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## THE POWER OF SCENES

### Quantities of amenities and qualities of places

5            *This paper elaborates a general theory of scenes as multi-dimensional complexes of meaning embedded in material, local practices. It outlines techniques for measuring scenes empirically and shows how certain types of scenes provide environments in which new social movement (NSM) organizations (like human rights and environmental groups) tend to thrive. However universal and cosmopolitan the content of NSM goals, they appear to get much of their energy and support from the qualities that inhere in concrete local contexts.*

10           **Keywords** scenes; culture; amenities; new social movements; walkability; place

15           We have worked with the concept of ‘scene’ for about a decade as members of ‘The Cultural Amenities Project’ with the University of Chicago Cultural Policy centre and subsequent research that has generated six monographs, papers and a major book (*Scenes: Culture and Place*, University of Chicago Press).<sup>1</sup> The concept emerged for us as a solution to a specific research problem. Our question was: how and why do amenities – operas, art galleries, restaurants and the like – influence community and urban development?

20           To answer this question, we downloaded data on hundreds of amenities for every US zip code, primarily from the US Census’ ZIP Business Patterns and online business directories (yellow pages), as well as other sources. It quickly became clear, however, that it would be a mistake to focus too heavily on any single amenity. What mattered more than a contemporary art gallery, yoga studio or body-piercing studio in isolation was the overall picture they all generate together. This in turn suggested a different way of regarding places, one we analogize to *taking the scenic route*. On the scenic route, one does not simply go from point A to B as quickly as possible. Instead, one tunes into the qualitative character of the passing scenery: an awesome coastline, a quaint village, a foreboding mountain range.

‘Scenic’ thinking shifted our analytical approach to cities and neighbourhoods. The goal became understanding the styles of life they evoke. Instead of simply counting churches, for instance, we now were asking to what extent tradition formed the basis of legitimacy in a given scene. Churches certainly could feed into this type of legitimacy, but so could classical ballet companies or etiquette schools. The question for each amenity then became: ‘To what kinds of scenes does it contribute?’ And our descriptions of these scenes began taking forms like: ‘one that tends to anchor legitimacy in personal self-expression, favor a transgressive style of theatricality, and attack the authenticity of the corporation’. Looking for scenes meant looking for the holistic but differentiated meanings of places.

The attraction of the concept lies in its grounded mobility. This twinning of seeming opposites is one of the centrepieces of Will Straw’s (2001, p. 248) version of the concept: “scene” seems able to evoke both the cozy intimacy of community and the fluid cosmopolitanism of urban life’. A similar sentiment informs our approach. When we describe a place as a scene, we are trying to capture the experiential attractions rooted in the on-going public life of its businesses, people, places of worship, activities – in the particular mix of concrete practices happening *here*. At the same time, these meanings are not exclusive to this place; we can find them elsewhere, even if to different degrees and in different combinations. To investigate scenes, in our conception, is to ask what is in the character of *this particular place* that may speak to *broader and more universal* themes?

This paper elaborates how these principles feed into our theory of scenes as multi-dimensional complexes of legitimacy, theatricality and authenticity that are embedded in material, local practices (Section 1). We then (Section 2) describe in somewhat more detail one key dimension of scenes – self-expressive legitimacy – and discuss techniques for locating scenes empirically (Section 3). We highlight self-expression because self-expressive scenes provide environments in which new social movement (NSM) organizations such as human rights or environmental groups tend to thrive (Section 4). Joining our amenities data with Census information, we find that NSMs tend to be located in distinctive places: dense, walkable neighbourhoods with more college graduate and non-white residents, higher crime, and, significantly, with amenities that evince the legitimacy of self-expression. There is, moreover, a strong interaction effect between walking and self-expression whereby self-expressive scenes strengthen the correlation between walking and NSMs. However universal and cosmopolitan the *content* of NSM goals, they appear to get much of their energy and support from the qualities that inhere in concrete local contexts. We conclude with a brief summary of on-going scenes analyses internationally and the prospects this research offers for humanistic social science.

## 1. A theory of scenes AQ2

75 While the concept has been loosely used by art and music critics for decades, academic researchers have focused on ‘scenes’ in multiple research traditions: to trace the role of national theatres and lifestyle communities in modernization processes; as niches for urban belonging in the metropolis that do not require nostalgia for the pre-modern village; or as linked to ‘youth’ as a specific phase of the life-course (Irwin 1977, Straw 2001, Blum 2003, Hitzler *et al.* 2005). AQ3 Others feature specific genres, such as the jazz scene or the theatre scene (Bennett and Peterson 2004, Lena and Peterson 2008), or investigate how scenes sometimes gather around and animate social movements in bars and cafes (Haunss and Leach 2007). Still others highlight specific neighbourhoods or types of places: the Camden Town scene or the Haight-Ashbury scene or the Beach scene. In contrast to these, our usage emphasizes the styles of life these neighbourhoods support – ‘neo-bohemian’ or ‘hippie’, ‘surfer’ or ‘spring break’ – and how these might be similar or different in other locales [Silver *et al.* (2010) reviews these and other uses].

90 These works are not exactly a ‘literature’ in the sense of the product of an inter-connected research community cumulatively pursuing a scientific programme: they have largely emerged independently and in ignorance of one another. Still, our review helped in formulating our conception of scenes as the meanings expressed by the people and practices in a place [Haunss and Leach’s (2007) review produced a similar result]. Our multi-dimensional theory of AQ4 scenes incorporates some of the main themes stressed by others, such as AQ5 exhibitionism and transgression (Blum 2003), local authenticity (Zukin 2009), among others. But we sought to place them in a more comprehensive and integrated framework.

100 Scenes analysis as we typically practice it revolves around several key premises. We stress *neighbourhoods*, rather than cities or nations, to capture local differences within and across these larger units; highlighting *physical structures*, such as dance clubs or shopping malls, roots scenes in concrete, identifiable gathering places; and including *persons*, described according to their race, class, gender, education, occupation, age and the like, captures the fact that a scene is defined not only by what is there but also who is there. At the same time, distinctive combinations of people, physical structures and places are articulated through particular *activities* (e.g. young tech workers attending a local area punk concert), and accounting for how they are joined together helps us generate a more refined picture. These combinations express *symbolic meanings* that define what is important about the experiences on offer in a place. In particular, we highlight meanings such as legitimacy, defining a right or wrong way to live; theatricality, an attractive way of seeing and being seen by others; and authenticity, a real or genuine identity. Finally, scenes have *publicness* and are available to passersby and deep enthusiasts alike.

While scenes may emerge and grow spontaneously, politics and policy influence them as well, especially those that take scenes as their objects: through debates about how to shape, sustain, alter or produce a given scene, how certain scenes attract (or repel) residents, firms and visitors, or how some scenes mesh with political sensibilities, voting patterns and specific organized groups, such as NSMs. These foci are part of a more general effort to retain the sensitivity to local complexity characteristic of ethnographers but disciplined by comparative methods. No single point is original to us, but joining these elements adds new insights bridging quantitative and qualitative traditions of social and cultural analysis.

### *1.1. Scenes as multi-dimensional complexes of meaning*

‘Scene’ is a powerful conceptual tool for discerning the range and configurations of expressive meanings evinced in various places, for seeing the locatedness of cultural life. For the concept of scene nicely directs our focus, not at ‘common values’ or ‘ways of life’ hermetically sealed from ‘other cultures’, but rather at multiple, loosely binding, more flexible arrays of local meanings. People can choose to enter or leave different scenes; scenes facilitate more choices than primordial characteristics like race, class, national origin and gender. The concept is sufficiently open to include marginal as well as less transgressive configurations – not ‘ways of life’ or ‘conditions of life’ but looser ‘styles of life’ make the scene.

At the same time, ‘scene’ facilitates cross-case comparison. The concept focuses on the range of cultural meanings expressed in many activities and people that define the lifestyle of a place, including, but not restricted to, ethnic or class labels. This focus on lifestyle distinguishes ‘scene’ from ‘milieu’, as in the ‘student milieu’, which says little about the difference between frat party and vegan co-op. And because the cultural elements of a scene – glamour, corporateness, formality, charisma and the like – can be found in many places, we can pinpoint the precise character of one scene versus another by comparing how they combine these elements.

Take, for instance, three coffee shops in three different neighbourhoods. In the first, in a well-established, working-class classic ethnic neighbourhood, old men are sipping cappuccinos outside a café while their younger fellows play pool inside. Nearby, shoppers sift through baskets of zucchini and peppers at an outdoor fruit and vegetable market, and an afternoon mass is letting out at the church down the block. In the second, on a trendy, ‘neo-bohemian’ strip, young people sip coffee on an outdoor patio, typing on laptop computers or scribbling in Moleskine notebooks while indie rock floats through the air. In the third, located on the first floor of an office tower in a downtown financial district, professionals in power ties and pin-stripe suits are power lunching; beeping smartphones are slipped out of expensive handbags, and stock prices scroll along the television, which is tuned to Bloomberg TV. In each of these

scenes, people are drinking coffee, and yet this mundane activity means something very different in these qualitatively different settings.

The challenge is to map and analyse how they differ. To do so, we translate these general ideas about scenes into an analytical model that can answer the question, ‘What kind of scene is this?’ in terms of both objective characteristics and symbolic meanings. Creating this model involves three major orienting assumptions for scenes analysis: holism, multi-dimensionality and combinatorial thinking.

*1.1.1. Holism.* We cannot look to any one type of amenity or activity to define the scene. Many neighbourhoods have some restaurants, shops, music venues and very likely a place of worship. This implies that the character of the scene does not inhere in any single amenity. We always have to look to collections, mixes and sets to get a read on what makes each scene distinctive. Other sociologists and economists of culture have analysed the qualitative characteristics of localities by measuring only one type of amenity, or a few, such as restaurants, museums or bookstores. We build on this work, and use amenities as key indicators for measuring scenes. We and our collaborators go further, however, by downloading and aggregating hundreds of different types of amenities for every zip code in the USA and postal code in Canada, as well as all French communes, Spanish census tracts, and more. This gives a far more holistic picture, one that allows us to see how the same amenity (e.g. a tattoo parlour) can take on different meanings when joined by others (e.g. an art gallery or hunting lodge).

*1.1.2. Multi-dimensionality.* Not only does no single amenity make any particular scene, but each amenity may contribute to the overall scene in many different ways. Imported Italian cappuccino may evoke a sense of local authenticity but it might also suggest the legitimacy of tradition, doing things in the way they have been done in the past. The Japanese–French fusion restaurant may celebrate the importance of ethnic culture but simultaneously affirm the value in expressing some unique, personal twist on old techniques. The nightclub red carpet VIP area may evince glamour just as much as it demands attention to formality, adhering to codified standards of appearance like dress codes. *Both-and*, not *either-or*, has to be the watchword for any theory of scenes.

*1.1.3. Combinatorial thinking.* Further difficulties arise when we move more deeply from amenities and activities and people into what they mean. In so doing, we necessarily move to a higher level of abstraction. This is because the same qualities can be found in many different scenes, expressed by many different amenities. Because the same dimensions of meaning can be present across scenes, qualities can (and must) be abstracted from any specific scene. Each quality – local authenticity, transgression, tradition, glamour, formality – has its own character that can be articulated separately. This also implies that no single abstract quality

defines any particular scene. If both ethnic neighbourhoods and neo-bohemian scenes have a dimension of local authenticity, this does not make them the same. The difference lies in how this one quality combines with others in each particular configuration – one with neighbourliness and tradition, the other with self-expression and transgression. However these combinations emerged, the resulting scene is a specific combination of multiple traits. This combinatorial logic extends the line of analysis from Richard Wagner’s Leitmotifs, to Claude Levi-Strauss’s myths, to scenes.

### 1.2. *Authenticity, theatricality, legitimacy: a pragmatic approach to scenes analysis*

If we try to delimit ahead of time what cultural themes can inhere in a scene, we will never be able to stop. For any quality we list, others can think of five more. At the same time, we cannot ‘just look’ at the world of scenes and expect some fixed set of qualities to pop out. We have to know what to look for; as William James noted in a section on ‘The Realities of the Unseen’ in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, it is in the light of abstract qualities like beauty, justice, goodness or strength that things and facts appear to us at all in the first place.<sup>2</sup>

The most prudent course is a pragmatist middle road between systematic theory and empiricism. On this middle road, the goal is to draw conceptualizations from a range of sources that have attempted to describe urban life, including aesthetic forms like poetry, novels, religion, and film and also non-fiction, like journalism, ethnographies, surveys, case studies, social and cultural theory, and philosophy. Such sources illustrate crucial themes that have occurred to participants in and observers of scenes. From these, we can build a workable set of dimensions with which to describe a given scene.

To start, let us return to the three scenes briefly evoked above – the ethnic neighbourhood, neo-bohemia and downtown scenes. While each ‘says’ much, the kinds of things they say bear some sort of resemblance to one another. The images of ethnic restaurants, indie record labels and corporate logos are all saying something about who you really are, about *authenticity*. How they say this differs – by being from a particular place and being part of its local customs, by coming from a particular ethnic heritage, by possessing a certain brand name (Gucci, not knockoffs). These meanings resemble one another in that all point to something considered *genuine* rather than *phony*, *real* not *fake*.<sup>3</sup>

But scenes say more than just how to be real. There is also something in the scene about how to present yourself, in your clothes, speech, manners, posture, bearing, appearance. The checked tablecloths and family-style service of a pizza joint suggest presenting yourself in a warm, intimate, neighbourly way; the dress codes of a country club or opera house cue formality and the ripped jeans and anarchist graffiti of the worker-owned, fair-trade café invite transgression. These modes of self-presentation can be considered styles of *theatricality*.<sup>4</sup>

**TABLE 1** Analytical dimensions of scenes I: theatricality, authenticity and legitimacy.

AQ6

Theatricality	Authenticity	Legitimacy
Mutual self-display	Discovering the real thing	Acting on moral bases
Seeing and being seen	Touching ground	Listening to duty
Appropriate vs. inappropriate	Genuine vs. phony	Right vs. wrong
Appearance	Identity	Intentions to act
Performing	Rooting	Evaluating

Authenticity is about who you really are; theatricality is about how you appear. Just as important is what one believes makes one's actions right or wrong, the authorities that are taken to normatively govern one's behaviour, and scenes say something about this as well. If the Catholic mass says listen to tradition, the poetry slam MC is saying listen to yourself; if the human rights watch poster on the wall says listen to the universal voice of humanity equally, the portraits of Che Guevara, Steve Jobs and Ronald Reagan are saying listen to what great leaders say. Think of these ways of determining what is right or wrong as types of *legitimacy*, a classic topic in sociology from Max Weber to Robert Bellah.

Thus, we have three general categories of meaning at stake in a scene: authenticity, theatricality and legitimacy. Table 1 summarizes these three general analytical components of scenes. To be sure, some lines between these categories are fuzzy. Still, the differences are real, and we can recognize them relatively easily – especially when they clash. For instance, 'being real' and 'being right' can point in different directions. The charmingly authentic Italian cappuccino shop may use coffee beans harvested under exploitative conditions. The intellectually sincere person, in staying true to his real self, may violate the moral expectations of his community. Theatricality can clash with authenticity and legitimacy just as well. As a form of theatricality, flashy clothes may provide the allure of glamour; as a form of authenticity, they may reek of the poseur. Formal gowns can make an event into an occasion just as much as they can indicate a moral failure to think for oneself. While authenticity, theatricality and legitimacy need not clash – a real scene can be a good scene can be a beautiful scene – they do point at different types of criteria for evaluating the nature of the scene.

### 1.3. Towards a cultural logic of scene dimensions

These broad categories – authenticity, theatricality and legitimacy – help us organize the types of meaning that a scene can support or resist. However, we also need to be able to say what types of authenticity, theatricality and legitimacy a scene values (or devalues). More specific dimensions – like *local* authenticity, *glamorous* theatricality or *traditional* legitimacy – have emerged already, but it is crucial to give them more substantive content. Whatever its

specific dimensions, however, a theory of scenes needs to provide some guidance about how to order those dimensions as members of a larger family. To do so, we arrange them into a pattern like the periodic table's groups of elements that, generally, become less metallic as you move from left to right. Even in the case of chemistry, though, 'exceptions to this general rule abound' (Scerri 2006, p. 11): some metals are soft and dull (like potassium and sodium), while others are hard and shiny (like gold and platinum). The same goes for the thematic elements of scenes. Rather than treat such exceptions as thorns in our side, think of them instead as spurs to further thought, new elements and new patterns.

Let us begin with the dimensions of authenticity, which convey the sources of one's being, where the 'true you' comes from. The *scope* of that 'you' organizes dimensions of authenticity. Starting at the top of table 2, the dimensions expand from *my turf* to the *world*. As we move down, the narrow and particularistic authenticity of the local contra the foreign expands outward. A 'real' rooted in state citizenship connects authenticity to a trans-local community, while diasporic and corporate sources of authenticity extend wider still; an ethnicity or a brand name can make a claim to authenticity in any country. And there is in principle no limit to the scope of reason, which can provide the true nature of not only any human but more broadly of any rational agent, Martians, angels, gods, whatever.

Theatricality is about performance, and the logic of performance (cf. Alexander 2010) runs, not from specificity to generality, but rather from external to internal and between convention and deviance. There is, first, the

**TABLE 2** Analytical dimensions of scenes II: 15 dimensions of theatricality, authenticity and legitimacy.

AQ7

<i>Theatricality</i>	
Exhibitionistic	Reserved
Glamorous	Ordinary
Neighbourly	Distant
Transgressive	Conformist
Formal	Informal
<i>Legitimacy</i>	
Traditional	Novel
Charismatic	Routine
Utilitarian	Unproductive
Egalitarian	Particular
Self-expressive	Scripted
<i>Authenticity</i>	
Local	Global
State	Anti-state
Ethnic	Non-ethnic
Corporate	Independent
Rational	Non-rational

conspicuous display of self as an object to be viewed for the sake of being viewed: the *exhibitionism* of ‘look at me!’ But what to look at, specifically? Table 2 shows various possibilities. You can perform according to conventional forms, *formally*, or by deviating from such forms, *transgressively*. And you can display yourself in such a way that you direct your audience towards your inner, intimate warmth, like a good *neighbour*, or towards your outer, surface sheen, *glamorously*.

Legitimacy concerns the basis of moral judgements, the *authority* on which a verdict of right or wrong is grounded. Time and space are key ways of discriminating among possible authorities. Starting from the top of the legitimacy group in table 2, *tradition* temporally orients one towards the authority of the past – as in classicism, which urges you to heed the wisdom of classic masters. The power of the present inheres in the *charisma* of great leader, who says listen to me now, past and future be damned. To orient yourself towards the authority of the future is to live not for present pleasure but rather to plan for what is to come, to treat the past not as a rule but as a source of information; this is the *utilitarian* attitude – calculating, forward-looking, weighing alternative courses. There are also spatial dimensions of legitimacy, such as the *global* ideals of egalitarianism that say what is good is what all can benefit from equally, or the legitimacy of the *individual person*, where the ultimate authority resides in you and you alone, in a unique personality revealing itself as it responds in its own way to particular situations.

## 2. Self-expressive legitimacy: a key dimension of scenes

A full accounting of a scene attends to multiple dimensions of legitimacy, theatricality and authenticity. To provide substantive content to such an accounting, each dimension needs to be articulated in more detail. Elsewhere, we do so for those listed in table 2 (*Scenes*, Chap. 2). Given space restrictions, we feature just one dimension of legitimacy, self-expression, since it is central to our analysis of NSMs, below.<sup>5</sup>

*Self-expression* grounds the legitimacy of a scene in its capacity to actualize an individual personality. The good person brings his own unique take, her own personal style, her own way of seeing, to each and every one of her actions. This is self-expression as an ethical task, a demand to improvisationally respond to situations in unscripted and surprising ways. Themes of self-expression run through Herder, Emerson, Thoreau and the American Pragmatists. Here is Emerson: ‘Insist on yourself; never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life’s cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another you have only an extemporaneous half possession’ (Emerson 2009, p. 145).

The legitimacy of self-expression continues to be affirmed in improv comedy theatres, rap cyphers and karaoke bars, in the stress on interior and

product design, and in the expectation that each person curate a unique playlist for their iPod. Daniel Bell (2008) suggested that this outlook dominates the contemporary art world, from conductors to poets, and extends out from there to the general populace. Robert Bellah *et al.*'s (2008) famous case study of expressive individualism shows its religious potential ('Sheilaism'). Political scientist Ronald Inglehart (1990) has found evidence of an international shift in values, away from 'materialism' and towards personal self-development. Even so, hostility to self-expression can define a scene just as well, in evincing the pleasures of fitting into scripts and filling roles – following in a marching band, playing in lockstep with an orchestra, reciting a memorized prayer at Mass.

### 3. Locating scenes

Digitized data now provide ways to access and compare the scenes evoked by the materially embodied life of local communities in a far more precise and extensive fashion than ever before. These allow us to 'visit' thousands of scenes from afar. Rather than strolling from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, writing down what we see and making comparisons, we can download online information into spreadsheets that tell us how many cafés, art galleries, Baptist churches, tattoo parlours, night clubs, community centres, etc. are in each locality. By downloading information about hundreds of different types of amenities, we reduce the chances of error by not relying on a handful – or even dozens – of indicators. This richness moves quantitative analysis closer to the ethnographer's ideals of thick description and local knowledge.

This is, of course, not the only way to analyse scenes empirically. Chad Anderson (2010), for instance, used scenes concepts to create videos and photos of Seoul neighbourhoods to capture the foundations of major conflicts over the city's redevelopment strategies. Working in France, Stephen Sawyer (2011) used yellow pages data to distill Parisian scenes, and one of his students made a film about the Parisian Underground. Dozens of student papers have investigated scenes ethnographically, especially around Chicago, such as Vincent Arrigo and John Thompson's (2007) study of Bridgeport. We ourselves have employed multiple methods – including ethnography, oral history, observant participation, interviews and documentary research – in our studies of political elites' top-down style of transforming Chicago's scenes (Clark and Silver 2012, Clark *forthcoming*) and of local activists in Toronto organizing politically to shape the character of their neighbourhood scenes (Silver 2012b, Silver and Clark 2013).

Nonetheless, large-scale data sets are helpful for locating and comparing scenes in national and cross-national analyses. We have typically used two main sources: (1) national business censuses, which contain surprisingly rich information about restaurants, arts amenities, churches, civic and social information, and much more; and (2) online yellow pages directories, which

380 contain more consumer-driven categorizations, like specialized shops and boutiques and multiple types of restaurants and churches. Like any data source, from ethnographic field notes to the census, each has its own error structures and assumptions (discussed in *Scenes*, Chap. 8; see also Silver *et al.* 2010). Together, however, they (along with other sources) provide a useful way to ‘read’ the material differences across local communities.

385 We often use a metric called ‘the performance score’ to measure scenes. It extends a certain form of Durkheimian reasoning, seeing particular amenities as indices of collective meanings (our ‘dimensions’). That is, we can use tattoo parlours to indicate transgressive theatricality, Catholic churches for traditional legitimacy, nightclubs for glamorous theatricality and so on. We assigned weights for each amenity in our database on a 5-point scale, ranging from low  
390 (1) for amenities that support practices which reject a given scene dimension, like modernist art rejecting traditional legitimacy, to neutral (3) for amenities that support practices indifferent to a given dimension, to high (5) for amenities that support practices which affirm a given dimension. Table 3 illustrates the sorts of amenities we use as indicators of self-expressive scenes, as well as those  
395 we use for traditionalist, rationalist and transgressive scenes, to give a feel for the scope of our database and indicators.

Each dimension’s performance score is the average weight assigned on that dimension for all amenities in a given locality (e.g. postal code or zip code).  
400 That is, a traditional legitimacy performance score of 3.2 for a particular zip code means that the average amenity in that zip code (somewhat) positively affirms the legitimacy of tradition. Each locality’s scene can thus be decomposed into a symbolic profile of multiple dimensions. Performance scores are not intended as rankings but as tools for discerning what types of experiences a given locale affords, the symbolic meanings which a greater or lesser share of its amenities perform.<sup>6</sup> This approach has been used by our collaborator Clemente Navarro with results clearly mapped for individual Spanish cities (<http://www.upo.es/cspl/scenes/>). Chapter 8 of *Scenes* provides more detail about coding methods, performance scores, sensitivity checks and the like.  
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#### 410 4. Scenes and NSMs

To illustrate the analytical value of these techniques, we now examine the sorts of locations most likely to support NSM organizations. These new (in the 1970s) civic groups were oriented to programmes – ecology, feminism, peace, gay rights, etc. – that older political parties ignored. Over time, other, more humanistic and aesthetic concerns also arose, such as suburban sprawl, sports stadiums, flowers, museums and walkability. In Europe, the state and parties were the hierarchical ‘establishment’ opposed by NSMs. For instance, in the 1970s in Italy, even Communists and Socialist parties rejected the new issues. In the USA, local business and political elites were more often the target  
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**TABLE 3.** Illustrative sample of amenities weighted high and low on traditionalism, self-expression, transgression and rationalism, from the Canadian amenities database.

	Traditionalist	Self-expressive	Transgressive	Rationalist
Higher weights	Bibles, synagogues, clergy, archives, religious goods, religious organizations, etiquette, ethics & protocol lessons, antique dealers, cemeteries, monuments, heritage buildings consultants, bookbinders-specialty & restoration, campgrounds, crests, mausoleums, historical places, museums, fishing & hunting, automobile antique & classic cars, Opera companies, church furnishings & supplies, churches & other places of worship, mosques, synagogues	Artists-fine arts, night clubs, fashion stylists & consultants, haute couture, graphic designers, fashion stylists & consultants, clowns tattooing, piercing & body art, schools-dramatic art & speech, art galleries, dealers & consultants, estheticians, dancing instruction, interior designers, sound recording studios, musical groups and artists, theatre (except musical) companies, hobby, toy and game stores, dance companies, live theatres and other performing arts presenters with facilities, yoga instruction, independent artists, writers and performers	Sex shops, adult entertainment, tattooing, piercing & body art, motorcycles, escort services, hemp products, casinos, nudist parks, snowboards, smokers' articles, gambling industries, esotericism – products and services, surf shops, night clubs, haute couture, art schools, escort services	Microscopes, telescopes, encyclopaedias, business consultants, accountants, lawyers, banks, bookkeeping services, insurance agents & brokers, tax return specialists, management consultants, laboratories, economic consultants, retirement and planning consultants, engineers, patent agents, expertise and technical analysis, productivity consultants, marketing consultants, industrial consultants, robotics, research and development, forensic services, statistical services, astronomy, geophysical surveying and mapping services, technical and trade schools, research and development
Lower weights	Business centres, laboratories, marketing consultants, robotics, administrative management and general management consulting services, engineers, industrial consultants, machine shops,	Uniform rental services, military goods, etiquette, ethics & protocol lessons, Bibles, business centres, business consultants, engineers, technical and trade schools, accountants, lawyers, management	Military goods, etiquette, ethics & protocol lessons, formal wear, uniform rental service, clergy, Bibles, business & trade associations, Chamber of Commerce, accounting services, lawyers, banks, tuxedos,	Esotericism – products and services, clergy, Bibles, mosques, funeral homes, religious organizations, synagogues, cemeteries, churches & other places of worship, astrologers, psychic consultants, massages,

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Traditionalist	Self-expressive	Transgressive	Rationalist
multimedia, hydroponics equipment & supplies, Internet-cafes, wireless communications, computer supplies & accessories, market research & analysis, research and development, sex shops, escort service, esotericism-products & services, inventors	consultants, corporate image development services, insurance agents and brokers, stock and bond brokers, tax consultants, mosques, synagogues, religious organizations, law courts	insurance, homes-elderly people, investment banking, portfolio management, mosques, uniforms, religious organizations, synagogues, religious goods, antique dealers, senior citizens services & centres, child care services, image consultants, elected government representatives, courts of law, professional organizations	homoeopathy, aromatherapy, naturopaths, chiropractors, amusement places, pilates, health resorts, nature parks, nature centres, rock climbing, skating rinks, boxing instruction, psychotherapy, hypnotherapy, sports teams and clubs, acupuncturists, herbal products, bars and pubs, psychoanalysis, musical groups and artists, dance companies, beauty salons, campgrounds, funeral homes

(see Ramirez *et al.* 2008). In either case, these citizen activists saw the traditional political process as closed, and this encouraged the more informal organization of the NSMs and their often confrontational tactics. But, as some political parties and governments embraced the new social issues, the political opportunity space in which they were operating drastically shifted. Movement leaders then broke from 'urban guerrilla warfare' and began participating in elections, lobbying and advising governments. As their issues were incorporated into the political system, their demands moderated. Yet their campaigns added a heightened sensitivity to the emotional and theatrical aspects of political life (McDonald 2006).

The influence of NSMs has been so strong that it is no exaggeration to say that the field of social research devoted to 'social movements' has been an extended attempt to explain how and why the movements of the 1960s and 1970s succeeded as much as they did. Much research on NSMs focuses on the 'successful' cases, where groups organize effectively and sometimes stage dramatic victories. This approach uncovers new tactics, rhetoric and organizational forms at work in the public sphere. Its cost, however, is that one has difficulties determining how these few successful cases differ from the many others that do not generate strong social movement organizations or tangible outcomes. The NSM rhetoric is often universalistic, concerned with issues like environmental degradation, human rights, personal expression and social justice. These apply to all human beings, wherever they happen to live and whatever their background. However, these universalistic themes do not resonate universally, and they result in significantly different styles of organization and political efficacy. Some analysts began to stress environmental characteristics, like the local political 'opportunity structure' that conditions NSMs' chances of success (McAdam *et al.* 1996). 'Framing' and 'organization' were also featured as key variables affecting the likelihood a social movement would flourish. But is it possible that more tangible local characteristics might play a role in NSM formation and success?

#### 4.1. *The specificity of the universal*

Linking scenes and social movements explicitly, Darcy Leach and Sebastian Haunss (2007) have shown the importance of clusters of bars, clubs, films, <sup>AQ11</sup> concerts and parties in energizing and sustaining Germany's 'autonomous' movement. In the American context, the key scenes of NSM activism were dense, high-crime, multi-ethnic urban centres. Here, young college graduates, artists and intellectuals moved in racially diverse inner-city neighbourhoods. In many cities, these areas showed the greatest underinvestment and degradation, and 'white flight' to the suburbs was often most rapid. But a vision of an alternative future emerged among (some of) those 'left behind', one more humane, more sensitive to the ecological consequences of human actions, and able to see beauty not only in symmetry and regularity but also in discord and disorder.

Richard Sennett's (2012) *Uses of Disorder* conveys some of this general attitude. <sup>AQ12</sup> But density alone does not capture what was distinctive about these NSM incubators.

465 We have, for instance, already noted the presence of artists in these neighbourhoods. Artists have often been politically aligned with NSM causes, but their significance goes deeper. The artist him- or herself could be a catalyst for urban change, helping to envision urban space as a source of beauty rather than a scene of depravity, despair and dirt. The artist, in other words, renders  
470 the inner city into a resource for cultivating the self. Aesthetic experience could be a human right. Insofar as this aspiration goes against the types of culture and the vision of society favoured by the organs of the state and the corporation, it would naturally tend to take on a more transgressive, counter-cultural flavour. A different world was in the making in avant-garde paintings and poetry, and it would of course be hard for the people benefiting from the current system to accept and enjoy what was to come. It was in the wake of these experiences, well before the current vogue of treating artists as urban development agents, that some of the first and most visionary urban cultural documents were formulated.

480 But not just any neighbourhood in any city is experienced this way. In her *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs (1961) argued that ill-advised urban renewal projects like those of Robert Moses in New York City and Fred Gardiner in Toronto, which proposed to build huge freeways through existing inner-city neighbourhoods, would destroy the features that made them work. Particularly important to these neighbourhoods was walkability: people out on the streets, she argued, are more likely to bump into one another, encounter others different from themselves, avoid getting stuck into stultifying routines, and keep their eyes out for criminal activity. Car culture threatened the very basis of urban community, and with it the spirit of cosmopolitan diversity crucial to the progressive NSMs.

490 We can translate these general observations into testable claims. NSMs should thrive in dense, diverse, places where high crime co-exists with college graduates and the arts. They should be in scenes that encourage self-expression, and they should be strong where more people spend more time walking. To take on these issues empirically, we made an NSM index, which sums the number of human rights groups, environmental groups and social advocacy groups in every US zip code. It is elaborated and described further in Knudsen and Clark (2013). <sup>AQ13</sup>

500 **Table 4** lists the 30 US zip codes with the most NSM organizations. The list naturally includes many state capitals, and Washington DC neighbourhoods are at the top of the charts. But it also suggests that NSM activity is driven by more than access and proximity to political leaders. The San Francisco Bay Area, for example, has five of the top 30, with the highest totals in the zip codes containing the Mission and Tenderloin districts. Portland's historic Goosehollow neighbourhood, whose

**TABLE 4** Top 30 NSM zip codes, nationally.

Zip code	NSMs	Zip code	NSMs
20036 DC, Washington	109	60604 IL, Chicago	24
20005 DC, Washington	82	10022 NY, New York	23
20006 DC, Washington	53	22314 VA, Alexandria	23
20009 DC, Washington	49	98101 WA, Seattle	22
94103 CA, San Francisco	47	02108 MA, Boston	22
20002 DC, Washington	44	19107 PA, Philadelphia	20
95814 CA, Sacramento	37	03301 NH, Concord	20
53703 WI, Madison	32	97205 OR, Portland	20
10017 NY, New York	31	94105 CA, San Francisco	20
20001 DC, Washington	29	32301 FL, Tallahassee	19
94612 CA, Oakland	28	02116 MA, Boston	19
10001 NY, New York	27	94129 CA, San Francisco	19
10016 NY, New York	26	94102 CA, San Francisco	18
55104 MN, Saint Paul	25	10021 NY, New York	18
43215 OH, Columbus	25	48933 MI, Lansing	18

Note: This table shows the zip codes with the most NSM organizations, nationally. The NSM index sums human rights groups, environmental groups and social advocacy groups.

neighbourhood association explicitly makes walkability, parks and cultural opportunities its main goals,<sup>7</sup> and Seattle's dense, hip Belltown have the most in Oregon and Washington.

These 30 localities are of course a tiny fraction of the whole country. To examine characteristics of the places in which NSM's thrive in general, we performed multivariate regression analyses for all US zip codes (*Scenes*, Chap. 6).<sup>8</sup> We found that NSMs are found mostly in Democratic counties with high rent and high crime. *Neighbourhoods* where NSMs cluster are usually dense, have lower rent, and include strong arts concentrations along with high non-white and college graduate shares of the population. Moreover, walking is a crucially important element of an NSM-friendly scene: the US zip codes in which the most people walk to work are associated on average with a 61 percent increase in NSMs over those with average levels of walkability. But cultivating an openness to personal expression is important as well: our self-expression performance score variable is strongly linked with NSM presence. Self-expressive, walkable, dense, artistic, diverse, low rent, neighbourhoods: these are indeed places that very much resemble the scenes in Jane Jacobs's Greenwich Village and Annex neighbourhoods. But Jacobs's haunts are not unique; they embody a type of urban experience that is apparently conducive to NSM activity in general, at least in the US context.

#### 4.2. *Self-expression and the political salience of walkability*

The above discussion, however, treats walkability and the cultural features of the neighbourhood (like self-expression) independently, asking how much an

530 increase of one is associated with an increase of NSMs net of changes in the other. But of course they do not operate independently, and one of the main propositions of urban reform movements from Jacobs on was that they should not. The urban experience itself should become an uplifting opportunity, and that means taking the time to wander through it and listen to what it says. Where there is a conjunction of walking and self-expression, we are, in turn, likely to find organizations dedicated to preserving and expanding the vision of life it suggests – cosmopolitan, ready to learn from chance encounters and diverse others, out to make the world more beautiful and sustainable than it currently is.

535 **Figure 1** shows how important this interplay between walking and self-expression is in fostering NSM political activity. The left graph indicates that, *ceteris paribus*, places with more walking are, in general, more likely to have any NSMs than neighbourhoods where there is less walking. But it also shows that this difference is greater in more self-expressive scenes: in the country's least self-expressive zip codes, the most walkable places have about 8 percent higher predicted probability of having some NSMs than the least walkable places do. But in the country's most self-expressive scenes, the most walkable zip codes exhibit a roughly 13 percent higher predicted probability of having at least one NSM than do the least walkable zips.

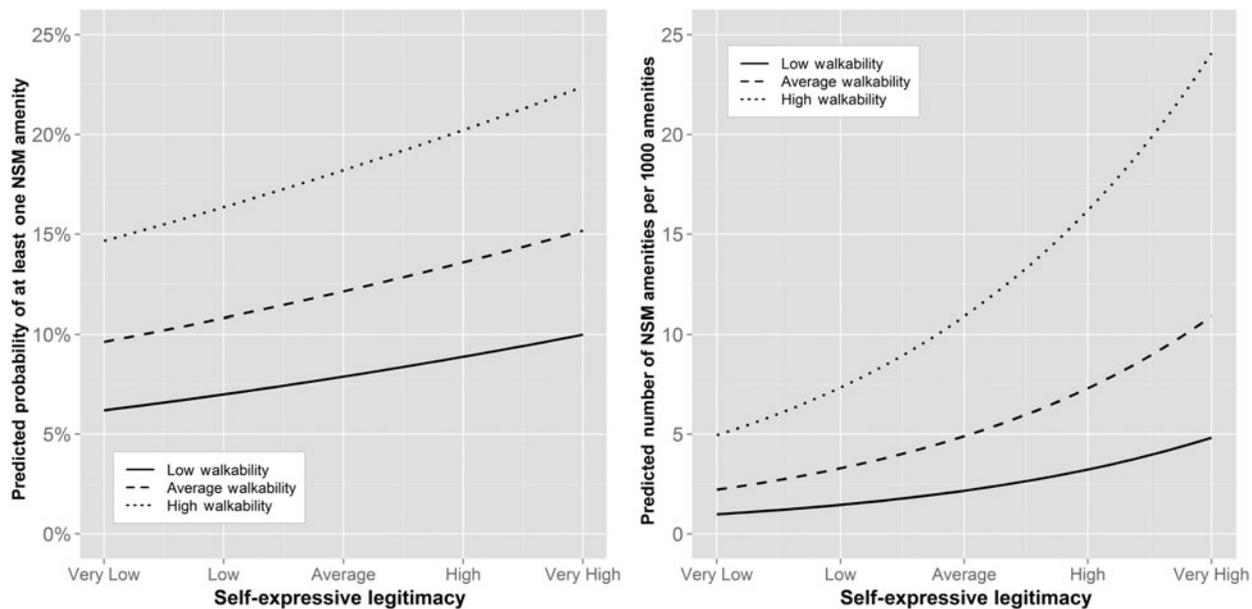
540 In the right graphic, we can see that the 'walking premium' for not only any but for many NSMs is much greater in more self-expressive scenes. The difference between walkable/less walkable increases rather dramatically, however, in highly self-expressive scenes. In less self-expressive scenes, a highly walkable zip code tends to have on average four more NSMs per 1,000 amenities than does a less walkable zip. But in the country's most self-expressive zip codes, a more walkable zip code has on average around 19 more NSMs per 1,000 amenities than does a low walkability zip.

545 That is, when walking and self-expression come together, the resulting scene is quite likely to contain organizations advocating for human rights, social justice and the environment. The one supports the other, as Jacobs held. A neighbourhood with people walking about is one with an audience, one that holds opportunities to see and be seen. A scene that prizes self-expression is one that legitimizes efforts to put one's ideas, insights and imagination forward before others, as an opportunity for experience and interaction. These sorts of places where public sociability and personal self-expression push one another to higher levels seem to cultivate the environments in which the NSMs have found energy, inspiration, members and supporters most in tune with their aims and ambitions.

550 Our results show just how much NSM organizations depend on the specific character of the situations in which they work. However universal and cosmopolitan the content of NSM goals, they appear to get much of their energy and support from the qualities of their concrete local contexts. Such

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**FIGURE 1** Walking and self-expression interact to predict greater numbers of NSMs. The figure is read left to right, where the y axis indicates the predicted probability of having any NSMs and the predicted number of NSMs (given that any exist) for an average US zip code (defined using the following covariates: county population, democratic vote share (1992), crime rate, and rent, zip code population density, percentage of college graduates, percentage of non-whites, percentage of arts industry concentration, rent, and change in rent). The x axis indicates an increase in the average self-expressive scene within each zip code from very low to very high. AQ14

575 qualities sustain a distinct style of life, one not found everywhere or even in many places – dense, walkable, self-expressive, urbane, diverse, intellectual. While each of these characteristics is important separately, when they come together, they provide powerful catalysts for NSM activism to grow. But where they are weak or absent, NSM styles and goals may seem alien and unwelcome, and they may face difficulties in taking root. Jacobs-esque settings, that is, provide a critical foundation of meanings and emotional energies for the more abstract environmental characteristics enshrined in the NSM literature’s trinity of opportunity structure, framing and organization.

## 580 5. Conclusion

This analysis illustrates how powerful scenes analysis can be, but this is by no means its limit. We have found, for instance, scenes that feature self-expression and glamour strongly predict economic growth – increasing incomes, jobs, population, rent and the like (Silver *et al.* 2011). Indeed, these scenic dimensions show economic growth impacts comparable to classical variables in the urban development literature, such as education or rent. We have similarly found strong links between various scenes and population shifts and political dynamics: there are more young people in transgressive scenes, for instance, and Canadians in more transgressive and self-expressive scenes vote less conservative while those in more corporate and local scenes vote more conservative (Silver and Miller 2013). These associations again hold independently from more traditional explanatory variables, and often rival them in explanatory power. The scenes of life evinced by local amenities have real and demonstrable social consequences.

595 At the same time, the subtleties of scenes sensitize us to the importance of context in enhancing or shifting the impacts of other variables. That is, instead of only asking whether A leads to B, we also ask whether the relationship between A and B changes depending on context C. For example, we find that (in the USA) when technology firms are located in self-expressive scenes, they are strongly linked with local economic growth; outside of such scenes, growth is weak to non-existent (Silver 2012a). Similarly, we find that in Canada the ‘artistic dividend’ – that is, the boost in general economic growth associated with artist clusters (Markusen and King 2003) – is greater when artist concentrations are located in supportive scenes, but weak to absent elsewhere (Silver and Miller 2012).

600 Similar work is underway internationally. For instance, Navarro (2012) uses amenities to map and compare Spanish cities, in terms of how ‘conventional and unconventional’ their scenes are, showing that about half the cultural differences among individuals relate to individual socio-economic characteristics and half to contextual and scene characteristics. Navarro *et al.* (2012) extend this work to show that significant economic development

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trajectories of Spanish cities attach to scene variations. In France, Sawyer (2011)<sup>AQ15</sup> used amenities to map the scenes of Paris. They show that Parisian scenes are organized polycentrically rather than in terms of the classical ‘centre–periphery’ divide, and draw out the political implications of this fact for the City’s ambitious *Grand Paris* project. Jang *et al.* (2011) map Seoul, Tokyo and Chicago’s scenes in terms of how glamorous, bohemian, traditional and ethnic they are, finding significant differences across cities and neighbourhoods, and analysing not only demographic characteristics but also the values and identities of the people who live in distinctive scenes. This body of research clearly indicates that cultural, meaning-laden aspects of place matter in quantifiable and often surprising ways.

These are just illustrations of the kind of analyses our theory of scenes allows us to model. The findings generated by the model can be combined with other perspectives and research methods to advance our understanding of urban life. We ourselves have pointed towards one possible direction, developing a theory of the ‘buzz’ generated by scenes as an ‘urban resource’ that can enhance economic production, political power and community solidarity, in the process-making scenes potentials objects of contestation and sparks to institutional innovation (Silver and Clark 2013). Silver (2012b) applied this perspective to two neighbourhood case studies in Toronto, drawing on interviews with local arts activists, community leaders, city officials, policy and legal documents, city staff reports, and media coverage to show how political controversies over local scenes differ when the value of the scene is perceived to be rooted in stimulating economic growth or community togetherness. Related contributions explore the specific dynamics of cultural policy in case studies of different cities from the USA, Canada, France, Spain and Korea (Grodach and Silver 2012).

‘Scene’ is a useful concept because it is generative, opening up rather than stymieing lines of inquiry. Hence, our theory of scenes aims to hold open a fluid space for understanding – in the most capacious sense of the term – the many dimensions of meaning that resonate through the material practices of everyday life. Beyond specific concepts, methods and data, the prospect of a genuinely humanistic social science is perhaps the driving animus of scenes analysis. Such analysis is *humanistic* in virtue of granting fundamental weight to the aesthetic and ethical qualities of human experience. It is *social* in virtue of locating such qualities in various constellations of practices and settings that inspire or disgust, excite or terrify, attract or repulse. And it is *science* in virtue of making the humanistic aspects of social life part of testable explanations of human behaviour, gathering data to test such propositions and testing them. Why do certain groups of people move to some neighbourhoods rather than others? Why do some businesses thrive in some locations but not others? And why do some political movements find support in some contexts but not elsewhere? Scenes analysis can help us answer these questions.

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## Notes

- 1 See <http://www.tnc-newsletter.blogspot.com> and [scenes.uchicago.edu](http://scenes.uchicago.edu). AQ17
- 2 ‘As time, space, and the ether soak through all things, so (we feel) do abstract and essential goodness, beauty, strength, significance, justice, soak though all things good, strong, significant, and just. Such ideas, and others equally abstract, form the background for all our facts, the fountain-head of all the possibilities we conceive of’ (James 1902, p. 52). AQ18
- 3 Specific dimensions of authenticity are drawn primarily from classical authors, though we also explored themes from recent urban scholarship and journalism. Thus, Rousseau, Herder, Wagner and the Brothers Grimm, as well as the American transcendentalists, provided our inspiration for natural, local and ethnic authenticity, which was bolstered by recent studies by Zukin (2009), Grazian (2003), among others. Rousseau and Durkheim stressed the nation-state as a fundamental source of identity and authentic reality, able to shape consciousness, local customs and more. Charles Taylor’s (2007) discussions about the power of logos like Nike or Coca Cola as sources of authenticity or inauthenticity provided initial impetus for corporateness, as well as Ritzer’s (2008) idea of McDonaldization. Kant and Hegel provide inspiration for including the rational intellect as a potential source of authenticity, a category stressed more recently in Daniel Bell’s knowledge workers or Joel Kotkin’s (2001) Nerdistan. AQ19
- 4 Four of our theatricality dimensions are drawn directly from recent and classic literature (e.g. Goffman 1959, Blum 2003, Lloyd 2006, Currid 2007): glamour, transgression, exhibitionism and formality. Because these are mostly urbane styles of performance, we added a fifth, neighbourliness, which builds on Jürgen Habermas and Daniel Bell’s observations that the small-town Puritan ethic was more than a moral doctrine but also a mode of self-presentation stressing neighbourly intimacy and warmth. AQ20

- 5 Empirically, self-expressive legitimacy is often correlated with local authenticity and glamorous theatricality.
- 6 We analyse our data at the zip code level primarily, since this is the lowest level at which census of business information is available. Scenes, however, are clearly not identical with zip codes, or even neighbourhoods, as they can spill across such boundaries. Discerning the 'catchment' area of a scene empirically is a challenging task. We are pursuing statistical techniques for doing so. In the meantime, we join this data with ethnographic accounts that explore where some folks go to church, and clubs others go to for Saturday night. The total number of various types of amenities may also be analytically important, and we have developed other measures designed to tap into this aspect of scenes, which we explore elsewhere.
- 7 <http://goosehollow.org/images/ghvision20110317.pdf>
- 8 More specifically, we are summarizing results from a Hurdle Model. These models are used in situations where an outcome is relatively rare but can take on multiple values (e.g. major sports teams in US counties). Our model accounts for county population, percentage of Democratic vote share (1992) <sup>AQ21</sup> crime rate and rent, as well as zip code population density, percentage of college graduates, and percentage of non-whites, rent and change in rent (from 1990 to 2000). We also include arts industry concentration, which measures how clustered employment in an index of cultural industry organizations is, relative to all other zip codes (this is a location quotient, described in the appendix to *Scenes*, Chap. 8).

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