

Diversity Affects | Troubling Institutions

Call for Papers for the Annual Conference of the Collaborative Research Center 1171 Affective Societies: Dynamics of Social Coexistence in Mobile Worlds, Freie Universität Berlin.

In cooperation with the Haus der Kulturen der Welt and the Schwules Museum, Berlin.

Keynote by Sara Ahmed

Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin

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How and with what affective ramifications is diversity evoked, realized, or silenced in institutional and organizational settings? Which affects do processes of diversifying institutions arouse in *all* actors involved? And how do these processes trouble or shape particular affective environments and scripts for everyday interactions, practices, and performances within and beyond institutional spaces? How are current debates on, and contestations of, “institutionalizing diversity” grounded in wider processes of globalization and human mobility, post-colonial societal realities, and the digital and technological transformations of everyday institutional and non-institutional life worlds?

“Diversity management” has become a buzzword of institutional change today, although important historical precursors of organizational engagement with anti-discrimination measures and affirmative action policies have been in place since the 1960s. Simultaneously, the institutional quest for diversity has triggered highly emotional and affective reactions from a wide range of heterogenous actors within and across different sociocultural and institutional domains. On the one hand, the fostering of diversity in existing institutional settings – in domains such as culture and art, education and research, government, healthcare, and the media – has evoked hopes and desires for more inclusive organizational environments. Furthermore, new actors have begun to push for the establishment of diverse (infra-)structures in public and institutional spaces. For organizational cultures aiming to reflect “true” social realities through practices of hiring and management, the explicit acknowledgment of categories like age, class, dis/ability, gender, migratory background, race, religion, and sexuality holds an emancipatory appeal. On the other hand, however, critics bemoan that diversity has primarily become an economic asset of neo-liberal and neo-capitalist management practices and marketing strategies that reify cultural difference and identity politics at the expense of acknowl-

edging, and transcending, deep-rooted social inequalities and injustices. Furthermore, populist discourses and actors have increasingly brought institutional diversity practices under attack in their quest to contain cultural multiplicity and policies of inclusion in an interconnected world.

This conference will consider the multiply intertwined processes of *institutionalizing diversity*, on the one hand, and their *affective repercussions within and beyond institutional settings*, on the other. Striving for “diversity” entails multiple “affective lives,” and these lives trouble numerous institutional routines. The work of diversity can thus potentially illuminate transformative, liberating or queer potentials; yet it can also serve to stabilize power relations and existing hierarchies within and beyond institutional space. With these potentials and pitfalls in mind, we raise the following questions: How do institutions convey specific emotional repertoires for the representation and enhancement of their own cultural and social diversity – both for internal and external purposes – and how do these affective registers relate to broader institutional histories of (not) engaging with diversity and difference? How do such positionings correspond to specific affective responses and practices among a wide range of concerned actors within and beyond these institutional spaces? What kinds of frictions and conflicts are elicited by divergent ways of dealing with diversity in the same institutional spaces, and how do affective experiences and articulations of multiple actors expose the “gaps” in such diversity management? In the context of cultural production, how do artworks (texts, performances, films etc.) reflect and enhance specific understandings of diversity in different cultural domains, and how do these works relate to the controversies and attacks that the promotion of “diverse cultural publics” currently faces? How does the mediatization of these processes – as images, sounds, language etc. – mobilize or disguise certain forms of diversity in institutional settings, and what kinds of material and aesthetic arrangements are being created here? How are diverse institutional spaces and their affective modalities regulated and structured through specific modes of governance, and how does the notion of “diversity” itself become an object of affective engagement under these circumstances?

We invite abstract submissions that address these themes and questions from different disciplinary perspectives in the humanities and social sciences and with regard to particular institutional settings and the contexts in which they are embedded. We are open to innovative modes and alternative formats of presentations (lecture performances, creative readings, roundtables, fireside chats and curated dialogues etc.). We also prefer submissions that are based on original research and not yet published or submitted for publication. Please send your abstract of no more than 300 words together with a short bio statement (max. 150 words) as a single pdf file to: diversityaffects2020@gmail.com. The deadline for submitting abstracts

is 6th December, 2019. Full- or part-funding for the travel and accommodation expenses of the selected speakers may be available upon request. Please indicate when submitting your abstract if you would like to avail this option.

Organized by: Hansjörg Dilger, Juliane Gorke, Omar Kasmani, Dominik Mattes, Hans Roth, Matthias Warstat ([CRC Affective Societies: Dynamics of Social Coexistence in Mobile Worlds](#))

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