The Power of Collective Occupation and Occupational Therapy: Supporting the Social Fabric in Europe Today
Outline

- Introduction To Collective Occupation
- Research Findings
- The Power Of Collective Occupation
- Future Directions and Implications
Discussing collective occupation
Individual focus
Interrelationships and Interconnectedness
Structures and Institutions
Complexity theory
Transactionalism
Ailey II. Jarvis McKinley and Megan Jakel in Sidra Bell's "La Valse". Photo by Eduardo Patino
Collectively performed occupations = distributed occupations

4 levels of distributed occupational systems

Population
Community
Group
Individual
Occupation is distributed across the entirety of the people who are taking part in their multitude of ways.

Collective occupation has a synergistic, gestalt quality.
The intentionality of collective occupation

Ubuntu

“I am because we are, and because we are, therefore I am”

http://www.khanyisela.org/
Working definition of collective occupations: “...are engaged in by individuals, groups, communities and/or societies in everyday contexts; these may reflect an intention towards social cohesion or dysfunction, and/or advancement of or aversion to a common good”
Collective occupations: Indigenously African
Mutuality, connectedness and co-creating as interconnecting elements of collective occupation
Introducing the town of Melissa
A narrative of occupation

Occupation as fluid, dynamic and multidimensional process, coordinating the multiple elements of the situation

Three plots
Maintaining the self-in-the-world
Maintaining the family, and
Maintaining the social fabric
The social fabric
For Greeks, Painful Cuts Keep Tearing At The Social Fabric
by Silvia Poggioli. 4 Feb 2013

Greece's social fabric unravels
Veteran socialist and author Charles-André Udry looks at the scale of the crisis in Greece today--and its impact on politics and social struggle. 10 Jan 2013
• Informal daily encounters in public spaces
• Participation in associations and organisations
• Community celebrations and events
• Informal daily encounters in public spaces
The *triví* – the rubbing together
• Participation in associations and organisations

Maintaining the social fabric
Associations representing particular populations
Association representing commercial interests:
Commercial Association
Farmers Cooperative
Beekeepers Association
Livestock Association

Supporting children’s education and activities:
Parent-teachers Association
Scout group
The Folk Law Association preserving the local heritage

Associations for recreational activities:
- Ski and Hill Walking Association
- Athletics Association
- Sky Club
New associations emerging

Public action
• Community celebrations and events

Maintaining the social fabric
The polis
Labour:
activity for survival

Work:
creates the artificial world of ‘things’

Action: ...
Action: The action and word of political life

The human condition of plurality

“the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world”

(Arendt 1958)
Power:
The potential of people acting together
A non-hierarchical and non-instrumental power
The power of consent and rational persuasion.

“sheer human togetherness”,
• Networks of informal occupation embedding experiences of trust, reciprocity, information exchange, resilience and belonging;

• Beyond-the-everyday occupation embedding experiences of enhanced emotional expression;

• Formally and informally organised occupation embedding experiences of protest, support and organisation.

Collective occupation
Networks of informal occupation
Belonging and support

Social capital -
Trust
Support
Reciprocal exchange
Access to information
Social norms
Features:
• flexible and long opening hours
• located close to home
• a good number of regulars
• a fairly plain physical appearance
• a playful atmosphere.

Important for:
• Equality of relationships
• Removed from the intensity of the family
• Developing social contacts
• Promoting active citizens in the community
Opportunities for informal collective occupation

- Neighbourhood, local shops, post office, bank, hairdresser, gym
- The local pub or coffee shop
- Work places, shared office and coffee spaces
- Conferences and meetings
- Social media – Facebook, Twitter
- ...

Opportunities for informal collective occupation
Pol Parol Café,
Leuven, Belgium
• Sharing and exchange of skills, knowledge and/or emotions.

• Equality, and respect for diversity

• Knowing the ‘other’
Challenges to informal occupation

• Increasing mobility
• Increasing emigration
• Closure of local shops and businesses
• Technology for everyday transactions
• Unsafe neighbourhoods, unease at hanging-out
• Discrimination and exclusion
Informal occupation as sites of discrimination and exclusion
Building networks of informal occupation
Beyond-the-everyday occupation embedding experiences of enhanced emotional expression
Art in the scaffolding

a socio-cultural project

Initiatives sheltered living for psychologically vulnerable people ‘De Hulster’
Saint-Jacobs church in the scaffolding
Quotes about art in the scaffolding

• I enjoy to see other people enjoying the event
• There are no differences, everybody can enjoy, everybody can have stress
• I get touched, worlds seem to come together
• It's nice to involve the children at school
• There is an atmosphere of sociability, without difference
Formally and informally organised occupation embedding experiences of protest, support and organisation
Medieval Guilds
Europe Today
24th July 2013
Message of the President of the Hellenic Democracy, Karolos Papoulias, on the 39th anniversary of the restoration of democracy.

The current economic collapse quickly became a political, institutional and cultural crisis, a tornado that dragged everything with it... The battle is not only to ensure economic self-reliance, national dignity and social justice, but is also a battle against the decline of democracy...hatred and violence is not the solution or the answer to the problem but perhaps the darkest part of it.
Greece
Impact of the crisis

Increased alcohol consumption

Increase in suicide rate

12% adults symptoms of major depressive disorder

(EPIPSI, 2013)
Unemployment
Greece - 27.6%
Spain - 26.3%
Youth unemployment (-25 yrs)
Greece - 62.9%
Spain - 56.1%
Croatia - 55.4%
(Eurostat – May 2013)

Impact in Greece
1/3 in poverty
500,000 no income
20,000 homeless
  - 60% in last two years
  - 47% with children
Increase in children to orphanages

(NGO Klimaka)
250,000 meals a day in soup kitchens

The potato “revolution”

http://faliriotissa-tailsofathens.blogspot.co.uk/2012/03/potato-revolution.html
Anti-racism festival
Emerging collective occupation
Increasing number of collectives offering affordable and accessible:
• elderly care
• energy, food,
• insurance and
• infrastructure

Tine de Moor
“Homo Cooperans. Institutions for Collective Action and the Compassionate Society”
Inaugural Lecture, University of Utrecht. August 2013
Open source software
Collective occupation

- is an essential part of our everyday lives
- can be defined by the quality of the experience and the power of the potential that is embedded in it
- cannot always be bounded and named either as a specific event or organisation. It is also the web of intertwining doing ...

Discrimination and inequality restrict people’s opportunities to engage collectively
THANK YOU