Edited by
Mette Louise Berg
Magdalena Nowicka

Studying Diversity, Migration and Urban Multiculture

Convivial Tools for Research and Practice

UCLPRESS

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Contents

List of figures

Contributors

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Contributors

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Methods with Nirmal Puwar (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); *Cultural Sociology: An Introduction* with Andy Bennett, Laura Desfor Edles, Margaret Gibson, David Inglis, Ronald Jacobs and Ian Woodward (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); *The Art of Listening* (Berg, 2007); *Auditory Cultures Reader* with Michael Bull (Berg, 2003); *Out of Whiteness* with Vron Ware (University of Chicago Press, 2002); *The Changing Face of Football: Racism and Multiculture in the English Game,* with Tim Crabbe and John Solomos (Berg, 2001); *New Ethnicities and Urban Culture: Racisms and Multiculture in Young Lives* (Routledge, 1996). In 2011, he published a free online book called *Academic Diary* (http://www.academic-diary.co.uk/) that argues for the values of scholarship and teaching. In April 2016, a book version of the blog was published including a lot of new writing entitled *Academic Diary: Or Why Higher Education Still Matters*. He also writes journalism and has made documentary films.

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Don Flynn has worked in the field of migration policy since the mid-1970s, when he started work as a caseworker at a London law centre. Since then, he has worked as policy officer for the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, a national legal rights organisation. He currently leads the

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Bea Giaquinto has since the 1990s worked with communities on the margins, including refugees and asylum seekers, homeless and vulnerably housed people, and new emerging communities. Her motivation is simple: to bring about change by encouraging participation and creating opportunities to give voice to their experience. Bea's career has included both participatory and therapeutic arts, casework, and managing frontline voluntary sector organisations for both the refugee and the homelessness sectors. She has also been involved in a number of participatory action research studies. Bea is currently working as a freelance consultant and researcher.

Ben Gidley is a senior lecturer in the Department of Psychosocial Studies at Birkbeck, University of London. He was previously a researcher at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS), and an associate professor of anthropology at the University of Oxford. He has spent two decades conducting social research in urban contexts, mainly in inner south-east London and mostly collaboratively.

Charlotte Gilsenan is chief executive of Bankside Open Spaces Trust and was formerly deputy chief executive of Cambridge House. With extensive strategic leadership and programme management experience, she has

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Fahira Hasedžić is from Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and came to Britain in 1996. She is a founding member of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Community Association in Nottingham, served as secretary of the association until recently, and also set up a cultural club. Fahira led the cultural club and folk-dance group, making costumes, and directing performances and choreography, as well as teaching folk dance. Fahira works with and supports Bosnia-Herzegovina associations across the UK, especially in Derby, Birmingham and London.

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Alicja Kaczmarek is the founder and director of the Polish Expats Association and Centrala Gallery in Birmingham. She is dedicated to community development, social action and social justice, as well as to the promotion of equality and human rights. Alicja has a BA in sociology from the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznan, an MA in social policy from the University of Birmingham, and a postgraduate diploma in cognitive behavioural therapy.

Agata Lisiak is professor of migration studies and academic director of the internship programme at Bard College Berlin. She was previously a researcher at the Institute of Social Sciences at Humboldt University and a Marie Curie Actions fellow at the Institute of Human Sciences in Vienna. Her research interests include everyday urban cultures, visual cultures, spatialities and visualities of migration, and feminism. She is a co-founder of migART (https://migart.bard.berlin) – a repository of activist, research and teaching projects engaging with migration through creative and collaborative methods.

Maggie O'Neill is professor in sociology at University College Cork. A former chair of the ESA (European Sociological Association) Research

Network on Biographical Sociology, she has a long history of doing participatory research, often working with artists, communities, practitioners and policymakers. Maggie is currently co-authoring a book with Brian Roberts called *Methods on the Move: Walking Methodologies* for Routledge. Her research activity has been instrumental in moving forward debates, dialogue and scholarship in three substantive areas: sex work and sexual exploitation; forced migration and the asylum–migration nexus; and participatory methodologies.

Ann Phoenix is professor of pyschosocial studies at the Thomas Coram Research Unit, Department of Social Science, UCL Institute of Education. Her publications include work on narratives, theoretical and empirical aspects of social identities, gender, masculinity, youth, intersectionality, racialisation, ethnicisation, migration and transnational families. From 2016 to 2018 she was the Erkko Professor at the Helsinki University Collegium for Advanced Studies.

Karin Woodley is chief executive of Cambridge House, a fellow of the British–American Project, a non-executive director of the Office of the Public Guardian, vice chair of Community Southwark, a trustee of Locality and a member of the Understanding Patient Data Advisory Group. She was formerly non-executive director of the Economic and Social Research Council, the Legal Services Board Consumer Panel and the Global Social Economy Forum. She was previously chief executive of the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust, Tabernacle Centre for Arts and Learning, and the Minority Arts Advisory Service. Past academic and training appointments include the National College of Police Leadership; Home Office; Siberian Federal University, Russia; University of Amsterdam in Johannesburg; Dillard University, New Orleans; Birkbeck College, University of London. She was the recipient of the Excellence in Diversity Awards 2016 Lifetime Achiever Award.

Acknowledgements

1

Introduction: Convivial tools for research and practice

Mette Louise Berg and Magdalena Nowicka

Researching conviviality/convivial research

Since the turn of the millennium, cities in the UK and in many countries in Western Europe have become increasingly 'super-diverse', that is, characterised by migration-driven diversification and complexity along intersecting lines of inter alia nationality, 'race' and ethnicity, faith, and legal and socio-economic status (Vertovec 2007). In the same period, neoliberal governance reforms and austerity measures have seen the welfare state cut and restructured, resulting in public service retrenchment and an outsourcing of responsibilities for service delivery from the public to the third sector, especially in the UK. These developments have given rise to a sense of competition over scarce public goods and services, fostered a politics of resentment and migrant backlash (OECD 2016), and have enabled nativist, anti-migrant and anti-diversity movements and political parties to harden their discourses and lines of exclusion.[1] Across Europe, right-wing populists construe a 'civilisational threat' from Islam, positing Muslims as 'backward' and anti-secularist others (Brubaker 2017).

In this context, the question of how we can live together with and in difference – that is, how we can live *convivially* (Hall 1993; Touraine 2000; Gilroy 2004; Gilroy 2006; Nowicka and Vertovec 2014; Wise and Noble 2016) – has acquired new urgency. As scholars seeking to answer this and related questions, we also have to contend with widely circulating anti-elite and anti-expert populism and discourses. Some of us are migrant researchers ourselves, thus doubly 'suspicious' – as expert-scientists, and as migrants. These are difficult, intertwined challenges. In this Introduction and the volume as a whole, we propose that innovative

methods and new forms of collaboration are needed to meet them. The volume is accordingly animated by the following questions: How can we research and understand conviviality in complex, super-diverse settings? And how can we make the research process itself more convivial? The chapters argue conceptually and illustrate empirically that we will be better able to answer the first question, if we simultaneously attend to the second.

The chapters examine and reflect on the potentials of conviviality as a concept to help us make sense of everyday encounters and practices that transgress categorical differences and establish a shared, common humanity. They do so while also reflecting on and mobilising a situated, participatory and open-ended methodology of research. Throughout the chapters, there is a focus on interactions and relationships, rather than on individuals, groups, cultures or categories, as either the building blocks or the obstructions to conviviality. In other words, the authors take a processual and anti-essentialist approach, thus refuting the exclusionary claims of ethnic absolutism about the incommensurability of cultures, races and religions (Gilroy 2006). The contributions show that conviviality is fragile even if researchers and participants are dedicated to achieving it, and that it requires social infrastructure as well as concerted effort and labour to achieve it.

Each chapter is grounded in research and practice in different urban sites across the UK, variously characterised by migration, and cultural, ethnic and other diversity, as well as being affected by austerity measures and inequalities. The authors reflect on the relationship between their substantive interest in conviviality and the degree to which their chosen methodological approach – reflecting their different disciplinary backgrounds – helps or hinders a convivial research process. They show how unequal power relations between researchers, those researched and 'research users' can be reconfigured, in the process producing much-needed new knowledge and understanding. In short, we argue for the importance of conviviality not only as the *subject* of study, but also as a *methodological* approach. The chapters that follow discuss the challenges, pitfalls and potential gains of such an approach from different angles, positions and disciplinary approaches. The volume thereby contributes to two recent developments in the social sciences, namely the convivial turn (Nowicka and Vertovec 2014; Wise and Noble 2016; Neal et al. 2013; Gilroy 2004) and the participatory turn (Gubrium and Harper 2016), and brings them into productive dialogue with each other.

In what follows, we sketch out the semantic terrain of conviviality, and discuss its affinities and differences with related concepts. We then

situate the contribution of the volume within the two 'turns' and show how our use of conviviality as both subject *of* and approach *to* research can generate new insights into our overarching questions. Finally, we provide an outline of the volume and the chapters that follow.

Situating conviviality

Conviviality has a long history (O'Callaghan 2004; Freitag 2014; Given 2018; Lemon 2013), but until fairly recently its usage in English was quite restricted. Since the turn of the millennium, however, interest in the term has blossomed across the social sciences as scholars have searched for concepts that would capture those often subtle processes of ordinary 'cohabitation and interaction' across difference (Gilroy 2004, xi) that characterise urban lives across Europe in the twenty-first century (Karner and Parker 2011; Harris 2014; Heil 2015; Back 1996a). The intention here is not to provide a comprehensive review of literature on conviviality (see, for example, Wise and Noble 2016; Nowicka and Vertovec 2014), but to emphasise key aspects of conviviality that provide a grounding to the chapters that follow. The contributions by Magdalena Nowicka, Ann Phoenix and Adele Galipo each provides further discussion of extant literature from sociological, psychosocial and anthropological perspectives respectively.

As a descriptor for contact and interaction across national, ethnic and other categorical boundaries, conviviality shares semantic terrain with cosmopolitanism, but it is also different from it. Cosmopolitanism in its Enlightenment incarnation claimed universalism, but it has in practice been associated with a male, Western and elite subject position (Berg 2009; Youngs 2009). In the past few decades, scholars have explored vernacular, critical and various other forms of grounded 'counter-cosmopolitanisms' (Gilroy 2004; Harvey 2000; Robbins 1998; Wessendorf 2014; Werbner 1999; Wise 2009). Notwithstanding such critical redefinitions, cosmopolitanism retains a stronger association with intellectual dispositions and attitudes than with everyday social practices. Conviviality, on the other hand, references the often subtle, unmarked quotidian practices, routines and acts of improvisation (Laurier and Philo 2006; Noble 2013; Wise and Velayutham 2014; Freitag 2014) that are of interest here, and so provides a more suitable lens for us.

Conviviality has acquired particular purchase in settings characterised by super-diversity (Shaftoe 2008; Shepard 2009; Blommaert 2014; Neal et al. 2018; Rishbeth and Rogaly 2018; Valluvan 2016; Padilla et al.

2015; Wessendorf 2014; Berg et al. 2019), often in relation to everyday, mundane activities, such as shopping, eating, taking one's children to the playground, riding on public transport and other leisure activities (Dunlap 2009; Phull et al. 2015; Rhys-Taylor 2013; Jones et al. 2015; Wilson 2011; Wilson 2013). Departing from an acknowledgement of the dynamic, complex and layered super-diversity of cities in the UK, conviviality helps us in getting at the social texture of encounters and social relations across difference. It is deeply phenomenological, for it understands sociality as being in the world, as transforming, proliferating, interacting and becoming (Given 2018). Some of the contributions to this volume accordingly conceptualise convivial research as a form of labour (see also Wise and Noble 2016, 425): the outcome of concerted effort by both researchers and research participants (Crafter and Iqbal; Gidley; Lisiak and Kaczmarek). Importantly, conviviality does not signal harmony, or the absence of tensions; it often coexists with racism (Back 2016; Tyler 2017; Back 1996b), social inequalities (Lapiņa 2016) and fantasies of Christian, white urban spaces (Nayak 2017). A focus on conviviality thus also entails appreciation of conflict and unconvivial moments and processes, including tension, dissonance, conflict, competition, violence and disintegration. As Given (2013) reminds us, conviviality is therefore political, for to foster and maintain conviviality requires countering unconvivial forces. Conviviality also engages ethics: how we see others, read them in their social context, and relate to them despite hierarchies of exclusion (Ahmed 2000; Jeffery and Nelson 2011). Finally, for some authors, the notion of conviviality has the advantage that it has not (at least not yet) been co-opted by corporate and policy discourses in the way that diversity has (Berg and Sigona 2013); it is more elusive and less amenable to enumeration and policy audits, with its referencing of relationships and interactions (Gidley 2013).

This volume adds to the literature by approaching conviviality as a *method* of study too. We propose that a *convivial research methodology* can help us address urgent questions about the role and significance of social science insights in a post-truth and expert-averse world. Confronting populist anti-migrant and anti-diversity claims with facts about migration and diversity is important and necessary, but does not counter public mistrust of experts or the attraction of fake news and post-truth discourses (Sismondo 2017; Lockie 2017). Philosopher Kate Higgins (2016, 9) argues that we should mobilise 'critical thinking, sustained inquiry and revision of beliefs on the basis of evidence' to combat the general distrust of academic knowledge. We would add that as social scientists, we need to reflect on *how* we generate knowledge and

establish validity. To do so requires a more open and inclusive approach to doing research, and a less instrumentalist relationship with research subjects and users (Sinha and Back 2013).

Participatory methods and conviviality

Convivial research can take many forms, and researchers focusing on conviviality often use a mix of methods rooted in different disciplines. Among these, ethnography claims a privileged position, because of its emphasis on everyday situated practices and performance (Wise and Noble 2016, 426; Gidley 2013, 363). The chapters in this volume are grounded in empirical research in a range of sites, sometimes conducted over many years, and often collaboratively between academics, community researchers and practitioners. They make use of different methods, including ethnography, as well as interviews and visual, participatory and arts-based methods (see especially Phoenix; Dwyer, Ahmed and Beinart; Crafter and Iqbal; O'Neill, Giaquinto and Hasedžić; Gidley; Lisiak and Kaczmarek). Yet a convivial research methodology is about more than the selection of research tools; it is also about our approach to studying the social.

In this, it is similar to approaches developed within the participatory turn, an umbrella term for research oriented towards conceiving, planning and conducting research '*with* those people whose life-world and meaningful actions are under study' (Bergold and Thomas 2012, n.p., italics in original), and including feminist, action and arts-based research. In participatory approaches, power relations in research design and execution are reversed, so that research participants are cast as subjects rather than objects, and the research process is informed by the idea of 'not on but with' (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Sinha and Back 2013). This opens the potential for a more ethical and democratic knowledge production (see also Lockie 2017).

Approaching our research convivially therefore entails broadening the scope of our interlocutors, to establish a genuine conversation and exchange with our subjects of research as well as with practitioners and activists, as we have done in this volume (see Woodley and Gilsenan; Flynn). These are often the kind of people that Holmes and Marcus (2008, 236–7) call 'para-ethnographers', who possess grounded, nuanced knowledge of the areas in which they live and work, often generated over many years. Like trained ethnographers, they possess a 'self-conscious critical faculty' that enables them to deal with 'contradiction, exceptions,

facts that are fugitive' (Holmes and Marcus 2008, 236–7). Often, they have developed this sensibility through living closely with and in difference, or through their own lived experiences of transnational migration and connections across borders.

A participatory and convivial approach to research gives participants a voice in deciding relevant themes and methods, as well as in the analytical process. Academic researchers thereby become learners in the process as well as investigators, with information and insights gleaned from the community informing the process (Ferreira and Gendron 2011). Equally, participatory approaches recognise that theory is not the reserve of academic researchers, but is a shared human capacity for making sense of the world (see Davidson 2001). It is central to the participatory approach to provide a space for research participants in which they can feel confident that what they say will not be used against them, and in which openness, differences of opinion and conflicts are permitted (Bergold and Thomas 2012). Several of the chapters collected here draw on insights from participatory and feminist approaches, notably those by Nowicka; Phoenix; Dwyer, Ahmed, and Beinart; O'Neill, Giaquinto, and Hasedžić; Gidley; and Lisiak and Kaczmarek.

Convivial research also resonates with 'slow science' (Stengers 2018), particularly in the way researchers are committed to remain relevant to society, to be politically engaged and to listen to marginalised groups. Those committed to convivial research, like those of the slow science movement, emphasise the importance of letting themselves be affected by their experience and knowledge, rather than imposing preconceived notions and conclusions. Convivial research does not explicitly oppose performance targets or excellence measures, but it does require time and 'slowing down'. Some of the authors reflect in their contributions on the experience of 'failing' in the research process (Gidley; Lisiak and Kaczmarek). Others show the value of returning to research sites and subjects after many years (O'Neill, Giaquinto, and Hasedžić).

Why convivial tools?

The subtitle of this book references Ivan Illich's *Tools for Conviviality*, which was first published in 1973. Illich's book is a critique of industrial society and its orientation towards mass production and consumption, the promotion of specialisation and its socially isolating effects, and the exploitation of the ecosystem and its limited resources. Illich's (1973) proposal for convivial tools aims at a social order in which each person's

well-being, competence and creativity are limited only by the claims of others to an equal range of power and freedom. 'Convivial' designates for Illich (1973, 6) a society of 'responsibly limited tools'. 'Tools' here refer not only to physical objects or tools such as telephones, computers or hammers, but also to cognitive skills, for example, language and knowledge, and to institutional systems, such as schools. Illich (1973) believed that people do not just use tools, but also shape them according to their needs; if allowed, they would put tools to use in caring for and about others. Through achieving personal freedom and independence, people would create a community that would bring satisfaction and well-being to all its members.

The way we understand research tools is similar to Illich (see Phoenix, this volume, for a slightly different take). Convivial tools for research accordingly refer not to standardised procedures or instruments, such as an interview or observation protocol or a questionnaire, but rather to processes and practices that enable interaction and exchange of knowledge and understanding. Illich (1973) argued that a tool such as a school can stimulate conviviality, or conversely, socialise children to become regimented consumers. Similarly, research tools can be used in a manner that regiments and extracts knowledge from research participants, or helps them co-produce it (Holstein and Gubrium 1995; Gubrium and Holstein 2003). The contributors to this book are concerned with the question of when and how research can become convivial, and how and to what degree established research methods serve conviviality (see especially Phoenix; Crafter and Iqbal; Gidley).

An essential aspect of thinking about conviviality as tools is the reference to learning, that is, conviviality as a skill and capacity (Wise and Noble 2016, 423) that can be acquired through practice and over time. Rather than looking for innate qualities or the characteristics of particularly nice and convivially minded people, the notion of tools suggests we should focus on social practices, relationships and institutional structures that either help or hinder conviviality. This means that agency and interactions, among and between research participants and researchers, become central. Illich understands agency as collaborative (Plumwood 2006), whereby he refers not only to collaboration between humans, but also to the interactions and relationships between humans and material objects (see also Given 2013; Given 2018). This aspect of Illich's thinking resonates with several chapters in the volume, which address how objects and artworks can facilitate conviviality in research (Dwyer, Ahmed and Beinart; Crafter and Iqbal; O'Neill, Giaquinto and Hasedžić; Lisiak and Kaczmarek).

As Joanna Overing and Alan Passes (2000) identify for Amazonian communities, lives lived convivially include a sense of gift-sharing, work relations and dialogue, a preference for the informal and performative as against the formal and institutional, and an intense ethical and aesthetic valuing of sociability. Some of these features are also characteristic of participatory research but that does not mean the two are the same; Phoenix and Nowicka (this volume) both discuss what distinguishes convivial research from conventional participatory methods.

Outline of the volume

The contributions gathered in the volume are written from different perspectives, including those of academics, arts practitioners involved in research, and practitioners involved in advising migrants and policymakers. Most are the outcome of collaborative work. The book is organised into four parts: I) Conceptualising and performing conviviality; II) Convivial collaborations; III) Ethics, relationships and power; and IV) Reflections on convivial research and practice.

Part I contains two contributions, each of which considers what 'convivial research' can be. Nowicka picks up the distinction she has made in earlier publications (Nowicka and Heil 2015) between normative and analytical aspects of conviviality, and discusses how convivial research incorporates both. She outlines how convivial research is different from participatory methods, and identifies the need for an epistemological reorientation of research if it is to become convivial. In her chapter, Ann Phoenix draws on years of research with migrants and minorities to show how convivial research is partial, situated and contingent on social positioning. Her contribution reminds us of the importance of power relations in the research process, and asks important questions about the potential for convivial versus non-convivial *outcomes* of ostensibly convivial research. She argues that convivial research requires closer attention to how the results of research are framed and used.

Part II includes three chapters, all reflecting on collaborative research. Claire Dwyer, Nazneen Ahmed and Katy Beinart discuss a collaborative arts-based research project with women from different faith communities in a London suburb. Here, convivial research relates to the labour involved in creating a space of possibilities for encounters between academics, artists and participants, and how this space offered them a chance to share their faith experiences and life stories. Following this, Sarah Crafter and Humera Iqbal explore a series of arts-based

workshops with child language brokers. They make use of the notion of 'cultural contact zones' and focus on 'doing conviviality', while considering actors' capacity to bridge cultural and linguistic differences when engaging in prolonged encounters. They also consider the role of researchers and artists as mediators and facilitators of conviviality in research. The final chapter in Part II is by Maggie O'Neill, Bea Giaquinto and Fahira Hasedžić. In it, they share reflections on arts-based and participatory research projects in Nottingham, which they collaborated on about twenty years ago. The chapter then moves forward to the present day when the three were able to meet again to walk together as part of O'Neill's current research. The chapter focuses on their shared stories of displacement and relocation. The reunion became an opportunity to consider how convivial research is centred on personal relations and possibilities for connecting and reconnecting. Their contribution demonstrates that emotions, friendships and time are of key importance for convivial research, and how some methods facilitate conviviality better than others.

Chapters in Part III discuss power and ethics in research relationships. Picking up on themes initiated by Phoenix, Ben Gidley's contribution draws on his long-standing experience of working in and with local communities in south London. He reflects on how the relationship between researchers and research participants is constrained by funding cuts, neo-liberal reforms and sometimes contradictory demands of policymakers and the public to produce particular findings and recommendations, not all of them convivial. He thus helpfully reminds us of the importance of supportive institutional arrangements for conviviality to thrive, and of the importance of considering the wider political context of research. Meanwhile, Agata Lisiak and Alicja Kaczmarczyk focus on their experience of 'failure' in collaborative research in Birmingham, when their attempts to create a convivial space simply did not attract any research participants. Using this example, they address the important question of what facilitates conviviality, and how time matters for convivial relationships to emerge, thus again flagging the importance of a supportive wider context. Adele Galipo's chapter reflects on the challenges she encountered during her ethnographic research in north London, when she attempted to combine a focus on local convivial spaces with attention to migrants' transnational connections. The chapter helpfully prompts us to consider the importance of the ways in which we delimit our field of research. We may encounter local expressions of conviviality by our research participants that are contradicted by the same participants' activism and engagement in transnational or diasporic politics.

This paradox leads Galipo to define the neighbourhood as a plural and relational space of interaction, tension and sometimes conviviality. The challenge lies in how to capture the interaction and coexistence of conviviality and exclusion.

We close the volume with three reflective pieces. One is an edited transcript of the discussion notes given at the workshop at UCL at which most chapters were first presented, by Don Flynn, formerly director of the Migrants' Rights Network. Flynn's reflections on his own activism within the migrants' rights field over several decades are a clear call for the need to mobilise politically to turn convivial ideals into social reality. The chapter by Karin Woodley and Charlotte Gilsenan discusses the practical and institutional barriers to co-production between civil society and academics. Woodley and Gilsenan were, at the time of writing, respectively chief and deputy chief executives of Cambridge House in south London, a neighbourhood-based social action centre. They draw on their long-standing experiences of working for social justice, empowerment, diversity and inclusion, including varied experiences of collaboration with academic researchers and the challenges such collaborations often entail. The final piece is by Les Back, whose work on urban conviviality, multiculture and participatory research, as well as on academic life and labour, has been an inspiration over many years for scholars of conviviality. Back discusses the ways in which the chapters in the volume seek to identify a toolbox of convivial capabilities that people use, in his words 'to navigate their way through a world shaped not only by hatred but also through coexistence with their neighbours, their friends and even their foes'.

The volume itself has been written in a period of intensely unconvivial politics and the rise of new nationalist populism, which pose profound challenges to critically engaged and socially committed scholarship. Turning to Illich's pioneering work on convivial tools, we concur with him in the need to focus on the institutional framework, relationships and skills that can either help or hinder conviviality to emerge. Conviviality is often subtle and elusive, but that does not mean it is inconsequential, random or not amenable to systematic, social scientific enquiry, as the chapters clearly illustrate. As several of the contributors argue, conviviality is not a panacea, and what is seen and experienced as convivial by one person or group may be seen rather differently by others. What we have aimed to do here is to open a space for dialogue and reflection. We hope readers will find plenty of inspiration to conduct and reflect on the potential of convivial research and convivial methods in their own practice.

Acknowledgements

Note

1. Pertinent examples include the Brexit vote in the UK in 2016, and the gains and outright victories of right-populist and nationalist parties across Europe. These include electoral victories in Hungary (2010, 2014 and 2018), Poland (2015) and Italy (2018); major gains in elections in Norway (2013), Sweden (2014), Denmark (2015), Germany (2016), France (2017), Finland (2017) and Austria (2017); and the emergence of new right-wing populist forces in the Netherlands.

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Part I
Conceptualising and performing conviviality

2

Convivial research between normativity and analytical innovation

Magdalena Nowicka

The term 'conviviality' stands for how we understand 'togetherness' and, in particular, how we understand what it means to 'live with difference' (Valentine 2008) in settings where people of different religious, national, ethnic and racial identities meet (Nowicka and Vertovec 2014). Conviviality is manifested in a broad range of daily activities in private and public spheres – cooking and eating, child rearing, dressing up, quarrelling, celebrating – each of which can become a site of boundary-making around ethnic, religious or racial categories. Focusing on conviviality, we can thus investigate when, why and how people activate these categories as demarcation lines or alternatively unsettle them in order to bridge social and cultural boundaries. The question that research in the broad field of migration and (urban) diversity seeks to answer is: under what circumstances do daily encounters and activities become convivial?

The notion of conviviality as currently applied in the social sciences and humanities transcends its everyday English meaning of a festive coming together of people. Without the reference to peaceful and joyful conditions, the notion of conviviality increasingly opens up to include irritation, tensions, conflict and frustration as equally important modes of human togetherness (Heil 2015a; Vigneswaran 2014). The scholarly concern with the conditions of 'living with difference' is not free from normative assumptions and expectations of a desired outcome of encounters between people (and their environments), or of ideas of what ought to be done to achieve this desired state. The notion of conviviality, though, also carries analytical potential for understanding everyday human encounters (Nowicka and Heil 2015).

Research encounters, in particular those that happen in the course of studies into migration-driven processes, are a particular form of such encounters with difference that carry a potential for conviviality, for they encourage research participants to negotiate their own and others' belongings and mutual expectations regarding the outcomes of this encounter (Nowicka and Ryan 2015). In particular, qualitative in-depth interviews and ethnographic research methods require researchers and participants to establish a relationship based on mutual trust and rapport despite asymmetries of power and different group belongings. Participatory action research, rooted in the principles of democracy, transparency and openness, and seeking to achieve a joint production of knowledge (Bergold and Thomas 2012; Cornwall and Jewkes 1995), seems to deserve the label 'convivial' as well. We could also term the research encounters informed by feminist scholarship (Cook and Fonow 1991; Eichler 1997) 'convivial', for this approach emphasises the importance of social context, interactions with other people and collaboration between researchers (Hesse-Biber 2012). Yet is every instance of participatory, feminist or ethnographic research convivial (see Chapter 3 by Ann Phoenix, in this volume)? What is the value added by labelling certain research practices and methods as convivial? How can researchers engage conviviality in their research practice? Finally, are convivial research methods better than others for examining social contexts shaped by migration?

In this contribution, I engage with precisely these questions. I will begin by tracing how researchers studying migration, as well as places and situations shaped by migration, employ the term 'conviviality'. In doing so, I distinguish between normative and analytical applications of the concept. In order to develop the notion of convivial research, I bring my analysis of the concept of conviviality together with the insights from the research with migrants done in the feminist and decolonial field. I consider the methodological and epistemological debates within this field as highly relevant to the emerging debate on conviviality, and in my discussion I will focus on how they engage with essentialism, reflexivity and authenticity.

I argue that convivial research integrates the methods of cooperative knowledge production while aiming to unsettle fixed categories of difference. In this sense, convivial research operates at two interlinked levels. First, it embraces the idea of an equal relationship, which is central to the normative takes on conviviality, as well as being present in the traditions of feminist, decolonial, qualitative and participatory research. Second, it is dedicated to understanding how human relations involve the

categorising of others as members of groups while also including socialising that occurs according to, and irrespective of, such categorisations. In turn, convivial research could be seen as bringing together and advancing feminist and decolonial attempts to establish a new epistemology for the social sciences and humanities, as well as helping to overcome certain shortcomings of migration studies with regard to how ethnicity or race are treated as categories for organising social life. In the final section of this article, I will draw on feminist and decolonial debates on knowledge production to sketch a pathway for future research on conviviality.

Conviviality as a normative idea: Possibilities of a convivial sociality

Various authors suggest 'conviviality' as a normative basis for social enquiry. However, they tend to imply rather than directly address the normative character of their approach. For the most part, works referring to 'conviviality' present normative exercises for researchers, such as assessing individual well-being, evaluating social arrangements and interactions, and judging the design of policies, technologies, spaces or material infrastructures.

One of the earliest social scientific normative proposals surrounding conviviality, and one of the most influential, is Ivan Illich's *Tools for Conviviality* (Illich 1973). His vision of a post-industrial society contains both a critique of rational and utilitarian principles of learning and working, and ideas for restructuring education to promote sociality, community, interaction and democracy. Illich thereby anticipates the Internet (Kellner 2008) as one such 'convivial tool' that enables people to communicate with each other and thus participate in social and political life, remaining in control of the new technology. While Illich's proposal reflects the spirit of the times, and corresponds to the idealism of the Silicon Valley engineers working on the first personal computers (Roszak 1994; Aupers and Houtman 2010), his work maintains its appeal to this day for two reasons: it remains critical of the assumed progressive nature of technological regimes (Pursell 2007), and it involves, in addition to communication technologies, all kinds of institutions, such as schools and factories. If these are fashioned in a convivial manner, they will enable a particular form of sociality based on justice and self-defined life (Illich 1973).

Illich's proposal for conviviality, as opposed to industrial productivity and economic growth, has found many followers in recently flourishing

social movements that object to the dominance of growth, globalisation and consumption, and instead promote social and environmental sustainability (Martínez-Alier et al. 2010; Arnsperger 2012; Bonaiuti 2014). Some studies demonstrate that a convivial economy is possible and indeed already operable (Shorthose 2005), but most research is concerned with the material and political conditions for a more convivial life in the future (Hinchliffe and Whatmore 2006; Shaftoe 2008; Rantisi and Leslie 2010; Edensor 2013; Edensor and Sumartojo 2015). Urban space is of particular interest to most authors working in this context, for cities assemble and generate difference and identities (Isin 2002), which are potentially (in the common sense, at least) antagonistic or even conflictual. Within the positive rhetoric of diversity, the concern with conflict in densely populated urban areas (a topic examined in studies on social cohesion, for example) is giving way to interest in what 'functions well' in cities, and what makes them liveable (Kraftl 2014; Maitland 2008).

This links to Lourdes Arizpe's (2015) early postulate for a more compatible way of living together, which she conceptualised as necessarily based on inter-generational and inter-ethnic solidarity in settings characterised by a mixing of people from different cultures, religions and places. Arizpe relates her argument to the notion of *Convivencia*, the peaceful coexistence of Muslim, Christian and Jewish communities in medieval Spain (Heil 2014; Heil 2015b), but she also imagines conviviality in the sense of all humans living in harmony with nature (Arizpe 1998). She thus proposes a holistic approach to the human condition in a globalised world. Recently, a group of French and international intellectuals around Alain Caillé, among them Eva Illouz, Frédéric Vandenberghe and Chantal Mouffe, linked to this tradition in their manifesto *Pour un manifeste du convivialisme* (Caillé 2011), in which they present their plea for a new kind of cohabitation. The authors sketch the urgent empirical necessity for a radical reform of the social in light of factors such as climate change, poverty and inequality, post-democratic tendencies, corruption, the financial crisis, terrorism, war and expulsion. The manifesto defines *convivialism* as a normative –ism, a conception of society based on common humanity, common sociality, individuation and managed conflict, and possible when people operate on the basis of mutual aid, spontaneity and empathy. In this body of work, conviviality appears as a 'participatory good' that is simultaneously produced and enjoyed by those who participate in it (Waldron 1993; Taylor 1995). Conviviality is a desired state, in the present and in the future, which people – understood as active agents – produce under conditions facilitating their freedoms (Shorthose 2002). As a group right, it is also conducive to the realisation of individual

rights, in particular the recognition of difference. Strikingly, this literature is largely silent about class and gender inequalities, presuming the existence of a basic human commonality, and a basic challenge to it that has a power to unite all people in common effort to deal with it.

To sum up, conviviality as a normative idea relies on the recognition of differences, equal participation, social justice and respect for autonomous individuals. It calls for solidarity between generations and ethnic groups, and for a joint effort in regard to sustainable development. It introduces the idea of convivial settings that facilitate interaction and exchange for the mutual benefit of those involved, who come together to envision a better future for all. Conviviality is thus concerned with how 'being together' can be successful for all parties involved.

Conviviality as an analytical tool: Social relations in urban multiculture

Analytical conviviality is used to bring to light processes that remain hidden or indecipherable if we look at them through the lens of other concepts, such as 'integration', 'assimilation', 'tolerance', 'civility' or 'hybridity', to name just a few. This entails focusing on the 'withness' – being close and connected to others – and considering individuals through the meanings of their interrelatedness (Boisvert 2010). Instead of asking about the voluntary relationships that people enter into in multiple settings, or about incidental encounters, such as the ones in public space that bear the potential for interaction (including conflict), analytical conviviality is concerned with the inherent relatedness of humans.

While analytical conviviality does not limit its interest to migrants and settings shaped by migration, authors who use the term 'convivial' to describe a situation usually draw on Paul Gilroy's (2004) critique of multicultural Britain. For Gilroy, a convivial culture is one in which racial and ethnic differences are rendered unremarkable and ordinary, despite racism and anti-racism claiming the opposite. Conviviality is thus characteristic of urban social patterns in which groups dwell in proximity to each other, but in such a way that their racial, linguistic and religious particularities do not add up to insuperable problems of communication (Gilroy 2006).

Following this lead, various authors problematise the existence of hybridity, multiculturalism and intercultural relationships, and express a preference for the study of dynamic, contingent and mobile identifications and human alliances in neighbourhoods with high numbers of new settlers (Gidley 2013; Wessendorf 2014; Wise and Velayutham 2014; Neal

et al. 2015; Lapiņa 2016; Wilde 2017; Tyler 2017). These authors focus on the question of how togetherness is experienced in super-diverse settings where people of different origins and different economic, legal and social statuses mix (Vertovec 2007; Hall 2013). This question points both to the concern about the potential for conflict related to ethnic and racial belonging, and to the possibilities for creating togetherness that embraces antagonism (Amin 2002; Amin 2003; van Leeuwen 2014; Ezzati and Bivand Erdal 2017). Scholars have answered the question of how togetherness is experienced by focusing on gestures of politeness in shared spaces (Laurier and Philo 2006), routine practices of giving, talking, sharing and exchanging (Dunlap 2009), or shared joy in festive activities (Edensor and Millington 2009) that constitute togetherness. At the same time, other researchers postulate that tensions should not be suppressed but instead openly addressed, and that spaces should be designed to encourage encounters between people whose positions and opinions are conflictual (Amin 2002; Sandercock 2003; Wood and Landry 2008).

Conviviality thus emerges in these proposals as an outcome of urban complexity and the opportunity structures it entails, which enable encounters and render ethnic belonging less salient or even irrelevant in daily interactions (Vigneswaran 2014; Nayak 2017). Yet, as Les Back (1996; 2016) reminds us, racism continues to shape social inequalities in urban multiculture, despite the fact that so many people evidently interact across racial and ethnic boundaries of belonging on a daily basis (Tyler 2017). So, while people come together to accomplish a task, share concerns, discuss issues or simply have fun, irrespective of their ethnic or racial self-understanding, we ought to be cautious not to overestimate the role of such encounters (van Leeuwen 2014). Racism leaves deep wounds (Hage 2013); the irrelevance of racial identities in some contexts does not render them irrelevant in any other context. Racial identities might perhaps be easier to bridge than the differences in class positions shaped by racism. Racism thus makes people vulnerable, which we need to take into account when considering how conflicts could be productive for establishing a peaceful mode of cohabitation (van Leeuwen 2014). If we want to understand this 'metropolitan paradox', it is not enough to reduce conviviality to the 'other side of the coin' of conflict (Karner and Parker 2011), or to a 'tool' in handling tensions. Situations and spaces are not 'convivial and conflictual'. Rather, to see situations through the lens of *analytical conviviality* means to see them as equally 'peaceful and conflictual', and to make the relational dependence of people the focus of research.

Conviviality as analytical lens may thus help us to understand how people find ad hoc and temporary commonalities, similarities and

consensus with regard to interests or concerns at a particular moment in time and in a particular place (Nowicka and Heil 2015). In urban public spaces, such temporary orders are commonly achieved through indifference towards others and avoidance of contact (Simmel 1903; Goffman 1963; Goffman 1971; Hirschauer 2005; Haddington et al. 2012). These are situations one does not recall; instead, they are 'forgotten' moments, for they often do not carry explicit meanings for individuals. Accordingly, they are difficult to mark, to pin down, to describe and to understand, and they often remain unnoticed in the research. There is no consensus in the social sciences on the ultimate meaning of 'civil inattention' (Goffman 1963) and this kind of 'indifference-to-difference' in the context of citizenship, and whether or not it is morally acceptable (van Leeuwen 2014). Here, conviviality offers a new frame for this debate to develop.

Moreover, when people move across various contexts on a daily basis – home, work, street, grocery store or school – they engage differently with the difference of others in each of these settings. Some minimal engagements rely largely on inattention, some on tuning in to the practice of others, and some involve positive or conflictual (self-)positioning while aligning along the lines of ethnic or religious group identity and belonging. Thus, it is common for people to marry members of their in-group (in ethnic, religious or class terms), to find friends among members of out-groups, to avoid controversial talks with work colleagues about politics, to shop at the corner grocery store and chat as usual about their family in a distant country, to keep away from a group of youths on the street due to feeling threatened by the incomprehensible foreign language they use, but to discuss religious tolerance with a neighbour at the end of the day – all these without the need to change their own attitudes towards those who are different. Given the multiplicity of such daily situations, the categories of identity, solidarity or shared interests commonly used in science only insufficiently explain the complexity of what it means to 'live-with-difference'.

Analytical conviviality thus emerges as a proposal to study social orders based on a fragile consensus that people achieve beyond the questions of commonality, similarity or shared values and heritage. At the heart of this approach is the deep interrelatedness and interdependency of people, which requires us to reconsider how social theory perceives humans as individuals, subjects or agents (Taylor 2004). Analytical conviviality calls on us to reconsider the relationship between the person and society, and thus to embrace individual differences and structural asymmetries of power.

Research encounters: Contesting fixed positions in research

Research encounters are a form of encounter with difference during which the researcher(s) and the research participant(s) negotiate the meaning of social categories they do or do not belong to. The postmodern and feminist tradition of interviewing (Holstein and Gubrium 1995; Gubrium and Holstein 2003) points to the tension between, on the one hand, the desire of the researcher to remain in control of the interaction, striving for emotional and professional distance and refraining from unintentionally influencing what the research participant reveals (an approach shaped, as Ann Oakley (1981; 2015) argues, by the traditional male vision of science), and, on the other hand, the conversational convention that requires partners to contribute more or less equally to a discussion with their own knowledge, opinions and emotions (Nowicka and Ryan 2015). 'Successful interviewing', accordingly, relies on overcoming boundaries that may inhibit communication. These boundaries may be sociocultural, religious, ethnic or racial in nature (Phoenix 1994; Ryan and Golden 2006), and interviewers create rapport with their research participants by attuning to their gendered, ethnic, religious, racial or socio-economic perspectives (see Crafter and Iqbal in this volume).

Yet the interview as encounter is more than just an exercise in creating rapport with the research participants to extract 'more' knowledge, results or insights (Sinha and Back 2013). To recognise that any knowledge produced in research is 'situated' (Haraway 1988) – that is, embodied, localised, shared and connected – means to understand both the researcher and the research participant as active producers of meaning of their own roles and understandings during the interview (England 1994; Rose 1997; Kvale 1999; Mullings 1999; Silverman 2011), and beyond it. Feminist authors pointed to how knowledge is networked, for it is located within communities rather than individuals (Nelson 1993; Walby 2001), and within the everyday experiences that people undergo as members of historically shaped groups (Collins 1997).

Accordingly, neither the researcher nor the research participants 'have' a particular position, and instead continuously negotiate their positions in interactions with others, also prior to the joint research encounter. They create themselves and are created as ethnic, racial or gendered subjects, and this process is reciprocal (Phillips 2010). It means that as much as the researcher makes assumptions about her or his research participants and their identities, belongings and positionalities, so do the research participants, and these assumptions and expectations

can be revised and negotiated during the interview. Their positions are not fixed, but negotiable (Narayan 1998).

In addition, within the research context, it is important to take into consideration that ethnic, national and religious categories of belonging are subject to revision, for mobility changes their meaning (Narayan 1993; Jacobs-Huey 2002; Tsuda 2015; Chereni 2014; Ganga and Scott 2006; Levine-Rasky 2015; Voloder and Kirpitchenko 2014). Both the negotiation of positions and the revision of categories as a result of mobility have played a part in my personal experience in researching people who – like me – were born in Poland but reside abroad. I often played the 'ethnic card' (Jacobs-Huey 2002; Leung 2015) to gain access to the field, and I spoke Polish during the research to make my participants feel comfortable. Yet, in fact, my trajectory of life and migration made me dissimilar to most of my research participants; my place of residence (in Germany and not in the UK, where my research was located), my academic background, my position as a researcher, but also my origin in a particular town in Poland, my family background and my lack of religious upbringing, made me feel distant from most of the Poles I interviewed. This became obvious only when my research participants said, 'You must know how it is, after all you are … also a migrant/also a Polish woman/also a foreigner/also brought up Catholic/also familiar with this place', and so on. In these situations, I had to either question or confirm such assumptions about our common heritage and status, and I did both, sometimes in the course of a single interview. I stressed the seeming similarities of origin in Poland (neglecting that we grew up in different places, went to different schools, were born to different families, which shaped the way we are now) to create rapport and ease narrations. Or I countered the misleading labelling of my person as an insider within the Polish community, saying I am unfamiliar with life in the UK (or as manual worker, or as post-accession migrant) to encourage joint reflection on commonly used social categories of nationality (Carling et al. 2014).

By problematising the assumption that a shared origin produces similar individuals (Nowicka and Cieslik 2014), researchers and research participants contribute to a larger process of questioning the congruence of state borders, cultures, languages and identities, and foster reflection on when and how group categories matter. By acknowledging the equality of knowledge generated by the research participants and the researcher (Smith 1999; Zavala 2013), research can create a space for cultural brokerage and for translation, which, by enabling respondents (and researchers) to transcend their own position, unsettles categories perceived as given (Johnson and Larsen 2013; Manning 2018). It is this

particular feature of research encounters that suggests that such encounters are 'convivial situations'. Research encounters possess the potential to disrupt old patterns of thinking and provide the possibility for reflection and exchange, allowing participants to 'break out of fixed notions' (Amin 2002, 970).

Epistemic disobedience in research: Questioning categories of thought, and its limits

What Amin (2002) and others, most prominently Gilroy (2004), identify as the core of convivial situations – the potential and capability of reaching beyond fixed notions (of identity and belonging) – has also been at the core of methodological and epistemological debates in the fields of feminist, participatory and decolonial research. Three strings of these debates are most relevant for the notion of convivial research: essentialism, reflexivity and authenticity.

Essentialism, and more specifically cultural essentialism, is highly contested in the feminist and participatory research traditions. Cultural essentialism considers humans as bearers of a culture (based on gender, race or ethnicity), which defines them and differentiates them from others (Grillo 2003). Participatory action research (PAR) and participatory community research projects driven by feminist and intersectional positions aim to develop a critical consciousness of gendered, classed and racial inequalities in communities involved in the research (Greenwood and Levin 2007; McIntyre 2008; Lykes and Hershberg 2014). As Maiter et al. (2008) remind us, it is important for PAR to account for a community's heterogeneity, and thus to acknowledge that a shared language or a sense of identity or ethnicity do not create 'sameness'. Infusions of both feminist and critical race theory knowledge have allowed PAR projects to complicate identity categories encountered in the field, and to recognise multiple, overlapping and conflicting loyalties and allegiances of research participants and researchers alike (Torre 2009; Dutta 2017). Yet, despite successfully facilitating critical reflection on race, ethnicity and gender, PAR does not necessarily aim at a deeper revision of these categories of difference; it takes the risk of essence, for the price of destabilising these categories could be political infertility (Spivak 1987; Strathern 1987; Dhawan and Castro Varela 2016).

There is no consensus on whether essentialism is 'wrong' in all circumstances, or whether it can be 'right' if used strategically (Spivak 1987; Narayan 1998; Lee 2011). The trouble with essentialism is that

it is in no case innocent, for it often leads to reducing people to representatives of categories to which they feel they do not belong. Such fixed categories are oppressive, for they sustain everyday racism and sexism. This is equally a problem in the everyday employment of categories of race or ethnicity as 'basic operators' (Brubaker et al. 2004), as well as in the social sciences and empirical research, which rely on ethnic categories in designing projects and analysing data (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). For researchers and laypeople alike, it requires nothing less than to de-link from the fixed notions rooted in Western epistemic dominance to bring on transformation (Mignolo 2009).

In order to question fixed categories, participants of (research) encounters need to be equipped with skills to question that which seems to be a given, to place it in a larger context, and to excavate the hidden meanings. This competence relates to researchers' (and participants') reflexivity. Reflexivity has often been considered in terms of unequal power relations in the research literature (Presser 2005; Karnieli-Miller et al. 2009), although it cannot be assumed that the researcher is more powerful than her participants (Bravo-Moreno 2003; Smith 2006). Feminist scholars have engaged extensively with the possibilities, potentials, failures and limitations of reflexivity in research (Katz 1992; McDowell 1992; Nast 1994). Researchers may reflect upon their own biography (internal position) or their own position in the system of privilege (external position), but both kinds of reflexivity – of the self and of the context – are problematic, for they consider the difference between the researcher and the research participant as 'distances in this landscape of power' (Rose 1997). Instead, Rose (1997, 315) argues that we should consider knowledge produced in research encounters as co-constitutive, emerging in relation to each other in the process of negotiation between the participants' and researcher's identities and positions. In this sense, there is no knowledge or identity outside of a relation with the other (Alcoff 2006). The emphasis in this kind of relational understanding of encounters is important insofar as it helps us to understand encounters as convivial situations in which the process of becoming is more central than the questions of being (Barnett 2004). In research encounters, the participants and the researcher affect each other not only as producers of knowledge, but also as empathic humans capable of engaging with the positions of others. The research encounter as convivial situation entails the potential for personal transformations and becoming through relational engagements with the positions and knowledge of the self and the other.

Learning from the analysis of research encounters, we need to ask a more general question: are some people better facilitators of conviviality

than others as a result of having a greater capability for reflexive (self-) positioning? This question leads to two further isssues. First, we must consider the unequal distribution of such capacities, so that the asymmetry in the relationship is acknowledged as a key element of convivial situations, and we need to consider which conditions are conducive to, or alternatively a hindrance for, conviviality. Second, we need to consider the possibilities of enhancing such skills through education. Importantly, as Attia and Edge (2017) stress, reflexivity and empathy are a researcher's personal rather than professional skills (despite the fact that they are taught in many disciplines, such as anthropology or sociology), and thus their enhancement might not necessarily be the task of an academic system. If so, 'convivial facilitators' are potentially everywhere.

Finally, there is a question of authenticity and rejection of essentialising categories of difference. Lee (2011) formulates this problem as a presumption of a person's knowledge of culture as corresponding to, or being an outcome of, this person's experience in culture. She insists that culture, experience and knowledge are socially constructed. Thus, every knowledge of culture is not individual, but social (compare Patterson 2014). Conviviality embraces this position in claiming that humans are inherently interrelated (Boisvert 2010). Accordingly, individuals' experience needs to be seen as an outcome of past negotiations that 'form the lens of understanding their experience' (Lee 2011, 272). This means it is necessary to reject an essential idea of cultural experience and cultural knowledge, and in consequence to consider the geographical and biographical context (Mignolo 2009; Koobak and Marling 2014; Gautam and Luitel 2013) of a convivial encounter. Hence, the historicity and geography of social relations matter for possibilities of conviviality, not in the sense of material and atmospheric settings enabling meaningful interaction, but because these factors establish which categories of difference are relevant to the encounter, as well as who is entitled to participate in particular encounters – and on which terms. It is possible to establish this only in reference to the position of the participants (Mignolo 2009). By scrutinising the geographical and biographical relevance of categories of difference, we can disentangle the 'we' and 'them' used by people to describe the experience in culture (Lisiak and Nowicka 2018). While ethnicity, race or gender are voiced categories, people perceive various differences in the ways others think and do things, for which they seem to lack readily available labels. Through categories such as ethnicity, people give meaning to such tacit differences. Assigning difference to a well-established category helps in naming the source of the feeling of irritation or uneasiness in contact with another person, or the sense of commonality and understanding – 'the right chemistry' (Nowicka 2006, 163).

The sense of understanding each other despite belonging to different ethnic (or other) groups, often stressed in research on everyday cosmopolitanism, is thus not at the core of convivial encounters; rather, it is the complex ways people entangle and disentangle their own and others' experience in culture with the help of geographically and historically specific and relevant categories of difference. The challenge of conviviality is thus to talk about experience in culture without making assumptions about a person's knowledge of culture.

Towards convivial research

In this concluding section, I would like to bring together these multiple strands of reflection to sketch a proposal for *convivial research*. First, convivial research should embrace the normativity the term suggests. Dedicated to the study of 'with-ness' as a basic characteristic of humans, research in the spirit of conviviality means asking how this 'with-ness' is a lived, mundane experience of people. The second feature of convivial research is the interest in everyday encounters. I do not see convivial research as limited to a particular kind of everyday encounter, for example, between long-established settlers and newcomers, in particular if the latter happen to be international migrants. But such settings might be 'easier' to study than others, as lenses through which processes of negotiation, translation, consensus building and tensions are more visible. In this sense, we can learn more easily and faster from these contexts. They are also interesting because of their political relevance. Spaces in which non-migrants and migrants meet frequently are highly ideologised. They are thus ideal examples to study how national ideologies, multicultural politics or diversity discourses impact the ways people see others as members of particular groups, and what they believe their mutual relations should look like, and which outcomes their encounters should have.

In terms of methods of study, convivial research focusing on 'with-ness' must take seriously the experiences of participatory, creative and ethnographic research, and reflect upon what it means to jointly produce knowledge. Ethical reflection on the co-production of conviviality in research must be an element of every project that describes itself as 'convivial'. In doing so, convivial research needs to embrace inequalities inherent to academic knowledge production and find ways of including experiences and knowledges of those involved in research; for this, the figures of the 'research subject' and 'the researcher' need to be revised to accommodate perspectives that unsettle the established orders (Morreira

2015). Drawing lessons from years of reflection on positionalities in research, much indebted to feminist scholarship, convivial research ought thus to focus on the negotiation of categories of sameness and difference throughout the knowledge-production process.

Convivial research is distinct, though, not because of the methods it employs but because of its interests. By this I do not mean its focus on everyday encounters, but rather its determination to understand the tacit differences that are relevant for the way people live together, and how such silent, unspoken differences are translated into explicit, stable and fixing categories of difference. Without giving priority to enquiry into race, ethnicity, religion or gender relations (and migrants as carriers of these categories of difference), convivial research can help us to understand when, how and why an unnamed feeling of difference, or irritation with difference sensed in ways people do and say things, gains meaning as a constitutive element of group categories.

While studying the everyday, convivial research must thus understand the histories and geographies of the power relations that led to the prioritisation of one category over the other, such as race or gender over the shape of people's fingers or the size of their feet. How do discourses and ideologies shape people's cognitive perspectives? Why do we think, to quote Mignolo (2009, 2), that 'native Americans have wisdom, Anglo Americans have science'? In this sense, convivial research is also deeply political: by revealing the mechanisms behind the construction and deconstruction of sameness and difference, it necessarily becomes involved in political struggles aiming to destabilise categories that are unjust and oppressive.

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3
Convivial practices in communities of research

Ann Phoenix

Over the last few decades, it has become a commonplace that good research should employ innovative methodology. Research funders see new methods as a clear-cut means of guaranteeing originality and, implicitly, of rectifying problems with previous research. Wiles et al. (2010) suggest that innovative research methods also provide hope of improving aspects of the research process identified as inadequate. The burgeoning of participatory research, spreading from the 'majority world'[1] (for example, Freire 1970) to the 'minority world', also foregrounds methodological innovation. In particular, participatory methods are designed to disrupt hierarchical relations between researcher and researched, and between providers and receivers/'users' (Hall 1992; also see the introduction to this volume). The 'participatory turn' in the social sciences has fuelled the development and use of methods for researching everyday conviviality and for making research convivial while attending to the oppression that patterns the lives of participants marginalised in various ways (Newton and Parfitt 2011). This simultaneous focus on conviviality and oppression or marginalisation serves to highlight the contrary possibilities that are part of conviviality and require a focus on negotiated everyday practices and relations (Back 1996; Gilroy 2005).

In addition, the proliferation of participatory methods around the world has multiplied the ways in which research is conducted (particularly in the 'minority world'). This has generated debate about what constitutes participatory methods (Jordan 2003). The question of what constitutes conviviality in the research process has received

less attention, but as notions of conviviality have gained ground (Gidley 2013), interest in what constitutes mundane conviviality has burgeoned. Lapiņa (2016, 33) suggests that conviviality, as a concept denoting unproblematic encounters with diversity, is sometimes treated as utopian and sometimes normative, and is employed in contradictory ways as 'fundamental or "small"/local, overarching or counter-narrative, harmonious or (also) conflictual, unpredictable or designable, descriptive or normative and universal or particular'. These contradictions arise partly because conviviality is a slippery concept (Wise and Velayutham 2014). There is, however, some agreement that conviviality can usefully be applied as an analytical construct to capture the quotidian mundanity of everyday life (Nowicka and Vertovec 2014). It is clear that conviviality is a multifaceted concept that has both positive and negative elements and is 'accomplished on an improvised basis' (Wise and Noble 2016, 426). It necessarily incorporates participants' experiences and the perspectives of researchers and research teams, as well as how research questions are devised and reports written and adopted. Each of these elements, and their links with participatory methods, can incorporate tensions and contradictions as well as pleasures into the research process.

This chapter first considers what may be said to constitute convivial research methods. The major part of the chapter then draws on a range of research projects, most of which I have been involved with and so know well. The chapter shows how research projects have contradictory potentialities in relation to conviviality. Thus, while aspects of the research process may be said to be convivial, others may not be so, even if a project includes methods that are often considered participatory and that have proved pleasurable for both researcher and participants. The chapter gives examples from studies of serial migration, children's residential institutions, young people's consumption, and family lives and environments in India and the UK, and alludes to other studies that have attempted to disrupt exclusion and promote conviviality. The chapter considers whether these examples constitute 'convivial research' and, if so, how and for whom. It suggests that such methods cannot be viewed as tools for convivial research without addressing broader, intersectional issues that include questions of whose interests are served by research, how power relations impact on the questions asked and what is done with the research. It suggests that convivial research should not be viewed as a grand narrative, but as partial, situated and contingent on social positioning.

Convivial research: Innovative methodology and the participatory turn

Since the seventeenth century, the term 'convivial' has carried the dual meanings of living together and dining together and, in contemporary everyday usage, has accrued meanings of friendliness, agreeableness, cheerfulness and welcome. Those concerned to develop convivial research frequently identify Ivan Illich's (1973) work as an impetus to thinking about convivial tools. Illich wanted the 'average citizen' to be able to understand and control practical knowledge in order to gain mastery of tools that allow them to enrich their environments according to their own visions, rather than those of an elite group. Illich (1973, 34) suggested that convivial tools (counterposed to 'industrial tools') disrupt the 'radical monopoly' of elite professional groups: 'Convivial tools are those which give each person who uses them the greatest opportunity to enrich the environment with the fruits of his or her vision. Industrial tools decry this possibility … and they allow their designers to determine the meaning and expectations of others.' For Illich, 'convivial tools', for which we might substitute 'convivial research', entails social, relational and collective means for a community of users to act on society, and hence is holistic and political. Illich's formulation is, however, somewhat nebulous. The implication of his 1973 publication, taken as the originary moment for convivial research, is that conviviality requires a shift in power relations between researchers and those they research.

As Nowicka and Vertovec (2014) point out, Illich did not sufficiently specify his idea of convivial tools, although he gave examples and others have picked up the notion and applied it to particular settings. Nowicka and Vertovec (2014) suggest that less attention has been paid to Illich's holistic principle than to notions of place. Interest in the convivial has coincided with interest in participatory methods and calls for innovative methods. The Center for Convivial Research and Autonomy[2] (CCRA) suggests that convivial research is 'the result of collective efforts to solve local problems and advance the shared interests of a community of struggle'.

Both participatory methods and innovation in methods have at their heart aims of improving research methodology and, sometimes, are also designed to be ethical and political – in the service of shifting the common power imbalance from researchers to the researched. The CCRA uses multiple, transdisciplinary investigative tools that generate ethical, oppositional knowledges. Participants engage in all aspects of research, and can invent

new tools as the research process unfolds. Knowledge production is, therefore, participatory and iterative, relational, often conflictual and politically situated (Callahan 2017). From a different perspective, Wiles et al. (2010) describe innovative methodology in ways that parallel Callahan's convivial research. They suggest that one way in which innovative methodology can be judged as improving research is if it has 'the aim of engaging participants or audience in a more holistic way, giving scope for emotional and moral as well as intellectual responses' (Wiles et al. 2011, 592).

This burgeoning of innovative, participatory research is not, however, straightforwardly positive, in that it carries contrary possibilities for conviviality and oppression. From a postcolonial perspective, participatory methods can be both convivial and exploitative. White and Pettit (2004, 7) suggest that 'As many critiques have pointed out, participatory methodologies can also be used to obscure differences within target communities, legitimise extractive and exploitative processes of information-gathering, impose external agendas and contain or co-opt potential popular resistance.' Participatory methods can, therefore, feel convivial, but if employed solely for extractive purposes, the findings can serve to (re)pathologise participants (Minh-ha 1989; Polletta 2006). This possible division between relationships at the point of data collection and the point of publicising the findings means that there are different levels to be considered in research, such as the levels of policy and of everyday practices, as well as the different parts of the research process. A research project may be considered convivial during fieldwork but not during the process of writing up. Vital questions about who the research is for and who defines the research questions serve to foreground issues about the politics of research, and the political economy of research funding. How then are we to understand conviviality? For example, are particular methods convivial in themselves and able to promote social justice? What analytic and writing strategies facilitate convivial research?

A different strand of work on conviviality was initiated by Les Back (1996), who focused on analyses of mundane conviviality in the context of everyday racism. Paul Gilroy's (2005; 2006) later publications have served to popularise notions of 'living with' as civility, where conviviality is paired with multiculturalism. As Don Flynn (this volume) points out, that notion of civility is important since, in Judith Butler's (2004) terms, it contributes to making life 'liveable', including for migrants and refugees. In relation to the friendly civility element of conviviality, there are two ways in which researchers have engaged with conviviality. First, some have focused on a 'feel-good' element of research. This has frequently been represented in the literature through a concern with the quality of

interviews and the interviewer–participant relationship. In particular, in-depth interviews have often been considered sites for allowing participants to tell their stories to empathic listeners, often with cathartic impact and emancipatory potential (Brinkman and Kvale 2005). Second, some researchers seek to make their research interpretations convivial, in providing emotional and other support to groups who are experiencing difficulties. Two examples are Les Back's (2016) *Academic Diary*, which many academics find supportive, reassuring and comforting (Gill 2018; Back 2018) and Johnson's (2014) film of minority ethnic students at UCL talking about their racialised experiences as students.

Two issues follow in relation to research. First, the notion of civility enables a broad range of research to be considered convivial, including research describing how people across constructed boundaries live together, policy-relevant research that contributes to improving people's living circumstances and research methodology that in itself enables civility between researchers and researched. Second, convivial research in these terms necessarily has a politico-ethical perspective in aiming to contribute to values of social justice, or, as Nowicka and Heil (2015) argue, a normative element. Paradise identifies four components of convivial research:

> the refusal to objectify communities of struggle; the obligation to include the community at every step of the process, from formulating the research question to engaging spaces of direct action; the commitment to claiming our own processes of knowledge production and at the same time making this process transparent, accessible, accountable; agreement to organize ourselves as a community around horizontal spaces of reflection, action, and decision-making.
>
> (Paradise 2015, 20)

While this definition operationalises equality of participants and researcher, it omits the emotions that might be aroused in the research encounter, as well as the potential impact of the research on participants and researchers. It is also not clear whether these four components have to be in play simultaneously, or if one component is sufficient for ensuring that research is convivial. A related issue is whether research that is congenial at the data collection phase is necessarily convivial throughout.

Turning to the notion of starting from the perspective of the 'community', this is clearly not practicable in much funded research, since it is frequently difficult to be clear what constitutes 'community', and

individual members of communities, however defined, differ in terms of intersectional power relations to do with gender, social class, racialisation and generation, among other things. Whose perspectives should be given primacy, particularly since inclusion can reproduce inequalities in power relations, resulting in co-option rather than empowerment? Research that aims to 'give voice' to less powerful groups as, for example, in research with children, can reproduce intersectional power hierarchies: 'Current rhetoric about "giving voice to children," commonplace both inside and outside the academy … masks a number of important conceptual and epistemological problems … questions of representation, issues of authenticity, the diversity of children's experiences, and children's participation in research' (James 2008, 261). Simply enabling some under-represented voices to be heard does not constitute 'giving voice' to the whole of a broad social category, and is no guarantee of increased equality. These issues are examined further in the sections below, which explore different elements of conviviality in research.

Conviviality in research

This section draws on examples from research to disentangle issues that, based on definitions such as those presented above, would be considered convivial in some way. Each subsection discusses different issues raised in research to consider the complexity and multifaceted nature of convivial research, as well as its affordances.

Conducting convivial research by changing understandings

Many social science research projects result in the production of new understandings of aspects of social life. Some of these changed understandings can be said to be convivial in that they refuse to objectify the groups being studied and produce analyses that take seriously participant viewpoints, situate them in their socio-economic positions and normalise (rather than pathologise) them. Examples of these include four of my own studies. For example, my study of mothers aged 16 to 19 years (Phoenix 1990), which drew on longitudinal, in-depth research and deconstructed the notion that the young women were problematic as mothers and too young for motherhood. Similarly, my study of the social identities of black, white and mixed-parentage young people showed that most of those of mixed parentage were calling themselves 'mixed' despite knowing that, at that time, they were generally considered black and expected to identify as

black (Tizard and Phoenix 2002). In taking seriously the young people's accounts, the study showed that there was a marked shift in social identities for that generation of mixed-parentage young people, and helped to disrupt the pathological thinking that characterised both popular thinking and academic work. A further example is Peter Townsend's groundbreaking study of poverty in the UK in the 1960s, which led to change in the definition of poverty from 'absolute' to 'relative' (Edwards et al. 2017). The Townsend example is illuminating in relation to convivial research. For, while it shifted understandings in ways that have had marked beneficial impacts on the lives of people living in poverty in many countries, it was neither participatory nor inclusive of the participants in formulating issues or analysis. Indeed, 'respondents' were sometimes browbeaten into taking part in the study by interviewers employed to 'convert' refusals into responses (Phoenix et al. 2017). As Jane Elliott (2013) suggests, participants' narratives and researcher narratives are both crucial, particularly since participants may well not produce analyses of their own lives and circumstances that could have convivial impacts on their lives.

Regardless of whether or not participants' groups have been consulted about how they should be represented, and the issues they consider important, many want their stories told. This is vividly illustrated by the extract below from a BBC Radio London phone-in on 'serial migration', where children were left behind when their parents migrated and joined them later:

Vanessa Feltz – BBC Radio London, 14 September 2007

Fatima: Hello, Vanessa.

Vanessa: So, you were left in Sierra Leone?

Fatima: Yeah.

Vanessa: And how old were you?

Fatima: 6.

Vanessa: God, and what was that like? … Yes, but eventually you become used to it, you become a Londoner, you have your own friends, your own life, your own loves, and then your own children. Fatima, thanks so much for that call, amazing. And then went through uni and then 'I got my degree' oh my god, if I were her, I'd just be trying to get dressed in the morning that would have been enough, just to clean my teeth and put on a clean pair of knickers would have just been enough of an achievement; how amazing. Honestly.

The presenter, Vanessa Feltz, draws upon pathologised, normative discourses of separation from parents as producing lives that are unrecognisable in the culture, and so 'unbearable'. For the numerous people who telephoned in to tell their stories, however, public recognition of their stories was clearly important. This was borne out in my study of adults who had been serial migrants, where many spontaneously explained that they saw the publicising of their stories as crucial to social change:

> I just think our stories have never been told.
> I agreed to be interviewed because I don't see my story out there.
> I've just been telling everybody and so has my sister. This story has got to be told.

The telling of their stories in the serial migration study, and on the Vanessa Feltz show, claimed 'liveable lives' and gained recognition for a collective story and for themselves. In doing so, they constituted themselves within the norms of personhood as intelligible subjects. In this sense, the phone-in and the research project were convivial, allowing them to air their own concerns in the way they wished. This did not necessarily mean, however, that they were concerned to deconstruct understandings of serial migration as a globally common family practice. Many of their accounts demonstrated subjection to normalising discourses of what families ought to be like, collusion with those discourses and individual resistance to being viewed as 'non-normative', rather than calling for new understandings as the research findings did.

Convivial policy outcomes?

Some influential studies that produce convivial findings, helping to improve life for the groups from which the participants come, do not directly have participants involved. While such studies could have consultative panels to facilitate participation of relevant groups, this is not always feasible. A good example of this is provided by a study conducted by Charlie Owen (2011) that used administrative statistics, and so did not involve participants. The study arose from recognition by the UK Department for Education (DfE) that there was a gap in knowledge about children 'looked after' by local authorities in residential children's homes. The DfE collected data on which looked after children are in residential children's homes, including demographics (such as age, sex and ethnicity), reasons for being looked after, length of time in care and whether placed inside or outside the home local authority. They did not,

however, know who was placed where. The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) collected data on the registration of children's homes, the number of registered places and data from inspections, including quality ratings. They did not, however, know about the children in the children's homes. The local authorities did know, but could not disclose the data for reasons of confidentiality. The DfE asked the Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre to address the lack of 'joined-up thinking' by bringing together the two data sets to get a better picture of the placement of children in residential homes.

The pattern of findings was complex, but one problem that generated media interest and fuelled changes in policy was that more than a third of the children had been placed more than twenty miles from their family homes (36 per cent). Most of these (30 per cent) were placed outside their home local authorities. The other 6 per cent were placed within the same local authority but more than twenty miles away from home. These findings influenced DfE policy on placement of children, so that children had to be consulted and placed within reasonable access of their family homes, if appropriate. The impact of the analyses was, therefore, convivial in producing ethical social change.

Participants following own agenda

The emphasis on ensuring that participants as members of communities can contribute to each stage of the research (Paradise 2015) and have a chance to enrich the environment from their perspective (Illich 1973) is built on the assumption that if this is the case, participants and researchers will be involved in research projects because they have the same aims. This is, of course, not necessarily so. It is not surprising that some participants have little commitment to researchers' agendas, even though they have agreed to take part in studies, particularly if they cannot see the relevance of all the questions they are asked. In the following example, from a study of young people and consumption conducted by Chris Griffin and me, the group of young women being interviewed in a study of young people and consumption switch attention to hand cream, rendering the researcher peripheral:

Interviewer: D'you think in your school or people your age there's a big range in the amount of money people have got to spend?

Reena: Yeah … yeah; **Becky**: Yeah; **Karen**: Yeah

Interviewer: Even in your school?

Zaby: Here y'are man … you need to cream your hands

Interviewer: Have some people got a lot more?

Karen: Many … huh

Zaby: Here y'are … I'll give you some cream [inaudible] [laughter]

Reena: Go on then [laughs]. You wanted some more [basis?], so I'll get it

Interviewer: Some have got a lot more money than others?

Reena: They [hands] look a bit crusty.

Karen: Yeah, they have, and they show it.

<div align="right">(Griffin 2007, 256–7)</div>

In this example, the participants continue to answer questions, albeit in a more distracted way, while having what Griffin (2007) calls a 'hand cream moment'. They clearly had a great deal of fun 'doing' girl and consumption, while remaining in the focus group discussion. From the perspective of convivial research, it may be considered that such differences between researchers' and participants' agendas result from lack of consultation, and so lack of participant commitment to the project, leaving the participants to create their own convivial moments. In the above example, however, this is not the case. It is that the young women's multiple positioning produces multiple agendas, posing challenges for the researcher, and anxiety about successful completion of the research. It also challenges assumptions that the researcher is more powerful than research participants, who partially subverted the agenda of the focus group interview, whether because they had temporarily lost interest or because they are simultaneously negotiating different interactional demands.

The fact that participants' own psychosocial concerns have an impact on the conduct of data collection is well documented in terms of 'sensitive interviewing' and the development of rapport (Bell et al. 2016; Dempsey et al. 2016). Participants, however, often have a story to tell, and will sometimes tell it almost regardless of what they have been asked (Brannen 2013; Burgos 1989). The following example is an extract from an interview in the serial migration study (discussed above) where the participant was very keen to be part of a project on serial migration and to tell her story. In an unrecorded telephone conversation before the interview, she narrated her serial migration vividly and evaluated its

impact on her life. In consequence, she did not want to tell that story in the interview, but wanted to talk of other things:

Interviewer: So, anything that comes to mind that you see as part of your story?

Angela: Erm, [3 seconds' pause] I think, it's very, it's quite complicated, I think, and you don't know where to start, cos there's so many, since I've spoken to you there's been so many different bits that have sort of surfaced, and I haven't thought about that for a long time or ever.

Interviewer: So simply talking on the phone last week?

Angela: It's just wakened a lot of things, or brought a lot of things back to mind that, you know, I hadn't thought about for a long, long time, about feelings, about, you know, visions, you know about the visual look of the place and the songs that were on the radio and the weather, and just things like that, and just being lost really in this work of new world. Although I didn't think of it like that, it was, now looking back it's like a serial existence, a surreal existence you know …

As the interviewer, I experienced a lack of conviviality, since I felt that I had lost control of the interview in the first few minutes. Over the course of the five hours of the interview, 'Angela' told her life story with what seemed liked incidental attention to the subject matter of the research, leaving me little space to ask questions. The interview did, however, appear to be convivial for Angela, and undoubtedly her interview, as one that produced unexpected accounts, helped to sharpen analyses. However, occasions such as those described in the two examples above, where the interests of the researcher and participants seem to be counterposed, raise questions about for whom methods are, and should be, convivial.

Convivial from whose perspective?

As discussed above, innovative methods might be considered convivial, in that many aim to produce more holistic understandings of human life and to 'facilitate more meaningful collaboration with participants' (Wiles et al. 2010, 4). Examples of such methods abound, including: psychosocial methods that aim to approach the complexity of everyday lives by foregrounding emotional dynamics in everyday situations (for example, Hook 2015; Phoenix and Seu 2013); narratives about sensory

experience, including objects (for example, Bell 2013); and music-elicitation interviews (DeNora 2013) that aim to study reflexive processes and give respite from pain and distress through focusing on non-verbal, collaborative understandings of music that means something to participants and so give insights into identities (Boddy and Østergaard 2016).

The rest of this section draws on an extract from a study of family lives and the environment, where Janet Boddy was the principal investigator (Boddy et al. 2016; Phoenix et al. 2017). The study was part of the NOVELLA (Narratives of Varied Everyday Lives and Linked Approaches) programme in the UK's National Centre for Research Methods. The project aimed to improve understanding of how families understand the notion of environment, and how environment and family practices interlink, with a view to understanding how these relate to 'big' environmental issues of climate change. We were also keen to address the prevalent notion that children, as 'the future', can be responsibilised for making positive environmental changes in the future, and by educating their parents about what they learn. Overall, then, the project was concerned with how families and different members of families negotiated meanings of 'environment' in their narratives of everyday and habitual family lives and family practices. In order to address this concern, we used a range of qualitative methods that, together, made for an innovative mix of methods. These consisted of secondary analysis of the University of Oxford longitudinal Young Lives qualitative data from India, with a sample of eight sets of young people interviewed three times (12, 13 and 15 years) and their carers, together with new data collection in southern England in the UK and in Andhra Pradesh/Telangana in India. The sample consisted of 12 families in each country, recruited from schools through a child in Years 7 or 8 (mainly 12-year olds). The families recruited came from both urban and rural contexts, and were of varying affluence. The multi-method approach employed consisted of group discussions, mapping and vignettes in school, then individual and family group interviews that included photo-elicitation, mapping and discussing vignettes over a two-week period. One of the interviews involved walking or driving in places that the child through whom the family was recruited went to and liked or disliked in her or his neighbourhood. Mobile interviews were particularly suited to this study, since, as Evans and Jones (2011) found, walking interviews allow particular engagement with environment and generate more place-based material than sedentary interviews.

The study clearly addresses issues of consequence for society, and so could have potentially convivial outcomes. Its major aim also requires

starting from participants' own perspectives. It did not, however, directly consult the families in India and the UK in order to devise the study, although it drew on accounts from parents and children in devising the methods. The methods used did often seem to generate conviviality, however, in that the participants generally liked being active. While a mixed-methods approach does not necessarily produce any better understanding for the participants of what researchers are aiming to do, it does give embodied, more holistic insights and, like the method of loci,[3] allows participants to engage with personal and familial emplaced, contextualised meanings of environment. It allowed the diversity of meanings of environment to be accessible to the study. Taking all the methods together, we were able to gain insights into the immediacy of 'big' environmental considerations in everyday narratives about local environments and habitual practices (Guha 2006) and the affordances of particular environments (Gibson 1979) for families positioned in particular ways.

In the following example, Aruna (a mother whose daughter lives in a city in Andhra Pradesh and attends an independent school) gives an account that has the potential for conviviality in the outcomes it enables and conviviality in terms of Aruna's enjoyment of telling her story and the 'living together' of researchers and participants in terms of rapport:

Aruna: One quick – you can call it as a joke, if I switch on the AC [air conditioning] in my car, my kids will shout, Amma, you are increasing the global warming, switch it off, polar bears will die [laughs]. Every time, this is the fight in the car …

Interviewer: And what do you say when the kids say that?

Aruna: We just laugh [laughing]. We keep telling them it is not just because we switch on the AC. It is one of the factors, though.

Interviewer: So, then what happens, who wins?

Aruna: Definitely them, you cannot argue with them, then after a couple of minutes they will forget, and then I will switch it on. I am not supposed to lie, though [laughing]. Especially this girl is very particular, 'let's open the windows as we drive, because we will be killing the polar bears.' I say, where do you see polar bears here [laughs] … And whenever she turns on the AC when she wants to sleep, I tell her 'polar bears are crying, why are you switching on the AC' [laughs].

(Phoenix et al. 2017, 126–7)

Unlike in Angela's extract above, Aruna pays close attention to the concerns of the research and, in doing so, enjoyed telling the story of intergenerational tussles about air conditioning in the car. It is a story that is, arguably, convivial for both this participant and the three researchers who were present at the interview, and suggests a comfortable research interaction. It also allows insights into how family members' engagement with 'big' environmental issues has to be viewed in the context of their local environments, including what they perceive as the needs and desires of different members of their families. The research thus gave Aruna the opportunity to speak back to 'big' environmental messages that are not necessarily on her agenda, an issue with which governments and NGOs need to engage if they are to be successful in fostering commitment to climate change issues.

Yet, while this is a convivial encounter, it does show that different participants in the research process have different perspectives, so that what is convivial for one may not be convivial for others – something that is not generally acknowledged in theorising of conviviality. For example, Aruna's gentle playfulness in telling about subverting her daughter's wishes and teasing her about her own desire for air conditioning is not rancorous, but is part of the negotiation of family practices. Those negotiations encapsulate the power relations that are part of intergenerational family life, and give an indication that participants, even in the same family, can have such different interests that what is convivial for one would not be for another. The research agenda can be viewed as producing active engagement with potentially 'troubled subject positions' (Wetherell 1998, 395). It would be easy to blame or denigrate participants in the service of new understandings and potentially convivial policy change. As researchers, we were careful to avoid judgement of our participants for their environmental practices, recognising that our carbon footprints in pursuit of the research could be deemed problematic (Boddy et al. 2016). However, this example illustrates how the question of for whom research is convivial is not simple to address.

Transparent processes of knowledge production

The final section of this paper addresses the key component in convivial research, of producing transparent analyses. There are numerous studies, participatory and otherwise, that aim to make their analyses transparent, both for purposes of ensuring democratic ethics and to improve research analyses. A burgeoning methodological approach that takes this perspective is Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA),

in which interpretations are triangulated by taking interpretations to participants to see if they agree with the analyses and changing any with which they disagree (Smith and Eatough 2007). It is not, however, generally agreed that participants should have an impact on research interpretations. Hollway and Jefferson (2012), for example, argue that it is potentially dangerous to triangulate psychosocial analyses with participants who may never have seen themselves as the analysis constructs them, and may be damaged by what they read. This is an idea given substance in Jaspal Naveel Singh's study of an Indo-German hip hop and urban art project in Delhi. When Singh sent an article he wrote to the hip hop artists involved, they were furious about how they were represented and what they saw as overly intellectualised jargon. As artists aiming to promote a particular public image of themselves as prosumers,[4] they refused to let him publish the paper he had sent them. Singh (2017) argues that more attention needs to be paid to analytical ethics, since the power relations inherent in the process of analysis and publication can erase participants' agency and run counter to the production of democratic knowledge. For Borland (2004), similar conflicts were resolved through engaged conversation with the research participant (her grandmother), but this is not necessarily possible.

The rest of this section explores the ways in which it can be difficult to ensure convivial processes of analysis, even among researchers themselves. These difficulties are presented in Phoenix et al. (2016), a paper developed when two research teams came together to learn from each other in the process of analysing each other's research material. Joint analysis is increasingly regarded as fruitful for the process of analysing qualitative data, building research skills and making the analytic process visible, as well as reducing inequalities and social distance, particularly between researchers and participants. In a half-day workshop, the group analysed an extract from the study of serial migration from the Caribbean to the UK (Phoenix 2011). This consisted of line-by-line analysis of 18 lines, with all the discussion being audio-recorded. The whole analytic process was so fruitful that the eight people in the group, together with the interviewer (who had not been at the workshop), analysed the process of doing the joint analysis in order to contribute to the burgeoning literature on group qualitative data analysis. The resulting paper describes the group's working practices and the different analytic resources drawn upon to conduct a narrative analysis (Phoenix et al. 2016). The process generated analytic understandings that would have been less available to individual researchers, but it also provided unexpected insights into the power relationships that differentially positioned

group members in relation to the data and the process of analysis. There was a complex interaction between researchers' methodological approaches, academic positions and experiential resources that came from their intersectional positioning. This became apparent during the writing of the paper, which made explicit the academic and experiential resources on which each person drew. The group reflected on their own families and parenting philosophies, as well as on their experiences of gendered divisions of domestic labour, of being migrants to the UK, and their cultural and generational positioning. As one member explained: 'There was a point where it was thought that I had read on, and I hadn't, which made me realise that I was bringing my experience into the analysis' (Phoenix et al. 2016, n.p.).

Another (non-Caribbean) group member mused on the validity of using her own experience to interpret data, and on how working in the group encouraged her to reflect on the bases of her assumptions:

> It was fascinating to reflect on the concept of extended families, which I myself have frequently experienced and associated with Caribbean families in the UK – the proud nature of many of these families, and the particular emphasis on success. At the same time, it was interesting to hear the views of other group members who highlighted that this is not necessarily associated with this particular population and that these are also things that are valued more broadly in UK cultures. I struggled a little to think for myself why I had this particular emphasis … This highlighted for me some of the difficulties in trying to draw on personal experience in interpreting texts, which is something I have only more recently started to do to this extent.
>
> (Phoenix et al. 2016, n.p.)

These comments suggest how a first encounter with data can be unexpectedly evocative and intense, and the risks involved for researchers in revealing their analytic ideas. Within a group, some perspectives and analytic frameworks are more readily taken up than others, which means that some are silenced, with the result that apparent consensus may be illusory. Working in a new group containing some people who have worked together in different combinations helped us to see how alternative interpretations can be built. Yet, it cannot be assumed that all the researchers learn the same things from such joint work. Since everybody brings their histories of analysis and engagement with the substantive issues, it is unsurprising that they find different issues salient and challenging, taking away

different new ideas in the process. This difficulty is simultaneously one of the advantages of joint analysis, as one of the group members explained: 'I think it really shows the danger of putting your own preconceptions on somebody else's narrative actually, and why a group narrative is really the thing to do because it takes you out of your own position. It challenges your position' (Phoenix et al. 2016, n.p.).

For all of us, this process helped us to see that simply doing joint work would not necessarily lead to straightforward agreement about analysis. This underlines the point made earlier that the process of conducting analysis is not necessarily egalitarian and that transparency does not guarantee consensus and conviviality. It became clear to us as we exchanged emails about the analytic process that face-to-face consensus building in joint analysis (unintentionally) silences some views and positioning, and that this is emotionally marked. The paper concluded that:

> Power dynamics inevitably, and often unacknowledged, enter into the analytic/epistemological approaches that are brought to bear on group analysis (e.g. Turner and Webb, 2012). Group analysis, therefore, has contrary potentialities (Fine, 1994; Hampshire et al., 2014). Some group members may feel more confident in sharing their views because of their professional or academic positions (whether they are a professor or a PhD student, for example), or because they are more experienced in doing analysis. Tracking how group dynamics shape analyses helps establish how 'shared' assumptions are arrived at and how differential positioning affects analytic insights. The process of conducting the above analyses showed that some interpretations were suppressed during the workshop in favour of working toward consensus and that power relations are inextricably linked to whether or not researchers voiced particular viewpoints. It is important therefore to attend to how the group moderates itself, both for ethical reasons and also to understand the processes whereby groups generate interpretations. Thus the ways in which group analysis enables knowledge sharing (Wang and Noe, 2010) can be beneficial to qualitative analysis. However, the notion that group analysis per se reduces inequalities within research teams is overly simplistic. Moreover, it became clear in the writing of the paper that members of the group sometimes disagreed with particular comments and had not said so at the time, with the result that the analysis was based on less of a consensus than it initially appeared.

> (Phoenix et al. 2016, n.p.)

Overall, then, even researchers agreeing to do joint analysis can have limited success in making the process transparent, without this being evident. It is perhaps not surprising that participants and researchers can find themselves in acknowledged and unacknowledged conflict about the analyses produced, even if the findings would have convivial impacts.

Conclusions

This chapter has contributed to examining the ways in which conviviality is an analytic term (Nowicka and Heil 2015). In doing so, it has illustrated some of the ways in which convivial research is, as Lapiņa (2016) suggests, riven with contradictions even though it is frequently treated as normatively positive. These contradictions partly arise from the duality built into the term, of 'living together' and 'dining' or 'celebrating together', which partly fuels the slipperiness of the concept (Wise and Velayutham 2014). In presenting examples of very different kinds of research, the chapter has shown that conviviality is a multifaceted concept that has both positive and negative elements 'accomplished on an improvised basis' (Wise and Noble 2016, 426). The chapter has also shown that it would be unsatisfactory to assume that convivial methods necessarily entail the use of innovative participatory methods, since conviviality can be produced or disrupted in design, during data collection or in the analyses presented. Indeed, convivial policy change is dependent on policymakers, not researchers.

While it is undoubtedly the case that convivial research entails the negotiation of meanings and methods, the potential for acknowledged and unacknowledged conflict in the process means that researchers and participants do not necessarily have the same experiences of conviviality and, even in those projects where both find the process of the research pleasurable, the analyses presented can alienate participants or reproduce pathological understandings. In developing convivial research, it is important to think about how research can change social understandings, whether it has convivial policy outcomes, whose agendas are played out in the data collection, and who finds particular methods convivial in which context. It is also important to consider whether the process of analysis and knowledge production is convivial. It is, therefore, too simplistic to conceptualise conviviality as inherent in tools as Illich (1973) suggested. Instead, convivial research has to be analysed as partial, situated and contingent on intersectional positioning.

Notes

1. The term 'majority world' highlights the fact that the majority of the world's population lives in these parts of the world, often referred to as 'developing', 'underdeveloped' or 'Third World'. The term 'minority world' is used to refer to those countries sometimes referred to as 'developed' or 'First World', where a minority of the world's population resides.
2. The Center for Convivial Research and Autonomy (CCRA) is a grass-roots collective dedicated to exploring the intersections between collective pedagogies, convivial research and local capacity-building. It invests in co-learning spaces and grass-roots research projects. One of CCRA's principal projects, Universidad de la Tierra Califas, is an alternative university that focuses on 'insurgent', grass-roots learning, designed to contribute to the regeneration of the community. The Uni-Tierra Califas currently convenes two strategic ateneos, or horizontal community-centred learning spaces.
3. The method of loci (Latin for 'places') is a mnemonic method to aid memory by associating things to be remembered with a particular place (for example, different rooms, or seats around a table). In other words, it uses spatial visualisations to facilitate recall.
4. The term 'prosumer' was coined in 1980 by American futurist Alvin Toffler, and was widely used by many technology writers in that period. It is now used as a dot-com era business term meaning 'production by consumers'. It refers to a person who simultaneously consumes and produces media, and is linked to the notion of 'prosumption'.

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Part II
Convivial collaborations

4

The fabric of faith: A reflection on creative arts practice research

Claire Dwyer, Nazneen Ahmed and Katy Beinart

Introduction

This chapter reflects on a collaborative creative project that brought together women from different faith communities in one locality to share their experiences of faith and migration through an embroidery project. Fabric of Faith was developed by the authors as the second of three creative collaborations for Making Suburban Faith, a project exploring the design practices, material cultures and popular creativity of suburban faith communities. This research project, based in Ealing in west London between 2015 and 2018, traced the role and significance of material cultures and practices of faith, particularly for migrant faith communities, in one suburban location.[1] The project responds to work in religious studies on 'everyday' and 'lived' religion, which emphasises vernacular and quotidian material culture in understanding how faith identities are practised (Garnett and Harris 2011; McGuire 2008; Morgan 2010). It argues that a recent celebration of craft and vernacular creativity in disciplines such as geography and sociology (Edensor et al. 2010; Hawkins 2016; Gauntlett 2011) has overlooked the creativity associated with faith spaces or religious identity (Ahmed and Dwyer 2017; Gilbert et al. 2019). Drawing on earlier work on religious buildings in the suburbs (Dwyer et al. 2013; Dwyer et al. 2015), the research project identified suburbs as neglected sites of religious creative endeavour and aimed both to understand how faith communities engage creatively and meaningfully with their locality, and explore how such creative capacities might be enhanced. Thus, central to the project is creative practice as an object of research, as a research tool in itself and as a means of public engagement. Following a

first project, Architectures of Shared Space, with young people and professional architects, Fabric of Faith brought together women from different faith backgrounds with an interest in religious textiles. Artist Katy Beinart, whose arts practice explores questions of home, migration and belonging, worked alongside the co-authors, researchers on the Making Suburban Faith project, in developing the project.[2]

Fabric of Faith involved six workshops in the summer of 2016 that culminated in a collective artwork that was exhibited in a series of venues in 2017. The creative project was research-led, inspired by handmade textiles in the case study places of worship, and foregrounded a shared practice of textile-making as 'devotional creativity' (see Gilbert et al. 2019). As outlined below, the conceptual starting point for the project was work on co-production, creative practice and participatory research, particularly in relation to textile-focused community arts practice. Participation in the seminar that initiated this edited volume provoked further reflection about how the project might also be analysed in relation to themes of conviviality. As we highlight in the discussion that follows, narratives and practices of conviviality can be identified in the experiences of the participants in the project, although they were implicit, rather than being an explicit objective, in the initial formulation of the project. The multi-layered creation of the artwork itself might also be read as communicating a narrative about the experiences and practice of conviviality in its production. The responses of viewers of the final exhibit, *My Life is but a Weaving*, often in a religious register, can also be interpreted as evidence for the possibilities of conviviality. In conclusion, we reflect on the process and outcome of the Fabric of Faith project. We argue that creative arts practice might be identified as a convivial research method, but we also highlight its limitations and our own ambivalence, recognising the tensions in collaborative and co-produced research practice. This chapter thus does not set out to offer a distinctive methodology or prescriptive tools for undertaking convivial research, instead offering an exploration of our research practice and some critical reflections on its processes and outcomes.

Convivial, participatory and creative research methods and practice

The Making Suburban Faith project was located in the London Borough of Ealing in west London, chosen for its diverse range of faith communities, which enabled the identification of case study sites (a mosque, a

Sikh gurdwara, a Hindu temple, a synagogue and three very different churches) all within a mile radius of each other. This diverse *ordinary* suburban geography is characteristic of the 'multicultural drift' described by Stuart Hall (2000, 231), and a suitable site for identifying practices of 'everyday multiculture' (Wise and Velayutham 2009; Neal et al. 2013). Such work questions a conflict-focused political and policy narrative about cultural, religious and ethnic diversity, suggesting instead that multicultural lives are lived competently and that 'people mix with, encounter one another, and manage cultural difference and ethnic identity in more contingent, pragmatic, and "at ease" or convivial ways than is popularly imagined' (Neal at al. 2013, 315). In their discussion of this putative 'convivial turn', Neal et al. (2013) draw on the work of Overing and Passes (2000) to highlight the informal, affective and performative dimensions of convivial living, suggesting that forms of 'multicultural social interaction' can be 'slight', 'spontaneous' and 'amicable'. This turn to the convivial follows Ash Amin's (2002, 959) call to celebrate the 'prosaic sites of multiculture' and Gilroy's (2004) evocation of convivial living in a multicultural Britain. Drawing on traditions of both urban ethnography and post-structuralist frameworks, a range of recent studies of multicultural and multi-ethnic interactions provide evidence for the possibilities, ambiguities and tensions of conviviality (Askins 2016; Gidley 2013; Wilson 2011; Wilson 2013; Wise 2005; Clayton 2009; Valentine and Waite 2012). This literature carefully probes the generosity, awkwardness and sometimes incommensurability of encountering differences. Drawing on her work on diverse sites including bus journeys and school playgrounds, Helen Wilson (2017, 465) argues that ambiguity is at the heart of understanding encounters with difference, which may be about 'both the opening up and closing down of affective capacity'. While Valentine (2008, 334) critiques theories of conviviality as too celebratory, and suggests that 'proximity does not equate with meaningful contact', Wilson (2017, 465) opens a more hopeful space for research on 'the tensions that exist between the desire to design encounters and their inherent unpredictability'.

Some recent academic research has focused more explicitly on such designed encounters, researching existing interfaith or community projects, such as an interfaith youth cricket project (Mayblin et al. 2016) or the Near Neighbours youth ambassadors bridge-building project (Slatcher 2017). Others have developed research initiatives that have actively engaged different groups (Askins and Pain 2011; Rogaly 2016). The first of these examples draws attention to some of the limits of interfaith initiatives – particularly when groups who do not share any social

spaces are temporarily brought together. The latter offers some inspiration for projects grounded in a specific locality and sharing a creative endeavour, although both studies provide frank admissions of failure in participation and collective ownership of artistic outputs. While Askins and Pain (2011, 814) are refreshingly critical about the failures of their project, they foreground what they term 'messy materialities', offering insights into how 'material engagement shifted emphasis from discourse to doing … through processes in which materiality and social relations were being mutually constituted'.

Our own project was founded on this prioritising of 'doing' – with the artist, researchers and participants coming together to create a collective textile arts piece. While the centrality of making to our project connects to the wider literature on participatory research (Kindon et al. 2007) and co-production (Hackney et al. 2016), its intellectual impetus came from Tim Ingold's (2013, 21) seminal book *Making*, in which he prioritises 'learning by doing' and emphasises making as a creative 'process of growth' within which the maker 'is amongst a world of active materials'. Drawing on Ingold's insights into the practices of making led to a creative exploration of the physical repeated processes of sewing and embodied motions of prayer. However, like Askins and Pain (2011), we also wanted to foreground the ways in which 'making is connecting' (Gauntlett 2011). The project drew on prior experience of a collective co-produced photography project in the same locality (Dwyer 2015), which had brought together senior citizens from different faith communities to collaborate to produce a photography exhibition shown in local places of worship and the local museum.

Our project also drew from a wider literature on textile-based arts projects that have sought to engage diverse communities or develop interfaith or intercultural dialogue. These include the Women Weaving Wisdom project in Bradford, the Wellcome Trust's Threads and Yarns initiative (Morrison and Marr 2013) and the Shamiana Mughal Tent developed by the Victoria and Albert Museum with women in east London (Akbar 1999; see also Garnett and Keith 2014). Like these projects, the Fabric of Faith project was grounded on the aspiration that a shared creative project would be an effective means to bring together women who did not know each other but shared a common interest in sewing and needlework as a starting basis of interaction and exchange. A textile-based project emerged directly from the identification of textiles as being important in people's own experience of their faith, home-making and migration, and as a dynamic means through which to explore faith practices.

Participation and making as convivial practice

The recruitment for the Fabric of Faith project began from our existing research within the different faith communities, which had identified vernacular textiles as a particularly interesting example of religious creativity. Our initial research suggested a rich vein of decorative textiles produced by members of suburban faith communities for use at home, in communal and congregational religious settings, and for sale or distribution as part of faith-based, often transnational, philanthropy (see Gilbert et al. 2019). Having identified groups in each of these different faith communities with interests in sewing, our intention was to bring some of them together to participate in a creative textiles project. We had two objectives for this project. The first was to use practices of shared making as a tool to explore the intersections of gender, faith, place and migration for the participants, in order to develop our understanding of the role of making, and specifically textile making, in the identities of diverse suburban faith communities. Second, through the collaboration with Katy, the artist, the intention was to produce an artistic product that might communicate some of these research ideas to wider audiences. Thus, although not grounded explicitly in narratives of conviviality, the project was founded on expectations of shared creative arts practice as a research tool.

To create a shared space for the project, we chose to build, as far as possible, on existing groups and networks. The project was thus based at St Thomas the Apostle Church hall in Hanwell, west London, where strong links had been established with two groups that shared the same hall spaces, but had not met before – the over-50s fellowship of the Anglican church and the Sangam Asian women's group, who met weekly at the church hall. Women from these groups were joined by participants from St Joseph's Catholic Church and other local churches and the neighbouring gurdwara. Women from our case studies at the mosque and synagogue were unable to attend all the workshops, but were able to contribute designs to the final artwork. The decision to create a women-only space created its own exclusions, but was important in ensuring the participation of some of the other faith groups. The majority of the women were retired and in their 60s or older, although the group also included two younger women. The ethnic and migration backgrounds of the group were diverse, including women with African–Asian, Irish, Zimbabwean, Indian and Armenian heritage, as well as different faith backgrounds. In total, 15 women were recruited, although not all of them were able to attend all of the six workshops that we organised.

The creation of a shared space of exchange and sociality was a key starting point for the project. Katy developed the idea of beginning with a 'tablecloth map', reflecting the workshop as a shared space of hospitality and exchange, and echoing the experience of gathering around tables to share meals when visiting groups at the church, mosque and temple. The tablecloth map drew inspiration from a range of conceptual artists who have produced textile maps, such as Alighiero Boetti's *Mappa* and Mona Hatoum's *Twelve Windows*. Katy chose the theme of prayer for the textile project – as a shared practice across the different faith communities and a practice linking both private and communal spaces, much like the experience of sewing.

The first workshop was designed for participants to share skills and exchange stories. Participants brought something they had made to show others in the group, allowing initial conversations to quickly develop common ground in relation to the participants' experiences of sewing and embroidery, and how this intersected with gendered biographical narratives. Introducing the tablecloth, Katy invited participants to write a prayer from their own faith tradition, and in their own language, on to printed paper tablecloths. In the second workshop, we explored how we might turn these lines of prayer, poems and images into a textile 'map' of Ealing. Tracing on to fabric the words contributed in the first week, participants began work on the different elements of this map. Over the subsequent weeks, these contributions developed their own shape and design. Many of the participants worked on their designs at home, as well as at the workshops, developing images and embellishments beyond the lines of prayer.

First, then, it is possible to identify the ways in which the project provided a space of convivial exchange and encounter. A key theme was the pleasure in recovering embroidery skills and learning from others. As one participant told us: 'I've enjoyed this so much. It's been years since I did work like this.' The frailties of sight and dexterity, which sometimes provided challenges in the execution of the work, were acknowledged, but contextualised in a pleasure and pride at both what had been accomplished in the past and what they had achieved in the workshop. The workshops were also enjoyed as a shared space of feminine sociability, as women who did not know each other quickly found commonalities such as shared work experiences, since several of the women had come to the UK to work as nurses in the local hospital. While interested in sharing each other's faith differences and migration experiences, the shared narrative of the group was one of prioritising commonality, and when differences were articulated or raised, they would be carefully avoided

as the group sought to foreground their identities on what they had in common – as mothers, grandmothers and often as migrants.

The participants themselves, when interviewed at the end of the project, reflected that a key pleasure for them of participating in the project was this sense of a convivial space of sharing experiences with each other. For some of them, this had also been their motivation for joining the project:

Betty: [What I enjoyed most], I suppose, was just being all together and just having a chat, listening to people and hearing their stories and why they're doing that and all the different things. It's a nice community there.

Sharan: I have been to different type of churches, mosques, gurdwaras, temples, synagogues, all the different religious places. So, if you're sitting there, if you don't know what they're doing, just pray to yourself because God is listening. So that's how I found it. And all the other ladies who participated and all that, they were very kind and very caring and loving.

Krishnajit: All joined together to do something, it was very interesting, the unity, there was no fighting. What religion this was, it was all joined, and everybody was so cosy and happy, it was beautiful, the atmosphere was lovely.

Alice: I'm very conscious that I live in a very culturally diverse area of London, and I thought 'why not?' I'm not a sewer, but that somehow didn't matter, it was the sense of using some kind of creative media to bring people together, that's the first thing.

Thus, participation for the women who joined the project was expressed in a register that emphasised positive encounters and prioritised commonalities, sameness and consensus. This ethic was also evident when the participants talked about what they had chosen to sew for the collective arts piece. A number of the participants explained that they had chosen to convey particular messages about community and unity through the choices they made for their work:

Arda: I made a little embroidery with some crosses, some new stitches, I thought about the community, how we live with each other and how we're helpful to each other, and every day there's tasks and we're kind to each other. The wording said, 'kindness, faith, united community'.

Rose: (who chose to represent the Christian parable of the Good Samaritan) You said it might be an exhibition, I thought it might inspire people to be kinder.

Others selected an image or words that would represent their faith to a wider community:

Sharan: I said 'I will put my Hinduism in that, and that will be my recognition of doing something'. Hare Krishna, people also know Krishna Rada, a lot of people know about it. 'Om', which is our bigger symbol, that symbol goes across Hinduism, so I said 'yes, I would like to make myself known through that religion, to whom I belong, to whom I pledge'.

As these quotations suggest, participation in the creative project could be seen as an achievement of convivial encounter where shared making together was experienced positively as sociable and supportive. Unlike some other projects (Hackney et al. 2016), differences of skill or age were not barriers to shared interaction. This is not to say that differences of opinion were not articulated, but the overwhelming ethos of the group ensured that such expressions were muted and that common ground was quickly established. For example, differences in child-rearing practices were acknowledged, but conflict was carefully avoided. Our choice of venue for the workshops proved to be particularly effective in creating this shared environment of feminine sociability. While the church hall comfortably facilitated sharing tea and cake, the social norms of the Sangam group, immediately preceding our workshops, created a particularly affective environment, and the singing of Punjabi folk songs became an aural backdrop to the sewing afternoons (see Figure 4.1).

As a research tool, the Fabric of Faith workshops proved a very successful means to gather an understanding of how creativity was integral to different communal religious identities and devotional practices (Gilbert et al. 2019), and to explore intersections of faith, gender and migration. This research was a two-fold process. Ideas were gathered and recorded in the discussions that took place during the workshops, when participants shared their own experiences of learning to sew, producing textiles for different congregational religious, family and community use, and their family and migration histories. These narratives were then consolidated in individual interviews with the participants after the workshops had finished.

Our central aspiration was also to foreground co-production and exchange in the co-creation of our artwork. For Katy, this presented some challenges in bringing together the final exhibition as a coherent piece of work and allowing enough flexibility so that all the pieces produced were included and relevant. In the next section, we discuss how the completion

Figure 4.1 Fabric of Faith sewing group, July 2016. Source: authors

of the artwork and its exhibition can also be understood through the analytical lens of conviviality.

Exhibition and audiences: Narrating conviviality

In the development of the final artwork, the challenge was to produce a piece that had coherence, particularly in connecting individual pieces together in one installation. While the initial intention of the artwork had been a textile 'map' of Ealing, the diversity and size of some of the individual pieces made it difficult to include them all within the envisaged 'tablecloth map'. Having experimented with different forms of the original map, the first installation of the work exhibited a dark blue velvet cloth, which had stitched on to it a map of lines of prayer, as well as pieces that related to specific religious sites and an appliquéd river. The chosen line of prayer from one of the participants, 'My life is but a weaving',[3] which formed the central Ealing Broadway road, became the name of the piece. The artwork was exhibited for the first time in the Church of St Thomas the Apostle in April 2016. The cloth was installed on a low table, which was surrounded by prayer mats from the West London Islamic Centre and kneelers from St Thomas's Church. The larger individual

pieces of embroidery were mounted inside old book covers and placed on wooden prayer stands surrounding the table. Explaining the design of the installation, Katy explains:

> The intention of the exhibition was to bring together the individual pieces, and also represent the relationships that were formed through the making of the pieces. The table represents the shared space of the table we worked around and the hospitality the group provided to one another, whether in cups of tea, emotional support or spiritual support. This is a link between the domestic, everyday realm of making and the enchanted realm it linked to for the participants.
>
> The poems and prayers became lines on the map, a geographical emblem of locality, while other pieces became more hidden in the albums. For me, this also recognised the intimacy of the space we created where many words were shared, some of them more private and others more public.

Katy's discussion of the *My Life is but a Weaving* installation can be read as a narration of conviviality – both its possibilities and its limitations. Thus, she shows how the artwork carefully juxtaposes expressions of shared stories and more private narratives of family, migration and faith – mirroring the different ways in which lives are both revealed and also concealed.

The first installation was at the east end of St Thomas's Church. It was situated immediately next to the font in a church space that was beautifully lit by bright sunlight during the week of the exhibition, perhaps particularly accentuating the centrality of prayer as the theme that had stimulated and linked all the embroidered pieces. Inviting visitors to respond to the art piece, slips of paper were provided for those who wanted to write their own prayers and attach them to the base of the exhibit. Information boards explaining the project, including photographs of some of the participants, were also displayed (see Figure 4.2).

The choice to have the first exhibition of the installation in Ealing, where it could be seen by the participants and their friends and families, was important. Since we had met for our workshops at the church hall of St Thomas's Church, when an opportunity emerged to exhibit the installation in the church, this seemed to be a fitting first location. Despite some concerns that a church setting for the exhibition might inhibit some audiences, we found that the installation at St Thomas's Church provided an effective way to engage a range of audiences, including in

Figure 4.2 *My Life is but a Weaving* installation, St Thomas's Church, April 2017. Source: authors

particular local community groups, members of the Asian women's group, interfaith groups and local schools. The recorded responses to the exhibition, both on the added prayers and in the visitors' book, reveal the ways in which visitors often responded to the exhibit as an expression of an achievement of *convivial* encounter. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of these responses were expressed in a religious register where ideas about sharing similarities and overcoming differences were prioritised:

> A lovely way to bring people together.
> A very beautiful and peaceful display of great art work. Showing what is slowly becoming a lost craft, but shows how our prayers and thoughts can be expressed.
> Thank you to all the people who put this all together, contributing their faith and their talent. It brings people of faith together and share their faith, their beliefs and their humanity.
> Beautiful work, and great to hear the stories of its making.
> A great way to showcase the various religions in stitching form.
>
> (Comments recorded in the visitors' book at the exhibition at St Thomas's Church, April 2017)

The artwork was subsequently shown at the Phoenix Art Gallery in Brighton in May 2017. In this second version of the exhibit, Katy reworked the main textile piece explicitly as a map by mounting it vertically on a wall. This became an experiment to see how it would change the viewing of the piece, as it became less domestic and more like an image. The intimacy of the individual pieces remained, as they were displayed on a low table and in cupboards around the small gallery space. In June 2017, the installation was exhibited in the cloisters at UCL as part of the UCL Festival of Culture. Within this wide-open public space, the original format of the installation was re-made, with the piece once again on a low table with the individual pieces distributed on the table itself and on surrounding display cases. In both of these exhibitions, visitors' responses echoed those of the first exhibit, with an affirmation of the value of the exhibition in narrating the possibilities of convivial encounters across religious differences. While many visitors to the first exhibition at St Thomas's Church had celebrated the possibilities of encountering differences through a hopeful religious register, in the more secular spaces of the art gallery and the university, visitors were perhaps more likely to express their admiration for a project that had overcome religious difference:

> Particularly interested in the idea of stitchers from different faith communities working together and talking while working. Beautiful work from a variety of traditions and the stories behind their work. Thank you for bringing it to a wider audience.
>
> Wonderful sense of community through a collective project. This is a really inspiring project that so much can be taken from in terms of effectively engaging with public audiences.
>
> <div align="right">(Comments recorded in the visitors' book at UCL Festival of Culture, June 2017)</div>

Conclusion: Creative arts practice and the possibilities and limitations of convivial tools for research

In this chapter, we have outlined our experiences of developing a textile-based arts project as a means to research creativity in relation to faith and locality. As suggested above, the starting point for this project was work on co-production, which resonates with some of the work by geographers and others on methods for developing conviviality and positive encounters with difference. The Fabric of Faith project was very successful

in creating a space in which women from different faith backgrounds could come together to share skills and experiences and co-create work for a co-produced creative piece curated by artist Katy Beinart. Although not initially foregrounded through the lens of conviviality, it is possible to render the experience in those terms for the participants and those who have engaged with the final arts piece. As we suggest above, the space of the workshops emerged as a space of convivial exchange and encounter. Analysing this space suggests that narratives of *shared-ness* rather than difference predominated. The participants were keen to emphasise ways in which they shared gendered and devotional identities with each other, even if their distinct faith or ethnic heritages were different, so the emphasis was on shared practices of prayer, rather than differences in belief or practice. Returning to the focus on ambiguities and challenges raised in the academic literatures on encounter cited above, it seems clear that participants' experiences of other kinds of interfaith encounters and their shared use of local spaces reduced discomfort and minimised the incommensurability of differences between them. We were impressed by how quickly a shared space of collective making was produced in the workshops – a space of joyful gendered sociability that was created primarily by the openness and enthusiasm of the participants. As Askins and Pain (2011) suggest, it was in the process of collective making that social relations were constituted.

Comments from visitors suggest that audiences often foregrounded narratives of faith differences, but were persuaded by the achievement of conviviality and interfaith dialogue that the final artwork communicated to them. However, we also want to identify some of the challenges and limitations. As already suggested, we were not able to include all those with whom we had undertaken research in the workshops, which limited the diversity of faith backgrounds of participants, while also perhaps contributing to the emergence of a dominant discourse of creating shared values rather than conflict for the group.

The project also raised interesting questions about the processes and values of co-produced or socially engaged public art. Katy was engaged as the artist to produce the final installation, but had to be responsive to how the participants interpreted the project. Thus, while the artistic starting point for the project had been prayers as text, some participants chose to interpret this through more expansive pictorial expressions. These individual pieces exceeded the scale of the original tablecloth map, requiring new framings of the artwork. In developing the final installation, Katy sought to give sufficient attention to these individual pieces, while also wanting to link them together, as she suggests above.

There were therefore times when Katy found herself having to cede and negotiate creative influence to the participants, while at the same time she sought a coherent creative framing of the installation. This emerged as a tension that required resolution for Katy in creating an effective final art piece. When the piece was first exhibited at St Thomas's Church, participants responded well to the piece but were also active participants in its arrangement – sometimes moving pieces or actually adding new elements to the table, such as a small candleholder as a devotional object. At the final exhibition of the installation, Katy contributed a new layer to the tablecloth map, stitching on to the map an outline tracing of the works the participants had brought to the first workshop. This 'constellation' of past works referenced a line from W. B. Yeats's poem 'He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven', chosen by one of the participants, which begins: 'Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths'. This artistic contribution added a new layer of representation to the installation, evoking the theme of absences, loss and sometimes regret, as the participants reflected on their previous creative work. For socially engaged artists, a key question is how to evaluate the 'relational aesthetics' (Bourraid 2002) of co-created work. Does the value of the artwork lie in the final artwork or in the co-creation and dialogic modes of practice? A co-produced artwork such as that produced by Fabric of Faith opens up this question, which resonates with academic attempts to probe the ambiguities of conviviality. In exhibiting the installation, we chose to include display boards about the process of the production and the participants to at least raise implicitly some of these questions.

While this is one key artistic question of co-produced creative work such as Fabric of Faith, a second question that emerged for us was over the longevity and shared ownership of the work. Since its temporary installation in the spring and summer of 2017, we have sought a suitable, more permanent and local site for the work that will allow its worth and significance for the participants to be properly valued and shared.[4] A local display space will better do justice to the creative energies of the participants and also is consistent with the principles of such engaged arts practice (Facer and Pahl 2017). However, this is sometimes difficult to achieve in a short-term academic project. We were also aware that the conclusion of the project, as the workshops ended, was experienced as a sense of loss and disappointment by the participants, who had enjoyed working together and were sad when the project ended. Although not an uncommon outcome of such a project, this sense of disappointment at the finale of the project raises issues shared by other projects (Rogaly 2016) about the limits of convivial tools for research in what they offer

for participants. Reflecting on these questions raises the issue of what remains after a co-produced, collaborative project is completed – how are its relationships and knowledges maintained? One partial response to this has been to develop a further output from this project, a professionally produced photobook for each of the participants, which will at least ensure they have a personal keepsake and record of their participation and their creative work.

Notes

1. Making Suburban Faith was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council as part of the Connected Communities Programme, grant AH/M001636/1, Design, Material Culture and Popular Creativity in Suburban Faith Communities. For more details see: http://www. makingsuburbanfaith.org/.
2. Katy Beinart is an interdisciplinary artist whose work particularly explores questions of home, identity and migration (http://www.katybeinart.co.uk/). She was commissioned to develop the co-produced creative project discussed in this chapter.
3. This is a popular prayer, sometimes described as 'The Tapestry Prayer', and popularised by author Corrie ten Boom. Its authorship is disputed, but an early version was published in the periodical *The American Farmer* in 1892, when it was attributed to Florence May Alt (http://www. theworshipbook.com/blog/lyrics-whodunnit).
4. The exhibition was shown at the Gunnersbury Park local history museum between October 2018 and January 2019.

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5

Examining conviviality and cultural mediation in arts-based workshops with child language brokers: Narrations of identity and (un)belonging

Sarah Crafter and Humera Iqbal

Introduction

The concept of conviviality has usually been applied to contexts such as urban neighbourhoods of diversity (Gidley 2013; Lapiņa 2016; Valluvan 2016), and refers to what Gidley (2013) would term the 'convivial turn', or the notion of living together or coexisting in our daily social interactions (Wise and Velayutham 2013). The application of conviviality explored in this chapter concerns everyday encounters (Fincher et al. 2014), or what Amin (2002, 959) calls 'the micropublics of everyday social contact'. 'Micropublics' are sites of (sometimes compulsory) conviviality, such as workplaces, schools (Neal et al. 2016), youth centres and community groups (Neal et al. 2015). In this vein, our lens of focus in this paper is on what Neal et al. (2016, 465) would describe as 'extended encounters', namely a series of arts-based workshops with students in a culturally and linguistically diverse school in London.

The substantive focus of the research study on which this paper is based explored feelings of identity, belonging and cultural mediation among child language brokers. Child language brokers are children and young people who linguistically and culturally mediate between family

members and officialdom (Antonini 2010). The arts-based workshops with our child language brokers, and their subsequent outputs, are the centre point for what Illich (1973) might term 'tools for conviviality'. Our analytic endeavours explore the 'autonomous and creative intercourse among persons' (Illich 1973, 11), namely the young people taking part in the workshops, wherein there were possibilities to share, connect and interact. In exploring one of the arts-based workshops for this paper we ask, what role did the artist delivering the workshop have on the output, and how did that unfolding process reflect our research objectives?

Child language brokering as a culturally mediated activity

Our study with child language brokers did not set out to use the concept of conviviality. However, child language brokering as a practice is useful for exploring micropublics because their role often involves the transmission of cultural knowledge between different parties in a conversation or meeting (Jones and Trickett 2005). Language brokers are often said to be something akin to a 'cultural broker' because they both culturally and linguistically mediate between the private world of family and the public world of institutions and officialdom. The spaces and contexts where brokering take place are wide-ranging, and include the home, retail, healthcare, police situations, immigration and welfare contexts, housing, school and many more (see Valdés 2003; Tse 1996). The status of child language brokers as young people interacting in adult settings, and across a range of culturally diverse spaces, developed into questions about how they negotiated and managed those exchanges, and what impact this might have on their identities. It is important to note that child language brokers do not seek an objective translation, as a professional interpreter would seek to do. Rather, child language brokers often advocate on behalf of family members, and therefore bring a different set of responsibilities and agendas (Crafter, Cline and Prokopiou 2017).

While previous research had suggested that child language brokers mediate different forms of cultural knowledge, values and norms during their language brokering, there was little in the way of systematic evidence to demonstrate this process. With a few exceptions (see Cline et al. 2010; Reynolds and Orellana 2009), the field had a somewhat dichotomous approach to child language brokering, presenting it in either positive or negative terms, rather than as a complex practice that is mediational, nuanced and multidimensional (Cline et al. 2010). We

were conscious that in previous research, young people had struggled to articulate, verbalise and find examples of how they culturally mediated knowledge through brokering – although they insisted it was a practice they undertook. To this end, we turned to arts-based approaches in an attempt to capture this elusive mediational process. However, the art was to form a dual function. For the purposes of our research, we were interested in how the production of the art during the workshops acted as a mediational activity for conversations about identity, belonging and language brokering. Equally, we committed to exhibiting the outputs with the aim of making the practice of language brokering more visible. We explore, therefore, how the workshop acted as a space of conviviality among a diverse group of young people. Before going on to discuss two of the arts-based projects that form the focus of this paper, we first turn towards some of the theoretical thinking that has underpinned this research.

Conviviality, contact zones and child language brokering

Our study was not about super-diverse geographies, but encounters led by acts of child language brokering across different contexts (Wise and Velayutham 2013), such as the school setting (Nayak 2017). Child language brokers, in their routine acts of translation for family and peers, undertake both fleeting and sustained encounters within complex populations and across a range of different public and private spaces. Amin (2013) discusses how different others (or 'collaborative strangers') can unite in 'joint endeavour' to achieve a particular outcome but without the expectation that close ties would necessarily develop. When young people broker, often there is a close tie between the person they are translating on behalf of, but this is not always the case for those that they are translating to. Yet, this can result in a joint endeavour between all parties to understand situations and messages.

At a young age, child language brokers may develop the know-how of the urban etiquette required for managing complex interactions with adult 'others', which some argue to be an important skill (Valentine 2008; Noble 2009). Of course, children are forced to develop this know-how rapidly on arrival to the new country (sometimes they get it wrong too). The literature on encounter talks about routine and mundane everyday interactions and negotiation (Hemming 2011; Amin 2013). Yet while these acts of negotiation may be a normative experience for the child language broker and their family, this may not be a 'normative' or

comfortable interaction between the child language broker and the adult official with whom they are interacting on behalf of family. Moreover, these interactions may take place in challenging contexts such as hospitals, police stations and even law offices.

It is in these social landscapes that the cultural contact zone has relevance. The inception of the concept of the 'cultural contact zone' is widely attributed to the work of Mary Pratt (1991), who used the term 'to refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power' (Pratt 1991, 33). In many respects, this definition holds many resonances with the experiences of child language brokers because they are invariably the bridge between the social spheres where such cultural meetings might take place. There is a high likelihood that the adult 'other' will belong to a different cultural background to the broker or their family, and given that conversations happen in a variety of contentious spaces (such as housing, welfare offices and immigration offices), there is the potential for 'clash' and 'grapple'. And our work is with children and young people, who, by virtue of their age status, enter into an asymmetrical power relationship.

As Nowicka and Vertovec (2014) suggest, conviviality and conflict can be close bedfellows. For example, using Pratt's (1991) notion of a cultural contact zone within the classroom, Malsbary (2014, 3) suggests that they can be spaces of 'possibility and dignity that counter anti-immigrant sentiment'. Additionally, the everyday encounters experienced by child language brokers are not without the racialised tensions that may also be said to make up convivial spaces (Nayak 2017). The approach to conviviality suggested by Gilroy (2006) was to look beyond ethnic categorisation towards (un)shared practices, such as taste, lifestyle and leisure preferences. We would like to draw attention to the term 'practice' here, which refers to what people *do* (Miller and Goodnow 1995): the actions and activities that are embedded in everyday life that are an essential feature of identity and belonging within communities (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). Child language brokering is, we suggest, a cultural practice that takes place in cultural contact zones across a variety of settings. Some have argued that the act of brokering leads to the development of competencies in understanding social norms or 'social capacity' of young people to negotiate and manoeuvre themselves and family in such settings (Hall 2015; Noble 2015; Onyx et al. 2011).

Our work focuses on how child language brokering as a practice acts as a mediator for identity and belonging. We sought to find research tools with which to explore a phenomenon that young people can find difficult to verbalise. It was with this in mind that we turned to arts-based

methods and the role such approaches have for creating spaces for young people to discuss a practice (child language brokering) that is often invisible or unacknowledged. This chapter examines cultural contact zones on two levels: first, those engendered by the workshop processes, and then those developed by the artistic outputs.

The use of arts-based methods for exploring child language brokering

The use of arts by social science researchers has come under considerable scrutiny in recent years. Often this has centred on the legitimacy of blurring the boundaries between social science and art. Taking our cue from Roberts (2008), we perceive our work as a performative social science:

> … where music, dance, video, poetry, or drama are being used as part of the 'tools' of the qualitative researcher, the 'performative' should be conceived as a 'provisional' or 'shorthand' term: to describe the collection, organisation and dissemination of research which moves beyond traditional modes, such as the text based journal article or overhead presentation.
>
> (Roberts 2008, n.p.)

Our 'performative turn' involved undertaking social science research through artistic modes or attempting to explore artistic practices. Our approach, therefore, was to use a combination of traditional social science methods (surveying, interviews, observations) alongside other art forms (audio diaries, drawing, sculpture, podcasting, film) to create new meanings and, in some senses, to develop what Springgay et al. (2005) would term 'a/r/tography', a link between art and ethnography.

Not confident with our ability to be both artists and social science researchers, we sought to collaborate with professional artists and organisations (see Roberts 2008), and, in one instance, an art therapist. Significantly, our aim was to use the arts workshops as a medium for exploring the conversations about migration, language brokering and identity during the workshops. The end product was important, in as much as we promised to put together school-based exhibitions of this output. In terms of the aim of the research, we saw the art workshops as playing a mediational role for social interaction and dialogue (Mand 2012).

Our research context

We initially collected data from five schools in two areas of the UK: London and Hampshire. For various reasons, such as contact teachers leaving our target schools for other jobs, our arts-based part of the study ended up taking place in two London schools. The arts-based task discussed in this chapter took place in an all-girls faith school in the south of London, which we have called Murray Green School. Of all the schools in our sample, this was the oldest, and was situated in a highly affluent and gentrified area. However, this was not reflective of the student body, who were highly diverse according to social class, ethnicity and language. It was not uncommon for students to travel from other areas of London because the school was faith-based and single-sex. According to the last official government inspection report (conducted by Ofsted in 2013), nine tenths of the children in the school came from minority ethnic backgrounds. This report also rated the school as 'outstanding'.[1]

Our contacts within the school were an English as an additional language (EAL) coordinator, who we will call Lucia, and one of the teaching assistants on her team, who we have named Fernanda. We had known Lucia for several years because she had been involved in a previous study on child language brokering in schools (http://child-language-brokering. weebly.com/). When we started this research, Lucia was trying to set up a young interpreter club and asked for our help. We regularly visited the young interpreter club and, over time, built a steady rapport with the girls who attended, many of whom took part in various aspects of our project. Fernanda had been in the classroom on several occasions when we visited. After hearing us talk to the young people about the research and our desire to run an arts-based workshop, Fernanda approached us and introduced herself to us as someone who worked as a freelance artist outside of her role as a part-time teaching assistant. She expressed an interest in being involved, and we subsequently asked her if she would like the opportunity to run a workshop.

Using sculpture to explore the identities of child language brokers

Fernanda was of Argentinian origin, and specialised in identity-based art. The artist's own identity and sense of belonging featured strongly in the task that she developed. Fernanda's workshop was based around

Ex-votos. Ex-voto refers to a devotional offering made to a saint or divinity, usually deposited in places of worship such as churches, and often around religious shrines. They take multiple forms, including texts, paintings and symbols, including the modelled replica of a healed body part.

Fernanda built on this concept and developed a set of workshops for the young interpreters to create a plaster hand that would be painted and engraved with symbols and imagery related to their identity as a language broker. Fernanda's aim was to explore the cultural assets that the young people brought with them as a means of counteracting the anti-immigrant talk that she felt permeated society. She talked about some of the negative homogeneous stereotypes attributed to 'immigrants'. The undecorated hand, while being a clearly defined object, was to her mind an opportunity for the young people to bring their own 'particularities' or identities to the design. She discussed how the young people would be able to combine this in multiple ways: written words (which would allow for expressions of language), objects (to express their cultures and personalities) and images (to incorporate description and information). The hand represented the idea of being able to help others (through translation), but also reflected their need to be helped. The aim was to develop an object that would be a symbolic portrait of themselves. The artist had also taken into account the faith-based nature of the school in developing this task.

The workshop was designed to take place over five sessions across 10 weeks within the school. Initially, these sessions were intended to last two hours each. However, the school context made timetabling difficult, and the young people had five main sessions during school hours and were able to complete their hands in their own time, often with the help of Fernanda. The workshops took place in the art room of the school, to which Fernanda had to negotiate access. She told us that she was very conscious that, as an EAL teaching assistant, she did not have a high status in the school. The art teachers did not know about her own freelance background, and Fernanda was nervous of their presence in the art room during the workshops.

The group was made up of nine girls aged between 13 and 15 years. All of the participants acted as a child language broker for family regularly, although some were more active than others. Most of the girls had taken part in one-to-one interviews prior to being part of the workshops. Others had been selected by Lucia to take part in the workshop because they were struggling to be part of the school community in various ways. See Table 5.1 for details of the participating students.

Table 5.1 Student participants

Name	Country of origin	Age arrived in England	Family languages other than English
Jola	Poland	6 years old	Polish – regular broker for her mother
Sofia	Colombia	Unknown	Spanish
Valeria	Ecuador	Unknown	Spanish – regular broker for her mother
Marina	Ecuador, but came to the UK after some time living in Spain	11 years old	Spanish – regular broker for her mother and aunt
Ofelia	Ecuador, but came to the UK after some time living in Spain	9 years old	Spanish – regular broker for her immediate family
Pilar	Ecuador and Columbia	Unknown	Spanish – regular broker for her immediate family
Karina	Ecuador	Unknown	Spanish – regular broker for her immediate family
Kitty	China	Born in the UK, but early years spent in China. Return age unknown	Mandarin – translates for a grandparent
Ania	Poland	Unknown	Polish – translates less frequently

Process of production: The role of the artist

Fernanda's own bilingualism, and her familiarity with many of the students (as she had worked at the school for several months), enabled her to rapidly gain a level of trust with the group. This was apparent at the very first workshop, and she was able to use this relationship to get many of the girls to express their feelings and experiences about migration and translating, while also teaching them basic casting, carving, drawing and painting techniques.

The sessions were structured as follows: Session 1: Exploring identity; Session 2: Show and tell; Session 3: Creation; Sessions 4 and 5: Completion of work.

Session 1: In the first session, Fernanda introduced herself, the creative process, what the workshop would produce and how this related to identity. She asked them identity-based questions (for example, what has been their general feeling since being in England/London), and each of

Figure 5.1 Fernanda shows the group how to create an 'identity-map' reflecting their feelings on their country of origin, the UK, and 'now'. Source: Pia Jaime

the girls produced a mind map with three sections on it: my country of origin, UK, and now (see Figure 5.1). At the end of the session, they also made their plaster-cast hands.

Session 2: For session 2, each of the students taking part had been asked to bring an object to the workshop that held power and importance in their lives (see Figure 5.2). Fernanda described these as objects that were 'close to their heart'. In turn, they talked about why the object was important and how it affected them. Objects included family photographs (from times before migration, or during visits back to their home country), items of jewellery, and awards and medals from personal achievements since they had come to the UK. One respondent (Ofelia) brought a book of messages and letters from her family in Ecuador, written in Spanish, which she had collected since she migrated. One student (Marina) chose her glasses because they were the one object that had accompanied her throughout all her migration journeys. Throughout, each student shared personal accounts and key moments around their sense of belonging and self. Fernanda described how important this stage was to the group because she felt that they needed a lot of support early on in the process 'so that they could bloom'. The task was important as it opened up a sense of trust in the group, and a sense of sharing. Following this, Fernanda asked them to think about how they would like to decorate their sculptures. She showed examples of her own sculptures.

Figure 5.2   In this picture, Kitty has brought in some bracelets as her 'objects of importance'. Source: Pia Jaime

Session 3: Between Sessions 2 and 3, all the group (including the authors) had gone away and sketched out their hand designs on paper (see Figure 5.3). Much of Session 3 was spent discussing what we had drawn, the stories behind the detail, and what they meant to each person. It is likely that the authors' narratives had quite a strong influence on how the young people moved forward with their accounts, as they included talk about family (including the recent loss of a grandfather), which seemed to pave the way for the group to do the same. It was in this session that the students began the process of decorating their hands.

Figure 5.3   In this picture, Ania is telling the rest of the group about her sketch of her hand sculpture. Source: Pia Jaime

Session 3, as well as Sessions 4 and 5 involved developing the sculptures. Fernanda began the session by talking about the details of their pieces. She reminded the group of the special objects they had brought with them to the previous session and asked them to think about how they might represent these visually. The authors spent time with each student, talking about their artwork and questioning them about what they had decided to do and what it meant to them. Fernanda provided a lot of support with this. For many of the sculptures, she applied her own carvings and finishing touches to their hands with the permission of the students during the extra sessions that she laid on when the authors were absent. Fernanda also asked the authors to support some of the girls who had less-developed ideas and, as such, they become an integral part both of what was generated by the students and of the discussions during production.

Following completion of the hands, each student was asked if she would be filmed describing her work. By this point in the project, we had spent a considerable amount of time with the language brokers, and they felt comfortable with our film-maker. Also, the hands were exhibited at the end of the study as part of two school exhibitions about child language brokers.

Tools used by Fernanda in the process of production

During the workshops, Fernanda used a range of dialogical and embodied tools for eliciting discussions about self and identity in the young people. It is interesting to note the means by which she introduced herself to the students in the first workshop. Most of the students were either vaguely or highly familiar with her role as an EAL teaching assistant within the school. During the first workshop, however, she deliberately introduced herself as a freelance artist, a migrant to the UK, and bilingual. In turn, the young people followed her lead and discussed their own language and migration origin. She shared her artwork, family details and personal stories. Over the course of the process, they became closer and the group began calling her by her first name,[2] and spent a considerable amount of time with her outside of lesson time.

Although Fernanda continually struggled to negotiate the use of the art room for the workshops, the use of this space added a sense of legitimacy to the task. We learned from Fernanda that the art teachers in the school had originally been sceptical of the process. Yet over time, they became increasingly more interested and appreciative of the workshops

and Fernanda's role as an artist (rather than as a teaching assistant) in that space. Fernanda also used the space to enact a sense of conviviality through joint endeavour (Amin 2002). She always moved the room around, so that the group was in a fairly small 'circle of trust'. Coupled with the small size of the group, this seemed to help facilitate personal stories about family and migration. From the outset, Fernanda was very animated, passionate and positive about the girls and their backgrounds. She told jokes, often teased the girls in a friendly way, and offered a lot of encouragement and smiles. She made references to her own Argentinian background and used Spanish words in the conversation from time to time.

With the two authors, Fernanda privately discussed feelings of frustration about the school because her invisible identity as an artist left her feeling that her true potential was not being recognised. This workshop seemed to be a way for her to cement her position as an artist within the school. We became very aware, over the course of the workshops, how important it was for the arts-based workshops to be perceived as a success by colleagues at the school. She had strong ties to the language brokers through her teaching assistant role and, importantly, she empathised with them because of her own migration experience. In our interview with Fernanda when the workshops had finished, she told us, 'I think it [the workshop] will change the perception of this school, of them [the students]'. This impacted on how much input she had with each artefact developed by each young person. Since our focus was on the discussions and narratives deriving from the workshop spaces, this was not considered a problem, but it did alter what kinds of stories were imprinted on to the final product. Such imprinting on children's creative processes has been one of the critiques of the arts-based participatory movement within social science (Lomax 2012).

The outputs: Contact zones and convivialities

For the purpose of this chapter, we will discuss the cases of Ofelia and Jola. We selected these cases because both of these girls were able to speak to issues related to being a young translator, and wider issues about what it means to be a migrant and a teenager in school. Their stories clearly contextualise language brokering against a wider picture, while simultaneously touching on deeply emotive issues about their lives.

The hand decorated by Ofelia is shown in Figure 5.4. At first, Ofelia had struggled to begin decorating her sculpture. While many of the others started working on their pieces straightaway, Ofelia sat for a long

Figure 5.4a–c These photographs capture the final design of Ofelia's hand sculpture. Source: Pia Jaime

while staring at her blank plaster and looking around the table at the rest of the group. In the end, the first author asked her about the object she had brought to Session 2 (letters from her family in Ecuador), which led her to expand on her discussions about family more generally. Her focus on family manifested itself in two ways: through the discussion of a dead brother, whom she had never met, and through letters sent to her from family in Ecuador.

When Ofelia told the narrative of her hand, she divided it into two halves. The white, colourful speckled part, she told us, represented her 'cheerfulness', a part of her identity that she took from her mother. The young boy represented her brother, who had died at around the age of 1 or 2 years, whom she had never met. Her stories about her brother were given to her by her mother, and although Ofelia had never met him, he appeared as an absent presence on her sculpture (Roseneil and Ketokivi 2016). She had never met him, but she thought about him a lot, and discussed that she had purposely put him at the juncture of the light colour and the night-sky part of the hand. The stars within the night sky represented the descriptions of her 'lost' brother given to her by her mother.

A booklet full of writing made up a significant element of her sculpture narrative. On her sculpture, she had transcribed some of the letters and personal messages from family back in Ecuador in Spanish. The letters were full of family in-jokes, such as an aunt writing to say in a humorous way that she thought that Ofelia had 'forgotten her'. Her uncle wrote a joke about her eyes, because the last time she had seen him in Ecuador, she had broken her glasses. Her cousin told stories from when they used

to live together as small children. The collection of letters, and her choice to include it as part of her sculpture, represents her ties of belonging and links to her family in Ecuador. It points to transnational kinship links and the maintenance of identity through shared communication (Moskal 2015; Moskal and Tyrrell 2016). It also points to the importance of language in maintaining these ties, especially as it was placed in the centre of the sculpture. Both the links to her dead brother, whom she meets only through her mother's stories about him, and the letters from family in a different country, represent the distal and proximate relationships that sit at the heart of spaces of care in relationships (Bowlby 2012).

The hand decorated by Jola is shown in Figure 5.5. From the beginning, Jola seemed more confident with the stories she wanted to overlay on her hand sculpture. Her choices were decisive and, like Ofelia, featured family as an important theme. To a greater extent than Ofelia, Jola incorporated aspects of her self-identity into her story. For example, she used feathers to represent the nickname 'fluffy', which one of her teachers had given her. She liked this nickname, as she felt that this represented her enjoyment of affection: both giving and receiving hugs and affection. Some of Jola's depictions, namely a semi-colon symbol, which she would like to have as a tattoo in the future, represent issues of emotional and mental health. She talked about sometimes feeling down and depressed, but also striving to be positive like her mother. Another symbol linked to the concept of infinite happiness. The large skull represented a key ring

Figure 5.5a–b   These photographs capture the final design of Jola's hand sculpture. Source: Pia Jaime

she owned, which she brought into the session as one of her significant objects, and this represented what she called her 'dark side'.

Like Ofelia, language featured as part of the narrative she overlaid on her sculpture. She included her two favourite words in her home language, which also reflected an affective element of her identity: *miłość* (which means love) and *śmiech* (which means laughter). Jola was a keen writer, and had written verses from her poetry across the hand. However, she deliberately wrote those in pencil to reflect how she usually kept her poetry hidden from most people.

Her narrative around family focused on two key people in her life: her mother and her grandfather. Her mother was symbolised by the green thumbprint because she said she loved gardening. Her descriptions of her mother also linked to her infinite happiness tattoo symbol. She described her mother as someone who experienced the loss of a child, the death of family members and the loss of home, but who always managed to stay positive. Jola strived to be like her. The narrative of her grandfather was symbolised by the piano keys at the bottom of her piece. When her grandfather was 6 years old, the Second World War broke out and, while out one day, he got separated from his family in Warsaw and lost. He was taken into an orphanage, where there was a grand piano. Jola told us that he taught himself how to play without sheet music. Jola's description of her grandfather speaks to the importance of intergenerational shared remembering regarding important life events in the family (Svob et al. 2016).

What arts-based workshops might tell us about conviviality in the contact zone

In this chapter, we have examined how a series of arts-based workshops with child language brokers could be conceived as a micropublic site of conviviality that is representative of a communal commitment and joint endeavour (Amin 2013). Or, as Nowicka and Vertovec (2014) put it, they reflect more on the 'with' of conviviality than the 'living' of 'living together' (Gidley 2013). In doing so, we asked what role did the artist play as a 'tool of conviviality' when delivering the workshops, and how did that unfolding process reflect our research objectives? As conflict and conviviality can be close bedfellows (Nowicka and Vertovec 2014), we suggest that child language brokering, as a practice, operates in contact zones that can reflect conflictual power inequalities. As such, language brokering encounters in the public sphere can be both facilitative and

agonistic. Micropublics such as a school classroom also pose as potential sites for racialised tension (Pratt 1991). In this instance, though, we suggest that the arts-based workshop enabled, perhaps even manufactured, the close ties that developed among the young people within the space.

Arguably, Fernanda was a central navigator or mediator for the young people's convivial experience. She facilitated the workshop as a convivial space by situating herself in relation to the students – she was also a migrant to the UK, she shared a language with many of the girls, she talked about some of her own difficulties of being in a 'new land'. She sometimes spoke in Spanish, of her own home and life in Argentina. She brought the students together in a close-knit circle, and this encouraged people to talk about their stories. It is likely that the authors also influenced the sessions by bringing their own stories about family, loss and love, and, in the case of the second author, migration experiences. We left the choice of artistic endeavour to Fernanda, who felt that the hand sculpture acted as a symbolic tool on to which the young people could imprint their own 'particularities'. When Illich (1973) wrote about 'tools for conviviality', he was not particularly specific about his meaning (Nowicka and Vertovec 2014), although he did refer to the process of 'creative intercourse among persons' (Illich 1973, 11). However, 'tools' seem to be perceived as political tools, physical objects and ways of being. This bears some resemblance to the way 'cultural tools' are treated in Vygotskian sociocultural theorising (Vygotsky 1978), where tools can be something symbolic such as language, or an object, such as a textbook. They are both historical and social. One facet of the use of cultural tools is the means by which they act as the mediator for social practice, linking the concrete actions of individuals and groups (de Abreu and Elbers 2005).

The artistic medium (namely a plaster hand sculpture) might be criticised for being adult-led, rather than being driven by the children (Lomax 2012). On reflection, though, we believe this removed some of the participatory pressure on the young people during the activity. Some of the students, such as Ofelia, struggled to begin decorating their sculpture, and needed prompting with questions. This could partly have been because she was intimidated by beginning something 'artistic', or it could have related to the use of the hand as a base for developing ideas further. However, it may also reflect broader difficulties we had encountered in talking to young people about migration and about their home languages. When we first entered our participating schools to undertake our research, many of the young people were reluctant to talk about their home languages and their migration journeys. School, as a space or location for undertaking any research, and in particular arts-based

approaches, is not without its problems. On the one hand, schools offer a unique opportunity for the development of connective conviviality because they can be sites of common experiences (Nayak 2017; Neal et al. 2016). On the other hand, for students, information about home is something they often like to keep very private and separate from their school life, making disclosure difficult (Crafter, Cline, de Abreu and O'Dell 2017). We found, however, that the use of this arts-based approach opened up a space for discussion about migration, identity and language that did not present itself in our regular meetings with students in their form groups. One explanation is that the fairly long duration of the workshops (five sessions across approximately eight weeks) created a slowly developing sense of trust. The group was small, they had language brokering as a shared endeavour, and they had already begun tentative steps in creating a young interpreters club. Those who took part in Fernanda's workshop not only dedicated themselves to developing their artwork – often going into the art room during their breaks and after school to work on their pieces – but they also continued to attend events related to the research, particularly our exhibitions. They brought family along and, in some instances, took the initiative in talking to the general public about the stories overlaying their sculptures. We would suggest that this was in part born out of Fernanda's ability to create a communal space of conviviality.

Our personal interest was not so much in the artefact itself, but rather in the messages, stories and discourses that the workshop generated. Arguably, the nature of the artefact was less conducive for fulfilling the role of our research. While we were interested in the narratives born out of the activity, using the artefact (the hand) as a mediational device perhaps limited direct talk about language-brokering experiences. We suggest that an art workshop has great potential for creating spaces of conviviality that, while beneficial for those involved, might not entirely fulfil the needs of the research. Therefore, there is more to learn about both the role of the facilitator and the kind of arts-based task that might maximise tools for conviviality in research. Here, we have also detailed some of the narratives that came about through participation in the workshops. We chose to focus on two of the respondents' stories, those of Ofelia and Jola, because of their shared themes around gains, losses, migration, love and family. While language brokering did not feature in their stories per se, language is one thread running through both of their narrations and tied into identity. Both Ofelia's and Jola's stories have care, caring relationships and family as a thematic central thread (Bowlby 2012). Like many care relationships relating to migration, they

are experienced as both distal and proximate, so that the young people's narratives are built around symbols and artefacts that offer connections across large and small geographical locations (Atkinson et al. 2011). Like many care relationships, the past, present and future are linked across the life course. Both Ofelia and Jola overlaid on to their artwork the stories they had been told of family now absent, whose presence remains in the telling of who they were. We suggest there may be some value in taking further the concept of 'care' and how it might relate to tools and spaces of conviviality.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. All state schools in the UK are judged by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). There are four potential outcomes, with 'inadequate' being the lowest and 'outstanding' being the highest.
2. Fernanda explained to us that in her own language her first name meant to 'cheep', like a bird, so the girls in the classroom would get her attention in the style of a bird. She had disliked this as a child, but warmed to the 'pet name' when it was used by the girls in the workshop.

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6

Migration, memory and place: Arts and walking as convivial methodologies in participatory research – A visual essay

Maggie O'Neill, Bea Giaquinto[1] and Fahira Hasedžić

Beginnings

Writing this chapter created the opportunity to introduce and discuss a walk,[2] undertaken by all three authors, which took us back to our first participatory arts research collaborations twenty years earlier. In this chapter, we define our participatory arts approach to research as convivial by discussing two projects that we conducted twenty years apart, their underpinning principles, and the analytic possibilities of our convivial research. Through the lens of the second project, a walking biographical interview ('walking with'), we argue that walking opens an embodied, convivial and kinaesthetic space for dialogue and understanding, challenging sexual and social inequalities; indeed, opens the possibilities for a radical democratic imaginary. A convivial sensibility is not just about cognition, affect and the relational offered by the arts as we experienced in the first project, but about the body too.

Our engagement with convivial research and convivial collaborations began in 1997 with a desire to conduct participatory research with the newly arrived Bosnian community in Nottingham. Maggie (a sociologist working at the intersections of the arts and collaborative social research that she describes as 'ethno-mimesis') set out to connect with the Bosnian community in order to share their stories of exile, displacement,

arrival, settlement and belonging. She was introduced to Fahira, who was then the secretary of the newly formed Bosnia-Herzegovina Association. Fahira invited Maggie to attend the association meetings with the whole community to discuss her ideas about the research. At this point, Maggie was introduced to Bea, who was the manager of City Arts in Nottingham and interested in collaborating.

All three of us held a commitment to the transformative role of the arts in social life, to the importance of stories and storytelling for sharing lived experience and for challenging the myths and stereotypes that were impacting on the Bosnian community; they were experiencing racism and incivilities. We agree that art is a feeling form, and that the relationship between art and society is mediated by the 'sensuous knowing, the playfulness and creativity of the artist and the historically given techniques and means of production' (O'Neill 2008, n.p.). Art forms are also constitutive; they bring something new into being, and can make experiences, hopes and ideas visible. As we shall see later in this chapter, art also provides a reflective space that contributes to knowledge and understanding. We all felt it was important to value and recognise the expertise, experience and knowledge in the newly arrived Bosnian community by conducting research in partnership with them. The Bosnian community wanted to share their stories with the wider community so that they might understand why they had been forced to flee and why they were now living in the East Midlands.

Our collaborative participatory action and arts research included work with three commissioned artists and a female translator (O'Neill and Tobolewska 2002). The regional arts council supported refugees and asylum seekers in developing arts infrastructures and policy, organising a conference and funding a post in a regional support organisation. The research also fed into other policy and practice discussions in the East Midlands region, and allowed for developing follow-up projects.[3]

Twenty years after our first meeting, we met in September 2017, to take a walk together as part of Maggie's Leverhulme Research Fellowship on borders, risk and belonging. The fellowship consolidated a long history of using walking and participatory methods for doing social research with artists and communities on asylum, migration and marginalisation. It offered a great opportunity to reconnect with Fahira and Bea and the earlier project that had focused upon global refugees, exile and belonging.

Maggie, Bea and Fahira had kept in touch via Facebook and sent Christmas cards and birthday greetings to each other. Maggie sent an invite to Bea and Fahira, asking them if they would like to get together

and walk with her, telling them a little about the project. Both accepted her invitation. Despite the intervening years, the attunement with each other and the fondness we held for each other remained. Both O'Connor (1992) and Spencer and Pahl (2006) discuss the importance of friendships in women's lives, the bonds of friendship, and the sociological and political significance of these, what Spencer and Pahl (2006, 2) call 'personal communities'. For us, our relationships were forged within an arts/research project that involved: connection and understanding, marked by attentive listening to life stories; empathy (we were all women and mothers, and shared something of each other's stories in the process of working together); trust, a basic element in friendships and 'personal communities'; and mutual recognition, marked by social class, gender and being mothers. Bea and Maggie connected at a very personal level with Fahira's story of loss and displacement (as mothers), of sending her children away to protect them, not knowing where they would end up, but hoping for the best. This is also because of a shared empathic connection with each other and a growing sense of friendship (see Cotterill 1992). As Holland (2007) identifies, emotions are important in the production of knowledge, and are a powerful (and often unacknowledged) part of our understanding, analysis, interpretation and indeed motivation for doing research.

Research methods

Les Back describes in his blog[4] how he would do his earlier research differently twenty years on. He would develop a deeper sense of ongoing dialogue, 'not just a live sociology, but a more sociable one … where the voices and understandings of participants can appear alongside the ethnographer's interpretation' (Back 2016, n.p.). He goes on to say that 'culture here would be written within but also beyond words'. Indeed, using images, photography and music, the ethnographic practice could make 'residents into observers of their own lives'. Back (2016, n.p.) also describes, using the words of George Shire, that what he has aspired to in his work is 'listening to understand not just to respond', and that this style of thought involves a 'politics of kindness'.[5] We agree with Back's point, and would add that the material, corporeal, embodied experience of collaborating and being together was also important to our sociable, convivial encounters and relationship. To some extent, our early research achieved a sociable, live sociology that was also absolutely an embodied experience, and the opportunity to reflect upon the research through the lens and concept of conviviality is very welcome.

What do we understand by conviviality? Illich's (2001) definition of a convivial society is one where people are not slaves to tools, technology or oppressive governance systems, and where creativity and imagination are the lifeblood of society. Focusing his critique on the deadening of the imagination through a focus on productivity, acceleration, and the engineering of satisfaction and consent as a threat to society, he offers tools for a convivial society, based upon what we would define as a commitment to participatory, relational methods and the relational goods of research. For us, convivial research highlights interdependence, the relational, embodied, sensory and affective aspects of research, and is about creativity and the imagination (see also both Nowicka and Phoenix in this volume). The relational, active listening and convivial tools that we place at the centre of our research are, for us, always participatory.

In her book on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Anna Marie Smith (1998, 147) outlines a radical democratic pluralist future, and that the process of reaching such a future includes 'participatory mechanisms through which rigid and antagonistic subject positions might be transformed by their democratic interaction with other subject positions'. Taking up this concept of a radical democratic imaginary as the need to open and keep open spaces for dialogue, and to enable us to 'work through the past' (Adorno 2005, 89), is central to our understanding and use of 'convivial'.

Arts-based methods

Building on a long history of conducting research in partnership with artists and communities, we argue that there is a need to develop alternative forms of re-presenting or re-signifying – that is to say, 'constructed through signifying, i.e., meaning-producing-practices' (Hall 1997: 28). This is linked to Fanon's (2008) call for dignity, equality and equity in re-signifying the self. Analysing the lived experiences of refugees and asylum seekers living in the UK, and developing renewed methodologies that incorporate their voices and images through participatory scholarly/civic research, can serve to enlighten and raise our awareness of those situated in the tension that is the asylum–migration–community nexus (see also O'Neill and Tobolewska 2002 and O'Neill 2010). It is vital that people who are usually the 'subject' of research are able to speak for themselves as subjects of their own narratives. This also has the potential to produce critical, reflexive texts that may help to mobilise social change, and the potential to impact on policy.

Drawing upon Adorno and Benjamin, we suggest that the dialectic of art and society is constituted by the tension between mimesis and constructive rationality. The mimetic (playful not imitative) quality of art is expressed well by Salverson (2001, 123), who suggests that when we talk about the mimetic in art this is not necessarily about holding a mirror to reality but rather about 'an ethical approach to suffering, mimesis … may instead reach toward and engage "them" (the names, the people, the embodied event)'. In this way, mimesis can 'depict something of reality's alienating character' (Heynen 1999, 175). Hence, through the mimetic moment of cognition, we can develop a critical perspective that might include empathy as sensuous knowing.

Participatory research

Our collaborative research is underpinned by the principles of participatory action research (PAR) that include: participation, inclusion, valuing all voices, and developing sustainable, action-oriented interventions (O'Neill and Webster 2005). We firmly agree that critical and cultural analysis using participatory methods could help us to access richer understandings of the complexities of migration, especially forced migration, develop knowledge that challenges exclusionary discourses and practices, and connect researchers to more relational ways of doing research and promoting social justice.

Further, we should not only seek to understand our social worlds but also seek to change them. Therefore, we argue for the vital importance of processes and practices of inclusion in our theory, research, and social policy with refugees and asylum seekers, as well as in collaborating with artists to conduct research (O'Neill and Tobolewska 2002). Orlando Fals Borda (1996) describes PAR as a transformative methodology linked to social justice, and describes two core orientations of PAR. The first is *Vivencia* or *Erfahrung* (life experience gained through immersion in fieldwork with local communities). This involves identifying without giving oneself over or projecting oneself into the other. The second is *commitment* to change processes and their actors. He describes the existential concept of experience (*Erlebnis*) following Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset:

> Through experiencing something, we intuitively apprehend its essence, we feel, enjoy and understand it as a reality, and we thereby place our being in a wider, more fulfilling context. In PAR, such an experience, called *vivencia* in Spanish, is complemented by another

idea: that of authentic commitment resulting from historical materialism and classical Marxism (Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach: 'Philosophers should not be content with just explaining the world, but should try to transform it').

(Fals Borda 1996, 87–8)

This approach gives rise to a subject–subject approach to documenting lived experience and generating understanding and knowledge as convivial. It takes us beyond the classical 'participant observer role' (subject–object) in fieldwork and can facilitate a 'critical recovery of history' (Fals Borda 1996, 81) that fosters mutual recognition, trust and responsibility. It also enriches the life experiences and skills of the researcher. Moreover, respect for communicating such knowledge is written into the processes and practices of PAR as a convivial method, so that meanings are understood by all involved.

Fals Borda (1996) talks of four key aspects or skills that are part of PAR's contribution to social research methodology: 1) an emphasis on collectivities; 2) critical recovery of history based upon use of personal, folk and archival materials; 3) devolving knowledge in understandable and meaningful ways; and 4) the production of 'symmetrical communication', indeed 'symmetrical reciprocity', which reinforces the need for dialogue and interpretation, and can lead to conscientisation. In a nutshell, PAR as a relational, convivial method can empower, be inclusive, mobilise and transform. PAR is, however, not a panacea; there are challenges, and ethical considerations must be at the centre (Banks et al. 2013).

Participatory arts

Combining community and participatory or socially engaged art forms in the research process involves working with 'feeling forms' (Witkin 1974), such as art, life-story narratives, film and dance, to re-tell and re-present the multiple stories generated through interpretative ethnographic research. Representing social research and lived experience in art forms (using photography, poetry, film or creative writing) can help audiences access a richer understanding of the complexity of lived experiences. Mark Webster (1997) defines participatory arts (PA) as a set of techniques and practices that help to make visible people's experiences and ideas for change. He argues that communities should be involved directly in making art, individually or as co-creators, not as the audience or recipients. PA is reflective and transformative, and emphasises

problem solving. It focuses on process and production, and is linked to community arts, a strong movement in the UK underpinned by democratic values that seek to challenge inequalities and support participation in art and art making. In our research, we have sought to challenge the myths and stereotypes of 'asylum seeker' and 'refugee'.

The challenges of conducting both PAR and PA are many. They need time: time to build relationships of trust, time to collaborate and dialogue, time to get to know each other, to work collaboratively and to be cognisant of shifting power dynamics and different sensibilities and affective states. Working with different agencies can also be demanding, as can working with different cultures of work and perceived status differentials. Initially, Maggie was aware of how she was perceived by two of the artists as embodying the institution of 'the university' and had to work to gain their trust, so that they knew that she was not flying in and out to do research in a way that cast them as 'use value' and stepping-stones in building her career. Valuing the expertise of all partners and developing relationships of trust is important. Community artists often build up extensive expertise and experience over a long history in a community; this knowledge is considerable. Working together across the arts and social research brings skills of archiving and curating, and of conducting research in systematic and rigorous ways, with the creative processes and practice of artists skilled in working with communities. This collaborative work at the borders of arts and social research is an invaluable aspect of ethno-mimetic research.

Ethno-mimesis

Exploring the possibilities for research conducted at the borders of art and ethnography in order to explore ways of transgressing conventional ways of collecting, analysing and representing research data, O'Neill et al. (2002) developed what Maggie calls 'ethno-mimesis'. The concept of ethno-mimesis expresses the combination of ethnographic and arts practice in social research, and especially in participatory action research. Participatory research facilitates sensuous, embodied knowing, the playful, imaginative and performative qualities of knowing and understanding. Ethno-mimesis is a theoretical construct, as well as a process and a practice. It is ultimately rooted in principles of equality, democracy and freedom, and what Jessica Benjamin (1990) describes (drawing on Hegel, Kant and Adorno) as a dialectic of mutual recognition. The key concept used here to express the re-presentation of life stories in artistic form is 'mimesis'.

Following Adorno, 'mimesis' does not simply mean naive imitation, but rather feeling, sensuousness and spirit, the playfulness of our being in the world in critical tension with the 'out-there' sense of our being in the world. Taussig (1993, 68) understands 'mimesis as both the faculty of imitation and the deployment of that faculty in sensuous knowing'.

As performative praxis, ethno-mimesis seeks to speak in empathic ways with people, re-presented here through photographic and performative texts. As Nowicka (this volume) states, central to understandings of conviviality is the recognition that we engage with each other empathically. If we think about PAR as a way of doing conviviality in research, then PAR facilitates empathy through a relational orientation to the other, which elicits a convivial sensibility, an openness and attunement to the other's lived experience, without either projecting oneself into the other, or collapsing the 'I' and 'you' into a totalising 'we' (see also Phoenix in this volume). Moreover, the mediating role and constitutive nature of art means that it does not need to be merely representational or produce mimesis (as in mimicry) to communicate and share experience that challenges identity thinking and opens a 'potential space'.

Our participatory, ethno-mimetic approach to research seeks to develop a radical cultural imaginary that challenges exclusionary discourses and produces counter-hegemonic knowledge. This is a knowledge that engages with feelings and the relational in tension with the cognitive, rational, constructive aspects of our lives and social worlds. Ethno-mimesis is both a practice (a methodology) and a process aimed at illuminating inequalities and injustice through sociocultural research and analysis.

As a convivial process and practice, ethno-mimesis can serve to focus our attention on history and the unspeakable, the transgressive acts and everyday resistances, and the relational dimensions of shared experiences. It emphasises the democratic processes and possibilities for social justice, citizenship, rights and freedom. Listening (in an affective sense not just literally, and in and through the art forms) to the voices and experiences of the Bosnians arriving in the UK from UN/Red Cross camps in Croatia in the mid-1990s encourages us to engage with ethics, within a moral order and reasoning based on thinking, feeling and compassion. The importance of empathy, of relational connectedness, of working *with* people experiencing forced migration, not on or for them, cannot be overestimated. Such research may inspire praxis. Research on the asylum–migration–community nexus that uses narrative, biographical and participatory methods can contribute to convivial methods at the level of theory, experience and praxis, and in so doing contribute to

social justice. The worry is that during the twenty-first century, there will be an increase, not decrease, in war and crimes against human rights, and increased breakdown of law, justice and protection of peoples, hence the need to prioritise convivial and participatory methods in social research.

So, ethno-mimesis provides a theoretical organising construct that describes a convivial research process, as a relational 'feeling form'. Coming to understand in a reflexive and purposeful way, through ethno-mimetic processes, the relationship between lived experience, wider social and cultural structures, processes and practices, is constitutive of what we call a 'politics of feeling'. Of course, the materiality of everyday life, and indeed relationships between ideology, knowledge and power, need to be understood within the context of wider structures of signification, and legitimation and control (Giddens 1984).

Global refugees: Exile, displacement and belonging

The research undertaken from 1997 onwards combined participatory action research and participatory arts using ethnographic approaches made up of biographical interviews and arts-based workshops. In 1997, we worked with three artists in the East Midlands in order to represent experiences of exile, displacement and belonging of members of the Bosnian community. Two communities took part in the research: the newly arrived Bosnian community living in the East Midlands who were 'programme' refugees arriving from the same UN camp in Croatia, and an Afghan community living in London, made up of three waves of Afghan migration. The people involved were keen to represent themselves, raise awareness about their community with their neighbours and wider communities, and develop connections with other community groups to facilitate a sense of belonging. As one of the participants reflected at the time:

> We wanted to show how quickly things can change and how much we hope this will never happen to you. Everything changed so quickly. One morning my best friend said that her parents had told her she could not play with me anymore because I was Muslim. Soon afterwards, my Father arranged safe passage across the border and we ended up in a refugee camp in Croatia. We were then given a choice: Britain or America. My Mother chose Britain because it is closer to home.
>
> <div align="right">(V., quoted in O'Neill and Tobolewska 2002, 124)</div>

The partnership included Nottingham City Arts, a community arts organisation, managed by Bea, and Exiled Writers Ink, a London-based support group for exiled artists, performers, film-makers and writers, managed by Jennifer Langer. Together with community co-researchers we conducted biographical interviews and the participants re-presented their life stories in artistic form with the support of artists and writers in creative arts/research workshops. Bea commissioned artists with experience of working on sensitive issues, and facilitated the participants representing their stories in artistic forms. The London-based group worked with Exiled Writers Ink to produce creative writing, poetry and short stories. We focus in this chapter solely on the ethno-mimetic research with the Bosnian community.

The image in Figure 6.1 emerged from Fahira's life-story interview, and was created first as an installation then digitally photographed and developed in Photoshop at the arts workshops based at City Arts. The narrative underneath the image, in English and Bosnian, tells that Fahira's neighbours held a meeting and decided to protect the three non-orthodox families in the block. Fahira and her family (husband, son and daughter) needed her neighbour's key for three years, and would hide in her neighbour's flat when soldiers were looking for Muslims. One

Figure 6.1 *Good Neighbour* installation by Fahira Hasedžić. Source: Karen Fraser

day she baked bread for her neighbour (having had supplies from the Red Cross) and took the bread to her neighbour's flat. A soldier was in her neighbour's flat asking for 'the Muslims' and her neighbour kept silent. The soldier asked Fahira, 'Who are you?' and she replied, 'You know who am I, I would not be here if I were Muslim.'

This example was created by Fahira and had a profound impact on Maggie and Bea, which stayed with them throughout the intervening years. The image and text tell of the possibility and actuality of a greater humanity than experienced by many during the war, through the protection and care offered by her neighbour. The image and text tell the story and offer thanks in the gifts to her neighbour – the good things denied during war and sanctions – bread, chocolate, lights, fruit; it is a hopeful image. A crucial point here is that in her experience of being 'protected' by her neighbours, Fahira's Muslim identity was acknowledged, and she was able to hold on to this. The artwork, produced by Fahira with the support of artist Karen Fraser, represents this experience, as well as the emotions involved, in the intersection of the image and the text. It is effectively a convivial integration of ethnography, life-story research and art. The impact on audiences when we exhibited the work was also considerable. People commented that they related on a personal level very strongly with this image and text, feeling that 'it could have been me'.

The artwork produced through the project was exhibited in galleries and community centres and reported on in the local press. It helped to challenge attitudes, myths and stereotypes about 'asylum seekers' and 'refugees'. At one exhibition in a community centre, a woman, clearly moved by the experience of seeing the work, said to us this 'could be us, my family, my grandchild'.

Walking borders

In October 2017, twenty years after the first PAR project, which brought us together, Maggie invited Fahira and Bea to meet and go for a walk as part of her Leverhulme Research Fellowship[6] that builds upon and focuses upon the usefulness of walking as a biographical research method. Taking a walk with someone is a powerful way of communicating about experiences; one can become 'attuned' to another, and connect in a lived embodied way with the feelings and corporeality of another. Walking with another opens up a space for dialogue where embodied knowledge, experience and memories can be shared (see O'Neill and Hubbard 2010).

When thinking about who she would like to walk with, Maggie reflected upon the participatory research they had conducted together, the importance of this research to her, the bonds they had shared, and the passing of time. The three of us met at Fahira's flat and shared our stories of the intervening years. It was as though the intervening years melted away. We hugged, and fell into conversation about our respective families and the changes the years had brought. Fahira made Bosnian coffee once again. She had already thought about the walk she would lead us on and had drawn a route. It was a walk she liked to take her grandchildren on and led to Nottingham Castle. This is the visual story of our walk accompanied by Fahira's text.

> I would like to go to Nottingham Castle, it is Robin Hood's Castle, I don't know why. When I came in England a long time ago it was 20, nearly 21 years ago, when I came here, I was surprised. The first time I came to Rugby, and then I moved to Nottingham. It was a surprise for me because I heard, when I was child, I heard a lot of things about Robin Hood and it was amazing for me to see exactly what is it, and they told me, 'oh, it is in Nottingham, it is Nottingham Castle'. It was my first impression to see how it was and the history about Robin Hood, about everything what's happened. It was amazing for me because I like to go, and I still like to go there because it reminds me when I came and how it was a surprise for me, and it was lovely to see everything about its history.

We talked together about what Nottingham Castle meant to each of us. Bea and Maggie used to take their children there, and Fahira now takes her grandchildren. We talked about what connected us back in the mid-1990s. Fahira said:

> You were both working with us, as well with the Bosnian Association. It was amazing, it was so nice, it was very helpful, very, very, we never forget you, both of you, we never forget you. Sometimes we talk, and when you sent a card for me, I said to all my friends 'Oh, Maggie sent card'. Oh, that is so nice; they are happy because it was really good, very, very helpful. When you are lonely, when you haven't got anybody, when you don't know nothing about system how it works, how it is, any help is amazing for you, yes.

Figure 6.2 Nottingham Trent University. Source: Bea Giaquinto

We head out for the walk. Fahira said:

> This is Trent University [see Figure 6.2], it reminds me every time when I pass here about when I came here for the first time. When I came in Nottingham I was lost and couldn't find my way back to my house, my flat; because all streets looked the same to me. I didn't know what can I do but then I saw this building, because it is amazing and it's an unusual building. I said, 'Look at that, oh I know where I am, and I know my street is opposite this building'. And I saw from here where my flat is located. It was funny.

Maggie replied:

> When I used to come to your flat, I would drive up that street there and then turn left, but unfortunately you can't do that anymore. But you know, when I interviewed Enisa all those years ago, she was telling me that her and her son went out for a walk from their flat and they were looking for Nottingham, they were looking for the city centre and they walked and walked and they couldn't find it and so then they came back to their place and it was only a short time later that they realised how close they were to the city centre before they turned back.

This story by Enisa, told in her life-story interview, was a formative point in Maggie's turn to walking-based methods. Walking is a convivial form

of finding your way, which elicits a sensory, embodied connection and attunement with the environment, as well as with co-walkers.

Fahira said:

> Yes, true but it happened to me again. I was out in the night-time, at night-time everything changes, everything looks different. I was in the city centre, and I was standing looking and thinking, 'it's not my town' [laughs]. It was horrible! I said, 'where am I now, look at that'. In the dark, I was walking round, thinking 'what I can do now?' I really didn't know where I am, it was one of the first impressions for me, but I never forget it. I walked and walked round, and again I found this building again. Yes! It's funny, it's funny.

Bea replied:

> Yes, so this building was also how you found your way in the dark as well.

Fahira:

> Yes, because it was, yes [laughs]. When I was walking again, I said, what I am doing but I didn't know how to ask anybody where is this building, I knew it is called Trent University but I couldn't ask, I didn't know English then, 'oh my God, what I can do?' It was horrible. When I find it, 'oh again I know where I am'.

This story was also formative for Bea in her practice as an artist and arts manager, as she goes on to describe:

> You'll be very glad to know that I remember you telling me that. So, when I was working in the Education Department and when I was running the Refugee Forum, every time I met a new person, I would go on Street Map and find a building that they recognised, and I put that on a map for them with their house at the other end. So that they could carry around a laminated map. That was influenced by you saying you need landmarks.

Fahira:

> But for me always, always when I was in town I stand and watch and look all round. I came from this building with the two windows and

so I have to go straight up [laughs] in order to remember, because it is important, you know, Nottingham is quite big if you are lost.

Maggie:

It is, and walking is so important isn't it? Because when you walk, you get a mental map and the places become familiar.

Fahira:

Yes, but it is more difficult if you don't know the language. If you can ask, now it's no problem for me because I can go anywhere in England, I travel a lot but when you first come you don't know nothing and it was funny, the first time I wanted to go to a shop, Wilkinson's, as I needed a sewing machine needle. It was horrible [laughs] and my son, he knew much more as he was in college and he told me, 'Mam, you have to learn, you have to learn, I am not here non-stop, you have to learn'. I was in Clarendon College to learn, but at the beginning I didn't know nothing, and so I took my dictionary, I wrote down exactly how I would say in my language, it was funny. I can't remember exactly how I wrote it down, but I translated the words exactly … When I saw the cashier, I just put the piece of paper down, because I didn't know to ask, and she was reading it, she did not know, and she read again. She said something, but I don't know what, and she called manager and she took this paper to her. Then she was reading it and nothing, and, oh, she said, 'oh yes, sewing machine'. Yes, yes, and so she took my hands and she took me inside Wilkinson's and she said, 'is it this one'? Oh yes this is it, I was so happy, I was so happy, many things like that, oh dear. I never forgot this because it was the first time I went to shop by myself without any words.

The relational and embodied aspect ('she took my hands') of the communication, the connection and empathy the cashier shares with Fahira, through listening, touch and care/concern, is highlighted here by Fahira as being very important for her.

Stopping outside Nottingham Theatre Royal (see Figure 6.3), Fahira tells us:

This is my favourite building, I like it.

Figure 6.3   Nottingham Theatre Royal. Source: Bea Giaquinto

Maggie:

>   Why is it your favourite building? I love it as well.

Fahira:

>   I like theatre, I like theatre but usually I go to see my favourite, *Swan Lake, Swan Lake*. Yes, this is my favourite, it's lovely. Yes, I like the old-fashioned buildings, it's absolutely nice, it's very different.

Walking down King Street, we approach Market Square (see Figure 6.4), and memories return of being there together. Fahira likes the traditional buildings, and remembers dancing there with her folk group.

Fahira:

>   Yes, we were dancing because it was Lord Mayor's Day in May, I think, 5th of May was Lord Mayor's Day. Did you see the picture?

Maggie:

>   Yes, and after that, didn't we go to the Bosnian Community Centre for a party?

Figure 6.4   Nottingham Market Square. Source: Bea Giaquinto

Fahira:

> Yes, yes, yes.

At Nottingham Castle (see Figure 6.5), Fahira shares her memories of arriving in Nottingham and feeling connected to the castle:

> I really like this place, it reminds me about stories which I heard when I came here and about everything that's happened around here with Sheriff, with Robin Hood, and yes, I like the festival, the Robin Hood Festival and they do a lot of things, they have tent, they have fire, they have fighting in there on horses, it's so nice. Yes, it's lovely, it's nice for children as well, and it's so good. They are making food, traditional food.
>
>   I like this castle and always when I am coming back from Birmingham or from Derby when the train is passing there, I always see my castle [laughs].

We walked past flower beds that we all remembered as having such striking displays, and Fahira remarked on the importance of walking and being outside:

> I like to walk, I like be out. If somebody took me prison, I would die [laughs]. To walk, to be out in the fresh air with friends, just to have coffee, to chat.

Figure 6.5 Castle mosaic. Source: Bea Giaquinto

We walked to the castle walls and looked over the city, remembering our past times here and how the vista had changed.

Fahira:

> I like the view in the round, I like this. Yes, you can see Nottingham on three sides.

Bea:

> This is where you can really see how Nottingham's changed over the last few years.

We looked at all the new housing, factory and office developments, and a new retail park, and all commented on the expanse of trees and green.

Fahira:

> It is the best place to come with friends [laughs]. I think in Nottingham, I like it.

Fahira said her grandchildren like it too. She pointed out People's College:

> My son, he started to learn there when he came, it was where he first went to learn English. He knew English, but it wasn't perfect,

but he knew a lot from the Bosnian schools. However, for university he needs some more, and he needs all the diplomas and everything, he had to pass first college and then university.

He came one year, one month before me. Yes, he was in Croatia in a refugee camp for one year and after that he came here, and he applied for us to be together because he was young. Yes, and when he left Bosnia, he was 16, and when he came here he applied for visa for us, his parents, to be together and after one month, we had it, and we came by Red Cross, British Red Cross from the UN, and they took us from Banja Luka to Croatia, from Croatia to England. Yes, it was good, it was very helpful for us.

I think we would die if we didn't leave. I think they would kill us. Every day it was like that, and my husband, he was really, really poorly and he was beaten a lot. I think they will kill us. We were lucky. I always said 'Thank you, England' [laughs] for everything what you have done for us. I can't forget it, for all people were very, very helpful, yes it was amazing.

Fahira goes on to say that when she goes to Bosnia she feels like a stranger:

Because everything has changed. You know I like my country, I like being there, but every year I go minimum once just to remember and to be there, but I feel sorry about everything that's happened.

Bea remarks that this must make her feel sad, and Fahira replies that it does indeed, and returns to talk about her memory of the war:

Yes, I am still very sad, I am still very sad. People, ordinary people, didn't like this war.

I hate war, because I know what is it, it is horrible. I respect all difference, but I hate what happened, because if you say you are different, because you are a different religion or something, it makes conflict, it makes people hate each other and the conflict, but always conflict, make wars, killing people and people dying, hating each other. They lose everything, everything, and most of all you can lose your family. For example, my family is everywhere around the world, my husband's family is everywhere, in Germany, in America, in Sweden, in Denmark, in Bosnia, in England; everywhere around world. We tried to be together, but no country wanted us all together. I don't know any family which are together.

You know how I feel when I think about my mum, how I feel when I think about my daughter, my grandchildren, so it is something which is very close to my heart. You can't, you can't feel good. You need to keep your family close and don't let anybody do what they did to us. It's horrible. Any war, anywhere around world makes horrible things, nothing good. They made everything worse, they destroyed it completely, everything, everything, all country, the fabric, everything what we had, all lives and everything, it's horrible.

We talked about Tito and the 'brotherhood and unity' philosophy that Fahira remembers:

You know, I think nobody will create what he did in the future because in Bosnia we had 29 different religions all mixed up, we lived normal, like brothers and sisters and good neighbours, good friends … . I never followed my children when they started to walk, I left them out, I never followed them, they were playing out a lot, and lots of children did, not just mine. They played together and we never had any accident with the children, we never had any problem with anybody round there, no attack, no, no nothing, nothing, and because we felt free, all people felt free, we had a good life. We didn't have any reason to make crime because we had a good life and those who wanted to work had a good choice, and then it stopped when he died, everything changed.

We knew something will happen, and straightaway it started. In Bosnia, three different religions on three sides, and Orthodox in Bosnia, they had somebody who supported them, and they made genocide, big genocide. I think after Second World War it was the biggest one, and they killed, in seven days they killed eight thousand people.

Most of them are Muslims, and most of them are men. It's horrible. You can't believe it. You can't understand it. I have to talk about this because if anyone starts something like that you have to stop them straightaway. I can't explain it. It's not possible, you had to be there, it is something, which one can't forget never, never, never, it's horrible.

We walked into the castle together, and Fahira showed us where she had had an exhibition of Bosnian dance costumes that she had made. We continued into another gallery and a large ram was on display, Private Derby, a regimental mascot. The invigilator was a retired soldier, and he opened a conversation with us and gave us a brief history of the uniforms on display

from the Napoleonic War at the end 1812, right through to the present day. We were polite and listened respectfully, but it was an uncomfortable coincidence that having just spoken about the Bosnian War and the impact upon the communities living in Bosnian-Herzegovina, we walked into an exhibition on the British Army, war and regimental mascots. We thanked him for sharing this information and talking with us. On leaving, we remarked on the coincidence of talking about war and walking straight into an exhibition on soldiers, their mascots and war throughout history. Fahira thought it might be interesting for students 'to learn about war, about what's happened, but for me it's not, it's something really sad'.

We moved into the next gallery and looked at the ceramics, Wedgwood pottery, the art gallery and fashion through time, our feelings a little lighter. We then headed to the cafe for lunch.

Walking back to Fahira's flat afterwards, we reflected back over the last twenty years, to the initial project. Our conversation reinforced for us the importance of participatory and arts-based research in providing important counter-voices of subjecthood amid narratives of deeply painful experiences, as well as documenting the migration journeys and the resilience and courage of the people involved. The research we conducted twenty years ago, and the walk we undertook together, enabled the foregrounding of feelings, meanings and experiences, and reinforced the way that creative, cultural, participatory and arts-based research is inherently convivial.

Walking enabled us to connect with and attune to each other in kinaesthetic, embodied and convivial ways. Walking opens a dialogue and space where embodied knowledge, experience and memories can be shared. Walking focuses attention on the sensory dimensions of lived experience, and the relationship between the visual and other senses. The walk described in this chapter enabled 'a series of relationalities and dialogues between walkers' (O'Neill and Hubbard 2010, 50). When we walk side by side with another, following the routes of others, it can bring the experience and feelings of the other into visibility and recognition in a feeling way and enable what Roy (2016: 207–8) calls 'caring encounters'.

Conclusion

Participatory action research, participatory arts and walking as ethno-mimesis are convivial because they are reflective (providing opportunities for people to think through issues and make visible their

concerns, experiences, hopes); they open a space for dialogue that is relational; they can produce change at any and every point of the process; they can be transformative *with* the participants not *on* or *for* them; and they can challenge stereotypes. In relation to partnership working, it is constitutive and can bring something new into the world, including new knowledge and understanding, as in the image *Good Neighbour* created by Fahira to thank her neighbours for their protection (see Figure 6.1). We discovered, working together in the late 1990s, and again in 2017, that working together to develop analysis and collective responses and outcomes, in and through participatory and convivial methods, enables people to have a stake in their community/society, fostering inclusion and belonging. At the very least, PAR/PA as ethno-mimesis can help highlight, reinforce and support skills and capacity development. It uses a range of research methods as appropriate – mixed or multiple methods, including arts-based methods. Both the arts/research workshops and life-story interviews in the first project and the dialogic space created through the walk enabled a relational, reflective, safe space for embodied connection, dialogue, listening and understanding. It was a privilege to spend time together, to reflect on the first project and the intervening years. Taking the walk together, as well as writing about it, reinforced the importance of convivial methods and convivial tools for social research, in the spirit of Les Back's (2016) 'politics of kindness'. By this, we mean appreciation for each other and for the process of ethnographic and participatory research, the time it takes to truly engage in affective listening and in working together to create change. We would like to return to Back's (2016, n.p.) retrospective reflections on his own ethnographic practice mentioned in the opening to our chapter, and his vision for the future of ethnography: 'I am imagining an augmented ethnographic practice that would allow and facilitate a greater openness of representational space where the voices and understandings of participants can appear alongside the ethnographer's interpretations.'

For us, this is what our process and practice involved. Together, participatory action and arts-based research as ethno-mimesis opened a convivial space for dialogue and embodied understanding, a radical democratic imaginary and psychosocial mattering (to be of importance to count, see Schultheiss et al. 2011). Working and walking together, we sought to produce knowledge to support social change, to challenge social inequalities and promote social justice. As Fahira states, she is committed to sharing what happened in her country 'so that it is not forgotten and that same thing never happens anywhere and to anyone again' (Hasedžić 2016, 48). Our research *with* each other constitutes a

being together in difference – the differences of where we live, our ages, stages of life, experiences, and social class differences too. However, ultimately for us, convivial research is both a deeply engaged and respectful approach to conducting research (that is, walking with – side by side) and has analytic power; it is potentially transformative.

Notes

1. Bea has reverted to her family name – Giaquinto. Previous research with Maggie was published under her then surname, Tobolewska.
2. Undertaken as part of Maggie O'Neill's Leverhulme Research Fellowship in 2017.
3. Subsequent research focused upon examining new arrivals' access to education and to employment, training and social enterprise. The arts-based outcomes provided very powerful messages. O'Neill led on the research grant applications, and the subsequent AHRC-funded work is documented in O'Neill (2010) *Asylum, Migration and Community*.
4. The blog was written by Les Back after the 'New Urban Multicultures: Conviviality and Racism' conference at Goldsmiths, University of London, in May 2016.
5. See Brownlie and Anderson (2017) on the importance of a sociology of kindness.
6. See: https://www.walkingborders.com.

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Part III
Ethics, relationships and power

7
Failing better at convivially researching spaces of diversity

Ben Gidley

Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.
<div align="right">Samuel Beckett</div>

In this chapter, I argue that participatory and convivial tools are always destined to fail, but, with a certain ethical courage and intellectual humility, we can learn to *fail better*. It reflects on a series of (in some senses failed) attempts to use participatory and action research tools, including peer research training and various visual methods, in conducting research in urban contexts, mainly in inner south London, with heterogeneous research participants. The chapter explores the ethical and epistemological challenges involved in this kind of research.

There are two overlapping contexts for my intervention. The first is the *participatory turn* in the social sciences. This turn, starting in the 1990s, has seen a growing emphasis on the co-production of research, the handing of the tools of representation over to subjects previously understood as passive informants, the growth of peer research, and the development of new methodological tools that enable the subjects of research to become active participants in the production of knowledge. The second context is the *diversity turn* in ethnicity and migration studies, in which, since the turn of the century, researchers have highlighted the forms of banal, commonplace intercultural encounter that flower in thrown-together super-diverse neighbourhoods, with a growing emphasis on qualitative research in public and parochial spaces in urban sites where populations are increasingly demographically complex, and diverse along a multiplying number of axes (Berg and Sigona 2013).

The diversity turn and the participatory turn have both led to an interest in *the convivial*, as a mode of living together in places *and* as a mode of doing research (Gilroy 2004; Nowicka and Vertovec 2013). This chapter is written out of long-term ethnographic engagement with diverse urban areas, where I have observed the fragile promise of mundane conviviality, even among neighbours who publicly articulate exclusionary discourses, and even in the shadow of everyday racism and grinding poverty. And it is written out of an ethical commitment to conviviality as a mode of research. But I will argue that participatory and convivial forms of research come with ethical and epistemological risks. And I will conclude that we need to supplement the vocabulary of conviviality with a vocabulary of *contention*, as a way of navigating these risks.

More specifically, in this chapter I will reflect on working since 1998 on a series of research projects that have tried to use participatory tools, mainly in inner south London. These were based at the Centre for Urban and Community Research (CUCR) at Goldsmiths, where I worked from 1998 to 2009, and the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) at Oxford, where I worked from 2010 until 2015. These included commissioned or competitively won research and consultancy for local authorities and NGOs, as well as more respectably 'academic' research funded by research councils or philanthropic trusts.[1] Most of this work focused on place-based (rather than on, for example, identity-based) communities, which drives my interest in place-based encounters with difference, the conditions under which conviviality does or does not flourish.

In the first half, I argue that the political economy of academic knowledge production blocks collaborative research and convivial tools; that the politics and political economy of fieldwork sites can make collaborative research ethically risky; and that 'super-diverse' contexts defined by the proximity of incorrigible world views generate infinite incommensurate perspectives that inevitably elude capture by social scientists. I describe these risks as ways in which convivial research is destined to 'fail'. In the second half, I argue for alternatives to the epistemological hubris that marks traditional forms of social science: cultivating craft skills, cultivating intellectual humility and valuing contention, which I characterise as strategies for 'failing better'. These strategies foreground the embeddedness and positionality of the researcher, and they insist on a different – slower – pace of research.

The term 'failing better' comes from Samuel Beckett, but I take it from Michael Keith (2005) and Les Back (2016), who were my teachers when I was an MA student. Lisiak and Kaczmarek in this volume take

the same Beckett quotation as their starting point, and similarly argue for a critical engagement with failure as an enriching participatory and convivial research process, which necessitates inventiveness and opens up a space and time for reflection, if the researcher is animated by radical hope. They also similarly argue that such an engagement forces research to *slow down* and thus make time for a more meaningful conviviality. My argument differs in that I identify structural aspects of contemporary society – the interlocking realities of demographic diversity and socio-economic inequality, the neo-liberal imperatives that shape the political economy of both urban neighbourhoods and social research – as structuring the inevitable, but nonetheless productive, labour of researching (and researching with) diverse communities.

Part 1: Failing

The injunction to participate

> Sometimes I telt the truth, sometimes ah lied. When ah lied, ah sometimes said things that ah thought he'd like tae hear, n sometimes said something which ah thought would wind him up, or confuse him.
>
> Renton, *Trainspotting*

Based on the body of participatory urban research in which I have been involved, the first part of this chapter will develop four propositions – about the injunction to participate, the reification of community, the political economy of participation, and the political economy of knowledge production. My first suggestion is that the *injunction to participate*, which we impose on our research participants when we do participatory research, is *an effect of power asymmetry*.

The participatory turn in the social sciences undoubtedly has a progressive, even transformative or emancipatory, potential linked to a commitment to give voice to the relatively voiceless. But precisely because it insists on eliciting the voices of those with less power, it is always problematic. Chris Haylett talks about the working-class experience of 'an injunction to tell'. She adds that '"*not telling*" (to welfare professionals, to the Department of Social Security, to the police [and, yes], to researchers) is *a strategic defence against confession and exposure*' (in Munt 2000, 74, emphasis added). She quotes the passage that opened this section, where the character Renton in Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* describes his

interactions with his counsellor, sometimes confessing, sometimes strategically and artfully defending himself against exposure.

The New Labour period in the UK, 1997–2010, which coincided with my time as a researcher at CUCR, saw the blossoming of initiatives to encourage the 'socially excluded' to participate; it was a time when there was considerable funding both for participatory forms of urban development and for the social scientific evaluation of such work (Amin 2005; Tooke 2003). Programmes such as Sure Start, New Deal for Communities, and the Single Regeneration Budget constituted a massive government investment in deprived localities in the UK in the late 1990s and the 2000s – as well as a boom period for researchers working in programme and project evaluation, who were contracted to assess and learn from the evidence on the efficacy of the investment. There was an elective affinity between this localist form of regeneration and the participatory turn in social sciences; methodologies for eliciting participation, often drawn from the global South, were shared across New Labour urbanism and participatory social research (Anastacio et al. 2000).

In the neighbourhoods of the poor, there was a proliferation of community forums, participatory budgeting, peer research and community-led regeneration. Thousands of people living in relative poverty gave hours of their lives, unpaid, to participate in the management, governance and improvement of their neighbourhoods. I still think that the positive social, political and psychosocial impacts of this work make it one of the great untold achievements of the Blair/Brown years. But it is also the case that the injunction to participate was imposed from above, alongside a classing gaze (Finch 1993) that understood working-class, migrant and minority communities in terms of a *lack*. Middle-class neighbourhoods were not expected to devote time to attending these kinds of meetings; and middle-class people who attended as professionals (such as myself) were paid to be there (if not always especially well).

I was reminded of this more recently, as one of my MA students, Emilia Öhberg, attempted to do a participatory action research project with urban Sámi participants in Stockholm. Her brilliant dissertation (Öhberg 2016) is essentially an account of what she learned from what she understood as her failure. Her participants – her co-researchers, as she understood them – express great interest in the work, but when the sessions are scheduled, no one turns up: there are reindeer being born back home up north that have to be protected from predators; there are jobs and care obligations to juggle in the city; lives to live. While the rural villages of the global South, where participatory action research was developed, provide researchers with essentially captive

audiences for their participatory projects, complex urban life creates both *obstacles to participation* and *opportunities to not participate* – to not tell. Öhberg conceptualised the non-participation as a form of agency for her co-researchers – and a form of learning for her in how to become an *ally of*, rather than *researcher of*, her co-researchers, and how to understand and begin to undo the structures in the academy that block a more equitable and reciprocal collaboration. Becoming an ally, an accomplice, being 'academically disobedient', as she puts it, is perhaps a way of failing better.

Reifying community

> . . . 'community' stands for the kind of world which is not, regrettably, available to us – but which we would dearly wish to inhabit and which we hope to repossess.
>
> (Bauman 2000, 3)

My second proposition – drawing on the critique of the concept of community developed by Richard Sennett (1970), Iris Marion Young (1990) and Vered Amit (2002) – is that *the aspiration to participatory research can serve to call into being, or to reify, putative 'communities'*, and that *these communities are structured around exclusion as much as inclusion*. While different theorists of conviviality have different conceptions of community and cohesion, I argue that the particular modalities of community reified by some forms of participatory research can reach too quickly for cohesion, and thus inhibit the possibility of more meaningful forms of conviviality.

By definition, the areas targeted in area-based initiatives have borders, which include some and exclude others. When funding is allocated to some areas and not others through competitive bidding, as with Sure Start, New Deal for Communities and other such programmes, there is always an adjacent population not included, who fall outside the definition of need that underpins the newly designated place. And when the available resources are scarce, whether because of unjust allocation or because of generalised austerity, the question of who is included and who is excluded becomes politically contentious.

This can be illustrated in one project I worked on, Local Knowledge for Local Solutions, training residents as researchers to design resident-led ways of investing central government Neighbourhood Renewal Fund money in multiply deprived Southwark neighbourhoods. This project started from the assumption, common to most participatory

approaches to research, that local people are those who best know local places, and that knowledge of such places requires hearing their voices.

In one of the project neighbourhoods, Camberwell in south London, we recruited an extremely heterogeneous resident research team, diverse along many axes, including class, age and ethnicity. But one thing they shared was a strong conception of a problem of 'antisocial' behaviour in the area, embodied by a cast of failed citizens or disreputable others: 'substance abusers', 'aggressive beggars', 'junkies', 'street drinkers', 'squeegee merchants'. Such individuals were defined as an outside presence who threatened the cohesion and well-being of the area. In researching the views of what they understood as '*the* community', the researchers we trained insisted that these others were *not* part of the community whose views they sought. The resident research team concluded, unsurprisingly, that various local treatment facilities associated with these categories of behaviours should be closed down, and that the local state should take a more 'zero tolerance' attitude to the 'antisocial'. When local rough sleepers tried to give their own views at our forums, the peer researchers attempted to exclude them.

In this example, both through participatory governance structures and through our participatory research, a very particular narrative of community was being established, one that was exclusive rather than inclusive. The term 'antisocial' was used to legitimate the exclusion from the category of 'community' of those residents seen as deviant. The researchers reproduced what Norbert Elias (Elias and Scotson 1965) would term an established/outsider figuration, in which the community was defined against its constitutive outside, the 'antisocial'. This dramatises an authoritarian dimension in the participatory ethos, which privileges the voices of local people in the name of community, but is open to narrow and exclusive definitions of who counts as local, who counts as 'the community'. Learning the craft skills of participatory researchers and of community development work is to learn how to navigate this challenge – but it is often almost impossible. Fail again, fail better.

The Camberwell case, though, was promisingly unusual in one crucial respect: the 'community' defined by co-researchers was self-consciously multicultural; the predominant lines of exclusion and inclusion were not racialised. More often in my experience of working in south London, that has not been the case. As I have argued elsewhere, community is often experienced through a pastoral imaginary narrated in terms of a remembered affective geography rooting particular bodies in places – a pastoral imaginary that mirrors the ecological fantasies of many social scientific representations of urban sites (Gidley 2013).

Where neighbourhoods are divided from each other along real or imagined lines of race and ethnicity, the tensions generated by this can be particularly poisonous. For example, it is not uncommon in deprived areas, particularly in the inner city, that neighbourhoods perceived as, for example, 'white' and areas perceived as 'Asian' are located adjacent to each other, because of histories of de facto segregation in the housing market or allocation policies, or because of accidents of settlement. If the 'Asian' neighbourhood is given resources through a programme such as Sure Start and the 'white' neighbourhood is not, or vice versa, a politics of competition can become a politics of resentment (as, for example, in the case study of Newtown and Aston in Birmingham, in Anastacio et al. 2000). As Les Back (2009) has described, community's 'moral project' is often anchored in lament. In Elias's (Elias and Scotson 1965) established/outsider figuration, nostalgic attachment to memories of a more homogeneous lost golden age produces cohesion, but also boundaries: those who do not share these memories do not belong (cf. Blokland 2001; Meier 2013).

This in turn can fuel 'white backlash', expressed in far-right activity, or the type of desperation that leads to urban violence, as in the Oldham riots of 2000 (Ritchie 2001; Hewitt 2005; Rhodes 2010). In many of the south London neighbourhoods in which I have worked, many residents' concepts of community can carry an insistence on indigeneity, and a nostalgic evocation of a homogeneous past. Richard Sennett (1977, 223) uses the term *destructive gemeinschaft* for this, describing how white working-class Chicago residents in the 1960s organised on the basis of community to protect a segregated urban order from multicultural drift.

In many London neighbourhoods, a 'real' local is locally understood as a white British person. 'Community' is defined against a gallery of diverse constitutive outsiders, including migrants, minorities and newcomers – but sometimes also community workers and researchers, who are often seen as prioritising the voices of these outsiders over those of the presumptive indigenes, for reasons of 'political correctness'. In such contexts, research using participatory tools that seeks the participation of those *not* deemed to be the 'real' Bermondsey people, for example, is a priori deemed inauthentic by those who see themselves as 'representing' or embodying the truly local. Here, the notions of the local and of community that underpin the participatory ethos push against the multicultural drift of contemporary London.

In a context in which demographic diversity and population churn continue to multiply incorrigible world views, the task of finding participatory tools that give weight to all voices can feel impossible. But at

the same time, *only* a form of knowledge production that allows incommensurate voices to be heard, which reflects the multiplicity of perspectives in a super-diverse site, can begin to do justice to representing life in such a site. Such a form of knowledge production could be thought of as convivial in the sense defined by Nowicka and Heil (2015, 15), who suggest it 'encourages an analysis of situations in which people bridge all kinds of socially significant differences [and thus] directs our attention to precarious socialities that are fragile and subject to contestation and change'.

Implicit here, I think, is the tension between two different modes of 'representation', one associated with representative democracy and quantitative research, and one associated instead with both ethnography and the participatory turn. The former is based on a logic of sameness or identity, in which representatives are presumed to *resemble* (statistically or racially) the constituencies they supposedly represent, or to *stand in for* those constituencies. The latter is about actually attending to the content of the contentious voices arising from those constituencies. In the identitarian mode of representation, constituencies (such as 'the community') are understood to be unanimous, whereas the participatory mode of representation recognises that constituencies are multiple and that each voice is partial. In the participatory mode, representation is always incomplete, partially failed – but convivial tools, such as those practised by community development workers and ethnographers, enable us to fail better, an argument to which I will return in the conclusion.

The political economy of participation

My third proposition is that *the political economy that structures participation can also undo its transformative potential*. This is the case, for example, at the local scale, where the injunction to participate comes as a condition for the allocation of funds, as with New Labour regeneration programmes, such as Neighbourhood Renewal or the Single Regeneration Budget, or the Cameron government's attempts at localism under the banner of 'Big Society'. As noted above, such programmes often draw almost arbitrary borders on a map around zones earmarked for the allocation of scarce resources, thus calling into being new 'communities'. Competition for these resources, in a context in which the border between the inside and outside of a community is racialised, leads inevitably to racialised competition, and the power to define authentic belonging can become toxic.

Michael Keith (2005), building on Sennett's (1977) insight, uses the term *cannibalistic gemeinschaft* to describe the poisonous racialised battles over resources resulting from this. Researchers working in such fieldwork sites cannot be innocent in these battles, and often find the products of their research being used as weapons in them. I experienced this, for example, working on the evaluation of regeneration projects in Deptford, where activists who claimed to speak for 'the community' praised my work as providing an objective, scientific validation of their claims when my findings concurred with them – but criticised me as a partial, inauthentic outsider when my findings were at odds with their narratives (cf. Seetzen 2006).

In the face of this kind of cannibalistic gemeinschaft, the white coat of a positivist model of knowledge production – the claim to be objective or to have access to scientific 'representativeness' that trumps that of local activists – can be a defence of a researcher's independence: researchers can hide behind the cloak of 'science' to avoid the naming of ways in which their work is complicit. (For example, they – or, rather, we – will emphasise our 'robust' methods and our sampling techniques, and often pick 'models' of evaluation that come with rigorous-sounding capital letters, such as 'The Behavioural Objectives Approach', 'The Four-Level Model' or 'Realistic Evaluation'.)

But that protective cloak is less available to researchers working with ethnographic or participatory epistemologies. Convivial approaches, as Nowicka and Heil (2015) argue, emphasise the fleeting and the contested, and therefore the relative, contingent and unfixable nature of reality, which goes against the grain of the positivist will to grab hold of social reality and hold it in place. This was a lesson I learned when I was commissioned with colleagues to evaluate a Sure Start local programme on a south London estate. The management board of the Sure Start programme was dominated by white working-class women residents, but our research team was commissioned by their middle-class (and more ethnically diverse) employees to deliver a participatory research project that would engage and elicit the voices of some of the more marginalised mothers in the neighbourhood. We worked with the latter to jointly identify research questions about mothers' experiences of Sure Start services, then to jointly gather and analyse qualitative data and write up the findings. But when we presented it back to the resident management board, it was dismissed as 'unrepresentative', as 'just opinions'; because it was qualitative and not quantitative, it was not seen as 'real' research. The report was never published. Fail again.

The political economy of knowledge production

If, as Back (2009, 204) puts it, 'research itself gets enmeshed in the process of enacting community', academic labour can contribute to the narratives that reify community in exclusive ways, or it can subvert that reification. *The political economy of knowledge production itself can work to undo participation's transformative potential*. We can see this when participatory research is funded as part of a time-limited social policy programme – for example, by the local or national state, as with Sure Start or Neighbourhood Renewal in the examples I have already mentioned, or by the EU.

Genuine community development and meaningful local participation take time to embed, while annual and quarterly funding cycles and project delivery milestones work against this, making it impossible to involve co-researchers in an equitable and reciprocal way in determining research questions, analysing data and framing findings.

And there are a number of ways in which the political economy of the space of academia specifically can work against a participatory ethos. The slow, difficult work of building reciprocal relationships in the field is undermined by the imperative to publish rapidly. The definitions of academic excellence that 'count' in the scholarly labour market remain saturated with positivist conceptions of what constitutes 'real' research. And, as Les Back (2016, 155) puts it, 'the price of academic failure is increasing' in the context of the audit culture of the neo-liberal academy. Thus, for instance, the ethos of co-production and multiple authorship emerging from truly participatory and convivial tools is thwarted by the individualised quantification of academic success, including the valorisation of sole-authored outputs in particular disciplines.

Part 2: Failing better

Cultivating convivial craft skills

How, then, can we fail better? I will conclude this chapter by offering three possible strategies: cultivating craft skills, cultivating intellectual humility and valuing contention. First, I suggest we need to have *the patience to cultivate the craft skills of participatory research*. These are often craft skills practised more artfully by non-academic researchers, who draw on the repertoires of community organising and community

development or the creative arts, more than on social science methodology protocols. As with other elements of research craft, they start from everyday human capacities, particularly the capacity to listen.

The most vital of them in a context of urban diversity – because there is no meaningful conviviality without encounter across lines of difference – is the capacity to use the research process to hold – and hold open – a safe space in which competing and incommensurable claims to truth can be spoken, and where differences can be worked through. This is an argument that resonates with that articulated by Lisiak and Kaczmarek elsewhere in this volume, who suggest that failure can enable the researcher to make space for a more meaningful conviviality. My example here would be a piece of research I worked on with Sue Lelliot, Alison Rooke, Debbie Humphry and Martin Myers that we called the Newtown Neighbourhood Project (Gidley et al. 2008; Gidley and Rooke 2010). In the project, a team of both researchers and community workers in a housing estate with a large settled Gypsy/Traveller population[2] set out to use research to understand local priorities for change in the area, funded by the Housing Corporation. In this area, interethnic relations had been a central concern for residents, but utterly taboo in community forums. When we gave people permission to talk about these issues in a research context, there were difficult conversations, but out of these came a more cohesive, convivial neighbourhood.

Early in our project, we ran a Your Neighbourhood – You Said It focus session with a mixed group of Gypsy/Traveller and non-Gypsy/Traveller origin students at the local secondary school. When asking them to draw and describe their neighbourhood, several alluded to problems being caused by a group of people that they tagged with 'pikey', a term that is used as a derogatory description for people of Gypsy/Traveller origin. This term was used by both the students who identified as being of Gypsy/Traveller origins and those who did not. The discussion was passionate, and we were told *'We are not usually allowed to talk this way in school!'*

The session gave us a glimpse of subtly constructed interrelations between and within the (interwoven) Gypsy/Traveller and white English[3] populations, and that these played out through an assigning of blame for the perceived 'state of the neighbourhood'. We realised this discourse needed to be recognised and accounted for in our work, avoiding the taboo suggested by the comment that 'We are not usually allowed to talk this way'. While our funders and their stakeholders were interested in the project precisely because of the Traveller dimension, it was clear locally that a project badged as a Gypsy/Traveller project would contribute to

the competitive culture of blame – of cannibalistic gemeinschaft, to use Keith's (2005) phrase. Instead, we allowed the complex range of local discourses about identity to emerge organically in the research process, making it clear that no issues were taboo.

As we worked with resident participants, making it clear we valued their voices, we noticed a shift in these discourses: residents who had previously articulated a racialised blame discourse began to insist that the full range of voices on the estate be heard through the research, and then increasingly focused on what desires and hopes for the area residents shared in common, rather than on identities that divided them. This transformation was only possible because of the convivial craft skills in the research team. These craft skills included both established youth work and community development repertoires, and more contemporary participatory methodologies: an emphasis on oral rather than written contact, mobilising family networks, working in local neutral and familiar spaces, training peer researchers, drawing on local workers' 'ethnographic sensibility' (Berg et al. 2019) and local knowledge, and a developmental and inclusive ethos; but also peer research, participatory mapping, photovoice sessions, film projects, storytelling and interactive forums.

Deploying these skills takes time and patience, a point that resonates with the emerging call for 'slow' forms of science and scholarship (Back 2016; Berg and Seeber 2016; Goldstein 2012; Martell 2014; Mountz et al. 2015 – see also Lisiak and Kaczmarek in this volume).

Cultivating failure

Slowness, I suggest, is a form of intellectual humility that goes against the grain of the epistemological hubris embedded in both positivist forms of social science and the accelerated temporality of the neo-liberal academy. Thus, my second suggestion is that we need the courage to *cultivate and valorise forms of intellectual humility*. What might this look like? For one thing, it means insisting *that partial truths are truer to the reality of urban diversity than the hubristic claims of positivistic social science*. Positivist studies of urban diversity that claim to be able to stand above the messy metropolis to count and map its diverse populations inevitably miss the analogue fuzz of how people actually identify or actually interact in real time in real places. As Lisa Jane Disch (1994, 1) notes, positivism's 'Archimedean standpoint' is a fantasy; we all write 'from a specific location that affords only a partial perspective on his or her society'.

Attempts to capture the totality of any social space, and in particular highly complex, fractured, multiply diverse, multilingual sites characterised by incorrigible world views, will necessarily fail. These attempts can nonetheless be productive, but only if researchers have the humility to admit to the *partiality* – the located, perspectival nature – of their understanding. Arendt (1982, 42) spoke of a form of understanding that 'is not the result of some higher standpoint that would then actually settle [a] dispute by being altogether above the mêlée', but is instead 'obtained by taking the viewpoints of others into account' – or, as Disch (1994, 13) paraphrases it, venturing into a world to 'regard it from a plurality of unfamiliar perspectives'. Being honest about being partial tends closer to the truth than any fantasy of omniscience.

Similarly, valorising intellectual humility means insisting that *slow research is usually better research*. Long-term ethnographic immersion, building up an (albeit partial) understanding of each of the multiple perspectives on sites of diversity, is the only way of productively working with the necessary failure of such research. As the literature on conviviality shows, it is in 'local micropolitics of everyday interaction' (Amin 2002, 960), in banal daily habits (Sandercock 2003, 89), in 'the routine ways in which people live and negotiate cultural difference in everyday social and geographical settings' (Neal et al. 2013, 310), that we find the secrets of living together. Attending to the subtle rhythms and textures of quotidian life, the ever-changing patterning of interaction in time and space at a nanoscale (Berg et al. 2019) – in short, taking the time to research sites slowly – is required. Academic career expectations today, with the imperative to deliver a regular supply of research outputs, take a punitive stance towards such slow research, but it is surely an ethically better way of failing, despite the cost in career terms.

Valorising intellectual humility means insisting that *participatory and ethnographic notions of representativeness are valid on their own terms*. Statistical representativeness – what Hannah Pitkin (1967) called 'mirror' or 'descriptive' representation – cannot be the gold standard for all social science. Hubristic positivism judges ethnographic accounts and lay knowledge as 'anecdotal', as mere 'opinions', as in the example above of the research co-produced with Sure Start mothers. As Disch notes (1994, 13), though, derogatory references to 'story-telling' hubristically assume the possibility of the 'Archimedean standpoint'. Participatory and ethnographic notions of representativeness, which valorise the subaltern (or humble) art of storytelling, follow a different logic. In John Stuart Mill's terms, quantitative modes of representativeness – which he

called 'arithmetical' – are Platonic, while ethnographic and participatory modes – which he called 'rhetorical' – are Socratic: in the Socratic view, no one holds the right solution, human knowledge is fallible and 'knowledge is a searching enterprise without an ultimate end' (Urbinati 1999, 23).

Valorising intellectual humility means insisting that *the stories told by non-academic practitioners count as knowledge too*. Hilary Wainwright argues that this was a key insight of the 'in and against the state' social movements that emerged in the 1960s (such as second-wave feminism) and helped shape community development, community organising and youth work: these movements, she writes:

> were built on sharing the practical, everyday knowledge of their members … That knowledge was by its nature fragmentary, rooted in intuitions, emotions as well as ideas, in the things people do rather than only those they write down … Much of what women talked about at this time had never previously been considered 'knowledge', and yet it led to an explosion of criticism of existing public service and economic policies.
>
> (Wainwright 2003, 23)

In my work over the last two decades with street-level bureaucrats and middle managers in the public and voluntary sector, I have been struck again and again by the depth and nuance and granular detail of their knowledge of the populations they serve (Gidley 2007). While they may not use this language, many public and voluntary sector workers cultivate an *ethnographic sensibility* in relation to the sites where they work (Berg et al. 2019). This qualitative knowledge is threatened in an age of austerity by cuts and restructuring that remove workers from the sites in which they are grounded, which diminishes both their professional practice and the store of knowledge we have about urban diversity.

In a context of super-diversity, and its proliferation of incorrigible world views, we need modes of academic production that do justice to this multiplex reality, to its contradictions and paradoxes, to its contentious voices. Valorising intellectual humility means exploring the possibility that academic publishing needs to change to enable shared forms of authorship. Multilingual research teams, for example, or collaborations between academics and non-academics, are required to better attend to the diverse voices present in urban areas (Gidley 2013).

Valuing contention

> What they [the demos] bring to the community strictly speaking is contention.

> (Rancière 1999, 9)

Attending to contentious voices is at the heart of my final suggestion. We need to *embrace forms of conviviality and cohesion that have space for contention*. For Arendt, 'it is not consensus but the activity of interpretative contestation that sustains both the integrity of the public realm and its plurality' (Disch 1994, 104).

Hirschman argues that contention *produces* cohesion and trust (cited in Urbinati 1999, 26; cf. Honig 1995, 160). The New Deal for Communities programme in Marsh Farm, Luton, provides an interesting example. When issues of race were raised at neighbourhood forums, local authority officials tried to close this down, for fear of politically incorrect comments that would cause offence to minorities; resident activists insisted on letting people be heard, and residents with competing perspectives and grievances felt listened to and valued, and soon moved away from racialising discourses; the cannibalistic gemeinschaft described above was addressed, rather than allowed to fester (see Wainwright 2003). Similarly, in the Newtown example quoted above, we used the research process to hold open a space for contention, in which competing and incommensurable claims to truth could be spoken. Instead of closing down inappropriate voices and forcing the community to speak unanimously, thus producing silences and exclusions, we worked *through* difference. By airing grievances and resentments, by allowing for difference, residents found a more meaningful form of cohesion.

Supplementing an ethos of mixing or of conviviality (Wessendorf 2013; Simone 2004) with one of contention better captures the ambivalence of diverse sites. Meaningful contact is not always immediately amical. Mundane forms of reciprocity and trust, and the dexterity in navigating linguistic and cultural differences – hallmarks of conviviality and commonplace diversity – can thrive without challenging negative representations of others (Jensen and Gidley 2016). Convivial parochial spaces and public familiarity can be accompanied by private segregation (Blokland 2001; Wessendorf 2013), or even be predicated on the exclusion of others marked as not buying into an ethos of conviviality (as in Wessendorf's account of Hackney, where Orthodox

Jews and hipsters appear to be the constitutive outside against which convivial locals define themselves). Contention, in contrast, recognises the messiness, ambivalence and contingency of such places, the fact that togetherness is always accomplished in real time, and is not a programmed feature of places.

Returning to the four arguments I made in the first part of this chapter, valorising contention offers a way out of the ethical risks of participatory tools: a way of failing better. First, the injunction to participate – the tyranny of participation, as Cooke and Kothari (2001) called it – is mitigated when we value contention. If those participating (in neighbourhood projects or in participatory research) are permitted – or even expected – to be contradictory, to sometimes remain silent, participation might not be experienced as an injunction. 'Real dialogue', as Bauman (2016, n.p.) noted, 'isn't about talking to people who believe the same things as you'. Second, the reification of community is prevented when places are understood as inherently mixed and messy – as contentious – rather than as unanimous. Third, thin structures of participation imposed from above as part of area-based social policy programmes led by specific policy objectives are challenged when contention is opened up. Contentious participatory spaces allow for resistance and refusal, for residents to reorient the objectives. Fourth, when academics attend to contention in their representations of place, they cannot wear the cloak of scientific neutrality; the polished performances of positivist representation are subverted, and multiple-authored, co-produced and collaborative research finds its value. Valuing contention alongside conviviality allows participatory tools to fail far better.

Notes

1. Almost all of the projects on which I draw here involved collaborative research teams, and the empirical material on which I draw was produced through this collaboration, so I want to acknowledge my colleagues on whose work this chapter draws: Geraldine Blake, Anan Collymore, Debbie Humphry, Ole Jensen, Sue Lelliot, Michael Keith, Marjorie Mayo, Alison Rooke, Imogen Slater and Jess Steele.
2. These residents of Roma and non-Roma English and Irish Traveller background, often of mixed heritage, identified in several different ways, including as Gypsies, Romany and Travellers. Although some Roma people see 'Gypsy' as an inaccurate or derogatory term, this was the most commonly used self-identification locally. We used 'Gypsy/Traveller origin' as a generic and relatively neutral term for several possible permutations of identification. Although it was hard to produce accurate numbers, up to 40 per cent of the neighbourhood population fell into this category, and the area had a half-century history of Gypsy/Traveller resident presence.
3. White English was overwhelmingly the most common self-identification among non-Gypsy/Traveller origin residents.

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8

Making something out of nothing: On failure and hope in community activism and research

Agata Lisiak and Alicja Kaczmarek

Joseph Had a Little Overcoat, Simms Taback's adaptation of a Jewish folk tale, is a story about a resourceful man living in a shtetl somewhere in eastern Poland. Joseph's coat was old and worn, so he made a jacket out of it and, when that got old and worn as well, he turned it into a vest, then a scarf, then a necktie, then a handkerchief, then a button. Eventually, Joseph lost the button, and had nothing. Rather than falling into despair, he made a book about it, 'which shows … you can always make something out of nothing' (Taback 1999). Celebrating *bal tashchit*, an ethical principle of the Jewish law that condemns wastefulness, the little children's book serves as a manual of sorts for finding value in things that may not appear valuable at all.

Joseph's story cleverly captures the workings of resourcefulness, a strategy and practice on which we find ourselves repeatedly relying in our activist and academic activities. It also encourages us to pay attention to transformations and processes rather than merely looking at end products and outcomes. In this chapter, when reflecting on the processes of knowledge production opened up by our collaboration, we zoom in on the moments of failure and how we refuse to be defeated by them (see Back 2016, 155).

Social scientists working with creative and collaborative methods (Keith 2005; Jones et al. 2017; Back 2016) like to quote the following passage from Samuel Beckett's 'Worstward Ho': 'Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.' Academics have found it inspirational and liberating, as it allows one to rethink failure

not as something shameful, but rather as something that holds potential for something new, possibly better. Facing failure, engaging with it critically rather than disregarding it, is a gesture embedded in queer theory (Halberstam 2011) and feminist research, practice and activism (see Gunaratnam and Hamilton 2017), which have effectively complicated and questioned research methods. Measured by compatibility with standards set out by patriarchy and the neo-liberal market, success is not necessarily something we should aspire to; failure may be 'a better bet' (Halberstam 2011, 4). Rather than trying to succeed at all costs, we embrace failure as a space where new opportunities emerge, a space of learning and collaboration, a space for shared production of knowledge.

Recognising the appeal of Beckett's passage, we want to engage with what we think provides its backbone, even if it remains unnamed: hope. After all, why would anyone want to try again, after failing, if they did not hope they would succeed this (or next) time? In the opening chapter of her book on hope, Rebecca Solnit (2016, 11) quotes F. Scott Fitzgerald: 'one should … be able to see that things are hopeless and yet be determined to make them otherwise'. During our collaboration, when we failed, we also recognised the hopelessness of the situation – it was impossible to improve things then and there – but we did not want to let all the work (not just our own, but primarily the work of people who offered us their time and attention) go to waste. As 'hope and action feed each other' (Solnit 2016, 11), we did not fall into despair, but decided to act: even if we had to change or postpone things along the way, even if our original vision proved to be impossible to realise.

The process of facing and overcoming obstacles necessitates inventiveness and resourcefulness. We do not mean to romanticise this necessity, but we also do not want to ignore the fun and intellectual stimulation it produces. To Solnit (2016, xv), 'hope is an embrace of the unknown and the unknowable', and while that can and does produce anxiety, it can also yield excitement and new ideas. Recognising this uncertainty means also acknowledging individual and collective ability to influence the outcomes of what you are setting out to do. Solnit's argument should not be confused with a motivational mantra or a neo-liberal slogan (although similar phrases are known to have been used in both). Rather, she draws attention to 'the spaciousness of uncertainty' we face and sees in it 'room to act' (Solnit 2016, xv).

Uncertainty is inherent to academia and activism both more generally (what is our potential impact in the world? how will our research outcomes be used? what is the next thing we will need to mobilise against? where is our next funding coming from?), and when it comes

to individual practices (how many people will show up to the event we are organising? will the method we designed work the way we think it should?); it yields frustration and anxiety. Embracing the unknown, as Solnit urges, may thus not seem particularly appealing to those of us who experience uncertainty fatigue (see Gill 2010). And yet, we have seen it work – or, rather, we made it work – and consider it an integral part of the knowledge production that emerges from our collaboration. As Halberstam (2011, 3) argues, 'under certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world'. Necessitated by failure, our resourcefulness has led to experimentation with the methods and approaches we thought we knew and, consequently, to new research questions. Failure also forced us to be more reflexive and flexible, and opened us up to the challenges to our theoretical positions and activist agendas (cf. England 1994).

In this chapter, we discuss how resourcefulness, creativity and, above all, hope-driven refusal to give in to what seems to be a failure, are, for us, an integral part of convivial research, and the driving force behind community activism and academic research. We reflect on how 'failed' research collaborations between academic and non-academic actors inspired the design of a framework for focus group interviews, as well as social action events. While not exactly a manual, this chapter discloses practices, mechanisms and tactics that emerged during the design and application of creative and collaborative methods in social activism and research. In response to the question posed by Magdalena Nowicka and Tilmann Heil 'whether conviviality can be *achieved* (socially engineered) at all, or whether it is just going to happen' (Nowicka and Heil 2016, 13, original emphasis), we propose – in the spirit of hope evoked by Solnit – to think of the practices and tactics we employ as convivial tools: conceived and developed to facilitate convivial situations, open and modifiable enough to let conviviality happen.

Who are we and how we got here

Alicja is an activist and social entrepreneur based in Birmingham. Since 2009, she has been working as the managing director of the Polish Expats Association (PEA), where she plans and implements projects related to the Eastern European community and manages a team of workers and collaborators. PEA's mission is to empower Eastern European migrants in the UK by encouraging them to get involved in local communities. PEA's

vision of society is one in which everyone feels included and able to fully exercise their rights while retaining their own particular culture. The PEA team seeks to identify the skills and knowledge that may help migrants to live their lives fully, with pride and dignity, in their new places of residence. PEA's main activities are focused in the project space Centrala in Digbeth (since 2015). While PEA's overall aim and mission apply to both Centrala space and outreach projects (such as the Erdington Welcome Centre, 2016–18), the approaches to achieving them may differ, and the activities they organise are addressed to different audiences. The outreach projects provide practical skills and information for recent migrants, helping them to understand and ease into life in Birmingham. Centrala seeks to create a positive environment for migrant communities to thrive artistically and socially, and to present Eastern European art and culture to wider audiences. Both the outreach projects and Centrala could be regarded as convivial spaces in that they facilitate interactions and behaviours that create a sense of community, connection and closeness (hooks 2003) – even if only temporary – among their visitors and staff (Nowicka and Vertovec 2014; Laurier and Philo 2006).

Agata is an academic based in Berlin. As a postdoctoral researcher in the ERC-funded project TRANSFORmIG[1] (2013–17) at Humboldt University, she was investigating how recent Polish migrants from cities that are largely homogeneous in terms of ethnicity and religion make sense of, and come to terms with, the much greater diversity they encounter in British and German cities (Nowicka 2017; Nowicka and Krzyżowski 2016; Lisiak 2017). Recognising the many complexities inherent to migrants' experiences of diversity in urban and transnational spaces, the TRANSFORmIG team chose a mixed-methods approach in order to generate not more, but various kinds of, data. The methods applied by TRANSFORmIG researchers include a qualitative longitudinal (three waves) study with semi-structured and narrative interviews, surveys, network analysis, mapping and focus group interviews, as well as visual and creative methods (Nowicka 2015; Krzyżowski 2017; Lisiak 2013).

We first met in Birmingham in June 2014. Being familiar with the many workshops, exhibitions and other events that PEA organised, Agata approached Alicja to talk about potential ways of collaborating that could benefit both the community to which PEA caters and the research Agata was conducting within TRANSFORmIG. Alicja was interested in involving Polish migrants in creative activities that would increase their visibility in the city and facilitate intercultural dialogue. Following up on TRANSFORmIG's earlier interviews in the city, Agata was keen to

further investigate the meanings that Birmingham's migrant residents attach to various places in the city and to find out where, essentially, *their* Birmingham is.

After our first meeting in Birmingham, we stayed in touch via email and Skype, and, several months into these exchanges, we started brainstorming ideas for potential cooperation. We eventually agreed that the best way to satisfy our academic and activist interests was to organise a photography and mapping workshop, followed by a gathering and an exhibition of the work produced in the process – an event, we hoped, that would seem attractive to Birmingham's Poles. Agata ran the workshop script by the research team and TRANSFORmIG's ethical adviser and, upon receiving approvals, we started preparing for the event. We bought art supplies and maps, made a list of people to contact, and started advertising the workshop through social media and mailing lists. We had a title, a date, a place; we discussed various scenarios and potential challenges; we were ready – or so we thought. And then no one came.

Challenges, failure, hope

In the months leading up to our collaboration, and during the event we eventually put together, we faced several challenges. Aside from our busy schedules, it did not exactly help that we were based in two different countries. While video calls worked well for catching up and some basic planning, they did not, and could not, replace sitting together at a table, coffee in hand, sketching out the details of our collaboration. It was not until Agata returned to Birmingham in May 2015 that we could start working properly. We looked at Centrala, checked the equipment, moved around tables and chairs, and discussed which walls could be used for the exhibit. Yet, very soon it became clear that the workshop would not happen on the original date we had planned, a few days after Agata's arrival in the city. We had received only one application. We failed.

Neither of us were rookies when it comes to organising events of this kind, so the low turnout was somewhat surprising and, indeed, disappointing. As Alicja remarked upon this failure, events addressed specifically to the Polish diaspora do not tend to be very well attended. Alicja identified two main reasons that may explain the difficulty in attracting local Polish audiences. First, the Polish community in Birmingham is isolated, and does not tend to participate in wider society; Polish migrants in Birmingham are dispersed, without common interest groups. Second, Birmingham's labour market relies on migrant manual workers, and is

characterised by long, unsociable hours that make it particularly hard for people to get involved in community events. Additionally, based on TRANSFORmIG's research, Agata observed that Polish migrants' social lives in Birmingham tend to centre around acquaintances and friendships made with other Poles at workplaces – they thrive in private circles without formal institutional settings. The Poles who get involved in associations and initiatives do not necessarily choose those specifically addressed to the Polish community, but to Birmingham residents at large. Our workshop idea, advertised to Birmingham's Poles, probably did not seem attractive to either of these groups.

Besides these reasons, another important factor played a role in our failure: judging in retrospect, we were acting in a rush. We set the date that worked for both of us and that could potentially work for participants, making sure it was not a national or school holiday. Focused on efficient planning, we underestimated the value of personal contact, talking things over, being silent together, talking some more. The hours we spent at a coffee table at Centrala were not included in our schedules, but proved to be the most important part of the preparations. The lesson we took out of it was to try to shake the neo-liberal logic of apparent efficiency we had embodied against our will, and to think of ways of 'interrupting this rushed temporality' (Back and Puwar 2012, 14).

Sitting together at Centrala, we went through our workshop script again, and discussed how we could make it more attractive to potential participants and how we could address not only Birmingham's Poles, but also African and Asian asylum seekers living in the city. Based on Alicja's observations, Polish migrants and African and Asian asylum seekers hardly ever interact with each other in Birmingham. Around the time of our meeting, Centrala was beginning to establish itself locally as a convivial space bringing together different publics – different in terms of ethnicity, nationality, religion and migration history – interested in art, music, discussions and activism; and its cosy cafe attracted passers-by, as well as people working in the neighbourhood. As a place where people can be 'sociable and festive' (Shaftoe 2008, 5), Centrala seemed a perfect location to host our workshop and facilitate convivial situations.

Whereas in the original script we asked potential participants to send us their photographs, this time we thought of having two workshops: one to help participants familiarise themselves with photography – and each other – and another one to exhibit and discuss the work they delivered. Alicja suggested we pair up with a photographers' collective with whom she had previously collaborated on a different project, which would give the participants an opportunity to work with professionals on developing

their photographic skills. We hoped these workshops would lead to both structured and spontaneous exchanges on everyday life in Birmingham, and facilitate connections, perhaps even friendships, between the participants. The curated interactions in Centrala aimed at overcoming the categories attached to the participants (EU migrants, asylum seekers, white migrants and racialised migrants) (Gilroy 2004), rendering racial, religious and other differences commonplace (Valluvan 2016), and creating 'a possibility for relating to each other beyond "claims and denials"' (Nowicka and Vertovec 2014, 346).

We recruited Polish participants through PEA's network and snowballing. They came from various parts of Birmingham, some from the suburbs, and most of them had not known each other before the workshop. Unlike the rather dispersed Polish migrant community, asylum seekers in Birmingham are grouped together in asylum homes; they are prohibited from working, but actively encouraged by the charities who support them to get involved in community activities of the kind PEA organises. The asylum seekers who took part in the workshop were recruited through two charities. They came as a group, and most of them already knew each other. From the community work perspective, the main aim of the workshop was to animate people who are identified, or themselves identify, as migrants or asylum seekers to work together. We wanted to create a space where people with various migration trajectories and statuses would capture and share their everyday experiences and reflect on the commonalities, differences and overlaps in their lives in Birmingham. As feelings of connection and closeness (hooks 2003) cannot thrive in situations marked by asymmetries of power, research and activism need to be committed to *treating people like people* and 'not as mere mines of information to be exploited by the researcher as the neutral collector of "facts"' (England 1994; see also Stanley and Wise 1993). Indebted to participatory action research (Erel et al. 2017a; Erel et al. 2017b; Lykes and Hershberg 2014) and feminist theory and activism (hooks 2003; Solnit 2016; Stanley and Wise 1993), we aimed at facilitating a safe, inclusive space that would challenge narrow representations of migrants and asylum seekers, 'value all voices' (Erel et al. 2017b, 6) and facilitate production of shared knowledge.

The first workshop, run by the photographers, centred on developing participants' technical skills. Towards the end of the workshop, we asked the participants to explore the city with a digital or mobile phone camera and to take photographs of things, people and situations they felt particularly drawn to, as well as those they did not like. We prepared a list of questions and prompts that – we expected – would both make the

photography assignment more structured for the participants and help us to plan the second workshop better. On the following weekend, the participants would bring their memory cards or mobile phones to Centrala and print out up to five selected photographs each on the printers provided by the photographers. As we were soon to find out, most participants disregarded the proposed prompts and only took photographs of the places in the city they liked. In turn, as moderators of the second workshop, we had to improvise and rely on our resourcefulness and the participants' good will.

During the second workshop, the photographers' team providing the equipment for printing out participants' photographs arrived much later than planned. While we experienced the waiting as frustrating, it also allowed us to spend more time with individual participants, to talk to them beyond exchanging pleasantries, and to meet their families – to simply spend time together. After the photographers arrived and the printing started, we realised that the workshop format would have to be adjusted to the circumstances: while several Polish migrants were busy installing the freshly printed photographs on Centrala's exhibition wall, it turned out that only one of the asylum seekers provided a photograph. Whereas she was eager to discuss the image in detail, it was not exactly the convivial exchange we were hoping to create: the Polish migrants were the dominant group among the speakers while the asylum seekers watched from the back seats. We therefore shifted focus from the creative part to socialising, and facilitated interactions that would involve all those who were present, not only those who presented their photographs.

Only two participants provided photographs of what they considered to be 'negative' situations: increased police presence in the city centre and a busy shopping street. The majority of the participants focused on the places and people they liked, and photographed their family and friends, parks, urban wildlife, a back garden. As they explained, they found little meaning in taking photographs of things, situations or places they did not like. We could relate very well to this remark, and wished we had been able to find ways of involving the participants in the workshop design right from the start. We felt drawn to this more intensively collaborative option during our preparations, but dismissed it as we did not think it fair to ask participants to devote even more of their time than they were already willing to give.

The second workshop ended with a reflection on what the photography and mapping exercises helped us all understand about the city, about ourselves and about each other. Despite the fact that many things did not go as planned, the workshop participants and the family

and friends they brought along with them seemed to enjoy the event very much, and we received extremely positive feedback during the reception and goodbyes. From PEA's perspective, the most valuable outcome of the workshop was the relationships it established with the asylum seekers' community, which, as we will discuss in the next section of this chapter, now continues to be developed through other projects at Centrala.

As Halberstam (2011, 12) notices, clearly set goals and definite methods developed for their achievement can 'stymie the process of discovery' and 'block one's ability to learn something that exceeds the frameworks with which one enters'. The 'failed' workshop encouraged us to seriously reconsider the many temporal aspects of collaborative research: the amount of time needed for preparation (as well as what counts as preparation, and who should be involved in this process); the social value that slowly emerges through a series of meetings in contrast to the more fleeting character of one-time events; the importance of 'taking time' to simply hang out with participants and collaborators, to get to know each other, and to let new ideas emerge from these interactions.

We also learned several things about what is likely to make an event seem appealing to potential participants. In Birmingham, as Alicja notices, it is particularly difficult – in comparison to other British cities with Polish diasporas – to win Polish migrants' support for community and social events. Workshops aiming at developing artistic and leisure interests and community building tend to be dismissed as 'a waste of time'. As people work long or unsociable hours, after which they attend to housework and caring responsibilities, they may not feel compelled to devote time to activities that do not seem to bring anything 'concrete' in return.

Failure and hope: Lessons for activism

As became clear in the course of the 'failed' photo event, it is particularly difficult to get people to engage in a workshop with a formal, structured set-up. It is equally challenging to get participants involved in the planning and design of workshops, as that would necessitate an even greater commitment and take up more of their time. Further, we noticed that the organisers' expectations diverted considerably from those voiced by the participants, which reinforced our awareness of the necessity of clear communication at all stages of cooperation (admittedly, the awareness itself does not solve the problem, so we continue to learn from failure with each event we put together). In the project that followed the photo

workshop, PEA tried to address these challenges directly by incorporating possible solutions into the design and planning process.

In the spring of 2015, PEA invited Małgorzata Dawidek, a Polish artist living in the UK, to collaborate with Centrala. The artist developed a multimedia project titled 'Conversio' collecting life stories of women who – for various political, economic, personal and other reasons – had been forced to settle into new social, cultural and economic conditions. As in the case of the photo workshop, the art project also intended to bring together migrants and asylum seekers who typically do not interact with each other in intimate settings; the difference this time was that we addressed the event specifically to women. PEA recruited participants through the same charity working with asylum seekers with whom we had worked on the photo workshop, as well as individual invitations. As an open call for participation did not prove to be very effective in the case of the photo workshop, PEA did not publish one, but relied on established networks instead.

In PEA's collaboration with Dawidek, we drew on the lessons learned from the photo workshop. We made sure to devote more time to preparation. We met with the artist several times, and she met with prospective participants even before they came to Centrala. We also insisted on the longitudinal character of this project: we agreed it should not be a one-time event, but a series of meetings, talks, workshops and art events. The prolonged and repeated meetings would allow the collaborators and participants to have more interactions that, we hoped, would lead to meaningful exchanges and learning from each other's experiences.

Through a series of individual conversations, as well as art and literary workshops, Dawidek invited migrant and asylum-seeking women of various ages, nationalities and ethnicities to share their biographies with her. As most of the participants were in the process of settling into economic, cultural and social conditions very different from their places of origin, the artist – a migrant woman herself – focused on the efforts, tactics and negotiations that went into getting used to making new lives in Britain. The workshops animated the participants to explore visual and lyrical forms of expression to convey the elements of their stories that they considered most relevant for the project; the participants themselves determined the shape of their stories and their presentation. The artist collected these outputs and incorporated them into video animations, which she then included in the multimedia exhibition that she developed for Centrala. The project's title was a crucial element of this endeavour as it focused on exchange between the participants and – in

the artist's own words – drew attention to the female body as a repository of memory, palimpsest and historical medium.

'Conversio' proved to be very successful and resonated well, both with the participants and wider audiences. With community engagement at its core, the project provided an opportunity for migrant and asylum-seeking women to have their voices heard. The exhibition helped Centrala gain reputation as a convivial safe space where everyone is welcome and where intercultural dialogue takes place in a friendly atmosphere. Following the art event, Centrala has been repeatedly chosen as a space for meetings, discussions, workshops and fundraisers, which have consequently put it on Birmingham's map as a centre for art and political discussions around migration, beyond its original Eastern European focus. This increased recognition of PEA's activities has also helped us to win more funding for other projects and initiatives. PEA's collaboration with the artist further emphasised the importance of long-term and repeated engagement in community-based projects and made it clear that there should be no shortcuts when it comes to working with people. It takes time to build good relationships, and good relationships are necessary to achieve meaningful community and academic results.

Failure and hope: Lessons for academia

After an internal evaluation of the Birmingham workshop, the TRANS-FORmIG researchers decided that some of its elements could lend themselves to application in other research settings and methods. The team reworked parts of the workshop script and modified it to fit a focus group interview (FGI) in Berlin. Having coded and analysed the interview material from TRANSFORmIG's first wave, which focused on everyday practices in the city, we identified several points we thought needed more exploration: migrants' familiarity with local discourses on individual neighbourhoods; mobility within the city and everyday uses of urban space; migrants' understandings of various urban phenomena and processes (such as ethnic and religious diversity or gentrification) and how they associate these with specific locations in the city; and transnational transfers related to urban living and encounters. As all these points could not possibly be approached through a single technique (Moore et al. 2008), we designed a three-part FGI whereby the shaping of each section was driven by three clusters of theoretical and empirical questions. The part inspired by the Birmingham workshop consisted of photo

elicitation and mapping, and focused on spatialities and temporalities of migrants' encounters with diversity (Amin 2012; Berg and Sigona 2013; Lisiak 2017).

The FGI took place in a meeting room of an association that offers social and legal services to Polish migrants in Berlin. Drawing lessons from the Birmingham event, we made sure to take our time, meet with the association representatives several times, brainstorm for a collaborative event we had in mind and discuss everything in detail. As we initially wanted to invite people to submit their own photographs through an online platform, we consulted with ethical and legal advisers about our plans, and received their approval. We secured a space for an exhibition of the selected photographs. We had initial ideas about how to involve participants in the workshop and exhibition design. We had everything planned and a sense that we could rely on our collaboration partners, but the number of applications we received was not enough to conduct an FGI. We had assumed that in the age of social media and proliferation of images, our contacts would be eager to submit photographs, but they were not. The most common explanation we heard from those who declined our invitation was that they simply did not have enough time. We failed again, but we failed better. We still liked the script designed for the FGI workshop; the only – and, admittedly, the most important – things that were missing were the images. Yet, as we realised during our brainstorming session, those we could supply ourselves. Of course, it would be a different kind of exercise and we would not organise an exhibition, but we could still work with the (slightly altered) script and generate stimulating discussions. As it turned out, this 'emergency' strategy developed in response to failure worked well: people showed much more interest, and registered for the FGI.

Putting methods at the service of theoretical concerns remains a common approach in social sciences, and it is difficult to shake as it is prominently featured in methodological handbooks and methods seminars, as well as in research funding guidelines. Yet, methods are not merely tools that can be used to produce specific kinds of data for testing selected theories; methods also convey social and intellectual change, and are thus an integral part of knowledge production (Latham and McCormack 2009; Back and Puwar 2012; Erel et al. 2017a). Our failure to attract photograph submissions allowed us to appreciate our own photo archives as potential research tools. Granted, the use of researchers' photographs in research situations is by no means 'new' (Harper 2002; Knowles and Sweetman 2004), but it has proven inventive (Lury

and Wakeford 2012), in that it helped us not only investigate, but also engage the social world of which we, in our capacities as researchers and urbanites, are part.

As photographs are polysemic (Barthes 1987), they generate multiple meanings and emotions in those who view them, and can yield rich data (Woodley-Baker 2009, 26). When participants talk about the meanings of photographs, 'they try to figure out something together' (Harper 2002, 23), which may to lead to a negotiated under-standing (Heisley and Levy 1991) of what they see. Researchers work-ing with photo elicitation generally identify two main approaches to this method, with pictures being taken by researchers or participants (Moore et al. 2008). The former is theory-driven; the latter, more inductive in its nature, allows researchers insight into participants' inner worlds (Moore et al. 2008) or provides access to their habitus (Bourdieu 2005; Back 2009). The approach to photo elicitation we took in the FGI is research driven. Based on the coding and analysis of the interview material from the first wave, we identified the themes and motifs related to encounters with diversity and everyday prac-tices. From the interview material, we selected a range of embodied markers of diversity (ethnicity, sexuality and age, for example) and a list of urban phenomena to which participants refer in their discus-sions on diversity (such as migrant infrastructures, dirt, built envi-ronment, street art and graffiti, and gentrification). Then we turned to our research and private photograph archives to look for images corresponding to the selected markers and phenomena.

We received an overwhelmingly positive response to the FGI, par-ticularly the photo elicitation part. The participants were engaged and the discussions were lively. The event also encouraged our research team to appreciate our own photo archives for their research poten-tial. Researchers use digital cameras and mobile phones equipped with cameras for various purposes: photography and video may be inscribed in methodological frameworks (photo walks, photo elicita-tion, videography) and research dissemination (visual essays, blogs, conference presentations, exhibitions), but also in everyday 'back-stage' activities, such as taking visual field notes. Whereas some visual notes are explicitly research related, others, conceived initially as private photographs or visual diaries, may seem irrelevant for one's research, but turn out to be useful or inspirational at a later point – our failure to gather photoraph submissions from participants helped us to realise their relevance.

Failing better: Notes on convivial time

Even if it is often accompanied by disappointment and despair, Halberstam (2011, 3) sees failure as a form of resistance to the neo-liberal notion of productivity and 'the toxic positivity of contemporary life'. Today, when we look back at the workshop we put together, and other events that were inspired by our original collaboration, we appreciate our initial, as well as later, failures as sources of inspiration and as necessary correctives to our methodological approaches. To us, failure has created a space that enabled development of new ideas and new relationships, a space for reflection on our academic and activist practice. Despite pressure from funding agencies to clearly define goals and prospective outcomes, we insist that it is not possible to produce *all* questions and approaches before starting research or community activism. Some questions – perhaps the best questions – emerge from experimenting on the ground.

One important lesson we have learned during our collaboration is to give our ideas more time to develop. During our video calls and later exchanges and preparations, we found ourselves repeatedly falling into an organising mode, which often overshadowed the thinking mode. Our recognition of the need to slow down and make time for thinking together, thinking collaboratively, is in line with the recent calls for slow scholarship that voice a commitment 'to good scholarship *and* a feminist politics of resistance to the accelerated timelines of the neoliberal university' (Mountz et al. 2015, 1238). The effort to take time is also, in fact, one of the prerequisites for urban conviviality. As we discussed earlier in this chapter, conviviality requires a certain extent of openness and connection, even if only temporary. It takes time to open up. It takes time to connect. While it is common to think of conviviality in relation to space (cf. Shaftoe 2008), the temporal aspects of conviviality are often underplayed or entirely overlooked. Our chapter is an invitation to think critically not only of convivial spaces, but also of *convivial times*, and of tools that can help us facilitate or make sense of both.

Advocates of slow scholarship encourage us not only to 'slow thinking down' (Back 2016, 11), but also to take time to rethink structures of power and inequality (Martell 2014). In retrospect, we would have liked to involve participants more closely in the planning, execution and evaluation of our activities, and render our methods more sociable (Sinha and Back 2014). And yet, regardless of how strongly we feel drawn to sociable methods, we also recognise the many organisational challenges they entail. Involving participants in the design of our activities and methods is likely to have been exciting for them and for us, but it would

also have required even more work, more time, and more commitment on the part of the participants than they had already been kind enough to offer. Our limited activist and academic budgets did not allow for adequate compensation of participants' time. Although we were able to provide some provisions (food, beverages, free childcare and bus tickets in Birmingham; refreshments and modest honoraria in Berlin), we understand that these are the bare minimum, and would have not sufficed if we were to request extensive involvement from participants. Many of the inventive, collaborative methods that have emerged in recent years are work-intensive for participants (Sinha and Back 2014; Lury and Wakeford 2012). Even if this kind of work is pleasurable, even if it provides many intellectual and emotional rewards, it is still work and needs to be recognised as such (McRobbie 2016; Tokumitsu 2015). Whereas Shamser Sinha and Les Back (2014) carefully interrogate the power dynamics of collaborative research endeavours and address the questions of authorship, representation, recognition and agency, we should also look into how participants' work is remunerated, if at all, and at the impact that has on the collaborative process.

PEA is usually able to organise free childcare and refreshments, but it does not pay for participation in the workshops it organises. The remuneration for participation in research activities offered by universities or research funding agencies is modest, and not enough to attract greater support for such initiatives. Also, as Alicja observes, the number of research projects aimed at migrants and asylum seekers has increased tremendously in recent years, especially after the Brexit vote in June 2016. Alicja has noted a certain fatigue and disillusionment with research and researchers among Birmingham's migrant communities. People are simply tired of engaging in activities that seem to deliver little or nothing in return. When developing convivial tools for research and activism, we should remain aware of how both have been saturated, and how said tools could potentially be employed to work actively against this process.

Facing failure, we needed to improvise and reformulate our goals, reassess our means and rethink our priorities. In the process, we came to appreciate the importance of the socialising aspects of our practice, and the knowledge that emerges from them. The many talks we had with research partners and participants, and the hours spent hanging out, have led us to discover the ordinary, slow, unspectacular side of conviviality – one that may not easily fit into funding schemes, and may be difficult to account for in reports.

Like Joseph's overcoat, our initial idea for collaboration turned into many different things. And now we have written a chapter about it,

which shows that, indeed, you can always make something out of nothing. Writing this piece helped us reflect on the importance of process and iteration (failing better) in convivial research and activism, and of decentring the focus on goals and outcomes. We came to appreciate our activist and research methods as parts of the thinking process, not as mere instruments. More than anything, however, this chapter has encouraged us to cultivate hope and 'a feeling of community' (hooks 2003) – we hope it will have a similar effect on the readers.

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9

Ethnographies of urban encounters in super-diverse contexts: Insights from Shepherd's Bush, west London

Adele Galipo

Introduction

In this chapter, I take the opportunity to reflect on some of the challenges I faced while researching both conviviality and transnational connections in an urban area. I draw on ethnographic material collected during research in a super-diverse context, mainly in the ward of Shepherd's Bush Green, in the Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, west London. More specifically, during fieldwork, one question became prominent: how can I look at conviviality in a localised context while also remaining alert to transnational connections? Put differently, how are everyday local encounters embedded into transnational dynamics?

My intervention here lies at the intersection of two strands of research. The first is the recent convivial turn in urban studies that, drawing mainly on Paul Gilroy's (2004) work, looks at super-diverse contexts and the ways in which people negotiate lived diversity in localised urban spaces (Gidley 2013; Neal et al. 2013). The second is the transnationalism paradigm in migration studies, which emerged in the early 1990s (Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Glick Schiller et al. 1995). This turn has moved away from binary understandings of migrants' movements to highlight the multidimensional and cross-border aspects in which migrants' practices are embedded. Here, I want to emphasise the interlinkages between these two strands of literature, and reflect on the ways

migrant transnationalism informs modes of living together in localised urban spaces. The underlying premise is that a transnational perspective that looks at the mobility of people and their complex transnational networks will help us go beyond a lurking 'methodological neighbourhoodism' (Berg et al. 2019) of the convivial turn.

In the first part of this chapter, I will discuss the almost total absence of a transnational lens within studies of conviviality and their focus on the 'locality of relations'. Drawing on some examples from my ethnographic engagement in Shepherd's Bush, I argue that the 'transnational variable' does play out in the way people relate to each other locally. This forces us to reconsider the neighbourhood as a plural and relational space where diverse residents interact (Cattacin 2009). In the second part of the chapter, I will introduce my fieldwork and discuss some of the methodological questions I had to grapple with practically and conceptually when looking at both practices of conviviality and transnational connections. More specifically, I explain how certain nodes have emerged as preferred research 'sites' (Olwig and Hastrup 1997), and how mobility and transnational connections intersect in the urban area. In the third and final section, I offer some reflections on the ethics of doing research in diverse urban contexts and the many challenges that still remain. Here, I also come back to the link between conviviality and transnationalism, and outline how a combined approach holds the potential to rejuvenate migration research.

Beyond methodological neighbourhoodism: Conviviality, transnationalism and the missing link

Much of the sociological, anthropological and geographical work emerging in the last decade within the 'convivial turn' places the city – and most particularly the neighbourhood – at the core of its analysis, following the path traced by urban sociologists, and in particular those within the Chicago School in the early twentieth century. By bringing into focus other markers of social differentiation, research conducted within the convivial turn has allowed a shift in the focus of analysis from studies of specific ethnic groups in specific places to studies of localised forms of diversity (Vertovec 2006; Beck 2011; Berg and Sigona 2013; Meissner and Vertovec 2015). In this regard, many ethnographic studies of conviviality do not focus on ethnicity at all. Laurier and Philo's (2006, 204) ethnography on 'gestures of conviviality' in cafes, for instance, is not at all concerned with ethnic groups and shows that these are places where it is possible to

detect 'unremarked dimensions of how the work of conviviality is actually accomplished on a momentary, situated and improvised basis'. In the same vein, many studies of conviviality frequently result in the analysis of mundane encounters at a neighbourhood level. Yet, convivial studies often remain confined within the spatiality of neighbourhood analyses (Berg 2014). More broadly, by focusing on mundane local encounters, and by favouring the study of micro-politics and the micro-dynamics in a particular space, the study of conviviality in diverse contexts tends to leave out the transnational aspects of people's lives. With the exception to some extent of the work of Heil (2014) and Nowicka (2015), the diasporic and transnational variable has not been fully explored by scholars of conviviality, despite the fact that migrants' transnational practices significantly contribute to shaping the dynamics of people's interactions at the local level.

Such transnational practices have been emphasised by scholars who outline that migrants maintain relations across vast distances, both in time and space, beyond national borders (Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Glick Schiller et al. 1995). In the early 1990s, the transnationalism paradigm emerged in particular through the work of North American anthropologists Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller and Cristina Szanton Blanc, who moved away from binary understandings of migrants' movements to highlight the multidimensional and cross-border aspects in which migrants' practices are embedded. The word 'transmigrant' was introduced to refer to people who develop and maintain multiple relations beyond cultural and geographic boundaries, whose identity is linked to networks running simultaneously across several nation states (Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Portes 1999; for a critical evaluation of this literature, see Monsutti 2004, 27–54). In a 'transnational social field' (Faist 2000), transmigrants develop and maintain multiple relations – familiar, economic, social, religious or political – that cross state borders. It is thus possible to observe the multiple mobilities and the creation of 'circulatory territories' that form a system where localised social relations may be less meaningful for individuals than the ones developed across distant places (Tarrius 2002). Transnational connections that migrants maintain upset the idea of hermetically sealed neighbourhoods and situate diverse inhabitants in multiple, interpenetrating scales of relationality (Glick Schiller 2012). Here, the contribution of Glick Schiller (2012) in trying to establish a link between urban studies and migrant transnationalism has been particularly important. In her work on transnationality and the city, she shows how urban life is actually informed by migrants' transnational practices and, conversely, how migrant pathways of settlement

and transnational connections are shaped by the position of cities within neo-liberal processes of local, national, regional and global rescaling. In her words:

> Analysing cities through a comparative and global lens defines migrants and people of migrant background who live in a city as local actors rather than within binaries of native/foreign or citizen/ outsider or legal/illegal. People of migrant background live within configurations of wealth, power, education, family and forms of cosmopolitan sociabilities that are part and parcel of the varying transnationality of cities.
>
> (Glick Schiller 2012, 28)

In Shepherd's Bush, urban life is visibly informed by transnational practices. People inhabiting the area navigate through multiple relations that span across the locality of the ward. Indeed, transnational connections play an important place in people's daily activities. Let us take, for example, the numerous money transfer agencies located in the area. Alongside Uxbridge Road – one of the two main roads that shape the topography of the ward – I counted five Dahabshiil[1] branches, ten Western Union agencies and one Amal Express[2] service point, to name just a few. Many shops have small painted signs in front of them that recall their link with the homeland, such as Jubba Express, Damas Gate, Lahore Spice and Nepal dining.[3] Transnational connections play out significantly in the way people relate to each other locally. Tensions in the area have sometimes been a reflection of dynamics that characterise relations across communities in their respective countries of origin. For instance, as argued by one of my interlocutors, there have been cases where tensions have arisen between Somali and Ethiopian residents due to the territorial and political dispute over the Ogaden, a region in the Horn of Africa contested by both Ethiopia and Somalia. This example clearly shows how conflicts happening elsewhere influence local conviviality and the way people negotiate everyday encounters.

Overall, incorporating a transnational perspective into studies of conviviality not only directs our attention to the highly complex, fractured and multilayered relations that people maintain across various places, but also helps to overcome what Berg et al. (2019) have called 'methodological neighbourhoodism', referring a strict and sometimes limited focus on the neighbourhood level as the context of analysis in the study of conviviality. Going beyond 'methodological neighbourhoodism'

entails taking into account the ways in which certain sites in the neighbourhood are marked by mobility and transnational connections. The examples outlined above emphasise that, if we want to understand urban dynamics of living together in a localised space, we need to be ready to look beyond this space – which changes continually and whose inhabitants are mobile – and start our analysis from the people and their practices *in* a territory, not *from* the territory itself. Transnational scholarship teaches us to perceive local communities as open. In urban contexts, then, this means to look not only at the practices people perform in their interactions with local encounters, but also at the multiple ways their transnational connections influence their daily activities and practices. This equally means to pay attention to, and to be more explicit about, the intersection between different levels of containment – local, national, transnational. At the same time, as Berg and Sigona (2013) argue, one should not forget that transnational connections are always located in time and space, and that localised interactions in sites of settlements are part and parcel of migrants' everyday encounters. These reflections lead us also to reconsider the neighbourhood as a plural and relational space where diverse residents interact (Cattacin 2009). This plurality invites us to go beyond integration assumptions and localised practices in favour of a more fluid conception of the city/neighbourhood that considers the transnational relations as playing an essential part in people's everyday encounters.

Researching conviviality and transnational connections in Shepherd's Bush

The theoretical reflections discussed above have outlined the importance of incorporating a transnational perspective into studies of conviviality as a way out of 'methodological neighbourhoodism' (Berg et al. 2019). Yet, how can this be applied concretely? How can we look at conviviality in a localised context while also remaining alert to transnational connections? These are the questions that I had to deal with during my fieldwork in the neighbourhood of Shepherd's Bush, west London. Doing research in a super-diverse urban context characterised by increased mobility presents particular challenges for researchers. Not only is a spatially localised site of research difficult to identify, as migrants operate in complex and interconnected contexts, but mapping the transnational practices of diverse communities might be problematic in terms of time and resources. I began my fieldwork in the area with the intention to analyse how everyday

conviviality is embedded into transnational dynamics. This research nicely links with my doctoral work on Somali transnational practices. In my PhD, I focused on the voluntary return of Somali migrants to central Somaliland and explored how such a phenomenon is intrinsically embedded into transnational sociocultural, economic and political fields. In the course of my investigation in Hargeisa, I came across many Somalis who were living as 'part-time diaspora' (Hammond 2013) in their cities of residence. The majority of people I met came from London, and so I started to conduct a multi-sited research that also included an exploration of their lives in this city. Little by little, I became curious about the ways their transnational practices related with their everyday encounters in London. This has pushed me to start this research, which fits within a larger field of study that explores urban encounters in super-diverse contexts, most specifically where no majority group can be found. In this regard, Wessendorf's (2014) study in the London Borough of Hackney represents one valuable exploration of how people of various religious, ethnic, socio-economic and educational backgrounds, and different legal statuses, negotiate social relations and develop intercultural competencies to get along in the neighbourhood. Yet, there is little space in her account to analyse how these local encounters are embedded into transnational connections. My work explores the ways and modes of interactions between human groups in the city, while also staying attuned to transnational connections. With its diverse socio-migratory configurations, a great diversity of origin of migrant populations, but also of their socio-economic status, their conditions and forms of mobility, Shepherd's Bush is probably one of the most suitable places to address this topic.

The neighbourhood belongs to the ward of Shepherd's Bush Green, in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. It has an estimated population of slightly over twelve thousand people out of almost one hundred and eighty-two thousand for the entire borough.[4] This is where the majority of the council housing stock is concentrated. Indeed, the estates around Shepherd's Bush and White City contain some of the biggest pockets of deprivation in London, with twice the average levels of unemployment. Historically, the population of Shepherd's Bush has mainly been white and working class, with big communities of Australian and Irish. With time, diversity has increased, first with the arrival of Caribbean migrants, then of those of African, Middle Eastern, Polish and Asian backgrounds. Over the years, the area has undergone tremendous change. Visible examples of gentrification are the multimillion-pound Westfield development built in 2008, as well as the recently renovated Bush Hall, which stands close to the local mosque located on Uxbridge

Road. Traders and local associations have been particularly united to resist the ongoing gentrification process. They have worked together to fight against a £150 million regeneration plan sponsored by private development investors and the local council to construct two hundred new flats next to Shepherd's Bush Market, in nearby Goldhawk Road. This form of resistance and antagonism towards the local council, who backed the proposal, united traders, residents and migrant associations. This has helped to boost a sense of community and attachment to the area, which is well expressed in the account of many of my interlocutors.

One of the main methodological challenges I faced at the beginning of my research was how to identify a spatially localised site of research, that is, how to define and get access to the field. I started a preliminary exploration of the area through regular weekly visits, when I observed the spatial and socio-economic morphologies of the neighbourhood. I was able to identify and select the places of ethnographic enquiry. I focused my investigation along the Green, which divides the topography of the area into two sides: Uxbridge Road on the northern side of the Green, and Goldhawk Road on the southern side. These are the streets with the largest concentration of commercial activities and local associations. From Uxbridge Road, it is also possible to get access to Shepherd's Bush Market, the 102-year-old permanent market known for its fabric shops and stalls, which hosts over ninety traders from a variety of backgrounds. In the first phase of my research, I observed, counted, photographed, sketched, listened, smelled and recorded. Over time, certain nodes emerged as preferred research 'sites' (Olwig and Hastrup 1997). On the one hand, these sites met pragmatic requirements for doing fieldwork (in terms of access and facility to meet people), but they also reflected a dynamic space where exchanges and relationships among different migrant communities and their transnational connections take place within the neighbourhood. The sites identified were small owner-run businesses – cafes, restaurants, groceries and money transfer shops alongside the two main streets – and social support organisations. In particular, I found migrant associations in the area acting as spaces of conjunctions and flows. This is the case, for instance, with a local non-profit organisation that provides a range of services to people affected by social inequalities, whether they are unemployed, members of black and minority ethnic groups, refugees or other local residents. The association has its own office close to Shepherd's Bush Market, and is run by Somali migrants. It also serves as a communal space for various communities to organise their own events. For instance, during the Iftar prayer in the holy month of Ramadan, the organisation gathered Eritrean and

Sudanese communities who wanted to break the fast together. Another example where the association served as a place of community gathering was in the aftermath of the fire at Grenfell Tower in June 2017. On this occasion, the association opened its doors and offered support to affected families who had lost their place and belongings. Little by little, I have been able to follow the trajectories and everyday practices of the people who inhabit these sites, and concentrate on the cross-cutting links between and across these communities. The snowball method proved to be the best way to make contacts with people. In fact, through people met in these sites, I have reached out to other migrants who were willing to meet me and talk about their everyday life and activities in the area. Alongside participant observation, one of my main research strategies was shadowing (McDonanld 2005): talking to individuals on the move and following them throughout their daily routine for a given span of time gave me the opportunity to observe practices, relationships and connections unfolding in space.

Urban life in Shepherd's Bush seems to be informed by migrants' transnational practices, as the everyday lives of many people continue to be embedded into 'transnational social fields' (Faist 2000). This is the case of Amina,[5] a Somali woman aged 22 who lives with her family in one of the council flats located along Goldhawk Road and works part-time as a project manager for a Somali association. She was born in 1995 in London and grew up in East Acton, an area predominately made up of white Irish people at that time. She moved to Shepherd's Bush when she was 7, as there were tensions between incoming Somali refugees and the established community. She went to high school in White City, and then to college in nearby Hammersmith. She felt at home there as everyone looked pretty much like her. The school was predominately Somali, but there were also other African and Caribbean students and a very few British. She was 13 years old when the imposing Westfield Shopping Centre opened its doors in the area. She would spend much of her free time hanging out there with her friends. Then she discovered a Somali charity organisation, and started going there every afternoon. As she came along with them, she started learning more about her origins and was somehow forced to learn about her identity. Today, Amina cannot imagine living anywhere else in London than in Shepherd's Bush. As she says:

> People always tend to talk about racist attacks that happen in London and I tend to think this will never happen in Shepherd's Bush. I actually remember one case when I was walking on Uxbridge

Road with an Iraqi friend, just behind a Somali man wearing the Kamiz. Suddenly, a British guy standing nearby looked at the man and said, 'Hey you Muslim, you have to go back'. The Somali man did not pay attention to him as he was on his phone, but I walked back and said, 'How can you say this? First of all, Shepherd's Bush is diverse, this is not accepted here'. I was shocked because this is like my home, I never thought it was going to happen. Then other locals came to me and asked what was going on. When the guy saw people coming together, I think he realised that this area was different. This is why I cannot imagine living anywhere else in London, this is home to me.

(Interview with Amina, April 2017)

Yet frictions across communities exist. For instance, while the Somali community rubs along quite well with the Eritrean and Moroccan communities, there are tensions with people of a Caribbean background. Again, this is nicely elucidated by Amina:

If you look at Somali groups, you will always see a Moroccan friend with them. The biggest thing I have seen is dating! The majority of those who get married are Moroccans and Somalis. Usually the woman is Somali and the man is Moroccan. If I would bring a Moroccan man at home, my dad would be fine. It would be different with a Jamaican. A couple of years ago, we had huge problems. Jamaicans were here for many years, so when the Somalis came, there were some tensions. I remember at college and high school, there were so many fights between Somalis and Jamaicans. Somali parents were saying to their kids, stay away from them, and vice versa.

(Interview with Amina, April 2017)

Amina's involvement with the local association has shaped her transnational engagement a lot. In fact, although her daily activities focus on community-level support, she is very active in fundraising to sponsor projects back in Somalia, particularly in times of crisis. She is also engaged in the remittance economy, as she sends small amounts of money back to her extended family in Mogadishu. Amina has recently decided to enrol in a part-time master's degree course in conflict and peace studies, as she wants to make concrete contributions in Somalia. Through the numerous fundraising activities, she realised she wanted to visit Somalia, and

see it with her own eyes. So far, she has been to Mogadishu twice in the last four years. The first time, she spent a month, in summer, as a volunteer for a local organisation. It was hard, and confusing too, as she never felt really accepted. People called her *dhaqan ceelis*[6] – they thought she had been brought back forcibly by her parents because she was not behaving well in London. At the same time, people insisted that this was her home, and they wanted people like her to come back and rebuild the community. The second time, she was doing an internship with an international NGO. On this occasion, she was more prepared and aware of the social gap between her having a British background and those who had never left Somalia. Since she visited Mogadishu, other friends of hers back in London thought about doing the same. This is the case of Fardus,[7] another Somali woman in her mid-twenties, who visited Somalia in the summer of 2016 for the first time in her life. After this journey, her life in London has been revolving around preparing for her next visit to Somalia. In fact, she is studying to take the English teacher certificate so that she will be able to teach English at schools in Mogadishu. Such transnational practices and mobility not only influence their daily lives but also the way they relate to others in their local encounters. For instance, as has already been briefly introduced, Amina gets along quite well with Ethiopians except when discussions turn to politics. Tensions about the situation in the Ogaden region are reflected locally and, since she became more involved with Somalia, her relationships with the Ethiopian community have worsened. She has got into discussions with some of her Ethiopian peers, and has decided to avoid going to Ethiopian places for a while. Most of the time, she prefers to hang out locally with other Somalis who live in the area, who she met at high school and has therefore known for a long time. They get along quite well with Arabs, as she calls them. They go to Somali restaurants and to the mosque, but also to shisha places, a social practice that is becoming quite popular among the young generation. The two shisha cafes she goes to are run by Lebanese and Egyptian men. They go there to enjoy a dessert and sit outside to smoke.

So far, the stories of my interlocutors highlight how certain places in the area emerge as spaces in which people experience intense conviviality but also exclusion and tensions, be they schools, shisha cafes or local migrant associations. While ethnic identity continues to play a role in how people co-inhabit the spaces of their everyday urban lives, there are many different dimensions of social relations that make up local encounters in Shepherd's Bush. Patterns of mobility, country of origin and length of residence seem to emerge as categories of difference in shaping relations across communities too. At the same time, these

stories also highlight how certain transnational practices intersect with local practices of conviviality. From the accounts just mentioned, certain areas emerge as local sites of transnationalism. These sites testify to the porous nature of urban neighbourhoods, as here multiple local and global dynamics overlap. Adopting a relational approach to neighbourhoods that points our attention to processes of mobility and global flows challenges ideas of urban places as local, cohesive and fixed (Appadurai 1996; Cattacin 2009). This helps us researchers to go beyond analyses that focus on the locality of relations, and to account for the high degree of mobility of people's lives. Yet, ethical concerns about how we actually do this remain.

On the ethics of doing research in diverse urban settings

As other scholars in this volume highlight (see Lisiak and Kaczmarczyk, Gidley, and Phoenix), ethnographies of urban encounters in super-diverse contexts present methodological and ethical challenges for researchers. Gidley, for instance, argues that participatory and convivial forms of research come with ethical and epistemological risks. In particular, he develops four propositions – about the injunction to participate, the reification of community, the political economy of participation, and the political economy of knowledge production. He describes these risks as ways in which convivial research is destined to 'fail'. He then proposes to cultivate intellectual humility and to value contention as strategies for 'failing better'. In my own experience of doing research in urban diverse contexts, I have been particularly concerned with the challenges of accounting for, and giving credit to, the variety of practices of my interlocutors. More specifically, when researching multiple migrant communities sharing specific locations, connecting such local encounters to their respective elsewheres (Gidley 2013, 369) might require a huge effort in terms of both time and personal and financial resources. Also, the emerging call for 'slow' research emphasised by other authors in this volume (see Lisiak and Kaczmarek, and Gidley) clashes with the time frame of many research projects. This is often tied to academic career expectations, which demand fast knowledge production. Taking the time to build trust with research participants, to develop in-depth knowledge and to account for the multiple variables that affect the entire research process comes with a cost in terms of academic career. This is especially so for young scholars, who navigate into the precarity of today's academic market.

Some ethical concerns may also arise from the way we do research. Working with groups of people might quickly imply the reification of these very groups as bounded entities. As Pastore and Ponzo (2016, 11) argue, in most of the empirical literature on migration, ethnic boundaries are often treated as an independent variable, that is, something used to explain. With the term 'groupism', Brubaker (2002) exactly refers to the tendency to take discrete and bounded entity for granted in the study of ethnicity. All in all, it seems to me that one of the challenges of conducting research on conviviality in diverse urban contexts is the tendency to reify ethnic groups, even when ethnicity is apparently not the main category of differentiation relevant for people in their daily lives (Brubaker 2002; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Talking about how ethnic difference has become ordinary is certainly good, but it still presupposes that there is 'an ethnicity', which might be reconfigured, but that is basically the same. Such acts of framing with which we as researchers operate do not simply interpret difference: they constitute it as ethnic. We can thus easily fall into the ethnic lens trap, which ignores differences within ethnicised groups and conceives of them as single and homogeneous communities (Glick Schiller 2012; Glick Schiller, Çağlar and Guldbrandsen 2006). In my own research, the identification and emergence of specific research sites as units of observation have allowed me to avoid clustering individuals into ethnic groups and reifying them as bounded entities. Yet, there are other challenges with which I am still struggling. Issues of power and authority, representation and 'othering', and the relation between power and knowledge, need further attention in our work as researchers. These issues challenge our way of knowing the world. In particular, they require us to acknowledge the power asymmetry in our relations with research participants, as well as in our representational practices. This directs our attention to the fact that the accounts we provide structure and create reality as much as they portray it. In the case of research conducted in urban neighbourhoods, then, this aspect is even more emphasised, as our work plays a significant role in shaping urban policies that have direct consequences for the everyday lives of the people who inhabit the area.

This chapter has engaged with both methodological and ethical concerns with which researchers are faced when looking at the ways conviviality in localised urban contexts intersects with transnational connections. It has shown how a combined approach that explores the modes of interactions between encounters in the city, while also staying attuned to the mobility and transnational practices of people, holds the potential to revitalise migration research in urban contexts. In particular, such an approach allows us to go beyond what could be called

'methodological neighbourhoodism' (Berg et al. 2019), and to account for the multilayered scales of relationality that characterise social life. This also pushes us researchers to advance our understanding of the complex and various dimensions that make up societies. Adopting a combined approach thus seems more suitable for capturing people's practices in the urban setting. However, as already mentioned, this does not come without methodological and ethical implications. With regard to methodology, doing research in contexts characterised by increased mobility still poses particular challenges, not only in terms of identifying research sites, but also in terms of mapping the transnational practices of diverse communities. Looking at the ethical challenges, this research has shown how accounting for the multiple voices that populate these sites without reifying groups still requires further analysis.

Notes

1. Dahabshiil is the main Somali money transfer agency that operates within the Horn of Africa.
2. Amal Express is also a Somali company, with a worldwide network of agencies in the USA, the UK, the Middle East, Africa and Australia.
3. See the work of Blommaert (2013) for a detailed ethnography of how multilingual signs can be read as chronicles documenting the complex histories of a place.
4. According to the 2011 Census (see: https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/councillors-and-democracy/about-hammersmith-fulham-council/census-information/population).
5. This is a pseudonym.
6. *Dhaqancelin* is a Somali verb that literally means 'to return to culture'. It is a label that people in Somalia use to refer to young Somalis who come from abroad and have been brought back by their parents because they have got into problems in their country of residence.
7. This is a pseudonym.

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Part IV

Reflections on convivial research and practice

10

Strategies to make conviviality the heart of campaigns for the rights of migrants[1]

Don Flynn

The use of what we have been calling convivial tools has been fundamental to the work of organisations that are providing services of various types to people from migrant communities. The need to build trust is a key part of this activity, dealing as we often are with individuals whose experiences of life have often been marked by abuse and exploitation. Why is the person representing any so-called migrant support group to be regarded as trustworthy, and not just someone else out to extract a fee or gain some other advantage over you? Those of us who are involved in activities in this area – as we style ourselves, activists – deal with this issue on a constant and ongoing basis throughout all our work.

However, the lines of action we come up with are seldom theorised in quite the same way as they have been in our discussion today. The typical activist, whose organisation will not be sufficiently resourced in ways that permit planned experimentation and reflection on outcomes, is essentially a pragmatist who learns 'what works' from what she does on the job. So, I think I should start by giving some background about myself and the work I've been doing during the course of my time as a migrant rights activist.

I am currently the director of the Migrants' Rights Network (MRN) – which just happens to be about to mark its 10th anniversary; in these times it is quite an achievement for an organisation working in this field to survive that long. But my own personal involvement in the issue goes back quite a bit further than that. I stumbled into it accidentally in the 1970s, when I found myself working for a law centre in Islington during

a time when the British way of managing immigration, as provided for in the foundational Immigration Act 1971, was bedding itself into the law and practice of government authorities. An awareness had established itself among the staff at the law centre that a significant part of the problems confronting the people in our client groups stemmed from insecurities associated with their immigration status. In order to understand this better, I was sent on a course in basic immigration law that lasted just a couple of days. I came back thinking I was now an expert on immigration law and set about advertising a bespoke advice service to anyone who needed it.

The response was immediate, with dozens of people coming to the centre to discuss problems that had festered for years because it had seemed to the person concerned that there was no remedy. Willingness to confide in their brand new legal adviser came from the fact that the law centre already had a strong reputation for sorting out landlord-and-tenant and myriad types of employment problems. The task of helping a Jamaican mother to bring her children across to join her, regularising the residence status of a Filipina overstayer, or getting refugee status for a Turkish Kurd, was something to be done alongside taking a landlord to court because of housing disrepair, or fighting the unfair dismissal of an employee from one of the many sweatshops that existed in our local area.

After serving an apprenticeship in this way, I went to work for a national immigration charity – the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants – and had the opportunity to travel around the country during the course of the 1990s and discover the impact of immigration policies across many communities. One of the things happening at that time was the steady growth in the numbers of young Europeans who were exercising their rights to freedom of movement under the terms of the, as it was then, European Economic Community's treaties. Refugee movements into the country were also becoming a substantial issue on the policy agenda. By the end of the decade, economic migration, which many believed had been ended by the strict terms of the 1971 legislation, was beginning to emerge as the issue that would dominate debate in the years to come.

It was based on these developments that I moved on to formulate the project that became the Migrants' Rights Network. Over these years, the immigration debate had changed in Britain as the government had struggled with the reality of globalisation and the fact that economic growth now depended on businesses and many public services being able to operate in the international markets that had been established for capital, services, goods and labour. Borders, while still a long way from being

open, were, for some at least, becoming more permeable. Inward flows of migrants, coming either as economic actors or people exercising a human right to asylum or family reunion, were increasing. Efforts to manage these movements produced a huge proliferation of immigration regulation, which confused not just the immigrants, but also the other private and public authorities that came into contact with them. Providing support to the newcomers in this context required not just competent legal caseworkers who could explain how the rules applied in each individual case, but also how whole communities could work through strategies that could promote mutual aid and support within migrant cohorts, and networking with other parts of civil society. MRN was one of the efforts that emerged during the course of the early 2000s, which were attempting to work through these issues.

Immigration policies were changing with incredible rapidity during this period. Sections of public opinion were bewildered by the arrival of large numbers of new migrants, and the insecurities of many people were played upon by the tabloid media and groups of politicians who were seeking advantage from these growing anxieties. As well as working at grass-roots level to provide the levels of advice that new migrants needed to find their way in the places they were settling, activists in the support networks were also looking for ways in which the voices of the newcomers themselves could be strengthened in the intensifying public debates that were taking place, in the belief that on hearing these accounts, more people would be persuaded to be sympathetic to their predicament. This was a new project, posing sharp questions about how confidence could be built among migrants that they had an account of themselves to give to the population at large, and also about the nature of the wider political narrative that would allow this to hold together as a progressive ideal with social justice and equality at its heart.

There was a justified sense that the migrant support sector was falling considerably behind in all of this work. Its leading organisations were still largely based in London, while the hotspots that were generating the controversies and setting the terms for public debate were to be found in places such as Boston in Lincolnshire and in Crewe, and in other small towns in the South West, Eastern England and across the Midlands. In these areas, migrant communities were beginning to elaborate their own networks and organisations. Advice services, tackling problems around exploitative working conditions and poor standards of accommodation, were coming into existence almost down to village level. Something of a capacity to fight back against the worst of what they were expected to endure was emerging as people came together to share experiences.

The vitality of this process was very encouraging, once the activists began to acknowledge its existence, but there was still a large failing in its ability to get the viewpoint of migrants into the public arena in a way that would encourage people to address the real problems of this period, rather than those that were being hyped up in the media. Leaders of migrant communities often doubted that this was even possible. They inclined to the view that they would never get a fair hearing from the rest of the population and that the best that could be done was to rely on their own resources to fight the few select battles where they stood a chance of success.

As a consequence, the conditions rooted in the deep nature of British society – the undercurrents of racism and xenophobia that shaped public attitudes and that were never effectively challenged by the liberal end of the media or mainstream politicians – remained in place to fix the direction of public opinion. Countering this required more than the tenacious resistance of migrant groups fighting their own corners: it needed the forging of a network of organisations confident in their own position in the communities they served, and trusting enough in the work being done by others to commit to sharing knowledge and experience. In doing so, they would be able to build the relationships needed to share the risks of innovative ways of campaigning and lobbying, which aimed to change the way in which migration was viewed in Britain.

This would involve striving for a dialogue, a way of talking, a way of reporting, a way of extending a narrative about what the migrant experience was in the UK, and how there exist multiple possibilities for generating disadvantage, hardship and social injustice. Accompanying this, there needs to be a communication strategy, which identifies who needs to be informed about these issues, and knowing who is likely to be concerned by the fact that negative outcomes are being produced. Once space has been obtained for the interests of migrants on policy agendas, the communication strategy has to be capable of reporting what is changing as a consequence of shifts of public resources from one area to another, and how benefits are obtained for all communities as a consequence. I have said that activists in the migrant support networks have arrived at this understanding through pragmatic experience, knowing what works and what remains to be tackled. To the extent that any theoretical sense of the issues at stake has been arrived at, it is probably around the theme of participatory action research and how its methodology is applicable to the work being done by the sector.

With regard to MRN's work, we found ourselves going out and visiting community organisations and finding that they had high standards in

terms of the ways in which they gathered and consolidated information about the conditions of the people with whom they were working. These people had a good picture in their heads of what the terrain looked like for them, and they had their own ways of dealing with problems. When we arrived on the scene, we were aware that we should not displace the ways of working that had already proven valuable by urging that they do things in different ways that best accorded with our own methods. Our job was rather to seek to add to the work already under way, and offer only suggestions as to how an extra 10 per cent might be got into the work through better networking with other groups and a more strategic way of thinking about the communication of findings. One of the main things we had to offer in this respect was a more instinctive understanding of the politics of institutions and how they related to public opinion, which came from our long experience of trying to change the policy agenda. Decades of experience of working in local communities as community activists-cum-barefoot lawyers, and as lobbyists hanging around the Palace of Westminster trying to get the attention of members of parliament and select committees of one sort or another – that was what we had to offer them. We knew what disturbed, what worried – to the extent to which anything did – the makers of policies, and where a timely interjection of real evidence, and solid information, might very well disrupt the narratives that they were working with.

Several years into our project, and a definite methodology began to assemble itself in which work with migrant communities moved through a series of clear stages. The first part of this was the promotion of dialogue that aimed to get a clearer and shared understanding of the principal problems that the group felt existed at that point in time for the community it represented. The range of issues typically covered improving English-language skills, moving out of low-paid, casual employment, getting access to better housing and social security entitlements, and finding ways to improve the experience of children in local schools. The dialogue stage would be followed by research, which aimed to improve the data that substantiated the extent of the problems the community faced. The third stage concerned reaching agreement on the messages that had emerged from this learning, and knowing who needed to hear them, whether they be local government and other public authorities, or national bodies going all the way up to the parliamentary level and government ministries. Finally, there was the stage that revolved around communication strategy, which involved training people who were going to be spokespeople and finding ways to get them before the relevant authorities or in the media – both mainstream and social.

There was a substantial convergence among migrant support organisations of approaches that followed this broad logic. Many had found ways to bring in the skills of researchers based in universities and social policy study centres, which had the effect of amplifying the messages that needed to be got across. As research projects were formulated, it often seemed that there was competition between researchers, with others also knocking on the doors of migrant leaders inviting them to enter into discussions and filling in questionnaires. In addition, there was work taking place in trades unions, with organisers wanting to know how you go about approaching migrants to get them to take up membership.

Others began to approach the migrant support networks to ask for input into the issues that were concerning them. Local social services wanted to understand better why they were becoming a safety net for migrant families that were judged to have no recourse to public funds. They often felt unclear about the objectives of the Home Office's immigration management policies, particularly with regard to the way in which these were increasing poverty and hardship among groups of people who the system had conceded had a right to remain in the country. Social workers felt conflicted by their professional obligation towards the welfare of their clients as it was being set against the plans of immigration control to construct a 'hostile environment' around migrant communities. It was often through work with migrant support groups that strategies for dealing with these tensions could be worked through and implemented.

Working with these other bodies meant that activists in the sector were having to zigzag in several directions in order to find the path that allowed all of us to move forward. We found ourselves constantly asking, what is behind this set of queries that are coming from bodies such as university researchers, trades union researchers, NHS trusts, teachers in local schools and social workers? How is the evidence that needs to go before them to be best expressed in ways that represent the people whose interests we were working to promote? What constitutes evidence in these circumstances? What truth can we argue for that is credible and capable of standing up against all the hostile viewpoints that are nurtured by government policy and the mainstream public discourse?

What is the relevance of this to our discussion today? I think this has to do with the fact that the business of changing the direction of public policy and the viewpoints of millions of people means more than simply putting the 'facts' into the arena. It also requires that the complex interests of the groups of migrants we have been trying to assist are properly represented in what is called the democratic process in ways that do not

increase the risk that it will all go wrong and people will be made more vulnerable because of ill-considered interventions. Migrants need this assurance also, and since what we are aiming to achieve requires their voice to be at the forefront of the public conversation, then building trust in the way we work, and the effects of our advocacy, is of critical importance. We have to be confident that the things we think we have found out about migrant communities do not simply reflect our own wishful thinking, or, worse, our own egos. When we have the opportunity to be interviewed on a television programme, when we see our activities reported in a newspaper, or when we appear before a parliamentary select committee, there has to be the sense of having worked through a process that means that what you have to say has been doubled-checked and approved by the people you are supposed to be working for.

What role does this concept of conviviality play in the work of migrant support organisations? There is this idea of living in a convivial society, which Paul Gilroy (2004) has written about. This is the potential that popular culture has to generate what he calls 'emancipatory interruptions', which cut across the racist and xenophobic currents of a postcolonial society. As someone who remembers discussions from his youth about the proprieties of a white person sitting next to a black person on public transport buses, it seems plausible to think that the everyday occurrence of such incidences in today's world represents an example of just such a convivial emancipatory interruption.

Today, there is quite a large agenda that needs to be set for these kinds of convivial approaches to emancipation. In the world of immigration policy, it centres on how the business of everyday life can do its bit to throw a spanner in the works of the Conservative government's work to create a 'hostile environment' for migrants. This is a framework for policy that came into existence in about 2013, and it formed the core approach to the measures set out in the Immigration Act of 2014. This dramatic phrase is not merely the hyperbole of the migrant rights sector: the interdepartmental committee that was set up by civil servants to prepare the bill before it proceeded through parliament was actually called the 'hostile environment committee'. Even now, senior civil servants at the Home Office are doing rounds of meetings before the people they call 'stakeholders' in the system of immigration control in which they explain that the agenda that they are working on is about the construction of 'the hostile environment'. Furthermore, it is perfectly clear from these presentations that the element of hostility they want to see is directed specifically against the casual conviviality of civil society, which migrants use as traction to find their way around the society in which they are settling.

Under this approach, the obligation of civility towards the people you work alongside, live with as near neighbours, queue with in GP surgery waiting rooms, accidentally jostle as you board public transport, is to be replaced with mistrust and suspicion, right to the point of a continual questioning as to whether this person even has a right to be in the country. A mandate to adopt this attitude of mind is already imposed on employers, who need to check the immigration status of anyone to whom they are thinking of offering a job. The new legislation extended this obligation to landlords in the private rented sector, compelling them under pain of a financial civil penalty to be sure that a prospective tenant was not an 'illegal'. At GP clinics, receptionists flick through patient passports trying to determine whether the person in front of them is entitled to treatment on the NHS. Schools include details of the nationalities of the children they are teaching in reports delivered to the Department for Education, and these details can then be shared with Home Office immigration enforcement officials. The business of querying, questioning and checking the immigration bona fides of just about everyone with whom they come into contact as the providers of services is now conducted by staff at local bank branches as much as by police officers on the beat. At more and more points in which citizens and neighbours interact with one another, with easy-going conviviality lubricating these countless transactions, the surveillance of the state is revealing itself in pursuit of its wish to see a higher degree of hostility between people.

As a consequence of the 2014 Act, which was followed by the 2016 Immigration Act, much of civil society and the realm of public service has been configured as a series of tripwires over which some would stumble and identify themselves as undesirable interlopers. But the experience of being subjected to this scrutiny leaves its mark even on the 'legal' migrant, and indeed on the person of colour who is associated with immigration because it was something their parents or grandparents underwent. Decades of progress towards something that deserves to be called integration based on mutual respect is in danger of being undone as the logic of immigration control forces everyone into an awareness of where their physiognomy or accent places them on the scale of potential immigrant. Places where, in the past, people would feel they could walk free and easily are in danger of becoming recast as areas to steer clear of because of the risk of being subjected to challenge about their right to be there or to use that service.

What does this point to in the future? The discussions we have had today have pointed to the possibility of using convivial research methodologies to assess relationships of power that exist between individuals,

and also the role of the state in local communities on issues of surveillance and control. If it is to play this role, it must be designed into the types of toolkits that migrant community organisations and their allies can use in their day-to-day practical work. Building trust between citizens and migrants back into relationships that the government is striving to strip out of civil society will only happen if it is part of a strategy that brings tangible benefits for the newcomers. An area where this is happening is the collaboration that is helping migrants to overcome the worst of the disadvantages associated with immigration statuses that refuse 'recourse to public funds' ('No Recourse to Public Funds', or NRPF). Migrant support groups have had a degree of success in forcing social services departments to provide measures of relief to families that are on the edge of absolute poverty because of this restriction. When this lobbying power is married to legal casework around human rights issues, then it is possible to get the NRPF condition lifted entirely.

Campaigns against NRPF have worked hard to incorporate the voice of migrant communities directly into advocacy work, using techniques such as theatre and drama to tell stories. As has been presented by contributors to our discussion today, this works best when the idea of performance goes alongside the building of confidence among groups of people who might otherwise be demoralised by their experiences. The dual outcome here is both a coherent and compelling re-enactment of the predicament of living without the support available to others, and also a group of individuals less afraid to speak out, and confident in the power of the account of life that they have to offer. This moves us to the point where we are tooling up to challenge the power of governments and state authorities who are imposing these hardships on migrant communities.

If we do this properly, we should be aiming to get beyond the tendency of many activists to evade the realities of politics in favour of a softer, apolitical, human rights approach. I do not necessarily mean just traditionally understood parliamentary party politics, but the sort that goes on around the power relations of art, of everyday life and of personal experience. These all have something to say about the type of society that Britain is becoming, the forces that are mobilising to bring it about, and the things that are happening at the level of grass-roots communities that constitute resistance to these developments. Emancipatory interruptions to the logic of a society steeped in attitudes of neocolonialism are the outcomes we are aiming for here, and consciousness about the role of conviviality seems to be a good thing to carry into the work we do.

My final point about it concerns one of the power issues that have been discussed today and that are very important for groups working in

the migrant rights field – namely those that we have with the people who fund us. We continually find ourselves having to report on the things we have achieved during the time the grant covers, and how our client group has benefited from our work. Yet it often feels false to report on what we are asked to think of as progress during times when we know that so much in the area of policy and rights has been going backwards. Insofar as it has taken place, it has been in the form of partial victories that have scarcely interrupted the succession of crises, and the return of tension and having to go back to fight once again on issues we thought we had settled decades ago. If we present our work as an advance along a linear route that has 'victory' marked at the end of it, we are surely deluding ourselves. We need another way to think about what we are winning from the battles we are having to fight on a daily basis.

As an answer to this, I am very much intrigued by the idea of a 'Red Queen race', which features in the story of *Alice through the Looking Glass*, and which is used by evolutionary biologists to explain why some species win out in the race for survival, and others become extinct. Alice's Red Queen described her predicament as a ruler as one that involved so much work that one has to run very hard merely to stay in the place where one is. That is a pretty accurate description of where we are in the world of the fight for the rights of migrants at the moment. As hard as we campaign, it is unlikely that our work will see any significant victories in the near future, given all the evidence about the anti-immigrant moods that prevail over public opinion and mainstream politics.

What we can say is that we are not alone in seeing difficulties in abundance for the years that come. Any sober analysis of the options that are open to government must consider the immense problems that stand before policymakers as they attempt new systems of immigration control within an economic and political context that otherwise demands the openness of borders and the circulation of workforces. We are now at the end of twenty years of attempts at immigration management, which have seen governments return to the statute books time and time again, constantly redrafting volumes of complex legislation and reconfiguring the agencies that are supposed to be enforcing these controls. The result at this moment in time is a sense of crisis for the direction of policy that is just as intense as it has been at any earlier point. We need to understand that our adversary in this work is running just as hard as we are, and also reporting as little in the way of clear, indisputable progress as we are.

So, what then is the point of a Red Queen race? It is to stay in the competition and match your opponent, pace for pace, across time. Our job can be seen as the need to keep people – our clients – in the race and

supported well enough to ensure that they endure. But if this sounds dismal we should at least be encouraged by the fact that there is an end to a Red Queen race, and that comes when you are still around years after it has started, and the people you are opposing have dropped with exhaustion as time has gone by.

That is what we have to project into the debate about the rights of migrants: not just in terms of their dealings with the Home Office and immigration enforcement, but in terms of their access to social justice right the way across the spectrum. Over recent years we have seen more and more political forces alongside us running exactly the same Red Queen race, whether it is UKIP, whether it is the anti-immigration lobby group Migration Watch UK, or whatever. Their work has not been easy because it is not long before the logic of their political position can be represented as being patently ridiculous and unworkable.

Perhaps the thing we are looking for in our work is something as simple as the capacity to survive and endure in conditions where we are supposed to buckle and give in. This will mean countless battles on countless fronts in order to sustain a social existence that will surely not easily give up on the ideal of conviviality. Being conscious of that fact, and having strategies that make conviviality a political weapon, is one of the most important things for which we should be working.

Note

1. This chapter is an edited transcript of the discussant comments given by the author at the workshop at which most chapters were originally presented.

Reference

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11

Breaking down barriers to co-production between research teams and civil society organisations

Karin Woodley and Charlotte Gilsenan

The work of civil society organisations has a value that is distinct from that of other sectors of society. Civil society organisations comprise independent, non-governmental and non-profit-making organisations, and include charities, voluntary and community groups, and social enterprises. They are predominantly 'value-driven' and work to achieve a broad range of social aims, including (but not limited to): extending social justice and promoting equality; poverty reduction; and dismantling barriers to societal cohesion, health, economic and environmental well-being.

In addition to their well-known function in undertaking direct interventions in social and economic life, civil society organisations have a long history of facilitating varying types of self-help, which, as a form of collective efficacy, often fill gaps in statutory services and respond directly to changing local need. Characterised by participatory decision-making and/or community ownership, civil society organisations have specialist knowledge of the needs of communities. The best of these do their work in partnership with a broad range of community members and engage with the most marginalised and vulnerable. This means they can be ideally placed to understand the changing needs of communities and to deliver innovative and solution-focused responses, particularly where state interventions are failing.

The needs of communities are varied and interlinked; many civil society organisations have therefore evolved to be multipurpose so that they can respond to people's needs holistically. These organisations

have a unique capacity to identify relationships and interdependencies between issues that are not captured or addressed by more siloed statutory services.

Increasing political emphasis on devolution and localism requires the generation and collation of evidence at a local level, much closer to the complexities and dynamics of whole communities, which are so often hidden from national view, with more accessible opportunities for evidence sharing. This provides opportunities for place-based civil society organisations to demonstrate what delivers social and economic benefits in neighbourhoods, as well as evidence of what activities successfully support vulnerable people to take control of their lives and their environment, and build the resilience they need to thrive.

The need for co-production between research teams and civil society organisations

Increasing economic and social vulnerability, as well as increasing ethnic and religious conflict, drives us to identify and share effective solutions to poverty and social injustice. However, although these are the foremost concerns of civil society, what works in civil society has either not been captured or not been organised into a cumulative and coherent body of knowledge. As a result, the effectiveness (or lack of effectiveness) of civil society in helping to ensure society is economically and socially accountable, responsive, inclusive and effective can be obscured and/or misunderstood.

Decentralisation means that previously state-delivered services are increasingly contracted to civil society organisations operating on local and neighbourhood levels. This means it is increasingly important that we improve our understanding of what works and what does not. Effective co-production between research teams and civil society organisations is therefore needed to:

- understand problems, causal drivers and wider economic and social influences
- illustrate what is possible, what has efficacy, what external influences can help and what is cost effective
- provide evidence from 'the front line' that meets recognised research standards and avoids partiality
- amplify influence, and ensure that evidence of what works informs policy and practice.

The barriers to co-production

Locally driven and participatory civil society organisations have a rich history of gathering compelling evidence, often in alliance with academic leads, that can have a groundbreaking effect on national policy and practice. Work undertaken by the network of settlement organisations in the first half of the twentieth century, for example, ensured that evidence generated and owned at a community level played a significant role in the development of the welfare state. However, the types of insight generated by locally driven organisations no longer have the status they once did. This is due, in part, to the rise and subsequent dominance of the social sciences in the production and distribution of knowledge regarding social and economic life in the UK. Another factor has been the acquisition of greater research and development budgets by national charities to address government's preoccupation with knowledge production and evidence gathering that can support scalable initiatives.

Partnership working between locally driven organisations and research bodies can and does produce useful and relevant insights. However, there are significant limitations to the structures, mechanisms and outputs that characterise current partnership working. For example, the predominance of civil society–research partnerships restricted to impact measurement means that outputs produced by such activities are of value to practitioners and, to a limited extent, policymakers, but they offer limited usefulness to more complex analyses of social and economic life.

When research partnerships set out to produce more ambitious outputs, traditional research practices often fail to engage effectively with the stakeholders of civil society organisations or to achieve mutually and reciprocally identified aims. This is, in part, due to structural and environmental conditions. It is often the case that civil society organisations have insufficient resources and expertise to independently and autonomously pursue effective partnerships. Asymmetries in resources mean that, when partnerships are created, hierarchical relationships emerge between researchers and civil society, with researchers as the dominant 'partner'. These asymmetries limit the ability of civil society organisations (and their stakeholders) to influence and shape research design and to take ownership of research outputs. This presents a significant obstacle to the development of an analytical research framework that can fully exploit the potentialities within civil society–research partnership.

Such structural limitations to effective engagement in research partnerships are compounded by divergences in certain key assumptions underpinning research design, methods and objectives. On the whole,

civil society organisations are driven to produce knowledge with, rather than for or about, research subjects. They tend to opt for participatory and/or problem–solution-oriented research methodologies, such as action research and peer-to-peer approaches.

Although there are good academic practitioners in these fields, in the main, such methods challenge conventional academic models, ethics and doctoral training by questioning and disrupting the traditional relationship between researchers and their research subjects.

Breaking down barriers to co-production

Conviviality

For researchers to capture and analyse the realities of community members' lives, methodologies must give communities a voice and role in the research process beyond providing access to research participants. A one-way process of 'tell us, tell us, tell us' lacks reciprocity and, by failing to respect and value the life experiences and creativity of community members, undermines the quality of evidence gathered.

To ensure that communities are treated like partners as opposed to information portals:

- engagement must seek out the views of community members regarding research questions, methods and protocols
- reasons for engagement need to be stated, so that community members are able to see the benefit of their involvement
- community members need to be involved in research teams and as co-investigators
- new research methodologies, ethical frameworks and doctoral training schemes potentially need to be developed to provide recognised, credible and authoritative frameworks for community-based participatory and community-engaged research.

Research bodies need to:

- reconcile the 'need to publish' with the needs of civil society partners and the communities they serve
- challenge perceptions that community-based participatory and community-engaged research lacks rigour, and therefore credibility and integrity

- increase the 'value' of contributions to community when assessing the career and professional development of researchers
- develop more inclusive forms of communication with civil society organisations and the communities they serve.

Co-production opens up opportunities to:

- create an evidence base that uses a robust methodology to systematically assess and synthesise the evidence on what works within civil society
- support the development of pilot projects that develop new technical and ethical frameworks for co-produced participatory research
- engage civil society practitioners in the development of doctoral training in participatory action research and critical enquiry
- collate existing evidence on how effective policy programmes and practices are, and produce high-quality synthesis reports and systematic reviews in areas where they do not currently exist
- generate practice-based research that demonstrates a deep and ongoing understanding of how issues are playing out over time in real communities
- challenge thematic research silos by joining up the evidence each theme generates
- develop research projects that attract sufficient resources to facilitate control groups, randomised control trials, unlock existing research and interlink evidence from different communities
- generate resources that can be accessed by civil society organisations for the preparation of projects and for initiating partnerships.

Cambridge House

Cambridge House is a social action centre tackling poverty and social injustice. We deliver intensive front-line services for people facing multiple disadvantage and complex, interrelated needs from our own building in Southwark, south London.

Working regionally and nationally, we remain firmly rooted in our local neighbourhood as a community asset and hub. We deliver services to more than a hundred thousand people each year, and use this experience to challenge public perception and stigma, shape research and knowledge-exchange activities, and promote systemic change.

Founded in 1889 by the University of Cambridge, Cambridge House is one the founders of the Settlement Movement and played a key role in the establishment of the welfare state in Britain. A century later, we continue to pursue our vision of a society without poverty where all people are valued, treated equally and lead fulfilling and productive lives.

Our front-line services include a law centre, professional advocacy services for children and adults with learning difficulties and mental health conditions, youth empowerment activities, projects for children and adults with disabilities, and office and conference spaces for 16 resident charities and community groups.

12
Afterword: Giving multiculture a name

Les Back

The idea of conviviality, as many of the contributions to this important book demonstrate, provides us with an alternative way to give a name to multicultural coexistence (Gilroy 2004). As Nowicka and Vertovec (2014, 1) point out, the idea of conviviality is based on the Latin root for 'with' and 'living'. In Gilroy's formulation – inspired by Ivan Ilich and Theodor Adorno – conviviality is always proximate to its negation. For Gilroy, the shadow of racism, imperial melancholia, 'anti-terrorist' securitisation and war is cast over the impulse to live differently. Understanding how these tensions are lived out involves writing what he calls 'counter histories of cultural relations'. 'This negative work', Gilroy (2004, 161) argues in his book *After Empire*, 'can discover and explore some of the emancipatory possibilities that are implicitly at stake in convivial culture but do not announce themselves, preferring to remain hidden and unpredictable'. Gilroy himself leaves the notion of conviviality under-explicated, in part because it acts like a fugitive hinterland in the context of racism and melancholic nationalism.

For Gilroy (2006, 27), a 'habitable multiculture depends upon working through the legacies of departed empire'. This means reckoning with the legacy of racisms both old and new that remain socially alive within worlds of coexistence. 'Even if today's unwanted newcomers – from Brazil or Eastern Europe – are not actually postcolonials, they may still carry all the ambivalence of the vanished empire within them' (Gilroy 2006, 31). Gilroy offers a way of understanding conviviality as an unruly, spontaneous social pattern produced by metropolitan social groups living in close proximity with each other. Here, racial differences become ordinary, banal, unremarkable and sometimes mundane to the point of boredom.

In Gilroy's conception, the forms of comprehension and communication that result produce 'everyday virtues' that enrich city life. Looser social bonds result, in which 'a degree of differentiation can be combined with a large measure of overlapping' (Gilroy 2006, 40). What the contributors to this book argue is that this prosaic form of multicultural 'good sense' is best understood by focusing on the sensibilities – as practical tools – that make convivial culture.

What the chapters in this book also do is embody in their practice a kind of convivial methodology, or what I would call a sociable form of research craft that traverses traditional disciplinary boundaries in which the relationships between the participants and the researcher or writer are reformulated. This method is attentive to the minor miracles or routine wonders that are so often looked past and unremarked upon. Taken together, the chapters of the book are inventive both in terms of form and in terms of practice that is deeply attentive to the embodied nature of thinking and learning, whether it be through walking along a street or being still and attentively present in one spot.

Gilroy (2006, 40) insists that 'recognising conviviality should not signify the absence of racism'. What the notion of conviviality does offer is an alternative understanding of culture that focuses on what people do every day, rather than always reducing them to their cultural origins. As Gilroy (2006, 40) concludes, 'Culture is misunderstood and oversimplified through being conceived as ethnic property to be owned and held under copyright. The vital alternative comprehends unruly, convivial multiculture as a sort of "Open-Source" co-production.' Gilroy offers a series of analytical instruments that enable us to understand the coexistence of both racism and convivial culture.

Conviviality, then, should not be a byword for saccharine diversity fantasies. Gill Valentine (2008, 334) points out rightly that it is foolhardy to replicate the mistaken logic of Gordon Allport's (1954) famous 'contact hypothesis', and assume that conviviality is the simple consequence of proximity to difference, although many of Valentine's findings merely restate observations that have been long-established in the field (see Hewitt 1986). Gilroy (2004) – recalling Adorno – stresses the 'negative dialectics of convivial culture' because he insists on avoiding a simplistic account of affirmative multiculture. While there are certainly shifts and forms of cultural bridging, there is no positive resolution of the dialectical tension between racism and multiculture. This involves having to live with countervailing conditions, or 'metropolitan paradoxes', both in places and in people, that do not hold out the possibility of synthesis (Back 1996).

Rather, conviviality here is a capability recalling philosopher Martha Nussbaum's (2006, 74) focus on human capabilities as a set of minimum core entitlements for 'the dignity of a human being, and of a life worthy of that dignity'. In Nussbaum's treatment, capabilities are minimum measures of justice that should be afforded to all to ensure 'human flourishing'. Her parameters are much wider than the concerns of the authors of this book, but they include relevantly: 'being able to live with and towards others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another' (Nussbaum 2006, 77). Racism damages that capability. Unlike Nussbaum, I am not making a normative or universal argument, and I think this scepticism is shared across this wonderful collection. Rather, we want to foreground how people who come into profound contact with each other use specific tools to make living in overlapping worlds and urban contact zones workable.

Central to Ivan Illich's initial formulation of conviviality is the emphasis on *tools*, and this has been returned to as an incitement in the book to think about how convivial multicultural worlds are made. This offers a way out of either reducing conviviality to a sense of 'identity' or claiming that a kind of underlying 'cultural ecology' structures and therefore explains convivial life. By paying close attention to the experience of how people live multicultural coexistence, we can find glimpses of the tools and resources that might enable us to make a different kind of society, one that is less disposed to melancholic hatred. In a time of populism and emboldened racist voices, this seems to me to be an urgent political task. Illich's (2009, 11) concerns were very different – he was seeking to find alternatives to the damaging nature of industrial society – and he notes, 'individuals need tools to move and dwell'. These tools include a refusal of hatred, as well as an attentiveness to, and curiosity for, what is both familiar and strange in the street. Using these tools affords the capacity to build and make sense out of the tangle of local circumstances and global connections. Interestingly, Illich (2009, 15) focuses on the 'structure of the tools, not on the character structure of the users'. In the same vein, I do not read this book as the search to identify the character structure of nice 'convivial people'. Rather, I read its chapters as in various ways trying to identify the toolbox of convivial capabilities that people in their ordinary circumstances of life use to navigate their way through a world shaped not only by hatred but also through coexistence with their neighbours, their friends and even their foes.

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Index

Anti-migrant populism is on the rise across Europe, and diversity and multiculturalism are increasingly presented as threats to social cohesion. Yet diversity is also a mundane social reality in urban neighbourhoods. With this in mind, this book explores how we can live together with and in difference. What is needed for conviviality to emerge and what role can research play? This volume demonstrates how collaboration between scholars, civil society and practitioners can help to answer these questions.

Drawing on a range of innovative and participatory methods, each chapter examines conviviality in different cities across the UK. The contributors ask how the research process itself can be made more convivial, and show how power relations between researchers, those researched, and research users can be reconfigured – in the process producing much needed new knowledge and understanding about urban diversity, multiculturalism and conviviality. Examples include embroidery workshops with diverse faith communities, arts work with child language brokers in schools, and life story and walking methods with refugees.

Studying Diversity, Migration and Urban Multiculture is interdisciplinary in scope and includes contributions from sociologists, anthropologists and social psychologists, as well as chapters by practitioners and activists. It will be of interest to scholars, students, practitioners, activists, and policymakers who work on migration, urban diversity, conviviality and conflict, and integration and cohesion.

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