A Remedy for Segregation?
Conviviality and the Question of Sustainable City Development: The Case of Malmö

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Introduction

Malmö – Sweden’s third city, situated in the southernmost part to the county, some 30 kilometres by way of bridge from the metropolis of Copenhagen, and with just over 300 000 inhabitants – is a city undergoing rapid change. It is growing, modernizing, and gaining in attractiveness, partly because of its location in the economically thriving Øresund region, partly because of the popularity of its cultural scene and its prospects for young people.

Malmö is also a city with an unusually high percentage of immigrants, and of immigrants from all major parts of the world; and it is a city where immigrants and native Swedes interact and share the city space. It is, however, also a city with major social inequalities. The breaches in the city’s social fabric concern many things: income, housing, schooling, health, etc. Correlated to the fact that Malmö is the most ethnically diverse Swedish city is another, more tragic fact, namely that Malmö is the Swedish city with the highest proportion of poor families and children.

The features darkening the image of Malmö as a thriving and vibrant city have been brought to the fore by the work of the so-called Malmö Commission (the Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö). The Commission, which is politically independent and consists of researchers and city officials, has been given the task to “assemble evidence and based on those propose strategies for reducing health inequalities and improve the long term living conditions for the citizens of Malmö”.

The focal point for the Commission is the observation of immense differences in health between different groups among Malmö’s population, but the studies it conducts also cover the assumed reasons behind these differences: lack of work (or bad working conditions), bad housing, educational problems, and a lack of economic and social resources. In these suppositions, the Malmö
Commission draws on the findings of the WHO report *Closing the gap in a generation* (2008), often referred to as the *Marmot report* (the renowned professor in public health, Sir Michael Marmot, having chaired the committee). In short, it is “the structural requirements for health” that the Commission aims at influencing (*Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö* 2010:1).

From the perspective of the differences in health and social conditions recognised by the Malmö Commission – the “gap” it is aiming to bridge over – *segregation* could be understood as the amassing (in some parts of the city) of such problems; or, in other terms, segregation is what happens when *inequality becomes spatially applied.*ii In the segregated city, some areas – city districts or neighbourhoods – are marked by people there being poor, housing being bad, schools being bad (lacking resources and/or not succeeding in giving their pupils a basis for further education) and, consequently, an exceeding number of the population experiencing health-related problems; all this as compared with other parts of the city. Segregation – as a process – is what constitutes a city that is disintegrating, whose parts cease to form a consistent whole. The Malmö Commission is acknowledging these facts and aims to do something about the situation, at least in terms of providing knowledge-based advice for the political decision makers. It does not pinpoint ‘immigrants’, nor does it equate Malmö’s problems with ethnic diversity.

There is, however, at the same time – in Malmö as in many other cities – an emphasis in public measures on the *ill-fated areas*, not the city as a whole; and to a significant extent, it is in these ill-fated areas where immigrants find themselves, which may cause confusion as to what problems the public measures are really trying to address. The dilemma becomes clear if one looks into the so-called *Area Programme for a Socially Sustainable Malmö*, aiming “to improve living conditions in areas where welfare is at its lowest and upgrade the physical environment”.iii This work is parallel to that of the Malmö Commission, but unlike that it does not focus the city as a totality but a collection of its least developed and least attractive neighbourhoods, which also happen to be neighbourhoods marked by a strong presence of immigrants and substantial ethnic diversity.

The tendency to connect the issues of physical city development with those of social equality and cohesion is, indeed, a topical one. “There is a renewed focus in policy on social cohesion, particularly its inclusion in the sustainable communities policy agenda”, writes Nicola Dempsey of the Oxford Institute for Sustainable Development. The concept of *social cohesion* is here taken to include both social interaction, social networks, a sense of community, participation in organised activities, trust and reciprocity, perceived safety, and a sense of place attachment (Dempsey 2009:322-3). *Social sustainability* is, in this context, taken to comprise two main dimensions: 1) social equity and 2) *sustainability of community* (see Bramley et.al. 2009:2126) or, in other terms, 1) the access to local services and opportunities and 2) the quality of one’s attachment to one’s neighbourhood.

The route taken by the *Area Programme* in Malmö, associating the question of social sustainability with that of the built environmentiv – the local neighbourhood and its physical features and resources – is, at least in the global context of urban planning, probably better-established than that of the Malmö Commission, which links social sustainability to health and social welfare in a more general (i.e., less geographically situated) sense. This, in turn, is probably because the Malmö Commission is in itself a tool for developing and, eventually, implementing over-all public welfare measures for the city. Although the tension between the ‘local’ (district or neighbourhood) urban regeneration
perspective and the city-wide socio-economic (or public welfare) perspective should not be exaggerated – they both strive to come to terms with the effects of urban disintegration and inequality – a difference in focus is still discernible.

This conference paper tries to say something about the character and quality of Malmö’s public life in terms of people challenging pre-set distinctions as to ethnic background, social class or living environment. It deals with the occurrence of conviviality in the city, identifying this with the “vernacular and everyday forms of cosmopolitanism” which many researchers see as a characteristic of life in contemporary, multi-ethnic cities (Devadason 2010:2946). Although only tentatively, it also deals with the question of whether increased conviviality is – or could become – a solution to the kinds of urban challenges that the Malmö Commission is addressing.

But before getting there, let us start with the better-established concept of cosmopolitanism.
Cosmopolitan City – Convivial City

Going through some of the vast literature on cosmopolitanism, it becomes obvious that it is a concept which carries several meanings: philosophical, sociological or ethical; relating to individuals, groups or places. In very broad terms – and for the purposes of this paper – it seems useful to distinguish between 1) a cosmopolitan mindset, 2) cosmopolitan practices, and 3) cosmopolitan places.

It is obvious that what we refer to as a cosmopolitan mindset has a strong ideological hold on much of today’s both scholarly and political (particularly liberal or leftist) discourse: it is the “normative orientation towards difference /.../ which represents the ‘globalising of minds’” (Devadason 2010:2946) or – in more liberal, individualistic terms – the notion “[positing] the individual actor as existing beyond particular communitarian arrangements, capable of authoring personal identity and properly at liberty to exercise this capacity” (Rapport 2007:225). The cosmopolitan mindset is mirrored by cosmopolitan practices, i.e., what people do, socially, in terms of dealing with diversity. Maja Povrzanovic Frykman has referred to such cosmopolitan practice as “cosmopolitanism in situ” (see Frykman 2012:3, where she “argues for the need of ethnographic research of the what, where, and when of cosmopolitanism as an outcome of experiences grounded in public spaces and mundane practices /.../ searched for in situ, as a potential outcome of social interaction in a particular place”); others have used terms such as “situated”, “vernacular” or “mundade” to denote this practical, everyday life type of cosmopolitanism (ibid.).

However, it could be discussed what comes first: the mindset or the practice. In other words, is there a pre-existing cosmopolitan mentality which causes cosmopolitan behaviour (interaction), or does the behaviour come first and the mentality – by means of induction and in the form or cosmopolitan values – follow as its conceptual product? Cosmopolitanism has been defined as “the cultural habitus of globalisation” (Devadason 2010:2945), which, quite consequently, should indicate that it is a composite thing: a “matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions” (Bourdieu 1977:83) or an acquired disposition, i.e., an inclination or tendency to act in a certain way in a certain situation. The question of what comes first – the idea or the action – is, therefore, perhaps irrelevant. A spirit of cosmopolitanism should be fostered in society, its proponents argue, but it will also be a natural consequence of observing and taking part in cosmopolitan action. They are both cause and effect of each other (so the argument goes, anyway). However, seeing cosmopolitanism as habitus also indicates that it is, to a significant extent, established unconsciously. It is not that you want to interact with strangers as a manifestation of an ideal (embracing diversity); interacting with strangers seems just the appropriate thing to do, the kind of behaviour that comes natural to you. Reversely, cosmopolitan ideals will not necessarily manifest themselves in habitual behaviour. This could mean that cosmopolitan mindsets and cosmopolitan practices are different, not necessarily interconnected things: “[Those] who practice cosmopolitanism may ‘not always be the same as those who preach it’ /.../; people may engage in cosmopolitan practices without referring to any discourse of cosmopolitanism” (Frykman 2012:19; Vertovec & Cohen 2002:5).

The normalness of cosmopolitan practices can characterise a place, for example a city that could, accordingly, be regarded as a cosmopolitan city (or, in Malmö’s case, perhaps an “aspiring
cosmopolitan city”\textsuperscript{v}, meaning that it aims at having – and being identified with – a quality of cosmopolitanism. A cosmopolitan place is a place where the world becomes present. Following a growing interest in urban anthropology and in ethnographic studies of what goes on in urban spaces and what signifies different urban environments, the ‘cosmopolitan subject’ has, perhaps, shifted in recent years: from the individual ‘cosmopolite’ – the world traveller who feels at home wherever he is and who, in Richard Sennett’s words, “moves comfortably in diversity” (Sennett 1977:17) – to the place where, so to speak, the world meets: the place that is marked – and even branded – by cosmopolitanism, adding to its value in the eyes of its inhabitants and the world around it.

But why should cosmopolitanism be understood so optimistically? What is it in cosmopolitanism that gives this ‘added value’ to a place marked by it? Frykman provides an answer:

> Recent scholarship on immigrant incorporation in urban environments suggests that the enlarged presence and everyday interaction of people from all over the world leads to multiple cultural competence and cosmopolitan orientations and attitudes /…/. It is widely accepted that cosmopolitanism /…/ intensifies the consciousness of the world as a whole, and allows insights and understandings that reach beyond a national perspective. (Frykman 20\textsuperscript{10})

The type of cosmopolitanism studies that Frykman advocates focus on the place, and among the questions they ask are:

- How is the place characterized – or signified – by difference?
- What opportunities for encounters, communication and connectedness does the place (with its infrastructure, built environments, public places etc; the “material setting”) provide?

The discussion about situated, everyday cosmopolitanism shows, however, how charged cosmopolitanism is with its ideological aspects, even when discussed as an empirical or analytical concept. Cosmopolitan action is interpreted as incorporating the world-expanding or consciousness-intensifying quality associated with cosmopolitanism as mindset or political ideal. On a theoretical basis, we see this conceptual ‘overload’ as problematic. Still, we would agree that cosmopolitan practice points to something beyond itself, possibly to what Floris Müller has referred to as “urban alchemy”: the hope that “diverse and divided populations of urban dwellers may potentially be transformed into one harmonious community of cosmopolitan citizens” (Müller 2010:3416). With urban life comes, not only visible diversity but also a connected diversity. Because “[urban] dwellers are inevitably and consistently confronted with cultural difference in their daily life” (ibid.), communication across cultural and social boundaries, openness to others (and a capacity to learn from them), living together – and thus: conviviality – will form inevitable parts of their competence or acquired habitus.

An everyday use of the term conviviality (in English) would relate it to a festive spirit and a fondness of enjoying a good company, eating and drinking, etc.\textsuperscript{vi} However, when relating conviviality to the integration of strangers in a society we mean something slightly different. Paul Gilroy, professor of sociology and African American studies at Yale University, refers conviviality “to the processes of cohabitation and interaction that have made multiculture an ordinary feature of social life in /…/ postcolonial cities” (Gilroy 2004:ix). He finds conviviality a useful conceptual tool at a time when the notion of multiculturalism and the politics of identity have broken down, and says that “[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” (ibid.). By the introduction of this concept, Gilroy gives “the previously overlooked potential for transnational solidarities and multicultural democracy to flourish” a setting in civil society, as one of his reviewers, Dorothy Roberts, has put it (Roberts 2006).

What Gilroy seems to be arguing against is an ideology of diversity which could be called intercultural and which bases its argument on a ‘cultural differences’ approach. Such an approach may seem progressive but in fact relies on the same kinds of categorization that the neo-nationalist adversaries of multiculturalism use to describe different cultures as particular, contradictory, and – thus – incompatible. According to Spanish researchers Casellas and Rocha (2009) there are several risks related to the intercultural idea, such as considering the origin as the only source of diversity, reducing the individual to a “specimen” of his/her culture, a lack of respect for intra-cultural differences, and – in the end – a use of culture as a means to exclude. Since every culture is constructed, dynamic and heterogeneous, integration models that focus on culture – assimilationism, multiculturality, interculturality, diversity management, etc. – are deemed wrong. Instead, Casellas and Rocha propose a civic model based on a “collective construction in terms of equality” through the participation of the people who live in a shared territory (Casellas & Rocha, 2009:13). This is another way of describing what is here referred to as conviviality, and another way of arguing that the recognition of culture in a fixed sense will not prove the key to equality in society; only, to quote Gilroy, a “radical openness” will do that.

It could be argued that the introduction of a new concept should be a response to a genuine scientific need for such a concept. It could also be claimed that a new concept would gain in credibility if it had a value neutral quality, i.e., if it would function as an analytical or explanatory tool rather than as a ‘moral label’. Previous uses of the term conviviality would perhaps indicate its ineptness in this respect, but if we use it the way Paul Gilroy does – i.e., very openly – it might actually work. Conviviality would, then, be about how, when, and where people (more specifically: people embodying difference) encounter each other and interact socially. In this very simple way it can say something about the integration that actually takes place, beyond the integration policies and politics of inclusion.

An idea adopted from studies in Barcelona, Spain, claims that in the urban environment there are interstices (Spanish: intersticios), which could mean gaps in the social geography of the city but also junctions where differences can be transgressed and hybridization take place. The public character of large parts of the city space means open admission to difference, creating “tensions, fears and conflicts, but also a space for new forms of sociability, new possibilities and construction of non-exclusive new identities” (Benach 2008:89-90; translation by Sara Aguirre Sanchez-Beato). It is in such spaces that conviviality can be found and studied. A list of such places would include parks, squares, streets, sports and leisure facilities, shopping malls (or other so-called ‘POPS’: privately owned public spaces) but also places not intended as (what city planners love to call) ‘meeting places’: abandoned lots, bicycle tunnels, parking spaces, and other such urban ‘non-places’.

So far, conviviality has been discussed as an object of study and as a concept with a potential for illustrating some of the processes by which, in this case, a city can become overtly ‘cosmopolitan’,
thus breaking the patterns of segregation or enclavism. But can conviviality prove instrumental in creating a socially sustainable city?

In what is so far merely the beginning of a scholarly project, we have made it our task

1) to further develop the theoretical understanding of conviviality: the uses, gains and possible shortcomings of the concept; and

2) to look more closely into what examples of conviviality there actually exist in the city (in this case Malmö), what can be understood (from studying these examples) as to the importance of conviviality, the possible benefits conviviality produces and what factors in the life of the city that provide obstacles to the realization of conviviality.

These two tasks have been the object of a pilot study, conducted in the spring of 2012 involving Jonas Alwall, senior lecturer in International Migration and Ethnic Relations at the Department of Urban Studies, Malmö University, and the four master students Sara Aguirre Sanchez-Beato, Mariana Garcia Troncoso, Alba Pérez Campillos and Tiziana Saponaro (who have conducted this study in Malmö as part of their degree as Master in Migration at the University of Valencia, Spain). The data gathered have consisted of photographs (some of which will be shown in the following), observations and conversations with people (natives as well as immigrants) in Malmö.

Later work will build on these findings and deepen the field of enquiry, addressing more specifically the links between conviviality and social sustainability and substantially expanding – quantitatively as well as qualitatively – the collected empirical data. In later analyses, empirical and theoretical findings from the scholarly reports of the Malmö Commission will also be included.
Aspects of Conviviality

In order to say something significant about what conviviality does – or could do – it seems necessary first to try do discern more specifically what it is. We would claim that conviviality, in the sense it is here discussed, could be understood as consisting of three aspects:

First, conviviality is spatial and temporal; it takes place in space and time and is, more precisely, a product of conspatiality and contemporality, of (in this case) people being in the same place at the same time. In this sense conviviality finds its place in what Doreen Massey (2005:12) has named “coexisting heterogeneity”.ix

This, in turn, points to the second aspect of conviviality, namely its involving an interaction of people with different backgrounds and experiences. That is to say: conviviality involves interaction which is not only occurring in one and the same place and at one and the same time; a fundamental aspect of this interaction is that it involves encounters between differences. Such differences would typically refer to ethnicity (or race), cultural heritage, language etc. – i.e., they would be visible or audible – but the differences would not necessarily be made aware (at the moment of interaction) by the agents involved.

Third, convivial interaction has a quality which makes it something more than the sum of the previous aspects. Convivial interaction is not just people (with differences) ‘meeting’; it manifests – or establishes – some kind of relation between the people involved. Such relations can, of course, be amicable, but they do not have to – and that is not the point here. The point is that convivial interaction involves people who recognize each other (by name, by a common history or, at least, by a certain capacity which brings them into contact); in their interaction they could be seen as counterparts or co-agents.

If these three aspects represent what conviviality is, what it does still remains to be defined. We need to ask ourselves whether the links between people that conviviality establishes can be said to hold certain positive future consequences (and if so, how does this work?).

The differences discussed so far – differences that are assumed to be transcended by conviviality – will, typically, involve things like physical features, dress, language or accent. Many such differences can be captured in observations or on photo. The typical manifestation of such encounters is the ‘immigrants meeting natives’ kind of scene so representative of city milieus we would call cosmopolitan. However, we also need to consider the importance of other, more subtle kinds of differences. A central methodological problem concerns the fact that some significant differences can only be observed by people actually involved in an encounter or situation (recognizing them calls for people to get to know one another), whereas, on the other hand, people who might look or sound very ‘different’ may in fact have many similarities: as to social background, education, habitus and outlooks, etc.

However, despite these objections there are some circumstances that make the assumption of conviviality’s positive consequences plausible. First, conviviality contributes in making diversity appear natural and unproblematic. If people with differences are able to function together, socialize,
and be trustful in each other’s company, why would such differences be a problem? There is also something promising with conviviality in that it legitimizes encounters, not only between people with observable ethnic or cultural differences but also between people holding different social positions. Taken together, these factors point to the usefulness of conviviality for an increased sense of trust and security, which would be an asset much appreciated by the population of a city that – in spite of its obvious progress – has earned a reputation for social unrest and acts of violence.

Second, conviviality has cognitive and emotive rewards. This has to do with the alleged competence and the increased freedom of choice it offers to its participants. In other words, in being convivial you acquire valuable skills and a freedom to experience new situations and places. Figuratively speaking, conviviality makes your world grow.

Third, conviviality offers new possibilities in terms of identification and, thus, identity transformation. In offering new insights into other people’s lives and choices, it also offers possibilities for your own development. ‘If they can do that – or be that – why can’t I?’ is a question much more likely to be posed in a convivial context than in one that is socially fixed. Hence, conviviality poses an existential challenge, the positive outcomes of which would be new possibilities for the understanding of selfhood and the choices available in a person’s life.

To sum up, and proposing – at least tentatively – a definition of the concept, conviviality is here taken to mean a contemporal and conspatial interaction of people embodying difference, establishing relations which enable trust, new experiences and new forms of identification.

In her observations of “cosmopolitanism in situ” in Malmö, Maja Povrzanovic Frykman has noted that in the same place in central Malmö you can hear several different languages spoken. But what does that mean? “The people I overheard”, she says, “were speaking to other native speakers of the respective languages – no engagement with linguistic difference there. Despite this, they contributed to the cosmopolitan feel of the place for me” (Frykman 2009). Frykman is looking for the “ethnographic indicators of cosmopolitanism as a phenomenon (or a cluster of phenomena) grounded in public spaces and mundane practices” (ibid.), and the same could be said about our search for instances of conviviality in the city. However, her example shows us the importance of paying attention to what really happens in (what appears to be) convivial situations. We need to be able to discern ‘genuine’ conviviality from intercultural co-existence in a ‘side-by-side’ manner or from interaction that only seems to be involving ‘real’ differences. The latter may well work to give a place – e.g., a city – a cosmopolitan quality, but it does not in itself indicate integration in terms of equity. To have the kind of consequences discussed here, conviviality needs to be something more than just its outward features.
Returning to Malmö: The City and Its Problems

As has already been noted, among Swedish cities Malmö shows a striking inequality in socioeconomic terms. The territorial distribution of this inequality follows a pattern which is not obvious or easy to get a grip on. It is not a matter of ‘centre vs. periphery’, i.e., the heart of the city against the suburbs (it could be discussed whether the concept of suburb is even applicable in Malmö). Rosengård – the most disreputable of the city’s district – is, for example, situated only a few kilometres from the centre, and other disadvantaged areas can be found even within the inner city. Malmö is segregated, that is obvious, but it is densely segregated, and even a relatively short walk could take you from rich parts to some of the poorest.

Malmö is administratively divided into ten districts, which are shown in the following map:

So, let us look at some of the geographically applied inequalities demonstrated in the ten city districts of Malmö. The following table shows the most recent data available, collected by some of the researchers involved in the Malmö Commission:
These data may seem hard to compare. They are, however, chosen because they provide a coherent picture of the types of phenomena marking the differences in equality among Malmö’s districts. In other words, they provide an image of the segregation in the city. In the chart below, the span between the best-off and the worst-fated city districts becomes even clearer.
These differences in terms of immigrant population, educational conditions and welfare dependency (obviously) – but also health – correlate with the differences in income distribution shown in the following map:

(Average income in Malmö 2009, related to figures for the country; Salonen 2012:51)

The map echoes the divergences shown in the chart. The ‘reddest’ parts of the city, i.e., the parts with the lowest average incomes, are found in the four city districts to the right in the chart – Rosengård, Fosie, Kirseberg and Södra innerstaden – where also the proportions of people who are Swedish-born, well-educated and experiencing good health are the lowest.

A lot could be said about the conditions for conviviality in these parts of the city. Establishing ‘meeting places’ is, for example, an important aspect of the on-going urban regeneration projects, including the Area Programme; there is also a general recognition that such places already exist and could be developed further. Although expressed in other terms, the notion that conviviality could grow and the ill-fated neighbourhoods gain in attractiveness (and thereby draw people from other parts of the city) is clearly present in the political visions for the city’s development. However, conviviality is still more likely to be identified with the city’s central or western parts, with the spaces considered most public: the inner city, the big parks, or the seaside. The images in the following sections are from some of those places.
Images of Conviviality

The following 29 photographs – demonstrating different aspects of conviviality – were, with the only exceptions of pictures 6, 19 and 20 (from 2010), shot in Malmö during the spring of 2012. The pictures are divided into two categories: 1) Everyday Conviviality and 2) Festivals and Other Special Events. These categories are neither undisputable, nor totally excluding each other, but as basic thematizations we think they work and more or less explain themselves.

Everyday Conviviality

“...in the streets of Malmö we can see daily interactions of people from different ethnic or national origins, like friends walking or chatting in the public space, boys playing football together in the fields, people interacting at the market at Möllevångstorget.” (Sara Aguirre Sanchez-Beato)

“The people are kind, but discrimination exists. Here you are alone; no-one will help you. I try to help all Latin-American people because I know what it is like to be in a place alone. This is a beautiful place to live; maybe it is the best country, but you have to be smart and quickly learn their culture and try not to disturb that.” (Latin American immigrant interviewed by Mariana Garcia Troncoso)

“I had the chance to talk to one of the stallholders and he was very open to tell me his migration story. Regarding Sweden, he was of the view that that ‘there are good people and bad people like everywhere else’. /.../ Despite being in contact with Swedes on a daily basis in his selling stall, the ‘trade relation’ might not be enough to get a proper acquaintance of the local people. /.../ Maybe there is a lack of a common project that ties this man to the city.” (Sara Aguirre Sanchez-Beato)
Festivals and Other Special Events

From my point of view, one of the nicest things about Malmö is the number of parks that it has. This helps people to live together: meet new friends, spend time with people that they do not know yet, see different ways to dress, different behaviours, and hear different languages. All this, especially at those parks, makes you see the differences between people publicly. Furthermore, in the city public events are often organized, where people meet and share time, places, culture, food, music, dances, ethnic products, etc. (Alba Pérez Campillos)
Interpreting Conviviality and Ways Forward

What do the images in the previous sections depict? Our overall answer would be that they depict people (mostly relatively young people) of different backgrounds doing things together, or at least being together in the same place at the same time. They depict conviviality, but only in some cases conviviality in its full meaning (as it has been discussed above).

The first eight pictures capture conviviality in everyday situations: in a restaurant, in a shop, at a playground, at the bus station or on the bus, and in the square at multicultural Möllevången. However, the situations depicted are in some cases not strikingly ‘convivial’. They show the contemporality and conspatiality of people ‘embodying difference’ which, taken together, are conviviality’s prerequisites (the first and second of the aspects mentioned above), but not to the same extent the third, relational aspect. Several of the scenes are in fact quite anonymous, with people not really interacting, only ‘co-existing’. A certain loneliness can be detected in some of them.*

However, the relational aspect becomes clearer in pictures 9-18. Some of these pictures obviously illustrate interethnic friendship – or even love. Some just depict friendship, but in a setting which is in itself convivial. The settings are city streets and squares, the People’s Park (a popular, centrally located meeting place but also the venue of many public events), a university classroom and a coffee shop.

Pictures 19-29 cover situation which in themselves intend to be convivial. 19 and 20 are taken at the Malmö Festival (the city’s biggest public event which takes place annually during a week in August). The other pictures are from smaller festivals of an ethnic – in this case Turkish – or multicultural character (the former turning out to be almost as multicultural as the latter) and a big running event for children (picture 27). The last two pictures show conviviality on stage, with multi-ethnic band settings within the context of the bigger multicultural festivals. These examples are, perhaps, in one sense the clearest. The people in these pictures perform conviviality. They manifest, in a condensed form, what the events (as larger frameworks) want to represent.

People in these scenes are either participating in convivial action or being spectators of it – or doing both things. Both roles would seem meaningful from the perspective of perceiving ‘diversity as normality’. The problem in these pictures – as in observing social behaviour in general – consists of the people who are not there. In Malmö, conviviality of this kind can easily be chosen (convivial public events are frequent in its squares and parks), but the places or situations manifesting conviviality in this qualified sense have to be sought out. They are, therefore, also easily avoided. The kinds of everyday conviviality shown in pictures 1-18 are, on the other hand, difficult to avoid. Since they assume the city as public space (or its shops, restaurants and other localities that people use on a daily basis), to avoid them you will have to withdraw, which is a conscious act. For example, to avoid encountering the veiled cashier in picture 3 would mean having to leave the shop (or at least the queue leading to her counter). Visible diversity in public spaces increases the ‘exposure’ to it, and avoiding to be in any way affected by it becomes ever more difficult. The scenes shown here point to the essential unavoidability of diversity – of being aware of it and in different ways being affected by it – for anyone moving in the city and partaking socially in its life.
If the task here was simply to find examples of people spending time together in different urban spaces – people by some standard being different – then most of these pictures are obvious examples and the task could be considered completed. However, we set out to find not only examples of conviviality but also of obstacles (as to the realization of conviviality) and signs of possible social gains that conviviality might produce, and in that endeavour we have barely left the starting blocks. If the issue is to discuss whether conviviality could work as a remedy for segregation, then we need something – some other pictures, observations or valid conclusions – to compare these images with. We also need to ask ourselves – and find data to indicate – whether conviviality just happens ‘naturally’ given certain circumstances (e.g., a certain denseness, a certain layout and availability of public spaces or other physical features in the built environment, in which case it could be affected by measures of city planning) or whether it would need to be encouraged by other political agencies or interventions. (For example, could we – provided that conviviality is shown to have the assumed positive effects for social cohesion in the city – conceive of a ‘conviviality plan’ that would in fact be a strategy of affirmative action for the city, involving both social and spatial dynamics? If so, how would such a plan have to be constructed – and would it work?)

Furthermore, we must deepen the analysis regarding what differences are really significant. The fundamental idea behind the Malmö Commission is that of a strong link existing between socio-economic circumstances, living conditions, and health. For conviviality to be a remedy it would have to involve differences that are relevant to these dynamics – i.e., factors such as income, employment, education, place of residence, age, and gender – but also more complex dimensions – which could be termed ‘strength-weakness’, ‘resilience-vulnerability’, or ‘security-precarity’ – that would also in different ways relate to migration experiences, experiences of discrimination or stigmatization, ethnic, cultural or religious minorityhood, etc.

Understanding the nature of these relations would, however, also have to be made part of the analysis. The following observations by Tiziana Saponaro illustrate how the intricate relations between ethnic background and socio-economic and cultural resources can be perceived:

[At] the beginning, the integration on the labour market seemed to me very different in respect to the realities that I am used to [from Italy and Spain]. I could find persons, ethnically non-Swedish, who worked in supermarkets, in bars and restaurants, and in a lot of different shops. Malmö gives an apparent feeling of non-discrimination, where a person is seen as an individual and where the national, ethnic, religious or cultural membership doesn’t matter. This happens in both the private and public sector. /…/

Rather than nationality, ethnicity or culture, the crux of the matter is the economic and social conditions faced by people who have come to Sweden from other countries. /…/ Ethnically non-Swedish people with a high human social and economic capital do not, in my opinion, have great difficulties in becoming an integral part of Swedish society. However, people who do not have this capital find themselves on the margins of society and share roughly the same conditions as nationals living in the same situation. So, to me, it is not true that there is no integration because people are different (for example Arabs). On the contrary, the lack of possibilities to become a full member of society is due to a lack of opportunity and resources. However, it is easier, both for governments and for the community as a whole, to think that the problems of coexistence is the result of insuperable differences while, on the contrary, needs are the same for all men, although they can be expressed in different ways.
Future studies, digging deeper into the meaning and consequences of conviviality, should include such complexities, take in problematizing perspectives, make relevant comparisons, and dare to test some enterprising ideas. This work has only just started and is already encountering several methodological problems. In the present study we can, for example, note the rather simplistic thematization of the differences that we assume are surpassed by conviviality. By what right do we suggest that examples of people’s hanging out together in the city really constitute instances of conviviality just because these people look different? One tentative answer to this question could be that instances of conviviality – to be recognized – indeed have to be visible, meaning that they have to include visible differences. This is not just a pragmatic argument from a methodological point of view (we can only observe difference if we can see it) but also an argument which may say something of how conviviality works. If what is considered normal is to be equal in spite of being different, then the public representation of this normality is people with real, observable differences acting as if these differences didn’t matter, i.e., not letting the differences set them apart. The more examples of such (convivial) action we can see in everyday life, the stronger the identification with this notion is likely to be.
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It is obvious that the images are chosen as representations of something that is not segregation, but that quality is built into the very concept of conviviality, so if these pictures are indeed images of conviviality then we already know that. To say that images of conviviality represent a social life that is not segregated would be

Notes


We stress this fact because it should be clear that what we are discussing is not ethnic segregation. Ethnic groups – and migration – play their part in the construction of the segregated city, but people are not poor or experiencing health problems because they belong to certain ethnic groups, nor is migration per se the reason why segregation occurs.


"This /.../ model emphasises practices of consultation and participation, especially through so-called ‘community partnerships’ and the involvement of the voluntary or third sector /.../ and identifies the ‘community’ and the local level as the main arenas for the achievement of sustainability” (Colantonio & Dixon 2010:9).

Following the Swedish social anthropologist Ulf Hannerz (1990), cosmopolitanism could also be seen as a specific competence. In Ranji Devadason’s words, this competence “is a reflexive process of engagement with difference, positioning oneself in relation to others, rather than relying on the established discourses of one community” (Devadason 2010:2946).

Frykman notes, in discussing Malmö as an aspiring cosmopolitan city (in relation to so-called global or ‘gateway’ cities, whose cosmopolitan character is already obvious), that “[the] most dramatic responses to changing conditions can be perceived in cities of smaller scale /.../. In meeting an uncertain future, urban restructuring is one response employed by many such cities. /.../ In this context, migrants living in the town – even if occupying lower or totally marginal socio-economic positions – become ‘good’ for the town’s image. Visible differences between people in the streets are seen as corresponding to the diversity of inhabitants that is normal for ‘gateway cities’. The languages the migrants settled in the city use in their homes, and their connections to faraway places, are seen as connections to ‘the world’, and are therefore lifted as a proof of the town’s multiple connectedness and openness, promising cultural and economic rewards” (Frykman 2010).

In Sweden, with a people considered to be serious and not very festive, ‘conviviality’ (konvivialitet) has (also) been given a slightly different meaning and has actually been referred to as a psychiatric term. In this sense, conviviality means the ability to function in interaction with other people; it is the opposite of depression, where you become secluded and afraid of others; understood in this way, conviviality works as a protection against suicide.

Gilroy identifies conviviality with processes on the local level, but if we instead refer to the earlier work of the Austrian philosopher Ivan Illich (1973), conviviality can also be seen as an improved social order, where the disadvantages of capitalism, differentiation and technological specialization can be overcome and replaced by a system in which people are given back the tools – both in a practical and symbolic sense – that will grant them, once again, their independence; i.e., to use Ferdinand Tönnies’ famous categories, to replace “Gesellschaft” with a new “Gemeinschaft”, or – in English and less strikingly – to replace ‘society’ with community.

In Massey’s way of understanding it, “coexisting heterogeneity” is a crucial aspect of space, which – in turn – “is indeed a product of relations /.../ and for that to be so there must be multiplicity /.../. However, these are not the relations of a coherent, closed system within which, as they say, everything is (already) related to everything else. Space can never be that completed simultaneity in which all interconnections have been established, and in which everywhere is already linked with everywhere else. A space, then, which is neither a container for always-already constituted identities nor a completed closure of holism. This is a space of loose ends and missing links. For the future to be open, space must be open too.” (Massey 2005:11-2)

Picture 4 shows a scene that many parents can probably relate to: being in a playground with your child, feeling bored and somewhat out of place. The man in the picture looks rather lost, but is this just an interpretation we draw from his non-native features and from his being a man alone with his child? Would the impression be different if he had the looks of a typical Swede – or, perhaps, if it was a woman in the photo? The Swedish playground is, it seems, not the place where he feels most at home. However, like several of the other pictures this one shows a person who is making a typical Swedish, public (or semi-public) situation part of his everyday life pattern. Or, at least, so it seems.

It is obvious that the images are chosen as representations of something that is not segregation, but that quality is built into the very concept of conviviality, so if these pictures are indeed images of conviviality then we already know that. To say that images of conviviality represent a social life that is not segregated would be
like saying that images of health do not represent sickness; such images would not in themselves show us what might cure sickness (only what sickness is not).