

The politics of conviviality: on the ground experiences from Spanish-speaking Latin Americans in Elephant & Castle, London.

1. Introduction

In the summer of 2014, we set out to examine how the proposed gentrification of Latin American enclaves in London was experienced by the majority of Spanish-speaking Latin Americans (SsLAs) who work within them, with special attention to the regeneration of the Elephant & Castle (E&C) shopping center and surrounding areas, and how this would affect the small Latin American businesses therein.

The term “Latin American”¹ has been employed in scholarly research and government official discourse to refer to economic migrants from a common geographical origin with a multiplicity of national, ethnic and linguistic identities (McIlwaine, 2011; CLAUKE, 2021). It usually encompasses both Spanish and Portuguese speakers though not speakers of other languages present in the region, including Dutch, English and French. In this article, however, we concentrate on Spanish speakers only, hence the term SsLA.

Our initial observations, as well as the impressions we had gained by the end of our ethnographic fieldwork in the summer of 2015, gave us a picture of the opposing, yet complementary ways in which this situation was experienced by SsLA business owners as well as some of the ways in which they were organizing themselves in preparation for their future displacement.

Prior to the closing down of the E&C shopping center on 24th September 2020, SsLA business owners and workers alike were united in their fear that an increase in the economic value of the area, especially in the light of the London Borough of Southwark’s plan to demolish the shopping center, which had seen better days, would result in a hike in rents, forcing them out of the area. Yet, there were palpable tensions between the more established group and the relatively newly arrived Latin Americans from Europe: onward Latin American migrants (OLAs),² especially from Spain.

Given OLAs’ status as Europeans (e.g., as Spanish passport holders, even though they self-identified as ethnic Latin Americans locally), unlike migrants from other parts of the world and some existing SsLAs in London with irregular status, they could reside and work legally in the UK without having to take an English language test or requiring a £35k minimum earning

threshold, given that an average salary was c. £25k.³ They could thus, in theory, legitimately navigate the system on arrival and gain relatively quick access to resources that had taken first and second-generation SsLAs much longer to obtain.

The arrival of a relatively large number of OLAs in London was reported for 2013 (22,000 arrivals compared to 44,000 already in the UK, McIlwaine and Bunge, 2016). Even though, prior to Brexit, OLAs met the legal conditions for entry and settlement, sustaining a livelihood has not been easy for them. Many OLAs, in common with first or second-generation SsLAs, work in the service industry (e.g., cleaning and catering) under precarious conditions (zero hours contracts, minimum wage or below, Berg, 2019; Márquez Reiter, 2021; Márquez Reiter and Kádár, in press/2021) and suffer deskilling (Baum, 2015; McIlwaine & Bunge, 2019). The arrival of OLAs coincided with the local Council's decision to demolish and regenerate the shopping center and surrounding areas, resulting in fewer resources needing to be shared across the social group. This, coupled with an uncertain future, helped to intensify the feeling of competition for economic resources in the segmented niche of the economy they occupy.

The type of relationships that are constructed in the participants' accounts and captured in our fieldwork, reveal bonds and feelings of diasporic belonging and membership, which are continually (re)negotiated in the contingencies of everyday practices. This paper thus contributes to the thematic issue by illustrating how diasporic relations are unbound, fluid, flexible (Mavroudi, 2007) and shaped by the affective, social, economic and political situations that members experience (Brubaker, 2005). All these complexities give rise to different forms of conviviality (Neal et al., 2018). The forms of conviviality captured here primarily respond to the structural conditions that SsLAs experience in the London based diaspora, including tensions between members of the group, especially in the light of scarce resources.

In view of this and against the backdrop of regeneration and the arrival of OLAs, which we explore ethnographically and discursively (section 3), the analysis (section 4) examines co-ethnic relations in diaspora constructed in the stories that circulate among members of the social group. We pay attention to how two established SsLA economic migrants articulate the experiences of 'new' and 'old' migrants from Latin America by positioning themselves as legitimate social actors at a critical moment for the livelihoods of members of this social group, especially in E&C. We discuss how they construct themselves as moral agents, relative to other members of the group in E&C, and how their claims to moral authority allow them to rightfully compete for scarce resources and position other co-ethnics, especially OLAs, as immoral or

underserving. We conclude by showing how the fieldwork and the interactions we report in this paper indicate that the construction of a collective identity, irrespective of any fundamental bonds that may or may not have once existed between members of the group, and a shared language (i.e., Spanish) are at the heart of the notion of the “community” that comes to the fore when a common good, benefitting all or most of its members, stands to be obtained. In this particular case, being recognized as a diasporic community in the UK is imperative to obtaining access to local government resources.

2. Latin Americans in London, at the crossroads of the regeneration of Elephant & Castle

SsLAs are self-ascribed members of the group, as observed in the way in which they present themselves and claim to be a “Latin American⁴ community”, in the different public spaces that they occupy: shopfronts of the businesses they run, the media they produce, the cultural events that they organize in the city, among others (see Román-Velázquez & Retis, 2020, Patiño-Santos, 2021). They also share similar stories of impoverishment and violence in their countries of origin, and similar trajectories to the UK at different historical moments (e.g., political unrest in the 1970s, natural disasters in the 1980s and economic issues since the 1990s.), which acted as triggers for their migration.

Contrary to previous multicultural patterns in the UK, where ethnic groups tended to live in small communities within the city (Vertovec, 2007), SsLAs are residentially dispersed across London, and are enclaved in areas of the city which offer a microcosmos of *latinidad* in the city: The Seven Sisters Market, Haringey; Elephant & Castle Shopping Center, Southwark. It is in these places that a variety of SsLA ways of speaking, as well as iconic Latin American imagery, help to construct a sense of home away from home.

The ties between these SsLAs are best described as loose and primarily underlined by the need to sustain a life in London. SsLAs in London share a common endeavor: economic progress at a personal level and political recognition as a collective. The latter is important to achieve personal progress, since national (UK based), rather than mere local Council, recognition would give the collective and its members social access to national resources (CLAUK, 2021). In theory, ethnic recognition might have decreased the chances of displacement from one of its cultural landscapes (McIlwaine & Bunge, 2016).

E&C represents an important space for socialization and a gateway to social inclusion. It has been one of the primary urban spaces in the city where SsLAs could meet other SsLAs, other migrants and locals. It constitutes a place in the city where those who cannot communicate fluently in English find important information in Spanish and those who can speak English and Spanish often find an additional networking resource⁵ (Richards et al., 2002). While the redevelopment of E&C, which started back in 2016, was likely to improve the area's infrastructure and overall reputation, research on Latin Americans in London (Román- Velázquez ,2014) pointed out the threats that it posed to the well-being of the relatively large number of Latin American businesses,⁶ local residents, and visitors.

Mobilizing the “convivial” in relationship construction

It is in difficult moments, such as the one experienced by the SsLAs in E&C, that group relations are foregrounded, often along a common thread that unites them, but which can also divide them. It is here that the idea of “being a community” emerges as participants position themselves as members of the collective (Mavroudi, 2007). Core to the construction of the “community” are the discourses, bonds and practices that link the imagined members, which allow them to construct sameness and difference.

We understand the diasporic relations of SsLAs in London as convivial (Neal et al., 2018). Conviviality, broadly defined as the everyday situated relational practices of living together in situations of cultural difference (Gilroy, 2006; Overing and Passes, 2002; Wessendorf, 2014), has received significant attention in sociology and anthropology to understand how different ethnic populations manage to cohabit “through messy and unstable contradictions in which resentments and resilience characterize ‘unruly urban multicultural’ and precarious modes of living together (Amin 2012; Gilroy 2006; Karner and Parker 2011; Nowicka and Vertovec 2014; Wise and Noble 2016)” (Neal et al., 2018, pp. 70). In view of this, criticisms of the celebratory nature of conviviality point to the absence of trouble with which it is often associated and to complex processes of negotiation among diverse social groups. Neal et al. (2018), therefore, call for convivial relations where the complexities are foregrounded, along with the processes of negotiation. In current multicultural spaces, members of the different social groups depend on the relations that they establish to navigate diasporic conditions more easily.

Similar claims have been made in sociolinguistics, where conviviality has been used to capture and explain the ways in which language plays a role in establishing and sustaining social relations between migrants (Goebel, 2015), their co-ethnics and the so-called local society in culturally diverse locales (Heil 2014, Blommaert 2014). Rampton (2015) maintains that conviviality needs to be understood as a *local* ideology constructed in local practices related to other ideologies with which it might be in tension. According to him: “[W]e need to be very careful with the term ‘convivial’. Whether or not small talk can be characterized as convivial will very much depend on the contingencies of where, when, how, by and to whom it is produced” (2015, pp. 87). Within the context of the forced displacement examined, we understand that convivial relations are neither homogeneous nor exempt from complexities. They are constructed, performed and negotiated in the public and private discourses of SsLAs and these discourses do not necessarily match.

3. Fieldwork and data

The data for this paper come from a sociolinguistic ethnography conducted between the summers of 2014 and 2015 in the area of E&C. Prior to September 2020, when the mall closed down, it represented one of the most important SsLA enclaves in London. It featured 96 Latin American shops: Spanish-speaking travel agencies, restaurants, hair and beauty salons, clothes shops, money transfer shops, etc. Over a period of a year, we visited the shopping center and the surrounding area once a week, including weekends when the mall was busiest. We started our fieldwork by interacting with the customers and workers of SsLA backgrounds, and visiting the shops and eateries located in the shopping mall and the surrounding areas mapped by Román and Hill (2016) in four clusters: the first and second floors of the shopping mall, and surrounding areas, that is, across Eagle’s yard, Draper House Sherston Court, and Elephant Road. Our fieldwork included intermittent photography of the area, the collection of local newspapers and other relevant documents such as flyers for “community” events, and non-participant observations. The establishments we visited were mostly eateries: cafés and bakeries, clothes and accessories stores, hair and beauty salons.

Prior to our fieldwork, we had both visited the shopping center as customers a multitude of times. We were thus familiar with the place and initially approached the data collection on that basis. We ordered coffee or the menu of the day at various eateries, briefly interacted with

service providers, took fieldnotes and compared notes at the end of each research day. As part of our fieldwork, we had informal conversations with at least fifty people at the SsLA stores, either workers or customers, and conducted life story interviews with twelve SsLA retailers in restaurants, a real estate agency, a legal consultancy firm, and two food stores, for a bespoke radio program for a local SsLA radio station. The aim of the radio program was to document the activities in which SsLAs engaged in one of the most important cultural hubs in the city and in this process, examine community relations. Our interviews with the retailers mainly stemmed from the recommendations of some of the service providers and passers-by we interacted with while conducting observations. In addition, our experience as customers and the notes taken while carrying out observations also informed our choice of interviewees, our interpretation of the data, and guided our fieldwork. Five of the retailers we interviewed were located in the shopping center, and seven in the surrounding areas.

During observations, the E&C SsLA businesses distributed along the two sides of the Walworth Road attracted our attention. The shopping center and main areas that are still being regenerated were located to the north of the Walworth Road, thus triggering the displacement of retailers located there to an unknown destination. On the other hand, the retailers to the south of the road, at least for the time being, will suffer no negative consequences. The Walworth Road was thus constructed as a symbolic ‘geographical border’ (Casey, 2011) that divided those who would be imminently displaced from those who would not.

We collected twelve life story interviews with retailers. The interactions with Jaime and Inés included in our data represent testimonies of co-ethnic relations against the backdrop of urban transformations in the city.

4. Analysis

The examination of the interviews is based on a general discourse analysis of the life stories (Atkinson, 1998) that emerge therein. The analysis draws on the deployment of linguistic resources such as categorizations, identity negotiation (Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004) through the use of small stories (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou, 2008), which can be about recent (‘today, this morning’) or still unfolding or hypothetical events, and notions, such as assessments (Pomerantz, 1984), extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986) and (non) affiliative laughter (Glenn and Holt, 2013) as supplementary elements to capture the

participants' (re)positioning in the light of interventions which they treat as interpersonally delicate (Márquez Reiter et al., 2016).

The paper contributes to understanding co-ethnic relations in a relatively unexplored group in London, by discussing some of the norms on which the social formation of the group is based at a specific socio-historical juncture.

4.1 On the fortunate and unfortunate line of relocation

The data, collected from our fieldwork in E&C and surrounding areas, produced rich information about the complex relationships among SsLA migrants. Positionings emerged in relation to their co-ethnics: friends, neighbors, and fellow workers, as well as the circumstances surrounding the regeneration. In a previous article (Patiño-Santos and Márquez Reiter, 2019), we reported the stories that SsLA employees working in this area produced about their relationships with bosses, co-workers, or friends from other businesses. There, we discussed the tensions among SsLAs regarding social relations around investing in co-ethnic businesses. This paper expands on those initial findings to focus on interactional segments and ethnographic data from two interviews with retailers (business owners) of different origins (Colombia and Ecuador), who produced discourses on forms of conviviality that they experienced. They constructed themselves as successful migrants, resulting from the length of time they have been in London and reflected in the high social position they enjoy relative to other co-ethnics. Their discourses allow us to understand some traces of the convivial relations that are practiced among this social group. *Latinidad* emerges as the interviewees' positioned themselves with respect to the regeneration of the area where they work, and other Latin Americans ('othering' – 'us' vs. 'them'). In so doing, they constructed their experience through recounting on-going, past, future, or hypothetical events according to a moral order and aligned (or not) themselves with other members or projects revealing a distinctively moralizing, but arguably exploitative position in the face of relocation. Thus, they bring to light their prerequisites for 'belonging'.

4.2 Don Jaime: *I'm one of the oldest businessmen in Elephant and Castle*

Our first interview was conducted with "Don Jaime", of Colombian origin, whose success as an economic migrant is evidenced by how he has established himself financially in the area. He is a commercial leaseholder who had been on the south side of Walworth Road for 18 years

at the time of the interview. He manages various other commercial activities and is closely connected with other well positioned SsLA migrants, as per his own account and those of other SsLAs we interacted with during our fieldwork. Don Jaime constructs the regeneration process experienced in the area, by deploying an opposition between winners and the unlucky ones, distinguishing between those located on the side of the Walworth Road where their businesses will be demolished and those on the other side who will not be negatively affected by the regeneration project for now. Conviviality, as we shall see later, is presented here from the stance of a discursively-constructed moral agent who shows empathy towards those who are suffering misfortune. The participants in the interview are Don Jaime, Rosina and Adriana, researchers of SsLA backgrounds (Uruguay and Colombia, respectively). Please see the Appendix for transcription conventions.

Extract 1. Constructing leadership

- 113 Jaime: Yo soy uno de los comerciantes más antiguos que
 114 tiene Elephan' and Castle (soy) uno (.) hay
 115 muchos yo conozco varios ((sniff))=
*I'm one of the longest-standing businessmen that
 Elephant and Castle has (I'm) one(.) there are many
 I know many ((sniff))=*
- 116 Rosina: =ajá
- 117 Jaime: .hh y:::, desde que empezamos a hacer negocios
 118 >desde que yo empecé a neg- egocios< pues a m- a
 119 menor escala pero. pero sí::: (0.4) .hh (.) he-
 120 (0.4) hemos::- he trabajado >mucho mucho muchos<
 121 años con la comunida' y he teni'o (.) cantidades
 122 de negocios .h .hh y::: como anécdotas yo: soy el
 123 pri- yo fui el primer PIRATA (.) radial
 124 latinoamericana en este país
*.hh and>:::, since we've started doing business
 >since I started doing bus-iness< I mean on a sma-
 ller scale but. But yes::: (0.4) .hh (.) we-
 (0.4) we have::- I have worked >a lot a lot many<
 years with the community and I've had (.) many types
 of businesses .h .hh and>::: as anecdotes I: and the
 fir- I was the first PIRATE (.) Latin American pirate
 radio station in this country*

Don Jaime starts by positioning himself as a leader of the community. He does this through the inclusion of the first-person pronoun ('I' -Yo) when, strictly speaking, in the pro-drop variety

of Colombian Spanish that he speaks, this is not needed. With this, he emphasizes his personal role in the establishment of Latin American businesses in E&C. He then follows with an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) through which he underlines length of settlement as relevant for his self-categorization and positions himself within the collective of long-established businessmen in the area. Following from the go-ahead token as marker of incipient listenership (L. 116), Jaime moves from the specific to the general when speaking as a member of the group of long established businessmen (from the first-person singular to the plural I/We ‘empezamos’) and presents himself as well-connected ‘in the community’.

Extract 2. Constructing inevitability

- 441 Rosina: >y di- dígame una cosa<
 442 (c'm') .HH (0.7) Cómo ve? (1.2) ¿mirá ahora que
 443 van a demoler el centro comercial (.) sí? Cómo ve
 444 c- qué le parece que va a pasar con el área con
 445 la comunidad latina con toda esa gente que
 446 usted .hh
*>and te- tell me something< (how')
 .HH (0.7) how do you see? (1.2) look now that they are
 going to demolish the commercial centre (.) right? How-
 what do you think will happen to the area to the
 Latino community to all these people that you. Hh*
- (1.0)
- 447 Adriana: (Ha es[tado estos año]s [y con sus clientes])
(That's [been here these year]s [and with your clients])
- 448 Rosina: [Viene aquí:] [a lo largo de los años
 449 y (con) la gente que [viene aquí]a esta misma
 450 tienda [no?](.) el negocio suyo=
*[comes here:_____] [throughout the y]ears and
 (with) the people who [come here] to this very
 shop [right?] (.) to your business=*
- 451 Adriana: [sus clientes] [Sí sí]
[your clients] [Yes yes]
- 452 Rosina: =cómo lo ve? qué?
=how do you see it? What?
- 453 Jaime: (0.4) Sí e::(h) hh
(0.4) Yes u::(h) hh
- 454 Rosina: Qué piensa
What do you think
- 455 Jaime: (0.4) Realmente::(h) son cosas de:(h)l de(h)l del
 456 desarrollo (.) urbanístico (0.6) son cosas del
 457 progreso (.) que eso no lo puede detener
 458 nadie(h). y un país como este que es progresista
 459 que es un país desarrollado .hh y que día a día
 460 está avanzando (1.2) en su desarrollo es normal

461 que este tipo de cosas pasen .hh
 462 desafortunadamente los que nos vamos a ver
 463 afectados somos los comerciantes latinoamericanos
 464 hay muchas otras comunidades pero .HH hablando
 465 por mi comunida' nos vamos a ver muy afectados
 466 porque somos(h) .hh uno de los (.) números más
 467 grandes de comerciantes en el área (0.6) .hh
*(0.4) In fact::(h) these are the things of: (h)of (h)
 urban (.) development (0.6) these are the things of
 progress(.) that cannot be stopped by anyone(h).
 And a country like this which is progressive that is a
 developed country .hh and that day by day
 is advancing (1.2) in its development it's natural that
 These type of things happen .hh unfortunately
 The ones that are going to be affected it's us the
 Latin American business people there are many other
 communities but .HH speaking for my community
 we're going to be very affected because we're(h) .hh
 one of the (.)the largest number of businesses
 in the area (0.6) .hh*

At L. 455, after much prompting from the researchers, he sets the scene to offer what he imagines his position in the community will be subsequent to the demolition (see L. 530 in Excerpt 4). He proffers a delayed assessment with some hesitation (L. 455), thus indicating that he treats the topic as potentially delicate. Given the fact the he is located on the 'better off' side of the border, he can take advantage of downtown's misfortune, since business is likely to come his way. Despite constructing himself as non-agentive in the misfortune of the businesses on the other side of road, as a community leader (L. 465 *speaking for my community*) and as a moral figure in the community who has the relevant knowledge to understand what is right (national economic progress) and what is wrong (displacement), the expectation would be for him to show some emotional connection with those badly affected by the area's regeneration. He articulates his response by putting forward 'fact of life' explanations of inevitability. The assessment offered is constructed in the impersonal and represents an official stance, in as much as it is in line with the view on urban development embraced by the local Council, and implicitly aligned with the demolition and displacement project. However, at L. 462 after a short delay, he introduces a hypothetical story offering a negative assessment of the development project. He prefaces it with a stance marker 'unfortunately' positioning himself as part of the affected community (i.e., Latin American businessmen who will be displaced). This is observed by the use of a hypothetical (future) story constructed through the first person plural, followed by an increment in which he explicitly voices the business community's concerns and further constructs himself as an authoritative figure within the community (see

also LL. 117-124 in Excerpt 1). In so doing, he underlines his emotional connection with those negatively affected and with the community in general, and shines a light on diasporic relations in a period of momentous change, especially for E&C. This is further illustrated in Excerpt 3, below, wherein Jaime expands upon his answer to the question initiated by Rosina in L. 441 (Excerpt 2).

Excerpt 3.: “us”, “on the ‘better off’ side” v. “them”, “on the ‘worse off’ side”

488 Jaime: [y desafortunadamente] e:(hh) estos
489 comerciantes del centro comercial se van a ver
490 seriamente afectados porque ellos van a quedar
491 sin:(h) ninguna reubicación. (0.8) en ninguna
492 parte (.) no hay donde acomodarlos ((sniff))=
*[and unfortunately] u: (hh) the
business people of the commercial centre will be
seriously affected because they will be left
without: (h) any relocation. (0.8) nowhere
(.) there's nowhere to accommodate them ((sniff))=*
.....

505 Jaime: Pero es imposible o sea yo he habla'o mucho con
506 ellos ((sniff)) y:: por ejemplo hay un
comerciante que paga siete mil quinienta' libra'
507 al año en este momento.
508 *But it's impossible that is I've talked a lot with
them ((sniff)) and:: for instance there's a business person
who pays seven thousand five hundred pounds a year at the
moment.
°Mj(h)°*

509 Rosina: En el local que tiene .hh cuando regrese a ese
510 Jaime: mismo:, local si es[que va a regresar .h]=
511 *For the shop he has .hh when he returns to the
same:, shop if he is [going to return .h]=
[Y el alquiler ?]
[and the rent?]*

512 Rosina: M: no

513 Adriana: =ya no van a decir tres mil quiniento' vale
514 cuarenta por encima de cincuenta mil libras el
515 arriendo entonces ya no hay forma de .hh de- de-
516 de pagar ese dinero porque es muchísimo (0.4)
517 tendría que trabajar sólo para pagar[(la
518 renta) y eso no .hh]
519 *=they're no longer going to say three thousand five hundred
it now costs over fifty thousand to
rent it so there's no way to .hh to-to-to-
to pay that money because it's a lot (0.4)
he'd have to work only to pay [(the rent)
and that it's not .hh]*

This excerpt and 4 (below) offer us some evidence of the discourses that circulate among the community regarding the regeneration program for E&C. During our fieldwork we interacted with business owners and workers in the shopping mall and they all expressed concerns. Uncertainty reigned and some of them were already looking for places to relocate once they were evicted. In excerpt 3, we observed an initial narrative: those who leave, won't be able to return because of the increasing rents - allowing Don Jaime to position himself as straddled across a fortunate-unfortunate line. Thus, in LL. 488-492 Don Jaime introduces a long assessment in order to align himself with those members of the Latin American business community who will be negatively affected by the regeneration plan. In L. 488, he carefully (n.b. "unfortunately") proceeds to distinguish between two groups of business people in the area separated by the spatial border constituted by the Walworth Road, and symbolically separated by a fortunate-unfortunate discourse depending on which side of the border they find themselves. This is illustrated by the use of 'us' vs. 'them', with extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986) L. 491 (*they will be left without: (h) any relocation, nowhere (.) there's nowhere to accommodate them*) invoking the inevitability of their future, in which he aligns himself once again with the fortunate team, given that he is spatially located on the 'better off' side of the Walworth Road. In L. 506, he draws on a story in which he constructs a hypothetical anticipated future, using 'them' vs. 'us' opposition and the likely future that awaits the unlucky ones (LL. 510-511/ 514-519) to illustrate his point: current Latin American business people will not be able to come back to the area.

Excerpt 4. "There are no opportunities for the losers"

520 Rosina: [Y cómo le
521 parece que le afectaría] a U S T E D AQUÍ a su
522 negocio en esta parte de Elephant 'n' Castle .hh
523 el que tirasen abajo (.) el centro comercial
[and how do you think it'd affect you] Y O U HERE your business in this part of Elephant and Castle .hh that they demolished (.) the commercial centre

524 Jaime: .hh
525 Rosina: que está en frente cómo l- qué repercusiones le
526 parece que puede tener (.) [para esta parte de
527 Elephant]
that's opposite how w-what consequences do you think it can have (.) [for this part of Elephant]

528 Adriana: [° Sí para esta
529 par]te°
[° yes for this
par]t°

530 Jaime: n(h) (.) Les voy a ser honesto (1.0) le' voy a
531 ser honesto (.) desafortunadamente (.) c- c-
532 co:n: (.) co:n: (1.6) con las caídas de algunas
533 personas o de algunos negocios con el cierre de
534 muchos negocios se benefician otros (.) y yo creo
535 que yo soy uno
536 de los beneficiados
*n(h) (.) I'm going to be honest with you (1.0) I'm going to
be honest with you (.) unfortunately (.) w-w- w:ith:
(.) w:ith: (1.6) the fall of some people or
some shops with the closure of many
shops others will benefit (.) and I think that I'm
one of those who will be benefit*

537 Rosina: M(h)=
538 Jaime: =Es::=
539 =it's::=
540 Adriana: =Es=
541 Jaime: =it's=
=Es desafortuna' [o para ellos]
=it's unfortunate [for them]

542 Rosina: [En qué senti]do beneficiado
[in what sen]se will you benefit

543 Jaime: Porque que es que::(h), resulta que (.) todos los
544 clientes de ese centro comercial y todos los
545 comerciantes que tiene (d'allá) latinos (.)
546 *Because is that:: (h), it turns out that (.) all the
Clients from that commercial centre and all the
Latin business people they have (there) (.)*

547 Rosina: M(h)
548 Jaime: quedan desubicados y todos: la mayoría buscan
549 para acá (.) para estos lados. .hh y yo sé que
550 muchos de esos clientes de (allá) vienen para acá
*they are left dislocated and all: the majority look
this way (.) towards this side. .hh and I know that
many of the clients from (there) come here*

Excerpt 3 allows us to observe one of the discourses that circulate among the community regarding the regeneration plan: there are no second opportunities for the unfortunate, those on the wrong side (LL. 514-519). In Excerpt 4, this discourse is reinforced by emphasizing the luck of those on the 'better off' side of the border (LL 541-543 and 545-550). Indeed, at L. 530, after some prompting from us, he faces the inevitability of answering our question. He does this by constructing a picture of himself as an honest and moral subject (e.g. Lubkemann, 2002). Through no fault of his own, he will simply benefit from a 'fact of life'. Despite not

being responsible for this state of affairs, in a final testimony Don Jaime reports some of his good deeds, that is, his efforts to relocate some of the businesses on the ‘fortunate’ side of the border: the road to the future. This form of conviviality, in which you express sympathy for the less fortunate, but at the same time make clear the difficulty of their escaping their fate, was also captured in the discourses of other retailers. Even those located in the shopping mall, but who already had a place to relocate to, aligned with this form of conviviality. As one of the employees explained to us, “at the beginning of the gentrification process, everyone came to the protests, but now, it’s only those who don’t have a place to go”.

Like Don Jaime, Inés, our second interviewee, highlights the inevitability of displacement and expands on the desirable attributes that Latin Americans ought to have. In line with Don Jaime, she also meets these requirements and constructs herself as a moral agent.

4.3 Inés: *They haven’t worked hard enough*

Inés, a retailer of Ecuadorian origin, constructs an economically successful trajectory similar to Don Jaime’s. She migrated over 20 years ago and has been able to set up her own business, a restaurant offering traditional Ecuadorian food, and renegotiate a lease for 100 years. Like him, she is spatially located on the “fortunate” side of Walworth Road, and constructs herself as an imagined winner from the regeneration project. She constructs her relationships with other SsLAs, presenting a convivial image. For example, when asked about her clientele, she replied “*a bit of ev:erything °my love° people come here from [everywhere]*”, indicating that she welcomes everyone in her restaurant. However, this convivial discourse is followed by a more evaluative one, when she talks about her co-ethnics, those retailers working on the north side of the border and the SsLAs coming from Spain.

Regarding the first group, she positions those on the north side of the border as unlucky. Specifically, she describes them as responsible for their own fate, since they have known about the regeneration plans right from the start, as observed in Excerpt 5, below.

Excerpt 5. Appealing to a legal order

- 22 Inés: [TO:]DO EL mundo sabe °mi amor° (0.4) todo el mundo
 23 sabe que tienen que irse.=
[EV:]ERY ONE
 knows °my love° (0.4) everyone knows they have
 to leave.=
 24 Rosina: =Y para dónde vamos a ir los latinos ento[nces]

25 Inés: =and where are we Latinos going th[en] [Ello]s
 26 sabrán a dónde mamita(h) (0.4) [the]y
 27
 28 Rosina: would know where sweetheart (h) (0.4)
 [Y a-]
 [and a-]

29 Inés: [Si u]ste' termina un contrato aquí: (.) uste' tiene
 30 que entregar eso(h) (.) como una casa como cualquier
 31 cosa(h)
 [if y]ou finish a contract here: (.) you
 have to give that back (h) (.) like a house like
 anything (h)

.....

42 Inés: [Para] mí MEJOR que el chopin' center
 43 desaparezca [For] me it's BETTER that the shopping centre
 disappears
 44 Adriana: No te gusta You don't like it
 45 Inés: No no es que no me gust[e es]un decir. mi a[mor.]
 46 No no it's not that I don't [like] it it's a way of saying. My
 47 Adriana: l[ove.]
 [a(h)] [a:(h)]
 perdón [a(h)] [a:(h)]
 sorry
 48 Inés: <Cuando estén construyendo allá>
 <when they're building there>

49 Rosina: (Se vienen para acá)
 (they will come here)

50 Inés: Cla:(h)ro la gente va a venir para acá(h)
Of: (h) course people will come here (h).

Like Don Jaime, Inés embraces the regeneration project (LL. 42-43) and justifies it on the basis of what is legally right and wrong (LL. 29-31) based on the laws of the land that ought to be common knowledge to all. This is illustrated by the way in which she invokes a common-sense understanding of contractual rights and obligations (*[if y]ou finish a contract here: (.) you have to hand it over (h) (.) like a house like anything (h)*). This is used to present a rational stance in terms of her position as a rightful winner and further helps to justify her assessment (LL. 42-43) of the regeneration project, i.e., the end justifies the means and she is not responsible for the fate of those who will be displaced. Additionally, she sheds further light on how one's own

hard work determines one's fate. This is illustrated in Excerpt 6 where she outlines the (un)desirable behavior of others in the community, with particular attention to the relatively recent arrival of SsLAs from Spain.

Excerpt 6. The *legitimate* Latin American in this context

- 51 Rosina: Ajá (.) y dime y la clientela que tienes? Inés
 52 sobretodo de dónde qué país es=
*Aha (.) and tell me and the clientele you have? Inés
 comes mostly from which country=*
- 53 Inés: =De to:do °mi amor° aquí viene gente de todas
 54 [partes]
*=a bit of ev:erything °my love° here come people from
 [everywhere]*
- 55 Rosina: [Vienen] colombianos acá [a comer?]
[do] Colombians come here [to eat?]
- 56 Inés: [<De Co:]lo(h)mbia de->
 57 (.) de- de todos los lados °mi amor° (0.7) de todas
 58 partes °vienen a comer (aquí)° =
*[<from Co:]lo(h)mbia from->
 (.) from-from everywhere °my love° (0.7) people from
 everywhere °come (here) to eat° =*
 =y qué es lo que más consume la gente qué es lo que
 más come=
- 59 Adriana: =and what do people tend to consume what do they
 60 consume=
 =De Con-fritada (0.6) la fritada °comen más° e' el
 cerdito:(h). preparado, (.) y: y ya frito. (0.5) la
 61 fritada es que más comen
 62 =of with- fried (0.6) fried food they °mostly consume° e pork:
 63 (h). Prepared, (.) and: already fried. (0.5)
fried food is what they mostly eat
 La fritada es lo que más comen=
Fried food is what they mostly eat=
- 64 Rosina: =Sí
 =yes
- 65 Inés: Y TE VIENE-? Y estos latinoamericanos que están
 llegando de España te están viniendo?
- 66 Rosina: AND DO-?these Latin Americans arriving from
 67 Spain do they come here?
 Sí:(h) vienen un poco de todo.
Yes:(h) a bit from everywhere.
- 68 Inés: Y cómo los notas
And how do you find them
- 69 Rosina: (1.4) Pues la inestabilidad que tiene' en este país
 mi amor (0.5) es triste porque no hablan inglés,
 70 Inés: (.) ^A:(h) y ya han dejado de venir con maleta' a
 71 estar aquí por monto:nes, (.) a buscar traba:jo, (.)
 72 es muy du:ro. y ellos lo que buscan es todo barato

73 (0.8) ellos buscan eso (.) todo barato (0.7) y esto
74 es Londres [no es p()]
75 (1.4) I mean the lack of stability they have in this
76 country my love (0.5) it's sad because they don't speak
English, (.)^A:(h) and they've already stopped coming with a
suitcase to stay here in drove:s, (.)to look for
work, (.) it's very ha:rd. And they look for what is
cheap (0.7) and this is London [it's not ()]
[Y ellos] no hablan
inglés? (.) estas personas=
[and they] don't speak English?
77 Adriana: (.) these people=
78 =Cla:ro, y si yo vivo diecinueve año' y no tengo un
buen inglés hhahaha imagínate ellos que acaban de
79 Inés: llegar (.) °imposible° (0.7) pero eso no es culpa
80 del país ni culpa de nosotros. (0.4) ellos debían
81 'ber pegado cada uno a sus paise(h)s. (.) pero ellos
82 vinieron a aventurar acá (.) Te cuento que el. (0.6)
83 cincuenta por ciento están ya, bien ubic(h)ados.
84 =of cou:rs, if I've lived here for nineteen years and don't
85 have good English hhahaha imagine them who have just
arrived(.)°impossible° (0.7) but that's not the country's
fault or ours. (0.4) they should have each returned to their
countrie(h)s. (.)
but they come to take a risk here (.) I tell you
that the. (0.6) fifty per cent of them are already, well
place(h)d.

The presence of OLAs in the area was repeatedly made relevant by various retailers and workers during our fieldwork. For that reason, in Excerpt 6, we topicalize Latin American migrants from Spain, known pejoratively as *españoles* (little Spaniards) or *rencauchados* (retreads). Some co-ethnics recognized that the arrival of OLAs had revitalized the market as they represented new potential customers, but at the same time there were resentments towards them for having come from Spain 'with papers'. In this example, Inés provides an account of their behavior in comparison with her own, in which she produces a negative portrayal of OLAs, whilst painting a picture of herself as a law-abiding, hard-working migrant. In short, she constructs herself as a moral agent who has justifiably earned what would be seen by others in the group as a good life in London. She does this by outlining the requirements that ought to be met by migrants to be successfully integrated in London, such as speaking English and working hard (*they don't speak English* (LL. 74-75), *they want everything cheap* (L. 78)), rather than expecting government hand-outs, as we shall see in the following excerpt. Specifically, recent arrivals are portrayed as opportunists who are not prepared to work as hard as they ought to and are only interested in taking advantage of what others, like Inés, have worked hard to

achieve (LL. 77-79). This evaluation is reiterated in the discourses of retailers who arrived in the 1990s when they refer to OLAs who have come from Spain (Patiño-Santos & Márquez-Reiter, 2018). It underlines the idea that they do not meet the necessary conditions to live in the receiving society and should return to their countries of origin, wherever these may be. They do not have the necessary tools to make a ‘good’ life in London or indeed the correct moral values (see, for example, Jordan & Duvell, 1999; Jordan, 2002 on Poles in the UK). She thus offers a picture of differing moral worlds based on her evaluation of the incompatible norms that are claimed to govern the behavior of recent arrivals vs. those of earlier migrants. This emerges more clearly in the small stories (Bamberg & Georgakopolou, 2008) she draws on in Excerpt 7 to further construct herself as a moral agent.

Excerpt 7. “We had to work like mules”

- 1 Adriana: Cómo le va a la gente si están contentos si::=
How are they doing are they content yes::=
- 2 Inés: ^=Tienen que contentarse pues mi amor (.) si este e'
 3 el país de las maravillas
*=they have to get content I mean my love (.)if this is the
 country of wonders*
- HE hhehehehehehehehehehe=
- 4 Rosina: =hasta los hijos que no son de ellos vienen cargando
 5 Inés: pa' que el gobierno los mantenga
 6 *=they even bring children who are not theirs
 for the government to support them*
- Cla::[: : : .]
 Of c::[: : : .]
- 7 Adriana: [cuando] a nosotros nos tocó: trabajar como el
 8 Inés: burro (.) yo por lo meno' (.) desde que tuve la niña
 9 fue que el gobierno me dio ca:sa (0.3) me lo dio por
 10 allá lejísimo' d' donde yo vivía ante' (.) me tocó
 11 devolver y yo con- vendí mi propieda' en Ecuador
 12 para poder comprar aquí(h)
 13 *[when] we had to work like
 mules (.)at least I (.) after I had my
 daughter the government gave me a ho:use (0.3) they gave it to
 me over there really far where I lived before(.)
 and I had to return it and I with-I sold my house in
 Ecuador to be able to buy here (h)*
- Ya: (h) .
- 14 Adriana: *Right: (h).*
 .hh Y dice que traen hijos que no son de ellos
- 15 Rosina: *.hh and you say that they bring with them children that are
 not theirs*
 Traen hasta hijos que no son de ellos mi amor de los
- 16 Inés: primos de los pariente' que tengan lo' mismo'
 17 apellidos (.) para pedir los a- los beneficio' aquí.
 18 (0.9) y yo estoy de acuerdo con Cameron (.) yo estoy

19 de acuerdo con Cameron de que- (0.7) que una persona
 20 que viva por lo menos tre' años y pague impuestos en
 21 este país tenga derecho a que reciba alguna ayuda
 22 (1.0) Aquí yo tuve (0.4) unas morenas aquí arriba en
 23 la peluquería(h) (0.6) yo la oía cuando conversaba
 24 con el marido porque pegaba ^unos gri:tos
 25 *they even bring with them children that aren't theirs my love
 of their cousins of relatives they have with the same surnames
 (.) to claim the- benefits
 here. (0.9) and I agree with Cameron in that- (0.7) that
 person who has at least lived here for three year and pays
 taxes in this country should have the right to recieve some
 help (1.0) I had help here (0.4)some
 blacks here upstairs in the hairdressers' (h) (0.6) I
 heard her when she talked to her husband because she
 she gave such screams*

Inés reacts to our question regarding the well-being of recent OLAs from Spain with sarcasm (*this is the country of wonders*). With this, she prepares the ground for the discourse that migrants with children are more likely to receive benefits. The formulation is received with laughter that is heard as affiliative (Glenn and Holt, 2013) as a result of which, a set of small stories in which recent arrivals are constructed as immoral subjects are produced.

In these stories she reports the illegal practices that these migrants engage in to obtain benefits, such as bringing children and relatives as their dependents when they are not, provided they have the same surname, and claiming housing benefit when they own properties overseas as well as illegally subletting them. These stories enable her to paint herself as a moral agent in contrast to recent arrivals from Spain. Unlike the latter, she had to work very hard and did not receive any government assistance until after her daughter was born. Furthermore, she had to sell her property in her native Ecuador in order to set up her own business. She thus presents herself as a moral agent insofar as she had the required individual qualities to progress and can rightfully align herself with the government stance, especially with the views of the governing party at the time.

Recent OLAs from Spain are not only depicted as unscrupulous with respect to their behavior towards the authorities in the receiving country but also with reference to their behavior towards members of their own community who, as in her case, have offered them support, albeit arguably to obtain some personal benefit i.e., managing to rent out the unit above her store.

Her narration indicates that, unlike herself as someone legitimately 'fortunate', the ambitions of OLAs do not justify the means they employ to fulfil them.

5. Further reflections

Our study contributes to understanding diasporic social relations between SsLAs in London at a specific socio-historic point in time, with a focus on E&C within a period of city-wide regeneration and the rescinding of resources. The timing of our study coincided with the arrival of OLAs from other regions within Europe, mainly from Spain, and the prospects of further competition for resources. The forced displacement of traders from the E&C shopping center and the surrounding area represented a significant blow to Latin Americans and the visibility that the group had long fought for.

We have shown how a public image of the ‘community’ is constructed by retailers who settled in the area of E&C at the beginning of the 1990s and who today control the economic resources and access thereto by their co-ethnics. We see how this public image presents a convivial face of the group, which allows them to make visible the ways in which the regeneration is affecting those located on the “unlucky” side of the street, i.e., in the shopping mall. Digging into daily life social relations however allowed us to observe the tensions, reported by previous studies on this group in the UK (see McIlwaine et al., 2011; Patiño-Santos and Márquez-Reiter, 2018; and see, for example Almeida et al., 2009; Guarnizo et al., 1999; Pessar, 1995; Aranda et al., 2014; Roth, 2016 for Latin Americans in the U.S.). Such tensions are not surprising in the case of the regeneration of E&C, given that it entails a socially and spatially challenging moment for this group, at a socio-historical juncture where the limited resources they had access to were axed.

Fieldwork and interviews with two retailers of SsLA backgrounds, carried out in the area of E&C, have allowed us to observe the ways in which these social actors position themselves and “others” in the light of the regeneration of the area and according to their time of arrival in the UK (i.e., previous cohorts of migrants or recent SsLA migrants). The “others”, in this case, emerge as the Latin Americans who work in the shopping center and will be displaced as a result of its demolition. The term also refers to recent OLAs who primarily hail from Spain, arriving as a result of the 2008 Spanish economic crisis. Don Jaime and Inés represent retailers who are on the “fortunate” side of the Walworth Road, and who will not suffer the immediate negative consequences of the regeneration plan. As explained in the initial section of this paper, Walworth Road is constructed in the discourses of these retailers as a symbolic social and spatial border that separates those who will be displaced from those who will benefit from the initial phase of the Council’s plan.

Don Jaime and Inés are SsLAs with successful migratory experiences. Both have been in London for over 19 years and represent small Latin American businesses. They own property leases in different parts of E&C, and in Greater London. They both construct themselves discursively as pioneers who settled in E&C and who are somehow responsible for what E&C currently is, that is, an important enclave for the SsLA diaspora in the city. Their migratory trajectories, experience and lifestyle in London vest them with the appropriate knowledge to understand how things work and how people, especially those from their social group, ought to behave in the receiving society. On the grounds of such experiential knowledge, they present themselves as exemplary economic migrants, as moral agents, convivial migrants who have known how to navigate the social networks in the city. Thus, they are able to judge the core skills and values that new arrivals should have: competence in the language of the receiving society and the right work ethic (i.e., being hard-working and availing themselves of any work opportunities) in order to succeed (Márquez Reiter & Kádár, in press/2021). They present knowledge of English and being hard-working as indicative of the moral agency expected of them, although they enjoy a rather limited capacity to influence either of these (Laidlaw, 2010).

The fact that these two participants are on the “fortunate” side of the Walworth Road, as a result of their migratory trajectories, shapes their discursive portrayals of the others and themselves. Consequently, Jaime and Inés draw on different communicative resources to construct themselves as pioneers and moral agents. While Don Jaime, though displaying fleeting moments of solidarity with the less fortunate, aligns himself with the discourses of ‘inevitability as imposed by progress’, from which he supports the regeneration plan launched by the local Council, Inés does with the Council as she explains that those who took leases in the shopping center knew right from the beginning that it would eventually be demolished. In her discourse, responsibility is viewed in terms of commonsensical moral duties. She thus explains how (economic) migrants should know that bills, rents and leases must be paid, and offers stories about immoral practices marked by breaches of trust, as illustrated by the swindling practices that OLAs are reported to engage in. Both social actors present themselves as knowledgeable and moral subjects who accept the changes and values of the ‘advanced’ society in which they now live. However, they draw on different sets of material and symbolic resources.

Some of the discourses reported in this paper, such as the value of personal gain in constructing oneself as a legitimate member of the group, and of the larger receiving society, are likely to emerge in the voices of those not prejudicially affected by the redevelopment of

the area. This is because the vast majority of SsLAs currently in London migrated in order to achieve better (economic) circumstances.

Notwithstanding this, we have seen how moralizing discourses of similarity are evoked by differential social positionings according to space and time (e.g., E&C, length of settlement, imminent displacement). These were based on the existence of common needs, expectations, and goals by all members of the social group in the face of the isolation and insecurity wrought by external pressures (e.g., Bulmer, 1985) and are accompanied by conservative discourses about migration in the UK (Dhalwal and Forkett, 2015). The common needs, expectations and goals cited are meant to be congruent with a set of values and practices that are not in fact necessarily shared by all its members. All in all, SsLAs present themselves as part of a “community” in spite of the internal tensions brought about by the precarious material conditions some of them face at a time when social and economic pressures are drawing painfully closer. Achieving social equality as a community in diaspora demands a recognition of social groups as “ethnic communities”, which translates, in the different boroughs of the city, into better possibilities of accessing certain services, such as public health initiatives, participating in consultations and decision-making processes regarding housing, health, education and local planning, but also in facilitating local funding of ethnic associations (Márquez Reiter, 2018; Patiño-Santos, 2021).

The closure of the shopping mall in September 2020 has generated mixed reactions from the Council and small retailers and activists in the area for over half a century (Hatts, 2020). This paper contributes to the thematic issue by capturing social relations and tensions at an important socio-historical juncture for Latin American heritage. The tensions observed at this point in time allow us to argue that conviviality becomes a resource to present a public image of diasporic relations but that behind the discourse of solidarity and togetherness, contradictions and conflict are prevalent and contingent on the structural conditions SsLAs inhabit. In short, the notion of conviviality, as discussed by Rampton (2015) has enabled us to understand a range of convivial practices whilst acknowledging the role of potential conflict within them.

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Transcription conventions (adapted from Schegloff 2007)

- [] overlapping speech
- (1) numbers in brackets indicate pause length in seconds
- (.) micropause
- :
- lengthening of the sound of preceding letter
- word cut-off
- .
- falling or final intonation
- ?
- rising or question intonation
- = latching utterances
- Underlining contrastive stress or emphasis
- CAPS indicates volume of speech
- °° markedly softer speech
- > < talk is compressed or rushed
- < > talk is markedly slowed or drawn out
- () blank space in brackets indicates uncertainty about the speech

¹ Latin Americans have achieved official recognition as an ethnic group in four of the London boroughs where they are mainly concentrated (i.e., Southwark, Lambeth, Islington and Hackney - 2012, 2013, 2015 and 2015, respectively). Recognition has brought important changes for the local populations, such as access to local services, and has facilitated political representation.

² Onward Latin Americans refers to Latin Americans who leave their country of origin, settle in a second country for a period of time, and then migrate on to a third country.

³<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/annualsurveyofhoursandearnings/2016provisionalresults>

⁴ They draw on the labels “Latin American” or “Latino/as” indistinctly. This needs to be understood by taking into account the different locations and scales at which the members of the social group enter into a dialogic relationship in which they are differentially situated (Yuval-Davies 2013), with special attention to the time of their arrival and whether they are first-generation, second-generation or onward migrants.

⁵ At the time of researching this paper, many of the Latin American shops had given way to temporary migrant shops, from a Polish coffee shop to an Arabic sweets stall. Other shops had temporarily settled at the back of the shopping center together with some longer-term residents (“La Chatica”) and new shops opposite, in what looks like a pop-up metal structure.

⁶ 96 Latin American businesses were identified in 2016 by Román-Velazquez and Hill.