



International  
Inequalities Institute

# **Migrant entrepreneurs and corner-shop cosmopolitanism**

Dr. Susanne Wessendorf  
International Inequalities Institute (III)  
London School of Economics (LSE)

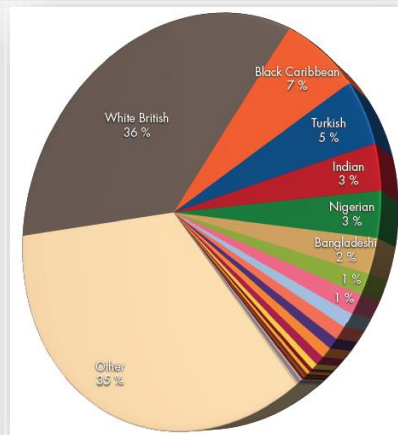
- What is the role of migrant entrepreneurs in creating links between majority and migrant populations?



# Super-diverse Hackney



- Total pop. 250,000
- 100+ languages (English, Turkish, Yiddish, French, Gujarati, Bengali, Vietnamese, Yoruba and Twi)
- 36.2 % white British
- Most areas of Hackney among 10% most deprived in Britain
- Increasing Gentrification



# Super-diverse Newham

Total population: 307,984

High unemployment (8.6%) and child poverty (41%)

Residents born in other countries: 42.4%

Ethnicity:

'South Asian': 35.7%

White British: 16.7%

Black African: 12.3%

White Other: 11.4%

'Other Asian': 6.5%

Caribbean: 4.9%

Religion:

Christian: 41.6%

Muslim: 40.9%

Hindu: 6.3%

No religion: 9.5%

Languages: 103 languages spoken



# Methods

- Participant observation in openly accessible community spaces :
  - Knitting groups
  - Coffee mornings
  - Youth clubs
- Focus group interviews:
  - Teenage boys
  - Mothers
  - Elderly
  - English classes
- Individual interviews
- Expert interviews
- Informal conversations

# Commonplace Diversity



- Diversity not seen as unusual
- Awareness of difference, but civility





# Commonplace Diversity



- Diversity not seen as unusual
- Awareness of difference, but civility
- History of diversification: high numbers of immigrants since 1950s (Caribbean, Africa, South Asia Turkey, Vietnam, etc.)
- Insider – outsider status not marked by visible difference
- New international immigration not specifically noticed

# Three social realms

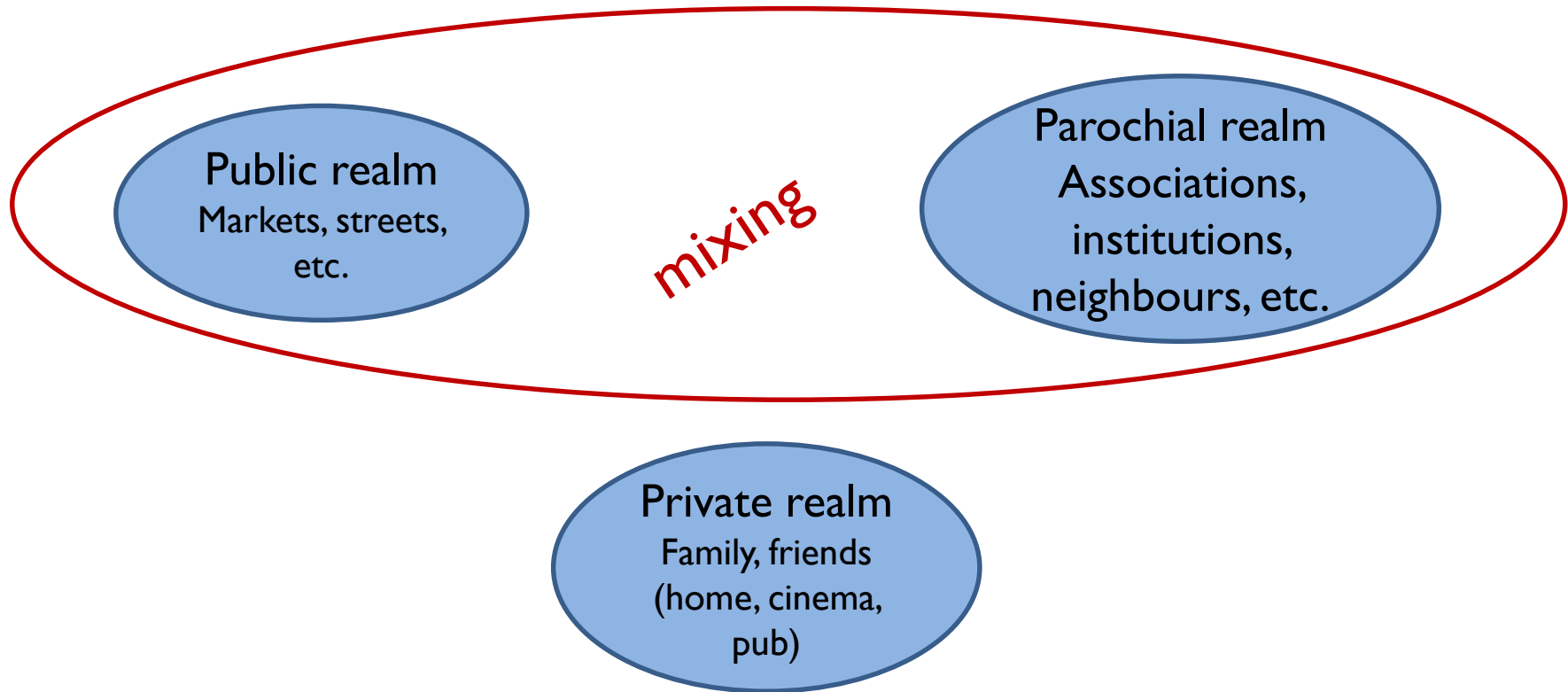
**Public realm**  
Markets, streets,  
etc.

**Parochial realm**  
Associations,  
institutions,  
neighbours, etc.

**Private realm**  
Family, friends  
(home, cinema,  
pub)



# Three social realms



# The parochial realm: 'Third spaces'

'your third place is where you relax in public, where you encounter familiar faces and make new acquaintances' (Oldenburg 1991).

e.g. Cafés, community centres, beauty parlours, corner-shops, barbers, etc.

## Third spaces through an 'ethnic lens'

- Co-ethnic sites: ethnic community organisations, shops catering to a specific migrant clientele (e.g. Ghanaian shop selling 'foufou' and Ghanaian cloth, etc.)
- Co-ethnic sites for everybody: e.g Italian delicatessen, Vietnamese nail parlour, Turkish restaurants, etc.
- Mixed sites: sports clubs, parks, youth clubs, etc.

# Co-ethnic sites for everybody: Migrant entrepreneurs

- Migrant run services and shops (e.g. barbours, nail salons, corner-shops, restaurants, cafes, etc.)
- These can serve as bridges between people of different backgrounds by offering food and services.

# Corner-shop cosmopolitanism

- ‘broth’, ‘auntie’ and ‘ma’am’
- South Asian butcher speaking Twi
- Sauerkraut and Polish beer



# 'Bridges' and 'barriers'

- Shops, cafes and restaurants can serve as bridges between majority and migrant populations.



# 'Barriers'

- Visibility of newcomers can also be seen as alienating
- Perceived accessibility of ethnic businesses



Sharon: You go to East Ham and they've got their cafés, they take over the whole area, where's that interacting or anything like that, it's separation isn't it, they've got two cafés, one at that side of the road and the other on that side, and it's just them! What about everybody else! Can't we sit in your café?

Fatima: Well you don't feel like you can sit there do you, no you don't.

Sharon: It's just them!

Jamilah: It's hard to walk in anywhere where someone, when everyone is talking a different language to you.

Fatima: When we came, we opened up Indian restaurants, it was open for ALL

Sharon: It was for everybody.

Fatima: It was for everyone, and everyone could come in.

Jamilah: But then everyone who was working and everything was speaking English half of the time, unless there was something at the back, but if you walk into a place, and everyone is talking in a foreign language, you're going to feel isolated, you won't want to go in, that's the whole issue, and that's a way of saying 'we don't want you here'.

Ayshe: I think it's just like with every community, as I say London is like a melting pot for every culture, and it's nice, but at the same time, what the government don't see is that segregation that happens individually, and sometime, you know to bring people together, you need to put stuff out there so people can enjoy and do stuff.

# Conclusion

- Third spaces as spaces of social interactions between people of different backgrounds
- Migrant businesses can provide such opportunities, e.g. cafés, restaurants, shops
- Contingent on opportunity structures for new migrants. UK: relatively open regulations regarding setting up a business
- Entrepreneurship as an important realm of migrant integration

# THANK YOU

Dr. Susanne Wessendorf  
International Inequalities Institute (III)  
s.wessendorf@lse.ac.uk



International  
Inequalities Institute