Creolising Conviviality: Thinking Relational Ontology and Decolonial Ethics Through Ivan Illich and Édouard Glissant

Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez

INTRODUCTION

In *Tools for Conviviality*, Ivan Illich (1973) questions how the tools of industrial and technological advancement can serve a common good. He discusses conviviality by focusing on the relationship between technological tools and their communal use. Édouard Glissant, in *Le Discours Antillais* (1981) and in *Poétique de la Relation* (1990, 1997b), writes about the twofold character of creolisation as on the one hand deriving from colonial racial rule and on the other prescribing a future of communal living to come. Taking the analyses of these two authors on conviviality and creolisation, this chapter asks, (a) how we can think conviviality in relation to creolisation, and (b) how we can conceptualise creolising conviviality. These questions are addressed by setting Illich's discussion of convivial tools in dialogue with Glissant's concept of creolisation. The chapter engages with

E. Gutiérrez Rodríguez (✉)
Justus-Liebig-University Giessen, Giessen, Germany
e-mail: E.Gutierrez-Rodriguez@sowi.uni-giessen.de

the historical analyses underpinning these concepts, their relational ontological assumptions and their decolonial ethical implications.

Illich and Glissant work with concepts that engage with the relational and ethical potential of living together with a commitment to social justice. However, while the industrial society and its technological endeavours, which pay very little attention to the pursuit of a common good, are at the centre of Illich's analysis, Glissant's perspective on creolisation outlines a decolonial critique of the racialised hierarchisation and compartmentalisation of modern society that impedes living together on equal ethical terms. The chapter is structured as follows. First, we will engage with the concept of conviviality by tracing it back to the Spanish etymology "convivencia", living together. From here, we will continue our discussion by engaging with Illich's notion of "convivial tools", followed by a brief discussion of Paul Gilroy's observations about "convivial culture". From there, we will trace some of the debates in social and cultural anthropology, sociology and human geography on the anthropology of encounters and the "conviviality turn". What this perspective entails for the conceptualisation of "transversal conviviality" will then be examined by drawing on my own study on migration, domestic work and affect. It is from that perspective that we will draw on Glissant's concept of creolisation and set it in relation with Illich's conviviality.

CONVIVIALITY: ON RELATIONAL ONTOLOGY

In 1973 Illich published his essay, "Tools for conviviality", in Harper & Row's *World Perspectives* series. He wrote in the foreword that the idea had evolved during a series of events that took place at Centro Intercultural de Documentación (CIDOC) in Cuernavaca, Mexico, in 1972. CIDOC was created in 1966 and replaced the Centre of Intercultural Formation (CIC), founded at the Jesuit University of Fordham, where Illich had held a professorship in sociology in the late 1950s. CIDOC was a civil association recognised by Mexican law, hosting a language school, a conference centre, a library and an independent publisher. Illich was the director, and during its ten years of existence renowned intellectuals such as Erich Fromm, Paulo Freire, Andre Gorz and others worked within this intellectually and politically engaged centre (Grünig Iribarren 2013). While working at CIDOC, Illich developed a critique of modernisation driven by industrialisation resulting in the commodification and monetarisation of life, increasing the gap between rich and poor. Silvia Grünig Iribarren, drawing

on Kalle Dietrich, explains how Illich summarised his analysis of industrialisation by discussing the phenomenon of “modernised poverty” (Grünig Iribarren 2013: 50). The divide between rich and poor is established along the lines of industrial development and its capital growth. Based on this analysis, Illich pointed to the disastrous consequences this development has for humanity and the planet. At the centre of monetary and financial gains stands the maxim of capital profit. Humanity and the planet figure only in these financial calculations as assets for capital growth. Confronting and contesting this logic of social development, Illich proposed the convivial use of technological tools to bring wellbeing and economic justice to all. Conviviality, for him, has the potential to address an intrinsic ethical value underlining the interconnectedness and mutual dependency between human beings, the planet and the cosmos. Conviviality in Illich’s sense goes beyond the living together of people and embraces a planetary cosmological thinking which realises that one’s individual life depends on the wellbeing of the planet. Illich’s concept entails a critique of capitalism and formulates a proposal for a radical humanism. He traces this argument by drawing on the Spanish debate on “convivencia”, which was rooted in Spanish counter-narratives to the colonial and imperial monocultural and monolingual project of fascist Spain.

Countering Spanish Fascism: “Convivencia”

The term “convivial” in Illich’s work refers etymologically to the Latin verb “convivere” and its development in the Spanish language to “convivencia”. The Romance genealogy is thus relevant, as the English translation “convivial” emphasises “joyful coming together” rather than the idea of a moral living together that the Spanish “convivencia” carries. Concretely, it means “to live in the company of others, living in the same habitat”. While it is a consequence of cohabitation (in Spanish *coexistencia*), “convivencia” goes a step further than just describing the inhabiting of a commonplace. It also has moral implications as it emphasises a communal being in the world, one that is tied to a respectful and caring living together. Illich was inspired in his use of this term by the Spanish discourse on “convivencia” of the twentieth century. This discourse was initiated by the work of the cultural historian and philologist Américo Castro y Quesada. In his 1948 account of Spanish intellectual history, *España en su historia*, Castro argues for a transcultural genealogy of artistic and intellectual practice and thought in Spain.

While for historians of the Iberian Medieval Age, this approach might not be entirely accurate and might fail to capture the complexity of these times (Manzano Moreno 2013; Soifer 2009; Szpiech 2013), from a political standpoint Castro's proposal represents, within the parameters of his time, a vision of a progressive, democratic and transcultural society (Glick 1992; Shamsie 2016; Wolf 2009). As Miriam Bodian notes in her essay "Américo Castro's Conversos and the Question of Subjectivity" (2017), this account is not without racial stereotypes, as in Castro's use of "caste" which, he argues, refers to lineage and not to biological race. Nonetheless, as Bodian observes, this distinction is not always neatly presented in his work. However, Castro does attempt to challenge the discourse on national identity of the nineteenth century. Taking up the preoccupation of the intellectual generation of 1898, a generation of Spanish intellectuals who failed to come to terms with anti-colonial struggles and the end of the Spanish Empire, Castro raises the question of "who the Spaniards are, how they are made up, and their ultimate worth as a nation" (Castro 1971: 583). Yet, while the critique of the Spanish colonial project does not figure in his analysis either, he challenges the dominant view of Spanish history at this time. The generation of 1898 was engaging with a conservative nationalist project that sought to construct an "eternal Gothic Castilean" Spain, referring to the Spanish Medieval Golden Age as a point of departure. Taking 711 as a starting point from which to think the intellectual and aesthetic coming into being of the Spanish nation, Castro traces the interfaith dialogue and cultural encounters during the Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba between 929 and 1031, where Jews, Christians and Muslims built intellectual circles to exchange and translate ideas in the Mediterranean region (Glick 1979/2005; Menocal 2002). Further, he engages with notions of cultural mixing by focusing on the intellectual figure of the *converso*.

Drawing on the analysis of the fifteenth-century writings of Fernando de la Torre, an aristocratic *converso* from Castile, Castro formulates the observation that Spain's cultural identity crisis is rooted in the denial of the multi-faith history of the Early Medieval Iberian Peninsula. By doing this, Castro places exchange and mixing between the Jewish, Muslim and Christian cultures at the heart of the historiography of the Iberian Peninsula. Further, again reflecting debates on national identity in the Spain of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, he develops an account of the way of being—the spirit of life of the inhabitants of Spanish territory—by focusing on what Bodian (2017: 6) calls "Spain's *morada vital*". Castro saw the articulation of this specific spirit (*Geist*) in the literary expression of

sixteenth- and seventeenth-century works written by *conversos*. As Bodian (2017: 4) writes, it “was in this romantic vein that he developed his twin ideas of the *morada vital* of a people—that cluster of characteristics that makes up the unique “nosotros” of a people—and the accompanying concept of *vividura*, or the consciousness of a people of being part of that collective existence.” The Spanish conservative state and in particular the Francoist regime, with their respective traditional intellectuals, as Castro argues, have failed to acknowledge and capture the hybrid spirit shaping the cultural expressions of Spanish territory.

For Castro, this process of historical oblivion was carried out through the expulsion of the Muslims and Jews from Spain in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹ Drawing on his teacher Menéndez y Pelayo, who developed the concept of “convivencia” through his analysis of linguistic variances in Spain, Castro reconnects to the attempt to produce a national historiography. However, his project represents an attempt to create a hegemonic historiography in Antonio Gramsci’s sense, engaging with a project for inclusive democracy embracing social justice. Thus, while his teacher belonged to the group of traditional intellectuals who promoted a conservative understanding of Spanish historiography, Castro’s approach is based on attempting to create a progressive, inclusive, democratic account as opposed to the Francoist project of *Hispanidad* in which Spain is configured as a white, Catholic, colonising and imperial nation. Written from his exile in the United States, his historical account *España en su historia* represents a counter-historiography nourished by a political vision of a democratic transcultural nation. The project does connect to European historiographies engaging with the building of the modern nation state in the nineteenth century. Yet, Castro’s national project embracing “convivencia” as a counter-discourse to fascist Spain, imagined a transcultural nation with multiple religious beliefs, languages and cultures.

This project, imagining European nation-states in multi-faith, multi-lingual and transcultural terms, still remains a point of struggle in contemporary political debates in Europe (Sakrani 2016), for example, in relation to the rise of extreme right-wing political forces proclaiming a Christian, white, ethnically monocultural Europe detached from its history of colonialism, the transatlantic slave trade, imperialism and European settler colonialism-migration. Right up to this day in Europe, the myth of the nation as rooted in one and the same ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic and cultural origin haunts and circulates in the media and in political speeches on national belonging and the formation of the nation-state.

While Illich does not make any explicit reference to Castro's work, as we will see in the following his reference to "convivencia" was based on a dynamic process of encounters and the creative and intellectual potential of living together. However, the social inequalities pre-empting the potential of living together complicate and limit the possibility of conviviality, as the material analysis of the convivial potential of technological tools in Illich's work shows.

Tools for Conviviality: Material Underpinnings and the Common Good

Illich introduces his approach to conviviality by discussing the technological transformation of society as a process of alienation. Arguing that the "technical development of consumer society needs to serve people's common needs" (1973: 18), he draws attention to the role of tools serving the goals of an industrialisation that addresses the needs of capital accumulation. Countering this use of tools, he suggests that we conceive of tools as a way of promoting social justice, providing a communal good living for all. Technological tools used with the sole goal of capital gain disregard the fact that a sustainable society cannot be reproduced on these terms. It is in this sense that Illich discusses the convivial dimension of tools serving the needs of all and the planet. As he notes, we need to

consider conviviality to be individual freedom realised in personal interdependence and, as such, an intrinsic ethical value. I believe that, in any society, as conviviality is reduced below a certain level, no amount of industrial productivity can effectively satisfy the needs it creates among society's members. Present institutional purposes, which hallow industrial productivity at the expense of convivial effectiveness, are a major factor in the amorphousness and meaninglessness that plague contemporary society. (Illich 1973: 17)

Industrial productivity is carried by the logic of capital accumulation, leading to the individual benefit of a few, while the larger part of the population experiences a deterioration in their living conditions. The use of technological tools within the project of capital growth is related to labour exploitation, land grabbing, extractivism, the expropriation of communal land, the privatisation of the provision of food and basic needs such as education, health and care, just to mention a few factors. Within the context of the industrial-prison-complex and migration and asylum control policies, technological tools are also related to incarceration, camps technologies,

holding parts of the population in dehumanising conditions. Thus, as Illich notes referring to the aim of producing docile bodies attending to consumer and capital production needs, the use of technological tools attends to socio-political and economic circumstances. Countering this development, Illich discusses conviviality as a counter-project addressing the potential of human practices and knowledge in creating conditions for a living together driven by a common good. For Illich:

People need not only to obtain things, they need above all the freedom to make things among which they can live, to give shape to them according to their own tastes, and to put them to use in caring for and about others. (Illich 1973: 17)

This observation brings us to what I call *Being-In-Relation*, addressing communal practices of care and responsibility. In Illich's sense, conviviality subscribes to a project that takes the relational and interdependent character of social Being and Becoming as its starting point. Evoking the function of institutions in providing and securing the realisation of communal life, Illich proposes the establishment of a convivial use of tools serving social justice and economic distribution, drawing on

a new consciousness about the nature of tools and on majority action for their control. If tools are not controlled politically, they will be managed in a belated technocratic response to disaster. Freedom and dignity will continue to dissolve into an unprecedented enslavement of man to his tools. As an alternative to technocratic disaster, I propose the vision of a convivial society. A convivial society would be the result of social arrangements that guarantee for each member the most ample and free access to the tools of the community and limit this freedom only in favour of another member's equal freedom. (Illich 1973: 17–18)

Illich's vocabulary is quite revealing of a period in which Marxist utopianism was commonplace in Western academia. Other scholars writing at this time such as Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and Paulo Freire were formulating similar diagnoses of society and emphasising the role of the senses, libido and desire in producing common awareness and counter-strategies to the appropriation and alienation tendencies produced by the logic of production and accumulation of capital.

In a period when the gap between rich and poor is rapidly increasing, precariousness and the cheapening of the workforce have become the

rule for people in employment, families are evicted from their homes and their access to public health care and education is further restricted, human beings are held in refugee camps or in a limbo of human and citizenship rights, the need for a vocabulary that can be used in understanding practices of conviviality is pertinent. In this context, conviviality represents an intrinsic ethical value based on the moral principle of the common good. It is this spirit that Paul Gilroy (2004) captured thirty years later in his work on the melancholia of Empire in British society.

Convivial Culture: Practices of a Living Together

In *After Empire*, Gilroy briefly refers to “convivial cultures” when he observes everyday life in the streets of London. Gilroy describes these as ordinary features of multicultural societies. He defines convivial culture as the “process[es] of cohabitation and interaction that have made multicultural an ordinary feature of social life in Britain’s urban areas and in postcolonial cities elsewhere ...” (2004: xi). By using this term, Gilroy shifts the perspective on identities to local communal practices, addressing people’s everyday life. This perspective has sparked and inspired research in anthropology, sociology and geography invested in the understanding of people’s practices and encounters as well as in the building of local support networks.

Research on diasporic pathways and aspiring cosmopolitan cities has mobilised Gilroy’s concept of convivial culture in order to understand the dynamics and relationality in which living together takes place (Glick Schiller et al. 2006; Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2011, 2015). Further, research on super-diversity and conviviality (Nowicka and Vertovec 2014; Heil 2015; Padilla et al. 2015) and the limits of conviviality (Lapina 2016) have engaged with empirical questions concerning the potential and limits of conviviality.² In addition, ethnographic research on conviviality has been conducted in the field of migration studies and the anthropology of encounters (for the South African context, see Vigneswaran 2014; Brudvig 2014; for south-east Asian contexts, see Gandhi and Hoek 2012; Wise and Velayutham 2013). On another level, studies on the dynamics of support of refugees by German civil society have addressed the question of communal support (Foroutan et al. 2017; Karakayali and Kleist 2016; Schiffauer et al. 2017) and solidarity (Glick Schiller and Caglar 2010; Glick Schiller 2016; Kymlicka 2016; Nowicka 2019). These studies discuss the

transcultural fabric of society and investigate the potential of forging common ground between the recently migrated populations, which are placed through asylum and migration policies within categories such as “refugee”, “EU migrant”, “third country migrant”, and the seemingly established population. Looking at education, work, housing and health, these studies show how an infrastructure of support can be established in order to create inclusive public support. In sum, the perspective on conviviality in these studies disrupts the pattern of thinking in “divided communities”, stressing instead the universal claim to sustainable common lives. This conceptual perspective adjusts the methodological and theoretical lens by questioning the “ethnic lens” and conceptions of homogeneous communities with shared cultural boundaries found in much scholarship on ethnic, racial, and religious minorities and in research on transnational migration (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002).

Connecting with Gilroy’s observation, empirical research operating within the parameters of convivial cultures and conviviality is complicating discourses on “fragmented” and “parallel” societies by showing how everyday culture relates to practices operating through connections and producing connections beyond ethnic and racial divides. This research resonates with Gilroy’s observation of convivial cultures shaping everyday encounters in British society. As he notes in his analysis of postcolonial Britain, the transcultural fabric of British society has not only been shaped by the (post)colonial diasporic and migratory movements in the second half of the twentieth century, but also by a long-standing history of colonialism and imperialism dating back to the seventeenth century. The phenomenon of “convivial culture” is thus an outcome of historical global entanglements, which are also reflected in Glissant’s concept of creolisation.

CREOLISING CONVIVIALITY

The term “creolisation” stands at the heart of French Caribbean Radical Thought (Nesbitt 2013; Gutiérrez Rodríguez and Tate 2015). It refers to a cultural transformation of society based on the experience of displacement and diasporic movements brought about through European colonialism, the Atlantic slave trade, and imperial trade and expansion policies. Focusing on the Caribbean as a territory marked and constituted through this history, the Martinique intellectual Édouard Glissant (1981) introduces the concept of creolisation, drawing on Caribbean ontologies and material historical conditions. For Glissant, creolisation engages with a new

perspective on understanding the world in relational and interconnected ways, and as such he considered it a universal proposal directed to everyone ('Tout-Monde') (Glissant 1997a, b; see also Mercier 2012; interview with Schwieger Hieppo 1998). He argues that "creolisation" cannot be conflated with the notion of *métissage*, meaning the organisation of the social through compartmentalised racial coding. Colonial governance took place by producing ethnic and racial entities and relating them to each other in a hierarchical order, creating instances of superiority and inferiority along the colour line. Opposing this ideology of cultural mixing, thinking cultures as standing side by side and reproducing themselves always by reproducing the pattern of racial social divides, he says: "One can mix without being touched at all—mixing can be mechanical—white peas and black peas. As long as the idea that the coloniser and its culture are superior persists, mixing can't be other than mechanical" (transl. by the author).³

Countering this notion of cultural mixing as reproducing the racialised hierarchical social order, "creolisation" describes the potential of creating something new, a rhizomatic transformation of culture, not producing old patterns of thinking but attending to the "unforeseeable" (*l'inattendue*) (1996). As Glissant says in *Odyssées immigrées* (2010), creolisation announces "*le différance que se mette au contact et que produise l'imprévisible*" [the difference that makes contact and produces the unforeseeable].⁴

As the Jamaican writer and philosopher Sylvia Wynter (1989) notes with regard to the concept of *Antilleanity*, the concept of creolisation can be considered a "forceful episteme" through which the world can be thought. This Caribbean episteme thus introduces an ontological and historical understanding of the world that takes the process of the racial codification of social hierarchies based on the scientific classification of populations and territories in European modernity as a point of departure. The late Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano's epistemic and material matrix of the "coloniality of power" (2000, 2008), organised around the axis of "race", configures the modern European perception of the world since the advent of European colonialism in the fifteenth century. Since then racialisation, the organisation of social inequalities, capital extraction and labour exploitation along the colour line, has structured modern societies (cf. Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2019). While creolisation emerges within this context of modern racial classification, it implies a vision of surpassing this pattern of categorisation by relying on "multiple, rather than singular, roots and foundations that, when taken as a whole, aim at the dual objectives of

liberation and of setting foundations for freedom beyond the trappings of the dialectics of asymmetrical recognition” (Gordon and Roberts 2009: 6).

For Glissant, creolisation counters the remnants of European colonial thinking. As Shirley Anne Tate and I argue in our edited volume *Creolizing Europe: Legacies and Transformations* (2015), creolisation denotes a project of decolonising the kind of thinking that reproduces racial and ethnic hierarchies. In times of growing nationalism, when the media representation of refugees and migrants as well as right-wing political speeches on the “failure of multiculturalism” either imply or state a need for further restrictions and severe control mechanisms on migration and the deportation or internment of refugees and asylum seekers, a change in the understanding of our contemporary societies is pertinent. Creolisation offers us a new way of comprehending social development. It offers a counter-strategy that stresses the variation of cultural mixing, not always prescribed by an officially recognised nomenclature, going beyond the existing patterns of classification and categorisation. As such, creolisation announces what is to come, a future to embrace the multiplicity deriving from processes in motion, constantly transforming as it goes, appearing at the juncture of what we know and what is unknown.

Attempts at organising a living together evolve within processes of creolisation. On the one hand, we live in societies where racial coding still organises society. Although they are not always explicitly spelt out, racial hierarchies as such dominate our society. At the same time, processes of disrupting and creating new ways of being within and beyond the colonial patterns of racial classification are taking place aesthetically (see Tate 2009), intellectually, organisationally and quotidianly. Besides the rules of racist colonisation and racial capitalism, new forms of being and becoming in the world are happening, countering these systems of oppression. Creolisation is one enunciation of this process. Yet, creolisation is not fulfilled if the coloniality of power remains in place. Creolisation and decolonisation are two sides of the same project of anti-colonial struggle. Thus, creolisation engages with practices and notions of liberation at the same time as it is situated within a cognitive script of colonial domination.

In a similar vein Illich’s conviviality, rather than describing a *fait accompli*, relates to everyday practices forging a living together. Both concepts, creolisation and conviviality, engage with social processes and practices of transformation in everyday culture. Further, they foresee possible futures of a living together.

Transversal Conviviality in the Private Household

As I have shown in my study on migration, domestic work and affect in private households (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2010), conviviality is shaped by a transversal moment within a context of a creolised society. Drawing on Félix Guattari's notion of "transversality", which he developed during his work as a psychiatrist in the psychiatric clinic La Borde, I consider private households employing migrant domestic workers as translocal sites, where the sphere of the rational is permeated by less tangible moments and experiences (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2011). As such the private household does not only reflect the societal context—existing social inequalities, the forms of governing and the hegemonic social order—in which it is embedded. It is also a point of encounter, where desires are articulated, feelings circulate and emotions are impressed and expressed. As such households are affective sites, places permeated by the circulation and transmission of feelings of joy, happiness and love, but also of sadness, contempt and disdain. The private household is a site where the members might be affectively animated when they encounter feelings of appreciation, but also disanimated when they experience feelings of degradation. It is within this context that I have reflected on the (dis-)affective (dis-)encounters between domestic workers and their employers. However, the term "encounter" needs to be contextualised. As Enrique Dussel (1995) argues in regard to the description of European colonialism as a site of cultural encounters, encounters do not always happen on a voluntary basis. People meet, as Mary Louise Pratt (1992) points out in her discussion of "contact zones", under political and social conditions of coercion and dependence. Members of different classes might meet at a restaurant, at a shop or at their children's school. Yet their encounter does not dissolve the relationship of inequality within which they are located. Thus, in the restaurant a person might wash the dishes, one might cut the vegetables, one might cook, one might serve and one might be sitting at a table with friends. This encounter is prescribed by the relationship between provider and user of services and employment relationships. The relationship between the restaurant client and the employees serving or working in the restaurant kitchen is one of interdependency. Client satisfaction depends on the gastronomic skills and the service, and the cook and the waitress depend on satisfaction for their salary. This is the relationship of interdependency and social divides in which everyday

encounters between different social groups occur. Within this context, conviviality is a desiderate, something we might long for, but it is not always realised due to the social inequalities that structure our common lives.

When we look at the relationship between domestic workers and their employers in private households, the paradox of proximity and distance inscribed in their encounter becomes evident. The private household is commonly idealised in society as a site of intimacy. In fact, the private household is a space ruled by subjective aspirations, desires, fears, expectations and habits. The domestic worker is plunged into a workplace marked by a sensorial network and affective fabric configuring the household and the relationship of its members to it, to themselves and the outer world. The domestic worker faces this inner world of the household members, following their physical, existential and emotional traces, arranging them, sorting them. She not only makes the beds, prepares the meal, cleans the floor, she is the person in charge of the wellbeing of the household members through the physical and emotional labour she invests in recreating an agreeable habitat. She is thus responsible for the social reproduction of the household on two levels: on the generative level, making sure the basic needs for reproduction on the individual level are met, and second, by creating an agreeable and liveable environment. The domestic worker enables the forging of a living together. This living together, however, does not embrace Illich's intrinsic ethical value of conviviality as it is founded on unequal terms.

When an (un)documented migrant woman is employed in a private household, the immediate *effects* of migration and border regimes become tangible. The dividing line between "citizen" and "non-citizen" marks the encounter between these two women. Through the outsourcing of domestic work to another woman, two social groups that usually live in segregated spaces meet in the private household. We could say that due to the need for a cleaner or a carer, private, middle-class professional households become open to a social group to which they do not have any form of attachment. In this space, the employers and the domestic workers meet as two women living in divided spaces ruled by different timescales and professional demands. In this encounter, these two women articulate and negotiate their desires, needs and moments of identification and dis-identification. They share some aspects related to the social construction and assignation of "femininity" in the households. However, this common experience, which might create a proximity between these women,

is challenged by the structural distance between them imposed by migration control policies (among others). The divide between “citizen” and “migrant” positions them on different societal scales. For example, as my study on undocumented migrant domestic workers (2010) shows, they might not only lose their job if they assert their right to decent pay, they also risk deportation. Under these conditions, these two women experience an intimate encounter, a “living together” entrenched in structural divisions sustaining a “living apart”. They usually do not live in the same neighbourhoods. Very often the domestic worker needs to travel a long distance to reach their employer’s household, which is likely to be located in a predominantly racially and nationally homogenous area. Their children usually do not attend the same schools and their friendship circles do not overlap, but in the privacy of the households these two women meet and share moments of unprecedented intimacy (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2007).

Thus, the encounter between the domestic worker and the employer is one based on a (dis-)encounter, due to the unevenness underlying their meeting, marked by the social invisibility of this labour, the lack of social recognition and the degradation of the person performing this work. The encounter between these two sides, employer and domestic worker, takes place on the grounds of a system of social (re-)production shaped by social inequalities. It is the domestic worker that provides the foundations for liveability and the possibility of a living together. However, the lack of cultural, social and economic recognition of her work and the employment relationship her labour is based on complicate the potential of conviviality. This example demonstrates that the discussion on conviviality needs to consider the material conditions in which moments of a living together are forged.

Considering the spontaneous and relational character of our lives, and also our emotional and material dependencies on others, makes us realise that we constantly transgress the imagined boundaries set by monocultural and monolingual societal prescriptions. Affiliations are guided by needs, feelings, affects and desires that bring us together in unexpected ways. It is in this regard that our relationships unfold in transversal ways, converging and diverging at different points. The project of creolising conviviality is informed by transversal vital forces moving us in different directions and embracing the principles of interconnectedness and interdependence.⁵ Attending to the rhizomatic movement of our lives, the concept of creolisation proposes an ethic of a “living together” driven by the unexpected and resulting from our multiple encounters and connections (Glissant 2002).

In the European context, creolisation not only signals “the underside of European modernity”⁶ but also brings to mind the transformation of European societies through the impact of postcolonial migration and diaspora. It frames a space in which a rhetoric of identity and community is contested. In this sense, Glissant describes Europe as inevitably inscribed in the project of creolisation. Creolisation, thus, delineates a different understanding of conviviality. Engaging with an ethic of relationality and transversality, it resonates with cosmological visions of a better world.

Creolisation speaks about an affective being in the world—the sensibility that nourishes the potential for conviviality. This is seen in Glissant’s observation and question:

Creolisation is the movement of the world – why would you like to go against the movement of the world? The movement of the world is first to create a kind of being and collective – which are not based on affiliation, legitimation and the unique root – sure, the whole movement is a liberation movement and not a movement of oppression.⁷

In this sense, creolisation stands at the heart of a political and ethical project of conviviality.

CONCLUSION: DECOLONIAL ETHICS OF CONVIVIALITY

Going back to Illich, conviviality as a societal model of “living together” cannot be realised under unequal economic and legal conditions. Yet, as a model of solidarity, conviviality can be envisioned through practices of support. As Illich contends, conviviality might be understood as an intrinsic ethical value that, as argued here, needs to be related to the material conditions of our lives.

Illich’s approach to conviviality has a twofold character. It engages with the material grounds, practices and use of technological tools on the one hand, and on the other hand, it deals with the ontological and ethical proposal of a living together. In this sense, conviviality does not describe an empirical reality, but a potential one. It is what Glissant calls a future to come when he introduces his concept of “creolisation” as a new way of understanding the world in relational and interconnected ways.

Framing conviviality from the perspective of creolisation entails working with a cosmological perspective focusing on the interconnectedness and relationality of Being. Hence, attempts to create a living together derive

from survival strategies emanating from the “contact zone” configured by different modes of production, through which various social groups are forced to live together, but through which human ability and creativity in connecting and forging common lives are triggered.

Creolising conviviality establishes the basis on which claims for a critical humanism can be formulated. This is a humanism that presupposes the universal recognition of all human beings, fundamental respect and the right to a dignified life. This is only possible if the logic of exploitation and the epistemological premises of an autonomous subject, detached from its environment, its social and affective Being, are dismantled. Humanity does not have its end in the individual recognition of the subject. Humanity is realised when we embrace a decolonial cosmology, involving the recognition of the interconnectedness and interdependency of the whole of humanity.

NOTES

1. In 1492, the Alhambra Decree, issued by the Catholic Monarchs Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon, instituted the expulsion of practicing Jews from the Kingdom of Castille and Aragon. This Decree targeted mainly *conversos*. Between 1609 and 1614 further royal orders expelling the Muslim population, known as *moriscos* were passed.
2. See also a recently initiated project at Lund University entitled “Beyond Racism. Ethnographies of Antiracism and Conviviality”: [https://portal.research.lu.se/portal/en/projects/beyond-racism-ethnographies-of-antiracism-and-conviviality\(d74d2684-0da4-42c1-b4ee-2c68f5c1cc1b\).html](https://portal.research.lu.se/portal/en/projects/beyond-racism-ethnographies-of-antiracism-and-conviviality(d74d2684-0da4-42c1-b4ee-2c68f5c1cc1b).html) (retrieved February 20, 2019).
3. The quotation is from a radio programme on pathways, territory and history in the French radio station Aligre FM broadcast in 2010: www.edouardglissant.fr/mediatheque.html (see also Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2015).
4. English translation by the author.
5. See further discussion in Glissant, *Introduction à une poétique du divers* and *Poétique of Relation* [?? Is this intended to be the French title or the title of the English translation ?].
6. Dussel (1995).
7. Comment made by Glissant in an interview with Sophie Haluk for the radio programme Aligre FM, “Odyssees immigrées: Créolisation et Décolonisation”, broadcast on the 16 July 2010. See <http://www.edouardglissant.fr/audio.html>, accessed September 12, 2012. Translation by the author. The original quote is: Créolisation c’est le mouvement même du monde—pourquoi voulait vous que nous allions à l’encontre du mouvement du monde? Le mouvement du monde c’est de créer premièrement un sort d’être

et de collectivité—ils ne sont plus basées sur l’affiliation, la légitimité et la racine unique—sur le mouvement entière c’est un mouvement libérateur et ce n’est pas un mouvement oppresseur.

REFERENCES

- Bodian, M. 2017. “Américo Castro’s Conversos and the Question of Subjectivity.” *Culture & History Digital Journal* 6 (2). <http://dx.doi.org/10.3989/chdj.2017.018>.
- Brudvig, I. 2014. *Conviviality in Bellville: An Ethnography of Space, Place, Mobility and Being in Urban South Africa*. Mankon, Bamenda: Langaa RPCIG.
- Castro, A. 1948. *España en su historia: cristianos, moros y judíos, 1885–1972*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada.
- Castro, A. 1971. *The Spaniards—An Introduction to Their History*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press.
- Dussel, E. 1995. *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of ‘the Other’ and the Myth of Modernity*. Translated by M. D. Barber. New York: Continuum.
- Foroutan, N., U. Hamann, N. El-Kayed, and S. Jorek. 2017. *Zwischen Lager und Mietvertrag—Wohnunterbringung von geflüchteten Frauen in Berlin und Dresden*. Berlin: Berliner Institut für empirische Integrations—und Migrationsforschung.
- Gandhi, A. and L. Hoek. 2012. “Introduction to Crowds and Conviviality: Ethnographies of the South Asian City.” *Ethnography* 13 (1): 3–11.
- Gilroy, P. 2004. *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* New York and London: Routledge.
- Glick Schiller, N. 2016. “The Question of Solidarity and Society: Comment on Will Kymlicka’s Article—‘Solidarity in Diverse Societies’.” *Comparative Migration Studies* 4 (1): 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-016-0027-x>.
- Glick Schiller, N. and A. Çağlar. 2010. *Locating Migration: Rescaling Cities and Migrants*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Glick Schiller, N., A. Çağlar, and T. C. Guldbrandsen. 2006. “Beyond the Ethnic Lens: Locality, Globality, and Born-Again Incorporation.” *American Ethnologist* 33 (4): 612–633. <https://doi.org/10.1525/ac.2006.33.4.612>.
- Glick, T. F. 1992. “Convivencia: An Introductory Note.” In *Convivencia: Jews Muslims and Christians in Medieval Spain*, edited by V. B. Mann, T. F. Glick and J. D. Dodds, 1–10, New York: Braziller.
- Glick, T. F. 2005 [1979]. *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages*. Leiden: Brill.
- Glissant, É. 1981. *Le discours antillais*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Glissant, É. 1990. *Poétique de la Relation. Poétique III*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Glissant, É. 1997a. *Poetics of Relation*. Translated by B. Wing. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

- Glissant, É. 1997b. *Traité du Tout-Monde. Poétique IV*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Glissant, É. 2002. "The Unforeseeable Diversity of the World." In *Beyond Dichotomies: Histories, Identities, Cultures, and the Challenge of Globalization*, edited by E. Mudimbe-Boyl, 287–296. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Gordon, J. A. and N. Roberts. 2009. "Introduction: The Project of Creolizing Rousseau." *CLR James Journal* 15 (1): 2–16.
- Grünig Iribarren, S. 2013. *Ivan Illich (1926–2002): The Convivial City. Environnement et Société*. Français: Université Paris-Est.
- Gutiérrez Rodríguez, E. 2007. "The 'Hidden Side' of the New Economy: On Transnational Migration, Domestic Work, and Unprecedented Intimacy." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 28 (3): 60–83.
- Gutiérrez Rodríguez, E. 2010. *Migration, Domestic Work and Affect—A Decolonial Perspective on Value and the Feminization of Labour*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Gutiérrez Rodríguez, E. 2011. "Politics of Affect. Transversal Conviviality." *Transversal: Multilingual Webjournal*. Available from: <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0811/gutierrezrodriguez/en>. Accessed March 1, 2019.
- Gutiérrez Rodríguez, E. 2015. "Archipelago Europe: On Creolizing Conviviality." In *Creolizing Europe: Legacies and Transformations*, edited by E. Gutiérrez Rodríguez and S. A. Tate, 80–99. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Gutiérrez Rodríguez, E. 2019. "Political Subjectivity, Transversal Mourning and a Caring Common: Responding to Deaths in the Mediterranean." *Critical African Studies* 10 (3): 345–360.
- Heil, T. 2015. "Conviviality: (Re-)negotiating Minimal Consensus." In *Routledge International Handbook of Diversity Studies*, edited by S. Vertovec, 317–324. New York and London: Routledge.
- Illich, I. 1973. *Tools for Conviviality*. New York: Harper & Row; London: Calder & Boyars.
- Karakayali, S. and J. O. Kleist. 2016. *EFA-Studie 2: Strukturen und Motive der ehrenamtlichen Flüchtlingsarbeit in Deutschland, Forschungsbericht—Ergebnisse einer explorativen Umfrage vom November/Dezember 2015*. Berlin: BIM, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.
- Kymlicka, W. 2016. "Solidarity in Diverse Societies. Beyond Neoliberal Multiculturalism and Welfare Chauvinism". *Comparative Migration Studies* 3 (1), S. 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-015-0017-4>.
- Lapiña, L. 2016. "Besides Conviviality: Paradoxes in Being 'at EASE' with Diversity in a Copenhagen District." *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 6 (1): 33–41. <https://doi.org/10.1515/njmr-2016-0002>.
- Manzano Moreno, E. 2013. "Qurtuba: algunas reflexiones críticas sobre el Califato de Córdoba y el mito de la convivencia." *Awraq: Estudios sobre el mundo árabe e islámico contemporáneo* 7: 225–246.

- Menocal, M. R. 2002. *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*. Boston: Little Brown.
- Mercier, J. B. 2012. Édouard Glissant: Du Tout-Monde au Traité du Tout-Monde. Intertextualité, Identité et espace: Pour une étude comparative. PhD thesis submitted to the Department of French and Italian, University of Kansas.
- Nesbitt, N. 2013. *Caribbean Critique: Antillean Critical Theory from Toussaint to Glissant*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Nowicka, M. and S. Vertovec. 2014. "Introduction: Comparing Convivialities: Dreams and Realities of Living-with-Difference". *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 17 (4): 341–356. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549413510414>.
- Nowicka, M., Ł. Krzyżowski, and D. Ohm. 2019. "Transnational Solidarity, the Refugees and Open Societies in Europe." *Current Sociology* 67 (3): 383–400. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392117737817>.
- Padilla, B., J. Azevedo, and A. Olmos-Alcaraz. 2015. "Superdiversity and Conviviality: Exploring Frameworks for Doing Ethnography in Southern European Intercultural Cities." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38 (4): 621–635.
- Pratt, M. L. 1992. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Quijano, A. 2000. "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America." *Nepantla: Views from the South* 1: 533–580.
- Quijano, A. 2008. "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Social Classification." In *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, edited by M. Moraña, E. D. Dussel, and C. A. Jáuregui, 181–224. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Sakrani, R. 2016. "Convivencia: Reflections About Its 'Kulturbedeutung' and Rereading the Normative Histories of Living Together." Research Paper Series, Max-Planck-Institut für Europäische Rechtsgeschichte; Max Planck Institute for European Legal History.
- Schiffauer, W., A. Eilert, and M. Rudloff. 2017. *So schaffen wir das—eine Zivilgesellschaft im Aufbruch. 90 wegweisende Projekte mit Geflüchteten*. Bielefeld: Transcript.
- Schwieger Hiepko, A. 1998. "L'Europe et les Antilles: Une interview d'Édouard Glissant." *Mots Pluriels*, 8. Available from: <http://www.arts.uwa.edu.au/MotsPluriels/MP898ash.html>. Accessed June 2, 2018.
- Shamsie, M. 2016. "Introduction: The Enduring Legacy of Al-Andalus." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 52 (2): 127–135. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2016.1164969>.
- Soifer, M.I. 2009. "Beyond *Convivencia*: Critical Reflections on the Historiography of Interfaith Relations in Christian Spain." *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 1 (1): 19–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17546550802700335>.
- Szpiech, R. 2013. "The Convivencia Wars: Decoding Historiography's Polemic with Philology." In *A Sea of Languages: Rethinking the Arabic Role in Medieval*

- Literary History*, edited by S. Akbari and K. Mallette, 135–161. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Tate, S. A. 2009. *Black Beauty: Aesthetics, Stylization, Politics*. London. New York: Routledge.
- Vigneswaran, D. 2014. “Protection and Conviviality: Community Policing in Johannesburg.” *European Cultural Studies*, 17 (4): 471–486.
- Wimmer, A. and N. Glick Schiller. 2002. “Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation–State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences.” *Global Networks* 2 (4): 301–334.
- Wise, A. and S. Velayntham. 2013. “Convivialities in Everyday Multiculturalism: Australia and Singapore Compared.” *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 17 (4): 406–430.
- Wolf, K. B. 2009. “Convivencia in Medieval Spain: A Brief History of an Idea.” *Religion Compass* 3 (1): 72–85. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8171.2008.00119.x>.
- Wynter, S. 1989. “Beyond the Word of Man: Glissant and the New Discourse of the Antilles.” *World Literature Today: A Literary Quarterly of the University of Oklahoma* 63 (4): 637–647.

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter’s Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter’s Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.