# Chapter 12
# Conclusions: Coming to Terms with Superdiversity?


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Whereas many studies on urban diversity have focused on so-called global cities (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2009; Crul and Mollenkopf 2012), this book focuses on a city that is not generally considered a global city but is nonetheless characterized by a high degree of migration-related diversity. Rotterdam qualifies as a superdiverse city (Vertovec 2007) that is home to people from more than 180 different nationalities who are speaking more than a hundred different languages and who brought with them all the big religions of the world. The concept superdiversity is especially relevant in those places where the historical majority group has become a numerical minority themselves, as is the case in Rotterdam. Of the whole city population, now more than half is of immigrant background, first or second generation. Rotterdam is a majority-minority city where diversity has become omnipresent in everyday city life. At the same time, however, diversity is highly contested in Rotterdam. Of the larger cities in the Netherlands, it is the city with the highest percentage of voters for the anti-immigrant and anti-Islam PVV (*Partij voor de Vrijheid* or Party for Freedom) of Geert Wilders in the national elections. The old party of late Pim Fortuyn, the rightwing *Leefbaar Rotterdam* (Livable Rotterdam), is the largest party in the City Council and it is part of the coalition that leads the city administration. This makes Rotterdam most

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prominent and vocal of all big cities in the Netherlands in opposing the increasing diversity. This backlash against ethnic and religious diversity has also given rise to a political counter reaction: there are two new parties prominently visible in the local political arena: the progressive Muslim party Nida and the party Denk which was founded by Turkish-Dutch politicians. In the 2018 local elections, Denk was, as one of the newcomers in the City Council, the big winner in Rotterdam with more votes than the local PVV. In some Rotterdam neighbourhoods Denk and Leefbaar Rotterdam, became the two largest parties. In no other Dutch city, the polarization around the themes of migration and diversity is as evident as it is in Rotterdam. During the local elections of 2018, the national media compared the local political debate of Rotterdam with that of Amsterdam. While in Amsterdam local politicians more and more distance themselves from the rhetoric of national politics regarding issues like diversity, migration and refugees, we see that local politicians in Rotterdam have often been at the forefront targeting certain migrant groups and demanding action of the national politics regarding migration.

Our quest in this book was to unravel how the city of Rotterdam comes to terms with its superdiverse character. It speaks to the rapidly evolving literature on superdiversity by taking as the central case study a city that may be representative of a much broader range of cities in Europe (and beyond) that seem reluctant in coming to terms with superdiversity, and that are not ranked as global cities (see also Crul and Mollenkopf 2012; Zapata Barrero et al. 2017; Alexander 2007). The example of Rotterdam reveals the spectrum of contradictions and paradoxes that come along with this uncomfortable relationship with superdiversity. Rotterdam is both a city of inclusion, the first with a mayor of Moroccan descent, and a city of exclusion, with political discourses in the City Council that are exclusionary and sometimes outright discriminatory. Some of its most prominent local politicians seem to reject or ignore the superdiverse reality of the city, while, at the same time, it is absolutely clear for everybody to see that diversity has become a tangible and ingrained aspect of Rotterdam's urban life and urban design. We think that cities like Rotterdam stand for a larger group of European cities that struggle with discontent about growing migration-related diversity. Many are former industrial or port cities like Antwerp, Liverpool or Malmö. Whereas global cities generally celebrate superdiversity, in these cities more often the negative consequences of being a superdiverse city are emphasized. The core question to be addressed in this concluding chapter is why in some cities, like Rotterdam, the transformation into a superdiverse city is more problematic and accompanied by political upheaval, while in other cities it seems to be a more smooth process. The term superdiversity is merely describing a certain reality that characterizes Rotterdam and is not used as a normative term. With this book, we want to contribute to the growing literature that is trying to explain under which conditions a superdiverse city or neighbourhood is perceived by its inhabitants as an overall positive configuration and under which conditions people perceive it as being a more negative phenomenon and it leads to a more negative discourse.

## 12.1 Superdiversity as a Social and Historical Fact

One of the main characteristics of Rotterdam making it a superdiverse city is the increasing diversity in ethnic groups living in the city. Whereas in the 1970s and 1980s migration to the city was dominated by five groups (people from Turkey, Morocco, Surinam, the Antilles and the Cape Verdean Islands), nowadays we see a far greater diversity of the groups that are represented with substantial numbers. Among them migrants from Poland, Bulgaria, and Pakistan to name a few. There is a growing second generation and third generation, but also an increasing expat community that adds to the variation in socio-economic statuses among inhabitants with a migration background. It is therefore hard to say anymore who are the dominant 'minorities' in Rotterdam, as the city hosts so many different migrants, and as over generations the boundaries between different groups have clearly blurred.

It is not just the increased diversity of ethnic groups and statuses, but also the diversity *within* ethnic groups has grown enormously. As Crul and others show in Chap. 3, the socio-economic diversity within groups who originally arrived as low educated labour migrants, has increased tremendously as well. We see a growing disparity within the second and third generation: part of the children and grandchildren of the labour migrants are reaching a middle-class status, while another group is lagging far behind. This trend makes it more and more difficult to look at the position of migrant groups as a whole, or, for that matter, to see groups only through the ethnic lens. This trend also questions existing assimilation theories that assume that 'ethnic groups' assimilate and that the group as a whole gains upward mobility. We see that some subgroups in the second and third generation are moving in opposite directions. The children of the group that lags behind can potentially be worse off than the generation before them, exposing the complexity of integration processes amongst migrants and their offspring. This complexity is maybe one of the most prominent characteristics of superdiverse cities: we cannot easily detect overall patterns, nor can we find singular patterns for separate ethnic groups. Some tend to be excluded from participation in society, others choose self-segregation, and some show clear signs of emancipation and upward mobility, whereas others follow downward patterns.

Recent groups of migrants settling in Rotterdam provide a further illustration of the emerging complexity of migration-related diversity. During the so-called 'refugee crisis' in 2015 and 2106, substantial numbers of people started to arrive from Eritrea and Syria. For many it is still unclear whether their migration is permanent or they will only be here temporarily. Even when they are commonly described as one group, 'refugees', differences within this group, for instance socio-economical differences, are huge. Refugees from Eritrea are largely young males and females without a lot of formal education, coming from rural areas, who often suffered severe traumas of a decade's long lasting war. Syrian refugees who made it to the Netherlands, on the other hand, are often well-educated, coming from middle-class families, and they often lived in large cities like Aleppo or Damascus.

Temporality was earlier also an important question in relation to internal EU migrants from, for example, Poland and Bulgaria. It is this so-called CEE migration to Rotterdam that has formed the most substantial immigration to the city over the last decade. This too is an internally highly diverse migrant category, which includes people from both Northern and Southern Europe, low and high skilled people, some doing seasonal jobs, while others have decided to stay and bring over their families (see Van Ostaaijen et al. in this volume). Rotterdam is increasingly becoming a 'way station', as Entzinger calls it in this volume, where people stay temporarily, to then move on to another country or city, or move back to their country of origin. This parallels with earlier forms of (seasonal) pre-industrial European rural-urban migration patterns, when cities offered a temporary place of resource in order to improve the income position.

Who, in this situation, are actually the established groups in the city and who the newcomers? Only 9% of the Rotterdam population is born there and has parents born in Rotterdam (see Crul et al. in this volume). This makes the question who is the 'genuine Rotterdammer' almost superfluous. The Rotterdam-born children and grandchildren of immigrants nowadays make up a larger share of this 9% than people of ethnic Dutch origin. This implies that the label 'newcomers to the city' applies as much to people of native Dutch descent as to migrants. When contemplating integration processes in the city, it is therefore also important to look at the people of Dutch descent. Furthermore, it is crucial to look at differences across generations, given that for various groups with a migration background a third generation is already born and raised in Rotterdam. It is especially the intersection between all these characteristics (of both migrants and non-migrants) that are needed to analyse societal patterns in a superdiverse city (Crul 2016).

Where do all these temporary and permanent migrants and people of Dutch descent settle in Rotterdam? There is a relatively high degree of segregation between immigrants and their offspring and people of Dutch descent. According to the segregation index, about 45% of the Rotterdam population of Dutch descent should move to another neighbourhood in order to achieve a city population that is equally distributed. This is a big difference with, for instance, Amsterdam, where this figure is only 27% (see Entzinger in this volume). In Rotterdam, migrants and their children are located in 'old' neighbourhoods such as Feijenoord and Delfshaven, but increasingly also in neighbourhoods like Charlois and IJsselmonde, built at the end of nineteen century as part of the city extension. Crul and Lelie, in this volume, find a striking difference between Rotterdam and Amsterdam in how the people of Dutch descent living in majority-minority neighbourhoods perceive the growing ethnic diversity in their city. Twice as many people see this as a threat in Rotterdam. There is especially a much higher percentage of people in middle-level jobs that are negative about the ethnic diversity in their city. This finding is in line with the political reality in Rotterdam. The anti-immigrant party Leefbaar Rotterdam can only be this big because it also has substantial numbers of voters from the Rotterdam middle-classes.

## 12.2 Rotterdam's Reluctant Responses to Superdiversity

One explanation for the backlash against the increasing diversity can be found in how the city narrative has been constructed. Rotterdam has always been a city of migration. The city, however, seems to have forgotten its history of diversity. As Van de Laar and Van der Schoor show in Chap. 2, Rotterdam's pre-modern growth during the late seventeenth and eighteenth century was largely driven by migration. In the seventeenth century, about half of the marrying men, according to the city registers, were born outside Rotterdam. One of the main still visible exponents of this is the high degree of religious pluralism, ranging from Catholics to different denominations of Protestants living next to each other. This pluralist legacy is still clearly visible in the skyline of the city. Churches with a very different outlook like the wooden Norwegian church, the typical Russian Orthodox church, the Finnish church or the Wallonian church are a result of the presence of these communities in the city. Migration continued to contribute to the growth of the city during much of the eighteenth century and shaped Rotterdam's world port expansion since the end of the nineteenth century. Although a majority of the migrants in this period were of Dutch origin, some researchers have pointed out the difficulties inland migrants faced in finding their way in the fast expanding city was not that different than for migrants that came from abroad.

A further important aspect of the post-war city, which makes the city narrative of Rotterdam different from that of Amsterdam, is its rebuilding after the destruction of the city centre during the Second World War. The children and grandchildren of the rural Dutch migrants that had come to the city in the first part of the twentieth century where the ones to rebuild and expand post-war Rotterdam. The overarching narrative, which became dominant, was that of Rotterdam being a city of hard working men and women who rebuilt the city with their own hands. In fact, the narrative of the reconstruction and the post-war expansion period could be reinterpreted as the end-phase of the acceptance of internal rural Dutch migrants as a truly integral part of the city population. This made this generation feel a strong ownership and identification with the city, which they then passed on to their children. Important to note: this happened in a period of relatively little migration to Rotterdam from outside the Netherlands, which was in fact an exceptional period in Rotterdam's migration history. The generation that grew up in this relatively ethnic homogeneous after-war Rotterdam, now forms the core part of the older voters of the anti-immigrant parties Leefbaar Rotterdam and Wilder's PVV.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Dutch economy started to boom again and, especially in Rotterdam, the industry needed new workers for unskilled manual labour. This was the start of bringing in so-called guest workers, first from Italy and Spain and later from Turkey and Morocco. The migration into the city coincided with people of Dutch descent leaving for satellite towns. This changed the city's ethnic and cultural make up drastically. This period of relative prosperity came to end with the economic recession of the 1980s. The majestic Rotterdam Port no longer was the job engine it had been before. Factories and shipyards started to lay off people

on a massive scale. In this time of great uncertainty, the first anti-immigrant incidents occurred and anti-immigrant parties for the first time received some traction among the working-class Dutch population in Rotterdam. The social democrats, in power since the Second World War and strongly rooted in the community of dock workers, were unable to integrate a post-industrial economic perspective for workers with a narrative of multiculturalism and solidarity.

Contrary to the original narrative of temporality of the guest workers, the number of migrants and their descendants increased in the 1980s, partly due to family reunification and partly because of new migrants, while at the same time the economic situation of the city worsened. In the early 1990s, due to the collapsing of the Soviet Union, migrants started to arrive from countries like Poland and Bulgaria. In a period of only two decades, the share of the city population with a migrant background increased from about 35% to over 50%. Of course, in some neighbourhoods the changes were more salient. As Vertovec points out in his epilogue to this volume, the pace of change in ethnic composition is often an important explanation of the growth of anti-immigrant parties. Part of what triggered the negative response to migrants in Rotterdam was the overall low level of education of the migrants that put them in direct competition for jobs with lower working-class Dutch people who had become unemployed because of the deindustrialisation of the harbour. As van Bochove and Burgers show in this volume, there is a strongly differentiated response to so-called expatriates and labour migrants. Although the descendants of labour migrants are increasingly emancipating into the middle-classes and higher skill level jobs, they tend to be perceived much more negative, constituting the 'other' (labelled 'allochthonous'), than expatriates. The paradox is that while expats often do not learn Dutch and often live in expat communities, the children of labour migrants, who do speak Dutch, many even with a strong Rotterdam accent, are targeted as not integrated.

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 marks a next historical period which set off a wave of anti-Islam reactions across the world and fuelled the rise of populist parties. In this period we increasingly see stricter boundaries (Alba 2009) being drawn between the imagined community of people of Dutch descent and 'outsiders', those of Moroccan and Turkish descent in particular. Especially the generation of Muslim youth that grew up after 9/11 has experienced not much else than their identity and religion being smeared. What Rumbaut (2008) has described as a reactive identity, an identity formed in response to societal circumstances, seems to develop among parts of this group. And this development also had an effect on the reality on the ground. People from different ethnic backgrounds became more antagonistic due to this climate. New Muslim and immigrant parties were founded in opposition to the anti-immigrant populist parties. Again, this made the debate sharper since there were now parties on both sides that made migration and Islam central topics.

In this context, especially the rise of populism in Rotterdam played a key role. As Van Ostaaijen shows in this volume, Rotterdam provided the first political arena in the Netherlands where populists broke the power of traditional parties. In 2002, Leefbaar Rotterdam was the first populist party coming to power in a Dutch city. This party, then led by Pim Fortuyn, played a short but crucial role in a similar

populist rise in Dutch national politics. In Rotterdam, since 2002, power has gone back and forth between the social democrats and other left-wing parties and the populists several times, showing that the city remains divided, not only on migration-related diversity, but also more in general about which narrative should represent the city in the future.

In sum, the way the city and its population developed over time plays an important role in explaining the strong presence of anti-immigrant parties in Rotterdam. The historic situation of a relatively ethnically homogeneous city population just before the Second World War, followed by the rebuilding of the city by that same population forms an important part of the puzzle. That the economic recension in the 1980s coincided with more migration forms another part. This all brought together a number of factors that gave right-wing populism extra momentum. Important politically was the inability of the social democratic party to formulate a proper response to how the economic downturn of the city affected the position of the Dutch working class. Many workers felt betrayed by the party because they did too little to stop the very strong position of harbour workers from crumbling away. Some saw the social democratic party as an accomplish to the dismantling of the welfare state and sell out of the many securities that working-class people had fought hard for over the years. Rotterdam, as a result, became a fertile ground for disappointed working-class people to be recruited by populist parties. Moreover, new anti-immigrant parties were keen to fill that void with their anti-immigrant rhetoric presented as a 'solution' to the 'real' problems of the working class. The narrative was built on what could be considered a double loss. The loss of an ethnic homogeneous community and the loss of security as privileged harbour workers who had all kinds of social securities. The anti-immigrant parties mobilized this 'trauma of loss' again and again, emphasizing the betrayal of the social democrats on both the topic of migration and social security. They claimed that they would restore the old order, with people of Dutch descent on top of the ladder, and migrants stopped at the border or sent back to their country of origin. Obviously, it is impossible to deliver on both themes, since the majority of migrants and their children have strong legal rights and the old working-class jobs will not return. But apparently the idea of a party willing to stand for these issues even when they cannot deliver is more attractive than voting for a party that doesn't acknowledge the feelings of loss and tells their electorate that they need to adapt to a new reality.

The two competing and partly overlapping narratives of Rotterdam as city of workers (1850–1970) or a city of migration are clearly manifest in the development of local policies towards migrant integration. During most of the 1980s and 1990s, Rotterdam followed an approach oriented primarily at socio-economic integration, especially in the spheres of labour and housing. A more culturalist approach emerged in the 2000s in the context of the rise of populism in the local political arena. In the late 2000s, as Dekker and Van Breugel observe in this volume, a more generic or 'mainstreamed' approach emerged in the local policy approach. However, as they argue, this seems not so much to have been a response to superdiversity, but rather a response to individualization, responsibilization and government retrenchment. In their contribution, Van Houdt and Schinkel take a somewhat different position

regarding the policy narrative on diversity in Rotterdam. According to them, Rotterdam uses a narrative of 'exceptionalism' as the legitimation for an interventionist and experimentalist approach to public problems. This narrative has emerged already after the Second World War, where the war destruction provided a rationale and opportunity for urban and social engineering. In a similar way, Rotterdam today tries to 'manage' migration-related diversity, for instance by means of a law specially created for Rotterdam to be able to disperse low-income groups (including many migrants) over the city, in the establishment of a special national program for the development of the South of Rotterdam (since 1900 Rotterdam's place of arrival where most migrants live), or in a special 'Rotterdam code' prescribing norms for social behaviour in the city. Such government efforts often seem to defy the complex legal and political nature of managing diversity in practice. A recent example of this complexity reduction is brought forward by Snel et al. in this volume in their analysis of the Rotterdam approach to migration from Central and Eastern Europe. In spite of the strongly heterogeneous character of this group, Rotterdam was very entrepreneurial on a national as well as a European scale to advocate a more straightforward approach to social issues that were arising with subgroups among these EU citizens. The fact that they are EU citizens with legal rights together with the fact that EU members politically where very cautious to make distinctions between EU citizens, made this attempt doomed to fail from the very beginning. It, however, did negatively brand these groups with the stigma of being problematic.

## 12.3 Rotterdam in Perspective

A central claim in this book is that Rotterdam stands for a broader range of cities that are superdiverse but are struggling to come to terms with this reality. In this context, we especially refer to port cities, which, because of their economic structure and labour market, have traditionally met with significant migration (Van de Laar and Van der Schoor, this volume). But also 'second cities' are more often struggling with how to incorporate their city's diversity in their city narrative (Entzinger, this volume). These cities are usually not global cities. Port and or second cities are often cities that are internationally connected but at the same time still heavily rely on local and national social and economic opportunity structures. This partly explains why there is a strong orientation on the local economy (Dekker and Van Breugel), traditionally a strong belief in social engineering (Van Houdt and Schinkel) and why, given the big working-class population, social democratic parties have played such a dominant role (Van Ostaaijen).

Looking at Rotterdam as a port city or second city, we see that in many aspects it resembles a global city. More than half of the population is of migrant descent, there is a presence of groups from all over the world and Rotterdam is the port of call for ships from all over the world. The most striking difference with global cities is the political discourse about diversity and the city narrative, which seems to

ignore the reality of its migration-related diversity. The comparison with Amsterdam, the other large city in the Netherlands, is especially interesting here. In his comparison between Rotterdam and Amsterdam, Entzinger in this volume builds a strong argument on the relevance of the local cultural and political climate and what he describes as the 'rhetorics of integration'. Entzinger observes that in many statements, both in public debates and in the policy and political discourse, Amsterdam and Rotterdam are each other's opposites when it comes to migration-related diversity. The differences between the two cities are large while the objective characteristics of the two cities, especially their 'superdiverse characteristics', are not that different. One could make a mistake by saying that the differences in rhetoric between both cities are not that important, but this would underestimate the real-world consequences of the differences in local 'climate' and 'rhetorics' for the people living in these cities. This is most clearly demonstrated by the article of Crul and Lelie about the opinions that people of Dutch descent have of diversity in the two cities (Crul and Lelie, Chap. 10 this volume). Crul and Lelie show that in spite of the fact that the socio-economic background characteristics of people living in majority-minority neighbourhoods are very similar in both cities, people of Dutch descent in Rotterdam hold much more negative opinions about diversity than people of Dutch descent in Amsterdam. There is, as they describe it, a key difference between both cities in terms of their 'taste for diversity'.

The observation that the differences between global cities and cities like Rotterdam are especially salient when it comes to the discourse on diversity is supported by how these cities' identities evolve and how they 'brand' themselves to the outside world. Global cities like London and Amsterdam see diversity as a core part of the city identity, and also use this in their city branding strategies to reinforce their positioning as global cities. The contribution by Belabas and Eshuis in this volume shows that in Rotterdam, the use of diversity in city branding is more layered and contested. Although Rotterdam defines diversity as a strength for the local economy ('World Port City'), it does not define it as a part of the city's identity itself, or as a core element of urban life. In fact, again as a reflection of the differences in discourses on superdiversity, it seems to evade diversity in city branding strategies because of its contested nature.

## 12.4 Rotterdam as a Reluctant Super-Diverse City. Looking into the Future

The explanation of why Rotterdam seems to be a reluctant or unhappy superdiverse city has led us to delve into political, historical, and economical reasons, as well as into the development of the public and political discourse and the city's narrative around diversity. It seems that the explanation for, some say, the exceptional case of Rotterdam, is to be found in the combination of all these elements coming together in a particular polarized political era. The way the city's economy has influenced

political developments directly in the past, will again be true for the future. Several contributions show how the positioning of Rotterdam is changing in the direction of what could be described as a global city, in which expats play a key role, where the economy is much broader than that of a port city, and for which internationalization is a core aspect of its branding strategy. In fact, migration to and the diversification of Rotterdam are essential aspects of this process of Rotterdam becoming a global city. The port city slowly transfers into a post-industrial city with more jobs in the middle and higher segments of the labour market. This changes Rotterdam from being primarily working class into a middle-class city. This growing middle-class population and the high paid expats are becoming more and more visible in the city with restaurants and shops catering for them. These two groups will play a key role in the future of the city. Parallel to this, the city also works as an emancipation machine for low educated people both from immigrant and non-immigrant descent. This too will change the socio-economic composition of the city. The process of Rotterdam becoming a global and middle-class city is an intractable process that punctuates institutions and certainties from the past and brings new developments as well as uncertainties. The diversification of its population has become symbolic for the broader transformation from the industrial port city to the modern cosmopolitan city marked by pluralism and diversity that it has become. In addition, as in all processes of transformation, there will be winners and losers. Who will project their feelings of loss or gain on the symbolic centre of modernization: migration and diversification. As various contributions have shown, such discourses have a constitutive effect on this city itself. Alongside these political developments, the demography of the city is changing and affects the debate. With each future election, more people with an immigrant background are able to vote, while the number of voters of Dutch descent will shrink. This will probably, slowly, but gradually, erode the electoral base for the anti-immigrant populist parties.

The authors of this book showed that superdiverse societies come in different forms and will be differently perceived depending on the historic, socio-economic and political circumstances. In this sense, superdiversity as a concept should be understood as typifying a certain reality, rather than as a specific model of diversity. This also means that there is an epistemological and ontological difference between superdiversity as concept and other key concepts in migration literature such as integration, multiculturalism or assimilation. The concept of superdiversity, in existence since Steven Vertovec coined it in 2007, is becoming more and more matured. Researchers are empirically testing under which conditions a superdiverse city, neighbourhood, or school for example, shows positive outcomes in terms of social cohesion, acceptance or tolerance and resilience, while in other cases we see growing intolerance, polarization and conflict.

In this book, we embraced the complexity that a superdiverse reality creates for Rotterdam, a city where part of the population is ambivalent or even outright negative about ethnic diversity. We think this brings a necessary addition to the literature on superdiversity. Precisely because the initial idea of introducing the term superdiversity was to show the growing complexity of diversity, one should

indeed also not expect a singular response to it. Just as much as we need to move beyond an ethnic lens that reduces complexities of people into simple ethnic categories, we also need to move beyond a singular superdiversity lens that would pretend to capture one reality or response. Rather, there will be many types of superdiverse cities, neighbourhoods or contexts, each with their own logic and challenges.

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