

Böllinger | Mildner | Vierke [eds.]

# Diversity Gains

Stepping Stones and Pitfalls



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The peer-reviewed series “Bayreuth Studies in Politics and Society in Africa” publishes research about socio-political processes and structures in African societies. The editors welcome innovative monographs and guest edited volumes in either English or German which discuss historical and current transformations in African countries with an empirical or theoretical focus. The series is open to case studies and comparative research from the social sciences and related academic disciplines.

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Sarah Böllinger | Carsten Mildner  
Ulf Vierke [eds.]

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# From Critical Intervention to Trademark – and Back! Diversity Gains in Discourse and Praxis

*Introduction by Sarah Böllinger, Katharina Fink and Carsten Mildner*

Diversity is virtually everywhere. It has made a career from a revolutionarily claim of advocating for social justice to a buzzword in strategic managerial strategies. In contemporary political discourse, diversity and its social implications are highly controversial. As such, it is of no difference to many other concepts with a radical zest in late capitalism. The simultaneousness of the rejection of diversity in right-wing discourse, its sometimes uncritical praise on the political opposite, and the depolitization through mainstreaming calls for a book project that assembles diverse contributions that tackle the field from a multiplicity of perspectives.

We wish to coin this a time of diversity gains, understood in – at least – two ways. In a lecture<sup>1</sup>, Ann Fox reflected on *disability gain*, inspired by Baumann and Murray's work on *Deaf Gain* (2014). Their idea understands deafness not as hearing *loss* but a *gain* in Deaf<sup>2</sup> identity and culture (see also Young/Temple 2014: 18; Harmon 2010). Fox argues that disability opens new perspectives for the person themselves and for society to move on (see also Reid-Cunningham 2009: 106-107); for an example she referred to Yassine Balbzioui's work on broken porcelain (see Fox this volume, also Böllinger 2019 for disability aesthetics). We understand *diversity gain* as a gain like this: Diversity enriches the lives of everybody, it

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1 Ann Fox (April 7, 2016): The Importance of “Fabulous Invalids”: Or, Why Representing Disability in Mainstream Theater Matters. A BIGSAS (Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies) Diversity Lecture on the occasion of the International Conference on Beauty and the Norm: Debating Standardization in Bodily Appearance at the University of Bayreuth, [www.beautyandthenorm.uni-bayreuth.de](http://www.beautyandthenorm.uni-bayreuth.de) (19.11.2019).

2 In referring to themselves as Deaf instead of deaf, Deaf people claim an identity as a cultural and linguistic group (Napier: 2002). There are thus deaf people and Deaf people, depending on which idea they identify with and the given social context (see also Mildner in this volume, McIlroy/Storbeck: 2011).

challenges gridlocked discourses and practices, it ignites social progress, creativity and innovation.

But we also understand diversity gain as a descriptive term: In a globalizing world, diversity increases – and so do the discussions around it. More and more people claim and create new and fluid identities in reference to gender, sexual orientation or religious beliefs while others engage to deconstruct confining identities that were based on racism, ableism or sexism. The social world plays out its variety and variation, thereby reducing ‘normality’ to absurdity. The *Gains* in the title of this collection shall thus be read in two ways:

- as a plural of gain – referencing the increase of diversity as such as well as the increasing reactions, confrontations and oppositions it causes. We will reflect on some of these in this introduction.
- as a verb – diversity gains victory and prevails over uniformity and monotony, stagnancy and regression.

In a TED talk (Technology, Entertainment, Design), one of the iconic formats of the mesh of capital and societal movements in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, Janet Stovall, manager of executive communications at the logistics company UPS (United Parcel Service), advocated for single-mindedness in making diversity a strong tool of dismantling exclusion in the workplace (Stovall 2018). The talk is of interest as it first links to the entanglement of language and action, and secondly because it links to the character of diversity as a process, which finds its echo in political theorist Chantal Mouffe’s “agonistic pluralism” (2000). Agonism, as explored in her work with Laclau (Smith 1998), keeps democracy alive as it requires a constant discussion of diverse positions. The agonistic notion of diversity requires the tolerating of difference and the translation of it into a productive form. It says: There will not be a society that has reached the perfect state. As such, it is necessary to stay in communication, in contact, as an exchange of equals. It takes away the illusion that a trademarked version of diversity, one that finds cultural capital in the imagery of superficial heterogeneity, will help in creating a diverse, accessible society that lives by unity in difference. Audre Lorde, a writer surely to re-read as a companion to this reader, puts it as a punchline: “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (1984: 110). Neither will “diversity<sup>TM</sup>”, as we dub the commodified version of a discourse that, by means of its mainstreaming, loses some of its radicality to challenge structural exclusion.

This is apparent in applications of diversity where human and civil rights and the social value of plurality do not seem to be sufficient enough. Instead, the value of diversity is measured in economic terms when con-



sultancy firms argue that higher rates of diversity in boards and businesses correlate with higher profits (see Frost 2014, 2016, 2019). While this rather shortsighted motivation may pave the way for a more diverse and inclusive neoliberal society, it seems risky: What if a company that is less diverse makes even more profit – will diversity fall back to a nice-to-have ideology? And what about the nonmonetary gains, what about health, solidarity, mutual learning, creativity and innovation?

As a shapeshifting concept, meandering between appellation, emancipatory project, depoliticized surface and rhetorical topos, diversity has been at the heart of social scientific interest of inquiry for centuries. Herbert Spencer acknowledged the heterogeneity of societies that needed to be faced and managed to create a system for harmonious coexistence (Spencer 1862), while disapproving of interethnic relations (Salzbrunn 2014: 15). Georg Simmel did not condemn diversity but identified it as a challenge for social organization (1890: 101f). Pierre Bourdieu has critically analyzed the processes of differentiation and distinction in various works (e.g. 1984, 2007). The list could be endlessly prolonged, but already here it becomes clear that precursors, founders and figureheads of sociology were continuously curious about how societies develop and manage their diversity; even though it might not have been termed like that until recently (Salzbrunn 2014: 13).

The current dynamics around diversity is best described as a mainstreaming. What this mainstreaming does to the potential of a concept as a “critical category” (Arndt 2018) can be best studied in the field of gender mainstreaming (e.g. Bacchi/Eveline 2010). Diversity went from being regarded as a problematic challenge for society as Simmel saw it, to social justice discourses, to possibly being considered an asset (Michaels 2006; Salzbrunn 2014: 8, 53; Friedner 2015; Frost 2019).

Looking at diversity in action, we identify the following four levels of denotation, which are paired with quotations from the vast realm of public discussion of diversity:

- Factual understanding: On the actual state of things, our societies, cultures, nations are diverse, meaning we “inhabit a universe that is characterized by diversity” (Desmond Tutu 2001).
- Ethical understanding: As a path of good life and conduct, where accepting and promoting diversity is the right (or only) way to live, as Jacqueline Woodson emphasized when arguing for more diversity in children’s books: “Diversity is about all of us, and about us having to

figure out how to walk through this world together” (Jacqueline Woodson in Kirch 2014).

- Entrepreneurial understanding: As a goal in economics and politics, where diversity is a subject of rational valuation. “There’s a pure and simple business case for diversity: Companies that are more diverse are more successful” (Mindy Grossman in Goudreau 2011); or as Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has been quoted saying, “Diversity isn’t just sound social policy. Diversity is the engine of invention. It generates creativity that enriches the world” (Foster 2016).
- Visionary understanding: As a path towards a better future: How can we use each other’s differences in our common battles for a livable future? Audre Lorde’s position about difference as a tool for a radically different society that is based on equal access while not being naïve about mechanisms of exclusion lives on in the genderqueer understanding of diversity as proclaimed by South African performance artist and writer Goldendean. In their work *Plan B* (2017), a “gathering of strangers” is proclaimed, leaning on Sara Ahmed’s notion of strangeness, as discussed in her work *Strange encounters* (2000). They offer a postcolonial, queer understanding of difference that builds on the queer-feminist tradition.

These four layers allow just a small glimpse into the panoply of praise diversity continues to receive. Diversity is every step: the current state of things, the way we need to go, the goals and results we seek, and the utopia we might be dreaming of. To rhetorically exaggerate: Diversity is the problem, the solution, the process and the result. So, all the praise raises suspicion. Is it not, by being celebrated on so many fronts, losing its significance and specific edge? And is this positive reflection and assumed appraisal of diversity in academia making us too comfortable with presumably achieved and overcome struggles? When looking at the current state of affairs it is obvious that the political reality does not necessarily go along with the academic consensus.

In Poland, the political party *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (Law and Justice) is winning local and national elections with a clearly national orientation, just as *Fidesz* (Fiatel Demokraták Szövetsége, Hungarian Civic Alliance) is in Hungary. Xenophobia was mobilized to win over voters in the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom. In Germany, the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) (Alternative for Germany), *Christlich-Soziale Union* (Christian Social Union) and the extraparliamentary movement *Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes* (PEGIDA, Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident) are competing

to dominate the right-winged discourse and blur the lines between right-of-center and radical-right in the political landscape. In the United States, Donald Trump convinced his voters with a simplistic *America First* logic, assuming this *America* to be essentially white and Christian, assailing ethnic and religious groups as well as women and people with disabilities (see also Ann Fox in this volume). Marine Le Pen had a realistic chance to take her political party the *Front National* into the presidential office. In Denmark, Italy and the Netherlands, right-wing parties have been shaping the political scene for years. And the attack of right-wing parties and initiatives in Germany against the “gender ideology”, as the Alternative for Germany calls it (AfD Landesverband Baden-Württemberg, regional association Baden-Württemberg, 2016), is an assault against diversity discourses. All these examples of political movements and discourses are rooted in their respective social, historical and political background but have in common that they do not share the academic praise for an inclusive future.

It can thus be of no great surprise that the academic program of diversity is the target of many conservative or new right-wing movements. In Hungary, Viktor Orbán signed a decree to remove gender studies from the list of accredited master programs (Redden 2018). The political party website of the Alternative for Germany (AfD 2017) describes diversity and gender mainstreaming as a mere mind game, far from reality, and gender studies as ideology instead of an academic, scientific undertaking.

The scrutiny and open repudiation of diversity is linked towards a “retreat into ethnic units, a sort of nationalist backlash, as we can witness in Europe and the United States today” (Philipps 2018: 3), a reactionary desire of “imagined communities” (Anderson 1991) for homogeneity. Comedian Stephen Colbert picked up on this illusory nostalgia in the title of his book *America Again: Re-becoming the Greatness We Never Weren't* (Colbert 2012). But jokes aside; where does this burning desire to return to a nationally and ethnically homogenous past – that never actually was – come from?

Wilhelm Heitmeyer identified national identity as an anchor in times of uncertainty that people repeatedly turn to when they face economic, political and social exclusion and decline – or just the fear thereof (Heitmeyer 2018, see also Waldmann/Elwert 1989: 11). The resulting negative mental states, Julijana Ranc argues, lead to resentment and prepare the ground for populism and the new right movements we witness today (Ranc 2019: 208, see also Elwert 1989: 54). As a consequence, the fight against xenophobia and the fight for acceptance of diversity are linked closer than one

might think at first. The answer lies in the social, economic and political inclusion of all. Diversity and inclusion (or inclusivity) are therefore inevitably linked – although the concepts are not congruent in what they mean and where they come from.

### Diversity and Inclusion – false friends but good friends?

The relation between diversity and inclusion is not as simple as it seems at first sight. One might consider an inclusive society one that cherishes and, quite importantly, enables diversity to thrive. Yet more than the field of diversity, inclusion involves a future – or utopian (see Becker 2016) – perspective; a demand for an accessible world grounded in basic human rights. It is vital to look not just at the terms *diversity* and *inclusion*, but at the politics embedded in both. Diversity and inclusion here are certainly no longer synonymous nor can one be subsumed under the other. Rather their relation is dialectic or can be turned into a productive relation, even an agonistic one, as Fink and others (this Volume) will explore further.

Diversity politics ascribes a positive value to diversity of cultural and social entities and tries to enhance diversity, for example by trying to privilege certain minorities. In order to be able to do so, one has to identify the elements that make situations, teams and settings diverse – for example by identifying what the markers that define a minority group are. As such, diversity focuses more on the situation as it presents itself, and on a productive understanding of difference, e.g. regarding gender, religion and culture. That these discourses have the tendency to flatten into depoliticized praise for differences considered stable is perhaps best expressed by the necessity to add the adjective “critical” to academic programs<sup>3</sup> and conferences on diversity.

Inclusion on the other hand assumes diversity on the micro level as a given, without necessarily having to identify certain criteria. Instead, the focus is on adjusting the conditions of equal access for everyone – physical, functional, structural, socioeconomic, political, cultural, etc. These meta conditions are to be changed to get rid of as many barriers as possible.

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3 See, e.g., the MA-program in Critical Diversity Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Regarding practices of diversity, the concepts of inclusion and diversity intertwine. The debates in Germany (e.g. in the context of education that the editors work in) are dominated by the concept of inclusion, as enforced by the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN 2006). While affirmative diversity politics aims at appreciating and enabling minorities within a diverse society, the intention (or utopia) of inclusion is that nobody needs affirmative practices because society is as open and equal so that every person can partake from the beginning.

Let us give an example from the editors' work at becks (Büro des Beauftragten für behinderte und chronisch kranke Studierende), the administrative department for disabled and chronically ill students at the University of Bayreuth. As a matter of fact, becks practices *integration*, that is to say, by means of adjustment measures becks enables students with disabilities to study in the same way as students without disability do. At the same time, the claim and aim of becks is to reshape the university into an inclusive space where those measures are not necessary anymore, and where *disability needs* are not considered as such. This idea of practicing diversity and inclusion presents itself as a process of constantly readjusting perceptions of individuals and groups. As much as it became clear that our own concepts of diversity might have been somewhat callow, it also encouraged us to map the multiple field of diversity concepts.

## Publication and Lecture Series

This publication is a result of the Diversity Lecture series of the *Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies* (BIGSAS), of which the editors are fellows<sup>4</sup>. At the same time, the editors work for becks and

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4 We want to express our gratitude to the authors for their presentations in Bayreuth and their contributions to this book, as well as for their patience during the process of publication. Jennifer Rasell, Gabriele Edelmann, Moritz Wohlgenannt, and Thomas Hughes supported us in editing the articles and the manuscript, Renzo Baas translated the article by Sarah Böllinger and Ulf Vierke. The organization of the Diversity Lecture Series and our work at becks would not have been the same without our cherished longtime student assistant Linda Ilona Rohmann. The Lecture Series as well as the edition of the book was realized in cooperation

BayFinK (Bayerische Forschungs- und Informationsstelle), a research and information platform for inclusive universities and cultural institutions across Bavaria based at the University of Bayreuth. This crossroads inspired the intersectional take of the BIGSAS Diversity Lectures. They create a forum for voices that reflect on the theoretical or conceptual character of diversity, and provide case studies, examples and empirical notes for further discussion. The context in which these lectures and conversations took place, BIGSAS, is itself home to a diverse community of fellows from a wide range of disciplines, each person with their own unique identity shaped by faith, race, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, age, ability, and socioeconomic class that is a gain for research and teaching. The community challenges assumptions, tests ideas, and broadens the understanding of the human experience and contextualization. However, diversity is more than the aggregate of different individual backgrounds, personal identities, and various worldviews. It is also the acknowledgement and deconstruction of discursive and institutional barriers and the accessibility of space that allows individuals to fully engage in academic life. While we position ourselves among those who appreciate diversity, liberty, human rights and an inclusive society, true diversity implies taking into consideration the uneven distribution of power and opportunities and to create mechanisms to address and resolve existing inequalities. BIGSAS faces these challenges with a *Diversity Program* that focuses on affirmative politics and adjustments to suit individual demands; individual measures and new labels are easier to create than to spark, implement and monitor bureaucratic and social change.

More than anything, diversity is a processual concept. It requires decision and dedicated action. To stress this, let us give attention to a very real struggle: The one for funding for academic work in the context of our graduate school. A *Diversity Grant* was on the table, and immediately heated discussions arose about who could or should be eligible for the new grant: All women? All Africans? Only Black Africans? All junior fellows with disabilities? Who's diverse *enough* for the grant? And how to define these groups and identify individual eligibility? It seemed not to be that easy to define what the *requirements* of diversity were in practice. In the end the funding body DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, German

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between different units of the University of Bayreuth, led by becks and the BIGSAS Diversity Program with support from BayFinK and Nomos Verlag.

Research Foundation) decided that only individuals who identify as ‘female’ would be eligible for the disability grant.

We faced a similar question about the criteria for diversity beyond the trademark when we started organizing the Diversity Lecture series. We scrutinized the task, asking ourselves: What is diversity? What is diverse? Who shall we invite? What is in the interest of the Lecture Series? We gave ourselves a simple answer, which allowed us a quite inclusive approach to start with and also to open up a debate on what diversity in an academic context could be. We invited friends and colleagues who are working on exciting topics or have published interesting works in the very broad field we would somehow see as fitting the label *diversity*. We found that in an international and pluricultural surrounding it has to be taken into account that the term *diversity* means different things in different places. Here appears already a lesson to be learned on the diversity of diversity. As, for example, Thomas Hughes argues in his chapter in this volume, diversity and multiculturalism in the United States of America and in Denmark are far from having the same significations due to historical difference. Denmark has – at least until recently – never been the kind of melting pot that the United States claims as its founding myth (Parrillo 2005: 8ff). Diversity has thus to be seen differently respective to its different contexts.

In this volume we wish to unfold how questions and challenges of diversity matter to those who usually are considered to make societies diverse. While academics may tend to appreciate diversity, the individual experience is at times not as merry as the discursive praise suggests. The proclamation of unity in diversity is often a charade for the people belonging to minorities of whichever kind. Since decades, minorities argue for their rights and their place within society. They get active to claim what is theirs. After all those decades we are still talking, but what are we achieving (see Windisch in this volume) – particularly given the current dynamics in politics introduced above? Marlon James takes this frustration one step further and asks, facing the often occurring reality of an all-White diversity panel: “why do we need a black person on a panel to talk about inclusion when it’s the white person who needs to figure out how to include?” (James 2016). In a comparable vein Tom Humphries wonders why Deaf people continuously need to argue for their Deaf culture, while Hearing culture is taken for granted (Humphries 2008). Is diversity something foreign that the able, hearing, white, Christian male appreciates as a mere decoration of a paternalistic world, the status quo we want to defend? Is it a given gift that is there and therefore, teleologically, is good?

Or is it something we need to work on, that we need to figure out how to manage? Is it something we accept and tolerate, only to then feel more comfortable behind our desks and in our positions? Or do we need to work on being more open to change, on unlearning implicitness and hidden norms? And do we perhaps need to make space? Regarding gender diversity politics, Ann Fox critically remarks that “while laudably trying to get more women represented in boardrooms and other positions of power, [we] don’t question the very structures of power that are being infiltrated” (Fox et al. 2019: 110, see also Haraway 1991 and Audre Lorde above). Part of those structures are the profit maximizing logics of late capitalism, as it plays out in the neoliberalism university.

Thus, taking diversity discourses seriously, it is revolution that is called for, not reform. As the art collective The Strategic Radicals, a temporary collective emerging from a discussion about the entanglement of arts and society in Windhoek, Namibia<sup>5</sup>, demand: “The present system will fall. But in the time it takes to crumble, we will be radically engaged. We must accelerate” (The Strategic Radicals 2018). In an unapologetic contribution to dismantling the diversity<sup>TM</sup>-discourse as camouflaging continuing structural inequality, South African students achieved a radical shift in the education system with the *#feesmustfall*-movement initiated by South African students that asked for the decolonization of institutions of higher education; and pushed for a thorough discussion of the underlying concept of exclusion and Whiteness. Now, the fight is on to keep their struggle going and protect it against being claimed by political parties.

The imperative of decolonization is transferred to other realms and lives as well. The “anticolonialist discourse” engages in “dissolving the ‘West’ and its highest product – the one who is not animal, barbarian, or woman; man, that is, the author of a cosmos called history” (Haraway 1991: 156). Sounds good? Sounds exciting? These radical shifts inflict disorientation and fear as well; especially by those who hold power – and those who fear to be marginalized in the future. Those who do hold power manage to mobilize some underprivileged groups against others (Salzbrunn 2014: 17), mobilizing fears of change in order to maintain the status quo (Heitmeyer

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5 In the context of the exhibition “FAVT: Future Africa Visions in Time”, a traveling exhibition conceptualised by Nadine Siegert, Storm Janse van Rensburg and Katharina Fink, which manifested as an edition in Windhoek, Namibia, in January 2018.



2018). Creating a broadly supported understanding that diversity brings people together in their common struggle for a better living – instead of being played off one against the other – is one of diversity’s many challenges.

Neither ignoring nor supporting fear, we take it into account and demand to face it with courage and curiosity. As is the point in Deaf gain and disability gain, diversity gain shall be a gain for all. And what the diversity debate shows clearly is that societies need formats for agonistic debate.

### The contributions

By inviting fellows from different disciplines and backgrounds, all labeled diversity scholars by grace of our choice, to share their ideas and thoughts on diversity with us over a few semesters, we were sure to find a great variety of contributions. This makes the collection not only diverse in content but also in writing style. Some are purely academic, some are more essayistic, even motivational, one is poetic. What this collection of articles seeks to do in this discussion is give food for thought and reflection. As mentioned above, there was no set agenda of the lecture series apart from exploring the topics that may be grouped within the scope of diversity.

### *Claiming identity*

Having presented her thoughts on disability gain in the Diversity Lectures in Bayreuth, Ann Fox uses her contribution to draw conclusions from an art exhibition by contemporary artist Yassine Balbzioui. In reflecting the manifold shapes of his ceramics, Fox enhances Tobin Siebers’ and others’ groundbreaking thoughts on disability aesthetics. Disability is still dominated by the medical field and not recognized as an identity, an aesthetic, and a way of being in the world. Fox argues that Balbzioui’s work can help us shape a world that cherishes diversity and equity, starting in contemporary art as well as in academia. That the criticism of inspirational or sentimentalized images of disability is also a question of context, however, is seen in the contributions by Emmanuel Sackey and Ras-I Mackinzeff. Based on his research in Ghana, Sackey studies the way the disability rights movement incorporates discourses of good governance and the role of civil society in promoting the rights of persons with disabilities. Sackey concludes that the disability rights movement in Ghana has bene-

fitted from foreign financial and technical support and internal dynamics alike. Ras-I Mackinzepp introduces us to the current situation of people with disabilities in Cameroon where he himself is an activist. In a very personal account, he shares a perspective from the south that is different from an institutional study or a discourse analysis. With references to philosophical and theological discussions, he shares examples and experience of barriers and disability while also highlighting abilities and the potentials of those often called disregarded as incapable. The inspiration porn criticism Fox refers to is appropriate facing the experiences of demotion of the disability communities in the United States and beyond. Sackey and Mackinzepp show us, though, that in Ghana and Cameroon, inspirational and maybe inevitably reductionist role models appear to be necessary subjects of identification that enable the creation of communities and the realization of the individual's potentials.

*The different glance – and what we can gain from it*

Taking Rosemary Garland-Thomson's work on "how we look" seriously, Sarah Böllinger and Ulf Vierke take a close look at how Tanzanian photographer John Kiyaya depicts persons with disability working in a rehabilitation center. In the setting of a quite normative and normalizing space, Kiyaya's work appears to be interested in portraying the person rather than in a display of disability. Meticulously analyzing some of Kiyaya's photographs through the lenses of art and disability studies, Böllinger and Vierke explore how a Tanzanian "freestyle photographer" who is far from being involved in disability discourses looks, represents – and makes us look. Katharina Fink discusses participatory art and cultural projects in South Africa and Germany. Curatorial work is creative and can therefore profit from participation, diverse input and a do-it-yourself approach – a process that she terms as "synchronizing". In advocating for an inclusive take, Fink shows the potential that involving and including holds for a re-politization of the museum space.

*Intermezzo towards experience*

Kevin Mwachiro participated in the diversity lectures by reading from his book *Invisible: Stories from Kenya's Queer Community* (2014) in which Kenyans tell their stories of queer life, of acceptance and exclusion. In-

stead of an article, he contributed his poem “In the Dead of Night” to this collection.

### Diversity within

Diversity, often understood as a descriptive term for a collective consisting of various groups, runs the risk to imply a certain homogeneity within the respective groups. Neubert and Stoll, within a research project by the Bayreuth Academy of Advanced African Studies, discover the diversity within a group discussed as the middle classes of Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu and Eldoret on their way to understand this group by quantitative and qualitative terms. Reflecting that diversity is usually understood to describe difference from the mainstream, the authors apply the term to have a closer look at the inner differentiation of a group. Based on an explorative research on deafness in Uganda, Carsten Mildner assembles three accounts of deaf people who live in the same town with the same impairment and yet experience their dis-ability very differently. He argues that looking at being deaf from a perspective that has diversity in mind opens more ways to appreciate identities and experiences while claims of unity, similitude and Culture can be limited in scope and reach.

### *Individual pluralities*

Sociological approaches to human phenomena can never be cut loose of context. Thomas Hughes and Monika Windisch focus on exactly these constellations when multiple belongings are at stake and new questions emerge. Hughes’ research participants navigate the categories of being disabled and being immigrants in the Danish welfare state. The account of Abuukar, a disabled immigrant from Somalia, reflects the experience of not being welcomed by Danish disability organizations and feeling equally excluded from the Somalian community due to his disability. Abuukar finds himself at the margins of both those groups and consequently experiences a doubled lack of belonging that Hughes terms “hypermarginality”. Windisch takes the discussion of intersectionality and mainstreaming to another level, going beyond country specific questions and debates that place either impairment effects *or* social barriers to the fore. Instead, she adds a fresh analysis of how intersectionality could work in the context of disability and how intersectional experiences of gender and disability are accounted for in European antidiscrimination policies.

All the contributions, in their assembly, inspire to reach beyond a superficial reading of diversity. What we would wish for as editors is at the same time easy and a lot: That this book invites for a close reading of one's own personal and institutional practices; to continue the discussion – and potentially get the tools or links needed to work with the complexity of diversity *at home*.

## Abbreviations

AfD	Alternative für Deutschland, Alternative for Germany
becks	Büro des Beauftragten für behinderte und chronisch kranke Studierende, administrative department for disabled and chronically ill students
BayFinK	Bayerische Forschungs- und Informationsstelle – Inklusive Hochschulen und Kultureinrichtungen, Bavarian Center for research and information – inclusive Universities and cultural institutions
BIGSAS	Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies
CSU	Christlich-Soziale Union, Christian Social Union
DFG	Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, German Research Foundation
Fidesz	Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége, Hungarian Civic Alliance
PEGIDA	Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes, Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident
TED	Technology, Entertainment, Design
UN	United Nations
UPS	United Parcel Service

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