

Mette Louise Berg

UCL

Forthcoming in *Critical Social Policy*

**[Final accepted version, submitted 25/05-2018]**

## Super-diversity, austerity, and the production of precarity: Latin Americans in London

### Introduction

Intensified globalization, upheaval, and conflicts are creating new patterns of migration and mobility in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In global cities like London, the effect has been the emergence of ‘super-diversity’, referencing a ‘transformative diversification of diversity’ (Vertovec 2007, 1025). This refers not only to more ethnicities and countries of origin represented among urban residents, but also to a range of further interacting variables of difference including socio-economic status, labour market integration, language, religion, migration trajectory and immigration status, different degrees of diasporic engagement, as well as distinct gender, age, and generational profiles of different groups living side by side. ‘New’ diversity further interacts with ‘old’ ethnic diversity, gentrification, and resident churn to create multi-layered, dynamic, and complex patterns of difference in urban spaces. The rise of super-diversity is intimately linked to widening structural inequalities at global and local levels: In the global South, globalization has led to ‘brutal expulsions’ (Sassen 2014), while in the affluent North ever more restrictive immigration and welfare policies are enacted, sifting migrants into differentiated categories of tenuous entitlements according to legal status.

When Steve Vertovec coined the term more than ten years ago, he included legal status as a ‘fundamental dimension’ of super-diversity, and argued that local service providers had yet to catch up with the new realities in their complexity (2007, 1036). In the years since then, the UK has gone through a protracted period of public sector austerity, retrenchment and restructuring, including a redrawing of boundaries between the public, private, and third sector. This has added further complexity to questions about rights and entitlements for increasingly diverse service users. Local governments have been especially affected by budget cuts. Indeed, Vivien Lowndes and Alison Gardner characterise the current situation as ‘super-austerity’ in what seems an implicit nod to super-diversity (although they do not make this point). With super-austerity, they clearly seek to capture something similarly complex and qualitatively new, defining it as a situation in which ‘new cuts come on top of previous ones, compounding original impacts and creating dangerous (and unevenly spread) multiplier effects’ (2016, 358-9).

At the national level, the UK government is committed to creating a ‘hostile environment’ for ‘illegal immigrants’ (Travis 2013, Burnett 2016). Introduced by then Home Secretary, now Prime Minister, Theresa May, the ‘hostile environment’ policy manifests itself in an ‘astoundingly complex web of

regulations, rules, exclusions and addenda around the eligibility of migrants to a range of public services and benefits' (Oliver 2014, 25). Illustrating what Nira Yuval-Davis et al. call 'everyday bordering' (2017), frontline service providers or street level bureaucrats (Lipsky 2010), including GP receptionists, Job Centre staff, and college admissions tutors, as well as landlords, employers, and others are increasingly required to police the borders of the welfare state as they go about their everyday jobs. The objective is ostensibly to be seen to be 'tough' on 'illegal immigrants' – an egregious and socio-politically produced condition (De Genova 2002) – but the policy has wide-ranging ramifications for all migrants and ethnicised minorities in the UK (see also, Jones et al. 2017). The dire consequences for those caught up in 'hostile environment' policies became a national scandal in the spring of 2018 when the plight of the so-called Windrush generation came to light (Gentleman 2018), illustrating Suzi Hall's characterization of 'a brutal migration milieu' (2017).

This article traces the implications for newly arrived migrants when super-diversity intersects with super-austerity against a background of everyday bordering practices, 'hostile environment' policies, and an increasingly deregulated labour market. In particular, I examine the multiple barriers Latin Americans in London face in accessing services, as understood by frontline service providers. I argue that examining such barriers, including how they compound each other, provides a window onto the production of precarity and new inequalities in super-diverse-cum-super-austere Brexit Britain. I deliberately invoke Judith Butler's notion of precarity to emphasise a 'politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death' (2009, 2).

Resourcing is clearly important for anyone to have effective access to services. As public services retract, increasingly scarce resources are being cordoned off for certain groups with migrants being targeted specifically (Paret and Gleeson 2016, 290); the number of people affected by 'no recourse to public funds' (Spencer and Price 2015) are testament to this. Examining barriers to access from the perspective of new migrants in super-diverse contexts can therefore help us understand better the production of precarity in global cities more broadly. I argue that the combined effect of super-diversity-cum-super-austerity is to make the everyday lives of entire groups precarious in multiple and mutually reinforcing ways, 'combining vulnerability to deportation and state violence, exclusion from public services and basic state protections, insecure employment and exploitation at work, insecure livelihood, and everyday discrimination or isolation' (Paret and Gleeson 2016, 281). My focus is on Latin Americans in an inner London borough, namely Southwark. Latin Americans are concentrated in London's low-wage and casualised labour market, which largely consists of migrant workers, some of them undocumented, doing the jobs that are too poorly paid to be attractive to native-born workers (see also, Ahmad 2008, Anderson 2010, Bloch and McKay 2016).

I will first describe the research on which the article is based. Following this, I outline the local context in Southwark and then hone in on the Latin American community in the borough and the multiple barriers they face in accessing services. In the conclusion, I reflect on the consequences of the 'hostile environment' strategy for new migrants in London and argue for the importance of linking super-diversity to rising inequality and austerity.

## Research methods

The article is based on research conducted as part of an ESRC Knowledge Exchange Fellowship held in 2014-15 during which I was a 'researcher in residence' with Southwark Council on a part-time basis.<sup>1</sup> The Fellowship came about via an already established relationship with the Council forged through earlier research.<sup>2</sup> During the Fellowship, I worked closely with council officers from the Community Engagement Division and with the Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS), a charity founded by Latin American migrants in London in 1983. Southwark was the first local authority in London to recognise Latin Americans as an ethnic group and wanted to understand better the barriers that its Latin American residents experience in accessing services. As a diverse borough with many new migrant groups and high churn among its residents, Southwark faces challenges in planning and delivering services, especially in a context of central government funding cuts.

In light of the paucity of data on the Latin American population in London in general and Southwark in particular (but see McIlwaine and Bunge 2016), I commissioned a series of detailed tables based on micro-data on country of birth and passports held for Latin Americans in Southwark including educational attainment and household characteristics. The Census analysis was conducted by Anna Krausova (2016) and provided a baseline even if the real number of Latin Americans in the borough are likely to be higher than the Census suggests.

Cathy Trejos, an experienced LAWRS outreach worker, was a research assistant and important interlocutor for the research. She contributed to all stages of the research from designing the interview guide and identifying interviewees, to conducting interviews and interpreting results. Between us, we conducted 27 semi-structured interviews with 35 Southwark-based statutory and non-statutory service providers in the public and third sector between May and July 2015 (see table 1). Most interviews took place face-to-face in the offices of the organisations, but where this was not possible, a few were conducted over the telephone. Several interviews involved more than one participant from the organisation. As table 1 shows, we included both mainstream and community-specific services.

Table 1. Organisations and services interviewed

| Type of organisation                      | Name of organisation(s) / service(s)  |
|---|---|
| Statutory service providers               | Job Centre; public library; children's centre; secondary school; NHS hospital   |
| Community                                 | 5 community organisations providing services to Latin Americans across London and campaigning for ethnic and political recognition and representation |
| Legal aid and advice                      | 4 different third sector legal advice organisations   |
| Neighbourhood organisations & settlements | 2 locally-based settlements   |

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/project/servicing-super-diversity-esrc-iaa-knowledge-exchange-fellowship/>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/project/welfare-neighbourhood-and-new-geographies-of-diversity/>.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Tenants' and residents' Associations    | 1 tenants' and residents' association                             |
| Trade unions                            | 2 trade unions representing cleaners                              |
| Employment-related                      | 1 third sector organisation                                       |
| Gender-based                            | 2 women's rights / women's aid organisations, one community-based |
| Health and ageing-related organisations | 3 third sector age- and health-related organisations              |
| Language tuition                        | 1 third sector English-language tuition provider                  |
| Cultural                                | 1 charity organising Latin American-flavoured cultural events     |

We also organised a workshop for and with Southwark Council staff from a cross-section of departments and services, including: Children's and Adult's Services, Community Engagement, Corporate Strategy, Customer Service, Education, Housing, Improvement and Development, Mental Health, Public Health, Regeneration, Social Services, Translation Services, Young People's Services. During the period of research we also participated in relevant community events. Finally, we had access to data and interview-based reports produced by and for LAWRS, the Coalition of Latin Americans in the UK (CLAUK), and Southwark Council.

Interview data was read in detail and combed for emergent themes. Once themes had been established, a further reading allowed us to identify additional relevant material in interviews that complemented and enriched our understanding of the themes. The article draws on both interview and census analysis material, and our notes from workshops and events.

### The Southwark context

What is now the London Borough of Southwark has historically been a working-class settlement characterised by poverty and deprivation. Today, Southwark's population is growing amid high levels of deprivation and high population density. Northern parts of the borough, fronting the river, are within walking distance of the City of London and centres of financial, political, and cultural power. This proximity, in combination with regeneration processes and gentrification, means that the socio-economic profile of residents is changing. As a result, the borough is increasingly marked by stark and visible juxtapositions of wealth and deprivation among its diverse residents. Chic, gentrified Bermondsey Street with expensive coffee bars and the forbidding White Cube Gallery runs next to some of the most deprived social housing estates in the UK. To the west of Bermondsey, Elephant and Castle, traditionally seen as distant from central London, is changing rapidly, and in a 2013 map of London house prices produced by an estate agent, the area is described as moving 'upmarket'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.economist.com/blogs/blighty/2013/09/mapping-gentrification>.

Like the rest of London, Southwark has in the past twenty years seen an increase in the non-UK born share of residents and a diversification of countries of origin of its residents. The borough is today characterised by considerable and growing linguistic, religious, and ethnic diversity, and represents a typical site of urban super-diversity (Poppleton et al. 2013). To illustrate, more than 120 languages are spoken in Southwark and about one in ten households have no members with English as their first language. Fully 39 per cent of its residents (an estimated 113,667 people) were born outside of the UK. Diversity is most evident among younger residents: more than half of all live births in the borough in 2011 were to foreign-born mothers, and three quarters of reception-age children in the borough are from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups. New and growing demographic groups in the UK including 'white other' and 'mixed' ethnicities, and African and Latin American ethnicities, represent a relatively larger share of Southwark's population compared to the national average.<sup>4</sup>

In short, the population in the borough is fluid and stratified, and consists of many small and internally differentiated groups, some in positions of considerable precarity. Residents have differential entitlements and degrees of visibility to service providers, but also different needs and expectations of services and how they are delivered. In these respects, the Southwark context is similar to that of other central London boroughs.

#### [Latin Americans in London: invisibility and labour market incorporation](#)

Latin Americans have settled in London since the 1970s, but the majority living in the city today have arrived since 2000 (McIlwaine and Bunge 2016, 22). As a new migrant group in the UK context, they have gone largely unnoticed by policymakers and the general public (McIlwaine, Cock, and Linneker 2011); they are also invisible in the census, thus constituting one of the 'hidden communities' in the capital (Pharoah and Hopwood 2013). Yet the Latin American-born and children of Latin American-born mothers make up a significant and growing group. They were estimated to number about 145,000 in 2013, of whom the vast majority were of working age, making them 'the eighth largest non-UK born population in London and larger in size than Somalian, Chinese and Romanian migrants' (McIlwaine and Bunge 2016, 8), all of whom have a higher degree of visibility.

Latin Americans are an internally diverse group, in country of origin as well as in language, education, and class background. Added to this are differences between historically embedded migrant generations (Berg and Eckstein 2015[2009]), such as differences between those who arrived in London as political exiles in the 1970s vs. more recent labour immigrants; and in migration status and trajectories, including differences between those who have migrated directly from Latin America vs. those who have migrated to London via other European countries, principally Spain (McIlwaine, Cock, and Linneker 2011, McIlwaine and Bunge 2016). Many in the latter category hold EU citizenship and do therefore not need visas or work permits. Degrees of entitlement to services and hence relative precarity vary considerably between those with EU vs. those with Latin American passports, yet community groups told us that most recently arrived Latin Americans, regardless of citizenship and formal entitlements, face difficulties in terms of employment, language barriers, and recognition of qualifications.

---

<sup>4</sup> Data in this section is from Krausova (2016).

Latin Americans live across all of London (McIlwaine, Cock, and Linneker 2011), but two areas are especially identified with them: Seven Sisters in Haringey, north London, and Elephant and Castle in Southwark, south London, on which this article focuses. Both areas feature clusters of Latin American shops and businesses catering to a co-ethnic as well as a broader clientele, and also regularly feature cultural events with a Latin American flavour, such as the *Carnaval del pueblo* in Southwark. There are other shared features too: Both areas are currently undergoing large-scale public- and private-led regeneration projects that are likely to dramatically increase rents and lead to a loss of ethnic businesses (Román-Velázquez 2014). According to the Census, about eight thousand Latin Americans lived in Southwark in 2011, representing just under three per cent of the borough's population, and eight per cent of residents who were born outside of the UK (Krausova 2016, 4). Both London-wide and in Southwark, the main countries of origin for Latin Americans are Brazil and Colombia (Krausova 2016, for London as a whole, see McIlwaine and Bunge 2016, 10).

All service providers we interviewed commented that Latin Americans are 'hard-working', that the vast majority are in employment, and that they often find jobs through word of mouth. Yet despite half of the community having university level education, they tend to work in elementary jobs (McIlwaine and Bunge 2016, 25), bearing out Saskia Sassen's characterisation of labour markets in global cities as marked by stark socio-economic and immigration-status related inequalities (2005, 30). To illustrate, fully 80 per cent of users of one of the community organisations we interviewed, who supports about 5,000 users annually, worked in cleaning (interview data), a largely unregulated, low-pay sector characterised by fragmented, unsocial hours (McIlwaine 2007, Però 2008). A Job Centre employee commented:

Latin Americans are very good at getting jobs quickly. Approximately 80 per cent of Latin Americans of working age are in employment, and on Spanish or Portuguese passports. But there is a big issue of why they work below their qualifications, including in cleaning and hospitality. They work, earn their salaries, pay their taxes; they are entitled to be here, but we are losing something – they have qualifications that are not being used.

Reflecting this pattern, our interviewees in legal advice clinics explained that Latin Americans present with issues of retention of payment, non-payment of wages, pay below minimum wage, unfair dismissal, non-payment of sick pay, holiday entitlement issues, and discrimination; all common issues in the low-pay end of the labour market (Equality and human rights commission 2014).

The legal advisors we interviewed also explained that many Latin Americans are not able to document the length of their residence in the UK and/or their income, needed to prove entitlement to benefits: Their income may go up and down from week to week (as is common in low-income households, see Hansen and Kneale 2013); many have not kept pay slips and tenancy agreements going back years, or may have been paid cash in hand and/or rented without contracts without realising that this would have an impact on their entitlements in the future, and in any case having little power to change their situation.

Responding to their living and work conditions, community groups have mounted campaigns for more visibility for Latin Americans, so far leading to ethnic recognition by Southwark Council in 2012, followed by Lambeth, Hackney, and Islington Councils.

## Barriers to access and provision of services for Latin Americans

Barriers to service provision can be formal and deliberate, where certain groups are explicitly excluded from certain services, as intended by the 'hostile environment' policies, which have affected many more people than the so-called 'illegal immigrants' they are set up to target. They can also be resource-related, informal or incidental, as when ostensibly universal and inclusive services are inadequately funded to work effectively, or set up in such a way as to make them effectively inaccessible for some groups. Culturally and socially embedded practices and beliefs can also act as effective barriers, e.g. where service users attach stigma to using certain services, or where recipients of some forms of state support (e.g., unemployment benefit) are seen as 'undeserving', thus discouraging users from claiming what they are entitled to.

Service providers that we interviewed explained that Latin Americans have the same needs for advice and services as other Southwark residents. However, unsocial working hours and poor English language skills mean that they face greater barriers in accessing appropriate support and services. Interviewees expressed concerns about the precariousness of some Latin Americans, while also recognising their agency. They described Latin Americans in terms such as 'resilient', 'strong work ethic', and commented on 'high levels of community support'. Yet these apparently positive aspects can also work to constrain and restrict migrants as scholarship on migration and social networks shows (Bloch and McKay 2016, 10-15). Thus, advice via word of mouth and informal support structures within the Latin American community may somewhat mitigate the impact of language and other barriers, but they do not always convey the complexity of rules and entitlements for individuals, and can diminish rather than enhance the capacity to gain access to resources for individuals and groups.

Other significant barriers that emerged in the research were employment-related barriers; barriers to accessing affordable and good quality housing; barriers to schooling and education; and health service barriers (see also Carlisle 2006, McIlwaine, Cock, and Linneker 2011). Importantly, such barriers interact with each other and with Latin Americans' labour market incorporation. Gender and legal status also intersect with service barriers, creating different degrees and conditions of precarity for men and women, children and adults, EU and non-EU citizens. In addition, the government's 'hostile environment' strategy and cuts to legal aid, expressly produce additional barriers for new migrants. The context is thus one of considerable diversity-related complexity, compounded by the effects of super-austerity. In what follows, I discuss different barriers in turn, and then show how they interact with each other. I begin with the difficulties Latin Americans face in learning English.

### *The language barrier and 'literacy in how the system works'*

All service providers and community groups interviewed identified poor English language skills as a major service access barrier for Latin Americans. Their observation is supported by Cathy McIlwaine's detailed analysis of the 2011 Census, in which she found that around one in five of all Latin Americans in London cannot speak English or cannot speak it very well, rising to more than a quarter of those resident in Southwark, but with significant variations between different national groups (McIlwaine and Bunge 2016, 20-21). Importantly, recent and precarious migrants with uncertain status, who are more likely to speak English poorly or not at all, are also less likely to be included in the Census; the issue can therefore be assumed to affect even more Latin Americans than the Census suggests. The language barrier was clearly reflected in demand for Southwark's translation service in 2014-15, where Spanish accounted for a far higher number of requests than any other language (data supplied by Southwark Council). Service providers emphasised that not speaking sufficient English to understand a payslip,

make a simple telephone call, or to be able to do a job interview, constituted a considerable barrier to inclusion, participation, and social mobility. The increasingly restrictive access to English language tuition for non-English speaking migrant groups (see Asthana 2017) and the severe cuts in funding for it (Casey 2016, 97), thus affect Latin Americans, and other recently arrived non-English speaking migrant groups, particularly harshly, and works to exclude migrants from services and integration more widely (see also, Phillimore 2018).

The language barrier is compounded by the pattern in which Latin Americans are incorporated into the labour market. Because their jobs are poorly paid and often part-time, many have to combine several jobs with different employers in order to get by, which in itself can have an impact on entitlements, and which negatively affects opportunities for learning English. E.g., most Latin Americans are in employment, and do not claim income-related benefits (although they may be entitled to it). Therefore, they are not considered a 'priority group' and so do not qualify for subsidised ESOL language classes (Granada 2013). However, their pay is often so low that they cannot afford to pay for courses at market rates, and fragmented, unsociable, and unpredictable hours make it difficult for them to attend regularly (see also, Carlisle 2006, Granada 2013, McIlwaine, Cock, and Linneker 2011). Additionally, as a Latin American trade union activist explained in an interview, many Latin Americans in commercial cleaning work almost exclusively with co-ethnic Spanish-speakers, and are therefore not picking up more than rudimentary English in their workplaces. The same activist commented that the lack of English language skills and uncertainties around legal status made Latin Americans particularly attractive employees for cleaning firms; they are compelled to put up with conditions that other workers would not, illustrating Bridget Anderson's argument about the capacity of immigration restriction and enforcement to fashion and produce precarious workers (2010, 313-4).

In recognition of the fundamental importance of overcoming the language barrier, community groups provide accessible and free language training, sometimes combined with training in rights and entitlements. This includes classes in children's centres, as well as trade union-organised classes part-subsidised by one of the Latin American embassies, and scheduled at times that make it possible for Latin Americans to attend. In a tough funding climate however, there are limits to the availability of such classes. Some service providers have successfully drawn on staff and volunteer language skills to reach out to Latin Americans, and have seen a considerable surge in demand. Service providers commented that Latin Americans demonstrate agency and resilience in overcoming language barriers, often using a 'trial and error' approach:

Latin Americans come to this library because a friend has told them that there is someone who speaks Spanish and helps with information, so they feel confident coming to a person that will speak in Spanish with them, someone who understands their needs. ... They come for any kind of thing, how to enrol their children into school, looking for English classes, benefits, how to register to vote, anything, you name it. It's like a focal point for the community. ... It would seem that the Latin Americans do not have many places that cover their needs for information and support. ... They are new in the UK and they have no knowledge of how things work ... They are missing information or places to go.

As this Spanish-speaking librarian suggests, accessing services requires a high degree of service cultural competency from users, as also noted by scholars: 'In the English welfare state, social security is administered via a particularly labyrinthine multiplicity of different agencies. People are required to



negotiate with an array of institutions, each with its own rules and procedures, in order to actualize their rights. Furthermore, problems arising in one area often have unanticipated effects on others' (Forbess and James 2014, 74). Other service providers also emphasised that the language barrier was compounded by the complexity of service provision:

Latin Americans need basic literacy in how the system works, more signposting to services, and training in how to make basic telephone calls to the council (neighbourhood-based community group).

Translating alone isn't going to help, it's also about context: these are complex issues. You need to sit with people and explain in their own language (advice worker).

As well as identifying a need for 'basic literacy' in understanding services – a phenomenon described for migrant groups across Europe as well as for vulnerable native-born residents (Green et al. 2014) – culturally embedded stigma attached to receiving public support and low expectations of services also effectively constituted a barrier. E.g., many service providers found that Latin Americans were reluctant to claim benefits to which they were entitled, including Working Tax Credit and Child Benefit. This has a particular gendered impact on women and children, to which I now turn.

#### *Gender-related barriers*

Service providers agreed that women tend to be more affected by the language barrier than men, as also seen for other migrant groups (Cheung and Phillimore 2017, 226). Providers offering services in Spanish and Portuguese supporting women affected by domestic violence also reported a lack of trust in the police and authorities more generally, making women reluctant to report incidents of domestic violence:

It has been my experience that there are many Latin American women who can't recognise when they are in a violent or coercive relationship ... it has become a normalised way of interaction between the couple and family. This is also relevant because I had some cases where the social circle was very harsh and made the women feel guilty as if they had done something very wrong by denouncing their aggressive partner. ... Many women still only depend on their friends' advice to make decisions due to their lack of interaction with other parts of the community, including services (women's aid organisation)

This dynamic makes it particularly difficult for women in violent relationships to seek support in a socially legitimate manner, highlighting the need for culturally appropriate and proactive service outreach. Such services have been cut across many local authorities as part of austerity measures, constituting one of the 'multiplier effects' that Lowndes and Gardner warn about (2016, 358-9). In some instances, services targeted specifically at ethnic minority women have even been cut in the name of 'diversity' (Southall Black Sisters 2008), highlighting troubling resonances between neoliberalism and policy-makers' conceptualisations of diversity (Berg and Sigona 2013, 353).

As for other groups, the shortage of affordable and accessible housing makes it more difficult for women to leave abusive relationships. Recent, low-income migrant groups are especially affected by this because of their structural exclusion from access to the shrinking supply of social housing, another of the sharp edges at the intersection of super-diversity and super-austerity.

## *Housing*

Following central government guidance (Guentner et al. 2016, 401), Southwark, like other local authorities, has imposed residence requirements for accessing social housing, restricting access for migrants. Across the UK as a whole, recent migrants are overwhelmingly living in private rented accommodation, a sector under considerable pressure by the contraction of the social housing pool (Perry 2012, 7; 10). Private lettings in the poorer end of the market are often informal, sometimes without legal agreements, and some involve illegally converted outbuildings or obliging people to share with strangers (Perry 2012, 14-18). In Southwark specifically, there is a significant shortage of affordable housing, reflecting a London-wide problem. Notwithstanding, the borough has a niche market of relatively cheap private housing, some of it of sub-standard quality, and sometimes operated by rogue landlords, and it is in this section of the housing market that many newly arrived Latin Americans and other recent migrant groups find themselves (Pharoah and Hopwood 2013, 48).

Latin Americans are additionally attracted to Southwark because they have friends and family members living in the borough, and because of the Latin American shops and services. However, the language barrier, low incomes, and, in some cases, insufficient understanding of legislation, puts many Latin Americans in vulnerable positions vis-à-vis private landlords. Service providers commented on their poor and overcrowded housing conditions:

Most of the Latin Americans that we are seeing now have rights to access some benefits such as housing benefits, but many are not doing it. People are living in very poor conditions, entire families sharing a room, with no space for any type of play, study, or eating area for the children (children's centre worker).

Some service providers told us that recent migrants have been affected by the requirement that landlords check the immigration status of tenants as part of the 'hostile environment'. The complexity of checking immigration status and the substantial penalties for non-compliance combine to make some landlords prefer to turn away migrants rather than risk being fined (see also, Guentner et al. 2016, 401). Meanwhile, language and wider service literacy issues mean that Latin Americans are not always aware of housing benefit rights and entitlements, are not able to avail themselves of the assistance needed to access services, and/or are reluctant to claim services to which they are entitled. Poor and overcrowded accommodation is known to have an adverse impact on children's education to which I now turn.

## *Access to schooling and education*

Community groups were concerned about the difficulties faced by many of their users in accessing schooling for their children, including lack of information for parents about the in-year admissions process causing long waiting times for school enrolment. LAWRS has worked with Southwark Council to address this, but also reported an increase in families arriving and waiting for school places; and that some schools are reluctant to take children who do not speak English because of a lack of resources and the potentially negative impact of large numbers of non-native English speakers on the school's ranking for English. Meanwhile, a stumbling block for parents is insufficient English and a lack of awareness of how the system works:

There is a lack of information around education, many parents are not aware of the education system and they send their children to classes without really knowing what the levels, exams, or steps are (English-language tuition provider)

Once children are enrolled in schools, there are issues around learning English to a sufficient level in time for key assessments such as GCSEs, as well as maintaining their first language. A teacher explained the situation in his boys-only school, which has a relatively high proportion of Latin American pupils:

Some families arrive here and the boys come to school in 1-2 weeks, but some have been out of school for up to a year. The Latino boys we see are mainly here as a result of secondary migration from Spain, but some come direct [from Latin America]. ... Parents often don't realise the importance of GCSEs, e.g. 15-year-olds might not be able to speak English well enough to be able to get good grades.

As well as the language barrier and the challenge of providing up-to-date and accurate information, access to schools is also dependent on immigration status discussed below.

### *Immigration status*

Immigration status was seen as a major issue for Latin Americans by service providers. They spoke of an unmet need for affordable and reliable immigration advice, funding for which has been cut as part of austerity measures with all non-asylum immigration cases removed from the scope of legal aid since 2013 (Guentner et al. 2016, 398). Migrants are therefore left without access to advice or representation to contest their case. Sub-standard, unregulated immigration 'advisors' were seen as a particularly pressing problem:

People pay for sub-standard immigration advice. ... There is a real crisis in access to good quality, affordable immigration advice. ... I have fears about people paying for poor quality immigration advice (advice worker)

The issue needs to be understood in the context of increasingly complex legislation and a proliferation of immigration statuses with different levels of entitlements. In the words of a legal advisor with more than ten years' experience in the field, who we interviewed, the differentiation in entitlements for different kinds of benefits has become 'extremely and unbelievably complicated.' As he explained, this includes distinctions between EU and non-EU nationals, complicated in cases where non-EU residents are married to EU nationals, or where children have EU or UK citizenship.

A particular issue of concern for the immigration advisors we interviewed was family reunification cases. Many Latin Americans who arrive in London have left family behind in either their country of origin or in another European country, and hope to reunite with their family once they have established themselves. Given their labour market incorporation, they have been especially affected by the threshold of a minimum annual salary of £18,000 (amounting to more than someone working full-time on the minimum wage would earn) from a sole employer to be entitled to family reunion. Thus, everyday bordering, 'hostile environment' policies, and super-austerity work together to form a formidable barrier to inclusion for recent migrant groups, especially those, like Latin Americans, who work in low-pay jobs. The uncertainties of status, physically demanding jobs at unsocial hours, overcrowded accommodation, social isolation and poverty, and protracted separation from loved ones, can have a detrimental impact on health.

### *Barriers to accessing health services*

It is well documented that migrants face particular barriers to accessing health care (Jayaweera 2014, 6). For migrant groups as for the population at large, health and wellbeing are related to socio-economic

conditions, and we also found a link between lower levels of English proficiency and higher reporting of poor health in the Census data (Krausova 2016), pointing to the wide-ranging ramifications of lack of adequate language skills. Depending on their legal status, some migrants have been required to pay for some health services since October 2014, creating barriers especially for pregnant women and mothers with young children. Confusion and lack of knowledge among both health service providers and migrants around entitlements mean that migrants are not always able to access the care they need. This is particularly the case for undocumented migrants and migrants with uncertain legal status, including visa over-stayers, refused asylum seekers, those who have been trafficked into the UK, and spousal migrants escaping domestic violence (Jayaweera 2014, 6). The concerns of health-related service providers that we interviewed bore this out.

In a focus group for Latin American women, conducted by LAWRS and Healthwatch Southwark, participants identified challenges in registering with GP surgeries, difficulties in making appointments and in accessing interpretation services, and negative attitudes from GP surgery staff, reflecting more wide-spread experiences among migrants across the UK (Hoong 2014[2013], Granada and Paccoud 2014). Participants in the focus group discussion also reported that they use private healthcare in addition to, or instead of NHS services that they may be entitled to, whether because of barriers to accessing NHS services, or culturally embedded beliefs that private provision is better.

Several service providers pointed out that Latin Americans, like other recent migrant groups, do not always know about the full range of services offered by GPs. The complex changes in entitlements make word of mouth particularly unreliable in this area, and many Latin Americans therefore are not certain about what their entitlements are, or how to access care. As a health professional observed, community groups have good cultural knowledge and are trusted by their communities. However, there is a limit to their capacity, e.g. concerning severe cases of mental ill health. There is thus a need for 'a bridge' between community groups and NHS mental health services, but it is exactly such small specialised groups that have seen their funding cut in recent years, creating another potentially dangerous multiplier effect of super-austerity, further exacerbated by precariousness arising from migration status and the differentiations of super-diversity.

### Conclusion: super-diversity, austerity, and the production of precarity

Super-austerity, including outsourcing and fragmentation of services, combined with the churn, newness, and differentiation of super-diversity, means that exceptional strain is put on local services, which were designed in an era of more stability of funding and user population (see also, Phillimore 2011, 2015). Importantly, austerity has affected already deprived local authorities more than others, and these are often also the same local areas that are the most diverse, including Southwark and other central London boroughs (Popleton et al. 2013).

At an immediate level, super-austerity means that small community support groups are facing diminished or no funding. Meanwhile, mainstream service providers do not have the resources or cultural and language skills needed to reach out to new and small groups, especially when they are also under funding pressure. All service providers interviewed for this research mentioned the crippling effects of poor English language skills for Latin Americans. There is consensus in the policy literature on the importance of ensuring that new migrants are able to speak English sufficiently well to participate in

wider society (All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration, Kere, and Bell 2016), yet access to affordable classes at suitable times is severely restricted, and funding has been cut in recent years. For new migrant groups such as Latin Americans, these inter-twined developments entail high risks of entrenchment of precarity, especially for women and children, and obstruct efforts to make 'livable lives' (Butler 2004, 146).

In addition to language skills, service providers also identified issues regarding 'service literacy' among their users. Critical literacy scholarship has long advocated an approach to literacy that places it within a wider socio-economic context imbued with unequal power relations (Street 2003). Melissa Steyn has helpfully linked this work to diversity scholarship in the form of 'critical diversity literacy', defined as an 'ethical socio-political stance' (2014, 379) that acknowledges the constitutive role of power in diversity. As Steyn argues, it can be understood as 'an informed analytical orientation that enables a person to "read" prevailing social relations as one would a text, recognizing the ways in which possibilities are being opened up or closed down for those differently positioned within the unfolding dynamics of specific social contexts' (ibid., 381).

Key here is the need for service *providers* to have the time and resources needed to assess and understand the barriers their users face, and how best to facilitate access and inclusion. Service providers we interviewed generally had a nuanced understanding of the multiple and interlinked barriers their clients faced in accessing services. They discussed these barriers within a wider socio-economic context, including public spending austerity, which also affected other service users, migrants or otherwise, and a complex and changing structure of service provision. Yet their critical literacy skills and ability to act upon them, are being undermined by the fragmentation of services and super-austerity. Meanwhile, 'hostile environment' policies explicitly seek to create an ethos of exclusion in public services and generate a climate of suspicion towards migrants and minorities, requiring service providers to perform everyday bordering as part of their jobs. Services are, in short, under pressure to exclude rather than include, putting new migrants and especially those who do not already speak English at risk of precarity and entrenched marginalisation. All service providers, whether in the public or third sector, were under pressure not only because of austerity measures, but also because of the increasing complexity of entitlements that make it difficult to establish what services residents can access and which they cannot. Others have written about instances where service providers are so over-worked and dealing with such complex cases that it simply becomes easier to refuse migrants access 'rather than risk making the wrong decision' (Oliver 2014, 25, see also, Phillimore 2015, 579), or of over-zealous local authorities implementing plainly unlawful restrictions (Guentner et al. 2016, 404).

To sum up, barriers to accessing services are more difficult to scale when super-austerity intersects with super-diversity; the ramifications of these intersections are likely to be felt not only by new and recent migrant groups but more widely by non-citizen and ethnic minority residents. Scholars of diversity and social policy would do well to focus on how this super-diversity-cum-super-austerity complex shapes the everyday lives of urban residents across the UK.

## Acknowledgments

I gratefully acknowledge the ESRC IAA Knowledge Exchange Fellowship which enabled me to carry out the research on which this article is based. I am also indebted to Southwark Council, Cathy Trejos and LAWRS, and to Anna Krausova. For helpful comments on draft versions, I would like to thank Rachel Humphris, Aris Komporozos-Athanasiou, and Jenny Woodman, as well as the Critical Social Policy reviewers.

## References cited

- Ahmad, Ali Nobil. 2008. "Dead men working: time and space in London's ('illegal') migrant economy." *Work, Employment and Society* 22 (2):301-318. doi: 10.1177/0950017008089106.
- All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration, Anna Kere, and Richard Bell. 2016. Interim report into integration of immigrants. London: Houses of Parliament.
- Anderson, Bridget. 2010. "Migration, immigration controls and the fashioning of precarious workers." *Work, Employment and Society* 24 (2):300-317. doi: 10.1177/0950017010362141.
- Asthana, Anushka. 2017. "Theresa May faces calls to implement regional immigration policy." *The Guardian*, 05/01. [https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jan/05/theresa-may-faces-calls-to-implement-regional-immigration-policy?utm\\_source=esp&utm\\_medium=Email&utm\\_campaign=GU+Today+main+NEW+H+categories&utm\\_term=207007&subid=19356098&CMP=EMCNEWEML6619I2](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jan/05/theresa-may-faces-calls-to-implement-regional-immigration-policy?utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=GU+Today+main+NEW+H+categories&utm_term=207007&subid=19356098&CMP=EMCNEWEML6619I2).
- Berg, Mette Louise, and Susan Eva Eckstein. 2015[2009]. "Re-Imagining Migrant Generations." *Diaspora* 18 (2/3):1-23.
- Berg, Mette Louise, and Nando Sigona. 2013. "Ethnography, diversity and urban space." *Identities* 20 (4):347-360.
- Bloch, Alice, and Sonia McKay. 2016. *Living on the margins : undocumented migrants in a global city*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Burnett, Jon. 2016. Entitlement and belonging: social restructuring and multicultural Britain. An IRR discussion paper on the Housing and Planning Bill 2015 and the Immigration Bill 2015. London: Institute of Race Relations.
- Butler, Judith. 2004. *Precarious life : the powers of mourning and violence*. London: Verso.
- Butler, Judith. 2009. "Performativity, precarity and sexual politics." *AIBR. Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana* 4 (3):1-13.
- Carlisle, Frances. 2006. "Marginalisation and ideas of community among Latin American migrants to the UK." *Gender and Development* 14 (2):235-45.
- Casey, Louise. 2016. The Casey Review: A Review into Opportunity and Integration. London: Department for Communities and Local Government.
- Cheung, Sin Yi, and Jenny Phillimore. 2017. "Gender and Refugee Integration: a Quantitative Analysis of Integration and Social Policy Outcomes." *Journal of Social Policy* 46 (2):211-230.
- De Genova, Nicholas P. 2002. "Migrant 'Illegality' and Deportability in Everyday Life." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31:419-447.
- Equality and human rights commission. 2014. The Invisible Workforce: Employment Practices in the Cleaning Sector. London: Equality and human rights commission.
- Forbess, Alice, and Deborah James. 2014. "Acts of Assistance: Navigating the Interstices of the British State with the Help of Non-profit Legal Advisers." *Social Analysis* 58 (3):73-89.
- Gentleman, Amelia. 2018. "The children of Windrush: 'I'm here legally, but they're asking me to prove I'm British!'" *The Guardian*, 15 April. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/apr/15/why-the-children-of-windrush-demand-an-immigration-amnesty>.
- Granada, Ana Lucila. 2013. "Latin Americans in London: language, integration and ethnic identity." PhD PhD, School of Languages and Social Sciences, Aston University.
- Granada, Ana Lucila, and Ivana Paccoud. 2014. Latin Americans: a case for better access to sexual health services. London: Coalition of Latin Americans in the UK.
- Green, Gill, Charlie Davison, Hannah Bradby, Kristine Krause, Felipe Morente Mejías, and Gabriele Alex. 2014. "Pathways to care: how superdiversity shapes the need for navigational assistance." *Sociology of Health & Illness* 36 (8):1205-1219. doi: 10.1111/1467-9566.12161.
- Guentner, Simon, Sue Lukes, Richard Stanton, Bastian A. Vollmer, and Jo Wilding. 2016. "Bordering practices in the UK welfare system." *Critical Social Policy* 36 (3):391-411. doi: doi:10.1177/0261018315622609.

- Hall, Suzanne M. 2017. "Mooring "super-diversity" to a brutal migration milieu." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40 (9):1562-1573. doi: 10.1080/01419870.2017.1300296.
- Hansen, Kirstine, and Dylan Kneale. 2013. "Does how You Measure Income make a Difference to Measuring Poverty? Evidence from the UK." *Social Indicators Research* 110 (3):1119-1140. doi: doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11205-011-9976-5.
- Hoong, Sec-Chang. 2014[2013]. Community focus groups with Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS): Findings & recommendations London: Healthwatch Southwark.
- Jayaweera, Hiranthi. 2014. Health of Migrants in the UK: What Do We Know? In *Migration Observatory Briefing*. Oxford, UK: COMPAS, University of Oxford.
- Jones, Hannah, Yasmin Gunaratnam, Gargi Battacharyya, William Davies, Sukhwant Dhaliwal, Kirsten Forkert, and Roiyah Saltus. 2017. *Go home? : the politics of immigration controversies*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Krausova, Anna. 2016. Lation Americans in Southwark: A Census Analysis Report. Oxford: Centre on Migration, Policy and Society.
- Lipsky, Michael. 2010. *Street-level bureaucracy : dilemmas of the individual in public services*. Updated ed. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Lowndes, Vivien, and Alison Gardner. 2016. "Local governance under the Conservatives: super-austerity, devolution and the 'smarter state'." *Local Government Studies* 42 (3):357-375. doi: 10.1080/03003930.2016.1150837.
- McIlwaine, Cathy. 2007. *Living in Latin London: How Latin American Migrants Survive in the City*. London: Queen Mary, University of London.
- McIlwaine, Cathy, and Diego Bunge. 2016. Towards visibility: the Latin American community in London. London: Queen Mary, University of London.
- McIlwaine, Cathy, Juan Camilo Cock, and Brian Linneker. 2011. No Longer Invisible: The Latin American Community in London. London: Queen Mary, University of London, Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS) and Trust for London.
- Oliver, Caroline. 2014. "Muddied waters: Migrants' entitlements to public services and benefits." In *Migration: The COMPAS anthology*, edited by Bridget Anderson and Michael Keith, 24-25. Oxford: The ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS).
- Paret, Marcel, and Shannon Gleeson. 2016. "Precarity and agency through a migration lens." *Citizenship Studies* 20 (3-4):277-294. doi: 10.1080/13621025.2016.1158356.
- Però, Davide. 2008. "Migrants' Mobilizations and Anthropology: Reflections from the Experience of Latin Americans in the UK." In *Citizenship, Political Engagement and Belonging: Immigrants in Europe and the United States*, edited by Deborah Reed-Danahay and Caroline Brettell, 103-123. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.
- Perry, John. 2012. UK migrants and the private rented sector: A policy and practice report from the Housing and Migration Network. London: Housing and Migration Network.
- Pharoah, Robin, and Oliver Hopwood. 2013. Families and hardship in new and established communities in Southwark. London: Southwark Council.
- Phillimore, Jenny. 2011. "Approaches to health provision in the age of super-diversity: Accessing the NHS in Britain's most diverse city." *Critical Social Policy* 31 (1):5-29.
- Phillimore, Jenny. 2015. "Delivering maternity services in an era of superdiversity: the challenges of novelty and newness." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38 (4):568-582.
- Phillimore, Jenny. 2018. "Perspectives on how government can boost migrant's English Language skills." *Superdiversity.net*, 16/03. <https://superdiversity.net/2018/03/16/perspectives-on-how-government-can-boost-migrants-english-language-skills/>.
- Poppleton, Sarah, Kate Hitchcock, Kitty Lymperopoulou, Jon Simmons, and Rebecca Gillespie. 2013. Social and Public Service Impacts of International Migration at the Local Level. In *Home Office Research Report*. London: Home Office.
- Román-Velázquez, Patria. 2014. "Claiming a Place in the Global City: Urban Regeneration and Latin American Spaces in London." *Revista Eptic Online* 16 (1):84-104.



- Sassen, Saskia. 2005. "The global city: introducing a concept." *Brown journal of world affairs* XI (2):27-43.
- Sassen, Saskia. 2014. *Expulsions*: Harvard University Press.
- Southall Black Sisters. 2008. "Southall Black Sisters' Victory against Ealing Council." accessed 13/03. <https://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk/campaigns/save-sbs-campaign-2008>.
- Spencer, Sarah, and Jonathan Price. 2015. *Safeguarding children from destitution: local authority responses to families with 'no recourse to public funds'*. Oxford: University of Oxford, Centre on Migration, Policy and Society.
- Steyn, Melissa. 2014. "Critical diversity literacy." In *Routledge International Handbook of Diversity Studies*, edited by Steven Vertovec, 379-389. Routledge.
- Street, Brian. 2003. "What's "new" in New Literacy Studies? Critical approaches to literacy in theory and practice." *Current Issues in Comparative Education* 5 (3):77-91.
- Travis, Alan. 2013. "Immigration bill: Theresa May defends plans to create 'hostile environment'." *The Guardian*, 10 October. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/oct/10/immigration-bill-theresa-may-hostile-environment>.
- Vertovec, Steven. 2007. "Super-diversity and its implications." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30 (6):1024-1054.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira, Georgie Wemyss, and Kathryn Cassidy. 2017. "Everyday Bordering, Belonging and the Reorientation of British Immigration Legislation." *Sociology*:1-17.