

DEMOS

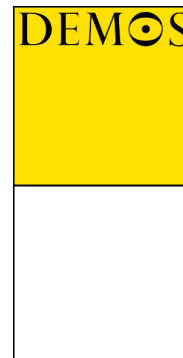
Equally Spaced?

**Public space and interaction
between diverse communities**

*A Report for the Commission for
Racial Equality*

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July 2007



The authors of the report would like to thank the Commission for Racial Equality for their support for the realisation of this report. In particular, we would like to thank Nick Johnson, Jonathan Bamber and Fred Grindrod at the CRE for their input and guidance throughout the process. At Demos, we would like to thank Catherine Fieschi, Alessandra Buonfino, Sophia Parker and Peter Harrington for their insightful comments on the drafts. Special thanks to Nasser Abourahme, Poppy Nicol, Outi Kuittinen and Abdus Shuman for their research support and Alyson Krueger for her work on the launch. As ever, all errors remain our own.

A note on methodology:

In-depth fieldwork was undertaken for three of the case studies: in the Castlemilk Youth Complex in Glasgow, in Queen's Market in Newham, and in Bath Place Community Centre, Leamington Spa. For these three cases, researchers spent time in each location observing in detail the functioning of the site and its users, as well as talking to a range of actors: facility managers, market traders, youth workers, board members, as well as users. We are grateful for the cooperation and enthusiasm with which we were met in each of these places.

Foreword

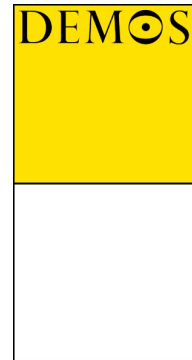
A journey on the London Underground in rush hour is probably the most diverse experience anyone could have.

The sheer number of different ethnicities and faiths let alone the diversity of socio-economic groups, means that any carriage represents in some respect, a most diverse part of Britain. It is unique to see groups of all backgrounds standing next to one another. Yet when it comes to actual interaction or economic and social integration the reality is very different. Contact with strangers on the Underground - or in similar situations - is minimal. It is actively avoided or, at most, happens in a purely functional manner; almost certainly, it is fleeting and hardly ever becomes more than a smile, or a polite word exchanged in passing. Everyone is on their own, with their iPods and their noses in a book or newspaper. Just as it is diverse, it is also almost entirely isolated.

This kind of everyday contact is dictated and forced by functionality - dialogue is not meant to happen. And when we look for places where people can actually come together, we must look for more meaningful interactions rather than simply those arenas where the greatest number of people may cross one another's path.

In recent years, many of our communities have been under threat of division and fracture. The often very rapid and unexplained pace of change across our society has unsettled many and caused many people to retreat into more insular community ties. Bonds of solidarity have largely fragmented and as a result of lack of contact and trust, tensions and misunderstandings between people have increased. This tension often manifests itself through a fear of other groups; Britain's diversity, which should be a source of strength, has become instead the subject of division. We live in a society where different groups live side by side, often occupy the same space, the same schools and shop in the same high streets. Yet a sudden event, a rumour or a general perception of injustice can be enough to trigger division and spark conflict. In some cases, such simmering tensions can disappear over time. In others, however, tensions come out in the open, first between individuals and then spreading to the wider neighbourhood. Much more often, however, tensions don't explode but instead are responsible for a silent retreat - a gradual withdrawal and clustering of homogenous communities behind invisible barriers - echoed by Ted Cante's description of 'parallel lives'.¹

In order to move beyond such tensions, and to counter the threat of a steady impoverishing of the shared public realm, it is fundamental to look ahead and return to a vision of what an integrated society might look like. By integration we do not just refer to the way a more ethnically and culturally diverse Britain can occupy the same space but rather take into account the wider process whereby groups of people from different economic and social backgrounds can learn to live together. An integrated



¹ Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team, chaired by Ted Cante (Home Office, 2001).

society is a society in which people's chances and opportunities to access services or acquiring a job or educational qualifications are not influenced or limited by an individual's faith, race or cultural background but rather are fully dictated by merit and aspirations.

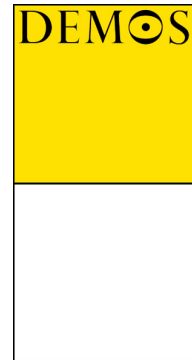
And it is not only about achievement and life chances. It is also about relationships: friendships that cross ethnic boundaries and inspired by what we have in common rather than by what divides us. The fairest societies are those in which people share experiences and common ambitions whatever their racial, religious or cultural backgrounds. In essence, we need to reassert the need for a society based on solidarity in which everyone's life chances are unaffected by what or where they were born.

To achieve this vision of living together, we need to accomplish equality for all sections of the community, interaction between all sections of society and participation by all sections of the community. This also relies on encouraging civic engagement and a richer notion of what it means to be a British citizen, by emphasising responsibilities, rights and solidarity, and through the promotion of greater interaction within and between communities.

There have been a series of parallel debates that impact upon the importance of public spaces. In this country, we have heard much talk, even if this has not always been followed by effective action, about the rebirth of our local institutions - currently framed as the debate over localism and 'double devolution'. What is true is that there has been renewed emphasis on the creation of a public realm, alongside renewed emphasis on the recreation of a civic identity that encourages citizens to take pride in their own areas. At the same time, the US academic Robert Putnam has been started the debate on how to track and rebuild declining levels of social capital amongst communities. In his seminal 'Bowling Alone' and subsequent work, he outlines the strong role that shared spaces can play in re-building strong community ties and networks of social support and reciprocity.²

All of this brings us back to the crucial role that public spaces can play in providing a focus for practical solutions that increase our sense of society and mutuality. What we mean by public space can be wide and varied - as one part of this research shows, it does not even need to refer to physical space. The important thing is what happens in that space. Whatever background, faith or any other views any individual has when they choose to enter, they can participate with their fellow citizens. It is about coming together and, more specifically, doing things together.

The research contained in this report shows some pioneering and innovative examples of how public spaces have been used to bring people



² Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000); Robert Putnam (ed) *Democracies in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Robert Putnam and Lewis Feldstein, *Better Together: Restoring the American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster 2003).

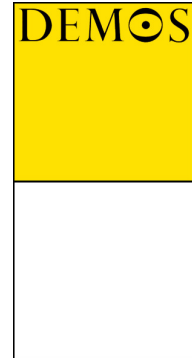
together. Hopefully, these are just the tip of the iceberg and there is much more work going on across the country. It can be practical, focused around a common political project or neighbourhood scheme; it could be done through campaigning around a cause or, as in many cases, through sporting or cultural activity. Previous CRE research shows that the best inter-ethnic interactions come when integration is a by-product of people coming together for another purpose.³

That means that a crucial way of developing an integrated society is to invest in and promote a far greater range of shared public spaces. This report begins to show how this can be done.

Our vision should be the creation of a twenty first century polis - but one that takes the reality of contemporary life as a starting point. It may not be confined to a single geographic area and certainly should be more inclusive than the ancient Greek description. However, the idea of a common belonging to a citizenship that can embrace diversity but still engender solidarity is crucial to twenty-first century Britain. Public spaces can be an essential building block for bringing people together and generating shared experiences. These, in turn, can lead to a greater sense of belonging. We need to learn from the examples in this report and make building public spaces a key part of our policy development in the years to come.

Nick Johnson

Director of Policy and Public Sector, CRE



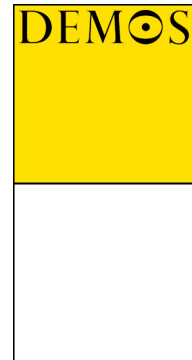
³ SHM, *Promoting interaction between ethnic communities: a research project for the Commission for Racial Equality* (London: CRE, 2006).

Equally Spaced?

Public space and interaction between diverse communities

This report aims to address the deficit in the current arena by offering one analysis of how public spaces can contribute to building positive relationships and bridges between different communities. Drawing on expertise from the fields of regeneration, community activism and education, the report works with a broad conception of public space that will elicit a response from beyond the usual confines of the planning and design sector.

The report explores people's motivations for entering public spaces, and assesses the potential for interaction that can be found herein. In particular, it explores some of the specific dimensions of public space - those that are most salient for people working in communities affected by tensions and misunderstandings. The report ends with a series of practical recommendations for those working in the field, drawn from the case studies and from an analysis of existing literature.



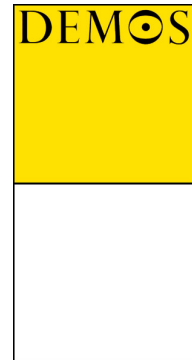
Introduction

Small communities grow great through harmony, great ones fall to pieces through discord.

Sallust, 86 BC - 34 BC

Here we are, about to build one million homes in the South East without a clue as to what creates a mixed community. High-density housing is increasing and there is evidence of increased segregation and different groups becoming more exclusive.

Trevor Phillips, Commission for Racial Equality⁴



The struggle to live alongside our neighbours is hardly a new one. But, as the quotation suggests, it remains critically important that communities aspiring to success and stability ensure that the relationships between people living within their confines are based upon principles of respect and fairness, preventing the building pressure of resentment from bubbling over into full-blown violence or civil unrest.

In today's world, we live increasingly globalised lives based in multiple overlapping networks of economic, social and cultural affiliation. Even so, the quality of the everyday locality still matters. Research evidence shows a link between good community spirit and health outcomes and between tightly knit communities and positive quality of lives.⁵ However, in a time of change and increased mobility, the search for spaces of comfort in relatively homogeneous micro-communities is becoming increasingly popular. The US model of gated communities is spreading in the UK and for many people (and in particularly amongst the higher social classes) choosing neighbours is becoming as important as choosing a place to live.⁶

This predictable human response to uncertainty can draw communities into a trap: whilst new or persistent pressures in a locality may lead to shared responses and innovation, and hence to increased social capital, they can also lead to a retreat from the shared realms of the community. This in turn can result in increased anxiety and tension between groups, thereby lowering collective efficacy: the ability of the neighbourhood to collectively respond to change in a positive way is threatened, which is

⁴ 'High-density race warning – Trevor Phillips says designers must consider community cohesion when planning new developments' *Building Design*, 03 November 2006.

⁵ Alessandra Buonfino and Paul Hilder, *Neighbouring in contemporary Britain: A think-piece for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Housing and Neighbourhoods Committee* (York/London: JRF/ Young Foundation, 2006).

⁶ R Atkinson and J Flint, *Fortress UK? Gated Communities, The Spatial Revolt of the Elites and Time-Space Trajectories of Segregation* (CNR Paper 17: July 2004); however there is no agreement over the question whether 'ghettoisation' is actually taking place in Britain. See Ash Amin, *Thinking Past Integration and Community Cohesion*. Paper for presentation at 2007 COMPAS Annual Conference, Oxford University, 5-6 July 2007.

likely to make any individual or group within the neighbourhood even more vulnerable.⁷

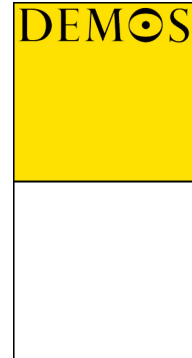
But we continue to have high expectations of our neighbours and our locality. Data suggest for example that trust levels are still relatively high, with 47 per cent of people trusting many people in their neighbourhood and another 37 per cent trusting some people.⁸ Conversely, crimes committed by a perpetrator known to a local community - the shootings in Dunblane, for example, or the murders in Soham - seem to be far more shocking to onlookers than those carried out by an outsider.

The power of neighbourhoods and local solidarity is also a force to be reckoned with - a fact long recognised, although not always welcomed, by community organisers and politicians alike. Public spaces have been key battlegrounds for issues around race and social justice, both in the UK and elsewhere. Many of the most effective oppressive techniques by the racist apartheid regime in South Africa relied on sealing the diverse groups within cities off from one another, further entrenching the existing alienation and so strengthening their own regime. The mismanagement of public policing in the predominantly African-Caribbean community in Brixton was blamed for the riots that sparked off there in the 1980s.⁹ The Government's decision to ban spontaneous protests in Parliament Square hints at the power that public demonstrations can have in shaping public - if not political - opinion. Public space, in other words, is a space for encounters and contest - providing at times an arena for symbolic and ideological conflict, and at times a symbolic beacon of hope or potential.

A story of decline, and stories of revival

This symbolism has been particularly important as the recent decades have seen a general perception of a decline of public space. Experts describe this as a 'discourse of loss', a theme that has run through urban theory from the second half of the 20th century. As Stephen Johnson explains, 'there are few ideas more widely received these days than the premise that traditional urban environments - the kind with bustling footpaths, public squares distinctive local flavour, elaborate street culture, and a diverse intermingling of people - have become an endangered species.'¹⁰

Recognising the symbolic and social value of public space and the pressures it has faced, policy-makers have recently responded by attempts to reverse the degradation of the public realm. One key element of such policies is re-investing in good quality public spaces. In



⁷ Robert J Sampson, Stephen Raudenbush, and Felton Earls, 'Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy' *Science* 1997-277:918-24.

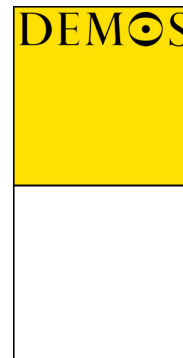
⁸ *Home Office Citizenship Survey* (HMSO: London 2003).

⁹ Lord Scarman, *The Scarman Report: The Brixton Disorders* (HMSO: London, 1981).

¹⁰ Steven Johnson, 'Theme-Parking the American City (Welcome to the Pleasure Dome)' *Village Voice Literary Supplement*, February-March 1999), February 16, 1999, p 81.

the UK, the Urban Task Force report *Towards an Urban Renaissance*¹¹ was the first of a series of policy publications to advocate a return to viewing squares, parks and public buildings as the hallmark of our cities.

Another way of viewing public space focuses more on public space as the setting for everyday spatial behaviour of individuals and communities, emphasising ordinary activities of citizens. Stemming from a long tradition in urban theory, this strand of thinking has become particularly relevant for new approaches to public space.¹² Crucially, this approach emphasises human creativity and persistence in using and improving the most unlikely of spaces for their own everyday ends, and questions the prerogative of architects and planners to shape the public realm. Authors point at the community garage sales that happen even in the most car-dominated suburbs, the temporary appropriation of vacant land for barbeques and other social activities, and the subaltern practices of street vendors and political protest in public.



Living together or parallel lives?

The present-day policy discourse on public space has been accused of ignoring such bottom-up practices, and thereby failing to live up fully to its ambition to reinvigorate the shared public sphere.¹³ Equally, there seems to be a degree of ethnicity-blindness in the assumption that a well-designed public realm will benefit everyone equally.¹⁴ The promise of a reinvigorated public realm seems to be the promise of re-engagement between all groups, with benefits that extend from everyday sociability to increased engagement, participation in society and community cohesion. But these hopes stand in stark contrast to the reality of mutual avoidance and community conflict as played out in the public sphere of Britain's neighbourhoods. The debate around how to live *together* in an increasingly diverse Britain, rather than just next door to one another, was highlighted by the 2001 riots and, more recently, by the Lozells riots in Birmingham.

The impact that international events in the US and the Middle East, as well as domestic debates have on community tensions at the local level is considerable, especially in very diverse areas. Since the 9/11 bombings,

¹¹ *Towards an Urban Renaissance* – The Report of the Urban Task Force, Chaired by Lord Rogers of Riverside (DETR 1999).

¹² Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1984); John Chase, John Kaliski and Margaret Crawford, *Everyday Urbanism* (Monacelli 1999); Melissa Mean and Charlie Tims, *People Make Places* (London: Demos/JRF, 2005); Markus Miessen and Kenny Cuypers, *Spaces of Uncertainty* (Wuppertal: Müller und Busmann 2002).

¹³ Ash Amin, Doreen Massey and Nigel Thrift, *Cities for the Many, not the Few* (Policy Press 2001); Gerry Hassan, Melissa Mean and Charlie Tims, *The Dreaming City – Glasgow 2020 and the Power of Mass Imagination* (London: Demos 2007).

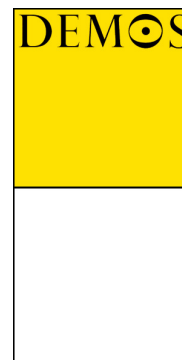
¹⁴ Claire Rishbeth, 'Ethnic Minority Groups and the Design on Public Open Space: an Inclusive Landscape?' *Landscape Research* 26-4, 2001.

many Muslims believe that Islamophobia is on the rise in Europe,¹⁵ and in the wake of the London Underground bombings of July 2005, the European Monitoring Centre on Racism (EUMC) reported a steep, if short-lived rise in faith hate crimes.¹⁶ At the same time, politics saw the start of the long-running debate around what British values should really be about, putting the question of belonging for many white and ethnic minority Britons in the spotlight.¹⁷ The Cattle report, commissioned in the wake of the riots in the north-west, had uncovered a picture of deep division in the places visited by the review team:

*...the Team was particularly struck by the depth of polarisation of our towns and cities. The extent to which these physical divisions were compounded by so many other aspects of our daily lives, was very evident. Separate educational arrangements, community and voluntary bodies, employment, places of worship, language, social and cultural networks, means that many communities operate on the basis of a series of parallel lives. These lives often do not seem to touch at any point, let alone overlap and promote any meaningful interchanges.*¹⁸

The reasons behind this sort of breakdown in community relations are complex, with many underlying causes. Poverty and social exclusion play a role and local competition over resources and services can be at the heart of what appear to be ethnic conflicts.¹⁹ In response, policy has often favoured an integrated approach to neighbourhood regeneration, which seeks to break through the interconnected dynamics of deprivation.

Since this reading of the situation gained currency, however, it has become clear that concentrating on neighbourhoods can bring both good and bad outcomes for cohesion in the UK. Although from a Westminster vantage point the barriers between people within neighbourhoods might seem the easiest ones to break down, for residents they often feel insurmountable in their daily lives. At the same time, the debate that has raged within and beyond Westminster about multiculturalism has rarely made the transition from punditry to practice. In the communities where these issues may be most pressing, national attention from the media and



¹⁵ 'Fearful Europe feels post-9/11 chill', *BBC News*, 11 September 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/5336596.stm> (accessed 20 July 2007).

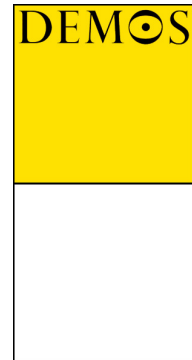
¹⁶ EUMC, *The impact of 7 July 2005 London bomb attacks on Muslim communities in the EU* (Brussels: European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2005).

¹⁷ Kenan Malik 'The Real value of Diversity', *Catalyst* 23 April 2007, <http://www.cre.gov.uk/connections.html> (accessed 20 July 2007); 'Brown speech promotes Britishness', *BBC News*, 14 January 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4611682.stm (accessed 20 July 2007).

¹⁸ *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team*, chaired by Ted Cattle (Home Office, 2001).

¹⁹ Stephen Vertovec, *New complexities of cohesion in Britain: Super-diversity, transnationalism and civil-integration* (Oxford: ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, 2007).

politicians has offered little insight into the way policy should start addressing divisions and build communities out of distinct groups.



What role does public space play?

It remains unclear what the role of public space can be in tackling these dilemmas. The newly built squares and gardens of the 'Urban Renaissance' agenda have met with scepticism. Ken Worpole and Katharine Knox, for example, question their emphasis on design and on a selective notion of urbanity: 'The "urban renaissance" agenda appears too concerned with matters of urban design, as well as being distinctly metropolitan in character. The majority of public spaces that people use are local spaces they visit regularly, often quite banal in design, or untidy in their activities or functions (such as street markets and car boot sales), but which nevertheless retain important social functions.'²⁰ Stephen Vertovec goes one step further, focusing in particular on the assumption of increased interaction between different ethnic groups: 'Desirable as they might be towards promoting better relations, "sustained encounters" and "deep and meaningful interactions" are simply not going to occur among most people in British cities today, whether ethnic majority, minority or new immigrant. Apart from a few contexts such as work or school, most urban encounters are fleeting or momentary.'²¹

However, while spaces for encounter have become more difficult to find and have reinforced the phenomenon of 'the familiar stranger' for many people in Britain today, public space is still considered far from irrelevant.²² As Britain enters a period of 'super-diversity',²³ in smaller towns as well as in its cities, and as community cohesion and public behaviour remain high on the policy agenda, there is increasing need for a more thorough analysis of the potential for different types of public space to support positive interactions between different social, economic and ethnic groups. This is particularly important in the context of the current drive to further increase the housing output across the country, as emphasised by the new Government. It is crucial that this new development - and indeed the ongoing regeneration of towns and cities - will not just increase numbers but also create places where people feel they can confidently live together with strangers. But as Trevor Phillips' quote at the beginning of this introduction remarks, it is uncertain if we know how, and indeed where, to start.

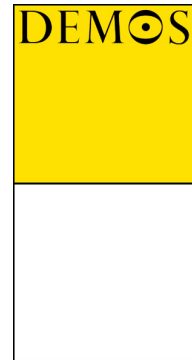
²⁰ Ken Worpole and Katharine Knox, *The Social Value of Public Spaces*, (York: JRF, 2007) p 3.

²¹ S. Vertovec, *New complexities of cohesion in Britain: Super-diversity, transnationalism and civil-integration*, pp 3-5.

²² E.g. see Commission on Integration and Cohesion, *Our shared future*, DCLG 2007; Ash Amin *Thinking Past Integration and Community Cohesion*. Paper for presentation at 2007 COMPAS Annual Conference, Oxford University, 5-6 July 2007.

²³ Ibid.

Chapter 1: What is public space?



In their report on public spaces and well-being, Dines and Cattell describe public spaces as 'a fundamental feature of cities. They represent sites of sociability and face-to-face interaction, and at the same time their quality is commonly perceived to be a measure of the quality of urban life.'²⁴ They also are often assumed to be civic spaces, both indoor and out: town squares and town halls, parks and gardens and so on.

Giambattista Nolli's famous 1748 map of Rome showed a figure ground where buildings - private space - were depicted in solid black and streets and squares left unfilled. He drew civic buildings differently, however, with their walls and columns in black, but their internal space left open because these were places where the community met, socialised and shared experiences, making the buildings a part of the public realm. Civic institutions can be key elements of the public spaces in our cities.



Source http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/EART/maps/nolli_06.jpg

This definition of public space essentially focuses upon its low barriers to entry: public spaces should be cost free, with no requirements of users and certainly no exclusion on the grounds of gender, race and so on. Different authors place different emphasis on the power of the public realm to shape society. Some see the public realm's relevance primarily in its functioning as the site for the conduction of politics.²⁵ Others see its

²⁴ See N Dines and V Cattell, with W Gesler and S Curtis, *Public spaces, social relations and well-being in East London* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2006).

²⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1958); Jürgen Habermas *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press 1991); Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (eds), *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

value rather in the everyday sociability that takes place, in which we can learn to live with others through seeing different norms and ways of behaving.²⁶

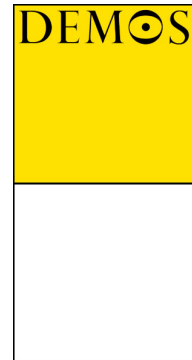
In contemporary cities, public spaces manifest the 'throwntogetherness' that characterises plural and open societies.²⁷ The physical closeness does not have to imply dense contact. As the American author Jane Jacobs puts it: 'Cities are full of people with whom, from your viewpoint, or mine, or any other individual's, a certain degree of contact is useful or enjoyable; but you do not want them in your hair.'²⁸ A desire for a degree of distance and privacy is natural. The challenge, she suggested, is to find ways in which this anonymity can be complemented by social mechanisms that allow people to get on in daily life, and sometimes take responsibility for each other.

But it is difficult to achieve. Richard Sennett, the sociologist, recently wrote more pessimistically about the reality of interaction between groups of 'others'.²⁹ Whereas for him the public realm should be the place where strangers can meet in safety, he discerns three dominant modes in which different groups live together, each of which is deficient: conflict, assimilation and indifference. Drawing on historical examples, he concludes that present day cities are sliding towards the indifference as a way to cope with the presence of 'others' in our midst.

Conflict, assimilation, indifference

In Renaissance Venice, attitudes to Jews were so hostile that the city government confined the Jews to a segregated island in the city - the first ghetto - 'protecting' them with force against the frequent fury of their fellow Venetians, whether religiously or racially motivated. According to Sennett, 'The reason for this arrangement was that Venice lacked civility of the fundamental sort... Prejudices against them were so strong that they could survive only in isolation with protection from the state... a model of urban difference without civility, requiring the state to perform the office of peacekeeping which civil society could not.'³⁰

Overt conflict was no longer an issue in Berlin at the end of the eighteenth century, where Jews enjoyed considerable freedom and opportunity. But this harmony came at the price of having to leave their differences at the door when entering the public realm: 'This model of civility exchanged inclusion for identity. The exchange... supposed that civil society and more largely citizenship required its own unitary identity; you could not be different and still be connected to others.'³¹



²⁶ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House and Vintage Books, 1961); Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (London: Penguin, 1991).

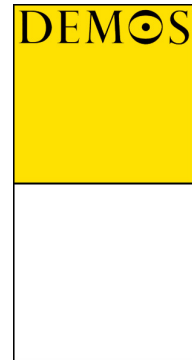
²⁷ Doreen Massey, *D For Space* (London: Sage, 2005).

²⁸ Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, pp 55-56.

²⁹ Richard Sennett, *Civility*, Urban Age Bulletin 1, Summer 2005, http://www.urban-age.net/0_downloads/archive/Richard_Sennett-Civility-Bulletin1.pdf (accessed 20 July 2007)

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p1

³¹ *Ibid.*, p1



The third type of relationship between Jews and public space was in the East End of London, in the nineteenth century. The area around Brick Lane had no walls or police protection and the Jews could openly express their culture and their religious beliefs - but there was very little meaningful contact between Jews and their neighbours. "Rather it was a space abandoned to its own devices by the dominant culture. Here lies the secret of the third model: civility based on indifference."³²

In this situation, public spaces might be ostentatiously shared by groups, but without bringing them together. The present-day city facilitates such social dissociation, with its increasing provision of segmented spaces based on self-selection and focusing on a narrow range of activities. For example, writing about present-day London, the architect Indy Johar questions the value of places such as Chinatown, 'Banglatown' (as present-day Brick Lane is sometimes referred to) and the Docklands.³³ He argues that all three are essentially consumer products - highly programmed, themed and bite-sized environments, the sometimes 'multicultural' stamp of might be attractive to the public for a short while. However, this atmosphere can be discarded a moment later, without affecting anyone's anonymity and autonomy, let alone creating trust or increased understanding. Hence, whilst sometimes highly successful in their own right, they perpetuate the separation between groups, a status quo which Richard Sennett refers to as 'dissociation as a version of civility. Fragmentation as a form of freedom. A social compromise which works against shared citizenship.'³⁴

Never neutral

In this light, the more explicitly and actively universalist model as epitomised by Berlin seems to have its merits. However it has its own problems, since its promise of equality and neutrality also presumes homogeneity in public. Assuming that spaces are neutral can become a smoke-screen for hiding inequalities and neglecting different groups' diverse needs, as though they do not matter. Instead, many authors have argued that Western cities should rise to the challenge of planning a space which different groups can use differently, building on the potential for adaptation to shifting patterns of need.³⁵ Claire Rishbeth argues that design is increasingly important in terms of inter-ethnic integration and interaction.³⁶ She claims that it is part of a number of issues that prevent ethnic minorities from fully using open public spaces, including fear of racist attacks and different use-patterns.

³² Richard Sennett, *Civility*, Urban Age Bulletin 1, Summer 2005 p 2.

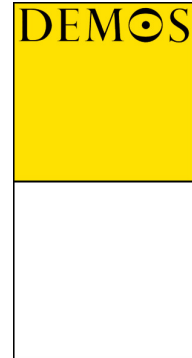
³³ Indy Johar 'Public Space is Dead; Long Live Public Space' in: Joost Beunderman et al. *BCN-LDN 2020* (Barcelona: Fundació Ramon Trias Fargas, 2007) pp 59-64.

³⁴ Richard Sennett, *Civility*, Urban Age Bulletin 1 Summer 2005 p 2.

³⁵ Jane M. Jacobs, *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Leonie Sandercock, *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities of the 21st Century* (London and New York: Continuum, 2003); Iris Marion, *Young Justice and the Politics of Difference*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

³⁶ Claire Rishbeth 'Ethnic Minority Groups and the Design on Public Open Space: an Inclusive Landscape?' *Landscape Research* 26-4, 2001.

For example, in past decades the Turkish minority in and near cities such as Amsterdam and Berlin started using the public parks for barbeques, in turn sparking a trend among the wider public. However, as Risbeth claims, parks and open spaces in the UK are still largely designed as a reflection of a more traditional European culture with a preference for naturalistic landscapes. If coupled to more restricted definitions of appropriate use of greenspace, such diversification of activities can easily be thwarted.



The reality of public space

Some crucial factors need to be taken into account when thinking about what inclusive public space means in the contemporary social and physical environment.

First, the number of spaces which fall unambiguously into the category of 'public' is dwindling. The public sector has become increasingly willing to open itself up to the involvement of private businesses, creating hybrid spaces in which corporate and public concerns are very much intertwined. The Chelsea and Westminster Hospital in London, for instance, has a branch of a high street coffee shop operating in its foyer, in a bid to create a less austere initial impression on entering the building. Public galleries and museums frequently charge entry to a part of their exhibitions, creating some areas which are free for all, and others with restricted entry. At the same time, the private sector has realised the public's appreciation of 'traditional' town squares and has attempted to recreate it within commercial spaces. Orchard Square shopping centre in Sheffield is reminiscent of a civic town square but, in fact, its purpose is exclusively commercial. In other words, 'public' space is often not exclusively public, whilst commercial and other private spaces (e.g. office lobbies) take on the superficial characteristics of public space.³⁷

Second, many seemingly 'public' spaces have implicit barriers to entry that diminish their truly public character. Zygmunt Bauman refers to these as spaces which are 'public yet not civil' and defines them as including spaces which are awe-inspiring but not conducive to lingering; places in which users are individually busy and active, but do not interact with one another and places that are transient in character, like waiting rooms in train stations.³⁸ For members of minorities, the number of public spaces falling into this category may well be greater, as there may be additional deterrents created by unfamiliarity and fear for hostile or discriminatory behaviour. Such fears are corroborated and reflected in the 2003-04 crimes figures which show, for example, that there were 4,179 prosecutions for racially aggravated crimes, of which 1,056 were assaults or harassment.³⁹ Poor physical surroundings have also been identified as a causal factor in violent racist attacks and other types of

³⁷ Melissa Mean and Charlie Tims, *People Make Places*, (London: Demos/JRF, 2005).

³⁸ See Z Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000).

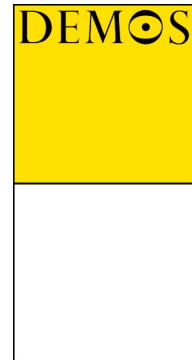
³⁹ Crown Prosecution Service, *Racist Incident Monitoring Annual Report 2003-2004* (London: CPS, 2004).

crime, creating a permissive environment in which offending becomes almost more acceptable.⁴⁰

The blurring of boundaries between public and private space creates definitional challenges. What do we mean by public spaces? A Demos study found that, when asked which public spaces they use regularly, many people tended to mention places which fall outside of traditional public space definitions.⁴¹ But as the authors explain, 'public space is better understood less as a predetermined physical space, and more as an experience created by an interaction between people and place.'

For this reason, Ray Oldenburg - an American academic based in Florida - developed an idea of 'third spaces'.⁴² These are neutral places (neither home nor workplace) in which the attendees are neither 'hosts' nor 'guests' and where people should feel relaxed and at ease. He highlights the importance of these informal places, ranging from coffee shops to bookstores, car boot sales and supermarkets, for maintaining civil society and democratic engagement.

In other words, meaningful interventions in public space must be guided by a definition based in the judgements that people make of public space, rather than by a static definition that obscures the case for creating change. For this report, we build on this broader definition of public spaces, which links into the wider notion of people's everyday experiences and spatial practices, in order to capture the broadest range of successful interventions and reflect the reality of people's daily experiences and behaviours.

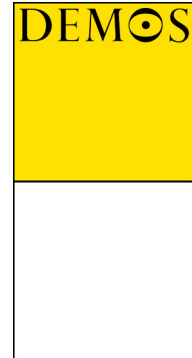


⁴⁰ S Isal, *Preventing Racist Violence: Work with Actual and Potential Perpetrators – Learning from Practice to Policy Change* (Runnymede Trust, 2005); Annette Hastings, John Flint, Carol McKenzie and Carl Mills, *Cleaning up neighbourhoods: Environmental problems and service provision in deprived neighbourhoods* (York: JRF/ Polity Press 2005); Martin Innes and Vanessa Jones, *Neighbourhood security and urban change: Risk, resilience and recovery* (York: JRF, 2006).

⁴¹ Melissa Mean and Charlie Tims *People Make Places*, (London: Demos/JRF, 2005).

⁴² R Oldenburg, *The great good place: cafes, coffee shops, bookstores, bars, hair salons, and other other hangouts at the heart of the community* (New York: Marlowe, 1989).

Chapter 2: public spaces and interaction



Political theorist Claus Offe offers one explanation for the way in which social ties between individuals within society cement the wider sense of common interest that citizens need to share in order to live together.⁴³ Whilst focusing mainly on the level of the nation state, the relation between citizens and the state, and the ingredients of 'nationhood', his analysis puts strong emphasis on the horizontal relation between citizens. This relationship is especially important for people who are new to a country, or who do not share the same sense of common historical or geographical 'belonging'. In particular, Offe emphasises two factors

- i) *trust*: citizens must trust one another to comply with the rules.
- ii) *solidarity*: citizens must still recognise the value of contributing to the common good even when they don't directly benefit as a result.

We know that public spaces are vitally important for that, because they are where citizens often encounter one another. Trust - as well as solidarity - is often built partly through familiarity, the gradual breaking down of the barriers of 'otherness', and the recognition of shared interests and a common humanity between what still are strangers. For the same reason, the places where citizens interact with the state play an essential part in building those citizens' trust in the state within which they live.

When it comes to diversity and change, particularly in communities which are experiencing rapid rates of mobility and the tensions that often go with it, trust becomes an essential element for building relationships between citizens (and different communities) and between citizens and the state.

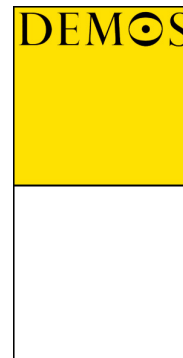
Social capital, civility and trust

The issue of trust is closely bound up with that of social capital - the social networks, shared norms and co-operative relationships that help people and communities get along, and which sustains their collective efficacy in the face of change.⁴⁴ The theory of social capital tends to distinguish between three forms of social capital - bonding, bridging and linking social capital:⁴⁵

⁴³ Claus Offe 'How Can We Trust Our Fellow Citizens?' in: Mark E Warren (ed), *Democracy and Trust*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) pp 42-87.

⁴⁴ R Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000) pp 22-23; Robert J Sampson, Stephen Raudenbush, and Felton Earls, 'Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy', *Science* 1997-277:918-24.

⁴⁵ Alejandro Portes, 'Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology', *Annual Review of Sociology* 24: 15-18 (1998); Michael Woolcock, 'The Place of Social Capital in Understanding Social and Economic Outcomes' *Isuma* 2, no. 1 (2001) p 11-17.



- Bonding social capital refers to the strong ties within homogeneous groups, which provides the social and psychological supports that people need for getting by in their everyday activities. This power of such in-group loyalties, however, can generate negative outcomes such as the potential exclusion of outsiders or a stifling of individuality and autonomy for in-group members.
- Bridging social capital spans across such homogeneous groups through cross cultural and cross generation activities. According to Robert Putnam, bridging capital is useful for information diffusion and to connect to external resources, building on the notion of 'the strength of weak ties' as outlined by Mark Granovetter in the 1970s.⁴⁶
- Linking social capital links individuals and groups to the formal sphere of participation with institutions and organisations outside the immediate community; the main distinction between bridging and linking social capital is the 'horizontal' nature of the former and the 'vertical' working of the latter.

The value of a well-functioning public realm lies primarily in its potential to create bonds of the second and third kind, bridging citizens across social cleavages by providing the setting for daily interaction and enabling relevant links with public institutions and community resources.

Stephen Vertovec emphasises the importance of such 'everyday practices for getting-on with others in the inherently fleeting encounters that comprise city life' and uses the term 'civil-integration', in contrast to the 'deep and meaningful' encounters that he feels are unlikely to occur regularly in the context of super-diversity.⁴⁷ The acquiring and routinisation of civil-interaction to him include 'simple forms of acknowledgement, acts of restricted helpfulness, types of personal consideration, courtesies, and "indifference to diversity"'.⁴⁸ He calls for recognition that through such socio-spatial practices, immigrants may actually be better integrated than often thought. Moreover, such interactions can grow shared meanings and values, as well as trust and a basis for cooperation for collective purposes. Hence it is crucial, he argues, that these kinds of daily civility should be negotiated and promoted alongside wider ambitions for better relationships.

Amin underlines this and points the fact that public space in its widest sense can be an operating mode for generating a kind of studied trust in urban multiplicity and public acceptance of 'throwntogetherness'.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Mark Granovetter, 'The Strength of Weak Ties', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 78, No. 6, May 1973, pp 1360-1380.

⁴⁷ Stephen Vertovec, *New complexities of cohesion in Britain: Super-diversity, transnationalism and civil-integration*, p3.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p3

⁴⁹ Ash Amin, *Thinking Past Integration and Community Cohesion*, Paper for presentation at 2007 COMPAS Annual Conference, Oxford University, 5-6 July 2007. p 6.

Basic factors of 'good quality space'

In part, the foundations of such civil-integration and trust can be understood in terms of relatively straightforward elements of good public space. Much has been written on the relationship between sense of trust and security in places and their physical state, with authors agreeing that it is inevitably a two-way process: on the one hand it relies on people adopting, using and managing the place. As Worpole and Knox put it: 'people make places, more than places make people.'⁵⁰ On the other hand, there is a recognition that the basic state of maintenance of places - both physical and social - conditions in no small degree the interactions between people: the quality setting of places can co-condition the actions of people that in turn make places.⁵¹

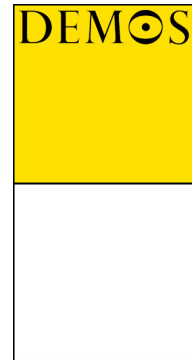
In this context, there is now a common recognition of a set of basic factors that underpin public space that is *socially* successful.⁵² In synthesis, the best public spaces are considered to be

- multi-use, with different activities embedded or allowed throughout the day (such as e.g. shopping, commuting, play, the office lunch-hour, a café);
- accessible and easy to move through to anyone who desires access, as networked spaces rather than stand-alone without barriers to any groups either physically or symbolically (special attention, in this regard, being paid to groups such as the elderly, children, women and ethnic minorities);
- legible in lay-out and design, with clear and recognisable routes, defined edges and clarity about the boundaries between public and private;
- locally relevant, designed with local character and the community in mind through participation;
- adaptable to people's diverse and changing needs and desires, with no overly prescriptive design but conversely leaving room for self-organisation and encouraging a degree of appropriation;
- open-ended, without exclusive domination of singular and incontestable cultural messages;
- safe and welcoming, give the idea of comfort and a degree of control, with for example good lighting and sightlines, and paying attention to different groups' needs with regard to safety.

⁵⁰ Ken Worpole and Katharine Knox *The Social Value of Public Spaces*, p 2.

⁵¹ Annette Hastings, John Flint, Carol McKenzie and Carl Mills, *Cleaning up neighbourhoods: Environmental problems and service provision in deprived neighbourhoods* (York: JRF/ Polity Press, 2005); Martin Innes and Vanessa Jones, *Neighbourhood security and urban change: Risk, resilience and recovery* (York: JRF, 2006); CABI, *Decent parks? Decent behaviour? The link between the quality of parks and user behaviour* (London: CABI, 2005).

⁵² See: Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, (New York: Random House and Vintage Books, 1961); CABI, *Better civic buildings and spaces* (London: CABI 2002); CABI, *Paving the way: how we achieve clean, safe and attractive streets* (London: CABI 2002); CABI, *By Design: urban design in the planning system: towards better practice* (London: CABI/DETR, 2000); CABI, *Safer Places: the planning system and crime prevention* (Home Office & ODPM, HMSO, London, 2004).



In sum, the success of public space is predicated on the way in which it encourages use: diverse use and diverse activities encourage diverse people. Hence public space should form the everyday setting of activities that people can undertake in different degrees of ‘togetherness’, rather than a set piece design.

It is this dimension - the extent to which public spaces can foster everyday positive interaction between people - that is at the core of this report. The CRE has previously commissioned research that has investigated how different types of interaction can help neighbours to live together and foster different sorts of social capital within communities.⁵³ It affirmed the need for a diversity of interactions, as people interact differently at different times for different motivations, and have different needs that need to be acknowledged before any intervention. Most of all, it emphasises that interaction can never be forced or false, and instead takes time to achieve as it is essentially about people’s habits in their public behaviour.

Creating projects that change these habits and foster positive interactions is therefore challenging. In this and the next chapter we will draw on the case studies undertaken in this research, as well as wider studies on public space practice, to explore some of the underpinning principles that help to sustain and increase interaction in the UK and beyond.

Public space in the UK

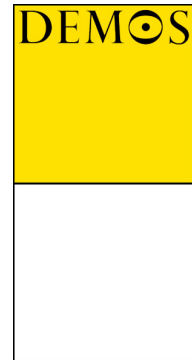
The UK is witnessing the emergence of new types of public space in its cities and neighbourhoods: formal and informal, public and semi-public, deliberate or spontaneous. These newly emerging spaces not only reflect that public experiences of a space can matter more for its role than its physical characteristics, but also that public spaces mean completely different things for different groups.

This research focuses on such new spaces and has identified eight main types of these ‘spaces of potential’. These are not to be interpreted in a narrowly spatial sense: in practice many places will have elements that cut across more than one definition, since the category into which a space falls is dictated by the activity happening within it at different times. Cutting across all these different types of space is the central importance of trust and confidence from users in creating valuable public space.

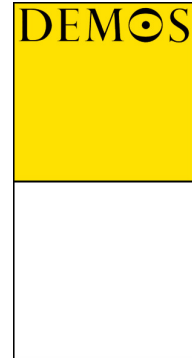
The eight types of space are:

- Exchange spaces: places where people exchange ideas, information and goods
- Productive spaces: used by people engaged in activities to grow or create goods

⁵³ SHM, *Promoting interaction between ethnic communities: a research project for the Commission for Racial Equality* (London: CRE, 2006).



- Spaces of services provision: support services are run from these spaces, either by statutory or voluntary providers
- Activity spaces: where people gather for leisure, such as for play, sport or informal events
- Democratic / participative spaces: for shared decision-making or governance
- Staged spaces: 'one-off' special occasions where people are brought together for a specific purpose
- In-between spaces: places which are located between communities
- Virtual spaces: non-physical spaces, such as those created online by social networking sites



Exchange spaces

Dialogue, contact and exchange of ideas, information and goods are a universal human need - although the sites in which this exchange takes place are dictated by people's lifestyles and preferences. Exchange sites are sites of potential which provide the possibility for people to interact in their local area, during the pursuit of their everyday needs, should they want to.

Markets are one of the best examples of places where one type of exchange - economic - can take place and provide a natural place for positive interaction to emerge. Our case study on Queen's Market shows that an intricate set of factors can make a difference for a market's success or failure, commercially as well as a site for interaction. The current market complex's location, physical layout (though not its actual design), traders, management regime, goods and reputation all work together to sustain a place which has great local significance.

Underpinned by a long historic presence in the area, this local sense of pride and ownership sustains a highly specific sets of tacit as well as explicit understandings between the traders, who 'set the tone' for the place, and between those who visit the market from further away or from the local community. In contrast to Queens Market, another market close by, in an area with similar demographic conditions, does not display the same local significance and does arguably very little for that town centre, economically and certainly in terms of interaction. Here, the immediate spatial context, the physical layout and the management and trader body did not create a similarly successful place for exchange. In that sense, Queen's Market forms a clear case of how, to quote Ash Amin, 'The micro-cultures of place matter.'⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Ash Amin 'The Multicultural City: Living with Ethnic Diversity' *The Edge* Issue 10 July 2002 http://www.esrcsocietytoday.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/about/CI/CP/the_edge/issue10/multicultural_2.aspx?ComponentId=10682&SourcePageId=3446 (accessed 20 July 2007).

Case Study 1: Queen's Market and East Ham Market, Newham, London

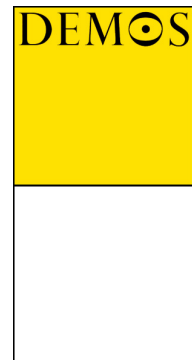
Recent publications, including studies by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the New Economics Foundation, have underlined the success of Queen's Market both as a social space within the community and as a local economic factor of great importance to the livelihood of poor local communities. One of Queen's Market's biggest advantages stems from its location. It is directly off the high street and close to the Underground station, making it accessible for people on their way to and from the centre, as well as increasing the degree to which the market is in a 'neutral' space. Because of the market's reputation for being cheap, people are also drawn there for more tangible reasons than seeing people they know, or having the opportunity to buy foods from regions across the world that wouldn't get shelf-space in a supermarket.

The management team responsible for the running of the market enforces specific measures to ensure that the present balance between different users in the market is preserved. The entry regime is restricted by a waiting list based on type of business, to prevent dominance of a single type of goods. The management also intervenes to block the introduction of stalls that would run against the needs of the majority of shoppers at the market; attempts to introduce vintage clothing stalls have, for instance, been rejected. The sale of religious items in the market is also forbidden and political or other canvassing is also limited to general and local elections. Public ownership of the market space also keeps prices low: it currently costs £75 per week to rent a stall.

A comparative case study visit to nearby East Ham market revealed that Queen's Market's loyalists may be right to suggest that their market is a fairly unique case, however. Despite being only one Underground stop away from Queen's Market and in an area with similar social and economic characteristics, East Ham market is a very different place. It is located in a separate market building rather than in a roofed open space. The layout is chaotic, making it hard to find one's way, and the mix of goods for sale is less varied to Queen's Market. The overall impression is of a far less vibrant space than Queen's Market, with much less community life happening in the periphery. In fact, shoppers on East Ham High Street often mentioned doing weekly visits to Queen's Market for fresh fruit and vegetables.

Markets can make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods and community interaction, but getting it right can be difficult. There is an intricate balance of factors at play, all of which influence the way in which a market works and the role which it is then able to play in the community. These factors can be hard to pin down - as one trader put it, "it is hard to put your finger on what makes for the 'magic' or 'buzz' of a market - some of them have it, some don't". But the benefits that stem from the markets that do have the right atmosphere to make a compelling case for continuing to work with local commercial spaces as sites where interactions between otherwise separate communities can take place.

DEMOS



Productive spaces

Productive open spaces are used by people engaged in activities to create, or grow, products and goods for everyday use. Allotments and vegetable patches in communal gardens are good examples of this. Growing food can be significant for a great diversity of people, not least because growing food can be a way to connect to the culture within which an individual grew up, as well as a strategy for sharing it with others within the family or community who might not be familiar with it.⁵⁵ Growing food is also cheaper than buying it, which is an important factor for people on a low income.

The 'Concrete to Coriander' project in Birmingham started with the explicit aim to promote allotments to South Asian women who were previously under-represented amongst allotment owners and users. The project has engaged a group of around 25 women in growing vegetables, learning new horticultural skills and adopting a healthier lifestyle. It now attracts women from other backgrounds as well, who often engage other family members (children and grandparents) in the activity. As one user explains, the exchange doesn't stop at gardening, and encourages neighbourliness: 'We teach each other languages: I teach the ladies some words in English and in return I learn Bangladeshi words.'⁵⁶

Spaces run by Green Connection in Nottingham, where allotments have incorporated many members of the (South) Asian community, function as a social space, as do the Calthorpe Community Gardens in Camden which also use gardening as a catalyst for good relationships between different groups. In Camden, the community garden has pioneered self-building of an on-site community centre and models of collective decision-making, as well as offering small plots for locals, including numerous members from the Bangladeshi community. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) emphasises allotments as a key example for (semi-) public spaces to create wider value in encouraging cross-community and cross-cultural ties, leading to small instances of cooperation and exchange and giving people a common stake in the quality of their public place.⁵⁷

Case Study 2: Bath Place Community Centre, Leamington Spa

Recently, Leamington has played host to a significant number of migrant workers from poorer EU countries, creating a fresh set of challenges for a town that is not as uniformly wealthy as outsiders often believe. For many years, Bath Place Community Centre has worked in one of the poorer areas of Leamington, to the north of the centre, trying to address the needs of people living on the margins of the town's economic good

⁵⁵ Claire Rishbeth 'Ethnic Minority Groups and the Design on Public Open Space: an Inclusive Landscape?' *Landscape Research* 26-4, 2001.

⁵⁶ 'Concrete to coriander, Birmingham', Women's Environment Network Newsletter No 5, Autumn 2002, http://www.wen.org.uk/local_food/Reports/TOBFAutumn02.pdf (accessed 20 July 2007).

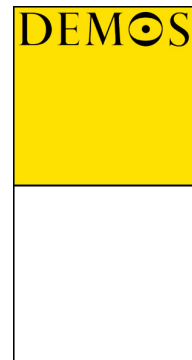
⁵⁷ CABE, *The Value of Public Space, how high quality parks and public spaces create economic, social and environmental value*, (London: CABE, 2004).

fortune.

Bath Place bases its effectiveness on embedding its activities in the habits of people's daily lives. A central part of their offer has been providing cheap, healthy food at their café, which offers meals everyday at a differential rate for low income families (£1.20 per day for unwaged people; 50p for children). 'We do seed to plate', one volunteer explains: 'we have allotments where we grow the veg. The café is important for bringing people in to the centre who might not have come before.' The café is a noisy social space, populated by a mixture of regulars, parents arriving to collect their children at the end of the morning session in the nursery and regulars who have wandered into the café, as well as first-time visitors.

The centre has also fostered a strong partnership with Adult Education in the area which has been a major part of bringing in the newer residents in Leamington. 'New arrivals often come to the centre through the English as a Second Language programme, or via other adult education modules', a tutor explains. 'But as people grow more familiar with the centre and what we do, they also use other services. Some come to "Stay and Play" where parents come to the centre with their children; rather than leaving the children, the parents stay around to play with the toys together and meet other parents living nearby. Children are an important way of bringing people together... when you've got kids, it gives you more in common than you might have had before.'

The informality of the centre's work also extends to their relationships with other community organisations, which is another of the ways in which they try to maintain the diversity of their user-group. 'There's an African-Caribbean community centre just down the road', Steve, manager of the centre says, 'and we'll use each others facilities, especially if something goes wrong at one or other of our centres. None of it is ever formal, but users of their centre have come in and used our IT equipment sometimes and we keep one another in touch about what we're doing. People can use both centres for different things... two ladies from there came in to use our computers when theirs were broken and now they still come into the café here all the time.'

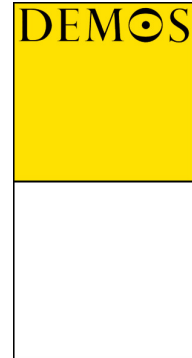


Spaces of service provision

There are many services run both by the state and the voluntary and community sectors that benefit people's everyday lives and, as a result, can act as a contact point between diverse groups of people. This contact, especially when it endures over time, can break down people's ideas about 'otherness' and challenge burgeoning prejudices. People also build bonds through the shared experiences of using the service. The potential for interaction does not have to be confined to interaction that takes place in the institution in question. Much has been made recently of

the potential of 'school gate' interaction to facilitate informal contact between the parents or carers of the children.⁵⁸

In Sheffield, a special needs school for children from a diversity of social and ethnic backgrounds is currently exploring plans to create a sheltered space for parents waiting to collect their children which will encourage walking to school (parents will not have to wait in the rain when the weather is bad), but also will strengthen relationships between parents. Such proposals for small physical interventions recognise the importance of the social potential that lies in minute spatial practices as the daily school run, and could equally be applied to improving opportunities for informal gatherings near other public and community facilities, cultivating conviviality through improving space and creating what Ash Amin calls 'urban plenitude'. 'Here, the promise of social regard comes from having access to collective resources, the knowledge that more does not become less through usage, the assurance of being part of a wider fabric of urban life.'⁵⁹



Case study 3: King David's Primary, Birmingham

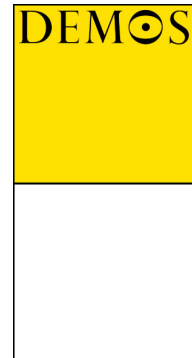
King David's Primary in Birmingham is a local state school, set up to meet the needs of the local Jewish community. The school has a remarkable roll call of pupils. However, whilst around half their students are, predictably, Jewish, the other half are overwhelmingly from Muslim families in the local area - some of whom have even moved into the locality to get into this particular school. The school has achieved this without any specific intervention, instead focusing on maintaining high educational standards above all. As a result it is rated as 'good' - the second highest Ofsted classification. Muslim festivals are recognised alongside Jewish holy days and Muslim children may wear a cap if they wish.

Around this primary school, a wider community of connected families emerges though shared commitment to the school. Despite the fact that the school must maintain a low profile and high security in a city where anti-semitic attacks have been common, there is a supportive and integrated community of parents, which articulate a shared commitment to the school's ethos and teaching. Teaching staff also report the extent to which investing in their mixed school has yielded results far into the future, with pupils from all backgrounds sustaining their friendships into adulthood.

⁵⁸ David Lammy, 'Close Encounters', Prospect Magazine 23 March 2006, <http://www.davidlammy.co.uk/da/33009> (accessed 20 July 2007); Ellen Bennett, 'The secret of community cohesion can be found at the supermarket, says CRE chairman', Building Magazine 18 July 2003, <http://www.building.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=306&storyCode=1029889>, (accessed 20 July 2007).

⁵⁹ Ash Amin, *Thinking Past Integration and Community Cohesion*, Paper for presentation at 2007 COMPAS Annual Conference, Oxford University, 5-6 July 2007 p 7.

These types of interaction do not take place in a vacuum. Divisions and differences that matter outside the school or community centre might sometimes be broken down, but they may also affect these very institutions, potentially in a negative way. Additionally, any service institution has its own power dynamics: the interaction between different groups takes place in formal settings, circumscribed through well-defined roles such as management-worker, councillor-client, teacher-student.⁶⁰ Such power can be used both to build bridges or fences between individuals and communities, creating a need for constant awareness and reflection among practitioners.



Activity spaces

The provision of leisure activities for different age groups can be another point of contact. Sport and children's play are widely recognised as a site where dynamics between groups can be altered, especially given the importance of tackling behavioural routines at a young age.⁶¹ Hence spaces for physical activities - permanent or temporary, formal or informal - create opportunities to break through ingrained patterns of prejudice and avoidance.

Heywood Park in Bolton is a traditional industrial neighbourhood with terraced houses around former cotton mills and with a mixed White working class and Asian population. It has a Council-run indoor and outdoor play facility and in the afternoons, parents and carers gather to chat while their children are playing. Relationships are good between children from the different ethnic groups in the area. Problems arise, however, for those over 14, as youth work and physical activities for them are lacking in the area. The park has been a target for vandalism and arson attacks in the past, as well as a site of violence between different groups of young people.

However, there are numerous positive examples of places where the potential of sports and play includes the older age groups. This is for instance the case in Leicester, known for its ethnic diversity and relatively harmonious community relations. Here, the football club (Leicester City) is engaged in efforts to bring teams of different backgrounds together to play against each other, or against the local police force, changing the terms of interactions between groups where tensions have been a problem in the past.

Activity spaces need not be limited to sport fields and pitches. For example, Home Zones were introduced by the Department of Transport following the example of Dutch residential street design. Within these zones, children's play is seen as the priority user of a street; other users - including motorists - have to adapt to this, which increases safety and confidence among all pedestrians. Perceived danger of traffic is an

⁶⁰ Stephen Vertovec, *New complexities of cohesion in Britain: Super-diversity, transnationalism and civil-integration*.

⁶¹ SHM, *Promoting interaction between ethnic communities: a research project for the Commission for Racial Equality* (London: CRE, 2006).

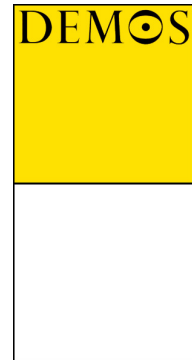
important detractor from use of the public realm,⁶² and hence measures that allow for more outdoors activity have positive effects. In his evaluation of Home Zones projects, Tim Gill writes that apart from an increase in children playing on the street, 'levels of contact and interaction between adults increase, creating a stronger sense of community'.⁶³

Often, less radical measures can also be effective. Bristol-based charity Streets Alive! aims to create such opportunities locally by helping residents to organise street parties, thereby attempting to generate a wider shift in thinking in how communities can use the public realm on their doorstep. Such initiatives sit alongside a range of organisations making a similar case: Living Streets, Sustrans and Play England, for example. All these groups have called strongly for streets to be reconceived around the needs of children, pedestrians and cyclists, to change the nature of the streets in our towns and cities and to enhance their potential as a setting for everyday conviviality.

Democratic / participative spaces

Co-production is one of the main factors underpinning the success of public or semi-public spaces. Authentic engagement and participative governance affect interaction amongst users. A recent Ford Foundation project concluded: 'participation works', as those taking part in tasks that belong to a shared local agenda could temporarily set aside or supersede other divisions and form rallying points.⁶⁴ Similarly, the charity Groundwork UK works across the country in localised arrangements to provide environmental improvements in deprived neighbourhoods. Based on the notion that 'the environment is a powerful shared concern around which often very diverse communities can come together',⁶⁵ the projects of local Groundwork trusts engage often highly diverse communities to improve their daily surroundings. By doing so they provide learning and skills opportunities, whilst at the same time tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, reducing littering and graffiti, improving health and learning and advancing community harmony.

Elsewhere, a project by MIT students and the theorist Manuel Castells in Zaragoza, Spain, aims to harness the power of cutting edge digital technology to enable local communities to personalise public spaces. Highly visible digital community notice-boards with continuously updated content will act as a resource for local residents and a digital graffiti wall is underpinned by training in digital arts and continuously shows the evolving content of people's art on a large screen.⁶⁶



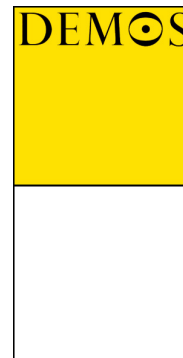
⁶² G Valentine, *Public Space and the Culture of Childhood* (London: Ashgate, 2004).

⁶³ Tim Gill, *Can I play out – Lessons from London Play's Home Zones Project* (London Play, 2007) p 22.

⁶⁴ R Bach, *Changing Relations: Newcomers and Established Residents in U.S. Communities* (New York: Ford Foundation, 1993) quoted in: Stephen Vertovec *New complexities of cohesion in Britain: Super-diversity, transnationalism and civil-integration*, p 33.

⁶⁵ Groundwork Birmingham and Solihull website, <http://www.groundwork-birmingham.org.uk/> (accessed 20 July 2007).

⁶⁶ *Milla Digital: Designing a new century public realm* (MIT / City of Zaragoza 2006).



In some cases, this can take the form of 'self-build spaces'. Inderpaul Johar cites the phenomenon of Sikh Gurudwaras and Community Living rooms as two expressions of a wider trend of community asset vehicles, such as Community Interest Companies and development trusts. These have resources devolved from the 'public' to the community. In some cases, such as with many Gurudwaras and other religious self-builds, they are constructed 'entirely using community donations, governed, managed and operated by a community dispersed throughout the UK and internationally.'⁶⁷ Johar concludes that such highly participative places are 'the built manifestation of difference [and therefore] they could risk being exclusive'⁶⁸; however, they can also 'work to galvanise inclusively through practical exchanges and the sense of building a common project.'⁶⁹

But emphasis on participation does not mean asking local communities to rally 'as one'. Dissent and disagreement are an inherent part of local democracy and as such (depending on the form they take) should be embraced. As Amin argues, full community consensus is neither achievable nor desirable; the key is open and vigorous public culture which 'accepts the rights of different claimants, the right to air disagreement and is committed to decisions that flow from the clashes of an empowered and democratic public.'⁷⁰

Case Study 4: Thames Valley Police, Slough

Slough can claim to be the most diverse place in England. If you were to pick any two people at random from its population of 120,000, there would be a 62 per cent chance that they would be from different ethnic backgrounds. Slough alone is home to more than 33,000 people from an Asian ethnic minority background.⁷¹

In the wake of the attacks on the US in September 2001, tensions between local groups increased, generating the need for an increased visible presence from Thames Valley Police. From the start of the operation, local police officers worked closely with local community groups (particularly those with members from each different ethnic group), inviting them to operational briefings. These same community representatives were also invited to shadow police officers in carrying out the duties described at the briefings, to ensure that they were adhering to the instructions that had been agreed.

Police officers were instructed to behave warmly towards local residents and regular officers were assisted by Black Police Association officers equipped with a greater knowledge of cultural and language differences, allowing them to police minority communities more sensitively. As a

⁶⁷ Indy Johar 'Public Space is Dead; Long Live Public Space' in: Joost Beunderman et al. *BCN-LDN 2020* (Barcelona: Fundació Ramon Trias Fargas, 2007) p 62.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p 62.

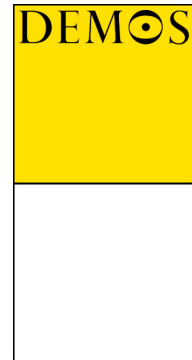
⁶⁹ Ibid., p 62.

⁷⁰ Ash Amin 'The Multicultural City: Living with Ethnic Diversity' *The Edge*, 2002.

⁷¹ *Ethnicity profiles for the South East* CRE website, <http://www.cre.gov.uk/diversity/map/southeast/index.html> (accessed 20 July 2007).

result, the rising tensions were diffused without serious incident. In circumstances in which forays into public spaces in Slough were becoming increasingly worrying for local ethnic minority residents, an increased police presence could have heightened the perceived threat and - by association - the likelihood that violence could ensue. But in reality, by adapting to the circumstances in which they found themselves working, the police were able to re-establish the sense of ownership that all Slough's local residents - both white and ethnic minority - have of the public spaces in their town.

This collaborative approach to public order and safety shows the importance of community participation not just in the creation, but also the management of public spaces: feelings of safety and mutual trust are no goods that can be simply 'delivered', but which can only be generated collaboratively through participation and the possibility of democratic contestation.



Staged spaces

Staging events is not usually part of the informal interaction agenda. However, events can play an important role. Theorists such as Amin emphasise that symbolism and a conscious public culture matter as one part of a wider policy that otherwise aims at strengthening weak ties and favouring casual encounters.⁷²

However, events should not be seen as one-offs or as levers that will magically spark interaction between groups. Research on 'what works' for organisations involved in community relations in Northern Ireland over the last 20 years showed that one-off events do not tend to create the sort of lasting behavioural shift that is generally needed to make a qualitative difference to separate communities.⁷³ Instead, events should act as a point of entry for making crucial first connections. They can also be celebrations of shared values and successes.

The London Borough of Newham has taken an even more practical approach. The Borough has an exceptionally diverse population and high levels of social deprivation. In the summer of 2006, it organised the Big Sunday as an occasion for celebrating local communities, as well as a way to let people know about the work of the Council and voluntary sector services. Around 30,000 residents attended and, owing to a highly simplified digital sign-up system for services and courses, the event worked as a measurable start for civic and community involvement, thereby increasing the potential of bridging social capital.

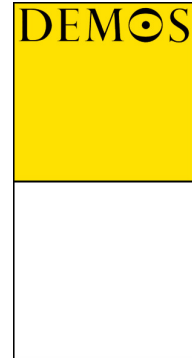
The use of symbolic events at critical moments in the lives of the community can be very important. After police discovered that three of

⁷² Ash Amin 'The Multicultural City: Living with Ethnic Diversity' *The Edge*, 2002.

⁷³ Institute for Conflict Research Community Cohesion, *Applying Learning from Groundwork in Northern Ireland* (Belfast ICR 2004); also see P Burton, R Goodlad, J Croft, J Abbott, A Hastings, G Macdonald and T Slater, *What Works in Community Involvement in Area-based Initiatives? A Systematic Review of the Literature*. (London, Home Office, 2004).

the London Underground bombers came from the same area of Leeds - Beeston - this small corner of the city found itself under siege from the international media and police. One year on, residents made the decision to mark the anniversary of the bombings. Residents were consulted about the form the memorial should take and the decision was taken to plant a tree, 'reflecting both a commitment to peace as well as representing the residents' unity.'⁷⁴ The focus was on a forward-looking ceremony, with the memorial providing people with a space to reflect within the community as it grew and changed.

In Glasgow, the Hidden Gardens were developed as a sanctuary garden explicitly to bridge the gap between different groups and was dedicated to peace and inspiration. It focused on the complete transformation of an area of industrial wasteland behind an arts centre. The design process involved an arts charity, landscape architects, a team of international artists and the local community in Pollokshields.⁷⁵



In-between spaces

Segregation and residential separation can be a problem in many communities. It is often down to circumstances rather than choice, but in general it goes hand in hand with creation of clear psychological and physical boundaries. When it comes to rethinking the wider use of public spaces, physical territorialism is therefore a key challenge.

Territorialism in itself is not necessarily racially focused - often it is merely an expression of neighbourhood attachment taken to an extreme. To a degree, it should be recognised as an inherent aspect of young people's lives which only becomes problematic in combination with other forms of deprivation and negative behaviour. Neighbourhood gangs as well as segregated communities are thus examples of the danger of 'bonding social capital' of the wrong kind, where too much belonging leads to the creation of clear territorial and psychological boundaries.

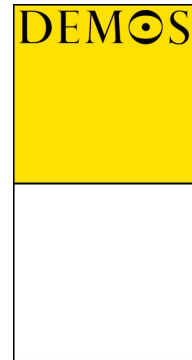
To counter such dynamics, policymakers and planners must enhance the border zones between communities, rather than focusing exclusively on the centres of communities. Richard Sennett describes the failure of a project in which he was involved as an example of how 'boundary thinking can miss opportunities'. Tasked with the creation of a new market (La Marqueta) in Harlem, New York, 'we planners chose to locate La Marqueta in the centre of Spanish Harlem twenty blocks away, in the very centre of the community, and to regard 96th Street [where Harlem changes into a very wealthy area - the Upper East Side] as a dead edge, where nothing much happens. We chose wrongly. Had we located the market on that street, we might have encouraged activity which brought the rich and the poor into some daily commercial contact. Wiser planners have since learned from our mistake, and on the West Side of Manhattan sought to locate new community resources at the edges between

⁷⁴ A newsletter for residents of Beeston Hill & Holbeck Summer 2006, http://www.leeds.gov.uk/files/2006/week24/inter__a3c225c7-97f2-4ad3-8f38-8e8503e23b32_90c6a080-5f6a-404c-934e-3c9aa8c2fb25.pdf (accessed 20 July 2007).

⁷⁵ <http://www.thehiddengardens.org.uk> (accessed 20 July 2007).

communities, in order... to open the gates between different racial and economic communities. Our imagination of the importance of the centre proved isolating, their understanding of the value of the edge and border has proved integrating.'⁷⁶

This is by no means easy - the problem with segregation and territorialism is exactly its entrenchment and embedding in daily routines as well as mental maps. However, services that people will use because of their practical value have a clear potential - such as markets, but also specialised provision such as the Castlemilk Youth Complex in Glasgow.



Case Study 5: Castlemilk Youth Complex, Glasgow

Castlemilk is one of the largest housing estates in Scotland, developed from 1953 as one of four estates on the outskirts of the Glasgow. The majority of residents are white Scottish people. The youth complex on the estate works with young people from 12 to 25 who live, work or attend school in the area. It was founded by a group of young people in 1994 and is still fully youth-led: the board of directors is made up of twenty-one 16 to 25 year-olds and four advisors, who are often former board members. Unlike other parts of Glasgow, sectarianism is not a major problem for Castlemilk. Rather, the youth complex faces two other divides: strong separation between the different neighbourhoods within the housing estate and racism towards asylum seekers living in the area.

The centre was originally formed to counter the first of these divisions, which emerged solely as a result of the physical layout of Castlemilk, divided as it is into five separate estates. The second division is between Castlemilkers and a group of asylum seekers who came into the area in the late 1990s and were initially housed in a series of high-rise towers. At first, there were severe issues with racism, with the white community being extremely hostile to the newcomers.

The centre's strategy is relevant to both issues: primarily, it encourages the 'banal encounters' model of fostering relationships between groups by participation in common, practical activities.⁷⁷ The centre's main emphasis is on creating opportunities for young people to develop themselves: personal development, learning new skills and taking part in sports, theatre and art. Bridge-building between the young people is left to emerge naturally. For example, anti-racism sessions happen via visual arts in which the young people produce paintings on the subject rather than only talk about it.

A key aspect of the Complex is its location within Castlemilk: it is located in a central part of the estate which none of the five 'territories' can claim as its own. From the start, this was a deliberate move to disturb

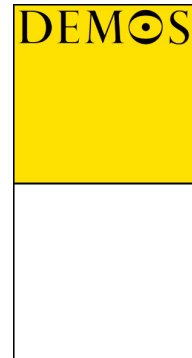
⁷⁶ Richard Sennett, *The City as an Open System*, Presentation at London School of Economics, Leverhulme International Symposium 2004 'The Resurgent City' <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/resurgentCity/Papers/richardsennett.pdf> (accessed 20 July 2007).

⁷⁷ Ellen Bennett, 'The secret of community cohesion can be found at the supermarket, says CRE chairman' *Building Magazine* 18 July 2003.

the entrenched socio-spatial standoff by a positive intervention: the Complex is literally an in-between space.

The success of the Complex is partly reflected in the numbers of young people with whom it works: 450 are registered and 150 use it regularly. The secret of Castlemilk's success lies in the fact that it can provide both real opportunities to young people to learn new skills, and a neutral space for them to interact - outside the home, school and work. It is flexible and inclusive, but appeals to its young users as a result of the chance it offers to take part in exciting and credible activities.

Crucially, the centre also recognises that all these things take time: shifts in attitudes happen slowly, and often need patient, gradual nurturing. In the Complex, young people can engage over an extended period of time, long after leaving school or starting a job or training. By offering the chance to engage over years rather than weeks, Castlemilk Youth Complex is making lasting change happen.



Virtual spaces

A sense of belonging in the 'real world' can involve a range of different relationships: family, birthplace, streets, place of worship and nationality, to name a few. Equally, people often identify as part of a community of users of a particular 'virtual' space. But whilst the early days of the internet were full of promise of more diverse interactions, some of this early optimism has not been fulfilled.

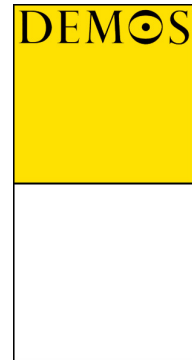
First, the digital divide has created a marked separation between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' of internet usage - a pattern which deteriorates even further once considerations of connection speed are brought in. Second, it increasingly becomes evident that people use the internet in a markedly territorial way, which mirrors social cleavages in the real world: in fact, social networking technology like Facebook can virtually guarantee that you will not have to interact with anyone you don't know (or who doesn't know someone you know). It reinforces, rather than challenges, existing social stratification - a fact illustrated in the findings of recent US research which revealed that MySpace and FaceBook use are rigidly stratified according to levels of educational attainment.⁷⁸ Thirdly, even when an online activity does bring together a more diverse group, it tends to be a relatively functional activity (like playing a game) where a person's differences are not only irrelevant, but are also unknown.

These virtual spaces are far from being a panacea for the lack of offline contact between diverse groups. There are reasons to be optimistic, however. Campaigns like 'Save the Internet' in the US have successfully capitalised on internet users' shared concern for the access to the internet to bring together a diverse group of activists to call for safeguards of the internet's equality of access. MySpace and Facebook

⁷⁸ Danah Boyd, 'Viewing American class divisions through Facebook and MySpace' *Apophenia Blog Essay* June 24 2007, <http://www.danah.org/papers/essays/ClassDivisions.html> (accessed 20 July 2007).

are increasingly politicised spaces, with campaigning organisations starting to work through existing networks on these sites to build collective action both online and offline. Increasingly, commentators are calling for constraints on the behaviour of people commenting on blogs and creative content (when it comes to racial and religious slurs or insulting language).

The parallels between virtual space and real, physical public space are apparent - social stratification, self-selection and exclusion are very real dangers. However, learning lessons about collective management by users of a shared space and transferring them between online and offline contexts creates the potential for these virtual spaces to become hubs for integration.



Towards spaces of trust and confidence

There are many sites in Britain, existing or new, that have the potential to act as centres of social interaction between groups. All such places could inform fresh thinking and future decision-making about public and communal spaces: about their location, physical lay-out, management and mix of activities. Evidently, each of the examples is different, reflecting local circumstances and a particular project's objectives. However they also have much in common - and most of all, the fact that 'use matters'. Without the continuous use of places as part of people's daily life, the notion of social interaction falls flat.

Earlier in this chapter, we cited a set of basic factors that condition the social success of public spaces. Whilst focusing mainly on the design of formal public spaces, they recognise and underline the first principle of 'use matters above all.' However, the exploration in this chapter proves that paying attention to more informal spaces can teach us more about the richness of human activities that underpin and help generate everyday interaction.

Undoubtedly, some of the most poignant outcomes of recent research focus on the manner in which trust, confidence and use are interrelated. Too often, our collective relationship to the public domain is marked exactly by a lack of trust and confidence: fears about the security of public spaces are at the forefront of public concerns. This becomes apparent in opinion surveys such as the Annual London Survey, where the public mentions crime as second in a top ten priority list of things affecting London's quality of life, with only housing affordability worrying people more.⁷⁹

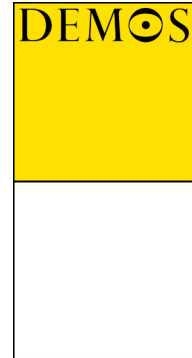
Such concerns often lead to calls for more CCTV and other 'hard' security measures such as fencing and formal surveillance. However, most good practice suggests that general principles of good design - such as lighting, active edges and legibility of walking routes - have more potential to

⁷⁹ *Annual London Survey 2006, Final topline results.* Ipsos Mori / Greater London Authority http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/annual_survey/2006/als-2006-toplines.pdf (accessed 20 July 2007).

reduce (the perception of) threat and increase confidence than ‘hard measures,’ the wider benefits of which are often unproven.⁸⁰ In fact, focusing exclusively on security instead of encouraging use and activity in all its forms might end up having negative consequences.⁸¹ Interaction, trust, participation, sense of ownership and collective efficacy are closely linked to the use of space as a primary positive factor, making or breaking a neighbourhood’s resilience in the face of risk and enabling pathways of recovery.

The categories of space and the examples cited in this chapter all present opportunities for positive interactions ranging from ‘everyday and banal’ encounters to celebratory and highly participative interaction. Hence, whilst spontaneous and unplanned encounters between people from different cultures and communities remain unpredictable, it is possible for cities and for actors within cities to help create the conditions that would sustain this.

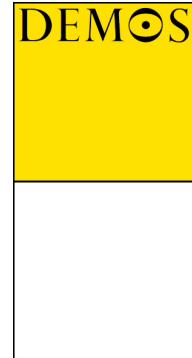
The next chapter will draw out a number of key lessons relating to the physical design and management of public spaces, the location of public and community services, institutional arrangements in different organisations, public space activation and co-governance and the encouragement of confidence and trust for cross-cultural projects.



⁸⁰ Paul Michael, Cozens Greg Saville and David Hillier, ‘Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED): a review and modern bibliography’ *Property Management*, Volume 23 Number 5 2005 pp. 328-356, <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/Insight/ViewContentServlet?Filename=Published/EmeraldFullTextArticle/Articles/1130230502.html#b169> (accessed 20 July 2007); CABEsapce, *Preventing Antisocial Behaviour in Public Spaces* (London: CABEsapce 2007; *Assessing the Impact of CCTV*, Home Office Research Study 292, 2005.

⁸¹ Ken Worpole and Katharine Knox, *The Social Value of Public Spaces* (York: JRF, 2007).

Chapter 3: Getting it right: from spaces of potential to places of interaction



The lessons from the research can be summarised in four main recommendations for practitioners and policymakers in the future:

- 1) be flexible in the use of space, understand the grain of people's everyday lives and reflect it in the design of public space;
- 2) aim to create the setting for 'trusted' spaces, where people feel secure to take part in unfamiliar interactions;
- 3) foster positive interactions but don't promote them: take an indirect approach to changing behaviour;
- 4) embrace creativity and innovation in finding new and imaginative uses for spaces that will transform interactions between people.

1. Be flexible in the use of space and go with the grain of people's everyday lives

People congregate in certain spaces *by necessity*, in the pursuit of everyday needs, habits and hobbies. It is the potential of these everyday spaces that needs to be harnessed to make such daily movements and interactions enjoyable and stimulating. Relatively low-budget, easy to introduce designs can change existing physical and social conditions and deliver clear benefits to different user groups. Any intervention needs to be based on close engagement with locally specific situations: from improving the physical conditions at the school gate or bus stop to widening pavements or adjusting a market's management regime, interventions need to *take small steps that start with people's existing behaviour and preferences*.

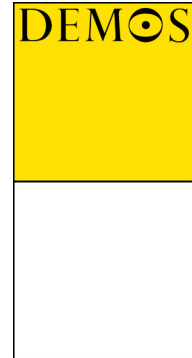
One person interviewed for the good practice review of cross-community work in Northern Ireland remarked, 'We use a community development strategy which gets people to look at projects on both sides, and see how they can share the good practice and get things done. The issues are things like unemployment, the Peace Line itself, discrimination and that type of thing.'⁸² Dealing with issues that made people's daily lives difficult gave the impetus for people to overcome major reservations about working with members of another community with whom relations were almost non-existent.

Working on these issues also means targeting a level of change in which people can experience real success. The chance to see that it is possible to shift entrenched behaviours within an area or to make practical changes that have a big impact on people's lives is essential. It will not necessarily stem from aiming to tackle the big issues from the start, but instead by making first steps. Herein lays the power of projects such as the environmental improvements generated by Groundwork trusts. Additionally, aiming for real community ownership of a project is

⁸² John Lampen, 'Building the Peace - Good Practice in Community Relations Work in Northern Ireland' (Belfast: Community Relations Council, 1995) p 20.

invaluable in creating lasting support for the initiative, as well as to build capacity that means that the effect of the project will last beyond the lifetime of the initial concern.

It is important to engage with the mainstream, trusted individuals who lead communities, from within places of worship, community centres or local businesses. These are the people who can act as hubs for transmitting ideas across different groups, and gain acceptance from the more sceptical informal networks (and individuals). Very often, voluntary and community groups will already exist and be part of these informal networks. Identifying these in each of the groups and looking to these as a starting point is critical.⁸³



2. Aim to create the setting for ‘trusted’ spaces, where people feel secure to take part in unfamiliar interactions

Feeling safe and secure in a space is a vital precursor to fostering trust and encouraging new uses. In the enthusiasm for building sophisticated responses to community tension, it can be easy to lose site of the basics. The state of repair of community surroundings, such as street-cleaning and responsiveness to graffiti and vandalism, however, remains central to people’s relationships with public space and must sit at the heart of new interventions. Signs of crime and vandalism communicate disrespect and lack of care for residents; until these are tackled, interventions aimed at more sophisticated integration goals will have only limited success. There is ample empirical evidence on the relationship of such ‘basic’ physical factors with safety and perceptions of safety as well as on wider factors of individual and community well-being.⁸⁴

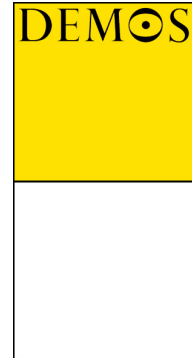
Projects to tackle discrimination or alienation between different ethnic groups must not assume a single, bipolar model of racism. In many cases the primary and most corrosive segregation will occur between white and one or several ethnic minority groups, but there may also be tensions between different ethnic minorities, or within a group that share the same ethnic background but arrived in the UK at different times, or in different circumstances. Perceived competition over scarce resources often triggers such tensions, reinforcing the importance of focusing on basic parameters of ‘urban plenitude’ in public services, maintenance of public space, and responsiveness to all users.

A further important step in building trust around spaces is to be prepared to have difficult conversations about what the space should be for, and how people’s past experiences shape their aspirations for the space now. Argument and conflict are a part of building understanding across cultures and institutions. Local practitioners and policymakers need to embrace

⁸³ Dhara Vyas, ‘How voluntary and community organisations can help transform the local relationships’, NCVO, 2006, <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/policy/index.asp?id=3298> (accessed June 2007); Paul Skidmore, Kirsten Bound and Hannah Lownsborough, *Community participation: Who benefits?* (York: JRF, 2006).

⁸⁴ David Halpern, *More than Bricks and Mortar? Mental Health and the Built Environment* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1995); Martin Innes and Vanessa Jones, *Neighbourhood security and urban change: Risk, resilience and recovery* (York: JRF, 2006).

this often uncomfortable truth. Concentrating too much on cohesion and on the avoidance of conflict can stifle progressive moves and merely sustain the status quo. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation makes this point in the report *Cultural Diversity in Britain*. Turning a blind eye to building pressures within communities has rarely ended well; instead, policymakers should be prepared to deal with disagreement and conflict, and willing to accept a plurality of views.⁸⁵



3. Foster positive interactions but don't promote them: take an indirect approach to changing behaviour

Ethnic and religious difference is a reality in the UK, sustained within interest-based, virtual and spatial communities. It is therefore generally unproductive to ask people to leave difference at the door of the public realm - expression of distinctiveness can be a valuable source of pride and confidence, dialogue and understanding. While acknowledging the reality of interest-based communities, we ought to provide continuous support for the emergence of new communities or their continuous adaptation, instead of aiming for the reinforcement and entrenchment of established communities. Through physical or activity-based interventions, local communities can be connected, can open up and friendships can be established: the establishment of a joint vegetable gardening club, collective recycling, participation in neighbourhood radio or television channels and exchanges between institutions or groups such as schools and theatres, can lead to the sharing of concern and the creation of new networks of social capital.

4. Embrace creativity and innovation in finding new and imaginative uses for spaces that will transform interactions between people

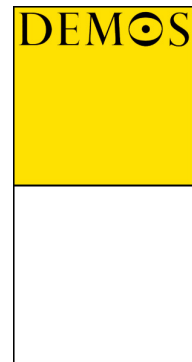
There is no need to focus exclusively on conventional definitions of what amounts to public space. Ambiguous and uncertain spaces can open up the process of defining use and access by taking the debate away from the 'usual suspects', and towards newer and less frequent users of public spaces. Whenever policymakers, designers and architects remain focused only on 'high-spec, high-design' places, this will come at the cost of failing to identify, investigate and harness the alternative opportunities posed by new kinds of both publics and spaces that emerge every day.

There is no reason why these spaces - community-led, or commercial, but perceived as public by many who use them - should not represent critical contact points for building relationships between separate groups.

Lastly, it is crucial to look beyond the traditional 'centres' of cities and communities in seeking spaces for fresh interactions. Bridging points and border zones are key levers for change and tackling tensions. Hence, policy and design should take these 'spaces of uncertainty' seriously, and

⁸⁵ Phil Wood, Charles Landry and Jude Bloomfield, *Cultural Diversity in Britain A toolkit for cross-cultural co-operation* (York: JRF / Comedia 2006), <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/1922-cultural-diversity-Britain.pdf> (accessed 20 July 2007).

focus its attention in between communities, in seemingly marginal, neutral and 'third' spaces. The hearts of communities can be places for expression of particular identities, but their borders should be places where many different identities can come together in a positive way.



About the contributors

Nick Johnson has been the Director of Policy and Public Sector for the Commission for Racial Equality since June 2004. He has led the development of the CRE's policy agenda and is a leading commentator on issues of integration, equality and identity, regularly writing and speaking on these issues. He recently edited *Britishness - towards a progressive citizenship* for the Smith Institute and has contributed to a number of books.

At the CRE, he leads the Commission's engagement with the public sector, aiming to see race equality and integration mainstreamed into the delivery of public services and the development of public policy.

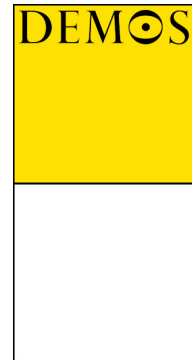
Prior to joining the CRE, he was a consultant in the public sector with PricewaterhouseCoopers, specialising in working with local government on the improvement agenda. Before that, he was at the Association of London Government, latterly as Head of their Programme Office, responsible for corporate and strategic policy.

He has also worked as a political consultant and researcher and is currently working on a book on the political legacy of Senator Robert F Kennedy. He sits on the Advisory Board of the Institute of Community Cohesion and is a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts.

Hannah Lownsbrough Hannah Lownsbrough is a Demos Associate and Senior Political Analyst at Crisis Action, an international, non-profit organisation which aims to help avert conflicts, prevent human rights abuses and ensure governments fulfil their obligations to protect civilians. She was a researcher at Demos from autumn 2003 to June 2007, during which time she worked on a wide range of projects. She wrote *Change Within*, a report in partnership with the Barrow Cadbury Trust, looking at the role played by black and minority ethnic community organisations. She also co-authored *Bringing it Home*, a pamphlet on community-led approaches to counter-terrorism, which investigates approaches to tackling the threat of violent extremism that are rooted within Muslim communities. With the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit and Manchester City Council, she has investigated the potential of a systems thinking methodology for renewing local government policies aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour amongst young people.

In addition to her roles at Demos and Crisis Action, Hannah is also chair of trustees at Chelsea Youth Club and Flashpoint Play Centre, a community organisation based on an estate in central London. She is also a trustee of Crisis, the national charity for single homeless people.

Joost Beunderman is a researcher in the Demos Cities Programme and is freelance consultant with Urhahn Urban Design, an Amsterdam-based practice. At Demos, Joost is involved in a wide range of urban policy projects. He currently leads the Children Make Places project which investigates ways to increase children's free movement and play



opportunities in public space across the UK; the pamphlet belonging to this project is due to be published in September 2007.

He co-edited *BCN-LDN 2020*, a collection of essays published jointly by Demos and the Barcelona think tank Fundació Ramon Trias Fargas, which provides critical reflections on the ‘resurgent city’ discourse that we hear from both cities, exploring directions for future urban politics on public space, migration and governance.

He is also part of a multi-disciplinary team that is currently developing a Public Realm Strategy for the Mayor of London, informing London’s public space policies up to 2025. For Urhahn Urban Design, Joost has been working on several research studies looking at the potential public realm benefits of high-density housing and town centre regeneration.

