UNIVERSITY OF
FORWARD
THINKING
WESTMINSTER⌗

**WestminsterResearch**

http://www.westminster.ac.uk/westminsterresearch

**The street party: pleasurable community practices and place making**

**Stevenson, N.**

International Journal of
**Event and Festival
Management**

# The street party: pleasurable community practices and place-making.

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

# The street party: Pleasurable community practices and place-making.

## Abstract

**Purpose.** This paper explores spatial and social practices associated with a community street party through the lens of literature on encounter, conviviality and place-making, considering its role developing a place-based sense of community.

**Design.** The research is based upon a case study of a street party in London. Data sources include interviews, a questionnaire, observation and a literature review.

**Findings**. The conviviality associated with partying disrupts mundane social relations and engages diverse communities in place-making. People playfully engage with one another, performing and reinforcing community and place values in the environment outside their homes.

**Practical Implications** – This paper aims to engender understanding and encourage urban policy makers to support activities which combine pleasure and play to develop a place-based sense of community. It identifies practices which actively engage people at a grassroots level and enable them to articulate and perform community values.

**Social Implications** – Developing a sense of community in rapidly changing and diverse urban areas presents challenges for urban policy makers. Grassroots activities such as street parties often fall outside of funding streams, debates and formal policy making for cities but it is argued here that they enable people to engage in pleasurable and playful interaction and have an important role in disrupting mundane interactions and connecting people.

**Originality Value**: This paper progresses discussion of community events from a social perspective through an original study, identifying specific practices which contribute to a place-based sense of community.

**Keywords** Place-making, Conviviality, Party, Community, Event.

**Paper Type** Research Paper

## Introduction

This paper extends the literature on community events and place-making (Duffy and Mair, 2014, 2018; Sweeney, Mee, Mcguirk and Ruming, 2018) by considering convivial practices and experiences associated with a community-led street party. It argues that partying is an important aspect of place-making and contributes to a shared sense of community, enabling playful experimentation with the geographies, sociabilities and everyday functionalities of a place. Its findings focus on the practices associated with the party, including making, doing and sharing, and the articulation and performance of values. This leads to a discussion around the characteristics of the party that support place-making and contribute to a place-based sense of community. These include its location and impermanence, multiple opportunities for engagement, associations with pleasure and disruptiveness.

The study is set in a street in North London which has staged four street parties in the past decade. Street parties are not uncommon in wider area – at least three similar events have been held nearby in the past three years. These parties provide an unusual opportunity for social interaction supported by music, dancing, games, activities and shared food. This paper is developed from research into one party in 2016 and uses literature on encounter, conviviality and place-making to explore the social and spatial practices associated with developing a place-based sense of community in a street that is socially and culturally diverse.

## The street

Lynch (1960) conceptualises the street in terms of its physical form – as a linear space with a connective function providing a route, path, or space through which people travel. The street also has social functions and attributes and is 'a tangible place for the convergence of a multitude of histories, trajectories and expressions' (Hall 2012, 130).

'People of all ages and cultural backgrounds occupy the street, rub shoulders, and exchange greetings' (Georgiou, 2017:267). It is 'central to the life of an area' (Hall, 2012:6), a neutral, shared realm, which provides a setting for everyday associations, activities and experiences (Anderson, 2011; Zukin et al., 2016). While it is shared, it is experienced in dissimilar ways by different people (Rota and Salone, 2014). Geographical proximity does not lead to people facing similar challenges in their daily lives, sharing interests or even using common amenities. In a multicultural, socially diverse street people live together but can remain apart in a state of 'courteous, but distanced co-location' (Hall, 2012:54). Public streets are multi-functional shared spaces that accommodate a variety of users and can be contested as different needs and aspirations compete. For example, car parking and through traffic present challenges to the street as a place for children to play.

There is a growing literature on events which temporarily close or reconfigure streets. These have multiple objectives and forms - some such as 'Reclaim the Streets' (Carmo, 2012; British Library, 2017) and slut walks (Reger, 2015) highlight peoples' rights and freedom on the streets. Others use recreational and social activity, conviviality and interaction to rework street uses and norms (Bunnell, 2008; Burrage, 2011; Faskunger, 2013; Mason et al., 2011). Examples include 'Ciclovia','Open Street' and 'Play Streets' projects which promote on-street recreational activities (D'Haese et al., 2015; Mason et al., 2011; Zieff, et al., 2016) and street festivals and parties support social interaction (Duffy and Mair, 2018).

This paper focuses the temporary reconfiguration of a street to host a community street party. In the UK context street parties started in the early twentieth century and have evolved from practices of "Street Dressing" - decorating the street with flags and bunting to mark national occasions (The Street Party, 2019). The street party is a type of

community festival that is held outside people's homes and is usually organised for and by residents. In the past decade street parties have proliferated, encouraged by nationwide community initiatives including 'The Big Lunch' and 'The Great Get Together' (Eden Project, 2019; Great Get Together, 2019). These initiatives are often associated with developing a place-based sense of community and are motivated by communitarianism – 'a version of pluralism that defines collective responsibility and problem solving with a sort of DIY activism' (Rojek, 2013:109). In this paper the street is conceptualised in term of its social and physical attributes as a way to explore the implications of a party which disrupts mundane interactions and contributes to peoples' sense of community within a residential street.

**Sense of community**

If 'community life is sustained when social networks are strong, when there are people with common interests and who feel a sense of common fate' (Berkowitz, 1996: 452) it is unsurprising that there are considerable challenges in developing and sustaining a sense of community in diverse areas. Vertovec's (2007) concept of super-diversity is relevant in the study area where there are multiple dimensions of difference, including social class, age, connection to the area, cultural background and ethnicity. In areas of super-diversity creating sense of 'community' and 'belonging' is an ongoing and complex process (Hoekstra and Pinkster, 2017). Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis suggests that mundane and everyday encounters can create conviviality, enabling people to make connections and to negotiate difference and belonging (Askins, 2016; Fincher and Iveson, 2008; Gilroy, 2004; Heil, 2014).

There is a body of research into the nature of conviviality in multi-cultural areas (including Amin, 2008; Nobel, 2013; Georgiou, 2017; Gilroy, 2004; Heil, 2014; Wessendorf, 2014) much of which draws from Sennett's (2005) definition of civility 'the capacity of people who differ to live together' (2005:1).    The contention is that in areas where ethnic, cultural religious and linguistic diversity are commonplace, people demonstrate 'civility towards diversity…as a strategy to both engage with difference as well as avoid deeper contact' (Wesssendorf, 2014:392).  Amin (2008) notes how apparently diverse public spaces can become locked into patterns of interactions 'people who already know each other meet in known corners'…  Their mingling … 'rarely involves transgressing long-accumulated attitudes and practices towards the stranger' (2008:9-10).

Within diverse communities regular convivial encounters with neighbours in the street can be cursory or superficial and do not necessarily create understanding, a sense of community or 'a respect for difference' (Valentine, 2008: 323).  Matejskova and Leitner (2011) argue that fleeting encounters can reinforce stereotypes, contrasting this with feelings of empathy engendered by the deeper and sustained encounters as people engage in a project.  Their study points to the importance of activities or events that enable people to work together.

Much research into conviviality focusses on mundane interactions and suggests, 'daily habits of quite banal intercultural interaction' (Sandercock, 2006:42), facilitate dialogue, and the negotiation of difference which is held to enhance the 'local liveability' of neighbourhoods (Amin, 2002:960).  More relevant to this study is Nobel (2013) who distinguishes between those 'iterative processes which accumulate – and moments in which a habituated behaviour might emerge as a response to an *unexpected* situation' (2013:175). He illustrates one such moment that occurs as people share an

experience of a performance in a school play which humorously parodies ethnic

boundaries.  This shifts the established conventions around discussing difference and

leads to humorous exchanges across diverse groups with lasting effects.

**Sense of place**

'The relationship between community and place is indeed a very powerful one in which
each reinforces the identity of the other, and in which the landscape is very much an
expression of communally held beliefs and values and of interpersonal involvements'
(Relph, 1976:34).

Places are conceptualised as 'territories of meaning' (Holt-Jensen, 1999:224),

'social zones where meaningful representations of, and emotional connections to,

people and settings can be formed' (McCunn and Gifford, 2018:208).  They are 'fluid

dynamic contexts of social interaction and memory' (Stokowsky, 2002:368) which are

sustained by narratives, imagery and symbols.

The term sense of place relates to peoples 'ability to develop feelings of

attachment to particular settings' (Stokowsky, 2002:368) and the term place-making is

often used to describe the process 'of transforming spaces into qualitative places''

(Cilliers and Timmermans, 2014:414).  Place-making is an ongoing, emergent,

relational, and social process of investing in spaces (Franklin and Marsden, 2015)

involving collective action (Semenza, 2003).  It is commonly an activity  in which

'people actively create meaningful places through conversation and interaction with

others' (Stokowsky, 2002:272) through the performance 'of practices which serve to

connect heterogeneous elements and draw them together into conversation, to produce

and maintain a particular coherence; to make place' (Sweeney et al., 2018:573).

Initiatives to develop place-based community identity often rely on peoples'

engagement in a mixture of social and spatial activities including art, performance,

community gardening, festivals and social events. (Semenza, 2003; Semenza and

March, 2009) These initiatives create new meaning through encounter and shared

experience, adding another layer to peoples' diverse experiences and identities (Hall,

2012).

Of particular interest to this paper is the literature on temporary social

interventions such as festivals and events which can contribute to peoples' place-based

sense of community by disrupting mundane social practices, strengthening social ties

and local identity, and creating pleasurable experiences (Duffy and Mair, 2018; Gibson

and Connell, 2011; Quinn, 2005; Rota and Salone, 2014; Stevens and Shin, 2014,

Stevenson, 2016).   Here politics and pleasure intersect (Sharp, 2008) as people explore

and perform 'a different way of organizing social and political life' (2008:227) which is

'plural, temporary and inclusive' (Amin, 2008; 17). The 'positive, celebratory, and

leisurely' (Sharp, 2008:227) aspects of festivals can create 'symbolic solidarity' (Amin,

2008; 17) and have the capacity to draw people together and inspire social action. These

'bursts of community' (Brent, 2009:233) can be transformative at the local scale in

terms of creating a sense of belonging in a place.  However their transformative

potential is both localised and limited – they do not resolve problems of social

inequality (Harvey, 1989; Waitt, 2008) and their effects can be temporary (Brent, 2009:

Koutrolikou, 2012; Rojek, 2013; Waitt, 2008).

**Method**

This paper is underpinned by a case study (Yin, 2009) of one street party and

draws together interviews, questionnaire data, observations and literature to study

multiple voices and perspectives of the party and its effects.  Primary research was

conducted before, during, and just after the party and included:

- 20 semi-structured interviews of between 45-75 minutes which were carried out before and after the party- four with residents who led and facilitated the party, 11 with residents who provided music, activities, or food outside their home, three who attended as party-goers but were not directly involved in providing activities and two with people who did not attend. The interviews were conversational and covered definitions of the local community, sense of belonging in that community (including discussion about how many people they knew by name or recognised/greeted in the street), involvement in the party and their engagement in other community/voluntary activities.

- 40 survey questionnaires - completed during the party (21 by residents and 19 by visitors) in which people were asked how they were involved in the party and what they enjoyed most and least about the event.

- Observations of organisational meetings and the party.

Data analysis was informed by grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Consents were obtained from all participants.  Interviews were transcribed, coded and themed using Nvivo and research memos were written during the analytical process to capture ideas as they emerged.  Themes were developed further using the questionnaire data, observations, research memos, and existing literature on community events and place-making.  Interviewees are numbered to maintain anonymity and the numbers appear after direct quotes in brackets thus (1).

**The study**

The study is based in Archway in the London Borough of Islington (LBI), a place that is socially and ethnically diverse and has experienced rapid population growth - increasing by 17% between 2001-2011and a further 13% between 2011-18

(UK Census, 2011; LBI, 2018).　It is a place of contrast - mean incomes in the Borough

are high - in 2014-15 they were £56,800 compared to £31,800 in the UK (Data London,

2017) but it is also the 24th most deprived borough in the UK (LBI, 2018).　This

disparity is illustrated in the Ward (small electoral district in the Borough) where the

study is located, and the least deprived residents live adjacent to the most deprived

(LBI, 2018:17).　Housing tenure is mixed in the Ward - 45% social housing, 34% owner

occupation and 20% private rented (LBI, 2014) and in the street which is occupied in a

mixture of tenures and forms, including family and shared houses, flats and bedsits.

The street comprises 110 properties and its residents are ethnically, culturally and

socially diverse - people who are affluent and those who experience deprivation live as

neighbours. While there are no apparent tensions between these different people who

live in close proximity, their diverse lives, practices and routines support 'a civility of

indifference' and mundane interactions involving polite 'conviviality without

engagement' (Georgiou, 2017:266).

## Findings
### *Sense of Community*

Interviewees identify a placed-based, sense of community associated with being

'local' - a term that includes people who live in the street or regularly traverse it.　They

identify spatial characteristics including 'trees' and 'greenery which provide a setting

for on-street sociability (5, 7, 10 and 15).　Living physically close to one another in a

narrow road and terraced housing and flats supports social interaction. 'The family

across the road feel like your neighbours as well as the people next door so that we

*community* a lot by just shouting across the road' (11). Interviewees identify important

neighbourhood places where they can to meet and socialise.　These include a church

hall in the adjacent street which is used for activities including a playgroup, after-school

clubs, and exercise classes. Shops at the end of the street provide 'places that people use but also places where they meet' (12) and the local school offers opportunities for residents with younger children to meet.

Peoples' place-sense of community arises from 'relationships with people in the street' (10) 'friendships with people in the nearby area' (11) and 'recognising people who regularly walk along it' (15).  These relationships are often based on greetings, and brief conversations but form the basis of convivial familiarity with neighbours that supports a sense of belonging and confidence in the environment around their homes. They are enhanced by common interests such as raising children, political campaigning, playing music, and on street guerrilla gardening (7, 8, 11, 18, 19).  Geographical proximity and common interests intersect creating a 'densely acquired network of familiarity' (Hall, 2012:129) which develops as;

> 'whatever is local becomes a part of your life…and involves 'getting to know
> your neighbours through the small things - It could just be buying your milk
> every day at the shops -you recognise people, they get to know you and then you
> have a good chat' (15).

Interviewees discuss challenges they face in developing a place-based sense of community – identifying regular turbulence as people move in and out of the area and 3 major shifts  - one in the 1970's when  large scale housing demolition severed friendship networks; in the 1990's when the area changed rapidly becoming  'smarter' (16) 'or gentrified' (18) as more 'middle-class families moved in and refurbished houses' (3), and more recently in the early 2000's as private renting increased and it became more diverse again. This type of turbulence is not uncommon in inner cities and is associated with wider urban processes of regeneration and change that transform neighbourhood relations (Hall, 2012).  In this street peoples' sense of community is dynamic, constantly being worked as the area changes existing networks are severed

and new networks are formed.  The street party is one process which reworks peoples'

placed-based feeling of community.

### The contribution of the party to a place-based sense of community

The party encompasses collective action to transform the street (Semenza, 2003; Semenza and March 2009), disrupting everyday relations and creating shared experiences and memories. 'It brings people together' (7), 'you get to meet many of the neighbours that you might not know' (2). Relationships with neighbours change 'Rather than just a faces passing in the street they become somebody you can smile and say "hello"… you know where they are and you can look out for each other' (7).  The party 'makes people feel a sense of belonging…a real sense of community and that neighbours share with each other' (9).

The civilities and associations arising from face-to-face interactions are important (Georgiou, 2017) and the party facilitates introductions and communication which is sustained through civil and convivial everyday exchanges.

> 'It creates a remarkable opportunity to meet people that I haven't met before and to
> break down barriers.  The last ones really contributed to relationships that have
> been sustained by bumping into each other in the street once every few weeks,
> seeing each other at the local shop and so on' (11).

Insert figure 1 around here.

Figure 1: What do people enjoy about the party.

Figure 1 is developed from the questionnaires and includes people who attended the party but were not directly involved in its organisation.  The most enjoyable aspect is getting to know other people in the street.  The most commonly used words are '*meeting*' and '*neighbours'* highlighting the importance of face-to-face convivial

exchanges and reflecting a shared desire to be together which resonates with research by

Brent, 2009 and Georgiou, 2017; Hall, 2012; Semenza and March, 2009.   The

temporary spatial transformation of the street and the community atmosphere of the

party facilitate pleasurable and friendly interactions, enabling people to move beyond

the courteous conviviality of everyday greetings.  Similar to studies by Duffy and Mair,

(2014, 2018) at this party pleasurable interaction is supported as people share music,

food and drink, and enables people to perform their identities in the unfolding story of

the place.

### *Social practices at the party.*

*Making, doing and sharing.*

Developing a street party is a convivial process that draws upon the diverse

skills and creativity within the community.  Hall (2012) and Semenza and March,

(2009) contend that creative expression can be a means to promote togetherness,

interaction and shared experience, linking people to places.  This happened as people

prepared for the party within their familiesand with neighbours.  Six women

interviewees identified  the importance of the shared experience of making party

bunting together. An open invitation was sent to everyone in the street by flyer.  Twelve

women gathered on the evening - for many it was the first time they were invited into

this neighbour's house - some knew each other well and others had not previously met.

> 'It was interesting to do something like that.  Culturally it is something that women
> used to be doing in other places and other times quite often, but we don't have
> many opportunities to do that now and not with our neighbours.  So, I think there's
> something quite special about doing something creative together' (12).

The experience of making bunting was perceived to create a sense of community through the conversations, laughter and understanding that emerged in the practice of a shared task.

Another creative endeavour was the preparation of food to share with neighbours and was commonly mentioned by interviewees and questionnaire respondents.  Cooking for the party drew together extended families and friends, providing opportunities to communicate cultural difference and traditions.  For example one interviewee whose family originate from India said:

'My mum cooks samosas and … and my workplace has got loads of tea urns. So I borrowed one of those, borrowed a trestle table and had tea and samosas.  We made a really big effort to go and say hello to people' (17).

As an observer I noticed that sharing food encouraged conversation and how sharing practices gained momentum as people were offered food and drink, and in-turn became increasingly generous.  As that happened narratives about place, friendliness and sharing were strengthened and this process continued after the party as stories were recollected and retold.

Creative and sharing practices were also identified by a group of resident musicians met before the event to work out a schedule and how to develop collaborations between their existing bands and to 'organise the logistics and running order for the musical items' (11).  Playing music was partly about performing or entertaining but also seen as a process of sharing, informal collaboration and experimentation between the musicians in the street (1, 12, 17). Spontaneous opportunities were encouraged through an 'open mic' session enabling other people to join in and for new collaborations to emerge.  Interviewees associated playing and

engaging in music with conversation, interaction and dancing during the event and more

lasting collaborations and friendships after.

Creative, sharing practices were also evident on the day as people brought out ladders to

put up bunting, negotiated where different element of the party should be sited and set

up different elements.  They decorated the street, the exteriors of their homes, set up

stalls and prepared activities. There was a photo booth, a street museum, a badminton

court, Zumba, a quiz, art activities, face-painting, football, a storytelling clown, Lego

building, a book shop, a 'chill-out zone' for teenagers, a display from a local boxing

club, food stalls and a 'conflict resolution centre' (Figure 2) for water fights.

Insert Figure 2 here

During the party people engaged in a variety of activities; they talked, ate

together and played football.  Children threw water bombs at one another, people

danced and listened to music. Creating and participating in these events is an example

of active place-making (Franklin and Marsden, 2015) encouraging 'plasticity of habit'

(Nobel, 2013:176) by disrupting mundane interactions and producing memorable

experiences to support post-party social interactions in the street.  Similar to studies by

Semenza and March, (2009) and Nobel (2013) at this party communal creativity

developed encounters, shared experiences and collective memories.


*Performing and reinforcing place values.*

In the street party place values were articulated, performed and reinforced, a

process of active meaning-making (Stokowsky, 2002) which developed shared

understanding of the community and place. Friendliness and inclusiveness were the two

most commonly identified characteristics and values of the street.   Neighbourly

friendliness was identified by all interviewees and was associated with sharing and

caring that crossed diverse social, ethnic, and cultural groups.  It was 'learned' (12)

actively 'practiced' (6, 15), and required an understanding of the 'concerns and problems faced by neighbours' (12).  It was performed as people prepared for the party together, and through the temporary intensification of friendliness during the party.   Six interviewees who were not born in the UK and described the party as part of a process of feeling welcome, and creating a sense of belonging in the street.  Interviewees identify a family friendly street where people care for neighbours children, 'and help each other out' (19).  This characteristic was reinforced at the party by the provision of many childrens' activities despite the majority of residents not having school age children.  Family friendly was broadly constructed and supported by residents inviting family members and friends with children.

There was a widely held aspiration 'to be inclusive of everybody in the street' (9) and this inclusiveness was articulated and performed through sharing and convivial interactions among a diverse range of residents during the party. There was no formal organisational structure for the event and several interviewees identified a differences in peoples' involvement.  Those most engaged in setting up the event were predominantly white 'middle-class people' (1, 2, 3, 9) and two interviewees identified practices that might inadvertently exclude people including the location of planning 'meetings in people's homes' (1) and informal 'around the table' decision making' (9) which favoured the most confident and articulate residents. However all  interviewees noted that the people who took on organisational roles created the basic structure for the party and carried out  tasks that others did not want to do.  Without a formal organisation several residents took on the 'practical stuff…getting funding…booking the clown, getting Arsenal to come along' (9), 'filling in the application forms and getting the insurance sorted' (4).

This approach was 'organic, inclusive and bottom up' (10), but created a basic infrastructure under which small events and activities could be developed by individual households and groups outside peoples' homes. Interviewees unanimously supported the lack of formal structure and it was seen as a way of engaging more people and providing freedom for individual households and sub-groups to organise party activities independently. Many individual households developed activities – some of which were communicated to other residents and others which emerged on the day. This informal and often spontaneous engagement, reflects the emergent, relational and social nature of partying. All interviewees thought that the street party was inclusive, 'on the day everyone will turn up and be part of it' (9) and saw high turnout as reflecting a widely shared aspiration for an inclusive party where people could meet neighbours.

The street party 'activates and is activated by ideas and issues about "community" identity and "place" that were already in circulation' (Duffy and Mair 2014:54). It enabled people to engage in atypical activities and interactions and to perform and reinforce commonly held values in an interactive process that developed their sense of the community within the street. People's interactions, experiences and active engagement within the physical setting of the street created, reproduced, and defended place values and meanings (Cresswell, 1996).

**Discussion**

Several characteristics of the street party that develop a place-based sense of community are discussed below.

*Proximity to home.*

The street outside peoples' homes is 'local' a 'sphere of familiarity and intimacy' (Hall, 2012;130) a place of mundane routines and interactions which is both

public and personal (Wessendorf, 2014). The location of the party outside peoples'

homes supported a sense of entitlement, comfort and belonging, empowering people to

arrange and take part in activities on their own terms. People felt free to set up-picnic

tables and activities independently of the main organisation of the party which

supported devolved practices in the articulation of street values. This party was located

on the street but is dissimilar to other initiatives which use recreational and social

activities to promote social interaction. Unlike the 'Ciclovia' and 'Open Street' projects

(Mason et al., 2011; Zieff et al., 2016) it was developed by people who live on the street

and unlike 'Play Streets' (D'Haese et al., 2015) it sought to involve all residents. These

differences supported diverse engagement in a shared experience which contributed to

the ongoing process of place-making.

*Ephemerality*

While residents aspired to neighbourly friendliness, differences in their daily

lives meant mundane interactions were often fleeting. The party provided an unusual

and short lived opportunity to step outside of the hectic 'messiness of everyday life,'

(Heil, 2014:456) and to meet, interact, engage with difference and create shared

experiences and neighbourhood values across a diverse community. Temporary

reconfiguration of the street created a 'loose' space (Franck, and Stevens, 2006) and

makeshift structures and activities, provided opportunity for convivial interactions and

the suspension of mundane social relations. The ephemeral nature of the party meant

that negotiations about the uses of the street space were relatively relaxed. The

emphasis was on a short-lived surge of conviviality and pleasure - any inconveniences

were short-term - at the end of the day the street reverted to its mundane form.

Experimentation, creativity, and celebration provide a way of loosening social/spatial

relations (Sharp, 2008) which is enhanced by the party's temporary, irregular and voluntary nature.

Each of the four recent street parties were developed by different alliances of people and enacted in different ways. This creates a fluidity and an approach to organisation that is flexible, relatively open and adaptable. A burst of energy (Brent, 2009) is required to create a party and this sporadic format enables different residents to engage with varying intensities and in multiple ways. The ability to encompass diverse contributions, shifting commitment and informal structure, coupled with recovery time between events means that people who would not normally volunteer or who are wary about committees and formal community structures choose to engage.

The ephemerality and lack of formal organisational structures associated with the party is both a help and hindrance. Its diffuse and shifting structure facilitates varied opportunities for engagement and draws together diverse residents. However, without a formally constituted community organisation it is difficult to access to funding and support from the local council. In this case, the councils' decision to waive street closure charges for street parties combined with donations from several local businesses to cover insurance costs enabled the party to proceed.

### Wide-ranging opportunities for encounter and conviviality.

The street party format enables diverse opportunities for encounter around a core of organised events, complemented by an array of activities, performances and installations provided by sub-groups of people and individual households. It uses creative and pleasurable activities such as cooking, participatory musical performance, and house decorating to express and share diverse backgrounds, experiences and needs. Partying also includes more informal and spontaneous convivial activities that arise by

'just being there' (8), these include 'bringing out a table and chairs and sharing some wine' (6), 'speaking to my neighbours' (15) and 'dancing in the street' (7);  The mixture of centralised/devolved and formal/informal activities engages its diverse residents and includes spontaneous or unexpected aspects  For example one family invited a Zumba teacher who led an impromptu class during the afternoon. The party supports shared practices of 'remembering, exchanging, investing and adapting…' (Hall, 2012; 134) through engagement in this diverse mixture of activities.  By creating common experiences and conviviality it adds another layer in the ongoing development of residents' sense of place.

### *Pleasure.*

The links between festivity, pleasure and social action are identified by Sharp (2008) and are supported by this study.  'It's always good to have some fun.  The fun aspect is quite important encouraging us to get together for a party' (7).  Anticipated, lived and remembered pleasures encourage people to engage with the party and with one another.  Pleasure is key to developing a place-based sense of community.   There is a sense of pleasurable anticipation as people plan and engage in diverse practices of creative thinking, designing, cooking, and rehearsing musical contributions.  The multiple micro-processes to develop activities and food are pleasurable in themselves and are an integral aspect of their enjoyment.

The conviviality, playfulness and pleasure experienced during the party enables people to experiment with, articulate and perform community values of friendship, sharing, and inclusivity.  The festive setting provides gaiety, cheerfulness, joyousness (Falassi, 1987) through engagement in a variety of pleasant experiences, social interactions and unexpected contributions dispersed in different locations along the street.  The convivial and celebratory context enables greater unpredictability than

would be accepted in a more serious endeavour - randomness and surprise are part of

the fun.    The pleasure endures through shared recollections and conversations in an on-

going collective meaning making process (Cresswell, 1996; Nobel, 2013; Stockowsky,

2002) which creates an intangible community resource in the form of a profusion of

stories and memories.  These stories are based on wide-ranging experiences of

conviviality, celebration and sharing, cannot be owned, fought over or managed in the

way a more tangible resource would be.

### Disruption.

The conviviality born out of everyday-relations provide way of living with and

negotiating difference.  However mundane convivial relations can be careful, polite and

can become locked or routinised (Amin, 2002, 2008; Georgiou, 2017; Heil, 2014,

Wessendorf, 2014).  The street party explored here creates introductions and unusual

interactions across diverse groups 'destabilizing boundaries and creating new spaces for

negotiating across difference' (Leitner, 2012: 830).  Amin (2002) argues that temporary

activities do little to develop sustained interaction and engagement between different

people.  However, in this study the temporary occupation of the street is part of the

ongoing practice of articulating and performing aspects of community and appears to

have lasting effects.  The intense conviviality, interactions and experiences of pleasure

at the party cannot be sustained, but form the basis for shared stories and memories

which underpin street based familiarity, feelings of belonging and sense of place lasting

well after the event.  These findings resonate with Noble (2013) who identifies incidents

or moments which disrupt and open up relations, the effects of which persist through

shared experiences and recollections. In this case study the disruptions of the party form

a wealth of pleasurable experiences and support a collective enthusiasm to engage, meet

neighbours and develop a sense of community within the street.

The 2016 party builds on experiences from previous parties. Partying is an ongoing practice of interruption of mundane relations which enables the articulation and performance of community values and provides opportunities for active engagement between different people.  Creating and recreating atypical conviviality through an enjoyable enactment of community opens-up and reworks relations (Fincher and Iveson, 2008; Askins, 2016). After each party things go back to *normal* but it is a different normal - people have met new neighbours, enjoyed something together and have collective memories and shared stories adding another layer to the ongoing process of developing their sense of place.

**Conclusion**

This paper develops understanding of the ongoing, relational, and social practice of place-making in diverse urban areas by exploring the processes and characteristics of a street party. The party is a relatively intangible aspect of place-making, leaving little physical detritus in its wake, but is an important process by which people actively develop, negotiate and perform a place-based sense of community. This party connects people to their neighbours and their neighbourhood, enabling enjoyable interactions and experiences which destabilise and rework relations.  It has long lasting positive impacts as community values of friendliness are performed, retold and become part of the narrative of the street, a shared resource held in the form of stories and memories.

Partying encompasses making, doing and sharing practices and enables residents to articulate, perform and reinforce street values. The temporary appropriation of the street for communal neighbourhood festivity loosens its rules and meanings, activating sociability through collective experiences which are pleasurable and out of the ordinary. Location in the street – the shared, familiar and multi-use place outside people's homes creates a sense of ownership, appealing to and engaging its diverse residents. People

participate on their own terms and playfully experiment with new possibilities.

Pleasure and place-making intersect through the activities, conviviality and friendly

interactions at the party. Partying helps people to narrate story of the street and their

place within it as they collectively create community meanings.

This findings of this study are optimistic, reflecting primary research which did

not reveal negative feelings about the party, even from those interviewees who did not

attend. While three interviewees questioned whether white and middle class people

might have dominated the organised elements of the party – all agreed that there were

diverse opportunities for engagement, enabling the majority of households chose to

participate in one way or another. Further study in other places would be useful to

investigate the extent to which positivity and optimism are common features of street

parties.

On-street partying can create place-making opportunities but also presents some

challenges to decision makers. There are political and practical risks associated with

this type of informal, temporary, voluntary and unpredictable community endeavour.

For example in this case it was not possible to pinpoint a single person who instigated,

led or held responsibility for the street party which had emerged from casual

interactions between individuals. The organisation lacked transparency and this

presented challenges to policy makers as there was a risk that the street party might only

represent and provide opportunities for small segments of the community. Informal and

ad-hoc organisation meant that residents were unable to bid for funding to support the

event and created some risks in terms of the management of the event itself. Without a

formal structure or funding residents did not have the resources to support effective

crowd control had too many people attended. Finally there is an unpredictability and

risk associated with partying, a pleasurable activity that reduces peoples inhibitions and

can support social interaction or alternatively lead to anti-social behaviour or ignite existing animosities.

These challenges were not apparent in the research undertaken for this study where a mixture of an informal organisational structure and the location outside peoples' homes enabled people to choose how and when they contribute to the party. There was enough central organisation to arrange the street closure and a core of activities and freedom for people to organise small events and activities outside their homes. Residents were unable to bid for local council funds but were supported by the council who waived street closure charges. The nature of the party meant that it did not attract a vast crowd and while there were noisy, unusual and exuberant behaviours, none of these is perceived to be anti-social in the party context.

It is easy to underestimate the potential of the party as a place-making mechanism due to its ephemerality, association with pleasure, informal decision making structures and the difficulty in seeing or quantifying its outcomes. However, it is argued here that anticipation, lived-pleasures and memories of partying creates a collective resource of convivial experiences and memories which develop a common sense of place. The street party effectively combines conviviality, playfulness, friendliness and pleasure to engage people in the serious business of place making. It enables people to articulate and perform important values, develop shared experience and create common stories which are retold in conversations, through shared photographs and social media. This collective resource persists in the minds of residents, is held across the diverse community and cannot effectively be owned or appropriated by one group.

In this study periodic active involvement in on-street partying develops sense of place by disrupting routine interactions and enabling people to articulate and perform

neighbourly friendliness.  The contention here is that the conviviality associated with

partying disrupts mundane social relations and has potential as a tool to engage diverse

communities in place-making.  Further research is required to consider the intersections

between the temporary pleasures of partying and place-making in other settings and to

consider how such disruptions might be supported and encouraged by decision makers.

**References**

Amin, A. 2002. "Ethnicity and the Multicultural City: Living with Diversity".
*Environment and Planning A* 34(6): 959-80.

Amin, A. 2008. "Collective culture and urban public space". *City* 12(3):
5–24.

Anderson, E. 2011. *The cosmopolitan canopy: Race and civility in everyday life*. New
York: W. W. Norton.

Askins, K. 2016. "Emotional citizenry: everyday geographies of befriending, belonging
and intercultural encounter." *Transactions of the Institute of British
Geographers* 41(4): 515-527.

British Library. 2017. Learning Dreamers and Dissenters.
http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/21cc/counterculture/disruption/reclaim/recl
aimthestreets.html (accessed 11/12/2017).

Bunnell, G. 2008. "Great public spaces." *Planning* 74(11): 10–15.

Burrage, H. 2011. "Green hubs, social inclusion and community engagement"
*Proceedings of the Institute of Civil Engineers – Municipal Engineer* 164: 167–
174.

Carmo, A. 2012. "Reclaim the Streets, the protestival and the creative transformation of
the city." *Finisterra* 47(94): 103-118.

Cilliers, E.and J. Timmermans 2014. "The importance of creative participatory planning
in the public place-making process." *Environment and Planning B: Planning
and Design* 41(3): 413–429.

Cresswell, T. 1996. *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression*.
Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Data London. 2017. Mean incomes by area. https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/average-income-tax-payers-borough/resource/392e86d4-f1d3-4f06-a6a5-7fcd0fd65948# (accessed 4/9/2017).

D'Haese, S., I. De Bourdeaudhuij, B. Deforche and G. Cardon. 2015. "Organizing 'Play Streets' during school vacations can increase physical activity and decrease sedentary time in children." *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* 12(14):1-14.

Duffy, M., and J Mair. 2018. *Festival Encounters – Theoretical Perspectives on Festival Events*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Duffy, M., and J. Mair. 2014. "Festivals and sense of community in places of transition: The Yakkerboo Festival, an Australian case study." Chapter 4 in Jepson A., and A. Clarke (eds) *Exploring Community Festivals and Events*. London: Routledge.

Eden Project (2019) Eden Project Communities. https://www.edenprojectcommunities.com/thebiglunchhomepage (accessed 10/5/2019).

Falassi, A. 1987. "Festival: Definition and morphology." Chapter 1 in A. Falassi (ed), Time out of time: Essays on the festival Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press p.p. 1–13.

Faskunger, J. 2013. "Promoting active living in healthy cities of Europe." *Urban Health* 90(1): 142–153.

Fincher, R., and K. Iveson. 2008. *Planning and diversity in the city: redistribution, recognition and encounter*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Franklin, A. and T. Marsden. 2015. "(Dis)connected communities and sustainable place-making." *Local Environment* 20(11): 940 –956.

Franck. K., and Q. Stevens. 2006. *Loose Space: possibility and diversity in urban life*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Georgiou M. 2017. "Conviviality Is Not Enough: A Communication Perspective to the City of Difference Communication." *Culture & Critique* 10; 261–279.

Gibson, C.. and J. Connell. 2011. *Festival Places – Reviving Rural Australia*. Bristol: Channel View Publications.

Gilroy, P. 2004. *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* London: Routledge

Glaser, B., and A. Strauss. 1967. *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research.* London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.

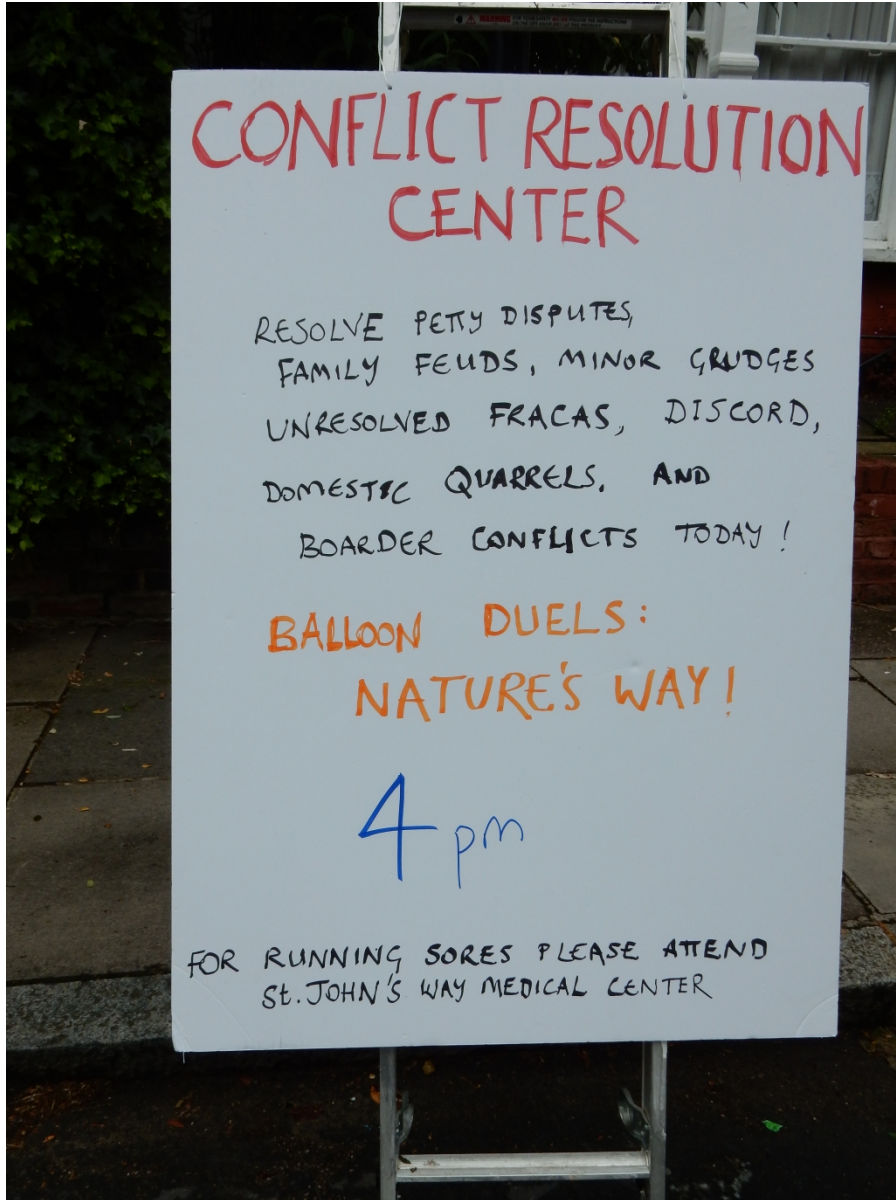Great Get Together (2019) About.  https://www.greatgettogether.org/about/(accessed

10/5/2019).

Hall, S. 2012. *City, Street and Citizen the measure of the ordinary*. London: Routledge.

Heil, T. 2014. "Are neighbours alike? Practices of conviviality in Catalonia and

Casamance." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 17(4): 452-470.

Holt-Jensen A. 1999. *Geography, History and Concepts*. London: Sage.

Koutrolikou, P. 2012. "Spatialities of Ethno Cultural Relations in Multicultural East

London:  Discourses of Interaction and Social Mix." *Urban Studies* 49(10):

2049-2066.

London Borough of Islington (LBI) (2018) State of Equalities in Islington.

https://www.islington.gov.uk/~/media/sharepoint-lists/public-

records/communications/information/adviceandinformation/20172018/2018013

0stateofequalitiesreport20181.pdf (accessed 1/2/2018)

LBI, (2013) Islington Census 2011: Second Release. https://vai.org.uk/wp/wp-

content/uploads/2013/01/2012-Census-Islington-Summary.pdf

 LBI (2014) Hillrise Ward Profile.  https://www.islington.gov.uk//~/media/sharepoint-

lists/public-

records/publichealth/qualityandperformance/profiles/20142015/20140512wardp

rofilehillrise2014 (accessed 1/2/2018).

Lynch, K. 1960. *Image of the City.*  Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Mason, M., S.B. Welch, A. Becker, D.R. Block, L. Gomez, A. Hernandez, Y. Suarez-

*Balcazar. 2011. "Ciclovià in Chicago: a strategy for community development to

improve public health." Community Development 42(2):221–239.*

McCunn, L. and J. Gifford. 2018. "Spatial navigation and place imageability in sense of

place." *Cities* 24: 208-218

Noble, G. 2013. "Cosmopolitan Habits: The Capacities and Habitats of

Intercultural Conviviality" *Body & Society* 19(2-3):162-185.

Quinn, B. 2005 "Arts Festivals and the City." *Urban Studies* 42(5-6): 927– 943,

Relph, E. 1976. *Place and Placelessness.*  London: Pion Limited.

Rojek, C. 2013. *Event Power (How Global Events Manage and Manipulate).* London:

Sage.

Semenza, J. 2003. "The intersection of urban planning, art, and public health: the

Sunnyside Piazza." *American Journal of Public Health*, 93(9): 1439–1441.

Semenza, J, and T, March. 2009. "An urban community-based intervention to advance
     social interactions." *Environment and Behaviour* 41(1): 22–42.

Sharpe, E. K. 2008. "Festivals and Social Change: Intersections of Pleasure and Politics
     at a Community Music Festival." *Leisure Sciences* 30(3): 217-234.

Sweeney, J. Mee, K. Mcguirk, P. and K. Ruming. (2018) "Assembling
     placemaking: making and remaking place in a regenerating city"
     *Cultural Geographies,* 25(4):571-587.

Reger, J. 2015. "The Story of a Slut Walk 1." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*,
     44(1):84-112.

Rota, F.S. and C. Salone. 2014. "Place-making processes in unconventional cultural
     practices. The case of Turin's contemporary art festival Paratissima." *Cities*
     40:90-98.

Sandercock, L. 2006. Cosmopolitan urbanism: A love song to our mongrel
     cities. Chapter 2 in: Binnie J, Holloway J, Millington S and Young C (eds)
     Cosmopolitan Urbanism. Abingdon: Routledge pp37–52.

Sennett, R. 2005. "'Civility', urban age." *Bulletin* 1: 1–3.

Stevens, Q., and H. Shin. 2014. "Urban Festivals and Local Social Space." *Planning
     Practice and Research.* 29(1):1-20.

Stevenson, N. 2016. "Local festivals, social capital and sustainable destination
     development:  Experiences in East London." *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*
     24(7):990-1006.

Stokowsky, P. 2002. "Language of Place and Discourses of Power: Constructing New
     Senses of Place*."* *Journal of Leisure Research*, 34(4):368-382.

The Street Party Site (2019) History of the Street Party.
     http://www.streetparty.org.uk/history.aspx (accessed 10/5/2019).

UK Census Data (2011), Islington statistics.  http://www.ukcensusdata.com/islington-
     e09000019#sthash.XUxMW6z2.dpbs (accessed 11/11/2017)

Vertovec, S. 2007. "Super-diversity and its implications." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30:
     1024–1054.

Waitt, G. 2008. "Urban Festivals: Geographies of Hype, Helplessness and Hope."
     *Geography Compass* 2(2): 513-37.

Wessendorf, S. 2014. "'Being open, but sometimes closed'. Conviviality in a super-
     diverse London neighbourhood." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 17(4):
     392–405.

Zieff, S. G., A. Chaudhuri, and E. Musselman. 2016. "Creating neighborhood recreational space for youth and children in the urban environment: Play(ing in the) Streets in San Francisco." *Children and Youth Services Review* 70:95-101.

Zukin, S., P. Kasinitz, and X Chen. 2016. *Global Cities, Local Streets*. London: Routledge.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60



Figure 1 What do people enjoy about the party

295x83mm (96 x 96 DPI)

Conflict Resolution Centre

292x390mm (300 x 300 DPI)