Governing diversity and social cohesion in European cities

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Introduction

Today, cities in Europe are more diverse than ever before. Immigration, socio-economic inequalities, spatial segregation, a diversity of identities, activities, and lifestyles, are all contributing factors. This hyper-diversity poses significant challenges for urban policymakers and institutions.

On the one hand, there are positive discourses on urban diversity. The European Union sees diversity as a driver for growth and social progress and many city authorities are inspired by Richard Florida's work and see diversity as an asset in attracting the creative class. On the other hand, increasing diversity engenders fears among a substantial parts of the population. The election victory for Trump, Brexit and the rise of populist movements across Europe are all related to increasing anxieties about immigration. Many national governments react to the perceived threat to social cohesion by enforcing stricter immigration policies and adopting an assimilation agenda.

The shift to a more assimilationist approach at the national level is not necessarily reproduced at the local level. City authorities tend to adopt more inclusive forms of integration policies and employ a more positive discourse towards diversity. On the basis of a comparison of 14 cities, Raco et al. (2014a) perceive a clear trend towards a more pragmatic approach to diversity in which positive aspects of difference for competitiveness and social cohesion are stressed. The local pragmatism can be related to the fact that it is the cities where the consequences of immigration are most visible. For city authorities, diversity is a given that has to be accommodated. They focus on coping with concrete issues rather than on delving into ideological debates (Scholten, 2013).

In this e-book, I aim to give insight into how cities deal with the (hyper-)diversity of their population and what policies they execute to strengthen the social cohesion within the city. My analysis is structured along the three principles of planning diverse cities, as identified by Fincher and Iveson (2008): recognition, encounter, and redistribution.

This contribution is based on the DIVERCITIES research project[1]. The four-year DIVERCITIES (Governing Urban Diversity: Creating Social Cohesion, Social Mobility and Economic Performance in Today's Hyper-diversified Cities) project, which began in March 2013 and ended in February this year, explored the value of diversity in cities. Coordinated by Utrecht University's Faculty of Geosciences, the principal aim of DIVERCITIES was to examine the ways in which Europe can benefit from diversity. The research for this project was undertaken in 11 EU cities: Antwerp, Athens, Budapest, Copenhagen, Leipzig, London, Milan, Paris, Rotterdam, Tallinn, Warsaw; and 3 non-EU cities: Istanbul, Toronto, and Zurich.

The project departs from other scholarly work by approaching diversity in a very broad way. A very influential concept in present-day's discussion is Vertovec's term super-diversity (Vertovec, 2007), which describes the enormous diversity within categories of immigrants. As we argue that diversification is a process that is not only related to immigration we go one step further and will use the term hyper-diversity. With this term we aim to make clear that we should not only look at diversity in ethnic, demographic and socio-economic terms, but also look to the differences that exist with respect to lifestyles, attitudes and activities.

Recognition

Recognition is about defining the attributes of groups of people so that their needs can be met. The question is on what basis the groups are defined. Critics of multiculturalism argue that that people of a certain ethnic background should not be automatically treated as groups (Tasan-Kok et al., 2013). Multiculturalism is critised for treating members of ethnic minorities as "ever-representative of bounded collective" (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010, p.19). In the context of an increasingly diverse population it is not feasible anymore to protect the heritage of different cultures and to communicate with community representatives to do so (Van Breugel et al., 2014; Pemberton, 2016). There is no one who can claim to be the spokesman of a community, when that community is fragmented and when identities become increasingly hybrid. Advocates of interculturalism argue that it is necessary to move beyond depictions of bounded communities differentiated along ethnic and cultural lines as it leads to essentialising of ethnic differences, while overlooking other differentiations on the basis of class, lifestyles, attitudes or activity patterns (Tasan-Kok et al., 2013; Pemberton, 2016).

Booth (2003, p. 432) argues that interculturalism is "…concerned with the task of developing cohesive civil societies by turning notions of singular identities into those of multiple ones, and by developing a shared and common value system and public culture. In building from a deep sharing of differences of culture and experience it encourages the formation of interdependencies which structure personal identities that go beyond nations or simplified ethnicities".

Therefore, a shift is needed from the recognition of collective identities to that of individual competences. Consequently, mainstreaming is advocated as the best strategy for addressing a hyperdiverse society (Van Breugel et al. 2014). Collett & Petrovic (2014, p.3) describe mainstreaming as "the effort to reach people with a migration background through social programming and policies that also target the general population, rather than through specific immigrant integration policies alone".

> **"Toronto, a city which has adopted 'diversity our strength' as its motto, has a very broad understanding of diversity, including categories like seniors, youth, women, LGBTQ people, the urban poor, ethnic groups, disabled people, newcomers and immigrants, aboriginal peoples and the homeless."**

Mainstreaming implicates that diversity policy is not the responsibility of a single department in a municipality, but that diversity-related efforts are integrated into the core services of all administrations in the municipality (Andersen et al., 2014). Mainstreaming should not be seen as a colour-blind universal policy (which would fit in an assimilationist approach), but as diversity-sensitive policy that does not treat people solely as a member of an ethnic group. Toronto, a city which has adopted 'diversity our strength' as its motto, has a very broad understanding of diversity, including categories like seniors, youth, women, LGBTQ people, the urban poor, ethnic groups, disabled people, newcomers and immigrants, aboriginal peoples and the homeless. A civil servant from the City of Toronto's Community Development indicates: "Everyone is diverse and how do we as an organisation make sure that everyone is part of what we do not just this or that group. We often use the terminology 'equity seeking groups' to address these groups and it is the LGBT community, as it is people with disabilities as it is newcomers, etc. It is about equity and access and ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to participate." (Ahmadi & Tasan-Kok, 2014, p.14)

In the UK mainstreaming is formalised in the Equality Act 2010 in which a duty was placed on all public bodies to consider how their practices and policies impact on the equality of different groups. The legal framework requires local authorities and the Mayor to address the specific needs of diverse groups. The so-called 'protected characteristics' included in the Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity (Raco et al., 2014b, p. 13).

Redistribution

The principle of redistribution is about the diminishment of differences between the rich and the poor. However, there is an unwillingness in most of our research cities to accept structural explanations for the growing social and economic inequalities that exist between groups and individuals (Raco et al., 2014a). The emphasis, instead, is on the social mobility of citizens and the role of policy in mobilising them to overcome the everyday problems that they encounter in urban life.

This trend is particularly strong in cities like London, Antwerp, Rotterdam and Zurich. In cities such as Copenhagen and Paris, on the other hand, there is still a strong attachment to the (assumed) achievements of the welfare state. The most pronounced example of neoliberal policy is probably London. While there is a lot of diversity policy in London in the areas of encounters (see page 5) and recognition (see page 5), there is little scope for redistribution. Raco et al. (2014b, p. 23) argue: "The existence of inequalities has been put down to a responsibilisation agenda in which it is clearly" their fault " with groups such as young black men unemployed because they did not apply themselves harder at school, so you get into victim blaming. " Some London NGOs also have trouble with the whole diversity discourse because they are seeing it as an attempt to derive attention from the "real" issues in London, such as racism and increasing inequality. Redistribution is primarily pursued by asking individuals to take more responsibility (higher education, strengthening social capital) in combination with fairly non-binding agreements with commercial and public institutions.

Under the influence of EU policy, we encounter such agreements in almost all of our research cities. For example, Paris has two policy instruments aimed at counteracting discrimination in the workplace. (1) The Charte pour la diversité en entreprise (2004): Companies that sign this charter commit themselves to promote awareness of diversity in staff members involved in application procedures. In their annual report, they should also include a chapter in which they address the measures they have taken to stimulate diversity. (2) Label Diversité (2008): This is a joint initiative of the national government and the national organisation of human resource managers. Companies and organisations in the public and private sectors can get a label after an audit of their human resource activities. This label is valid for four years. An example of a local initiative to counter discrimination is the Anti-discrimination Plan prepared by the Association for the Prevention of Site Vilette (APSV), an NGO in the 19th arrondissement aimed at combating youth unemployment. The plan consists of anti-discrimination training for employment agencies and human resource managers. Anti-discrimination courses are paid by employers themselves. The success of the plan is mainly due to the fact that employers and recruitment agencies have come to the conclusion that discrimination is a problem. However, it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of the plan, as the monitoring does not look at the ethnic origin of young people. In line with the Republican principle of equal treatment, no distinction is made between race, origin or religion. This fits in with the French tradition of redistribution without the recognition of diversity (Escafré-Dublet & Lelévrier, 2014).

Encounters

One element of an intercultural approach is to stimulate encounters with others in urban space. Fincher and Iveson (2008, p.145) plea that city life should enable "our capacity to explore different sides of ourselves and to craft new identifications through encounters with others as strangers". Therefore, zones of encounters should be created, as interaction will not happen automatically.

One way to create these contact opportunities is to stimulate mixed income housing. With the exception of Athens and Warsaw, these area-based policies represent an important source of intervention in our cities. However, these policies do not always have the expected result as different social groups tend to live parallel lives. In many mixed projects, there is a physical separation between affordable and commercial homes because real estate investors assume that this improves the marketability of more expensive housing (Kilburn, 2013). In some cases, mixed housing projects

further fuel the gentrification process exacerbating the shortage of affordable housing.

Cities like Paris and Zurich acknowledge the risk that mixed housing can lead to rising inequalities. Paris aims to expand the proportion of social housing in the rich southwestern part of Paris to get a better balance of the various social groups in the city. To this end, the municipality buys (mostly empty or partially used) private buildings in the city (Escafré-Dublet et al., 2014). With state support, these buildings are refurbished and the management is being outsourced to Paris Habitat (with 124 thousand homes the largest player in the social housing market in Paris). Zurich also pursues an active policy to keep the city accessible. At present 25% of the rented houses belong to the social sector. The policy is now to increase that percentage to 2050 to 1/3. In this way, the city tries to counteract the trend of gentrification (partly reinforced by past mixing policy) (Plüss & Schenkel, 2014).

Conclusions

Our research shows that it appears to be difficult to find the right balance between the planning principles recognition and redistribution. London and Toronto are often praised for their recognition policy and tolerance, but from interviews with policy makers in the field, it appears that the positive discourse about diversity sometimes obscures our gaze and does not show what is really going on in certain neighbourhoods. Diversity is primarily used as symbolism, as a marketing strategy for cities, but there is insufficient attention to the issue of inequality. In Paris, the situation is reversed. There is a lot of attention for redistribution, but diversity is a sensitive theme within the republican French tradition. The French reluctance to accommodate the specific needs of immigrant groups may hinder the incorporation of these groups into the French society. Additionally, choosing not to collect statistics by migrant status makes it impossible to assess whether the policy of redistribution (such as anti-discrimination and job subsidisation) is also effective. Zurich is one of the few cities in our research where recognition and redistribution go hand in hand. Every effort is made to make migrants feel at home and at the same time there is also an eye for the danger of increasing inequality.

With respect to the third planning principle, encounters, there are more similarities between our research cities, especially with respect to the emphasis on mixed housing policies. These policies are intended to attract middle-class residents and entrepreneurs to settle (or remain) in deprived areas. While middle-class neighbourhoods of creative people are constantly held up as the ideal, the role of people with other lifestyles and opportunities is underestimated. It is a discourse that negates the diversity of city life. If policy-makers want to encourage social cohesion, they need to invest in programmes that bring together the diverse groups of the neighbourhood. 'Soft' actions, which foster encounters and interactions between people with diverse backgrounds, can be used to positive effect. Examples of 'soft' actions are organising festivities, helping residents start up activities and manage and run community halls, and getting residents to participate in social programmes.

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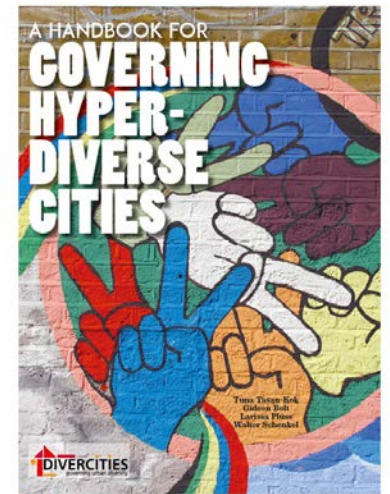
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