

Home, city and diaspora: Anglo–Indian and Chinese attachments to Calcutta

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Abstract *This article is about the city as home for people living in diaspora. We develop two key areas of debate. First, in contrast to research that explores diasporic homes in relation to domestic homemaking and/or the nation as home or 'homeland', we consider the city as home in diaspora. Second, building on research on transnational urbanism, translocality and the importance of the 'city scale' in migration studies, we argue that the city is a distinctive location of diasporic dwelling, belonging and attachment. Drawing on interviews with Anglo–Indian and Chinese Calcuttans who live in London and Toronto, we develop the idea of 'diaspora cities' to explore the importance of the city as home rather than the nation as 'homeland' for many people living in diaspora. This leads to an understanding of the importance of migration and diaspora within cities of departure as well as resettlement, and contributes a distinctively diasporic focus to broader work on comparative urbanism.*

Keywords HOME, CITY, DIASPORA, COMMUNITY, BELONGING, CALCUTTA

The home and city are important sites and subjects for research on diaspora and transnationality. Across emotional, imaginative and material terrains, research on home in this context revolves around homemaking practices, the relationships between dwelling and mobility, and the intersections of home, memory, identity and belonging (Al-Ali and Koser 2002; Blunt and Dowling 2006). Research on the city, diaspora and transnationality is similarly wide-ranging, spanning multicultural and/or cosmopolitan citizenship, everyday urban life for transnational migrants, and broader debates on transnational urbanism and translocal connections (Keith 2005; Ley 2004; Smith 2001; Smith and Eade 2008). In this research, a range of ideas and approaches inform studies of both the home and the city. These include the importance of place and networks in transnational migration (Gielis 2009; Voigt-Graf 2004), and the significance of memory, identity and emotion in shaping everyday domestic and urban life in diasporas and transnational spaces (Fortier 2000; Tolia-Kelly 2004). They also include the material and imaginative geographies of dwelling and

belonging that recast cities as migrant places (Falzon 2003; Seng 2010) and the complexity of multi-scalar and multiple attachments across transnational and diasporic homes and cities (Georgiou 2006). Some of this research brings together an interest in the domestic and urban by focusing on migrant homes and homemaking in the city. While some studies present the city as a location more than an analytical focus, others reveal the importance of urban and domestic spaces and practices in understanding diaspora and transnationality. Among the latter are studies of transnational migration, domestic architecture and neighbourhood conflict in Vancouver (Mitchell 2004), the material practices of diasporic homebuilding in London (Datta 2008), and the role of public space in fostering transnational geographies of home in Hong Kong (Law 2001).

Building on such research, in this article we develop the idea of 'diaspora cities' to explore the significance to many people living in diaspora of the city as home rather than of the nation as 'homeland'. We stress the importance of migration and diaspora in the cities of both departure and resettlement in an attempt to contribute a distinctively diasporic focus to broader work on comparative urbanism (Blunt et al. 2012a, 2012b; Bonnerjee 2012; Lahiri 2010, 2011).¹ Unlike research that explores diasporic homes in relation to domestic homemaking and/or the nation as home or 'homeland' (Al-Ali and Koser 2002; Levin and Fincher 2010; Wiles 2008), we consider memories, ideas and practices that revolve around the city as home in 'diaspora space' (Brah 1996). Building on research on transnational urbanism (Smith 2001), translocality (Brickell and Datta 2011) and the importance of the 'city scale' in migration studies (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009), we argue that the city is a distinctive location of diasporic dwelling, belonging and attachment. Drawing on interviews with Anglo-Indian and Chinese Calcuttans living in London and Toronto, we contribute to broader critiques of 'methodological nationalism' (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002) by exploring the extent to which members of two diasporic communities consider the city rather than the nation as home.

Two key themes underpin our argument about home, city and diaspora. First, we explore Anglo-Indian and Chinese Calcuttans' relationships between home and identity and note how they extend beyond the domestic to encompass wider cities and diasporas. The ways in which these two communities, which were minorities both before and after migration, describe the city as home in terms of their origins, dwelling, feelings of belonging, comfort and familiarity – often in contrast to the less homely spaces of the nation – are closely associated with ideas of home, identity and community. Second, we are interested in the temporality and spatiality of the city as home for those living in diaspora. Cities constitute dense and complex theatres or landscapes of memory, with monuments, memorials, street names and buildings providing important material contexts for personal and collective memory work and the imaginative and embodied practices of 're-membering' (Boyer 1994; Fortier 2000). The political, cultural, spiritual and socio-economic dynamics of urban memory have been studied in a wide range of cities (Boym 2001; Della Dora 2006; Srinivas 2001; Till 2005). Other research has explored the personal and collective mobilization of memory and nostalgia over diaspora space, as shown by the domestic

material cultures that invoke remembered landscapes prior to migration for South Asian women in London (Tolia-Kelly 2004). In this article, we analyse the intersections of urban and diasporic memory and nostalgia and the importance of home in articulating such attachments. Following Srinivas's argument that different groups in the city create different landscapes of memory, we focus on the ways in which members of two minority communities now living in London and Toronto remember Calcutta² as home.

The Anglo-Indian and Chinese are two of Calcutta's largest minority communities to trace their roots to the city's imperial past.³ Calcutta, like most imperial cities, grew through the migration and resettlement of different groups of people who made the city their home (Banerjee et al. 2009; Chatterji 2009). For Anglo-Indian and Chinese Calcuttans the city was in different ways already diasporic. Because of their complex sense of belonging encompassing Britain and India and their mixed ancestry, many Anglo-Indians imagine themselves as part of an imperial diaspora (Blunt 2005) and regard Calcutta as a key site of memories and attachments (Andrews 2005). Before Independence, the former capital of India was the largest and most permanent site of residence for Anglo-Indians, who lived in particular neighbourhoods in the central city, attended the same churches, schools and clubs, and worked in specific fields – Anglo-Indian men often in government service and Anglo-Indian women in teaching, nursing or office work. An estimated one-third of the community has migrated since Independence, first to London in the 1940s and 1950s, and then in significant numbers to Toronto and Perth in the 1960s and 1970s. Today, there are an estimated 30,000 Anglo-Indians in Calcutta (Blunt 2005).

Since their arrival in Calcutta in the late eighteenth century, the Chinese have settled in other towns and cities in India, but only in Calcutta are there Chinese schools and associations. The community lives in two Chinatowns – the Cantonese central Tiretta Bazaar neighbourhood, which developed in the nineteenth century, and the walled Hakka Chinatown in Tangra, which dates from the early twentieth century (Oxford 1993). Liang (2007) identifies three waves of Chinese migration to Calcutta. The first was in the nineteenth century and consisted mainly of traders and skilled workers; the second, which took place in the 1920s and 1930s, comprised mostly unskilled refugees fleeing oppressive conditions in China, and the third, which was after the Second World War, was predominantly made up of people trying to escape the civil war at home. The Chinese carved out occupational niches in carpentry, shoemaking, tannery and dentistry (Liang 2007), but now work in other occupations as well, particularly in restaurants and beauty parlours. Like the Anglo-Indians, the younger generation of Chinese is being educated in English-medium schools and is increasingly working in the service sector. Their large-scale migration from Calcutta began in the 1960s after many community members were detained in internment camps in Deoli, Rajasthan because of the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962. Today there are roughly 2000 Chinese residents in Calcutta, as well as a sizeable and visible immigrant community in Toronto and a smaller and less visible one in London (for more on both communities, see Bonnerjee 2010).

Home and diaspora

According to Al-Ali and Koser (2002: 1), ‘the changing relationship between migrants and their “homes” is held to be an almost quintessential characteristic of transnational migration’, spanning everyday domestic life alongside ‘wider questions about the very idea of home, of what home might represent, and where home might be located’ (Blunt and Dowling 2006: 197). In her research on Greek Cypriot communities in London and New York, for example, Myria Georgiou (2006: 160) writes that ‘home is a special, intense and emotional space and symbol for diaspora’, which exists within different places and across overlapping scales of belonging and attachment:

Home can be the domestic natural space, the immediate family, a private home, the refuge from the outside world. It can be the local space where everyday life evolves – the place to which people always return. It can also be the country of origin, the symbolic Home, the source, or the highly symbolic and mediated transnational context, which shelters diaspora against exclusionary national spaces. More than any one of these, it tends to be all of the above.

(Georgiou 2006: 160)

Much research on domestic and transnational diasporic homes and homemaking focuses on domestic architecture (King 1984; Levin and Fincher 2010), material cultures (Salih 2002; Tolia-Kelly 2004) and other homemaking practices (Longhurst et al. 2009; Morgan et al. 2005). However, ideas about home and belonging in diaspora extend far beyond the domestic sphere and invoke the nation as home or ‘homeland’. Janine Wiles, in researching New Zealanders living in London, argues that ‘discursive and material aspects of New Zealand as home form a framework for everyday life as migrants in London’ (Wiles 2008: 117). This framework encompasses ‘the symbolic or political nature of home, the importance of family and familiarity for a sense of home, and the role of physical material objects and places’. She explores the ‘spatial elasticity’ (Wiles 2008: 127) of New Zealand as home for people living in diaspora, whereby transnational ideas of home exist across different scales ranging from family homes to the wider landscape.

Although diasporas are usually transnational, many studies invoke the nation through material and imaginative connections to a past, present or imagined ‘homeland’ (for wider discussion see Abdelhady 2008; Falzon 2003; Hage 1996). Many researchers explore diasporic attachments to homelands and nations that might be remembered, imagined, lost, or yet to be achieved, and the material manifestation of such attachments through political activism, the transfer of remittances and diverse cultural practices (Adamson 2002; Axel 2001; Carter 2005). Others question whether people living in diaspora identify with a homeland or nation of origin to which they are materially and/or emotionally bound and to which they envisage returning. Avtar Brah (1996: 181), for example, proposes the notion of ‘diaspora space’ to encompass ‘the intersectionality of diaspora, border, and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural and psychic processes’. As Brah explains:

Diaspora space as a conceptual category is ‘inhabited’ not only by those who have migrated and their descendants but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous. In other words, the concept of *diaspora space* (as opposed to that of diaspora) includes the entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of ‘staying put’.

(Brah 1996: 181)

In this article, we focus on the city as a distinctive location of residence and belonging (Gilroy 2000: 124) within ‘diaspora space’ and the ways in which such attachments are articulated through ideas of home.

Home, city and diaspora

Thinking about home and diaspora ‘through the city’ (following Robins 2001) is to build on research about translocality and transnational urbanism and involves engaging with broader debates about global cities. A wide range of research shows that translocal connections between people and places touch on both dwelling and mobility (Appadurai 1996; Hannerz 1996; Smith 2001, 2005). In their attempt to extend our understanding of translocal geographies beyond (as well as within) debates on transnationalism, Katherine Brickell and Ayona Datta (2011: 4) argue that ‘there is a need to understand translocality in other spaces, places and scales beyond the national.’ The city has been a significant site for such research. In his influential work on transnational urbanism, Michael Peter Smith (2001, 2005, 2011) focuses on the centrality of cities in forging translocal linkages ‘because they concentrated the social, physical and human capital used to forge a multiplicity of socio-economic, cultural and political projects that linked localities across borders’ (Smith 2011: 182). Tracing translocal linkages within and across cities has been particularly important in research on migration (Sinatti 2008; Smith and Eade 2008). As Glick Schiller and Çağlar explain, in wider work on ‘transnational communities’ or ‘transnational social space’:

the networks or imaginaries of diasporic identity that link people are envisioned as circumscribed and bounded by a common communal or national identity, even though the domain of connection is transnational. This approach minimises the place-specific character of migrant networks and the ways in which a specific locality may shape relationships that extend beyond national borders.

(Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009: 186)

For Glick Schiller and Çağlar, analysis of the ‘city scale’ is vital for understanding migrant incorporation, particularly in terms of ‘the varying positionings of cities within global fields of power and the different roles migrants play within the reconstitution of specific cities’ (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009: 178).

In this article, we extend the debates on translocality, transnational urbanism and the importance of the ‘city scale’ in migration studies through our focus on home, city and diaspora. While various researchers (including Brickell 2011; Hatfield 2011;

Mercer et al. 2009) have explored ideas and material spaces of home as key sites of translocal connectivity for migrants, fewer have explored ideas of the city itself as home. While most research on translocality is located in broader studies of transnationalism, we argue that a distinctively diasporic perspective will aid our understanding of the connections within and between cities (see Blunt et al. 2012b). We thus develop the notion of diaspora cities to encompass the city as a site of dwelling and mobility, shaped by connections within and across different cities and communities in the past and present. We are responding to Ien Ang's (2001: 92) claim that the 'global city is the space of diaspora's undoing'. Based on evidence from different and contested notions of a Chinese diaspora in Singapore and Sydney and the complex hybridity of the global city (Mayaram 2009; Oswin and Yeoh 2010), Ang compares the 'imagined communities' created by ideas of diasporas and global cities:

While diasporas are constituted by ethnic unity in the face of spatial scattering, global cities are shaped by ethnic diversity through spatial convergence. While what matters for diaspora is a connection with a symbolic 'elsewhere', a long-distance, virtual relationship with a global community of belonging, what grounds the global city is its firm orientation towards 'here', the local, *this* place. While the transnationality of the diasporic community is one of 'sameness in dispersal' across global space, the transnationality of the global city is characterized by intense simultaneity and co-existence, by territorial 'togetherness in difference'.
(Ang 2001: 89)

While Ang's argument relates specifically to the complex politics of multiculturalism in global cities, we explore the importance of migration and diaspora in shaping ethnically diverse cities of both departure and resettlement. Viewing the city as diasporic opens up space to study communities – like Anglo-Indian and Chinese Calcuttans – that were and are minorities both before and after migration.

Mark-Anthony Falzon's (2003: 662, 665) research on Hindu Sindhi migration to Bombay emphasizes attachments to the city as a 'cultural heart'. As he explains, Sindhi ties to Bombay are '*a product of the migration process*' and are materialized through, for example, patronage, investment, consumption and religion (Falzon 2003: 679). The cosmopolitanism that characterizes a Sindhi collective identity is closer to Bombay than to a 'primordial homeland' as 'the prime node of world-wide Sindhi interconnectivity' (Falzon 2003: 677). We build on Falzon's (2003: 677) ideas about the importance of the city in shaping a 'diasporic imaginary', but differ on two points. First, we focus on the city as a site of departure as well as resettlement. And second, our perspective is more fully comparative than his because we focus on two communities from Calcutta and their migration to London and Toronto (see Falzon 2003: 677–8).

Beyond 'methodological nationalism'

Our methodological approach reflects our concern to research diasporic lives through the scale of the city rather than the nation. While debates on the need to move beyond

'methodological nationalism' (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002) have underpinned transnational and diaspora studies, a significant part of such research still remains at the scale of the nation. At the same time, research on diaspora often continues to focus on a singular location of resettlement rather than on the diasporic connections between a number of places. As Georgiou (2006: 127) writes, 'empirical research on multi-positioned diasporic connections is just at the beginning. ... The connections between singular points in the diaspora and the country of origin still dominate the literature.' We focus on the city as a site of diasporic study because we think that the urban scale is the most meaningful for understanding minority diasporas like the Anglo-Indian and Indian Chinese communities. While 'methodological nationalism' continues to invoke a bounded sense of nationhood, Kevin Ward (2010) has criticized the 'methodological territorialism' that allows authors of comparative urban studies to understand cities as contained entities. By comparing two minority communities in three cities, and showing how ideas about the city as home travel across urban and diasporic space, we situate our research not only in terms of a 'relational comparative approach' to understanding cities and the connections between them (Ward 2010) but also in terms of comparative research in migration studies (including Foner 2005). In doing so, we argue that understanding cities as well as communities in relation to wider diasporas, and the mobility as well as dwelling that this implies, can help to draw out a range of 'interconnected trajectories – how different cities are implicated in each other's past, present and future' (Ward 2010: 480; also see Robinson 2006).

In this article we draw on 20 interviews in London (14 with 21 Anglo-Indian and 6 with 8 Chinese women and men) and 35 interviews in Toronto (16 with 19 Anglo-Indian and 19 with 26 Chinese women and men), alongside ethnographic research in participants' homes, restaurants and at social gatherings. The number of interviews with Chinese respondents was comparatively higher in Toronto because the community there is much larger. Most interviewees were aged over 55 and we recruited them to reflect migration at different periods, particularly to London in the 1950s and to Toronto since the 1970s. We recruited the interviewees through community organizations in London and Toronto, through contacts given by interviewees in Calcutta and through personal contacts. Many interviews extended over lunch or dinner, and sometimes included other family members and friends.

Drawing on our research with Anglo-Indian and Chinese Calcuttans, we frame the idea of the city as home in diaspora in three ways. First, we examine how the city, as a place of birth and dwelling, features more prominently than the nation in its residents' sense of their origins and identities. Second, we explore the city as home through the observation of familiar everyday urban practices. Third, by analysing the respondents' memories of Calcutta alongside their narratives on living in London and Toronto, we present a diasporic framework for understanding the city as home.

Calcutta as *desh*: the city as home

The idea of a foundational origin is significant in research on diasporas, not only to give the latter a definitional form but also to explain a located space of home

constructed through memory and nostalgia. The space of the nation usually defines this sense of home and belonging. To explore the city as home for Anglo-Indian and Chinese Calcuttans, we draw on the idea of *desh*,⁴ a Bengali term that refers to the nation as homeland and to home as a place of origin. In a different context, Laura Bear (2007: 180–1) described the railway colony as an Anglo-Indian *desh* – ‘a place of memory and conceptual space [that] gave families a foundational point of origin’. While the idea of *desh* is usually located in rural areas, we focus on the city for two reasons. First, for communities caught up in the complex territorial politics of imperialism, such as the Anglo-Indian and the Chinese, we explore how the city rather than the nation creates a located sense of home, belonging and attachment. Second, we investigate how the city, narrated as a place of birth, family and dwelling, destabilizes any fixed relationship between territory, genealogy and the nation.

At critical political moments, both communities experienced challenges to their ability to identify with the nation and to feel at home on a national scale. Despite being born and ‘domiciled’ in India, many Anglo-Indians did not feel at home there. Their estrangement was particularly marked during the period of ‘Indianization’ and the struggle for Independence when there was an attempt to create an independent ‘homeland’ at McCluskieganj in rural Bihar in the 1930s. There were, in fact, a number of political debates about the place of Anglo-Indians in independent India after 1947 (Blunt 2005). With many members of the Chinese Indian community detained in internment camps in Deoli, Rajasthan, irrespective of whether they had been born in India or China, the 1962 Sino-Indian conflict raised questions about their citizenship (Banerjee 2007; Berjeaut 1999; Oxfeld 1993). Large-scale emigration from both communities began during these two periods of political turmoil. Their narratives on Calcutta as home, articulated in terms of emotional attachment, belonging and familiarity, are closely bound up with their wider difficulties of feeling at home in India. Roger, an Anglo-Indian who lives in Toronto, expressed his anxiety about the desire to have a place to call ‘home’:

It’s almost 40 years. I am a Canadian now, but I still call India home. When I came to Canada, I accepted this as my country and I owe my allegiance to this country, because it gave me what India could not give me, not because I was not educated or I was dark, or yellow or green, but because I was not Indian. Once the British left, they left us at large. There were no jobs for us on a platter. Now I understand that Anglo-Indians are blending in the mosaic of that country and most of them are earning degrees and getting good jobs. ... We are a community which is misplaced all over the world. The British and the Indians created us, but they gave us no country ... we don’t have a country! Canada is great, but this is not my country. I happen to be here and live here. I don’t have a country.

The notion of home for Roger is complex as it combines an anxiety about not having a country to call his own with an emotional attachment to India. At the same time, he also expresses an attachment to Calcutta:

If you are talking to Anglo-Indians who are from Madras, they have their affiliation for Madras. People from Bombay have their affiliation for Bombay. They won't talk about India, as in India. They would talk about the city that that they were from. I have never travelled in India, so I really don't know India, I know Calcutta. ... You know they say London has a certain aura about it and I feel Calcutta does also. I think about it the same way people think of London. I like the hustle and bustle of Free School Street, of Park Street, of Chowringhee and I think we can't beat that. ... I miss that.

While India provides an image or idea of home, the minorities in question narrate the feeling of being at home specifically through the city. Homi Bhabha (1990: 3) describes belonging as the 'historically and temporally disjunct positions that minorities occupy ambivalently within the nation's space'. For communities such as the Anglo-Indian and Chinese, the city assumes an important and located sense of belonging. Although the city became un-homely for both these communities during times of political turmoil, which called into question their sense of belonging to the nation, it remained an affective space closely linked to the presence of family and a sense of familiarity.

For the Chinese community, ethnic identity complicated the space of belonging and home. Describing her sense of home, Brenda Chen says:

Now it is Toronto, but there's always the sense that I was raised in Calcutta ... more and more I live in Toronto it becomes home. But, because you are in Toronto, they ask: 'where are you from originally'? It's always like, oh yeah ... yes ... but ... and then you say you are from Calcutta. The funny thing is you never say India, always Calcutta ... because you always want to distinguish in your mind that you are not from Bombay or Delhi. ... And, the point is if the question comes from someone with an Indian background, and you say you are from India, they look almost shocked, so you always have to qualify and say that you are from Calcutta.

The city as a place of birth, family and dwelling was a recurrent theme in narratives of the city as home. As Julie Hu, who now lives in Toronto, explained:

I think that's where I spent most of my life ... that's where all my friends are ... Calcutta ... India ... and everything about that place and I would see it as a whole rather than associating anything with mainland China. India is my home ... I think it's more Calcutta ... that's where I was born ... so that's the place which formed me ... you recognize Calcutta.

Although there were frequent overlaps between referring to India or Calcutta as home, the narratives of their lived experiences emphasized familiarity with the city as the basis for attachment. With Anglo-Indians and Chinese rarely travelling outside the city, it became an important site of belonging. Kenneth, an Anglo-Indian living in

Toronto said that ‘even though we are Canadian citizens now, it [Calcutta] will always be “back home” for us, because that is where we were born; that’s the soil we were brought up on ... because many Anglo-Indians never experienced other parts [of India], so Calcutta is home.’ Similarly, Pamela Chen, who also lives in Toronto, said ‘it [Calcutta] is always “back home”. ... I have travelled to other cities, but our connection is with Calcutta.’ Anglo-Indians saw these personal connections as important in identifying the city as home:

It is the attachment that comes from being in any particular city. ... I mean, this was my home, but, for another Anglo-Indian, it was his city as well. I think for people, whether the city is nice or not, it is like their home, so it is important to you; it is a part of your being, your experience, your background. ... I do have links with Calcutta, what I feel is my personal experience ... like my family has roots which go back 200 years in Calcutta ... there is a gravestone in the cemetery in Calcutta.

(Leonard, London)

That is where I grew up. That’s where I started to make friends ... Calcutta more than any other part of India. ... That is when I started to build memories. Yes, my life in India centred around Calcutta. It is still a very special place. I know I haven’t been home and people say ‘why haven’t you been home?’ All I can say is, I don’t know why I haven’t been home. When I think of Calcutta, I think of this little city where I grew up.

(Linda, Toronto)

When asked why she still thinks of Calcutta as home, Linda replied that it is ‘because Mom and Dad and Nana were there ... when we came to England everyone separated’. While Anglo-Indians trace a familial link to the city as part of their narrative of belonging, the Chinese ritualize their narratives through ancestral worship during Qingming, or through the Spring Festival at the various cemeteries in Calcutta. Describing her sense of attachment to Calcutta, Patricia Hsu explained how she imagines the city as home. ‘Personally I always think of it [Calcutta] as my homeland as that is where I was born, that is where I got my education. ... Another attachment is that my Dad is buried there ... and I also hope to go and see Bandel Church⁵ one day.’

Oxford (1993) writes that the family is an especially important social unit for the Hakka Chinese; they remember the city as a place in which these close ties had survived. Calcutta’s Chinese community thus associate the city with a sense of being part of a community. In Mei Ling’s words:

I think the nostalgia is mainly about what they miss ... the sense of belonging ... to a community ... not the place itself. I think if they can get all the community and transplant it here [Toronto], with the same kind of belonging and perform the same rituals, they would be quite happy.

Both Anglo–Indian and Chinese Calcuttans thus had their idea of community and its associated sense of belonging firmly rooted in the city. Indeed, they identified with the city much more readily than with a wider sense of belonging to the nation, which was fraught with complexity and ambivalence.

At home in the city

The city scale has an equally significant role in shaping community identity, alongside its importance in thinking about a space of belonging for minority communities. Anglo–Indian and Chinese Calcuttans look upon the city as a home place situated at the intersections of community, identity and memory. The specificity of their Calcutta-based memories plays a crucial role in identifying the city as home. Narratives pertaining to being at home there also revolve around creating an urban space in which these minorities felt comfortable. In this section, we explore how the idea of the city as home is rooted in their Calcutta-specific memories and how those memories create the basis of an urban identity for both communities.

With the ending of the job reservation system in the 1960s, which meant fewer Anglo–Indians living in railway colonies, the community became less rural and many of its members are relocated in Indian cities other than Calcutta. Nonetheless, they continued to narrate their urban identity through their specific memories of Calcutta and their place in that city. This process of narrating and constructing Calcutta as a space of identification reveals complex intersections between memory, imagination and attachment. Many Anglo–Indians remember the city as the bustling place to which they moved from the relatively placid surroundings of the railway colony, often to look for jobs. They also remember it as a place with a lively social life. For Leonard, who spent a long time in a boarding school near Darjeeling, the city had ‘a lot to offer because it was a chance to be somewhere different ... it was a chance to go to restaurants and meet other people, the cinemas ... it was ...[a] contrast ... [to] living a very quiet life in the hill station’. Like Leonard, Anglo–Indians who had moved to Calcutta from a railway colony, or those who were born and grew up in the city, felt at home there because it allowed them to lead an Anglo–Indian way of life. The city symbolized modernity, consumption and with the image of ‘Calcutta *wallah*’, Anglo–Indian women and the idea of a ‘Calcutta Christmas’ it embodied a distinctively Anglo–Indian identity.

‘Calcutta *wallah*’ is a term Anglo–Indians use to describe someone from the city, either someone born there or someone who has spent a significant length of time there. Although the term is still in use, it refers to an identity connected to the city of the past, so has a nostalgic connotation. Talking about the specific experience of Calcutta Anglo–Indians, Linda, who moved to the city from a railway colony, says:

Calcutta Anglo–Indians considered themselves king of the castle. They were so much more Westernized. They had New Market. They had all the new fashions. They had the best cinemas. They seemed to think they were the best. Some of my older friends say: ‘Oh, the ladies of Calcutta, they were the

prettiest things.’ But when I look around me, there were beautiful women from Madras, from Bangalore! ... People would talk about the Grail Club and the Rangers Club. Those places were associated only with Calcutta ... I think that is what is about Calcutta – it is the social scene.

The embodied figure of the Calcutta *wallah* not only differentiates Calcutta from other cities and locates it in a hierarchy in relation to other places in which Anglo-Indians live or have lived, but it also often has a gendered connotation. Bill Forbes wrote a popular song in the 1960s immortalizing the special identity of the ‘ladies of Calcutta’. Because of their Western dress, social mixing and paid employment, Anglo-Indian women generally, but particularly those from Calcutta, were thought by themselves and others to embody modernity (Blunt 2005). As Linda’s comment shows, many envisaged Calcutta as a site of modernity refracted through such identities. On the other hand, nostalgia for a Calcutta Christmas, because of its specific association with certain places in the city such as a Jewish bakery in New Market called Nahoum’s and the Grail and Rangers’ community clubs, supported an image of the city as a site of consumption and sociality. In the diasporic context, a Calcutta Christmas, much like the Chinese New Year, has become synonymous with ‘a time to go back home’, to give something back to the members of the community who have remained in the city, (for more on return visits to Calcutta, see Blunt et al. (2012a) and Delofski’s (1998) documentary film).

Members of the Chinese community also relate feeling at home in Calcutta directly to their ability to retain a distinct community identity. While Chinese Calcuttans derive their sense of belonging to Calcutta from their emotional connections to the city as home, such feelings have differed significantly over generations. Calcutta’s earliest Chinese residents, who saw the city as a temporary home, centred their lives on the close-knit structure of their community, which they developed through a range of schools, regional associations and temples (Zhang 2010) and which counter-balanced the insecurities and ambivalences of belonging to the nation. The events of 1962 changed the perceptions of and narratives about Calcutta as home for those members of the Chinese community who had been born in the city. The early close-knit community life of the Chinese derived from the contexts in which the community migrated to Calcutta and, indeed, for many it took some time to view Calcutta as home. As Mei Ling, a Hakka Chinese woman who lives in Toronto, says of her father’s generation:

They all wanted to go back. ... I think ... those who were born ... in the 1940s and 1950s were the first generation born there [Calcutta] ... the first generation to actually break out of the mould ... because I know that my parents never had any Cantonese friends. ... They didn’t even want to learn Hindi ... they were very afraid ... we had to be brought up as Chinese ... and kind of drilled into us that thrice a year we have to go to the cemetery. ... It’s a clan bonding thing ... it’s all kind of ... my parents wanted to go back home. ... All they wanted is to go back.

After 1962 the ‘clan-bonding’ rituals continued, but now focused on the idea of Calcutta as home. When asked if a particular Calcutta Chinese identity existed, Patricia Hsu replied:

I think Calcutta is the city where you find most of the Chinese culture preserved, like in terms of the Chinese New Year, going to the cemetery twice a year to pay your respect to elders. ... In other places like Bombay, Delhi or Bangalore, that part of the culture is missing.

Identifying Calcutta as home not only reflects a sense of attachment to the city, especially for those who had been born there, but also reveals a process of rearticulating what were mostly rural identities based in specific regions of China through the space of the urban. While regional affiliations were expressed through different associations such as Sea Ip, Toong On, Nam Soon and Gee Hing, these different regional (and mostly rural) identities also came together to form a particular Calcutta Chinese identity ritualized through an annual visit during the Chinese New Year to Achipur, a small town to the south of Calcutta. The beginnings of the community in the city date back to the arrival of a Fukienese sailor merchant, Yong Atchew, in the late eighteenth century. There are many versions of this popular history, but most tell the story of how Atchew wrested land from Warren Hastings, the governor-general, and established a Chinese colony (Liang 2007), now called Achipur. It is an important place for the community and following each Chinese New Year, several groups offer prayers at its Bogong-Bopo (God and Goddess of Earth) temple, seen as the protectors of the Chinese in Calcutta and at Atchew’s tomb (Zhang 2010). The practice of visiting Achipur reflects both a unique ritualization of ancestor worship (Zhang 2010) and an assertion of community belonging rooted in Calcutta.

The different ways of feeling at home in the city involve creating specific community spaces in the city and transgressing their boundaries. Memories of spaces of sociability in Calcutta thus span both community sites and other places in the wider city. Anglo-Indian and Chinese Calcuttans remember their close-knit community life in clubs and associations, as well as other iconic places in the neighbourhood such as New Market, the zoo, the botanical gardens, Eden Gardens and the Victoria Memorial all contributing to their sense of feeling at home. Although their narratives of memory and nostalgia seem to fix the city and community identities in the past, these memories play a significant role in shaping their identities in the present. Shared memories of Calcutta are an important aspect of the diasporic lives of Anglo-Indian and Chinese Calcuttans.

Calcutta–London–Toronto: home across cities

Large-scale migration from Calcutta had an unsettling effect on both the Anglo-Indian and Chinese communities’ idea of home, as Bradley, an Anglo-Indian now living in London, vividly describes:

Home is here ... heart is there ... how do you leave your children ... grandchildren? ... This [London] has got to be home. The heart is always there. I came here with every intention of going back. ... So to me, I love Calcutta so, so much, it's unbelievable. I knew the date, the time ... when I actually fell in love with Calcutta. ... I got a taxi and I was going across Howrah Bridge, I saw a *bhisti walla* [water-bearer] cleaning the roads on the other side of it ... going up to Brabourne Road ... and I got a terrific feeling come over me ... we are home. From that moment, I absolutely fell in love with Calcutta.

The dilemma Bradley faces in identifying his 'home' reflects the experiences of many other Anglo-Indian and Chinese Calcuttans who have migrated to London and Toronto. On the one hand, there is a strong attachment to Calcutta as a memory, a place of birth and often a place of a childhood recollected through strong family ties. On the other hand, however, a new life in London and Toronto, also based on family and social ties, creates a new and different sense of home in these cities. In this section, we explore how another city can influence the Anglo-Indian and Chinese Calcuttans' ideas of home – in other words, how the idea of home travels, over diaspora.

Brah (1996: 196) writes about 'home' as the 'mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination and ... [as] the lived experience of locality'. Bradley's earlier comment shows how a sense of home is rooted in the everyday spaces of the city. When Anglo-Indian and Chinese communities migrated from Calcutta, they transposed their 'lived experiences of locality' to new urban settings. Many Anglo-Indians who migrated to London, especially in the 1950s, found their first impression of the city dismaying. Donald, for example, remembers:

London was a big disappointment when I came here. I was used to the city lights, over there in Calcutta. I was used to the climate ... and I came here on a cold November day. ... I came into Victoria and there we got to see what London was like ... it was vast ... but all the houses looked the same, and I wasn't impressed.

Others, especially Anglo-Indian women, remember having to get used to doing domestic work for the first time (Blunt 2005). These discomforts, however, extended beyond the domestic setting and made it difficult for them to imagine London, let alone Britain, as home. In the context of the city, such discomforts found expression through their loss of the close-knit life they had experienced in Calcutta. Anne, who lives in Toronto, for example, describes her memories of Calcutta through the closeness she felt at home:

In Calcutta the warmth that you get, I don't think you get it anywhere else. ... But there comes a time, you know, for jobs and I guess for our children's sake we have to move. I tell my kids those times will never come back ... no matter

how you try to relive it. Although we live here [Toronto] now and we do go back to visit, we cannot have those times again. We were all one family back then, we lived in each other's houses ... we looked after each other's kids ... we were all one.

Penelope has a similar memory of Calcutta. When asked what she misses most about the city, she said:

The warmth ... the love of people ... you know, Calcutta has its own charm ... when we go back on holidays or even when we were there, when we visited somebody, we didn't have to phone and say that we are coming. I think it's the distance here that causes it, or maybe because people are too preoccupied. But in Calcutta, we just go. ... It's that warmth that you miss here. ... Like where we lived, [her husband] would never be at home, but I always had my sisters every Saturday, Sunday, my sister-in-law would come with her kids. So I always had big *handies* [cooking pots] of food cooking and we used to cook, eat and relax.

Both Penelope and Anne migrated to Toronto in the late 1970s and 1980s and the descriptions of their homes in Calcutta are fraught with the sense of loss they still feel about missing their close-knit family in the city.

While the loss of family cohesion and of a social life were what most affected the sense of home among Anglo-Indians who migrated to London and Toronto, for Chinese Calcuttans it was the negotiation of their ethnic identity that mattered most. Toronto is now home to more Chinese Calcuttans than Calcutta. Although, like the Anglo-Indian community, many rue the loss of the sociability that characterized life 'back home', Chinese Calcuttans have been able to recreate significant social ties within the community, mainly through marriage. Calcutta, to most, however, remains home. The Chinese community narrated the idea of Calcutta as home through its ability to retain its particular ethnic identity through various institutions. In Toronto, on the other hand, the presence of a wider Chinese diaspora makes the Calcutta Chinese community less visible. While many like William Liu mentioned that they 'felt more comfortable [in Toronto] because there were more Chinese people there', their claim to a particular identity was not etched on the space of the city.

The ambiguity between a sense of belonging to the nation and/or to the city becomes acute for both Anglo-Indian and Chinese Calcuttans in diaspora. While home remains a place in memory, there are complex associations between the idea of the nation as home and the idea of the city as home. Many describe India as home in answer to questions such as 'where are you from?', but, as Brenda Chen's earlier comment showed, '[one] always has to qualify and say that you are from Calcutta.' In envisaging a sense of home, Chinese Calcuttans have to negotiate their identity at various levels because they identify with a broader Chinese diaspora from India. In addition, defining a sense of home within a more extensive Chinese diaspora transforms different regional identities such as Cantonese and/or Hakka.

The largely Cantonese Chinese diaspora from Hong Kong, composed of more recent migrants with more capital to invest in the city, compounds the difficulty of identifying with the wider Chinese diaspora. The Hong Kong Chinese in Toronto have built large suburban malls specializing in ‘Chinese’ products. While members of the Indian Chinese community frequent these malls, they are nonetheless conscious of the economic divisions between the different groups. Julie Hu, for example, explained that in Toronto ‘there are three distinct groups: those from Hong Kong, from India and from China ... we automatically make out who is who.’ The difference is not just economic – many Indian Chinese have also done well for themselves in Toronto – but also ethnic. As Chris Wong said, ‘the Hong Kong Chinese are more Cantonese, they look down upon the Hakka’.

A recent resurgence of interest in a wider Hakka identity in Toronto further obfuscates the Indian Hakka identity. Toronto is home to Hakka communities from Jamaica, South Africa and India. The Toronto Hakka Conference, which, in collaboration with York University has taken place annually since 2000, deals with Hakka identity issues. At the same time, there are also attempts made to recognize an Indian Hakka identity. The complexities of identifying with the nation and the city as home resurface in diaspora for Chinese Calcuttans. Discussing the desire to assert a distinct Indian Hakka Chinese identity, William Lin explained that although the community was extremely close-knit in Calcutta, in Toronto there is a need to distinguish this identity from a wider Hakka identity. As he explained:

Here [in Toronto] because of so many different communities living together, you do think of your identity, and you want to identify yourself. In India it is more like Chinese and Indian. Here it is more like, you are an African Chinese, a Jamaican Chinese, or Indian Chinese. So when people ask what is your background, you have to kind of say, I am Hakka, but Hakka from India.

In cities like London and Toronto, which accommodate a number of different diasporas, there is often no option but to negotiate the idea of home through the nation. Yet, as many Anglo-Indian and Chinese Calcuttan narratives reveal, memories of the city as home are bound up with family, friendships and the everyday spaces of the city. At the same time, as Bradley’s comment at the beginning of this section shows, London and Toronto also embody a different sense of home. While Calcutta remains ‘back home’ and a place in memory, the feeling of being at home in London or Toronto derives in part from the recreation of familiarities experienced in Calcutta. In London, for example, these people can relive the friendships and social connections that had contributed to creating a sense of home in Calcutta through monthly meetings of the Calcutta Club, which a group of Calcuttans formed across a range of communities. Other community associations as well as personal friendship networks also help to recreate a sense of home in both London and Toronto.

The everyday spaces in the city that served to identify it as home travel to the diaspora, not only insofar as they link cities through the diasporic communities, but

also because the members of the communities live and relive these interconnected memories in the diaspora cities. Large numbers of Hakka restaurants serving Indian-style Chinese food have opened in the suburbs of Toronto since the late 1980s, thus offering their customers a particularly urban way of recreating and reliving a sense of home. According to unofficial estimates, there are more than 60 such restaurants and Calcutta Chinese run over 90 per cent of them. While there are a couple of Indian Chinese restaurants like Yeuh Tung and Spadina Garden in downtown Toronto, most are located in the western suburbs of Brampton and Mississauga and the eastern suburbs of Scarborough and Markham. The restaurants tend to be quite large, accommodating between 30 and more than 100 customers. Chinese restaurants have a marked presence in the diasporic landscapes of several cities (see Kwan 2005). They are places where Anglo-Indian and Chinese Calcuttans can play out their shared memories of Calcutta through conversations about 'back home'. Many Anglo-Indians described visiting Indian Hakka restaurants. For Dominic, for example:

No matter which Hakka place you go to, they are all Calcutta Chinese. ... They say Indian Chinese, but they are all Calcutta. ... We talk Calcutta all the time. ... As soon as we go there, in no time they come to our table and have a chat and then we start talking about Calcutta. ... You know like 'there is nothing like this restaurant on Chittaranjan Avenue or Peiping on Park Street.' ... And we have mutual friends somehow, so it's very easy to strike up a conversation with the Calcutta Chinese people here.

Similarly, as Penelope explained, 'we talk about Calcutta and some of the Chinese speak Hindi, so we have fun ... we talk about Tangra, about Dhapa ... about Calcutta ... who went back, how things are ... what is good ... what is bad.' The excitement of being able to talk about Calcutta and to speak in Hindi draws on shared experiences of the city. Despite their frequent encounters between friends from Calcutta, the chance encounters within a wider South Asian diaspora make Indian Hakka restaurants a place in which to relive memories of the city as home in diaspora.

Conclusion

The multiple and different connections that exist across home, city and diaspora framed the focus of this article. Through our research on Anglo-Indian and Chinese Calcuttans now living in London and Toronto, we explored how many people living in diaspora attach greater importance to the city than the nation in remembering and articulating their attachments to home. Rather than studying diasporic homemaking in the city, we focused on ideas and memories about the city itself as home, and argued that the city, as a location of both departure and resettlement, is an important site of diasporic belonging and attachment. Two key themes underpinned our discussion of the city as home for Anglo-Indian and Chinese Calcuttans. First, we explored the relationships between home and identity of two minority communities and noted how these extend beyond the domestic sphere to encompass wider cities and diasporas. For

minority communities like the Anglo-Indian and Chinese Calcuttans, the city represented a place of origin, dwelling, belonging, comfort and familiarity in contrast to the less homely spaces of the nation, particularly at times of political instability. Seeing the city as home rather than the nation as homeland signified a located sense of attachment. Anglo-Indian and Chinese Calcuttans closely associated the idea of belonging in the city to identifying with a community, which they articulated through personal relationships with family and friends, familiar everyday urban practices and embracing an urban way of life in Calcutta. We also explored the temporality and spatiality of the city as home for those living in diaspora, focusing on the intersections of urban and diasporic memory and nostalgia and the importance of ideas of home in articulating such attachments. Identifying the city as home relies on keeping alive memories of everyday urban spaces and practices, which are communal and intercommunal, ritualized and mundane.

Throughout the article, we have developed the idea of ‘diaspora cities’ to explore the significance of the city to a diasporic imagination and to understand the importance of migration and diaspora within cities of both departure and resettlement. In seeking to move beyond ‘methodological nationalism’ and ‘methodological territorialism’, we focused on Calcutta, London and Toronto as three ‘diaspora cities’ for Anglo-Indian and Chinese Calcuttans. We explored the role of the city rather than of domestic space or the nation as ‘homeland’ in shaping, recasting and articulating an idea of home in diaspora. Our study of the Anglo-Indian and Chinese Calcuttan minority communities confirms the relevance of the city more than the nation as a site of attachment, belonging and identification. We thus contribute to a heterogeneous and differentiated idea of diaspora, which encompasses members of minority communities in cities of departure as well as resettlement. We have shown that while Calcutta is a significant site of attachment for those who were born there and who identify it as their place of origin, it is also important for those who came there from other parts of India, particularly the Anglo-Indians who moved from railway towns and other settlements. While Anglo-Indian and Chinese residence in Calcutta is already diasporic on a transnational scale, tracing genealogies and connections to a European paternal ancestor or to the Chinese mainland, it also reflects smaller scale and more recent migrations from elsewhere in India for some of our interviewees. Both groups, however, saw the city more than the nation as a site of attachment and belonging, remembered and rearticulated over diaspora space in London and Toronto.

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Notes

1. We refer to cities of 'departure' rather than of 'origin' because we understand cities like Calcutta as already diasporic, shaped by multiple and diverse migrations.
2. Although Calcutta was renamed Kolkata in 2001, we use the earlier name in this article as most interviewees migrated before 2001 and this is how almost all of them referred to the city.
3. This article is part of a broader project on the Anglo-Indian, Brahmo, Chinese and Jewish communities in Calcutta, their migration to London, Toronto and Israel since 1947, and the effects of migration for those who have remained in Calcutta.
4. Anglo-Indians, who spoke Hindi, rather than Bengali, used the word *mooluk*, which has the same meaning as *desh*. We use *desh* rather than *mooluk* to explore a sense of belonging rooted in a Bengali city. Also see Blunt (2005) on McCluskiegunj as an Anglo-Indian *mooluk*.
5. Bandel is a town in Hugli district, approximately 60 kilometres north of Calcutta. The Portuguese Church in this town is an important place of pilgrimage for Catholics in India, including Anglo-Indians and Chinese.

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