The struggle to belong
Dealing with diversity in 21st century urban settings.

Amsterdam, 7-9 July 2011

Public spaces, social interaction and the negotiation of difference

Lars Wiesemann

Department of Geography, Bonn University
Meckenheimer Allee 166
D-53115 Bonn, Germany
wiesemann@geographie.uni-bonn.de

I Introduction

Data from the Eurobarometer survey on Intercultural Dialogue in Europe (2007: 4-6) show that "day-to-day interaction among people belonging to different cultures is reality in Europe" and random encounters in public spaces are most typical". However, in scientific discourse about 'living with difference' the question arises as to whether such encounters with 'difference' in public spaces challenge or harden prejudices towards 'Others'. Drawing on qualitative research conducted in Mülheim, a socially and ethnically diverse quarter of Cologne, Germany, the daily negotiation of ethnic (and other) differences in public spaces is examined in this paper. The empirical focus is upon the experiences expressed by German inhabitants of the quarter in order to explore some of the limits and potentials of public encounters with 'difference'.

The ways in which encounters in public spaces can reinforce prejudices are investigated. In this context, the role of sedimented knowledge about the 'Other' in shaping perception and judgment of encounters is pointed out. This is crucial for the affirmation of prejudices and the direction of behaviour in interaction. The paper also explores how encounters with 'difference' in public life change attitudes positively, which has rarely been the subject of empirical investigation so far. I want to highlight moments of transgression and conviviality in public spaces and how they can lead to rethinking fixed notions towards 'Others'. First the discussion on public spaces as potential sites for coming to terms with difference is outlined. Then an insight into the spatial and temporal contexts in which prejudices are hardened or challenged is given, using original empirical material.

II The importance of everyday encounters and the role of public spaces

Often highlighted in the discussion on diversity is that living with difference demands regular encounters between strangers, and with the unfamiliar (Amin 2002; Fincher & Iveson 2008; Hewstone 2009; Sandercock 2003; Wood & Landry 2008). The importance of contact in reducing prejudice and in fostering respect between different social groups has long been emphasised in the field of social psychology. This school of thought goes back to social psychologist Gordon Allport (1954), who developed the so-called 'contact-hypothesis' more than 50 years ago. To put it simply, it implies that "merely by assembling people without regard for race, colour, religion, or national origin, we can thereby destroy stereotypes and develop friendly attitudes" (Allport 1954: 261). The argument underlying this assertion is that - under certain conditions - contact between different social groups leads to broad and differentiated knowledge of each other, whereby mutual feelings of anxiety and uncertainty

are lessened, trust and empathy are enhanced and as a result negative attitudes are changed (Farwick 2009; Hewstone 2003). Given the relevance of interpersonal contact in mediating difference, the question arises in which kinds of spaces such positive effects could be faciliated through encounters (Amin 2002; Valentine 2008; Vertovec 2007). In this context there is also discussion about the role of public spaces. However their potential is evaluated differently.

Urban public spaces - a breeding ground for mutual respect and understanding?

In urban studies literature the social value of public spaces is often celebrated. Streets, squares, parks or other shared spaces are regarded as sites where people of various social and cultural backgrounds come together and mingle. Here they can encounter each other in a peaceful and civil way, where personal difference is recognised and acknowledged (Berman 1986; Madanipour 1999; Shaftoe 2008; Walzer 1986; Young 1986). The awareness of sharing the same space in similar ways with people different from oneself could create a temporary bond and a sense of community (Carr et al. 1993; Rogers & Power 2000). As a locus for diverse und unplanned encounters, public spaces offer the opportunity for social exchange with people who do not otherwise have contact in daily life (de Buhr 2010; Gestring 2005; Paravicini et al. 2002; Shaftoe 2008; Young 1986). For Jane Jacobs (1961), contact between different individuals or social groups emerges primarily on city streets. She underlines the relevance of sidewalks for small-scale socializing involving different people by arguing that such casual contacts serve to enhance trust and tolerance among the inhabitants of neighbourhoods.

Lyn H. Lofland (1993) looks at people interacting in everyday public life, for example, when they make way for each other on the street, give or receive minor assistance and so on. She argues that "in these and myriad other ways (...) persons in the public space of cities can truly learn the lesson that one can act together (…) without the necessity to be the same" (Lofland 1993: 102). For her, such experiences of uneventful interactions with people viewed as different may foster a more tolerant attitude. Eric Laurier and Chris Philo (2006) also draw attention to such mundane civil exchanges in everyday public encounters. They regard these interactions as a 'doing of togetherness' which expresses mutual acknowledgement (see also Valentine 2008).

Other authors emphasize the positive aspects of encountering the unknown and the unfamiliar - and here public space also plays a crucial role, being a place where "group diversity of the city is most often apparent" and "one always risks encountering those who are different"

(Young 1990: 240). The direct experience of diverse people, cultural forms and behaviours is regarded as an enrichment of everyday life where city dwellers have the chance to enter into unfamiliar lives and get to know the strange and the novel (Sennett 2001; Young 1990). These encounters offer the potential to familiarize oneself with different lifestyles and values as well as gaining an understanding of groups and cultures different from one's own (Shaftoe 2008; Young 1986). Furthermore interacting with unfamiliar individuals would allow urban dwellers to broaden their horizon in terms of experience. With this in mind, Richard Sennett (1986: 295) claims that "people grow only by the processes of encountering the unknown." Without engagement with difference he sees the danger that people will become increasingly prejudiced and narrow-minded (Sennett 1986, 2001).

In light of the above, public space ought to be designed and managed in a way that it is freely accessible and attracts a broad range of people; so that a vital public life and possibilities for unpredictable encounters and interactions between strangers can emerge. With this planners, urbanists and academics often link the expectation, according to Ash Amin (2008: 6), that "[p]ublic space, if organized properly, offers the potential for social communion by allowing us to lift our gaze from the daily grind, and as a result, increase our disposition towards the other."

However, Ash Amin (2002) cautions against too high expectations of public spaces. He argues that they are not the most appropriate sites for enabling intercultural exchange. These spaces provide little opportunity for 'meaningful' contact between strangers. This is because they are either simply spaces of transit and thus encounters are only fleeting and superficial or they tend to be occupied by particular groups whose presence preclude other users. Furthermore he points out that people in public spaces carry with them a host of pre-formed orientations (e.g. negative racial attitudes). These dispositions are brought into encounters which could shape them in a negative way so that, for example, some strangers are treated with rejection or hostility (Amin 2010; see also Swanton 2010). He concludes that "the city`s public spaces are not natural servants of multicultural engagement" and "seem to fall short of inculcating interethnic understanding" (Amin 2002: 967, 969).

Likewise, Gill Valentine (2008) doubts whether encounters in public spaces are sufficient for changing negative attitudes and fostering respect for difference. She also points out how limited contact is in these spaces. Referring to findings of two different studies about social interaction in public spaces in cities in the United Kingdom, she sums up that many everyday encounters between strangers cannot be seen as contact at all. Although the research sites

were used by a range of different individuals or groups, there was only rarely direct contact between them. Rather the sociability in these spaces is more likely to be characterized as a passive and indifferent coexistence. Studies about public spaces from Germany (Tessin 2004; Seggern & Tessin 2002), Switzerland (Bühler et al. 2008) and Canada (Germain & Radice 2006) also show that proximity of people does not inevitably lead to contact and exchange in the research sites surveyed. Here, too, contact between different people using these spaces only occurred occasionally and individuals or groups tended to keep to themselves.

In addition, Gill Valentine (2008) argues that people may indeed encounter each other generally in a courteous manner in public, but this should not be interpreted too quickly as a sign of respect for difference. In a qualitative study of white majority prejudice in three UK locations, she identifies a gap between people's attitudes and their actual practices towards minority groups in public spaces. Some of the interviewees encountered members of minority groups in a polite way, even though they are prejudiced against these groups. For Valentine, behaving in courteous ways towards 'Others' in public results from ritualised codes of etiquette. Therefore, "we should be careful about mistaking such taken-for-granted civilities as respect for difference" (Valentine 2008: 328). Further the research shows that just seeing members of minority groups in public space can lead to expressions of prejudice (Valentine & McDonald 2004; Valentine 2010). Similar findings are also evident in Patricia Ehrkamp's (2008) ethnographic study of Marxloh, an immigrant neighbourhood of Duisburg (Germany). Here, the publicity of male migrants in neighbourhood space hardened social distance and images of the 'Other' among the German residents.

Sites of encounter beyond 'classical' public spaces

Given this less than optimistic view of 'classical' public spaces (such as streets, squares and parks), other spaces of encounter where contact might yield positive benefits have been discussed. Ash Amin (2002: 959) suggests that the sites for coming to terms with difference are most likely the "micro-publics of everyday social contact and encounter" such as workplaces, colleges, youth centres, sports or music clubs, theatre groups, communal gardens and so on. In these sites intercultural contact may be more effective and lasting, because they can offer opportunities for meaningful exchange and cultural transgression. They are places of purposeful and organized group activity; where people of different backgrounds can get together in new ways which disrupt familiar patterns and provide the possibility for new attachments. Through engagement in a common venture individuals have the chance to "break out of fixed relations and fixed notions" and can "learn to become different" (Amin 2002: 970).

More recently another suggestion about forms and spaces of contact has been made by Ruth Fincher and Kurt Iveson (2008). They propose fostering convivial encounters among strangers, whereby individuals have opportunities to construct temporary identifications with others alongside their fixed identities (such as gender, race and class) through common interests and activities. Such shared identifications can emerge through fleeting encounters as well as more purposeful interactions. Fincher and Iveson highlight particular spaces which facilitate convivial forms of encounters beyond 'classical' public spaces. For example, they emphasize public libraries as a site of encounter where conviviality can emerge. They provide free access for people and are spaces with a diversity of uses and users. In the course of various activities within the library (such as reading books or newspapers, drinking coffee, surfing the internet and so on) numerous forms of contacts with dissimilar others can occur. In these moments individuals can step out of their conventional stances towards each other on the basis of their common status as library users. Such convivial encounters may lead to new ways of being and relating which are not confined to prescribed identities.

These points of view of how to change attitudes appear plausible when considering social psychology research on the contact-hypothesis and social categorization. This body of research has outlined different conditions under which intergroup contact can lead to positive effects. Members of different social groups should be brought together in a context where participants can get to know each other properly, where there is intergroup cooperation, where a social climate or norms support contact and equality and where multiple, overlapping identities are possible and participants can share a common status (Allport 1954, Brown 2010; Hewstone 2003).

This article looks to contribute to the debate on whether public encounters with difference challenge or harden prejudices towards 'Others'. With the pessimistic view of the potential of public encounters and the socio-psychological research on the conditions in which contact can have a positive effect, the question as to whether we expect too much of public spaces seem to be justified. Public spaces can indeed be crucial sites for (re)producing definitions of difference and for reinforcing prejudices. However, I argue that everyday public life also provides opportunities for moments of transgression through fleeting encounters as well as for convivial forms of contact. These can both influence attitudes towards 'Others' in a positive way. In the next section I briefly introduce the quarter studied and the research methods used.

III The study

The research was conducted in Mülheim, a quarter of the city of Cologne. Cologne is the biggest city of North Rhine-Westphalia, with around one million inhabitants, and an important media hub in Germany (Wiktorin et al. 2001). Mülheim is one of the most socially and ethnically diverse neighbourhoods of Cologne. The quarter is a former working-class and industrial neighbourhood close to the city centre, which has undergone major structural change over the last few decades. From the end of 19th century until long after the Second World War Mülheim was an important industrial location. In the course of the process of deindustrialization in the 1980s more and more jobs were lost and factories closed (Stadt Köln 2009). In comparison to the rest of the city of Cologne, Mülheim now has higher than average unemployment and number of welfare recipients.

Alongside the economic restructuring, the composition of the population of the quarter changed as a result of immigration, especially after Second World War. Mülheim is characterised by increasing cultural diversity. At present it has inhabitants from 134 different countries. Almost half of the around 41,000 residents of the quarter have a non-German background. This includes workers who came to German as *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers) and their families who followed; refugees from civil war regions, asylum seekers, Roma and Sinti and ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union. The largest groups of foreigners are the Turks, Italians, Poles and citizens of the former Yugoslavia. By far the biggest group of foreigners are the Turks with around 5,600 residents in Mülheim; about 50% of the foreign population there. The Turkish group, in particular, has changed the appearance of parts of the quarter. Some streets have a high concentration of Turkish businesses, restaurants or tea houses, where an 'Oriental-Turkish' street life (Bukow 2010: 114) has been established; at least from the perspective of the German inhabitants.

This study took a qualitative approach to exploring and understanding everyday encounters in public spaces. A mixed-methods approach was taken which involved in-depth interviews, go-along interviews and participant observation. The fieldwork took place from February 2010 to January 2011 in Cologne-Mülheim.

The interviews were conducted with inhabitants of Mülheim. Interviewees were selected in terms of age, gender, social status and ethnicity in order to represent the diversity of inhabitants of the quarter as much as possible. The interviews focused on biographical aspects, everyday life in the quarter, the usage and perception of public spaces as well as everyday encounters and contact in public. A total of 42 interviews, which lasted between one

and two hours, were carried out. In addition, eight respondents agreed to participate in go-along interviews. In these they were accompanied on their daily routes through the quarter which enabled a deeper insight into their everyday experiences and their connection with particular places. In this way, further knowledge about the perception of places, encounters with strangers and the construction of difference was generated. Finally, different public spaces were observed such as streets, parks, playgrounds and squares. This served the purpose of getting a more detailed impression of the users and uses of these spaces as well as the social interaction which occurred. The observations were recorded in field notes.

In the remainder of the paper, I focus on the interviews with German residents and their experiences and personal contact with 'Others' in everyday public life for my discussion of the limits and potentials of encounters with 'difference' in public spaces.

IV The affirmation of prejudices through public encounters

In the following section I will give an insight into how everyday encounters in public spaces in Mülheim (re)produce ethnic differences and reinforce prejudices. I will also look at how the images of the 'Other' in everyday encounters can shape behaviour in interactions.

Respondents articulated negative attitudes towards different ethnic minorities. Prejudice was mainly directed at people of Turkish origin. This focus on the Turkish minority is not quite surprising, as they are the main object of 'Othering' in public discourse in Germany (Butterwegge & Hentges 2006; Sökefeld 2004) and represent the largest ethnic community in Mülheim. The interviewees mobilised primarily cultural differences between 'Germans' and 'Turks' to justify their negative attitudes. Here certain aspects are highlighted repeatedly, such as the male culture of honour and superiority of men to women which are taken as markers of 'Turkish culture'. These values, which are seen as being 'old-fashioned and backward', are drawn on as a signifier of cultural difference. The reinforcement of such prejudices and images of the 'Other' are closely connected to the visibility and spatial practice of the 'Turkish' inhabitants in the public spaces in the quarter.

Negatively-experienced encounters in the street are formative for the image of 'Turkish' men. Their 'Otherness' is seen mainly in how they 'hang around' in groups around tea houses, kiosks or on street corners and how young 'Turkish' adults 'strut' around the quarter. The respondents stress what they see as inappropriate behaviour by the groups of men such as spreading out on the pavements, narrowing the path and provocative eye contact when passing. The interviewees saw this as the 'Turkish' men transgressing self-evident rules and norms of public behaviour such as *civil inattention* and respect for *personal space* (Goffman

8

1963, 1971). This male practice is traced back to 'cultural specifics'. For the male respondents this behaviour is connected to the 'Turkish culture of honour'. Actions like 'blocking the way on purpose' and 'staring down' are perceived to be typical Turkish male rituals with which they try to demonstrate their strength and masculinity. Tim (in his early 30s, office worker) describes his daily crossing of the quarter as sometimes having to 'run the gauntlet', particularly because of how the younger 'Turkish' men behave on the pavements. These encounters are, in his eyes, manifestations of how they are trapped in a 'Turkish culture of honour'.

Tim: You head out and a group of around four people come directly towards you. The pavement is blocked. And then they start to mess with you. With stares and the like. Don't even attempt to give way and play being big strong men. It's this honour thing... honour just still is a really big deal in their culture. They just have it in them... I think it's really dubious.[1]

Female respondents read this male practice as being representative of the macho behaviour which is 'rooted in the Turkish culture'. They complain about the 'urge Turkish men have' to show off their masculinity to women and point out their tactless and disrespectful behaviour like 'aggressive checking out' with stares or comments when they pass the groups of men. Erika (mid-50s, self-employed) feels that the 'Turkish men' are overstepping the 'limits of her tolerance'. For her this behaviour demonstrates that 'Turkish men' are machos and see themselves as being superior to women.

Erika: Only the Turks eyeball you like this... When you come across this again and again and it's only the Turks, then I just see that as being what Turks do... it's their macho culture. Women are way down the pecking order for them. They just behave differently. And that's just different to what I know from my own culture.

The construction of difference and the reinforcement of prejudice are also triggered by the visibility of 'Turkish' women in public spaces. Several of the respondents pointed out that these women must lead subjugated, backward, other-determined lives. The reason for this point of view is that they usually see 'Turkish' women wearing headscarves in public. This is seen as a marker for a different way of life and a patriarchal culture. The further observation that 'Turkish' women walk behind men or are only visible in public when they go food shopping is taken as another indicator for their subjugation and how they yield to a traditional female role.

Carmen (mid-50s, retired): They are always walking behind them. The men are always three steps in front of the women. Is that really alright? I always see that on the street... The men

---

[1] The interviews were conducted in German and the quotes have been translated into English for this paper.

also don't carry things for the women. The women carry the shopping. That wouldn't work with us at all. That they put up with that! Not for me.

Peter (mid-40s, unemployed): *When I do see them, then they're usually coming from doing the food shopping with loads of shopping bags or heading out to the shops. Otherwise not much. That's kind of a sign in itself. The women aren't really allowed to go somewhere on their own. They've to look after the home and are satisfied with keeping their husbands happy and don't really have much say about anything.*

The perception and interpretation of such encounters must be seen in connection with the existing stereotypical knowledge of 'Turkish culture'. The interviewees refer not only to their own experiences of encounters, but also to media reports and hearsay from friends and acquaintances when asked why they assume that 'Turkish' men and 'Turkish' women are 'different'. This sedimented knowledge about the 'Other' which is delivered through public and everyday discourse structures the perception and sense making of everyday encounters (Abels 2009; Berger & Luckmann 2009). By identifying the stranger as being 'Turkish' through his/her body (e.g. skin colour, clothing), his/her behaviour (e.g. body language, gait) and the place of encounter (e.g. in front of a Turkish tea house), this supposed knowledge of 'such people' is brought into the encounter situatively and then used to define the situation. Male practices of bodies, which are identified as being Turkish, are then read as being as macho or honour-related behaviour; as is the phenomenon that a female body walking behind a male body, which are both identified as being Turkish, is read as being a cultural practice which is taken as a sign of repressive 'Turkish culture'.

These attributions lead to these fleeting encounters being taken as the *indubitable truth* (Merton 1948) affirming the otherness of 'Turkish' people. This has the result that prejudices and boundaries between 'us' and 'them' become fixed. At the same time the encounters justify the 'right' point of view, i.e. not prejudice, and brand 'Turkish' immigrants as being *out of place* and *out of nation* (Cresswell 1996).

Such images of the 'Other', combined with personal experience from previous encounters, can situatively shape behaviour towards 'Turkish' residents during interactions. The recognition of 'Turkish' men and 'honour-dependent" male practices on pavements can lead to some of the male respondents entering into a *character contest* (Goffmann 1967). This means they steer towards the group, make themselves bigger, seek eye contact and push through the group with the intent of undermining the supposed 'Turkish' self-concept of superiority and strength. They want to demonstrate that such displays of manlihood are *out of place* and that they are not going to subordinate themselves to it. Frank (in his 50s and self-

employed), for example, describes how he forces his way through when he realises that 'Turkish' men are not going to make way for him.

Frank: When they don't make way for me, then I just force my way through. I don't dodge the situation. Then I also bluster up. I make myself bigger and sometimes I even stick my elbows out. Because I don't accept that I should have to follow some cultural rites which are based on dominance, space-hogging and demonstrating power and honour. That why I go through on purpose and I also want to signal that I'm not going to give in and that it just doesn't work like that.

Other male respondents avoid eye contact with young 'Turkish' men, to not risk looking at someone in the wrong way, move extra to the side or change the side of the road when they see a group ahead of them; expecting provocative behaviour. Some of the female respondents use similar avoidance tactics when they encounter 'macho-looking Turks'. Here they control where they look (e.g. staring at the ground or straight ahead), start to walk faster, dig in their handbags, busy themselves with their mobile phone (e.g. by simulating a phone call) or put on headphones. By pretending to be indifferent or otherwise engaged they try to avoid contact and to simultaneously appear normal. A number of the interviewees also situatively change their behaviour towards 'Turkish' women, who are seen as being different due to their appearance. Some of the female respondents mention, for example, that they ignore 'veiled Turkish women' on purpose or throw them a deprecatory look. This *non-person treatment* (Goffman 1963) can be understood as a form of *silent violence* (Gyr 1996). They legitimise their behaviour with the image of femininity that 'veiled Turkish women' embody because it goes against their own self-concept and 'Western normality'.

These findings about how pre-formed attitudes on race direct perception, judgment, and action in encounters echo Dan Swanton's (2010) research on multicultural life and everyday interaction in public spaces in a British mill town. In his study, for example, Asian men are often sorted and vilified as gang members in light of media representation, gossip and so on, so that they are encountered with intensities of suspicion that in turn shape behaviour in interaction. Further the character contests or the non-person treatment in this study illustrate how everyday encounters are situatively used as instruments of power (Gyr 1996; Hüttermann 2010) in order to uphold the cultural values of the majority.

The results support the argument that public spaces are not appropriate sites for coming to terms with difference. They show that fleeting encounters can become a basis for the hardening of prejudices and, in this context, illustrate the influence of existing stereotypes on the perception of encounters. Particularly negatively-experienced encounters with persons who are defined as being members of another culture (e.g. as here with 'Turkish' men), can

entail apparently negative generalisations about the whole group and diminish the "willingness to engage with the Other" (Hannerz 1996: 103). The example of veiled women demonstrates that "techniques of boundary inscription between 'us' and 'them' begin with the body" (Valentine 2010: 531) and here as well, visibility in public space is crucial. Nevertheless the positive aspects of public encounters should not be overlooked and will be examined next.

V Moments of transgression and conviviality through public encounters

Research suggests that encounters with 'difference' in public spaces can also provide the opportunity to destabilise fixed notions about the 'Other' and to transmit a sense of 'togetherness in difference'. Some respondents refer in their interview to moments, occurrences or situations in everyday life, which were positive experiences with people they saw as different. These encounters generated new insights, put opinions into a new context and allowed them to question or even change certain attitudes. Such moments can emerge in both fleeting encounters as well as in more involved interactions in public spaces.

In the numerous encounters throughout everyday life there can be fleeting moments in which the 'Other' is unexpectedly experienced 'differently'. Such incidents break through the haze of everyday routine and call attention to themselves because something happened which does not fit in with seemingly self-evident assumptions and irritate *thinking-as-usual* (Schütz 1972). These encounters have something surprising about them, something that 'couldn't be counted on', because the 'Other' is experienced in a way contrary to the stereotypical expectation and thus the apparently obvious is questioned. In these situations fixed notions of the 'Other' can destabilise, despite the fleeting character of the encounter. Such transgressive moments in which attitudes towards the 'Other' are questioned can arise in very different situations in everyday public life.

Anna (mid-20s, student), for example, referred to everyday encounters to illustrate how her stance towards 'veiled Turkish women' had changed. Her initially negative attitude came from the notion that 'these Turkish women' disapproved of 'German women like her' because of her liberal lifestyle. However, small gestures of friendliness and consideration by the 'Other', such as a smile or the offering of an umbrella led to 'irritation' and to a change in attitude.

Anna: I just thought, that there were barriers, you know, because we're different to them... then once, on the street, a Turkish woman came towards me and I thought that she'd look at me strange again, because I was, like, dressed more liberally. Then she suddenly threw a smile at me. Or another time, it was pouring rain and I was soaked to the skin, 'cos I didn't

have an umbrella. Then a Turkish woman took me under her umbrella. That was really nice and I was totally flabbergasted. And then you ask yourself; they can't think we're that bad. Things like that make the feeling disappear bit by bit and I've become more open myself.

Another trangressive moment, which was triggered by a short, chance conversation, was mentioned by Eva (mid-50s, office worker). She talked about the negative image she used to have of young migrants, in particular of those with a Turkish background. Through the public discourse on deficits in 'integration and language', but also from her own impressions from the quarter, she has thought that 'Turkish' youth could only speak broken German. She assumed that they only spoke 'strange slang' and were perhaps not interested in learning proper German. While waiting at a bus stop she happened to start talking to a group of five 'Turkish' youths, who had just come from the job centre and were talking about their visit there and the situation in the labour market. The conversation stayed with Eva, with the result that she has renounced her generalising assessment of 'Turkish' youth.

Eva: They started talking to me and in such good German and so reflected. I had not counted on that at all. Because when they arrived [at the bus stop] I had already made up my mind about them. Just straight away this typical image of Turkish youth you have. They can't speak German properly and so on... But I was quite pleasantly surprised by the situation. And that was a moment you keep. You carry this experience with you. And I avoid the prejudices I had before, because that's often quite unfair to them.

Although both of these examples are of quite different situations, they illustrate how transgressive moments can emerge from short interactions in public life. What these moments have in common is that the other person is seen as a typical representative of a group which is seen negatively. At the same time the 'representative' is experienced as being 'atypical' because existing prejudices presume and then expect different behaviour. The *thinking-as-usual* is irritated; something 'unexpected' happens and people are left 'flabbergasted'. In that moment- as can be seen in both of these statements- existing notions about the 'Other' are challenged which can lead to corrected opinions. Socio-psychological research on prejudice also shows that contact in such circumstances can have positive effects. Negative attitudes can be changed when, firstly, the behaviour of members of an outgroup is markedly inconsistent with the associated stereotypes of that outgroup and, secondly, these members are also seen as being typical for their group (Pettigrew 1998).

Moments of banal transgression can be prompted, not only by small polite or attentive gestures or small-talk; which allow new insights, but also by unexpected help from the 'Other'. Even when such 'small achievements' (Amin 2006) through fleeting encounters are more random and serendipitous in everyday life, their importance should not be

underestimated. They can portray first steps towards overcoming negative attitudes and encouraging greater openness towards people seen as different.

Encounters between strangers in public life are not only brief; of just seconds or minutes (Lofland 1998). Rather some of the interviewees recount public encounters with people experienced as different, which are longer and more sociable. For example, they occur when playing soccer, basketball, boules or when children play together in playgrounds. In these situations forms of conviviality, as described by Ruth Fincher and Kurt Iveson (2008), can emerge. The situations described in the interviews indicate that the interviewees are drawn into a momentary relationship with people who are otherwise seen as different. They can step out of their usual stances towards them on the basis of their shared status as football, basketball or boules players or parents in the moments of their encounters. Such convivial encounters can have a positive impact on personal attitude towards the 'Other' and/or can transmit a feeling of 'togetherness in difference'.

Philip (18 yrs., secondary school student) narrated the positive experiences he had with 'Turkish' youths when playing football in the park. His distance towards them stemmed from the 'lower social status' as well as the 'irritable and aggressive behaviour' due to their 'mentality'. He does not 'have anything to do with them' and tended 'to avoid them'. While playing football in the park with his friends they occasionally played with 'Turkish' youths who also happened to be in the park. The shared interest in football allowed them to come together despite the putative differences.

Philip: We just joined forces. And they were 'Turkish' guys, whom we would have otherwise avoided or thought that they're not on the same wavelength. But they just wanted to play football the same as us. And so we played together... You always end up chatting and they were really friendly and not antisocial or aggressive, like we thought. That was a positive thing for me... Playing football is way of getting to know each other. It unites you in that moment.

The quote shows that the joint identification as football players arises during the shared activity. The shared status allows Philip to socialise more easily with individuals he usually experiences as being different and with whom he does not normally have any contact in any other contexts. Such convivial encounters through playing football in parks have let Robin develop a more positive view towards 'Turkish' youths.

Conviviality can also arise when playing boules. Thomas (early 50s, office worker) regularly meets a few friends and acquaintances to play boules in a park in Mülheim. During the game people often turn up who are interested in joining in. This way Thomas says that he gets in

touch with 'all kinds of people'. His accounts also show how a temporarily shared identification can emerge from a common activity and encourages cross-group socializing. For Thomas, the friendly contact based on their common status as boules players gives him a sense of 'togetherness in difference'. Such positive experiences affirm his view that the co-existence of the diverse groups in Mülheim works in daily life.

Thomas: I meet all kinds of people through playing boules. It's a total mix of professions, backgrounds, young and old. These things can be in the way otherwise. But not then, because we've something in common and that's playing boules. The three balls are the main thing... we just play together and chat away... it's a nice feeling, the feeling of being connected, even when the other person is unemployed, retired, a student or from Turkey or Iran. We just get on... And that always gives me the feeling that our co-existence here works.

As these two examples illustrate, 'classical' public spaces can also be understood as everyday settings which enable convivial encounters. The decisive factor is that people who are different to each other come together in an everyday context on the basis of shared activities and interests. This allows people to construct temporary identifications with others alongside their fixed identities. That can enable sociability and has a transformative potential to change attitudes towards others.

However it must be considered that such an engagement on the basis of informal and loosely organised mutual interests does not necessarily have positive effects. John Clayton (2009) shows in his study of everyday multicultural life in the city of Leicester in the UK that young people with different cultural backgrounds playing football together in public spaces can lead to tension and conflict between groups. Therefore it must be kept in mind that such temporary contact situations like playing football or boules can give rise to incidents which could unsettle the momentary relationship and could have a negative outcome.

VI Conclusion

This paper has examined encounters with, and the negotiation of, ethnic (and other) differences in public spaces. The experiences of 'German' residents in the quarter of Mülheim illustrate the ambivalent impact of everyday interactions on attitudes towards 'Others'.

The empirical material demonstrates how definitions of cultural difference are (re)produced and prejudices are reinforced through everyday encounters. The spatial practice and visibility of 'Turkish' men and women become the basis for hardening the image of 'Turkish culture', characterised by male honour and the dominance of men over women. In this context, there is a need to take into account the sedimented knowledge about the 'Other' brought into such everyday encounters. As the research shows, the knowledge acquired through public and

everyday discourse influences everyday interactions and is adapted to interpret everyday life. This knowledge shapes the perception and judgement of encounters, whereby the preformed image is then confirmed and taken as proof of 'Otherness'. This underlines how hegemonic ideas about the 'Other' infiltrate everyday encounters (Simonsen 2008; Swanton 2010). The encounters show in a circular manner that the image portrayed in the public discourse is indeed accurate.

However, there is also evidence that everyday interactions in public spaces with 'Others' can change attitudes in a positive way. In casual, fleeting everyday encounters transgressive moments can occur in which fixed notions of the 'Other' are questioned. These encounters can emerge when politeness and friendliness are experienced when they are not expected, when chance small-talk allows insights which were surprising or when the 'Other' shows solidarity when no entitlement was perceived.

Alongside such serendipitous encounters, public spaces also enable convivial forms of contact. Through shared activities or interests such as playing football or playing boules different people are brought together on the basis of a common status which offers opportunities for informal social exchange. This can lead to greater openness towards people perceived as different. Even though these two forms of encounters resulted in more positive attitudes in this study, this does not mean that this is always the case. Gestures of friendliness such as a smile or the offering of an umbrella by the 'Other' can also result in rejection, depending on the person's past experience, attitude and mood (Amin & Thrift 2002). Forms of conviviality can also possibly become unstable due to negative incidents during the encounter.

Therefore, in which further contexts transgressive moments and convivial encounters between individuals or groups can occur in public life demand closer consideration. This also applies to their limitations and to the sustainability of such encounters. In other words, to what extent do such positive experiences go beyond the moment in which they occur (Valentine 2008)? In addition to Gill Valentine's (2010: 512) call to look more closely at the temporary and spatial contexts in which prejudices emerge, the circumstances in which prejudices are challenged by encounters in public life thus require greater attention.

References

Abels, W. (2009): Wirklichkeit: Über Wissen und andere, Definitionen der Wirklichkeit, über uns und Andere, Fremde und Vorurteile. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.

Allport, G. W. (1954): The nature of prejudice. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Amin, A. (2002): Ethnicity and the multicultural city: living with diversity, *Environment and Planning A*, 34(6), 959-80.

Amin, A. (2006): 2006: The good city, *Urban Studies*, 43, 1009-1023.

Amin, A. (2008): Collective Culture and Urban Public Space, *City*, 12(1), 5-24.

Amin, A. (2010): Cities and the ethic of care for the stranger. Retrieved 11 May 2011 from http://lx.iriss.org.uk/content/cities-and-ethic-care-stranger-0

Amin, A. and Thrift, N. (2002): Cities: Reimagining the Urban. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Berger, P. L. and Luckmann, T. (2009): Die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit, 23rd edition. Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch.

Berman, M. (1986): Taking it to the streets: conflict and community in public space, *Dissent*, 333(4), 476-485.

Brown, R. (2010): Prejudice: its social psychology, 2nd edition. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Bühler, E., Kaspar, H. and Ostermann, F. (2008): Nachhaltiges Entwerfen, Bewirtschaften und Aneignen städtischer Parkanlagen. Unveröffentlichter, dem Schweizerischen Nationalfonds eingereichter wissenschaftlicher Schlussbericht. Geographisches Institut der Universität Zürich.

Bukow, W.-D. (2010): Urbanes Zusammenleben. Zum Umgang mit Migration und Mobilität in europäischen Stadtgesellschaften. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.

Butterwegge, C. and Hentges, G. (eds) (2006): Massenmedien, Migration und Integration. Herausforderungen für Journalismus und politische Bildung, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.

Carr, S., Francis, M., Rivlin, L. and Stone, A. (1993): Public Space. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Clayton, J. (2009): Thinking spatially: towards an everyday understanding of inter-ethnic relations, *Social & Cultural Geography*, 10(4), 481-498.

Cresswell, T. (1996): In place/out of place: geography, ideology and transgression. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

de Buhr, S. (2010): Stadt für alle durch interkulturelle öffentliche Räume, *vhw Forum Wohneigentum*, (3), 137-140.

Ehrkamp, P. (2008): Risking publicity: masculinities and the racialization of public neighborhood space, *Social & Cultural Geography*, 9(2), 117-133.

European Commission (2007): Intercultural Dialogue in Europe, Summary. Flash Eurobarometer 217. Brussels.

Farwick, A. (2009): Segregation und Eingliederung. Zum Einfluss der räumlichen Konzentration von Zuwanderern auf den Eingliederungsprozess. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.

Fincher, R. and Iveson, K. (2008): Planning and Diversity in the City: Redistribution, Recognition and Encounter. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Germain, A. and Radice, M. (2006): Cosmopolitanism by default: public sociability in Montréal, in: Binnie, J., Holloway, J., Millington, S. and Young C., (eds) *Cosmopolitan urbanism*, London: Routledge, 112-130.

Gestring, N. (2005): Öffentlicher Raum und Integration, in: Burmeister, H.-P. (ed) *Stadt als Lebensraum. Europäische Perspektiven*, Rehburg-Loccum: Evangelische Akad. Loccum, 63-72.

Goffman, E. (1963): Behaviour in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings. New York: Free Press.

Goffman, E. (1967): Interaction ritual: Essays on face–to–face behavior. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Goffman, E. (1971): Relations In Public: Microstudies of the Public Order. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Gyr, U. (1996): Stille Gewalt. Zur Bedeutung nonverbal ausgeübter Macht im Alltag, in: Roth, K. (ed) *Mit der Differenz leben: Europäische Ethnologie und Interkulturelle Kommunikation*, Münster: Waxmann, 43-59.

Hannerz, U. (1996): Transnational Connections. Culture, People, Places. London: Routledge.

Hewstone, M. (2003): Intergroup contact: Panacea for prejudice? *The Psychologist*, 16(7), 352-355.

Hewstone, M. (2009): Living apart, living together? The role of intergroup contact in social integration, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 162, 243-300.

Hüttermann, J. (2010): Die Räume urbaner Intergruppenbeziehungen im Lichte von Konflikt- und Ausweichinteraktionen, in: Herrmann, H. (ed) *RaumErleben. Zur Wahrnehmung des Raumes in Wissenschaft und Praxis*, Opladen: Barbara Budrich, 99-122.

Jacobs, J. (1961): The Death and Life of Great American Cities. London: Pimlico.

Laurier, E. and Philo, C. (2006): Cold shoulders and napkins handed: gestures of responsibility, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* NS, 31, 193–207.

Lofland, L. H. (1993): Urbanity, Tolerance and Public Space: The Creation of Cosmopolitans, in: Deben, L, Heinemeijer, W. and van der Vaart, D. (eds) *Understanding Amsterdam: Essays on Economic Vitality, City Life, and Urban Form*, Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 143-160.

Lofland, L. H. (1998) The Public Realm: Exploring the City's Quintessential Social Territory. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

Madanipour, A. (1999): Why are the design and development of public spaces significant for cities? *Environment and Planning B*, 26(6), 879-891.

Merton, R. K. (1948): The self-fulfilling prophecy, *The Antioch Review*, 8, 193-210.

Paravicini, U., Claus, S., Münkel, A. and Oertzen, S. v. (2002): Neukonzeption städtischer öffentlicher Räume im europäischen Vergleich 3, Hannover: NFFG.

Pettigrew, T. F. (1998): Intergroup contact theory, *Annual Review of Psychology*, 49, 65-85.

Rogers, R. and Power, A. (2000): Cities for a small Country. London: Faber and Faber.

Sandercock, L. (2003): Cosmopolis II: mongrel cities in the twenty-first century. London: Continuum.

Schütz, A. (1972): Der Fremde. Ein sozialpsychologischer Versuch, in: Schütz, A. (ed) *Gesammelte Aufsätze II: Studien zur soziologischen Theorie*, Den Haag: Nijhoff, 53-69.

Seggern, H. v. and Tessin, W. (2002): Einen Ort begreifen: Der Ernst-August-Platz in Hannover – Beobachtungen, Experimente, Gespräche, Fotos, in: Riege, M. and Schubert, H. (eds) *Sozialraumanalyse. Grundlagen – Methoden – Praxis*, Opladen: VS Verlag, 265-280.

Sennett, R (1986): The Fall of Public Man. London: Faber and Faber.

Sennett, R. (2001): New capitalism, new isolation: a flexible city. Retrieved 11 May 2011 from http://mondediplo.com/2001/02/16cities

Shaftoe, H. (2008): Convivial urban spaces: creating effective public places. London: Earthscan.

Simonsen, K. (2008): Practice, Narrative and the `Multicultural City': A Copenhagen Case, *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 15(2), 145-158.

Sökefeld, M. (2004): Das Paradigma kultureller Differenz: Zur Forschung und Diskussion über Einwanderer aus der Türkei in Deutschland, in: Sökefeld, M. (ed) *Jenseits des Paradigmas kultureller Differenz*, Bielefeld: Transcript: 9-34.

Stadt Köln (2009): Mülheim 2020: Wege öffnen - Übergänge schaffen - zusammen wachsen. Köln.

Swanton, D. (2010): Sorting bodies: race, affect, and everyday multiculture in a mill town in northern England, *Environment and Planning A*, 42, 2332-2350.

Tessin, W. (2004): Freiraum und Verhalten. Soziologische Aspekte der Nutzung und Planung städtischer Freiräume. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.

Valentine, G. (2008): Living with difference: Reflections on geographies of encounter, *Progress in Human Geography*, 32(3), 323-337.

Valentine, G. (2010): Prejudice: rethinking geographies of oppression, *Social & Cultural Geography*, 11(6), 519-537.

Valentine, G. and MacDonald, I. (2004): Understanding prejudice. London: Citizenship 21.

Vertovec, S. (2007): Super-diversity and its implications, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30(6), 1024-1054.

Walzer, M. (1986): Pleasures and Costs of Urbanity, *Dissent*, 33(4), 470-475.

Wiktorin, D., Blenck, J., Nipper, J., Nutz, M. and Zehner, K. (eds) (2001): Köln. Der historisch-topographische Atlas. Köln.

Wood, P. and Landry, C. (2008): Intercultural City: planning for diversity advantage. London: Earthscan.

Young, I. M. (1986): The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference, *Social Theory and Practice*, 12(11), 1-26.

Young, I. M. (1990): Justice and the politics of difference. Princeton: Princeton University Press.