Perspectives from urban geography: Convivial encounter

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What do we mean when we say ‘community’?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GEMEINSCHAFT</th>
<th>GESELLSCHAFT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kinship</td>
<td>Neighbourhood Anonymity of relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td>Barter Monetary exchange</td>
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<td>Custom</td>
<td>Contract</td>
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<td>Tradition</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
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<td>Inertia</td>
<td>Progress</td>
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<td>Habit</td>
<td>Novelty</td>
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<td>Customary law</td>
<td>Legislative law</td>
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<td>Religious</td>
<td>Secular</td>
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<td>Man as social animal</td>
<td>Atomistic individualism</td>
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<td>Value absolutism</td>
<td>Value Relativism</td>
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<td>Fusion of ends-means</td>
<td>Separation of ends-means</td>
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<td>Natural will</td>
<td>Rational will</td>
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<td>Communal (common) ownership of land</td>
<td>Pursuit of individual self-interest – rational calculation of personal gain</td>
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<tr>
<td>and means of production</td>
<td>– egoism, narcissism and will to power – insensitivity to common needs</td>
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<td>and public interest</td>
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Source: Lee, M., 2015, Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft, Research Starters: Sociology
Defining ‘encounter’

• Goffman (1961):
  • Encounter a situation “where people effectively agree to sustain for a time a single focus of cognitive and visual attention” (p. 298)
  • Social differences negotiated in encounter - tensions ‘transmuted’ or ‘leaked’

Why encounters matter: Three perspectives

<table>
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<th>Conception of encounter</th>
<th>Key concepts</th>
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<td>Encounters strengthening connectedness in communities</td>
<td>Social cohesion</td>
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<td>Encounters as a form of participation in the public life</td>
<td>Social inclusion</td>
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<td>Encounters changing the way we identify and relate with others</td>
<td>Conviviality</td>
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Encounter and social cohesion

“Most of it is ostensibly utterly trivial but the sum is not trivial at all. The sum of such casual, public contact at a local level—most of it fortuitous, most of it associated with errands, all of it metered by the person concerned and not thrust upon him by anyone—is a feeling for the public identity of people, a web of public respect and trust, and a resource in time of personal or neighbourhood need” (Jacobs, 1962, p. 56)
Encounter and inclusion

Co-presentation (non-segregation)

Encounter (participation in the public life of the city)

Lasting relationships (‘community participation’)
Encounter and inclusion

• Political inclusion:
  • Encounters as participation in the ‘public sphere’ (Habermas 1991), where knowledge is exchanged and multiple ‘public opinions’ are being formed

Convivial encounters

“Conviviality is a social pattern in which different metropolitan groups dwell in close proximity, but where their racial, linguistic and religious particularities do not ... add up to discontinuities of experience or insuperable problems of communication [... as the logic of ethnic absolutism suggests they must...]. In these conditions, a degree of differentiation can be combined with a large measure of overlapping.” (Gilroy, 2006, p. 40)

“In this convivial culture, racial and ethnic differences have been rendered unremarkable...they have been able to become ‘ordinary’. Instead of adding to the premium of race as political ontology and economic fate, people discover that the things which really divide them are much more profound: taste, lifestyle, leisure preferences. By making racial differences appear ordinary and banal, even boring, convivial interaction ...has disseminated everyday virtues that enrich our cities, drive our cultural industries and enhance our struggling democracy so that it resists pressure to operate in segregated and colour-coded forms.” (Gilroy, 2006, p. 40)
Convivial encounters

Inattentive, light-touch → Shared identification
Convivial encounters

From fixed, essentialised identities to ‘situated identifications’

“encounters among strangers (rather than indifference or hostility) are a desirable goal for urban life, in order that all urban inhabitants have opportunities to explore their own hybridity through experiencing a variety of different situations and people in the course of their everyday lives” (Fincher & Iveson, 2008, p. 153)

How can we create a convivial culture?
The ingredients of a convivial culture

• Co-presence is the starting point... but there is also a need for:
  • Competence, willingness and commitment of participants
  • Encounter infrastructure
Encounter competence

• Community incompetence: insecurity about what is ‘appropriate’ in encounter with person with intellectual disability

Encounter competence

- Institutional practices:
  - Going out in groups
  - Disability support workers preventing encounter


SupportingInclusion.weebly.com
Encounter infrastructure

• The urban commons: community gardens, neighbourhood houses, public libraries
  • Mainstream
  • Inclusive
  • Convivial
Final comments

• Why do encounters matter?
  • Cohesion, inclusion and conviviality

• What are the ingredients of a convivial culture?
  • Co-presence; competence; infrastructure