The role of super-diversity in shaping the perception of and services for older migrants

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ABSTRACT

Population ageing and international migration are on the rise. The common denominator between these two phenomena is the older migrant population, which has been steadily increasing in Northern America and Western Europe. The emergence of this population has been challenging institutional practices and services due to a growth in heterogeneity. Against this background, the paper aims to answer two questions: (1) does super-diversity in the older native population have an impact on the ways in which practitioners regard and refer to older migrants? and (2) what kind of service responses does the recognition of super-diversity as a characteristic of the older population, both native and migrant, lead to? The empirical analysis focuses on Switzerland, a highly relevant case for two reasons: first due to the heterogeneity within the native population, given its three linguistic regions, and second due to the large proportion of (older) migrants. Based on 33 in-depth interviews with representatives of local institutions dealing with older persons including migrants in Switzerland; the conclusion of the paper is that super-diversity in the majority population can potentially lead to a recognition and acceptance of super-diversity in other populations, and in this case older migrants. Yet, at an institutional level super-diversity can translate in over-individualized tailored services, which can unintentionally contribute to inequality.

Introduction

Worldwide and particularly in Western Europe and North America we witness an ageing of societies and an increase in international migrants. The population at the intersection of the two is that of older migrants, a group that has been also steadily growing (Rallu, 2017; Warnes, Friedrich, Kellaher, & Torres, 2004). In public debates elderly populations and older migrants tend to be conceived as homogeneous. To counteract this, scholarship needs to acknowledge the diversity within these groups. Given the migration flows following the Second World War (WWII), the de-standardisation of the life course and the individualisation of societies, we witness a general increase in super-diversity in elderly populations. The de-standardisation of the life course, a concept pertaining to the life-course literature, refers to the fact that in the mid-20th century scholarship observed that "a large majority of individuals went through an identified set of ordered and age-graded family and occupational stages with very few of them getting out of sequence or skipping transitions" (Widmer & Ritschard, 2009: 28). The end of the 20th century marks a de-standardisation of the life course (Widmer & Ritschard, 2009). The age intervals in which major life events occur have widened, with women having children in

their 20s as well as in their 40s. Further there are a variety of ways in which people participate on the labour market with alternate periods of unemployment, part-time employment, self-employment and so on. The migrant population with the diversity of countries of origin, motives for migration, timings of migration, legal statuses in the country of destination, and family contexts is also highly heterogeneous (Warnes et al., 2004). All these have contributed to super-diversity in old age and have an impact on interactions between care providers and care givers in the context of elderly care, and are calling for a re-think of services to address the needs of older migrants.

Against this background, the paper asks two questions: does super-diversity in the older native population have an impact on the ways in which practitioners regard and refer to older migrants, and what kind of service responses does the recognition of super-diversity as a characteristic of the older population, both native and migrant, lead to? To answer these questions, we take as a case in point the discourse that representatives of local institutions who provide services to older people with a migration background in Switzerland. To frame the empirical analysis, the following part will discuss the debates in the gerontological and migration literature in relation to an array of concepts often used when research on older migrants is at stakes (such as, for

example the process of othering as well as intersectionality and diversity), and the concept of super-diversity, which is a concept migration scholars use but social gerontologists have yet to adopt into their vernacular.

Othering, diversity, intersectionality and super-diversity as a theoretical lens

An 'us' and a 'them' are always created through distinction. For one of them to exist, it is important that it opposes the other. Drawing on classical works by Marx and Bourdieu, Jenkins (2000) speaks about the processes of group identification and social categorization. He refers to two situations of group identity formation: a group "whose members recognize it and their membership of it (a group for itself) and a collectivity which is identified and defined by others (a category in itself)" (Jenkins, 2000: 9). There can emerge a tension between how one defines him/herself and how others define him/her. In other words, one can be considered to be a migrant by others, and even have objective characteristics that make one a 'migrant' (having moved from a country of origin to a country of destination temporarily or permanently), and yet not regard oneself as a 'migrant'. This can be the case because, for example, the way the category 'migrant' is perceived as negative or because one does not identify oneself with people who belong to that category. Related to this is Torres' argument that "othering practices utilize essentialist understandings of ethnicity not only to bring to the fore notions of difference but also to designate that which is peculiar or deviant" (2015: 941). Therefore, the process of othering does not only consist of a process of differentiation, it involves also a judgement about those from which we want to differentiate ourselves from.

An aspect we need to keep in mind is that social categories change in time in relation to the socio-economic and political context. For example, political refugees from the former Eastern European communist block who arrived in Western Europe in the 1970s and 80s were welcomed because of the small number of migrant arrivals at that time, and the attitude towards the totalitarian regimes from Eastern Europe. On the contrary, the recent arrival of refugees from Syria and also Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan has been portrayed as a crisis.

Looking at the Swedish scholarly and grey literature on older migrants and their welfare needs, Torres (2006) shows how the creation of the category older migrant leads to the construction of a social problem. She shows how, the population of older migrants in Sweden is perceived to be different from native Swedes, and each group is considered to be internally homogeneous. When it comes to migrants, she claims, there is little acknowledgement of in-group differences; for example between those who aged in place and those who came after retirement or between older migrants originating in different countries, particularly because in Sweden, migrants aged 55 and over originate from 203 countries. Furthermore, older migrants are portrayed as having 'specific needs', which puts forward an essentialist and negative image of this population.

In addition to this, the very idea of 'the other' varies across countries and continents. Whereas the North American and British scholarship refers to 'ethnic groups', in continental Europe, migrant groups understood as national groups are the populations of reference: Turks in Germany, Italians, Spaniards and Portuguese in Switzerland and Luxembourg and so on. Ethnicity or migration, for that matter, constitute the main elements for 'othering' certain populations. At the same time, we need to bear in mind that 'othering' can draw on any other characteristics, and not only migration background. Calasanti (1993, 1996) shows that much of the gerontological literature regards white, middle-class persons as the default category, thus othering women and ethnic minorities.

In spite of this, gerontological theory has long ago advocated for taking into account diversity (Calasanti, 1993, 1996; Calasanti & Zajicek, 1993; McMullin, 2000). In the gerontological literature, however, diversity has been approached as drawing on gender, age, class

and ethnicity/race and the way these are, each on its own and also interconnected, at the basis of 'power relations that structure social life' (McMullin, 2000: 517). In order to overcome this, it is argued that an understanding of how these interlocked characteristics are the sources of inequalities by giving or restricting access to opportunities throughout the life course is something that gerontology needs to grasp (Calasanti & Zajicek, 1993; McMullin, 2000). Building on this, Torres (2015) also considers essential for the advancement of gerontological research and practice to take into account how "ethnicity interacts with class, gender, sexuality and age" (p. 954). These elements are in fact at the core of the concept of intersectionality. Social gerontologists such as Calasanti and Zajicek (1993), McMullin (2000) and Torres (2006) have, in other words, argued in favor of taking into account gender, ethnicity, age and class into account. In the following paragraphs I will discuss another multi-dimensional concept; super-diversity. This concept emerged in migration studies, and it is one that social gerontologists have yet to incorporate in their vernacular. It is important because it does not limit the source of diversity to uniquely three domains: race or ethnicity, class and gender. If researchers approach a population with an intersectionality lens, they assume a priori that the sources of distinction are the three ones mentioned above, and their interaction, and how they contribute to inequality. Super-diversity provides us with a bottom-up informed understanding on the sources of distinction. In this sense, we could observe that religion is a key element in some parts of the world, but not in others. Furthermore, intersectionality emerged in order to show the source of inequality. Meanwhile, super-diversity can be a tool for identifying interactions between variables that create inequality, but simultaneously it can provide a better understating of coping mechanisms and sources of resilience in older migrants. For example, by taking into account nationality, migration history, role of family in care provision, it can informs on strategies to overcome vulnerability among older migrant, and not only.

The concept of super-diversity was coined by Vertovec (2007) in migration and urban studies. It is often mistakenly associated solely with ethnic diversity. For example, the fact that older migrants in Sweden originate from 203 countries, which Torres (2006) points out when arguing that we need to consider the heterogeneity within the category of older migrants, is on its own solely a marker of diversity, not super-diversity. Steven Vertovec's aim was precisely to develop a multi-dimensional concept, which includes but is not limited to ethnic identity. Thus, super-diversity captures the migration experience in terms of migration flow, age at arrival, migration context, legal status, and so on; and also other variables such as gender, age and socio-economic characteristics, and the life course, among other. Accounting for super-diversity, Meissner and Vertovec (2015) refer to the fact that migrants are coming from "more varied national, ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds", and moreover there is an increase in the "migration channels (such as work permit programmes, mobilities created by the various EU enlargements, ever-changing refugee and 'mixed migration' flows, undocumented movements, student migration, family reunion, and so on)", associated with "legal statuses (conditions, rights and restrictions), diverging patterns of gender and age, and variance in migrants' human capital (education, work skills and experience)" (p. 542).

Super-diversity allows us to move away from reductionist perspectives considering that ethnic or national groups are homogeneous across and within them. Also, it allows to identify the source of disadvantage or vulnerability in other factors, beyond ethnicity or migration. Studying older migrant or ethnic minority populations, Phillipson (2015) notices that the precursor theories of 'double' or 'triple-jeopardy' already marked the importance of seeing vulnerability in these populations as an outcome of several factors. In the case of the double jeopardy theory, this would be race and ethnic disadvantages as well as old age (Dowd & Bengtson, 1978), while in respect to triple-jeopardy, the sources of discrimination considered are: age, living in disadvantaged situations and discrimination determined by their

"culture, skin colour or religious affiliation" (Norman 1985 in Phillipson, 2015: 920).

Building on this previous scholarship, super-diversity provides us with a better understanding of the sources of social inequality (Boccagni, 2015) that migrant populations often face. Super-diversity particularly aims to constitute a "lens to de-esentialize ethnic and cultural differences, casting light on the underlying concurrent processes of societal differentiation, individual identification and group (dis) alignment" (Boccagni, 2015: 611). Therefore super-diversity provides a re-focus from the individual as they are at a point in time to the life course, and how the de-standardisation of the life course leads to super-diversity, what Boccagni (2015) calls (dis)alignment. It is because of all of this that I am hereby arguing that studying older population, including migrants, and their life course would greatly benefit from the super-diversity approach. To give an example, two persons, both aged 68, fill in a form. They both mark that they are born in another country than the country of residence, and thus for an outsider they are 'migrants', yet one migrated when they were five and the parents moved from Italy to Switzerland, and the other migrated when they were 45 and had lost the job and acquaintances suggested that there might be opportunities for work in Switzerland. Their position on the labour market, contributions towards pension, ties to the home country, family situation, and probability to return to Italy are yet completely different.

In addition to individual characteristics that mark super-diversity, the de-standardisation of the life course and the individualisation of societies contribute even more to super-diversity. The life course approach does not limit itself to a recognition that there are series of events that unfold chronologically, but it focuses on the existence of "multiple attributes over the life course" (Boccagni, 2015: 611), which act in interaction. In this way, it moves away from being solely an empirical characteristic, and becomes also an 'analytical lens' (Boccagni, 2015: 609). Not only is it important to acknowledge the existence of an array of dimensions for super-diversity to exist; it is moreover essential to understand how these characteristics have a simultaneous impact and do not act individually (Boccagni, 2015; Crul, 2016), which has been equally argued in the gerontological literature (McMullin, 2000).

While sharing some commonalities, super-diversity differs from intesectionality. The common denominator between the two concepts is their multi-dimensional character (Boccagni, 2015; Crul, 2016). Both concepts stress the importance of how inequality is created at the intersection of different variables, and urge not to consider them separately. The distinction between the two is that intersectionality focuses on three identificational aspects: ethnicity or race, class and gender; whereas super-diversity covers a broader array of individual, and also spatial components. Torres (2006) argues that intersectionality allows us to go beyond the dichotomy of an 'us' and a 'them'. Similarly, I argue it is essential to go beyond and employ super-diversity to further unpack the heterogeneity within groups.

In the social gerontological scholarship, diversity and intersectionality have been used to encourage a more heterogeneity-aware approach to ageing populations (Calasanti, 1996). The heterogeneity that characterizes older migrant populations has, however, a range of sources that most social gerontological literature has yet to acknowledge. Super-diversity is a concept that allows us connect and access those sources since it brings to the forefront some of the reasons behind the variability within migrant groups. Super-diversity adds to this by stressing the simultaneous action of several factors of distinction, and how they create both opportunities and or inhibitors for taking action. Super-diversity focuses on one's life course and how super-diversity is produced in the individual trajectory and not as a "cross-sectional categorization". Thus, it allows us to understand the variability within groups and the factors shaping it.

Another important element in understanding diversity is that it needs to be embedded and understood in a particular context and only then becomes a 'meaningful conceptual tool' that goes beyond a 'self-evident fact'. The fact that a migrant is a Romanian roma does not mean the same in two different contexts. Being a Romanian Roma who was deported from France by Sarkozy sometime between 2009 and 2012 or being a Romanian Roma working in an NGO in Brussels are two very different contexts in which diversity can be experienced as inducing inequality, on the one hand, or as a source of access to social mobility, on the other. Ethnocultural diversity is "situated and context-dependant […] in the light of a person's representations about it, the structure of opportunities he/she deals with, the forms of capital he/she can mobilize" (Boccagni, 2015: 610).

But how does super-diversity relate to identifying other groups and processes of othering? For long, native populations, or large parts of them, in Europe and North America have been homogeneous. Nation states throughout Europe have aimed to homogenize their populations. A notable exception of heterogeneity in the native population is Switzerland where the co-existence of four languages and a strong cantonal identity are part of the Swiss history. Starting with the migration after WWII, there is an increase in diversity and more recently the emergence of super-diversity. Simultaneously, social psychology shows that a group perceives members of other groups as homogeneous, known as the out-group homogeneity effect (Haslam, Rothschild, & Ernst, 2000). This paper assumes that if a group is super-diverse, then they will perceive another group – in the present case migrant populations – also as heterogeneous. Living in demographically super-diverse environments makes one reflect on their own identity and that of others (Boccagni, 2015). Therefore, if members of a group acknowledge their super-diversity, this contributes to reflexive thinking and acknowledging other groups' (super)-diversity, making it less likely to esentialize other populations.

The remaining of the paper is structured in four parts: first a presentation of the empirical context in which the data collection took place: Switzerland. Second there is a discussion of the methods and the data. Third, there are presented the empirical findings looking at the impact of super-diversity on othering older migrants, and at the services available for older migrants. Fourth, there is a discussion and conclusion, focusing on the interplay between super-diversity and over-individualisation.

Zooming in on the Swiss context of super-diversity

There are several reasons that make Switzerland a highly relevant case for underpinning the impact of super-diversity on othering or not of older migrants. These refer mainly to the super-diversity in the Swiss native population, and the high proportion of migrants in Switzerland.

The Swiss confederation is divided in four linguistic regions: German, French, Italian and Romansh, the latter being rather small. It is formed of 26 cantons, with a strong cantonal and regional identity. Simultaneously, there is inter-cantonal mobility, and therefore possibilities of interaction between Swiss natives from different cantons. In a total population of 8'484'130, in 2017 there were 510'066 internal migrants or 6% of the population. Most of the internal migration is among cantons of the same language: 70% within the German-speaking part and 22.44% within the French-speaking region (FSO, 2018a).

With regard to the migrant population, "in 2017, 37.2% of the permanent resident population has a migration background (2'647'000). More than a third of this population (958'000) has Swiss nationality" (FSO, 2017). Migrants aged 65 and over are originated from 168 countries with Italians, Germans, French and Spanish as the largest national groups[1] (FSO, 2018b). The first waves of migration following WWII were rather homogeneous. This is not anymore the case and we witness an increase in countries of origin, channel of migration and patterns of migration.

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[1] The data is by nationality, therefore all those who have taken up Swiss nationality do not appear anymore in statistics.

With regard to the services targeting older migrant, in general in Switzerland there are only few of them. When there are, they take the form of culturally sensitive services and service provision in other languages. Moreover, services and programmes are highly localized and specific to certain cantons, and also specialized in the service provision for certain populations. This is due to the histories of migration towards particular cantons. In Geneva, the Red Cross provides a service of community interpretations for 74 languages and dialects.[2] In the canton of Vaud there is a programme of the Protestant Mutual Assistance Association (EPER) targeting particularly older persons from former Yugoslavia. In addition there are migrant associations that provide information to older migrants and in this sense favor their access to formal services, such as ProMigrante, an association established by second generation Italians to provide assistance to older Italians in Basel. Also, there is a National Forum Age and Migration that plays the role of an information hub.

Out of the three cantons where fieldwork was conducted, in Geneva and in Basel there are nursing homes in which there are specialized services for persons with a migration background. In Basel there is a nursing home with a Mediterranean floor, where there are particularly persons from the Italian and Spanish community. In Geneva there is a home for the elderly for persons of Jewish and respectively Italian origin, however they are open to persons of other origins also. Providenza, the nursing home for the older Italians in Geneva hosts now very few Italians and increasingly Swiss and people of other origins. The specificity of Geneva, according to a head nurse in a nursing home in an ethnic neighbourhood in Geneva, is that the Swiss persons in some of the homes for the elderly are a minority and migrants constitute the majority. What appears specific to Ticino is the care services that are targeting Swiss Germans. Important to mention is that this is a canton anecdotally named 'the nursing home' of Switzerland.

Methods

The paper draws on qualitative fieldwork conducted in three cantons: Geneva, Basel and Ticino. These three cantons cover the three linguistic regions of Switzerland. They are all border cantons and have high proportions of migrants. In 2017, in the cantons of Basel and Ticino, the migrant population represented 27% and in Geneva it represented 40% of the residing population (FSO, 2017).

The fieldwork consisted of 33 in-depth interviews with representatives of local institutions providing care and other services to older persons – public, private and third sector (associations and voluntary and community organisations). There were done interviews with 18 public institutions (6 in each canton) and 15 third sector institutions (7 in Geneva, and 4 in Basel and respectively Ticino). It is important to mention that public institutions have private components. For example nursing homes can be public, nonetheless, part of the expenses of patients are paid by private medical insurances, and clients themselves pay for monthly residence costs. Also, third sector institutions – such as associations – have an important public component. They are most often funded through public schemes and are given a certain area of activity to cover (Table 1).

The fieldwork took place between 2014 and 2016. In the cantons of Geneva and Ticino, interviews were conducted by the author in French, the language of the canton of Geneva, and Italian, the language of the canton of Ticino. In the canton of Basel, interviews were conducted in German, the language of the canton, by a master student. Interviews were transcribed, and interviews in German were also translated into French. The average length of an interview is 50 min. The corpus of interviews was analysed using discourse analysis. Using this method, the focus was on what was said, and thus the main codes were:

Table 1
Institutions interviewed during the fieldwork.

In-depth interviews with / in	Geneva	Basel	Ticino
Public institutions (some with private component)	• Local departments for social policies • Day-care centres • Nursing homes • Public home care providers		
Third sector institutions: associations and voluntary and community organisations (including public funding)	• Migrant associations • Platforms and associations for the ageing • The Red Cross		

statements about the migrant population, statements comparing older natives and migrants, and description of specialized services for the older migrant population.

Empirical findings

Four factors contribute to the emergence of (super-)diversity especially in the landscape of old-age services in Switzerland. First, as already mentioned, the native population in Switzerland has always been marked by cultural and linguistic diversity (Mayer, 1951). Second, the (super-)diversity of the migrant population, due more precisely to the fact that Switzerland has attracted different flows of migrants – labour migrants from after WWII, family reunification migrants, several waves of refugees, 'zero generation migrants',[3] temporary migrants, irregular migrants[4] from Latin America and Asia, personnel working in international organisations and in the banking sector, daily commuters from neighbouring countries, international retirement migrants, to mention but a few – diversity of countries of origin, several generations of migrants, and a variety of types of jobs taken up at the destination. Inevitably, migrant populations are reaching retirement. Some of them engage in transnational migration with their country of origin, some return to their home countries and others decide to settle in Switzerland. Third the de-standardisation of the life-course and the increased individualism are associated with diversity among the young-old cohorts in the Swiss native population (Widmer & Ritschard, 2009). In light of this, I draw inspiration from the work of Torres (2006) who shows how in spite of being very diverse, the older immigrant population in Sweden is regarded as a homogeneous category that is portrayed as a social problem. The empirical analysis to be presented below adds to this the impact of super-diversity on the process of 'othering' of older migrants. This part is structured in two sub-parts: the discourse on older migrants and the structuring of services for this population.

Discourse on older migrants

Some representatives of local institutions asked me what I understood by migrants. I answered giving the definition of the United Nations[5] according to which a migrant is a person who resides permanently or temporarily in a country other than their country of birth. To provide examples from my own research, I referred to the Italian migration after WWII and the migration from Germany – the two largest national groups in Switzerland, especially of older migrants. There

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[2] http://www.croix-rouge-ge.ch/index.php?page=interpretariat-communautaire

[3] Zero generation migrants are persons who are close to retirement or retired already and migrate for shorter or longer periods of time in order to be closer to their adult children migrants themselves to provide care to their grandchildren.

[4] Irregular migrants are usually persons who entered Switzerland with a visa and have then overstayed it lacking documents that entitle them to residence or participation on the labour market on the Swiss territory.

[5] http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/migrant/

were several reactions to my answer. Some claimed that such persons have lived in Switzerland for long periods of time and are not migrants anymore (representative of a third sector institution in Geneva). In addition, some of the representatives interviewed stated that Germans, particularly in Ticino, are not migrants because they are well off (representative of a public institution in Ticino).[6] These statements underline the fact that people endow the word 'migrant' with certain characteristics, hereby listed are only two: a certain temporality and low socio-economic status. The external attribution of a status – being or not a migrant – and the essentialization that rich people are not migrants even if they live in a country where they were not born in, are the starting point for the process of othering that older migrants often experience.

The following three themes appeared in the analysis of the interviews: (1) representatives of institutions made reference to more nuanced differences among older persons, not based on ethnicity or migration background, but rather on socio-economic status or gender; (2) there was an understanding of the existing heterogeneity not only within the migrant population, but also among the native elderly population, and respondents did not essentialize either of the groups, and (3) only a small number of representatives of institutions had a discourse that othered migrants.

(1) Nuancing differences among older persons

The discourse of representatives of local institutions portrayed the elderly as a heterogeneous population, internal differences being based not only on migration background, but on other characteristics. One nurse from a nursing home in Geneva spoke about differences based on gender:

> … there are differences in the way to ask for things, but I would not say that it is linked only to culture. […] Gender, for example, men have more facility to ask as if they are entitled to, for example "this and this should be done", while a woman asks differently. (Nurse, Nursing home, Pâquis, Geneva).

Several respondents consider that people's situation in old age are shaped by their life course. In a nursing home in Basel, the representative that was interviewed spoke about the impact of older migrants' professional background on old-age morbidity. The point he was making was that it was very common for Italians and Spaniards to have worked in construction, which means that they did hard physical jobs and thus later on developed certain health conditions. In addition, those who are now elderly have lived through the difficult years during WWII and the period after having experienced poverty and lack of food, which again had an impact on their health and well-being.

> There are cultural differences [between migrants and natives]. More than this, there are differences in individual life experiences. I work in rehabilitation. So, people who are living here and who have a prescription of physiotherapy come in our ward and we speak a lot. And sometimes they told me stories about the first years of immigration, the difficult years […]. And right after the Second World War or even between the two world wars, when there was the big social poverty for everybody. […] the mentality of closing oneself, being closed to novelty, created significant life experiences. (Physiotherapist, nursing home, Ticino).

The respondent was himself a migrant, commuting daily from Italy to Ticino, Switzerland, and makes reference to himself as one among the 60,000 'phantom-like commuters'.

A director of a nursing home in Ticino referred to differences between generations, in which people born before 1930 neither complain nor ask for help, due to the fact that they grew up in periods characterized by hardship. To conclude, practitioners referred to a series of elements that can mark diversity and go beyond migration background.

(2) Heterogeneity within older natives and migrants

While talking about the migrant populations using the services of their respective institutions, many of the practitioners acknowledged the diversity of their clients and compared it with that of the Swiss population. Some even made references to the different flows of migration, and how the migrant population is reaching old age. This excerpt from an interview with a representative of a nursing home with a Mediterranean ward for Italian and Spanish persons is illustrative of the cultural diversity in the Swiss old-age landscape related or not to migrant populations:

> We need employees who have the know-how, how to work with [people from] other cultures. But the same applies to the Swiss, we have people from Ticino, people from the French-speaking parts, we do not separate them either. (Nursing home with a Mediterranean ward, Basel).

In the same nursing home in Basel, the respondent refers to some differences between older migrants and natives and simultaneously, acknowledges that there are moreover similarities between the two groups:

> Either the older migrants have never ever learned German or they speak German, but with the advancement in age and the development of dementia, they speak more and more their mother tongue and in the Mediterranean ward they can speak their language. […] Another difference is the collaboration with the family, which is more intense among migrants than among the other inhabitants. Their families want to participate more, talk more, it is more alive, the family participates more in the care process. But otherwise there are also many similarities. (Nursing home with a Mediterranean ward, Basel).

In another nursing home in Basel, when asked about the differences between older migrants and natives, the respondent could not really pin it down. On the one hand, she mentioned language as a difference, yet depending on one's level of education, with highly educated migrants speaking the language at the destination. On the other hand, she spoke about several inhabitants who had difficulties to integrate in the nursing home for the elderly, in spite of the fact that these were a Swiss natives and an Austrian, who therefore spoke German. This stresses both that older migrants and natives exhibit also similarities, and not only differences, and also that not all differences that the interviewees alluded to were differences that had solely to do with migration background.

Therefore, it can be noted that most representatives of local institutions acknowledge and stress the diversity of older migrants, and discuss it in relation to the diversity of the Swiss population itself.

(3) Older Swiss and migrants: worlds apart

In contrast to the above we have the discourse that some institutional representatives used which considers migrants and natives as two opposing populations:

> Do you have specific events for them [migrants]?
> No, not at all, those who are here [members of their association] are very well integrated, they have become real Swiss. We do not really consider them as migrants. (Representative, Association of older persons, Basel).

While the respondent considers this to be a positive statement, 'becoming a real Swiss' has an assimilationist and discriminatory base. The respondent goes on to say that there are migrants who stay among

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[6] Both conversations prior to the interviews.

themselves, and this is a particularity in relation to those who do not accept to marry other nationalities: 'The Muslim want a parallel society'.

As it appears from the interviews, some respondents essentialize different national groups in their discourse:

Respondent 1: Maybe culturally, what I notice a bit is that the Swiss German waits a lot of time until asking for help. They are isolated, they do not have lots of contacts, they want to stay at home without help. Italians, so those from the South, on the contrary, needs more people to go over and pamper them. More exigent…
Respondent 2: and sometimes they even tell us "I pay the medical insurance, so you have to …".
Respondent 1: Yes, this is the mentality from the South. Those from the North, the mentality is that I have to manage and ask for the least.
Respondent 2: People from Yugoslavia also ask very late for help. They usually are sent to us by the hospital. Often there is the family who intervenes. Usually there are very critical situations, because as soon as the situation improves, they say they do not need any more help. There is also the community, it substitutes. (Two representatives, Institution for home maintenance, Ticino).

Another othering discourse is exemplified by the response of a social worker after I asked if migrants use the services of their association in Geneva. Contrary to the other interviews, she made rather stigmatizing comments regarding older migrants:

There are quite a few … we have many persons, when I look now at names there are many names as El-Machanqua, Al-Katubit, Allo-Machan … (which can be approximately translated as: El-Guy, Allo-Guy) many people who come … but these are the more recent. (Social worker, 3rd sector association, Geneva).

This type of naming points to the Arabic origin of some migrants and is particularly discriminatory. However, the last three quotes from the interviews were to be found less frequently. What comes up from these two last excerpts is the fact that some of the professionals interviewed hierarchized different migrants against each other when talking about who older migrants are. This means that we can place migrant groups on a continuum from strongly discriminated or highly othered to not at all discriminated. On such a continuum, highly othered migrants are those who are perceived to have a bigger social distance from the majority. Such can be people of Arabic background. Italians, a group highly discriminated in the 1960s up to 1990s, but which have been ageing in place seem to be found towards the other end of the discrimination spectrum since they seemed to be the least othered nowadays. A group that is not even considered as a migrant group are older Germans.

To sum up the general lines of the discourses that the professionals interviewed used when it comes to diversity in old age, the following quote is highly representative:

There are [migrants] very well integrated, who speak well the language and others who stay among themselves, who barely speak the language. There is not one type of migrant. (Association of nursing homes, Basel).

While the general discourse is one acknowledging super-diversity, this however does not mean that migrants are not at all subjected to othering. What we can read in between the lines of this last quote is precisely the fact that some migrants are well integrated, so they resemble the majority of the population, while there are others who are, for various reasons, perceived to be different.

Services for older migrants

In spite of conducting the research in cantons with a large concentration of migrant populations and particularly older migrants, one

finding that struck us as interesting is that older migrants seemed to be relatively 'invisible' within the various institutions we interviewed.

This could be observed when one took note of the type of service specialisation found in some of the cantons; a specialisation that seemed to respond to the migration inflows they experienced. In this sense programmes and services responded to a real local need. Several institutions in Ticino spoke, for example, about services targeting the Swiss German internal migrants arriving in the canton

… the phenomenon which is specific for the area of Locarno, is the presence of persons coming from the German-speaking Switzerland. We have about 35 to 40% of persons who speak only Swiss German.

Speaking Swiss German is a pre-condition to work for us. It has become a necessary language. As this is an important population, we require nurses, but also other employees to have a good base of Swiss German. (Two representatives, Institution for home maintenance, Ticino).

The elderly people who are in need of home care apply for such services in their own canton of residence. When and if they travel within Switzerland, they need to manage without formal care assistance. Yet, to facilitate tourism, which is very important for the canton of Ticino, the institution providing home care in Ticino decided to make an exception and they provide home care services to Swiss tourists on holidays in the canton. There is a tourism agency which organizes care provision for their older clients, and some hotels have agreements with the institution providing home care, so that the nurses can provide care services even in hotels. Older Swiss tourists have to make the necessary arrangement previous to their trip to Ticino, yet they can travel and still benefit of formal care services.

This was not, however, the only institution mentioning the importance of speaking German when working in the area of service provision to older persons. A third sector institution, ProSenectute, Ticino, required German when a new position was opened, and even they updated their website and have the page in German in addition to Italian. Also, we noted a different discourse in Ticino where institutions are the ones adapting to the language needs of clients: 'we are careful of people's needs'. This can be an economic choice driven by the fact that tourism is particularly important to this canton's economy, and at the same time it shows that the incoming population is positively evaluated; that is the Swiss German tourists or temporary internal migrants.

Additionally, it appeared that the default response of some of these institutions to the lack of formal services that are in fact available to older migrants, is to implement tailored, and moreover improvised or ad-hoc services. The head nurse of a nursing home in Geneva spoke, for example, about individually tailored projects to suit one's wishes. She said that when older migrants arrive in an elderly home, there is a discussion of their wishes and how these can be accommodated and developed in a life project:

There is always a nurse and an activity organiser [animateur] who are the reference persons and who meet periodically with the resident [ageing person] to do what we call the project that suits one's wishes or with the family if the resident cannot anymore. So, we work on an individual basis, each person has a record of wishes, what is important, the life project and in there we take into account the culture of the person and then there are animations in groups, in small groups and this can vary… (Nurse, Nursing home, Pâquis, Geneva).

Further, she argues how these wishes can be attached to a culture, nonetheless she stresses that it can be a Muslim or a Swiss who express particular needs. And she gives two examples: on the one hand an African lady who wants to eat with her hands and for whom it is bought food from outside the nursing home twice a week. Simultaneously, a Swiss lady wants to eat fondue each week and this has become part of her life project in the nursing home.

Discussing about specialized programmes and services for older migrants, other representatives of institution also spoke about 'tailored' services adapted to individual needs, which can be offered to both migrants and natives.

> Just to finalize, I think that regarding the issue of migrants, I am particularly marked and very proud by the work of IMAD and all its collaborators, it is this first mission [of their institution] not only to remain at home, but considering their values, taking into account their values and their lifestyle. And in this sense we individualize the support and we accompany each in the best way that fits their wishes. (Vice-director for services, Institution for home maintenance, Geneva).

Discussing about specialized services for older migrants, a representative of the association of nursing homes stated:

> Our objective is to take care of inhabitants individually / address inhabitants' needs individually. When they express a special wish, we try to satisfy it, regardless if this is of a Swiss, of a German or of somebody of another nationality. We look at the individual, what the person wants. Of course, considering if it is possible in a nursing home. (Representative, Association of nursing homes, Basel).

The discourse on services continues in the same line with the one on older migrants, stressing that these are not two contrasting populations: older migrants and older natives, but rather individuals with their life courses and characteristics. Thus, it seems that because institutions recognize super-diversity, the focus for service provision is on individually tailored services, and not so much on services targeting different sub-populations. These services emerge from the bottom, similarly to migrant associations such as ProMigrante, which was set up to assist older migrants, particularly of Italian origin, to access information and prepare for old age.

While the idea of individually tailored services might sound appealing, the head nurse in the nursing home from Geneva speaks also about the limitations associated with it, which are linked to resources. Residents can express their wishes, but these need to be hierarchized and only the most important individual activities will be fulfilled due to a lack of time and personnel. The limitation of these ad-hoc and individually tailored responses resides in the lack of formalisation and structure. As a consequence, the emergence of such individually driven services depends on the interaction between the care provider on the one hand, and the care receiver and their family on the other hand. A series of external factors can intervene to hamper positive interactions: the short time slots for care providers, difficulty to communicate or miscommunication, lack of cultural-sensitive skills on behalf of the care provider, shyness to demand something on behalf of care receivers, and so on. Thus, over-individualization and lack of formalisation of care services, while acknowledging differences between persons, can potentially increase inequalities.

Discussion and conclusion: from essentialzing to (super-)diversity

This part returns to the two questions posed in the beginning of the paper: does super-diversity in the older native population shape the ways in which practitioners regard and refer to older migrants, and what kind of service responses does the recognition of super-diversity as a characteristic of the older population, both native and migrant, lead to?

Fig. 1 sums up the empirical analysis and sets the framework for the paper's discussion.

The empirical analysis suggests that in Switzerland the diversity of the native population appears to contribute to reflexive thinking, and leads to an acceptance of the heterogeneity of migrants and less essentializing comments about non-native populations. The discourse of practitioners shows that there is a strong acknowledgement among care and service providers that older migrants, and also older natives,

constitute heterogeneous populations, and therefore that there are other variables that underline the lack of access to welfare services and older people's so called 'special needs', other than migration background. This confirms the observation of Boccagni (2015) that super-diversity in a population has positive consequences on the way this population reflects on the diversity of other groups both in relation to themselves and within the other groups.

Yet, there are differences in discourses across the institutions interviewed. One needs to bear in mind that representatives of local institutions speak from their daily experience and because of this they provide services to different groups of older migrants. Accordingly, their interaction with older migrants shape their discourses about this population. This shows how the institutional environment shapes the interaction between professionals and older persons, and the potential for othering. In nursing homes, given their high costs and thus difficult accessibility, there is a 'selected' group of older migrants and so the ways in which representatives of these institutions talk about older migrants is determined by this 'selection'. Likewise, the services that home care providers offer are partially paid by clients and/or are reimbursed by medical insurances provided doctors prescribe them. And therefore, the older persons accessing these services are also a 'selected' population to some extent. Local associations mediating access to social services and providing social aid are the ones that deal with the 'least favoured' migrant populations, which potentially explains why the 'othering' discourses we witnessed were mostly found among representatives of such institutions. In contrast, an association for leisure activities spoke about its migrant members as 'real Swiss', because it brings together people who can afford to pay a membership in order to access social activities. Thus, the setting and structure of the services that are provided leaves a mark on the kind of discourses about older migrants that the institutional representatives interviewed gave voice to.

In relation to services, super-diversity makes it more difficult to develop services for heterogeneous populations, and therefore the reaction of some institutions is to over-individualize the services they provide. The positive side of over-individualisation is the fact that institutions show a capacity to adapt and be flexible to individual needs since they end up developing individually tailored services for their older clients. The negative side resides in the fact that in the absence of a formalized structure, there is too much *manoeuvring space,* which can contribute to an increase in inequalities. This is due to the fact that individually tailored services or ad-hoc services emerge in the interaction between the care provider, the care receiver and their family. Lack of demands on behalf of the family and the care receiver, shyness in asking or demanding extra-support, not speaking the language or miscommunication could mean that some care receivers will not be able to access these individually tailored services. Some may even not know that they can request them. On the part of the care provider, the short time slots and lack of cultural-sensitive skills will make it less likely to respond to individual needs. Therefore, some care receivers will have only their basic needs fulfilled, while others will receive tailored-made services that take into account their needs. Besides the fact that such services respond to super-diversity and a lack of formalisation; the trend in individually tailored services reflects also the institutional adaptation to macro social changes, in other words, the individualisation of societies.

At a policy level, it would be important to translate super-diversity in policies through a formalisation of practices that take into account cultural and socio-economic variations and de-standardized life courses. To address the need for old age care services, we need an integrated and multi-dimensional approach, and yet the implementation of a super-diversity approach in social work does not come without challenges (Boccagni, 2015).

Responding to super-diversity and integrating it in their practices, social services can provide equal chances for good treatment for all, and not only for those who demand it. In the context of old age care, all the
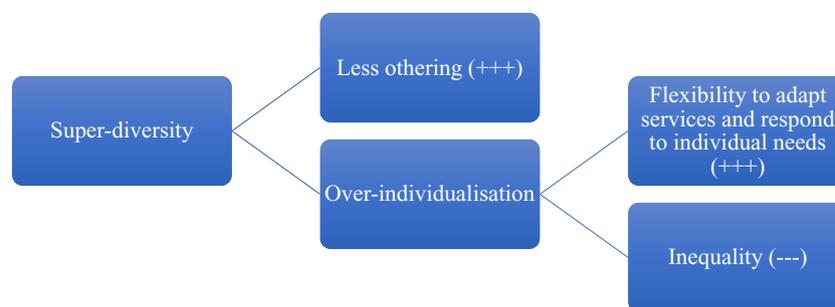
Fig. 1. The impact of super-diversity in the discourse about and services for older migrant populations.

individual characteristics contributing to (super-)diversity become manifest in the interaction with local institutions. Being a migrant women who did not work and thus does not have experience of interacting with authorities, or being a German woman, who has been a stay-at-home mother, married to a director of a multinational, being a man in his 90s who has never been dependant, are all latent characteristics that influence if somebody will ask or not for help. When an elderly person accesses old-age services, these latent features contribute to the establishment of power relations (Calasanti, 1993, 1996). As a consequence depending on these individual characteristics, people may have or not access to services, and even if they do have the right to access, they would need to consider demanding such services from the institutions that cater to their needs. This is why I would argue that failing to develop formal services informed by super-diversity leads to inequality in old age.

At a theoretical level, using super-diversity as an analytic tool, research on older migrants could place itself more at the centre of migration studies, and not be rather marginal as it is the case now.

Thinking of future research at the crossroad of social gerontology and migration studies in light of super-diversity, there are several lines of enquiry that come to mind. One would be to focus on an analysis of social policies from the perspective of super-diversity, with the objective of exploring the adequacy of current social policies to super-diversity in older populations. Another, would be to scan the scarce existing datasets comparing older migrants and natives, and analyse them with a super-diversity lens. This would allow us to put forward the idea that older migrant populations are not just diverse but super-diverse, look at other factors, besides migration background, at the core of super-diversity, and account for in-group variability.

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