The Spatial Form of Bangladeshi Community in London’s East End

Iza Aftab
University College London, UK
a_iza@hotmail.com

Abstract

This paper addresses council housing provided to the immigrant Bangladeshi families living in Tower Hamlets today. The paper proposes that by studying the Bangladeshi diaspora to the United Kingdom certain socio-spatial ties may be used to highlight the Bangladeshi spatial networks in the United Kingdom. It is assumed that the Bangladeshi families are spatially segregated and it is proposed they project an exclusive co-presence in the borough of Tower Hamlets. This paper tries to find out if Bangladeshi families within the segregated housing estates use the estates spatial configuration in the same way. It conjectures that the families may use council housing space to maintain a highly integrated social network within the estate even though the spatial configuration of the estates may not reflect this phenomenon.

Consequently, history of housing policies and typologies are explained and from their comparison the paper tries to understand the roles of immigration, housing policy and design on the settlement and use of housing estates in Britain. A study of the movement of families living in one housing estate is also done to explain the spatial and transpatial ties the families have, at a micro level, within the estate and at a macro level, with their home land. Simultaneously, detail plans of the one estate were studied and the role gender plays spatially in a working class Bangladeshi household in the East End was shown. What is being suggested is that council housing, criticized for its lack of ‘integration’ with its surrounding urban fabric, is used in a unique manner to supplement the community within the estate.

Therefore, the paper suggests that Bangladeshi families in council housing willingly adopt the council housing estate space and set about to adapt space to accommodate their everyday socio-spatial networks. This understanding exposes the interdependent nature of space and behaviour i.e. People constantly shift their identities with spatial use. Thus this paper ties together economic and political motives of housing tenure with socio-spatial ones to explain the persistence of Bangladeshi families in council estates of Tower Hamlets. It finally suggests that Bangladeshis are institutionalised with council space not only by constraint of the housing system but also by choice.

1. Introduction

The Borough of Tower Hamlets has in the past served spatially as a location for immigrant induction and settlement into the United Kingdom hence has seen waves of immigrants settling there and eventually dispersing into the city fabric of London\(^1\). Today more than

---

\(^1\) There were the Huguenots in the 17th century, Jews in the 19th century and Bangladeshis in the 20th Century.
Iza Aftab

34 percent of Bangladeshi immigrants to the United Kingdom are settled in the housing estates of Tower Hamlets. This research will investigate what is the spatial potential of Tower Hamlets and its council estate space for the immigrant Bangladeshi families living in them. In doing so this paper will demonstrate how Bangladeshi immigrants in Tower Hamlets use the spatial structure of the borough and its housing estates to maintain a level of exclusion in their socio-spatial networks hence hold on to cultural ties with their homeland.

Questions initially addressed are: What are the spatial characteristics of the visually present Bangladeshi community living in Tower Hamlets? And how do they spatially maintain their identity as an ethnic minority in it? To answer these questions the paper will examine the spatial configuration of Tower Hamlets and of council houses (belonging to Chicksand housing estate) in the ward of Spitalfields to substantiate its hypothesis.

The first section of the paper deals with the various social theories of socio-spatial constraints or choice of segregation. The migrant, Bangladeshi community has been known to keep strong socio-spatial ties with their country of origin (Peach, 1998, Gardner, 2002 & Khan, 2003), typical of ‘South Asian’ ethnic, migrant communities of the United Kingdom such as the Indians and Pakistanis. These has helped them to maintain their individual identities, separate from their host country, and are distinguishable by their nationality, language, rules of endogamy, kinship ties and religion amongst other things.

As suggested by Vaughan (1999), Immigrant minorities may utilise space in many ways; not only to ensure economic survival but also to maintain their ethnic ties and social set up within an alien culture and environment (Vaughan, 1999). This Bangladeshi community's settlement, in Tower Hamlets, reflect similar separate kinship ties and clustering patterns to the extent that they remain an “encapsulated” population (Peach,1998) (i.e. interdependent on its own community network and segregated from the host population) and as this paper proposes resulting in spatial exclusive-co presence in the borough.

Hence this paper will show through syntactic analysis, that the spatial configuration of Tower Hamlets, its wards and housing estates (built between 1940-1970), from the global to the local level is spatially utilised by its community to generate the necessary economic and social activity for the minority community to sustain its cultural identity. The paper will further explore how this balance is maintained within the boroughs' fragmented and inward looking housing estates, where the presence of Bangladeshi families is the highest.

Hence this paper proposes that clues to the nature of Bangladeshi immigrant settlement may be found through syntactic analysis of the spatial characteristics (at a macro level) of the borough of Tower Hamlets and (at a micro level) through the study of its housing estate layouts. It not only proposes a theory of choice in spatial self-segregation of the community but also illustrates the potential of spatial use that supports this self-segregation.

2. Social Theories of spatial segregation and choice

To understand the notions of spatial segregation a review of social theories of spatial segregation, that have a direct bearing on the issue at hand is presented to form the theoretical background to ideas of exclusive co presence, spatial segregation and choice of settlement of Bangladeshi immigrants.

Previous literature argues that each new wave of immigrants’ settlement in London over the centuries was dictated by economic deprivation (Kersh, 1996) hence due to
constraints. Job prospects of being near the city centre, coupled with cheap accommodation made the East End borough of Tower Hamlets ideal for settling in. By a process of identifying a niche in industry such as restaurants, leather and clothes goods production and developing it as a key economic activity immigrants are able to maintain their familial and social solidarity. One can also see an economic process that would distribute revenue right through the immigrant’s social structure.

The ideas of choice or constraint in the settlement of Bangladeshi immigrants have different advocates. In work done by Dahya (1967) it is argued that East Pakistani (Bangladeshi) concentration in lodging houses was a rational ‘choice’. In the 1960’s most of this group of immigrants were single men, often from the same village and family, moving in ‘chain migration’, speaking little English, mostly employed as a gang and sharing the same religion and dietary requirements. The system of chain migration, as defined by Dahya, is essentially a process by which established kinsmen facilitate the migration of their relatives/fellow villagers, who in turn extend the favour to their relatives to migrate and settle in a host country. This “assistance” included finding employment and accommodation for the new arrival. Therefore cheap city housing fitted their requirements well. Similarly the council housing fitted the requirements of the families that migrated later on in the form of rented apartments. It is suggested that the need to support each other was strong due to their strict social set up and resulted in a spatially “encapsulated” population (Peach, Robinson et al. 1981) i.e. interdependent on its own community network and segregated from the host population.

Rates of spatial segregation between ethnic groups can also predict the degrees to which these groups intermarry (Park, 1926)\(^3\). This is significant in evaluating whether segregation is a product of external discriminatory behavior of the dominant society, or of internal cultural pressures for the maintenance of ethnic and religious identity, which seems the case for the Bangladeshis. A clear spatial sorting is highlighted by their settlement in housing estates \(^4\).

This explanation of use of space can be also supported by the idea of “conformity” (Giddens, 1984). Giddens suggests human beings are social actors who use social knowledge to achieve particular aims by engaging in particular social activities. Any social activity that goes beyond a majority group’s set constraints would be deemed “deviant” or a “non-conformist”. Sibley (1997) argues that segregation may occur due to a majority population’s perception that a particular ethnic group is deviant. In this case the “deviant” being the Bangladeshi immigrants amongst the host British population. This paper argues that, each minority ethnic group comes with their own collection of social structures and a mode of replication which leads them to willingly segregate from the majority population. Therefore it is proposed that ethnic segregation of Bangladeshi families may in fact be a voluntary process (like with the Jewish immigrants before them) practised by different ethnic groups in order to re-enact the social structures and the mode of replication that they are accustomed to.

The suggestion that the Bangladeshi population voluntarily clusters in order to maintain their social networks similar to their homeland is further substantiated by a study of their spatial network in Tower Hamlets. It is also suggested that social housing of the 20th century resulted in a spatial transformation of the borough, which is utilized by the Bangladeshi community to maintain their spatial ties.

---


\(^4\) Census, 2001 data states 34%.
3. Housing policies and Typologies

It is a widely accepted fact that British council housing was a social and architectural experiment whose story ended in alleged policy and design failure (Ravetz 2001). Architects deemed to design for a thriving community. Allocation of housing gave local authorities autonomy in deciding social order/hierarchy in their estates. Immigrants automatically fell into one of the various, bottom of the list; categories based on the fact that they were either single labourers, had too large families, or were new to the area.

Tower Hamlets is the most deprived local authority area in London⁵, and its housing estates layout has been criticised for being infused with a rigid hierarchal order resulting in segregated spaces. Hillier (1998) suggests that council-housing design resulted in areas made up of “enclosure, repetition and hierarchy”, which meant fragmentation of the estate housing from the rest of the urban fabric. Yet interestingly, today most of the immigrant Bangladeshi population ⁶, shows a preference of settling into council housing or has bought a council housing flat in the East End (Peach 1998). Today Bangladeshis make up 34%, of the population of the borough of Tower Hamlets⁷.

4. Axial Analysis of Borough

The purpose of these purely configurational analyses was to understand the inherent potentials of space under consideration. The possibility of exclusive co-presence was explored. Exclusive co-presence indicates that the spatial quality of the borough is of such that it only allows a certain amount of pedestrian movement through and around the borough.

The spatial structure of Tower Hamlets Figure 52 analysed is as follows: The Regents canal splits the entire borough through the middle in a North-South direction. Vallance Road and its extension New Road and the Cannon Road, together with Grove Road and its Extensions Burdett Road and possibly Westferry Road link the North and the South of the Borough together. There are four East-West connections, Bethnal Green Road to Roman Road, Whitechapel Road to Bow Road, Commercial Road to East India Dock Road and the Highway to Aspen Way.

4.1. Global Integration

Global integration Figure 53 shows that the roads from Whitechapel Road to Bow Road are the chief integrators of the whole spatial system. However Commercial Road and parts of East India Dock and the Highway are also well integrated. The northern section of the borough and the southern tip are segregated while the rest of the borough is fairly integrated. What is suggested is that the integrated roads of the Tower Hamlets should act as “high streets” to the borough wards and be used for through movement. However, this is not the case. Apart for a brief section between the junction of Vallance Road and Cambridge Heath Road where regular market stalls set up, Whitechapel Road does not seem to have any development that would label it a high street. In fact all the streets that are well integrated act more like highways than high streets; they are used a through roads which pedestrians pass by.

⁶ TConsisting three generations of family or extended families living together.
⁷ Britain, Census 2001.
“High streets” are supposed to be well-integrated streets of pedestrian movement, exploited as potential commercial areas by shop owners and usually have main shopping attractors such as main chain stores (e.g. Boots, Marks and Spencer) on them. This results in a ‘multiplier effect’ (Hillier 1996) i.e. the main stores attracting more customers hence more pedestrian movement, which consequently attracts more commercial activity. Simultaneously one can also see a large number of commercial developments that exploits pedestrian movement on the East section of Bethnal Green Road, which Global Integration shows as being segregated in the axial map. This means that for some reason Global Integration does not seem to relate to the way the spatial structure of the borough is used (Hillier, 1999).

4.2. Local Integration

The Local Integration of the borough Figure 54 shows that the east section of Bethnal Green road and Roman Road are locally integrated. Both have predominant commercial development that exploits pedestrian movement. Also Grove Road, its extensions and the southern section of Cambridge Heath Road are segregated. These roads have no commercial activity on them. Axial analysis does pick out Wapping Street and even Columbia Road, which hosts a well-known flower market, as being relatively well integrated.

Looking at the local integration it is seen that apart from Cannon Road and its extension New Road, there are no North-South integrated axial lines that connect the main East-West integrated axial lines (East West integrators), Suggesting that pedestrians may only move East-West along integrated axial lines that are closest to them. There may be several reasons why this is so. One may be that only 38% of the population owns a car \(^8\).
Figure 53: Global Integration of Tower Hamlets.

Figure 54: Local Integration of Tower Hamlets.
However local integration does not seem to be accurate enough to be able to pick out the little obscure pockets of commercial development, which seem to occur through out the borough of Tower Hamlets. Examples being Burslem Street that connects to Cannon Street and also Ben Johnson Road, which has a line of commercial development, but seems to be segregated in local integration. However both these roads seem to be integrated in Global Integration.

Based on “movement economies” Hillier (1996), suggests that centers (spaces with diverse commercial activity) tend to develop in spaces both globally and locally integrated. But commercial development here tends to be limited. Spaces that do seem to have diverse i.e. big chain stores, commercial development such as Ben Jonson Road and Burslem Road are globally integrated and locally segregated. In fact Cable Street, which is shown as both globally and locally integrated, does not have any commercial development on it at all. All of this seems to go in complete contrast to notions of the “movement economy”. The answers seem to lie in the large spatially segregated structures that populate the borough-the housing estates of Tower Hamlets.

To check out this hypothesis an axial analysis of the ward of Spitalfields without and then with the spaces of the Chicksand housing estate included in the analysis was done and a marked increase in the integration of the ward was observed. From this we could predict that if all the housing estate convex spaces were counted into the axial analysis the whole local and global integration of the area would change. It may reinforce the global integration but may alter the local integration in the borough level quite drastically. Hence the deeper the housing estates are the more fragmented or segregated the space is from its global settings. Essentially it is easier to walk around the estates than through them, thus leaving the housing estate space as pockets of segregated spaces from its surrounding streets.

4.3. Spatial Configuration of Tower Hamlets Housing Estates

It seems, looking at the axial maps, that the wards of Tower Hamlets have the spatial potential of being located in areas of privileged integration and allow greater access to the spatial structure of the city (Hillier, 1996)\(^9\). This means that its placement near to the city has greater economic viability. The possible argument is that the area is unique by being well integrated enough to promote non-conformist (i.e. immigrant) development yet not integrated enough in relation to the rest of the city, therefore the area was avoided by mainstream development. This may also suggest a reason why a non-conformist is willing to live one step deeper in space than a conformist is willing to live. It is therefore proposed that by settling in the social housing estates of the borough the Bangladeshis can also maintain their socio-spatial support network by living in clusters of the inward looking spatially segregated housing estates.

To further substantiate this use of space and understand this phenomenon a case study of a social housing estate in Spitalfields near the Brick Lane market was made. It will try to see if the spatial characteristics of housing estates protects and fosters the Bangladeshis socio-spatial networks in the region.


\(^{9}\) Also see Global integration map of London to see the integration of Tower hamlets.
5. Case Study of Chicksand Housing Estate

The ward of Spitalfields of Tower Hamlets is known to have 65 social housing blocks. Figure 55. To study all housing estates in the ward was physically not possible, therefore one case study was chosen of the Chicksand housing estate comprising of five multistoried, balcony accessed, housing blocks: Ramar House, Greatrix House, Chicksand House, Casson House and Spelman House Figure 56. Built in 1940’s the Chicksand estate (located east of Brick lane) was one of many built on the principles of the modern movement hence embodied the ideas of territory, enclosure, repetition and hierarchy. Today it has 80% Bangladeshi residents 10.

5.1. Methodology

5.1.1. Five Minute Traces, Snapshots and Gate Counts

The study was concerned with the ratio of Bangladeshis to non-Bangladeshis, the ratio of men to women and children using the above-mentioned spaces. Initial groupings were established along the lines of age, based purely on appearance as follows; teenagers or younger, adults, and the elderly. Grouping patterns, the kind of activity favoured: walking, standing, sitting and their frequency were also noted. Therefore five-minute traces, gate counts and snapshots were taken of the case study area. Figure 57.

Time and manageable scale limited the extent and number of study gates to 14. Readings were carried out from 9:00 am to 8:00pm with breaks from 1:00-1:30 pm and 3:30-4:00pm and most observation studies were conducted during the latter half of March and August; it was considerably dark shortly after 18:00 pm.

10 Tower hamlets Local Housing Report, 1999 or http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/
Figure 56: Chicksand Housing Estate and Segregation through Landscaping.

Figure 57: Chicksand Estate Gates and Movement Traces.
In order to determine whether movement rates during the day were common to both genders, both male and female subjects were followed (5 minutes each) and the direction of movement noticed. In most cases this process began at one of the observation points in or around the estate. Movement around the estate and through the estate was noted, especially within the communal courtyards of the housing blocks and its balconies.

Simultaneously any vandalism (i.e. broken windows, car theft), rubbish or graffiti in and around the estate was also noted. All of the above information was analysed and grouped together to present a clear picture of the movement rates within the study area. This information was then correlated to the axial analysis done of the estate and its surrounding areas.

5.2. Data Analysis

The research was approached from the point of view of studying spatial configuration of movement and the social construction of neighborhood networks of the minority community, which would have the potential to enable the flow of information through the community, creating a robust social system.

5.2.1 Snapshots

The Chicksand Housing Estate, was far quieter as a public space and far more segregated area despite being only two steps away from Brick Lane. The overpopulated estate was in a fairly rundown state and portrayed an image of a typical ‘sink estate’ namely graffiti on its walls, litter and garbage in its stairwells, drug related problems and visible street gangs. It is evident that planning additions of landscaping e.g. railing, levels, ramps and planters, further divided the estate up.

Yet, amongst this like any other thriving community, children played in courtyards and men chat to each other across balconies or sat outside their house balcony spaces observing the world go by. Hence the estate populated with residents, going about their daily lives. (Aftab, 2004)

It is only will a detailed look at the data collected a certain pattern of movement emerged.

5.3. Analysis Of Movement Counts

5.3.1. The first set of data collected was the movement of ‘strangers’ (mostly non-Bangladeshis) and residents through the study area as an indication of the comparative integration and or segregation of the housing estate. Looking at Figure 58a and Figure 58b, most of the ‘through’ movement of strangers is around the housing estate rather than within the estate and away from areas where gangs of local young males were found. Movement was usually of single males, single older females or younger females in groups who would work around that area. No non-resident (Non-Bangladeshi) children were seen. Though naturally Brick Lane (adjacent to the estate) had a large percentage of non-Bangladeshi movement.

In comparison, a high percentage of residents used interior routes and short cuts through the estate. The peak movements were to and from movement, usually towards

---

11 Information provided by council estate officer and through interviews.
12 Previous studies done of council estate space also show that the percentage of strangers through the estate was very low.
Brick Lane (as the local schools, mosque and jobs were all located in the market area) at the early morning and evening from work and school. At Juma (Friday) prayers (12:00pm-2:00 pm Friday) time and evening madrassa time (5:00pm-7:00pm) high movement rates were observed also.

Interestingly it was noted that there is a lot of inner estate movement (of families and friends to and from the houses of the estate and other surrounding estates) though even they do not stay long sitting or standing outside in the estate area. Only the gangs of teenagers/young adult males and children are seen standing at street corners or playing football. On weekends there is an increase in the amount of residential movement. Secondly Brick Lane serves as a social meeting place instead of just a commercial market for the Bangladeshi community. Therefore people tend to (predominately male) mingle and stand and chat more on Brick Lane. Thirdly no social mixing between strangers (whites and blacks) and the Bangladeshi ethnic minority group living there was observed, suggesting a high degree of social segregation.

5.3.2. The second set of data was an overview of the movement of male, female and children (Bangladeshi residents) walking within and around the housing estate and Brick Lane. Looking at (Fig. 59a) the average percentage movement of female to male, it was seen that certain routes were more frequently taken by women, at a certain time of the day and were different from the movement of males.

The local school and local shopping center are the main attractors and during morning
when mothers take their children to school on Brick Lane and when women go shopping there is more use of routes to and from the local general stores (main attractors). Younger women always walk in groups of two or more, while single as well as groups of men were seen to be using the main routes. For males the peak times of movement are prayer times, to and from the local mosque along with morning and evening peak times to and from work.

Movement of women was often ‘through’ movement and a lot of visual contact through balconies. Though they rarely stopped for longer than 2-3 minutes in the communal areas. This showed that the main communal areas were considered to be a public domain not suitable for the adult female to linger in.

5.3.3. Thirdly there was a considerable amount of neighbour interaction on the balconies as the residents tended to leave their doors open during summer months. The balconies faced each other and overlooked the courtyards below, and offered easy visual contact with other residents. Thus the residents used balconies as an extension of their house. Men, both young and old spend a considerable amount of time on the balconies of the estate and “policed” the space.

5.3.4. Fourthly the study also took into consideration crime and gang culture by noting the frequency of vandalism and presence of youth gangs in and about the area (Fig.59b). Both vandalism and gangs were seen to be present around the site. The gangs place themselves on the most strategic lines of sight and seem to police the estate (collaborating with the axial diagram of housing estate Fig.60).

5.5. Axial Analysis of Study Area

To further understand the spatial characteristics of the housing estate a radius-3 axial analysis of only the estate and its surrounding streets including Brick Lane was done. From the analysis (Fig.60) it is evident that the integration of the streets seems to correlate with the pedestrian movement data collected.

Interestingly the axial lines representing the areas within the four houses (Ramar,
Greatorix, Chicksand and Casson Houses) are the least integrated lines. This may be explained by the landscaping within the estate, which divides the areas by levels, ramps, railings and planters, making it difficult to walk through. The residents usually use alternative short cut routes through the estate.

Not surprisingly, the most integrated routes are the routes passing between the sides of Chicksand House and the football ground and children’s play ground. This continues up to Spellman House. The other passing through the back of Chicksand House and the front of Spellman House perpendicularly crosses the first. The street behind Greatorix House (correlated to plan of estate and axial analysis) is also fairly well integrated. It is also noted that the major movement of residents takes place on these lines. The two most integrated routes form the main axis through the estate and intersect where there is a local corner general store. This is promising as this is also where gangs of local youth ‘hangout’ (usually chatting, smoking or playing football). Supporting the space syntax theory of children and youth tend to be found on the integrated streets (Hillier 1998). It is suggested that they police the street visually situating themselves at strategic street corners throughout the day. The streets around the estate are otherwise less integrated.

5.6. Gender roles and Exclusive co-presence

It would not be considered unusual to find relatives or people originating from the same village living in close proximity or even in the same street. This may be considered as a reproduction of household organisations found in their country of origin (Nasser, 2000). With such close proximity to relatives and friends, it seems reasonable to suggest that the potential of random encounters involving individuals from this extended social circle is significantly higher than in an environment devoid of this type of premeditated social structuring. This also highlights the importance of female interaction, gossip and contact, for they determine the extent to which information flows within and between housing estates as they spend the most time within the estate during the day and visit relatives in surrounding ones, while men leave for work.

What is proposed is that the use of the areas in and around the social housing estates in Spitalfields creates an ‘exclusive co-presence’, that may allow the Bangladeshi community to keep its social and its spatial characteristics intact i.e. keep a close kinship contact and use of the local Brick Lane not only for economic reasons but also as a community generating space.

“Living in such close proximity intensifies local gossip networks which act as a means of social control, particularly of gender relations.” (Gillispe, 1995).

As stated above, the structuring of spaces induces certain patterns of behaviour such as the notions of visual control and surveillance. There is a high ratio of rules to events, which, according to Hillier, is not generally found in a city structure. But in the study case, as proximity implies an increase in the incidence of encounters, a greater number of rules of societal behaviour have been erected to induce or even reduce potential encounters and actions/activities. Interestingly it can be suggested that the unconstitutedness 13 (ratio of residence entrances opening directly onto street hence potential of contact) of the housing estates, caused by fragmentation of space, is counter balanced so that more visual contact is maintained where needed highlighted by residence movement and male surveillance of

---

13 Constitutedness is defined as the ratio of residence entrances opening directly onto street hence potential of contact.
the estate area.

This reflects the same characteristic of exclusive co-presence seen at the borough level by the analysis of its global and local integration values. It is suggested that these are necessary Bangladeshi social-spatial networks, which help in maintaining their migrant culture in the host country.

6. Summary and Conclusions

This paper sets out to substantiate the claim of exclusive co presence hence the notion of exclusion in the borough of Tower Hamlets. It demonstrates the voluntary adoption of housing estates space by the Bangladeshi, minority immigrants despite the deeply fragmented spatial structure of housing estates of the borough. It is further proposed that this spatial structure affects movement patterns in three ways:

Firstly, the spatial structure of the estate tends to separate different groups of people adults-children, men-women and residents-strangers. Creating a dispersed population at different times of the day. As “Movement economies” (Hillier, 1996) depends upon a certain amount of people moving or being in a place for a certain amount of time to create a multiplier effect, hence commercial development becomes limited in the residential areas and they remain segregated resulting in an exclusive co presence.

Secondly, it was seen that, estates are highly fragmented with many axial lines due to the addition of landscaping in the form of ramps, railings, gates and pavement levels. This increases the global depth of the housing estates from the main thoroughfares of the borough, as a whole urban block has miniaturized and reproduced the complexity of an urban neighborhood.

Random encounters of community members on the streets are but one facet of this neighbourhood. The potential gossip/rumours that may be generated from such encounters, if a member were caught behaving in an unacceptable manner, act as a form of deterrent, as its repercussions would be detrimental to a member’s family’s standing within the community (Khan, 2003). The above-mentioned kinship networks are responsible for the well being of its individual members, but also for the safeguard and perpetuation of tradition and culture. It is suggested that ‘popping over’ to visit family or neighbour maintains the local gossip network of the estate and thus helped maintain the socio spatial system of support.

Thirdly, The housing estates not only spatially fragment the wards of the Tower Hamlets but also define how people are dispersed within them. The spatial analysis shows that the area allows a certain amount of non-Bangladeshi movement amongst the local Bangladeshis just enough to sustain the area’s commercial activity (controlled multiplier effect). The community is spatially structured like localized villages so that it can create its intricate social structures, excluding any other. The spatial analysis shows that the area allows a certain amount of non-Bangladeshi movement amongst the local Bangladeshis just enough to sustain the area’s commercial activity (controlled multiplier effect).

The housing estate areas have limited commercial development and the estates are “unconstituted” (Hanson, 2000) spaces in terms of the entire spatial structure of Tower Hamlets. Meaning they do not have a high rate of neighbors and are inward looking blocks with less potential of visual contact along their outer boundaries. It is possible to suggest that, if one is not a resident of an housing estate one is unlikely to use any of the spaces within or around the estate area. Since it would not have anything to
offer in terms of commercial activity. Also unconstituted \(^{14}\) spaces within the estates are sometimes occupied by gangs of youth who in doing so also police these areas by providing surveillance.

Simultaneously by restricting strangers to housing estates, its local identity is strengthened and segregated spatial structure maintained. Initially this was used to ensure survival of the first Bangladeshi immigrants and is now used to maintain the community’s identity. The study also concludes that Brick lane acts as a community generator hence the importance of market being only two steps away from the housing estate. It is an economy that relies on the maintenance of Bangladeshi way of life (hence mosque, school and shops selling Bangladeshi food stores in the market) generating a specific clientele to frequent the shops on Brick Lane (shops selling Bangladeshi cultural symbols).

It should be clarified that social exclusion is not essentially a conscious process practised by the majority population. In some cases groups of immigrants, due to lack of social knowledge about their host country’s social network is so low that they are unable to contribute in its social replication. Faced with this situation, they group in segregated spatial structures in order to actuate the social structure they are accustomed to. This would be the only way that would ensure their survival. That may explain why the Bangladeshi immigrants did not assimilate but only acculturated the host’s culture. Interestingly they willingly adopt segregated spaces to ensure their highly integrated social system survives.

What is to be seen is if this status quo remains. If community remains as bubbles of social units within the inner city or if their social network will slowly break down as the older generation, who wish to preserve their way of life, and the younger generation who have both the need and the education necessary to join the larger host population come to terms with each others views. It leads to the question; Do all social settlements that are based on ethnicity have a particular spatial life span? This paper and its observations are far from conclusive yet has tried to shed light onto a spatial issues of importance to ethnic minority Bangladeshi group in the East End for which further studies are to be done. This is important to address as it helps in understanding the socio- spatial characteristics of minority settlement in UK as younger generations grow up with different outlook than those of first generation immigrants before them.

**Literature**


\(^{14}\) Ratio of residence entrances opening directly onto street.


