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## Editorial

# Digital language practices in superdiversity: Introduction



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This Special Issue brings together research at the intersection of two emerging areas of scholarship in sociocultural linguistics, digital communication and superdiversity. The nine papers explore their relationship from two angles: they examine the role of digital language practices in contexts of societal superdiversity, and the relevance of superdiversity as a theoretical perspective for the study of digital language practices. In our Introduction we first outline the concept of superdiversity and the way digital media and communications technologies are conceptualised in literature on superdiversity and some relevant earlier scholarship. We then turn to the reception of superdiversity in sociolinguistics and the role of digital language and literacy in this discussion. Drawing on the papers in this issue, we then outline a number of research perspectives on digital language practices in superdiversity. Finally the papers in the special issue are introduced.

## 1. Digital media in the concept of superdiversity

The term 'super-diversity' (as it was first spelt) was initially proposed by Vertovec (2006, 2007) as a "summary term" for the increasingly complex interplay of factors that shape patterns of immigration to metropolitan Britain and London in particular (Vertovec, 2007: 1025–1026). The idea of superdiversity is premised on a world-wide shift in migration patterns from relatively predictable migration flows up until the 1980s, to more diffuse and less predictable flows of migration since the early 1990s. These social transformations are causing 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" (Vertovec, 2007: 1042). Whereas migration flows in/to Europe in the 1960–70s were dominated by state-organised labour recruitment schemes of migrant workers from around the Mediterranean as well as along colonial ties, 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, with increasingly diverse legal statuses, and in increasingly diverse trajectories. And whereas the earlier migration flows led to relatively stable and sizeable immigrant communities (e.g. of Turkish in Germany,

Portuguese in Luxembourg, Algerians in France, Mexicans in the U. S.) the post-Cold War migration flows are more differentiated and diversified and immigrant groups "newer, smaller, [more] transient, more socially stratified, less organised and more legally differentiated" and consequently more difficult to manage than 1950–70s migrations (Vertovec, 2010: 86). For Vertovec and others, superdiversity calls into question multiculturalism and multicultural identity politics (see also Fanshawe and Sriskandarajah, 2010).

An emphasis on digital communication technologies and the communicative practices they enable has been an important theme in Vertovec's research even before the notion of superdiversity was coined. In an article entitled "Cheap calls: the social glue of migrant transnationalism", Vertovec (2004) argues that "nothing has facilitated global linkage more than the boom in ordinary, cheap international telephone calls", and points out that

"The personal, real-time contact provided by international telephone calls is transforming the everyday lives of innumerable migrants. [...] Whereas throughout the world non-migrant families commonly have discussions across a kitchen table (for example, can we buy a refrigerator? What do we do about the teenager's behaviour? Who should take care of grandmother?), now many families whose members are relocated through migration conduct the same everyday discussions in real time across oceans. Cheap telephone calls have largely facilitated this. It is now common for a single family to be stretched across vast distances and between nation-states, yet still retain its sense of collectivity." (2004: 222).

It is important to remember that this interest did not emerge in a vacuum. Its seeds are to be found in earlier, influential theorising of cultural globalisation, migration and mobility. Appadurai (1996), whose five cultural dimensions of globalisation (ethno-, techno-, finance-, media-, and ideoscapes) has become a landmark reference point in the social-scientific theorising of globalisation, notes that

"The story of mass migrations (voluntary and forced) is hardly a new feature of human history. But when it is juxtaposed with the rapid flow of mass-mediated images, scripts and sensations, we have a new order of instability in the production of modern subjectivities. As Turkish guest workers in Germany watch Turkish films in their German flats, as Koreans in Philadelphia watch the 1988 Olympics in Seoul through satellite feeds from Korea, and as Pakistani cabdrivers in Chicago listen to cassettes of sermons recorded in mosques in Pakistan or Iran, we see

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moving images meet deterritorialized viewers. These create diasporic public spheres, phenomena that confound theories that depend on the continued salience of the nation-state as the key arbiter of important social changes.”

Appadurai's words have not lost much currency, even if the analogue technologies he mentions sound a little outdated at present. Satellite dishes, cassette tapes and VHS were at the core of diasporic mediascapes at the time of his writings, but have lost much of their practical value two decades later as they are replaced by newer digital and network technologies. This is equally true for descriptions of “sophisticated technologies” of just ten years ago. [Jacquemet \(2005\)](#), for instance, remarks

“Sophisticated technologies for rapid human mobility and electronic global communication (in its economic, political, and cultural modes flowing through such media as high-capacity planes, cable lines, television networks, fixed and mobile telephony, and the Internet) are advancing a process of constructing localities in relation to global sociopolitical forces [...] An increasing number of people around the globe learn to interact with historically and culturally distant communicative environments through new technologies (including the asynchronous channels of e-mail and voice-mail, the abridged idioms of cellular digital messaging, and the multi-media capabilities of web pages) and use newly acquired techno-linguistic skills (control of English, translation capabilities, knowledge of interactional routines in mediated environments).”

An attempt to update these descriptions with anno 2014 state-of-the-art information and communication technologies (we could think of touch-screen smartphones and their apps, cloud computing, 3D-printers, Google glass, and so on) will without any doubt be similarly outdated in the next ten years. From the viewpoint of this Special Issue, the lesson is that a focus on technologies themselves is bound to remain ephemeral and become rapidly outdated. We argue that the important difference from Appadurai to Jacquemet to present-day digital media is not in the mere devices, but in the changing qualities of whatever is being mediated and its place in everyday cultural practice. Appadurai's discussion positions media as containers of cultural products, such as music or sermons, that diasporic and mobile people consume and appropriate as resources for congregation and conviviality. Today, digital media is much more than that, as its capacity to store cultural productions is complemented by its capacity to facilitate deterritorialized interaction, individualised self-presentation, and large-scale participation in cultural and political discourses.

Note, however, that migration scholars' assessments of how technologies relate to new social relations vary. While the citations above might be read as technology-driven explanations of social change, [Glick-Schiller et al. \(1995: 52\)](#), for instance, argue that “jet planes, telephones, faxes, and internet” only facilitate rather than produce the tendency of today's transmigrants to go back and forth and maintain multiple linkages with their countries of origin. The important point for them is that “immigrant transnationalism is best understood as a response to the fact that in a global economy contemporary migrants have found full incorporation in the countries within which they resettle either not possible or not desirable.”

## 2. Superdiversity in language studies: the place of digital language practices

The role of digital technologies and practices in the construction of transnational identities and maintenance of transnational networks has not passed unnoticed in the uptake of superdiversity

in language studies. [Blommaert and Rampton \(2011\)](#) who took a leading role in introducing the notion of superdiversity to sociolinguistics, have argued that the socio-demographic changes Vertovec observed need to be seen in conjunction with the historically coinciding development of digital communication technologies and their spread in our everyday lives in the 1990s

“While emigration used to mean real separation between the emigré and his/her home society, involving the loss or dramatic reduction of social, cultural and political roles and impact there, emigrants and dispersed communities now have the potential to retain an active connection by means of an elaborate set of long-distance communication technologies. These technologies impact on sedentary ‘host’ communities as well, with people getting involved in transnational networks that offer potentially altered forms of identity, community formation and cooperation [...]. In the first instance, these developments are changes in the material world – new technologies of communication and knowledge as well as new demographics – but for large numbers of people across the world, they are also lived experiences and sociocultural modes of life that may be changing in ways and degrees that we have yet to understand.”

The recent interest of language scholars in superdiversity did not occur in a vacuum, either. It emerges at a time when mobility and globalisation have become major foci in sociolinguistic scholarship at an empirical as much as theoretical level. As studies of language and discourse turn to an ever-increasing range of mobile and globalised phenomena such as migration, tourism, and cultural industries (see e.g. the volumes edited by [Coupland, 2010](#); [Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010](#)), their theoretical apparatus, too, is increasingly shaped by metaphors of flow, fluidity and movement in an attempt to deconstruct notions of fixity and stability in our understanding of language and society. For example, whereas bilingual talk used to be analysed in terms of juxtapositions between grammatical systems (i.e. code-switching), it is now being reconceptualised as linguistic practice that transverse languages (i.e. translanguaging or polylinguaging; cf. [Canagarajah, 2013](#); [Creese and Blackledge, 2010b](#); [Garcia and Li, 2013](#); [Jørgensen et al., 2011](#)). Similarly, the former understanding of intercultural communication as communication between individuals socialised in supposedly distinct cultures is making place for transcultural approaches that focus on processes of borrowing, blending and *bricolage* not between, but across localities ([Pennycook, 2010](#)). Likewise, the notion of context is being diversified and destabilised in concepts such as recontextualisation, entextualisation, relocalisation or resemiotisation (e.g., [Iedema, 2003](#); [Silverstein and Urban, 1996](#)). At a higher order of abstraction, sociolinguistics and discourse analysis themselves are now imagined as being ‘on the move’, i.e. undergoing a process of reviewing central concepts of the field in response to shifts in contemporary social life as well as in keeping with developments in social theory ([Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010](#)).

In a sense, then, superdiversity epitomises the turn of sociolinguistics to these themes: it offers an ‘umbrella’ notion under which it seems possible to tackle their interaction, thereby also emphasising the importance of the communication technologies that enable and intensify the present-day global flows of people, discourses, and signs. In this way, the notion of superdiversity alerts us even more pressingly than that of globalisation to integrate digital language and literacy in our theorising of language, discourse and communication. Whereas early-days sociolinguistics predominantly studied language in physical, territorialised settings within nation-states and their institutions, today there is a range of mobile modes and transnational spaces of communication which need to be studied to understand the changing contexts of language and/in social life. However, with very few

exceptions (notably [Varis and Wang, 2011](#); [Leppänen and Häkkinen, 2012](#), to which we return below), the place of digital language and literacy in superdiversity is merely mentioned rather than studied in the available research literature. The volume on linguistic superdiversity edited by [Duarte and Gogolin \(2013\)](#), for instance, very sparsely uses the terms “digital”, “virtual”, “computer”, “Internet”, “online” and does so predominantly in relation to research techniques (e.g., [Hinskens, 2013](#)) and not with reference to digital language and literacy practices. Exceptions here are the chapters by [Blommaert and Varis \(2013\)](#) and [Kroon et al. \(2013\)](#), which include some discussion and programmatic statements (but not empirical research) on the role of the Internet in researching language and globalisation or superdiversity. Similarly, [Creese and Blackledge \(2010a: 569\)](#) in their study of Bangladeshi families in Birmingham observe a tension between local and translocal linguistic practices; they point out that “digital communication made available resources which superseded territorial boundaries, offering linguistic resources which resided in none of these localities, and may have been more at home on the streets of New York City or Mumbai.” The nature of these translocal resources, the modes of mediation, genres and interactions they are associated with as well as their recontextualisation in the family space remain unexamined. It is precisely in this direction that this Special Issue aims to make a contribution.

### 3. Networks, individuals, and spaces: perspectives on digital language practice in superdiversity

The nine papers in this special issue explore the role of digital language practices in superdiversity based on a rich set of empirical cases. They examine representations, discourses and interactions carried out in a wide range of digital media – social network sites, discussion forums, blogs, YouTube pages – and an equally wide range of diasporic and multilingual contexts: Senegalese, Nepalese and Nigerian global diasporas; the postcolonial Lusophone (Brazilian-Portuguese) world; young members of the Dutch-Chinese community; locals and expats in Luxembourg; young people of Greek and Taiwanese background in Germany; Finnish-Swedish and Spanish-Swedish youngsters in Sweden; and a group of Copenhagen adolescents. In terms of method, the papers cover a range of approaches to digital data collection, with varying degrees of direct engagement with participants (see [Fanshawe and Sriskandarajah, 2010](#)). Those papers that examine communication in small-scale social networks (notably by [Staehr, Jonsson and Muhonen](#), and [Androutsopoulos](#)) complement digital data collection with personal interviews with participants, whereas the papers that examine spaces of discourse with unrestricted reading access limit their techniques of data collection to web data retrieval and gain background information by means of observing and transversing the digital spaces under examination. Before we move to an outline of each paper separately (see next section), we draw on them all to sketch out three distinct, but interrelated perspectives on the role of digital language practices in superdiversity, i.e. at the level of individuals, communities (or networks), and digitally mediated spaces.

From these, the level of communities (represented as networks of virtually interconnected individuals) is probably the most well known one. Research in cultural and ethnic studies as well as sociolinguistics since the early 2000s examined how diasporic and transnational people appropriate the Internet to create discourse spaces in which to articulate marginal voices, negotiate plural identities, construct the meanings and boundaries of community. To the extent it considers language, this research shows that diaspora communities are neither consistent nor uniform in their discourse and linguistic choices; rather, their virtual spaces of discourse lay bare their diverse and fluid linguistic repertoires and

understandings of identity and community ([Androutsopoulos, 2006](#)). This finding is fully compatible with the contemporary view from language and superdiversity research, which conceptualises “diasporas as internally diverse and multi-dimensional, shaped by individual biographies and characterised by different levels of hybridity and interaction with other groups” ([Deumert and Mabandla, 2013: 46](#)).

A number of papers in this Special Issue address the relation of digital media and superdiversity at this ‘community’ level, with diasporic discussion forums and web portals being their objects of study ([Mc Laughlin, Heyd, Juffermans et al., Sharma](#)). As superdiversity theory also states, people in the process of global mobility create digital enclaves for political and cultural discourse. [Vertovec \(2010: 89\)](#), for example, points out that “Regular and routine transnational practices of exchange [...] in diasporic networks often ensure that common collective identities are maintained and enhanced.” The research collected in this Issue suggests that such spaces also become sites for language-ideological discourses. They sometimes confirm the indexical orders and normativities that people carry over from their social spaces of origin and/or residence ([Mc Laughlin, Sharma](#)), whereas in other cases they endow new global diasporas with new sociolinguistic emblems and identities ([Heyd, Juffermans et al.](#)).

Even though the notion of superdiversity emerged in a macro-sociological frame of scholarship, its reception in sociolinguistics also foregrounds individual linguistic practice and communicative experience. Together with other theorising of language and society in late modernity (e.g., [Busch, 2012](#); [Rampton, 2006](#)), the superdiversity approach in sociolinguistics emphasises that “fragmentation, rather than unity, defines the experiences and practices of contemporary speakers” ([Deumert and Mabandla, 2013](#)). Given that digital, and in particular mobile communication technologies are considered a backbone of transnational mobility (e.g., [Vertovec, 2004](#)), understanding the relation of language to individual trajectories in superdiverse settings seems impossible without taking digitally-mediated communication into account. The social functions of individual digital connectivity are manifold – transnational families reuniting on Skype, couples maintaining a flow of interaction via text messaging, undocumented migrants devising their route with the help of mobile phones, etc. – and so are the implications of these trajectories for individual linguistic repertoires. That such facets of digital language practice are not examined at all in this special issue is unfortunate, but fully understandable in view of the considerable difficulties in gaining access to the data required for this fine-grained and often highly sensitive level of analysis. Some papers nonetheless address digital language practices at the level of individuals with a focus on the local appropriation of globally circulating semiotic resources ([Jonsson and Muhonen, Staehr](#)) and the management of linguistic repertoires in the orientation to heterogeneous networked audiences ([Androutsopoulos](#)). We see here the seeds of a future agenda of research, which moves from ethnographically informed discourse analyses of digital spaces to multi-sited ethnographies of the incorporation of digital literacy practices into people’s language lives. In this special issue, [Staehr’s](#) paper perhaps comes closest to such integration of digital practices in a general ethnography of contemporary languaging.

It seems tempting to conceptualise the Internet as a whole as a ‘superdiverse space’ by virtue of the sheer diversity of multilingual and semiotic resources that a user can browse through. For example, [Varis and Wang \(2011: 71\)](#) refer to the Internet as “the superdiverse space par excellence” and “a space of seemingly endless possibilities for self-expression and community formation” (71), and argue it complexifies “the nature of human communication and engagement with others, of transnational movements and migration, and of social and cultural life in general

(70).” Having said this, they warn against viewing the Internet solely in terms of diversity, innovation, and creativity (“happy heterogeneity”) and call attention to processes of control, order and policing writing on the Internet is also subject to (see also Wang et al., 2011). A counterpart to this view is the anthropological approach to deconstructing the Internet in order to uncover virtual spaces of individual and community practice. As Miller and Slater (2000: 1) argued in their classic ethnography of Internet use in Trinidad, “the Internet is not a monolithic or placeless ‘cyberspace’; rather, it is numerous new technologies, used by diverse people, in diverse real-world locations”. The analogy to the urban spaces originally studied by Vertovec is not the Internet as a whole, an entity as ‘superdiverse’ as the entire ‘world’, but specific social spaces discursively constructed by its users. As pointed out above, such virtual spaces provide sites of congregation and conviviality for virtual communities, and in these spaces uses of language that resemble the polylingual languaging familiar from offline contexts of superdiversity (cf. Jørgensen et al., 2011) can be observed.

This is not to say that virtual spaces are merely equivalents or copies of urban spaces. They are not, and herein lays the relevance of studying virtual spaces of interaction in superdiverse settings. Social networking sites, virtual environments, online-gaming spaces etc. enable by virtue of their translocal accessibility a flow of semiotic resources that by far exceeds the resources that individual members bring along (Androutsopoulos). It is important to emphasise that this does not happen at the level of ‘the Internet’ as a whole but in distinct spaces of participation and engagement, which enable networked individuals to access, experience, appropriate and recycle transcultural flows and globally circulating semiotic resources. A number of papers in this issue examine such spaces and their role in contemporary representations and performances of identity, community and ethnicity (Androutsopoulos, Fabrício, Juffermans et al., Jonsson and Muhonen, Staehr).

Leppänen and Häkkinen (2012) add another dimension of interest for language and superdiversity research by emphasising the role of the Internet as a site of “prosumption”, i.e. the fusion of practices of consumption and production which characterises participation in social media. The Internet offers a vast reservoir of semiotic resources, which users can recycle and creatively recontextualise. They illustrate this with an analysis of YouTube videos from Finland, which parody video clips from a Bollywood movie and a Syrian wedding band by devising (sexist and racist) mock translations that acoustically resemble the original lyrics in Hindi and Kurdish, respectively. Just at the point where their analysis begins to raise questions about cultural othering and banal racism in Finnish society, they show how this in itself offensive appropriation provides the Kurdish wedding singer with a temporal career opportunity, which results in lucrative visits to Finland and (self-acclaimed) opportunities for cultural dialogue with his audiences. This is a different understanding of superdiversity, largely detached from the original conception and its empirical focus on urban spaces, that reconceptualises superdiversity as a diversification of semiotic resources and artefacts in the age of the Internet.

#### 4. The papers in this special issue

The Special Issue begins with an article by Fiona Mc Laughlin, “Senegalese digital repertoires in superdiversity: A case study from Seneweb”. It takes at its point of departure the opening vignette of Heller’s (2011) book *Paths to Post-Nationalism* where French police was puzzled to make sense of a suspected Senegalese drug-dealer speaking French with a Canadian rather than Senegalese accent. The paper goes on to examine the way writers on ‘Seneweb’, a

Senegalese web forum, construct language in and beyond French and urban Wolof. The main story Mc Laughlin follows in her analysis is concerned with the long-distance political commentary and ridicule from Seneweb users of artist Youssou N’Dour’s announcement to run for president in the 2012 elections due to his supposed insufficient command of French.

The second paper by Bal Sharma, “On high horses: Transnational Nepalis and language ideologies on YouTube”, takes a similar diasporic political discussion as its data. Its site of discourse is YouTube; the community are Nepalese outside of Nepal. Sharma analyses the comments following a video of a speech by Nepal’s health minister at an international meeting. Like in Mc Laughlin’s case, the discussion also revolves around language ideologies and political legitimacy. The respective minister is mocked and ridiculed for her heavily accented English by the transnational Nepalese internauts in, as Sharma points out, an equally accented form of English. Drawing on Bakhtinian dialogicality and the socio-linguistics of stance (Jaffe, 2009), the analysis uncovers multiple orders of indexicality in ideologies of English: the video of the speech as well as the comments themselves are stance objects triggering evaluation and reflexive commentary. The cynical evaluation of the minister’s speech points at divergence of transnational Nepalese with the local Maoist political elite in which cosmopolitanism functions as a marker of distinction and prestige through the logics of centre-periphery in English. Sharma argues that digital spaces such as YouTube offer channels for (oppositional) political involvement and engagement with the nation of origin for diasporic populations.

A diasporic population is also at the centre of the article by Theresa Heyd, “Doing race and ethnicity in a digital community: lexical labels and narratives of belonging in a Nigerian web forum”. It takes a quantitative and qualitative approach on performances of race and ethnicity in ‘Nairaland’, a similar diaspora web portal as in Mc Laughlin’s study. A 17 million-word corpus is analysed with four different corpus linguistic methods. The global digital community of Nairaland is mapped and visualised on six continents by means of semi-automatic geolocation of the top-1000 members, revealing centres in Nigeria and the U.S. Frequencies of lexical items of race and ethnicity are then compiled, and a close analysis of the semantics of one such racial epithet (*akata* ‘stranger/foreigner; emigrant; African-American’) is given. Finally a close reading of ethnolinguistic repertoires in diasporic narratives of belonging is provided. The paper concludes by noting that there are degrees of (super)diverse belonging within the community and calls for more theory-building and detailed analysis of discursive practices.

The paper by Branca Falabella Fabrício, “The empire blogs back: gendered and sexualized cultural ‘others’ in superdiversified digital trajectories”, examines discourses of sexualised and exoticised othering in Brazilian-Portuguese mediated cultural (mis) encounters and (mis)representations of the female body against the background of changing (or superdiversifying) geopolitical and socio-economic relations between Portugal and its former colony, Brazil. Fabrício’s critical analysis rests on a larger frame of reference to cultural and postcolonial studies, concerned with macro-social – or Gee’s ‘capital D’ – Discourses. It is complemented by an in-depth analysis of digital text trajectories of (‘small d’) discourses on blogs and social media. Taking Ashcroft et al.’s ‘The empire writes back’ as inspiration for her title, Fabrício argues that “colonial empires” are still around as orienting forces in post-colonial relations, but that these are also critically contested in everyday digital forms of writing back.

The fifth paper is by Kasper Juffermans, Jan Blommaert, Sjaak Kroon and Jinling Li, “Dutch-Chinese repertoires and language Ausbau in superdiversity: A view from digital media”. It examines narratives and interactions by Dutch-Chinese young people on a web forum dedicated to Chinese heritage youth in the

Netherlands. Participants in this community space engage in identity work as they identify with or distance themselves from their languages and countries of origin and residence. They identify as Chinese heritage people and express anxieties about sociolinguistic transformations in China and Chinese under globalisation, but predominantly do so in Dutch rather than a Chinese language. Theoretically this paper's particular feature is the way it recalibrates the sociolinguistic notion of *Ausbau* (Kloss, 1967) to address the tension in terms of language and identity planning and investment at bottom-up individual as opposed to a top-down societal scale-levels.

The next couple of papers turn to the globally leading social networking platform, Facebook, with a focus on practices of multilingualism in the context of personal and public social networks. The paper by Luc Belling and Julia de Bres, "Digital superdiversity in Luxembourg: The role of Luxembourgish in a multilingual Facebook group", presents findings of a quantitative and qualitative analysis of language choice and metalinguistic negotiation in a public Facebook group whose purpose is to facilitate the gifting of consumer goods. Situated in Luxembourg, arguably one of Europe's most diverse countries in terms of migration, workforce mobility and societal multilingualism, the group is popular among residents of Luxembourg with very diverse backgrounds. The authors carry out an analysis of language practices over the first eighteen months of the group's existence. They reconstruct how language became an issue with group members, and how their language practices and preferences changed over time from a prevalence of English and an openness for diverse language choices in the comments that follow up on initiating posts to a predominance of Luxembourgish and increasing pressure on members to conform to a Luxembourgish-only policy. The findings show a relation between the emergence of group-internal structure and hierarchy and an increasing regulation of language practices.

The paper by Jannis Androutsopoulos, "Languaging when contexts collapse: audience design in social networking", examines data from semi-public social networks by young people of Greek and Taiwanese background in Germany. Bringing together elements of sociolinguistic theory and media studies, Androutsopoulos examines these social networking spaces as sites of 'context collapse' – i.e. a congregation of people from heterogeneous social contexts – and focuses on participant's selection of linguistic resources for audience design. In a social network that comprises people with widely different linguistic repertoires, participants' choice to "maximise" or "partition" their audience is crucial for the ways they deploy elements of their linguistic repertoire in initiating online interaction or responding to others' initiating moves.

The last couple of papers, by Jonsson and Muhonen, and Stæhr, set forth the analysis of language practices of Facebook with a focus on individuals and peer-groups and stronger ethnographic engagement including several fieldwork contacts to participants (incidentally, these are the only papers with excerpts of spoken conversational data). Both papers are concerned with local uses of globally circulating semiotic material, which they conceptualise with their notions of relocalisation and appropriation, respectively.

In their paper entitled "Multilingual repertoires and the relocalisation of manga in digital media", Carla Jonsson and Anu Muhonen compile a theoretical vocabulary that comprises superdiversity, multilingual literacies, linguistic repertoires, and indexicality. Their paper examines how two Swedish adolescents with strong cultural ties elsewhere relocalise manga in their digital media practices, the impact of this on their multilingual repertoires, and how their linguistic and semiotic choices online (including their relocalisation of manga) are a means for the performance of social identities in ways which reflect the superdiverse conditions they live and act in. Their analysis touches on

some familiar aspects of digital discourse, such as the choice of screen names, which draws here on Japanese even though none of the participants is of Japanese ancestry. Their findings show that relocalisation of semiotic resources is accelerated and accentuated in conditions of superdiversity, though it remains oriented to particular, local and translocal, audiences.

Andreas Stæhr's paper on "The appropriation of transcultural flows among Copenhagen youth: The case of Illuminati" also takes his cues from Pennycook's (2007) theorising of transcultural flows and uses as a case study the engagement of a group of Copenhagen high school students of diverse origins and ethno-religious backgrounds with the imagery and symbols associated with the conspiracy theory of Illuminati. Engaging here means evoking, aligning and disaligning with Illuminati signs in different communicative situations off and online. A particular aspect of Stæhr's analysis is the transmedia reach of everyday practices in face-to-face and networked situations. Stæhr concludes that digital media intensify the transcultural flow of symbolic resources which shapes especially young people's cultural practices in superdiverse societies.

## 5. Conclusion

Following this brief discussion of the role of digital media in superdiversity scholarship and its reception in recent sociolinguistics, some concluding remarks are due before we hand the collection over to our readership (which we imagine to be geographically superdiverse, but only moderately diverse in terms of academic backgrounds).

The contribution of these papers is not primarily towards theorising the notion of superdiversity itself, a notion that is more useful at the theoretical rather than the empirical plane, as Ana Deumert argues in her concluding Commentary. Rather, the papers offer detailed empirical examinations of digital language practices in a range of settings which can be reasonably considered 'superdiverse' in terms of their respective countries, communities and networks. Taken together, the findings show that digital language practices in settings of superdiversity extend and complicate the semiotic resources available to people for their performance of identities and social relationships. As several papers (e.g. Belling and de Bres, Androutsopoulos) suggest, communication in a superdiverse context does not forcibly lead to communicative breakdown as some contemporary dystopia of the Babel tower would be likely to predict. It can also lead to new ways of negotiating and managing diverse sets of linguistic resources and relations, eventually developing forms of homogenisation as well as diversification, as in the Luxembourg Facebook group studied by Belling and de Bres or in Fabrício's study of Brazilian bloggers contestation over gender representations and postcolonial relations in Portugal.

Overall, the research presented here demonstrates how sociolinguistics and discourse studies can respond to what we identified as a pressing need to examine and theorise digital language and literacy practice not as a separate arena but as a set of communicative activities that are now inseparable from everyday life with language in superdiverse societies. Doing so means developing the theoretical vocabulary and methods of language and discourse studies in ways that integrate and merge media and mediation with linguistic repertoires, practices, and contexts.

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