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Super-diversity as a methodological lens calls for a study of dynamics of new and diversified social groups that moves away from more traditional approaches focused on ethnicity. In examining the potential of super-diversity as a methodological lens, I identify a risk of downplaying the effect of "old" categories of difference that are likely to continue to shape social structures as well as space. I propose a re-centering of power and inequality in the study of super-diversity by situating its study within an urban culturalist approach, with sociological tools borrowed from ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism. This proposal is illustrated through the analysis of two public spaces in a super-diverse New York neighborhood. I conclude by raising questions about the use of super-diversity discourse in the public and policy spheres.

Socrates Sculpture Park, New York City. It is a warm Saturday, and I am spending time in this park as a researcher of public space in Astoria, a diverse neighborhood in Queens. I stroll past the stalls of the farmers market, watching the mostly white vendors and customers, many of the latter wearing expensive casual clothing and toting yoga mats. A guest chef is demonstrating how to prepare sauces to go with a duck breast. There is a group of Latina women pushing strollers laden with shopping bags. They walk past the tent that processes low-income food credits accepted at the market, and join other Latina women who are shopping at the stand of a Mexican immigrant pepper farmer. A 40ish lesbian couple, one white, one African American, wear matching bike helmets as they shop.

Elsewhere in the park, there is a scattering of people, many of whom are looking at or taking pictures of the sculpture installations. Others are enjoying the waterfront views of Manhattan. A group of young East Asian women make their away around the perimeter of the park, chatting and taking pictures. A Middle Eastern group of four children, a man, and a woman wearing a hijab, move leisurely past the installations, the two younger children frolicking in the grass. An elderly white couple sit in foldable lawn chairs, observing the action. A Latina woman looks over the water, holding the hand of a young girl. In a shady corner, a South Asian man and a young boy are casting fishing rods, a huge grin on the boy's face. Two young African American men are sitting on the railing, sharing tinny music on their phones. By the hedges on the other side of the park are three bedraggled looking white men, nursing concealed drinks.

As I walk around, I hear English and Spanish, and several languages I cannot definitively identify. There are people of various ages, race, ethnicity, immigration status, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, people with disabilities and without, locals and visitors from elsewhere in the city and beyond. This one small urban park seems to encapsulate not just local diversity,

but super-diversity, with its implication of multi-dimensional complexity and the challenges it poses to researchers and policy-makers (Meissner 2015; Vertovec 2007). The concept of super-diversity calls on social scientists to recognize the new immigration-driven reality in cities like London and New York, where there is differentiation of not just ethnicity, but a myriad of other variables that intersect in ways that lead to unequal opportunities within ethnic groups as well as between them, including along dimensions of religion, age, gender, legal status, and class (Vertovec 2007). In public spaces like Socrates Sculpture Park and in the surrounding immigrant-rich neighborhood, the lens of super-diversity allows us to move beyond ethnicity, the traditional preoccupation of urban and migration scholars. By conceptualizing these spaces as super-diverse, scholars are able to free themselves from assumptions about what type of difference matters, providing a fresh way to approach old questions of integration, transnationalism, and tolerance (Meissner and Vertovec 2015). Vertovec (2007) argues that using super-diversity helps scholars study new patterns of inequality and prejudice. Responding to a context of heightened urban conflict, particularly the 2001 riots in several UK cities, he explains that the super-diversity approach can illuminate the conditions under which diverse populations engage meaningfully with each other.

In this paper, I raise questions about super-diversity as a methodological lens. Vertovec (2007, 1047) proposes a qualitative approach that focuses on interactions between actors, analyzing both the meanings of these interactions and the structural forces and social categories that shape understandings and behavior. In elaborating the approach, Meissner (2015) highlights the multidimensional nature of diversity and the imperative to investigate "social patterns that are not necessarily marked by perceived inequalities, but where the simultaneity of multiple axes of differentiation results in positively or ambivalently perceived social relations" (557). Thus, the

concept of super-diversity rightly draws attention to the complexity of different dimensions of difference. But while foregrounding it, and improving on ethno-centric foci of much of migration research, it risks downplaying the differences among differences. In other words, while researchers orient themselves to new emergent patterns of complexity, particularly while looking for "key forms of space and contact that might yield positive benefits" (Vertovec 2007, 1046), they should not assume that the rise of super-diversity necessarily brings a decline in the role of the "old" categories of race, class, and gender. These categories may seem less reliable as signifiers of commonalities or differences in everyday encounters. However, they can continue to wield influence by shaping social organization of institutions, spaces and communities.

This paper seeks to contribute to the body of critical responses to super-diversity (e.g. Boccagni 2015; Hall 2017; Makoni 2012; Ndhlovu 2016). Makoni (2012) noted the tendency to romanticize the diversification of diversity, leading to "a careful concealment of power differences" and "an illusion of equality in a highly asymmetrical world" (192). Everyday interactions, which may take place without much apparent conflict across difference occur within a macro structure of systemic oppressions that remains powerfully salient. These systems of oppression are grounded in long histories of unequal distribution of power and resources by race, class, and gender – the very categories the strength of which may appear to be fading in everyday encounters taking place amidst a dazzling super-diversity. Moreover, as Hall (2017) points out, super-diversity is inextricable from the violent and discriminatory border regimes that produce it. How do we incorporate an analysis of power, structural inequality, and hegemony into the ethnographic study of everyday super-diversity?

In what follows, I explore these questions, arguing that much can be gained in the study of immigration, cities, and public space by adding an ethnomethodological and symbolic

interactionist lens to the super-diversity approach. By treating difference as an ongoing accomplishment rather than a set of interrelated variables, and social actors as actively interpreting their social contexts in interactions, the study of super-diversity can avoid overemphasizing the patina of positive or neutral sociality and remain sufficiently sensitive to exclusions, interplays of power, and reproduction of inequality unfolding in everyday interactions. In addition, I argue for an urban culturalist approach (Borer 2006) to super-diversity, focused on the role of urban space in meaning-making, place identities, and reactions and interactions with place and in place. I provide two ethnographic examples from Astoria, New York, to illustrate the ways in which these methodological approaches can help illuminate the everyday accomplishment of difference and reproduction of inequality without reifying social categories. Situated in a setting marked by immigration-driven super-diversity, these examples focus on public space as a research site for studying interactions with place and between social actors. I also find that public space actors use diversity as a cultural construct to promote particular interests.

Super-diversity as a methodological lens

Meissner and Vertovec (2015) identify three aspects of super-diversity: descriptive, methodological, and practical. The methodological leverage of super-diversity comes from casting off the straitjacket of ethnicity, and, instead, analyzing the dynamics of new and diversified social groups and cross-cutting categories. Super-diversity as a methodological lens calls for approaches that promise progress in "rethinking patterns of inequality, prejudice and segregation; gaining a more nuanced understanding of social interactions, cosmopolitanism and

creolization; elaborating theories of mobility; and obfuscating the spurious dualism of transnationalism versus integration" (Meissner and Vertovec 2015, 543). I argue that super-diversity might hold such potential, but that it can also obscure enduring structures of inequality by over-focusing on emergent social categories, and that it can benefit from being interpolated with other methodological approaches.

A new literature engaging with super-diversity has emerged in the past decade. Berg and Sigona (2013) praise the "diversity turn" and super-diversity as an approach to the study of urban space, challenging ethnographers to move away from essentializing ethnicity. Padilla, Azevedo, and Olmos-Alcaraz (2015) even contend that research with a super-diversity lens can help break the cycle of reification of ethnic Otherness. Drawing on their multi-sited ethnography of two Southern European cities, they argue that everyday difference comes to be viewed positively by locals, and that analysis of conflict moves beyond race and ethnicity. Similarly Acosta-Garcia and Martinez-Ortiz (2015) use a super-diversity lens by focusing on "collective intermingling" (641) rather than discrete migration streams in Mexico, and Biehl (2015) argues that this lens helps her understand access to housing in Istanbul that is shaped by more than gender and race.

Several recent studies analyze the dynamics and implications of super-diversity specifically in urban public spaces. For instance, Wilson (2011) argues that ordinary encounters on a diverse Birmingham bus can have lasting effects on the way people understand difference. Although she shows how these encounters could reinforce prejudice and exclusion, there is also a strong potential for an affective disruption of dominant categorizations and norms that can lead to recognition and even tolerance. Neal and colleagues (2015) draw on interviews in which they brought together strangers using city parks to show that people become oriented towards mixing and tolerance through enjoyment of these public spaces. Other recent ethnographic studies show

that diversity can become an unremarkable fact of everyday life in super-diverse settings (Wessendorf 2014; Jones et al 2015), and that people in such settings often negotiate differences in everyday encounters with ease and a cosmopolitan orientation (Neal et al 2013).

Some of the recent research on lived and routine super-diversity incorporates Gilroy's (2004) arguments for illuminating social dispositions that lead to convivial patterns of coexistence in diverse neighborhoods. Although attention to everyday conviviality in super-diverse settings can be seen a corrective to reified, colonial categories of race and ethnicity (Gilroy 2004), Ndhlovu (2015) argues that it replicates a Western, elite, and neoliberal conceptualization of identity. Relatedly, in an analysis of multiculture in the UK that could be extended to super-diversity, Fortier (2008) points out that it serves to obscure histories of racist domination with visual spectacle of seemingly inclusive mixing of diverse people. Hall (2017) argues that super-diversity's connection to "structures of economic and political power and the inequalities they secure is not explicitly advanced" (1565, see also Boccagni 2015).

Thus, the relationship between fleeting civil, or even convivial, interactions among people of different racial and ethnic categories and durable structures of inequality is not always apparent in research utilizing the super-diversity framework. Moreover, we are cautioned by Valentine (2008) to remain cognizant of the gap between superficial everyday practices of urban dwellers and their deeply-held values and beliefs. Gidley (2013) points out that observation in public space alone as an ethnographic approach does not reveal key differences in private lives. Public behavior and everyday routine interactions should certainly not be dismissed, yet how do we analyse and understand the significance of these interactions? Several recent US-based studies have focused on neighborhoods that are diverse, have a reputation for tolerance, and celebrate their diversity. However, deeper analysis reveals that even there, socioeconomic and

racial inequality is reproduced through daily encounters and durable social structures (Mayorga-Gallo 2015; Tissot 2015; Zelner 2015). What do everyday interactions then say, if anything, about who has more access to power? Whose options in life are limited by structural inequality and discrimination, and whose are enhanced? Moreover, how do we answer these questions with ethnographic methodologies? I propose that the strengths of the super-diversity framework are maximized when it is situated within an urban culturalist approach (Borer 2006), with tools borrowed from ethnomethodology (West and Fenstermaker 1995) and symbolic interactionism (Anderson and Snow 2001).

First developed by Garfinkel (1988), ethnomethodology is a subfield of sociology focused on how people make meaning and produce social life in everyday settings. Since it rejects reifying social categories, it is an excellent fit for super-diversity as a methodological lens. At the same time, ethnomethodologists are interested in empirically studying how hierarchies and inequalities are maintained through using an ethnographic approach focused on everyday encounters. They investigate and compare the salience of social categories to see how seemingly objective social properties achieve their taken-for-grantedness (Zimmerman 1978). Particularly useful here is West and Fenstermaker's (1995) call to conceptualize "difference as an ongoing interactional accomplishment" (8). By looking at how people *do difference*, scholars can study how social categories take on their meaning in social interactions, and understand how these categories variably constrain people. Ultimately, these social categories are both an outcome of inequality and are used to rationalize inequality. This focus on the accomplishment of difference, rather than plotting the many simultaneous axes of super-diversity, promises to illuminate the mechanisms through which power hierarchies are produced and reproduced.

Symbolic interactionism, a related and at times overlapping micro-sociological tradition, situates the study of social interactions within social contexts. Goffman's (1959, 1971) theoretical and methodological approaches, for example, treat people as social actors who make decisions as they interpret social situations, interact, and "perform" their roles, rather than simply react to stimuli or be passive receptacles of dominant cultural categories. Ethnographic approaches that adopt this perspective can uncover the interplay of power in social interactions, trace patterns of inclusion and exclusion that directly affect material outcomes, and bring to light struggles over the very definitions of categories that structure interaction *and* access to resources (Anderson and Snow 2001).

Urban culturalism (Borer 2006, 2010) brings the interactionist approach to the study of the city and highlights the spatial dimension. Borer (2006) identifies six areas for urban culturalist research, three of which are useful here. The first is urban community and civic culture, exemplified by Mario Small's (2004) analysis of changing cultural frames that characterize the relationship of people to their neighborhoods. The second is urban identities and lifestyles: how urban residents use place to construct their identities. The third area of urban culturalist research is attuned to how people cope with the complexity of urban life by making urban places meaningful through interactions and place design. Researchers who want to make sense of these meanings should observe reactions to places and interactions among actors (Borer 2006; Lofland 1998).

Altogether, these three sociological approaches promise to enrich the study of super-diversity by providing tools to analyse power hierarchies, stratification, and inequality without abandoning an ethnographic focus on the everyday in urban spaces.

Tracing power in a super-diverse community garden

Examples from my research help to illustrate these points. A community garden in Astoria, Queens, epitomized super-diversity: there were more than 40 languages spoken by recent and long-term immigrants who gardened there, and the variation in socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, and disability was remarkable. Whether or not this super-diversity is new in New York is arguable, and it is important not to overstate its influence (Foner 2017). By starting with an urban culturalist perspective that centers place, and using an ethnomethodological lens and an interactionist approach, I was able to move my analysis beyond description of the dizzying super-diversity to tracing local power inequalities. I did find that differences other than race and ethnicity mattered in the community garden context. At the same time, dominant societal hierarchies also found their way into what on the surface appeared to be a multicultural haven. In the process, I came to see the role of diversity as an ideology that served particular interests in the garden.

The community garden is located in a super-diverse Queens neighborhood. Astoria's population is 55 percent white, 10 percent black, 16 percent Asian, 18 percent other or multiple races, and 30 percent Hispanic of all races (US Census Bureau 2016). Native Americans living in Queens were decimated by smallpox in the 17th century, and the area that became known as Astoria was settled by waves of European immigrants. Contemporary Astoria still bears the marks of immigration from Italy, and then Greece, which dominated in the early and mid-20th century, respectively (Alexiou 2013). No single immigrant group comes close to demographic dominance among more recent newcomers. Forty-six percent of Astoria residents were born outside of the United States, with the largest groups coming from Greece, Mexico, Ecuador,

Colombia, Italy, and Bangladesh as well as North Africa (US Census 2016). Astoria is also home to a spatially segregated African American population, many of whom are migrants from the US South and their descendants. The last decade has seen an influx of affluent, largely non-Hispanic white residents who are attracted to Astoria's proximity to Manhattan. Developers turn old factories into upscale apartments and build brand new luxury developments. Local political leaders talk of Astoria's immigration-driven diversity as a laudable quality that distinguishes the neighborhood, focusing on European-origin groups and rarely acknowledging the presence of African Americans.

At the time of my research, the community garden contained about 120 plots, used by individuals and groups, as well as several common spaces and a shared community plot. It was surrounded by a tall chain-link fence with a locked gate. As part of the New York City-regulated community garden system, the garden had to be open to the public at least 20 hours per week, allowing people who were not garden members to spend time there. The garden was run by an elected steering committee and overseen by a city-affiliated non-profit organization. I spent around 220 hours there as a participant observer from 2011 to 2013. I began my fieldwork as a volunteer in the shared community plot, eventually becoming a garden member and sharing a plot with another gardener. I am a white middle class immigrant woman in my 30s who grew up in New York City. Different aspects of my identity shaped how respondents related to me and interpreted my presence in the field (Mayorga-Gallo and Hordge-Freeman 2016). I was variably seen as a fellow immigrant, a fellow "real" New Yorker (vis-à-vis gentrifiers), and a privileged white woman to either identify with or suspect. In addition to participant observation, I conducted seventeen semi-structured interviews with locals involved in various ways with the garden.

The visual and aural spectacle of the community garden communicates super-diversity. Visitors marvel at the many languages, ethnicities, ages, and the number of people with various physical and mental disabilities. Even longtime members of the garden sometimes remarked that this was a unique place for forming relationships with people very different from them. These sentiments were expressed, for instance, by members of a group that worked together to develop a new technology for converting compost into fuel: a working-class Chinese immigrant woman suffering the effects of a devastating accident, an African American man eking out a precarious living as an organizer in local public housing, and a second generation child of European immigrants, an artist who had moved to Astoria before the full-fledged onset of gentrification. The parochial nature of the garden provided an opportunity to engage in a meaningful way across lines of difference, something that is usually more difficult in other public spaces like parks, sidewalks, and buses.

Taking an urban culturalist perspective focused my ethnographic research on people's meaning-making around place itself. By observing how people worked with the material space, how they talked about it to me and to each other, and by uncovering assumptions about what the space meant to them, I came to the conclusion that there were distinct and clashing ways of imagining the garden (Aptekar 2015). Some gardeners treated the garden primarily as a place to grow food. Others were concerned with aesthetics of green urbanism. I became sensitive to the varying ways that gardeners viewed the garden through observing everyday interactions, which revealed small and large tensions and shared norms that developed around this space. I tried to examine how people *did* super-diversity in everyday encounters, and, in the process, analysed which of the many differences among them mattered more than others, in what contexts, and how. I found that there were opportunities to disrupt dominant hierarchies, and gardeners with

less power were sometimes able to draw on their localness and protected social status as elderly and/or disabled to defend and promote their interests. These instances of disruption were partly facilitated by alliances with more privileged gardeners who could use various forms of capital to lend legitimacy to their claims. Nevertheless, in interacting with each other and with the materiality of the space, gardeners tended to recreate entrenched hierarchies that structured the world outside the garden gates. Spoken and unspoken rules governing the space controlled the people in that space. These rules were ostensibly race-, gender-, and class-blind, yet were deeply influenced by these axes of inequality.

For example, one chilly November day, I was with three gardeners in the communal plot, planting garlic that would come up the following spring. Two of the three, both middle aged Asian immigrant women, Mika (middle class and Japanese) and Tai (working class and Chinese), started to mark the small area that we had already planted. They placed a small tree branch in the ground and put an empty water bottle on top. The third woman, Becky, a white attorney in her early 40s, rushed over and said: "No, you can't stick that up here. Take it down." Mika said: "We need to mark the area." To which Becky replied: "There are many ways to mark it better, like with markers in the cabinet." Mika and Tai did not respond, and although their facial expressions and body language betrayed irritation, they removed the recycled water bottle and found small popsicle sticks and twine. Becky did not object to these. This exchange was a clash of two garden visions. Primarily concerned with enhancing food production, Mika and Tai had tried to use immediately available materials to facilitate their planting task. For Becky, orderly and "natural" appearance of the garden was more important than functionality, even if it slowed down a repetitive task undertaken with fingers cramped with cold. The largely implicit rules about the way the garden should look privileged the aesthetic sensibilities of more affluent

gardeners (Zukin 1998), who tended to be native-born whites originally from outside of New York. In this interaction, as in many others, there was a grudging deference to these seemingly neutral rules, which regulated people by regulating the space. Becky was one of the garden leaders and was periodically involved in censoring the appearance of Tai's plot, who was an avid recycler of "ugly" plastic materials. Becky's dominance in this encounter came both from her access to multiple forms of capital and the spatial regulation of the garden. Distinct power dynamics structured super-diverse encounters in ways that reproduced systems of domination shaped by race and class inequalities[1].

In multiple everyday encounters, mostly without any overt conflict, these actors and many others negotiated difference among multiple dimensions. On the surface, it seemed that diverse people interacted with each other civilly, and the differences that mattered were not those so often privileged by social scientists. For instance, claims to localness or being known as a skillful gardener could be effectively used to leverage influence. But what was also clear is that larger societal inequalities, especially race and class, continued to be important in the garden and pointed to the dynamics of power in social interactions. In looking at how hierarchies and inequalities were maintained in everyday encounters, I came to understand the social categories that structured interactions, as well as access to valued outcomes.

The gardeners who had more power in the garden due to their class and race often employed their social, cultural, economic, and human capital to their advantage. They were able to get what they wanted: for the garden to look a certain way, for nonconforming gardeners to toe the aesthetic line, to control access to the garden, and even influence what plants would be cultivated. Not surprisingly, as recent research on the discourse of diversity suggests (Ahmed 2012; Bell and Hartmann 2007; Berrey 2015; Mayorga-Gallo 2015), perceptions and claims of

diversity can help buttress inequitable realities. The city government-affiliated non-profit organization that oversaw this community garden encouraged gardens that reflected the diversity of the city, even intervening in those that appeared to be controlled by one ethnic group. As Martinez (2010) documents in a study of the Lower East Side, some gardens function as a restorative and resistive spaces for one ethnic community (e.g. Puerto Rican *casita* gardens), rather than formally regulated and open gardens favored by non-profit organizations. Leaders of the Astoria garden could point to its racial and linguistic diversity to deflect criticism. One member of the steering committee – likely confiding in me as a perceived in-group member – explained to me that they did not have to have to worry about the city closing the garden down because city officials had their hands full with more problematic gardens. This garden, she said, had "its diversity going for it".

While technically public in the sense of providing open access, a space like the Astoria community garden, with semi-permeable physical, symbolic, and social boundaries fosters more deeply engaged relations than the fleeting encounters characteristic of many other public spaces. The garden is a clearly bounded space, where place-specific friendships developed and, in some cases, extended beyond the boundaries of the garden itself. Moreover, users actively worked with the design and material elements of the garden through such activities as weeding, pruning, and planting, presenting multiple opportunities to understand place-specific meaning making and the ongoing accomplishment of difference that reproduced power inequalities. In the following section, I return to a very different site in Astoria, described in the opening section. Unlike the community garden, Socrates Sculpture Park is characterized by fleeting interaction or even non-interaction, which poses methodological difficulties.

Moving beyond fleeting interactions

Socrates Sculpture Park is a public park with open access, run by a private-public partnership that manages it as an exhibition space for new sculpture. A typical experience at the park opened this paper, illustrating the apparent super-diversity of park visitors and the non-conflictual tenor of the space. However, these impressions belied the ways in which the park replicated race and class inequalities through practices of exclusion, as well as through a context of class-specific consumption of cultural products. To uncover these dynamics below the surface of peaceful super-diversity, I again employed insights from ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism, with a focus on meaning-making in and through space, everyday accomplishment of difference, and reproduction of inequality. It was also necessary to situate the park in its neighborhood context and learn from people who avoided the park as well as those who visited it. I found that the diversity discourse itself was used to legitimate the park as an inclusive space that was attractive to the more affluent visitors.

Like the community garden, the park seemed, at first sight, to embody a setting where an inclusive super-diversity had become normalized and accepted. Park visitors appeared diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, if a bit less so by age and disability than people in the garden. There did not seem to be obvious conflicts among those who used the park. This strong impression of a convivial super-diverse space was illustrated by my disagreement with a film crew making a documentary about the neighborhood's diversity. When reacting to my presentation of preliminary findings, which highlighted practices of direct and indirect exclusion, the filmmakers contested my assessment of the park. They argued that their, admittedly few, visits to the park revealed a remarkably inclusive diversity of humanity. They pointed, as an

example, to the footage showing a white belly dancer, a group of young African American children, a middle aged man with "Puerto Rico" embroidered on his hat, girls in hijabs, and a young white couple with a dog on a leash. However, my research, attuned to the ongoing accomplishment of difference and the interplay of power in interaction, revealed that this impression of super-diversity hid practices of exclusion.

While conducting the study, I spent approximately 100 hours of ethnographic fieldwork in the park between 2011 and 2013. I visited the park at different times of day and week, participating in organized activities, such as film screenings and classes, as well as unstructured activities, such as looking at the sculptures and waterfront views or eating lunch there. I conducted unstructured interviews with park users, and drew on semi-structured interviews with neighborhood residents who did not use, but spoke to me about, the park. I also interviewed one staff member. As a white middle class woman, my presence in this park was unremarkable, although it may have appeared less purposeful than that of other white middle class women because I was not jogging, walking a dog, or caring for children.

Getting at the structures of power when studying a place with few enduring relationships was an ongoing challenge. Tracing the contours of inequality was difficult because so much of the interaction was fleeting. In understanding how people accomplished difference and reproduced inequalities in interaction, it was essential to understand the larger neighborhood context around the park, its institutional history, and what the park meant to people who rarely or never went there, as well as those for whom it was a regular destination. As in my research in the community garden, I focused on how various kinds of differences operated as a way of getting at mechanisms through which inequality was reproduced. I found that more affluent, mostly white

visitors (living locally or visiting) used the park more openly and freely than working-class

immigrants and African Americans living nearby.

Locating and talking to those who did not use the park deviates from the approach taken

by many parks researchers (e.g. Neal et al 2015), but it proved crucial for identifying less

obvious processes of exclusion. I came to realize that the occasional presence of groups of

African American children, noted by the film crew as evidence of inclusion, signaled a youth

program on an organized visit, different from the more casual use of the park by white children

and their caretakers. The presence of African American children without their parents actually

highlighted how rare it was to see African American *families* in this park, even though it was

only a short walk from a heavily African American area. Meanwhile, many white parents with

young children who lived in the nearby new luxury housing routinely visited the park. Some

working class locals thought the park was like a museum with an entry fee, due to features such

as a staffed tent at the entry, as well as a dearth of benches and the presence of strikingly modern

sculptures (rather than the more traditional statues found in local parks). They thought it was

normal for children to go to the park on an organized trip with a school group, but they did not

feel comfortable going on their own. Many others did go to the park, but stayed at its literal

margins, either on the prohibited side of the waterfront fence, or semi-hidden in the dense hedges

that marked the boundary (Aptekar 2017).

Another example illustrates how urban culturalist analysis of interactions with material

culture and between people helps illuminate inequalities in what might seem a convivial super-

diverse space. I walked into the park with someone I met through the community garden. Alexis

was a middle aged, Asian immigrant woman who worked assorted odd jobs like dog-sitting. She

had grown up in an English-speaking Caribbean country and had lived in New York for many

decades. At this time, one of the showcased artists had put up a large tent with Thai food given out to visitors without charge. There was no sign indicating this, and I only learned that the food was free when looking up the exhibit online later. Among other things, this exhibit was billed as celebrating local diversity, although it was referred to as the diversity of the larger borough of Queens, rather than the neighborhood, and the selected restaurant was not Astoria-based.

Passing by the side of the tent, Alexis yelled out: "Any samples?" and was ignored by the uniformed workers inside. As we approached, she yelled her question again, and one of the women workers stared at Alexis. Smoothing over the awkwardness in a classic manner described by Goffman (1959), Alexis shrugged and said: "Oh well, I guess they don't hear me." A few moments later, we walked through an exhibit featuring miniature versions of local smokestacks. It was crowded with predominantly white visitors, who appeared middle class. Alexis became frustrated by the signage, which was not obviously connected to the smokestacks: "Why do they write stuff like this? How are we supposed to know what they mean?" Right after that, two young Latino people staffing the tent at the main entrance asked us if we wanted a t-shirt with the exhibit logo on it. Alexis asked whether it was free, and they said no. Alexis's frustrated attempts to make sense of the park point to indirect practices of exclusion stemming from class-specific cultural consumption norms. The material content and social norms of public spaces contribute to spaces that satisfy cultural preferences patterned by class (Zukin 1995). No one bars Alexis from entering and enjoying the park, but her expectations and understandings, at least in this case, do not mesh well with the unspoken norms and rules governing this space, which articulate far more comfortably with the expectations of more affluent visitors.

The delivery of diversity, often through food, for cultural consumption was part of the strategy of putting the park on New York's competitive cultural map. This diversity tended to be

conceptualized as diversity of the iconically diverse larger borough of Queens, rather than the immediate neighborhood. The emphasis was on immigration-driven diversity with only a rare mention of African Americans, thereby having the effect of reinforcing racial divisions. Demonstrable engagement with the local community, such as through programming for local minority children – while undoubtedly enriching the cultural experiences of these children – was also part of crafting an image of the park as a diverse and authentic attraction. Research shows that ethnic and racial diversity is attractive as a neighborhood amenity to new affluent residents (Brown-Saracino 2010; Zukin 1995).

Digging beyond the appearance of convivial super-diversity in this site necessitated expanding beyond the urban space under study. Walking through the neighborhood with an informant (Low 2015; Neal et al 2015), and observing her interact with physical elements of the park and actively interpret situations as they arose, allowed me to parse the ways in which inequality is reproduced in everyday encounters. More specifically, I was able to see how the sometimes subtle practices of exclusion shaped meaning-making practices of marginalized urban residents. Situating the park within the residential patterns of the surrounding neighborhood and comparison with other local public places enabled me to note the differences in use of the park by different groups. Goals and strategies of the park leadership, gathered through interviews and secondary material, such as the park website, pamphlets, and media articles, were also useful for understanding how diversity as a concept was used to frame the park as an attractive and authentic space.

Super-diversity: a few cautions

I used the examples of the community garden and the sculpture park to show some of the ways the super-diversity lens can be used methodologically without losing sight of inequality. There are benefits to employing the concept of super-diversity, including its focus on emergent differences and social categories, as well as attention to how they may actually matter to people in contexts of complex and dynamic interplay among multiple variables (Vertovec 2007). This focus meshes well with sociological approaches grounded in traditions of ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism, particularly when centered in urban space. Ethnographic study of everyday interactions in highly diverse spaces can tell us about inequalities in access to power and life chances, provided that scholars consider and contextualize meaning-making practices of social actors. In contrast to Meissner's (2015) call to investigate "social patterns that are not necessarily marked by perceived inequalities" (557), it is critical to emphasize that super-diversity goes hand in hand with inequality.

This means that being open to a wide range of social categories in super-diverse urban spaces must be combined with clear-eyed focus on and understanding of macro patterns of stratification. Super-diversity is a descriptive concept that draws attention to the multiplicity of intersecting social categories in global cities. It helps scholars move away from traditional analyses of race, class, and gender inequalities towards investigations of emergent categories and the lived everyday complexity on the scale of urban places. This can be valuable and innovative, particularly as a corrective to the reification of ethnicity in traditional migration studies. At the same time, traditional migration studies are criticized by critical race theorists for turning a blind eye on the processes of racialization and structural racism (e.g. Treitler 2015). If scholars of super-diversity turn away from persistent inequalities that continue to structure super-diverse contexts and dismiss research that analyses race, class, and gender inequalities as outdated, they

will rightly face the same criticism. For instance, instead of critiquing intersectionality for focusing too much on traditional categories, as Meissner and Vertovec (2015) do, scholars of super-diversity should embrace an emphasis on matrices of oppression highlighted by intersectional approaches (Crenshaw 1989).

In both research sites described in this paper, it became clear that diversity as a concept was used to reproduce dominant power hierarchies. In the community garden, gardeners with more access to various forms of capital used diversity discourse as a signal to the authorities that the status quo in the management of the garden need not be scrutinized for fairness. In the sculpture park, diversity discourse was used by park staff to promote the park as a site of cultural consumption with marketable authenticity. Notably, Vertovec (2007) writes that the city of London used its diversity to make a successful bid for the 2012 Olympic Games. This use of diversity to sell the city as attractive was a new development, even as the detrimental effects of Olympic Games on the more powerless members of hosting communities are well documented (Kennelly and Watt 2011; Minnaert 2012). On a much smaller scale, Socrates Sculpture Park and the community garden are also using the discourse of diversity in ways that support a vision of public space that benefits more powerful members of society.

Although super-diversity is a term born of scholarly pursuits, it has now crossed over into policy and public arenas, particularly in the European context (Meissner and Vertovec 2015). Future work should investigate the use of super-diversity beyond academia, such as Boccagni's (2015) critique of its use in social work. Existing research indicates that the flexible and multivalent concept of diversity can obscure practices of oppression and exclusion. Berry (2015) shows that commitment to diversity in a Chicago housing redevelopment actually works to undermine demands for racial justice and does little to remedy enduring structures of inequality.

Mayorga-Gallo's (2014) research in a diverse neighborhood in North Carolina demonstrates that discourses of diversity support white homeowners' privilege. Diversity language is used to exacerbate inequalities in higher education, both in the US, where Warikoo (2016) shows how elite universities turn diversity into a commodity, undermining policies that seek to redress social injustice, and in the UK and Australia, where Ahmed (2012) reveals how the language of diversity is used to reproduce structural racism. In what ways and through which configurations of policies can super-diversity operate in a similar way, especially in light of Ndhlovu's (2015) criticism of super-diversity as marked by "colonial matrices of power" (33)? Further, what work can super-diversity do, as a scholarly tool and discursive formation, to illuminate or obfuscate processes of inequality inherent in capitalist regimes where borders are porous to wealth and the wealthy but sometimes deadly to the poor? In this article, I have argued for the merits of super-diversity as a methodological lens, provided it is combined with a set of methodological tools that sharpen its ability to examine the role of enduring inequalities and ensure a vigilance against lapsing into uncritical celebrations of conviviality.

Endnotes

1. Gender, too, is key to understanding power dynamics in the community garden and beyond, but I limit my discussion to race and class here.

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