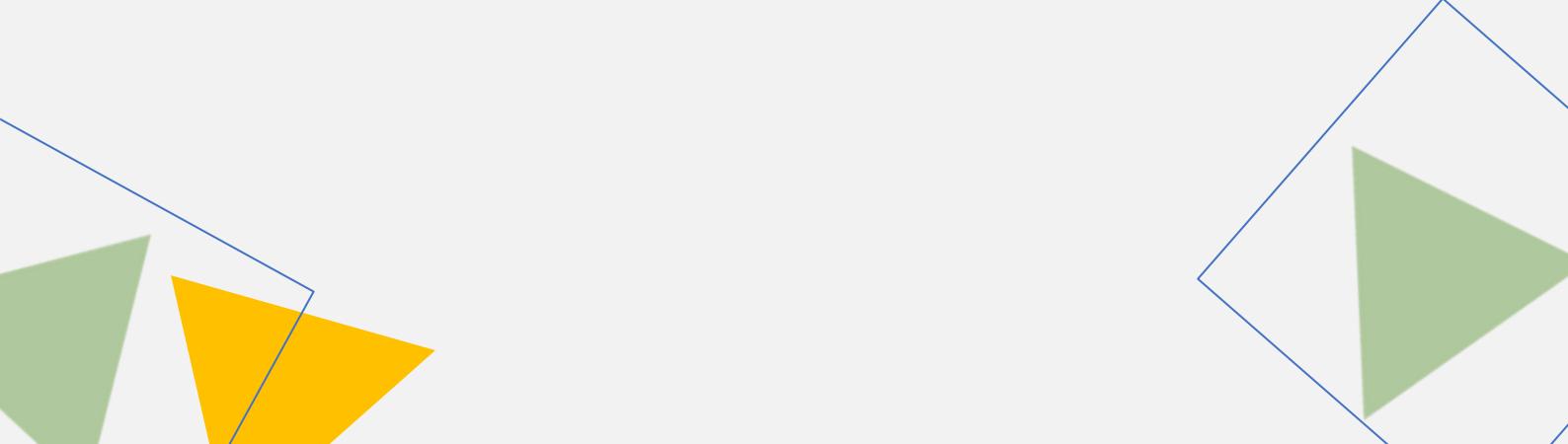


Report

Engaging with the Latin American Community In Southwark

Dr María Soledad Montañez

March -September 2021



Background

In 2018, as part of the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Open World Research Initiative 'Cross- Language Dynamics Reshaping Community' project 'Cross Language Dynamics: Reshaping Community' project, the Institute of Modern Languages Research in partnership with Southwark Council secured funding to develop a project on community engagement with and about the Latin American community in Southwark. As a result of the successful joint bid, the action-research led to a series of projects and activities which I was able to progress with the Latin American community organisations in Southwark, exploring how community engagement and community development approaches could be used to further integration of new migrant and multilingual communities in London.

The project was completed in October 2020 with a report, entitled: [*Lemme Hablar: Community Engagement and the Latin American Community in Southwark*](#). The report contained a set of recommendations to Southwark Council, which was presented at the Southwark Latin American Network, and at the Southwark Latin American Community Conference in September 2021, as detailed below.

Further funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council allowed the project to follow-up and test some of the recommendations made in *Lemme Hablar: Community Engagement and the Latin American Community in Southwark*, in particular, the development of the Southwark Latin American Network (SLAN).

In this sense, my follow-up project aimed to continue shaping and supporting the community's needs, by focussing on achieving strategic change, including research and policy work, and testing new approaches to address local priorities. Due to the limited timeframe, and the COVID-19 pandemic, the project focused on the deliverables of **three key objectives**:

1. Co-development of SLAN in partnership with Community Southwark
2. A cross-sector conference about the Latin American Community in Southwark and a webinar on Latinx women in London
3. A Translation Training project for community members in partnership with [The Centre for Translation Studies \(CenTraS\)](#) at UCL School of European Languages, Culture and Society (SELCS)

1. The Southwark Latin American Network (SLAN)

The Southwark Latin American Network is a forum of service providers, community organisations, voluntary groups and activists working in the London Borough of Southwark and supporting the Latin American community in the borough. The network emerged as part of my research on the Latin American community in Southwark, within the Translingual strand of the AHRC project '[Cross-Language Dynamics: Reshaping Community](#)'.

The multi-sector network brings together the local government (Southwark Council), non-profit organisations and voluntary groups, stakeholders and providers of services for and by the Latin American community in Southwark and neighbouring boroughs), and public organisations (such as the University of London, Public Health England, Public Health Southwark).

In 2018, Southwark Council and I approached Community Southwark to start discussing the possibility of co-developing a Latin American network in the borough, as my project aimed to explore ways of co-creating a more sustainable form of engagement that could last longer than the actual project's timeframe and could be led by the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in the borough.

Our research project in Southwark concluded that effective community engagement requires the participation, knowledge and expertise of organisations and voluntary groups working in equal, sustainable, and meaningful collaboration with local authorities, researchers, practitioners, and other relevant stakeholders.

These ideas and approaches built on the Council's existing work with the Latin American communities using previous research, such as Mette Berg's *Latin Americans in Southwark: Service Access and Provision* (2017).

In July 2018, Community Southwark and I began co-developing and co-facilitating the Latin American cross-sector network in Southwark (SLAN). At its initial stage, the Latin American network brought together the local government (Southwark Council), the third-sector (Latin American organisations, stakeholders and providers of services for the Latin American community in Southwark and neighbouring boroughs) and public organisations (University of London, Public Health Southwark, HIV Commission Lead and CCGs).

The network aimed to support Latin American representation in Southwark and articulate a common understanding of issues, needs, goals and solutions to increase more effective collaborative working, reducing gaps and duplication in programmes, and improving services for the Latin American community at a local level.

The network was conceived as an opportunity to develop a more consistent relationship and better understanding of community needs between the Latin American organisations themselves and the Council and other decision-makers.

The network was initially based on Community Southwark's existing network model known as "Provider Led Group/Network" (PLG). PLGs were designed to encourage peer support

between communities and organisations of different sizes and stages of development to ensure that the groups were plugged in, joined-up and could get their messages across to opinion formers and decision-makers.

Southwark Council has participated actively in the network's building-process and considered the network an important platform for relationship building and collaboration.¹

In July 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Community Southwark appointed a new CEO, and all the PLGs and Networks were reenergised and expanded to cover interests that they did not cover before. It was important at that time that Community Southwark as the lead VCS infrastructure organisation for Southwark could speak with some authority and knowledge when identifying the needs of the sector and the solutions at a very critical time in our history. A key aim and outcome of my research, after working very closely in the development of the network, was the decision that the Latin American Network should have a seat on [Southwark Voice](#). This was a major step forward in recognising the importance of the community to Southwark. Southwark Voice (Voice) is an independent group of Representatives from networks of voluntary organisations, community groups and active citizens working in Southwark.

After some discussion, and a few setbacks, in April 2021, the network elected a Chair for the network, agreed on the Terms of Reference and redefined its membership. The network was formally launched at the Southwark Latin American Network in September 2021, and it is now called the [Southwark Latin American Network \(SLAN\)](#). The network was officially launched at the cross-sector Southwark Latin American Community Conference in September 2021.

Achievements

- The network elected a Chair. This was a huge milestone for the network, after several problems regarding the election process and the Terms of Reference.
- Set up a working group on Place and Space to lobby for a cultural and community hub for the Latin American community in Southwark.
- The network has met and will meet every 2 months to discuss issues and challenges faced by the community.
- The Network sat at their first Southwark Voice meeting in July 2020, and since then it has attended 3 meetings. Issues it has brought to the table include: **visibility, representation and recognition** of the Latin American Community in Southwark; **capacity building**, a need for infrastructure and community assets - such as spaces, access to funding; **advocacy and intercultural communication**; issues such as translation of documents into Spanish and Portuguese; **information dissemination and awareness** of funding and support initiatives for the Latin American community.
- The network has its own [webpage](#) designed by a member organisation.

¹ The network was mentioned at [the Education & Local Economy Scrutiny Commission](#) in February 2021, and fully acknowledged at our Southwark Latin American community conference in September 2021.

- The network has conducted its own internal survey about the current needs of the Latin American organisations in Southwark.



Challenges

As a cross-sector network, SLAN has presented some challenges in terms of identity politics, representation and leadership, in particular in relation to the pre-existing Coalition of Latin Americans in the UK (CLAUk). Issues regarding community formation, accountability and legitimacy were frequently raised, contested and addressed at the network meetings, including competitive pressures, resource constraints, and differing priorities. Since its inception, the network has discussed these challenges, as have Southwark Council, Community Southwark and member organisations in their desire to seek the best way forward.

My role as an academic within the development of this network has been new to most of us. The role involved mostly leadership, management and administrative work to support Community Southwark, such as co-organizer, creating a sense of team spirit, servicing the meetings (agenda, minutes, action points and facilitating sessions and workshops) for the SLAN meetings and conference organisation, as well as an advisory role and budget holder.

2. The Southwark Latin American Community Conference (14/09/21)

The cross-sector conference, the first of its kind, brought together Latin American organisations, community leaders, academics, and decision makers in Southwark to discuss and reflect on the needs and challenges faced by the Latin American communities in Southwark, as well as to consider the community's assets and existing resources.

The virtual conference aimed to explore opportunities for collaboration to bring about change, offer solutions, and improve representation in Southwark. It functioned as a virtual forum for representatives to work together and will be continued in future through Community Southwark.

The conference was organised by the Southwark Latin American Network (SLAN) in partnership with Community Southwark, with the support of the Institute of Modern Languages Research, University of London.

The conference was a collaborative and collective effort that aimed to:

1. Present research on community engagement in Southwark with the Latin American community
2. Introduce the Southwark Latin American Network (SLAN)
3. Discuss forms of collaboration across sectors
4. Present a set of asks – by the community organisations

The online conference took place on the 14th of September. See programme in appendix.

All member organisations gave a presentation and presented a set of asks to Southwark Council.

The conference was introduced by Community Southwark CEO, Chris Mikata-Pralat, and Cllr Alice MacDonald (Southwark Council Cabinet Member for Equalities, Neighbourhoods and Leisure), and Cllr Maria Linforth-Hall spoke about the importance of engaging with the Latin American community in Southwark.

The conference was organised by David Reid (Community Southwark) and myself with the initial support of a small conference committee, formed by Latin American member organisations.

Cllr Alice MacDonald (Cabinet Member for Equalities, Neighbourhoods and Leisure) said in her presentation at the conference:

“I am committed to work with you all to make sure that your voices are heard, and you can thrive in this borough. [...]”

“This is a very important conference”

[María Soledad Montañez’s report is a really important study [which] offers a valuable insight about what Southwark needs to do to tackle the issues faced by the community”

The conference included three four? major panel sessions, which focused on SLAN’s priority key areas: Place and Space; Health and Wellbeing; and Education and Culture, Employment and Welfare Rights.

Panel members included: Sangeeta Leahy (Director of Public Health Southwark), Cllr Jason Ochere (Cabinet member for business, jobs and town centres), Cllr Evelyn Akoto (Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing), Sally Causer (Southwark Law Centre), and Rosie Dalton-Lucas (Head of Programme – Healthy Places, Public Health Division, Place and Wellbeing Department, London Borough of Southwark). See Appendix for full programme.

More than 20 invitations were sent to Council Cabinet Members, key Council Officers and stakeholders in the borough, who due to previous commitments, could not attend the conference.

To facilitate participation and representation, Community Southwark and I offered two “surgeries” to support organisations in the writing of their presentations, and we hosted a meeting to review the conference’s aims and set of asks.

The conference was recorded and will be available online.

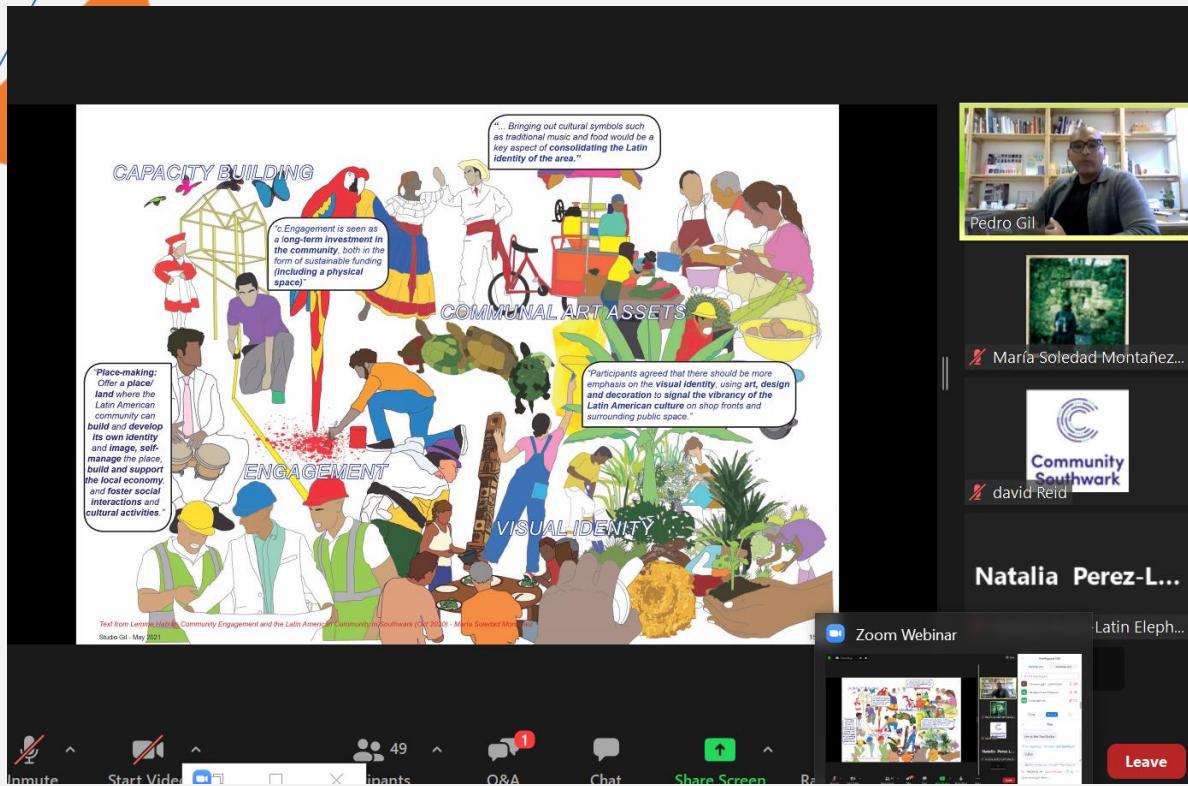
Set of asks

The Latin American organisations each presented a set of asks.

Overall, the set of asks focussed on the recognition of the community as an ethnic minority, and its particularities and specific needs, and on the need for a space/place for the community to develop a sense of belonging. Specific asks included:

- Ethnic Recognition
 - a. The recognition of Elephant and Castle as a Latin Quarter
 - b. Work of faith groups and their role

- c. A cultural hub building for the Latin American community
 - Enhance the current retail offering of the borough through the provision and delivery of specialist food, goods and services.
 - A world-class purpose-built cultural hub building for the Latin American community in recognition of their contribution.
 - Public realm spaces, structures, and installations that represent and celebrate the diversity of Southwark, including the Latin American community and its cultural offer.
 - Increase NHS Mental health services provided in Spanish and Portuguese rather than using interpreters.
 - Provide Spanish and Portuguese speaking mental health professionals to work in the community with organisations.
 - Social housing and more support for those renting or wanting to rent in the private sector. More staff working in Housing options to avoid such long waiting times to get help.
 - Help with liaising with Southwark schools to increase Spanish as a foreign language offer across schools, connecting MFL provision with Latin American community needs.
 - Support for Spanish-speaking parents with young children to help them navigate the different systems, such as the education system.
 - Funding:
 - a. Increase funding for groups working on combatting violence against women and girls, ensuring it doesn't just go to larger generic organisations, but also prioritises smaller groups working closely with specific communities.
 - b. Specific cultural and linguistic funding, particularly for work with young people.
 - c. Provide funding for organisations to offer culturally appropriate therapy and mental health services.
 - Improve understanding of the intersecting layers of discrimination faced by Latin American women to provide routes to safe reporting.



Pedro Gil, Carnaval del Pueblo, giving a presentation at the Southwark Latin American Network.

Screenshot of his presentation, which includes quotes from my research.

3. Conversatorio: The Latin American Community in London: An Intergenerational Conversation (9/09/2021)

Migrant women's first-hand experiences are often unseen and unheard. This event aimed to explore new forms of engagement and increase representation within the Latin American community. This online conversatorio was an opportunity to discuss more informally and from a more personal perspective, the barriers faced by Latin American women, but also talk about their community work and the many ways they contribute to create networks of solidarity and sorority.

The event brought together Latin American women across generations from artists and writers to community organisers, activists, mothers, teachers and students, and scholars working with the Latin American community in London. It included 8 speakers from differing generational perspectives, nationalities, educational backgrounds, and personal experiences, from the Chile Democrático to the British Latinx. The speakers shared their experiences and knowledge about migration in London from an intersectional perspective.

The event was attended by **40 people**, which included a mix of academics and community members. Due to the high interest in the topic, we aim to have a series of podcasts, and the publication of a book that gathers the testimonies of migrant women in the UK.

4. Citizens Translation Training

One of the key findings from my research report to Southwark (*Lemme Hablar*) is that there is a clear need to develop a culturally-informed engagement strategy to specifically target the Latin American community and tailor interventions according to population, gender, labour circumstances, and language.

Access to key information in the main community languages (Spanish and Portuguese) was recommended as a strategic priority in the Council's approach to migrant communities, and in the promotion of equality and accessibility. In considering legally protected characteristics, such as race/ethnicity, my report makes a clear case about how language cannot be disassociated from such characteristics when working with minority ethnic and migrant communities. The need for translation became even more evident and urgent during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.

One of the suggested recommendations was that volunteers from Translation and Interpreting Studies from universities and colleges in London provide up-to-date information in Spanish and Portuguese and potentially in other community languages. Information dissemination about public services, and civic participation has been identified as key, as well as training and multilingual toolkits and guides related to housing, employment and education, health and wellbeing, and community engagement.

Following these recommendations, I approached Professor Federico Federici from the Centre for Translation Studies at University College London, the Latin American Women's Rights Service and the Indoamerican Refugee and Migrant Organisation, to test out a project on community translation in London.

The proposed project aimed to build translation capacity amongst the Latin American community. Based on Federici's experience and expertise in running similar projects in countries such as Sierra Leone and New Zealand, I proposed to Federici that we co-organise a similar pilot project in London.

The Centre for Translation Studies of University College London (UCL) delivered the training sponsored by UCL's Grand Challenges initiative.

The course was divided into three sessions of 90 minutes, and it was readapted to meet the community's needs. The course included: Basic Principles of Translating for Community Translators, Completeness and Revision of Community Translations and Translation Quality and Reusability.

The lessons were progressive, and they worked sequentially. We established that participants had to attend at least two sessions to get a certificate.

A key aspect of the development of this translation training course was to give participants the opportunity to translate a document relevant to the community to support translation

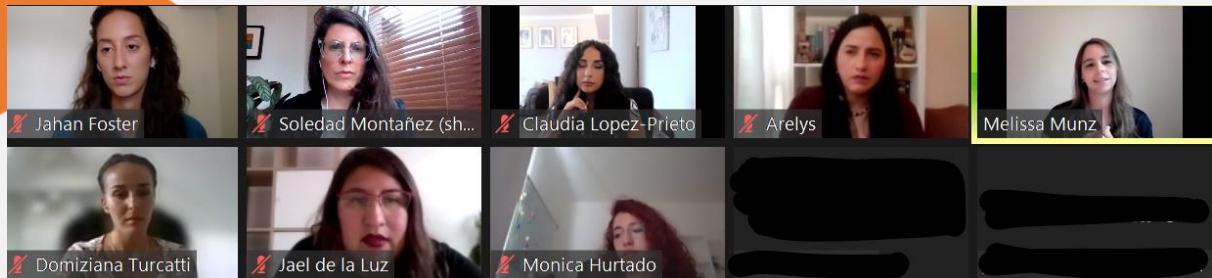
capacity within the organisations, while at the same time providing tangible experience for participants. Accordingly, the community organisations proposed the following:

1. Guide to SEN support in schools: <https://www.lambethiass.org.uk/documents/1317-a-guide-to-sen-support-in-schools>
2. Guide on EHC plans: <https://www.lambethiass.org.uk/documents/1326-a-guide-to-ech-plans>
3. Guide on EHC Needs Assessments: <https://www.lambethiass.org.uk/documents/1325-a-guide-to-ehc-needs-assessments>
4. When people can't agree: A guide for young people: https://www.lambethiass.org.uk/documents?page=1&per_page=10&search_document%5Bterm%5D=

47 people registered to attend the training and **45 completed the training successfully**, receiving a certificate of attendance issued by UCL.

Future actions

- Federico Federici, myself and the Latin American organisations will meet at the end of September to assess the project's experience and decide the next steps, as UCL will lead the programme based on their existing funding (2022-2025).



Some of the key speakers at the online Conversatorio

Conclusion

My research is largely based and focused on collaboration. Since I started this project in 2018, I have been sharing advice with academic colleagues and postgraduate students about how to engage and work with migrant communities and community groups.

This is advice based on my reflexion and on several years of community work and research with the Latin American community in London.

- Understand the needs of the community and support the involvement of the community in the planning of the project. This will take more time and resources, and it might take you to unexpected outcomes. This would need to be factored in to any project design and management.
- Set out clear and realistic plans and times scales for planning, delivery and monitoring
- Identify the people and structure to carry out their work and be mindful of their own capacity and resources.
- Work with the resources available in the organisations while contributing to expand networks, contacts, and links inside and outside academia
- Be aware that most of the organisation work with volunteers. Consider including expenses in your budget to cover volunteer's travel costs, or their time
- Include an administration cost for the community organisations you work with or make a donation; discuss this with the organisation
- Budget for catering per session for participants and volunteers when running workshops
- Offer support with the delivery of external events – by providing travel costs or overheads costs to pay staff for extra hours of work
- If working with families or women, consider including a budget to hire a mobile crèche. If feasible, adapt a section of your project for parents/carers with young children who might still be interested in attending your event (running an event during school hours might benefit some parents, but activities for children and young people should be organised at after-school times)

- Participatory research: Research and resources are one of the most valuable resources academics can offer (e.g. connecting organisations to experts/researchers in key areas of policy-making, expanding the network of contacts, increasing the profile of organisations to potential funders and policy-makers)
- Share your research with the community and ask for feedback
- Consider leaving a legacy and a long-term commitment to support the organisations and partnerships
- Be particularly mindful of your role as an academic and your own bias and interests. Consider whether your approach can be considered patronising or condescending
- Engage with people face to face or by phone
- Even if you do not consider yourself to work in a “bubble”, and you are pretty much community-oriented, you will be positioned within a certain framework. Be aware of your position and be ready to be challenged and adapt your research outcomes.
- Time management is perhaps one of the challenges I face. Staff from VCS usually work part-time or on voluntary basis. This means that you might need to be more flexible in terms of your working hours, and availability. This can be tricky for academics working PT, or FT academics with several commitments. Academic deadlines and priorities might not be the same for community organisations, and therefore, it is important to plan your research with the organisation/s.

zoom Latin American Conference - Shared screen with speaker view

Community Engagement and the Latin American Community in Southwark

- Cross-Language Dynamics: Reshaping Community
- Part of the Open World Research Initiative funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council
- In partnership with Southwark Council

Researcher: Soledad Montañez

Southwark Council

Cross-Language Dynamics

OWRI

IMIR

INSTITUTE OF MODERN LANGUAGES RESEARCH

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED STUDY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Appendix

Latin American Community Conference – Full Programme



LATIN AMERICAN CONFERENCE

14 SEPTEMBER 2021

Join us at this virtual cross-sector conference, as we explore opportunities for collaboration to bring about change, create solutions and improve representation with the Latin American community Southwark!

REGISTER YOUR PLACE: bit.ly/LatinAConf

Community Southwark

IMLR

The conference will bring together Latin American organisations, community leaders, academics and decision makers in Southwark to discuss and reflect on the needs and challenges faced by the Latin American communities in Southwark, as well as considering the community's assets and existing resources.

The virtual conference will explore opportunities for collaboration to bring about change and solutions and improve representation in Southwark.

The Latin American Community Conference in Southwark is a cross-sector conference organized by the Southwark Latin American Network (SLAN) in partnership with Community Southwark, with the support of the Institute of Modern Languages Research, University of London.

Date: 14 September 2021

Location: Virtual event (via Zoom to be hosted by Community Southwark)

The conference aims to:

1. Present research on community engagement in Southwark with the Latin American community
2. Introduce Southwark Latin American Network
3. Discuss forms of collaboration across sectors
4. Set of asks – presented by the community.

Conference Schedule

10:00-11am

Welcome and introductions

Chris Mikata-Pralat (Community Southwark)

Jhon Marulanda (Chair of Southwark Latin American Network)

David Reid (VCS Support Officer, Ethnic Minority Community Groups, Community Southwark)

Cllr Alice MacDonald (Southwark Council)

María Soledad Montañez (IMLR, University of London)

Cllr Maria Linforth-Hall (Southwark Council)

Followed by Q&A

11-11:15hrs: Coffee Break

11:15-13hrs

Session 1: Place and Space

Place-making and the need for a cultural and physical space has long been thought as an essential strategic response to the recognition of the Latin American community in the borough. Latin American organisations have argued that, in particular in key urban spaces such as Elephant and Castle, multi-ethnic public environments such as the Elephant and Castle business area are vital places for representation, integration, developing a sense of identity and belonging.

Moderator: Mario Marín

Speakers:

Santiago Peluffo and Natalia Pérez (Latin Elephant): 'Retention, Growth and Sustainability- London's Latin Barrio'

Pedro Gil (Carnaval del Pueblo): 'Towards a Latin American Cultural Hub: A Meaningful Step Towards Recognition and Visibility in London'

Alirio Prada Peña (Mayor's office, Barranquilla, Colombia) – In Spanish

Interpreting by Juan Camilo Díaz Reina.

13-14hrs: Lunch Break

14-15:30hrs

Session 2: Exploring Health and Wellbeing in the Latin American communities in Southwark

This panel will bring together community organisations and academics to discuss mental health and wellbeing within the Latin American communities in Southwark. Presentations will discuss topics such as mental health, sexual health and HIV, domestic abuse and VAWG, service access and provision, as well as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the community.

Chair: María Soledad Montañez

Moderators: Shamsur Choudhury and Lizzy Maccauley (Healthwatch Southwark)

Speakers:

Jasmine Gideon (Birkbeck University): 'Journeys to health: The Case of Chilean Exiles in the UK'

Nancy Liscano (VOADES-UK): 'The Ulysses Syndrome, Health and Wellbeing in the Latin American community in Southwark'

Carlos Corredor (Aymara UK): 'A model for sexual health improvement in Southwark, Lambeth and Lewisham'

Domiziana Turcatti (University of Oxford): 'Latin American NGOs as caring communities: A Southwark study'

Tony Furlong (Metro Charity) and Vic Diamente (NAZ Project): 'Con la comunidad, para la comunidad: Community-based programme approaches to Latin American health'

Bruna Boscaini (IRMO): 'The impact of COVID-19 on the local Latin American community: Accessing the Vaccine and Healthcare Services'

15:30-15:40 Coffee Break

15:40- 17hrs

Session 3: Education and Culture, Employment and Welfare Rights

Inequalities such as social class, migration status, ethnicity and gender, and many others, play a significant role in community engagement with migrant communities. Such recognition also prompts us to consider a more integral approach to representation and participation which recognises the community's heterogeneity, and its linguistic and cultural diversity.

This panel will present recent reports, data and work done by and with the Latin American community organisations in Southwark in these areas, discussing current demands, suggesting possible solutions and forms of engagement, from VAWG, access to housing, EU settlement scheme to the role of faith groups.

Moderator: Naomi Wells (IMLR, University of London)

Speakers:

Mette Berg (UCL): 'Latin Americans in Southwark: Barriers to service access and provision'

Rachel Hobbs and Monica Rowley (LADPP): 'Supporting Latin Americans to access services in Southwark: challenges for community organisations'

Romina López (Latin Hub UK): 'Protecting Latin American Heritage in the UK'

Grace Romero with Jasmina Hernández (Espacio Mamá): 'Listening to the mamás: Parenting in a foreign land'

Marian Ventura (Acción Social UK): 'Contribution of the Latin American Faith Groups in Southwark'

Gisela Valle (LAWRS): 'Violence Against Women and Girls in the Latin American Community'

17-18 hrs: Asamblea

On the news:

The Southwark Latin American conference was mentioned on Express News UK, the leading Latin American media in London, as "one of the most important events for the Latin American community in the city".

https://youtu.be/CLT_BO05e4w

Citizen Translation Letter – for participants

Dear <Name Surname> [I will mail merge these]

We are delighted to issue you the attached Certificate of Attendance. The Certificates recognizes your work and participation to the "Basic Principles of Translating for Community Translators" training.

Dr María Soledad Montañez, of the University of Manchester and University of London, and Prof. Federico M. Federici, of the Centre for Translation Studies at UCL, organized the pilot "Citizen Translation Training" for the Latin American community.

The training was delivered by Chloe Franklin, a professional translator, and it introduced you to essential principles of translation.

In the UK you can find more information through

- the Chartered Institute of Linguists, CloL: <https://www.ciol.org.uk/>;

- the Institute of Translation and Interpreting: <https://www.iti.org.uk/>.

If the training inspired you to know more about translation, these two institutions collate useful resources with information about training and the services that translators (and interpreters) offer.

The “Basic Principles of Translating for Community Translators” training was organized by the Open World Research Initiative ‘Cross-language dynamics: re-shaping community’: Multilingual Communities strand of the University Manchester and the Institute of Modern Languages Research (IMLR), School of Advanced Studies University of London. The Centre for Translation Studies of University College London (UCL) delivered the training sponsored by UCL’s Grand Challenges initiative.

We are very grateful to the Latin American Women’s Rights Service and the Indoamerican Refugee and Migrant Organisation for having organized the training.

We hope the training experience was rewarding. With many congratulations on receiving this certificate.

Kind regards,

Dr María Soledad Montañez
University of Manchester
University of London

Prof. Federico M. Federici
Centre for Translation Studies
University College London

Acknowledgements: Thank you to Community Southwark, in particular David Reid, all the Latin American organisations in Southwark and colleagues from the Institute of Modern Languages Research for supporting this project.

¡Muchas gracias! ¡Obrigada!