

Article

The Forks Market: Cosmopolitan Canopy, Conviviality, and Class

Sonia Bookman

Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of Manitoba, Canada; sonia.bookman@umanitoba.ca

Submitted: 12 November 2022 | Accepted: 16 March 2023 | Published: 26 October 2023

Abstract

This article contributes to scholarship on the varieties of co-existence expressed in urban public life by providing an analysis of cosmopolitan conviviality as it surfaces in the branded public space of The Forks Market in Winnipeg, Canada. Recently renovated to create an intimate food hall, the Market is framed as a “commons” to encourage sociability among patrons. It is also configured as an inclusive space where an urban multicultural clientele can gather and share in a variety of foodways. Drawing on empirical observational research, and paying attention to the Market’s material affordances, I argue that Forks Market patrons co-perform a kind of cosmopolitan conviviality comprising two key components: (a) convivial sociability, and (b) cosmopolitan openness. Exploring tensions between inclusivity and exclusivity, however, I maintain that such conviviality is marked by ambivalence linked to the Market’s operation as both a “cosmopolitan canopy” and a branded space with an emphasis on consumption. In particular, I consider how the “look” of the Market conveys a sense of authenticity with an “upscale” design oriented toward middle-class tastes.

Keywords

class; consumption; conviviality; cosmopolitan canopy; cosmopolitanism

Issue

This article is part of the issue “Improvisation, Conviviality, and Conflict in Everyday Encounters in Public Space” edited by Mervyn Horgan (University of Guelph) and Saara Liinamaa (University of Guelph).

© 2023 by the author(s); licensee Cogitatio Press (Lisbon, Portugal). This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY).

1. Introduction

A resurgence of academic interest in conviviality over the past decade has focused attention on the everyday practices of interacting with strangers and “living-with-difference” in culturally diverse settings (Nowicka & Vertovec, 2014, p. 341). Broadly defined as “the capacity to live together,” conviviality is understood as pragmatic and performative, taking shape through daily habits, routines, and social interactions in specific contexts (Wise & Noble, 2016, p. 423). Situated and temporal, conviviality arises from the dynamic interplay of interpersonal interactions and social spaces, or “material environs,” and their particular “*affordances of conviviality*” (Wise & Noble, 2016, p. 427, italics in original). Still, conviviality is not only a matter of happily “getting along,” but is complicated by tensions, conflict, and social exclusions (Nowicka, 2020; Wise & Noble, 2016).

While convivialities scholarship has a much longer history rooted in studies of urban social life in public space (for example, Lofland, 1989), renewed interest,

understood as the “convivial, everyday turn,” has resulted in a growing number of studies that examine how people interact with strangers, negotiate diversity, and cultivate a “convivial civil togetherness” (Nowicka, 2020, p. 24) in urban public or semi-public spaces such as parks (Barker et al., 2019), skating rinks (Horgan et al., 2020), and streetscapes (Radice, 2016). These studies underscore the importance of delineating the varieties of co-existence expressed in everyday encounters and the tensions they manifest, paying attention to their underpinning by material and spatial contexts.

My project here is to contribute to this emerging scholarship by providing an analysis of cosmopolitan conviviality as it surfaces in a branded urban public space. Drawing on empirical research material from a study of The Forks Market in Winnipeg, Canada, I consider how the material environs of this public space are configured to support performances of conviviality that are also cosmopolitan in orientation. Recently renovated, The Forks Market is designed to evoke a “commons” and encourage sociability among patrons of its intimate food hall,

anchored by a craft beer and wine bar aptly named The Common. It is also configured as an inclusive space where an urban multicultural clientele can gather and share in a culturally diverse foodscape with a range of authentic ethnic, fusion, and local craft outlets. Engaging the intersections between cosmopolitanism and conviviality, I argue that Forks Market patrons co-perform a kind of cosmopolitan conviviality comprised of: (a) convivial sociability characterized by commensality, spontaneous exchange, civility, and trust; as well as (b) cosmopolitan openness fostered by mundane encounters with cultural and culinary diversity. I pay particular attention to the underpinning of such conviviality by the brandscape and its material affordances; in other words, the mechanisms by which conviviality is co-produced. In addition, I consider its ambivalence given the tensions between inclusivity and exclusivity linked to the Market's operation as a "cosmopolitan canopy" (Anderson, 2004, p. 15) and a branded space of consumption. In particular, I examine how The Forks Market's renewal reflects an "upscaling" of the space with an emphasis on authenticity, oriented toward "discerning" middle-class tastes (Bourdieu, 1984). Before moving on to the research material, however, it is important to discuss the links between cosmopolitanism and conviviality, as well as cosmopolitan canopies and urban branding.

2. Cosmopolitanism, Conviviality, and Branded Spaces of Consumption

2.1. *Cosmopolitanism and Conviviality*

Cosmopolitanism is a complex concept with both political and cultural connotations referring to: (a) a political project and philosophy of world citizenship, and (b) an aesthetic disposition and set of practices premised on "openness towards divergent cultural experiences" (Hannerz, 1996, p. 103; see also Binnie et al., 2006). An emerging sociology of cosmopolitanism considers the ways in which cosmopolitanism is "lived" and expressed in everyday life, including how a cosmopolitan "worldliness" manifests through global migration or travel (Germann Molz, 2011), or the way cultural openness is cultivated in diverse urban centers (Latham, 2006), for example. Some writers in this vein suggest that cosmopolitanism is the reserve of elites for whom it serves as a form of cultural capital (Binnie et al., 2006; Holt, 1998). This is captured by Radice's (2002, p. 151) concept of "commodified cosmopolitanism," which refers to the co-option of cultural openness for instrumental purposes, whether to "sell commodities" or to "gain competitive advantage" through a process of distinction. While this may be the case in some contexts, others note how, alternatively, a "mundane cosmopolitanism" (Hebdige, 1990, p. 20) may be cultivated through everyday engagement with global televisual flows (Szczesny & Urry, 2002) or the consumption of non-local fashion, for instance (Nava, 2002).

Recent convivialities scholarship has begun to explore the relationship of everyday cosmopolitanism to conviviality, signaling a resonance between these concepts (Noble, 2013; Radice, 2016). While some researchers recommend replacing cosmopolitanism with conviviality as a more effective analytic lens through which to understand "living-with-difference" (Nowicka, 2020, p. 16), others prefer to use these concepts as complimentary terms. As Radice (2016, p. 436) points out, unlike cosmopolitanism, conviviality is not necessarily concerned with cultural diversity: "[A]s a type of sociability, it can emerge within homogenous groups as well as across lines of difference." Indeed, it is Gilroy's (2004, 2006) pivotal contribution that foregrounds cultural differences in convivialities scholarship (Wise & Noble, 2016). Moreover, I would add, cosmopolitanism, even in its quotidian form, is not limited to multicultural openness. There are different types of everyday cosmopolitanism, including an aesthetic interest in and respect for social and cultural differences, but also a moral cosmopolitan "concern for humanity and the world as a whole" which can be seen in daily practices such as purchasing fairtrade coffee (Emontspool & Georgi, 2017, p. 307). Here, I use the notion of "cosmopolitan conviviality" to capture both the convivial sociability and aesthetic cosmopolitan openness that are evoked by and performed within The Forks Market.

2.2. *Cosmopolitan Canopies and Branded Spaces of Cosmopolitan Consumption*

The term "cosmopolitan canopy" was introduced by Anderson (2004) to describe the kinds of dense, heterogeneous, bounded public or semi-public spaces in a city where people both engage in cultural diversity and perform civil sociability. Based on his study of the Reading Terminal Market in Philadelphia, Anderson (2004, p. 20) argues that cosmopolitan canopies are relatively "neutral territories" where "opportunities are provided, at least situationally, to connect across ethnic and racial lines." Offering a respite from the streets and more impersonal public spaces where people are generally wary of one another, cosmopolitan canopies are places where individuals feel safe enough to interact "with common civility" (Anderson, 2004, p. 21). For Anderson (2004, p. 28), such face-to-face encounters with others afford the possibility of working toward an everyday "cosmopolitan appreciation of difference."

Taking up Anderson's notion, researchers have investigated an expanded range of spaces as cosmopolitan canopies, including public parks (Barker et al., 2019), farmer's markets (Aptekar, 2019), and even restaurants (Figueiredo et al., 2018). While much of this work shares Anderson's optimistic view of the cosmopolitan canopy as a refuge of diverse civility, others critique this image. For example, Aptekar's (2019) study of a New York farmer's market shows how the appearance of civility and tolerance co-exists with racial and ethnic conflicts and structural inequalities. Engaging in these debates,

I consider the potential and limits of The Forks Market as a cosmopolitan canopy and branded urban space.

To be sure, the principles of commercial branding have been increasingly applied to a whole host of urban public or semi-public spaces, from waterfront districts to cities as a whole, in an attempt to rework the ways in which they are perceived and consumed (Harris, 2011). The idea is to cultivate an image and brand experience that will attract visitors and investment, as well as promote consumption (Greenberg, 2008). Cosmopolitan canopies are no exception. Managed by a coalition of private and public interests working together to promote a vision for a place, urban branding often draws on marketing techniques of “brandscaping” to create a coherent image that shapes an entire environment (Greenberg, 2008; Moor, 2007). This involves coordinating physical and ambient elements, a distinct “retail and leisure infrastructure,” and representational work to establish the look and feel of a place, themed to convey particular qualities such as “heritage,” “cosmopolitan,” and so on (Julier, 2005, p. 871).

Management uses the strategy of brandscaping to guide consumer involvement, shaping meanings, experiences, and social relations that in turn co-create brand image and “value-in-use,” even though outcomes are never fully determined (Arvidsson, 2006). This requires attention to the gaps between the ideal that brand management evokes and the everyday cultures (Banet-Weiser, 2012) that surface on the brand’s platform. Banet-Weiser (2012) develops the concept of “brand culture” to capture the ways in which individuals live their lives, express identities, and form connections with one another within the cultural contexts of brands in this contemporary moment. While she reinforces the idea of “brand cultures as culture,” indicating that there is no separation between commercial and authentic culture, she also suggests that brand cultures are characterized by their ambivalence, such that “both economic imperatives and ‘authenticity’ are expressed and experienced simultaneously” (Banet-Weiser, 2012, pp. 13, 15). It is precisely this ambivalence that characterizes the kind of cosmopolitan conviviality that surfaces in the branded space of The Forks Market and underpins the tensions of inclusivity and exclusivity analyzed here.

This is not to say that convivial performances in commercial spaces have previously gone unnoticed, though. Indeed, scholars have considered how practices of commercial hospitality (usually associated with instrumentality) can give rise to an “ethics of conviviality” comprising authentic forms of urban sociality (Bell, 2007, p. 8), or how markets form important sites of everyday social connection and interaction (Watson, 2009). Yet there has been little academic study of branded public spaces as settings for convivial and cosmopolitan sociability. Branding is a distinctive commercial and cultural form (Arvidsson, 2006; Moor, 2007) that warrants sustained academic attention to the ways in which it co-shapes convivial cultures.

3. Methods

This article draws on material from documentary research as well as visual and naturalistic observation in a case study of The Forks Market in Winnipeg, Canada (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Winnipeg is one of Canada’s ten largest cities, with a relatively diverse population; over 25% of residents are foreign-born and 28% identify as visible minorities (City of Winnipeg, 2019). Documentary research was conducted to gain insight into the historical development of The Forks and The Forks Market redesign, using publicly available documents from The Forks website, the architectural firm involved in the renovation, as well as promotional articles and planning documents. This research aimed to develop an understanding of the overall vision for The Forks, especially The Forks Market, and how the Market’s redesign manifests this.

Visual observation focused on The Forks Market space, using photography as well as drawings recorded in designated fieldwork notebooks to capture the material and spatial environment. Visual analysis was conducted using material semiotics (Emmison et al., 2012) to consider the symbolic affordances of material items, aspects of design, and their spatial assemblage in the Market. This required noting the way convivial and cosmopolitan performances are supported through, for example, spatial patterning (zones, objects), architectural design and décor, and the coordination of shops and restaurants. Such research is based on the idea that material environs play a crucial role in the co-production of convivialities (Wise & Noble, 2016).

In addition, the method of naturalistic, unobtrusive observation was employed to understand how people use and engage with the Market environment. Unobtrusive observation discerns how people perform conviviality in quotidian ways. This choice of method was inspired by recent research on skating rinks as sociable public spaces (Horgan et al., 2020), but also Anderson’s (2004) more participatory research on cosmopolitan canopies. Working with two research assistants, over 100 hours of systematic observation was completed over a period of two years (2020–2022). Detailed observations were recorded in fieldwork notebooks on different days, times, and locations in and around the Market, encompassing five main areas: the main Food Hall in the atrium and two parallel side halls; an upper level of shops and lounge; and the outdoor patio connected to the Market. Observations were standardized with consistent noting of date/time/location at the beginning of each and focused on a clear set of themes. These include: (a) demographics and diversity of patrons and employees (based on estimations of age, gender, white/visible minority, professional status, and so on); (b) the activities people engage in there (eating and drinking, or meeting people, for example); (c) the types of interactions (verbal and non-verbal) that occur between strangers and familiars; and (d) the Market environment (material elements

and their use by patrons). This unobtrusive research focused on observable elements of the space, following ethical guidelines for observational research conducted in public settings where there is no expectation of privacy (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018). The field notes did not record any identifying information about the individuals observed. Notably, fieldwork was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Various public health orders resulted in a range of restrictions in public and commercial places such as The Forks, requiring complete closure at times. Over half of the observations took place during periods when all restrictions were lifted, so it was possible to note whether and how pandemic measures affected performances of conviviality.

Regular meetings were held with research assistants to discuss observations underway, ensure consistency in recording data, and maintain a constant focus on the research themes. Of course, each researcher brings a particular set of understandings and skills to the field, allowing them to capture different elements and contribute more nuanced observations. Following the fieldwork, I met with the research assistants steadily as we undertook a systematic review of field notes, established a list of codes to categorize the data, and proceeded with coding to reveal the set of themes that I discuss next (Kirby et al., 2006). The themes reflect predominant patterns of social interaction, activity, and use of space, as well as demographic trends. Such patterns were observed and verified by all of the researchers. Exceptions to these patterns were quite rare (though they do exist). I report on these themes using exemplary excerpts from the field notes. Thus, the excerpts are not simply anecdotes but illustrate patterns of activity noted as part of an extensive, systematic process of naturalistic observation. While research assistants were involved in gathering, coding, and categorizing the data, the final analysis presented here is my own.

4. The Forks Market

Located at the intersection of the Red and Assiniboine rivers in the city of Winnipeg, The Forks is described as a “meeting place” (The Forks, 2022a) because of its historical role as a place for Indigenous trade, and, following colonization, European settlement, industry, and immigration. Over the past three decades, The Forks—a former railyard—has been redeveloped into a thriving heritage tourist site featuring a children’s museum and playground, entertainment spaces, a riverwalk, a boutique hotel, and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights designed by “starchitect” Antoine Predock. Bringing urbanites together to eat and drink, visit the shops and museums, and celebrate major events, The Forks serves as one of Winnipeg’s most significant public spaces and sources of civic pride (The Forks, 2023).

This article concentrates on The Forks Market—an anchoring space within the larger site—described on The Forks website as a “vibrant” shopping and food hall

destination (The Forks, 2022c). It operates as a public space in the city, with no entry fee, openly available to anyone. The Market’s renewal, completed in 2016, was orchestrated by The Forks North Portage Partnership (a tri-level governmental organization governed by a ten-member board), which owns and manages The Forks as part of a broader downtown revitalization mandate (The Forks, 2022b). In collaboration with the innovative Number TEN Architectural Group, and using techniques of brandscaping, the Market underwent reinvention, drawing on its history as a site of “gathering and trade” to frame its current iteration as a space of community and commerce (Riediger, 2016; see also Number TEN Architectural Group, 2021). To this end, the former festival market, which included vendors such as fruit and vegetable stands, was replaced with a new retail and leisure infrastructure centered on an “eclectic food hall” concept with more local, yet diverse, culinary options (The Forks, 2022c). The Market Loft was restructured to showcase “local maker and retail options,” fostering a craft consumption scene (The Forks, 2022c). In addition, the formerly teal-trimmed atrium was updated with industrial architectural features such as exposed brick walls, black steel signage, and natural wood elements. Themed to convey the qualities of “community,” “cultural diversity,” and “heritage,” The Forks Market brandscape invokes a coherent image as a culturally inclusive, urban “commons,” circulated via media and reinforced by marketing campaigns. It is manifest in the new Forks Logo, created by Tetro Design in 2018, which signals “a clear relationship between The Forks and The Forks Market/The Common” (The Forks Market, 2018).

In the analysis below, I explore in more detail how the Market brandscape encourages patrons to co-perform this image through cosmopolitan activity and convivial encounters, as well as the tensions it frames. Primarily, I focus on the brandscape’s material affordances and their symbolic meanings, considering how these are used as resources for sociability and engagement across differences. In the following sections, I trace the key components of a “cosmopolitan conviviality” that surfaces in this process, which, while discussed separately for analytic purposes, are, in practice, closely entwined.

5. Cosmopolitan Conviviality: Key Elements

5.1. Convivial Sociability

Intentionally designed to “reinforce The Forks’ reputation as a meeting place” (Number TEN Architectural Group, 2021) with the aim of “enhance[ing] the sense of community,” (Riediger, 2016), the Market’s material culture provides “affordances of sociability” (Horgan et al., 2020, p. 147) that encourage people to interact and to engage in an exchange of glances, if not words, to listen in on other people’s conversations, or to simply observe and participate in the “spectacle of sociability, of seeing and being seen” (Radice, 2016, p. 439).

In my observations of this place, I found that patrons use such affordances to co-perform a convivial sociability consisting of commensality, spontaneous exchange, civility, and trust.

Most obviously, the food hall itself frames a shared experience of eating and drinking together. The main floor of The Forks Market is configured as a broad food hall comprised of three zones: (1) the North Hall featuring The Original Pancake House restaurant and two “ethnic” kiosks alongside several gourmet food shops (a bakery, boutique wine seller, and specialty candy store); (2) the South Hall lined by colourful murals, with a fish and chips outlet and another two food kiosks; and (3) the main Food Hall in the building’s atrium with numerous kitsch, fusion, and “ethnic” eateries. These zones are anchored by The Common craft beer and wine bar featuring a rail-inspired steel canopy that arches toward and frames the dining area, evoking the notion of a “commons” in the food hall space. Enhancing this notion, the main Food Hall offers a range of seating, including bar-height counters, steel-based tables for four, and custom oak seating that forms one long table down the center for communal dining. Upholstered orange booths face inward, promoting a shared experience in view of all, while oversized black and copper drum pendants not only define the space but provide “visual warmth” to establish an intimate ambiance (Riediger, 2016).

Codified as a “commons,” with a range of eateries and communal dining space, most of the people I observed come to The Forks Market to share a meal with friends or family, meet with colleagues for a drink, or read the newspaper with a pastry in the company of others. The constant hum of chatter, the sound of laughter, and the movement of people, together with lively music, the smell of coffee, and freshly made food establish a vibrant, social atmosphere. Enjoying food and drink with others in this space and even at the same table at times promotes a shared experience and sense of sociability among individuals. Bell (2007, p. 19) refers to this as “commensality,” which, he maintains, “is not always a disguise for competitions over taste and status; it can also be about social identification, the sharing of not only food and drink but of world-views and patterns of living.” In this case, commensality reflects a particular way of being together in urban public space, a casual convivial togetherness.

While engaging in a common experience of eating, drinking, and relaxing together, the Market further supports spontaneous social interactions between strangers and familiars. For example, the design of food service and flows, in which individuals must line up together to order food or drinks from the kiosks, enables brief encounters. Individuals were seen asking others about food options while waiting to order, providing compliments, or just engaging in small talk. In addition, many patrons were seen “people watching,” or conducting what Anderson (2004, p. 21) refers to as a form of “folk ethnography.” For example, from the field notes:

An older couple next to me sit in [the] orange chair, facing the crowd—people watching while they have coffee and chat.

Indeed, the sociopetal, proxemic patterning of tables, invites a range of social interactions within the main dining hall. Some individuals carried out informal performances (a display of talent), garnering the attention of those sitting nearby. Again, from the field notes:

A woman who sits at one of the tables...gets up from her seat and requests the attention of the people sitting [nearby]. She announces that she will be playing a traditional song for them on her flute-like traditional instrument as it is Indigenous Day. The people sitting, though not everyone, pay attention to her and give her a round of applause....A woman and young teenager walk up to her and compliment her. Opposite them sit two men; one of them initiates conversation with her friend and all of them start talking to each other.

Still others struck up brief conversations with strangers, often facilitated by and focused on, children and pets, who seem to break down barriers with a common focus. For example, from the field notes:

A table with two young boys (toddler age) and parents is approached by an older man. The man appears to be making a comment about the kids. He looks to them and talks and smiles. A short interaction, but very friendly and out of the blue.

Such interpersonal, often intercultural, interactions occurred even when strict pandemic restrictions were in place (masking, social distancing rules), and tables were spaced apart. Nonetheless, there was more emphasis on nonverbal communication and verbal exchanges were more guarded, as people kept their distance.

A general “code of civility” (Anderson, 2004, p. 26) was evident throughout the observations, which captured numerous polite gestures, respect for people’s belongings and space marked by the use of a table, as well as the provision of assistance with directions, food choices, or putting away trays. Covid-19 protocols, however, introduced another dimension of civility requiring individuals to follow public health orders at times. These were highly regulated with material markers, including signs reminding individuals to “be kind,” sanitizing stations, and distancing measures. In line with Market branding, security teams upheld pandemic restrictions in a friendly, welcoming manner while checking vaccination cards and maintaining control, ensuring rules were followed when necessary. This illustrates how civility does not simply occur naturally in these spaces, but is a result of informal and formal social and moral regulation and control, which, materialized in the Market, forms part of the “conditions for conviviality,” even when taken for granted (Barker et al., 2019, p. 508).

Trust among strangers was enacted in several ways. I observed individuals asking strangers to watch their belongings (including their cell phones) while they collected food orders. In addition, children were seen wandering (not too far) from their parents but watched by others around them. For example, from the field notes:

A woman [with] her small child (a toddler) [leaves the child] alone while she throws away their garbage [and] puts their dirty tray away. Seems like a “safe space” to leave the child alone for a moment. While [the] mom is away, people look over at the girl and smile.

Leaving one’s belongings or even children alone for moments of time is not common practice in other public city spaces, which are characterized by distrust. At The Forks Market, however, configured as “the city’s living room” (Riediger, 2016), there is a general feeling of comfort and safety that allows children to walk around unaccompanied by adults, as captured in many observations. Parallel to Horgan et al.’s (2020, p. 149) study of skating rinks, an “atmosphere of generalized trust” circulates in this public space of sociability, wherein such trust plays an important role in the performance of conviviality, laying down the foundation for “getting along.”

Still, the conviviality that I observed patrons co-perform does not meet the community ideal forwarded by The Forks Market branding; rather, it reflects a more loose-knit form of “being together” based on informal, spontaneous, mainly non-verbal exchanges of glances or gestures, but also brief, friendly conversation. This is not a form of community based on deep connection, but a casual conviviality, similar to that observed in park life, where people are “more concerned with getting along (as a social lubricant) than with togetherness (as social glue)” (Barker et al., 2019, p. 499). In addition, and perhaps more importantly, such conviviality is mediated by consumption. While it is not required, I rarely saw anyone at a table without purchased items. As reflected in the field notes:

Of all the spaces I’ve been in today, this is the busiest and liveliest. I can hear several conversations and can see various groups of people engaging with one another. Music from the bar. Here, the “expectation” seems to be food or drink of some sort. Every table that is occupied is consuming food or drink.

The consumerist orientation of the Market is further reinforced by the shopping scene on the second floor, clearly visible from the main Food Hall, and the shopping bags carried by people strolling around the area. Here, community is not only cultivated but is also commodified and thus narrowly defined by the ability to consume.

5.2. *Cosmopolitan Openness*

The Forks Market is also configured as a culturally diverse, inclusive place for gathering. This is evident in the architectural design featuring open, accessible spaces inside and out, with multiple entryways to the Market, wide aisles, and a lift to the loft. Seating accommodates various individual and group needs, with high chairs, wheelchair spaces, and counter seating for lone individuals. The Market is moreover situated in the city center, accessible by private vehicle or public transit. On the whole, the materiality of the Forks—seating, flow, building access—is designed with inclusivity in mind, thus providing “an opportunity for diverse strangers to come together and be exposed to one another” (Anderson, 2004, p. 28).

Observational data confirms that a diversity of people inhabit the Market environment. I saw patrons representing a span of age groups, from young children to elderly folks, differently-abled individuals, with some in wheelchairs, a mix of white and visible minority visitors and employees, people speaking different languages, along with various lifestyle groups, including sports fans, joggers, and moms with strollers, to name a few. Of course, some groups maintain a greater presence at different times of the day or week; for example, more families with children were at the Market on weekends, elderly folks could be seen with coffee and crosswords during the morning hours, and young adults populated The Common bar and patio area Friday nights. Nevertheless, social and cultural diversity was constant throughout, as recorded at each observation. Still, I perceived a subtle racial hierarchy among employees, wherein lower positions of table cleaner, pandemic security staff, and food delivery were predominantly occupied by young, visible minorities. Thus, as Gilroy (2006) points out, racism can still exist alongside conviviality.

On the whole, the convivial environment enables interactions across differences that are unique to the Market compared to those on the street. For instance, on several occasions I observed members of a group speaking a language other than English initiate brief conversations in English with nearby patrons. From the field notes:

A table of non-native English speaking friends interact with [a] nearby table (a young family with two kids) and ask what is the name of the child and [the English-speaking] child tells them how old she is (four). As [the] table of non-native English speakers leaves, [the] four-year old child waves and says “bye” and they reciprocate.

Indeed, children could be seen leading intercultural engagement as they wandered to nearby tables in search of play. Again, from the field notes:

[A white, middle-aged] man converses with his friends, keep[ing] an eye on his son, who roams around near his vicinity. Sitting diagonally opposite them is an interracial [visible minority] couple with their two kids. The man's son goes to their table and the mother starts playing with him; offers "high-fives." The man, in response, goes to their table and starts a conversation with the family and asks if it's okay with them, with his son playing [there]. They don't mind, and he leaves his son in their company....After ten to fifteen minutes or so, he brings his son back to the table and thanks the family.

At times, "people watching" blended into other forms of mundane exchange that cross boundaries of difference, resulting in a series of social interactions wherein cosmopolitan sociability seemed almost contagious. For example, from the field notes:

A couple of older women, one [who is] white, one [who is] a visible minority (with blue hair) comment with the table across [from] them, a man (white, middle aged) and his son, having lunch. The women are having coffee [and] appear to be "people watching," both facing inward toward the crowd even though at a table for four....[The] woman with blue hair gets up for food and chats with the man and son. [As they conclude] he says, "Have a good day, God bless." Then, he chats with [another] man...at the table next to him about coffee and where they live in the city, say[ing], "Nice to meet you." [They continue to] discuss sports [and] food, [one mentioning he] had Argentinian ribs for lunch.

While such striking interactions occur occasionally, encounters across differences could largely be understood in terms of "rubbing along," a concept that Watson (2009) describes as:

A form of limited encounter between social subjects where recognition of different others through a glance or gaze, seeing and being seen, sharing embodied spaces, in talk or silence, has the potential to militate against the withdrawal into the self or private realm. (Watson, 2009, p. 1581)

Reflecting this practice of "rubbing along," an "ordinary multicultural" forms part of the brand experience of The Forks Market (Gilroy, 2006). As Anderson (2004) suggests, such everyday experiences of diverse co-mingling encourage the practice of "living-with-difference" (Nowicka & Vertovec, 2014, p. 341) as normal, cultivating an openness wherein "denizens learn to get along and deal effectively with life in this setting" (Anderson, 2004, p. 22). In this sense, The Forks Market resembles a cosmopolitan canopy.

The Market, however, extends opportunities for cultural exchange with its "gourmet foodscape," a concept

that "capture[s] the cultural spaces and practices of gourmet food" (Johnston & Baumann, 2015, p. 3). Such foodscapes feature "local, organic, and sustainable foods," along with "ethnic" cuisines and specialty ingredients, with particular emphasis on qualities of "authenticity" and "exoticism" (Johnston & Baumann, 2015, pp. 19–20). For example, the kiosk Habanero Sombrero uses folk art and Day of the Dead symbolism to market "authentic" Mexican tacos. Nearby, Red Ember sells pizza prepared with ethically sourced local ingredients and baked in its authentic wood-fired copper oven imported from Naples. While each kiosk in the Market presents a different vendor with unique symbolism marking its culinary culture, the kiosks themselves are relatively standardized, materially. Lined up alongside the dining areas, they feature open kitchens framed by exposed brick arches, with vendor names in black steel lettering overhead. This layout serves to materially anchor the diverse kiosks, which are linked together as a common resource in the form of culinary cultural diversity (Figueiredo et al., 2018).

Engaging in such cosmopolitan affordances, it was not uncommon to see a table of friends, each with a different ethnic or fusion food, and it was evident that people were consuming food from different cultures. From the field notes:

A table of four to six guys, they are each enjoying a different meal—sushi, fries and burger, fancy-looking tuna tacos, a hot dog—a true "cosmopolitan" lunch table.

Patrons could be heard discussing the various food options while lined up at the kiosks, sharing their food choices (as mentioned in an excerpt above referencing Argentinian ribs), and they were often seen glancing at the food already on tables, observing the variety of culinary options being consumed.

Optimistically, Anderson (2004, p. 17) suggests that culinary diversity promotes cosmopolitan openness: "When diverse people are eating one another's food, strangers in the abstract can become somewhat more human and a social good is performed for those observing." However, critics of "culinary cosmopolitanism" submit that it may also, paradoxically, reinforce social and cultural hierarchies (Johnston & Baumann, 2015, p. 92). In particular, it can be used instrumentally to perform cosmopolitan competence, based on the ability to know and navigate cultural differences (which are also "fixed" through commodification) as a source of symbolic distinction between cosmopolitan consumers and others, as well as between cosmopolitan consumers themselves. As Figueiredo et al. (2018, p. 128) indicate, "displays of cosmopolitan competence are more salient in cosmopolitan spaces—those densely occupied by cosmopolitan consumers—because the attempt to create symbolic distinctions from surrounding cosmopolitan fellows demands finer gradations in cosmopolitan display of competence." In this vein, the Market's gourmet

foodscape circulates a “commodified cosmopolitanism” (Radice, 2002, p. 150) oriented toward elite cosmopolitan consumers who can use it as a resource to express a cosmopolitan difference (Figueiredo et al., 2018).

Nonetheless, Wise (2011, p. 107) flags the importance of the “social settings in which food is consumed cross-culturally” when considering cosmopolitan outcomes. Within The Forks Market, characterized by intercultural conviviality, the culturally “exotic” quality of gourmet food is downplayed. Cultural differences are normalized in this context, where they are encountered as mundane. Here culinary diversity underpins a “banal” cosmopolitanism, described by Noble (2013, p. 166) as a “practical orientation” in which daily practices of “engaging with people and goods from other cultures” facilitate openness to “a broader humanity.”

The Market’s foodscape thus reflects a commodified cosmopolitanism that includes elements of a consumer-oriented brandscape, and that exists alongside a banal cosmopolitanism that is co-performed through everyday intercultural exchange in the food hall. The presence of these contradictory cosmopolitanisms manifests the ambivalent character of the Market’s brand culture, in which an authentic ordinary cosmopolitanism takes shape within a market framework that prioritizes cosmopolitan consumption, even while promoting inclusivity through accessible design.

5.3. Class-Oriented Consumption

The coordination of the material culture of the Forks Market further invokes a notion of “authenticity,” which especially appeals to middle-class consumers, or those with relatively high levels of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984). As Watson (2009) points out in her study of commercial markets in the UK, markets mediate differences such as class in part through their symbolic and material elements, which express particular class tastes: “The look of a market, its materiality and the products sold convey certain social meanings which attract some individuals while disinclining others from entering that space” (Watson, 2009, p. 1587). She explains how markets reflect Bourdieu’s (1984) notion of habitus, which implies that tastes are a matter of class position, and especially embody cultural capital (which is not independent of other forms, such as economic capital), observing how some markets attract more middle-class shoppers than others when their aesthetic and goods align with more “discerning” tastes (Watson, 2009).

In the case of The Forks Market, the “look” of the space is shaped by the brand theme of heritage, which selectively focuses on the Market’s industrial rail history. This is manifest in the use of materials, including reclaimed wood, raw steel, and hand-forged blacksmith work, the latter “referenc[ing] a traditional industrial art” linked to craft production (Riediger, 2016). The arched passageways connecting the Market’s three halls carry heritage-themed names such as Trader’s Lane. In addi-

tion, the North Hall features large, sepia-tinted photos of The Forks’ immigrant and industrial legacy. Overall, The Forks Market brandscape is framed with industrial-inspired materiality, which conveys a sense of authenticity through its close connection to the past. At the same time, the “look” of the Market has been “upscaled” with high-end elements such as marble counters in the main food hall, where water is served from gleaming copper taps.

Johnston and Baumann (2015) explain that authenticity (always a social construct) is pursued by tourists, foodies, and other cultural consumers as a new marker of distinction in an era of growing cultural omnivorousness, where consumption is increasingly democratized and distinction is no longer sought through the snobbish consumption of “highbrow” cultural goods. In this context, they argue, new markers of high-status consumption have emerged, such as the quality of authenticity, which can be seen in a range of cultural consumption, from food and tourist experiences to home décor and clothing style. It works as a source of distinction since the ability to appreciate and consume “authentic” goods “requires an investment of time and a set of cognitive and aesthetic skills that generally accompany higher education and income levels” (Johnston & Baumann, 2015, p. 83).

The authenticity concept is further expressed by the Market’s retail and leisure infrastructure. In particular, the gourmet foodscape is designed to offer an “authentic” diverse culinary repertoire, which especially appeals to middle-class foodies and agro-tourists (Johnston & Baumann, 2015). Indeed, the cost of food at The Forks Market is not insignificant, where an ethically sourced hot dog, fries, and house-made drink from Wienerpeg (a kitsch hot dog vendor that replaced an ordinary hot dog stand) can cost upwards of \$18 CDN. Additionally, the Market refresh cultivates a local maker retail scene where individuals in search of authentic, hand-crafted goods can shop at stores such as Coal and Canary (where one can purchase a \$30 CDN candle). Altogether, the rebranding of The Forks Market may be seen to appeal to middle-class consumers, who can decipher and make use of the codes of authenticity conveyed by the space’s heritage-themed material culture and authentic consumer goods to display their “good taste” (Johnston & Baumann, 2015).

While it is not possible to provide a definitive account of the class composition of Forks Market patrons based on observation alone, there are some discernable class signals (Emmison et al., 2012) that provide insight into which groups are represented in the space. Many of the patrons I observed appeared to be professional or middle class, according to visible markers of social status such as high-end brand name clothing (for example, Canada Goose winter coats), professional rank, and subcultural style. For example, white-collar professionals identified by office attire, such as suits and ties or jackets with corporate logos and lanyards, were frequently observed having lunch or meeting for a drink after work. To be sure,

the location of The Forks is close to downtown office towers and various cultural industries where many of Winnipeg's professional classes work. Fashionable young adults comprised another group commonly observed in the evenings, including those who could be categorized as "hipsters," a largely middle-class trend, centrally concerned with authenticity in the presentation of self-identity (Maly & Varis, 2015). Unlike Anderson's (2004) observations of the Reading Terminal Market, where he encountered people from a wide range of class backgrounds, at The Forks Market there were very few occasions when I encountered street-involved persons, and even then, they appeared uncomfortable, scanning the space and moving from one table to the next.

The overall impression of The Forks' Market—its look, materiality, products, and symbolic meaning—is largely middle-class, creating an image of The Forks as a middle-class space. This can impact whether individuals feel a sense of belonging there, creating tensions of inclusion and exclusion along class lines (Watson, 2009, p. 1581). Thus, while the cosmopolitan canopy encompasses a wide range of ethnic and racial diversity, as well as differences in ability, age, and gender, there seems to be less class-based diversity inscribed in the brand environment, pointing again to the contradictions of the consumerist-oriented brandscape and the convivial cosmopolitan brand culture that surfaces in the space of the Market.

6. Conclusions

This study set out to explore how a particular kind of conviviality surfaces in and is supported by the branded public space of the Forks Market in Winnipeg, Canada. The empirical material presented here demonstrates how a specific form of cosmopolitan conviviality takes shape in the dynamic interplay of the brandscape forged at the Market and the people who frequent the site. It was argued that the brandscape forms a cultural context of consumption that provides material affordances (and their symbolic meanings) for the co-performance of a convivial sociability and cosmopolitan openness, which is as much a product of the material environs as it is the social and cultural activity of those who use and inhabit the space. It is this co-produced experience that people consume and even pay for as the brand "value-in-use" (Arvidsson, 2006). It forms the basis of a convivial brand culture in which people live out their lives and form connections across difference within the cultural spaces of brands.

Framed as a "commons," the Market supports convivial performances that encompass a sociable commensality, civility, and trust. Such conviviality resonates with the "lighter touch forms of sociality" (Thrift, 2005, p. 145) that are central to urban life, though often neglected (Bell, 2007). Inhabited by a diversity of people, patrons engage in various exchanges across difference, co-performing a mundane cosmopolitan openness in the

form of "rubbing along" (Watson, 2009). Of course, this does not mean hierarchies of race and ethnicity are dissolved; rather, they co-exist alongside a conviviality that provides people with the means to address inequalities in the city (Gilroy, 2006). Such cosmopolitan conviviality is further marked by tensions, whereby authentic forms of conviviality and an ordinary multiculturalism exist alongside commodified versions of community and cosmopolitanism. Such tensions reflect the middle-class and consumption orientation of The Forks Market brandscape and the ambivalence of the brand culture that features in this space.

This study contributes to the debates on conviviality and cosmopolitanism in public urban spaces in a number of ways: First, by focusing on a branded public space and drawing on sociological brand theories, the study provides insight into the ways in which branded spaces, or brandscapes, underpin and support the performance of convivialities through the configuration of a cosmopolitan social infrastructure consisting of a range of material and symbolic convivial and cosmopolitan affordances. This allows an understanding of the "mechanisms" by which convivialities are co-performed, which may be of interest to urban planners concerned with the cultivation of forms of sociability in cities. As the principles of commercial branding are applied to a widening range of semi-public and public urban spaces, it will be important to consider the specific ways in which branded spaces help or hinder the possibilities for convivial activity.

Second, by engaging the intersections of cosmopolitanism and conviviality, the study contributes to the growing scholarship on ordinary cosmopolitanisms by outlining some of the ways in which an aesthetic cosmopolitan openness is expressed in the context of a convivial environment, both affirming earlier work on cosmopolitan canopies but also pointing to the tensions that arise within cosmopolitan brand spaces. In addition, detailing the components of a convivial cosmopolitanism as it surfaces on the platform of a branded public space, the study contributes to recent convivialities research, reflected in this issue, concerned with the varieties of co-existence that takes shape in particular material and spatial urban contexts.

Third, drawing on the concept of "brand culture" (Banet-Weiser, 2012, p. 13), the study provides insight into the tensions and contradictions inherent in performances of convivial cosmopolitanism in a branded urban public space. Specifically, it illustrates how these are part and parcel of a brand culture, characterized by ambivalence, in which authentic forms of sociability and engagement across differences exist alongside commodified cosmopolitanism and community.

Fourth, the study draws attention to the reworking of public space as it is increasingly branded. What happens to urban public space, which is "fiercely defended as the space of encounter with strangers and as a democratic public realm" (Watson, 2009, p. 1583) when it is subject to brand visions, logos, design, and activity such as

brandscaping? While the Forks Market remains a public space and is envisioned as the city's living room, its brand image, as evidenced in the latest renovation, seems to narrow the possibilities for all members of the public to participate. Thus, while aiming to "enhance the sense of community" (Riediger, 2016) in the Market, its configuration as a commercial food hall commodifies community because it is mediated through the purchase of food and drink. Can branding be done differently to support wider involvement and possibilities for exchange, as Anderson (2004) envisaged in his work on cosmopolitan canopies? This is an important question, since branding itself is not inherently exclusive nor necessarily tied to commerce, and could be used toward other ends, such as encouraging sociability, in the context of urban space (Moor, 2007).

Acknowledgments

The author thanks Yatila Jamir and Chantal Nygaard for their first-rate research assistance with this project. The author also thanks the anonymous reviewers for their insightful, constructive feedback on a previous version of this article. The research was funded in part by a Mitacs Globalinks Internship and the Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of Manitoba.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

- Anderson, E. (2004). The cosmopolitan canopy. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 595(1), 14–31.
- Aptekar, S. (2019). The unbearable lightness of the cosmopolitan canopy: Accomplishment of diversity at an urban farmers market. *City & Community*, 18(1), 71–87.
- Arvidsson, A. (2006). *Brands: Meaning and value in media culture*. Routledge.
- Banet-Weiser, S. (2012). *Authentic™: The politics of ambivalence in a brand culture*. New York University Press.
- Barker, A., Crawford, A., Booth, N., & Churchill, D. (2019). Everyday encounters with difference in urban parks: Forging "openness to otherness" in segmenting cities. *International Journal of Law in Context*, 15, 495–514.
- Bell, D. (2007). The hospitable city: Social relations in commercial spaces. *Progress in Human Geography*, 31(1), 7–22.
- Binnie, J., Holloway, J., Millington, S., & Young, C. (2006). Introduction: Grounding cosmopolitan urbanism: Approaches, practices and policies. In J. Binnie, J. Holloway, S. Millington, & C. Young (Eds.), *Cosmopolitan urbanism* (pp. 1–34). Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Routledge.
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. (2018). *Tri-council policy statement: Ethical conduct for research involving humans*. Government of Canada.
- City of Winnipeg. (2019). *2016 census*. <https://winnipeg.ca/census/2016>
- Emmison, M., Smith, P., & Mayall, M. (2012). *Researching the visual* (2nd ed.). SAGE.
- Emontspool, J., & Georgi, C. (2017). A cosmopolitan return to nature: How combining aestheticization and moralization processes expresses distinction in food consumption. *Consumption, Markets & Culture*, 20(4), 306–328.
- Figueredo, B., Bean, J., & Larsen, H. (2018). Cosmopolitanism and its sociomaterial construction in the servicescape. In J. Emontspool & I. Woodward (Eds.), *Cosmopolitanism, markets, and consumption: A critical global perspective* (pp. 127–156). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2), 219–245.
- Germann Molz, J. (2011). Cosmopolitanism and consumption. In M. Roverso & M. Nowicka (Eds.), *The Ashgate research companion to cosmopolitanism* (pp. 33–52). Ashgate.
- Gilroy, P. (2004). *After empire: Melancholia or convivial culture?* Routledge.
- Gilroy, P. (2006). Multiculture in times of war: An inaugural lecture given at the London School of Economics. *The Critical Quarterly*, 48(4), 27–45.
- Greenberg, M. (2008). *Branding New York: How a city in crisis was sold to the world*. Routledge.
- Hannerz, U. (1996). *Transnational connections*. Routledge.
- Harris, A. (2011). Branding Hoxton: Cultural landscapes of post-industrial London. In A. Pike (Ed.), *Brands and branding geographies* (pp. 187–199). Edward Elgar.
- Hebdige, D. (1990). Fax to the future. *Marxism Today*, 34, 18–23.
- Holt, D. (1998). Does cultural capital structure American consumption? *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25(1), 1–25.
- Horgan, M., Liinamaa, S., Dakin, A., Meligrana, S., & Xu, M. (2020). A shared everyday ethic of public sociability: Outdoor public ice rinks as spaces for encounter. *Urban Planning*, 5(4), 143–154.
- Johnston, J., & Baumann, S. (2015). *Foodies: Democracy and distinction in the gourmet foodscape* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Julier, G. (2005). Urban designscapes and the production of aesthetic consent. *Urban Studies*, 42(5/6), 869–887.
- Kirby, S., Greaves, L., & Reid, C. (2006). *Experience, research, social change: Methods beyond the mainstream* (2nd ed.). Broadview Press.

- Latham, A. (2006). Sociality and the cosmopolitan imagination: National, cosmopolitan and local imaginaries in Auckland, New Zealand. In J. Binnie, J. Holloway, S. Millington, & C. Young (Eds.), *Cosmopolitan urbanism* (pp. 89–111). Routledge.
- Lofland, L. (1989). Social life in the public realm. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 19(4), 453–482.
- Maly, I., & Varis, P. (2015). The 21st century hipster: On micro-populations in times of superdiversity. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 19(6), 637–653.
- Moor, L. (2007). *The rise of brands*. Berg.
- Nava, M. (2002). Cosmopolitan modernity: Everyday imaginaries and the register of difference. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 19(1/2), 81–100.
- Noble, G. (2013). Cosmopolitan habits: The capacities and habits of intercultural conviviality. *Body & Society*, 19(2/3), 162–185.
- Nowicka, M. (2020). Fantasy of conviviality: Banalities of multicultural settings and what we do (not) notice when we look at them. In O. Hemer, M. Povrzanović Frykman, & P. Ristilampi (Eds.), *Conviviality at the crossroads: The poetics and politics of everyday encounters* (pp. 15–42). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nowicka, M., & Vertovec, S. (2014). Comparing convivialities: Dreams and realities of living-with-difference. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 17(4), 341–356.
- Number TEN Architectural Group. (2021). *Projects: The Forks Market refresh*. <https://www.numberten.com/projects/the-forks-market-refresh>
- Radice, M. (2002). Street-level cosmopolitanism: Neighbourhood shopping streets in multi-ethnic Montréal. In A. Wise & S. Velayutham (Eds.), *Everyday multiculturalism* (pp. 140–157). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Radice, M. (2016). Unpacking intercultural conviviality in multiethnic commercial streets. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 37(5), 432–448.
- Riediger, E. (2016, April 20). A new vision for The Forks Market: A design guest post. *Tourism Winnipeg*. <https://www.tourismwinnipeg.com/things-to-do/only-in-the-peg/read,post/171/a-new-vision-for-the-forks-market-a-design-guest-post>
- Szerszynski, B., & Urry, J. (2002). Cultures of cosmopolitanism. *The Sociological Review*, 50(4), 461–481.
- The Forks. (2018). *The Forks logo: Something new with everything old in mind*. <https://www.theforks.com/blog/230/the-forks-logo-something-new-with-everything-old-in-mind>
- The Forks. (2022a). *The Forks*. <https://www.theforks.com/about/the-forks>
- The Forks. (2022b). *Connecting 2020–2030 ten year concept + financial plan*. <https://connecting2030.theforks.com>
- The Forks. (2022c). *The Forks Market*. <https://www.theforks.com/attractions/the-forks-market>
- The Forks. (2023). *History*. <https://www.theforks.com/about/history>
- Thrift, N. (2005). But malice aforethought: Cities and the natural history of hatred. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 30(2), 133–150.
- Watson, S. (2009). The magic of the marketplace: Sociality in a neglected public space. *Urban Studies*, 46(8), 1577–1591.
- Wise, A. (2011). Moving food: Gustatory commensality and disjuncture in everyday multiculturalism. *New Formations*, 74, 82–107.
- Wise, A., & Noble, G. (2016). Convivialities: An orientation. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 37(5), 423–431.

About the Author



Sonia Bookman is an associate professor in the Department of Sociology and Criminology at the University of Manitoba. She completed her PhD at the University of Manchester, UK. Her research focuses on the intersections of brands, culture, consumption, and everyday life, and has been published in journals such as the *Journal of Consumer Culture* and *Cultural Sociology*. She is currently working on the SSHRC-funded project “Cosmopolitan Consumption, Markets, and Culture in Canadian Society.”