**‘I’m Local *and* Foreign’: Belonging, the City and the Case for Denizenship**

The degree to which phenomena such as globalization and transnational migration have influenced both the legal framing and meaning of citizenship has been discussed a lot recently. As Leitner & Ehrkamp (2006) argue, there is agreement over the fact that the nation-state faces threats ‘from above’ – in the guise of processes of economic and political globalization (Habermas 2001) – and ‘from below’ – in the guise of transnational migrants whose familial, economic, cultural and political affinities cut across national borders (Guarzino & Smith 1998).

Those considering threats to the national, liberal-democratic model of citizenship which emanate ‘from below’ have naturally focused on the related issues of identity and belonging. More specifically, they have underlined the challenges to the national identity of the host country posed by migrants who avow multiple allegiances. Amid all this debate the voice of the migrant him- or herself is seldom heard. Rather, commentators have tended to work backwards, using realignments of the political and legal dimensions of citizenship – or formal citizenship (Staeheli 2003; Varsanyi 2006) – to make assumptions about migrants’ sentiments of belonging and the meaning they ascribe to citizenship – or substantive citizenship (ibid.). There are exceptions to this trend, however. A small number of researchers have sought to flesh-out the substantive dimension of citizenship by talking with migrants about their feelings of belonging and the practices through which these feelings are expressed (Baumann 1996; Duyvendak 2011; Ehrkamp & Leitner 2003; Fenster 2005; Kasinitz et al. 2008; Leitner & Ehrkamp 2006; Varsanyi 2006). Their work has given us new conceptual tools to use when making sense of belonging, identity and substantive citizenship, such as ‘formations’ (Fenster 2005) and ‘spheres’ of belonging (Duyvendak 2011).

Here I draw on ethnographic research conducted at a soccer club in central London, Oldfield United (OU),[[1]](#footnote-1)\* all of whose players were either migrants, or the children or grandchildren of migrants. During this bout of ethnographic research respondents discussed their feelings of attachment to/detachment from national polities, their inclinations towards acquiring citizenship in the UK, and their levels of civic participation. In making sense of these discussions I seek to develop Tomas Hammar’s formal category of the denizen – or resident non-citizen – into the substantive notion of denizenship. I situate this notion in relation to dominant discourses of liberal-democratic citizenship and, more specifically, the tangle of inclusion and exclusion – the universal and the particular – which underpins them.

The findings of this research underline the importance of moving beyond legal or political categories to the everyday conditions and motivations which lead immigrants and their children/grandchildren to pursue degrees of entrance to or exit from national citizenship and its set of requirements and obligations. The respondents in this study – even those who were British citizens – identified themselves as ‘foreign’ and poor; their shared plight was characterized by alterity and exclusion. It was this plight which saw them evade the liberal state’s attempts at ‘citizen-making’, working cash-in-hand jobs, availing themselves of the local underground economy, and rejecting any ‘national’ affiliations. These sentiments and corresponding actions indicate that the formal and substantive dimensions of citizenship do not always align with one another.

I begin with a brief examination of the literature on citizenship and belonging. Here particular attention is paid to substantive understandings of citizenship and attempts to make sense of threats to the liberal-democratic model of citizenship. The section ends by introducing Tomas Hammar’s (1990) category of the denizen and discussing the possibility of developing this formal category into the substantive notion of denizenship. I then set the ethnographic scene and outline the research methodology employed. I proceed to present and analyze the findings of the fieldwork, focusing on the subjects’ touchstones of belonging and related attitudes to citizenship. I end by revisiting the liberal tenets which frame the democratic model of citizenship and considering how they might shed light on the phenomenon of denizenship and other threats to the liberal-democratic model.

**The City, Citizenship and Belonging**

The liberal-democratic conception of citizenship, dominant for most of the twentieth century, presupposes that national citizenship affords legal equality and protection to all citizens who reside within a national territory. These citizens are also granted equal access to civil, political and social rights (Marshall 1950). However, the granting of these rights by nation-state to citizen is contingent on the latter fulfilling certain obligations, such as paying taxes and showing loyalty and allegiance to the nation-state as a political community. This particular conception of citizenship thus assumes membership of one nation-state (Bosniak 2001; Gustafson 2002).

The distinction between formal and substantive citizenship (Staeheli 2003; Varsanyi 2006) is useful in making sense of debates about whether and to what extent the liberal-democratic conception of citizenship has been undermined by globalization, transnational migration and the transnational practices of migrant populations (Bakker & Smith 2010; Leitner & Ehrkamp 2006). A formal understanding of citizenship concerns the legal dimension of citizenship and, more specifically, the role of the state in according rights to national citizens. A substantive understanding concerns the processes and practices through which individuals negotiate and contest the meaning of citizenship. Of the three major trends that have been identified as threats to the liberal-democratic model of citizenship, two – the decoupling of rights from formal membership (Soysal 1994, 2000), and denationalization of citizenship as a result of rights being recast as universal human rights (Gurowitz 2006; Soysal 1994) – concern the formal dimension of citizenship while the other – the deterritorialization of identities – concerns its substantive dimension (Leitner & Ehrkamp 2006). The final trend relates to the identities of migrants themselves and gets to the heart of substantive citizenship by focusing on modes of belonging.

The deterritorialization of migrant identities is one of the characteristics of the postnational age heralded by some scholars (Appadurai 1996; Hannerz 1996). This term is meant to signal that the sentiments of belonging, commitment and allegiance expressed by migrants are now directed towards communal, ethnic and religious communities which transcend or cut across national boundaries. The possibility of enjoying citizenship rights in more than one nation-state is thus accompanied by the national community’s loss of primacy as a touchstone of allegiance.

Investigations into migrants’ modes of belonging and substantive citizenship have tended to emphasise one (or more) of three different (though not unrelated) elements of substantive citizenship which we might label positional, affective and instrumental.

In pointing to the position of marginality occupied by migrants in Germany and the United States, Ehrkamp and Leitner (2003, 2006) argue that these migrants felt allegiances to multiple communities and saw formal citizenship as a prerequisite for personal security and access to social and political rights (though were skeptical about whether this would amount to equal treatment). The positional element of substantive citizenship is also emphasised in the “spheres of belonging” identified by Duyvendak (2011): the individual sphere of the household, the economic sphere of the workplace, the associational sphere of the community and the socio-political sphere of the nation-state. Tensions are evident in and between these spheres because, while the household and community spheres depend on homogeneity and commonality, the workplace and nation-state are heterogeneous spaces which demand negotiation with and accommodation of difference and otherness. Many of the “meanings of belonging” (which, in turn, inform “formations of belonging”) identified by Fenster (2005) also underline the positionality of substantive citizenship: belonging and walking practices; a gendered sense of belonging vis-à-vis power relations and control; and belonging and urban planning.

Another of Fenster’s meanings of belonging – belonging and memory – relates to the moods and feelings associated with substantive citizenship, or its affective element. Likewise Kasinitz et al.’s (2008) study of five ‘immigrant-origin’ and three native-born comparison groups in New York emphasises this affective component; the authors argue that whether respondents espoused national origin identities, hyphenated identities, assimilative unhyphenated identities, or dissimilative racial and pan-ethnic identities (Rumbaut 1996), the majority of subjects considered the United States to be home.

The instrumental element of substantive citizenship is evident in Baumann’s (1996) notion of ‘discursive competences’ and Fenster’s (2005) “right to belong” and “belonging as citizenship.” The former are exercised by residents of Southall, west London, in drawing on cultural, religious and ‘community’ differences to frame their sentiments of belonging and attendant citizenship practices. The latter two are bound up with the ability of “people of different identities … to take part in civil society” (2005: 253) and, more specifically, promote particular causes in the politics of planning and development.

Scholars’ attempts to shed light on the tensions and contradictions of the liberal-democratic model of citizenship have centred on the friction between homogeneity and heterogeneity – sameness and difference – in the tenets of liberalism.

For Holston and Appadurai (1996: 192) the liberal-democratic conception of citizenship relies on “the social imaginary of a nation of commensurable citizens”. They argue that this sense of sufficient similarity and common purpose has disintegrated because of widening of social and economic inequalities in so many of the world’s cities. This disintegration is evident in Caldeira’s (1996) analysis of the private, walled enclaves of Sao Paulo. Here she is critical of the liberal framing of citizenship and, more specifically, what she calls the liberal “fiction”:

the polity incorporating all equal citizens has never occurred, but its founding ideals and its promise of continuous incorporation have retained their power for at least two centuries, shaping people’s experience of citizenship and city life and legitimating the actions of various excluded groups in their claims for incorporation. (Ibid: 22)

However, the actions of those prosperous enough to segregate themselves also kicked at the bruises of the liberal fiction by signaling a rejection of openness and equality.

Modern citizenship, Balibar (1996) has argued, operates according to a dichotomy between the egalitarian and the statutory. Here the impulse to inclusion is offset by a statutory (or hierarchical) pole, which is expressed through both nationality and the social division of labour: on one hand, through the distinction between citizens and foreigners and, on the other, between those who govern and those who are governed. In examining neoliberal forms of governance Rose (1999) has located the tension between the universal and particular in the opposition between the community and the excluded. A community is a unit wherein citizens are bound by human ties and affinities which check the impulses of personal interest incentivised by the free market. Those hobbled by unemployment and/or poverty – the excluded – lack the nous or ‘maturity’ to assume a meaningful role as a full citizen in the community. This exclusion is counteracted by inclusive measures aimed at drawing the excluded into one or other community (and thereby the ‘stakeholder economy’). The state thus treats certain members of its population as clients or subjects before they can rightfully be considered as citizens.

Here I argue that the formal and substantive dimensions of citizenship are not always neatly conjoined. Using the findings of ethnographic research, I attempt to demonstrate that one can possess legal status as a citizen while as far as possible abjuring one’s citizenly responsibilities, just as one’s allegiance to a given nation can be professed and demonstrated without citizenship being legally conferred. In doing so, I try to develop the formal, technical category of the denizen (Hammar 1990) into the substantive notion of denizenship.

Tomas Hammar’s discussion of “denizen” as a technical term centres on a distinction between temporary foreign visitor/guest worker, denizen, and citizen, with the status-bound zones inhabited by each regulated by three entrance gates: immigration regulation (gate one), regulation of domicile and residential status (gate two), and regulation of naturalisation into full citizenship (gate three). Denizens occupy the interstice between gate two and three, having been granted permanent resident status without being naturalised and hence granted full citizenship.

Twenty-eight per cent of OU’s squad members fitted Hammar’s technical description of the denizen as resident non-citizen; if we revisit the distinction between formal and substantive citizenship, these individuals were denizens in the formal sense. They shared a certain frame of mind conditioned by the fact that to be local was to originate elsewhere; to come from Oldfield or Bridgegate was to trace one’s ancestry to a foreign territory.

The signal feature of this mind-set was a sense of belonging based on the feeling of being alien; alien to mainstream discourses of nationhood, to politics, to the basic functioning of the nation-state and, at bottom, to the qualifications and requirements of British citizenship. A corresponding set of phenomena included a rejection of nationhood, a paucity of taxable income, reluctance to gain the right to vote, and other strategies of refusal of citizenship and its requirements. Together this way of thinking and acting constituted the substantive dimension of being a denizen – or denizenship.**1** However, this substantive realm of denizenship wasn’t the preserve of OU’s formal denizens.

OU’s British players – who together constituted 53% of the squad – were illustrative of a disjunction between the formal and substantive dimensions of citizenship. They expressed a rejection of nationhood and, more specifically, an on-going affirmation of being alien in relation to the nation-state to which they nominally belonged. Their expressions of self-alienation from Britishness/Englishness corresponded to actions which might be interpreted as degrees of exit from citizenship. Indeed, if we foreground the substantive dimension of citizenship we are confronted with the prospect of urban space as increasingly comprised of denizen enclaves – urban denizenia – each embedded in networks of global settlement but united in their residents’ renouncement or refusal of national citizenship and the rejection of a scollective culture rooted in the extension of *polis* (politics, policy, polity, police) and *civitas* (civil, civic, civilian, citizen) (Isin 1992).

Before documenting the findings of my ethnographic research and squaring them with the literature examined above, I should provide a detailed picture of the physical and socio-cultural setting of the research, as well as outlining the research methodology employed.

**Settings and Methods**

The analysis in this paper is based on two years’ ethnographic research at Oldfield United (OU), a semi-professional club situated in Oldfield, London. The district of Oldfield is located in the London borough of Bridgegate, one of the most ethnically diverse boroughs in Britain. The borough isn’t as heterogeneous in terms of income and wealth distribution, however. Levels of economic security are polarised; while a four-bedroom house in Oldfield fetches an average of £950,000 ($1.44 million), Bridgegate Council’s waiting list for local authority housing numbered 16,000 applicants at the last count.

OU was originally chosen as a fieldwork site as I wanted to explore how its players made sense of human variation amid the super-diversity (Vertovec 2007) of inner-city London. However, it quickly became evident that these young men’s understandings of self and other were bound up with their perceptions of the local area and related feelings of belonging. I therefore began asking the first- second- and third-generation immigrants who together comprised OU’s pool of players about their attitudes and dispositions towards the ‘host’ nation and the requirements and obligations of citizenship, as well exploring the feelings of belonging which informed them.

For two seasons I performed the role of Club Secretary, attending every home and away fixture, filling in match report forms, overseeing player registrations, etc. The research involved sustained observation of the club’s players, and over 70 unstructured interviews. While these interviews were not recorded, an account of each exchange was written-up as soon as possible after it had taken place, and transcripts were later checked with discussants to ensure fairness and accuracy.

The squad – consisting of players aged between seventeen and twenty-eight – was incredibly diverse in terms of ethnicity, including young men who had moved to London from France, Colombia, Rwanda, Liberia, Poland, Kosovo, Albania, Slovakia and Slovenia. The parents or grandparents of other players had arrived from Ireland, Jamaica, Grenada, Greece, Cyprus, Nigeria, Germany, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Algeria.

In a questionnaire the club asked its 69 registered players to complete, 58 per cent reported that they were in current employment, 11 per cent that they were in full-time education, and the remaining 31 per cent that they were unemployed. However, it turned out that these figures were misleading. After a year at the club I had a much better understanding of nature of the players’ employment, unemployment and study, particularly among the 30 players who together comprised the first-team squad and with whom I spent the most time (and from whom respondents are drawn here).

Of the nine first-team players that reported themselves as being unemployed, only one received unemployment benefit, and all had informal, cash-in-hand jobs and/or provided services in the local underground economy. Fourteen of the 18 first-teamers who reported themselves as being employed, and two of the three in full-time education, also relied on such informal work as their only source of income. The remaining four players who were formally employed had short-term, rolling contracts in the service sector (the majority at local sports centres), and were in and out of work during my two years at the club. Three of the four offset this insecurity by working cash-in-hand and/or within the underground economy on an *ad ho*c basis, while all four called on services available in this economy (though they may not have offered a service themselves). All members of the squad were therefore members of the ‘precariat’ (Standing 2010; Wacquant 2008; 2009) – though the players opted to call themselves “casuals.”

Eighty per cent of first-teamers lived in council-owned accommodation (of which 70 per cent resided with parents) – and over 70 per cent lived on one of two (notorious) local estates, Rydal Grove or Avant Crescent. The remaining 20 per cent, those living in privately-owned accommodation, lived exclusively with parents; no player who had left home had subsequently bought a flat or house of his own.

In what follows I describe how the ideals of resident non-citizenship (and the practices through which they are expressed) became apparent during my fieldwork, before considering how they might be framed in theoretical terms.

**Denizenship, Belonging and ‘Home’**

In many ways, the players’ sentiments of belonging were exemplified by club captain, Alex. Hailing from Rydal Grove, he had played for OU for 12 years. His feelings of detachment from Britain were illustrated one evening following an away fixture some 30 miles outside London. After the match, players from both teams convened in the bar (where ‘refreshments’ were provided by the host club) while club officials headed to the boardroom. Having completed the routine admin tasks I walked to the car park where I saw Alex leading a group of players towards me, their faces knotted with indignation:

Alex: What the fuck was that? … Fucking coleslaw sandwiches ... we’re foreign, man. We need meat. Make sure we give them something nasty when they come to our place.

Alex, whose Greek grandparents had settled in London in the late 1950s, was British. He was a British citizen. However, being ‘foreign’ was important to him; I heard him identify himself as such on eleven occasions (interestingly this identification came without any avowed attachment to Greece). On five of these occasions he extended the claim to the entire first-team, with the assertion going unchallenged by any teammates present at the time.

It wasn’t only food that was used to express the group’s ‘alien’ status. Below is a fragment of a conversation Alex and I had about OU’s players ‘looking foreign’ which took place during another away fixture:

Alex: Look at us. We all look foreign. I do … you do.2 Look at our team-sheet! There ain’t no English players on there. Look at theirs. That’s what I mean.

Researcher: But you’re Oldfield born-and-bred, right?

Alex: Of course. But that don’t mean I’m English, no way. I’m local and foreign, everyone round my way’s foreign.

So although Alex was nominally British, he took pains to distance himself from discourses of nationhood and carry on a lived sense of being alien in relation to England, yet native to Oldfield. Like every other member of the squad, he had never voted; the prospect of him voting was attenuated by the fact that he lived on an estate deemed by local government to be of little electoral value.

Alex’s teammates – whatever their origin or formal citizenship status – shared his mentality. It was linked to the characterisation of the inner-city estates on which they lived as ‘alien’ territory. The club was seen as representative of this territory, a fact underlined when matches were played outside of central London and the players’ alien status was thrown into relief (see Alex’s comments above).3

I spoke with another of OU’s British citizens, Lawrence, whose grandparents had moved to London from Grenada in the 1950s.

Lawrence: When we started out Oldfield was basically an estate team. Every player (was) from abroad. Now we’ve got more players from other *manors* (slang term meaning *estates*). But them places are still full of people from abroad … from Kosovo, Somalia rather than, like, the West Indies … but they’re still foreign. I don’t know any English people. Ain’t none here.

Researcher: So do you feel any attachment to Grenada – or England?

Lawrence: Not really to either place. I have a son to feed. I gotta’ live with what’s going on *right here*.

The ‘foreign’ occupiers of such estates were also described as poor. One of the 24 first-teamers who lived on a ‘manor’ alluded to by Lawrence – in this case, Avant Crescent – was twenty-four year-old Carl. Carl was also a British citizen, his grandparents having moved to Bridgegate from Ireland in the 1960s. He and his family had lived in-and-around ‘Avant’ ever since.

Carl: (The Grove is) just like Avant. Same people, same problems. Crime, not a lot of police … Almost everyone’s come in from other places … Irish, Somalis, Bengalis, whatever … but not from choice! Council puts them there (large estates). Just like they put my family there … (It’s the) same on Avant. More boys from Kosovo, Albania, I think. But hard to tell … One thing we all know is that we ain’t English!

This attitude was shared by young men who had arrived relatively recently, and who were denizens in the formal sense. Sphresim was born in the disputed Balkan territory of Kosovo in 1991. In 1999 his mother decided to flee the Kosovo War, travelling with Sphresim to London where they were given council accommodation in Oldfield. In moving to the UK, Sphresim was one of three players in the squad to exemplify the recasting of rights as universal human rights discussed by Soysal (1994). I broached the issue of citizenship and politics with him:

Sphresim: Nah, not into that. Don’t feel like I need to. I don’t feel less worthy than any of these other guys. (Kosovo) weren’t ever really home. I came here so young that Oldfield feels more like me. (We’re) more about what’s happening here: soccer, work, girls, whatever...

Another recent arrival was Polish striker, Mariusz. He travelled to London only a couple of months before signing for OUFC in 2009. He settled in Lonsworth Park, where he and his brother lived with Mariusz’s Slovakian girlfriend.

Mariusz: My brother come a few months (before). They say at home it’s not good time to come, so I wait for my brother to say how it is. He has no problems getting in or with work, so I come … My girlfriend is here, my brother also. I have friends at football, and work. I like my area … I may go back someday, I don’t know. In London, Lonsworth Park or near … I like it.

Twenty-four-year-old Stephen Johnson also lived in Lonsworth Park. His parents had travelled to London from Nigeria in the late 1970s, both to pursue careers – his father in British Rail, his mother as a nurse – but had never become naturalised citizens.

Researcher: Have you never thought about getting British citizenship?

Stephen: Don’t see the point. My parents never have and they ain’t had problems. Can still travel when I get on holiday or whatever.

Researcher: You feel no attachment to Britain, then?

Stephen: No. I’m from Lonsworth Park, play for Oldfield United, support Man United … Nigeria, neither. My parents do a little I think, I have no need for that.

Researcher: Do you feel at home here, though?

Stephen: I do in my *ends* (slang term meaning *neighbourhood*)

The fact that Britain is a signatory party to the European Convention on Human Rights, Poland’s membership of the European Union, and Nigeria’s membership of the Commonwealth, afforded Sphresim, Mariusz and Stephen, respectively, certain civil, social and political rights in the UK. In this sense they were beneficiaries of the decoupling of rights from membership in the national polity (Soysal 1994; 2000). However, those among the squad who had become British citizens didn’t see their naturalisation as a consummation of their loyalty to Britain, or a threshold moment in terms of the acquisition of rights or security (Leitner & Ehrkamp 2006).

Eighteen-year-old Diego was the latest player to become a naturalised British citizen. He was born and had lived most of his life in Colombia, moving to London in 2004 with his mother, brother and girlfriend in order to join his uncle who had made the journey three years before.

Researcher: Your registration says you’re British, did you have to naturalise then?

Diego: Yeah, my Uncle had done it ... (he) talked to my mum. I didn’t know what was happening really. Mum was pushing you know, saying it’s better for us. (I) don’t feel like it’s that much easier ... you know? How many of these guys have it? How many of them are liars (laughs)? None of them is really English anyway.

Researcher: You wouldn’t call yourself English then, no?

Diego: Nah, I do on forms. But apart from that, no. Everyone’s from someplace else ... No big deal.

Unlike the second-generation immigrants of New York interviewed by Kasinitz et al. (2008: 262) for whom the United States was “indisputably home”, for OU’s players England (or Britain) or, indeed, any other nation-state, didn’t enjoy the same status. Their responses emphasised that to be local was, *ipso facto*, to originate elsewhere. This identity did not directly correspond to one of Rumbaut’s (1996) four ethnic identity choices. However, if we borrow from the lexicon of his taxonomy the players’ identities might be described as dissimilative, origin-locality based. Their locales were populated by fellow ‘foreigners’ who, like them, resisted assimilation into a wider, British (or English) identity.

Though this didn’t amount to a full denationalization of formal citizenship (Soysal 1994) – as we have seen, a number of players relied on the nation-state as a guarantor of certain rights (Koopmans & Statham 1999; Leitner & Ehrkamp 2006) – it did seem tantamount to a denationalization of citizenship’s substantive dimension and, more specifically, identity and belonging. In the case of the 16 first-teamers who were British citizens, it indicated a disjuncture between the formal and substantive dimensions of citizenship.

Being ‘foreign’ and the fact that they, their parents or grandparents had been deposited in the margins of the inner-city – a fact which testifies to the meaning of both urban planning and memory in formations of belonging (Fenster 2004) – were more important to the players’ selfhood than any notion of national loyalty. This common ground had certain implications for how they understood the requirements of citizenship.

**Denizenship, Territory and Going Underground**

It has been contended by postnational and transnational theorists that the identities and allegiances of migrants are becoming deterritorialized (Appadurai 1996; Hannerz 1996). Their claim is premised on the fact that many migrants sustain memberships and commitments that cut across national boundaries (Glick Schiller and Basch 1995); whether these are national, ethnic, religious, communal or cultural in nature, they ‘trump’ any loyalty to the host or adopted nation (Soysal 2000). Though two of OU’s first-teamers – both relatively recent arrivals – Mariusz (from Poland) and Edward (from Liberia) – maintained familial relationships and friendships with people in their ‘nations of origin’, the players’ primary allegiance was to their local environment and, more specifically, the estates they lived on. In relation to national territories, then, their identities had been deterritorialized. However, this did not mean that the players’ identities were unrelated to territorially-defined locales (Leitner & Ehrkamp 2006). These identities were tied to their immediate environment, which was abidingly non-national, alien territory. In turn, this informed the players’ perceptions of citizenly obligations and their means of making a living.

Players described the estates they lived on as dumping grounds which allowed those with the power to do so (the local council) to deposit and (with the help of other state agencies) contain undesirables, whatever their ‘origin’; they felt that the boundaries demarcating these areas served to confine alien elements – lawless margins of the inner-city left to ‘foreigners’ and the ‘poor’. “You never see the police round our way,” complained Alex. “Hardly no cameras but there’s *bare* (slang term meaning *an abundance of*) crime! They don’t ever chase it up anyway, if someone gets robbed or whatever. But see when it’s one of us getting in bother somewhere else, watch ‘em get there in no time at all.” In this way, though the fault lines between private and public housing weren’t marked by concrete walls (Caldeira 1996), an air of physical proximity and social distance (Wirth 1938) meant they were keenly felt on both sides of the divide. Here we see parallels with Fenster’s (2004) discussion of walking practices within formations of belonging. The players’ repetitive daily uses of urban space via foot or public transportation contributed to the construction of their own ‘private city’ (ibid: 253). This private city was illustrative of another meaning of belonging identified by Fenster (ibid.) – power relations and control. Players felt excluded from areas containing private housing, areas viewed as coterminous with spaces wherein the law was keenly and effectively enforced.

These young men travelled little, following the trend of those living in pockets of urban deprivation (Dorling 2010). On a journey back from an away fixture, Lawrence, who had recently been released from prison following his third prosecution for burglary, reflected on his prospects of travel. “I can’t barely afford to go out on a Saturday night mate, forget about (a) holiday. I’m on parole … I’m stuck in the *manor*.”

In linking the plight of residents under the touchstones of alterity and exclusion, the players spoke of a shared ethic of survival. This involved a desire to – as far as possible – keep money ‘on the manor’ and, combined with the lack of formal employment opportunities available locally, led all 30 first-team players into cash-in-hand work and/or the underground economy.

On meeting Lawrence only days after his release, he told me about a service he was able to offer:

Lawrence: You got (a) pay-as-you-go (electricity) meter? … I’ve got a key, will get you fifty pounds’ worth every time (it is used). Selling it (£50 of credit) for *a score* (slang term meaning *twenty pounds*).

The conditions of his probation demanded that Lawrence ‘sign-on’ to receive unemployment benefit if unable to secure gainful employment. This made sure that he remained on the radar of the probation service – and more broadly speaking, the state – having to visit the local job centre regularly (on top of frequent meetings with his probation officer) in order to document his living arrangements and his pursuit of formal job opportunities. He thus picked up the nickname ‘Giro’,4 coined by Alex (who prided himself on creating sobriquets that stuck) but quickly adopted by everyone else at the club. Alex meant it as a playful jibe; he knew Lawrence resented the practice of compulsorily signing-on. None of the other 24 first-teamers who were formally unemployed had signed-on, including Alex, who explained his decision thus:

Alex: I don’t want them asking what I’m doing all the time ... you get fuck all anyway. Ask Giro! (I) just wanna stay out of it … Just do my own thing … I got my schemes … Us foreign boys got to sort each other out. (The) locals here (have) been doing it for time.

I enquired on a number of occasions as to Alex’s occupation, with ‘don’t ask’ being the most common response. However, a number of stories told by other players, along with the wisps of pungent smoke which curled upwards from the sunroof of his car, confirmed my suspicions that Alex was heavily involved in the local underground economy.

I asked Carl about his dealings with Alex and Lawrence.

Carl: I make some money selling stuff over there (Rydal Grove) and on Avant. *Moody* (slang term meaning *counterfeit*) clothes mostly. Can also use it to get stuff from other people. (Been selling clothes) since I was about eighteen. Used to work part-time up Colridge Park (a local sports centre) but got *binned* (slang term meaning *sacked*). Get some cash-in-hand work for coaching every now and then, though.

Researcher: Have you ever had any trouble with the police over selling clothes?

Carl: They ain’t interested really. There’s other stuff going on, serious shit. So what’s their use in bothering me?

Like six of OU’s first-teamers, Sphresim worked as a youth soccer coach, being paid £10 per hour, cash-in-hand to run training sessions and matches.

Sphresim: I have to do around two evenings a week and then usually just Saturday, but sometimes Saturday and Sunday mornings … I love it. Plus, I need the money.

Other players with cash-in-hand coaching jobs included twenty-seven-year-old Josh and twenty-eight-year-old Clive – both residents of the Grove whose grandparents had moved to London from Germany and Ireland, respectively – who combined coaching duties with other ‘casual’ work.

Clive: There ain’t no jobs round here. Most of us boys on the Grove are casuals … Help each other out with work – keeps money on the *manor* … with the locals. Don’t want it mixed up in the system.

Josh: Yeah, coaching’s my regular money. Then I pick up bits-and-bobs … Removals, bit of labouring, whatever really. As Cli(ve) says, keep it on the *manor*. No one outside’s trying to help us, have to help each other.

Mariusz also worked a cash-in-hand job, and often after matches on Saturdays would head straight to work.

Mariusz: I work at a restaurant for (an) Italian family. I am a waiter there. (I get) fifty pounds per day (cash) … Fifty hours (per week). More if I do some shift(s) on Saturday … Carl helps me to get nice clothes. Much cheaper (than from a retail outlet)!

The informal work of OU’s players – whether this involved cash-in-hand jobs, operating in the underground economy, or both – mirrors the occupational realities of other first-, second- and third-generation immigrants (Kasinitiz et al. 2008). However, the way they made a living was tied to their perception of the places in which they lived. The identification of their estates as alien territory where the ‘poor’ and ‘foreign’ lived was linked to the work they pursued. An ethic of survival – bound up with keeping money ‘on the manor’ – saw all thirty players work either cash-in-hand jobs or operate within the underground economy. In recognising their marginal position in society, they had chosen to avail themselves of the opportunities available in the margins.

A connection might be made here to the ‘discursive competences’ witnessed by Baumann (1996) in Southall. Players certainly used a sense of alterity and alienation and a stance vis-à-vis the state to frame their (non-)citizen practices. However, in doing so no notion of culture, religion or ‘community’ was wittingly appealed to, whether instrumentally or otherwise. In contrast to the migrants interviewed by Ehrkamp and Leitner (2003, 2006), who occupied a marginal position but sought formal citizenship as a prerequisite for personal security and access to social and political rights, the OU players’ avowed marginality involved accepting a position in the margins of society – and seeking to take advantage of the opportunities it sometimes afforded – rather than pursuing greater inclusion and the accompanying set of obligations. The ‘right to belong’ (Fenster 2004) bound up with this mind-set was incompatible with partaking in civil society and the attendant responsibilities. Rather, their ‘right to difference’ (Sandercock 2000) was identified with a right to resident non-citizenship.

If we try to square the players’ sentiments of belonging with the spheres of belonging outlined by Duyvendak (2011), the difficulty of identifying any direct equivalents of these spheres in the lives of OU’s players becomes apparent. However, some broadly analogous zones can be made out. The household sphere approximates to what the players referred to as ‘family’; the community to the network of estates on which their friends and family almost exclusively lived; the workplace to the underground economy of services, trading and casual labour; and the nation-state to the feelings of national allegiance against which the players’ non-citizenship was partially defined.

In terms of the play of homogeneity, heterogeneity, accommodation and negotiation discussed by Duyvendak (ibid.), for OU’s players these spheres were imbued with different meanings and expectations. The household, community and workplace were spheres of homogeneity, of commonality based on alterity and exclusion. The rich, ‘super-diversity’ (Vertovec 2007) of Oldfield had become banal, being dissolved into a sense of commonality which, in turn, rested on a shared ethic of survival. There was an obvious tension between these spheres where negotiation with difference and accommodation of heterogeneity had been going on so long as to be reduced to a shared plight, and the sphere of the nation-state. Indeed, the latter was seen as incommensurate with the household, community and workplace. The nation-state and those who identified with it represented homogeneity bought at the price of exclusion based on difference, or the ‘toleration’ of difference if individuals were willing to accept the obligations and responsibilities of national citizenship.

Discussion

It is possible to frame the elements of substantive denizenship evidenced at OU according to the elements of substantive citizenship examined earlier. The affective element was illustrated by the fact that, unlike the second-generation immigrants of New York interviewed by Kasinitz et al. (2008: 262), the nation that OU’s players lived in was by no means “indisputably home”. In turn, this sentiment was informed by the relationship between belonging and memory (Fenster 2004). The positional element could be discerned in the meanings of belonging attached to walking practices, power relations and control, and urban planning, while players’ positionality in terms of ‘spheres of belonging’ (Duyvendak 2011) – household, community, workplace and nation-state – saw these spheres imbued with meanings and expectations consonant with the right to belong (which itself corresponded with a right to difference expressed in resident non-citizenship). Indeed, the assertion of this rights saw the combination of positional and instrumental elements; in using a sense of alterity and alienation and a stance vis-à-vis the nation-state to frame their (non-)citizen practices, the players showed that they possessed something akin to Baumann’s (1996) discursive competences. However, these competences were exercised in accepting a position in the margins of society rather than pursuing formal citizenship as a prerequisite for personal security and access to social and political rights (Leitner & Ehrkamp 2006).

The lives of players who were, formally speaking, resident non-citizens, support Soyal’s (1994) claims that rights have been recast as human rights and, furthermore, that rights have been decoupled from membership of a national polity (1994, 2000). However, as a number of these players relied on the nation-state as a guarantor of certain rights (Koopmans & Statham 1999; Leitner & Ehrkamp 2006), this didn’t represent a denationalization of formal citizenship (Soysal 1994). What the OU players’ lives – both denizen and citizen alike – did illustrate was a denationalization of the substantive dimension of citizenship. The result, a substantive notion of denizenship, was evidence of a deterritorialization of identity in relation to national territories, though did not foreclose the possibility of players identifying with territorially-defined locales.

In light of these findings, it is also necessary to reconsider the theoretical tensions that a number of researchers have identified with the liberal conception of citizenship. What the remarks of Balibar (on the egalitarian vs. statutory poles), Holston and Appadurai (on inequality), and Caldeira (on the ‘liberal fiction’) seem to have in common is a frustration with how the opposition between the universal and the particular, sameness and difference, is reckoned in liberal theory – and with the implications of this reckoning for processes of inclusion and exclusion. With this in mind, it may be helpful to (briefly) revisit the tenets of this theory and consider how they bear upon the liberal-democratic conception of citizenship. Doing so might not only help us make better sense of the frustrations outlined above, but also the mode of belonging – which I have called denizenship – documented in this paper.

It is widely accepted that the implications of the philosophy of John Locke were developed into the basic tenets of liberalism (Laski 1997 [1936]; Waldron 2002). As others have pointed out, the tension between the universal and particular in Locke’s writings had important consequences for the liberal framing of citizenship (Harvey 2009; Laski 1997 [1936]; Mehta 1999) and, more specifically, the relationship between citizenship and private property; and the relationship between freedom, consent, political authority, and exclusion.

Locke’s description of the origins of private property pointed towards a conflation of property rights and political power. With ‘Nature’ cast as inert and valueless, the only way to generate worth out of this passive space – bequeathed by God and therefore held in common by all men – was to mix what was by definition held in private, *my* labour, with what was held in common, nature. All of this boiled down to a couple of basic assumptions: 1) private property originated from the mixing of human labour with nature held in common; 2) human labour is the principal source of value (Mehta 1999).

Relatedly, the boundaries of Locke’s nation-state corresponded to an aggregate of private property belonging to those individuals contracted to form a distinctive political society or government. As Laski put it, “A state has been made in which property is the effective title to citizenship” (1997 [1936]: 153).

The tension between universal and particular also made itself felt in the relationship posited in Locke’s work between freedom, consent, political authority, and exclusion. In *Two Treatises of Government* Locke identifies a set of characteristics common to all human beings, central to which is the assertion, foundational to liberal theory and its universalistic bent, that everyone is naturally free. Locke went on to claim that consent should be the fundamental ground for the legitimacy of political authority. Among other things, consent required acting in view of the constraints designated by the laws of nature. These laws are fundamental moral principles, legislated for individuals and collectives by God, which we must abide by despite our natural proclivity for freedom. For Locke, these natural laws are accessed through the exercising of natural human reason (Laski 2007 [1920]). However, those unable to exercise reason, whether permanently (i.e. “lunaticks” or “ideots”) or temporarily (i.e. children), could not rightfully provide any expression of consent and could, by implication, be excluded from the bounds of political constituency and governed without consent.

While this brief consideration alone cannot explain away the criticisms of the liberal-democratic model outlined above, it does shed some light on why the principles of this model are left open to such lines of theoretical critique. It is these principles which are the bedrock of the liberal fiction lamented by Caldeira, as well as the focus on individual rights and tension between the egalitarian and statutory – inclusive and exclusive – poles described by Balibar. Revisiting these principles also allows us to see how the myth of similarity and universality described by Holston and Appadurai was undermined at the outset by the criteria for giving consent and the predication of citizenship on the ownership of private property. These principles also have important implications for the modes of belonging explored in this paper.

As noted earlier, in examining debates about the governability of liberal-democratic, market-based societies Rose (1999) has underlined the opposition between the community and the excluded. Though the neoliberal state aims to draw members of the excluded – those lacking the nous or ‘maturity’ to possess property and the ability to pay taxes – into a ‘stakeholder economy’, some never cross this threshold. As Rose (ibid, p. 259) has stated:

outside the communities of inclusion exists an array of micro-sectors, micro-cultures of failed citizens, anti-citizens, consisting of those who are unable or unwilling to enterprise their lives or manage their own risk, incapable of exercising responsible self-government.

More or less wittingly, OU’s players avoided the political programmes and strategies aimed at making subjects, clients or citizens of them. The word ‘community’ was never used at the club, let alone employed strategically as a container or rallying point for the players’ sense of being alien. Neither did they constitute failed citizens, unable to manage their lives according to a calculus of enterprise and risk. By identifying themselves as local by virtue of being ‘foreign’, and carrying on an enterprising life according their own, non-citizen logic, these individuals pre-empted the neoliberal state’s attempts to characterise them as outsiders – members of the ‘excluded’ – in order to incorporate them into the body politic according to certain conditions.

In effect, denizens occupy the interstices of the liberal-democratic model of citizenship – the spaces opened up by the contradiction between the universal and the particular, the egalitarian and the statutory. But whereas some city dwellers have used this contradiction to bolster claims for their incorporation into the body politic, denizens do their utmost to resist degrees of entrance to citizenship. As the paper has shown, they share spaces of the city with citizens who also possess this mind-set – a substantive notion of denizenship – in the case of the latter expressed by the pursuit of degrees of exit from national citizenship. Rather than call the bluff of the liberal fiction, those living in urban denizenia would prefer to be left out of the story altogether.

Notes

1 This isn’t to conceive of denizenship as a quasi-citizenship status that devalues national citizenship in the country of immigration, ignoring the fact that denizens are at the same time foreign nationals of a country of origin (Bauböck 2010). It is to take denizenship beyond mere legal status to examine the attitudes and modes of belonging of the resident non-citizen.

2 This comment confirmed that the players thought of me, too, as being foreign. “You ain’t really English!” was how most responded when I told them my nationality. They may have held this belief because they knew that I lived on a local estate and, at the time of conducting the research, was roughly the same age as some of the club’s senior players. It therefore seemed unlikely that the players’ perceptions of my ethnicity vis-à-vis their own sharpened their sense of being different or alien.

3 There are parallels here with Baumann’s (1996) work in Southall, where residents’ ethno-religious identifications were felt more or less keenly depending on the forum in which they were expressed.

4 A Giroor giro transfer is a payment transfer from one bank account to another bank account instigated by the payer, not the payee. Before the use of electronic transfers of payments became the norm in the United Kingdom, the bi-weekly ‘giro’ payment was the normal way of distributing benefit payments.

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1. \* I have changed the names of places (besides London), clubs and people to ensure anonymity. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)