INTRODUCTION

SOCIAL CAPITAL IN AN ERA OF SUPER-DIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

Societies worldwide are becoming increasingly diverse, particularly as the result of globalisation and migration (Castles *et al.* 2013). Migrants come from a wider variety of countries of origin, speak more different languages, have a wider variety of migrant statuses and are more often male than female. Moreover, this wide variety of people tends to concentrate in certain parts of certain cities, creating super-diverse places (Vertovec 2007; Meissner & Vertovec 2015). Some scholars argue that this process of diversification complicates the creation of social capital. As people are inclined to connect to similar others, urban residents may prefer to live side-by-side without mixing socially (Reynolds & Zontini 2013).

Putnam *et al.* (1993, p. 167) define social capital as 'features of social organisation, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action'. The presumed negative association between ethnic diversity and social capital was already a central tenet in the era of the Chicago School (Wirth 1938; Shaw & McKay 1942). This old idea is still vividly debated following Putnam's (2007) paper *E Pluribus Unum*. Putnam argued that people in diverse communities are likely to 'hunker down'. Ethnic heterogeneity negatively affects the number of friends and acquaintances and the willingness to do something for the neighbourhood or to work with voluntary organisations. Moreover, diversity does not only lead to less trust in the so-called out-group (for example people with a different ethnicity), but also to distrust in the in-group. Researchers argue that Putnam has put too much emphasis on the role of ethnic diversity at the expense of other types of diversity (Pemberton & Phillimore 2018; see also Albeda *et al.* this issue), and wrongfully assumes that all ethnic and racial groups have similar responses to diversity (Abascal & Baldassarri 2015). Moreover, his findings are often not confirmed in replication studies outside of the United States (e.g. Van der Meer & Tolsma 2014).[1]

Whereas Putnam (2007) finds statistical associations between diversity on the one hand and social capital on the other hand, he does not provide insights in the mechanisms behind his theory. It is not clear why people would feel the need to 'hunker down' in a diverse environment. The concept of 'ethnic boundary making' is useful to get more insight in the causes of presumed diminishing social capital. There are two central concepts here: 'ethnicity' and 'boundary making'. 'Ethnicity' is a social construct which is 'the product of actions undertaken by ethnic groups as they shape and reshape

their self-definition and culture; however, ethnicity is also constructed by external social, economic, and political processes and actors as they shape and reshape ethnic categories and definitions' (Nagel 1994, p. 152).

The construction and reconstruction of ethnic categories is the outcome of processes of 'boundary making'. Lamont and Molnár (2012) make a distinction between symbolic boundaries and social boundaries. Symbolic boundaries are that individuals (and other social actors) make in their everyday to categorise objects, people, and practices, and even time and space. People tend to feel similar to those who they perceive to be on their side of the boundary. While most studies on symbolic boundaries focus on ethnic distinctions, it should be stressed that people use all kinds of other markers (e.g. class, religion, lifestyle, length of residence) to draw boundaries between categories (Tersteeg et al. 2017; see also Albeda et al. in this issue for a further discussion). It depends on the social and spatial context to what extent the ethnic distinction plays a role in boundary making. Symbolic boundaries are likely to constrain social interactions with other groups and can even translate into patterns of exclusion and segregation (Visser 2016). In other words, symbolic boundaries may lead to social boundaries, defined by Lamont and Molnár (2012, p. 168) as 'objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and non-material) and social opportunities'.

In the dynamic process of 'boundary making' a three-way distinction can be made with regard to a change of position towards (ethnic) boundaries (Zolberg & Long 1999). *Boundary crossing* refers to the adoption of norms, values and practices of the majority society by an individual, without affecting the (bright) boundary between minority and majority groups. *Boundary blurring* is the process in which members of minority groups are becoming part of the majority society, without having to abandon most of the norms, values and identity of their minority community. In her research in Rotterdam, Visser (2016) shows how young second-generation migrants saw them as being on both sides of the ethnic boundary. They were code-switching between the identity markers of the Dutch-majority society and their migrant community, depending on the spatial or social context they were in. Boundary crossing and boundary blurring are necessary (but not sufficient) conditions for *boundary shifting* to occur. Boundary shifting is about the relocation of the line between groups. That may happen either in the direction of more inclusion (e.g. when newcomers are fully accepted as members of the society) or in the direction of exclusion (when newcomers are faced with more hostility and discrimination).

This *Dossier* tests the ideas above by studying the interplay between diversity and the various dimensions of social capital in diverse neighbourhoods. We specifically focus on the following questions:

1. How do residents living in diverse neighbourhoods draw group boundaries and which characteristics do they use in drawing these boundaries (Albeda et al. this issue; Virág and Váradi this issue)?
2. How does ethnic diversity impact on collective civic action in diverse neighbourhoods (Dekker this issue)?
3. How does living in a diverse environment affect the attitude towards asylum seekers (Bolt & Wetsteijn this issue)?

THE PAPERS IN THIS ISSUE

Albeda, Tersteeg, Oosterlynck and Verschraegen analyse how residents in super-diverse neighbourhoods in the cities of Antwerp and Amsterdam draw, enact and experience boundaries. Rather than focusing on one particular 'marker' of a boundary between groups (like ethnicity), they examined the interplay of multiple dimensions of difference. They find that residents construct symbolic boundaries using multiple markers related to ethnicity, class, religion and length of residence. However, class is less important than ethnicity in boundary making, as many residents used ethnicity as a 'proxy' for people's socioeconomic position. Albeda *et al.* show that residents strategically position

themselves and others in relation to existing symbolic partners. While some contest a symbolic boundary, others only contest their own position which is coined by Wimmer (2013) as 'individual boundary crossing'. While placing themselves as exceptions on the 'right' side of the boundary, the ethnic symbolic boundary is confirmed and even brightened. One of the insights of the papers is that there is not necessarily a strong connection between everyday interaction and symbolic boundaries. For most residents, symbolic boundaries do not stand in the way of social interactions with people at the other side of the boundary. At the same time, even positive social interactions with others do not always lead to the blurring of boundaries.

Virág and Váradi discuss the link between spatial exclusion and boundary-making in Roma neighbourhoods in two Hungarian rural small towns. They describe the Roma ghetto as an area where residents lack the choice to choose their group belonging. Rather than being an actual ethnic community, the Roma label is something imposed on them by the majority society. Territorial stigmatisation is used to maintain the inequality in Hungarian society and to legitimise those with a higher social position. Non-Roma living in or close to the Roma ghetto fear the stigma of the ghetto which leads to the desire to morally distinguish themselves from the Roma inhabitants. Their boundary work is aimed at keeping the social and symbolic distance to Roma families and by creating linking relationships with representatives of institutions and local councils. Virág and Váradi also present a positive example of boundary-blurring by a Vlach Roma community in a rural town. This community succeeded in blurring the boundary with the non-Roma through their favourable position in the local labour market and their rich bridging relationships. There is a high degree of acceptance from the host society for their traditional cultural values, which makes it one of the rare communities in Hungary with the possibility to build up their group ethnic identity on a voluntary basis. At the same time, there is a big contrast between the Vlach community predominantly living in mixed ethnic neighbourhoods and the ghetto dwelling Romungro in the same village. The boundary work of Vlach Roma is aimed at distancing themselves (both socially and geographically) from the Romungro Roma to ensure their position as accepted members of the village community.

Dekker, Lee and Phipps examine the impact of diversity on collective civic action in two multicultural neighbourhoods. They refute Putnam's claim that ethnic diversity negatively impacts collective civic action and find the opposite appears to be the case in the Melbourne context. Organisations that are active in improving the neighbourhood have a higher share of members of ethnic minority groups than non-active organisations, although the difference is statistically not significant. Representatives of civil society organisations do not mention ethnic diversity as a problem in the neighbourhood. On the contrary, they see diversity as an enrichment of the neighbourhood. The multiculturalist discourse of the Australian government plays an important role here. The State of Victoria, in which Melbourne is located, stimulates the acceptance of different ethnic groups and supports their distinctive identities. This multiculturalist discourse has real consequences for how everyday encounters are experienced and how ethnic diversity is interpreted. Community organisations are creatively using the 'multiculturalism' concept to strengthen their goals and to stimulate a stronger sense of belonging. These cases show how government policy can influence everyday experiences of living in deprived diverse neighbourhoods.

Bolt and Wetsteijn (this issue) focus on the impact of living with diversity on the support for a generous asylum-policy in the Netherlands. The evidence is derived from the European Social Survey (ESS). Following the contact hypothesis, it was expected that interethnic exposure would lead to more positive attitudes towards newcomers. Indeed, residents of ethnically mixed neighbourhoods were more likely to support a generous asylum-policy than residents of neighbourhoods with no or hardly any members of minority ethnic groups. At the same time, there is also support for the competition theory, albeit at a different spatial scale. While the presence of minority ethnic groups

in the neighbourhood does not appear to engender people's sense of threat, people who overestimate the presence of immigrants in the country as a whole tend to experience ethnic threat, and consequently, are less likely than others to support a generous asylum policy

CONCLUSIONS

This dossier shows Putnam's (2007) presumed negative association between ethnic diversity and social capital is not supported by evidence from case studies in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods in the Netherlands, Belgium, Hungary and Australia. The contributions show that living in ethnically diverse area does not automatically lead to 'hunkering down', nor does it stand in the way of collective civic actions, or the forming of social ties across boundaries, or between groups.

In line with Laurence (2009) we find that ethnic diversity can improve relations between groups. The evidence in the case studies suggest that both residents, civic organisations and governments are active agents in processes of boundary crossing and blurring. Importantly, these neighbourhood processes of boundary crossing and blurring are highly dependent on the local and national context (Meissner & Vertovec 2015). Feeling part of a minority ethnic group is not only a process of collective self-identification, but also of external categorisation. Newcomers can only blur the boundaries when the majority society is willing to change legal, social, and cultural institutions to enable their participation (Zolberg & Long 1999; Dekker et al. 2017). Positive discourses about minorities at the national level positively impact tolerance at the local level.

Conforming Sampson's (2012) theory past civic involvement appears a very good predictor of the present-day civic involvement. At the local level, the history of diversity also plays a role in the level of social capital today. Diversity is more likely to become an ordinary part of resident's everyday lived experience in neighbourhoods and countries that have a history of diversification, as shown by new evidence from the case studies. This finding would suggest that over time diversity may decrease in importance, whereas the concentration of disadvantage in neighbourhoods continues to have a negative impact on social capital and interethnic relations. Neighbourhoods within cities within countries with all their varieties of diversity continue to make an impact on individual experiences of residents. Future research should focus on the impact of super-diversity (Vertovec 2007; Meissner & Vertovec 2015) rather than ethnic diversity (Putnam et al. 1993; Putnam 2007) on social capital and interethnic relations in neighbourhoods.

Note

1. As outlined by Dekker (2018), Putnam has more recently indicated that not just ethnicity divides society but most of all social-economic status (SES) (Putnam 2016). In doing so, he acknowledges that ethnicity, family SES, location, schools and community are all interrelated.

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