Living with Diversity: Local Social Imaginaries and the Politics of Intersectionality in a Super-diverse City

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Introduction

According to the philosopher Charles Taylor (2002) the growing presence of socio-cultural diversity in western countries is generating new 'social imaginaries' in which individuals, groups, and governmental institutions are having to reconsider 'the ways in which people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations' (p.106). The growing presence and juxtaposition of diversity, it is argued, encourages the formation of more relational world views that look beyond the bounded politics of territories. These new imaginaries are particularly significant in 'super-diverse' cities (*cf.* Vertovec, 2012) in which the visible presence of diversity has become 'commonplace' and is increasingly 'experienced as a normal part of social life and not as something particularly special' (Wessendorf, 2014: p.407). Such proclamations are underpinned by implicit forms of 'contact theory' in which it is assumed that contacts between 'different' groups generate subjectivities founded on the principles of mutual tolerance and understanding (see Pettigrew, 1998). At the same time there is a growing trend within urban and social policy agendas to curate progressive representations of diversity within cities in order to make them more marketable and attractive to inward investors and skilled, 'creative', workers. Much of the writing on these topics in the urban studies literature is framed at a relatively high level of abstraction and discusses wider 'social trends' and 'ways of thinking' amongst population groups. Time-frames are (re)presented in a linear, diachronic fashion with implicit and explicit assumptions that, despite moments of disruption, the politics of diversity awareness and inclusion in 'western' cities is moving towards a new era of greater pluralism and openness.

However, such approaches often remain disconnected from recent writings in geography that have shed light on the diverse forms of encounter found in cities (and elsewhere) and the spatial and temporal settings in which imaginaries, identities, and reflexive modes of thinking emerge, evolve, and take on political forms (see Wilson, 2016; Waite *et al.*, 2014). As Matejskova and Leitner (2011) point out 'real life contact between members of different social groups is always structurally mediated and embedded in particular historical and geographical contexts' (p.721). There is thus an innate openness, rather than a set of normative tendencies, to encounters and their outcomes, with the possibility that in certain settings new forms of conflict and hostility emerge rather than a more pluralist set of imaginaries. As Thrift (2005) notes cities are characterised as much by maliciousness and the jarring of juxtaposed subjectivities as they are by social imaginaries of tolerance and openness towards the presence of diversity and 'strangers'. Moreover, critics have associated the rise of identity-based diversity politics and imaginations with heightened individualism, the breakdown of collective identities, and a fragmented politics of cultural division and separation (see Bauman, 2003). Some have even aligned the rise of simple narratives of change with the growth of reactionary politics across Europe and elsewhere (see Lilla, 2016; Žižek, 2016).

It is in this wider context that the paper, drawing on in-depth ethnographic evidence from London, argues that there is much to be gained from combining more normative insights on changing social imaginaries with recent writings in geography on the importance of spatio-temporal settings in shaping encounters. The former provides a series of propositions over the changing form and character of contemporary political change but lack a broader spatial and temporal sensitivity to the embedded nature of social imaginaries and how these challenge, or may even undermine, broader generalisations. The latter open up new terrains for empirical analysis by challenging generalised diachronic accounts, but their public policy implications often remain implicit, rather than explicit. There is frequently a focus on, or even celebration of, the openness and relationality of encounters, their endless variety, and their ability to surprise and generate multiple outcomes. What is less clear, however, are the *conditions that underpin the articulation of social imaginaries*, how such imaginaries come into being in specific geographical contexts, and how they are produced and with what effects. In the period following the global financial crisis of

2007/8 these conditions have been subject to rapid changes. In larger cities, with higher levels of socio-cultural diversity, urban environments have undergone new rounds of intense property-led development at the same time as the welfare budgets of government agencies have been drastically reduced in the name of austerity urbanism (Peck and Theodore 2015).

Whilst it is imperative to avoid simple prescriptions for public policy, this paper explores some of core conditions in and through which urban subjectivities and what might be termed *Local Social Imaginaries* [LSIs] are emerging and evolving in contemporary urban contexts. It argues that recent orthodoxies surrounding the 'unstoppable' nature of globalisation and cultural diversification are challenged and enriched by an understanding of the particular intersections of social, economic, and political processes that make-up (diverse) places. It will take as its starting point Delanty's (2012) claim that contemporary imaginations of diversity represent 'both a normative theory (which makes cognitive claims) and also a particular kind of social phenomenon' (p.334). The co-presence and juxtaposition of imagined diversities thus becomes both 'an experience of reality - in the sense of a lived experience and measurable empirical condition - and an interpretation of such experiences…that does not counter-oppose the normative and the empirical' (p.335). LSIs are thus continually (re)shaped by reflexive subjects through processes of interaction, engagement and encounter in place and can take on a variety of forms, ranging from enhanced mutual understanding and collective social imaginaries to hostility and reinforced senses of 'otherness' and distrust. But the paper goes further. It makes direct connections between the conditions of encounter(s) that are being created in cities by waves of neo-liberal austerity and property-led developments and the ways in which these influence the LSIs of citizens. The study shows how and in what ways they create and exacerbate tensions between different social groups by shrinking the spaces and temporalities in which more sustained forms of encounter can take place.

The paper begins by examining the relationships between diversity, in different forms, and LSIs. It then turns to case study work in London that explores transformative identities, governmentalities, and ways of thinking associated with diverse urban living and the conditions in and through which different forms of imaginations emerge and are given expression in calls for (political) action and intervention. The analysis provides empirical evidence that documents and describes a dialectical picture in which diversity is simultaneously celebrated as an everyday phenomenon that helps to bring about new progressive imaginaries at the same time as, under certain conditions, its presence leads to new forms of hostility towards groups that do not 'fit in' with prescribed local social imaginations. These imaginaries, the paper argues, are catalysed and reinforced by *intersectional (re)combinations* of cultural and material processes that are, in turn, shaped by structured and increasingly rapid transformations to the built environment and the effects of welfare cuts and demographic policies. Urban stresses relating to swingeing austerity cuts to welfare, overcrowding, the growing cost of living, changes in labour markets, and globally-oriented urban development programmes shape and influence imaginaries in ways that go beyond simple accounts of the impacts of globalisation and de-territorialised identities. The paper argues that recent policy orthodoxies on 'social mixing' that implicitly or explicitly draw on the assumptions embedded in social contact theories, fail to adequately address these intersections and inter-relationships. It calls for greater awareness of the impacts of contemporary forms of urban policy and austerity cuts on forms of encounter and diversity politics and the ways in which these might be used to mobilise alternative and more critical political agendas in cities.

Diversity, Intersectionality and the Emergence of New Social Imaginaries

For Vertovec (2012), drawing on the writings of Charles Taylor (2003), changes in the socio-cultural composition of cities and populations are leading to the formation of new social imaginaries, defined as the common understandings and presumptions that individuals and citizens possess about their collective social life. Diversity, in this sense, has become a new norm that 'began as a kind of social engineering

idea advocated by specialists, and has eventually been elaborated, promoted and codified to the point that it is now part of everyday understanding…integral to the way that everybody treats each other in society' (p.306). In Taylor's (2002) terms, contemporary modernity is infused with complex new imaginaries that relate to the 'way ordinary people imagine their social surroundings' and the 'common understanding[s] that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy' (p.106). It is claimed that in an an era of difference, a quiet revolution is taking place in the ways in which individuals see themselves and the world around them (see Beck and Grandes, 2007). Post-national discourses, problems, and agendas are being identified and translated into new programmes of political action requiring policy-makers and citizens to 'suspend the assumption of the nation-state… [to] make the empirical investigation of local-global phenomena possible' (Beck and Sznaider, 2006: p.9).

Such narratives underpin a wide range of policy interventions and programmes towards the management of socio-cultural diversity in cities. Many policies implicitly and/or explicitly draw on concepts of 'contact theory' from social psychology that, in Blokland's (2003) terms, represents the 'hypothesis that when the frequency of interactions between groups increases, they will understand and therefore like and respect each other better' (p.6). In other words, encounters and contacts in places assume a 'cultural transformation through mixing...[that] stands as a valorised sign of reified diversity' (Keith, 2005: p.48; see also Fincher and Iveson, 2012). The 'normalisation' of diversity is given a political subjectivity in that it acts on the governmentalities of citizens in a mutually-reinforcing way; its presence encourages the formation of common understanding, practices, and social imaginaries and this in turn generates political agendas that encourage and welcome more diversity and more relational understandings of place. The perceived co-presence of diversity thus sustains and establishes a degree of political legitimacy towards more open and pluralist policy interventions as 'ordinary' citizens come to accept the new 'realities' of a globally-connected world in which belonging and attachments are stretched out over space (see Massey, 2007). This is reflected in a range of urban policy interventions that promote mixed and sustainable forms of neighbourhood planning (see Casey, 2016)[1].

Such orthodoxies have been challenged by writings from across the social sciences. A growing literature within cultural studies has focused on the *intersectionalities* that exist between and within different groups, thereby challenging the assumption that there exist essential categories of subjects whose 'mixing' can be planned for and socially ordered. Intersectionality draws attention to the 'recognition of the differences that exist *among* groups, moving dialogue beyond considering only the differences *between* groups' (Smooth (2014: p.14). It not only focuses on the ways in which individuals make sense of their lives, through imaginaries, but is also 'concerned with the systems that give meaning' to social categories and power hierarchies. The literature on intersectionalities arose in black feminist movements in the United States that drew attention to the multiple layers of contested subjectification that individuals face and how these are shaped by processes of fluidity and relationality in different fields of public policy and everyday living (see Combs, 2014; Wilson, 2014).

These more generic debates over diversity, imaginaries, and intersectionalities have progressed in parallel with writings in geography that has generated empirical and conceptual insights into the diversity of encounters that exist in contemporary cities and the fundamental significance of *spatio-temporal* settings in framing inter-sectional forms of identity-building and politics (see Wilson, 2016). As Valentine (2007)

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[1] The UK government's recent review into social integration, for instance, argues forcefully that a failure to bring about mixing and social contacts has negative social and economic consequences: 'where communities live separately, with fewer interactions between people from different backgrounds, mistrust, anxiety, and prejudice grow. Conversely, social mixing and interactions between people from a wider range of backgrounds can have positive impacts; not just in reducing anxiety and prejudice, but also in enabling people to get on better in employment and social mobility' (Casey, 2016: p.8).

notes, in focusing primarily on questions of cultural identity, much of the writing on intersectionality and broader social imaginaries 'risks losing sight of the fact that in particular spaces there are dominant spatial orderings that produce moments of exclusion for particular social groups' (p.18). And as authors such as Pemberton and Phillimore (2016) have shown, the relations between contemporary forms of place-making and 'super-diversity' are contingent on a variety of factors, including the 'visibility' of difference and contrasting attitudes towards the presence of diversity amongst different ethnic groups. Neighbourhoods that have experienced rapid in-migration have become 'liminal spaces' in which 'diversity is tolerated but…where no dominant neighbourhood identity becomes embedded' (p.15). In a similar vein, Delanty (2012) argues that the growth of diverse neighbourhoods should be principally viewed as an 'empirically grounded normativity' in which 'universalistic orientations emerge from a critical engagement with one's situation, the particular, the here and now in so far as this is a situation involving a relation with others' (p.336).

The outcomes associated with these relational interactions and encounters between subjects generate a variety of social imaginaries and ways of thinking about others and about place that are highly contextualised and relate to specific geographies and contexts. Given the fluid character of identity formation, subjects can also hold multiple perspectives and identities *simultaneously* and in a *dialectical* manner. Under certain conditions they may express forms of mutual learning, a desire to reflexively re-shape their own subjectivities in relating to groups of others or generic perspectives of 'place', at the same time as contacts under certain conditions can generate hostility and divergence with specific types of difference and certain groups. For Clayton (2009) 'an understanding of place emphasises that experiences between and within places differ in terms of how individuals are positioned by their racial and ethnic identities, their social class positions but also their geographic locations' (p.488; see Massey, 2007). Similar themes are taken up in Bridge's (2005) work on everyday living in cities in which contemporary processes of identity-formation 'emerge in the urban neighbourhood in which difference is a daily reality and a negotiation' (p.158; see Hall, 2014).

Recent geographical writing on the temporality of encounters also focuses on the extent to which they take on *sustained* or more *fleeting* characteristics. The former, as authors such as Clayton (2009) show, represent more regularised and formally or informally institutionalised interactions between subjects. Under such conditions, interactions between groups tend to be stronger and allow for cross-cultural and cross-class interaction(s) and mutual learning. Research in the field of children's geographies, for instance, has shed light on the role of schools, particularly primary schools, in acting as 'sites of encounter and incremental learning for parents' in urban environments with a relatively high degree of socio-cultural diversity (Wilson, 2014: p.102). They, along with other public infrastructure, can influence the formation of LSIs by acting as the social surroundings in and through which common understandings and ways of interacting can be forged, beyond those that emerge in classrooms and amongst pupils (see Holt, 2013). Alongside formal settings, thriving urban areas also possess what Pieket and Valentine (2017) define as 'socialised spaces', such as sports clubs and voluntary associations that act as quasi-public spaces of temporally varied but often sustained encounters. Other research has shown that where encounters are limited to 'fleeting' exchanges between citizens, the capacity for more engaged forms of interaction is limited. Matejskova and Leitner's (2011) work in neighbourhoods that had experienced recent in-migration in Berlin found that absence of sustained encounters had helped to generate a degree of hostility with existing residents who felt 'disconnected' from the new arrivals.

But just as approaches to LSIs and encounters need to avoid cultural determinism, so it is important to avoid the trap of spatial and temporal determinism. Sustained encounters also have the potential to breed intense forms of friction between groups of citizens, particularly over the 'appropriate' uses of public space and the boundaries between the public and private uses. There is no reason to assume that slow

encounters will generate more inclusive imaginaries. As Abram (2014) claims, in much of the urban studies literature 'the concept of conflicting temporalities is generally underemphasised in favour of spatial justice'. Yet 'games of temporality are constantly being played' (p.132) in which different citizens and interests draw on different temporal imaginations and frames. Whilst fleeting encounters may fuel mutual hostility in the case of Berlin, in other contexts they represent an important part of mutual social support networks and sustain a strong sense of neighbourliness (see Painter, 2012). Professional workers, for instance, often possess social networks that are stretched out over space, meaning that 'local' encounters with neighbours take on a less sustained, but nonetheless welcoming and supportive form (see Savage, 2015).

An examination of the conditions through which LSIs are established in specific places also draws attention to the factors that generate *insecurity, fear, and loss*. Waite *et al.*'s (2014) research on the views of urban residents towards asylum seekers in the UK uncovered a fractured set of social imaginaries in which there was little 'recognition of potential shared concerns about economic insecurity within minority groups' but the emergence of 'an anxiety about the threat such groups might pose to majority groups' ability to maintain and protect their privileged status and way of life' (p.321). Much of the focus of attention was on the various 'capacities to hurt' that incomers represented to imagined forms of existing well-being and place cohesion. They posed a series of imagined threats to vulnerable social groups (in particular women) and those looking for work and housing. Rather than the presence of such diversity generating relational, diversity-oriented social imaginaries (*cf*. Taylor, 2003), asylum-seekers were viewed as 'illegitimate' agents, both in a formal/legal sense and in relation to being 'out of place'. In urban areas already suffering from multiple forms of hurt and insecurity brought about by capitalist restructuring and neo-liberal austerity, it is unsurprising that contact(s) between diverse socio-cultural groups often generates LSIs characterised by 'the hardening of prejudice and stereotyping' (Matejskova and Leitner, 2011: p.720). Such findings chime with other writings by authors such as Scheffer (2011) whose work on so-called 'host' populations in the Netherlands demonstrate the power that a sense of loss can have on citizens if they see rapid cultural and social changes in their neighbourhoods.

These feelings of loss and hurt are taking form as cities across Europe and elsewhere are experiencing increases in socio-cultural diversity at the same time as they are becoming more unequal in terms of income and asset ownership. The disconnections between groups are compounded by rising income inequalities, polarising labour markets, and crises of housing availability and affordability (see Jackson, 2015). They are also reinforced by physical changes brought about by urban redevelopment programmes and economic orthodoxies that prioritise 'creative' forms of growth. A growing body of research shows that resentments and tensions between groups are often 'laced with examples of perceived economic and social injustices' and/or 'contextual expectations about appropriate ways of behaving' (Valentine, 2008: p.329). In a similar vein, Valentine and Sadgrove's (2012) UK-based research explores the ways in which moral norms about behaviour and ways of acting are 'constituted in and through space', or what they term 'regimes of judgment' (p.2060). Where the presence and practices of diverse individuals or groups challenge dominant spatial orderings, this opens up both possibilities for the evolution of more relational and open LSIs, but can also fuel feelings of division that lead to negative judgments and stereotyping[2].

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[2] The UK's vote to leave the EU in June 2006 exemplifies these wider trends. The outcome was, in part, based on political campaigns that openly presented growing diversity as a 'threat' to social cohesion and economic well-being (see Vote Leave, 2016). Referendum voting patterns show that Leave votes were higher in areas in which there had been proportionately large and recent *relative* increases in external migration (see *The Economist*, 2016).

It is in this wider political and analytical context that the remainder of the paper now examines the processes in and through which LSIs are formed and reproduced in ways that sought to capture the presence of common and shared understanding that existed in the area, the form and character of common practices, and perceptions of the legitimacy and the 'fairness' (otherwise) associated with recent changes. It draws directly on research carried out in a specific urban location, the Borough of Haringey. Interviews were conducted with 53 local residents between October 2014 and October 2015. Its core aim was to examine the reflexive inter-relationships between place diversity and identities in a part of London that is experiencing rapid economic, social, and (built) environmental change. The methodology was qualitative in nature and involved in-depth 1-2 hour interviews. Respondents were asked to reflect on the following topics, each of which was then analysed in relation to the specific definitions of LSIs (including their imaginations of social surrounding, common understandings of diverse practices, and a shared sense of legitimacy): their biographies and how and why they had come to live in the area; the extent to which their perceptions of place diversity influenced their choices of location and the degree to which they could exercise such 'choice'; their perceptions of the more 'positive' and 'negative' aspects of the areas in which they now live; whether they saw socio-cultural diversity as an asset or a liability; their activities and core social relationships; and how the propinquity and co-presence of different types of diversity had influenced the ways in which they thought about themselves and their own social practices, perspectives, and ways of living. The empirical findings show that rather than fitting into neat divisions between subjects, views of diversity offer a complex set of dialectical and intersectional LSIs exist in which it is both recognised and celebrated, but simultaneously seen as a threat and a source of conflict and division[3]. The discussion identifies the intersectional conditions and circumstances that reflexively shape these subjectivities and the types of interactions and encounters that take place.

Researching Local Social Imaginaries: Evidence from Haringey, London

Haringey was selected as it is a microcosm of London's diverse demographics (see Figure 1). It possesses a population of 236,000 and has been described as the 'fifth most ethnically diverse in the country', with over 100 languages spoken and almost two-thirds of the population (65.3%) defining itself as from an 'ethnic minority' background (ONS, 2014). Its migrant and ethnic minority communities are not dominated by any one particular group. It has a young population relative to London with 24.9% of Haringey's residents under 20 years old; 66.3% of its population between 20-64, while 8.8% are aged 65 and over, much lower than 11.1% for the rest of London. Almost two-thirds (64%) of the 101,955 households of the borough are considered 'deprived' in one or more dimensions. However, there are also high degrees of spatial diversity between and within neighbourhoods, with a very sharp east-west divide, with strong contrasts in terms of income, education and employment levels as well proportions of ethnic minorities. Figure 2 shows a reasonably strong correlation between our respondents and the average values for the borough, London, and England and Wales[4]. The majority (27) were born in the UK, although a sizeable proportion were also born overseas[5]. The intersectional character of our sample

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[3] It is important to note that responses are anonymised but quotations also maintain the full text of the original words used during the interviews as these are integral to the analysis.

[4] According to a number of key characteristics measured in the UK Census 2011.

[5] 3 respondents were born in Jamaica, 2 born in the USA, Zimbabwe, Somalia, the Netherlands, and Poland respectively and 1 born in Malawi, Djibouti, India, Spain, Guyana, South Africa, Syria, Dominica, Portugal and Mexico. In addition our interviewees identified themselves as belonging to a range of different ethnic groups as defined by the UK Census, the largest of which was White British (20) but also 9 who identified as White Other, 3 as Asian/Asian British: Indian, 6 as Black/Black British: Caribbean, 4 as Black/Black British: African, 1 as Mixed White and Asian, 1 as Mixed White and Black Caribbean, 1 as Mixed Other and 5 as Other. In terms of level of education (including both achieved or currently undertaking) 14 of our interviewees reached postgraduate degree level, 17 undergraduate degree level and 19 some form of secondary school, college or vocational training. The household monthly net income of our interviewees was fairly evenly split with 14 answering that they and their household earned more than £2,500 per/month, 11 between £1,500-£2,500, 23 less than £1,500 and 2 who did not answer. In

allows for a more rounded assessment of the (place) conditions through which cosmopolitan subjectivities of different types are produced and reproduced.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE
INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE

The eastern side of Haringey is undergoing fundamental processes of regeneration and reconstruction. In the wake of de-industrialisation in the 1970s the area's property and residential markets have been relatively depressed and it became one of the more deprived parts of London, with high concentrations of social problems and unemployment, a housing stock dominated by poor quality social housing, and the presence of a relatively low-skilled workforce. However, since the early 2000s, these characteristics have turned the area into an 'opportunity space' as London's economy has expanded, demand for housing has increased, and the city's population has been swelled by unprecedented levels of in-migration. The local authority, in line with others in London, has pursued a vigorous economic growth agenda, much of which is driven by speculative property development projects led by global investors. The primary objective is to bring about structural changes to the economic base of the borough and to establish 'creative' industries, whilst attracting creative class workers (see LB Haringey, 2014). In a bleak assessment of the borough's housing crisis, the authority's *Housing Strategy Consultation* (2015) states that,

'demand for homes continues to grow, with housing becoming increasingly unaffordable for many people, while government funding decisions mean that support for councils to meet this demand is shrinking at the same time as support for individuals. Meanwhile, the quality of existing homes is often not high enough, and inequalities are reinforced by the way different kinds of housing are distributed across the borough' (p.1).

Moreover, it estimates the problems of availability and affordability will become even more acute as, *'Haringey's population is growing, from 216,510 in 2001 to a projected 293,7494 by 2026'* (p.7) and the ratio between *'house prices and earnings in Haringey has increased from 4.31 in 1997 to 11.15 in 2013'* (p.13).

The key objective of local planning policy is to create mixed and balanced communities in which the urban fabric reflects *'the full diversity of our vibrant borough, with people of all ages, ethnicities, incomes and backgrounds living together in strong, successful and cohesive communities'*. In reality, the processes of change taking place on the ground are characterised by growing unaffordability, increasing rates of overcrowding, the persistence of underemployment in poor communities, and the growth of new separations and parallel lives between those living in new developments and those residing in older housing. In addition, the borough also acts as an arrival area for new migrants . However, as with all forms of intersectionality, the types of migrants arriving are subject to very different experiences and forms of engagement and encounter, depending on combinations of their class, employment status, type of housing tenure, gender, and ethnicity.

The conditions in which they are arriving are being re-shaped by unprecedented local government austerity cuts in the wake of the global financial crisis. In the 1980s, Haringey borough was one of the key sites of resistance to the Thatcher government's national policy programmes (see Cochrane, 1993). During the 1990s and 2000s the local Labour leadership has gradually embraced a very different and more entrepreneurial political outlook. This has partly resulted from internal changes within the Labour group, but also reflects a broader perception that some parts of the borough face significant economic problems,

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terms of household tenure, 22 were in owner-occupier households, 15 were renting from a housing association/local authority, 9 were renting privately and 4 owned their property as part of a shared ownership scheme.

that can 'only' be tackled through economic renewal. Since 2010 the council's total budget has been cut by 40%, with £160million of savings, resulting in a 45% drop in staff and the loss of 12 public buildings. Between 2016-2018 a further £20million of reductions are planned (London Borough of Haringey, 2017: p.1). At the same time spending is being re-allocated to central government-set priorities, such as social care; increasing from £61million in 2013/14 to £91million by 2018/19, or one in every three pounds spent. A continuing central government push towards encouraging self-sufficiency in finance means that the council has become increasingly dependent on the promotion of development projects to raise future returns through planning 'gain' arrangements. Resources to support discretionary local activities, such as community centres, and the maintenance of public spaces are being squeezed at a time when demands are relentlessly increasing, thus putting pressure on the borough's most vulnerable residents. In 2016/17 its total Housing Budget was only £3.7million (1.4%) out of a total of £255.6million, despite the growing crisis of affordability and overcrowding highlighted in its strategy. In the next sections, we now look at the implications of some of these broader contexts in shaping forms of encounter and LSIs.

Intersectional Encounters and LSIs of Diversity
One of the strongest findings to emerge from the research related to the intersections between respondents' social class and cultural ethnicity and what Clayton (2009) terms *sustained* encounters in which the interactions between subjects are regularised and formally or informally institutionalised. It was these forms of interaction, more than others, that established and reproduced more reflexive LSIs, The most significant examples of this related to the use of public welfare services, particularly the education system, and the ways in which social infrastructure such as schools acted as a focus for encounters between diverse intersections of residents. The intersections between *the presence/absence of children* and the networks of care and sociability that surround them generated intense forms of interaction. Many female respondents of all classes and cultural ethnicities, claimed that having children had had a transformative effect on their social networks and their broader perceptions of otherness and place. One recent in-migrant from Poland, with children, summed up the experiences of many of our interviewees:

"the thing is, since I've had a child, it's really changed my friendship circles a lot…because I used to be much more about like my friends, or my colleagues, or my partner…it's all about like my son's friends, so we're much more likely, now, to socialise with parents of his friends, than say, some of our old friends...in terms of the amount of time we spend, it's, probably, much more the frequency of it is much more, and the length of time is much more about parent friends".

As reflected elsewhere in the geographical literature (*cf.* Wilson, 2014), schools and nurseries played a key role in binding diverse groups and creating new collective identities, imaginations and networks; what one parent described as *"the connection thing: it is [my] children who have, been bringing me together with lots of different people, helping to make those contacts"*.

The influences of children on attitudes to diversity and place went beyond the institutional settings of schools. A number of parents commented on the ways in which their children's social networks were 'more diverse' than their own and generated more outward-looking relational imaginations. One mother summarised her own thoughts on her children's friends: *"they have the opportunity to go and mix up with them and I wasn't in need to mix up with them and they wasn't need, either, to be mixing up with me"*. This perception that children brought about deeper and more interactive forms of integration than found amongst older generations, was a widely shared experience. One White British longer term resident provided one of the most thoughtful insights:

"my kids' generation are completely the most tolerant, I mean, my kids, in terms of their feelings about their friends, and who they hung out with, didn't work out on all the kind of marriage/dating front, although a lot of my kids friends have

married Chinese and Vietnamese and Hong Kong and Poles etc., - my son's just married a Hungarian - so their generation did not see a problem about colour and race and so on and so forth".

The 'everyday contact' with diversity in the neighbourhood was perceived as a 'school for integration', with some parents reflecting that *"the people who grow up here do integrate because they've grown up here and they mix in school and they probably feel more in common with the locals than with their families original"*. Such views were clear evidence that under conditions of sustained engagement, LSIs that valued commonplace diversity were emerging.

The role of children-centred networks is therefore very powerful but it is also very gendered and/or focussed on family relations. They are particularly important for recent in-migrants and those without close relatives nearby who may otherwise experience isolation. For such groups these networks can also generate a range of interactions that 'normalise' diversity as a lived experience. In the words of one parent, having children is a key factor that makes you become *"part of the community because you build around the school gates"*. Child networks also formed a strong bridge between different class groups of parents and brought together new forms of intersection in ways that, as will be discussed below, those without children were excluded from, sometimes exacerbating their marginality. Haringey's schools, along with those across central London, have benefitted from central government policy intervention during the 2000s and have become relatively successful in terms of both quantitative attainment and in the qualitative mixing of children from different class and ethnic backgrounds (see Burgess, 2014). In Haringey there was clear evidence of these broader trends and their impact on social imaginaries and ways of thinking about diversity and place. It demonstrates the fundamental role of core welfare services in underpinning shared, sustained, and meaningful encounters and social imaginations. Where they are well funded, identifiably 'local' in character, and perceived to be successful, they provide a strong focus around which citizens can build meaningful encounters that cross intersectional differences.

The research also identified more informal types of sustained contact and encounter organised from the bottom-up by communities and residents. As Amin and Thrift (2002) suggest, networks of friendship have become increasingly important in shaping social imaginaries in diverse cities as individuals and migrants, in particular, find themselves disconnected from family ties. The respondents highlighted the relationships between the formation and reproduction of strong friendship networks and organised activities and events, what Piekut and Valentine (2017) term quasi-public social institutions. These provided the basis for cultural interactions and intersections across different ethnic groups and, to a lesser extent, classes. Haringey possesses a plethora of such organisations that seek to promote interaction between residents in the name of a diversity agenda. One such organisation, the Selby Trust[6], for instance, aims to *'to increase the capacity and sustainability of historically excluded groups in the diverse communities served'*, whilst others such as Living Under One Sun[7], a not-for-profit organization, aims to *'actively creating places for communities to meet, access services, share skills and ideas and shape their neighbourhoods'* as well as *'to inspire*

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[6] The Selby Trust manages the Selby Centre (a former school premises in Tottenham) as a multi-purpose community and social enterprise centre and has three main aims: (i) *'to increase the capacity and sustainability of historically excluded groups in the diverse communities served'*; (ii) *'to promote and support, directly and through networking, a range of opportunities to enable all communities to achieve economic, social and cultural growth'*; (iii) *'to be a key place in community and economic development through partnership working at all levels – locally, London-wide, nationally and internationally'*. These aims are served by five inter-related core functions: (a) *Community Facilities Management* - Maintaining the centre as a community facility which reaches over 100 enterprises and attracts 1500 individuals on a regular basis; (b) *Community Development Centre* – Bringing grassroots partnerships and consortia together in a rich mix of cutting edge services that challenge poverty, injustice and inequality; (c) *Community Economic Development* – Achieving sustainability through social enterprise that promote growth in the lo-cal economy whilst serving social and environmental functions; (d) *Community Safety* – Encourage safer neighbourhoods with less violence, anti-social behaviour and better life chances for young people, women, offenders and ex-offenders; (e) *Community Environmental Development* – Greening the Selby Centre by creating a diverse, low carbon community as a model of good practice.

[7] Since it was created in 2005 by *'mothers of many cultures and ages to tell their stories through meet, cook and eat sessions in a corner of Totten-ham'* the activities it undertakes have gradually expanded and evolved over time from its original focus on strengthening social cohesion to include a focus on enhancing the social mobility of residents through a wide range of events, projects, training programmes and courses (LUOS, 2014).

across generations and cultures taking responsibility to build, protect, share and celebrate a positive neighbourhood and environment both locally and globally' (2014: p.1). These organisations are part of a thriving local voluntary and community sector through which some respondents had developed and established friendship networks and/or social relationships that transcended intersectional differences. They are funded almost entirely through combinations of local authority support and local rents, much of which is now threatened by austerity and welfare cuts and whose loss would undermine some of the local conditions in which more reflexive and 'legitimate' forms of encounter and commonality are taking place.

These were particularly evident in relation to longer term residents in established social housing areas, for whom organised activities were essential to the building of their social networks and engagements with others. A number of traditional White British working class respondents talked about how engagement through voluntary activities and festivals had generated a broader awareness of 'others' and new LSIs. A good example was found in the attitude of one long-term resident who noted that living alongside Turkish immigrants had transformed his outlooks and influenced his geographical imaginations of people and places:

"I wasn't too clever on all my views on immigration before, but speaking to people, it's like a real flipping eye opener. There's a lot of Turkish people in that area and I could imagine, if you were speaking to him, the circumstances he's been through to end up here and it's made me realise it is important, it's important to help these people - I didn't really think that before - I used to think 'oh, close the border,' n'all that".

Many reported that these engagements had led to new forms of *(re)imagining* about 'different' types of cultures, peoples, and places, the impacts of which went beyond a sense of identity and belonging and incorporated more relational re-imaginations of global geopolitics and the position of 'others'. Organised community activities offered an opportunity to develop a greater level of inter-cultural understanding, appreciation, and acceptance of the diverse backgrounds of his neighbours:

"I'd never really come across that many different religions. And coming here ... once you get to know people…I dunno what I thought before, actually a girl I've spoke to a couple of times, young girl - she's Muslim - got the shawl over her head [sic.] *and I don't know what ... what I usually think like what are they like staunch religious n'all that, when you speak to her, she's laughing and cracking jokes n'all that, just like normal people* [sic.] *do, and it's like, they're just the same".*

An older West Indian migrant, living in social housing, explained, for instance, how her increased contact and interactions with 'diverse' neighbours had made her *"more tolerant with people around 'cos you don't know what they've come from, you don't know their mentality. It makes me more aware of what's happening around me and what they will be going through".* This notion of growing empathy emerges from a greater understanding of the experiences that others have had through communication, much of which takes place, it was claimed, in sustained local encounters. The diverse urban environment provides the spaces through which these forms of learning and changing subjectivities emerge even if this, sometimes, incorporated selective simplifications and views of people and places elsewhere.

Alongside these more organised types of interactions, respondents reported that their engagements with others often took place in public settings such as parks, schools, and local small shops and cafés, the presence (or absence) of which helped shaped their LSIs (for similar findings see Neal *et al.*, 2016). Most respondents report friendships across ethnic groups as an empirical norm, or a part of their everyday life, the 'commonplace' diversity identified by anthropologist writers on London such as Wessendorf (2014). And contrary to the growing policy orthodoxy that the presence of diversity acts as source of division and insecurity there was evidence amongst recent migrants and groups who suffer from socio-cultural discrimination, that diversity generated perceptions of ontological security, as opposed to insecurity or

isolation. Respondents talked openly of a place in which, *"you expect it to be diverse, you expect people to be fairly open minded, accepting and open"*.

In many cases this sense of security emerged through networks of friends, work-colleagues, and other forms of socialising. We found evidence of wide-ranging kinship and friendship networks in terms of the cultural and ethnic background of a respondent's social circles, with some respondents being in mixed partnerships/relationships or having children who are in mixed partnerships. Sometimes this evoked almost romanticised perceptions of urban harmony with some residents seeing their ethnically diverse environment creating what one long term White British, working resident characterised as *"a beautiful community"*. One respondent, summed up the feeling expressed (both explicitly and implicitly) by many towards the diversity of their neighbourhood in remarking *"The thing is, it's normal, I grew up around loads of different cultures, a lot of my friends were from all over the world, it's not something I even thought about before you asked me that question"*. Such responses were typical of those amongst our sample, such as homosexual couples, who felt 'out of place' in more politically and culturally conservative social environments. Or in the words of one long-term resident, originally from Syria, the area's diversity engendered a sense of imagined comfort in which *"I don't feel like a stranger, like the odd one out"*.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that LSIs consisting of 'common' understandings, practices, and a widely-shared sense of legitimacy (*cf.* Taylor, 2003) are most likely to emerge in specific temporal and spatial settings and conditions. There was some evidence that 'contact' and the visible presence of socio-ethnic diversity was encouraging the formation of new types of local social imagining. It was widely reported that diversity made the area "interesting" and "attractive". There was also evidence for processes of subjective 'learning' about difference and the acquisition of more relational understandings of cultures and places. In many cases respondents recounted that living in proximity to diverse and mixed neighbours had encouraged a growing sense of local *and* translocal awareness and reflexivity. However, the analysis goes further and shows that it is not contacts *per se* that shape such imaginaries, but the contacts that are forged and developed in specific spatial and temporal settings. The presence of well-funded social and welfare institutions, particularly local schools, along with voluntary organisations that existed to promote engagement between different groups, helped to establish more reflexive LSIs. There were multiple examples of changes to the identities, subjectivities, and governmental frames of respondents. The presence of diversity acted as a source of cultural learning, security, and neighbourliness. And yet at the same time, as will be examined below, under different spatial and temporal conditions, many of which are related to material changes to the built environment and welfare cuts, new tensions and forms of conflict over the 'legitimacy' of increased diversity have emerged. The next section will explore these more critical imaginaries and the perceived 'hurts' generated by the presence of 'new' in-migrants on the physical condition of the urban environment and the social character of the area.

Growing Divergence, Neighbourhood Change, and Critical Encounters of the Local and Global

The research uncovered LSIs characterised growing forms of hostility to the presence of selective forms of diversity. Whilst some of this hostility is targeted at unknown and anonymous wealthy 'foreign' buyers of expensive properties who have been acquiring land and exclusive sites across the borough, most is focussed on marginal groups whose activities and cultural practices are seen as being 'different' to the norm and 'out of character' with the place, even with the presence of commonplace diversity. Such findings reflect Taylor's (2003) concern with perceptions of the legitimacy of diversity imaginaries and has echoes of Waite *et al.*'s (2014) research on the presence of negative attitudes towards the presence of asylum-seekers in some UK cities and their perceived capacity to 'hurt' and undermine the 'cohesion' of places. The projection of these critical perspectives was framed through forms of intersectionality and combinations of the 'wrong' types of spatial and temporal practices, many of which were associated with

targeted individuals who had failed to integrate 'properly' and represented a disorderly and disruptive presence to a dominant territorial and essential sense of place. There are strong representations of the broader politics found across England (and much of Europe) of growing anti-multiculturalism. The section begins with a discussion of perceptions of change. The interviews highlight the presence of selective forms of hostility, rejection, and divergence. It then moves on to explore the relative *fluidity and fragility* of LSIs of diversity and the ways in which relational forms of interaction are subject to constant change and re-articulation.

The most common form of *overt othering* amongst respondents relates to so-called 'newcomers from Eastern Europe'. They are widely seen as 'problem communities' who fail to conform to the existing orderliness and social conventions of the places in which they now live. Such views consisted of more than a simple expression of hostility but reflected a complex intersection of a variety of factors and imaginations of hurt concerning: perceived reductions in the availability, affordability, and quality of housing and employment; the decline of public services in the wake of unprecedented welfare/austerity cuts; and the socially and spatially divisive character of on-going regeneration programmes. It is under these conditions that LSIs of hostility have emerged and taken on their most powerful forms. Almost all respondents, but particularly those in more marginal and/or precarious housing and employment conditions, expressed such hurts, even in interviews in which they simultaneously expressed a 'positive' and 'pluralist' imagination of cultural diversity and its disappearance.

Respondents discussed, often at length, the negative changes that were taking place in their neighbourhoods as a consequence of urban regeneration programmes and the influence that externally financed and globally-oriented projects were having on their engagement with other groups and residents. Many commented on the recent and ongoing transformation of the housing stock in the area and the ways in which its regeneration had fuelled local tensions. This is happening through a combination of processes: the conversion of single houses into small flats or houses in multiple occupation, particularly in the poorer parts of the borough that have been singled out for redevelopment, or in the wealthier, western part, where there have been high-profile purchases of houses by 'super-rich' foreign investors or absentee landlords. The changing ownership and rental structure of large parts of Haringey which those transformations are bringing into being, are perceived mostly negatively. Some respondents from lower income groups also noted that their neighbourhoods and social circles were not diverse in terms of income and reflected the spatial divisions which exist within Haringey. For example: *"a lot of the people that I've interacted with and I've come across on the eastern side are more the working class and the underclass and the western side, more middle class area, upper class…, so you can actually see that there's a massive difference…".* Or as another long-term resident stated: *"there are also big families living there, there are also many homes with problems like domestic violence, drugs, alcohol, unemployment, some juvenile, criminal issues as well, but it's a big mix over there and it's quite varied ... you've got Afro Caribbean families, you've got Asian families, you've got Eastern Europeans".* Regeneration programmes and austerity cuts were compounding these spatialised problems and entrenching LSIs of disconnection and hostility.

Negative perceptions of the hurts generated by recent migrants were particularly strong amongst, although not exclusive to, longer term residents, many of whom were themselves part of earlier waves of migration to the area. A retired nurse who arrived in Haringey from Jamaica in 1975, for instance, stated:

"I have seen a lot of changes over the years because when I came to live in Haringey, there were a lot of shops, mostly Caribbean people, but now, there's a lot of diversities, different nationalities and less West Indian. That time when I started living here, everything was clean and there wasn't like now, there's now a lot of ... with the different diversities coming in, there's a lot of changes where there's a lot of dumping and theft and most of the shops that were in the high road, Tottenham High Road, has closed and the different people take it over".

Whilst such statements reflect an acknowledgement that the economy and provision of services in the area have changed, this is explained as being 'caused' by the arrival of certain groups, rather than resulting from structural and planning policy changes. Or as another long term resident, who was generally very positive about diversity in Haringey, noted it was increasingly felt that the presence of 'new types' of others was generating tensions and had helped to initiative negative changes to the built environment:

"They're all sorts [sic.]. *There's Romanians, there's this, there is that. They are Eastern Europeans and they are loud, they are rude, they, you know, at 3 in the morning, ins and outs, closing, banging doors, speaking loud on their phone. It's just very upsetting. A few times I've gone on to say, 'is there something wrong with you?', 'do you need help?', you know. I've landlord, he spoke to them…it's ridiculous. The amount of rubbish that is on the street".*

Migrants were blamed by some for crowding-out opportunities for families and longer-term residents to live in the area; *"it's not diverse in terms of ages because younger people can't afford to live there, not anymore".* Others complained that the absence of younger families meant that *"it's absolutely quiet, it's really really quiet all the time…. There's no cohesion, as far as I can see".*

There was generally relatively little reflection on local labour market and housing change of which the newer migrants were often the principal victims. The intersections between the new migrants' age and gender, being mainly single young men, along with their class position and marginal connection to the labour market, meant that the majority of their encounters with neighbours and residents were through their visible use of public space(s) and their occupation of poor quality and visibly overcrowded housing stock. This was reinforced by cultural separations and the absence of clear opportunities for the 'sustained encounters' that, for other migrants such as parents, provided an institutionalised mechanism through which to build social networks. One further perception of the group was that it was both expanding and transitory, with a constant through-flow of individuals. Their brief temporal presence added to their 'disruptive' and hurtful influences[8].

These demographic shifts intersected with intense forms of cultural separation and disengagement, particularly around the issue of the use (or non-use) of the English language in public places. A long-term White British respondent highlighted the ways in which language differences played an important role in generating local separations between residents and eroded an imagined sense of local 'community':

"if you walk down the street here, you often don't hear any English being spoken and that's a real change from say, for example, the West Indian community, although they obviously look different [sic.] *because of the colour of their skin, they all speak perfect English. I think language is so important for integration, that that's the biggest barrier that prevents the different groups from getting together".*

The views of another encapsulated those of many that were interviewed: *"I'm not tolerant with people that don't speak English, trying to understand what they're trying to say to you now".* Newcomers did not behave as immigrants either normatively 'should' or 'did' act in an imagined past and their lack of English language skills reinforced barriers between ethnic groups, in ways highlighted by similar studies (see Clayton, 2009; Leitner, 2012). Their perceived 'unwillingness' (*cf.* Ahmed, 2014) to play the imagined roles ascribed to newcomers to the area acted as a source of tension and local conflict.

The newer migrants were also blamed by some for the corrosion of 'friendly', everyday bonds and relationships of trust between neighbours. This was evoked by long-term residents who lived in streets where the recent deterioration and lack of affordability of the housing stock had increased the degree of

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[8] It is important to note that in this project, we were unable to verify the veracity of such claims given the limited official data, but were also unable to interview individuals who fitted these categories given their liminality and marginality.

transience and multiple occupancy. These views crossed ethnic and social groups but were particularly prevalent amongst working-class respondents living in areas undergoing redevelopment and social problems. One elderly Black British resident typified such responses:

"on one side they're all young, Eastern Europeans, they don't speak English as a first language, they make a lot of noise, which we complain about, so we don't have a very good relationship with them, they are a bit of a nuisance really... 15 years ago, I used to know quite a few people in our street, but they've all left the neighbourhood, the people I used to know, and the people who moved in just don't mix".

Concerns over neighbourhood change were reflected in other negative LSIs. A white British resident for instance, felt that growing diversity had had a detrimental impact on a local sense of social cohesion:

"There's a load of 'em round there... Most of all them shops are all kind of foreign people [sic.]*... You don't see a lot of English... I think it's the same all over the place ... The Romanians stay to their own, the Polish stay to their own, Albanians, they stay to their own".*

Others, including young White British respondents, held equally negative feelings with typical criticisms of newcomers as *"not trustworthy"*. Negative experiences were put down to the presence of 'dangerous' others and the hurt they bring

To summarise, this section has provided graphic evidence of the emergence of sources of social tensions and conflicts in areas of 'super-diversity' and the ways in which these conditions impact on LSIs. Whilst many respondents claim that diversity represents a commonplace and positive backdrop to everyday living in the area, they are also quick to make distinctions between different types of diversity and migrant practices. In areas of regeneration and/or locations undergoing higher levels of housing and employment stress, the intersections between material and cultural dynamics are producing particularly acute forms of othering and LSIs of discrimination and separation. Despite a prevailing local policy rhetoric of mixing and inclusion, the evidence has shown that in a context of inequality, perceived cultural separations over belonging and place have been amplified. The sharing of space generates tensions where there exist conditions of overcrowding, growing problems of housing affordability and accessibility, and urban regeneration programmes that fuel juxtapositions of inequality and perceptions of 'hurt' (*cf.* Waite *et al.*, 2014). As the discussion shows, where there are concentrations of overcrowded housing with relatively low-skilled, lower income (often) single male migrant residents, whose English-language skills are poor, negative perceptions and forms of othering are quick to emerge and take on a variety of forms, echoing the findings of research in working class neighbourhoods in other cities (*cf.* Matejskova and Leitner, 2011). These negative social imaginaries are shaped by *local* conditions and experiences of shared place, rather than being directed 'upwards' towards national government policies (such as austerity cuts) and the investors and developers who were re-shaping the borough social and economic geographies.

Conclusions

The paper has drawn on an in-depth study of perceptions of diversity and the emergence and evolution of *local social imaginaries* in Haringey, a diverse area of London. It has argued for a more integrated approach to the study of diversity in cities that combines recent writings in philosophy and cultural studies on the development and evolution of identities and social imaginaries across 'western' societies (*cf.* Taylor, 2003) *and* the burgeoning literature on the geography of encounters that stresses the importance of spatial and temporal (place) settings in influencing identities and ways of thinking about difference (see Wilson, 2016). The former, establish powerful normative propositions on the form and character of social change but have the weakness of over-generalisation and the tendency to establish diachronic and all-embracing characterisations. The latter often celebrate the 'openness' and growing relationality of encounters in cities (and elsewhere) but tend to be less prescriptive in highlighting their public policy

implications or leave implicit their normative insights on the *conditions* under which specific types of imaginaries and subjectivities emerge.

In light of its findings, the paper establishes three core insights for future research and urban policy and planning agendas.

First, it highlights the *geographical variability and embeddedness of social imaginaries* and the power of place-based, lived experiences in shaping broader perceptions of political, social, and economic processes. In the Haringey case, the stresses on the urban environment created by regeneration programmes, concentrations of socio-economic hardship, the decreasing quality and quantity of public spaces, and the limited opportunities to access housing, were more significant in shaping perceptions of hurt and the impacts of growing diversity, than more abstract influences such as national social policy changes or the global financial crisis. Specific social groups rapidly became targeted as the generators of local 'problems', with relatively little focus channelled 'upwards' towards policy-makers and corporate investors/developers. There are wider political implications inherent in such findings. The key role played by local experiences in shaping broader perceptions and political outlooks has recently been highlighted in debates over the Brexit Referendum of 2016 and those 'left behind' by globalisation (see *The Economist*, 2017). In simple terms, what happens at the local level matters. Policy interventions should therefore focus on the types of urban conditions that promote more positive modes of encounter, such as those outlined in recent contributions in social geography on the importance of regularised, repeated, and institutionally-mediated social interactions in breaking down barriers to difference (*cf.* Piekut and Valentine, 2017; Wilson, 2014). More intensive forms of sustained interaction, when supported by public and voluntary organisations, particularly those involving children, create the conditions in which more reflexive LSIs emerge and this can also have much wider significance in influencing broader political outlooks and policies.

Second, whilst there has been much critical engagement with the impacts of *austerity urbanism* on the capacities of local government agencies (Peck and Theodore, 2015), its wider cultural and material impacts on local identities and forms of encounter have been less widely discussed. As local authorities face drastic reductions in their budgets, the social infrastructure that underpins forms of positive, regularised encounters is being systematically corroded in many cities. Given the importance of place and local experiences in shaping the governmentalities and political outlooks of citizens highlighted above, these dimensions of austerity need to be given a stronger emphasis in future research and directly addressed in work on the 'impacts' of reform. For instance, there is a drive amongst some local authorities, including Haringey, to adopt more delivery-focused, entrepreneurial modes of governance in order to raise finance to fill austerity funding gaps (Penny, 2016). Such approaches often reduce the availability of social housing and public spaces and promote high-return, privatised residential spaces and environments. This in turn generates the type lived experiences that foster LSIs of hostility and suspicion towards 'others'. Similarly, austerity cuts to budgets for schools and voluntary and community associations (many of whom rely on direct or in kind local government support), could have a drastic impact on the presence of schemes that encourage the formation of more positive LSIs. A focus on LSIs provides a powerful framework through which to explore these dynamics. It also establishes a platform from which to interrogate the multiple impacts that contemporary forms of austerity governance and urban development are having on citizens and the ways in which unmanaged social and economic pressures can lead to a fracturing of place cohesion and broader forms of social antagonism and tension.

And finally, the movement of diversity narratives from the realms of technocratic policy language into the social and political mainstream (*cf.* Vertovec, 2012) is not a simple or uncontested process. The research has shown that more reflexive LSIs do not emerge unproblematically through presence, contact, and day-to-day encounters, as is often implied by orthodox urban policy and planning literatures on social mixing

and diverse neighbourhoods (see Blokland, 2003). More inclusive imaginaries have to be systematically *nurtured through careful and systematic forms of urban policy and local statecraft*, that relate to a broad range of social policy fields. It needs to be recognised that imaginaries exist in multiple, fluid, and sometimes contradictory forms that reflect Delanty's (2012) insight that diversity represents both an 'experience of reality - in the sense of a lived experience and measurable empirical condition - and an interpretation of such experiences' (p.335). A stronger focus on understanding the intersectionalities and interplays between cultural constructions and material conditions, that does not treat them as distinct objects of study, should represent the starting point for future governmental interventions and place understandings.

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