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BEYOND CONCLUSION

Interdisciplinary Perspectives Towards New Understandings of Coexistence

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Provocation

Cities worldwide struggle to address rising inequalities and demographic changes that strain the social fabric, affecting the dynamics of everyday coexistence. As cities become socioeconomically more diverse and as new vectors of inequality appear, these changes lead to new divisions over identity, struggles for equal recognition, and access to rights and opportunities. Taking this idea of societal change as its starting point, in this volume, we explored the dynamics of coexistence as a process where togetherness and separation, inclusion, and exclusion are continuously negotiated, sensed, and made sense of. Through the complexity-informed approach, using the concept of the everyday as our epistemological lens, this volume has illuminated that relations do not unfold through fixed categories or stable identities and that difference is not a specific feature of urban everyday life. We have traced how social bonds, belonging, a sense of exclusion, separation, and meanings are created through fleeting encounters, mundane routines, affective resonances, and situated interpretations amid daily life as people encounter "difference" and live with one another.

Rather than offering a unified theory, we have embraced methodological and conceptual multiplicity. We have applied a threefold strategy – a multisited methodology, a refusal of identity-based framings, and an interdisciplinary, multimethod design – that has enabled us to attend to the nuanced ways in which people relate to each other and to urban space. The data used in the chapters, ranging from eye-tracking and physiological responses to reflexive interviews, field observations, and spatial mapping, did not converge into a singular narrative. Instead, they revealed how solidarity and tensions, as well as conviviality and

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contradictions, entwine in everyday life. Each chapter offers a partial perspective on the question of living together in the city, illuminating the complexity of urban everyday life as its throwntogetherness and sensory overload unfold amid broader societal transformations. Partialness does not denote that these perspectives are biased or distorted. The concept of partitioning, as proposed by Jean-Luc Nancy (1986, pp. 99, 143, 163, 168), simply denotes how all these perspectives are part of this world and those sites where people coexist.

What emerges from this volume is not a neatly packaged model through which we can fully capture coexistence as it unfolds. Overall, the contributors recognize the plasticity of living together: the way people practise and experience coexistence is fluid, ambiguous, and at times discomforting. In the city, where inequality operates and social density is high, the social fabric continuously stretches, frays, and is reconfigured in relation to the social, spatial, and affective experiences that emerge in the urban everyday. Fraying denotes a formative conflict – or perhaps better yet, a tension – that results from the social complexity, abundance of life, and affective density that are part of the urban everyday (also, Hokka & Puumala, 2026). Such tension is not destructive or harmful, but an inherent part of the city and, as the chapters have shown, it evokes the agentic processes of sense-making and negotiation. It is shaped in processes of reflexivity, where people interpret, contest, and re-ground their sense of self and place.

The complexity-informed approach that we introduced to inform our engagement with urban coexistence is based on the accumulation of research sites and conceptual standpoints. Through this accumulation, we have illustrated how daily coexistence is made of both endurance and ephemerality, of habitual rhythms and disruptive moments. It is shaped by large-scale transformations that impinge on people but also by people's agencies that can become sociopolitical forces that drive change, not merely navigate it. Neither sense nor meaning is simply inherited or imposed on people and places. They are actively produced in the interplay between sensuous and sensory stimuli and reflective engagement. People's sense of self and place are formed "in processes of reflexivity" (Butcher, 2019, p. 1203), which exposes the plasticity of sociopolitical interpretations and relational significations, while not negating the existence of structural constraints and operation of power (Hokka & Puumala, 2026). This plasticity challenges linear notions of time (see Guillaume & Huysmans, 2019, p. 282) and invites us to consider how daily life is punctuated by ephemeral moments that nonetheless require attention, interpretation, and sometimes, the restoration of regular flow of life or the recreation of meaning (Butcher, 2019, p. 1206; also, Dirksmeier & Helbrecht, 2015, p. 487). Building on the empirically grounded and rich insights, we propose the complexity-informed approach as a potent medium to rethink concepts that are applied to address the question of coexistence.

The complexity-informed approach destabilizes the idea of difference as a useful analytical concept or as an object of inquiry. While in all chapters, the authors illuminated the enduring operation of difference amid daily life, together, our ambition to apply the everyday as an epistemological horizon contributes to an understanding that the meanings of difference are shifting and ambiguous. By discussing how the quotidian flow of time, momentary experience of place or encounter, unexpected event or situation constantly require sense-making of proximity and distance, inclusion and exclusion, approach or avoidance, encountering or turning away, the volume provides rich empirical evidence that difference is a dynamic and contested concept. Hence, difference may disguise more than it reveals if it is used as an umbrella term for the experience and practice of living together. To revisit the dynamics of coexistence, we proposed the concept of the everyday, which, we argued, takes note of times, spaces, practices, and events that the idea of difference or approaches based on identity thinking may be unable to consider, but that are part of coexistence. By foregrounding a horizontal conception of relations (Guillaume & Huysmans, 2019, p. 283), the concept of the everyday emphasizes the commonness of life in the city (p. 284) and draws attention to the multifarious constellations and heterogeneous relations that unfold between people and places, as well as among people. Yet, it enables staying cognizant of the operation of power, which is central for understanding how social norms and various forms of inequality affect and shape coexistence.

Importantly, for us, complexity is not a theoretical abstraction, but a lived condition – one that demands both methodological openness and epistemic humility. Therefore, the complexity-informed approach that we proposed and on which we built our research design must not be thought of as a solution. It is rather a provocation: a call to rethink how we study, represent, and engage with urban life. It invites us to move beyond the idea of difference or identity-based ideas of togetherness and separation, and instead dwell in the ambiguities, frictions, and emergent constellations that make up the city. On these grounds, complexity can be conceived of as an epistemological and methodological intervention that has conceptual ramifications.

Interdisciplinary Perspectives Revisited

In this volume, our interdisciplinary approach has drawn on a range of methodological and disciplinary approaches to the everyday. Using the everyday as our vantage point on the sociopolitical complexity of contemporary urban life, we have discussed the dynamics of coexistence amid the conditions of diversity and inequality and the broader changes that affect cities. Our aim was to reveal and analyse the diverse range of subjective and collective experiences, as well as the fleeting moments and enduring patterns through

which agency and power operate, and to trace both the affective atmospheres (Anderson, 2009) and landscapes (Berberich et al., 2013) that unfold spatially and socially through relationships. These affective atmospheres shape a sensory and relational orientation that unfolds both prior to and alongside the formation of subjectivity and is experienced as lived duration (Anderson, 2009, p. 78). Affective landscapes, in turn, involve a "new education of the senses informed by the insignificant noises and events of ordinary life" (Rancière, 2012, p. 6; see also Berberich et al., 2013, p. 315). Our research design was born from the conviction that contemporary urban transformations are too complicated to be studied through a singular approach or discipline. Hence, this volume emerged from a sense of urgency and insufficiency.

The work behind the book has been driven by the question of whether the complexity of daily life could help us rethink the concepts that are used to make sense of living together. Or perhaps whether those concepts, burdened by historical legacies, are too rigid or even violent in relation to the social density and abundance that characterize contemporary cities. For this, we developed an interdisciplinary research design (see Chapter 2) and then tested its potential to produce empirically grounded and rich analyses of coexistence, hoping that a better understanding of its dynamics would enable us to propose conceptual advances. The impetus – and challenge – of creating such an interdisciplinary setup stems from the recognition that no single discipline or methodology can unpack its dynamics while conserving its empirical richness, social abundance, and inherent controversies. We have combined ethnographic research that produces deeply contextual knowledge with experimental research aiming to extract emotion from complex stimuli in controlled laboratory settings. This has meant navigating tensions between interpretive and experimental logics, between rich contextual accounts and controlled environments, and between relational and individualistic understandings of social life – and between interpretive and positivist research traditions. It is imperative to acknowledge these profound epistemological and ontological differences between the disciplines from which our two methodologies originate and where they are commonly applied. Ethnographic research draws on relational ontology and interpretative traditions, while experimental research into emotions is grounded in realist ontology and positivism. These differences extend to views on data, analysis, and knowledge production (also, Maltezos et al., 2025, p. 197). Our focus on the everyday enabled us to frame the research design to suit different disciplines (on such travelling concepts, see van Assche et al., 2023, p. 40). Rather than seeking compatibility or integration, our interdisciplinary research design emphasizes complementarity.

To establish a meaningful connection between the two methodologies, we used immersive technologies. The use of curated 360-degree videos enabled us to use ethnographic data and interviews as the foundation of our experimental research setting. We could design experimental stimuli that were sensitive

to and informed by the kind of events, situations, encounters, and dynamics that our interlocutors thought were typical of our research sites. The use of immersive technologies helped us to condense these into short videos. This way, the created video stimuli mimicked the rhythms and dynamics of daily life, accounting for presences, actions, and the operation of power that people had brought to our attention during the interviews or that we had observed ourselves. By conceptualizing and filming our own 360-degree videos, we developed a stimulus for experimental research that did not shy away from the ambiguities or complexities of everyday life.

The videos made it possible for us to bring everyday life into a laboratory setting, which enabled us to study whether people respond to, observe, and make sense of – in principle – the same mundane situations and environments in the same way. The experimental approach worked to complement the thick description gained through ethnography. Through it, we could gather evidence on how everyday emotions emerge, turn into feelings and lived experiences that are further placed within a sociopolitical context. Thus, the research design has allowed us to produce evidence-based and reflexive knowledge about coexistence in the urban everyday (Pehkonen et al., 2026). We trust that this complexity-informed approach allowed us to retain the contextual nuance and depth of knowledge that each method enables and that is unique to it, while acknowledging that their knowledge claims remain different. Despite evident differences or even contradictions between the methods, together they offer strong potential for generating in-depth and multifaceted insights into how emotional experiences vary between individuals, while taking note of how these experiences are embedded in sociopolitical contexts.

Although philosophical and theoretical debates have hinted at a new conceptual agenda on thinking about coexistence (Nancy, 2000; Amin, 2012; Jackson, 2022), empirical analyses often remain tethered to identity thinking. Of course, ours is not the only book that draws on interdisciplinary perspectives. Yet, by engaging with the same empirical research contexts under a shared research design, we hope this volume forcefully illuminates the diverse, while interconnected insights that are needed to unpack the abundant features and dimensions of urban everyday coexistence. This shared empirical focus allowed us to test whether our complexity-informed approach could shed light on emergent social phenomena, and to help understand how people navigate change, sense its effects, and create meanings in everyday life. As polarization, demographic and social diversity, and intersectional inequalities increase, we believe there is a need for such interdisciplinary analyses that can help us to unpack how communal constellations, solidarities, conflicts, or tensions emerge, unfold, and reshape the social fabric.

As the chapters illuminate, complexity-informed and exploratory research designs can be highly useful in untangling the affective, social, political,

material, and spatial dimensions of urban coexistence, while considering the effect of these dimensions on how people actually live together. This is so as none of these dimensions are internally uniform. Rather, they consist of tangential, ambiguous, and contingent practices and experiences. Each methodological and disciplinary lens introduced in this volume contributed valuable insights, while revealing specific limitations on understanding coexistence in the urban everyday. These limitations differ across the adopted perspectives but are present, nonetheless. This is precisely the potential of interdisciplinarity to pave the way for new understandings: by exposing the boundaries of what each conceptual and methodical frame can reveal, interdisciplinary approaches allow for their knowledges to be contrasted, complemented, and mobilized to extend our understanding of this complex thematic. Hence, while different "epistemic cultures" (Knorr-Cetina, 1999) and disciplinary traditions apply distinct methodologies and heuristics, interdisciplinary approaches offer considerable potential for conceptual and theoretical advancement (van Zundert et al., 2011).

Working across disciplines presents both significant challenges and generative possibilities (also, Lanterman & Blithe, 2019). As mentioned above, different fields come with distinct epistemological assumptions, methodological preferences, and conceptual vocabularies, which can make collaboration demanding. Interdisciplinary research requires time, patience, and a constant willingness to listen – not only to learn about findings but also to gain insight about the foundational assumptions that shape how knowledge is produced and interpreted. Yet, out of these differences appears the potential for deepened insight, altered perspectives, and the emergence of new questions and concepts or for rethinking our concepts in ways that align with people's lived realities. We hope our example assures adventurous minds that it is possible to tackle the challenges that emanate from differing epistemological and ontological standpoints and that are characteristic of interdisciplinary work. Scholars can establish meaningful links between empirical findings and conceptual discussions, without trying to assimilate the disciplines and instead acknowledge their epistemic and ontological tensions. However, unforeseen complications often do arise in the process and can only be understood – and overcome – through the research process itself (Pehkonen et al., 2026).

The question of living together in the city has long intrigued social researchers, urban scholars, and political theorists alike. By resisting disciplinary closure and embracing conceptual and methodological pluralism, we sought to produce a more differentiated and granular understanding of the affective, relational, material, and political textures of urban coexistence, while remaining attentive to the epistemic limitations of each applied approach. The potential of interdisciplinary perspectives lies in their capacity to offer complementary knowledge, revealing critically diverse perspectives that require further

elaboration, or deepening our understanding. Sometimes, as this volume shows, all three propositions hold true.

Towards New Understandings of Coexistence

This volume began with a question: What new insights, if any, can be gained into how diversity and inequality are lived, negotiated, and interpreted in everyday urban life? The long-standing debates surrounding these issues span multiple disciplines and methodological perspectives. These analyses have immensely contributed to our understanding of how living together is shaped, negotiated, contested, and experienced – through routine encounters, avoidance, or exclusion or in specific places and urban publics designed to support conviviality. In the chapters, the authors respond to the presented question by offering methodological and analytical avenues that resist framing coexistence through cultural, religious, or ethnic groupings, or through specific sites. Instead of taking any of these as the starting point for our inquiry, we focused on the everyday. We thus set out to explore and understand the abundance of subjects and practices, and the multiplicity of temporalities and spaces that characterize the unfolding of daily living together.

Yet, our answer to the initial question remains deliberately tentative. We posited that a complexity-informed approach, grounded in interdisciplinary research design, and consolidated by applying the everyday as an epistemic horizon, might offer new, altered, or deepened insights into urban coexistence. By attending to urban everyday life, the volume proposes a qualitative shift in how coexistence is analysed. Rather than anchoring analysis in predefined categories or locations, the framework centres the relational, situational, and embedded production of social life in ways that acknowledge the role of space, affect, and historical legacies in the present. This enables an understanding of how coexistence is dynamically shaped, negotiated, and experienced without reducing these practices and accounts to group-based analytics. The multimethod approach adds further depth to the discussion, enabling us to consider the general abundance of relations, practices, places, and meanings that constitute urban life.

We did not set out to revolutionize or challenge existing scholarship on coexistence and its social, relational, spatial, and affective dimensions. Rather, we sought to explore what new understandings might emerge from combining research traditions that have, from different vantage points, examined these questions. In other words, in this volume, we asked: Does the convergence of diverse interdisciplinary approaches and methodologies under a shared framework of inquiry yield different insights than when these inquiries remain separate?

We can now answer the question with more confidence, without being self-assured or complacent. The idea of ambiguity is central to our account also in

this respect. In the chapters, we have unveiled the significance of both space and time for the creation of experiences, perceptions, and relations, as well as for the emergence of submerged sensuous experiences and sudden intense emotions. In all chapters, while different in their outlooks and ways of claiming knowledge, the authors reached a similar finding: everyday life in socioeconomically diverse urban neighbourhoods is not only shaped by cultural stereotypes, organized based on social categories, or reflective of public discourses of fear. But neither is daily life about the celebration of differences and constructive, positive encounters across or with "difference." Rather, a much more subtle dynamics enables meaningful coexistence amid admitted ambiguities and tensions. Approaching social life with the concept of the everyday, this volume illuminates the importance of fleeting events, chance encounters, surprising situations, and daily routines for fostering a sense of belonging, but also exclusion and alienation.

Our multisited inquiry, where the same sites were explored from different perspectives and with various methods, enables contrasting different urban contexts without collapsing them into a single narrative. It considers and stays attentive to local histories and trajectories while identifying shared features of everyday life across the locations. As suggested by Xavier Guillaume and Jef Huysmans (2019) in their elaboration of the everyday, this approach advocates for a horizontal and embedded view of social and political life (p. 283) that can account for how various manifestations of diversity and inequality are sensed, made sense of, and matter for coexistence in the city. Coexistence unfolds amid constant change and is a constantly changing constellation. It is neither without ambiguity nor reducible to difference or conflict.

Methodologically, in the volume, we adopted an unconventional approach in combining ethnography with emotion research, including the use of immersive technologies tailored to sociopolitically reflexive research settings. As a result, we have proposed a research design that enables the study of affective experience that is both empirically rigorous and conceptually and contextually sensitive. Empirically, by analysing the three national and six urban contexts, we move beyond particularisms to identify more general dynamics through which to make sense of coexistence. While diversity and inequality appear across our contexts, their historical roots, experienced meanings, and effects differ, as do the policies with which they are addressed. Thus, diversity and inequality shape urban neighbourhoods and their daily life in distinct ways, but people also shape these broader developments by enacting their agency; by actively looking for, using, and creating opportunities for themselves and those around them.

These insights have relevance beyond academic debate. They can inform policies that aim to promote social sustainability and inclusive planning practice, as well as community work that seeks to tackle the effects of material deprivation and social exclusion in people's lives. In a time when policy discourse and public debates increasingly frame urban social life in terms of segregation, polarization,

and identity-based cleavages, there is a dire need for evidence-based and holistic insights. Such insights are crucial for understanding how people navigate their lives, construct relations to others, and interact with their surroundings in multiple, sometimes controversial ways.

However, this volume offers not closure, but an opening. It proposes new ways of thinking about, researching, and analysing coexistence. Interdisciplinary, methodological experimentation enables analyses of urban life and urban policies that are attuned to its complexity. Importantly, the contributors recognize that urban transformations are far from complete; the processes shaping cities remain dynamic and contested. As such, urban life and policies will continue to raise persistent and emerging questions of diversity and inequality, demanding ongoing critical engagement and innovative responses.

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