Multilingual Europe 2.0: Dutch-Chinese youth identities in the era of superdiversity

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Abstract

This paper argues that multilingual/multicultural identity in Europe has reached a next level since we have entered the era of superdiversity. Under superdiversity we are confronted with a diversification of diversity: relations between ethnicity, citizenship, residence, origin, language, profession, etc. have become more complex and less predictable than before, and as a consequence there is a need to revisit, deconstruct and reinvent our theoretical toolkit to analyse language, culture, ethnicity, identity, etc. This contribution draws on ongoing ethnographic fieldwork in and around a Chinese complementary school in the Netherlands and is part of a larger project investigating discourses of inheritance and identities in multilingual European settings. It focuses on the ethnic and linguistic identifications of Dutch-Chinese youngsters on the Asian and Proud community of the Dutch social networking site Hyves, and shows how Dutch-Chinese youngsters of diverse backgrounds engage in creative languaging in 'netnolectal' Dutch while discussing/celebrating their ethnic and linguistic identities. Focusing on young people's identities, this paper aims to entangle the complexities of being, speaking and learning Chinese in the Netherlands. It thereby explores the internal diversity within Chineseness and its functioning within, or repositioning as, a larger Asian identity as well as its relation to Dutch/European-ness.[1]

1. Introduction

In a series of recent articles, Steven Vertovec (2006; 2007) discusses the changing conditions and contexts of global migration flows and suggests that we are shifting into a post-multiculturalist world. The paradigmatic term he has proposed to describe these ongoing demographic changes as a result of globalisation is 'superdiversity'.

Superdiversity is premised on a world-wide shift in migration patterns from relatively predictable flows of migration from a few places to a few places after World War II to more diffuse and less predictable migration flows from many places to many places since the early 1990s. Whereas migration to the Netherlands in the 1960s-70s was dominated by a state organized labour recruitment scheme of migrant workers (*gastarbeiders*) from Southern Europe (Italy, Spain, Portugal), Turkey and Morocco as well as along colonial ties (from Indonesia, Surinam, and the Antilles), the 1990s have witnessed migration from increasingly diverse places from literally all over the world, from persons with increasingly diverse social, ethnic and religious backgrounds, migrating for increasingly diverse motives and with increasingly diverse legal statuses. Also migration itineraries have become increasingly diverse and complex: "more people are now moving from more places, through more places, to more places" (Vertovec, 2010:86). These changing dynamics of the world's human traffic or 'ethnoscape' (Appadurai, 1996) have caused an unparalleled *diversification of diversity* in societies hosting migrants, "not just in terms of bringing more ethnicities and countries of origin, but also with respect to a multiplication of significant variables that affect where, how and with whom people live"

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[1] This paper was presented at the conference on *Globalisation, Europeanization and Other Transnational Phenomena* at the Budapest College of Communication and Business in Budapest, Hungary, 6-7 May 2011.

(Vertovec, 2007:1042). Societies such as the Netherlands are consequently transforming from multicultural societies with a limited number of ethnic groups ('cultures') to a superdiverse society in which cultural, religious and linguistic identities cannot be taken for granted – in which ethnicity, culture, language and religion have "no guarantees" (Harris and Rampton, 2009) and are increasingly difficult to determine and define in terms of groups of people (cf. Brubaker, 2002).

Superdiversity intends to "capture a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything many migrant-receiving countries have previously experienced" (Vertovec, 2010:87). As current relations between ethnicity, citizenship, residence, origin, language, profession, etc. are of an unprecedented high complexity and low predictability, it becomes increasingly evident that it is descriptively inadequate to assume fixed relations between such categories of identity or to assume the countability or representability of cultures, languages and identities (in plural) or to see migrants ('ethnic minorities') as bearers of national, ethnic or religious cultures. With respect to language, observations of superdiversification have led to abandon notions of language as bounded entities and putative things in the physical world, in favour of an understanding of language as political construction or historical invention (see e.g., Makoni and Pennycook, 2007; Blackledge and Creese, 2010; Shohamy, 2006; Stroud, 2003) and towards adopting an alternative sociolinguistic vocabulary with notions such as crossing, transidiomatic practices, (trans)languaging, resources, repertoires, regimes, etc. to describe and understand the communicative practices and experiences of actual persons in particular places and situations (Rampton, 2005 [1995]; Jacquemet, 2005; Jørgensen, 2008; Blommaert, 2010; Creese and Blackledge, 2010).

In this paper we want to explore what the demographic changes described by the notion of superdiversity mean for articulations of ethnic and linguistic identity by young people of migrant (family) backgrounds. Focusing on identity talk on a social networking website set up to discuss (and celebrate) Asian identity in the Netherlands, we argue that European identities and multilingualism in Europe have reached a next level in the context of superdiversity and use the notion of '2.0' to refer to this next level. We assume that the Internet carves out a new, democratic space to communicate with peers that is different from other, offline channels of communication and that it enables the development of new identities. The term 2.0 is used to refer to new ways of 'languaging' and performing identity among multiethnic youth that defy modernist assumptions about (relations between) language(s), culture(s) and identity/ies. The term 2.0 invokes the notion Web 2.0, the revolutionary second phase in the development of the World Wide Web with increased interactivity compared to the earlier stages of the Internet when ordinary users could only retrieve information. The Web 1.0 was largely a read-only place requiring centralized and specialized programming skills (e.g., .html) commanded by IT specialists to write on the internet. In the Web 2.0 phase non-specialists have writing rights as well and the Internet becomes a place to retrieve but also to publish information. Blogs are an early example of Web 2.0 technology, Wikipedia ("the free encyclopaedia that anyone can edit"), Youtube ("Broadcast Yourself") and social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Hyves are more recent ones.[2]

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[2] There has also been mention of the web 3.0 (as well as of education 3.0 and society 3.0) and even of the Web 4.0. Web 3.0 refers to the stage of development of the Internet with respect to personalisation and the integration of different web applications and the possibility of the web itself to generate new information (including for marketing purposes) by

With the analogy to identity that we invoke in the title of this paper, we suggest that the dynamics of identity in the era of globalisation and superdiversity have also shifted from fairly stable identities with limited 'writing rights' (limited scope for acting out and developing alternative identities) to more complex repertoires of identity young people can actively perform by making use of the all the channels and forums of expression that are currently available to them. Identity 1.0 corresponds to essentialist or absolutist models of ethnic identity (identity and ethnicity as something that is given, that one is born into), while identity 2.0 assumes a more constructivist model of ethnic identity, regarding identity and ethnicity as something that is performed and developed in the course of one's life). Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to answer the question to what extent superdiversity is caused by technological changes, this paper explores the potentials and consequences of a Web 2.0 medium (a Hyves peer network of Dutch-Asian youth) for articulating superdiverse linguistic and cultural identities.

The starting point for this paper is not online communication or Asian identity, but ongoing ethnographic fieldwork in and around a complementary Chinese language school in Eindhoven for a larger HERA-funded research project that investigates discourses of inheritance and identities in four European multilingual contexts.[3]

2. The Chinese diaspora in the Netherlands

The Chinese are one of the oldest established immigrant communities in the Netherlands. Figures of the number of Chinese residing in the Netherlands vary a lot depending on the source and on the definition of 'Chinese'. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, there were 75,000 Chinese in the Netherlands in 2010. The flow of Chinese migration to the Netherlands is multi-layered and highly diverse in terms of individual motivations and personal or family trajectories.

Chinese immigration to the Netherlands happened *grosso modo* in three stages. The first stage took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century when Chinese pioneers began to immigrate to the Netherlands for a variety of reasons. As a push factor, there was the Taiping Rebellion against the ruling Qing dynasty between 1850 and 1864, a civil war that cost the lives of 20 million people. As a pull factor, there was the economic opportunity of being hired by Dutch shipping companies to break the Dutch seamen's strike of 1911 (Pieke, 1992). The Chinese pioneers who came directly from mainland China to the Netherlands were mainly from the provinces of Guangdong and Zheijiang. More precisely, the majority of them came from the Wenzhou and Qingtian districts in Zhejiang and the Bo On district in Guangdong (Li, 1999; Pieke, 1988; 1992).

This initial flow was followed in a second stage in the 1950s to 1970s by Chinese of various ethnic and regional backgrounds that had previously migrated to Java, Sumatra, Suriname, Vietnam,

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Taiwan and Hong Kong. These immigrants were mostly engaged in the catering business, i.e. in exploiting Chinese restaurants thereby introducing Chinese-Indonesian (*Chinees-Indisch*) cuisine to the Netherlands. The Hong Kong and Guangdong Chinese became the largest group of Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands, representing 70 percent of the Dutch Chinese until the 1990s (CBS, 2010:6). Until the 1990s therefore, Cantonese was the dominant language and lingua franca of the Dutch Chinese diaspora.

A third stage in the history of Chinese migration to the Netherlands is marked by a sudden rise of immigration from Mainland China after 1976 and more distinctly since the 1990s. The reason behind this third wave was the political and economic transformation in mainland China, of the People's Republic of China (PRC) where the social position of emigrants had shifted from being 'betrayers of the motherland' to one of admiration (Li, 1999). Since the pursuit of material well-being was no longer considered taboo in mainland China and since the Chinese government had softened its severely defined emigration policies, potential economic betterment in wealthy countries effectively pushed many Chinese into going abroad. As a result, in the final quarter of the twentieth century, the Chinese emigration was far greater than anything experienced during the first three-quarters of the century. This third stage is also characterized by the so-called *liuxuesheng*, i.e. Chinese students abroad and their dependants. Since 1979, it has become more and more attractive for Chinese university students to study abroad, including the Netherlands.

In the period 2001-2008, the Hong Kong and Guangdong Chinese made up less than 15 percent of persons of Chinese origin in the Netherlands and the category of Chinese from other provinces (other than Guangdong, Taiwan, Zheijiang, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing) rose to over 50 percent (CBS, 2010:6): from this period onwards, Chinese immigrants originated from all over China. Together with important geopolitical changes in (Greater) China itself, this increase of diversity in the Chinese diasporic population meant a dramatic change of the status of Cantonese from main language of the diaspora, to only one of the *fangyan*/dialects (see Wang, 2011 for a discussion of 'fangyan' or 'dialect' in relation to Putonghua). The Chinese variety of the north, Mandarin or *Putonghua* steadily gained importance, both in China itself (see Dong, 2009; 2010) as well as in the diaspora. These demographic changes in the constitution of Chinese diasporas along with the geopolitical changes in (Greater) China have far-reaching consequences for people's language and identity repertoires.

Ma (2003) characterized the dynamics of the overseas Chinese population as "a fluid and flexible global network", and emphasized that overseas Chinese history should be placed in a larger historical context beyond national boundaries. Chan (2006) furthermore stressed that new Chinese migrants (*xin yimin*) are highly educated professionals and extremely mobile, and less dependent on 'offline clan associations' (voluntary migrant associations) for their integration into the host society as well as the maintenance of their cultural heritage than on virtual communities. Such virtual communities offer a more diversified repertoire of identity options, at both higher and lower scale levels. Since there are multiple Chinese polities within Greater China (mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore – with varying statuses and relations to the centre), Chinese identities or identifications with Chineseness are inevitably multiple and "rooted in local contexts of power-in-

meaning and meaning-in-power that cannot be encompassed by universal definitions of 'Chineseness'" (Chun, 1996:126). Therefore,

> It might be possible for one to identify as Cantonese, Chinese, or Asian, depending on whether the frame of reference is meant to accent feelings of intimacy among a small circle of kinsmen, to distinguish oneself in terms of presumed cultural origins, or to mark one's solidarity in contrast with non-Asians. In no case is facticity a relevant issue. Identification with the first may be relevant in consideration of personal lifestyle; the second, in consideration of intellectual orientations; and the third, in consideration of political interest. Finally, there will, no doubt, be cases in which one wishes simply to be taken for what one "really" is (i.e., simply as a person, in which the ethnic factor is deemed irrelevant), as well as cases in which an explicit claim of identity is not deemed necessary (in which case, ethnicity is simply seen as matter-of-fact) (Chun, 1996:135f).

Focusing on young people's identities, this paper aims to illustrate that being Chinese in the Netherlands is far from a single, uniform category of identity one simply belongs to. It explores the internal diversity within Chineseness as well as its functioning within (or its repositioning as) a larger Asian identity, and also focuses on its relation to Dutchness.

3. Talking identity on the web

Social networking site Hyves is the Dutch alternative for Facebook and MySpace and is tremendously popular among Dutch youth and almost everybody else using the Internet in the Netherlands. Even the current and former Dutch Prime Ministers have or had Hyves profiles they (or their staff) regularly updated. According to the official figures provided by Hyves itself, the social networking site had 10.6 million members in 2011 (of which 9 million in the Netherlands, i.e. more than half of the population or three quarters of those using the Internet). Hyvers, as the users of the medium are called, have an average age of thirty, and include a slighter higher share of women (56 vs. 44 percent). Hyves started in the same year as Facebook, in 2004, but stayed local and did not expand to become a global medium like Facebook which now has 600 million users, i.e. close to ten per cent of the world's population. In the Netherlands, Hyves still has a bigger market share than its global competitors Facebook and Twitter.

Like Facebook, Hyves is an onymous (non-anonymous) site and provides a virtual forum to create and articulate identities and engage in networks of friends that are partly – or greatly – overlapping with one's real-life identities and networks. Varis, Wang and Du (2011/forthcoming, 2) explain that "'Virtual' reality is quite a misnomer, because what is 'virtual' is very 'real' in the lives of many people, especially when identity processes are concerned". When you sign up for Hyves, which one of us did only in the course of researching for this paper, you are asked to choose a username, provide a picture, and give your e-mail address, first name, surname, sex, relationship status, birth day, birth year, language preference (Dutch/English), living situation (alone, with partner, with children, with friends, with parents), address, organ donor registration status, mobile phone number, Blackberry pin and MSN. For most of these profile details, you are given the choice to fill them out or to leave

them blank and to set restrictions on who is able to see the information (only friends, friends of friends, hyvers, everybody). You are also invited to join networks of your school or the company you work for, etc. and are offered the option to upgrade your membership (with extra options) for a monthly fee.

The Asian and Proud community on Hyves (*http://asian-and-proud.hyves.nl/*), described as "The place to be for all proud asians ;p", was established on 21 July 2007 by the then 13-year-old "Wingy" who also moderates the community together with "Vietpride". Wingy or Kimberley is a Cantonese-speaking Dutch-Chinese girl who is studying Chinese (Mandarin) in a complementary school in Amsterdam. Vietpride or William is, according to his profile page of mixed Vietnamese and Thai descent ("*Half Viet, Half Thais,* **100 % Asian**") and distinctly multilingual (German, English, French, Dutch, Vietnamese, Thai), 97 years old and attending a secondary school in Sittard-Geleen in the southern most province of Limburg. The hyve contains:

- a members' directory;
- an agenda (e.g., featuring an ad for the Pasar Malam Indonesia cultural, business and culinary festival in The Hague);
- news items (e.g., about the hotel fire through fireworks in Shenyang, northern China);
- photo and video section;
- polls (e.g., do you like living in the Netherlands?);
- discussion forums;
- gadgets (a gadget or 'application' is a piece of code – video or game – users can install on their own profile, e.g., a Youtube video of the earthquake in Japan inviting contemplation);
- scribbles (*krabbels*, general postings to the forum, e.g. Fragment 1)
- and commercial adds by Google (e.g., an all-risk commercial vehicle insurance)

Fragment 1 (first scribble on Asian and Proud, Danying, 21 July 2007, 19:01)[4]

heeeyy..eerste krabbel van my😎 echt cool man zo'n asian site ben ik net op zoek naar😃 khooop dat er nog meer azns komen😊 xxx❤️	heeeyy..first scribble from me😎 really <u>cool</u> man such an <u>asian site</u> just what I was looking for😃 I hope more asns will come😊 xxx❤️

The main part of the community's archive would consist of the discussion forums that group dozens or hundreds of postings. A discussion forum can be introduced by any member of the community and are titled themes or questions other members can respond to. Examples of such forums on the Asian and Proud Hyves include both more serious discussion topics as well as more playful formats, and also miscellaneous postings that are in one way or another relevant to the Asian and Proud community (e.g., from an University of Amsterdam researcher asking members to fill out a questionnaire, from a community theatre looking for Chinese musicians/actors and from a fashion designer looking for a model with Asian looks and size 'S'). Serious discussion topics usually take the

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[4] Fragments are represented in their original on the left and with a translation in English on the right. Words or phrases that are already in English in the original are underlined in the translation; untranslatable items as well as superfluous translations are indicated between square brackets.

shape of a question that is introduced and explained and then being answered in a series of replies. Examples of "serious" discussions are:

- "Asian.. leuk of niet leuk?" (Asian.. like it or not?)
- "Wat is jouw "meest Aziatische" bezit?" (What's your most Asian possession?)
- "wat voor soort types val je?" (What type [i.e., Asian, Dutch or otherwise] do you fall in love with?)
- "Waar geboren?" (Where [are you] born?)
- "Hoe oud zijn jullie?" (How old are you?)[5]
- "Vraagje voor alle asians hier hoe lang zijn jullie??" (Question for all Asians here, how tall are you?)
- "Jouw favo asian dramas ^^" (Your favo[rite] Asian drama)

Examples of playful forums are:

- the magic crystal ball – a game in which members predict something about the next poster which is either confirmed or disproved by the next poster who then predicts something about the next poster again;
- the three word game – a game in which members collaboratively construct a story by posting three words at a time, resulting in a surrealist never-ending story (e.g., freely translated: Once upon a time there was a group of Asians in the supermarket who were talking, and three of them were actually chicken so that day, they put an egg on the table with a chick, but the chick was actually a weird swan…);
- word snake – a game in which members post words beginning the final letter of the last word (e.g., *mobiel / liefde / egoïst / toetje / emo / onmogelijk / kip / patat…*: mobile, love, egoist, desert, emo, impossible, chicken, chips)
- guessing age – a game in which members estimate the age of the previous poster;
- "What origin is the person below you?" – a game in which the members guess the ethnic origin of the previous poster on the basis of his/her profile picture)
- "rate the pictureee" (a flirtatious game in which members give report marks for the profile picture, and the looks, of the previous poster)

All topics are directly or indirectly connected to Asian identity issues or are turned into discussions of ethnic identity (e.g., in the forum where participants are asked to give their age, they often also add their country of origin). Some topics elicit hundreds of responses; others remain more exclusive. The most popular forum, the crystal ball game, had more than 1700 posting in 2011 since it started in September 2008. The oldest forum is as old as the Asian and Proud Hyves community itself, i.e. the forum *Ik kom uit…* (I come from…) that was initiated by Wingy on the day she founded the community.

The postings on the discussion forums show little evidence of editing or moderation. It appears that almost anything may be articulated on the forums. When a member expresses racist or otherwise offensive opinions, he is verbally reprimanded by his peers and further being ignored. In one case, an entire discussion forum in which one member claimed not to be a racist while articulating ideas of

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[5] We are dealing with a youthful community here: following the 151 postings to this forum, 72% of the Asian and Proud members fall within the range of 13 to 16 year-old and 94% is under-20.

Asian racial superiority, denying the holocaust and insulting fellow hyvers, was deleted altogether. The discussions generally tend to stay within bounds of decency, however.

The forum we focus on in this paper is *Welk Chinees dialect spreken jullie?* (Which Chinese dialect do you speak?). Within the Asian and Proud community, this forum is a bit more exclusive than some of the other forums as here Asian identity is narrowed down to Chineseness, thereby creating a sub-community of Chinese speakers within the Asian and Proud community.[6] This particular forum was introduced by Leon on a Sunday night in April 2008 with the posting in Fragment 2. It is a slow forum: in May 2011 it contained 95 messages posted by 89 different individuals. Following the date and time stamps attached to every posting, we can reconstruct that the first 41 messages have been sent between 20 April 2008 and 10 August 2008, i.e. 2 to 3 messages every week. After that, the forum continues alternating silent periods of several weeks with more active periods lasting a few days or weeks through to September 2010. Seven out of ten messages were sent in the late afternoon and evening (i.e. between 15:00 and 22:59) and more than nine out of ten messages were posted between 12:00 and 02:59 at night, making the very late night and the morning (between 3:00 and 11:59) the time with the lowest activity.

Fragment 2 (opening of the forum by Leon, 20 April 2008, 21:37)

Ik ben zelf kantonees 😛 ksit op chinese school in eindhoven, ik moet Sinas leren van me ouders -.- ,,	I'm cantonese myself 😛 I'm going to chinese school in eindhoven, I had to learn [Chinese] from my parents -.- ,,
Maja kvind mandarijns moeilijk xD! kan het wel beetje verstaan maar kan het niet spreken >.< stomme klanken 😒	But I find Mandarin hard xD! Can understand it a little, but can't speak it >.< stupid sounds 😒
Maja vul hieronder maar in of je mandarijns bent of Kantonees of Wentonees etc. etc	But just fill out down here if you're mandarin or Cantonese or Wenzhounese etc. etc
^^ kanto rules~ xX	^^ canto rules~ xX

The forum can be read as an inquiry into Leon's online friends' repertoires of Chinese as conveyed in the title question of the forum (What Chinese dialect do you speak?) but also as a broader sociolinguistic discussion of their experiences with learning Chinese and their multilingual identities as Dutch-Asian or Dutch-Chinese youth. What is interesting about this, is (1) that we can treat the forum as an archive of discourses of Dutch-Chinese identities voiced within an informal peer group setting that is not controlled or influenced whatsoever by us as researchers; and (2) that the voices contained in this forum are complementary to the voices we have been recording in the school, thus giving us additional insight into Chinese complementary education in the Netherlands from the perspective of both those who have (almost) completed and those who have quitted their complementary education. The data thus provide rich ethnographic detail of the constraints and regrets or missed opportunities youngsters have experienced with respect to learning Chinese. Leon, who

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6 There is another forum that is directed at Vietnamese people, and one that asks *weaboos* (wannabe Japanese/Asians) to stay away.

initiated the forum, for instance expresses the following unvarnished opinion with regard to Chinese complementary schools (in Fragment 3).

Fragment 3 (Leon, 3 June 2008, 19:10)

Chinese school = 1 woord,: IncredibleSuperDuperBoring =/	Chinese school = 1 word,: <u>IncredibleSuperDuperBoring</u> =/
ik ben de oudste van de klas,De op een na oudste is 13 O_- ksit in een klas vol met kinderen tusse 5 en 13 -.- xD ksit bij hun in de klas omdat ik de basis niet ken, + i Suck @ mandarijns ;\ kheb kantonees/nederlands accent XD stel je voor hoe ik Ni hau ma? zeg :}	I'm the oldest of the class,The second oldest is 13 O_- I'm in a class full with children between 5 and 13 -.- xD am with them in class because I don't know the basics, + <u>i Suck @</u> mandarin ;\ ive got cantonese/dutch accent XD imagine how I say Ni hau ma? :}
Achja kheb nog vrienden op school daar dus,, kan me nooit vervelen tijdens de pauze =]	Well yeah ive still got friends at school there so,, I can't get bored during break =]

4. The medium: "netnolectal" Dutch

The medium of conversation on the forum is Dutch – not Chinese. No Chinese characters appear throughout the forum. Chinese linguistic identity is entirely being discussed in Dutch here. The Dutch used on the forum is not the same Dutch they learn or use in school, nor is it the same Dutch they would speak with their real-world friends. It is what we may term a "netnolect" of Dutch, a (youth language) varieties of Dutch that is written (rather than spoken) on the Internet. Native speakers of netnolectal Dutch are Dutch 'netizens' that are active on any of the social network sites such as Hyves or Facebook. This variety of Dutch is characterized by exactly those features noted above on commenting on Leon's entries cited above as well as some other characteristics. On the basis of the forum investigated here, we can arrive at the following list of features typical for netnolectal variety of Dutch used by the Asian and Proud community.

- free(r) use of capitalisation and punctuation marks
  - e.g., "!!", "!!!", "??", ",,", …
- visual paralinguistics (smileys, para-alphabetic symbols)
  - pictographic smileys: e.g., " ", " "," ", " ", " ", " "
  - typographic smileys: e.g., ">.<", ":}", "-.-", "-.-'", "XD", "xD" (when turned 90 degrees, xD shows a laughing face with eyes squeezed shut and a wide open mouth)
  - para-alphabetic symbols, e.g., "^^", "~ xX", "=]", "=)"
- word contractions and abbreviated forms
  - contractions: e.g., "maja" for *maar ja* (lit. but yes), "tis" for *het is* (it is), "achja" for *ach ja* (well, yeah), "kheb" for *ik heb* (I have), "idd" for *inderdaad* (indeed)
  - abbreviated function words: e.g., "k" for *ik* (I), "&", "n" and "+" for *en* (and), "@" for *at* (borrowed directly from English)

- shorthand keywords: e.g., "Canto" for *Kantonees* (Cantonese), "Mando" for *Mandarijn* (Mandarin), "Viet" for *Vietnamees* (Vietnamese), "Amsie" for *Amsterdam*, "Uttie" for *Utrecht*, "ehv" for *Eindhoven*, "cn" and "Chin" for *Chinees* (Chinese).
- other abbreviated forms: e.g., "lol" for *laughing out loud*, "LOLZZZ" (a plural form of *LOL*, much *laughter out loud*), "wtf" for *what the fuck*

- extensive borrowing of lexical items and phrases from English
  - "I suck", "I guess", "yeah", "yeah man", "too busy of everything", "and a little", "fuck", "wtf", "lol", "nahhh"

- deliberate misspellings
  - "sgool" for *school* (school; cf. skool), "lere" for *leren* (learn), "kunne" for *kunnen* (can), "beetjj" for *beetje* (little bit), "zown" for *zo'n* (such a), "naadruk" for *nadruk* (emphasis), "gaat naa" for *gaat naar* (goes to), "comunicere" for *communiceren* (communicate)
  - humoristic spellings: "sinas" for *Chinees* (Chinese); the wordplay of Sinas refers to yellow lemonade in Dutch, and perhaps also to the website www.sina.com.cn (a Chinese Twitter-like website)
  - use of y instead of ij: e.g., "moeilyk voor my" for *moeilijk voor mij* (difficult for me)

- use of vulgar or foul language
  - "kut" (cunt, used very productively in Dutch as a foul word, equivalent to 'fuck' in English), "houjebek" (shut up, here written in one word, normally three words), "fck", "fuck"

- onomatopoeic exclamations to express emotions
  - "gheghe", "gehehee", "ghehe", "hehehehe", "phew", "yayy", "whuhahaha", "bohh", "nahhh", "hmm", "whuahha", "ahem"
  - "zucht" (sigh), "fszeu" for *of zo* (or so)

- colloquialisms
  - "mn" for *mijn* (my), "me broer" for *mijn broer* (my brother), "me lerares" for *mijn lerares* (my teacher), "nie" for *niet* (not), "kan der" for *ik kan er* (I can), "ikke" for *ik* (I)

- "coolisms" (= turbotaal?)
  - "vet saaii" (bloody boring, lit. fat boring), "vet ver" (bloody far), "wooow"
  - also borrowings from English have this function

- duplication of vowels or consonants to express intensity
  - "o jaaaa" (o yes), "nahhh", "jaa" (yes), "cantooo", "wentooo", "heeeel" (very), "wooow"

- occasional switches to Chinese words or phrases or integrated loans from Chinese into Dutch
  - terms: "pinyin" (the system for transliterating Chinese with (Latin) alphabetical characters)
  - names: "fa yin" (name of a Chinese school in Amsterdam)
  - phrases: "ni hau ma? ", "hou mau?" (both greetings, in Mandarin and Hakka respectively, used not communicatively on the forum, but as example of the language)

Except for the last, all of the above features below may be assumed to be shared by netnolectal Dutch used in other online communities as well. As a youth language variety, netnolectal Dutch is the contemporary version of what twenty-five years ago in the Dutch context Kuitenbrouwer (1987) called "turbotaal" (turbo language) and is related to or corresponds with 'sms language', 'textese', 'netspeak', 'chatspeak', 'txt lingo': non-standard forms of written language that are electronically mediated and characterised by conciseness and a relatively high speed of text production (see Androutsopoulos, 2006; Drouin, 2011; Vold Lexander, 2011).

Although traditional language or spelling mistakes do occur on the Asian and Proud forums, they are fairly minimal and unobtrusive. We define language mistakes here as deviations from orthographic or grammatical norms that have been canonized in consecutive Dutch language reforms and are instructed in mainstream education. Although mistakes are not intrinsically wrong, they are socially sanctioned as mistakes in certain contexts and may be recognized as such in other contexts. Examples of mistakes include classic dt-errors, which are mistakes against the morphological principle which prescribes that the spelling of a morpheme remains constant across all forms in which it occurs even if has no phonological realisation. Thus, the homophonous verb forms *ik word* (I become) and *hij wordt* (he becomes) and *het gebeurt* (it happens) and *het is gebeurd* (it has happened) are spelled differently, respectively because all simple present third person singular forms are suffixed with a –t and because all past tense forms of verbs with stems that end with voiced consonants are suffixed with –d (–de, –d) forms. Dt-errors belong to the most common spelling errors in Dutch (see Sandra, 2010, for a detailed discussion and psycholinguistic explanation) and it is hardly surprisingly that they are also encountered on discussion forums of the Asian and Proud community, e.g.

- *het is niet echt moeilijk* (vindt ik dan) [vind] (It's not really difficult I think);
- *ben ermee opgegroeit* [opgegroeid] (was raised with it [Mandarin]);
- *Ik ben gewoon Nederlands opgevoedt* [opgevoed] (I was simply brought up in Dutch).

And even here, we cannot be conclusively certain that these are really "mistakes" and not playful agentive deviations from shared norms. There is no reason to assume that the Asian and Proud community members are concerned with styling their postings in impeccable, school-normative Dutch. They are writing here in an environment that is relatively little error-oriented and where there are other norms than those espoused by their teachers, grammar books and spelling guides. In a very basic sense, it is not possible to make conventional orthographic errors or mistakes in this community because the Asian and Proud hyve is a space of heterogeneity and diversity, a place where difference and otherness are accepted much more than penalized. It is exactly by being creative and playful with norms that one builds and maintains a reputation of being cool. The visual paralinguistics, the use of English expressions (associated with television and popular music), the creative contractions, abbreviations and other graphic devices to style one's text-as-talk are important means to achieve prestige and "web credibility" in this online community.

5. Mapping Chinese diversity

Reading the forum as an archive of self-articulations of Dutch-Chinese identity, we can begin with mapping the diversity that falls under Chinese (language) in the Chinese community in the Netherlands and learn something of the vocabulary that is used to speak about this diversity. Although,

as indicated, we haven't had any control or influence over our research sample, the 89 persons behind the 95 postings might well form a representative cross-section of Chinese youth in the Netherlands.

The language varieties named in the forum include (in their various names and spellings), apart from Chinese itself (41 textual occurrences), especially Mandarin, Cantonese and Wenzhounese. The 89 persons in our sample collectively speak or identify themselves with ten different varieties of Chinese, of which Mandarin (63), Cantonese (53) and Wenzhounese (21) are most frequently mentioned. Also Vietnamese (8) is named in answering the forum question *What Chinese dialect do you speak?* Among the other "Chineses" occurring in the posting are Hakka with four textual occurrences and Fuzhounese ("fuchounees"), Hokkien ("fokkien"), Chaozhounese ("cahozhou(hua)"), Qingtianese ("qingtianees"), Shanghainese ("ShangHai's") and Suzhounese ("dialect wat uit Suzhou komt") with one occurrence each.

There is display of linguistic/ethnic pride or chauvinism in expressing one's ethnolinguistic identity, especially in the case of speakers of Cantonese and Wenzhounese – the two oldest ethnolinguistic groups of Chinese immigrants. Also members identifying with Mandarin and Vietnames displayed pride in talking about their ethnic/linguistic identity. Compare Leon's "^^ kanto rules~ xX" (Fragment 2) with the postings by ZhuChi, Inge and Huy in Fragments 4, 5 and 6.

Fragment 4 (ZhuChi, 21 April 2008, 22:57)

Wenzhounees!! Yeah man.. 😄 maar ik zit/zat op cn school in zwolle.. verplicht🙂	Wenzhounese!! Yeah man.. 😄 but I go/went to cn school in zwolle.. by force🙂

Fragment 5 (Inge, 10 May 2008, 21:27)

Mandarijns! =)	Mandarin! =)

Fragment 6 (Huy, 12 May 2008, 19:56)

Ik spreek Vietnamees 😎	I speak Vietnamese 😎

Their pride is expressed verbally or (more frequently) through the use of exclamation marks and happy smileys. ZhuChi in Fragment 4 makes use of all three modalities to express his pride over being Wenzhounese, i.e. he puts two exclamation marks after the name of his dialect ("Wenzhounees!!"), adds a cool expression that he may have picked up by watching American films ("Yeah man..") and also places a cheering smiley with two arms up at the end of this proposition. The message is clear: ZhuChi is proud to be Wenzhounese. Note that the wording, capitalisation and the smiley of the second part of his posting (about his membership of a Chinese school) are more austere. Huy in Fragment 6 adds a cool smiley (with sunglasses) after the plainly worded declaration that he speaks Vietnamese. By doing so, he suggests that people speaking Vietnamese are like the smiley, cool.

In contrast to the ethnic/linguistic pride of speakers of the larger varieties of Chinese (and of Vietnamese), Asian and Proud members that identify with the smaller varieties of Chinese are more reserved and even a little embarrassed about their ethnolinguistic identities. Compare the postings by Lisa, Kenny and Ellen in Fragments 7, 8 and 9.

Fragment 7 (Lisa, 28 November 2008, 16:17)

ik spreek een dialect wat uit suzhou komt 😃(nooit van gehoord zeker😛) kan mandarijns verstaan en beetje spreken ook met canto kan ik verstaan maar nog niet echt spreken. heb een paar jaar op chinese school gezeten maar vond het niet leuk dus gestopt, maar ik moet weer op school in amsie van me moeder☺	I speak a dialect which comes from suzhou 😃 (never heard of it I suppose😛) can under-stand mandarin and speak it a little also with canto I can understand but not really speak it. have been to the Chinese school for a few years but didn't like it so quitted, but I have to go back to school in amsie from my mother☺

Fragment 8 (Kenny, 14 April 2009, 01:22)

Qingtianees. Mand, Konton😵	Qingtianese. Mand, Konton😵

Fragment 9 (Ellen, 17 June 2009, 17:40)

Chaozhou(hua) , bijna niemand spreekt dat whuahha, voel me echt dom, iedereen spreekt van die standaard talen kom ik aan hoor. En ik kan een beetje mandarijns en viet verstaan ^^	Chazhou(hua) , hardly anyone speaks that whuahha, I feel really stupid, everybody speaks those standard languages and then there's me. And I can understand a little mandarin and viet ^^

Lisa assumes that her fellow network members have never heard of her hometown and adds both a happy smiley and one that sticks out his tongue. This suggests that is she is fairly self-confident to have a background she doesn't share with many other Dutch-Chinese. Ellen on the other hand, writes that she feels stupid to be from a lesser known place and to be speaking a dialect hardly anyone speaks. Kenny lists three languages as response to the question what Chinese dialect he speaks and adds a freaky smiley, which may be interpreted as expression of discontent with his unusual/abnormal descent.

6. Constraints and missed opportunities re learning Chinese

The forum also offers rich detail about Dutch-Chinese young people's attitudes toward learning Chinese. A study of complementary education such as that of Francis, Archer and Mau (2009) which primarily investigates classroom and playground activities during school hours can only take the experiences of school-going youngsters into account. If we are also concerned with the experiences and articulations of identity of those staying away from Chinese school (e.g., of the premature school leavers), then we must find them in other spaces than the school. One such space where we can encounter them (or rather their artefactualised, archived voices) is online, on social network media such as the Asian and Proud Hyves community.

Asian and Proud members frequently indicated that they were forced to learn Mandarin and go to Chinese school by their parents (e.g., see Leon in Fragment 2 and Lisa in Fragment 7). In Fragment 3 cited above, Leon further elaborates his aversion of Chinese schooling. He describes it in "one word" as "IncredibleSuperDuperBoring" and explains that he is mainly frustrated with the age disparity in his class, himself being much older than the other students in his class. The problem of attending classes with too young children was similarly reported by Chris (Fragment 10) who exaggerates the situation somewhat telling us that he as a teenager has to take classes with 4 and 5-

year-olds. However, he seems to see the humour of the situation as indicated by the "lol xd" he ends his posting with.

Fragment 10 (Chris, 27 December 2009, 02:59)

Kantoow van mijn ouders, dus ik kan wel gewoon kanto praten en verstaan. Manderijns kan ik niet dus volg ik lessen in Arnhem met allerlei kindjes van 4, 5 lol xd	Cantoow from my parents, so I can of course speak and understand canto. I don't know Mandarin so I'm taking classes in Arnhem with lots of little children of 4, 5 lol xd

Onki in Fragment 11 reports a different problem with respect to learning Chinese in the Netherlands: the distance of the school to her home. As she lives in a "nobody's provincial village" (*niemandsboerendorp*), she has to resort to self-study if she wants to know Mandarin. This imposes a significant barrier to Onki's possibilities of learning Chinese. Although the Asian and Proud community does not make up for this in terms of language learning potential, it does offer her access to a community of Chinese and Asian peers to discuss issues of Asian identity.

Fragment 11 (Onki, 6 October 2008, 20:43)

Cantonees 😌 (ben daar geboren en gebleven tot mijn 6e dus..<3) Ik kan een beetje Manderijns verstaan en spreken maar echt ver kom ik er niet mee -.-' Ojaaaaa ik probeer het ook zelf te leren schrijven en lezen sinds ik in niemandsboerendorp woon is de chinese school vet ver hiervandaan zucht XD	Cantonese 😌 (was born there and stayed there until my 6th..<3) I can understand and speak a little Mandarin but it doesn't get me really far -.-' O yeah I also try to teach myself to write and read it since I live in a nobody's provincial village the Chinese school is bloody far away from here sigh XD

Other members who had the opportunity to attend a Chinese school in their surroundings, noted that it was (too) difficult to combine it with their mainstream education or with their busy lives in general. Cantonese-speaking Seline (Fragment 12) and Mandarin-speaking Hexue (Fragment 13), for instance, write that they would like to learn or to have learned Chinese in school, but are or were not committed enough to give up their weekends for it. Note that for Seline and Hexue, learning Chinese does not mean the same thing: for Seline who grew up speaking Cantonese at home, it means in the first place learning to speak Mandarin; for Hexue, who already speaks Mandarin, it presumably means learning to read and write Chinese characters.

Fragment 12 (Seline, 21 April 2008, 00:04)

Yeah Ik spreek zelf ook cantonees.. Ik ben zelfst opgevoed ermee omdat mijn ouders ook cantonees spreken.. Ik zat op chinees school in utrecht..maja nu allang niet meer..Too busy of everything.. Ik zou wel manderijns willen leren want het is belangrijk voor later als je iets wilt bereiken in china	<u>Yeah</u> I speak cantonese myself too.. I'm even raised with it cuz my parents also speak Cantonese.. I went to Chinese school in Utrecht..but not anymore for a long time now..<u>Too busy of everything</u>.. I would wanna learn mandarin cuz it's important for later if you want to achieve something in china

Fragment 13 (Hexue, 10 December 2008, 23:10)

Mandarijns n_n	Mandarin n_n
Ik dacht erover na om naar Chinese school te gaan in weekend fszeu... maar nahhh ik heb 't al druk genoeg met middelbare XD	I thought about going to Chinese school during the weekend or so… but <u>nahhh</u> I'm busy enough already with secondary XD

Yet other community members report that they quitted Chinese school because it was too difficult for them. Cantonese-speaking Sinyi92 (Fragment 14) writes that she now sticks to speaking Chinese (Cantonese) as learning (to read and write) is too difficult for her. Margriet (Fragment 15), also Cantonese-speaking, writes that she can understand a little (spoken) Mandarin, but finds speaking it too difficult. 'Pui (Fragment 16), who is of mixed Cantonese and Wenzhounese descent, also quitted learning Mandarin because she "didn't get it".

Fragment 14 (sinyi92, 5 May 2008, 18:57)

k zelf spreek canto.. net soals de meeste van jullie.. k zat op chin school.. maarja.. lere was te moeilijk voor mij.. 🙂 dus blijf ik bij het praten..	I speak canto myself.. like most of you.. went to chinese school.. but.. learning was too difficult for me.. 🙂 so I stick to speaking..

Fragment 15 (margriet, 27 June 2008, 20:38)

cantonees 😎 en kan een beetje mando verstaan maar niet praten veels te moeilyk voor my xd.	cantonees 😎 and can understand a little mando but not speak it way too difficult for me xd.

Fragment 16 ('Pui, 12 October 2009, 20:01)

Canzhou? o.0 [mam canto -hk-, pap wenzhou] maar ik ben dus canto opgevoed :3, ooit moest ik manda leren @chinese school in ehv ;>.> ik snapte er niks van en ging eronderuit [a.]	Canzhou? o.0 [mum canto -hk-, dad wenzhou] but I was brought up canto :3, once I had to learn manda @chinese school in ehv ;>.> I didn't get it and got out of it [a.]

Cantonese-speaking Bonny is still attending Chinese school at the time of posting the message in Fragment 17, but says she is not very good at Mandarin as she admits to be sleeping in class on Saturday mornings. Bonny's posting, as well as those of Seline, Hexue, Sinyi92, Margriet and 'Pui point at the considerable effort youngsters of Chinese background need to make in order to connect with their linguistic heritage. Simply being Chinese is not enough as they have to spend long hours in classrooms on Saturday morning to learn the culturally and economically required variety of Chinese (Mandarin) together with a highly complex and educationally very demanding writing system. It is clear that the object of Chinese language education is very expensive and exclusive linguistic capital.

Fragment 17 (~' Bonny~, 27 December 2009, 16:57)

IK spreek kantonees . en beetj manderijns niet echt goed.Maar ik zit ook op chinese school,let daar nooit op'..want het is in het weekend 😫 dan slaap ik liever tijdens de les 😖	I speak cantonese . and a little mandarin not that well.But I'm also going to Chinese school,don't pay attention there cuz it's during the weekend 😫 then I rather sleep in class 😖

Ting, who has a Wenzhounese family background, writes (in Fragment 18) that she understands all of Wenzhounese, but cannot speak it, and knows only a little Mandarin from Chinese school, but has forgotten most of it. A similar remark about "forgetting" Chinese outside of a formal educational context, is made by Peter in Fragment 19 who writes that he spoke much better Mandarin when he was young than he does now and has forgotten much of what he knew.

Fragment 18 (Ting, 30 July 2008, 20:43)

wenzhou, versta alles maar spreek 't niet manderijns kan ik een beetje en versta ik ook n_n heb op chinese school gezeten in heerlen maar ben alles inmiddels al vergeten 😐	wenzhou, understand evertything but don't speak it I know a little mandarin and understand it too n_n have been to chinese school in heerlen but have forgotten everything already 😐

Fragment 19 (Peter, 10 October 2008, 16:04)

Manderijns, maar het spreken en verstaan lukt me soms niet helemaal 😜Kzit niet op een chinese school en ook nog nooit op gezeten xD Toen ik nog jong was kon ik het veel beter...vergeten 😒😒😳	Mandarin, but I sometimes don't quite manage with speaking and understanding 😜I'm not going to chinese school and have never gone there xD When I was young I could do much better…forgotten 😒😒😳

The importance of even little bits and pieces of Chinese in one's language repertoire for their Dutch-Chinese identity is illustrated by the postings of Sara (Fragment 20) and Lisanne (Fragment 21) who report to experience serious shortcomings in their proficiency in Chinese. Sara writes that she suspects her parents to be ashamed of her because she doesn't speak enough Vietnamese and Mandarin. Lisanne comments that she has zero competence in Chinese and notes this with a sense of regret or frustration ("wtf") in observing that other Chinese community members speak at least some Chinese. She marks her comment with a crying (sad) and a blushing (embarrassed) smiley.

Fragment 20 ([»Sara«],17 June 2008, 15:43)

whuhahaha, ik kan alleen vietnamees verstaan, niet spreken, maar wel een klein beetje mandarijns praten..😊 Verbaast me niet als mijn ouders schamen voor mij 😾	whuhahaha, I can only understand vietnamese, not speak it, but do speak a little bit of mandarin..😊 Wouldn't surprise me if my parents are ashamed of me 😾

Fragment 21 (Lisanne, 14 March 2010, 17:15)

| wtf iedereen kan hier wel ietss van chinees spreken🙁 . | wtf everybody here can speak some chinese🙁 . |
| kom ik aan met me niks 🙁 | and there I am with my nothing 🙁 |

7. Conclusions

What we read in this forum, is evidence of truncated repertoires of Chinese language proficiency. To state the obvious: no user of Chinese knows the entire Chinese language. This is hardly surprising as this is true for any language and any speaker: nobody speaks all of a language. One may be more or less confident in speaking (a variety of) a language such as Dutch or Chinese, but nobody can claim to know (either to produce or understand) all there is in a language. This is a sociolinguistic universal: linguistic or communicative competence is always limited (Blommaert and Backus, 2011). Language proficiency is essentially truncated. Proficiency is always proficiency in a particular variety (standard vs. vernacular), to a particular extent (more or less) and in a particular mode of language (understanding, speaking, reading, writing) (cf. Dyers, 2008). This is all the more evident for Chinese as 'the Chinese language' groups a higher number of people, a vaster geographical area and a larger continuum of variation than any other language in the world, while at the same time upholding a meaningful sense of unity ('sociolinguistic harmony') among speakers of mutually by and large unintelligible vernaculars. This fact raises many questions about what language is, and what it means to be proficient in a language. At this point, we may even ask if we are in fact using the word 'language' in the same way when we speak about Chinese than when we speak about English or Dutch. So, what does it mean to know Chinese in the Netherlands?

Knowing Chinese in the Netherlands can mean a plurality of things. First of all, for the young people on the Asian and Proud hyves it invariably also means knowing Dutch. The Dutch-Chinese hyvers studied here come together in the context of a broader Dutch-Asian virtual network, the vehicular language of which is Dutch, not Chinese. All members are highly proficient in Dutch, especially in what we have termed netnolectal Dutch, in ways that makes them undistinguishable from autochtonous 'native speakers' of Dutch. There is no linguistic evidence whatsoever in our sample of postings to categorise these youngsters as anything else than native speakers of Dutch. In multilingual Europe 2.0, ethnicity (being Chinese) or the mother's tongue (Chinese, Wenzhounese) is not a valid criterion for determining native-speakerness anymore. The sub-community of Dutch-Chinese youth within the Asian and Proud community is eventually a community of native Dutch speakers-and-writers. In multilingual Europe 2.0 or superdiverse Europe, we are dealing with new natives and new European identities, with Dutch-Chinese and many other hyphenated, hybrid identities.

Secondly, the Chinese component of one's Dutch-Chinese identity cannot be taken for granted, nor does breaking it down into its regional variants (Cantonese, Wenzhounese, Mandarin, etc.) tell us everything about someone's Chineseness. Equally important is one's extent of socialisation into the school-taught variety of Chinese, Mandarin or *Putonghua*. Someone's respective success in Chinese complementary education where Mandarin is taught determines in important ways someone's identification with his or her Chinese linguistic and cultural heritage. New natives' heritage in

superdiverse Europe is not a bounded, homogenous set of traditions, practices and values but is complex, multilayered and polycentric.

Thirdly, in multilingual Europe 2.0, one's ethnicity is no longer solely or even primarily determined by one's biological descent (one's 'race'), but is increasingly renegotiable through engaging with other forms of ethnicity. It becomes evident that ethnicity is not in the first place the property of fixed groups (young) people simply belong to and that researchers may work with as unproblematic taken-for-granted social units (Brubaker, 2002). Dutch-Chinese youth, as used in the title, is certainly not the only or best ethnic denominator for all situations. Importantly, the online network studied here is not entitled 'Chinese and Proud' but 'Asian and Proud'. The broad participation of young people of Chinese background within this community suggests that Asianness is at least as productive a marker of ethnic identity than is Chineseness (Chun, 1996), probably in more pervasive and meaningful ways than was the case for their (grand)parents' generation. Online communities allow for a rescaling of ethnicity: a partial redefinition of one's Chineseness as Asianness.

Multilingual Europe 2.0 forces us to adopt a 'post-groupist' understanding of ethnicity, i.e. to abandon "the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis" (Brubaker, 2002:164). The basic demographic changes superdiversity entail urge us to revisit, deconstruct and reinvent many of our established assumptions about language, identity, ethnicity, culture, and communication (Blommaert and Rampton, 2011). An ethnographic project such as the present one uses vernacular voices as analytical heuristic for finding and dealing with alternative understanding of language, ideology, ethnicity, etc. and thereby contributes to renewing our theoretical and conceptual apparatus for analysing and understanding the world in its superdiverse complexity.

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