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CONVIVIAL CULTURES IN MULTICULTURAL MANCHESTER AND BARCELONA: NARRATIVES OF POLISH MIGRANT WOMEN

INTRODUCTION

While a contemporary understanding of multicultural Europe often emerges from the politicians' idea of managing diversity through different approaches, such as assimilation or multiculturalism, this article concentrates on a new understanding of multicultural societies which can emerge from below, from the very fabric of routine interaction between new and established individuals in various urban spaces. These new emerging patterns of interaction are a result of what Gilroy (2004) calls 'conviviality'. My doctoral research empirically explores how convivial cultures emerge in encounters between Polish migrant women and multicultural population in both Manchester and Barcelona; which factors facilitate and limit conviviality, and the way cultural identity is negotiated through convivial encounters. While the study of gender and migration is marginalized in the larger field of migration studies, this research stresses the importance of heterogeneity of experiences affected by individual circumstances and positionality of migrant women. Despite being often portrayed as the carriers of tradition rather than change (Yuval-Davis, 1997), migrant women's experiences of motherhood and mixed-relationships, for instance, constitute important themes when researching convivial encounters.

After Poland joined the European Union (EU) in May 2004, many Polish people have arrived in more prosperous European countries in search of work, career development and new experiences.¹ The extent of Polish presence in Britain has attracted the controversial attention of the media and politics; Polish migrants, often blamed for taking British jobs and benefits, have become a proxy when referring to the issue of immigration. Spain, on the contrary, did not open its labour market to Polish migrants until 2006. The

¹Between 2003 and 2010, the Polish-born population in Britain increased from 75,000 to 532,000 (ONS 2011).

extent of Polish migration has been substantially smaller in Spain than in Britain.² Furthermore, the discourse on Polish migration is absent in the Spanish media and politics, partly due to their alleged ‘invisibility’ and cultural closeness to the Spanish culture (Nalewajko 2012; González Yanci and Aguilera Arilla 1996). Their integral part in shaping convivial culture in multicultural cities of Britain and Spain has been largely overlooked.

While in Spain there is a significant gap in research regarding encounters between Polish migrants and multicultural population, especially after 2004; there has been a growing interest in academic research in Britain about Polish migrants’ response to cultural diversity. The studies often offer simplistic ways of interpreting attitudes of Polish migrants, ranging from positive exchanges to “negative experiences and structurally enforced absences of interaction through to more active spatial strategies of *withdrawal* from mixing with members of ‘other’ communities” (Cook et al. 2011: 737). It is claimed that some Polish migrants “regard ethnic diversity as abnormal” (Eade et al. 2006: 18); live in a “Polish bubble” and manifest racist attitudes towards Asian and black minorities (D’Angelo and Ryan 2011: 254). Nevertheless, researching encounters requires exploring not only attitudes but the complexity of experiences which are situated in a specific time and place, and positioned by personal biographies. Moreover, there is a need to deconstruct the homogenous notion of the ‘Polish migrant’ coming from a culturally homogenous country, for economic reasons, and unable to accept cultural diversity in multicultural societies. Many of my research participants arrived to Britain and Spain not only to work, but also to study, attend language courses, advance their career, and search for new experience and adventure. Some had previously travelled, studied and lived in other countries where they had contact with people from different cultures. Others established relations with people from different countries who lived in Poland. However, this research on conviviality aims to deconstruct the notion of fixed identities and cultures by acknowledging the different positioning of those in the interaction.

In this article, I firstly explore the concepts of conviviality and convivial cultures with attention to the intersection of locality, gender, ethnicity, class and other social categories shared with different groups and individuals. Secondly, I provide a description of the research context, methods and analysis. Thirdly, while drawing on the preliminary research findings mainly from the narrative interviews, I explore how convivial cultures

²The January 2013 statistics recorded 78,952 Polish migrants living in Spain (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2013).

emerge in different localities through strategies of contact and exchange between Polish migrant women and the multicultural population of both Manchester and Barcelona; and how ethno-cultural boundaries are negotiated through convivial encounters.

CONVIVIALITY AS A PRODUCT OF HABITUAL AND INTERACTIVE COEXISTENCE

While the question of living together in super-diverse cities (Vertovec 2007) has been often problematized in public, political and some scholarly debates, the emerging patterns of 'convivial culture' have been evolving often unacknowledged in cafes, parks, universities or in workplaces, allowing diverse groups to coexist. Convivial culture is a culture of intermixture defined as "social pattern in which different metropolitan groups dwell in close proximity, but where their racial, linguistic and religious particularities do not (...) add up to discontinuities of experience or insuperable problems of communication" (Gilroy, 2006: 40). When researching experiences of Polish women in multicultural Manchester and Barcelona, I find Gilroy's notion of conviviality very useful, even though he offers no methodological or theoretical underpinning of the concept. I explore conviviality as a form of habitual interaction in multicultural settings and as a possible alternative way of belonging which has developed as a result of regular contact and interaction helping to overcome mutual fear of the 'other' and allowing new identities to arise from encounters in multicultural environments. The term 'multicultural' used throughout this paper is distinguished from the contested notion of multiculturalism. It describes societies or settings in which people of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds coexist together and it does not arise from the governmental policy (Hall 2000).

Existing literature about the practices of living together in diverse multicultural cities (Amin 2002, 2008; Valentine, 2008; Cook et al. 2011) often interprets conviviality as limited to positive but superficial and casual encounters, such as banal mingling, holding doors for people or small talk in public spaces unlikely to generate meaningful encounters. For Valentine, "everyday convivial encounters often mark instead a culture of tolerance which leaves the issue of our multiple and intersecting identities ... unaddressed" (Valentine 2008, 334). Nevertheless, conviviality needs much more complex exploration. Convivial (in Latin: *convīv(ere)*) means to live together (con 'with' + *vivere* 'live'). Living together involves habitual contact, not merely a casual encounter. Conviviality is

a dynamic process of cohabitation and interaction not necessarily free from racism and tensions (Gilroy 2004). However, it gives possibilities to overcome racism by enabling different groups and individuals to focus on commonalities that intercut the dimensions of fixed difference which may cause fear and anxiety about the 'other'. Karner and Parker's (2011) study on the lived experiences of ethnic pluralism demonstrates that alongside tensions, incidents of racism and violence among the studied groups, members of different religions in the area shared various practical and political problems. The authors argue that local lives are significantly shaped by often enriching interactions across social boundaries as forms of everyday inter-ethnic conviviality.

Culture is no longer understood as a homogenous body of traditions and customs but as a dynamic social process (Yuval-Davis, 1997). Convivial cultures become a product of intermixture where race is stripped of its meaning and ethnicity gradually stops becoming a barrier, as it is not understood anymore as a primary and fixed identity marker (Fenton 2003; Gilroy 2004). Conviviality "introduces a measure of distance from the pivotal term "identity" ... The radical openness that brings conviviality alive makes a nonsense of closed, fixed and reified identity and turns attention toward the always-unpredictable mechanisms of identification" (Gilroy 2004: xi). Conviviality allows exploring identity as a "production', which is never complete, always in process" (Hall 1990: 222). I propose to explore conviviality with recognition of the many sources of identity formation based on experiences of gender, sexuality, age, class, and other social categories, which are shared with other groups and individuals, intersect and cut across ethnic lines (Amin, 2002). While women are often described as the biological and cultural producers, and are often expected to reinvent cultural tradition (Yuval-Davis, 1997: 26), conviviality contests this burden of representation and moves the debate further, challenging assumptions of intra-ethnic homogeneity.

Convivial encounters do not occur in a vacuum. Cities are specific places of encounter (Valentine 2008) and meeting "the stranger" (Simonsen 2008:145). Nevertheless, this research recognises that cities are not homogenous entities and they differ in their opportunity structures and their ethnic composition of various localities. Muir and Wetherell (2010) argue that while in some cities encounters might be characterised by inter-ethnic tensions, in others there is clear evidence that convivial cultures constitute an integral part of everyday reality. Convivial encounters may, or may not, occur in various spaces of multicultural cities such as neighbourhoods, workplaces, colleges or mother and toddler groups. These 'contact zones', defined as the spaces where

“people geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations” (Louise Pratt 1992:6), are intrinsic in exploration of everyday convivial experiences. They are places where individuals and groups co-exist and where their identifications intersect. Lamphere (1992: 2) points out that ‘interrelations are not just a matter of race, ethnicity, or immigrant status but can be influenced by the organisation of a workplace, apartment complex, or school.’ Micropublics as the sites of banal transgression may serve as sites of inclusion and negotiation (Amin, 2002: 970). This means that people may step out of their daily environments into other spaces which bring them together with those from different backgrounds. Despite claims that contact with ‘others’ does not automatically lead to respect for difference (Valentine 2008), it is “an important condition for allowing common cross-cutting identities to develop” (Muir and Wetherell 2010: 12) and it is significant in reducing prejudice (Hewstone 2003). This paper acknowledges the necessity of empirical exploration of the complexities of emerging convivial cultures in order to enhance a broader understanding of the concept of conviviality.

METHODOLOGY

The fieldwork for this research was carried out in Manchester and Barcelona between June 2012 and March 2013. Both are multicultural cities with super-diverse and mixed neighbourhoods, making them significant settings for studying convivial encounters. Both are post-industrial with migration friendly narrative characterised by a wide organisational support of inter-cultural coexistence, although in recent years the funding streams of multicultural groups have been limited by the economic crisis.

The ethnography was initiated by participant observation with several multicultural groups involving Polish migrant women, which not only enabled a better understanding of convivial practices but also allowed me to establish trust with and provided access to research participants. I conducted narrative interviews with twenty Polish migrant women in each city in order to engage with their narratives and reflect on the meaning of convivial cultures. I adopted the feminist approach to interviews which advocates less dominating ways of interviewing and respects participants’ manners of reflecting meaning in their lives (DeVault 1999; Riesman, 2002). This research approach not only gives them opportunity to represent their ‘selves’, but also to contest the ways in which dominant discourses and practices position them. More importantly, the narrative method challenges assumptions

that the position of migrant women can mainly be explained with merely referring to their cultures of origin. This is essential when researching how Polish migrant women negotiate their cultural identities which often intersect with other categories, such as class, age or sexuality. The sample was chosen to be as varied as possible and it included Polish migrant women who entered Britain and Spain just before or after Poland joined the EU. The interviewees were mainly contacted through the groups with which I conducted the participant observation and subsequently snowball sampling was applied. This research is not intended to be statistically representative of Polish women's experiences. On the contrary, it challenges the dominant regimes of representation of human agency and privileges positionality and subjectivity. The third method employed in this research was a focus group conducted in each city made up of five to six women previously interviewed. The interactive feature of this research approach allows discussion to explore the formation and negotiation of accounts within a group context and to cross-check data gathered through the above methods. All participants have been given pseudonyms.

The narrative interviews were firstly transcribed and summarised in order to obtain an account of each interviewee with an individual biography. Secondly, in order to explore similarities and differences across cases, the thematic analysis was applied, with attention to the structure of the narratives. The findings were cross-checked with data from the focus groups and the participant observation.

CONVIVIAL CULTURES IN MANCHESTER – EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

The preliminary research findings in the two contexts demonstrate a vast heterogeneity of narratives, many tensions and contradictions. The reappearing themes include convivial experiences in local spaces of Manchester and Barcelona, for instance, in organisational niches, mother and toddler groups, at educational courses and workplaces, where different processes may intersect to give meaning to convivial cultures. Many participants felt that group activities in Manchester offered them a ground for a common understanding in spite of cultural and language differences, and more importantly, a sense of belonging. This passage demonstrates what it means for Celina to be part of Europia, a group working with Central and Eastern European migrants and the local population in Manchester:

I felt isolation in London ... I lived with Polish people; they only worked and nothing beside it. But in Manchester, at Europia, it has been great... I have been meeting up with these people and we have been organising events. I feel like I am contributing somehow and some kind of bond develops, because we do something together, we have the same goal ... it makes sense, a bit of a human sense of life.

When Celina arrived in London, after having lived in different countries, she felt isolated because of a series of difficulties she encountered while living with a Polish family and the limited interaction with her subsequent Polish housemates. This feeling of isolation continued when she arrived in Manchester. For the first few months she lived in fear, as her flat was repeatedly targeted by local hooligans. The absence of trust in her previous experiences in London, lack of contact with and fear of the ‘strangers’ from her new neighbourhood in Manchester made it difficult for any convivial culture to emerge. Celina became homeless after leaving the unsafe accommodation. This was a turning point in her story, as this was when she came across Europia and the Chinese Women Society. At first, the close relationship between the two groups was difficult to understand for Celina because she interpreted cultural identity in terms of one sort of collective, ‘one people’, “with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference” (Hall 1990:223):

They said to me, they will send you Petra from the Chinese Women Society, I said ‘but I am not Chinese’, but I was told it didn’t matter. This was still my Polish narrow-minded thinking.

Celina’s example demonstrates common cross-cutting of identities which enables her to look beyond ethno-cultural boundaries and establish bonds and friendships with members of the two groups. This convivial experience can be understood as sociability which “builds on a certain shared human competencies to relate to multiple other persons as well as a desire for human relationships ... In these interactions people gather in the same place ... around some point of shared interest” (Glick Schiller 2011: 402). As Vertovec (2007) points out, shared ‘politics of place’ serves to forge multi-ethnic coalitions and alliances among the group members. The convivial culture emerging within the group is premised on the formation of a bond and mutual trust between Celina and other members, the feeling of inclusion and “the same goal”.

Similarly to Celina, Judyta previously lived in a multicultural country. Before coming to Manchester, she lived in London where she shared accommodation with Nigerian people. When she had a child with her partner of Nigerian origin, she moved to Manchester. Participating in Europia activities enabled her to step outside her daily

environment, get to know others and engage in common ventures: *What I really like is that there are people from different parts of the world and they want to do something together and they find a common language and most of all they accept each other.* At the same time, when the Chinese Women Society asked members of Europa to prepare a short performance for the celebration of the Chinese New Year, Judyta expressed her objections to change Polish legends to suit the occasion:

If this is Polish culture, a Polish legend, this is not out of nowhere. This is not some kind of a fairy-tale, but a legend that is linked with a historical place... so there is a seed of truth, but it shouldn't be changed, because it is linked with a given region, place and people ... Fine, Chinese New Year, but we are supposed to show something Central and Eastern European, so why should I care that in their culture this colour symbolises this or the other and that they might not like it ... My culture is like this and I will not change it for the needs of other cultures.

Judyta gives importance to unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning of cultural symbols. In this context, she sees her culture as an essentialist and homogenous body of traditions and fixed cultural symbols that should not be changed. Nevertheless, Judyta's objection to changing the legends did not stop her from taking part in a re-invented performance. This served not as a betrayal of individual identities, but rather a celebration of collective convivial culture transformed from a static and homogenous phenomenon into a dynamic process allowing negotiation and re-shaping of cultural identity, which in the case of Judyta also happens in other spheres of her life. She feels uncomfortable about the boundaries of 'Polishness' she encounters during a Polish event for children:

I spoke to the organiser of the Children's Day in Oldham, who made it totally Polish. We talked about racism. I told him, listen, it was a nice event, you could eat a grilled Polish sausage, have a pint of Polish beer, but for me it was 'Polakowo', Poland for Polish people ... When I arrived with my partner, he felt uncomfortable. I didn't feel good and I will never go to this kind of event. So he told me, you know, 85 per cent of Polish people are racist. So I said to him, we are the ones who should change it, it is our duty.

This passage constitutes a contradiction to the previous one which demonstrates how Judyta negotiates her cultural identity in different settings. Judyta's narrative is full of contradictions and tensions as she tries to make sense of living in a multicultural society and in a mixed relationship. Judyta's narrative demonstrates that individuals each belong to

multiple group identities at different levels. On the one hand, she affirms her mixed-race child's distinctiveness from 'blackness', partly as a result of pressure from the 'Polish collective' expecting her to fit to a role of the cultural reproducer of the nation (Yuval-Davis 1997). On the other, she becomes a member of cross-cutting social formations (Baumann, 1996) understood in this study as convivial cultures in which the intersection of personal experiences, locality, ethnicity and gender plays an important part. This is evident in her narrative about meeting other mothers in child-care facilities:

All these women from different countries, who came here like me, they need it, because they don't have families here, they don't have many friends, and we all need to meet people, establish friendship, so they are more open [than English women]. And maybe this is what brings us closer, because for example, there is a mother who came from Zimbabwe... so she misses home too and she is able to understand that someone may feel homesick, so this is what brings us closer... We meet up together with our kids, or we visit each other for a cup of tea and coffee...

According to Glick Schiller (2011: 404), "the process of engagement with others is always going to be with particular individuals with whom one may want to identify or share moments or spaces of 'conviviality'". Judyta's culture is not a primary marker of her identity in convivial encounters with other mothers. As a mother who lives away from her family in Poland, Judyta identifies with other women who came from different countries and share similar experiences of motherhood and migration, allowing her to look beyond ethno-cultural boundaries. In this context, conviviality enables Judyta to focus on those commonalities that intercut the dimensions of fixed identity and difference. On the contrary, her convivial encounters with English mothers are limited as she has little in common with them. Although the child-care facilities enable contact between mothers, the locality in this context is not the primary aspect facilitating the emergence of convivial cultures but commonality of experiences is.

Some participants feel that educational courses offer them an opportunity to come together with people from varied backgrounds. This leads to the narrative of Paulina who articulates her convivial encounters with people of Middle Eastern and South Asian origin in different ways and in different contexts. The intersection of locality, gender and class are significant in shaping Paulina's experiences and perceptions of people of Asian origin. The two excerpts below demonstrate how different her experiences are on the street of an ethnically diverse and relatively deprived neighbourhood of Manchester and during an adult education course:

I felt stressed when walking through that neighbourhood. People would accost me on the street and look at me in a strange way. I had blond hair then and 'ciapaci' would make some inappropriate comments so I felt uncomfortable ... Their comments weren't nice... I felt really bad and scared.

I like the course a lot, so many people from different countries, a lot from Arabic countries, from Pakistan, but they are nice people, I have even better contact with them than with Polish people.

On the one hand, this example illustrates that the casual contact with 'the other' on the street can generate social pathologies of avoidance, self-preservation and intolerance, especially if the space is marked by uneven power dynamics (Amin, 2008), in this case between a Polish woman and Asian men making sexual remarks. Moreover, by defining them with a derogatory term 'ciapaci'³, she perceives them as a homogenous group based on skin colour rather than knowledge of their background. On the other hand, habitual contact as a result of regular attendance at the course and the opportunity to get to know her colleagues enabled Paulina to redefine some terms. She does not refer to her colleagues of Middle Eastern and South Asian origin as 'ciapaci', with whom she has established a better contact than with her Polish counterparts. Habitual contact and the locality of the course facility promote the establishment of social relations in a relatively safe manner, free of fear and anxiety experienced on the street. This allows Paulina to look beyond the ethno-cultural boundaries giving space to conviviality.

CONVIVIAL CULTURES IN BARCELONA – EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

As in the context of Manchester organisational activities in Barcelona may facilitate the emergence of convivial culture where encounter and interaction produce a sense of belonging amongst some participants. While lack of knowledge of Spanish and Catalan usually constitutes a significant barrier for Natalia in establishing meaningful contact, a workshop organised by the Casa Eslava, an organisation working with migrants from Slavic countries and the local population, allows her to transcend this linguistic difficulty. She finds a common language and understanding with other participants through non-verbal means and participation in activities:

³ A term ascribed by some Polish migrants to those of South Asian (usually from Pakistan) and Middle-Eastern origin, often in conjunction with a lower class status. Some research participants said that the term came from the 'chapatti' bread; others explained it in terms of skin colour. The interviewees who used it said they heard it from other Poles and adopted it (*ciapaty* – singular, *ciapaci* – plural).

I remember that it really helped me a lot... It was all in Spanish, but it wasn't a problem for me because of this huge interest and willingness to participate expressed by all the women, regardless if they were veiled, older or younger ... I think it was useful for many of us, who found support thanks to some discussions about problematic topics. Despite the language barrier, we found a common language ... Even when I wasn't able to communicate in Spanish, we used body language. I remember when leaving I was happy because I felt part of the group, even though in everyday life I feel rejected to some extent because I don't speak their language.

During the workshop, a form of social relationship between the participants is established. Having in common experiences of gender and migration brings them closer and allows meaningful interaction. This example also demonstrates openness across difference rather than through the celebration of difference (Glick Schiller 2011). This creates a sense of belonging without negating cultural, generational or religious differences. This is set in contrast to feeling rejected in everyday life because of a lack of knowledge of Catalan and Spanish. As a result, Natalia develops a sense of belonging in culturally diverse settings and with people, who like her, migrated to Barcelona. This is also reflected in her relationship with an Indian partner. On the contrary, Zofia, who speaks Spanish and Catalan fluently and whose partner is Catalan, has access to what she calls, "two Barcelonas", the diverse one and the Catalan Barcelona. Her narrative demonstrates that the cross-cutting of social formations does not only occur through multicultural activities. She told me how important it was for her to become a part of a Catalan association which aims to promote Catalan culture outside of Spain:

[It] means a lot to me ... I was invited to become a part of it and I became an executive member. This was an honour for me because I am the only foreigner there ... I feel appreciated and important ... Sometimes when we are away at an event, for example, the Italians ask what we are doing and where we are from, I then feel like part of the group and I say, our culture is like this and like that. I also feel like this is my culture, my language and my family.

While she feels she is an integral part of the culturally diverse Barcelona, it is her participation with the Catalan group that also offers her a sense of belonging and inclusion. Zofia's involvement with the association allows her to cross the ethno-cultural boundaries of the group and to form friendships with other members. Being Polish does not exclude her from becoming a part of the group. This example offers a more inclusive notion of

‘Catalanness’, manifesting itself through a kind of conviviality where the ethno-national boundaries in social relations between Zofia and the group become less important.

The workplace is a space where many migrants spend much time together with people from different backgrounds. These places may generate multiple and diverse types of interaction often allowing migrants to get to know others. The importance of habitual contact at work with people from different backgrounds was stressed particularly in the context of Barcelona where many participants noticed segmentation of the labour market based on ethnic stratification. This could be a result of the dominant ideological forms defining certain groups of migrants as "outsiders" far from the White-Christian-Western model, who tend to occupy marginal spaces of the labour market or work in the black economy as they face difficulties in obtaining a residence permit (Colectivo IOE 1998). Some participants emphasised that these divisions made meaningful interactions almost impossible with many non-European migrants, for example, with Africans who often sell sun-glasses or t-shirts on the streets or with South Asian migrants often described as ‘cerveza-beer’ men, as they are known from selling drinks on the streets or at the beach. Irena, who is a product engineer and a PhD student, claims that there are limited possibilities to get know people from different cultures, since many of them work in specific sectors:

But when today you see that people from South America mostly work in bars... in grocery shops you usually see Pakistani or Chinese people... then they are not seen as equals... There is a lack of possibility to work with them and to get to know them. The first step is for the employer to treat everyone equally, and then you have a chance to get to know others.

This ethno-stratification of the labour market results not only in exclusion and discrimination, but also affects the opportunities of contact and emergence of convivial culture shared between different groups of migrants. Irena points out that habitual contact at work allowed her to look beyond ethno-religious differences and see her co-workers as equals:

When you see that I work shoulder to shoulder with a Muslim man or woman, and she does exactly what I do, and she is treated exactly the way I am, I start treating her the same way too... You see, she wears burka, or however you call it, but she works with me, she is a scientist, she is a normal human being like you and me... this is a chance to get to know her and her culture. We spend most of our time at work, so if you have a chance to

get to know other people and to see that they do the same job as you do, that they don't just clean, it would make a difference. I have learnt this myself...

Irena's strong statement confirms Hewstone's (2003) suggestion that equal status and opportunities to get to know each other allow meaningful contact. Working side by side with a veiled woman allows Irena to cross certain ethno-religious boundaries, challenge stereotypes and see her work colleague as a human being. This confirms Carr's et al. (1993: 344) assertion that "in a well-designed and well-managed public space, the armour of daily life can be partially removed, allowing us to see others as whole people. Seeing people as different from oneself responding to the same setting in similar ways creates a temporary bond."

CONCLUSION

This article aimed to broaden understanding of conviviality as manifested in everyday experiences of encounters through boundary crossings in different spheres of Polish women's lives in which routine practices generate experiences of a more inclusive belonging. The article highlighted the evidence of emerging convivial cultures and the diversity of encounters between Polish migrant women and local populations in Manchester and Barcelona. The preliminary findings demonstrate that everyday experiences of convivial encounters are context specific. These experiences are influenced not only by the wider social, political and economic context in the two cities but also by intersection of locality, personal biographies, gender class and other categories which will be further explored. The above examples from the field demonstrate that conviviality allows both, contradictory but coexisting tendencies (Gilroy 2006) through convivial encounters which become key factors for cultural negotiation. Conviviality as a product of interactive coexistence and intersecting trajectories allows cultural identities to be transformed. This helps to challenge the idea of undifferentiated, racially and ethnically segregated groups. Even if migrants want to maintain their traditions, they maintain them alongside their daily interactions, transforming the landscape of multicultural cities (Hall, 2000).

Although the quality of everyday interaction and the extent to which it promotes meaningful contact which translates to positive respect (Valentine, 2008) is currently questioned, this research shows that participation in shared tasks and ventures, whether during organisational activities, mother and toddler meetings or educational courses, are

likely to form social connections and bonds of trust. This often allows boundary crossing and looking beyond ethnic, racial or religious difference; and (re)shaping own identities in relations to others. Social location raises important questions which need further exploration in terms of opportunities for encounter or the lack of such opportunities. Those participants who worked, lived and socialised in the localities discussed above were more likely to establish convivial interaction with the local population and other migrants, especially if this interaction was conditioned by shared experiences and common goals.

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