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Composite Meaning, Flexible Ranges, and Multi-level Conditions of Conviviality:

Exploring the Polymorph

Deriving from the Latin word *convivere,* to live together, the term 'conviviality' has been used to denote situations ranging from groups or individuals co-existing side by side with each other without much contact; living together and inter-relating; and inter-relating and drawing fun, wisdom, and emotional enrichment from this exchange. Preoccupied with debates about the adequate understanding of multiculturalism as a set of civic-political ideas and it's (mal) functioning in the legal and institutional arrangements, social scientists have thus far devoted little attention to this phenomenon as conceived and practiced by people in their everyday lives. And without such attention—what is needed is a mutual engagement of theoretical reflections and empirical investigations--our understanding of the challenges of living-with-difference will remain incomplete.

The propositions presented in this essay aim at initiating a scholarly debate about the ways of conceptualizing and empirically investigating conviviality and it's facilitating and hindering societal contexts. My training and research practice as a comparative-historical sociologist have been founded on three premises which also inform this discussion. The first one is the conceptualization of both human

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actors and their surrounding societal environment as processes of continuous "becoming" (rather than as entities fixed in time) and their forms and contents as always changeable and never fully determined. The second is the recognition of the ever-potential causal impact on the examined phenomena of the temporal dimension of the events and, specifically, their pace (slow/er or quick/er), rhythm (regular or irregular), sequence (the order in which the events happen), and duration (long/er or short/er) (Aminzade 1992; see also Abbott 2001). And third, the historical approach to sociological analysis holds that the answer to *why* social phenomena come into being, change, or persist, is revealed by demonstrating *how* they do it, that is, by showing how they have been shaped over time by the constellations of multiple and changing circumstances (Abrams 1982).   In order to show how/why a social phenomenon evolves in a certain direction and assumes specific characteristics, a historical sociologist identifies the constellation of circumstances that shape these developments.

In the reminder of this essay I present, first, a composite definition of conviviality whose constitutive components are conceived in terms of degrees rather than as present-or-absent conditions. Next, I offer a preliminary list of macro-, micro-, and individual-level circumstances which co-shape conviviality into different arrangements and intensities. Within the framework of the structuration theory which informs my discussion, I then identify the characteristics of cultures of conviviality as different from the orientations and practices of the individuals who (re)create them, and I propose a distinction between the conditions contributing to the emergence of cultures of conviviality and the circumstances responsible for their endurance over time**.** In the last part of the essay I identify different goals of case-based investigations and propose

some strategies of comparative analysis of the contributing circumstances and different forms and "contents" of conviviality, and I illustrate it with examples taken from my previous studies of ground-level multiculturalism in different locations.

Definitional Components and Elasticity of Conviviality

I propose, then, a definition of conviviality as consisting of six elements:

First**,** like multiculturalism as its public-sphere equivalent, conviviality involves the recognition by people of individual and group differences—be they ethnic, racial, religious, or sexual--as legitimate at least, and welcome at best feature of society.

Second, conviviality calls for an absence or at least avoidance to the extent possible of the zero-sum/either-or approach to the apprehension of the world around and its human inhabitants or, differently put, for the appreciation of ambivalence or, better yet, polyvalence of their characteristics. My criterion here echoes the idea informing the proposition formulated recently by Anne Phillips, a political and gender theorist, who in her book *Multiculturalism Without Culture* (2007) postulates the abandonment of the notion of culture conceived in reified holistic terms as the tool carving out the world into neatly separated categories. The fulfilment of this criterion seems to require a social exchange between different groups' members, at least in the public sphere and, at its most, in both public- and private-sphere lives of the diverse people.

Third and related, conviviality at least allows for and at best invites a *Weltanschauung* which Michael Walzer (1990) called a particularist universalism**,** that is, an orientation which (i) combines elements of group-specific concerns and loyalties and

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a commitment to broader societal and/or universal human values and purposes, and (ii) in the case of conflicts between the two calls for the negotiatory (rather than confrontational) mode of their resolution at best, and appeasement in the least.

Fourth, conviviality involves a sympathetic indifference at least and, at best, what Frans de Waal, a world-renowned primatologist, calls an empathic interest in others, especially those different from ourselves (2009). Considering that conviviality involves people representing different ethnic/national origins, racial membership, religious beliefs, sexual preferences etc., its scope and intensity are enhanced to the extent the above five action-guiding orientation-components characterize as many partners in multicultural encounters as possible.

Fifth, conviviality as the recognition of difference informed by an actively sympathetic or at least tolerant perception of the world and its human inhabitants represents this diversity it recognizes more as a "horizontal" arrangement, as in "one hundred different flowers in bloom" rather than as a "vertical," hierarchical one. In practical application, it calls for an "avoiding self-awareness" at least and, at best, the eradication of linguistic and other representational images which categorize the human world into unequal, hierarchically arranged depictions.

The sixth and last definitional component of conviviality requires a certain degree of stability or endurance over time of the above-listed features of people's orientations: the steadier they are the more reliably they guide people's everyday activities.

As the above understanding of conviviality indicates, I propose to conceive of it in terms of degrees rather than as a present-or-absent proposition. One can display this approach in a continuum of views and practices with the options ranging, at the minimum level, from side-by-side co-existence without much or with no mutual engagements to

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intense interactions bringing joy and reciprocal enrichment to the involved parties at the maximum level. Different components of conviviality may exhibit different intensities. I do not believe—if only because changing circumstances of our lives tend to alter our perceptions and behaviour--that we are capable of realizing to perfection in a sustained fashion all the criteria of conviviality. I think, however, that it is good to have this ideal notion before our inner eyes to help us to keep "aiming above ourselves," so to speak, in our daily activities, and to keep ourselves open—intellectually and emotionally—to new life experiences and, thus, to change.

Whereas the notions of low-level conviviality and of pluralism are obviously related, they are not identical in that the latter does not require avoidance of categorizing—to the contrary, it may actually encourage sharp boundary-making activities (whether symbolic or behavioural)—and it does not necessarily call for the "sympathetic" kind of indifference towards others. Similarly, at the other end of the spectrum, the high-level inter-personal conviviality is akin but not identical to cosmopolitanism which is commonly understood as a radical detachment from grounded communities and loyalties and perpetual fluidity of human selves (see Waldron 2000 for a good review of different conceptualizations of cosmopolitanism). These two notions are analogous particularly in their welcoming recognition of difference and the polyvalent apprehension of the world perceived as a non-hierarchical composition. But conviviality differs from cosmopolitanism in its "particularist-universalist" orientation informed by the allowance for or even invitation of a commitment to particular places, groups, and/or traditions.

Factors Contributing to the Emergence of Conviviality and Its Endurance Over Time

As already noted, specific arrangements of the constitutive components of conviviality and their intensity are context-dependent, Below is a list of macro-, micro-, and individual-level circumstances which, dependent upon particular situations, in different constellations co-shape the composition and levels of intensity of conviviality. I have assembled them from the available studies of multiculturalism "on the ground," including my own comparative-historical investigations (Morawska forthcoming; 2011a; 2008; 2001a; 2001b) and from my readings for the project I am currently preparing on everyday multicultural practices in the cities of wordly Alexandria under the Arab rule in the ninth and tenth centuries, pre-ghetto cosmopolitan Venice in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and *Weltstadt* Berlin at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

The factors shaping the forms and intensities of conviviality identified in Table 1 represent a "general assemblage" from which to select time- and place-specific constellations of circumstances relevant for particular situations—the task calling for a concerted empirical investigation which is the project for the future. Here, I present some suggestions regarding configurations of factors responsible for different phases, as it where, of conviviality conceived as a process of "becoming" rather than as an entity fixed in time. The first proposition is a distinction between the conditions contributing to the *emergence* of conviviality as a set of orientations and practices informing individual lifeworlds, and the conditions responsible for the *endurance* of conviviality or, in Oliver Bakewell's (2012) apt phrase, for its "dynamic stability" over time. This distinction is embedded in the theoretical approach to the study of sociocultural life which informs my conceptualization of conviviality, called the structuration model. (For the original

formulations of the structuration model, see Bourdieu 1977;Giddens 1976, 1984; the reformulated versions can be found in Sewell 1992; Emirbayer and Mische 1998; Stones 2005; Elder-Vass 2010; Depelteau 2010; Morawska 2011b)

It can be summarized thusly. Whereas the pressures of forces at the upper and mezzo-level structural layers (economic and political systems, cultural formations, technological civilizations) set the "dynamic limits" of the possible and the impossible within which people act, it is at the level of the immediate social surroundings that individuals and groups evaluate their situations, define purposes, and undertake actions. The intended and, often, unintended consequences of these individual and collective activities affect—sustain or transform—these local-level and, over time, larger-scope structures. The process of this on-going (re)constitution is presented in the diagram below.

STRUCTURATION DIAGRAM ABOUT HERE

Of concern here is the conceptualization of the relationship between societal structures and human activities informing the structuration model. Structures, understood as more or less enduring organizations of social (including economic and political) relations and cultural formations are created and recreated through the collective practice of social actors occupying particular positions in small and larger groups they are members of where they enact specific roles whose normative prescriptions they have more or less internalized. As these position-and-role-specific practices—chains of practices, actually, as there are many acted out by many people at the same time in an ongoing fashion— become routinized and repetitive, they generate over time properties with the characteristics and effects of their own, distinct from or external to the features and

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intentions of the individual people whose activities led to their emergence. Repetitive and routinized human actions, then, generate emergent properties that are irreducible to either the features of the actors who carry them out or the social conditions in which they evolve (on this ability of individuals, see Domingues 2000;Sawyer 2001). This "causal" facility of human actors, however, is not simply the product of their agentic volitions but of the dialectics of the *power to* and *power over* as these actors (re)define and pursue their purposes, playing with or against different structures.

If we conceive of the interplay between societal structures and human actors positedby the structuration model as an ongoing process over time (see the Diagram above), it becomes possible to view the two sides of this relationship as mutually reconstituting each other over a long stretch of time, and at the same time to allow for the pre-existence of structural conditions human actors negotiate as they pursue their everyday lives here and now or, put differently, for the temporal delay in the transformative effects of people's activities on societal structures, particularly larger and more "remote" ones. Closely related to the above proposition, it can be defensibly argued that while the assumption of the pre-existence of societal structures makes good sense in the analysis of actors' orientations and practices in the bounded, time- and place-specific situation, by taking a *longue duree* perspective on the process of (re)constitution of societal structures and human agency one make a similar claim regarding (inter)acting people. Without presuming individuals to be "ultimate"," if we assume the plurality and multi-dimensionality of societal structures, it makes sense theoretically to allow for the possibility in historically specific shorter-*dure* situations of the coexistence of pre-established "harder" macro- and mezzo-level technological, economic, and political structures and the yet-unformed, fluid state of micro-level, local ones.

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Resting on the above premises, I propose the following conditions from the listed earlier enumeration of general-assemblage factors as contributing to the *emergence* of the culture of conviviality in the specific location.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

The emergence of concern here is the coming into being of a ground-level "culture of conviviality" as a more or less encompassing, intense and widespread set of normative expectations, role models and actual practices regarding friendly at best and indifferent in the least peaceful coexistence of groups and individuals living side by side with each other. Of primary importance for the emergence of such culture are, I believe, the individual characteristics of the people involved and the local-level circumstances of their everyday lives. (Repeated implementations "from above" by the tsarist governments of the 19th-century Russian Empire of exclusionary nationalist policies did not prevent the co-existence in "distant proximity" [Rothkirchen 1986; also Kugelmass 1980] of different ethnic and religious groups in specific locations.) The local economic situation, especially prospects of employment and the degree of inter-group competition for jobs, and civic-political climate of the place; resident groups' sociocultural profile, particularly their ideologically or religiously sanctioned orientations towards and relations with "outsiders"; opportunities for, scope, and friendly or inimical nature of actual inter-group contacts; and individual actors' attitudes and behaviour regarding representatives of other groups interact to shape the forms and "contents" of the emergent culture of conviviality. As indicated in Table 2, important in this process is also a sufficient level of regularity or recurrence of local public- and private-sphere symbolic and behavioural practices of coexistence.

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Once formed—this is my second proposition derived from the earlier outlined structuration model which informs this discussion--the culture of conviviality or, in terms of this approach, a local-level "structure" displays features distinct from the characteristics of the individual actors who have contributed to its emergence. According to Dave Elder-Vass (2010) whose conceptualization I find persuasive, the three distinct properties of such 'entities' or structures include, first, inter-relatedness of their parts or what he calls their organisation into a certain pattern; second, possession by these entities of some features that are different from their contributing parts; and third, a certain endurance or, again, dynamic stability over time of these arrangements (idem, pp.16-17, 33-36, 68).

The culture of conviviality as an emergent structure displays 'organisation' in the sense that it is composed of inter-related specific images with attached valuations and normative prescriptions, sets of expectations, reference frameworks and role models that—combined--support people's orientations toward 'others' and set the rules of their behaviour towards them. According to Elder-Vass, symbolic systems are embedded in or carried by "normative circles" or institutions which set the forms and directions of people's practices and incite conformity. The effectiveness of cultures of conviviality requires a sufficient degree of internalization or habituation of its components by the participating individuals. The more legitimacy and following the role-setters have, the more widespread will be the culture of conviviality. The culture of conviviality possesses features which are irreducible to those of the contributing individuals in the form of power of social control through group approval or ostracism regarding specific activities of the participants. And, once formed, it tends to endure over a certain time, if always open to alterations.

My third proposition in the context of a discussion of the emergent cultures-as-structures of conviviality, is a list of conditions likely to contribute to its *endurance over time*.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Whereas they do not constitute the necessary conditions for the emergence of cultures of conviviality, macro-level or larger-societal circumstances--such as the dynamics of the regional/national economy and labour market and state-national/international discourse and policies regarding group and individual human rights and membership which over time influence local labour market and civic-political situation/climate--do play a role in facilitating or hindering the endurance of such an emergent culture. And, important, so does the direction of change in these macro-structural arrangements, such as the economic slump or recovery, loosening or tightening of immigration policies, or the expansion or shrinking of state funding for multicultural programmes.

As for the local-society conditions, besides the same factors that impact the emergence of the culture of conviviality, three additional circumstances, I would argue, are likely to contribute to its endurance or diminution. The first one is the intensity, persistence, and, of course, effectiveness of the local leadership's—the equivalent of Elder-Vass's "normative circles" — involvement in sustaining a multiculturalist civic climate, policies, and ground-level social and cultural initiatives. The second important condition is the presence, social grid, and vitality of the culture of conviviality which, formed by the repeated practices of individual actors, now in the process of structuration exerts a "causal influence" on these people through the internalized (or merely observed for practical reasons of group acceptance) sets of normative expectations and role models

regarding inter-group and interpersonal coexistence. And the third extra factor which contributes to the persistence or volatility of the culture of conviviality is, as in the case of the macro-level societal environment, the direction of change over time in the local economy, in the civic-political leadership and its activities, and in the composition, scope, and intensity of the local culture of conviviality.

Like those at the local-society level, the circumstances concerning resident groups which affect the endurance of the culture of conviviality include, in addition to the factors responsible for its emergence, some extra conditions as well. They are, first, the size and, especially, pace of growth of those groups over time relative to one another in the context of the dynamics of the local economy and political life. Second is the scope, intensity, and in/exclusiveness of group cultures of conviviality (for example, acceptance of Asians but not Africans, Jews but not Muslims, in the public but not private sphere etc.). And third, again is the persistence or direction of change of the composition and pace of growth/decline of resident groups vis-à-vis each other; the level of their residential and work segregation; the intensity and "resolvability" of inter-group conflicts/competition for jobs, residence, and political recognition; the degree of group institutional completeness and sociocultural enclosure together with group members' reciprocal perceptions; and the embeddedness and scope of intra-group cultures of conviviality.

Finally, regarding the individual characteristics which have an impact on the persistence or diminution/disappearance over time of the culture of conviviality, at least two factors should be added, I believe, to the features contributing to its emergence. One of them is, once again, the endurance or direction of change of the individual's socioeconomic position and prospects of mobility; his/her internalized perceptions of and normative prescriptions regarding "others" and concern with/interest in them; h/h

membership in/commitment to ideological/religious communities/beliefs founded on the ideas of superiority/separation/open war with members of other groups; residential/work isolation or (type of) contact with members of other groups; frequency and intensity of prejudice/discrimination experience on the part of other groups; and economic/residential competition with or feeling threatened by other groups. And the other circumstance which plays a role in the endurance or weakening over time of the culture of conviviality is the sequence of events in the individual's life--especially in the (upward or downward) socioeconomic and residential mobility and, often related to it, isolation from or contact (competitive, collegial, or alienating) with members of other groups; access to or withdrawal from membership and commitment to ideological/religious open- or closed-minded communities/beliefs--which alters h/h orientations and practices regarding others. .

Before closing this part of the discussion, I would like to emphasize that the cultures of conviviality which display the properties identified by Elder-Vass have class-, gender-, and often ethnic (or national)-specific features which shape their composition, intensity, and mode of operation, and, therefore, require further specification of their properties. This is a task for future research. Here, I offer only a couple of suggestions. Regarding class, although formal education is customarily treated as part of the individual cultural capital, I decided not to include it under this category in Table 1, because the pilot study recently conducted by the research team I am a member of among immigrants in Berlin and London probing the 'lessons' in multicultural ideas and practices they acquire in their host country/city did not confirm the importance of this factor; in fact, a number of low-educated immigrants whom we interviewed declared a much stronger commitment to the values of multiculturalism than did their highly educated professional counterparts. But the notion of class is not exhausted by the level

of formal schooling: it also entails occupational skills, experience, and pursuits and, important, wherever it still exists, a culture with its shared memories, symbols, and traditions, and it is in these multiple meanings that class-specific cultures of conviviality should be investigated. (It may well be, too, that formal education turns out to be a relevant factor shaping conviviality in larger-scope or differently executed studies, so perhaps it should not be given up.)

As for gender, its impact on conviviality remains practically uninvestigated by scholars interested in this phenomenon (as well as in the related issue of multiculturalism). My intuition as a comparative-historical ethnographer—and this is my suggestion for a possible venue of research on the topic— is that each of the two genders will tend to display its own genre of tensions in his and her commitments to and practice of conviviality. As the non-dominant "second" part of (most) societies, women might be expected to have an emphatic understanding of or even an affinity with being "other," and yet their traditional socialization as the defenders of the family hearth and the transmitters of its unique traditions would likely make them suspicious of outsiders. For their part, men, seeing themselves as representative of the "universal" ideals of humanity and responsible for their implementations might also, albeit on different grounds, be expected to display a commitment to human diversity—an inclination tempered by their dominant role in society as the "first and only." These potential contradictory tendencies would be, of course, further complicated by other characteristics of men's and women's lives such as their national/ethnic/religious culture, socioeconomic position, residence, social environment, etc.

Cultures of Conviviality: Different Research Goals and Investigation Strategies

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As my identification of different components of conviviality and the conditions of its emergence and persistence indicates, the study of this phenomenon requires a multi-level analysis sensitive to time- and place-specific features of the social environments in which it evolves and then endures or weakens and eventually vanishes. Because of the complexity, the context-dependency and thus, the on-going "motion" of cultures of conviviality, a better-fitting mode of their investigation are case-based rather than variable-based analysis (see Ragin and Becker 1992 on the case-based social inquiry). Charles Ragin's (1994; see also Hall 1999) typology of different research goals in case-based studies can serve as a useful guide in such projects. His list includes:

-testing/refining theories/concepts

-interpreting significance

- giving voice

- exploring diversity, and

-establishing historical, that is, time- and-place-bound patterns.

In my ethnographic practice, including analyses of ground-level ideas and practices of multiculturalism by different groups in different time periods and locations, I have derived the greatest cognitive gain from a three-step study of the investigated phenomena: first, by exploring diversity; then by trying to identify historical patterns; and, on this basis, refining of theories or concepts that have informed my analysis (Morawska2011b; 2009; 2008; 2001a; 2001b; forthcoming).

The best way to undertake this challenge is, in my opinion, through a comparative analysis (see Rihoux and Ragin 2008 on strategies of case-based comparative investigations). Comparative analyses can aim at a high level of complexity by including as many dimensions of the examined phenomena tested on as many groups in as many different locations as possible or, just the opposite, follow a simple (or

even deliberately simplified) setups. The simple setup has two variants: a comparison of different actors in a similar setting, and a comparison of similar actors in different settings In what follows I offer two illustrations of these investigative strategies taken from my research. Because of space limitations, I only signal here the types of comparative settings and the general directions of analysis, without distinguishing between the emergence and endurance phases of the reported phenomena.

Thus, in the mode of comparing different groups in a similar setting, the latter can denote a large(r) place such as a country or its region or a small(er) locality such as the city or neighbourhood. "Controlling" for the features of the surrounding context, this type of comparative analysis allows for an exploration of the diversity of factors in larger societal environment and group and individual circumstances that contribute to the emergence, specific features, and/or the persistence or weakening over time of the culture(s) of conviviality.

> An interesting case for this strategy--a call for an investigation rather than an account of the situation--comes from my examination of ground-level multiculturalism as practiced in the Mission neighbourhood in San Francisco, the place where I also lived during the summer of 1998 (Morawska forthcoming). The Mission neighbourhood represents an unusually encompassing and "vigorous" instance of conviviality, involving different ethnic, racial, and sexual groups, and practiced in multiple public forums as well as in personal relations. During my sojourn in the Mission I did not detect nor did I did find reported in any local studies I read, any hierarchical ordering of people by colour, sexual orientation or age, either in the public space or in personal interactions.

> I have identified the following factors responsible for this place's uncommonly lively and intense everyday multicultural practices. San Francisco's enduring historical tradition, dating back to the late 19th century, of attracting "free-spirited" nonconformist settlers; its less settled or more permeable than on the East Coast societal structures; and, throughout the first half of the 20th century, its moderate Republic city politics informed by the tolerant, open-minded civic culture[1] subsequently replaced in the 1960s with successive "rainbow coalitions" of political leaders with different skin colours, religious beliefs, and sexual orientations all of which have actively promoted multiculturalism in the city's economic, civic-political, and socio-cultural life. These hands-on

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[1] The important exception here was the long-lasting anti-Orientalism

multiculturalist activities have been particularly intense in the Mission neighbourhood, probably because of a higher-than-elsewhere in the city concentration of people whose professions—arts, literature, humanities--and, with it, life orientations foster explorative, open-minded attitudes towards the world and people in it.   A lack of a significant residential or economic competition among the resident groups has upheld the friendly coexistence of their members, and a low residential, racial, ethnic, and sexual (gay vs. heterosexual) segregation has facilitated everyday contacts. These features of the Mission have, in turn, attracted a particular kind of people: cosmopolitan or, as the observers call them, "bohemian" in mind and spirit, whose individual characteristics have, reciprocally, sustained the multiculturalist profile of the neighbourhood they live in.

And yet, this all-encompassing, intense openness to diversity of the Mission residents H has not applied to   "a [different] group in a similar setting" or the kind of people (whether connected to each other or not) who even slightly deviate from the locally accepted understanding of mumulticulturalism. In fact, any displays perceived as crossing the boundaries of the "politically correct" expressions of this orientation are met with an unforgiving, dogmatic intolerance. I am not entirely sure why this happens and I did not dare to ask my neighbours. It may be because m members of these many racially, sexually, and culturally "other" groups do not yet feel entirely certain or secure in their recognition; or maybe they came to this neighbourhood to find a "recognition paradise" from an inimical world outside and they now impose the strictest multiculturalist code as a guarantee of this promise, especially since they know from their experience in the larger society how fragile it is.

The other mode of research strategy, comparing similar groups in different settings, allows a researcher to control for personal characteristics of the social actors involved in the study, and to test the impact on conviviality of macro- and micro-level societal contexts. My illustration represents a comparison across space, but this strategy can be also used for investigations across time.

The comparison of similar actors in different locations involves the position of Jews in two American small towns in the early twentieth century: Greensboro in North Carolina,and Johnstown, Pennsylvania (Morawska 2001a; 1996) The recognition of Jewish residents in a particular place as the legitimate and "equal" economic and political partners entitled to their ethnic and/or religious differences can serve as a measuring rod of the level of location's commitment to and actual practice of conviviality In Greensboro, then, Jews, were members of the town's established economic elite well-integrated into its political and sociocultural life, including local country clubs and high-status associations[2], they were seen and treated as full-fledged citizens and their "religious

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[2] Throughout the interwar period Jews in America were customarily excluded from such gentile organizations regardless of their education and economic status.

difference" as an accepted component of the city's cultural landscape. The constellation of circumstances responsible for this good conviviality included, on the side of the local society, the commercial nature of Greensboro's economy and the recognized role of the Jews in making it thrive, as well as the long-time presence and influence of the Quakers on town public affairs which sustained the tradition of tolerance; and, on the side of the Jewish group, its small size with a high proportion of native-born Americans, residential dispersion, and the mostly Reform (liberal-progressive) nature of Jewish religious practices and a weak organizational group infrastructure or low level of its sociocultural enclosure

In sharp contrast, Jewish residents of Johnstown, Pennsylvania—referred to as the "Hebrews" in the local media and by political representatives--remained multiply marginalized throughout the interwar period in the town's economy, political affairs, and sociocultural life. The following constellation of circumstances contributed to this situation. Among the local-society features, it was the heavy-industrial nature of the town's economy dominated by the local potentate, Bethlehem Steel Company staffed mostly by the established WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) elite whose influence penetrated far beyond the economic sphere into the social, political, and cultural realms; and the exclusionary, ethnic-ascriptive bases of local social organization informed by strong nativist (anti-foreign) sentiments. For their part, from the time of their settlement in Johnstown at the end of the 19th century until the postwar era Jews occupied a position of small shopkeepers serving predominantly an immigrant, primarily East and South European, working-class clientele without a voice in public affairs (BSC had remained staunchly non-union until 1941), the predominance of immigrants in the Jewish population and of the Orthodox religious practices which sustained the sociocultural enclosure of the local community; and the small size of the Jewish group which in the context of Johnstown's unfriendly civic-political climate, made its members feel less rather than, as in Greensboro, more secure as residents.

So much for the illustrations of different modes of case-based comparative analyses aimed at exploring diversity. .Once a sufficient amount of data has been collected— besides practical considerations such as time and funding, the-rule-of-a-thumb criterion to decide whether this is so can what's ethnographers call "the saturation point" or the situation when added cases do not bring new relevant knowledge—a researcher would design more complex comparative frameworks in search of more encompassing information about different patterns of the emergence, characteristics, and persistence or weakening/disappearance over time of the cultures of conviviality and their contributing circumstances. With this information in hand, h/s would move to the re-assessment of the proposed concept of conviviality and, assuming investigation was

conducted in the framework of the structuration model (it could be, of course, informed

by other theories)—of its basic propositions.

Conclusion

The main purpose of the foregoing discussion has been to interest those concerned with

conviviality—in examining the defining components of this phenomenon, and the facilitating

and hindering conditions of its emergence and endurance over time—issues which have thus far

attracted minimal scholarly Attention. I proposed here a context-dependent, flexible

understanding of conviviality which allows for the expansion and contraction of its contents and

intensity with changing circumstances. Within the framework of the structuration model which

has informed my historical-sociological investigations of inter-group coexistence, I then

proposed a distinction between the emergence and persistence phases of conviviality and I

suggested the constellations of macro- and micro-level and individual circumstances which

shape its composition and intensity in these different "moments." Finally, I identified different

research goals informing comparative case-based investigations which, I argued, should be

appropriate for the study of conviviality, and offered a few empirical illustrations of such

analyses.

My training as a comparative-historical sociologist, my practice as an ethnographer, and

my theoretical approach founded on the conception of human actors and the society around

them as the ongoing processes of becoming through the reciprocal but always under-determined

(re)constitution, "naturally" incline me to look for—and find—diversity and polymorphy rather

than the general uniform patterns in the phenomena I investigate. This preference has also

informed the foregoing discussion. The approach I propose calls for a multi-step/multi-level

longitudinal research optimally carried out by a team of investigators. It undoubtedly requires

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from the participating researchers a good deal of *Sitzfleisch,* but, I strongly believe, it brings worthy results. Researchers interested in finding the common underlying regularities of human behaviour—in this case, conviviality—yet cognizant of the situatedness and temporality of social life, can find insightful guidance in their projects in the works of John R. Hall (1999); Andrew Abbott (2001); and Charles Ragin (1987) noted earlier.

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