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Translation and Translanguaging

Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse Wards in Four UK Cities

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Paper 11

Enterprising Communities: How Everyday Entrepreneurs Create Better Communities

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(<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/generic/tlang/index.aspx>)

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Enterprising Communities: How Everyday Entrepreneurs Create Better Communities

The evidence presented below is an outcome of the AHRC funded research project, ‘Translation and Translanguaging: Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse Wards in Four UK Cities’ (2014-2018) (AH/L007096/1).

This Working Paper is in the format of a policy briefing. On 14th July 2015, Professor Adrian Blackledge presented findings from the TLANG research project as evidence to the Everyday Entrepreneurs Inquiry of the All Party Parliamentary Small Shops Group at the House of Commons. The project was later asked to submit this evidence in written form to the same group.

TLANG takes an interdisciplinary orientation to researching language, business and superdiversity and our evidence base is built from qualitative data (observations, audio and video recordings, textual artefacts and photographs) and interpreted through a linguistic ethnography methodology. The findings documented below are drawn across the individual city reports for phase one of the project. To reach these conclusions we brought together a cross disciplinary team which shared an interest in the daily encounters of people engaged in entrepreneurial activity in city neighbourhoods.

The project conducted detailed ethnographic investigations in small migrant businesses in Birmingham, Cardiff, Leeds, and London. (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/generic/tlang/working-papers/index.aspx>).

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| 1. Everyday engagement | 2.3 | The everyday multiculturalism practised in small shop settings contributes to social cohesion, playing a role in neighbourhoods which goes beyond commerce |
| 1.1 Entrepreneurs are proud of their small businesses, and the role they play in the city | | |
| 1.2 Setting up a small business requires determination, courage, and resilience | 2.4 | Everyday entrepreneurship brings together people who might otherwise remain apart |
| 1.3 Small shops are contexts where friendships may be formed between traders and customers | 2.5 | Despite the fleeting nature of many interactions in small shops, they contribute to the normalization of diversity |
| 1.4 A willingness to engage with others is a social skill practised in small shops in superdiverse cities | 2.6 | Small shops are spaces in which regular encounters with difference contribute to diversity becoming commonplace |
| 1.5 Everyday entrepreneurs often have long-standing and intergenerational relationships with customers and their families | 3. Everyday languaging | |
| 2. Everyday diversity | 3.1 | Small shops are spaces where people communicate by whatever means possible to achieve their objectives, and these communicative interactions are an important part of the fabric of local communities |
| 2.1 In small shop encounters people acknowledge difference as a positive resource for convivial communication, and this is a means of contributing to unity and social cohesion | 3.2 | Despite the different backgrounds and biographies of people engaged in commercial encounters, breakdown in communication is rare |
| 2.2 The day-to-day practices of buying and selling are normally characterised by good humour, conviviality, generosity of spirit, and people’s willingness to get on with other people | 3.3 | Small shops are often places where traders and customers learn features of each others’ languages, and this contributes to intercultural communication and social cohesion |

- 3.4 In small shops people engage in cross-cultural encounters and negotiate meaning through improvised language resources, and these cross-cultural encounters limit ‘differences’ between people
- 3.5 Small shops are spaces where people learn about unfamiliar produce (e.g. foods), and this new knowledge contributes to intercultural understanding
- 3.6 Small shops are sites where heritages may overlap, and this overlapping can open up spaces for communication
- 3.7 Small shops are spaces where multilingualism is positively valued and encouraged, and this contributes to people feeling less isolated, and even empowered
- 3.8 Small shops are often viewed as part of the heritage of a neighbourhood
- 3.9 Everyday entrepreneurs believe that small shops are more valuable sites for communication and interaction than supermarkets

4. Migration

- 4.1 Small shops are often spaces where migration is positively valued by everyday entrepreneurs, and this attitude can help to counter negative discourses about migration and migrants
- 4.2 Small shops can play a role in maintaining transnational connections for migrants, preventing potential social isolation
- 4.3 Small businesses are spaces where migrants support other migrants with advice about navigating social structures and processes
- 4.4 Small migrant businesses succeed when they establish a customer base through niche markets, and this success contributes to local economic growth
- 4.5 Small shops are often places where traders and customers learn features of each others’ cultural practices and beliefs, and this dynamic interaction contributes to intercultural understanding

5. Small shops as community hubs

- 5.1 Small shops have roles beyond commerce, often offering advice and support on housing, schools, finance, and counselling
- 5.2 Small shops sometimes operate as community hubs, providing practical support to people in need, including food, clothing, and even money
- 5.3 In some cases small shops have a role in fostering religious practices and identities
- 5.4 Small shops are often *de facto* community centres which provide information about events and activities in the locality

6. Overcoming obstacles in enterprising communities

- 6.1 Everyday entrepreneurs face challenges in setting up small businesses when they are confronted by bureaucratic demands beyond their skills and experience
- 6.2 New businesses would benefit from better focused support from local government in writing business plans and meeting bureaucratic requirements
- 6.3 Everyday entrepreneurs sometimes fail due to lack of available funds in the initial stages of business set-up, and local government could offer better support in this area
- 6.4 Setting up a small business can be physically and logistically demanding for families, and available child care would alleviate these demands
- 6.5 New entrepreneurs sometimes experience discrimination from competitors in the process of setting up a business, and local government can be more responsive in taking action to prevent this
- 6.6 Local government can promote local business by ensuring that transport links are in place to facilitate customer flow