Superdiversity & intangible cultural heritage

Challenges for musea

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Superdiversity in the heart of Europe

In 2017 two out of three children in Brussel & Antwerpen, Rotterdam & Amsterdam have a migration background.

This lecture:
- What is superdiversity & how can we understand the transition towards superdiversity?
- What are the challenges for Intangible Cultural Heritage & Museums?
1. The lense of superdiversity

- A relatively new concept
- First coined by Steven Vertovec 2005/2007
  - Complexity of & diversity in London

- Superdiversity
  - Not just a synonym for (ethnic) ‘diversity’ or ‘multicultural society’
  - A new period in migration & a profound demographic and social transition.
The concept of superdiversity: work in progress

- A new concept with a broad range of interpretations
  - See Meissner & Vertovec 2015
  - & lecture New York Steven Vertovec 2016
  - Descriptive, methodological & practical

- Superdiversity has (at least) three dimensions
  - Quantitative transition/context
    - Majority-minority cities
  - Qualitative transition
    - Processes of (migration driven) diversification
  - (contested) normalisation of diversity
    - Demographic normalisation, commonplace diversity (Wessendorf), conviviality
1. Quantitative transition: diversity increases everywhere, but the most in urban areas
Part of the quantitative transition is the transition towards majority-minority cities.

- ‘majority-minority cities’ (Crul et al):
  - Cities with a majority of different minorities
  - In global cities such as New York, Sao Paolo, Toronto of Sydney
    - E.g. Kasinitz et al on New York
  - Recently in European cities as well:
    - Brussels, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Den Hague
    - Tomorrow in Antwerp, Frankfurt and many other (large) European cities

Brussel metropolitan region: one of the world’s most diverse cities

- 70.4% of all citizens of foreign origin
  - Other nationality
  - Other nationality at the moment of birth
  - Father or mother having another nationality at the moment of birth

- Large differences within Brussels
  - In absolute numbers and %
  - But also according to other characteristics
    - Poor/rich (e.g. diplomats & eurocrats)
    - Countries of origin
    - Housing & employment

- Demographic dynamic is crucial
  - Less diversity among elderly citizens
  - Almost all kids & youngsters have migration backgrounds
Antwerp at the tipping point to become a majority-minority city in 2018-2019

- 521,946 inhabitants
- 20.5% non-Belgian citizens
- In global 48% of inhabitants rooted in migration
  - including country of origin of parents
- Strong population increase
  - From 445,000 citizens in 2000
  - To 522,000 today
  - 600,000 expected in 2030
- Due to
  - More children born
  - Internal migration
  - Antwerp as arrival city
Antwerp at the tipping point to become a majority-minority city in 2018 or 2019

- Strong differences according to age & ethnicity
  - Less than 10% amongst oldest inhabitants
  - > 50% among -50-ers
  - > 70% among kids

- Even without further migration Antwerp becomes a majority-minority-city in the next years
- + yearly arrival of 4000-6000 new migrants
The concept of majority-minority cities...

- Helps to understand demographic transitions
  - Superdiversity is not (only) about new migration, but about the actual population dynamics
  - Spread, speed & scale (Meissner & Vertovec, 2015)
- Contributes to ‘normalisation’
  - See the city as it is
    - And not as it was...
- Gives recognition to ethnic minorities
  - It is ‘our’ city as well
- Includes transitions in intangible cultural heritage

- Picture: parade of the giants in Borgerhout (folklore, Reuzenstoet), first Muslim giant in 2013 participating
However, the concept of majority-minority cities...

- Frightens some people
- Neglects power relations
  - A ‘demographic’ majority of minorities hides huge power and socio-economic inequalities
- Might hinder our understanding of superdiversity, if used in a simplified way
- Differences within groups are becoming larger & more important compared to differences between groups
  - First, second, third, fourth generation
  - Rich/poor
  - High/low educated
  - Religious/non-religious
  - Dutch speaking/multilingual/non-Dutch-speaking
  - ...

Picture: ceremony at the end of the integration course for newcomers at the townhall of Antwerp
2. Superdiversity as a qualitative transition: increasing diversity within diversity

- ‘the diversification of diversity’,
- ‘the dynamic interplay of [...] new, small & scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated & legally stratified immigrants’
  - (Steven Vertovec)

Graphs: different nationalities living in
  - Frankfurt (Germany)
  - Ostend (Belgium)
Superdiversity as a qualitative transition: increasing diversity within diversity

- The basic pattern of migration has changed
  - 1950’s-1980’s: people from a limited number of countries of origin towards a limited number of destination countries
  - 1990’s-today: people from a much more countries of origin moving towards a higher number of destination countries

=> Increasing diversity within diversity
Superdiversity is about increasing diversity within diversity

- An increasing hybridity in & complexity of our society, especially in cities

- Interaction between
  - More nationalities
  - More different languages
  - Increasing religious diversity
  - Diversity in motivations to migrate
  - Diversity in legal statuses
  - Diversity in socio-economic positions
  - Diversity in and between different communities
  - Increasing transnational lifestyles and transmigration
  - ...

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3. Superdiversity as a (contested) process of normalisation of diversity

- Beyond dominant majority-thinking
- Beyond thé minority as an exception
- Superdiversity as the ‘new normal’
- Susanne Wessendorf: ‘Commonplace diversity’
  - Also in profesional settings
    - Social work, education, health care, policy, public administration, business, …

- However, not without conflicts or tensions
  - A politically contested process
  - with steps forward & backward
  - driven by demography
Superdiversity as a reality & a challenge in the 21st century

- Our society changes faster as our way of thinking, analyzing or governing
- Need for new frameworks for research and policy
- Beyond methodological nationalism
  - Wimmer & Glick Schiller, Beck, ...
Exploring challenges in contexts of superdiversity

- Beyond ‘us versus them’
- Combatting urban poverty is increasingly combatting poverty among ethnic minorities
- Undocumented migrants in cities
- Transmigration and temporality
- Different visions on integration in superdiversity
- Redistribution versus recognition

- See book
Are we able to think beyond us-and-them?

- We keep on thinking about diversity in terms of ‘us-and-them’
- Reality has become more complex
- Beyond us-and-them:
  - From an ‘either/or’ logic
  - Towards an ‘and-and’-logic
  - Recognising multiple identities
    - Thinking (and measuring) beyond nationality
    - Recognising ambivalence
Interculturalisation of organisations & professions

- 21st century will become more diverse
- Urgent need for interculturalisation
  - intercultural communication
  - intercultural services and care
  - Interculturalisation of education
    - Students and teachers!
- The most urgent in front-line professions
  - social work, education, health care, ...
- developing empowering & divers-sensitive ways of working
  - also in the cultural sector
  - Also within the UNESCO
The challenge of superdiversity in the 21st century

- Moving from musea (or other cultural organisations) with ‘some special attention’ for diversity
- Towards musea where superdiversity is part of the core of the organisation & of their policies
Divers or cultural-sensitive working in times of superdiversity

- Moving beyond etnocentrism
  - As our societies are becoming superdivers,
  - our history, culture & cultural heritage will become superdiverse as well
- Moving beyond us-and-them
  - Recognising multiple identities
  - Recognising hybridity & ambivalence
- Moving beyond static & essentialising (or essentialistic) approaches of culture
  - Culture & intangible cultural heritage as dynamic
  - A stronger emphasis on superdiversity, hybridity, mixity in the UNESCO-framework?
- Co-creation, including dialogue & debate, within intercultural teams
The paradox of superdiversity? Less and more attention for ethnic diversity

- The ‘normalisation’ of superdiversity implies leaving the ‘ethnic lense’ behind us
  - Less attention for ethnicity
  - Just one of many differences
  - Paying attention to processes of differentiation
  - Intersectionality: gender, age, class, education, religion, ...

- However, in the transition towards normalisation, we need to pay more attention to processes of interculturalisation & divers-sensitivity today.
Concluding.  
Scenarios for the future

Superdiversity is
- An sociological & empirical concept
- Not an ideological frame
- not good or bad as such
- it depends how we deal with this transition

Maurice Crul analyses two possible scenarios for the future
A scenario of fear, humiliation, polarization & distrust

- us-versus-them discours, based upon (mutual) distrust
- Increasing poverty, unemployment, school drop-out, ... amongst migrants
- Polarisation from both sides
  - Head-scarf-debates
  - Racism is a ‘relative’
  - ‘Pegida’ versus ‘fundamentalism first’
- Refugees as a threat
- Superdiversity can/will become explosive
Or a scenario of hope & empowerment

- Superdiversity becomes an evident reality
- Recognition of multiple identities
- With a perspective for emancipation and upward social mobility
  - An enabling and supportive policy
  - Stimulating and enabling emancipation within communities
- Active pluralism in practice
- Where uncertainty becomes mutual trust
working towards a scenario of hope & empowerment

... because the future of our cities is not based upon (further) polarization & distrust,

but requires the mobilisation of the social capital of all citizens today

Picture: Zinneke parade Brussels
Time for questions & discussion

Feedback? dirk.geldof@kdg.be

Books available after the session

Transmigration (English edition) is only available as e-book