

Superdiversity, population health and health care: opportunities and challenges in a changing world

The last three decades have witnessed the emergence of superdiversity as more people arrive from more places and greater heterogeneity is observable within country of origin or ethnic groups, as well as across categories. Such changes are in evidence throughout much of the developed and developing world and bring a range of challenges and opportunities for health researchers and providers. Superdiversity also brings additional complexity to already multicultural populations challenging methodological nationalism and associated essentialisation and sometimes rarefication (Wimmer & Glick-Schiller 2002). Categorisation of populations has been important, enabling inequalities in access and outcomes to be identified and the development of interventions targeted at groups assessed as having specific, generally considered cultural, needs. At the same time categories are frequently political having little foundation in lived reality and failing to reflect the diversification of diversity and population fluidity. This plenary session focuses upon the opportunities and challenges of categorisation highlighting some of the problems associated with a groupist approach. Examples from genomics and migrant maternity studies are used to illustrate some of the risks associated with categorisations and argue the case for a need to explore a more nuanced approach to categorising populations. The plenary ends with a discussion of the progress made in qualitative methods through approaches such as maximum variation sampling and community research and ongoing challenges in adapting quantitative methods to take account of the superdiversification of populations.