

Multiculturalism From Below: Transversal Crossings and Working Class Cosmopolitans

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My paper today is based on an ethnographic project called 'Contact Zones' which I began in 2002, and which has morphed into a several new forms since then. This ongoing program of research explores what I call quotidian diversity, or multiculturalism from below. It has involved researching mundane modes of intercultural crossing in culturally diverse suburban locales and more recently regional and rural settings. Today I am going to explore what I term 'transversal' intercultural crossing and exchange in everyday spaces through vignettes from two of my field-sites; Ashfield and Griffith, a large Australian country town. It is a political project in many ways. I wanted to find out where the points of affinity and disjuncture were, and how and why people 'get along' and to think about these in terms of how this might inform multicultural and especially anti-racism policies.

Everyday in suburban neighbourhoods, communities, clubs, schools, parks and shopping centres, people from diverse backgrounds mix it together, whether by design or necessity. Some of those interactions may be as ephemeral as passing one another in the fruit market, others may be more enduring such as membership in sporting clubs or neighbourly relations with those in the same street. Not all of these relationships are characterised by racism and cross-cultural friction and are negotiated, if not always comfortably, at least in a mostly amiable fashion.

What most characterises Ashfield is the extent of its cultural diversity, moving from an Anglo-Celtic working class area to incorporate Greek, Italian, Polish, Lebanese and Turkish migrants, and more recently large numbers of Chinese and Indians.

Griffith, meanwhile, is an extraordinary little town of about 50,000 residents. There are some 70 first languages represented there and at least 40 settled communities. A citrus farming area, Griffith was established following WWI by Anglo-Celtic soldier settlers in the 1920s who were closely followed by a large settlement of Italian migrants in the 1970s, Punjabi Sikhs and Turks. And more recently a myriad of different Pacific Islander groups and refugees from Africa and the middle east, especially Afghanistan, have settled there. All these groups now co-exist in reasonable harmony. My task was to dig beneath the surface to see if this was really so, and if so, how so.

During my fieldwork I identified many mundane strategies people make to smooth and foster relations across difference in their local areas, and several spaces which make interethnic interaction comfortable for those in them. I have termed these, somewhat clumsily, Quotidian Transversality.

I use the term to refer to those processes which sociologists and anthropologists normally think of as creating and reproducing sociality within a particular social and cultural unit: Forms of gift exchange and reciprocity, kinship and social networks, ways of talking, and place orientations, for example. Mostly these are thought about as processes which facilitate the social viability of an ethnically homogeneous group. The term Quotidian Transversality flags for me how individuals in everyday spaces use these modes of sociality to produce or smooth interrelations across cultural difference, whether or not this difference is a conscious one. Quotidian Transversality is loosely underpinned by the notion of dialogic rooting and shifting of identities, developed by Nira Yuval-Davis, and by theorists such as Guattari and also de Certeau.

Transversal politics is an inter-group strategy to work through conflict. Initially developed by Guattari in 1974 in a somewhat different context, transversalism was eventually developed by Italian feminists in the 1970s and 1980s, and more fully by UK academic, Nira Yuval-Davis and taken up by academic and peace activist, Cynthia Cockburn who used it in her research with women's groups in conflict zones.

Cockburn and Yuval-Davis suggest that the central aspect of a transversal politics is a dialogue centred on the idea of ‘rooting’ and ‘shifting’, whereby each participant in the dialogue brings with them the rooting in their own membership and identity, while also trying to shift in order to put themselves in a situation of exchange with those who have a different membership and identity. Cockburn points out that this process of rooting and shifting does not mean discarding one’s political and other sources of belonging, but neither should rooting render participants incapable of movement, of looking for connection with those among ‘the others’ with whom they might find compatible values and goals. (Cockburn 1998:9). As Yuval-Davis argues:

Yuval-Davis (2004:27) reminds us that ‘transversal politics is not only a dialogue in which two or more partners are negotiating a common political position, but is a process in which all the participants are mutually reconstructing themselves and the others engaged with them in it’.

I adapt transversality somewhat loosely. For me, the notion of quotidian transversality flags the process by which local and diasporic modes of inhabitation intersect through momentary cross-cultural transgressions and displacements (Amin 2002: 15) in everyday, mundane situations. Quotidian Transversality is different to simply hybridity or code-switching, it moves away from a kind of assimilationist and ingegrationist notion of exchange across difference, and highlights how cultural difference can also be the basis for commensality and exchange; where identities are not left behind, but can be shifted and opened up in moments of reciprocity. I’ll come back to this at the end of the paper. For now, there are a number of threads that emerged for me as exemplars of quotidian transversality at work – forms of mundane space or practice which produce this kind of rooting and shifting across difference. I’ll introduce three of them now.

1. Transversal Exchanges
2. Transversal Places
3. Transversal People, or Enablers

Transversal Exchanges: The Gift in Inter-Ethnic Urban Contexts

Much has been said about transnational cultural traffic, about the circulation of material goods, indeed gifts, to facilitate sociality across extended space. I want to reflect in this next section on how such gift traffic (which may have transnational or diasporic roots/routes/histories) weaves through suburban streets across cultures, borders, boundaries, how it might tie people together, not across space, but across difference, however momentarily.

Along with many others, David Cheal has written extensively about what he calls the 'gift economy'. He argues that gifts are used to construct certain kinds of voluntary social relationships (p14) and should be viewed as symbolic media for managing the emotional and interpersonal aspects of relationships. In complex and multi-fractal social systems such as super-diverse cities, those living in close proximity are not likely to be constituted by 'strong ties'. However in such contexts gifts have a kind of 'free floating' presence within a moral economy of interpersonal relations, and facilitate types of interaction that might otherwise be only weakly institutionalised' (p19 and Cheal 1988a).

When Vijaya, one of my Indian research participants, moved into her house in Ashfield earlier this year, she was pleasantly surprised when Frank, her Lebanese-Muslim neighbour, called over the back fence to present her with freshly picked figs from his garden in a gesture of welcome. He had seen her admiring his crop the day before. This first gift precipitated a regular exchange between them. The latest produce from their respective vegetable patches would be passed over the fence along with cooking hints to accompany unfamiliar varieties. If Lebanese Frank had been out to the big fruit markets and bought a box of peaches or cucumbers or whatever, inevitably some would come Vijaya's way. Not long after her latest chillies or limes would end up on his side. Tony, their Italian neighbour at the rear whose balcony overlooks both Vijaya and Frank's yards, had seen this exchange and eventually joined in regular three-way vegetable conversations. He gave Vijaya some of his tomato seedlings, via Frank the Lebanese neighbour, to grow in her yard. And from the other end of the street, curry leaves from the tree in the yard of the sister of another neighbour would be offered to Vijaya whenever a new crop arrived at their place.

Australia's backyard food is as diverse as the backgrounds of the Australians who grow it. Lemons and lime, banana trees and Lebanese cucumber, grapes and guavas, mangos and mandarins, basil and Thai mint, chillies and okra, aubergines and figs—they are as much about the sensual reconstruction of homely tastes and smells as they are about gardening. But there is also a kind of micro-moral-economy that emerges through the exchange of surplus produce—surplus gifted to facilitate neighbourly and kin relations. And increasingly these neighbourly environments incorporate households of diverse cultural backgrounds. Whether or not those engaged in this most everyday form of reciprocity are consciously aware that they are producing and reproducing social relations and cultural intersections is unimportant. What is important is the outcome of such reciprocities. The materiality, the sensual and aromatic qualities of food exchanged is significant. Food is as much about taste and smell. As neighbourly gifts, food, especially the home grown variety, is very often accompanied by stories about cooking and family histories about when and where this or that was traditionally eaten, how to grow it, how to cook it, what you might do with it. Over time, such exchanges have the potential to dialogically produce spaces of quotidian transversality through the production of sensory and narrative intersections and the kinds of relations and networks produced through gift exchange.

Often well known religious festivals provide opportunities for transversal crossing. The following account from Mrs Papworth is a good example. At 75, she has lived in Ashfield, indeed, in the same street, her whole life. She lived in one house till she was 20, then married a man in the house across the road and moved in with him where she has lived ever since. An Anglo-Celtic working class woman now widowed, her mobility is limited to the local area and she spends her days in the local shops and going to senior's social groups and the local clubs. I asked her about her interactions with Chinese in the local area, especially at the shops.

I talk to them. I will say a ni how (how are you), to them, to the Asian places. When it was gong xi fatt choy (Chinese New Year) in February, I had just heard from Mary and Edward, the Chinese couple who run the chemist, about the little red bags they give in China, with money in it. And I knew the gold was popular. So I went to Tek (the \$2 discount shop, also Chinese owned) and I got some little red bags, paper ones. And I got some gold foil paper, and I cut a couple of strips and I put a few dollars in and gave to Mary and Edward and the Chinese fellow

who does my massage, and the Vietnamese lady in the bread shop. So I do mix.

I characterise such exchanges as a moral-economy of place-sharing. In his seminal work on 'The Gift' Mauss reminds us that Gifts are not just material objects. Gifts can involve gifts of care and service as well as objects. 'What makes a gift is the relationship within which the transaction occurs' (Carrier 1991:122). Drawing on Carrier, what is important about such exchanges is how the people, objects and social relations involved are made and remade, understood and re-understood in everyday transactions.

The flow of gifts (veges) just described is important in another sense. They create what I call local and diasporic intersections. As Mauss and others have argued, Gifts are inalienable. Gifts, he says, are to some extent are 'to some extent part of persons' (Mauss 1969:11). Drawing on material culture studies, objects (and in this context, the more general definition of gift) carry with them both general cultural meanings, and cultural biographies, and also take on meanings within specific personal relationships. This twinning of cultural biography of the object and its giver, with the inters-subjective relations produced in the giving, produces narrative, embodied, material and emplaced intersections.

Transversal Places

Along with informal gift exchange, there were particular spaces I identified in my study which appeared to foster 'transversal crossing'. Transversal Crossing places are the kinds of spaces that ease intercultural encounters and relationships among those perhaps less comfortable with difference. Their success seems to lie in their non-place character, their in-between-ness or their lack of identification with one group or another. They are, in their own ways, borderlands. There are many I've identified, but today I only have time to reflect on two examples; local clubs (RSLs, Leagues etc) and front gardens.

Ashfield has a high concentration of clubs, including the Ashfield and Canterbury-Hurlstone Park RSLs, the Wests Leagues club, and the Ashfield Catholic and

Community Club. These five clubs form the single most common element in the social lives of Ashfield's elderly residents from every ethnic group. Every single senior I interviewed reported regular visits to these clubs several times a week. The main activity is participation in the raffles or bingo which are held most days of the week, followed by a cheap club meal, and for some, a few dollars on the pokies.

Besides the shopping mall, these clubs are the most culturally diverse places in the local area. They have the highest levels of interethnic interaction and seem to provide the basis for otherwise unlikely friendships to emerge, particularly among the elderly. During the Sunday afternoon raffle at the Ashfield RSL you'll find several large tables of youngish and older seniors each as culturally diverse as the next: commonly you will find several Chinese, Filipinas, Indians, Anglos, Poles and Italians at the same table each with their raffle tickets spread in front of them, applauding one another when their number comes up. They'll often call over a hello to people at other tables and the club staff know many of them by name. Those seniors I've interviewed say they have a regular weekly circuit across the five clubs and catch up with their friends at each place: Ashfield RSL on a Friday for the grocery raffle, Wests on Sunday for the meat raffle, and so on.

In her 80s, Sylvia Thornhill has lived in area since 1969. A feisty, working class lady, she grew up on a dairy farm in Queensland then moved to Sydney where her husband and she owned the local milk run for many years. She's often seen around Ashfield with her milk crate on a trolley which she uses to cart groceries and booty collected at club raffles. Here, she speaks about the newly Chinese nature of Ashfield shops and how her experience in local clubs has helped her feel comfortable with the changes around her:

It doesn't worry me at all. I sometimes say you'd think you're in China weren't you. You sit at the bus stop... but it doesn't worry me at all. I suppose you know, I have friends, from different multicultural at the club. Chinese, Philippines, Polish, its a real mixture at the club. We meet at the club every week. ... We made friends – just seeing regular faces... We mainly just see each other at the club, we meet for the Raffles and free concerts. But a couple of them I see outside.

So the changes in the suburb didn't bother me because of that, I didn't notice them

Sylvia's narrative shows how the simple fact of regular togetherness, how involvement in an activity enjoyed by different groups in a place all participants comfortably inhabit can facilitate fleeting relations and sometimes friendships across difference, which in turn can impact on their broader feelings of belonging to the local area.

FRONT GARDENS

The front garden is another iconic non-space, suburban borderlands, if you will. Front gardens can be characterised as liminal spaces, neither private nor public and thus zones for encounters and exchanges. On weekends, mornings and late afternoons, especially in spring and summer, many local residents will be in their front gardens tending their plants, while others will be on their regular stroll. Strollers and front gardeners will nod hellos and often exchange words about the weather, the garden or the dog. While people mix side by side in shopping centres, for example, there is little in the way of interaction. But the nature of the front yard almost demands, or at least invites, exchange, and a lovely garden provides automatic 'permission' to say a few words – it's something everyone has in common. Through these encounters the regular strollers and gardeners, as often as not from culturally different backgrounds, eventually come to recognise one another.

Beyond their obvious differences, the common thread between the clubs and the interactions around front gardens is that people feel these are '*Spaces that they can inhabit*'. In Ashfield's clubs, there is a comfortable sense of inhabitation by diverse individuals. There appears to be little in the way of territorial competition or cultural ownership surrounding participation in them. I call these clubs 'odourless' spaces, a term coined in a slightly different context by Japanese studies scholar, Koichi Iwobuchi. Odourless spaces are those that have no clear ownership, no clear territorial claimants, there are no strong codes and rituals surrounding insiders and outsiders, and participation in the main forms of entertainment is the main criteria for belonging. They are 'odourless' because their décor, internal spatial arrangement, and general aesthetic appearance is generic and not ethnically or historically marked. I noticed similar patterns of comfortable interaction in other 'odourless' spaces in my field-sites such as shopping mall food courts and the local corner shops.

I also identified a number of what I call ‘**fragrant transversal places**’. Unlike Odourless Spaces, these are spaces which carry a cultural ‘scent’ but are culturally mediated in various ways. One example that emerged during the Ashfield part of the study was a particular restaurant that was enormously popular amongst both Chinese and Anglos (and indeed others). Shanghai Night is one of the earliest Shanghainese restaurants in Ashfield. It is owned by Fiona, a Chinese woman, recently divorced, and her son, Yang. Yang is a rather suave young fellow of about 23. He attends Sydney University during the day, and helps his mother in the restaurant of an evening. Fiona has appointed Yang the restaurant’s cultural mediator. They are an authentic Shanghainese restaurant with a large Shanghainese clientele. Their signs and menus are in Chinese, but they have an English menu, and English translations on their internal signage. Yang’s job is to greet customers as they enter the restaurant, and he has a particular responsibility for greeting non-Chinese customers and showing them to a table, offering them a menu and providing assistance with ordering. He tries to remember regulars by name and seems to play the ‘cultural mediator’ role with great enjoyment. He roams the room, dropping by at tables to offer advice or just have a quick chat. Fiona told us it’s a deliberate (and successful) strategy to attract more western clientele, without losing their Chinese customers.

I’ve written elsewhere about the possibilities of graphic design and Chinese language signage. The use of colour, design and symbol with Chinese text is another example of ‘Fragrant Transversal Places’. I’ll show you a few examples of what I mean now. As you can see, most of the traditional Chinese language signage is in plain text and typically in red, blue or gold. There are possibilities in graphic design to use colour and symbol to provide ‘cross-over points’ of interpretation beyond the text of the sign, rather than relying on ‘English only’ signs. They maintain their ‘cultural scent’ and Chinese text, but provide alternative ways of ‘accessing’ or ‘reading’ the sign.

Transversal People

In addition to transversal exchanges and spaces, there are certain types of people that emerged over and over again in the study. I call them Transversal Enablers. Transversal Enablers are certain enthusiastic personalities in towns and neighbourhoods who produce what I call intersectional gossip, knowledge, and inter-ethnic information networks. They are individuals who typically go out of their way

to create connections between culturally different residents in their local area, workplace or other such micro-public (Amin...).

There were a number of such characters across all of my field-sites (although fewer in Perth). They all had very similar outgoing and jovial personality characteristics, and interestingly, were all women. However their role went beyond simply creating paths for new networks to establish. These transversal enablers served a number of important functions which seemed to assist in creating threads of connection across cultural difference – for themselves, and for their local communities.

1. **Acquiring everyday cross-cultural knowledge**

Transversal enablers produced spaces of intimate social exchange where questions about differing cultural practices could be asked in a safe environment. The Transversal Enablers in the various field sites typically employed some kind of ritual or conversational form designed to ‘ferret out’ everyday cultural orientations of the cultural ‘Other’. This was often the kind of information useful to prepare the ground for future cross-cultural contact and sociality, and was in turn passed on through gossip networks to ‘prepare’ others so that their own social contact with the cultural Other would go smoothly. This kind of orientation is present in the following extract from an interview with a Griffith Maori woman, who talks about discussing over food ‘what everyone ate’.

We passed by the pub, and there was this large group of men staying there who looked like they were from Sudan, and so the next day I went..., I just thought, well, I'll take the initiative, go down and introduce myself ... They were new farm workers... just arrived.

I think Christmas Eve, I drove by, they were still there. ... So I went home, and I asked my husband what did he think of going to invite them to come to Christmas dinner?

I didn't know what they ate. It didn't matter. They just ate whatever we did, and you know, we discussed over food, we discussed what it was they did eat, and they...

...we asked questions, and they introduced themselves, and we made a really huge effort to remember their names, and remember things they spoke about, and do you know every culture, or every country, or every group has songs or folklore, or something, so in our home, when we invite people, we often say, 'We'll feed you, but you have to sing for us!' so they were more than happy to sing, and so they had a guitar and they sang, and just wonderful....

Griffith Maori (New Zealand) woman

And here, another of my Griffith interviewees talks of her practice of always learning about the greetings and manners of cultural others in her locality.

If I think I know how to say hello in any language, I always try it. If I bungle it and make a mistake, I apologise. I'm very mindful of being respectful of... so not saying, 'Oh this is me., Like me, or love me', I go and I'm very respectful, because every culture interacts. Like in some, you know, you have to bow and be... so I try to look in there and see if I can find out before I get to meet them, something I might need to know, and if I don't, you know, I ask, and find out, and so it really is going in with a respectful attitude rather than going with an attitude of, 'You're actually here to meet me.' I'm there to meet you, so I want to know as much as I can.

Anglo woman - Griffith

Note that she specifically refers to the ethical dimensions of her desire to learn how to 'say hello' in the other languages. She seems very aware of the importance of not expecting the cultural other to simply assimilate to her way of doing things, and aware that there should be an ethical relationship based on some kind of equal exchange. Which leads to the next function I believe these Transversal Enablers have:

2. Reciprocity & and quotidian rituals: Non-dominant forms of guest-host relations

Transversal Enablers in my study seemed also to be aware, at least in everyday terms, of the problems of an uneven distribution of power in a dominant culture guest/host relationship. Mauss reminds us of the social importance of reciprocity and gift relations. In his recent book 'Respect', Richard Sennett points out that for Mauss, 'The Gift' doesn't have to be about equality of exchange. In Mauss's view too much equality of exchange simply turns exchange into transaction. Yet Mauss still believed that 'those who benefit' from a gift, 'must give something back, even if they do not and cannot give back an equivalent'...as Sennett points out, 'they must do so to achieve respect in the eyes of others and their own' (Sennett 2003:219). Indeed, for Sennett, mutuality is the very foundation of respect because 'if we ask nothing in return, we do not acknowledge the mutual relationship between ourselves and the person to whom we give' (2003: 219).

The transversal enablers seemed acutely aware of these politics of reciprocity and the problems of a more unequal exchange where the dominant culture 'host' achieved power through giving without return. They typically emphasised to me how they tried

to ensure that the social situations they created for interacting with cultural others had some kind of reciprocity involved. This extended from a stated expectation that the cultural ‘guest’ should contribute in some way to the occasion, to a more amorphous emphasis that both equally benefited from the engagement.

Again, our Maori participant is a good example of this kind of disposition. Her insistence that her guests ‘sing, or bring an instrument’ seemed odd at first, but I believe it represents an attempt at ‘evening out’ the mutuality of the gift exchange; she provides food, they sing. While there remained many instances of ‘hosting’ or ‘welcoming’ newcomers, there was always an emphasis on encounters that had some form of reciprocity involved.

“There are always cup of tea, coffee, and a biscuit, maybe some free morning, fifteen minutes, and afternoon they have afternoon tea. They have half an hour or hour lunch, and that’s it. And they always make barbecue when they finish.

We always have a table there, and talk, and so on. There’s talk about family, sometimes sport, sometimes people go for wedding, or what’s happening, about cooking, and a lot of fun with... a lot of girls are from Taiwan and Timor, and always happy little girls, and laughing, and bring something. They have lunch, they give us to try what they do, I bake a cake, I always give somebody too, some. You know, biscuits or cake, then we share.”

Italian (2nd Generation) farmers wife speaking about her culturally diverse farm workers.

3. Food, song and other forms of embodied commensality

As you can see, food, and to a lesser extent dance and music come up again and again in these narratives of interaction and reciprocity. Importantly, this kind of food reciprocity was not about ‘appreciating difference’ from a distance - in the cosmo-multi-culturalist sense that Hage critiques, but instead had an emphasis on mutuality and inter-subjective engagement.

“The Afghani ladies have come to my house probably once a month, and that has been wonderful.

They first of all were a bit unsure about why I was doing it, why I was inviting them. They were a bit apprehensive. Why? What is it? What’s happening? But after a while they couldn’t wait to come, because they’d come, they’d kick off their veils and their shoes, and they’d have...

I’d show them all the Australian food like pavlovas and lamingtons, sandwiches.”

Anglo-Celtic lady...

We can see in this snippet hints of what I spoke about earlier where histories and cultural attachments to the sensuality of food is shared through a process of exchange.

It produces a kind of sensual and narrative mutuality that I think Sennett might be hinting at when he argues that ‘exchange turns people outward’.

4. Production of spaces and networks of intercultural care and trust

These transversal enablers also helped to produce knowledge networks, and spaces of intercultural care and trust. Gossip was often used by them to let other members of the community know who was new, what they were like, what cultural orientations they had, and what they might need. Of course some theorists such as Gluckman do speak of some of the more problematic social control aspects of gossip. Gossip, as Gluckman (1963) has pointed out, is ‘generally enjoyed by people about others with whom they are in a close social relationship’. It functions as a means of social control because ‘when you gossip about your friends to other mutual friends you are demonstrating that you all belong to one set which has the duty to be interested in one another’s vices as well as virtues’ (Gluckman 1963: 313-4). Here though, gossip seemed principally to be employed to produce information networks.

The transversal enablers went out of their way to work out what newer ‘cultural others’ needed, and helped to open up networks of knowledge and assistance. Sometimes this had to do with local knowledge around shopping, schools and local services. There were a number of reports of opening up friendship networks to assist newcomers access employment. Here is a good example of the kind of orientation I’m referring to here. This woman is a farm manager’s wife in Griffith:

..., with my husband’s job, we have a lot of people that come, not just from interstate but overseas, to work for him, and so ... as a farm manager’s wife, I take it upon myself to, you know, go by and say, ‘Look, when you’ve got time, I’ll take you on what I call the Housewives’ Tour’, so then we take them to all the bargain places, I take them to supermarkets, and if they are from another country, I show them different shopping items that are equivalent to something that I think they might need. I sit and I talk to them about, you know, just even food, but they may not be able to even prepare their family meals as they would normally, because they can’t find the ingredients. ... so I just do things like that.

Other times the assistance was more hands on. Helping cultural others with their English was a prominent theme. Here is a 90 year old Anglo-woman from Ashfield:

Noelle: Our neighbours are Lebanese, and she was sent out here to marry him at the age of 15, which I don’t approve of. Anyway she’s a lovely young

woman. *She has two lovely little boys, they're seven and five. But Arabic was their natural language, and when they were tiny they didn't hear English. Their grandparents lived here. The father in there was born here, but he's still very Lebanese in his thinking. Twice a week the seven year old comes in here, and I'm teaching him to read, and we have a wonderful time.*

A: *Has that helped with relationships, neighbourly relationships?*

N: *Oh they're very grateful. She brings in great plates of fruit and all that sort of thing.*

A: *So you give them something by helping with the English.*

N: *Yes, but I don't need it, it's just a pleasure to teach the little chap, he's lovely.*

The sorts of mutuality in cross-cultural engagement and welcome facilitated by Transversal Enablers is different to the form of dominant culture guest-host relations that were found in what was known as the 'good neighbour movement'. The Good Neighbour Movement was funded between the 1950s and 1970s by the department of immigration and operated in both cities and country towns to welcome 'new Australians' into their communities. It involved members of churches, Country Women's Associations, Parents and Citizens committees, youth and returned soldiers' organisations, Rotary and many other voluntary bodies. Members of the movement would be tasked with welcoming new arrivals, introducing them into the local community, showing them where all the local services were, inviting them to social functions and explaining local laws and customs and so forth. Perhaps well intended, the program eventually received criticism for its somewhat paternalistic view, and the 'culture blindness' of the services offered. It was eventually replaced by the model of multiculturalism and multicultural service provision we are more familiar with today, where culturally specific settlement services are preferred, and where possible ethnic communities themselves are considered the most effective means of delivering such services. What I am talking about here is a rather more 'mutual' (to borrow Sennett's term) form of cross-cultural welcome.

When it all falls down ... contact zones/danger zones

In this last section, I want to talk briefly about what happens 'when it all falls down'. So far I've presented mostly stories of positive exchange. However a number of 'failed encounters' and foiled attempts at cross-cultural exchange did emerge during

my research. I don't have time today to go into these in much length, other than to say they reinforced to me the kinds of practices displayed by my 'Transversal Enablers'.

Entering into cross-cultural exchanges without some awareness of the differing cultural orientations involved can be fraught. The importance of the kinds of knowledge enablers can bring is apparent in a couple of examples related to me by my Muslim participants. An Afghani woman in Griffith related her distress at how she had to cut off from the Anglo and Italians she came to know when she arrived in town because of a bad experience when she had when she went with her husband to his Italian boss's Christmas party and there was inappropriate gender mixing and drinking involved.

SLIDE: Christmas party.

The Italian boss and his wife were obviously full of good and positive intentions, wanting to include their new Afghani workers in their social circle. But for all the good intentions, this is a situation which, without the appropriate cultural mediation, produced the unintended consequence of making the guests feel excluded and in the longer term, making them feel nervous about future cross-cultural mixing. Here is the same woman talking a bit later about her views now that she has had a few bad experiences.

SLIDE: Food and plate sharing.

Despite the reticence to try the food from other groups, note that she still emphasises that she still contributes her 'share' when it comes to social situations involving 'bring a plate'.

A similar issue emerged in the Perth field-site involving the local council's failed attempt to try to bring Muslim women into contact with Anglo and other women through the council owned swimming and recreation centre. The council had laudably introduced women's only exercise sessions two mornings a week in the facility's gym. They offered free child minding and went out of their way to involve women from the Muslim community. For some months this went along well and produced

lots of positive cross-cultural contact between the Anglo and Muslim women and their children who attended the sessions. The council were thrilled at this and decided to invest in decorating the exercise space and installing TVs to play music videos. Eventually, the Muslim women stopped coming, and the council couldn't work out why as the co-presence had worked quite positively until then. During the interviews in Perth it became apparent that the reason the Muslim women stopped coming was that during the exercise session the gym was showing American music videos (with lots of scantily clad gyrating women) which the Muslim women felt uncomfortable with – and especially in the presence of their children to them. It was quite a simple matter for the council to adjust which would in turn re-open that space of cross-cultural encounter in an otherwise quite Anglo area.

Reflections and Conclusions

I'd like to wrap up now with a few concluding remarks. I think what I have shown today is that an ethnographic perspective on everyday diversity can help us to get a handle on the level of cultural complexity that Steve Vertovec calls 'super-diversity'. I think I have shown some of the patterns of affinity and disjuncture that occur in super-diverse contact zones. Far from the scare tactics of some politicians who decry the formation of 'ethnic ghettos', on the ground, there are real possibilities for some form of non-assimilationist integration to emerge and that this is a process that is happening in every diverse locality and in everyday ways. I also agree with Vertovec that super-diversity poses new challenges for policy and service provision. I think there are lessons in the ethnographic material I've presented today about the potential for more local forms of community based intervention which can work in tandem with more removed and didactic anti-racism and inter-community cohesion campaigns. There are also lessons in this material for re-thinking multicultural settlement services and service provision.

Primarily though, it's the notion of 'living with cultural diversity' and fostering an open and outward looking form of multiculturalism and national identity that has occupied my thoughts more recently – especially in the context of recent calls from the Howard government for a return to 'Australian Values' and proposals for a citizenship test to test migrants their knowledge of these. This inward looking,

parochial cultural orientation is actually quite contrary to the forms of cultural engagement that emerged in my study.

There are well known theorists who posit that simple co-existence in diverse cities can produce a cosmopolitan disposition – where ‘indifference to difference’ and ‘toleration’ of side-by-sideness are the most ethical form of co-inhabitation (eg Donald in *Imagining the Modern City* 1999). However as Ash Amin has argued, coming to terms with difference is a matter of everyday practices ... and it needs to be inculcated as a habit of PRACTICE (NOT JUST CO-PRESENCE)" (Amin ...Ref?). Amin is cynical about the the possibilities of simply engineering togetherness through public space and enforced mixing through public housing. He suggests that it is what he calls ‘micro-publics’ where cross-cultural engagement most likely takes place: workplaces, schools, colleges, youth centres, sports clubs, community centres, community gardens, child-care facilities, and local sporting teams (Amin 2006; Amin 2002, and Sandercock 2003). These are the sites where a kind of civitas (in Sennett’s sense of the term) can emerge because they are prosaic sites of interdependence, engagement and negotiation. But I think I’ve shown in this work that neighbourly practices of exchange and other forms of workplace and community sociality hold out similar potential – as long as they are premised on intersectional care and reciprocity.

Gift exchange

Clearly the notion of gift exchange and reciprocity flows through this paper. By the gift, I mean both exchanges of material objects, and reciprocity of care and service..

Hage argues that

“Perhaps the foundation of all ethical practices, and certainly the foundation of any social ethics is precisely this: relating to the presence of the other as gift. ... Because the other, through my desire to interact with him or her, offers me, by making it visible, my own humanity. When I interact with others and I fail to receive from them the gift of the common humanity that we share, when I fail to see them as offering such a gift, it means that I consider such others as less than human.” (Hage 2003:151)

I want to argue that the forms of exchange and reciprocity that emerged in my study hold out the potential to create the conditions of possibility for preparing subjects able to see cultural others as ‘gift’. I call these practices of ‘Quotidian Recognition’. As is

well known, Taylor has argued for a politics of multicultural recognition by way of a model of differential citizenship which recognises individuals and groups ‘in their distinctiveness’ (Blum 1998:52). In some ways Quotidian Recognition overcomes some of the problems with Taylor’s model, to do with its emphasis on the promotion and maintenance of group cultural identities. Such a conception of multicultural recognition does not deal well with the kinds of hybridised identities that are produced through intercultural exchange and crossing. Quotidian Recognition recognises difference through everyday exchange and encounters, but also incorporates the inevitable transactional / transversal transformation of difference. Quotidian recognition might look something like this: ... ‘I recognise you in the moment as related to me through this loosely connected place community, but different from me, through your stories, your objects, your gifts etc. I am also responsible to you and you to me through this gift exchange and mutuality of care, and this carries over to how I view others of your kind’

These exchanges produce what might be termed ‘spaces of care’ and involves an ethics of encounter (Conradson 2003: 508). These are prosaic situations which produce a feeling of mutual care. This mutual care is able to carry over beyond the moment to how subjects view abstract others –by way of a disposition of gratitude which emerges from the relations of reciprocity. By gratitude I don’t by any means mean the lopsided gratitude of the host/guest relationship where the migrant is expected to feel eternally grateful to the white hosts. The gratitude I refer to instead can be read as a bodily affect and rests on a basis of mutuality and reciprocity. Gratitude, as Simmel characterises it (1950: 388) ‘is an ideal living on of a relation which may have ended long ago, and with it, the act of giving and receiving’. He argues that although it is a purely personal affect ‘. . . gratitude’s thousandfold ramifications throughout society make it one of the most powerful means of social cohesion’ (Simmel 1950: 388). As he says, ‘it creates innumerable connections, ideal and concrete, loose and firm, among those who are filled with gratitude toward the same giver’ (388). Moreover, he argues, importantly, that it is not simply thanking a person for what they do. It can be an exchange of recognition and gratitude for one another’s existence. Simmel, for this reason, calls gratitude the ‘moral memory of humankind’ and characterises it as ‘an ideal bridge which the soul comes across again and again, upon provocations too slight to throw a new bridge to the other person, it

uses to come closer to them' (388). In this way it embodies two important aspects, for me, of intercultural living, which is mutual hospitality and recognition, which together can produce a flow-on effect.

These forms of reciprocity also have the capacity to produce fluid boundaries. Ien Ang sees these everyday exchanges as contributing to "the incremental and dialogical construction of lived identities which slowly dissolve the boundaries between the past and the future' (2000:11). This is akin to John Urry's notion of 'fluidity' (Urry 2000:187) of boundaries 'neither boundaries nor relations mark the difference between one place and another. Instead, sometimes boundaries come and go, allow leakage or disappear altogether, while relations transform themselves without fracture. Sometimes, then, social space behaves like a fluid' (Mol and Law 1994: 643).

Gifts of care and service across cultural difference help to dissolve boundaries because food, stories, song, and cultural dispositions around the 'good manners' carry with them a 'cultural scent' which intermingles with the affects produced in the relationship of reciprocity. So the narratives of how you eat the food, who cooked it, where it came from etc... produce cultural intersections – and this is important – through a space of situational care. As Mauss and other theorists of the gift have argued, gifts are inalienable; they are, says Mauss, 'to some extent part of persons' (Mauss 1969:11). They are 'inalienably linked to the giver, the gift generates and regenerates the relationship between giver and recipient' (Carrier 1991: 125) As Carrier points out 'Mauss's model suggests that there is more involved than general cultural meaning. Objects derive identity or meaning from the specific personal relationships in which they are transacted' (Carrier 1991: 132)

It is then, this kind of exchange which is close to what Sennett is referring to when he says 'exchange turns people outward' (Sennett 2003:226) and it can produce a more general disposition of trust beyond the concrete Other to the abstract other through creating the conditions of possibility for inter-cultural trust. Simmel again, argues that 'Trust involves a degree of cognitive familiarity with the object of trust that is somewhere between total knowledge and total ignorance. ... When faced by the totally unknown, we can gamble but we cannot trust'. (in Lewis & Weigert (1985:

970)’. This kind of disposition emerged time and again in the study when a research participant extract from the concrete: an elderly Anglo women saying ‘my Chinese neighbours lovely – they help carry my shopping bags up the stairs of the block of flats’ then told me ‘and so Chinese are really great’.

I think one of the things that happened in the move during the 1970s away from the ‘Good Neighbour Movement’ towards the multicultural service provision model where ethnic communities themselves were funded to provide ethno-specific settlement services – and don’t get me wrong – that was an important and essential move away from a parochial and paternalist version of ‘welcome’ that existed previously – but what happened was there seemed to be a perception from long-time Australians that they no longer had ‘permission or responsibility to care’. And a cautionary note; there also needs to be ‘permission to be left alone’ – so we don’t want to over-romanticise closed forms of community and a small-town form of surveillance. But this is different to arguing that culturally diverse communities should live side by side without any form of intersectional engagement, care and mutuality.

Of course power relations are always present in place sharing as are various degrees of intolerance and cross-cultural discomfort. And questions of place as representation and ideology have to be considered in dialogue with the sorts of social relations and practice discussed here (Miller 2001). I flag these issues so as not to over romanticise diversity, but because, at a time of increasing anxiety and tension surrounding cultural difference in western cities; little is known about who, where, how and why people get on in multicultural suburbia, how diversity is lived on the ground, from below, in the borderlands, in contact zones.

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