article

Making the most of super-diversity: notes on the potential of a new approach

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This article aims at exploring how 'super-diversity' can cover aspects of current debates that traditional ways of understanding identity and multiculturalism could not. I start by engaging with Gilles Deleuze's differential ontology, which conceptualises difference as an inherent feature of identity and not some 'issue' brought by migration flows. I then outline super-diversity's potential implications for diversity management, with particular attention to the case of Roma minorities in Europe. The main argument is that super-diversity can provide a promising framework to address some of multiculturalism's constraints, if we focus on the new kind, rather than the new level, of complexity.

key words super-diversity • difference • identity • multiculturalism

Introduction

Over the past two decades issues of diversity and of migration management have received unparalleled policy and scholarly attention in relation to a state of affairs of contemporary western societies in which they are increasingly presented as a normal feature of a globalising world (de Jong, 2014; Pécoud, 2009). A recent article by Sara de Jong makes a convincing case that the two fields (diversity management and migration management) have so far too often been studied in isolation from each other and that the policy studies literature could benefit by incorporating diversity management into the study of migration (de Jong, 2016).

In light of the ongoing so-called 'migration crisis' in Europe and the integration challenges it entails, this article aims at advancing the under-researched concept of 'super-diversity' as a possibly helpful bridge between the two disciplines of migration and diversity management. The term 'super-diversity' was first introduced by Steven Vertovec in 2005 (Vertovec, 2005) and articulated in an academic journal in 2007 as a 'term intended to underline a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything previously experienced in a particular society' (Vertovec, 2007 1024).[1] The contribution of this article to the wider debate around the multilevel governance of super-diversity is to problematise the conceptualisation of identity in relation to difference, to explore how super-diversity might be employed in tackling the policy and governance implications of increasingly complex societies, and to assess its potential and limitations for integration/inclusion policies.

1   This means opening up questions of identity of the mainstream majority population,
2 and not only of the migrant minorities, and adopting an approach that does not
3 essentialise ethnicity but instead looks at a variety of intersecting identities and
4 needs. In order to do so, this article will first problematise the relationship between
5 identity and difference as a way to rethink the dimensions and fluidity that super-
6 diversity consists of; it will then provide a brief overview of the background, that
7 is, how we got to the present debate on the death (or serious illness, or rebranding)
8 of multiculturalism (Barber, 2015; Connolly, 2010; Kundnani, 2002). Following
9 this, the specificities of super-diversity will be located before, and finally, suggesting
10 the adoption of a super-diversity approach in the drafting of guidelines on diversity
11 management such as the Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy
12 in the European Union (Council of the European Union, 2004) and the Action
13 Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals (European Commission, 2016).
14 The Roma minority(ies) in Europe will serve as a useful case study to exemplify
15 how super-diversity can help us depart from the dominance of ethnicity as the main
16 category for identity policy without negating its relevance, in order to encourage
17 the development of inclusive policies towards minority groups and neighborhoods
18 that take into account multiple variables.

Difference and identity, which came first?

The core questions that underlie the main categorisations used in multiculturalism, intersectionality and/or super-diversity can roughly be synthesised as: how do we construct our identity, and how do we conceptualise the identity of others? There is certainly a component of agency in our defining who we are as individuals as opposed to 'others', but how much of it is personal choice, how much of it is inherited, and how much of it depends on how the rest of the world sees (and treats) us?[2] Stemming from our sense of self and other, where does racism (ageism, sexism, and so on) come from? And how does this translate into societies' integration and social cohesion (or lack thereof), particularly with respect to migration?

A variety of attributes can be used as the basis for the identification and categorisation of minorities. These characteristics can range from language to religion, to professional affiliation, political orientation, citizenship/nationality, gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, to territorial location, and so on. The importance attributed to any given identity varies in time and space, and not all of them have the same degree of intensity, social relevance, exclusivity, 'changeability'/flexibility, nor do they entail the same legal consequences. The attempt, here, is that of trying to understand which of these attributes have been traditionally linked to diversity policies,[3] how these are gradually changing, and what role super-diversity plays or could play in these developments.

In terms of group and class belonging/affiliation, we tend to think that poverty and social exclusion 'can be fixed', while ethnicity and gender 'cannot' (European Commission DG EMPL and COMM, 2007; European Commission DG JUST, 2012b; 2015; European Commission DG V (EMPL), 1994; Pakulski and Waters, 1996). This is obviously an oversimplification, but it serves the purpose of beginning to unpack some of the building blocks of the increasingly complex identities we talk about when we call into question a 'European culture' or 'European values'. Even though there is a well-established debate in social anthropology and gender studies

1 around the fact that ethnicity, race and gender are social constructs that are intrinsically
2 linked to historical processes and power relations – thus culturally constructed and
3 fluid (Barth, 1969; Gould, 2007; Hall and Gay, 1996) – diversity management policies
4 are still fundamentally rooted, in Europe and elsewhere, on the assumption that
5 we are born with a fairly fixed and stable race ('visible minority'), ethnicity (used
6 mostly nowadays to indicate the 'country of origin') and gender.[4] Conversely, class
7 belonging is seen as intrinsically changeable (the concept of 'upward/downward
8 mobility'), and culture, language and religion seem to lie somewhere in between
9 the two: we inherit it – some aspects and traits of it, at least – but also cultivate it in
10 a direction that is mostly of our choosing. Such choice (or series or combination of
11 choices) is however determined by our life options, access to information, exposure to
12 societal expectations, upbringing, and contact with different cultures (Abu-Lughod,
13 2002). The fact that our personal, individual identities are complex, not simply the
14 reproduction of some given 'community' value seems a fairly uncontroversial assertion
15 to make. What is often overlooked when drafting integration policies, however, is
16 that this same mixture of 'nature and nurture' also applies to society as a whole.
17 Different expectations and degree of agency are projected from the dominant majority
18 population onto different kinds of minorities, shaping policies, but also a sense of
19 community (or of alienation, or of a community alternative to the 'mainstream' one),
20 and potentially re-enforcing stereotypes and even stereotyped self-perception on behalf
21 of certain minorities. The ways in which differences and identities are narrated, acted
22 upon and legislated about are therefore of paramount importance. It is in this sense
23 that it seems useful to bring Deleuze's almost half-century old differential ontology
24 into the picture. The way in which most current integration policies, discrimination
25 surveys, and multicultural datasets are designed rely on the unspoken assumption that
26 there are 'identities' out there that can be compared, and which differ one from the
27 other, mostly based on ethnicity/nationality (Queen's University Multiculturalism
28 Policy Index, the Migrant Integration Policy Index, the Canadian Index for Measuring
29 Integration, just to name a few). Instead, according to Gilles Deleuze's theories, there
30 are no identities prior to difference: all identities emerge from difference(s), since
31 perception derives from contrast and confrontation. If there were no 'them', there
32 could be no conceivable 'us' (Deleuze, 1968). By inverting the traditional relationship
33 between identity and difference, he states:

35   '[t]he majority of philosophers…subordinated difference to identity or
36   to the Same, to the Similar, to the Opposed or to the Analogous: they…
37   introduced difference into the identity of the concept, they…put difference
38   in the concept itself, thereby reaching a conceptual difference, but not a
39   concept of difference. We tend to subordinate difference to identity in order
40   to think it…We also have a tendency to subordinate it to resemblance…to
41   opposition…and to analogy…In other words, we do not think of difference
42   in itself.' (Deleuze, 1968, p 12)

44 While Deleuze's argument that difference should fundamentally be the object of
45 affirmation and not negation was not developed in relation to minorities, migration
46 nor diversity management, his claim seems quite compelling if applied to this realm:
47 in order to grasp beings exactly as they are, the concept of identity (categories,
48 resemblances, unities of apperception, and so on) fails to attain difference in itself. The

‘swarms of difference’ are not something transcendent or outside of the world; they are ‘immanent expression’ just as are the identities formed from them (Deleuze, 1968; Deleuze and Parnet, 1987). ‘[A]nd they continue to exist even within the identities they form, not as identities but as difference. From their place within identities, these swarms of difference assure that the future will be open to novelty, to new identities and new relationships among them’ (May, 2005). Drawing upon Gilles Deleuze’s concept of identity in relation to difference, the propositions I would like to put forward as a departing point is, therefore, that the problem of majority–minority relations is often mis-(re)presented: it is not racism that produces racist behaviour; rather, it is racist behaviour that produces racism. The matter is not irrelevant nor tautological, in that it has very serious implications in how we can and should think of antidiscrimination law, inclusion and integration policies, and so on. We tend to think that character causes action, but more often than not when it comes to socialisation, moral behaviour, and collective identity, the opposite is true. Otherwise put, ‘Here is a way of seeing the world: it is composed not of identities that form and reform themselves, but of swarms of difference that actualise themselves into specific forms of identity’ (May, 2005). Since the categories that we use to identify ourselves and others derive from differences in the first place, there can be no ‘fixed’ or stable identities, if not in relation to the difference from everything it is not (its internal difference). Difference has been treated as a secondary characteristic that only comes out when one compares pre-existing things: these things can then be said to have differences. But this network of direct relations between identities overshadows a much more subtle and elaborate network of ‘real’ differences: gradients, intensities, and so on. The result is that in modern democracies identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, simply because we overlook the fact that the inner core of identity is never autonomous and self-sufficient, but was formed in relation to ‘significant others’ who, to put it with Hall, ‘mediated to the subject the values, meanings and symbols – the culture – of the worlds he/she inhabited’ (Hall et al, 1995). Super-diversity offers, in this respect, a useful crosscutting tool to multiculturalism’s focus on ethnicity (operationalised as country of origin) and to intersectionality’s ‘holy trinity’ of class, gender and race, and allows for inductive as well as for deductive coding in analysing identities. This does not mean that all belongings ‘weigh the same’, nor that by bringing in new categories we must compromise analysing and comparing empirical data. Conversely, by allowing for categories that are not necessarily theory-driven to emerge, policy-applied research may have much to gain by employing the concept of super-diversity. (Boccagni, 2014; Padilla et al, 2014)

A second premise, but not least important (and tied to the difference-identity conundrum), is that in the policy and scholarly attitude towards minorities in general – be them immigrant (such as the asylum seekers whose legitimate claim to article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights triggered the so-called ‘migration crisis’) or not (such as the Roma in most CEE countries or the First Nations in Canada) – there is a need to refocus and re-centre our ‘measure’ of difference: as trivial as it may sound, policies (even, and crucially, intercultural and multicultural ones) too often overlook the fact that, while we cannot and should not ‘equalise’ differences, and while not all differences carry the same consequences in terms of integration, majorities and minorities are *equally different*, meaning that we live at the same (cultural) distance. How we construct meaning, distance and difference, is a matter of purposeful, intentional choice, and it typically reflects in policies. To

take a non-politically charged example (as long as one is not a Roma with a blue-eyed child), blue eyes are as 'different' to brown eyes as brown eyes are to blue eyes. A society composed solely of blue-eyed inhabitants will consider a brown-eyed person 'different', and vice versa. In short, the fact of something (or someone) being numerically inferior or a 'novelty' for the majority does make the minority more 'peculiar' than any given member of the dominant culture – it is simply the context that makes it seem that way. While this point has been acknowledged in conceptualising integration as a 'two avenue path' in theory (Bouchard and Taylor, 2008; Council of the European Union, 2004; Gidley, 2014; Ruiz Vieytez, 2014a; 2014b), most integration policies are still in practice designed by utilising the dominant, majority host society as a benchmark for integration with which minorities should aspire to catch up.

The debate on multiculturalism and its discontents

While super-diversity is, as stated in the introduction, a fairly novel term, the issues that it aims at addressing have been in the making now for quite some time. When, in the 1970s, Keohane and Nye started using the term 'complex interdependence' in reference to both international politics and international economy, as well as to the interactions between these two arenas, realism was still the strongest framework through which international politics was analysed and interpreted, and nation–states were seen as the main actors in the political arena, while economics was largely considered its own independent branch of study. As interdependence grew 'thicker and quicker' (Nye, 2007, p 207) as a consequence of globalisation growing 'faster, cheaper and deeper' (Friedman, 1999), with increasingly frequent interactions between individuals and groups coming from different cultural, religious, linguistic and national backgrounds, it has become obvious that issues concerning the politics of nation–states, markets, but also, and crucially, group identities cannot be addressed separately.

In our progressively complex and diverse societies, in which peoples' identities tend to be multilayered, and do not always necessarily overlap with one set of political or cultural institutions, multiculturalism emerged as a field that acknowledged minorities and ethno-cultural communities as well as their claims for recognition and representation, particularly in North America and in Europe, to the point that as an American sociologist argued 'we are all multiculturalists now' (Glazer, 1997). Since the 1970s, the civil rights movement has been so successful in bringing attention to the issues of racialisation and inter-group relations that we have seen a whole set of law changes and of recognition policies. As Steven Vertovec put it during a talk given at the Einstein Forum in Potsdam in 2009 'Even the French have set up a National Commission on Diversity and Equal Opportunities. And when the French are talking about diversity, you know there is a major paradigm shift going on. These are amazing times we are living in!' (Vertovec, 2009).

While multiculturalism was strongly mobilised, particularly in the 1990s, in measures aimed at recognising the pluralisation of societies, academic scholarship around 'the M word' also rapidly grew into a research field in its own right – best known of which is the work by Will Kymlicka (1995), Tariq Modood (1998), Charles Taylor (1994) and Bhikhu Parekh (1997), among others – and attempts were made at building indicators to measure it, with databases such as Queen's University Multiculturalism Policy Index.[5] Over the last decade, however, western

democracies have witnessed both a political and an academic drawing back on multiculturalism discourse with criticism rising on different fronts: on the one hand growing xenophobic and populist movements and political parties, coupled with declining welfare states and with the (real or perceived) security and refugee crises, have laid the ideological background of the condemnation of immigration from mainstream *politics* – the so-called 'anti-multiculturalism' (Barry, 2000; Huntington, 2004; Kymlicka, 2015) – on the other hand there has been no shortage of failures and pitfalls in the implementation of multicultural identity *policies*, which gave rise to what has been dubbed as the 'post-multiculturalist critique' (Benhabib, 2002; Phillips, 2007, p 16; Vertovec, 2005a). In Anne Phillips' words, despite its noble intentions, multiculturalism became a 'cultural straitjacket' rather than a 'cultural liberator', and Phillips has not been alone in claiming that it required a radical overhaul if it were to serve its original emancipatory goals (Phillips, 2007). Consequently, if gradually the word 'multiculturalism' started disappearing from policies and legislation: while the policies themselves did not significantly change, the perception of a need for a rebranding, for a new conceptual framework, or both, led multiculturalism to being replaced ever more often by the concepts of 'diversity' and 'integration', which to date remain the two most used expressions in policy documents regarding migrants and citizens of immigrant background (Favell, 2013; Gidley, 2014; Matejskova and Antonish, 2015; Medda-Windischer, 2014; Vertovec, 2009). This shift in vocabulary can be seen not only at the national, but also at an international level: UNESCO, following criticism about its conception of culture being stagnant, based on a static idea of cultures as in need of being conserved and protected, issued a World Report in 2009 that revolved not so much around the preservation of culture or the promotion of multiculturalism, but rather around the concept of cultural diversity (UNESCO, 2009). Such a stance takes into account the dynamic nature of identity, and is associated with the permanence of cultural change (UNESCO, 2009, p 21). Another clear example of the shift from multiculturalism to diversity is the 2008 Council of Europe's White Paper on intercultural dialogue 'Living together as equals in dignity', that was developed to contribute to 'an international discussion gaining steady momentum' on the occasion of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (Council of Europe, 2008, p 51). In the White Paper the word 'diversity' is used 78 times, while the expression 'multiculturalism' can only be found nine times, and in most cases not in flattering ways. At page 9, for instance, we learn that 'The responses to the questionnaires sent to member states revealed a belief that what had until recently been a preferred policy approach, conveyed in shorthand as "multiculturalism", had been found inadequate' (Council of Europe, 2008, p 9). A few pages later we read '[W]hile this was ostensibly a radical departure from assimilationism, in fact multiculturalism frequently shared the same, schematic conception of society set in opposition of majority and minority, differing only in endorsing separation of the minority from the majority rather than assimilation to it' (Council of Europe, 2008, p 18), and '[W]hilst driven by benign intentions, multiculturalism is now seen by many as having fostered communal segregation and mutual incomprehension, as well as having contributed to the undermining of the rights of individuals…' (Council of Europe, 2008, p 19).

In short, the dissatisfaction with multiculturalism seems to come from the fact that it is simultaneously both 'not enough' (it does not change the majority–minority dichotomy and opposition) and 'too much' (it gives too much power and rights

to communities over individuals, creating concerns about issues of membership, belonging and especially women's rights). It is noteworthy that while the protean nature of culture might nowadays appear to be a banal platitude, this change in political discourse did not happen smoothly nor did it take place overnight. An account of the factors that triggered or favoured such change would deserve a separate article, but the central fact remains that such change has occurred, and currently remains in place. At the same time, there is a general scholarly as well as political agreement that since the phenomenon of increasingly multicultural – or rather diverse – societies is here to stay, research on the topic of integration and on the management of diversity is much needed, and entails a re-visitation of legal standards, anti-discrimination law, human rights and citizenship laws, as well as of policy measures on matters such as minorities' access to, and enjoyment of, rights. In this respect, while perhaps not in all these realms, super-diversity can be a particularly useful tool for reframing cultural policies in ways that contribute to a 'transformative', and not only 'affirmative', policy-making (Fraser, 1995).

In the following sections I will therefore reflect upon what have emerged as the main aspects of super-diversity identified by Meissner and Vertovec (descriptive, methodological and policy-oriented) to trace a phenomenon which, if not new in itself, I believe offers innovative opportunities especially for policy research (Meissner and Vertovec, 2015). I will do so by first illustrating the way in which the concept has come to be understood as a framework that can coexist, and to some extent complement, the more rehearsed ones of multiculturalism and diversity. I will then look at the effects of super-diversity on cultural and social management policies with regard to a highly politicised issue: Roma minority integration in the EU.

Identity politics and super-diversity's positioning in the debate

Multiculturalism might have fallen out of favour with public opinion and with policy makers, but the simple rejection of the multiculturalist paradigm cannot will away immigration flows, its increasing numbers, its growing diversity in destinations and origins, nor can it ignore its demographic, social, economic and cultural impact on receiving societies. As a matter of fact, most societies are currently no longer solely 'sending' or 'receiving' migrants, but are both sending *and* receiving. Moreover, countries that have historically been ones that people emigrated from (such as Southern Europe) have, in the past decade, had to acknowledge immigration communities coming to settle in their territory and that are neither temporary workers nor limited to asylum seekers. To quote again the Council of Europe's White Paper: 'The cultural diversity of contemporary societies has to be acknowledged as an empirical fact' (Council of Europe, 2008, p 19). While cultural diversity, compared to multiculturalism, offers a tempting alternative to an approach that has worn itself out of popularity, it maintains one of its main liabilities, namely that the unit of analysis has not, in essence, changed.[6] There is increasing support around the idea that culture is not a 'fixed' category or practice and that it should not be essentialised, but when talking about diversity, the Council of Europe (as well as most national and local governments, media sources and academics) still has in mind mainly racial/ethnic diversity. It might picture a wider variety of ethno-cultural communities – particularly if compared to the classic migration patterns in which large numbers of people would move from few places to few places – but the unit of analysis is still

1 ethnicity, despite there being 'more' of it, being more mixed, more diluted, or more
2 dispersed. When talking about Islam, for example, even though the more politically
3 correct policy makers might differentiate between Sunni Muslims, Shi'ites, Sufi
4 Muslism and so on, the policies and practices of diversity management still tend to
5 lump together the religious affiliation of Islam and Arab ethnicity, presenting it to
6 the European majority as a cultural trait. Policies of cultural (religious, in these case)
7 diversity thus become easily ethnicised because the assumptions that underlie this
8 representation of the 'problem' are still rooted in diversity as ethnicity. In this sense,
9 I believe the term 'super-diversity' represents a more radical break from diversity,
10 compared to the shift that diversity represented vis-à-vis multiculturalism.
11   As Vertovec argued in 2007, and as Meissner and Vertovec have reiterated and made
12 even clearer in their more recent 'Comparing super-diversity' article, the issue is not
13 (or is no longer) one of measuring, assessing or having to deal with a different 'quantity'
14 of ethnic diversity (Meissner and Vertovec, 2015; Vertovec, 2007). The steps to be
15 taken in rethinking public policies (for both minorities and majorities) should first
16 acknowledge super-diversity as 'the diversity of diversity': namely by accepting that
17 a pluralisation of societies has taken place over the past decades not only with respect
18 of ethnicity or country of origin, but also in terms of legal statuses, gender, age, social
19 capital, resources, education, religion, language, sexual orientation, physical ability
20 and so on. In Western Europe we have often been told that there are only two ways
21 for people to integrate into a society: the 'British' model of cultural pluralism, and the
22 'French' model, based on acceptance of Republican values and, above all, the concept
23 of equality (Favell, 2003; 2013). As both 'variations', in the last few years, have been
24 declared doomed, dying, or dead a number of times,[7] it is worth taking a brief detour
25 to give an overview of how the key conceptual issues came about in immigrant and
26 integration incorporation discourse, and how we have arrived at super-diversity. As
27 previously mentioned, multiculturalism emerged as a response to twentieth-century
28 inter-group relations, addressing the challenge of racialisation, communitarism[8] and
29 integration, and is fully ingrained in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and
30 1970s, as well as the New Civil Rights Movement of the twenty-first century. Its main
31 driver was the will to guarantee rights and recognition to underprivileged minorities,
32 and this led to research such as the Multicultural Policy Index. The MCP Index
33 monitors the evolution of multiculturalism policies in a standardised format, and it
34 is noteworthy that it distinguishes between three types of minorities – immigrant
35 minorities ('new minorities'), indigenous populations (such as the Ainu in Japan) and
36 national minorities (such as Quebec in Canada). Where does this leave us in terms
37 of better understanding diversity management? While such a project has the declared
38 aim of monitoring the evolution of multiculturalism policies and majority–minority
39 relations, what it really captures is the States' (legal) stances on minority recognition.
40 Which can indeed be an important tool for integration, but also risks reinforcing
41 the ethnic paradigm as the most salient one in modern societies: pushing people to
42 choose between being, say, 'more' Inuit or 'more' Canadian.
43   Interculturalism, also stemming from the desire for integration, is an attempt to
44 create intercultural mediation based on a flexible idea of culture and seeking a new
45 idea of citizenship (Allemann-Ghionda, 2009; Gundara and Jacobs, 2000). It emerged
46 from the criticisms to multiculturalism and it 'prescribes' intensive contact, exchange,
47 coupled with the support for cross-cultural dialogue and challenging self-segregation
48 tendencies within cultures, while aiming at creating a shared identity of sorts. Both

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multiculturalism and interculturalism pose the question of whether certain rules should be re-thought in order to accommodate minorities, and the two terms are, beyond this synthetic sketch, two umbrella terms subsuming a varied number of approaches which are, in many regards, quite similar (Hill, 2007).

As for super-diversity, it was coined originally to describe a society 'distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small, scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economic differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade' (Vertovec, 2006). Its major contribution is therefore that of taking into account a whole range of factors for identity, breaking the 'ethnicity primacy' rule.

That being said, multiculturalism, interculturalism, diversity and super-diversity are by no means mutually exclusive frameworks: the fact that diversity has changed in terms of *quality* does not mean it has not also changed in terms of *quantity*. Super-diversity should thus rather be seen as the attempt to deepen, highlight, and make better sense of a phenomenon that was brought to the forefront of academic scholarly and political debate by the previous approaches (Berg and Sigona, 2013). Regarding the potential 'dangers' of super-diversity, while the term has attracted some criticism simply based on its 'trendiness'[9] (Ndhlovu, 2016), it has also been criticised on the basis that it risks 'flattening' differences, overlooking power politics and social inequalities (Modood, 2011; Humphris, 2015). Various types of diversity are associated with a higher or a lower degree of sensitivity to policy intervention (with difference from the mainstream usually translating into a disadvantage for the minority in terms of services and rights). When addressing the issue of the protection and promotion of minority rights, particularly in the area of equality and anti-discrimination, not all differences are 'equally different'. However, while agreeing that the risk is present, levelling the field of differences is not something inherent in the concept of super-diversity. Using super-diversity as a framework for a kind of critical policy analysis that allows for inductive methodology might help overcome this difficulty, creating an opening for super-diversity to address debates on power, politics and policy (Meissner and Vertovec, 2015, pp 551–2).

The Roma as a litmus test for super-diversity

The expulsion of European citizens of Roma ethnicity from France and Italy in spite of the 2004 Freedom of Movement EC Directive and the current 'refugee crisis' have not only raised heated political debates in Brussels, but also marked a significant shift in discourses in minority politics, widening the minority and immigration debate from the classic issue of securing peace within national borders to perspectives of general human rights and non-discrimination.

A particularly compelling case to analyse in Europe is the set of policies addressed to the Roma people, a minority[10] which falls outside of the typical category of migrant communities with which diversity is usually associated, since Romani minorities have been residing in Europe for centuries and are as indigenous to the European continent as the descendants of the Founding Fathers are to the United States. Falling outside the typical multicultural scheme and of the mainstream political agenda, minorities such as the Roma find themselves in a particularly vulnerable situation, as they risk not only not being included (socially nor politically) in the political community that should represent them but not even having a recognised identity to oppose

to mainstream society, and which would entitle them to cultural rights and special protections (European Commission DG JUST, 2012a). They are an acknowledged minority, in some countries as a 'national' one, but the perception of an oppositional identity and the practice of segregation is very acute and widespread, to the point that national Roma communities are sometimes perceived as more 'foreign' in their own country than non-Roma migrants in the same territory. Here we have the case of a highly diverse minority, characterised by a range of legal statuses, linguistic diversity, socio-economic diversity, religious diversity and so on, and yet the 'Roma issue' is still regarded, thought of, and consequently dealt with (both at the European and at national levels) in very essentialising ways, as if dealing with a generic and all-comprehensive ethnic minority, while a range of other dimensions (such as gender, socio-economic class, language, age, geographic location) remain largely un-problematised (Tremlett, 2014). This translates into policies that are generally addressed at the Roma community (since that is where the current narratives locate the 'problem'), and not at the neighborhoods they inhabit, the society of which they are a part, the schools they attend or the employers or institutions that discriminate against them. In this sense, I suggest that super-diversity, for all its limitations (the concept is still a 'work in progress', as stressed by Meissner and Vertovec, 2015) holds important potential to shift the frame that informs these policies, by problematising the terms in which specific policy problems are understood. While it is not new to draw attention to the fact that all policies are problematising activities which contain implicit problem representations, and thus 'how the "problem" is represented, or constituted, matters' (Bacchi, 2009, p 1), this body of literature has scarcely been applied to diversity management, and much less to Roma-targeted policies.

Monica Rossi has eloquently summed up what the fundamental issue with the conceptual and methodological approach to Roma studies has been so far:

> 'Whether you believe them to be unassimilable or whether you want to 'preserve' their culture, the methodology to date has always been the same: to adopt criteria which are presumed to be anthropologically correct, but are instead an alibi for the inaction that freezes the Roma by either segregating them, or offering them ineffective and inadequate integration practices.' (Rossi, 2009, p 71)

An example of how this approach can be shifted by changing the conceptual framework from a traditional ethnic one to a super-diversity one is the case of a group of Romanian Roma who, having been evicted in 2009 from an informal settlement, joined an occupied ex salami factory in Rome (Maestri, 2014; 2016). By doing so, they successfully managed to change their 'category of identification' into a new narrative: they were able to shift in the public (and administrative) eye from being seen as 'Roma' (and thus, in the Italian policy framework, 'nomads') to being perceived as part of the 'Metropoliz squatters', thus no longer the target of specific and ethnically-based 'Roma integration policies', which in turn translated into being able to lobby their housing rights together with other (non-Roma) migrants. The emergence of the 'squatters' identification in this specific case, even though 'squatters' is not a category of any kind in current policies, allowed a group of people who had been acknowledged solely on the basis of their ethnicity to be seen as people experiencing severe housing deprivation, in a way that did not negate their ethnicity

but that did not make their ethnicity the only possible lens to construct narratives and policies about them: 'They have been considered another thing' (Maestri, 2016, p 6). The 'squatters' identification is one linked to marginality and is charged with its own set of stereotypes, of course, but I consider it important in the sense that it allowed the Roma who had been evicted and who became a part of the Metropoliz experience to escape the 'ethnicity trap' (Rossi, 2016). Allowing for new identities and categories to emerge, and for the possibility of people to move freely between them and identify with more than one at the same time is something that should not be underestimated: 'since the way the group is defined in each system in academic and policy literature is related to policy justifications, these groups are usually attached to a conceptual category with general implications for the discourse of ethnic/national/ anti-racist politics' (Acton and Gheorghe, 2001, p 61).

The argument here is that the possibility of multiple identifications that super-diversity enables (that is, the recognition of the fact that everyone's identities are complex and not simply the reproduction of some given 'community' value) can (and should) deeply affect our way of understanding knowledge production about and around minorities. For instance, more useful than analysing the Roma minorities, their culture or lifestyles or markers of ethnicity (as these are fluid, contextual and generally defined by non-Roma) what Mihai Surdu has called their various classifiers and modes of objectification become what to look at: 'Roma identity as we know it today wouldn't exist without the discourse created by numerous experts…The production of knowledge about Roma presents a curious consensus on who the Roma are and typically reinforces stereotypes. Consequently, Roma identity tends to be recognised by the strength of the stereotypes related to it' (Surdu, 2014).

In short, super-diversity can help us move beyond a fixed and limiting notion of 'ethnicity' without losing sight of ethnicity, and it can be seen as 'an emblematic departure' from 'the ideology of the "nation-state" which dominates both popular representations and academic objects of analysis' (Tremlett, 2014, p 840). Partly because of its novelty and its appeal in policy terms (London successfully managed to brand itself as super-diverse as an asset for the Olympics) it offers a new avenue that might prove useful in what can be thought of as Nancy Fraser's recognition policy via a 'deconstruction of the mainstream' (Fraser, 1995).

This, however, requires strong political will on behalf of academic scholars, policy-makers and the media alike, in widening the way that diversity is typically thought of and portrayed, namely as uniquely concerning the two classic areas of 1) collective security and 2) economic employment (Ruiz Vieytez, 2014b, p 15). Politics will remain the underlying driving force in framing policy 'problems' in specific ways: the recent National Roma Integration Strategies would probably not have developed as they did, had France and Italy not started a campaign of evicting and repatriating Romanian Roma in 2010 as a response to populist concerns of a 'Roma invasion' (Clough Marinaro and Sigona, 2011; Magazzini and Piemontese, 2015). However, super-diversity can serve as a tool to dispel the fiction that such 'policy problems' are neutral, objective and not rooted in a specific (cultural) way of constructing it.

Bringing the structure back in

Historically, the likely by-product of conflating popular sovereignty and liberal representative democracy in nation states in areas of mixed populations has been

the proclivity to sacrifice cultural minorities on the High Altar of nation building: 'reducing the heterogeneity of the people is a symbolic policy which transforms the people into a nation' (Mastropaolo, 2012). However, contemporary processes of social and cultural interconnection, fuelled by increased global mobility, are challenging and (re)-shaping institutional boundaries of identity and belonging. Faced with these processes, while a populistic discourse has slipped easily into a rhetoric of danger (of invasion, poverty, unemployment and cultural disintegration), new policies are being developed at the European, state, regional and local levels in order to catch up with demographic changes, and to cope with new and 'different' immigrant minorities, compared to traditional, national ones. What was in the 1970s a niche, cutting edge research field, namely that revolving around the concept of multiculturalism and diversity, has increasingly gained relevance and attention, and migration and integration is now a recognised and bolstering branch of social science, both fostering and drawing from public policy debates. Meanwhile, the object of study has remained anything but still: discourse on multiculturalism, interculturalism, diversity, and more recently super-diversity is the result of not only changes in demographics and in paths of migration, but also in the ways we (societies at the 'receiving' end of the migration fluxes) have chosen to frame the issue(s) of differences and identities. A growing number of academics are critical of methodological nationalism, and migration policies are increasingly seen to have more chance of succeeding if various levels of governance, including local authorities and civil society, are actively engaged in an integrated strategy (Amelina et al, 2012; Hepburn and Zapata-Barrero, 2014; Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002).

The EU Framework for Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 that was adopted by the European Commission in 2011 is a case in point that while the nation-state remains an inescapable framework for both political institutions and collective identity formation, immigration, integration and diversity management policies must acquire a broader (or at least different) framework than that of the nation-state and of ethnicity, if we are to make any progress. For some time now, the EU has pointed at the local level as a key actor in migrant integration policy-making.[11] A critique of unidirectional approaches to migration governance leads not only to the identification of new actors in the formulation and implementation of migration policy and its governance but also to a new understanding of 'policy making' as a 'thick' assemblage of institutions, narratives and the strategies and action of the different actors involved. Against this backdrop, super-diversity can be used to challenge the dominant approaches that understand migration policy as based mainly on action by states by revealing a much richer, more complex picture made up of both top-down and bottom-up decisions. The challenge is to identify the different threads that shape migration and integration governance as a super-diverse and thick assemblage by unpacking multi-level and multi-scale spaces for politics and policies, and identifying the changing narratives in (but also outside of) institutional settings: in the case of the Roma minorities, as Vermeersch writes: 'Depending on how political and social actors portrayed them or on how activists represented them, the Roma could be conceived of in different ways: as migrants/nomads, as a national minority, as an ethnic group or as a social underclass' (Vermeersch, 2012, p 1203).

This article's suggestion for ways forward in operationalising the concept of super-diversity is to shift the focus from minorities to majorities, and from general theories to institutional local settings, in order to produce an alternative research framework to

traditional ethnic studies and methodological nationalism. Beyond the case of Roma minorities in Europe, the use of a super-diversity lens to investigate migration and integration issues could further our understanding of the institutional dimension as well as of the social dimension of these issues. As any conceptual framework, super-diversity has, of course, both assets and drawbacks.

In order to confront the criticism that it ignores issues of inequalities and power, super-diversity needs to be adopted in public policies by putting the emphasis not so much on the level (in demographic, quantitative terms) but rather on the kind of diversity to be acknowledged, accommodated and cherished, thus deconstructing the mainstream. The implication of deconstructing the mainstream through super-diversity would, in my opinion, on the one hand contribute to rendering a more accurate picture of our similarities and fundamental equality amid the many, multilayered identities built out of difference that each of us consists of. On the other hand, it would challenge the unspoken implication of the traditional framework that 'white men are individuals – human beings in their own right, with personalities and quirks and rich, rounded lives – while other people are still defined as members of homogenous 'othered' groups' (Bates, 2016). In short, super-diversity can actively help bring the debate on privilege and power relations into policy discourse. The main danger of super-diversity might therefore not be that of creating an 'equivalence of differences', but rather that of being the product of the society that it attempts to question: since super-diversity tends to be more individualistic than multiculturalism, it is more difficult to make claims around this concept. But at the same time, as differentiation is socially and politically constructed, it also opens up the discussion on the responsibilities of mainstream institutions (Faist, 2009).[12]

As UNESCO's universal declaration on cultural diversity and Action Plan[13] point out, the challenge is precisely that of taking advantage of the richness that diversities, *as diversities*, have to offer to the European project. The insight that super-diversity has to offer to this project is a subtle, but at the same time radical one. It allows not only for change, but also for contradiction, variation and opposition not only in majority–minority relations, but also within the majority itself, and within Europe's decision-making institutions.

As stated by the first article of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity[14] 'Cultural diversity, as a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, is as necessary to mankind as biologic diversity is for living creatures. In this sense, it represents the common heritage of humanity, and should be recognised and affirmed as such for the benefit of present and future generations.' If culture is the sum total of not just ethnicity but also of beliefs, assumptions, language(s), customs, legends, songs, age, sexual orientation, (hi)stories, politics, attitudes, tastes, human capital, profession and more, then super-diversity can thus be a useful concept not only as a terminological marker of growing complexity, but it could be used as the tool of choice to design cultural policies that are not only affirmative in nature, but also that tackle the root causes of inequality by deconstructing the mainstream, in what Nancy Fraser has called politics of transformation. The major shift here, it seems, is that of moving the focus from entities to relations, allowing an exploration of diversity(ies) within the majority population and its decision making bodies as well. In this sense, this could indeed be the 'radical overhaul' of multiculturalism for which some scholars have been calling.

Notes

[1] In this article I adopt the spelling with hyphen, as Vertovec tends to do, but this bears no meaning with respect to the debate around this punctuation mark and should by no means be interpreted as a choice to stress the 'super-' part of the term or promote a limited understanding of it as just 'more' ethnic diversity (Meissner and Vertovec, 2015, 545).

[2] Even if we chose to take country of origin as the only meaningful category, we would have to account for the shifts in borders and citizenship laws, as an anecdote in Agnew's *Making political geography* illustrates: an old man says that he was born in the Austro-Hungarian empire, he went to school in Czechoslovakia, he got married in Hungary, he worked most of his life in the USSR and now lives in Ukraine. When his interlocutor comments that he must have travelled a great deal, he replies 'Not at all! I have never left Mukacheve' (Agnew, 2002).

[3] For a definition of diversity related to this debate, see (Vertovec, 2012; Wessendorf, 2013). Diversity policies typically entail recognition and appreciation of cultural diversity, support for immigrant associations, promotion of interfaith dialogue and more generally policies aimed at fostering immigrant integration (Ambrosini, 2016).

[4] Transgender and transsexual studies and identity are out of the scope of the analysis of this article, which does not mean that they should be overlooked in formulating equality policies (for a problematisation of gender and identity, see Butler, 1990).

[5] This is not to obliterate the differences that exist among the authors mentioned. For an overview of the heterogeneity and dissonances between multicultural schools of thought and interpretations, see (Uberoi and Modood, 2015).

[6] For an account of the shift from multiculturalism to diversity, see (Boccagni, 2014).

[7] Angela Merkel: 'multiculturalism has utterly failed', October 2010; David Cameron: 'muscular liberalism against passive tolerance', February 2011; Manuel Valls: 'Roma lifestyles as "clearly in confrontation" with French ways of life', September 2013.

[8] French scholar Jean-Paul Fitoussi described communitarianism in a 2008 article as follows: 'The temptation of communitarianism, which the French have debated for at least a decade, comes from the wish to turn the failure of "genuine" equality into something positive. It offers integration by default within the differentiated space of various communities – a sort of imprisonment by civilization' (Fitoussi, 2008).

[9] Vertovec's 2007 *Super-diversity and its implications* is currently the most cited article in *Ethnic and Racial Studies'* history.

[10] On the debate on the construction of a political identity of the Roma, and whether we should think in terms of one or multiple minorities, see Magazzini, 2016; Surdu, 2015.

[11] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. A European Agenda on Migration. Brussels, 13.5.2015. COM(2015) 240 final. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/communication_on_the_ european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region, *Migration management at the local level*, International Organisation for Migration (IOM), 2015, and the Committee of the Regions, Report on the role of local and regional

authorities in managing migration in the Mediterranean (CoR- 2014-01464). Available at http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/arlem/Documents/rapport-ecoter-migration-2014-en.pdf

[12] In whatever way one understands liberal democratic national–popular sovereignty, the demos is always defined by mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, mechanisms that by virtue of their inescapable national dimension, are always cultural.

[13] See Main Lines of an Action Plan for the Implementation of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001560/156046e.pdf#page=50

[14] Accepted unanimously by the 185 countries represented at the 31st session of the General Conference, in 2001.

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