

Dear colleagues, dear audience,

We are very pleased to welcome you at our conference.

This is the third conference in a series of three conferences that are sponsored by the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (Federal Agency for Civic Education). The first conference took place in December of last year and focused on the connection between the economic crisis and migration. A second conference took place in October and discussed the nexus between climate change and migration.

Our third topic in the series Rethinking Migration taking place today and tomorrow concerns the widely discussed concept of diversity. Although the term diversity is widely-used, there is still great uncertainty regarding its meaning, how such a concept might be successfully implemented as well as which chances and risks are connected to it.

What are the main topics our conference?

- ✧ The definition of diversity and framing the controversial debates on diversity
- ✧ A comparison of diversity politics and strategies of innovative cities on an international as well as a national German level
- ✧ The implementation of diversity strategies in different fields of action

The term “diversity” can be translated with the German word “Vielfalt” or Diversität, meaning citing the Collins English Dictionary the state or quality of being different or varied. the differences and the similarities

On the one hand, diversity describes the actual condition of an increasingly heterogeneous society.

On the other hand, it refers to a specific goal, which is the possibility to shape the existing diversity.

It is undisputed that,

- in the context of progressing globalization, diversity increases both qualitatively and quantitatively and
- that the term diversity is used in an increasing number of contexts.

The term diversity not only refers to race, ethnicity, and religious beliefs but also to aspects such as gender and, more recently, disability status and sexual orientation. Also, factors such as age and socioeconomic status are gaining increasing importance.

Given its high complexity, diversity is often dealt with in reduced and reductionist ways. Today, the term diversity is used in different social contexts, for example

- ✧ as a catchword in order to improve public image
- ✧ in management concepts
- ✧ as a label to bring forward economic interests
- ✧ as a strategy against xenophobia and racism

△ or as an alternative concept opposing the concept of (immigrant) integration.

Diversity is explicitly stressed as something positive with an enormous potential for social and economic development. It is regarded as a concept that could lead to a change in paradigm, leaving deficit-oriented programs behind and instead adopting an appreciative stance towards heterogeneity.

Generally, diversity as a strategy in human resource development in business companies, in administration, education, social work or as a strategy that applies to society as a whole should contribute to the integration of minorities and marginalized groups into society as well as to shape a discrimination-free coexistence.

It would be no longer the task of „minorities“ to become just like the „majority.“ In the ideal case, recognition of diversity would lead to a change of awareness in the minds of people: Ideally, the perception and reflection on the handling of differences and the treatment of, for instance, “foreigners” is strengthened.

BUT the question of how this shift in awareness is to be practically implemented in order to reach more participation and equal opportunities needs further clarification and will be discussed and analyzed critically in the framework of this third Rethinking Migration Conference over the next one and a half days.

The concept of diversity has no clear definition; but the definition of diversity differs from person to person, from organization to organization, and from author to author. In some organizations, concepts of diversity are strictly focused upon race, gender, religion, and disability status; in other organizations, the concept of diversity is extended to sexual orientation, body image, and socioeconomic status.

The programs and ways to implement diversity are as different as the concepts of diversity are vague and varied. Often, these programs are subsumed under the generic terms “diversity management” and “diversity mainstreaming”. As a common feature, all these different implementations of diversity place an emphasis on the positive character of a diverse society or group of people on the respect and acceptance in understanding each other

The diversity concept has its roots in the civil rights movement and anti-discrimination movement, which spread in the USA in the 1950s and 1960s. Respect for difference was supposed to anchor social initiatives and measures in the fight against discrimination.

Therefore, the principle of “affirmative action” was introduced in the 1960s. It refers to the positive discrimination of individuals who are not part of a dominant (social) group offering them better access to education and work.

This early diversity movement with its strong anti-discrimination efforts differs significantly from more recent diversity strategies, which evolved after the publication of the “Workforce” report in 2000.

Instead of emphasizing the politically motivated aspect of equality, the economic value of diversity strategies was put into the foreground.

Thus, “affirmative action” was replaced by “affirmative diversity.” This change certainly also stemmed from allegations of “reverse discrimination” brought forward above all by white men who felt discriminated against by affirmative action programs (Vedder 2006).

Also, an economically justified diversity strategy or diversity management concept is easier to promote among dominant social groups than equality policies on the basis of legal regulations.

The current handling of diversity in Europe is strongly connected to particular national memory cultures. European societies almost unanimously follow the paradigm of “deficit-oriented approaches.” These approaches, which stress the deficits of minorities, stem from a traditional ethnocentric point of view. Difficulties of a change in perspective towards recognition and valuation are therefore not surprising.

Nowadays, the rhetoric of appreciation of diversity is – to a growing extent – a central feature of the corporate identity of many institutions.

In Germany, the concept of diversity or rather diversity management was increasingly adopted in corporate practice. It was imported via subsidiaries of American companies.

Also, European and German anti-discrimination and equality legislation played an important role in promoting diversity strategies.

But the question remains:

What can equality legislation achieve if the legal options to counter discrimination are not well known in society?

The implementation of anti-discrimination legislation in connection with diversity programs still encounters strong resistance.

It is confronted with a series of defensive battles defending certain resources, privileges, and claims but also with the desire to preserve and defend traditional ways of thinking within one’s own generation, gender or social group.

So what does diversity mean for different socio-political fields of action as well as for organizations and businesses of the non-profit and profit-sector? We will deal with this question tomorrow within the city panels and particularly in the contributions on the different socio-political fields of action.

CONTRADICTIONS AND CRITICAL QUESTIONS

We can sum up, that in practice, diversity has been viewed as a **contradictory concept, BECAUSE** it is

on the one hand, a concept used to describe plurality and on the other hand an

organizational development strategy;
furthermore, it is a concept for profit-maximization but then also a concept aiming at equal treatment and the improvement of access to opportunities.

In light of this, we have to ask crucial questions on the implementation of diversity strategies in a two-fold direction:

- Is the utilization of human resources targeted by the diversity approach compatible with anti-discrimination goals? (Hommel/Scherr 2009)
- How can this contradiction between the economic agenda and the agenda stressing social equality be solved with regards to diversity? Is it true, that in profit-oriented companies, for example, diversity is exclusively regarded as a production factor and not as an emancipatory opportunity (Allemann-Ghionda/Buckow, 2011). How can both objectives be reconciled in different fields of actions?

In order to suggest possible answers to these questions, a review of the chances and limits of the concept of diversity may open new perspectives.

WHERE CAN THE STRENGTHS and CHANCES OF THE DIVERSITY APPROACH BE IDENTIFIED?

- Diversity programs promote the creation of equal access opportunities to social positions. Therefore, diversity plays an important role in education for schools and universities, in the health sector, in social work and cultural policy – in other words: diversity is an important factor in the whole range of services provided by the government and the non-profit sector. In these areas – as we will discuss tomorrow – diversity has so far been understood and implemented to very different degrees.
- The strengths of the concept clearly lie in the development of new perspectives of equal opportunities..

Obvious strong points of diversity are:

- ✧ the disregard towards ethnic distinctions by placing a focus on the plurality of differential lines. Diversity therefore means a counter-discourse to the “ghettoization of minorities.” The concept helps to overcome a sectorally practiced recognition of differences and their constructedness (Allemann-Ghionda/Buckow, 2011).
- ✧ The concept offers a new point of view: It is not minorities who have deficits and are in need for reform; instead, in view of the diverse composition of contemporary society, the social space has to be creatively reshaped. Especially the concept of integration stands in contradiction with the essential idea of diversity. Integration emphasizes the “German norm.” “Integration means in this sense, to bring ‚problem children‘ to the same level through the adoption of special measures at a certain time for example when starting school.” (Terkessidis) The focus of diversity is not to improve the “others” but to shape the organizational form with regard to social diversity. Stronger

emphasis on resources: instead of focusing on deficits of minorities, their potentials are valued.

1. Diversity programs do not only address explicit discrimination but also invisible structural access barriers, this applies for example to recruitment methods. Change in the sense of diversity is also an attack on the privileges of a majority in an organization.
2. Diversity as a comprehensive strategy is attractive for the management of organizations (municipal policy institutions or welfare associations, for instance) because it promises to overcome the coexistence of equal opportunity policies and intercultural opening against fragmented departmental policy (Schroer, 2009)

LIMITS and DANGERS

The critical question is whether diversity approaches neglect socio-economic backgrounds and leave existing power relations untouched. PROVOCATIVELY SAID: Is diversity synonymous with individualization?

The limits of the concept are addressed in the following hypotheses:

There is the danger that

1. the approaches stemming from diversity approaches and aiming at new concepts of diversity end up merely as a flowery phrase and have only a marketing effect due to their theoretical vagueness and lack of definition (Allemann-Ghionda/Buckow, 2011).
2. diversity is used as an umbrella term for a conglomeration of measures, for example support of international exchange programs for employees and intercultural trainings, demand of employee benefits and child care services, support offers for migrants (interpreters, language courses), work-life-balance initiatives, company agreements on “partnership in the workplace” and “anti-discrimination” etc.
3. existing differences are negated and completely leveled out: In some diversity concepts attention is supposed to be given to all kinds of differences so that their analytical utility value and added value and their practical orientation function for the educational practice tend towards zero (Auernheim).
4. a depoliticization takes place. For example, class-specific discrimination experiences of different minorities are understated and class-specific differences are neglected. At the same time, there is the threat of leveling out and depoliticizing specific profiles and motion-political strategies (Schroer, 2009). According to Terkessidis, the introduction of diversity programs could, ultimately, neutralize the claims of minorities to anti-discrimination and participation.
5. Diversity is applied only selectively and only allows the degree of diversity in human resource planning that is compliant with organizational goals which means that diversity can be misused in order to create a homogenizing organizational culture. (Herrmann-Pillath, 2010)

These challenges for the conception and implementation of diversity programs and policies leads us to the crucial question on empirical research.

EMPRICAL EVIDENCE – MORE OPEN QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS

In Germany, there is still little empirical research on the implementation of diversity concepts. These empirical deficits concern, for instance, the following questions:

- ⤴ Are heterogeneous groups more creative and more productive than homogeneous ones? There is empirical evidence that heterogeneous teams are more innovative than homogeneous ones. On the other hand, it is argued that arising costs of conflicts in multicultural teams are ignored.
- ⤴ How can implications of diversity programs be measured? Effects of diversity measures are difficult to measure as their effects are long-term and result from multiple factors. The direct relation between adopted measures and their contribution to success is difficult to determine and the most important effects lie in the avoidance of costs which arise when certain measures are not adopted (opportunity costs). Diversity management measures typically have a long-term perspective: Whoever initiates a mentoring-program for employees of foreign descent for example, will, firstly, only be able to prove its effects after a couple of years. Secondly, it will be difficult to measure the specific contribution of this very program because there are many different factors which could contribute to a possible hiring of managers of foreign descent.
- ⤴ Which instruments does efficient diversity management need? For example: What do diversity trainings have to look like? Is it better not to adopt diversity management strategies if there is no comprehensive strategy but only sporadic and fragmented measures? Either you do it right or you don't do it at all? (Herrmann-Pillath, 2010) In the USA, the experience has been that short and sporadic diversity trainings had counter-productive effects because awareness is raised for the problem lying at the basis of diversity but no concrete solutions are offered. Therefore, a diversity training only raises the awareness and strengthens the perception of discrimination.

To sum up, successful diversity programs and measures depend on the political will to implement diversity management which combines both top-down and bottom up approaches. In order to understand the relevance and the possible political “power” of the diversity concept and discourse we need to look into the debate on multiculturalism in Europe.

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The concept of „diversity“ is not directly related, but entangled with some principles of the debate on multiculturalism, that has dominated the debate on how to “integrate” immigrants in Western societies. I will first sketch the salient features of the multiculturalism debate and then show that the concept of “diversity” reacts to some shortcomings within the multiculturalism debate. Additionally, changed realities and changed sociospatial developments paved the way for a new thinking about the participation of migrants in the urban context. Rethinking migration ...

Among the countries that experienced politics of multiculturalism first were Australia, the US, and Canada. The term of “multicultural policies” covered a wide range of policies, that go beyond the protection of the basic civil and political rights

guaranteed to all individuals in a liberal democratic state. Multicultural policies extend the level of recognition and support for ethnic and cultural minorities to maintain and express their distinct identities and practices.

The adoption of multicultural policies has been and remained controversial from the outset for a variety of reasons. One line of critique has been philosophical. Some are criticizing multicultural policies because, they argue, that they contradict the principles of individual freedom, because they privilege “group rights” over “individual rights” and principles of equality. The defenders of such policies think that only receiving help in order to overcome imbalances would promote equality.

So in this case the crucial argument is the question if particular groups in society might be “privileged” in getting resources and support over other groups or if there should be equal access to new resources for all individuals. And it poses the question which groups should be considered to have access to which kind of additional resources. This contradiction is known as “progressive’s dilemma” (Goodhart 2004): a multicultural welfare state seems to be a contradiction in itself.

Another concern of the critics of multicultural politics has been that policies would endanger the stability of the welfare state. In the seminal study on a variety of Western countries Banting et al. showed that in the time span from 1980 - 2000 this did not seem to be the case. In their multivariate analyses they showed that there was no consistent relationship between the adoption of multicultural policies and the erosion the welfare state. Still, the question on how multicultural policies are interwoven with solidarity and the redistribution mechanisms of the welfare state are still virulent.

The third line of argument is on which impact multicultural policies have on the integration process of the migrants itself: do special policies help or hinder the integration of migrants into the mainstream society? Do they eventually favor isolation and segregation? In the context of 9/11 it was discussed if multicultural policies had unintentionally created spaces for radical religious and political movements to operate. It was argued that multicultural policies might have helped to build up institutional structures that have were occupied by fundamentalist groups.

In Europe nearly all countries that registered immigration followed some form of multicultural policies. We find all forms of mixed approaches: countries never claiming to follow multicultural policies, but doing so on the spot, like the UK with its Equality Act of 2006. Countries with a deliberate policy of equality and assimilation like France. Countries such as Germany that never followed a multicultural rhetoric and policy. The Netherlands, until the end of the 1990s was regarded as one of the most advanced democracies in Europe: multi-ethnic, libertarian, open to and tolerant towards other cultures and supporting ethnic groups in cherishing their native culture. Today it is a country with a zero-tolerance policy and with the strictest immigration policies in Europe and a severe assimilationist policy. We will hear more about those European initiatives and approaches in our European session, when “rethinking” the countries’ approaches.

In Germany, a declared multicultural policy never did exist. On the contrary the right-center government under Kohl in 1982 claimed in its coalition agreements, that Germany was not an “immigration country”. Only some intellectuals started to discuss multiculturalism as a counter-concept to the rather traditional and nation-state centered official discourse. Some schools started to introduce intercultural elements in their education framing. The first and only “Unit for Multiculturalism” was opened in 1989 in Farnkfurt am Main – a heritage of the discussions spurred by Green Party politician Daniel Cohn-Bendit. Still, the official discourse is on integration, not on multiculturalism and only in the year 2000 Germany officially declared itself an immigration country. Although chancellor Merkel stated in 2010 that “multiculturalism had failed” (even if never introduced), other comments in this line of argumentation followed in the context on the debate on economist Thilo Sarrazin’s book “Deutschland schafft sich ab.” Sarrazin evoked the danger that the German welfare state would dissolve due to migrants. Even if Germany never followed real multicultural policies we do find elements of multiculturalism in current policies. When considering the new integration action plan, it is possible to trace such policies: migrant groups are addressed and provided with special policies. Since integration is taking place always locally, mostly in the urban context, we decided to concentrate on cities and on their approaches to diversity. Rethinking migration ... with a focus on urban development.

The last argument I want to stress is that diversity is responding to changed social and spatial realities. The differentiation of society has led to a variety of different milieus and settings that are hardly to be captured in terms of class or layers. Sociologists invented the term “milieufication” for this. One attempt to classify this extreme social differentiation is made by the SINUS studies (2008). This study rejects the common idea that the origin of a migrant still predicts his or her cultural behavior in Germany. Only very few, for instance, turn out to be very religious. Maybe the most fascinating and revealing result of the study is that 2/3 of all interviewees felt that their bi-culturality is an enrichment rather than a hindrance for their life. There were experiences with discrimination, but few.