GOVERNING URBAN DIVERSITY: MULTI-SCALAR REPRESENTATIONS, LOCAL CONTEXTS, DISSONANT NARRATIVES

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Abstract

In recent academic and urban policy writings the term urban diversity is usually understood, or discussed within the context of, increasing 'socio-cultural' diversity in cities or is explicitly connected to debates over immigration and demographic change. Although policy agendas follow certain common trends 'to deal with' the consequences of diversity there is a lack of evidence based research on how representations of diversity are mobilised and implemented by institutions of governance operating at multiple scales and how these narratives relate to each other. Policy-makers are faced with new dilemmas over how to govern and manage cities that are becoming increasingly diverse on the one hand, and increasingly 'sensitive' to certain channels of flows of people (such as refugees) on the other. In some cases city authorities promote the idea of inclusive diversity as a mark of modernisation and tolerance. In others, its recognition may be seen as a threat to an imagined social order and is perceived to be fuelling neo-assimilationist policies in many EU cities (Tasan-Kok et al., 2013). This special issue aims to fill this gap by providing evidence-based research outcomes that tackle different dimensions of the governance of diversity in cities. The principal aim of the research project, named DIVERCITIES, that underpins this collection was to critically assess evidence concerning the range of socio-economic outcomes that may emerge from the presence of greater urban diversity. DIVERCITIES has shown that city policy agendas across Europe are often more 'positive' towards diversity than national policies and media reports. Moreover, local policy initiatives, mostly formed at the bottom-up scale, sometimes as a cooperation between state and civic actors and sometimes as purely private or even individual arrangements, address the actual needs of certain population groups by acting as bridge-builders between public authorities and target groups. This collection aims to provide a clear understanding of how diversity is understood, operationalized and dealt with at different scales of policy-making. In focusing on European examples, it provides an important addition to a literature that has become Anglo-American focused, both in terms of the concepts and policy interventions.

Introduction

Much of the recent academic and policy writing on the topic of urban diversity has focused on the impacts of increasing 'cultural' diversity in cities and broader debates over immigration and ethnic identities (Harries, Byrne, Rhodes, & Wallace, 2018; Scheurer & Haase, 2018; Warren & Jones, 2018; Ye, 2018). Whilst policy agendas have followed certain common trends, such as enhanced recognition, there is a lack of evidence-based research on how representations of diversity are defined and mobilised by authorities in different cities across Europe and with what effects. The

intensification of globalisation processes during the 1990s and 2000s have increased the potential for new tensions and conflicts to emerge over cultural outlooks and identity politics, making the task of governing and managing diversity at the urban scale increasingly complex (Goodhart, 2017). In many cities policy-makers are faced with new challenges over how to use territorial welfare and policy systems to govern and manage cities that are becoming increasingly diverse. There is some ambivalence in responses with some authorities promoting the idea of an inclusive diversity as a mark of modernisation, tolerance, and diversity. In others, however, its recognition may be seen as a threat to an imagined social order and it is this perception that is fuelling neo-assimilationist policies in many EU cities (Tasan-Kok et al., 2013).

It is in this broader context that this special issue is set. The papers are based on the findings of a cross-national research project named DIVERCITIES[1] that focused on the relationships between diversity narratives, urban planning agendas, and policy outcomes in fourteen European and North-American cities. According to this research, policy agendas at different scales of governance (national, city or neighbourhood levels) display varied approaches to the recognition and representation of urban diversity. Urban diversity is usually viewed in terms of cultural cosmopolitanism and ethnic identities, rather than (although sometimes in combination with) recognition of the diversity of material outcomes and growing inequalities generated by contemporary forms of economic growth. This alternative polyphonic approach (Malcuzynski, 1984) allows multiple, sometimes conflicting and not necessarily synchronised views to emerge in local urban contexts, framing dissonant narratives on urban diversity. It is imperative that research identifies some of the structural and place-specific conditions that are shaping the form and character of urban diversity policies planning.

Diversity is framed and operationalized in multi-scalar policy environments that are not necessarily synchronised or based on binding regulations. Local policy initiatives, mostly formed from the bottom-up, sometimes as a cooperation between state and civic actors and sometimes as purely private or even individual arrangements, seek to recognise and address diverse needs by acting as bridge-builders between public authorities and target groups. Metropolitan policy agendas, working on broader city-wide scales of representation and governance, usually produce conceptualisations of multiculturality, ethnicity or social inclusion to cover the topic as a separate policy category, often within the framework of social cohesion agenda, without comprehensive strategies that would bind diverse scales of social policy to spatial governance. National policies across Europe, however, tend to reflect different political framings and more formal formulations of 'national' identities. These are institutionalised through legal measures and regulations that link migration to questions over border controls and place cohesion, topics that have become increasingly contentious during the period of so-called refugee crisis and mass-migration over the last decade.

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[1] *The DIVERCITIES project ran from 2013-2017 and was funded under the EU's Seventh Framework Programme. It involved the study of 14 cities in the EU and beyond. More information and findings can be found at www.urbandivercities.eu.*

This collection aims to provide *a clear understanding of how, within this fragmented policy landscape, diversity is conceptualised and operationalized by focusing on different aspects of diversity governance across multiple-scales.* Whilst it is imperative to avoid simple prescriptions for public policy, this Special Issue explores some of the core conditions in and through which narratives and discourses of urban diversity are emerging and evolving in contemporary urban settings and their effects on different population groups. It argues that recent orthodoxies surrounding the 'unstoppable' nature of globalisation and cultural diversification are enriched by understandings of place change and the particular intersections of social, economic, and political processes that shape policy narratives of diversity.

In the early 2000s Vertovec's (2007; 2010) super-diversity approach brought a fresh point of view, prior to the so-called refugee crisis. It dominated scholarly work, and inspired policy agendas at multiple scales, as it successfully captured the complexity in urban diversity related to migration and offered an operational frame of analysis. Trying to capture the increasing complexity in urban society, and incorporating feminist notions of intersectionality (McCall, 2008), some other approaches sought to move beyond the traditionally used focus on ethnicity or class by avoiding broad generalizations that put people into arbitrary categories. The hyper-diversity approach (Tasan-Kok et al., 2013), for instance, emphasized the possibility of various identities acting simultaneously in individuals, as well as the ability of individuals to change and switch identities within a lifetime (Bauman, 2001). This approach emphasized changing dynamics and patterns of behaviour, lifestyles, and activities in the life cycle of individuals, arguing that urban society may be more complex and dynamic than traditional policy frameworks would designed to capture (Tasan-Kok et al., 2013).

While these discussions provided an important frame of analysis to policy approaches in the early 2000s, the combination of economic and political crises re-shaped the landscape of European immigration politics and has moved the scholarly focus towards different directions that are more sensitive to the role of national and local state in dealing with increasing inequalities in the era of austerity (Berg et al., 2019). For example, by framing the role of public welfare provision services at the local (neighbourhood) scale, the 'welfare micro-publics' approach (ibid.) underlines the importance of particular micro-scale service spaces in the era of rising economic inequality, the hostile policy environment towards migrants (Jones et al., 2017) and welfare state restructuring, bringing the discussion back to the basics of needs rather than identities. In other contexts the term diversity has been treated with suspicion and there have been attempts to develop 'mainstream', welfare based approaches to inequality that, particularly under Republican models, focus on guaranteeing equal rights to all cities regardless of their social and cultural differences. Whatever the approaches to diversity found across Europe, it is a contention of the DIVERCITIES project that there is a growing gap especially notable between the policy narratives and agendas found in metropolitan cities and amongst national governments today (Raco, 2018). Before introducing the contributions and contributors of this Special Issue, we turn to debates over diversity politics and the extent to which a specific urban dimension can be identified and analysed in this complex policy environment.

The Politics of *Urban* Diversity in Europe

During the 1990s and early 2000s mainstream policy and academic discussions of diversity presented it as an inevitable part of 'runaway' globalisation. Western societies, it seemed, were witnessing the emergence of a new cosmopolitanism in which nation-states would matter less and less as the material and cultural gains of increased global growth were felt by greater numbers of people (see Held, 2010). Multicultural policies in which strangers were embraced and celebrated were in the ascendancy in much of Europe with Ulrich Beck (Beck, 2000; Beck & Sznaider, 2006) even claiming that the nation-state had become something of a 'zombie category', with little real substance but still haunting the minds of citizens and policy-makers. Governments and populations had little alternative but to accept that globalisation was here to stay and that multiculturalism and diversity were core components of this set of processes of change. In Rancière's terms (2010) a new 'Millennial Thinking' dominated imaginations in which the continued existence of racism, prejudice, and conflict in cities became elided with the 'backwardness' of specific interests and groups, mainly from poorer sections of society. They had failed to understand the pervasiveness of the new realities unfolding around them. Such attitudes had no place in a modern, cosmopolitan polity. Attempts to challenge this prevailing consensus were dismissed as 'regressive and archaic behaviour', or a relic of out-dated and increasingly irrelevant post-war class politics (Harvey, 2013).

However, since the financial crash of 2008 and the rise of the so-called 'migration crisis' fuelled by broader geo-political instability, many of the positive, quasi-utopian assumptions of the Millennial era have been challenged. There has been a rising tide of resentment towards diversity and migration policies across Europe with many countries adopting more aggressive integrationist or neo-assilimilationist forms of intervention (Goodhart, 2017). Dominant narratives at national and supra-national scales have become less progressive and, in some cases, even openly hostile to the (co)presence of migrant groups. For urban policy-makers and planners these broader changes have generated particularly acute dilemmas. Most migrants head to urban areas, and seemingly global cities are the most preferred destinations as the recent research of World Economic Forum displays[2]. Urban authorities and communities of these cities are facing some of the greatest pressures of demographic growth and economic change. At the same time under processes of neo-liberal welfare and labour market reforms, social and economic inequalities between and within social groups have expanded and become more entrenched, particularly in cities. Austerity cuts, in particular, are hitting urban areas hardest (see for instance Beatty & Fothergill, 2015; Chardas, 2014; Chorianopoulos & Tselepi, 2017). Concerns over the potential for urban (dis)order have added further fuel to what are already highly charged political debates.

Despite this broader rowing-back of more progressive, liberal approaches to diversity, formal urban policy agendas have tended to be more 'positive' and welcoming in their descriptions of diversity than those found at national or supra-national scales. In many cities a more pragmatic approach is emerging that accepts the presence of diverse social and cultural groups and seeks to promote the value of diversity for enhanced economic competitiveness and social cohesion (see Raco, 2018). Recent elections and referendums in Europe support this broader trend towards *urban-led* progressivism. Those areas with the highest levels of social and cultural diversity have voted

consistently for more open and pro-immigration agendas. In the first round of the French Presidential Election in 2017 for instance, Marine Le Pen's Front National won only 4.99% of the vote in Paris, in comparison to 21.6% nationally (Pasha Robinson, 2017). In other countries, such as Sweden, the support base for growing nationalist, anti-immigrant parties is to be found amongst electorates in non-urban areas (Malik, 2018). Similarly, in the Brexit referendum in 2016 the vote to remain was highest (55.2%) in urban areas, with London recording a vote of 59.9%. Also in Switzerland more conservative attitudes are demonstrated in rural areas rather than urban zones by 2002, 2004 and 2009 referendums on immigration related topics (Green et al., 2011). In many cities, the politics of diversity has thus, become converted into a pragmatic and technical discussion over how to extract maximum benefit from socio-economic changes in a highly managerial way (Raco & Kesten, 2018). Related planning policy orthodoxies such as mixed communities, balanced urbanism, place-making, and sustainable community-building have become important components of reformist urban policy agendas. In such policy frameworks, the focus is on idealised forms of diversity in neighbourhoods in which people of different cultural backgrounds live alongside each other. However, these policies usually frame diversity from a very narrow point of view whereby a connection between structuring forces, particularly those connected to wider political, economic and spatial dynamics is missing (Ozogul & Tasan-Kok, 2018). But their presence is indicative of a pragmatic urban policy response that continues to value contact and mixing between different citizens as part of a progressive planning agenda.

Whilst this trend towards 'progressive urbanism' should not be overstated - as some urban centres in Europe have also been well-springs of discontent towards diversity politics (as will be discussed in the Special Issue) – a number of explanations have been put forward to explain its presence. Some relate it to the continuing importance of representative politics and statecraft, with Mayors and city authorities reliant on the votes of diverse electorates. As Rose and Miller (2010) note, 'governing a sphere [such as a city] requires that it can be represented and depicted in a way that both grasps its truth and re-presents it in a form in which it can enter the sphere of conscious political calculation' (p.283). Representing cities through the lens of 'diversity' provides one such inscription for how to govern and manage populations and around which to fashion electoral support. The recent election in 2016 of Sadiq Khan as Mayor of London is indicative of this new diversity statecraft in action. For others, the more progressive elements found in urban agendas reflect the 'normalisation' of diversity imaginaries in cities and the growing of commonplace social imaginaries (Vertovec, 2010; Wessendorf, 2014). Drawing on classic social psychology accounts of contact theory, this group of writers argue that everyday contact generates more positive governmentalities and social imaginaries and that these in turn lead to a more progressive political agendas (see Taylor, 2004). There are echoes of Massey's (2012) insights into a 'progressive sense of place' or the ways in which the 'thrown togetherness' of urban environments generates enhanced understandings and a sense of cohesive commonality between different groups.

However, such views have not gone unchallenged. For a growing number of critics the mainstream focus on 'diversity' within cities is beginning, paradoxically, to act as a barrier to more integrated and cohesive political agendas and should be resisted, or at least incorporated into, a more class-centred

form of politics. For Bauman (2003), diversity narratives are often used by policy-makers to justify the rolling out of a neo-liberal politics of individualisation and atomisation (see also Ahmed, 2012). Rather than being progressive, Bauman contends that such visions act as catalysts 'triggering the production and self-perpetuation of difference, and the efforts to build a community around it' (p.77). In some instances, the desire to present an 'accurate' picture of diversity, leads to 'recognition wars' between groups that require combatants to absolutise their differences. This, in turn, breaks down the possibilities for collective action and the mobilisation of more challenging agendas associated with the equality of outcomes. There also exist many studies that are sceptical about the effectiveness of diversity and mixed community policies based on simple narratives of contact, and engagement (Piekut & Valentine, 2017; Valentine, 2008). They seem to have had, at best, small positive effects, and more often no effects in terms of improving the life conditions and opportunities of poor urban residents or diverse groups. If and when they have had a positive impact, it was most likely caused by the improvements to facilities and services (health, education, training or retail provision) which accompanied interventions for more mixed tenures (Galster, 2007a, 2007b). The net result is that, for critics, urban diversity agendas have helped to legitimate and justify divisive forms of neo-liberalism and welfare reform, thereby undermining its progressive sheen (Clarke & Newman, 2012).

And yet, despite these criticisms, there is much evidence to show that urban planning and policy for diversity can make a significant difference to the politics of place. Social and political tensions between groups increase when: affordable and available housing becomes scarce; where public services are weak and poorly resourced; where urban environments are poorly maintained, segregated and threatening; and where individuals and communities feel a sense of 'loss' and perceived threats of 'hurt' from seemingly distant social and/or economic changes (see Arapoglou, 2012; Waite, Valentine, & Lewis, 2014; Wilson, 2017). Conversely, tensions are reduced in places: with well-functioning community infrastructure, such as schools and social centres; where people with different backgrounds encounter each other in regular and repeated ways; that possess open and accessible public spaces that feel inclusive with small shops, cafes, and meeting places for locals; and in which housing and employment opportunities exist that cater for the needs of a range of groups (Arbaci & Tapada-Berteli, 2012; García Mejuto, 2016; Neal et al. 2016. The presence of these factors help to generate a stronger sense of place attachment and well-being (see Tasan-Kok et al. 2013). And whilst in diverse urban areas, as noted above, political agendas towards diversity have tended to be more 'welcoming' and 'positive' in outlook, broader economic, political and social changes to the contexts above can rapidly shift both political outlooks and policies. As will be seen in the contributions below, the politics of diversity in European cities is under constant, place-centred, pressure for reform and the direction that this will take in the longer run will depend on how states and governments respond to, and shape, urban areas.

The Contributions

It is in this broader context that the Special Issue is situated. It presents a number of multi-scalar local renditions of urban diversity governance in European cities, to provide an evidence base on

how dissonant narratives and representations of diversity are mobilised and implemented by institutions of governance, and with what potential and actual outcomes and consequences. The case study cities studied in the following papers are Antwerp, Milan, Istanbul, and Paris, each of which embody a series of specific tensions over the politics and practices of diversity policies, as discussed above, and play a key role in shaping national and supra-national policy narratives. In their case studies the authors have critically deconstructed and analysed existing urban policy programmes in their respective cities and used these to shed light on the conceptions of diversity that exist within these programmes and how these relate to broader trends in regional, national, and EU level policy thinking. The emphasis of the research has been to document, describe, and assess existing institutional relationships and decision-making frameworks in the selected cities and link these to changing policy agendas and implementation practices, as well as reflecting on the effects of such policies and to what extent and according to whom they have been successful.

Drawing on the example of Antwerp, the largest city of the Flemish Region in Belgium, Saeys et al. examine how the focus of diversity policies have oscillated and become more politicised in the wake of the global financial crisis and political changes in the city. In particular, it explores how there has been a backlash against more open forms of multiculturalism, with the legitimacy of minority groups being increasingly challenged. While scholars have dedicated much attention to the normative arguments for this trend (Parekh, 2000), their paper focuses on the empirical complexities of actual diversity policy-making in a local context. More specifically, it investigates the changes in the policy practices and discourses regarding ethnic minorities. The official policies regarding ethnic minorities in the city took a multicultural turn in the early 2000s, most evident in two strategies for group representation: the establishment of a Migrant Council to address the interests of ethnic minorities and the recruitment of an ethnically diverse city staff in order to make the municipal services reflect the ethnically diverse population. Drawing on a theoretical distinction between mirror and issue representation, the authors analyse how these measures became contested in the context of a wider backlash against multiculturalism. When multicultural policies became diversity policies, the migrant council was disbanded and a dress code prohibited minorities to display religious or other symbols in front-office public functions. In this context, the paper argues, the mainstreaming of diversity in policy discourses led to the demise of both mirror and issue representation of ethnic minority groups and instead called upon the subjects involved to demonstrate individual responsibility.

In a similar vein Angelucci *et al.* analyse the discourses, strategies and daily practices of diversity policies in Milan, Italy. Their analysis is framed at different scales, ranging from a weak national model of integration that sets the window of opportunity for local practices to city-level debates, perspectives, and policy strategies about urban diversity management adopted by officials and policy makers in Milan. The city has also been active in promoting neighbourhood level organized activities and sought to encourage new forms of daily practice and lifestyles amongst inhabitants of diverse neighbourhoods across the city. The authors disentangle how different levels influence each other: from a top-down perspective, asking to what extent do inhabitants consider urban diversity management to be relevant in creating conditions for living together in diversity? From a bottom-up perspective, to what extent micro-level transformations in diversity (such as. the pluralization of

family conditions and migration backgrounds) are taken into account in the political and policy agenda? The results demonstrate a series of gaps between policy frames and neighbourhood life experiences. Nevertheless, the focus in not on the width of these gaps, but rather on their characteristics and reasons, as an example of a policy discourse on diversity that may have long-lasting effects: in particular, in producing an institutional environment which does not enable appreciation, promotion and even economic valorisation of diversity. The paper concludes that the detachment between discourses and practices at different scales can have negative effects on diversity management on an urban scale, but at the same time it can also foster micro-innovations and adaptive strategies at the very local level. To what extent these initiatives and schemes can be "scaled up" remains an open question.

In their paper on Istanbul, Yenigun and Eraydin examine the discourses and practices of central and local governments related to the issues of urban diversity in the city. They focus on the importance of governance arrangements in the contemporary period, highlighting the issues, which central or local governments seek to downplay, or those that they lack the efficiency to address. The paper claims that current diversity discourses and policies are being increasingly used for populist purposes, and so fail to reflect the key problems related to the city's social and economic inequalities and challenges. Diversity has been used to promote the economic development of the city and to circumvent the different demands of people of diverse cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Spurred-on by the pro-growth political agendas of central and local governments, the paper argues that city-wide initiatives undertake an important mission in coming up with pragmatic and non-discriminatory solutions to diversity-related issues. Through an examination of recent interventions, the paper uncovers the conflicts and the mismatches that exist between the highly politicised discourses, policies and practices. Looking at ways of addressing this issue, this study analyses how different types of governance arrangements bring new arenas of expression to diverse groups. The paper concludes with a description of the governance initiatives that have important functions to react against government policies in different fields, in a country that is shifting rapidly towards authoritarianism.

And finally, Escafre-Dublet and Lelevrier use the economically and culturally diverse example of Paris to explain how 'diversity' policies have been mobilised and developed in the city, even though formally under the Republican Constitution it is illegal to create separations between different groups or to adopt 'multi-cultural' policies or programmes. They show that in the French case urban diversity policies have, therefore, had to focus on income and economic diversity to justify targeted forms of intervention. This has had some advantages in directing policies towards the reduction of economic inequalities in the city, thereby helping a range of diverse groups. However, it has also reduced the flexibility of policy interventions and the ability of policies to identity and tackle the inter-sectional challenges that groups face. The authors reflect on what the French example might mean for urban policies in countries and cities in which diversity and multi-culturalism have become foundational cornerstones of policy narratives and frameworks.

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