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'Are we invisible?' Power-geometries of conviviality in a superdiverse London neighbourhood

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Abstract

This paper explores the complexities of conviviality in a London neighbourhood by using primary qualitative data to analyse the implications of the (in)visibility of difference for superdiverse social relations. It develops the concept of powergeometries to examine the implications of how social differences are produced, imagined, and experienced in the neighbourhood's public spaces. Drawing on three situated examples from a visual ethnographic research project, it explores the affective intensities of how gender, sexuality, class, and race intersect with ethnicity, religion, and migrant status to shape urban conviviality. The paper argues the way different positions and identities are layered and intersect can shape the development of 'cosmopolitan outlooks' and intercultural relations. In doing so, the analysis refines understandings of superdiversity conceived narrowly within the remit of majority/minority relations. It promotes instead more critically ethnographic explorations of the complex and varied ways difference has meaning in everyday lives in superdiverse places and shapes everyday forms of recognition and equality. The paper contributes to debates on geographies of difference, encounter, and public space by analysing how power relations affect conviviality. It demonstrates how conviviality is an ambivalent process that is punctuated by both prejudices and solidarities and is shaped by structural inequalities and wider political discourses. The paper concludes by highlighting the role of agency and space for dialogue for residents negotiating differences among urban change.

KEYWORDS

Conviviality, intersectionality, London, power-geometry, superdiversity, urban ethnography

1 | INTRODUCTION

It's a sunny day in July 2017 at Gillespie Park, a small nature reserve nestled in an unsuspecting part of north-east London. I'm here for a picnic organised by an inter-faith women's group, attended by those from a nearby mosque and a local church. They gather every couple of months to share food and tea and to make and maintain friendships and

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connections. Today's picnic is the first time they've gathered since an Islamophobic terror attack that occurred two weeks previously in nearby Finsbury Park, in which one man, Makram Ali, was killed and ten others were injured (BBC, 2017).

Early on in the picnic, once the group has settled onto their blankets, Jacqueline, a vicar and one of the organisers, brings up the terror attack. It seems important for her to discuss. She's frequently a dominant voice in the group and is seemingly a spokesperson for the women of the church, all of whom present today are white British and aged over 50. Many of them also seem keen to express their dismay and incomprehension of the attack, while in contrast the women from the mosque express feelings of fear: fear of being out in public space and of being the target of future attacks. Hadiyah says: 'some don't feel safe to go out or let their children out'. Talk turns to a recent spate of acid attacks reportedly happening in green spaces around London. Another woman from the mosque adds: 'women don't come [to the meeting] because they don't feel safe', she pauses, 'the acid attacks. It's not safe. It's happened in parks maybe that's why they don't come'. I look again around the group of women, trying to see who hasn't come. There's about 15 of us, an even balance from the church and the mosque, but not everyone I've met before has come. A woman from the church seems confused and tries to clarify, asking about the attacks. Saleema responds, 'yes, acid attacks have been happening'. Anne, from the church chimes in, incredulously, 'not in London?!' The first woman is insistent: 'Yes, parks - acid attacks!' Jacqueline steps into the conversation and gives a small speech about how it's important to come together despite these difficult times. Susan agrees and insists to the group that spaces like this park are 'safe, quiet'. Conversation moves on and later on the picnic winds down with a game of Kabaddi, a Tamil contact sport from India that someone comments reminds them a bit of the game British Bulldog that she used to play in the playground. Jokes are shared about the next meeting being at Ayat's house in Morocco or Raksha's in Bangladesh, but the group settles on a trip to a local swimming pool on its women-only day.2

This moment from the interfaith group highlights everyday negotiations of difference in the creation of conviviality in this superdiverse (Vertovec, 2007) London neighbourhood. But the discrepancy between the women on matters of violence and questions of safety in public space also represents limits in understanding and solidarity on the part of some. While the white Christians in the group are well meaning in their choice of a nature reserve for the picnic, they also struggle to acknowledge and take seriously the fear the Muslim women have about being visible in public space, particularly so soon after a high-profile Islamophobic attack. Their understanding is shaped by their own experiences and a wider form of white normativity. This indicates how good intentions around togetherness, inclusivity, and allyship can fail to adequately respond to complex situations and lead to forms of 'non-performativity' (Ahmed, 2006) in which these speech acts around 'coming together' do not necessarily or fully bring into effect what they name. It is important to recognise how inter-faith and multicultural solidarities crucially marked the response to the attack (Stansfeld, 2017), and in particular, how these kinds of meaningful encounters create forms of 'emotional citizenry' and 'inter-scaled belonging' (Askins, 2016). Nevertheless, these perspectives alone can occlude attuning to 'topographies of power, social inequality and forms of exclusion that disrupt the melody of multicultural conviviality' (Nayak, 2017, p. 289).

This paper joins with growing calls to recognise the ambivalences and complexities of conviviality (Meissner & Heil, 2020; Stansfeld, 2019; Wise & Noble, 2016), and to better understand conviviality's production and unfolding within 'the shadow of racism, imperial melancholia, "anti-terrorist" securitisation and war' (Back & Sinha, 2016, p. 522; see also Tyler, 2020). It argues that, in order to do so, we need to interrogate complex geographies of difference (Valentine et al., 2013) through attention to the concept of 'power-geometries' (Massey, 1993). A key contribution of this paper is bringing a critical geographic lens to debates on encounters and conviviality by positioning power-geometries as a central concept to explore the complexities of how difference is produced and experienced in intersectional ways within urban superdiverse publics. In doing so, the paper refines understandings of superdiversity conceived narrowly within the remit of majority/minority relations. It promotes instead critically ethnographic explorations of the complex and varied ways identities and positions overlap, intersect, and shape superdiverse social relations. It particularly considers the role of visibility of difference in this process and the implications of (in)visibility for the manifestation of prejudices and solidarities. This approach values both structural and post-structural interpretations of difference, examining the affective intensities of a 'dynamic interplay of variables' (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1024) and how these are shaped by wider discourses and structural inequalities, emphasising the role of agency in urban conviviality.

The empirical research is based in Finsbury Park, a bustling neighbourhood that is home to 30,000–60,000 residents across the London Boroughs of Islington, Haringey, and Hackney, depending on how you define its boundaries. Precise statistics on the area are thus difficult to gather, but in Haringey 67% of residents are from an ethnic minority background and over 180 languages are spoken.³ In Hackney, 9%, or almost 1 in 10 people, define as LGBTQ+.⁴ And within the Finsbury Park ward of Islington, 42% of the population were born outside the UK and 16% identify as Muslim.⁵ The area also has a large population churn and significant class differences, as areas just streets apart vary from being among

the 2% most deprived in the country to being in the 50% least deprived. Consequently, the area can be called superdiverse and encapsulates Massey's (1994) notion of a 'global sense of place', as there is an impossibility of thinking about Finsbury Park 'without bringing into play half the world and a considerable amount of British imperialist history' (p. 154). Consequently, the identity of the area is multiple, fluid, and contested (p. 154).

In the sections that follow, the paper situates debates on superdiversity and conviviality in relation to geographical concepts of space and power-geometries and anti-essentialist accounts of politics of difference. It describes a critical ethnographic approach to researching superdiverse social relations. Then, three distinct empirical sections explore in turn how the visibility of minority groups are navigated and reacted to and what this means for how conviviality is embodied and multicultural community performed. Taken together, they demonstrate how intersecting forces shape the everyday experience of difference and superdiversity and the ways that individuals express 'cosmopolitan outlooks' (Jackson, 2014) and 'convivial disintegration' (Meissner & Heil, 2020). The paper concludes by suggesting that everyday superdiverse solidarities can manifest through practices of care, 'allyship', and dialogue that together are instrumental in constructing everyday multiculture. Nevertheless, different types of visibility in relation to mediated prejudice and structural inequality can threaten this feeling of openness to difference, leading to affectivities of fear and insecurity. Consequently, I argue that a recognition-based approach (Taylor, 1994) to the experience of difference is integral to work toward 'everyday equality' (Fincher et al., 2019) in superdiverse contexts, while acknowledging and exploring the complexity, contingency, and mediation of difference and recognition. I contend that recognition often happens in moments, and through dialogue it can be worked through and transform social relations as part of a process of conviviality.

2 | SUPERDIVERSITY AND LIVING WITH VISIBILITY: SITUATED POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE

Superdiversity, the 'diversification of diversity' (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1025), is a concept that seeks to draw 'attention to the complexity of different dimensions of difference' (Aptekar, 2019, p. 55). It enables an interpretive approach to the simultaneity (Massey, 2005) of urban space. Meissner (2015) argues superdiversity is a malleable social science concept that facilitates exploration of how 'multiple axes of differentiation results in positively or ambivalently perceived social relations' (p. 557). Yet critics have suggested the concept does not do enough to engage analytically with power dynamics and social inequalities (Makoni, 2012), undervaluing still prevalent issues of race, gender, and class. Instead, many favour concepts such as intersectionality, which provides a critical lens to explore complexity through analysing how different axes of social division influence and compound one another (Collins & Bilge, 2020). As Dhawan and Castro Varela (2018, p. 49) argue, 'one of the most significant advantages of an intersectional approach is its commitment to not only feminist theory, but also critical practice or a practice of critique' that might seem lacking in analyses of superdiversity. As Collins and Bilge (2020) develop, the heterogeneity of intersectionality is one of its strengths.

Superdiversity has an interesting relationship to intersectionality (Stansfeld, 2022) and critical race theories. On the one hand, it shares with these theories 'a call for recognizing the composite effects of social categories' (Vertovec, 2017, p. 10), drawing attention to the complexity of difference and the diversity within social groups, yet it focuses specifically on migration-related categories. While there have been efforts to widen the category to consider the ways both the mobile and immobile are implicated in a wider condition of globalisation (Stansfeld, 2022), critics argue proponents of superdiversity have minimised 'the significance of racism in understanding contemporary multiculture' (Back, 2015, para. 8). The concept, although emerging from the UK context, has diverted from a history of scholarship that has explored the ways the legacy of empire has created racial orders and hierarchies within Britain (Back et al., 2012; Gilroy, 2004; Hall, 1992). Yet there is potential to use the concept within a critical race framework (Crenshaw et al., 1995) that analyses the ways that power intersects in relation to differentiation within a postcolonial context.

The concept of 'power-geometry' (Massey, 1993) can bring together this heterogeneous and critical approach of intersectionality with the spatial and translocal approach of superdiversity to better understand the everyday experiences of living with difference. This approach develops scholarship on conviviality that addresses the power relations and ambivalence that shape processes of socio-cultural co-existence and emphasise 'togetherness as lived negotiation, belonging as practice' (Wise & Noble, 2016, p. 425; see also Wise & Velayutham, 2014). Paul Gilroy's conceptualisation of conviviality has been influential because it 'does not describe the absence of racism or the triumph of tolerance' (Gilroy, 2004, p. xi) but captures the creative capacity demonstrated by ordinary individuals and communities to manage conflicts and differences in processes of cohabitation and interaction.

For Massey (1993, p. 62), the power-geometry of time-space compression is 'about power in relation *to* ... flows and ... movement'. She highlights how 'different social groups have distinct relationships to [an] anyway-differentiated mobility' (p. 62). Consequently, what power-geometry brings to this conceptualisation is a geographical foregrounding of how conviviality is wrapped up in processes of everyday mobility and shaped by the 'different kinds and degrees of human agency' (Castree et al., 2013, unpaginated) that individuals and communities have even within the same place. 'Power-geometries' address the complexities of 'co-existing heterogeneity' and how 'time-space compression' manifests in urban space (Massey, 2005). It explores who has power and control over their movements and, to some degree, over the kinds of social encounter that individuals engage in. Consequently, it enables an exploration of the spatiality of 'highly complex social differentiation' (Massey, 1993, p. 62). The concept can illuminate the ways geographically uneven relations of power in super-diverse neighbourhoods mediate the manifold ways difference is produced, experienced, and valued. As Mimi Sheller (2018, p. 47) argues, 'uneven mobilities operate at a scale of bodily relations, taking the form of differences in gender, race, class, sexuality, and ability to relate to regimes of mobility control. Differential capabilities for movement affect what it means to be human and the ways in which people form mobile subjectivities'.

This critical spatial approach to superdiversity and conviviality aligns with scholarship that has focused on encounters in public spaces (Wilson, 2017) investigating how space and identities are relational. This focus can move scholarship on superdiversity away from ontologies that position difference and group identities as fixed and essential. As Ndhlovu (2016, p. 35) suggests, a 'problem with the current framing of superdiversity is that it runs the risk of reinforcing and reproducing the same single-strand identity categories that it supposedly seeks to challenge'. This anti-essentialist approach does not mean casting off notions of race, class, and gender, but understanding them differently through attending to 'the microsociality of multicultural life' (Swanton, 2010), considering the 'affective intensities through which differentiation is performed' (p. 2347).

This performance of differentiation can occur through the labelling of some bodies as strange, unfamiliar, foreign, or 'a body out of place' (Ahmed, 2000, p. 55) in urban publics. Kristeva (1991, p. 1) suggests this labelling of 'foreign' occurs when individuals become conscious of their own difference, and it disappears when we 'acknowledge ourselves as foreigners'. In such theorisations, difference is not fixed but emerges in part from the encounter and from visibility of certain codes and markers of difference, such as dress, skin colour, or accent. These markers can mean people respond to human variation by invoking stereotypes or 'granular essentialisms' (Rosbrook-Thompson, 2018), yet these are 'contingent, contextual and liable to be misapplied' (p. 650). Power relations are inherent within affective encounters, which can play out through 'habits, repertoires and dispositions of bodies' (Anderson, 2014, p. 85). In this way race is produced 'as a technology that locates and sorts human differences encountered as threatening or 'unruly' (Swanton, 2010, p. 2334). This sorting of bodies becomes more complicated due to histories, experiences, and contexts and can be coded in relation to media representations and discourses.

A superdiverse 'politics of difference' recognises that identities are (re)constructed and reinforced at the point of encounter or intersection with other subject positions in urban settings. Paying attention to this intersectionality, then, can tell a wider story about the 'complex entanglement between identity, power and place' (Jacobs & Fincher, 1998, p. 2) and the ability of urban subjects to move freely and shape the places they inhabit. This critical lens informed by an intersectional approach enables insight into the way power-geometries are shaped by structural inequalities and discursive regimes, addressing the danger that even within superdiverse neighbourhoods 'visibility curdles into representations' (Brighenti, 2007, p. 333). Brighenti argues that disempowerment does not necessarily lead to invisibility but to a lack of control of the way an individual is perceived and seen. By connecting this recognition of power-geometries to Bhabha's (1994) concept of 'transparency', we can consider how this agency is produced. For Bhabha, 'transparency is the action of the distribution and arrangement of differential spaces, positions, knowledges in relation to each other, relative to discriminatory, not inherent, sense of order' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 155). In other words, here Bhabha emphasises the power relations that shape relationality and how relational difference is imagined, described, and ordered. These superdiverse public and community spaces are therefore not immune from the manifestation of mediated prejudice. In fact, they are subject to 'brutal migration milieu' (Hall, 2017) perpetuated by government 'hostile environment' policies that included 'go home' vans and immigration raids (Jones et al., 2017). This has ushered in a 'new politics fear' (Hall, 2017, p. 1563) that contributes to differential experiences of urban mobility. Nevertheless, superdiverse 'allyship' and a 'prevalent ethos of inclusion' (Berg et al., 2019, p. 2737) are possible in these contexts, and are supported by wider social movements such as the anti-racist movement, 'Black Lives Matter', feminist movement, 'Reclaim the Streets', and LGBTQ+ 'Pride' events. However, they unfold 'within a larger landscape of brute inequality and stratification of entitlements' (p. 2737) that mediates the experience of living with difference.

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Brighenti (2007) argues that urban visibility is imbued with politics and as public spaces are shaped by subjects relationally, the experience of visibility will vary according to who inhabits that space. This means that imaginations and experiences of public spaces can become unpredictable and permeated with 'intensities of fear or anxiety as well as ... more convivial moods or registers of affect' (Koch & Latham, 2012, p. 526). In superdiverse neighbourhoods, visibility can be shaped by specificities of difference as the norm, banal, and everyday, and studies have observed at times an 'indifference to difference' (Van Leeuwen, 2010; Wessendorf, 2014). This everyday acceptance can constitute a form of 'unpanicked multiculturalism' (Noble, 2009) that is required for inclusive citizenship (Fernando, 2014). Yet studies have also observed how difference is a point of curiosity and can become a shared value in these contexts (Stansfeld, 2019), enabling possibilities for social bonds, cross-cultural solidarities, and relational citizenship (Askins, 2016). In particular, scholars such as Cohen and Sheringham (2016) have highlighted the role of space in the formation of these shared ways of life. Yet, as noted, some celebrations of diversity that value difference have been critiqued for not recognising the ambivalences of conviviality, at times obscuring larger structural inequalities (Lubienski, 2003). There is a need to move beyond arguments of 'cosmopolitan hope' (Butcher & Dickens, 2016) to challenge hierarchies of power. Shire (2008) notes that within celebrated convivial global cities like London, people can feel both comfortable and uncomfortable with difference, simultaneously.

3 | RESEARCHING URBAN SUPERDIVERSITY AND CONVIVIALITY

This research followed a critical ethnographic approach to mapping (in)visibilities in community and public spaces. It was undertaken as part of a doctoral research project that adopted a creative qualitative methodology, including mapping, mobile, participatory, and visual approaches to explore the production and experience of space/place, difference, and conviviality in Finsbury Park, a superdiverse neighbourhood. Importantly, this critical ethnographic approach (Madison, 2012) cis focused on describing, analysing, and opening 'to scrutiny otherwise hidden agendas, power centers, and assumptions that inhibit, repress and constrain' (Thomas, 1993, pp. 2–3). In order to do so, I used a research approach that is heterogeneous, flexible, and able to respond to the complexities and dynamism of place and diversity.

Field research included 33 semi-structured 'stakeholder' interviews with individuals who were a member or representative of an identified community/religious/political group; 13 walking interviews with local residents that through participatory photography and GPS mapping created 'place portraits' of vernacular landmarks; 15 months of ethnographic participant observation of local community groups and spaces; and 10 focus groups that used participatory mapping techniques. A key ethical concern was an emphasis on positionality and reflexivity to explore how power relations structure everyday life in the neighbourhood. In the micro-scale of researcher/participant relations, the performativity of identity, multiculture, and place plays out. Yet approaching the research subject in an open manner allowed 'categories of difference to emerge rather than imposing them' (Berg et al., 2019, p. 2724). In this way, the research was mainly focused on exploring urban space and place and what Finsbury Park as a neighbourhood meant to different people. This approach was intended to allow the expressions and experiences of place and difference that participants found to be important to organically come to the fore; however, undoubtedly these were informed by the relations between me and the participants. This highlights the significance of power-geometries in mediating social relations in the neighbourhood, as the different identities I held—whether being a white British Londoner who grew up in a nearby neighbourhood, or a dual-heritage citizen and second-generation South African immigrant, or a middle-class queer woman—shaped my encounters with research participants in different ways. At times these intersectional identities served as a resource for finding connection or perhaps at other times meant participants felt hesitant to discuss certain feelings or experiences. Overwhelmingly, issues of gender arose during fieldwork, reflecting a shared power-geometry of being female in these urban spaces. On the other hand, issues of race were not often openly or directly discussed by my participants, which may have been because of my identity as white, with encounters reflecting wider normativities that reflect 'the ideal of "color-blindness" as the dominant moral compass of social enlightenment about race' (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xv). Yet participants still quite frequently referred to various markers of race, such as language or ethnicity.

Berg et al. (2019, p. 2727) identify 'a methodological challenge: how to measure and evidence diversity as a condition without falling into crude categorization of pre-defined, ethnicised differences'. Rather than assuming identifications or categorising research participants myself, I sought to allow identifications to emerge in the field and in conversations with participants. I did at times explain that I was interested in the 'diversity of the area' and mostly participants responded positively, expressing their pride and appreciation for the multiculture of the neighbourhood. For example, one local resident, Deb, told me:

it's just a fantastic thing that we can all get together because your culture is not my culture and we can talk about things like that which is lovely, I think.

(Walking interview, 2016)

Largely, research findings reflected lively forms of everyday multiculture supported by contact within micro-publics and shared public spaces. Contestations, generally, were not the norm, but when they did emerge I found there were often similar issues coming into play around access to public shared spaces, the negotiation of difference, and feelings of fear or safety. Therefore, while the following three sections tell only partial stories of the neighbourhood, they do explore these important issues of minority visibility and communal relations in public spaces in relation to different kinds of superdiverse intersections exploring dynamics related to gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, migrant status, and religion.

4 | DIFFERENCE WITHIN A 'DISCRIMINATORY SENSE OF ORDER': SUPERDIVERSITY, SOCIALITY, AND LGBTQ+ (IN)VISIBILITY

This first empirical section explores the experience of LGBTQ+ difference in superdiverse space. It argues that while the neighbourhood generally fosters a sense of openness to difference, power-geometries mean being visible can still be a source of anxiety and this has ambivalent effects on convivial relations. Generally, participants in Finsbury Park suggested the diversity of this urban neighbourhood fostered a sense of openness and inclusivity, at times framing the neighbourhood through an association between histories of immigration, ethnic diversity, and diverse sexualities. For Robert, an openly gay parish priest in Finsbury Park, there is a history of openness that produces local forms of what he terms 'tolerance':

One of the reasons I think I've stayed is because you never get bored (laughter) in Finsbury Park ... It's a funny mixture of change and continuity ... I remember being told very early on by a gay parishioner – who'd lived here for ... about 25 years at that point ... one of the things he most liked about the area was that it was broken up, there were no solid groups of people and this made it much more tolerant as an area. And so obviously for gay people in the late 80s that was quite important, and he saw that as a very definite plus.

(Interview, 2016)

It has been commonly argued that 'a strong and vibrant gay community is a solid leading indicator of a place that is open to many different kinds of people' (Florida, 2012, unpaginated). However, Robert suggests that rather than the gay community itself, it is the diversity of Finsbury Park that indicates an atmosphere of tolerance. Openness may have become an imperative of the area, emerging from a similarity in needs of the diverse groups and individuals all seeking a safe, affordable place to live and thrive. Consequently, the power-geometries of differing marginalised groups may mean safety from discrimination is a shared part of relations to locality and community, with a 'politics of recognition' (Gorman-Murray & Nash, 2016) emerging as 'the demands of multiculturalism build on the already established principles of the politics of equal respect' (Taylor, 1994, p. 68). However, even in these contexts, generalised tolerance does not prevent discrimination happening, and ambivalence can still be present with difference as a site of anxiety and uncertainty, particularly for the individual conceived of as 'different'. As Hage (1998, p. 89) argues, toleration 'is not just to accept, it is to accept and position the other within specific limits and boundaries'. This is something Alexa, a lesbian-identified local resident in her late 20s, discussed:

Sometimes when you're in a vulnerable sort of sector of the community you have to be on guard about where you go and what you say and who you say it to, or how you say something to somebody. So, for instance, like if a Turkish man at a restaurant is hitting on me, like every Turkish man – men do at restaurants which is very charming but like it'd be like ah 'do you have a husband?' and rather than being like 'no, this is my situation', I just sort of have to roll with it, have to sort of smile and be like 'no, not yet', that kind of thing (sighs). (Follow-up interview, 2017)

Valentine (1993, p. 411) has found 'patriarchy ... perpetuates the invisibility of lesbians in everyday space' and encourages this adoption of 'fictional sexual identities', hindering 'authentic relations' for gay women. Alexa notes that while Finsbury Park does provide some safety as an urban neighbourhood, providing a certain level on anonymity, her ability to develop these 'authentic' social relations are limited. Goh (2018, p. 463) highlights how 'overlapping identities and systems of oppression

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exacerbate the marginalization of LGBT-identified people, creating "unjust geographies" that intertwine race, class, gender, and sexuality'. However, in multicultural neighbourhoods social relations are also intersectional and marginalisation can be complicated by wider racialised dynamics. Alexa discusses in more detail her fear of visibility:

It's a bit of double-edged sword because ... you have this other defining feature about yourself in a diverse neighbourhood as being like ... well sometimes I just feel like every other white woman, but then when I feel like I interact with people, I don't just become any other white woman, I'm like - the white dyke - and that can either mean like I'm open to being persuaded into heterosexual marriage or other kind of fetishisations of my sexuality ... Um so it's either like, it can be safe, I can feel safe in my anonymity or I can sometimes feel quite threatened by other ways of life that the media tells me - those people - how they live their lives and how they think of people like me - like being stoned to death or (pause) corrected rape or other things like that...

(Follow-up interview, 2017)

Alexa's fear of fetishisation and sexual violence seems to be related to intersecting oppressions of homophobia and patriarchal dominance, yet it is also mediated by wider racialised discourses perpetuated by the media. She goes on to tell me that she regrets feeling like she has to make judgements about others in the neighbourhood, particularly in relation to men from migrant backgrounds and the way they perceive her. Yet she can't help but feel vulnerable and afraid. Schuermans (2016) argues through encounters with difference, white fear can perpetuate racialised assumptions and stereotypes around the 'suspicious body'. He suggests that positive and transformational encounters can only occur 'once fear of bodily harm is addressed' (p. 107). However, Alexa's case indicates how in superdiverse neighbourhoods these dynamics can be more complicated and ambivalent. Power-geometries did not preclude her from having positive relations with the Turkish men she sometimes feels guarded around. During a walking interview the year before, she told me about her friendship with her previous boss, Denny, who was Turkish, choosing his old flat for a 'place portrait' (Figure 1). She recounted stories of drinking with him and his close friend, Kudret, and how he'd 'sort her out' with extra cash when she needed it.

She narrated, 'he was one of kindest, happiest people (camera clicks) I've ever met and like I said he really looked out for me...'. This apparent contradiction in Alexa's feelings indicates the ambivalent and processual nature of conviviality and multicultural belonging. Alexa's admission of fear of the 'other' doesn't match up with her actual experiences and relations. This is partly due to a break between wider mediated discourse (with the media and government suggesting immigrants are a threat) and everyday practices (of having immigrant friendships/relations). Consequently, while Alexa does participate in the convivial multiculture of Finsbury Park, creating social connections and friendships across difference through a shared workplace, this doesn't prevent or negate her own anxiety about feeling different or even vulnerable because of her sexual identity. Bhabha's concept of transparency indicates that queerness, when visible, is distributed still in relation to a 'discriminatory sense of order' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 156). He suggests 'the place of difference and otherness, or the space of the adversarial ... is never entirely on the outside or implacably oppositional ... The contour of difference is agonistic, shifting, splitting' (p. 156). He argues we shouldn't rely on binary conceptions; in this case of tolerant as opposed to intolerant places or people. Difference is not monolithic but hybrid and it has different affective resonances at different times. Alexa draws attention to the



intersectional issues of gender, sexuality, and race that manifest through visibility in multicultural urban space and complicate social relations.

The stereotype of immigrant men as perpetrators of sexualised violence is splitting, for both the 'stereotyper' and 'stereotyped', as Alexa recognises this judgement is uncomfortable because it comes from a place of vulnerability. Yet she also admits her relative lack of agency to control the reactions people have to her. Although Alexa has experience of Turkish men as 'the kindest people I've ever met', her response to encountering one in a restaurant instinctively draws on an essentialised notion of difference (Rosbrook-Thompson, 2018). Complex power-geometries unfolding, in this instance between gender, sexuality, and race/religion, can perpetuate notions of otherness in spite of positive social relationships. More generally, Alexa's experience in the neighbourhood corresponded the experience of Jackson and Jones' (2014, p. 200) participant, in that while 'complex multiculture meant that she was able to feel comfortable because she did not "stick out" - since everyone "stuck out" in various ways ... being unseen meant [her] claims to space become overlooked too'. Consequently, this invisibility is part of a 'contingent conviviality' (Nayak, 2017) within a discriminatory sense of order that both prevents Alexa's own claims for space and recognition and has potential to reinforce wider racialised discourses. While tolerance and respect are seen as shared values in the neighbourhood, they can't be assumed, as they need to be continually worked through in specific situations and places. Superdiverse social relations are still mediated by complex power-geometries that reinforce and shape the production of difference. By focusing on the sorts of ambivalences that Alexa highlights, we can begin to understand the complexity of superdiverse social relations that 'disturbs some of the more normative accounts of processes of belonging' (Saha & Watson, 2014, p. 110). In the following section, I build on this argument by exploring the implications of when violence manifests against marginalised communities. I consider the role agency and power-geometries play for the urban geographies of Muslim women, as well as for the production of difference. The section will show how conviviality can manifest solidarity in superdiverse settings, but also how due to power-geometries these solidarities can be limited or undermined.

5 | THE AFFECTIVE POWER OF VISIBLE DIFFERENCE: ISLAMOPHOBIC HATE IN SUPERDIVERSE SETTINGS

Through this second case, I explore the affective power of visible difference and the ways it can create atmospheres of tension and fear for Muslim people in the neighbourhood, limiting their mobility, everyday practices, and sociality. Fieldwork was undertaken during and following the Brexit vote in 2016 and sat within a wider context of rising hate and hate crime. In the run-up to this time, 'there were a cluster of nine anti-Muslim hate crimes and incidents targeting the [Finsbury Park] mosque' in 2015 (Ganesh, 2017). Hate crime against Muslims was drawn to my attention by a variety of locals, including Christian and white British residents, as Carol indicated in our walking interview by choosing the Finsbury Park Mosque as one of her 'vernacular landmarks' for a place portrait (Figure 2).



FIGURE 2 'Finsbury Park Mosque', Place Portrait from Carol's walk, 2016, authors photograph.



K: Tell me why you've chosen the mosque as a place

C: Um, I think it just – it's not a place that's got any great interest for me, but it just shows the weird diversity of this particular spot and also um sometimes people throw things in the backyard of the mosque

K: oh do they?

C: you know, like sausages as a joke

K: Oh!

C: You know because they don't eat pork (chuckles) and that was reported as a hate crime (laughs) – which is kind of – a bit po-faced

(Walking interview, 2016)

Carol is able to view hate crime here as humorous, 'brushing off' the gravity of its implications and failing to acknowledge the affective experience and violence that they involve. The 'jokes' she mentions can be seen within a historical lens of Western societies using humour as a way to perpetuate social norms and uneven power relations (Davies, 1982). Sociologists have argued that racial micro-aggressions and verbal discrimination can often be downplayed or dismissed as 'banter' (Burdsey, 2011). Moreover, feminist literature has explored how 'banter' can normalise and even perpetuate violence (Bates, 2014). The purpose of banter is to humiliate and to mock, and itself constitutes a form of symbolic violence, 'in which hate victimisation of certain vulnerable groups becomes socially acceptable by constructing the circumstances in which overt violence could take place' (Pieterse et al., 2018, p. 31). In this case, what Carol calls a joke is not verbal, but is a physical act of hate crime that has very real consequences for the local Muslim population. The affective response to this hate crime for many Muslim locals I encountered was, unsurprisingly, one of fear that resulted in a change of everyday behaviour. This is something Aliah, a community development worker, discusses when talking about her son:

Even now he'll say 'Mum can I go here?' and I'm like 'I will drop you and I will pick you up' and especially when he's in Islington, I am a little bit more wary because of where we are today. I guess, with ... you know ... I've not ever encountered any hate crime but I know people who have and you know, he's a youngster and sometimes I think, you can be in the wrong place at the wrong time. So ... I am ... quite ... aware, I guess ... of his safety ... I think cos he's my child maybe. I mean I roam around like (laughs) ... No problem ... I know there's a bit of a hate crime with Muslims and things at the moment as well, so that kind of bothers me deep within, that I can't take any risk I guess ... There's been a huge change in what people used to think to what it is today, so, um, but maybe just I'm being a protective mum.

(Interview, 2016)

Aliah notes her strictness with her son is precautionary, related to his 'visibility', and involves avoiding public transport. But she also admits that her fear and concerns around the risks of her son being in public space bothers her 'deep within'. These affective geographies shape her and her son's relationships to public space, similarly to the women in the inter-faith women's group discussed in the opening vignette. Valentine (1989) has drawn attention to how a geography of fear has pressured women into adopting 'defensive tactics' that restrict the use and occupation of public space. Here Aliah demonstrates how this has implications not only for Muslim women but also for their families.

Following the Islamophobic terror attack in June 2017, hundreds attended a vigil to pay their respects and show solidarity with the Muslim community and the multicultural community of Finsbury Park. Mohammed Kozbar, chairman of the Mosque, summed up a general feeling of the response: 'stood amongst the signs and hashtags of "United against all terror" and "#WeStandTogether"', he said, 'we all have harmony in this area, and these people try to divide us, but we tell them that "we will not let you do that"' (Stansfeld, 2017). These statements of harmony, inclusion, and anti-racism constitute acts of 'collective caring' (Fincher et al., 2019, p. 50) and they are crucially important in this context to denounce hate and terror attacks. However, as Ahmed (2006, p. 106) suggests in her discussion of 'non-performativity', while these words 'do things' in publicly counteracting hate crime, they are not necessarily "finished" as forms of action, as what they "do" depends on how they are "taken up". These sayings do seem to be taken up by the women in the interfaith women's group, however, as illustrated in the opening vignette, this is not always straightforward, as good intentions around togetherness, allyship, and solidarity can fail to respond adequately to these situations.

Rosemary, one of the women from the church, told me that there was a hate crime meeting coming up that she'd be attending and said in a surprisingly angry tone for a softly spoken woman, 'you know, someone SPAT at our Raksha!' Rosemary, through meaningful contact within the inter-faith women's group, feels defensive of Raksha and is able to

refer to her as 'our', signalling this multicultural community and affective solidarity. These acts of 'allyship' do 'act' and have meaning. Increasing attendance at a hate crime meeting may affect behaviours in public space and increase sense of belonging for Muslim communities, but they do not necessarily move past the pervasiveness of whiteness as the norm in the public realm. Power-geometries, as forms of 'power in relation to the flows and movement' (Massey, 1993, p. 62), come to shape Raksha's, Aliah's, and other women's mobilities and freedoms to use and be visible in public space. As Raksha, at a later mapping focus group, noted:

The thing is you used to know certain places or neighbourhoods would be unsafe and you could just stay away from there. But now, nowhere is safe.

(Focus group, 2017)

This feeling of constant unease and insecurity has led not only to avoidance of public space/transport, but to the women modifying their own dress and appearance when they are in public in order to be less of a target. Raksha notes how, after an attack is reported in the media, she will change her niqab (veil) from an 'all black long one that covers my face apart from eyes, to a hijab, a bright colourful one that just covers my head'. Tarlo (2010, p. 45) notes this kind of strategy is due to the way 'transcultural interactions cut across the sartorial geography of particular spaces, as do political events which alter people's perceptions of particular dress forms at particular times'. Here, power-geometries create a 'geography of the veil' (Listerborn, 2015, p. 97) in which 'public spaces are economically, socially, culturally and political charged and unequally distributed'. Whereas Tarlo (2010) notes that wearing a hijab or niqab in leafy wealthy London neighbourhoods like Hampstead or Highgate would be highly conspicuous, this research highlights that this conspicuousness is becoming more ubiquitous and is also present in superdiverse settings.

The veil as a signifier of difference also indicates the gendered nature of this Islamophobic violence. Johnson (2017) explores how boundaries around the body and dress enacted through 'the multi-dimensional hijab' present a particular form of territorialisation that facilitates comfort or discomfort. In doing so, Johnson draws attention to the affective dimensions of these processes of racialisation. Listerborn (2015, p. 98) argues 'in understanding the fear, hate, and misrecognition directed toward veiled Muslim women, the process of Othering is significant'. Muslim women, despite their individual differences, become essentialised into a Muslim Other or stranger through the performance of differentiation (Swanton, 2010). This kind of hate and violence creates what Ahmed (2001) refers to as an 'affective economy' in which hate 'circulates between signifiers in relationships of difference and displacement' (p. 347). Consequently, women adapt their use of these signifiers in order to be less visibly 'different' and increase their own agency and mobility. However, in a similar way to Alexa's attempts to 'stick out' less, these attempts affect their affective experiences of the neighbourhood and their ability to forge social relations.

These forms of violence threaten convivial spaces and are also part of their contingent nature. Issues around visibility, hate, and affective power of difference illustrate the complexity of the ways power-geometries mediate experiences of superdiverse space and influence forms of multicultural community and collectivity in Finsbury Park. Although groups like the interfaith women's group could at times be ambivalent, as discussed in the introduction, the group also created tangible acts of solidarity that enabled the Muslim women to feel supported by a wider community in the face of hate. Nevertheless, in Finsbury Park, 'local expressions of violence are intertwined with wider socio-spatial and political and economic patterns' (Listerborn, 2015, p. 97). Power-geometries, therefore, mediate the experience of superdiverse space through a discursive form of 'transparency' that here implies the cultural is not 'the *source* of conflict ... but ... the *effect* of discriminatory practices' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 163). Paying attention to the production of differentiation in this case indicates how 'discriminatory practices can map out subject populations that are tarred with the visible and transparent mark of power' (p. 158). Consequently, I argue research on conviviality must attend to the way these discriminatory practices are part of reproducing and restructuring superdiverse places and lives within them.

6 | THE INTENSITY OF INEQUALITY: GENDER AND INTER-ETHNIC BOUNDARY CROSSING IN BLACKSTOCK ROAD

This final empirical section examines how the intense proximities of urban public space combined with structural inequalities influence the experience of difference and otherness in this superdiverse neighbourhood. It addresses how complex dynamics of gender and ethnicity shape experiences of symbolic boundary crossing, immigrant acceptability, and migrant inter-ethnic social relations. It focuses on contestations that emerged on Blackstock Road, a street in the

neighbourhood populated with independent and culturally hybrid establishments that epitomise the 'superdiverse street' (Hall, 2015). The street has been dubbed by some locals 'Little Algiers', due to its concentration of Algerian cafes and a North African community presence. During fieldwork, in different ways, people would speak of Blackstock Road as a place where you might encounter difference. Consequently, it seemed to divide opinion for local residents. Many residents called it their favourite local street, having grown to enjoy its translocal and independent charm, particularly the more liberal-leaning white British Londoners. This reflected Jackson's (2014, p. 65) findings that for middle-class residents in Peckham, South London, the ability to live and engage with otherness in the neighbourhood was part of developing 'a cosmopolitan outlook', but could also be 'co-opted into the white middle-class self as a form of cultural capital' (p. 66). Comparatively, some local migrant communities were more ambivalent. Hannah, a 19-year-old British Somali local resident who grew up in Finsbury Park, notes that when she was a child and used to visit Blackstock Road, she felt like she was 'in another world' or 'another country sometimes', due to the visible presence of the Algerian and North African Arabic community. She refers to people standing outside shops and taking up space and finds this overwhelming, but also discusses the positive aspects of 'so much of like the one community in one place', in particular the shops selling delicious and unusual foods like 'baked baklavas and olives in a tray'. Hannah notes although this community has been a presence since she was a young child, she still had to get used to these visible differences and now appreciates them. However, this acceptance was not as simple for some in a Turkish, Cypriot, and Kurdish women's group. During a focus group, the street and its inhabitants continued to arise as a site of contention for the women, who identified 'too many problems', particularly in relation to crime, safety, and cleanliness, which they attribute to the Arab men who spend time on the street.

As well as being a site of encounter, Blackstock Road is a borough boundary between the Boroughs of Islington and Hackney. Many different participants often suggested it was neglected for this reason, as service provision, such as street cleaning, policing, and outreach work run by the local councils, was not joined up and failed to respond to local need. Change in this context becomes fraught, with previous iterations of community and place viewed with nostalgia. Irem, from the group, lamented how Finsbury Park used to be cleaner and 'nicer', and she expressed disgust and discomfort around the 'oily streets', what Jackson (2014, p. 64) calls the 'leakiness of multiculture'. Consequently, visiting Blackstock Road constitutes a form of symbolic boundary-crossing for the women complicated by gendered relations, as the women express their intimidation when men hanging about on the street don't move when they walk past. While for the middle-class white British residents this boundary-crossing can become a point of 'vivid concern or delight' (Kristeva, 1991, p. 4), differing power-geometries for the Turkish, Kurdish, and Cypriot women mean anxiety and fear arises. One of the women from the group, Gaye, expresses an important feeling by the women that they 'weren't allowed to go there', highlighting the feeling of restricted mobility due to women's experiences of sexual harassment. The women's fears become intertwined with concerns about wider social problems, viewed with a cultural lens. As Irem states:

like N5 for me – I can't believe it now, it's too much change ... Lots of different Arab, not the same place ... no more like rich place ... I am like, I'm not feeling like London, I'm feeling like Arab country!

(Focus Group, 2016)

Feelings of fear and discomfort that Irem and other women express are deeply bound with the cultural expectations about what London and England should be – wealthy, clean, efficient, and safe. It is clear that who disrupts, and how this narrative is disrupted, matters. The women express a sense of being 'citizens of paradox' (Hall, 2012, p. 68), in which as established immigrants they make a generalised distinction between themselves and new immigrants, invoking 'new hierarchies of belonging' (Back et al., 2012). As Hall notes, 'within narratives of deserving and undeserving immigrants lurks the question of ethnicity and race, and whether it is in fact the investments of time and work that are the basis of immigrant "acceptability", or whether judgement is affected by racism' (Hall, 2012, p. 69). However, this was not the view of all the women in the group, as Hira challenges Irem's claims by asking:

H: Are we invisible? This is not, I'm not happy to talk like that because we are here as well and the other people can come into the other countries and not to say these people that come are all bad, yes there is a small minority maybe – they're not doing enough road work – there is all the work, collect the rubbish, all the bins full – maybe they do more work because I believe everybody pay council tax or service charge or something

K: of course, yeah. So really the government needs to bring more services?

H: more services!



G: more services

H: we can't say all 'these people' or that, it's, I'm unhappy with speaking like that.

(Focus Group, 2016)

Hira's rhetorical question 'Are we invisible?' recognises the place of the women themselves as immigrants, also having a visible presence in the area. Hira invokes Kristeva's notion that 'strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity ... By recognising him within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself' (Kristeva, 1991, p. 1). Through dialogue, then, the process of differentiation and 'othering' is disrupted. Instead, the problems are refocused on wider structural issues, particularly a lack of service provision on a borough boundary that cash-strapped councils are seen to have neglected. Hira's point indicates how visibility can highlight sameness and shared struggles.

Similar comments were made among women at an Anglican Church Tea Group for over 50s, who were unified in their concern with the young men and take-away delivery riders 'loitering' on the street. However, one Tea Group member, Rosemary, confided that she had countered the others after having discussions with her daughter, suggesting that social space in the neighbourhood is in short supply and the young men hanging about on benches might need that space as much as their group needed the church hall. Rosemary's self-reflection indicates how recognition can emerge when structural contexts are acknowledged, in this case how the visibility of ethnicised masculinity in public space is mediated by labour precarity and overcrowded housing. As one of the delivery drivers, Zakaria Gherabi, publicly said:

If you see lots of riders all together, we are not a gang, we are working, we have families and we face struggles. We come together to work, and because we are from the same country people think we are a gang. We need a safe space to wait while we work.

(quoted from Ferguson, 2020, no pagination)

Zakaria recognises the stereotype of a 'gang' has been put on him and his fellow riders, many of whom are Algerian men, and he tries to find space for dialogue to respond to others' fears and express his own struggles. Before this news article, Zakaria faced a violent attack while working in Finsbury Park and in early 2020 an Algerian friend and fellow delivery rider was killed in the neighbourhood as the victim of a road rage attack (BBC, 2020). The men often perceived as perpetrators are also victims of crime and similarly express fear about being visible in public space. So, as well as addressing questions of race in considering immigrant acceptability, there is also a 'need to challenge the gendered logics which position migrant men as villains', particularly as 'the undeserving migrant is, in general, gendered negatively, as a man' (De Noronha, 2015, p. 7).

These examples demonstrate how power-geometries mediate experiences of and perspectives on difference amongst structural inequality and urban change. The Algerian men face a lack of agency due to often being undocumented, in precarious work, and living in overcrowded conditions. Many have little choice but to spend time in street spaces to work and cultivate necessary forms of community and sociality to survive. Yet this intersects with their being male and supported by wider dynamics of patriarchy in public space; while the women may be more established as migrants, they still feel more vulnerable as women in public space compared to white British middle-class residents. Consequently, power-geometries mean that conviviality is not experienced by all equally. Intersectional power dynamics that produce 'new hierarchies of belonging' (Back et al., 2012) also shape the experience of urban publics and who may feel safe to form intercultural social relations. Yet dialogues on these issues can enable a recognition of the wider structural challenges the neighbourhood and its' residents face, leading to everyday forms of recognition and respect that enable a 'contingent conviviality' (Nayak, 2017) to carry on.

7 | CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the (in)visibility of difference in a superdiverse north London neighbourhood, focusing on affectivities of fear and discomfort as well as of connection and solidarity in encounters with otherness. It has argued that an analysis of 'power-geometries' (Massey, 1993), as geographically uneven relations of power, is important in understanding how superdiversity unfolds and is experienced as a process of urban change. Contributing to debates on urban sociality and conviviality, the paper has examined their unfolding in relation to a 'discriminatory sense of order' (Bhabha, 1994) that is shaped by wider structural inequalities and media discourses that can shape ambivalent forms of

cosmopolitan belonging and lead to, at times, the non-performativity (Ahmed, 2006) of acts of 'allyship'. The research explored how, nevertheless, in spite of and because of complex social differentiation, individuals are able to persevere and use what agency they can to continue to construct new solidarities and cosmopolitan outlooks in the face of dispossession, austerity, and hate.

More broadly, the paper contributes to debates on the experience of urban public space, particularly considering how it is gendered and raced. I have built on work by Swanton (2010) that uses race in a broad and inventive sense, investigating the 'significance of materiality and affect in processes of social differentiation' (p. 2334). The paper has explored the experience of superdiversity from an intersectional perspective, examining how different identities and subjectivities gain meaning and affectivity through urban encounters. While much research has focused on the white 'majority' expression of prejudice and encounters with otherness (Valentine, 2008), this paper has explored the nuances of inclusion and exclusion between 'minority' groups. In particular, emphasising 'the significance of indeterminacy, complexity, and liveliness' (Swanton, 2010, p. 2334) in urban multiculture and the ways differentiation occurs through bodies, things, spaces, and discourses.

While the city can be viewed as a shelter for diverse communities, it can also represent a danger for minority groups. In particular, the paper has explored the impact of intolerance on racialised, religious, and sexual minorities within superdiverse urban spaces. By exploring the affective power of the visibility of difference, I have indicated the ways visibility illuminates underlying power-geometries that mediate individuals' and groups' mobility and agency. While the paper has addressed how varying forms of difference intersect and are layered, it has particularly shown how these relations are gendered, highlighting the shared experience of fear that different women face in urban spaces. Proponents of superdiversity have highlighted the ways the concept goes beyond the 'race-gender-class complex' (Vertovec, 2017, p. 10) of intersectional approaches. Yet this should not mean undervaluing the role that gender, race, and class play in people's lives in superdiverse settings. While some scholars have highlighted tolerance as an explanatory approach to social differentiation in superdiverse neighbourhoods, I argue this approach can risk overlooking differences, perpetuating the invisibility of identities and inhibiting 'authentic' relations. As 'everyday convivial encounters often mark ... a culture of tolerance which leaves the issue of our multiple and intersecting identities ... unaddressed, as well as the question of who has the power to tolerate' (Valentine, 2008, p. 334). Instead, I argue that a recognition-based approach to convivial relations in superdiverse neighbourhoods can manifest a form of multicultural community through eventfulness and a multiplicity of small acts, moments, and social relationships that manifest forms of solidarity and 'allyship'. The kind of 'ethos of inclusion' that Berg et al. (2019) argue is an important aspect of conviviality. In order to achieve forms of 'everyday equality' (Fincher et al., 2019, p. 7) that involve 'being together in difference as equals', power-geometries and structural inequalities must be acknowledged. Importantly, local people require agency and space for dialogue in recognising differences and sameness in each other as they navigate the superdiverse places and communities they are a part of.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The full dataset that supports the findings of this study is not publicly available due to privacy and ethical restrictions. Visual and creative ethnographic data with consent to be shared is available to view at: https://mappingsuperdiversity.wordpress.com/.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹Research informants have been given pseudonyms to support anonymity.
- ²Material used here and throughout this paper has been drawn from a previously unpublished doctoral thesis (Stansfeld, 2019).
- ³ 'Ethnic minority backgrounds' in this instance includes the 'White Other' category, which encompasses groups from varied backgrounds including nationals from Turkey and Eastern Europe. Statistics from 'Haringey at a Glance: State of the Borough' (April 2021) available at: https://www.haringey.gov.uk/sites/haringeygovuk/files/state_of_the_borough_final_master_version.pdf.
- ⁴Statistic from 'A Profile of Hackney, its People and Place', LB Hackney Policy and Insight Team, available at: https://hackney.gov.uk/population.
- ⁵ Statistics from Local Insight profile for 'Finsbury Park' area, Islington Council, 9 January 2019, OCSI.
- ⁶Indices of multiple deprivation, 2015.

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