

Urban Diversity: Disentangling the Cultural from the Economic Case

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Abstract

For many planners and city branders a pluralistic urban society, variation in architectural styles and mixed-uses render cities creative, competitive and more livable. Diversity, as the new orthodoxy in urban planning and policy, embodies the opposite of earlier, top-down modernist planning ideals. Reading diversity as a cipher for the market, as I set out to do in this article, lays bare the normative trajectories of these discourses of diversity. In so doing, I make two arguments. First, while it is often assumed that urban diversity makes cities more cosmopolitan and more economically productive, I contend that the cultural and economic logics of diversity are not mutually re-enforcing, but can often contradict one another. The same regime of market rule that supposedly leads to more diverse and livable postindustrial cities, produces increasing spatial inequalities. Second, I suggest that a perspective that highlights the structuring force of physical urban infrastructures sheds light on these path-dependent patterns of segregation, thereby allowing us to understand struggles over place and meaning in ways that move beyond the current limitations of diversity discourses.

Keywords: diversity, spatial inequalities, infrastructure, urban planning, Cosmpolitanism

Diversity's Terminological Ambiguities¹

In the imaginaries of many city planners, branding agencies and urban designers, cities are breeding places of a new public sphere. In these dominant accounts, diversity is one of the main features of a nascent postindustrial public, deemed to live more leisurely, creative and sustainable lives. As a panacea for all social ills and as a new "planning orthodoxy" (Fainstein 2005), urban diversity is regarded both as a new urban condition and as a desirable outcome of urban development

(see e.g., Florida 2005; Marshall 2007; Glaeser 2011).

The term 'diversity' usually denotes a situation of multiplicity and heterogeneity, but often one in which the recognition of difference and the integration of migrants have been successful. As spaces of agglomeration and intersection, cities are often at the center of debates on diversity.

As I contend in this essay, the case for diversity has both a *cultural* and an *economic* dimension. The ambivalence of the term is what makes it both so appealing and ultimately self-contradictory. The problem with such a conflated understanding of diversity is that it renders what are essentially social questions of equality and justice into debates on discourse and identity politics. Trading off redistribution for recognition distracts from the actual issues at stake and, more than that, offers a legitimization strategy for processes

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that even aggravate the situation for urban residents.

The sanguine understanding of (urban) diversity has its origin long before the most recent wave of globalization that began in the late 1970s. The concept of diversity, as I seek to show in the first part of this article, has implied cosmopolitan hopes from the late 18th century. As such, it has also served from the modern beginnings of liberal thought and (neo)classical economics as a cipher to advocate for the superiority of market rule.

However, as I contend in the following part of this essay, the *economic* logic of the market contradicts the cosmopolitan, *cultural* argument for diversity. The same rule of markets that supposedly leads us to more diverse and sustainable postindustrial cities, leads to increasing inequalities and segregation. The two arguments for diversity are not congruent. They do not add up. Instead, they often stand in opposition.

As I will argue in the final part of this essay, the best way to render this contradiction visible in the urban context is by taking an infrastructural perspective. I am not referring to a Marxian base-superstructure binary here. Rather, I argue that by viewing the city through the prism of its actual physical support structures, we can better understand the struggles over place and meaning that diversity discourses tend to gloss over. A look at the often invisible enabling conditions of public life shows how the discourse of successful urban diversity management clashes with the realities of infrastructural inequalities and the ways they fall into patterns of racial and class segregation.

Diversity as a Good in itself

In planning circles and public discourses on the city, particularly in North America and Europe, diversity is accepted as the new urban condition—and a positive one at that. Diversity, like sustainability, livability, and resilience has become one of the top- trending buzz words that appear in cities' self-representations and development plans.

The term diversity implies several meanings that are often left undifferentiated. As Susan Fainstein has noted, it alludes to contexts as far-ranging as a varied physical design, mixes of uses, an expanded public realm and a mixture of “multiple social groupings exercising their ‘right to the city’” (Fainstein 2005: 3). When the term is used in the media, it mostly refers to the latter: ethnic or cultural diversity—two terms which in themselves are equally vague. These very different aspects of diversity, however ambiguously defined, are supposed to inform one another and are generally viewed, in these discourses, as desirable.

What exactly is it that makes diversity so appealing? Akin to the imprecise use of the term, the normative claim as to why exactly diversity is something virtuous is often left equally unexplained in such statements. What is emphasized, however, is that economic diversity can engender cultural diversity, essentially insinuating that exchange and circulation are necessarily worthwhile social goods.

A recent report published by the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), for instance, cements this broader intuition. According to the authors, societies with higher “cultural diffusion” adapt better to technological change, industrialize more rapidly, and grow faster (Ashraf and Galor 2011: 54). The European Union (EU) project *Diversity* equally assumes that “socio-economic, socio-demographic, ethnic and cultural diversity can positively affect social cohesion, urban economic performance and social mobility of individuals and groups suffering from socio-economic deprivation” (Diversity 2015). In a similar vein, UN Habitat's urban planning and design principles emphasize the need for “optimizing the population and economic density of urban settlements,” and by “promoting mixed land use, diversity and better connectivity” (UN Habitat 2012). In all these examples, diverse urban agglomerations are supposed to increase exchange and thereby foster cosmopolitanism and productivity.

The terminological ambivalence of the cultural and the economic case makes the notion of diversity so compelling for different sides of the political spectrum. *Culturally*, diversity is often viewed as a (postmodern) condition and regarded as an aspect of a world closing in on itself. Seen as a consequence of purportedly inexorable globalization processes that integrate peoples and cultures across national borders, the term diversity resonates with hopes for a more cosmopolitan society (Beck 2000; Held 2003, 2010). While this cosmopolitan dimension of the concept of diversity might appeal to the left of the political spectrum, more conservative liberals make an *economic* case for diversity.

They stress that diverse cities are economically more successful than more ethnically and culturally homogenous cities. We can identify two often-cited reasons as to why this is supposed to be the case. For one, diversity attracts economically powerful groups to the city. Diversity has thus become a cultural branding tool for outward representation which, in the fierce competition with other cities, serves as one among other labels to increase the attractiveness of a city for young mobile professionals (for exemplary analyses see Donald et al. 2009). Second, in recent years, diversity has undergone a crucial epistemological shift in the way that it has been used by urban administrations. As Mathias Rodatz astutely observes for the case of Germany—which equally holds true for the US and other North Atlantic states—municipal authorities are beginning to “view migrant districts as productive sites of ‘diversity’ featuring resources for the ‘local economy’ and ‘civil society’” (Rodatz 2012: 70). In other words, diversity has come to be seen as the extension of the low-pay urban labor market to new populations.

In both the cultural and the economic use of the term, diversity appears to us as a public good into which urban societies can tap. Both dimensions seem to feed of from and to inform one another. The underlying idea of this supposedly synergetic relationship is that, by adhering to the principle of diversity, cities offer cosmopolitan

lifestyles *and* increase productivity. The assumption is one of a cosmopolitan presence in the city which offers the best of all possible worlds: variety, mixture, *and* economic growth.

This type of argument is not as new as one might think. It has a long lineage that I will seek to trace in very broad brush strokes in the following paragraphs. As we will see, the innocent, cosmopolitan term ‘diversity’ comes with heavy baggage. But its underlying assumptions do not hold up to scrutiny. Let me stress right away, that I am not arguing against diversity. Indeed, I will even argue that we need to re-discover the emancipatory potentials of a diverse society. However, the blurring of different categories and objectives too often leads to implicit value statements about the form of social and economic organization which, upon closer inspection, are self-contradictory. In great part, then, this essay is an exercise in rendering those normative claims explicit that underlie diversity discourses.

There is no good reason why cultural and economic diversity are mutually reinforcing and why one should naturally follow from the other. That economic and cultural diversity do not causally correspond is also the reason why we should not simply argue in favor of diversity as though it was a good in itself. Thus, it is not merely that the uses of the term diversity are unstable over time (Lammert and Sarkowsky 2010), but that upon closer inspection, the economic and cultural dimensions of diversity discourses are incommensurate.

How Diversity Became a Buzz-word

Both aspects of diversity discourses are firmly grounded in liberal and neoliberal thought from Smith to Hayek to Friedman. The *locus classicus* of these two lines of argumentation is Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*. For Smith, too, spatial proximity and close interaction were the keys to social progress. In *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith argues that the division of labor, the “extent of the market,” determined the degree of labor specialization and thereby the advancement of society (Smith [1776] 2003: 27). In cit-

ies, where transportation and communication is safe and cheap, markets can extend, labor can specialize, and productivity increases. Commercial exchange—the economic side of the argument—, in turn, also produces “improvements of art and industry” and “cultivation.” (Smith [1776] 2003: 29-30) Cities, because they facilitate interaction between merchants, are the nodal points of social progress, according to Smith. In essence, more cosmopolitan and diverse cities—even though he did not use these exact terms—are more resonant with their citizens, more civilized, more democratic, and more productive. The economic and the cultural case for diversity are deeply entwined from the start.

The first one to outline the economic advantages of urban agglomerations in the context of modern economics was Alfred Marshall in his *Principles of Economics* (1890) and *Industry and Trade* (1919). He adds the importance of size to the debate on diverse cities.² In urban agglomerations, according to Marshall, the market is closer to its ideal of efficient resource allocation and increased productivity because of scale economies, reduced transportation costs and shared economies. Note that this argument for urban productivity, while it picks up essential elements of Smith’s argumentation, has little to say about the cultural or civilizational dimension of urban agglomerations. This is perhaps less surprising given that his was the era of professionalization of economics as a discipline and of a more positivistic understanding of economic processes to be examined in econometric models detached from cultural context. The more normative, cultural reason, —why diversity is a good thing and why it follows from economic diversity—is only gradually re-introduced after World War II.

In the mid-20th century, liberal thinkers highlight the superiority of market rule, addition-

ally, by contrasting it to the shortcomings of the public sector. Complexity, proponents of public choice theory argued in the 1960s and 1970s, when the Fordist regime entered its terminal crisis, was best met by the mechanism of supply and demand. This mechanism, in turn, was described as more adaptive to individuals’ needs, socially just and responsive to difference. The market is not only more efficient, it is also more democratic and drives innovation from the bottom up. It is not merely that local governments were acting out of bad faith, as public choice theorists argued. And Hayek, like Friedman, too, insisted that even the most benevolent and clear-sighted public official would intervene in the market too late, with the wrong assumptions, distorting expectations and market outcomes. Markets are simply too complex to be governed and central planning can offer no solution. Indeed, centralized planning is the very problem—even more so because, as Hayek believed, such concentrated power promotes tyranny and totalitarianism.

Therefore, markets are not just efficient and productive agglomerations, they are also more apt to accommodate complexity and to prevent and diffuse the concentration of power. It is for these reasons that the government needs to relinquish all responsibilities to market flows. This is the intellectual climate in which Jane Jacobs writes: “sprawling municipal government’s separate administrative empires” do not fail to deal appropriately with metropolitan complexity out of bad faith—“there is no villainy responsible for this situation” (Jacobs 1961: 407). With their organizational setup, they are simply incapable of managing a qualitatively new type of complexity. In addition to catering to the diversity of urban populations, then, markets help to reign in irresponsible and incapable government. Cities are engines of growth when they are diverse, and when markets can rule uninhibited by state intervention. Cities are more democratic when they avoid central planning and adhere to what Jacobs called the forces of self-diversification.

Indeed, the most obvious point to trace the recent emergence of ‘diversity’ as an unques-

² Building on his insights, economists over the course of the decades that followed identified four ways in which diversity and size impact economic growth: scale economies—that facilitate collective consumption—, shared inputs in production and consumption, reduced transaction costs, and more resilience vis-à-vis external shocks (Quigley 1998: 131-133).

tioned and undifferentiated guiding principle in urban planning are the writings of Jane Jacobs. She was the most explicit advocate of diversity as an overarching ideal, bringing the economic and cultural dimensions of the term together in a way that few others in urban planning had done before. Jacobs' tradition of thinking has had an overwhelming impact on city planning—Robert Fishman even calls her work the “most powerful intellectual stimulus to the revival of the American planning tradition” (Fishman 2000: 19)—and it is certainly worth taking a closer look at her understanding of diversity.

For Jacobs, great cities are concentrated, diverse, and attuned to the (real) needs of their inhabitants (Jacobs 1961: 15). Unsurprisingly, they face urban complexity not with paternalistic central planning approaches but flexible solutions on the micro-scale. This is because of what she calls a “ubiquitous principle”, something that Adam Smith would have described as the division of labor and others, simply, as the market. This principle indicates “the need of cities for a most intricate and close-grained diversity of uses that give each other constant mutual support, both economically and socially” (Jacobs 1961: 14). Rather than getting in the way of the “spontaneous [...] force of self-diversification”, the “new aristocracy of altruistic planning experts,” according to Jacobs, needed to step back (Jacobs 1961: 289). Planners, she insisted, had to yield to the forces of “self-diversification” which she saw as “possibly the greatest regenerative forces inherent in energetic American metropolitan economies” (Jacobs 1961: 290).

I am certainly not arguing that Jacobs is a proto-neoliberal. But her example shows us that even a critical mind that sought emancipatory potential in the urban arena embraces the very same set of ideas that mark the rise of neoliberalism, and this should give us pause to reflect. For Jacobs diversity is a supreme good because it accounts for difference, systemic complexity, spontaneity and individual needs and desires. The argument, at the outset, is a cultural one that contains the seed of an economic line of argumentation.

Her staunch position against government planning, her belief in self-healing forces of diversification, and the focus on the micro-scale neighborhood are matched by the decentralizing tendencies of markets.

What she sees as the main problem of modernist planning, per counter, are “routine, ruthless, wasteful, oversimplified solutions for all manner of city physical needs (let alone social and economic needs)” that are “devised by administrative systems which have lost the power to comprehend, to handle and to value an infinity of vital, unique, intricate and interlocked details” (Jacobs 1961: 408). It is unnecessary to belabor the point that Jacobs orients her critique against modernist planning ideals and, for this reason alone, her argumentation in favor of more diversity harbors strong affinities with neoliberal discourses against the state. But I mention it here, because this consonance of “urban diversity” and liberal thought can be traced back much further, as we saw, and still echoes in today's planning discourses. It is this overlap that confuses causality and correlation. It is the original fallacy of equating market rule with cosmopolitanism.

With the fall of the wall and the rise of liberal capitalism as the seemingly last standing alternative to organize societies in the 1990s, this ideological nexus of capitalism and democracy was extended by a new-found (or newly re-found) cosmopolitanism. The expected end of the nation-state and hopes for a postnational moment (Ohmae 1995; Beck 2000; Held 2003, 2010) implied a normative trajectory: free markets lead not just to more democracy, but also to more diversity, and thereby to more cosmopolitan cities and societies. This is of course not the place to unpack the rich history of contemporary ideas of diversity in their myriad inflections.³ Suffice it to state for the purpose of this argument that cities, as the nodal points of globalization, were to be the stages on which these cosmopolitan hopes of the post-Cold War era were to

³ For such a history of ideas (in German language), see Monika Salzbrunn (2014), especially parts I and II).

be dreamt and enacted. The cultural and economic dimensions of urban diversity, envisioned by Adam Smith and sometimes lost out of sight during the 20th century, were finally re-united in arguments in favor of urban diversity toward the turn of the 21st century.

Increasingly, this discourse has turned into a tautological loop: markets create economic diversity—through specialization—and cultural diversity—through the exchange between people with different backgrounds. The circle is closed on two hypotheticals; both these potential outcomes *can* lead to increases in productivity and cosmopolitan solidarities—and this is why markets are the best mechanism to organize societies. Upon closer inspection, then, the coupling of the economic and cultural dimension of the term diversity is a legitimation strategy for marketization.

As such, the two dimensions of the term still echo in urban planning discourses and municipal branding efforts today. Richard Sennett, for instance, argues for a more democratic cosmopolitanism that reflects and accounts for cultural difference and complexity in his work on the “open city.” Sennett forcefully contends that cities need to be open systems, unencumbered by central planning and reflective of “system[s] in unstable evolution” in order to adapt to social change (Sennett 2006). The most visible proponent of the economic argument is perhaps Richard Florida who insists that “places have replaced companies as the key organizing units in our economy” (Florida 2002: 30) in which “diversity and creativity work together to power innovation and economic growth” (Florida 2002: 262). If these two thinkers reflect the polar ends of discourses on diversity—and again, like with Jacobs, I have chosen them not as apologists of neoliberalism but as articulators of deeper currents of contemporary thought—, the economic and the cultural dimensions of diversity remain intricately linked. So much so, that it almost seems impossible to have cultural diversity without economic diversity. The former seems to necessarily flow from the latter. This is why the

cultural dimension of the argument for diversity is so impoverished: it is always derived from the economic argument. Through this lens, cosmopolitanism becomes a side effect of markets. It is turned from an ideal worth pursuing in and of itself into a by-product of a much more powerful economic line of argumentation.

One might want to ask why exactly this is problematic. The most important reason, in my view, is that it creates a unified, unquestioned understanding of urban development. From this liberal perspective, accepting diversity is simply the most pragmatic thing to do, even if there was an alternative. Why? Because it is more democratic, makes economic sense and fosters solidarity. Who could question these ideals? From this vantage point, that does not discern the economic from the cultural case for diversity, the remedy to stagnation and decline always becomes circulation and flow. Diversity is a state, a snapshot, in the inexorable and unsurpassable process of *laissez-faire*.

This theodicy of market rule ultimately depoliticizes discussions about possible urban futures because it relegates all political questions to the seemingly neutral domain of the market. In so doing, discourses on diversity hollow out the concept from its implied cosmopolitanism, which remains only as a strategy of legitimation for seemingly natural and unmediated social relations governed by external global forces. Through this discursive legerdemain, relations of private vice inevitably are transformed into public virtue.

Urbanization's Infrastructures

Though we like to think of the economic and cultural dimension of diversity to be intertwined for some of the reasons outlined above, actually they often stand in direct opposition. For one, it is by no means clear that diversity is a good thing in the first place—or at least making this point requires a different type of argumentation. Neither is it said that, second, the right kind of diversity ensues from the right kind (read: market-type) of economic organization.

The first point is a theoretical one to make. Cultural and ethnic diversity can be, but do not have to be, a good thing. The notion that diversity is something desirable implies certain *a priori* assumptions about what humans are and how they interact under specific conditions. But opinions on the inherent value of the idea diverge. Federalism, for instance, is seen by some as the most democratic political form, because it allows for a certain type of diversity of opinions and backgrounds—and therefore balances power and interests, creating egalitarian social structures (Gagnon 2014; see also Vormann 2014). But diversity can equally lead to less favorable, indeed opposite, social outcomes, such as increases in inequality, according to others. Those would argue, for instance, that a lack of welfare institutions in the United States and other multicultural societies is in large part a consequence of distrust between different ethnic groups. Diversity creates a “progressive dilemma,” these authors highlight, because immigration undermines the functioning of the welfare state (Phillips 1999; Pearce 2004; Goodhart 2013—while again others argue exactly the opposite, e.g., Kymlicka and Banting 2006).

Not only is diversity not a good in and of itself, comparative research also shows us that the success of urban diversity heavily depends on geographical and historical context. It entails both the possibilities for “social stress and [...] social innovation” (Stren and Polèse 2000: 8; see also Pestieau and Wallace 2003; Kihato et al. 2010). Diversity as a good depends on other goods such as equality, justice or upward mobility. As an auxiliary good, the term diversity points beyond itself, raising different questions: diversity of what kind? Of ethnic origin? Of tastes? Of class? Of gender? Of building styles? And, just as importantly: diversity for what purpose?

In sum, the most diverse society does not necessarily have to be a good society—and neither does an ethnically and culturally homogeneous society, if that category makes any sense in the first place, need to be a bad one. One of the central reasons why diversity is nonetheless regarded as

a good thing in itself is because it implies that different voices are heard and that strangers meet in a diverse society so as to formulate the public good. And I think that there is indeed a strong case to be made as to why a diversity of perspectives, backgrounds, and interests can improve democracy and the quality of life for all.

But even if we took this positive normative gist for granted, and if we accept the assumption that a certain diversity of backgrounds, traditions, and interests is something desirable for cities and for their politics, it is by no means sure if this type of diversity evolves from the physical presence of different people in the same place (Wessel 2009). More to the point, it is even less clear why the market should provide this type of diversity, given its tendency to concentrate capital and to privilege the already more powerful. Quite to the contrary: the market, instead of bringing strangers together in a public realm, can equally drive them apart and segregate them from one another.

Assuming the superiority of market rule, dominant discourses on diversity have articulated a cosmopolitan and egalitarian fantasy for processes that can indeed work to produce the opposite of such a utopia: spatial fragmentation and urban splintering. An infrastructural perspective, as I suggest it here, helps us to make this final point.

If the liberal position naturalizes social development as an inevitable result of globalized flows, if it assumes a transhistorical perspective of social situations, and if it limits the perspective to one presentist dimension—that of pragmatism and practicability starting from where we are—then infrastructures as an analytical perspective can help us to concretize social practices in the context of processes of uneven development, to broaden the horizon of action both temporally and scale-wise, and to point to political decisions and alternative, more emancipatory trajectories of city-making.

I am therefore proposing to shift the view from the superficial and ambivalent discourse on diversity to the infrastructural materialities

and inequalities that it helps legitimate. Infrastructures are congealed social relations. They are crystallizations and material manifestations of social struggles and political decisions taken in the past that shape social relations in the present. In line with Hillary Angelo and Craig Calhoun (2013), I understand infrastructures as material subsystems that facilitate large-scale social organization. As sunk costs and enabling conditions, they create trade-offs and empower certain social groups and uses over others.

As I have argued, the discourse of urban diversity is so powerful because it absorbs different political positions by making both a neoliberal case for increased productivity and a social-democratic case for cosmopolitan multiculturalism. An infrastructural perspective reveals to us that the market case for diversity is not congruent with the cosmopolitan notion of diversity. Put in different terms, these positions are only reconcilable to a limited degree.

By tracing the congealing of market rule into urban infrastructures, we can point out the discrepancies between the rhetoric of free flow and circulation and the limitations of exchange. Marketization, if not politically controlled, leads to an unequal access to infrastructure and thereby to unequal opportunities. This is precisely what happened in the past four decades in which many different types of infrastructure have been privatized in North Atlantic states. Public transportation, shipping, communication, and energy infrastructures were marketized because procurement through that mechanism was deemed more efficient. But the triumph of the market by no means created a more open or diverse society. Quite the contrary: segregation and limited access has often occurred along racial, ethnic, cultural, and class lines.

As Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin argue in their work on splintering urbanism, affluent social groups have started, after the neoliberal revolution of the late-1970s, to demand 'fiscal equivalence' (Graham and Marvin 2001: 234). The emphasis on freedom of choice in the market place, rather than on more redistributive

local politics and the 'modern public infrastructure ideal' of equal access, has led private firms and local governments to "construct networks and spaces that are customised specifically to the needs of the upper-income social and economic groups who are the target users" (Graham and Marvin 2001: 235). This selective targeting of well-funded customers by private providers, coupled with the ending of infrastructure cross-subsidies, has restricted access to public infrastructure for less well-off residents. In other words, more markets have meant less exchange between different parts of the population, not more.

Examples for this mechanism are many, from the privatization of public spaces to the marketization of the water supply, from tolled private highways to the privatization of streets. This commodification of previously public goods, in turn, yields similar effects: a segmentation of markets, the targeting of valuable customers by private firms under the promise of offering more efficient services at lower prices and greater choice, and the restriction to access based on wealth. Often times, especially in the case of the United States, these poorer populations, underserved by the market, tend to be racial and ethnic minorities and live in areas that are segregated from the more visible parts of the city (Vormann 2015).

In sum, public works, once considered part of the basic rights of social citizenship have become exclusive commodities for specific groups. The market has not served as an engine of diversity but has instead functioned as a driver and amplifier of inequality.⁴

⁴ In outlining the reduction in access and the detachment from public space, grid erosion as described by Albert Pope serves as a palpable symbol of the privatization of formerly public goods in other spheres. Streets, once a symbol of the public sphere, accessible for everyone, have been turned through marketization into exclusive goods with restricted access. Albert Pope's work on the changing urban fabric of North American cities examines the decline of the functionalist urban planning paradigm in more depth and from a slightly different perspective. Pope sees

If we take 'diversity' at face value and see it as a good in itself that freely flows from marketization, as do the dominant discourses, we take it as a starting point rather than the end point of crucial social processes. All historical and larger-scale forces leading to this present full of potential are eclipsed and naturalized. The state of diversity is an end of history shrouding its political past. A look at the infrastructures of urban life helps us to reverse this view. Examples of infrastructural inequality show us that urban diversity should be viewed as a question of class, not of discourse and identity.⁵ Diversity is not the decisive variable of whether a neighborhood is doing well or not. The question is one of economic inequality, not identitarian difference.

Diversity as Cosmopolitanism

Susan Fainstein importantly emphasizes that diversity is just one among other capabilities and that an over-emphasis on diversity distracts our view from other capacities such as equity, growth, and sustainability which stand in a trade-off relationship and are up for political, not technocratic debate (Fainstein 2005). Others, such as Mathias Rodatz, have raised the important point that diversity is sometimes employed by municipal officials as a euphemism for cheap labor in an overall context of sharp and rising inequalities (Rodatz 2012). Yet others draw on research outside urban theory to argue that diversity in physical proximity does not necessarily lead to more tolerant inter-group behavior, but can even have the contrary effect of reinforcing divisions along cultural and ethnic lines (Wessel 2009).

the modernist ideal reflected in the open grid structure of North American cities. What he calls 'grid erosion' (Pope 1996: 94), by contrast, is the creation of 'ladders'—streets that are detached from the grid, and hence from the public, and that serve to link two exclusive terminal points: 'whether the cul-de-sac housing tract, a peripheral slab city, a gutted, skywalked CBD, or an upscale suburban office park, the traditional open urban grid [...] exists in fragmentary form as the remnant of a recognisable order.' (Pope 1996: 58)

⁵ For similar arguments on a more conceptual level see Benn Michaels 2007 and Arapoglou 2012.

In this essay I have sought to complement this emergent, more critical lineage of debates about urban diversity with a further dimension. I argued that diversity is an expression of a particular set of social relations and that a look at urban infrastructures can grant us insights into longer-standing inequalities engrained in space and spatial uses that prevent cities from becoming truly cosmopolitan. The cultural dimension of the term diversity has been eroded and replaced by an economic argument. Under the illusion that diversity could produce both a more cosmopolitan *and* a wealthier city, diversity has become a cipher of the market, shifting all things political to an abstract force of self-diversification.

As such, the concept of diversity can even work to reinforce inequalities. The term operates on a discursive level that forecloses political change by implying the desirability of the status quo. The concept of 'urban diversity' has become part of a legitimation strategy for market rule. Rather than creating public spaces of democratic interaction, increased marketization has led to segregated urbanization patterns and unequal access to public goods.

And yet, redistribution remains at least as important as is recognition. As a window of analysis that integrates social relations on various scales and temporal horizons, an infrastructural perspective can help us see through the normative dimension of diversity discourses, and formulate a broader critique of their implications. These material support structures enable certain social uses over others. Costs and benefits incurred by infrastructures are unevenly distributed and reinforce pre-existing vulnerabilities. A look at infrastructures therefore refines our understanding of the value that a society attributes to the public good and what it deems to be the rights of its (social) citizens.

The critical intervention of this paper has been to decouple the economic from the cultural argument for diversity. Cultural diversity is a defining feature of every city, and its success has little to do with the marketization of the city. From Simmel to Weber, from Arendt to Habermas the interac-

tion of strangers has been identified as a crucial feature of cities, one that can foster democracy and cosmopolitanism. How to deal with diversity economically is another question. It needs a different debate. As long as the emphasis remains on human resources, not human capabilities, though, the cultural argument will remain co-opted by the economic argument.

Instead of underlining the economic importance of diversity, then, why not rethink the desirability of cosmopolitanism and the rights of people in the city, regardless of their national background? Diversity, in a cosmopolitan sense, means more than just an extended labor pool. Instead, it is a chance for these diverse populations to actually have a voice and an impact on the political and social development of the city—and to participate in its public life.

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