Mutating faces of the state? Austerity, migration and faith-based volunteers in a UK downscaled urban context

Humphris, Rachel

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Rachel Humphris
University of Birmingham, UK

Abstract
This article explores how austerity combined with the UK Government's expressed aim of creating a hostile environment, reshaped policy and practice towards new migrants in a downscaled urban area. There is an assumption that volunteers come to govern in zones the state has ceded or abandoned. However, how volunteers come to undertake these roles, their discretionary power and the consequences for state theory have not been fully explored. Drawing on 73 interviews with local state actors and volunteers and in-depth participant observation over 14 months with more than 200 new migrants, this article argues volunteers become the 'face of the state' for new migrants with direct effects. Volunteers have wide discretionary power and negotiate uncertainty by falling back on religious values and local narratives of migration forging new practices of governance. This article makes two contributions to theorising the state. First, the economic position of a city and narratives of place shapes who gains legal status and state membership, adding to literature on the relationship between civil society and the state in neoliberal contexts. Second, seemingly mundane actions and intimate relations have immediate implications for political membership. This represents a system of governance that relies on assessments of behaviours in new migrants' everyday lives rather than rights or entitlements. This article unpacks these assessments and explores the consequences for volunteers and new migrants alike.

Keywords
austerity, faith-based organisations, migration, urban governance, welfare

Introduction

You need to know where they have come from, who they are married to or not, whether children are in school, whether there is domestic abuse. You have to ask the right questions, and give the

Corresponding author:
Rachel Humphris, University of Birmingham, Muirhead Tower, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT, UK.
Email: r.humphris@bham.ac.uk

right information, because if you have a lack of understanding about what the legalities are you could easily be responsible for someone being deported.

This extract is taken from an interview I conducted in 2013 with Clare, the Head of a Children's Centre in Luton, UK. She clearly expressed her confusion about UK migration policies and the unwanted responsibility she felt had befallen her and her employees. In the same interview Clare described the large budget cuts the Children's Centre had made in the previous three years. Her funding was now targeted for particular projects, such as parenting classes and she had to prove that she had registered and engaged with mothers from particular 'target groups' (Ofsted, 2014). The nature of funding had shifted their ways of working as Samantha, the Deputy Head of the same Children's Centre reflected, 'Children's Centres used to be tea, cake and sympathy and all the time in the world. But now you have to justify what you are doing all the time – the review and evaluation – what benefit you are bringing?' During my 14-month fieldwork in Luton with state actors like Clare and Samantha they constantly referred to their targets, strictly time-managed caseloads and questioned whether they were providing 'value for money'. On the other hand, I noticed from observing their work they were spending large amounts of (unaccounted) time deciphering the eligibility of their clients due to their migration and legal status. To resolve these tensions they turned to volunteers.

This article explores how austerity combined with the UK Government's expressed policy aim of creating a hostile environment[1] reshaped local government policy and practice towards new migrants in Luton, a downscaled area.[2] 'Downscaled' not only refers to a smaller population than metropolises, but also the desirability of an urban environment and its ability to raise funds and capital (for example through raising local taxes). A downscaled urban area has fewer resources to cushion the effects of austerity, while also dealing with the effects of a rapidly diversifying population.

This article argues that austerity, welfare conditionality and the hostile environment combined to mutate the 'faces of the state' (Navaro-Yashin, 2002) from trained advisors to (often faith) volunteers. While it is has been argued volunteers fill the gaps left by contracting welfare (Mayblin & James, 2018), the implications of *how* volunteers come to undertake these roles, the discretionary power they assume and exercise, and the consequences for new migrants' interpretation and experience of 'the state'[3] have not been fully explored.

Furthermore, the shift from state to voluntary support exacerbates formal government policy over migrants and the poor that strives to remake dispositions and behaviours rather than socio-economic structures (Anderson, 2013; Dubois, 2014a). While both migrants and welfare claimants have suffered under the confluence of austerity, welfare conditionality and the hostile environment (Dwyer & Wright, 2014; Jones et al., 2017; O'Brien, 2015), the new migrants at the heart of this article have characteristics shaping their experience in particular ways. I focus on one new migrant group who were identified as 'Romanian Roma' by local state actors. These new migrant families had no previous connections to Luton, were mostly illiterate and were subject to complicated and rapidly shifting policies governing their right to reside in the UK (Humphris, 2017, 2018).

These characteristics created wide spaces of discretion for volunteers. In response, they fell back on moral and religious values intensifying the salience of behaviours and

compassion rather than entitlement to rights. In this context, new migrants experience the state as contradictory, confusing and untrustworthy. The article also demonstrates the implications of theorising state reproduction through relationships at the frontline for those on the edges of state membership.

Methods

This article is based on ethnographic fieldwork living in Luton between January 2013 and March 2014. I followed networks of actors who interacted with new migrants including health visitors, Children Centre workers, equality and diversity officers, community support officers, housing officers, policy community support officers, third-sector workers and any other individuals who shaped new migrants' settlement and engagement with the state (Humphris, 2017). I used purposive sampling to identify people who had direct experience of governing local migration, interviewing 52 local government employees, 13 third-sector workers and eight volunteers.

I made contact with interviewees in three ways. First, bureaucrats would visit new migrant homes and I arrange to meet and interview them. Second, I interviewed local government Directors of Services and asked them who they thought I should interview. Third, I followed contacts that were made through churches. Interviews were conducted at a time and place that suited the interviewee and wherever they felt most comfortable. This included going on home visits and having conversations while driving in the car, email conversations, arranging formal interviews, attending meetings and having quick 'catch-ups' before or after meetings or home visits. Interviews were conducted in English. They were audio recorded and transcribed in full.

I also conducted participant observation with these actors including accompanying them on more than 10 home visits and attending five multi-agency meetings about new migrants in Luton. This allowed me to understand their daily practice and non-verbal behaviour. In addition, I lived with three new migrant families during this time and had regular conversations with more than 200 new migrants. The new migrants at the heart of this study were identified as Romanian Roma. Romanian Roma were chosen because they represent an extreme case of 'new migration' (Modood, 2017). Ethnography was the appropriate method because many families had previous experiences of marginalisation, racism and state violence and would have been closed to other methods that did not rely on building trusting relationships over a long duration of time.

I learnt the oral language *Romanes* that was spoken in new migrant homes and shared my everyday life with them.[4] Houses were often shared between two or three families in order to pay rent and therefore when there were too many people for the number of beds, I also shared my bedroom and bed with new migrant mothers. I kept a detailed field note diary which I completed in a notebook during the day and typed in the evening or following morning. Diary entries ranged from 500 to 2000 words. They included life histories, detailed descriptions of specific encounters and a record of events and general conversations that had occurred during the day as well as emerging themes. Field notes and interviews had all identifying information removed and were then thematically coded using NVivo. Full ethical approval was obtained through CUREC, University of Oxford and ethical issues were taken seriously. I constantly made adjustments to my fieldwork and

interview practice to suit each individual and situation. My position also changed as I came to know respondents better and my language skills improved. I developed strategies such as never discussing the legal or familial situation of others even to very close family members. Sometimes I was called on to translate. I only translated in emergency situations (such as a mother giving birth at two o'clock in the morning without the time to call an interpreter). I paid the first two families £200 rent each month. The third family refused payment. I appreciate the debate about paying respondents (Head, 1999) but each family provided me with food and utilities and were struggling to pay rent. My contribution covered these costs. I am still in contact with some families and frontline workers who are interested in my research and discuss it openly with them. I believe this upholds my continuing ethical duty which extends beyond fieldwork into writing and is in a continuing process of renegotiation (Okely, 1994).

Luton is an illuminating case because widespread restructuring and budget cuts in local government has a greater impact on poorer urban areas (Hastings et al., 2013), leading to a more acute need to prioritise certain services over others. Luton can be defined as a downscaled urban area The town is a peripheral urban context but is similarly grappling with the issue of shifting patterns of mobility that have been attributed to global metropolises and the acute need to prioritise and cut services.[5]

Previous research has mainly privileged metropolitan and large urban centres to analyse intensified globalisation, shifting patterns of migration and mobility and growing global inequality. Luton is not a city but its demographics are exemplary of new, dynamic patterns of urban diversity (Castles & Miller, 2009, p. 110; Hall, 1993; Kofman, 1998; Schierup, Hansen, & Castles, 2006; Touraine, 2000). For example, Luton has a younger population than the UK average, with 22% under 15 years of age compared to 19% nationally (Luton Borough Council, 2013c). The pupil-level school census showed that 51% of children are identified as 'Black, Minority, Ethnic' in 2011. The Director of Children's Services commented 'we have sixty-two schools in Luton with more than one hundred and twenty languages spoken' (interview, November 2013). Furthermore, since May 2004 there had been more than 10,000 new National Insurance registrations by people from new European Union member states, with more than 80% from Polish nationals (Mayhew & Waples, 2011). 'New migrants' became a term that was discussed at all levels of local government and was also included in bureaucratic roles such as an education officer for those who were 'new to the UK' (interview with Coordinator for refugees, asylum seekers and all others new to the UK [aged up to 19 years], Luton Borough Council).

Luton has been termed an 'escalator' area, referring to the notion that as soon as residents have sufficient resources they move out of Luton (Robson, Lymperopoulou, & Rae, 2008, p. 2697). The town has a permanently new population. This sentiment was evident in interviews:

> Your service has to be flexible enough to cater for your client base. Luton is a very transient community. What you do find is that once people reach a certain economic status, they leave Luton … [this] creates a very unique challenge to those who work in the statutory sectors because we have got to be flexible enough to meet the needs of a very changing population. (Home Improvement Officer, Luton Borough Council)

Migrants' settlement in an area can also be seen as an assessment of its desirability as a place to live. This assessment influences the narrative of an area that contributes to and reflects its trajectory of disempowerment or redevelopment (Lee & Yeoh, 2006). Luton has a long-standing negative image connected to its 'working class marginality' and has been previously represented as a manifestation of the failure of multiculturalism (Rootham, Hardgrove, & McDowell, 2015). Luton suffered in the economic recessions of the 1970s and 1980s in which the car industry declined affecting Luton's Vauxhall car plant which employed the majority of the largely male workforce. The most recent economic downturn saw Luton's unemployment rise in line with national trends (Luton Borough Council, 2013a). The area is also associated with extremism and racist violence (Francis, 2012). The English Defence League (EDL) emerged in Luton, a far-right movement whose stated aim is to oppose the spread of Islam in the UK (Allen, 2010; Copsey, 2010). Moreover, there was intensive media coverage of a small number of Islamist militants and four arrests of suspected terrorists that took place in Luton. Due to the history of far-right activities in the town, the implementation of policies that affected migrants and 'minorities' had taken on increased salience at the local level.

The frontline: The relational state and geographies of discretion

I use the term 'frontline' to trace how the subtle workings of state power are diffused from state actors to faith-based volunteers in Luton. Anthropologists of the state and critical geographers have envisaged the state as 'relational' and continually reproduced through embedded social relationships (Thelen, Vetters, & von Benda-Beckmann, 2014, p. 7). First argued by Mitchell (1991) and developed by Mountz (2003) and Heyman (2004), this perspective argues that the state is not just constituted of, but constituted by, everyday social processes of reproduction (Coleman, 2012; Marston, 2004; Mountz, 2003). This approach to analysing the state is inspired by a Foucauldian reading of power that argues the state is not a unified entity but is constituted by 'instruments, techniques and procedures that may be brought to bear on the actions of others' (Hindess, 1996, p. 110). The state operates not as a locatable object but as a located series of networks through which governance takes place. Mountz suggests that to locate these networks of governance in the everyday we must attend to representations, symbols, materiality and practices and the way that they are interlinked (2003, pp. 628–630).This theoretical perspective allows the conceptualisation of those who mediate relationships with the state as assuming a 'face of the state'. Within this framework the state can be envisaged as emerging and dissipating in interactions between new migrants and actors who take on these roles, including volunteers.

Encounters between new migrants and various others who become state actors are sites where different values emerge, are contested, and are either re-inscribed or transformed. These interactions are the sites of the delivery of public services, the implementation of state policy and where decisions around access to state resources are made (Lipsky, 1980/2010). Dubois, drawing on Bourdieu, notes state acts are 'inseparably symbolic and material, relying on abstract categories and on concrete objects – consisting of both discourses and bureaucratic routines – that shape the perceptions of the people as well as

their material situations' (2014b, p. 38). Jones takes a relational perspective arguing not only do these interactions influence perceptions but also the identities of state agents and citizens are forged in relation to each other demonstrating there is no fixed boundary between the state and civil society (2012, p. 806). In this article, I argue that we must also take local narratives of place into account and this becomes particularly salient when volunteers are given discretionary decision-making power on who belongs to the state.

Van der Leun, in a study of the implementation of immigration restrictions to public services, found that some street-level bureaucrats bend the rules – a tendency she found in occupations with higher levels of professionalisation, such as in health and education. Occupations with lower levels of professionalisation tended to comply more rigorously with the law, leading to a higher level of exclusions (Van der Leun, 2006). The gap between policy and practice, she argues, results from a lack of awareness and understanding of policy. This article makes a critical intervention into this literature. The diffusion of state power to volunteers furthers neoliberal agendas to replace rights and entitlements with performances of vulnerability where new migrants have to prove their worth through tightly defined parameters of moral value. This is a consistent mode of state governance that pushes life-changing decisions onto those who are least trained and least likely to 'bend the rules'.

'Luton Excellence', outsourcing and the hostile environment

> … the council, as you might expect, is going through a massive review of its structures and shape. There will be massive service rationalisation and budget reduction. (Community Development Officer, Luton Borough Council)

This section explores how the Luton local government responded to austerity and created the mechanisms for outsourcing services to volunteers. Local governments in England are funded in two main ways, through national government grants and council tax. During my fieldwork Luton reported a £54 million spending reduction between 2011/12 and 2013/14 (Luton Borough Council, 2013c).

To achieve this reduction in spending, Luton Borough Council established its 'flagship' programme 'Luton Excellence'. The aim of this initiative is 'to develop the council's "lean change" capability'. The concept of 'lean working' is described as the driving principle for local government employees (Luton Borough Council, 2013b) and had become part of the way frontline workers justified their roles and took satisfaction from their jobs:

> … we are great at identifying the need for partnerships in areas of work where resource limitation is quite prevalent and in the current circumstances. You have to think, for want of a better word, leaner, you know? You have got to make your very limited resource stretch and meet your target. (Home Improvement Officer, Luton Borough Council)

In parallel to austerity policies, the UK Government's expressed aim to create a hostile environment for migrants[6] has resulted in increasingly fragmented and rapidly shifting

regulations, creating complex constellations of rights, residency requirements and entitlements (Gov.UK, 2016). In addition, legal aid has been curtailed for many categories of migration (James & Killick, 2014; Lewis, Dwyer, Scullion, & Waite, 2012). The need for experienced local-level support services has increased, while there have been national-level budget cuts reducing these services (Good, 2007; Moorhead & Robinson, 2006).

Moreover, it has been argued that such assistance is particularly necessary in England and Wales because of the 'interrelatedness of housing, employment, social security, immigration and asylum, and debt' (Forbess & James, 2014, p. 74). In the UK welfare state, social security is administered via a multiplicity of different agencies that increasingly are entwined with immigration controls. Applicants are required to negotiate with an array of institutions, each with its own rules and procedures in order to actualise their legal residency rights. The small decisions that local state actors make can have large consequences for the life chances of new migrants, as indicated by Clare's quote that began this article. If they do not have enough information about a new migrant family they could be responsible for their deportation (Humphris, 2017).

The combined consequences of austerity, lean working and outsourcing and the hostile environment were a marked reduction in services that supported new migrants. This reduction in services could be seen in all areas of support and also led to new migrants becoming 'invisible populations' and further justified reductions in services. For example, interpreting services were outsourced in 2012 in Luton. Under increasing budget pressure a receptionist stated in June 2013 that interpreters could only be booked for registered patients. This meant that those who could not speak English were either unable to access a doctor or were dependent on others to accompany them. This led to an increase in missed appointments and a further reluctance to register new migrants as patients. Receptionists also began advising unregistered patients to attend a 'drop-in' health service in a different area rather than offer registration. This meant that increasing numbers of new migrants were not registered with a doctor. Decreasing interpreting services affected all the population that could not speak English, however there was a particular change for new migrants. The change in interpreting services not only impeded their access to services, but resulted in them not being registered. Local government administrative systems utilise doctor registration data to assess interpreting needs and therefore this practice prevented new migrants from being identified to the local government. Consequently, this practice affected commissioning of services. If there was no record of interpreters being used for a particular language, or there was a drop in the use of interpreters, the budget at the local government level was diverted to other areas.

In addition, the ability for new migrants to organise themselves into their own support groups was curtailed at this time because of shifting funding priorities. The interplay between national government grant reduction and local responses resulted in restricted support for new migrants to organise their own groups, which had previously been the main mechanism through which migrants gained recognition within local government.

The shift in funding occurred at the time when organisation became one of the only avenues through which to learn about bureaucratic processes and gain support from state actors. Between 2009 and 2011 Luton Borough Council received £589,500 from national government through the Migration Impact Fund for projects designed to reduce the short-term pressure of migration on local public services.[7] This had included the

employment of a 'new migrant development officer' who helped to register people with local services. However, due to the fund's termination, support was only provided to those already organised into recognised groups with identified interests and sufficient knowledge and resources to access funding for their own activities. New migrants were unable to access statutory and third-sector support, and the mechanisms that had been in place to form their own groups were declining.

Mutating faces of the state: Religious volunteers, values and deservingness

The most significant change to support services in Luton was the structure of funding for the third-sector to provide frontline services for those who were identified as 'vulnerable', 'socially excluded' or 'hard to reach'. The main avenue of funding was called Supporting People, established in 2003 with a national £1.8 billion ring-fenced budget. Luton Borough Council funded 14 different third-sector organisations to provide different specialist services. All organisations had different expertise and methods of supporting clients. In 2009 the ring-fencing was removed and the local government undertook a review of services. Rather than providing support for 14 different external support service providers, the local government decided to fund one organisation. Pathways, an organisation that had been working in Luton for 40 years, won the contract which began on 1 July 2012. They were commissioned to provide a new floating service which aimed to 'reduce homelessness and help people live independently in their own homes'. Many of the 13 other organisations ceased to function or reduced their operations. Pathways had a particular remit to support people to become self-sufficient through intensive support for 12 weeks. Although support workers had some room for manoeuvre, there was increasing pressure to discharge clients within 12 weeks. This target was increasingly difficult to achieve as waiting times for new social welfare requests (such as child benefit) were extending beyond four months.

   Due to the reduction in resources and increasing pressure on the service, support workers referred clients to volunteers who they knew through personal connections. For example, a key target for all Children's Centres was to register mothers in their catchment area who are considered to be a 'target group' by Ofsted categories.[8] Frontline workers were given targets to find and register these 'target populations'. 'How do staff go about supporting mothers that you don't know are even out there?' asked Samantha, the Children's Centre Deputy Head, in a formal interview. One frequent answer to this problem was to gain referrals from the church.

   During my fieldwork, Clare, Head of the local Children's Centre, began an arrangement to have a formal monthly 'catch-up' meeting with Simon, a church pastor, to gain information on 'Romanian Roma' families. Due to austerity, she only had resources to focus on Ofsted's 'target populations' which included 'Roma'. Simon then worked to arrange trips to register previously 'invisible' mothers at the Children's Centre based on their involvement in the church and their proximity to the Children's Centre. In this way, Simon sometimes began the process of both gathering information on new migrants arriving in the area, and registering families with the local government. However, the relationship was also a source of tension for frontline workers, and demonstrates a

complex interweaving of different actors' discretionary and normative approaches. Simon's involvement provided differential trajectories for families who were part of the church. One frontline worker complained to me: 'He can just choose who he works with because the only person he has to justify his decisions to is God.' Additionally, Simon often checked on the support status of families he knew from the church by calling and emailing frontline workers. His persistent contact created pressure for these families' cases to be resolved quickly.

In other examples, frontline workers faced with restricted resources because of austerity made discretionary decisions to refer families to informal or voluntary-sector help. Several local state actors recommended that families work with Christian, a church volunteer who was known to be able to help 'Romanian Roma' to apply for National Insurance Numbers (NINo).[9] Christian became a source of information and translation of state processes for frontline workers as well as new migrants. He had been providing voluntary support for around 18 months when I began my fieldwork. Lisa, a Pathways floating support officer, believed that Christian possessed expert knowledge due to his accounting background. This was crucial because the legal status of migrants from Romania and Bulgaria was governed by 'transitional arrangements' leading to the entwining of welfare regulations and immigration controls through becoming registered as self-employed. In the context of the hostile environment the proof needed to be considered legitimately self-employed in the UK became increasingly difficult and relied on earning above a minimum threshold. Lisa was not able to successfully resolve 'Romanian Roma' cases and was increasingly reticent to take on families who did not already have a NINo and often asked Christian for help.

Families referred to Christian took on new challenges and performances to maintain their relationship with him. For example, one new migrant mother, Maria, wanted to help her mother, Patricia, apply for a NINo. Lisa was happy to help make the appointment but could not accompany her to the NINo interview and so referred her to Christian. He had originally met Maria through a local church and as they came to know each other over many months he began to help her fill in her tax return. However, Christian refused to take Patricia to her interview as he believed she was not a genuine applicant for a NINo because she did not have the skills to gain or retain a job. He made this assessment through visiting Maria's home and meeting Patricia while she was relaxing with her family.

Christian reproduced ideas around 'deservingness' that were inherent in welfare conditionality and the recent hostile shift in policy that only those Romanians and Bulgarians who earned above a minimum threshold should gain a form of political inclusion. State forms were reproduced through embedded relations among and between new migrants and those who assume 'faces of the state'. Christian had also struggled to find work himself in Luton and often commented on the decline of the city since the recession and the dwindling resources of the local government. Christian was placed in a position where he was responsible for making the decision regarding Patricia's political membership based on an assessment of her that was drawn from his relationship with her family that had been gained through the church mixed with local narratives of the city's decline and national austerity discourse.

Maria had benefitted from this relationship because she fulfilled Christian's idea of a capable and entrepreneurial young woman who was working despite many personal

misfortunes (her husband had left her and taken her daughter with him). However, Patricia did not correspond with Christian's idea of a hard-working citizen and he effectively assumed a state role by refusing to help her with her application, knowing that he was her only contact with support. Through his relationship with the family in his role as a church volunteer he had gained a particular impression of Patricia. Patricia was unable to shift these perceptions when Christian shifted roles and assumed a 'face of the state'. He became the gatekeeper to Patricia gaining a form of legal residency status in the UK (through a NINo). In light of the complex policies around legal residency for Romanians, Christian drew on ideas that resonate with welfare discourse around 'hard-working citizens' that gained particular salience in Luton through the economic downturn. In this example austerity pushed the discretionary decision onto Christian, who mobilised notions that were circulating in Luton (as a downscaled area) that were used to justify welfare conditionality. Christian effectively embodied the hostile environment. Not only did he deter Patricia from gaining a secure legal residency, Christian became the border guard that blocked her entry.

The following example similarly demonstrates how volunteers drew on a pool of ideological and normative resources that linked Romanian migrants with the decline of the locality and the mentality of border control shaping discretionary decision-making. As mentioned above, volunteers made decisions based on their own values increasing the salience of performances based on moral judgements of 'deservingness'. This vignette involves Rosemary's encounters with 'Romanian Roma' couple Cezar and Ecaterina and their three children, who arrived in Luton having previously lived in London. Rosemary was an English volunteer who attended a local Baptist church. Cezar, gained a NINo from his scrap metal business. Cezar and his family had moved to a two-bedroomed terraced house in Luton along with another family with three children. There were also up to 10 different single men who stayed in the house at any one time. Cezar could speak and read some English but Ecaterina, his wife, could not speak English and was illiterate. As Cezar was often absent for long periods of time working, Ecaterina could not act on any letters or documents sent to the house.

Ecaterina became 'visible' to state actors through her children. Initially, Simon (a church pastor) and a Children's Centre family support worker registered the family. Following this, Simon then referred Rosemary (a church volunteer) to help Ecaterina and suggested she start making home visits. Rosemary took on a role similar to a Children's Centre family support worker, and acted as a liaison between the family and the local school, where she had been a governor. The school had made family liaison officers redundant because of funding cuts. Ecaterina asked Rosemary to look at various documents when she visited. Ecaterina invited Rosemary to take on a 'face of the state' and despite some reluctance, Rosemary took on this role because she felt it would benefit the children she was trying to teach English. Ecaterina's six-year-old daughter began attending primary school for the first time with Rosemary's help.

However, the relationship between Rosemary and Ecaterina quickly soured, leading Ecaterina and her family with no one to support their appeal for housing and child benefit despite their entitlements. Rosemary explained that she had become dismayed by Ecaterina and could not understand her behaviour. This was infused with moralised views regarding the correct behaviour of children and parenting. She explains:

> I went round and took colouring and two balls. Horia took the ball and then refused to give it back. The parents have no desire to help them behave differently. Ecaterina just let him do it – did not help to educate him. I keep reminding myself that they are coming from a completely different culture and that is why they are like this. … It is like living in a wagon isn't it? If your whole family is living in one room then you don't keep things do you?

Rosemary also rationalised the family's behaviour as being linked with mobility: 'I wouldn't be surprised if they suddenly disappear.' Ideas linked to itinerant lifestyles resonate with particular stigmatised views of 'Gypsies' and also long-standing historical views about the poor being feckless and shiftless through vagrancy and are therefore not 'hard-working'.

Rosemary eventually stopped visiting, filling in the bureaucratic forms, and managing the family's bureaucratic identity. Without Rosemary's assistance, who had been compiling the documents to appeal this decision, the family withdrew from all state processes and became 'invisible'. Ecaterina's daughter also stopped attending school.

The dissolution of Rosemary and Ecaterina's relationship was linked to racialised perceptions and ideas linked to hard-working families and moral discourses of parenting. This example illustrates that when volunteers assume gatekeeping roles (often unwillingly) their own moral judgements shape their support and justify their withdrawal. In a hostile and austere context, these conflicts of values determined whether families were able to gain legal residency. Previous work on the hostile environment has focused on landlords, employers, banks and NHS services who run immigration status checks. This example shows how performances of behaviours, here performances of motherhood, effectively became the border that new migrants must cross. When seen from this fine-grained empirical perspective, the depths that the hostile environment has pushed into everyday life are revealed.

Dubois has argued that in the last three decades there has been a shift in welfare policies that represent what he terms a 'post-welfare' state (2014b, p. 40). These policies are based increasingly on behavioural criteria, rather than addressing structural inequalities (Benington & Taylor, 1999; Jessop, 1993).The vignettes above demonstrate how this post-welfare state does remake dispositions, however the normative form of these behaviours is not clear. Moreover, in some cases expected behaviours can be contradictory because the power to make decisions has been pushed onto volunteers. Volunteers and state actors may have conflicting values that they bring to bear in their assessments of new migrants. Volunteers' striving to remake dispositions and the contradictions this entails is demonstrated by the following vignette.

Christian worked over a period of time to support one new migrant mother, Ramona. Ramona almost lost his support when she suffered from gall stones during the early part of a pregnancy. The hospital recommended that she have an abortion in order to safely remove the gall stones. When she related this to Christian, his strong belief in the sacredness of unborn children meant that he felt unable to continue his involvement in helping her access a legal status in the UK. The encounter was 'rescued' by Ramona's daughter-in-law, who interceded, telling Christian that Ramona's English was not good and she was trying to make a joke. She confirmed to Christian that Ramona would not have an abortion and would wait to have the baby before she had the operation, securing his

continuing (but shaken) support. These understandings are in contrast to the values of frontline workers who often expressed a wish that the mothers would practise family planning in their role as 'good mothers'. Local state actors' use of the church as a key resource in supporting their work with new migrant families created different expectations and new migrants had to conform to conflicting values. Informal arrangements between state actors and volunteers have heightened the idea of behaviours and affiliations as being key to gaining formal legal residency. As shown above, volunteers chose whether to support a family or not and these decisions can be based on whether their values, behaviours or affiliations align. These arrangements cause contradictory and conflicting demands on families, for example around contraception and abortion.

Conclusion

This article has reflected on how a medium-sized downscaled urban area governed new migrants at a time of economic crisis, welfare restructuring and rapidly shifting legal and residency requirements. While this article has focused on Luton, these dynamics are not unique. Local governments are increasingly delegated with duties for social problems with fewer central government funds (Price & Spencer, 2015). This article contributes to the literature on migrant settlement by demonstrating that the relationship between migrants and a locality with limited opportunity structures and local narratives of disempowerment create their own trajectories. Organisational pathways for migrants are less feasible or not possible at all in downscaled cities and this affects the ways migrants are able to negotiate their relationship to the locality and the state. In particular, reliance on faith-based organisations may be more prevalent in downscaled contexts where 'ethnic institutions' or other established social or political organisations are not evident.

Canepari and Rosa have argued that the modes of governance of recently arrived people, the way their presence is constructed by themselves or others, and the implications of the latter for whether and to what extent they are regarded as citizens, are all subject to struggle (2017). This article has shown how these struggles are inextricably linked to local narratives of place and effect how interactions between frontline workers, volunteers and migrants play out. Previous research has argued that neighbourhood and city scales are crucial to new migrants' negotiations of belonging and political membership (Pastore & Ponzo, 2016). I argue in this article that attention should also fall on the economic positioning of the neighbourhood and city in relation to the nation-state and the ability of urban areas to shape their own trajectories or cushion the effects of national-level agendas and policies. These understandings emerge as increasingly salient when volunteers become the face of the state for new migrants and draw on these narratives and their own experiences of decline or otherwise.

In addition, this article has shown how deeply the hostile environment has permeated the everyday lives of those in Luton and begun to shape trajectories. As Bridget Anderson's words both 'non-citizens' (migrants) and 'failed citizens' (benefit claimants) are subject to hostility (2013, p. 4). The thread linking austerity, welfare restructuring and the hostile environment is that they are policies designed to alter behaviour in the form of audits. Many of the volunteers were also benefit claimants or had been affected by the decline of the city. This context shaped the moral values they mobilised to justify their discretionary

decisions about whether, and how, to support new migrants. Dubois argues the uncertainty and individualisation that has opened such wide spaces for discretion does not 'signal disaggregation of the state… but instead signifies a consistent mode of state governance in which the state exerts power over its citizens by affording street-level bureaucrats discretion and leeway' (Dubois, 2014b, p. 40). This article has shown how diffusing power to volunteers is a means through which to extend uncertainty further and increase reliance on individual values and behaviours. Volunteers, in an effort to prove their own moral worth as citizens (and Christians), take up these roles and in a very real sense reproduce the state. Moreover, they do the dirty work of border enforcement by refusing to help those who they believe will not be able to work and be self-sufficient, using intimate knowledge gained from their relationships with new migrants in their homes. Where and how the state emerges becomes ever more slippery and difficult to pinpoint as state effects are tangled up in long-standing relationships between new migrants and volunteers that may have begun under very different circumstance and terms.

Scholars of the anthropology of the state have long argued that the state is not a stable and enduring institution. Rather, it is a fragile everyday accomplishment which, this article has shown, is achieved through governance of intimacies and performances of values. The politics of belonging and claims-making extends far beyond formal rights and status, to encompass a set of negotiated and often incomplete, positions of authority and influence. Volunteers who may at first have been friends through the church become new migrants' 'face of the state' under whose surveillance, audit and control they must navigate successfully to gain secure legal status. Through these shifting faces they come to perceive their political and social position shaping their own understandings of the city and the state. This article has demonstrated how austerity and the hostile environment entwine to shift the nature of boundaries and the inherently exclusionary, contradictory and contingent nature of the state project itself.

Funding

Notes

1. The 2014 Immigration Act planned to create a 'hostile environment' with the aim of making it harder for illegalised immigrants to work and live in the UK.
2. In England and Wales, lower-tier local authorities are known as 'councils' and may be either borough, county or district councils. They are funded through a mix of national government grants, council tax levied by themselves on their residents, parking charges and business rates. Their responsibilities include *inter alia*, administering housing and council tax benefits, administering social housing and providing emergency shelter, education and schooling, child protection and adult social care.
3. The quotation marks around 'the state' in this sentence are to indicate that the state is often portrayed as a unitary and well-defined object. The anthropological literature on 'the state' has demonstrated how 'the state' is contingent, contradictory. However, for readability I do not use quotation marks in the rest of the article.
4. *Romanes* is a predominantly oral language that is spoken by those often identified as Roma, Gypsies, Travellers or Sinti.

5. At the local government level in the UK according to the Bank of England, municipalities are facing cuts in funding estimated to be three times greater than the reduction in local government budgets during previous recessions in the 1970s and 1980s. These cuts in funding are occurring at a time of rising demand for services, especially from older people but also as a result of the wider costs of recession, including low incomes (see Hills, Thomas, & Dimsdale, 2010).
6. Capping migration has been one of the flagship policies of the Conservatives during the 2010 and 2015 electoral campaigns. Theresa May, then UK Home Secretary, stated (28 June 2010, Hansard) 'it is this Government's aim to reduce the level of net migration back down to the levels of the 1990s - tens of thousands each year, not hundreds of thousands'.
7. House of Commons Parliamentary business, Migration Impact Fund, 2 March 2010 : Column 1146W; www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100302/text/100302w 0034.htm
8. Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. Ofsted inspectors conduct visits and regulate services that care for children and young people, and all services providing education and skills. Ofsted refers to vulnerable children and families as 'target groups with additional needs'. The framework for Children's Centre inspection stated 'families the [Children's] Centre identifies as having needs or circumstances that require particularly perceptive intervention and/or additional support'.
9. A National Insurance Number is a personal account number and acts as a reference for the social security system in the UK. EU nationals who wish to stay for longer than three months in the UK must hold a qualifying status. This qualifying status can be proved through gaining a NINo. During transitional controls Romanians and Bulgarians had restricted access to the labour market and therefore could only gain a qualifying status through being self-employed, economically inactive and self-sufficient, student and self-sufficient, a family member accompanying or joining an EU national who satisfies one of the other statuses, or a pensioner.

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