From diversity to hyperdiversity in an urban context: position of people in poverty.
Three Belgian cases1

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'Diversity' is not of today, certainly not if we consider larger societal units such as nation-states or cities. Today, however, European countries – and with them, their cities – seem to become more diversified than ever before. Whereas their original diversity was rather of the social and economic kind, new dimensions have been added. Social status and social class have been joined by gender, specific needs (handicaps), generations (the young and the old, the greening and the greying of society), sex (LGTB) and by ethnic diversity. Gender has gained importance through the increasing presence of women in public space (such as the labour market) and the generational dimension from the greying and greening of our societies, the latter reinforced by the development of 'youth cultures'.

In the past decades, attention has almost exclusively focused on the ethnic dimension of diversity, resulting from a combination of factual trends and changes in perception. Indeed, that topic of ethnic diversity dominates the scene more than ever before, is not only the result of an increased influx of very diverse groups of immigrants; its prominence can only be explained by some degree of xenophobic undercurrents. Which does not imply that facts do not matter. Consecutive and overlapping waves consisted of immigrants from former colonies and of so-called guest-workers. This results in complicating the common denominator of 'ethnicity', which now itself includes diversity, based on differences in motives, language, religion, culture and (legal) status. It is what the concept of super-diversity tries to define: diversity within diversity.

It does however not stop there. Vertovec (2007) has put forward the hypothesis that a further stage of complexity and dynamics has been reached, especially in an urban context, which requires an even newer concept, that of hyper-diversity. It has been further refined in the Divercities project[3]. There it refers to an '*intense diversification of the population, not only in socio-economic, social and ethnic terms, but also with respect to lifestyles, attitudes and activities*' (Tasan-Kok et al. 2013). This cross-cutting forms of diversity are expected to lead to more heterogeneity than ever before in urban populations, resulting in an increasing status inconsistency (or status discrepancy) in urban societies. This development fosters the 'fragmentation' of social collectives into smaller units down to the family and individual level, the reduction of group relations (family, friends and acquaintances, neighbours, colleagues) to network relations, and the redefinition of action spaces (between neighbourhood and city, local and global, real and virtual).

Hyperdiversity would have impact on different levels. At the individual level, Manço (2002, 2006) writes that this intersection between different identity characteristics and the accompanying internal shocks between different parts of the identity lead to the development of an awareness that multiples belongings are possible for everybody. But for him, hyperdiversity also refers to the appropriation, and even the claiming, of those 'internal' diversities at the societal level, leading to socio-political debates about the legitimacy of those who reclaim crossed identities; today it is about Muslims and Europeans or about homosexuals and parents; in former times it was about workers and mothers.

Manço (2002) also points out that, more than the transversality of diversities, what is innovative in Vertovec's concept of hyperdiversity is its qualitative dimension: changes in our perception of diversity. Do those 'newer' stages in diversity refer to 'real' changes or rather to our perception of social reality? Indeed, what seems to have changed since the 1960s and 1970s is our sensibility, our perception, and even the need for many to express and render visible those diverse identities; also, for some, the need to see that those identities are not rejected by the 'majority' of society. Illustrations thereof are most of the 'new social movements' as there are the feminist movement, the revolts of the youth, the anti-racist movement, the popularization of black and gay cultures. We could easily suppose that globalization, the facilitating of worldwide exchanges, has enforced the volume and frequency of mixtures and has dispersed them over the whole world. Even transversality that differentiating characteristic of 'hyperdiversity' was always present

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1   Working paper, 2015, IRFAM, Liège.
2   www.irfam.org.
3   www.urbandivercities.eu.

in multi-ethnic and multicultural societies, certainly in cities. Intermarriage between persons of different ethnic or religious origins always has existed. Even more so, do these changes in perception refer to 'our' perception (that is, of some academics) or can they be identified in the population?

How is this chapter organized? First, we will try to position the basic concept of diversity and its more recent forms (super-diversity or hyper-diversity) within a framework of 'different forms of differences' (differentiation, fragmentation, inequality, and exclusion), given that differences constitute the basis for any form of diversity. Next we will discuss the impact of new forms of diversity on the urban situation; this impact will be illustrated with results from three Belgian case-studies (Brussels, Liège and Antwerp). What is absent from those cases and from empirical studies of hyperdiversity is the ways(s) in which people in poverty contribute to urban diversity. We propose two theoretical inputs to understand how they are part of urban forms of diversity. We will conclude with some reflections on possible developments.

I. Diversity, superdiversity and hyperdiversity: just words?

If European cities are indeed hyper-diversified and no longer just 'diversified' or 'super-diversified', it has important implications. As researchers, we will need to develop new analytical frameworks to analyse cities, their neighbourhoods, their institutions, their populations, and – perhaps most importantly – the relations between their residents (and even other participants in urban life), between individuals and institutions (including city government), between individuals and collectives and their spatial setting. Policy-makers will need new approaches for new policies and will have to adapt appropriate governance arrangements.

1. Diversity is a form of difference – but which one?

In linking (forms of) diversity to (forms of) difference, we undertake kind of bottom-up construction of a conceptual framework. At present, the kind of difference that is almost automatically connected with diversity is ethnic diversity and its twin, cultural diversity. Diversity, however, is also about social statuses, social classes, power, family structures, social networks, demography. And, last but not least, it has an important spatial dimension – particularly when the focus is on city life and on the setup of the city itself. Concepts such as 'social (ethnic) mix' and 'gentrification' – but also segregation – are expressions of this spatial dimension.

Given that diversity implies some kind of difference, we need first to take a look at what kind of difference 'diversity' is referring to. Indeed, differences exist in many forms. In the early 1990s, Vranken developed a typology on 'different forms of differences' (Vranken 1995, Vranken 2001), which results from the crossing of two variables: the presence/absence of a hierarchy, fairly common in sociological analysis, and the presence/absence of fault lines, less common but certainly as relevant to understand social relations.

Those fault lines, 'discontinuities' (Townsend 1970, Townsend 1973, Townsend 1979), or 'ruptures' (Paugam 2008) may be relational, institutional, spatial or societal. Their reference point is dominant institutions, society's centres; the places where Bourdieu's economic, social, and cultural capital are stored. They exist at the micro-level (of individuals and their networks), at the meso-level (of groups, institutions or neighbourhoods), and at the macro-level (of society). Spatial fault lines often occur in combination with social fault lines.

Social differentiation refers to situations of equivalence, to phenomena such as different tastes in food or clothing, colour of eyes or hair; situations that do not have a notable impact on the distribution of social goods. Differentiation may relate to individuals or groups (families, classes), although in the latter case it would almost always develop into social fragmentation, which – strictly speaking – refers to a collection of different fields that are separated from each other (by fault lines) but which exist on a par. Fragmentation is latently present in a number of theoretical perspectives, such as the multicultural tenet or the 'cultural' interpretation of the 'culture of poverty', where it is assumed that different cultures can exist side by side in a kind of patchwork. In terms of urban space, a polycentric (social or spatial) area with equivalent fragments (such as 'urban' or 'ethnic' villages) is another illustration. A fragmented city consists of various neighbourhoods, each with their own functions, character, and architectural styles.

This leads us to the first definition of diversity: in terms of differentiation or fragmentation. *We could see this as a positive form of diversity*. However, if we take into account the second variable, that of hierarchical relations such as the ones that exist in social inequality, do we then still have diversity? Does 'positive' diversity change into a rather '*negative*' concept, if inequality is brought into the typology?

Inequality is a more common concept in sociology – and, as a reality, more common in society – than both differentiation and fragmentation. Let us take the illustrations we used before: different cultures or different parts of a city. What does happen if cultures or urban units are no longer on an equal footing, but if one cultural pattern or one neighbourhood dominates the others, as is the case for the relation between bourgeois culture and working-class culture, between one ethnic culture – it also applies to religion – and the others, or when one part of the city refutes the rest of its periphery? It leads, at least, to fewer opportunities for whom is part of the dominated culture (religion), class, community or neighbourhood. The negative social outcomes of inequality are clearly illustrated by Wilkinson and Pickett (2009); their review of empirical evidence, albeit on the level of national states, shows that inequality is associated with mortality, mental illness, low trust, low social capital, hostility, and racism, with poor educational performance and low social mobility.

The relation between inequality and diversity has undoubtedly become more important, since (income) inequality has been on the increase in Europe since over two decades, starting during a period of economic growth and not as a side-effect of the on-going crisis. The European Commission (2010) point to economic modernization and labour market deregulation as the culprits, because they led to polarization on the labour market and to larger income inequalities, which have not been compensated by social policies or transfers.

2. Do forms of exclusion reduce diversity?

Social exclusion is more than just inequality; it implies, besides a hierarchal relationship, the presence of fault lines between individuals, positions or groups. Exclusion is not just about common ruptures in the fabric of society (as is the case with fragmentation); it refers to gaps that lead to divisions between 'in' and 'out', as is the case in situations and processes such as (spatial or social) inaccessibility (ethnic or gender) discrimination, or (spatial or economic) polarization.

If the combination between inequality and diversity already is problematic, how should we then treat situations of exclusion in terms of diversity? Is it just another step further away from diversity or at least from a positive definition of diversity? Does not the exclusion of people or groups of society automatically reduce its diversity? Important forms of exclusion, such as the ones that existed in South Africa (apartheid) and in the Southern states of the US could be seen as attempts to homogenize society, through reducing or even annihilating its ethnic diversity. Indeed, the so-called 'white trash', a form of the underclass and thus marked by economic, social and even cultural features but not by ethnic ones, remained part of those societies. *Are these concepts useful for a better understanding of what is happening in contemporary cities in the Western world – and, in our case, in Belgium?*

3. Spatial forms of social exclusion

Western cities have often been described in terms of social exclusion: as divided cities (Fainstein, Gordon and Harloe 1992), dual cities (Mollenkopf and Castells 1991), polarized cities (Sassen 1991), and partitioned cities (Marcuse and van Kempen 2000). Spatial segregation is a prominent topic in many studies: Friedrichs (1998); Bolt & van Kempen (2002, 2008); Kazepov (2005); van Kempen (2005), to name just a few.

A too simplistic, albeit dominant, definition of polarization is that it refers to a situation in which those with the highest incomes earn more and more money, while those with the lowest incomes earn less and less (Hamnett 1994). We need to go further, by not only focusing on individuals and not only on income. Firstly, polarization shows in the dwindling of the middle class and the resulting increase in the relative importance of the two other major classes, the 'upper class' (or the bourgeoisie) and the working class (or the proletariat). The rise of an (urban) underclass or a 'precariat' (Standing 2011) further exacerbates this polarization. And, secondly, polarization is not only about income but also about the very unequal distribution of power, status and social protection (and risk protection in general). Polarization opposes 'who works' and 'who doesn't' (but not for whatever reason), 'who pays' (taxes and contributions) to 'who profits' (from social benefits – not who profits from the economic crisis) (Pratschke and Morlicchio 2012).

Polarization is an almost built-in feature of our cities because of the increasing gap between neighbourhoods in terms of their advantages and disadvantages.

The spontaneous development of our cities, in the context of increasing inequality and polarization, is towards urban spatial segregation. Although, in general, European cities are spatially less segregated than American cities (Kazepov 2005; van Kempen 2005), population groups often are spatially unequally distributed within many European cities according to their social, socio-economic, ethnic and cultural characteristics. Social and spatial walls are erected between the different parts of the city, which renders them inaccessible and which reduces opportunities for social or/and spatial mobility. This segregation exists between gentrified neighbourhoods and the remainder of the city, and between 'the city' and areas where the poor are more or less forced to live, also because of the lack of alternatives elsewhere in the city.

4. Diversity, cohesion and conflict: the next step

Still one step further is introducing the concept of 'opposition' (conflict, struggle) into the conceptual framework. Do ethnic conflicts or class struggles annihilate diversity? Those concepts have been marginalized in recent political and academic discourses, because they did not fit into the dominant framework which favoured 'cohesion', integration and inclusion, often leaving out the oppressing features of those relations.

Not that the concept of cohesion should be thrown away and certainly not when discussing forms of diversity. The classic functionalist tenet in sociology on structural differentiation posits that increased specialization results in more subsystems and institutions and therefore needs a higher level of organization to link the different subsystems and institutions in a coherent whole. Diversity thus requires some 'integrative' mechanism. If this is absent, society's or a city's sustainability is threatened.

It seems as if the built-in organic solidarity – resulting from the functional division of labour (see Durkheim) – no longer fulfils this function sufficiently. This weakening of the structural basis of solidarity is paralleled by the collapse of routines that used to function as mediators between the general value patterns and everyday life and, moreover, as mechanisms of social control. The weakening or even disappearance of both this structural basis and the 'spontaneous' routines and reciprocity opened the way to foster a number of top-down initiatives to complement and to strengthen them.

This wide array of 'top-down' initiative ranges from 'repressive' to 'protective'. The latter are older and part of our (retreating) welfare state: social protection, social services. The 'repressive' ones are more recent and focus on policing the private and public sphere. Is concerns the many social and physical control systems that are being introduced in urban environments in order to promote safety. Best documented is the increase in CCTV-controlled areas, private security services, the call for 'more police/blue in the street', and the increase and diversification of the notion of misbehaviour in public places that is subject to fines. Initiatives to promote cohesion – such as the financing of 'spontaneous' neighbourhood festivities – also fit into this picture.

The success of mono-cultural discourses and the increase in legal and other mechanisms to prevent or to combat forms of 'deviant behaviour' (including specific cultural behaviour) are less easily identifiable, but are also part of this 'top-down' effort to impose 'mechanical solidarity' in the absence of its structural or spontaneous forms. The integration debate has shifted; from 'reciprocal adaptation' of dominant and minority cultures to the slogan 'integrate or leave', and integration has become another word for 'adaptation' (Vranken 2004).

II. Down to the level of neighbourhood

It looks as if neighbourhoods are 'back in town', after they have been lost for many years? The idea that a neighbourhood as a 'Gemeinschaft' had crumbled under the pressure of changes in the social structure, which increasingly opened up choices for the organization of one's life and which reduced the togetherness of the residents, has for many years dominated the discourse (Blokland-Potters 1998). This return of the neighbourhood as a relevant level in the whole debate is important, because it is within neighbourhoods that degrees and forms of diversity are being experienced most. This is because processes of 'place-making', that is how people give meaning to their physical environment, are very narrowly connected with what is most nearby.

However, studies have shown that interethnic contacts are often limited (Pinkster & Völker 2009), even in (ethnically) super-diverse neighbourhoods. Highly diverse neighbourhoods are valued for several reasons, which are closely linked to the (social-spatial) position of the person or group. 'Urbanites' value them for their 'atmosphere', but they identify with the city at large. Their often diverse networks are not to be found in the neighbourhood, but cover the whole city; which also is their level of integration in social life (Blokland & Van Eijk 2010). Because social contacts between different groups are arguably of limited scope and depth, some authors propose to incorporate other dimensions of neighbourhood encounters, so-called 'lived diversity'. Among these are the visibility of diversity in public space and experiences that are consist of touch, sound, smell/taste, and vision that together make up 'sensuous geography of otherness' (Wise 2010).

However, people from ethnic communities are also producers of services, such as local shops or night shops, in niches abandoned by supermarkets because they do not generate sufficient (financial) profits. Moreover, they occupy, maintain, and secure large parts of the urban fabric deserted by households with high incomes. Patterns of solidarity within ethnic communities are also innovative and revitalize the associative life of the working-class districts of European cities (Gatugu et al. 2004; Amoranitis and Manço 2011; Gerstnerova 2014). Harder to objectify on a larger scale, people that originate from immigration, in particular ethnic entrepreneurs, and actors, artists, sportsmen, and other migrants in 'visible' professions also offer diversity, colours, tastes, modes of operation and productions which are out of the ordinary, and truly innovate our real or virtual spaces. These are positive challenges and opportunities, rather than problems and difficulties.

1. Liège, Brussels and Antwerp: three cases in Belgium

As for Belgium, its diversity cannot fully be understood without also taking into account its linguistic, religious and spatial diversity. The religious one has led to the pillarization of Belgian society (resulting in a very strong civil society, without the clear overlapping divisions between the Catholic, socialist and liberal pillar that used to dominate until the 1970s) and the linguistic one, which still dominates political life – although now only at the national level, whereas before it was also very relevant to understand what happened at the local level – and most in particular in the larger cities. The spatial dimension refers to the opposition urban-rural, which always had an impact on decision-making regarding urban matters and which still is relevant to understand the 'welfare migration' to larger cities and the 'urban flight' to suburban and rural sites; Those forms seem to be only relevant at the national level, but they have their impact, direct or indirect, on the way urban diversity takes form and is experienced.

Grippa et al. (2015) identify some strong tendencies of the spread of poverty in the Belgian cities. In all city regions there is the opposition between an impoverished city centre and middle-class periphery. The suburbanization by the middle-class continues at a steady pace, and local processes of gentrification do not counterbalance this, even though locally they can have a big impact. Furthermore, the differences between Walloon cities and Brussels, on the one hand, and the Flemish cities, on the other hand, remain remarkable. The major Walloon cities, facing a structural crisis since the 1970s, are strongly affected by poverty. The large Flemish cities, however, are not spared: to a somewhat lesser degree than in other regions, an important part of the residents' lives in poor neighbourhoods, where unemployment, dependence on transfer incomes, the proportion of the foreign-born population, health problems and school failure keep piling up.

Dynamics in the city-regions are complex on the neighbourhood level. In Brussels and in the large Flemish cities, the disadvantaged population groups are spreading from the poor central districts, often in the city's 19th-century belt, to adjacent areas of average standing. At the same time, the new migrant populations move into the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods; whereas the most affluent districts remain inaccessible, both for households who flee the poorest districts and for the new migrants. The increasing population pressure on the large cities, particularly in Brussels, therefore is primarily borne by the poorest districts and their slightly less disadvantaged neighbours. In the major Walloon cities, dynamics are somewhat different. There also, the new migrants settle in the impoverished centres, but they are less numerous. On the other hand, there is a noticeable improvement in the numerous relatively disadvantaged neighbourhoods that are more peripheral, where middle-class households settle because of the lower real estate prices (Grippa et al., 2015: 86).

2. Brussels: urban relegation

« Urban relegation » refers to the spatial fragmentation of cities composed of spheres that are less and less reciprocally permeable (Donzelot 2004, 14). At the level of Brussels Capital Region (BCR), an analysis of the socio-demographic variables reveals this interaction between fracture and hierarchisation. Cureghem is a neighbourhood which is characterized (like several others in the Belgian capital) by a concentration of persons with following characteristics: foreigners (42% compared with 31% for the whole of BCR; *Monitoring des quartiers de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale,* 2014) ; unemployed (unemployment level of 41% compared with 23% for the BCR); victims of pauperization (population close to or below the poverty line, 57% compared with 20% for the whole of the BCR, which already has a poverty score well above the Belgian average).

To 'make a city' ('faire la ville') implies ways of 'being in the city' ('être en ville)'. For Donzelot (2004), the city houses different urban styles. For the Brussels case, we could cite two that are pertinent: the *relegation* (large residential complexes and impoverished neighbourhoods) and *gentrification* or *the 'élitisation'* (return to the city of an international and educated bourgeoisie).

Taking account of its history as the capital of Belgium and, more recently and informally, of the EU, it houses those different spaces on a small territory where the relegated neighbourhoods are situated in the centre and are encircled by the wealthier zones of the periphery of by expanding office zones. Those ecosystems produce lifestyles and determine specific relations with mobility, security and education. Taking as a point of reference certain neighbourhoods of the city of Brussels, we perceive as well the inequality between residents as the concentration of persons who share the same characteristics in the typified spaces (Service de prévention de la Ville de Bruxelles 2011).

So it is that the destination of 'Kleine Zavel' ('Petit Sablon') and 'Ambiorix Sud' is one of gentrification regarding their strong degree of moving (a value of 1.66 compared to an average per resident moving within one year in Brussels Capital Region of 1); their elevated degree of higher education (1.68 compared to 1 for the BCR) and their low unemployment rate (0.40 compared to the standardized figure of 1 for the BCR).

On the other hand, a neighbourhood such as 'Saint-Thomas' could be qualified as a space of relegation because of its low degree of moving (0.59 compared to 1 for the BCR), low degree of higher education (0:39), and the high unemployment rate (2.32 compared to 1 for the BCR).

The income gap between neighbourhoods is widening. The average income of the residents of neighbourhoods such as Petit Sablon, Ambiorix Sud, but also Square Orban, Louise Nord-ouest and Bourse has increased from 10 to 50% between 2000 and 2009, while the average income of residents of Saint-Thomas or Coin des Cerises or Marie-Christine, has decreased by 4% in the same period (Service de prévention de la Ville de Bruxelles 2011).

3. The Faubourg Sainte-Walburge in Liège: citizens or shared owners?

Within the frame of its actions to promote local intercultural governance, IRFAM set up research in the Sainte-Walburge neighbourhood. This neighbourhood is characterized by a wide variety of housing and ownership; it has become more accessible in some of its streets. This has led to an increased level of spatial mobility and some degree of gentrification in one street, bordering on another neighbourhood. The quality of living is highly appreciated by the residents. The lack of social mix is identified by some residents as a potential problem, although other residents don't regret it. Social workers criticize the management of the social housing stock, which is deteriorating.

With the contribution of both residents and social workers, managing diversities at the local level was approached from five angles: origin, gender, intergenerational, social class and professional identity (Manço et Dufaÿ 2014). Through this initiative, IRFAM wants to promote a '*bottom-up' management of diversity*, to increase its visibility and to valorize the actors and the lever/tools of sociocultural changes at the local level, and to reinforce the participation of the residents *as citizens*.

The analysis of the interviews has permitted to identify seven main themes, which the authors of the report have named 'markets' in order to emphasize their dynamic character: to give, to receive, to exchange, to transform, to offer, to demand. It covers the spaces-times that are shared by the residents of diverse origins (Caillouette 2001; Doucet et Favreau 1991), but also the situations in which they are competitors. The six

'markets' cover as many fundamental needs: (1) housing (2) work (3) education of the young (4) the religious or the spiritual (5) social relations, in general, in the sense of the shared public space and (6) leisure time and (local) festivities (Mançо & Dufaÿ, 2014).

The authors presented their analysis in the form of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). The witnesses identify the wealth of associations, their network, the existence of neighbourhood committees and the willingness of those actors to collaborate, as a huge strength of the neighbourhood. They see the quality of the environment (green spaces, the quality of the housing stock) and the street festivities as contributions to social cohesion. The residents attribute much importance to the presence of commercial activities in the neighbourhood. They are perceived as places of togetherness, social bonds and as a factor of mobility.

On the other side, several problems or situations that reinforce social division have been evoked, such as the lack of work, of schooling and prevention (combating incivilities), of civil education (knowledge of the Belgian institutional and social system), the absence of a revision of the law on family reunion, absence of social mix in the schools, weak participation of migrants in the life of the neighbourhood, lack of support for individuals from birth, persisting immigration, number of children that are 'parentified' and left to themselves.

Few interviewees have formulated ideas to improve the situation. Many accept that it is normal not to live in a ideal world and that their neighbourhood is fairly good in spite of its imperfections. Several actors mentioned the importance to acquire a good knowledge of French by the migrants as an important vector for integration. Although this would facilitate socio-professional integration, improve social relations and citizen participation, the knowledge of the local language alone would not suffice to become integrated at the local or societal level. Integration of migrants remains a dynamic process that requires participation of everybody.

Fear of stigmatization often leads to a correct intercultural discourse, minimizing the differences, the diversities and the difficulties. For a number of interviewees, the recognition of 'the other' in his 'otherness' consists of a positive reference to his culture and in sympathy for his migration trajectory. However, it also seems primordial to protect the neighbourhood against all rumours or stigmatization that are susceptible to reinforce symbolic frontiers or stereotypes. As a result, a number of interviewees refused to refer the interviewer to 'the most racist' residents, for fear of contributing to stigmatization of the neighbourhood.

The associative network of the neighbourhood is dense and dynamic and is characterized by a strong will to collaborate (co-operate) and to stimulate a global approach, bringing together associative resources. Social coordination works towards the strengthening and supporting of this dynamic, such as by the publication and updating of a guide of associations so as to facilitate the mutual knowledge and the public's orientation du public. The actors of the local associative network want transversal approaches, co-operation and economy of scale profiting users. The spirit of competition, resulting from the way subsidies are allocated to associations, is identified as an obstacle for the pooling of resources and for the strengthening of good practices. The will to co-operate and to bring together the strengths of the neighbourhood for the profit of the residents does not, however, establish efficient networking. So, as a reflection of a fragmented society, 'oldcomers' and 'newcomers' cohabit with the old residents of Sainte Walburge in a spirit of shared ownership ('mitoyenneté'), rather than in that of citizenship.

4. Antwerp: a 'divercity'?

In their report on Antwerp (and more specifically in the areas Antwerp Noord, Deurne Noord and Borgerhout Intramuros. Selected for their high degree of diversity), the authors (Saeys et al. 2015) describe how residents of this kind of neighbourhood experience living in hyperdiversity – hyperdiversity being defined as – see earlier – 'intense diversification of the population, not only in socio-economic, social and ethnic terms, but also with respect to lifestyles, attitudes and activities' (Tasan-Kok et al. 2013).

Originally, most long-term residents had problems with the inflow of migrants, but, in the meantime, they have adapted to their presence. As for the motives that have inspired residents of Belgian origin to move to this neighbourhood, low housing prices and its location are much more important than its diversity; this even goes for so-called 'gentrifiers'. Although are in general positive about diversity, many of them live in

rather homogeneous 'white' parts of the neighbourhood; they choose whether they want to be confronted with diversity and when. One such opportunity is offered by the diversity of shops; this contribution of people of foreign origin is welcomed. As the authors put it: 'In this sense diversity is "consumed" by many residents' (Saeys et al. 2015).

To the residents of foreign origin, the neighbourhood's diversity is important, because they do not want to live in a homogeneous white neighbourhood, where they would stand out, nor in a neighbourhood with too many foreigners, because it would reduce their opportunities to practice their language skills.

Although most interviewees want to interact with residents of different ethnic or class backgrounds, divisions along ethnic and class lines are very much present. This is especially the case for places like cafes and restaurants. It is less so for public places, such as parks, although contact between the different groups rather limited.

Social life in general is positively evaluated, especially relations with neighbours and irrespective of their ethnic and class background. Those relations, however, only are of the strong type between residents with the same ethnic origin and/or class position. Some perceive those strong ties as negative when they lead to strict social control. Strong social control may limit social mobility. Diversity then could contribute to providing opportunities to improve one's social position. One illustration of strategies to escape social control is when people ask neighbours with a different (ethnic) background about job opportunities within an informal economy circuit that is unknown to people of their own background. However, today social cohesion in hyper-diverse neighbourhoods is based on 'weak ties' rather than on 'strong ties'. Instead of problematizing the lack of 'strong ties', it might be better to focus on the opportunities that 'weak ties' offer to the creating of inclusive communities (Saeys et al. 2015).

Living in diversity may also contribute to fostering open-mindedness and to learn how to deal with cultural differences. Schools are very important in this respect. The problem is that parents (of both Belgian and foreign origin) are reluctant to sent their children to 'black' schools because they are afraid that this will negatively affect future opportunities of their children. When it concerns schools, almost all interviewees prefer mixed schools over completely white or non-white schools. Schools seem a particularly important site to bring groups together, which requires public investment and close attention of educational professionals to how children manage (or not) to live in diversity. However, creating mixed schools is not enough to teach children how to deal with diversity. Discussion on how diversity can be expressed at school is to be preferred over top-down interventions to curtail certain expressions of diversity, as this may lead to segregation. An example of such a discussion is whether it is acceptable that public schools (these are schools governed by the Flemish Community, or the 'Gemeenschapsonderwijs' – GO) don not allow children to wear religious (or other) symbols (Saeys et al. 2015).

In general, interviewees are not aware that the city has a diversity policy that could have an impact on and in their neighbourhood. Some specific initiatives are well-known and their importance is recognized.

III. Regarding the position of people in poverty with respect to diversity

In spite of the growing attention to the city dwellers' heterogeneity, it seems as if one important category has almost been forgotten: people (living) in poverty – a more appropriate designation of what is usually called 'the poor' – although they constituted an important part of the urban diversity puzzle since the origins of cities. Is it because they were usually perceived as 'a dangerous class' (*une classe dangereuse*), rather threatening urban life than contributing to it? Or is it because 'the poor' are not easily identifiable at the city level, because of the heterogeneity – which usually means that they are often put in the same 'problematic' basket with migrants. Moreover, there are no reliable figures available at the level of individual cities – certainly not for Belgium. The information we have is on some proxy variables such as the number of persons receiving the guaranteed minimum income ('leefloon', *RIS: revenu d'insertion sociale*), the number of children in poverty, the number of persons entitled to cheaper health care (the so-called OMNIO-status). The first indicator gives a good indication, not as the percentage of the population receiving the guaranteed income in a given city but in relation to the (national/regional) average. Then we see that this 'social assistance risk' is very high in the larger Belgian cities as Brussels, Antwerp and Liege.

The question of urban poverty (in cities) includes features such as the position of the city in its city-region, urban flight, rural-urban migration (to seek employment or for reasons of service provision), spatial concentration within the city and resulting polarization and even segregation, and stigmatization based on residence. Especially 'urban flight' is a complex phenomenon, because it means that higher income groups are fleeing the city, whereas at the same time the subject of increasing suburban poverty has become a matter of concern.

For many years, the situation of people in poverty and migrant communities in the city has almost been reduced to one and the same problem. There are several reasons for this mixing up of both population groups, such as that large parts of the cities have been deserted by the higher-income groups, leaving behind lower income segments (the older population and the ethnic newcomers). On the other hand, there is the fact that the majority of migrants have always been more than an aggregate of individuals, but were present (and visible) as communities. The rise of xenophobic feelings, partly a result of consecutive crises and rising unemployment, partly a result of the successes of right-wing and even racist parties – such as the Vlaams Blok in, first Antwerp and later Flanders – is another factor to be taken into account.

What does this imply for our subject? First, that a very large part of our cities' population consists of people in poverty – their share is even larger than that of 'ethnic minorities'. Moreover, the trend is towards an increase in their part, given the relation between the percentage of people in poverty and the level of economic welfare of the country. On the basis of the indicators used, we may suppose that, at least, their living conditions and their SES are deviating enough from those of the 'average' (or 'median') city dweller, to treat them as a specific category of city dwellers. Does this suffice to conclude that they are contributing to the city's diversity? Indicators such as income, possession of goods or labour market participation are important but they do not represent the total picture; they do certainly not tell us everything about their cultural and behavioural pattern, which is not to be neglected when describing and analysing the pattern of social relations within a city. This is, moreover, relevant because the cultural dimension constitutes an important part of the whole discourse on diversity; see concepts such as multiculturalism, pluriculturalism, interculturalism.

1. A theoretical elaboration

We will have a brief look at the following elements: the positive functions of poverty, the culture of poverty, and the praxis of poverty, to conclude with the question of the power (lessness) of people in poverty to fully participate in the construction of the city's diversity.

Gans' list of the *'positive functions of poverty'* (Gans, 1972) illustrates that the existence of poverty and the presence of poor people in our cities should not only be approached in terms of a 'social problem', but that it also contributes very much to their 'sustainability'; as such is not only reveals some of the structural features of modern poverty but sheds some light on the part they have played, play, and will play in the city's diversity. Gans's list consists of thirteen positive (economic, social, cultural and even ecological) functions (Gans, 1971). Apart from its academic use, this text is not irrelevant to frame contemporary political statements and programmes when it comes to matters such as social assistance and poverty policies in general.

Another relevant entry is the hypothesis of the existence of a specific *'culture of poverty'*. We will not discuss this hypothesis in detail, but conclude from the debate that living in poverty is characterized by the combination of two sets of values: the dominant values and their interpretation by the poor, sometimes leading to the development of typical alternatives. The result is that the poor possess a broader value range than the middle classes; in this respect, the (very) poor do resemble the (very) rich. This wide range of specific values provide the poor with the necessary opportunities to adapt to their living conditions without having to adopt deviant behaviour. However, even behaviour usually labelled as deviant ('promiscuous' sexual relations, 'illegal' children, and 'unmarried' mothers) should rather be considered as solutions to their problems and not as social problems. A wide range of publications on those facets has been produced since; they have been discussed by Newman and Massengill (2006) and Small, Harding & al. (2010).

As for the relation between cities and 'culture of poverty', Fisher (1975) posits that the city's size is positively correlated with the number of subcultures, and size of a subculture is positively related to the variety in the city's social infrastructure, it could be expected that a 'culture of poverty' or a 'subculture of

the poor' has more chances to develop in an urban environment. (Vranken and Friedrichs 2001). Indeed, cities possess a higher 'critical mass'. This makes it easier to reproduce subcultures in a larger city and to host many subcultures. Moreover, competition between different subcultures has a clear mobilizing effect on their development.

Each society has its own *'praxis of poverty',* which should not be confused with a 'culture of poverty'. Whereas the latter refers to a specific pattern of values and norms, other structural components meet with a cultural pattern in the praxis, such as a low degree of participation and a relationship of dependency. In what does this 'praxis of poverty' differ from the dominant praxis?

The public dimension of the praxis of poverty is not based upon a regular participation in the economic process of production, which does result in other forms of sociability for the poor. Personal, diffuse and discontinuous relationships replace the impersonal, specific and continuous ones that are typical for this public dimension to which the non-poor are largely conforming. Even if the person in poverty finds a job, full participation in the economic process is hampered by his limited technical capabilities and by his personalization of relations with the employer or the need to do so. If he does not have a job, the acquisition of income even depends totally or mainly upon the personalization of relationships such as in the selling of relatively unmarketable goods by giving them some imaginary value. Even in receiving an income to which he is formally entitled, personalised relationships play an important role for the poor. It is also characterized by the absence of the so-called 'deferred gratification patterns'.

In the end, the public and the private dimension tends to amalgamate for persons living in poverty. From the moment on that this reduction takes place, the centre of the organization of daily life shifts to the private dimension. This private sphere has a double function: refuse and refuge (Vercauteren 1970). Both imply and reject each other, as society itself at the same time refuses and is refused. The 'refuse' function represents the centrifugal and eliminating dimension of society. From the position of the poor, however, this 'refuse' has a centripetal character: because it exists, the poor always have a place to go to and to meet others who are in a comparable position. The same symmetry is characteristic for the other function, 'refuge'. For society, this function is centripetal because it supposes an identification of the poor with the dominant values and norms. From the perspective of the poor, however, this 'refuge' function has a centrifugal function: it expresses values and norms that are being imposed by society.

The world of the poor thus cannot be seen as isolated from the rest of society nor can it be taken as an integral part of it. Excluded from society, the poor have to fall back upon their world. It offers them the subsistence minimum of durability they need to refute their economic and social uselessness. The status they gain in this way, however, will never be stable enough to form an autonomous entity: society will always remain the point of reference, economically, politically, socially and culturally. It seems as if the poor are trying to construct an identity through referring to other social groups, situations or positions. Nevertheless, these are just distorting mirrors of their own group, the situation or positions. The importance of consumption is a good illustration: it often expresses an attempt to compensate absence from economic, social and political participation by seeking refuge in dominant consumption patterns.

But there is more. Does the existence of a 'culture of poverty' automatically imply the existence of an organized social reality – such as a social class? Two questions arise in this respect. How to position people in poverty in social stratification schemes? Are people in poverty a social class side by side with other classes? From this perspective, they have been named a 'new working class', a 'lower class', a 'lower-lower class', a 'lowest class'. This would, however, overrate the structural position of people in poverty. They are at most a social stratum (in the sense of 'soziale Schicht', 'couche sociale'); that is a structural relevant category, whose members only have a relation of non-possession to factors of production. Indeed, the population in poverty includes (unemployed and employed) wage earners, self-employed (small retailers, farmers, artisans) and persons who are not or no longer active (invalids, pensioners); in other words, persons (groups) who structurally belong to different classes, but have as a common characteristic that they do not realize one of the production factors or do so only incompletely (unskilled labour, little or inadequate capital or land, obsolete combinations of different factors).

Politically, people in poverty therefore cannot act autonomously; they are fundamentally powerlessness, because they are outside the economic process of production and therefore are not able to form social entities such as labour unions, political parties or social and cultural associations. Pressure can only be

exercised through stronger actors, such as labour unions, political parties, welfare organizations or the state itself; in extreme cases by a momentary eruption personified in a charismatic leader.

A related question is about whether the poor can exercise relevant effects on other levels through their cultural patterns. A definition of the poor as a 'social stratum' implies that this cultural pattern of the poor should be analysed in relation to the cultural patterns of social classes. This leads us to formulate two hypotheses. In situations where rather general and abstract statements are due, the poor use the dominant value pattern as a frame of reference. In specific social situations, that is in situations where behaviour is implied, the frames of reference are their own 'minority' interpretations of general values. This difference between dominant pattern and minority interpretation can be explained as follows. Minority interpretations cannot be transformed into an objective system, because the social environment in which they originated is a dependent one. Moreover, as has already been stated, the poor lack the (institutionalized) power to transform their minority interpretation into socially accepted patterns. It is true that so-called pertinent effects could be discovered in the creation of a system of services for marginalized groups, but the functionality of this system for the dominant groups is quite clear.

Because of the unequal permeability of borders between social classes, cultural patterns are transmitted from higher to lower classes but not vice versa. This is another reason why the cultural patterns of the poor (as is the case with that of the workers, but in lesser degree) are aligned to these upper classes. It could partly explain the gap between the poor and the working classes, why a specific set of values and norms has been materialized and why this reality functions as the mediating institution for the transfer of dominant cultural patterns to the poor. The higher vulnerability of the poor, compared with workers or ethnic minorities, can be explained by the presence of coherent cultural patterns in the latter collectives and by their absence with the poor.

2. Some final comments and recommendations

In what respect do people in poverty contribute to urban diversity? As for hyperdiversity, their contribution is relatively small because of the central place of the cross-cutting of different economic, social, and cultural characteristics in its definition. But for people in poverty, the economic, social and cultural dimensions of their life cluster; what is called status consistency in sociological literature.

However, it may be that at this rather interpersonal level, their contribution is fairly weak; on the other hand, their contribution to the diversity of the city as a social category (group, stratum, class or culture) should not be neglected. This is well illustrated by the 'positive functions' of Gans; people in poverty are unmistakeably part of the 'urban body': as cheap labour force, as job providers, as consumers (of lower-quality goods and services), as moral reference groups.

Defined in terms of difference, there is not a position of 'differentiation' because they are often directly visible as 'poor' or fragmentation, which would only be the case is their social position and culture word be on par with that of other city dwellers – which is not the case. Their relation with the rest of the city is characterized by inequality. That is, as long as they are not excluded from urban life. If they are excluded, enclosed in ghetto-like neighbourhoods and/or excluded from public perception and discourse, then they are cut off from any form of diversity. There are signs that the dwindling of structural forms of solidarity, especially of the bottom-up type, and their replacement with disciplinary top-down imposed forms of 'solidarity' are leading to this exclusion.

So what about attempts to create an urban social mix, which would facilitate hyperdiversity? The findings of the Antwerp research clearly show that living in the same neighbourhood does not mean that people actually do maintain in-depth relationships with each other. Attracting middle-class people to a deprived neighbourhood, hence, does not directly affect the social mobility of people in a deprived position. The white middle-class living in diverse areas mostly connect with other white middle-class people and meet each other at homogeneous places. The policy implication is that if politicians want social mix to generate results, the main challenge is that their programmes and projects have to attract the different socio-economic, cultural and religious groups. However, most people do experience the lack of 'strong ties' with neighbours of other ethnic origins as a deficit; they feel that they maintain good relations with their neighbours. Policy-makers should hence perhaps better value the 'light' forms of living in diversity, which do not require strong bonds but a capacity to deal with diversity as an evident reality.

The Liège research leads to a somewhat more optimistic conclusions. We learn that the involvement of the interviewees in the management of the 'city' is characterized by optimism and a willingness to live together in harmony. A sign of this is the participation in research. Local governance can consider the issue of diversity in various ways: ignore the differences, try to erase them, polarize them, consider some and forget others, or even try to bring them together. 'Valuing diversity' then refers to any initiative to promote intercultural relations as a source of enrichment for local action. The 'intercultural governance' is to develop a proactive, participatory and preventive approach (Manço and Bolzman, 2009, 2010) in order to create or support 'friction' between people and different cultural groups; to embody issues related to 'living together'; to include specific issues to minorities in public actions; to allow minorities to express their sensitivities in decision-making; to involve groups of immigrants in the public debate; to create spaces of concentration between professional, a decompartmentalization between sectors and associations; to facilitate consultations between professionals, their audiences and their hierarchy; and to exchange good practices with other cities.

Two leitmotifs 'pro-diversity' are necessary at the local level. The first is to enhance the resources and expertise of the stakeholders in the field (social workers, sociocultural animators) and their audiences, including migrants and their associations. The second is to promote the integration of 'intercultural skills' (Manço, 2002) in a global vision of communal policies: among the players, the networks, the coordinators, the politicians. Among the steps of an intercultural policy, Wood and Landry (2007) identified a 'mission statement' of the city, taking account of the main functions of the municipality through an 'intercultural magnifier' (projects in education, in the public sphere, in housing, in neighbourhoods, in the police, in the world of commerce, sports, and entertainment), and exploration and identification of best practices from elsewhere. Beyond any doubt, many initiatives already exist; but they still can be deepened. More networking, to capitalize on the 'good practices' and to launch a programme of training and cross-cultural awareness for all stakeholders – including politicians, representatives of the private sector and even implement advisory forums in the districts – could enrich existing devices.

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