




Diversity in Density



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Recent migration surges and rapid urbanisation have increased human diversity in population-dense locations, particularly in urban apartment buildings [1, 2, 3]. Although research on everyday multiculturalism shows that local neighbourhoods are important sites for tackling racism and fostering understanding [4, 5], little work has examined the role of apartment buildings in shaping intercultural interactions, whether positive or negative [6].

Literature on cross-cultural engagements tends to focus on larger-scale spaces, from local neighbourhoods and workplaces to institutions like schools and clubs [1, 7, 8, 9]. Likewise, programs and public policies developed explicitly to encourage civic participation among socio-culturally diverse groups have traditionally overlooked the role of apartment buildings. This oversight is particularly notable, as apartment buildings constitute a new arena of urban governance; their management operates like an additional tier of government which collects taxes (levies), sets rules governing behaviour (by-laws), and elects representatives (committees) [10].

Moreover, as crucibles of both formal and informal interactions, apartment buildings have the potential either to cause or to prevent conflict and isolation. Proponents of contact theory, including scholars of 'everyday multiculturalism,' argue that increased intercultural contact improves intercultural relations. Others believe that increased cultural diversity can negatively affect social cohesion, neighbourly exchange, and tolerance of ethnic others, as people of different cultures, languages, and beliefs may withdraw socially or 'hunker' [11, 12, 13]. Still others contend that peaceful cohabitation can be grounded in a mutual respect for others' right to be present [7, 8, 14], which sometimes entails maintaining respectful distance, i.e. living 'side-by-side rather than face-to-face' [15]. At this time, we have much to learn about which effect is more likely and which trajectories lead to which outcomes.

With both density and diversity increasing globally, we encourage contributors from across disciplines, sectors, and industries to join us for a broad-ranging discussion about the ways in which increasing density and cultural diversity are changing the daily lives, housing and urban designs, and policies and programs in your communities.

Here are some questions that have been guiding our research to date:

- What is the extent of social, cultural, economic, and demographic mixing and segregation in high-density settings in your country?
 - What are the main factors driving this geographical distribution?
 - Does this differ by ownership or by rental structure (i.e. public, private, etc.)?
 - Has this changed over time? If so, what precipitated these changes?
- Which factors enable or constrain intercultural interactions in local apartment complexes?
 - What are the most beneficial types of community interactions in these spaces?
 - How might conflicts be managed in these spaces?
 - How can parallel needs for privacy and community be best managed?

- What interventions or supports are needed to encourage positive social interactions in multicultural apartment communities? What hinders their development? E.g. building management, design, quality, availability of resources.
- To what extent are neighbourhoods, cities, regions, or nations that have only recently opened up to a greater diversity of residents and/or higher levels of apartment living experiencing more acute conflicts?
- How do different top-down, bottom-up, and blended approaches work – or not – in encouraging intergroup cohesion and in mitigating conflicts?
- In what ways do increases in intolerances influenced by our current political and economic situations play out similarly or differently at the building scale?

We look forward to an engaging conversation with you over the coming month and to continued engagement and collaboration in the future.

Best regards,

Edgar, Hazel, and Chris