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1

Introduction: Migration, Cities, Diversities ‘Old’ and ‘New’

Steven Vertovec

Across the globe, more people – from more varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds, subject to more varied conditions of mobility and legal status – come into regular contact with one another in today’s growing cities. Population diversification and urban expansion are two linked processes that serve to define our times. How do these processes unfold, especially in terms of social relations? The dynamics of urban diversification – despite their increasing ubiquity – remain seriously under-researched. We know little about how people in diversifying urban settings create new patterns of coexistence or how and why they might tend towards conflict. Social scientists have yet to fully describe and theorize the developments and implications of migration-driven diversification, especially in the key urban spaces where new migrants live. This book addresses the knowledge gap.

Migration and urban diversification

While world population is expected to increase from 7 billion in 2011 to 9.3 billion in 2050, the planet’s urban population is projected to grow from 3.6 billion in 2011 to 6.3 billion in 2050; hence, practically all the planet’s population growth will be evident in cities (UN-DESA 2012). Indeed, by 2050, approximately 67 per cent of the world’s people will live in cities (as opposed to just over 50 per cent now). In many countries, natural increase (births minus deaths) accounts for some 60 per cent of urban population growth (Ibid.). Apart from natural increase, we can see that migration currently accounts – and will likely increasingly account – for a large share of the unprecedented growth in cities across the world. Migration contributes significantly to the expansion of relatively small cities of fewer than one million people as well as
to the expanding megacities of over 20 million people. Yet, it is anticipated that the highest growth will be in middle-range cities of between one and ten million inhabitants (Ibid.).

Moreover, the biggest urban expansions will take place in cities of the so-called global South. In these, it is expected that rural-to-urban migration inside of countries will account for a major share of city growth (World Bank 2013). However, worldwide, rural-to-urban migration is increasingly entangled with other kinds of migration. More and more, global movements have come to be characterized by ‘mixed migratory flows’ (Van Hear 2009): these see a combination of ‘voluntary’ and ‘forced’, internal and international, undocumented and legal (under a variety of channels), skilled and unskilled, conflict displaced, environmentally induced, political asylum seeking, trader, student, temporary and ‘circular’ and permanent migrants. For many individuals, furthermore, there is a great overlap in these categories by way of their own motivations and experiences of movement. Mixed migratory flows also significantly account for complex changes in population characteristics surrounding patterns of nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, age, gender, class and human capital. Together, these multiple processes of diversification have led to the emergence of conditions of ‘super-diversity’ (Vertovec 2007a).

Another important feature of urban diversification is that, since new migrants tend to inhabit those urban spaces which still play host to migrants from previous waves, new complexities are ‘layered’ on top of and positioned with regard to pre-existing patterns of diversity (including their socio-economic positions and geographical concentrations, social policies, daily interactions and physical environments that developed around such pre-existing patterns). How do prior conditions of diversity and practices of interaction affect the incorporation of new migrants who are characterized by significantly different traits?

Differentially across cities and specific urban contexts within them, processes of diversification, conditions of super-diversity and the layered and positioned effects of ‘old’ and ‘new’ diversities have engendered changing patterns of prejudice, segregation, inequality and discord, as well as emergent practices of cooperation, civility, cosmopolitanism and conviviality. We still have much to learn about how, where, when and why such patterns and practices arise or transform.

**Studying urban diversification**

Within the social sciences, the current state of the art is largely insufficient for analyses of new urban diversifications. Theories and
methods used to study immigrants in urban settings are still largely based on those of the Chicago school of urban studies set out in the early and mid-part of the last century (Waters and Jiménez 2005). This has primarily entailed looking particularly at ethnically defined groups by way of their respective processes of assimilation, measured in terms of changing socio-economic status, spatial concentration, linguistic change and intermarriage. The focus on assimilation – or, in European parlance, ‘integration’ – dominates the field and is currently the foremost policy concern of most immigrant-receiving states (or, indeed, European-level agencies). Theory and research on multiculturalism have also tended to rely on a view of diversity that assumes it to comprise distinct ethnic groups living side by side and developing on their own terms (see Vertovec and Wessendorf 2006). To the extent that interethnic or intercultural relations have been examined, studies usually concern binary minority–majority relations. However, as a UN-Habitat Report (2005: 9) recognizes, ‘It is quite possible that today, migrants are transforming the city to a point where the time-honored assimilation vs. multicultural (ethnic) alternative loses its heuristic value.’

In keeping with the long-standing assimilation paradigm in migration studies, it has often been assumed that social cohesion requires some form of baseline homogeneity, and that diversity itself threatens social cohesion (e.g., Putnam 2007). However, this assumption does not ring true. For instance, drawing on studies of 14 neighbourhoods across the United States, Philip Nyden and his colleagues (1998: 265) show that ‘stable diverse communities are not a figment of a progressive policy researcher’s imagination – they do exist’. This is reiterated in Logan and Zhang’s (2010) study of new diversity and the rise of ‘global neighborhoods’. Certainly, ‘there are plenty of neighbourhoods,’ Ash Amin (2002: 960) observes, ‘in which multiethnicity has not resulted in social breakdown, so ethnic mixture itself does not offer a compelling explanation for failure’. In order to foster a better understanding of the dynamics of diversity – and how diversity might actually create new forms of social cohesion, Amin (2002) calls for an anthropology of the ‘local micropolitics of everyday interaction’ akin to what Leonie Sandercock (2003: 89) sees as ‘daily habits of perhaps quite banal intercultural interaction’. Such interaction should be additionally looked at in terms of the multiple variables of mixed migration and super-diversity mentioned above (gender, age, human capital, migration channel and legal status) and not solely in terms of basic ethnic or racial categories.

Despite the key issues that such contexts and conditions present, social scientists have provided surprisingly few accounts of interactions
between individuals by way of multiple groups, categories and characteristics: how they are negotiated and maintained and how local physical and historical conditions contribute to their formation. While there are a few good studies of social relations within highly diverse contexts (such as Lamphere 1992, Baumann 1996, Sanjek 1998, Maly 2005), they have focused almost exclusively on ethnicity as the foremost marker of difference. More recently, across a variety of social sciences, there has been an ‘everyday’ turn in ethnographic accounts of interethnic relations and negotiations of difference within contexts of super-diversity (Wise and Velayutham 2009, Berg and Sigona 2013, Wessendorf 2013). Such a shift demonstrates the growing interest in ‘the routine ways in which people live and negotiate cultural difference in everyday social and geographical settings’ (Neal et al. 2013: 310). Much of this shifting attention has entailed accounts of everyday relations of ‘conviviality’ (for instance, Gilroy 2004, Karner and Parker 2011, Nowicka and Vertovec 2014) and shared ‘multiculture’ (for instance, Kesten et al. 2011, Bloch et al. 2013, Rhys-Taylor 2013).

While such a shift in interest and approach is certainly welcomed, studies in this field should not wholly emphasize the fashioning of multicultural competences, positive coexistence, conviviality or amicable interactions and relationships. We must attempt to understand more about how these positive developments take place alongside, or entangled with, long-standing or incipient tensions, conflicts, modes of self-dissociation and practices that implicitly or explicitly exclude others. Further, with regard to all such positive or negative practices, we need to take account of the ways in which their development occurs when new patterns of migrant-led diversification have been encountered in places with pre-existing patterns of diversity.

Diversification and public space

There is much to be learned by examining places and processes in which people’s variegated engagement with diversification challenges or transforms pre-existing social patterns to establish new norms of living together – or new fault lines of tension. A key strategy for research in this field is to investigate how increased and evermore complex facets of diversity are encountered and responded to, by a range of actors, in specific public spaces. Public spaces refer to physical settings – especially streets, squares, parks and markets – which are in principle accessible to all regardless of background (gender, age, ethnicity, legal status, disability, etc.). In this sense, the meaning is distinct from ‘the public
sphere’, which can be conceived as a domain of collective discourse and deliberation, such as political institutions and the media. Public spaces are key to examining a range of encounters of diversity (Lofland 1973, Low et al. 2005, Talen 2010). Such spaces directly condition the ways people engage one another through their location, official regulations, physical layouts and material conditions; moreover, public spaces have the potential to be mutually negotiated in terms of their local meaning, configuration and use (Watson 2006a, b, Amin 2008). Therefore, scholars must be aware of how encounters unfold ‘in the entanglement between people and the material and visual culture of public space, rather than solely in the quality of social interaction between strangers’ (Amin 2008: 8). Further, public spaces are not neutral. They are filled with signs, symbols and markers that are variously ‘read’ by socially positioned and culturally distinct people. Consequently, ‘public spaces mean completely different things for different groups’ (Lowsbrough and Beunderman 2007: 19). Research on diversity and diversification in urban public space should concern ‘social processes that make spaces into places, with conflicts over access and control of space, and with the values and meaning people attach to place’ (Low et al. 2005: 3).

Within discrete public spaces, researchers need to account for a wide range of interactions, since people interact differently with different people, at different times, for different reasons. It is clear that especially in dense urban settings, interaction in public spaces is often fleeting; fleeting encounters with diverse strangers, however, underpins much by way of everyday experience in cities, out-group attitude formation and broader modes of civility (Lofland 1998, Vertovec 2007b). The nature and impacts of variegated, fleeting encounters – and their relation to more sustained and meaningful social relationships and social structures – is also a relatively understudied field, particularly with regard to processes of diversification and conditions of super-diversity.

This book is the product of a large-scale, comparative and interdisciplinary project that has been premised on the above-mentioned considerations. That is, the book provides findings from a project that investigated, through a variety of approaches and social scientific methods, the combined issues of migrant diversification and urban growth, everyday social relations and the nature of public spaces.

The GlobaldiverCities project

In public spaces compared across cities, what accounts for similarities and differences in social and spatial patterns that arise under conditions of
diversification, when new diversity meets old diversity? This was the core research question in the GlobaldiverCities project (the full title is ‘Migration and New Diversities in Global Cities: Comparatively Conceiving, Observing and Visualizing Diversification in Urban Public Spaces’; see www.globaldivercities.mmg.mpg.de). Funded by the European Research Council (ERC), the project brought together a ten-person team comprising anthropologists, sociologists, geographers and ethnographic filmmakers to work full-time, simultaneously in four locations, throughout 2011–2014. The project also benefitted from local expert advisors, consultants, collegial feedback at academic events around the world and academic colleagues together with a substantial research support staff at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity.

In order to address its research question sufficiently, the project called for a number of lines of investigation. This included enquiry into the following: the nature of public spaces, how their multiple uses and meanings arise among various groups in different kinds of cities; legacies of historical conditions surrounding the ways diversity has been conceived, comprised and managed by public authorities and local actors – and, importantly, how historical and current dynamics relate to structures of inequality; effects of physical environments and material phenomena (e.g., commercial, industrial, service and leisure infrastructure, spatial layout, housing access, building conditions, commodities), how they condition, constrain and create opportunities for social and spatial relationships; and patterns of social interaction – fleeting and sustained – how they develop through avoidance, intermingling, codependence and civility and how new fault lines of tension or conflict arise.

The ERC research project also focused on different manifestations of diversity. ‘Old diversity’ is a shorthand for describing long-standing understandings and patterns of social and cultural difference around which particular societal – and, importantly, state – systems have developed (e.g., policies of exclusion or access, multi-ethnic residence or segregation, ethnic economies and relationships of codependence or dispute). ‘New diversity’ (or super-diversity) refers to more recent configurations marked by ongoing shifts in migration patterns (concerning national origins, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, age, human capital and legal status). At the core of the project’s research question are more fundamental ones: what does diversification – and diversity as such – look like and mean to those of various backgrounds who dwell within it? Despite highly differing conditions, are there common patterns of social adjustment to diversification? Are there common ways of
negotiating, re-creating or appropriating public space? In order to provide the best, most forward-thinking answers to these questions, the GlobaldiverCities project required a robust comparative, strategic and multi-method design.

Comparison

The project’s research question is fundamentally based on a comparative approach across cities where specific historical and contemporary conditions of diversification and patterns of new diversity meets old diversity arise. Drawn from an array of possible contexts, the sites for comparison in the GlobaldiverCities project were specifically chosen for a number of reasons. Processes of diversification and layering of ‘old’ and ‘new’ diversities are understudied. The choice of cities was made according to ‘diverse case’ selection strategy in order to take account of multiple variables leading to typological theorizing (Gerring 2007). Here, variables refer to possible modes, constraints and opportunities of diversity encounter. The selection thus reflects differentiated historical and political–economic circumstances behind the changing patterns and politics of diversity in cities and neighbourhoods, with discrete conditions shaping trajectories, layers of diversity and the social relations that derive from them.

In each case city, the choice of research-site neighbourhoods was made with attention to contexts in which new super-diversity is evident, where no single group dominates and where (physical/spatial, visual and social) manifestations of old and new diversities meet. The public spaces within each neighbourhood offered important sites of fleeting and more sustained encounters embodying processes of stress alongside processes manifesting the construction of new, common and productive modes of interaction.

The project’s three case cities were New York, Singapore and Johannesburg. Chapters 2, 3 and 4, respectively, describe the nature of diversification in each city and set the scene regarding each research-site neighbourhood. The cities were chosen not just to provide a kind of global breadth (North American, African and Asian) but also because they represent parallel processes and scales of new diversification within contexts of profoundly contrasting ‘old diversity’.

New York is the classic American city of immigration that, as the country’s foremost port of entry, has historically received several waves of newcomers. Already in 1900, 37 per cent of the city’s population was foreign born: the same percentage is found today. Over decades upon decades of influx, a unique social and political culture has been created
around the absorption of successive waves of immigrants in New York. Like many major American cities with large immigrant populations, New York City ensures the legal rights of immigrants and provides services for all legal residents regardless of immigration status; further: ‘A recent series of local laws and executive orders in New York City has tried to improve immigrants’ access to city services and the city does not participate in the Section 287(g) programme that empowers local police officers to enforce immigration legislation’ (Fincher et al. 2014: 12). Besides the inherent place of immigration in the city’s politics, culture and heritage, there is much new about it. New York City’s foreign-born population has doubled in the past 30 years (see Foner 2013). Groups are coming, in addition, from places whence they had never come before. Breaking from the pattern of successive waves from different places (Ireland, Italy, blacks from the southern United States, Mexico, etc.), extraordinary diversity is the hallmark of contemporary immigration to New York. It is often said that today, virtually every country in the world is represented by recent migrants to the city. In addition to diversified places of origin, there has been an increased heterogeneity of human capital, occupational and class backgrounds; such diversification is also indicative of differing migration processes, channels and legal statuses. Diversity and mixture of legal statuses are even to be found in individual families: as Phil Kasinitz (2012: 586) observes in one study, ‘Indeed, it was not at all uncommon for these second and 1.5-generation New Yorkers to grow up in a “mixed status” household that included illegal immigrants, people holding legal temporary visas (such as tourist or student visas), legal permanent residents, naturalized citizens, and birthright citizens.’

Each borough of New York has a unique mix of old and new diversities. Queens is one of the most renowned, where 46 per cent of one million people are foreign born. Emblematic of diversification in the city as a whole, the foreign-born population of Queens increased by 6.3 per cent between 2000 and 2006, comprising a wide array of countries of origin with no group dominating. In this book, the site of comparative research is the Queens district of Astoria: here, within the 2010 total population estimate of 174,171, over 40 per cent are foreign born (Lobo and Salvo 2013). In Astoria, the largest country of birth cohort is Greece (9.5 per cent), followed by Mexico (8.4 per cent), Ecuador (6.5 per cent), Colombia (4.9 per cent), Italy (4.2 per cent), Bangladesh (4.1 per cent), Dominican Republic (4.0 per cent), China (4.0 per cent), Brazil (3.7 per cent) and Peru (2.7 per cent); the rest – no less than 47.6 per cent – comprises smaller cohorts from 120 countries and regions all over the world (American Community Survey 2008–2012).
Since colonial times, Singapore has been a highly regulated multi-ethnic city. In comparison to many other so-called multicultural cities around the world, ‘its urban policies are often more muscular and interventionist. As a result, urban planning plays a major role in the management of diversity and difference’ (Fincher et al. 2014: 13). Politics and public images are largely based on the official multiracial CMIO model (Chinese, Malay, Indian and ‘Others’), together with the establishment of four official languages (Malay, Mandarin, Tamil and English). Within Singapore’s current total population of 5,312,100, some 3,771,721 are officially residents: of the latter, 74 per cent are designated as Chinese, 13 per cent Malay, 9 per cent Indian and 3 per cent Other (Singapore 2011). Racial and cultural harmony is considered fundamental to Singapore’s existence and so visibly emphasized in public culture. Hence, every Singaporean citizen is associated with a race culture, and cultural diversity is celebrated especially in highly public festivals.

Unquestionably a prosperous global city, Singapore is extremely dependent on labour migrants for its continuing economic maintenance and development. Most of this dependency is controlled by a restrictive work permit system for low-skilled workers in manufacturing, construction and domestic services (while there are also large numbers of high-skilled foreign workers and students). In recent years, Singapore’s non-resident workforce increased dramatically from 248,000 in 1990 to 670,000 in 2006 to almost 1.5 million in 2013; today, foreigners make up 38 per cent of Singapore’s total population (Ibid.). The majority of them come, through bilateral agreements, from countries such as India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Myanmar and Thailand. Old migration streams (especially from China and Malaysia) conditioned by colonial politics continue to be important alongside the recent arrivals from elsewhere. A major government concern in Singapore is to ensure that the foreign worker population remains temporary.

In Singapore, GlobaldiverCities research was carried out in the area of Jurong West (population of 267,524 in 2010). With an estimated 1000 factories as well as shipyards, it is a well-known neighbourhood of mixed immigrant concentration. Tens of thousands of foreign (far more male than female) workers live in designated dormitories. Jurong West is an exemplary site for examining how newer waves of migration present myriad challenges and possibilities within the already-existing varied socio-spatial landscapes of Singapore.

After 1990 and the collapse of Apartheid, migration to South Africa (and to Johannesburg in particular) from the region, the continent and
the rest of the world increased dramatically. Reasoned approximations of the number of foreigners from all over Africa – legal and illegal – are between one and three million (Wa Kabwe 2008). Additionally, there are substantial flows of informal cross-border traders, circular migration and rural–urban movement from ethnically and linguistically different parts of South Africa itself. Foreigners in South Africa encompass temporary legal contract workers, legal immigrants and migrants with marketable skills, variously ‘forced migrants’ and irregular or undocumented migrants. Estimates suggest that currently up to 40 per cent of Johannesburg’s 3.2 million population is of migrant origin (Crush 2005). Origins of migrations to Johannesburg include Zimbabwe, DRC, Mozambique, Namibia, Lesotho, Somalia, Nigeria and other parts of South Africa. Mixed and precarious legal statuses, furthermore, situate many migrants socially, economically and geographically as well. These facts have important ramifications for shaping public discourse, public spaces and the city as a whole. It is also critical to bear in mind that Johannesburg is a city characterized by extremely high levels of intolerance and xenophobia, leading to terrible riots in 2008. Further, due to limited administrative infrastructure and scarce public finances, local government is extremely hindered with regard to physical development and the enactment of equality policies called for in the 1996 Constitution (Fincher et al. 2014: 15).

Foreigners make up the majority of the population in particular Johannesburg neighbourhoods. In this book, we present research carried out in the district of Hillbrow (estimated population 74,000). Formerly a ‘Whites only’ area, Hillbrow has become a central site for migration from townships, from throughout rural South Africa and from all over Africa. Hillbrow has been a high-density neighbourhood since the 1950s, where the decline and breakdown of tenancy contracts and building body corporates in the 1980s have resulted in severe overcrowding of the neighbourhood, accompanied by the downgrading of the building stock. Coupled with inadequate public services and a highly informalized local economy, Hillbrow is characterized by crowded and busy street sidewalks and overcrowded shared living spaces.

Methods
In the GlobaldiverCities project, research methods were chosen to best investigate the multi-faceted nature of social encounters in urban public spaces under conditions of diversification. This was undertaken with particular sensitivity to temporality, spatiality and multiple meanings for inhabitants (cf. Watson 2006a). Methods were derived from tested
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