Civilities, local hierarchies and bridging divides
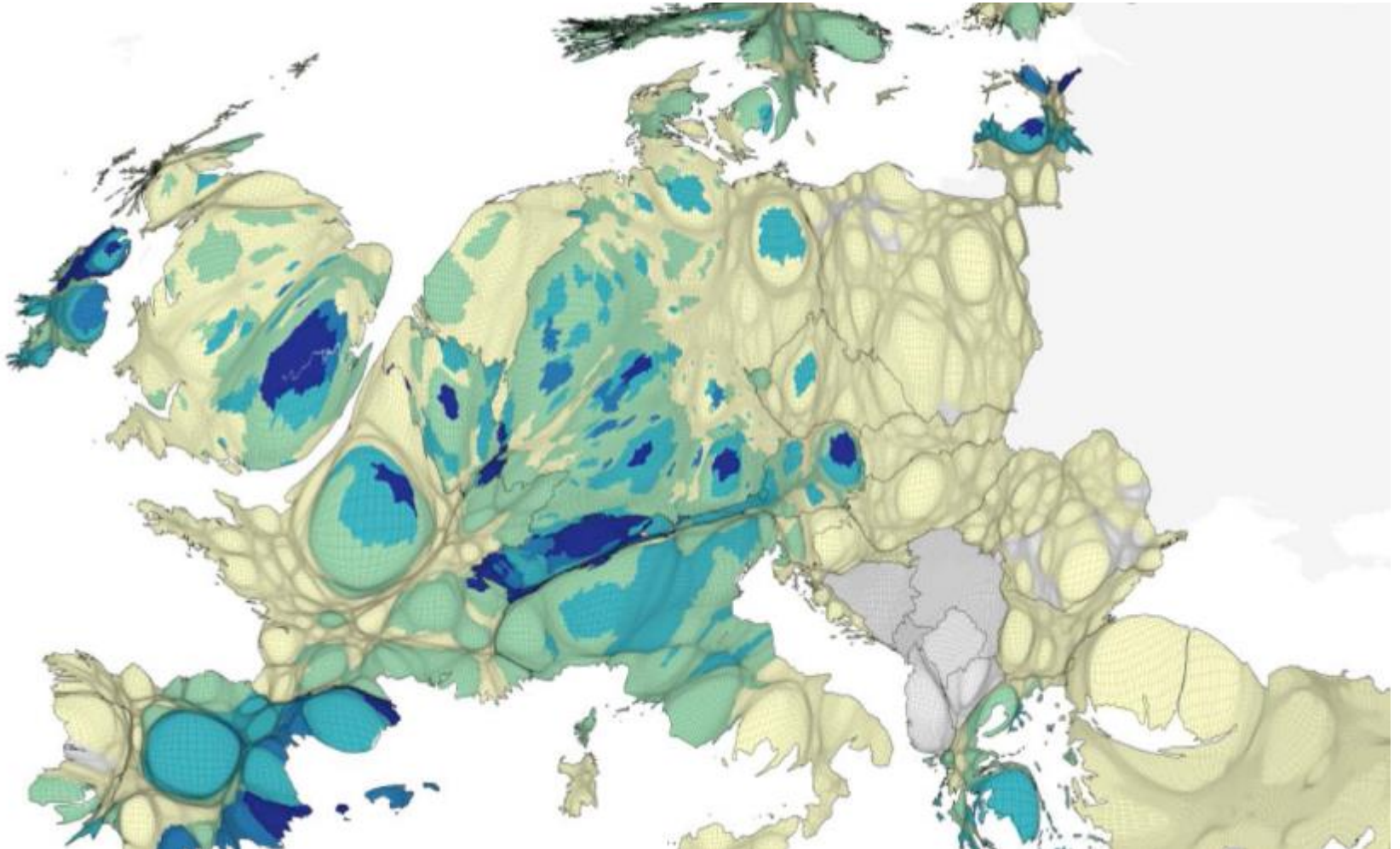
Claire Bynner, University of Glasgow

VSSN Seminar in the Gorbals –

Border Crossings: Implications for Civil Society in a 'Dis'-United Kingdom

Brexit and Border crossings

The regional geography of 'foreigner-born' in Europe in 2014 (% population)

Superdiverse neighbourhoods

Superdiversity (Vertovec 2007) – a new level of **diversity and complexity** in recent patterns of migration **surpassing anything previously experienced**

"gateway neighbourhoods" (Slater 2004)

"arrival zones" (Saunders 2011)

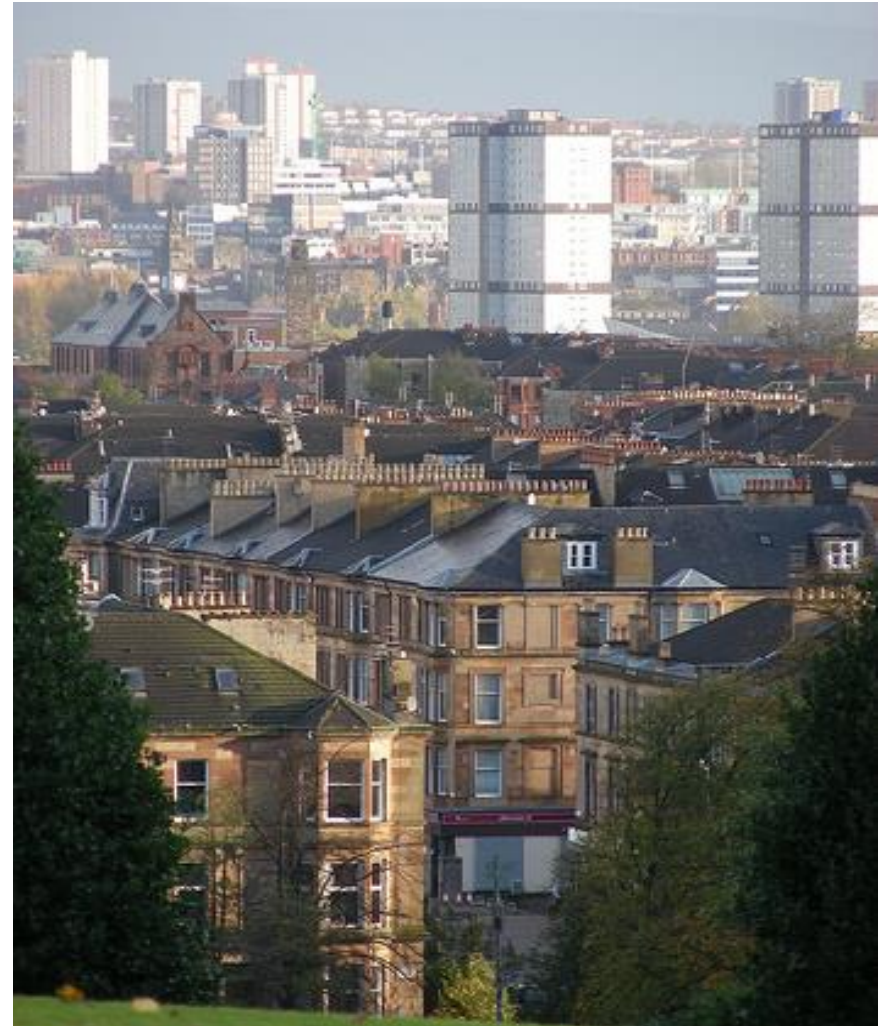"global neighbourhoods" (Logan and Zhang 2010)

"escalator areas" (Travers et al 2006)

Social contact and trust: a case study of a superdiverse neighbourhood

- the most diverse neighbourhood in Scotland
- 50+ languages spoken

Fieldwork: 11 months, mixed methods
- 34 resident interviews
- 24 interviews with local organisations
- 8 walk-along interviews
- Documentary evidence and local statistics
- Direct and participant observations

Conviviality literature

- From multiculturalism to intercultural relations
  - *The nature and extent of intercultural interactions at a local level remains uncertain*

- 'Convivir' – to live together - active negotiation
  - Overing & Passes (2001) a collective achievement, requires effort, an ethical and aesthetic value
  - Gilroy (2004) – 'multiculture' - the ordinariness of ethnic differences in everyday life
  - 'Unpanicked multiculturalism' (Noble 2009) 'cool convivality;' (Neal et al 2013), 'commonplace diversity' (Wessendorf 2014)

- Critique - a romantic view? Underplays inequalities?

Civility, prejudice and local hierarchy

Findings from case study -

- Social differences were defined by local civility
  - conformity to *local norms of recognition and respect* in practices of *sharing common space* (see also Erickson 2011; Bannister &Kearns 2013)
  - relies on 'substantive civility' (Boyd 2006)- *citizenship and inclusion in the political community*
- Convivial interactions provided a vehicle for prejudice
  - *convivial prejudice -* communicating a negative judgement of a third party or outsider group
- Re-ordering of local hierarchies -
  - increased status for ethnic groups who conformed to local norms of civility. Groups at the bottom deemed - 'uncivilised'
- Local civility was strongly influenced by the *history and material context* of the neighbourhood and the city

Bridging divides

Group-based activities:

Cross-cultural activities involving shared interests or goals

Neighbour interactions

Everyday helpfulness, cooperation and kindness, sharing residential space

Street interactions

Friendly encounters in public spaces

Communities need a sense of *agency and power* to improve conditions at a local level

Good relations work

➢ trust and long-term relationships - acting as a kind of 'social glue'

➢ complex, requires time and resource, and is often unrecognised

➢ beyond co-presence to meaningful interactions

> increasing opportunities to discuss cultural differences and similarities

> initiating community conversations

> facilitating difficult dialogues

'Good relations … relies on being able to have difficult and uncomfortable conversations where we disagree profoundly yet still maintain social bonds and trust.

It involves skilled resilient and resourced practitioners who are able to 'sit in the fire' of difficult feelings and unresolved conflict.

We can't dissuade others from racism and xenophobia if we can't bear to hear them out, and understand underlying fears and concerns.'

(Jo Broadwood, 2016 Talk for a Change)