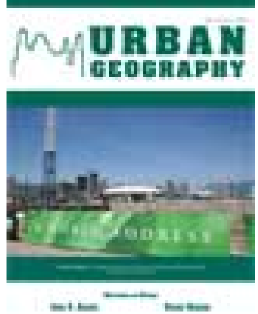

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Encountering neighbors: coexisting with difference in Auckland's Avondale

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses neighboring practices across difference in Avondale, a diverse and changing neighbourhood in Auckland, New Zealand. Based on a qualitative study of urban encounters, we draw attention to modes of coexistence in the parochial realm and, more specifically, to encounters with neighbors as an under-researched site of living with difference in cities. In Avondale, adherence to tacit norms of pragmatic, light-touch neighboring is crucial to residents' sense of convivial coexistence and negotiating such rules is regularly inflected with 'difference'. Our findings show that various facets of diversity are salient in enacting neighbourliness. However, class-based differences associated with a recent influx of higher-income earners threw difference into stark relief because newcomers were perceived as deliberately breaching codes of conduct. Our findings demonstrate the importance of accounting for the salience of multiple facets of difference and for conditions of demographic change in developing an understanding of the complexities of neighboring.

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Diversity; parochial realm; neighbor; pragmatic encounters; class; Auckland

Introduction

This paper discusses neighboring practices as a parochial mode of coexistence in Avondale, a diverse and changing neighborhood in Auckland, New Zealand. Originally a working-class community with a longstanding history of ethno-cultural diversity, this West Auckland neighborhood remains relatively deprived. However, a recent influx of higher income earners coupled with the construction of new housing and Council investment in public facilities have initiated both demographic shifts and urban change that have become noticeable to its residents. These current conditions frame residents' perceptions of difference, especially, as we argue, in the context of neighboring.

In illuminating parochial relations at the scale of the neighborhood as a key site of negotiating everyday diversity (Peterson, 2017), our discussion contributes to scholarship on living with difference in the context of urban diversification. Even though neighborhoods have long been regarded as key sites of negotiating diversity, most research has focused either on fleeting encounters between strangers in the public realm or on sustained encounters in the micro-publics (Amin, 2002) that constitute the parochial

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realm. A surprisingly small number of studies within the canon on living with urban difference have considered relationships between neighbors.

Drawing on qualitative data, we argue that neighboring practices are integral to parochial relations within neighborhoods and a site of negotiating difference. We highlight two key socio-spatial aspects of living with difference as it plays out in Avondale. Firstly, we demonstrate that neighboring is intrinsic to parochial relations in Avondale. Being able to rely on adherence to tacit codes of conduct underlies residents' sense of convivial community. Secondly, we argue that diversity is simultaneously made commonplace and hyper-visible through negotiations of these codes of conduct. We demonstrate that even as various axes of difference, such as age, and ethno-linguistic background play a role in enacting these informal rules of pragmatic neighborliness, primarily class-based differences are highlighted as a potential source of conflict and threat to established norms of neighboring. This finding is both place- and time-specific and shaped by legacies of demographic change which indicates a need to concretely consider urban and demographic change in research on convivial coexistence. It also demonstrates a necessity to go beyond ethnicity as a central concern in conceptualizing difference and diversity and their effects on people's ability for convivial interactions and coexistence.

In the next section, we turn to existing scholarship on urban diversity and encounters. We pay particular attention to the co-constitutive nature of spaces and modes of interactions and implications for how we understand difference and diversity to be salient. After situating our own contributions within this field, we outline our research design and introduce our research site, Avondale. The discussion of key findings from this study of encounters in Avondale forms the penultimate section before we conclude the paper with a discussion of the implications of our research.

Modes of urban coexistence

The growing complexity in social diversity in the contemporary global city has prompted considerable interest in the question of living with difference (Valentine, 2008; Vertovec & Cohen, 2002) which culminated in a "diversity turn" and an attendant "*convivial turn*" (Nayak, 2017, p. 290, italics original) in the social-scientific study of the city and migration. Beyond complexity in and of itself, though, scholarly engagement with diversity and conviviality must also be understood as a critical response to policy discourses that heralded diversity's (especially ethno-cultural and religious diversity) propensity for conflict (Vollebergh, 2016). Studies of everyday quotidian encounters across difference served to demonstrate that while conviviality – in the sense of conflict-free harmony – may not be all-pervasive, people are generally able to successfully negotiate diversity so that it becomes "commonplace" (Wessendorf, 2014) and "breathable" (Ye, 2016).

In this context, social science scholarship has pinpointed an array of urban "contact zones" that shape and are shaped by encounters that hinge on a number of multiple intersecting registers, including nationality, race, religion, language, class, legal status, gender, and sexuality (Back & Sinha, 2018; Binnie et al., 2006; Collins et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2015). Notably, this expansive body of qualitative research on city dwellers' day-to-day practices of negotiating difference has focused primarily on public and semi-public

shared spaces – or, as Amin (2002, p. 959) calls them, "micropublics" – as sites of encounters. Neighborhood streets, parks and playgrounds, as well as public transport, cafés, markets, schools, community centers, libraries, and community gardens are particular urban spaces that are conceptualized as "places of meeting with 'the stranger'" (Simonsen, 2008, p. 145).

Of central importance to our discussion is that this research has shown that spaces and modes of coexistence are mutually constitutive (Peterson, 2017). This means that different kinds of spaces determine, and are conversely defined by, particular codes of conduct and by "the ways people interact and how relations, meanings and rules are produced and negotiated within these settings" (Peterson, 2017, p. 1070). For instance, shared public spaces afford strangers the opportunity to engage in acts of low-key sociality as well as "acts of kindness and compassion" (Thrift, 2005, p. 140) in fleeting, one-off interactions. Much of the research on the public realm has argued that the public infrastructure has an important role to play in enabling people to interact (Rokem & Vaughan, 2019), have opportunities for "pleasurable forms of sociality and togetherness" (Koch & Latham, 2011, p. 517) or to create a "comfort zone" (Blokland & Nast, 2014).

There are also particular social and spatial orders to spaces that form the parochial realm (Hunter, 1995; Lofland, 1973). In short, the parochial realm is where community is constituted by interpersonal networks in local spaces such as schools, cafés, church and side streets and is located at the scale of the neighborhood. As Lofland points out, these can be referred to as "home territories" where "regular participants have a relative freedom of behavior and sense of intimacy and control over the area" (Lofland, 1998, p. 69). In this realm of communal relations, people are less familiar with each other than in the private realm but are more than the strangers typically encountered in the public realm. Some sites, such as community centers, writers' groups or even schools are characterized by an "elective belonging" around a common interest (Butcher, 2019, p. 390) that shapes people's sustained interactions. Peterson's (2017) empirical study of interactions in the library and community center of a Dutch city demonstrated that the shared interests that bring people together in these settings enable connections and that even though "interactions may start out as purposeful," they "take on aspects of amicability such as showing compassion, concern and interest in others" (Peterson, 2017, p. 1078). As such, sociality in the parochial realm produces a more mutual sense of obligation amongst people who share local institutions and interpersonal networks (Hunter, 1995).

Even though Lofland (1998) and much recent research (which we will turn to in the next section) has drawn attention to the parochial realm, one aspect that is currently underexplored in research on encounters in diversifying cities is the relation between neighbors. Likewise, spaces that are not designed to bring people together such as driveways, front lawns, staircases, and residential streets have, by far, remained under the radar in the literature on diversity and encounters. In these residential spaces, encounters amongst people are enabled by mere proximity. Neighbors are neither complete strangers nor are they bound by common interests. Their encounters are, by nature of proximity, typically recurring in their familiarized locales. Existing research suggests that a light-touch sociality characteristic of public spaces is also part of neighboring in Western societies. For Painter (2012), for instance, the neighbor "is typically neither a friend, nor a stranger, nor an enemy, but an unknown" (p. 526) and Laurier

et al. (2002) argue that "most neighbours, as you would expect, were just neighbours" (p. 352). For van Eijk (2012), this means that neighboring is a relation of affinity not affect; one that does not require emotional involvement. Indeed, keeping one's distance and respecting the other's privacy are important rules of neighboring (Kusenbach, 2006; Laurier et al., 2002, van Eijk, 2012). Yet, as Kusenbach (2006) also shows, there is more to neighboring than distance. Based on a study of two Hollywood neighborhoods, she typologized neighborly relations as "friendly recognition, parochial helpfulness, proactive intervention, and embracing and contesting diversity" (Kusenbach, 2006, p. 279). It is, for instance, part of neighboring etiquette that "one *should* help a neighbour in need" (Kusenbach, 2006, p. 292, italics original) and that any help received should be gratefully acknowledged and reciprocated or extended in turn to another neighbor in need. It is adherence to such codes of conduct that organizes a network of neighborly encounters and sense of community.

Both the importance of low-key, pragmatic exchanges and of adherence to codes of neighborly conduct are aptly illustrated in Burrell's (2016) Leicester-based study which explicitly considers the effects of increased mobility and subsequent "churn" on social relations amongst neighborhood residents. She argues that residents of neighborhoods with high population turnover cope surprisingly well with churn because the "infrastructure of conviviality" (Burrell, 2016, p. 1613) provides stability. The individual is less important to enacting neighborly relations than the figure of the neighbor. This means that as long as residents can rely on the neighbor to fulfill their role of neighboring, regardless of people moving in and out, churn is not a threat to the social fabric of the neighborhood. This demonstrates the significance of low-pressure, light touch norms of neighboring for generating a sense of familiarity, comfort, and "reassurance" (Burrell, 2016, p. 1612) that is productive for day-to-day living.

A key question this outline of modes of coexistence in different urban spaces raises is what role difference and diversity play in these encounters and at what points they become salient in negotiating modes of living together convivially.

Encounters across difference

The burgeoning body of scholarship on encounters was catalyzed by diversity even though the insights into rules and modes would be equally applicable in a hypothetically entirely homogenous population. But in societies that are increasingly heterogeneous, how are diversity and difference implicated?

Amin (2012) has argued that in contemporary urban societies that are thoroughly hybrid and crucibles of diverse stranger gatherings, a degree of distance, civil inattention, and indifference to "strangeness" are important characteristics of living with difference. However, this only holds as long as people follow established norms that are always already imbued with power differentials. Difference quickly becomes hyper-visible in breaches of formal and informal rules and regulations governing the use of shared space. Cancellieri and Ostanel (2015), for instance, showed that recent migrants to Padua created "spaces of sociability" (p. 507) in the public spaces of the city but that "locals" perceived such publicly visible practices as transgressions of "established behavioural taken-for-granted conventions" (p. 503).

In semi-public spaces, such as schools (see, for instance, Basu, 2011; Hewitt, 2016; Neal et al., 2016; Wilson, 2014), community centers (see Peterson, 2017) and community gardens (Aptekar, 2015) negotiations of difference play out in settings where people engage in more sustained rather than one-off fleeting encounters. As Peterson (2017) has claimed, such settings “let us observe in more detail how people might come to terms with difference” (p. 1069). Overall, this scholarship underscores the more pragmatic, and often ambivalent, ways in which people (learn to) live with difference and, importantly, argues that people can coexist in ways that are not reducible to the consistently convivial. Ho’s (2011) analysis of the potential of schools as micro-publics in the context of Sydney, Australia, highlights that learning to live with difference does not need to be consistently harmonious. Instead, a degree of conflict can be productive and strengthen the robustness of micro-publics without subtracting from the more important aim of “a mutual recognition of and respect for the other’s legitimate presence in a shared social space” (Ho, 2011, p. 617).

The existing research that considers difference and diversity in neighboring has come to fairly diverging conclusions. Van Eijk (2012), for example, argues that while culturalist discourses inevitably shape *perceptions* of neighboring, in *practice* difference does not matter, precisely because of the low-key nature of interactions which does not require close connections. However, research has also shown that differences can emerge in the very understandings of rules of light-touch sociality amongst neighbors. Documenting how migrants perceive and negotiate expected modes of neighboring in their new host communities, Hebbani et al. (2017) and Heil (2014) show that Ethiopian former refugees in Brisbane and Senegalese migrants in Catalonia, Spain, respectively, were struck by the low-key nature of neighborly interactions because they contrasted with their own experience of neighbors as intimate and familial co-residents who routinely socialized and visited each other’s homes, thereby blurring the distinctions between codes of conduct in the parochial and private realms. As Heil (2014) explains, Senegalese migrants to Catalonia expected neighborly relations to be more individualistic and adapted their behavior accordingly, taking care not to be intrusive. At the same time, migrants in Catalonia are explicitly instructed by the regional government that *convivencia* is a formal code of conduct for neighboring (Heil, 2014), reflecting policy concerns regarding immigrant integration. The way such discourses and formalized rules intersect with the unwritten and tacit understandings of neighboring and highlight difference was shown aptly in Vollebergh’s (2016) study of neighboring in Antwerp. Here, the concept of *samenleven* (living together) informed white Flemish residents’ expectations of interactions, especially in relation to “*culturally Other* neighbours” (p. 141, emphasis original) but not to white Flemish co-inhabitants. As Vollebergh (2016) argues, *samenleven* informed an ethical responsibility of achieving togetherness and, in turn, disappointment when social interactions did not live up to expectations.

Lastly, and in contrast to van Eijk’s (2012) argument, research has also found difference to be the subject of much attention in the context of neighboring. In Kusenbach’s (2006) study, reactions to perceived difference took the form of either explicit inclusion or active resistance to it. Importantly, especially the latter only occasionally revolved around ethno-cultural difference. More often than not conflict revolved around other forms of social diversity, such as being single, a tenant rather than a homeowner,

a potential drug user, or a resident with assumed mental health concerns, and purported behaviors associated with such statuses.

Our paper advances these preceding understandings of coexistence with difference by analyzing neighboring practices in Avondale, Auckland, as a form of parochial relations. In this study, our attention was drawn to neighboring primarily as a result of a notable lack of interactions in Avondale's public spaces. In Avondale, residential streets, front gardens and driveways take on particular significance for making community. These spaces afford residents opportunities for encounters with fellow residents and engender normative expectations of neighborly relationships. Even though neighbors were not complete strangers, interactions were characterized by a low key, light touch, fleeting sociality similar to that found in public spaces by other research.

Evidence of such fleeting encounters in parochial spaces illuminates how people live with and negotiate difference(s) in ordinary, unromantic, already existing ways. We highlight a more situated understanding of "breathable diversity" (Ye, 2016) by demonstrating the importance of partial and low-pressure forms of living together – or side by side – with difference. It also shows that difference can be ordinary or thrown into sharp relief within day-to-day neighboring practices. We explicitly set out to investigate what kinds of difference were salient to neighborhood residents and in what contexts of their everyday lives. In this approach, our research also responds to Glick Schiller and Çağlar's repeated call to think "beyond the ethnic lens" (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2013, 2011), that is, to overcome a methodological nationalism that tends to equate diversity and difference with ethnicity. In so doing, we recognize that difference and diversity are complex and intersectional. As we show later, even if ethnicity remains an important category of differentiation and integral to the idea of diversity, class differences emerged as the more salient marker of difference in the context of neighborly relations in Avondale.

Finally, this paper is an opportunity to grow the global theoretical and empirical portfolio of understanding the complexities of urban diversity, as grounded in people's everyday spaces and lives. As the research literature discussed above indicates, much of the recent work on urban diversity has been conducted in Western European contexts, first and foremost the United Kingdom (cf Hall, 2015; Neal et al., 2013; Watson & Saha, 2013), and to a lesser extent in North America and Australia (Aptekar, 2015; Basu & Fiedler, 2017; Hiebert, 2002; Ho, 2011; Lobo, 2010) and more recently in Asian and Middle Eastern cities (Daniels, 2010; Elsheshtawy, 2013; Ye, 2016). There remains a continued need to be "worlding" urban theory (McGuirk, 2015; Robinson, 2002; Roy, 2009; Roy & Ong, 2011). This call is inspired by the need to enable conceptual, rather than just empirical, non-European contributions. This paper widens our range of sites for both empirical *and* theoretical enquiry as the empirical distinctiveness of Avondale provides an opportunity for conceptualizing what everyday diversity looks like outside of the dominant cores of knowledge production.

Research site and methodology

The findings we discuss in the remainder of this article are derived from a research project that aimed to explore the socio-spatial patterns of living with difference and diversity in the context of Auckland as a city that has been undergoing drastic migration-led population increase and diversification over recent decades (Terruhn, 2020). We conducted the study in the two neighborhoods of Avondale and Northcote but will focus our discussion in this paper exclusively on the former. We selected Avondale because of its particular demography and ongoing patterns of change. It is located at the western edge of Auckland's inner-city suburbs and its ethnic diversity is the outcome of different periods of migration. Avondale was once a working-class Pākehā[1] area before Māori and Pacific communities moved in from the late 1970s. This pattern of intra-city migration is the product of a combination of factors: gentrification, a decline in industrial production, as well as transport planning practices displaced Māori and Pasifika residents from the inner-city suburbs they inhabited at the time, forcing them to move outwards.

As New Zealand's immigration policies liberalized from the 1990s onwards, Avondale became home to a greater number of international migrants. The first international migrants were largely from Asia, with Chinese and Indian migrants the biggest groups. More recently, there is a growing number of Middle Eastern and African migrants in Avondale. In 2013, about half of the suburb's population of approximately 21,000 was born overseas. This demonstrates not only the changing faces of Avondale but also the growing migrant-driven complexity of the neighborhood. Today, Avondale contains the fifth most diverse Census Area Unit in Aotearoa/New Zealand where no one ethnic group forms a majority.

The most recent inward-moving trend transforming the neighborhood is again intra-city migration, particularly of Pākehā. Following a steep decline in the early 2000s, the numbers and the percentage of Europeans in Avondale have been slowly rising. This ongoing influx of Pākehā constitutes shifts in Avondale's changing socio-economic profile. Like its surrounding West Auckland suburbs, Avondale was a working-class area that ranked high in the relative deprivation index. This has begun to change as new, wealthier groups of Pākehā move in. Indeed, the "ongoing gentrification has resulted in the number of middle to high-income households growing and the manufacturing workers living in the area slowly being replaced by professionals working in the CBD" (Panuku Development Auckland., 2017, p. 28). This latest demographic change is prompted mainly by two related factors. Firstly, Auckland's steep house prices make properties in more desirable neighborhoods inaccessible to first-time homebuyers. Secondly, and as a response to the housing shortage, Avondale is a key site of building activity. The neighborhood's population is projected to increase by approximately 8,000 people over the course of the next 15 years. Auckland Council has also recently budgeted 8.5 million dollars for the revitalization of Avondale's town center and the provision of a new community center and green spaces. In their advertising for new dwellings that are being built in Avondale, one of the Housing Companies explicitly draws attention to the "massive transformation" Avondale is experiencing "due to significant investment in the local infrastructure and an influx of young couples and families buying into the area" (Ockham Residential, n.d). This is a suburb that is "in progress" through socio-economic

changes that are ongoing across the city, policy shifts at the national level and mobilities at the global scale.

Against this backdrop, the study upon which this article is based explored the socio-spatial patterns of how difference and diversity manifest in the neighborhood, in what ways difference was salient in social interactions in Avondale, and what kinds of difference were salient. The study was designed to explore social interactions across difference in order to be able to contribute to analyses and theorizations of how diversity is understood and practiced in diversifying urban neighborhoods. The fieldwork, which we conducted between May and September 2016, consisted of a number of methods. We began with observations in Avondale's public spaces, its high street, reserves, residential streets, the local library and a Sunday market. For this purpose, two researchers visited Avondale on a variety of days and at different times of the day to observe public life. In addition, we attended neighborhood events, such as a public safety meeting, two urban design workshops organized by a local community group, a multicultural lunch organized by a city council affiliated organization and, in the lead-up to local body elections, a Q&A meeting with candidates. We documented all observations in field notes, as well as photographs and video recordings if appropriate. We also engaged with people in the area – such as residents, shop owners and market stall holders, members of business associations, and elected Local Board members who represent the community – in a mix of informal conversations, interviews, and transect walks. We audio and/or video-recorded over 50 conversations and many more were summarized within our field notes. We used these conversations to explore people's sense and perception of place and community, to ask how important their local neighborhood and places therein were to them and how they engaged with others in their neighborhood. Lastly, we included material from social media pages related to the neighborhood and materials from local community organizations in our data collection.

We inductively analyzed all transcripts of text and all visual material in a way that allowed us to chart where and how difference manifested locally, how people perceived and experienced difference within the neighborhood and what aspects of diversity were salient in what situations. Working as a team with two field researchers and a research lead allowed us to compare and discuss our individual observations and interpretations.

In this ethnographically inspired research project, we aimed to include a wide variety of residents but we are not making any claims to be able to generalize the findings. Because neighboring practices are difficult to observe, the findings presented below are based on a subset of data drawn from a small number of in-depth interviews, complemented with informal conversations and media content. Our analysis indicates certain patterns but we acknowledge that not all voices are equally represented in the data. Follow-up studies that specifically focus on neighboring practices under conditions of neighborhood change would be a welcome addition to provide greater nuance.

The following sections detail findings from this study which speak to the ways in which modes of coexistence in Avondale are shaped both by the infrastructure of the neighborhood and its demographic make-up. More specifically, we demonstrate that pragmatic, light-touch neighborly practices form an important part of the fabric of the neighborhood. Difference manifests in a variety of ways and ethnicity, language proficiency, and age are all seen to impact neighboring practices. However, the influx of higher income earners who allegedly refuse to adhere to the established unwritten norms of neighboring is perceived as

a threat to neighborliness and is, therefore, a key marker of difference. Expanding on Burrell's (2016) study, this finding also shows that churn can in fact be troublesome if newcomers are perceived as not adhering to established norms of neighboring.

Modes of coexistence: pragmatic encounters with neighbors

Taking our cue from international ethnographic studies of encounters in diverse neighborhoods, we initially directed our attention to Avondale's public spaces: the local high street, reserves and playgrounds dotting residential areas, the local library, and a large Sunday market. As discussed previously, much of the literature asserts that these are the urban sites where city dwellers inevitably intermingle and rub shoulders with diverse strangers. Things are, however, different in Avondale. Auckland is a suburban city, a collection of low-density neighborhoods (see Auckland Regional Council, 2010 for a history of suburbanization in Auckland). Because of the city's immense urban sprawl, residents of many neighborhoods are highly reliant on cars. This has measurable effects on public life, as has been pointed out ever since cars came to dominate city life. As an observation recorded in a local history publication from the 1960s shows, the advent of car reliance had the effect that

> more and more Avondale residents were able to travel to Lynnmall, Kelston and other shopping complexes where prices were lower and parking easier. This affected not only the Avondale business area but also the community life of the district. Residents less often met each other at the bus stop, the railway station or the local store. (in Truttman & Avondale-Waterview Historical Society, 2003, p. 116)

Our own observations confirmed that this remains the case. We were immediately struck by the relative absence of people in the neighborhood's public spaces. With the exception of early mornings and mid-afternoons, when parents gather at the gate of the Primary School to pick up their children, and high school students pass through the town center on their walk to and from the local schools or gather at the bus stops, we saw few pedestrians. In conversations with shopkeepers, we find that business is slow for many of them. A number of benches dot the pavement along the length of Avondale's high street but more often than not, they are vacant. Residents echoed our observations. When asked about their perceptions and importance of the neighborhood, many said that Avondale did not have a hub and offered no places to linger. While they generally valued the uniqueness of Avondale's town center with its small, colorful shops rather than big box stores, it was also evident that they hardly ever spent time there. This absence of people in public places reportedly had a knock-on effect. One local resident, a Pākehā woman who had lived in the neighborhood for a number of years but had only recently begun to spend more time in its public places since going on maternity leave, stated that she did not like to frequent the local reserves because "there's not necessarily other people there." Though she did not feel unsafe, she nonetheless perceived the absence of people as discomforting. This shows that an absence of opportunities for "public familiarity" (Blokland & Nast, 2014) with other users of space may deter yet others from using public spaces. As one resident and member of the Local Board put it, the habitus of getting around in private cars rather than using public transport, walking or cycling was a main obstacle to "making connections" because "we don't see people."

With the exception of the library, weekly market and occasional organized community events, opportunities for fleeting encounters in Avondale's public spaces are slim. Our findings – which are primarily drawn from conversations and a small number of in-depth interviews with residents – indicate that residential streets, as well as private or shared driveways and front gardens, are key sites of encounters and of parochial relations with other residents of the neighborhood. It is important to know that the streetscape of Avondale's residential areas (still) largely consists of individual detached single-family homes that stand on sections of varying sizes, which are separated from neighboring properties by hedges or low fences. Often there is no, or only very little, physical separation between the front lawns of private properties and the public footpaths. Such open streetscapes are especially characteristic of Auckland's low-income neighborhoods. While there are few gated communities in Auckland, properties in more affluent neighborhoods tend to be surrounded by higher and more substantial fencing and homes are often less visible from the street.

According to people's accounts, interactions with neighbors were primarily chance encounters taking place with some regularity. Enabled by the built environment, residents often see their immediate or nearby neighbors in the course of going about their daily routine. As one older Pākehā resident said about encountering one of her neighbors: "He'll potter around in the garden [...] and he's always there for a little chat 'cos he's out the front, you can have a good chat to him." Echoing the research discussed earlier, residents described encounters with neighbors as fleeting but regular and they were evidently shaped by, what Painter (2012, p. 527) calls "the rhythms of urban life." Examples of interactions included greetings on the way to and from work or just the way to and from the car in the driveway, hellos over the fence on a weekend, or small talk over wheeling the rubbish bins to the kerb for collection.

In addition, residents recounted examples of interactions that indicated that neighborly relationships also involved encounters that reflect an ethics of care and sharing that corresponds with the "parochial helpfulness" identified by Kusenbach (2006). This included negotiating the use of shared driveways and agreeing on repairs and maintenance of shared boundaries. Other types of exchanges between neighbors included, as one resident put it, "looking after each other for practical things." This meant keeping an eye on the neighbor's property when on holiday, letting each other know about events in the community, sharing surplus produce from gardens, looking after someone's garden in their absence, or offering help with maintenance work, such as painting fences. As these examples suggest, interactions are mostly fleeting, short exchanges of conversation rather than joint activities that are characteristic of encounters in the semi-publics of community facilities, for instance.

As a consequence of such fleeting yet regular encounters, neighbors in Avondale are best described as familiars or acquaintances. To a greater or lesser degree, residents know the people who live next door or nearby to the extent that they recognize them and perhaps know their names but usually not much more. The following examples from residents illustrate the differing degrees of familiarity and further demonstrate the light touch nature of interactions. Pointing out his various neighbors and describing the extent of his interactions with them, one Pasifika participant who had grown up in Avondale tells us: "there's a woman on one side [of the fence], I couldn't see her face but she's reached out to me a couple of times, 'hey, how's it going?'. We introduce each other but

we don't talk regularly." This is a prime example of a connection that is barely there, and yet an acknowledgment of the other's presence that achieves a minimal degree of familiarity. A similar act of Kusenbach's (2006) "friendly recognition" is evident in this description provided by another resident (ethnicity not recorded): "We're sort of friendly and chat here and there and stuff but we don't socialize with them or anything like that." To give a final example, a further participant (Pākehā) outlined relations with her neighbors as follows:

> So, our direct neighbors we know quite well. We're not going over to have dinners but we know each other well. We walk over the street and have a chat and we have a drink maybe once in a blue moon but we know each other and we look out for each other and when there has been a problem or 'have you heard this or that' or 'can you look after this while we're away on holidays'. It's just those little things that really matter, I think.

The above demonstrates that the relationship is characterized by a light-touch, pragmatic sociality that mainly comes about by chance even when knowing the neighbor "quite well". If at all, a more formal planned type of socializing (such as having drinks together) occurs only occasionally. Most notably, we found that there was no explicit expectation to develop more sustained relationships or even friendships. Instead, norms of neighborliness revolved around care, trust, and reliability in need rather than on more intimate or affective relationships.

These non-intimate and brief encounters made Avondale a comfortable place for the residents we spoke to. Participants also highlighted, however, that there are differences in how well neighbors adhered to these codes of conduct. It was in such reflections on who adhered or refused to adhere to these tacit rules that difference and diversity became salient. Their perceptions of how neighborhood diversity impacts social relations between neighbors illuminates that some facets of difference are commonplace while others become hyper-visible. As we will discuss in detail below, ethnicity, language, and age were frequently mentioned as factors that shape neighboring practices, but they were seen as unproblematic. Class and income, however, were explicitly emphasized as markers of difference because they were implicated in deliberate breaches of established norms of neighboring. In the following section, we discuss how these facets of diversity and difference manifest in residents' perceptions of relations between neighbors.

Diversity and norms of neighborliness in diversifying Avondale

Residents routinely described cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity as a commonplace part of the neighborhood fabric. More than that they depicted this diversity as a central and well-established feature of Avondale's identity more broadly. As one young male participant of Samoan and Pākehā heritage put it, "everyone just accepts that it's a diverse place and as far as I can tell everyone gets along." In this community, he and others said, everyone is welcome and nobody is judged. As he went on, "I've never felt racial tension or anything here which I like, considering how diverse it is." Whilst this resident says that it is astonishing that there is no tension given the level of diversity, another resident (ethnicity not recorded) we spoke to suggested that it was precisely the sheer breadth of diversity that helped Avondalians to get on:

> The more diverse a place is the better because I think if you have a neighborhood where say forty percent [are] Pākehā and sixty percent something else, there's two groups and then you might have the one group judging the other group. But if you have thirty different ethnicities and you would have to judge every group, you would be damned busy.

This sense of "commonplace diversity" (Wessendorf, 2014) has also been highlighted on a New Zealand TV program that showcases different neighborhoods around the country. Introducing Avondale as "a multi-ethnic marvel of a suburb," the local presenter proudly announced that "the neighbors on my street are Chinese, Punjabi, Fiji Indian, Samoan, Tongan, Niuaen, and Tokelau Islands." Further describing the community, the presenter continued: "and what I love most about my neighbors is that they're all very friendly, caring and supportive" (TVNZ, 2017).

In residents' accounts of their interactions with neighbors, ethno-linguistic diversity featured as a factor that impacted the possibilities of friendly contact. Speaking about her Chinese next-door neighbors, one Pākehā resident told us:

> The parents have no English but living with them was their daughter-in-law. They're lovely people and it's been great when [the daughter-in-law]'s around, you can talk to them but apart from then you can't.
>
> *Does she translate?*
>
> Yeah but she's gone back to China for a while. So it's just 'hi'.
>
> *But you try to communicate with them?*
>
> Yeah. [The daughter-in-law] was telling us, the father saw my husband outside, he'd dash in because he knew he was going to say something to him and he wouldn't know how to talk back to him.

Whilst linguistic difference can be a potential barrier to interactions between neighbors, importantly it is not seen as a threat to the fabric of neighborliness. Even though the above excerpt alludes to witnessing active avoidance of an encounter, the data suggests that residents perceive a lack of interaction due to language barriers not as a deliberate breach of norms of neighboring. Instead, the residents we spoke to displayed empathy for international newcomers with little or no English proficiency as the following quote suggests:

> We have a Chinese family, a Filipino family, a Vietnamese family immediately on our boundary. I don't know how comfortable they all feel speaking to someone in English all the time. I feel like that's maybe one of the big barriers to [communicating with] each other.

Age and generational change also featured in residents' reflections on neighboring. Some residents suggested that the current low-key nature of neighborly relations is itself a product of generational change in that older residents may be more likely to maintain deeper connections that involve a greater degree of socializing to their neighbors. For instance, the same resident as above recalled the differences between an older Pākehā couple that moved and his other, younger and ethnically diverse, neighbors.

> The old couple, they were an old Pākehā couple that moved on. They were the classic Kiwi family that I would be accustomed to in [New Zealand town] where I grew up – 'how's it going?' and he's out doing the lawns and the gardens, really house-proud and he was always

> up for a chat and most other families are not like that. He's from a generation probably where it was accepted that you know your neighbor, you invite them round for tea and a beer or whatever and you look out for each other and stuff like that. I don't get that sense from any of the others.

Class as a marker of difference and conflict

In contrast to language and generational differences, which were frequently commented upon as salient but benign aspects of diversity that impact neighborly interactions, socio-economic status and associated differences in behavior were explicitly highlighted as a threat to neighboring and parochial relations. This found expression in concern about recent newcomers to the area who, residents said, did not adhere to established norms of neighborliness. These newcomers were described as more affluent people who were attracted to Avondale because properties were more affordable than in more central Auckland locations. Younger high-income earners were perceived to create "more of a contrast," as one participant said, between established residents and newcomers. The notion of contrast suggests a sense of impending polarization, especially when compared to an earlier statement that a breadth of diversity was key to convivial social relations. This perception of socio-economic status as creating a contrast relates to the neighborhood's narrative of a working-class identity according to which Avondale residents are authentic, humble, and unpretentious. As one resident put it, "this is a working-class area and I just feel comfortable in an area like this. If it was to become a Westmere or a Ponsonby I don't know if I'd like it anymore." With the references to Westmere and Ponsonby, he draws parallels with suburbs that used to be working class and home to large shares of Māori and Pasifika residents but are now very affluent places where Pākehā professionals make up a large proportion of the resident population. Although there clearly are intersections with ethnicity that are reflective of income inequalities along ethnic lines, it is class – expressed primarily through income – that emerges as a key axis of difference where newly arrived gentrifiers are seen to pose a threat to the social fabric of the neighborhood. For instance, a newspaper editorial by an Avondale resident stated, "Avondale residents are happy to play our part in solving the housing crisis. But we are not prepared to see the so-called 'gentrification' of our neighborhoods push out the very people who give this place its welcoming character" (Charman, 2016). This statement suggests that long-term lower-income residents enable convivial social relations whereas higher-income newcomers may not.

With specific reference to neighboring, we focus in more detail on one resident's account of how higher-income newcomers are perceived to breach established codes of conduct. We make no claims that this resident's perception is true or indeed generalizable. However, this case is noteworthy because it has been more widely taken up in the media, including an article in the local newspaper and an opinion piece on an activist blog (Beechey, 2017), suggesting a wider concern about demographic change and its impacts on the community. In discussing neighborly social relations, this resident, previously cited as enjoying low-key pragmatic relationships (see p. 24) claimed that many recent arrivals were actively shutting themselves off from their neighbors. This process of refusing to interact found its material manifestation in what she called "gentrification fences". She argued that,

> The house gets sold in the street and two weeks later a new fence goes up. It's like saying "well, we can afford to live here but we only live here because we could afford it, actually it's not the neighborhood of choice." That's how it feels.
>
> *Do you think that it's specific social groups?*
>
> I think the people that have recently bought and paid eight hundred thousand dollars for a house, these are the ones who are putting up the fences.

Referring explicitly to income as a key factor, she tied her observations to wider processes of housing unaffordability, densification, and cultural diversification in Auckland.

> Many people move here from different neighborhoods. They have their friends probably scattered over different parts of Auckland and these are the people they stay in touch with. They're not really putting energy in[to] making their local place the main hub of activity and social interaction. That's what I think it is. But maybe also people from different cultures, maybe because it's more dense than it used to be and maybe Kiwis are so used to space but it's not only Kiwis who are putting up the fences, everybody seems to be doing it. Maybe it's the diversity that people don't know how to relate to. I don't know. It might be that, often people are scared of what they don't know.

Auckland's housing crisis has meant that higher-income earners have had to look to live in neighborhoods further away from the city center. As such, they are perceived to be attracted to Avondale's housing stock but not to its resident community. The excerpt above demonstrates the complicated intersections between ethno-culture and socio-economic status. An initial reference to "Kiwis" suggests that this resident visualizes these better off newcomers as Pākehā. However, this is retracted in saying that every newcomer seems to erect fences. This resident published her concerns in a local paper as well as a regional online news site. Her tongue-in-cheek critique of newcomers' apparent need for privacy, confirms the light-touch requirements of neighboring and assumptions that new residents are not interested in engaging with neighbors. She writes:

> I wonder how many of these fences were built before the owners even knew their neighbors. If you are thinking about erecting one of those fences, can you be convinced that you can have a lower fence and nobody will go and stand there and stare at what you are doing? I promise that talking to neighbors doesn't mean you have to be Best Friends Forever. And I know from experience that Avondaliens are not total weirdos or scary. I believe that good fences help retain friendly streetscapes, and facilitate interaction between residents.

This resident also suggested that newcomers' origins and continued connections to other parts of the city may impact the way they enact neighborhood-based social relations (see further above). One interesting aspect to consider here is the term "newcomer". Newcomers are equated with higher-income earners who have moved into the area after the drastic explosion of property values. They are not necessarily juxtaposed with what we might consider long-term residents but with those who moved to Avondale when housing was still (more) affordable. They are also pictured as a domestic migrant of sorts, having come from other parts of Auckland rather than from overseas. The resident cited here is herself an international migrant from continental Europe who had lived in Avondale for approximately eight years.

Such perceptions indicate that processes of urban change can have significant impacts on residents' sense of community and coexistence with others. Research in Glenn Innes,

a neighborhood of Auckland that has recently undergone swift state-led gentrification, has found similar perceptions amongst established residents. Interviews with residents there demonstrated that they felt that "newer residents will lead much more private lives, that they won't 'come out' and create community" (Gordon et al., 2017, p. 780). Partly, this is the result of contrasting class or income-based norms of living together. As Colic-Peisker and Robertson (2015) found in a study of a gentrifying neighborhood of Melbourne, socializing with neighbors in or around the private space of the home was more common amongst working-class residents whereas middle-class residents tended to combine socializing with consumption and to make more use of public places. Notably, they argue that middle-class gentrifiers "do not need the everyday support of their neighbours" (Colic-Peisker & Robertson, 2015, p. 82) because their networks are more likely to reach beyond the neighborhood. Some of this was borne out in conversations with new Avondale residents. One young mother who self-identified as a gentrifier told us that she would have preferred to live in the more affluent suburb of Grey Lynn and was hoping that the gentrification of Avondale would happen more swiftly. When asked to explain what gentrification would look like, she referred to increased and better amenities, such as a bakery and an upmarket grocery store. Telling us about the opening of a new café, one resident noted: "it started with a hiss and a roar when it opened so there was obviously a need for something a bit more upmarket. People are hanging out for it to open." These places are seen to attract a formerly invisible clientele, such as "yummy mummies", which creates a different kind of diversity, new sites for socializing and new opportunities for encounters in micro-publics. Cafés were seen as vibrant places, but at the same time, the residents we spoke to were concerned that consumption-based spaces tend to exclude those on lower incomes.

Conclusion

This exploration of modes of coexistence in Avondale has revealed the codes of conduct that are particular to the parochial realm of this neighborhood and drawn attention to the impact of demographic change on residents' experiences and perceptions of residential social relations and what constitutes difference. This discussion highlights the contributions of these findings to the study of living with difference in parochial neighborhood spaces.

For one, this study demonstrates the need to carefully consider the implications of urban change at the neighborhood level. Rather than simply being a backdrop to people's lives, processes of urban change, such as churn, diversification, and gentrification actively shape residents' sense of place and can, as Butcher (2019) argues, cause "dissonance" through upsetting the sense of comfort created by "routine activity and familiar others" (Butcher, 2019, p. 388). This is the case especially when residents feel that they have no control over the transformations affecting their neighborhood (Butcher, 2019). This is true for public spaces as has been shown by Wise (2010) who documented residents' sense of feeling out of place when diversification rendered neighborhood spaces unrecognizable to older Anglo residents. However, this may perhaps be even more the case in the parochial realm where proximity bears familiarity and demands a level of engagement with others that is not expected in public. While Burrell (2016) has argued that residents are able to cope with churn because the figure of the neighbor remains static

even as individuals come and go, this study has shown that this is not always the case. In Avondale, recent higher-income arrivals are perceived to disrupt established norms of neighboring by, quite literally, fencing themselves off. As we have shown, neighborliness is an important thread in the fabric of the neighborhood and, in line with Burrell's (2016) study, an ability to rely on neighbors to adhere to norms of neighborliness is crucial for residents' sense of comfort. When newer arrivals make themselves unavailable (or are perceived to be doing so), the figure of the neighbor disappears. In Avondale, higher-income earners have been arriving gradually as house prices have skyrocketed in Auckland. However, gentrification has begun to affect several Auckland neighborhoods, and especially lower-income communities, as the state and local government have initiated large-scale building and redevelopment projects to accommodate population growth. Such developments call for more and, ideally, longitudinal research on the effects of urban change on modes of coexistence.

Secondly, this study makes an argument for a more nuanced understanding of difference and diversity not only as processual but also multiply determined. This explorative study of Avondale illustrates the socio-spatial richness, the variety of how diversity is *done*, so to speak and which aspects of difference are mobilized in residents' expectations, perceptions, and practices of neighborly interactions. The case of Avondale shows that the neighborhood's longstanding feature of ethno-cultural and linguistic diversity is normalized in the parochial realm, while perceived breaches of norms of neighboring primarily along class lines throw difference into sharp relief. These experiences of difference are contoured by classed processes of urban change that are unfolding across the city. While Avondale residents continue to refer to ethnicity as a form of change in the neighborhood's population, it is class expressed through income, education, and occupation, and in intersection with geographical origin and ethnicity, that is actively shaping the practices of and attitudes toward living with diversity in Avondale.

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Note

1. Pākehā is a Māori word that emerged during colonization as a way to distinguish between the indigenous population and the settlers. It is sometimes used to mean non-Māori or white but is also commonly used for European New Zealanders. We use it in the latter sense.

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