

We moved out to the suburbs when I was three as Mum and Dad wanted us brought up out of the city. It seemed like the sensible thing to do – trouble was brewing, stirrings of the Thatcher era were felt across the city. I recall a gloriously longed for family holiday to Mallorca!

One other thing stands out for me from that time – the visits to my Italian Nan's next to the Anfield stadium. Following a series of riots in Toxteth, media coverage of Liverpool was increasingly negative, but all I could see was the passion in the young faces of those people on their way to the game. The throng of fans walking to the ground, their songs and camaraderie had a lifelong impact on me. The feeling and emotions they stirred up were all the riches I needed; any shame I felt standing in a queue every day at school to receive free meal tickets and uniform vouchers was overwhelmed by the passion for our team and their glories).

Language – and accent - play a major role in cultural capital and the ability to travel and use languages should never be underplayed. Neither should the influence of the media in reinforcing stereotypes and negativity around cultures. I recall a teacher on a school trip in the early 80s being visibly ashamed to say we were from Liverpool, preferring to say we were from just outside. This kind man, who had actually subbed my place on the trip so I could go, felt ashamed. My blood boiled – this was not right.

I started to study French at secondary school and loved it – I seemed to have a natural aptitude for languages, most probably due to having my ear tuned in at an early age (coupled with a burning desire to learn Spanish and go back to Mallorca!)

Fast forward to the 1990s... Alongside Law I also studied French and Russian and found myself living in Moscow over winter 1992-93. The sense of distance from home was exacerbated by the long queues to place a telephone call home from the central post office in barely post-Soviet pre-mobile phone Russia. The sense of longing to hear the voice of a familiar community, and connect with home is powerful , and has a direct impact, I think, on well-being.

Grabbing the chance to go and watch Liverpool play at Moscow Spartak, we met supporters who had travelled from home (literally - the Liverpool supporters club contingent included two lads I had been to school with) and watched familiar faces play in unfamiliar territory amid jeers and jibes from Spartak fans. After the game, we went to a bar with the lads. A Kit-Kat was produced from a case and given to me. When I then took a bite and passed it to eight of my fellow students (food was short that winter) the lads immediately had a whip round, turning out their dollars and pounds, and left the contents of their suitcases for us, including toiletries and treats. We smelled like boys, but we were clean and full of chocolate! We were swept up and treated like their own.

I learnt a lot about pride and heritage in those few days, my sense of identity very much defined and set: I belonged to a city with a proud character, big heart - and distinct accent.