Diversifying cities in Italy
Diversification and inclusion processes through a super-diversity lens

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The project aims to investigate diversification patterns within urban environments in Italy and to outline their potential influence on inclusion processes. I firstly try to map where and how diversification occurs in the studied contexts with quantitative and comparative methods. Secondly, I will look through a super-diversity lens at how processes of diversification may shape social relations in selected diversifying urban environments, by combining semi-structured interviews and qualitative social network analysis.

State of the arts

As a preliminary step, it is necessary to clarify what diversity, diversification and super-diversity mean in this framework. Diversity can be primarily understood as a set of categories, by which people are perceived as belonging to different groups (Vertovec, 2012; Lambert and Bell, 2013). Moreover, diversity should be also conceived as relational, since it is through social networks and in social interactions that diversity takes shape in everyday lives and it becomes part of social imaginary (Vertovec, 2012; Meissner, 2016). Diversification is the result of both new patterns in contemporary migration flows and policies and the growing sensibility towards new categories of diversity, which lead to qualitatively and quantitatively increase relevant axes of diversity (Hollinger, 1995; Vertovec, 2012; Scholten and others, 2019).

The concept of super-diversity is first coined by Vertovec (2007), who suggests that exclusive focus on ethnicity and country of origin in migration studies can only provide a simplistic understanding of contemporary diversity. It is a *summary term*, which identifies the interplay of new significant variables in a context of increasing diversification (Vertovec, 2007; 2019), but it is also a *post-multicultural term*, which can lead to the development of a more inclusive collective identity beyond the limits of multiculturalism itself (Meissner, 2015). In this sense, it does not simply mean "more diversity", but it rather deals with a proliferation of new, different kinds and conceptions of diversity, which interact between themselves and shape social contexts in still little-known ways (Meissner and Vertovec, 2015).

Based on these assumptions, super-diversity develops in two main directions. It is conceived on one hand as a set of variables that researchers should conjunctively investigate and, on the other, as the context where the interplay of these variables leads to a situation in which we can no longer speak of clear majorities or minorities (Meissner, 2015; Crul, 2016; Scholten and others, 2019). Regarding the variables to consider in this perspective, despite Vertovec (2007) suggested in his first theorisation to mainly focus on a set of migration-related variables, further studies have then expanded this framework by including demographic, socio-economic and cultural categories (Meissner, 2016; Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore, 2018; Vertovec, 2019). Moreover, other scholars (Tasan-Kok and others, 2014; Barberis

and others, 2017; Oosterlynck and others, 2018) recently propose to overcome the concept of super-diversity itself, by replacing it with the notion of hyper-diversity, which also includes diversification of lifestyle, attitudes and activities in cities.

In addition to the debate on the determination of variables, other issues still remain open about this perspective. Indeed, according to its main critics, the concept of super-diversity contains a *powerful sense of romanticism*, which creates an *illusion of equality in a highly asymmetrical world* and leads to the de-politicisation of difference by ignoring processes of exclusion in contemporary societies (Makoni, 2012; Ndhlovu, 2013, 2016). Moreover, diversification patterns inherent with super-diversity, particularly those linked to migration-related variables, are partially produced by asymmetrical border regimes, which cannot be fully addressed by a super-diversity approach alone (Hall, 2017; Aptekar, 2019). In order to deal with this problem, I argue that super-diversity framework could benefit from the combination with an intersectional approach and Mezzadra and Neilson's (2014) idea of border as method. In particular, intersectionality, which some scholars have already successfully combined with super-diversity (Crul, 2016; Khazei, 2018), allows to understand identities in social life as shaped by the combination of different aspects, in order to point out new patterns of alliance or discrimination (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Cho and others, 2013). Similarly, the conception of borders as a dispositive detached from the mere geographic dimension, which follows individuals and shapes their sociality and trajectories in labour market, enables to historicise categories of diversity and to show the conflicts inherent in them (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2014). As a result, by integrating such perspectives, I can more deeply understand how stratification and inequality may link with super-diversity. Moreover, these approaches can also provide relevant variables to consider in my framework: on one hand, intersectionality suggests a still crucial role of traditional categories, such as gender, ethnicity and class; on the other, Mezzadra and Neilson's theory calls to consider new fundamental elements linked with globalised contemporary societies, such as different labour market experiences and legal statuses.

As regards the implications of diversification processes on social relations, various frameworks have been proposed. One of the most complete is Wessendorf's notion of *commonplace diversity*, which she uses to understand contacts among diverse people within super-diverse contexts (Wessendorf, 2014b). She develops this theory from Lofland's idea of *civility towards diversity*, whose key point is that cosmopolitan practices are not necessarily grounded in an open attitude towards others, but they may also result from a relative unconcern towards diversity in everyday situations (Lofland, 1989). However, commonplace diversity primarily results from the saturation of differences through frequent contacts between diverse people and it thus describes a situation in which civility towards diversity becomes something more systematic and widespread. According to her theory, in super-diverse contexts people do not think differences as something unusual, since diversity is part of their everyday lives, but this does not mean that there are no conflicts or stereotypes, so that such encounter with diversity mainly remains in public and parochial realms without moving into private one (Wessendorf, 2014b).

Wessendorf's theory about social relations in super-diverse contexts, as well as other similar frameworks, such as *quotidian transversality* or *conviviality* (Gilroy, 2004; Wise, 2009; Pardilla and others, 2015), can also involve a reassessment of

classic integration and assimilation policy paradigms (Wessendorf, 2014b; Crul, 2016; Grzymala-Kazlowska and Phillimore, 2018). Various scholars adopting a super-diversity approach have thus suggested new paradigms for integration policies to deal with this situation. For instance, Zapata-Barrero (2017) proposes interculturalism as a new policy orientation in post-multicultural contexts. Interculturalism requires as premise that contacts between different groups become a driver in policy creation, by fostering both circumstantial and more structured contacts in various public or semi-public spaces (Zapata-Barrero, 2017). Such perspective can also be integrated by Van Breugel and others' (2016, 2018) idea of *mainstreaming* in immigrants' integration governance, which involves a shift from specific to generic policies in this field, while creating at the same time a widespread awareness of migration-related diversity. However, these new orientations still need to be tested, especially within contexts without a consolidated multicultural tradition (Van Bruegel and Scholten, 2016; Van Bruegel and others, 2018).

Research objectives

My main research objective is to study how contemporary diversification processes can affect the structure of social and inter-group relations in Italian urban contexts and to outline the possible implication of this situation on inclusion paradigms. In order to achieve these aims, I suggest to adopt an approach based on the concept super-diversity in combination with other relevant theoretical frameworks, as described above.

Since the adoption of a super-diversity lens implies a methodological shift from community-based studies and methodological nationalism (Vertovec, 2007; Meissner, 2015; Pardilla and others, 2015, Scholten and others, 2019), this research intends to use a locality-based approach, by focusing on urban sites and social fields where differences are daily negotiated and intercultural encounters occur (Glick Schiller and Çağlar, 2009, 2013; Zapata-Barrero and others, 2017). Drawing on those scholars proposing a "local turn" in migration studies, I look at urban contexts as a mean to overcome methodological nationalism and to observe more deeply intersections between different axes of diversity (Glick Schiller and Çağlar, 2009; Zapata-Barrero and others, 2017; Hadj Abdou, 2019; Scholten and others, 2019). Moreover, I also suggest this approach since cities and neighbourhoods are considered by many scholars as the levels where diversification processes can be better observed through a super-diversity lens (Pardilla and others, 2015; Scholten and others, 2019). For this reason, I also refer to the framework elaborated by Pardilla and others (2015), who suggest a three-levels analysis focused on actors, social networks and neighbourhood's characteristics for the study of super-diversity in Southern European cities.

I propose the Italian urban context as field for this research in order to test super-diversity in different contexts relative to those where the framework is generally applied. In fact, Italy is characterised by an established tradition of immigration, whom history is nevertheless more recent than that of other Northern European countries. Moreover, integration policies are often perceived as lacking a specific official model and largely based on pragmatism and delegation to civil society or local authorities (Caponio, 2013; Allievi, 2014). It is thus only in recent years that scholars start to use super-diversity perspective in Italy as a backdrop for their

works (Barberis and Boccagni, 2014; Ambrosini, 2015; Barberis, 2017; Becci and others, 2017).

Methodology

My research proposal is divided in two main sections, respectively focused on diversification processes at the urban level and on their individual and social impacts. The first one aims to identify where diversification occurs and what are the characteristics of diversifying places in Italy. I choose quantitative and comparative methodologies to fulfil these preliminary purposes in order to include large amounts of data about many places and manage them. The second part focuses on how social and individual relations are structured in specific diversifying contexts, which I intend to select according to the results of the first section among those with the clearest evidence of diversification processes (Stringer, 2014). In this case, I use qualitative analysis because it allows to reconstruct everyday experiences at individual and social level, by also focusing on meanings that social actors give to those circumstances (Morawska, 2018). For this reason, semi-structured interviews and qualitative social network analysis are proposed with the aim to focus on respondents' attitudes towards diversity and the diversity they meet in everyday relations. The combination of multiple qualitative tools also enables methodological triangulation between methods and it may allow a deeper understanding of the studied phenomenon (Flick, 2018; Fusch and others, 2018). The above-mentioned paradigms about social relations are used in this part as theoretical references for the elaboration of interviews, as well as in the interpretation of social network analysis' results.

In order to identify how and where diversification processes occur in the selected fields, I firstly propose to deal with the elaboration of a quantitative index, which maps some preliminary variables. For this analysis, I select various cities in Italy with different population, immigrants' characteristics and positioning within the economic global and national networks and I consider neighbourhoods within them as reference units. According to the aforementioned literature on super-diversity, I may use as indicators in this phase variables such as non-citizens' rate, number of different nationalities or ethnicities, religions, ethnic and economic segregation and diversification of legal statuses, as well as occupational and educational categories and information about familiar structures (Vertovec, 2007; Stringer, 2014; Pardilla et al., 2015; Meissner, 2016). I seek to find data for the index building mainly from population censuses, but also from other official statistics released by the Municipalities or other official sources, also seeking to trace time series of every variable (Stringer, 2014; Scholten and others, 2019). According to the results of this index, I intend to observe where diversification occur in the studied contexts and to comparatively consider among localities with similar outcomes some relevant elements, such as local integration policies, city's scale and neighbourhood's positioning within it or the history and the characteristics of migration (Glick Schiller and Çağlar, 2009; Meissner and Vertovec, 2015; Scholten and others, 2019).

Based on index and comparison's findings, I intend to select in different cities no more than four neighbourhoods with similar diversification levels, where grounding the subsequent qualitative research. In this section, I combine different methods to provide a more complete framework through the triangulation of collected data (Flick, 2018; Fusch and others, 2018), but also to deal with multiple spatial

dimensions. In fact, each employed method should allow to look at awareness of diversity and implications of diversification in specific realms, particularly private and parochial ones, while at the same time providing complementary information on how these different levels influence each other with regards to my object of study (Lofland, 1989).

As regards the private sphere, I initially consider how diversification affects diversity in social relations by setting a qualitative social network analysis. I focus on ego-centered networks through name generator and interpreter questions and the use of network charts as mean to collect data (Hollstein, 2011; Wald, 2014). Quota sampling may be implemented on the basis of relevant characteristics, such as gender, age, economic situation and migration background, while submitting a neighbours' group in every selected fields to the interview. I firstly ask to list people with whom they recently or frequently talk and to locate them in a three-circles model, where the respondent represents the center. The closer the circle is to the center, the stricter the relationship between respondent and the alters in that circle is. Secondly, I ask respondents to specify what kind of relationship they have with every contact and some relevant characteristics that they know about listed persons, such as gender, generation, nationality, migration background, employment status or education (Wald, 2014; Stark, 2018). Through this methodological tool, I can thus focus on characteristics of people respondents regularly meet in various settings and other persons who are important in their personal paths (Meissner, 2016; Stark, 2018). The results of these interviews should allow to compare respondent's characteristics with those of her/his alters and look at where different kinds of intersectionally-conceived diversities are located in the network. In this way, I can consider the possible emergence of commonplace diversity or similar cosmopolitan practices, as well as circumstances of exclusion or segregation, through the observation of personal ties' frequency and intensiveness between diverse people. Once concluded this part, I further propose to select a sub-sample among the same respondents and to submit them to a semi-structured interview about their awareness of diversity, by asking what axes of diversity they perceive as more relevant in their daily lives and why. These interviews can also be useful to ask interviewees about their perception of diversification in attitudes, lifestyles and activities, and the relevance they give to it.

So far as concerns the second dimension, I refer to the definition of parochial realm as the world of communal relationships in contact zones, such as schools, workplaces or neighbourhoods' associations (Kusenbach, 2006). It is particularly relevant for the study of social relations through a super-diversity lens, since it is the place where encounters between diverse people can more frequently occur and develop, also shifting from this realm to the private one (Wessendorf, 2014a, 2014b). Thus, I seek to investigate this aspect with semi-structured interviews to representatives of political, social and cultural associations and institutions, based in the studied neighbourhoods. Respondents should not be selected in non-mixed spaces, such as ethnic associations, but rather in mixed ones, as for instance students' or parents' groups, political, cultural and volunteering associations, trade unions or residents' associations (Wessendorf, 2014b). Such design is particularly important, also by considering that the methodology takes here the form of informant interviews, since the involved subjects should have a privileged insider view on the topic (Fedyuk and Zentai, 2018). In fact, interviews should focus at this

level on two main arguments: the involvement or the exclusion of different groups and the possible rise of conflicts or new cooperative forms within these institutions and associations. Groups are understood in this case as not merely defined by ethnicity, but also by other relevant axes, such as generation, gender, class, work position, legal statuses and education, also considering the intersection between these elements (Meissner and Vertovec, 2015; Khazei, 2018). By setting such analysis, I mainly intend to study through a super-diversity lens new exclusion and inclusion patterns in diversifying contexts, but also try figuring out how different environments can affect social relations between diverse people within parochial realms.

Expected results

Studying diversification in Italy allows to look at how this process may question traditional integration paradigms in different contexts from those generally addressed by scholars adopting a super-diversity perspective. Therefore, since diversification processes can result in different outcomes according to the context, this research can firstly contribute to the academic literature by providing a further and comparative insight of such mechanisms in Italian cities (Crul and others, 2013; Scholten and others, 2019). Moreover, such work could also represent the first step to set a comparison with other urban environments in different Southern European countries with similar characteristics, in order to study more deeply diversification in contexts with more recent immigration flows and without a strong multicultural tradition.

Such work can also be useful in studying the potential application of recent frameworks for local integration policies. The combination of a super-diversity lens with an intersectional approach may allow to look at new possible exclusion patterns, which are beyond ethno-cultural issues or in which these are just a part in a more complex mix (Phillimore, 2010, 2015; Wessendorf, 2014b). Therefore, findings of this research can also lead to consider new policy paradigms, such as for example interculturalism or mainstreaming of immigrants' integration governance (Zapata-Barrero, 2017; Van Breugel and others, 2018), whom suitability in the studied contexts could be suggested also on the basis of my study.

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