The Reflexive Diversity Research Programme

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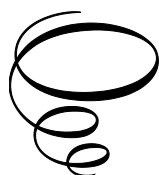
An Introduction

By

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Translated from the original German
by Elena V. Futter-Buck

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The Reflexive Diversity Research Programme: An Introduction

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I have been pondering reflexive diversity research for several years in one way or another. That is why I would like to thank many people and different institutions. They all gave me the opportunity to discuss the issue from different perspectives and to further develop my thoughts on it.

In fact, it all began in 2008 with a visiting professorship on intersectionality at the Department of Political Science at the University of Vienna. There, I discussed the topic of intersectionality and its consequences with doctoral students and colleagues. I would like to thank my doctoral colloquium at the time and particularly my former Viennese colleagues Ulli Brandt, Eva Kreisky, and Birgit Sauer as well as Sieglinde Rosenberger for fascinating discussions.

After this methodological starting shot and a short latency period, I began to look into the subject of diversity more intensively at the University of Göttingen. Here, I found an extraordinarily stimulating environment. I had the opportunity to found the Diversity Research Institute and to advise the University on the development of a diversity strategy. Since 2013, we have been studying processes of diversification and their effects in a diverse team. The aim is to advance research on diversity and processes of diversification on a theoretical and an empirical-practical level, and to contribute both to a theory of diversity and to the creation of a world in which people can be different without fear (Adorno).

Research and consultancy focus especially on the level of organisations. I would like to thank all members of the Institute for stimulating conversations and constructive feedback. Special thanks go to Astrid Biele Mefebue, Elena Buck, Yvonne Franke, Doreen Müller, Miklas Schulz, and Ulrike Thiele-Manjali. I repeatedly discussed aspects of reflexive diversity research with them and learned from their considerations. I would also like to emphasise that the members of the Institute's Scientific Advisory board – Aletta Gräfin von Hardenberg, Morten Huse, Kenan Kolat, Konstantina Vassiliou-Enz, Peer Pasternack, and Eva Welskop-Deffaa – have provided constructive and patient support to my reflections on the reflexive diversity research programme over the years.

In the summer semester of 2014, Gibor Basri – then Vice President of Equity and Inclusion at the University of California, Berkeley – invited me to Berkeley as visiting professor. During this time I had many enlightening

the bibliography, Sumera Syed for formatting assistance, and Elena Buck for coordinating the final stages of the submission process.

I am almost certain that I did not mention all the people to whom I owe thanks. I would like to apologise for this right now. But that is the way it is when people try to reconstruct a story: Above all, they construct new and – at least from their point of view – relatively insightful stories.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In an op-ed in the New York Times that received a lot of attention (at least in the Global North), American political scientist and publicist Mark Lilla (2016) explained Donald Trump's victory against Hillary R. Clinton in the last presidential election as follows: Clinton had simply set too much store by diversity. For, in this view, her political strategy had focused too much on identity politics for the diverse "others". Instead of asking what kept the community together, Clinton had placed her bets on defending the rights of specific, historically disadvantaged groups. This had made it easy for Trump to pose as "saviour" of "normal" America's forgotten centre. Implicitly, the "real" majority declared itself an "actual" minority whose rights must be defended against diverse political (liberation) movements – specifically, the civil rights movement, women's movement, gay and lesbian movement, and transgender and disability rights organisations. Of course, this viewpoint itself has since been publicly criticised and challenged.

This controversy, the arguments of which have become increasingly popular elsewhere, e.g. In Germany, makes it clear how much the issue of diversity[1] has come to the centre of diverse public debates. Indeed, diversity is perceived as normality (de Jong 2014, 2016). Steven Vertovec (2015) even argues we currently live in an "age of diversity". It appears to have become normal – almost everywhere – to make diversity and its consequences an issue of discussion.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the social sciences have been engaging with the topic for quite some time. Due to a globalisation of economic flows accompanied by a transnationalisation of labour markets as well as regionally expanding wars and increasing climate change, they observe a diversification of populations hitherto imagined as homogeneous, especially

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[1] In some contexts, this is referred to as heterogeneity or plurality. I will use those terms synonymously. In the German-speaking world, heterogeneity (mostly, but not always) seems to be the term of choice in the context of (higher) education institutions, diversity in the business context, and either plurality, diversity or (social) inequality are used in politics. This practice, however, does not exist in the same way in international debates.

in cities. In this context, Martina Löw (2014) has declared diversity to be a hallmark of modern societies and cities as the *epitome of diversity* (see Bukow et al. 2011, 7). Steven Vertovec (2007) even speaks of "super-diversity" for large cities or metropolises. For European cities such as Amsterdam, Brussels or London are already – and German cities such as Augsburg, Frankfurt or Stuttgart soon will be – mainly composed of so-called minorities, which themselves are diverse rather than homogeneous (see Schneider, Crul, and Lelie 2015).

The question of *extended cohesion in increasing diversity* (Pries 2013) becomes ever more urgent at the beginning of the 21st century. This, however, is no new question for the social sciences. In fact, the classical authors of sociology were already thinking about it at the end of the 19th century. Max Weber, Emile Durkheim and Georg Simmel, for example, were inspired not least by Herbert Spencer's observations about the increased differentiation of societies and its consequences, as well as intensified processes of industrialisation, urbanisation and rationalisation, to ask how societies could achieve cohesion while traditional ways of life and living conditions were visibly eroding. They focused on different levels of inquiry and each put specific questions at the centre of their reflections: Durkheim made binding forces, which he traced back to similarities or dissimilarities, responsible for social cohesion within societies. He spoke of "mechanic solidarity", which he held to be typical for segmental societies, and "organic solidarity", which he held to be typical for modern differentiated societies (see Durkheim 1930). Weber was not so much interested in structures of social interdependence, but put the binding force of social action at the centre of his considerations (see Weber 1922). Simmel inquired into the different belongings of individuals to different social groups and developed the concept of the "intersection of social circles". Following Simmel, people belong to different social groups, that is, social strata and occupational categories as well as families or religious groups. It is precisely because of these different belongings that processes of communitisation – i.e. processes of inclusion, but also processes of exclusion – come to pass (see Simmel 1908).

According to Ludger Pries, the fact that the question of cohesion in the face of increasing diversity has been and is currently being debated so enthusiastically is due to fundamental changes to the ways in which we imagine diversity. "The transition into modern industrial-capitalist society around the turn of the 19th/20th century was [...] accompanied by an enormous increase in diversity which was imagined mainly as *essentialist and substantial;* in contrast, at the beginning of the 21st century, it is mainly diversity perceived as *constructivist and relational*" (Pries 2013, 14, original

emphasis, own translation). However, Pries is not too sure "which share of the perceived changes can be attributed to *changing perceptions* and which share is due to an intersubjectively examined and 'objectively' stated *perception of change*" (Pries 2013, 13, original emphasis, own translation).[2]

Independently of their respective ontological status and their epistemic evaluation, these perceptions have received new impetus, at the very latest since the so-called "refugee crisis" in the European Union. They are subject to intense debates not only in research, but also in parliaments, businesses and other civil society institutions: For many, it is increasingly urgent to integrate people from "other" cultures, also in view of skill shortages. They ask how best to achieve this. Should the "others" adapt, that is: assimilate, or would it not be better to strive collectively for inclusion? They ask how it is possible to achieve "adequate" representation not only of women, but also of members of underprivileged classes, specific occupational groups and, most of all, of immigrants. Their goal is to increase equity of opportunity in order to enable all to participate actively and adequately in important socio-political decisions. Others however expressly oppose any integration efforts and, from a right-wing populist perspective, insist upon an ethnically homogeneous people (body politic) to which many of them also ascribe a special national character. In particular, some of them fear an impending "islamisation" of what is, in their opinion, the "actually" Christian occident.[3] Some – such as the so-called Identitarians – refer to Alain de Benoist. They fear increasing "unification" and fight for the "preservation of a plurality of pure cultures or ethnies".

These are only some examples of topics that are currently being negotiated and discussed in the journalistic interdiscourse, in different academic special discourses and in everyday elementary discourse. They stand at the centre of reflexive diversity research. Reflexive diversity research, in essence, aims to inquire into the practices of problematising[4] diversity and the empirical-practical practices of diversity work. Its goal is to research the processes of construction, de-construction and re-construction of social practices of differentiation and their consequences. In so doing, reflexive diversity research sees itself as an immanent moment of

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[2] However, what exactly Pries means by "intersubjectively examined" and "objectively stated" remains unclear.

[3] Examples of parties representing such politics are the French "Front National" (FN), the "Alternative für Deutschland" (AfD) in Germany, and "Prawo i Sprawiedliwość" (PiS) in Poland.

[4] The term "practice of problematisation" points to something being made an issue in an empirical-practical way. It signifies neither the (discursive) creation of anything previously non-existent, nor the representation of something pre-existing.

its subject. It attempts, in a normative perspective, to contribute to a world "in which one could be different without fear" (Adorno 2006, 66). Reflexive diversity research, therefore, is not satisfied with pointing out the contingency of societal relationships and self-relations, or with questioning presumed certainties and/or documenting existing social critiques.

From this starting point, reflexive diversity research aims to offer an epistemological as well as method/olog/ical framework for researching diversity, its dimensions and their manifestations. It focuses on the following leading questions:

- What is problematised or "responded to" as diversity, when and why?
- Who problematises diversity, which groups are thus "made" and who resists this, why and how?
- Which concepts are used to capture these differences and, by extension diversity? Which differences are made, in an empirical-practical way, in this process and by whom? How and under which circumstances do differences become commonalities and commonalities differences?
- Which (strategic) consequences are linked to diversity and how do they materialise (if indeed they do materialise)? And how do differences become social inequalities or states of disparity?

In engaging with the abovementioned leading questions, we do not assume that differences, and by extension diversity, are given and could and need "only" be discovered using certain – preferably scientific – methods.

Neither do we assume certain differences or commonalities to be "relevant", "given" or "necessary". Rather, differences – and consequently, possibly the phenomenon of diversity itself – are presumed to be something that emerges primarily from an interplay of different practices and elements. These construction processes however have real *(wirk-lich),* that is, effective (*wirk-sam*) consequences. They can – but of course need not – materialise in one way or another.[5]

The considerations presented thus far are based on an understanding of construction I will call reflexive[6]: This means to analyse both the (observed)

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[5] William and Dorothy Thomas (1928, 572) drew attention to this effect very early. Their much-cited Thomas theorem states: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences". Zanoni et al. (2020, 19) make a similar argument.

[6] Reflexive constructivism is inspired by "post-foundationalist thought" (Marchart 2007) and benefits from the method of critical "ontology of the present" (Foucault 1976). It is also close to operative constructivism as conceptualised by Niklas

processes of construction and their consequences – that is, the constructs, and their consequences for and on (social) processes of construction – and the consequences of the observations (whatever their manner) of these processes of construction and their consequences. Not only does the concept of reflexive constructivism addressed here relate to observing the observers of processes of construction[7], but it also considers the consequences of the observed processes of construction. This means, however, that processes of construction and constructs are no longer viewed as opposites (of whichever kind), but rather as different aggregate states of diverse practices or praxes.[8] In short: No matter the level of observation, a constitutive and, by extension, recursive referential connection between constructions and constructs is to be assumed. This applies not only to the second level of observation (the consequences of the processes of construction), but also to the third level of observation (the inquiry into the processes of construction and their consequences). In this way, the processes of knowledge formation and transformation, and thus the practice of research, come into the focus of research. Consequently, researchers and research become decentred as privileged actors in the production of "true" knowledge and (ought to) become objects of research themselves. In this perspective, there is no escape from the perspective practices of construction of differences and commonalities. This is why precisely these practices should be explained.

I would like to make this abstract movement of thought more concrete by way of an empirical example (cf. Bührmann 2015a; 2017b)[9]: Historical research shows that up to the beginning of the modern era, people assumed a one-gender-system. The order of sexual difference was explained,

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Luhmann: For one thing, both types of constructivism suppose a recursive referential connection between constructs and the act of construing. For another, they suppose that these constructs have no originary essence.

[7] Following Niklas Luhmann, I understand observation as a type of operation that is necessarily bound to differences. Before any realisation becomes possible, one must always decide with the help of which distinction to observe the world.

[8] In contrast to Donna Haraway (1992; 1997), Karen Barad (2003; 2007) and others, I take the concept of reflection, in a wider sense, to address the explication of the implicit and the critical review of consequences rather than focusing on its meaning in optical physics. Therefore, reflexivity is not understood as an operation "that pretends that what develops within it was already there before, if not recognisable" (Trinkaus 2013, 134, own translation). Rather, just such ontological and epistemic relationships are the object of reflection.

[9] Throughout this book, I will use examples from my research, hoping these will help to explain my searching pendulum movement between theoretical reflections and research-practical conceptions.

following medieval humorism[10], by quantitative differences relating to the degrees of temperature in the body. Only since the 18th century have people assumed the female body to be qualitatively and therefore fundamentally different from the male body in its physiological and psychological "nature" (cf. Laqueur 1990; Honegger 1991): To this end, anatomical measurements/surveys, physiological experiments and morphological examinations were conducted. This led to bodies becoming perceptible as either male or female in a biological two-sex model, and to their becoming according objects of knowledge. However, the "male" and "female" properties of the bodies appeared neither suddenly nor abruptly before the eyes of the researchers. Rather, they were "made" through according practices, which included material traces and abstract data, concepts and interpretations. Over time, it became easier to distinguish male from female bodies with increasing precision. That is, gender-typed bodies and the processes of their production are inextricably linked. In essence, these bodies have become what Hans-Jörg Rheinberger (2001) has called "epistemic things": For they leave enough questions unanswered and drive further research endeavours. Additional differences between the bodies were discovered and according causalities determined. In the laboratories of Enlightenment, gender-typed bodies became gender-specific bodies, from which character traits were deduced. While the male represented culture, rationality and activity, the female stood for nature, irrationality and passivity. At the same time, man was considered the embodiment of the normal, while woman was considered to be the other, special and lesser. This knowledge about the "natural" order of the sexes was then disseminated in the bourgeois public sphere through encyclopaedias and journals, but also literary texts (cf. Bührmann 2004). Thus, in the 19th century – in the bourgeoisie at least – a "polarisation of sexual characters" (cf. Hausen 1976) was considered to be naturally given and formed the basis of a corresponding "natural" division of labour. According to this, women are to operate in the family as homemakers, wives and mothers, while men are to operate in public as providers and breadwinners for "their" families. This "natural" division of labour and the related hierarchical order(ing) of the sexes/genders has been critically questioned by gender studies since as early

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[10] Humorism or humoralism refers to a theory of illness that assumes the "correct" mixture of different bodily fluids (humours) to be the precondition for good health and their "incorrect" mixture to be the cause of illness. Four fluids were considered particularly important: yellow bile ("cholera"), black bile ("melancholia"), blood ("sanguis") and phlegm ("phlegma"). Humorism developed in antiquity and was the generally accepted medical conception for explaining bodily processes all the way into the 18th century.

as the late 19th century (see Bührmann 2004). Beyond this, since the late 20th century, the notion of a strict biological two-sex system itself, with its binary logic, has been massively questioned by gender and queer studies, but also and especially by trans*persons. Now the difficult question of the number of dimensions of diversity, their weighting and possible expressions, poses itself not only in research (see Butler 1990). For many bodies no longer seem to fit in the tight corset of the (biological) two-sex model. As a reaction to this, an inter-ministerial working group in the German federal government discussed the practical consequences of introducing an intersexual gender category. Not only men and women participated in the discussions and hearings, but so did trans*persons fighting vehemently for their (physical) self-determination. In the USA – at least at progressive universities such as the University of California, Berkeley – it is good form for forms to offer not only the options "male", "female" and "other", but also "gender queer" and "transgender".[11]

This exemplifies three things: Firstly, it should have become clear that discursive processes of construction and de-construction (can) have tangible material and real (*wirk-liche*) constructive consequences. For the two-sex system initially had its foundation in biology: A binary differentiation was introduced, then reinforced as a corresponding arrangement of differences (*Differenz/an/ordnung*) in everyday interactions, as well as institutionally encoded and fixed. This binary differentiation was subsequently further differentiated based on scientific research until, finally, it currently seems to be collapsing into itself. Secondly, however, it also becomes clear that it is important to contextualise the making of differences – the act of differentiating – and its real (*wirk-liche*) consequences and implications. For without context, it is impossible to know the meaning of differences and/or commonalities. Thirdly, we must understand science/research itself as an important agent of making and observing differences and/or commonalities. By making certain lead differences (*Leitunterscheidungen*) relevant, certain objects of research with certain master dimensions were established and justified. In this way, gender studies presuppose the relevance of gender, research on social inequality presupposes the relevance of class and critical race studies presuppose the importance of ethnicity, nationality and race. Pierre Bourdieu (2010) points out that classification "classifies the

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[11] Cf. Rankin & Associates Consulting 2014. This is why Katja Sabisch (2013, 51, original emphasis, own translation) has spoken of an "*epistemological blurring* of gender as a category of analysis which is confronted with a *methodological restriction/limitation* of empirical gender studies". To be sure, she thinks about this challenge not from the perspective of diversity research, but of gender studies.

classifier".[12] This is why it is essential to systematically explicate and reflect upon one's own research perspective and research style. It is also necessary to include into this reflection the associated normative claims about the interlacing of discursive and non-discursive practices and their possible objectivations and subjectivations.

Reflexive diversity research takes up important insights of both positivist-functionalist and critical-emancipatory diversity research and attempts to develop them further in a constructive way (cf. Zanoni et al. 2020; Bührmann 2019a; Bührmann 2019b).[13] Positivist-functionalist diversity research is especially interested in the economic usefulness of diversity management concepts. Businesses and entrepreneurial utility calculations are at the centre of this kind of research. Studies (mostly quantitative ones) attempt to determine their effects. Studies oriented towards a critical-emancipatory diversity research criticise just such a focus and research not only businesses, but also other types of organisation in their social structural surroundings. They focus on the social consequences of diversity management concepts for individuals, but also for social developments. Both research programmes further differ according to their research focus and the ontological status of the concepts they employ. For example, positivist-functionalist diversity research asks which structural categories are relevant in a given context. In contrast, critical-emancipatory diversity research is mainly interested in the genesis of these dimensions or categories and regards them as process categories. It opposes substantialisations as well as homogenisations and aims at a systematic de-construction of supposedly given substances. However, due to (social-) theoretical considerations, critical-emancipatory diversity research itself posits certain categories, such as race, class and gender and the difference arrangements linked to them, as always relevant – if perhaps not always present.

Others suggest a de-centring of this triad of race, class and gender and demand to first research which dimensions of diversity are made relevant in which context by means of which power relations. Reflexive diversity research takes up this thought. It uses the two research programmes not to

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[12] Michel Foucault already drew attention to the relevance of the question of what is made relevant in his "Order of Things" (1970), citing the example of the scientific special discourses of biology, economy and social sciences.
[13] These research programmes initially formed in relation to how organisations deal with diversity. This is why organisations are in focus here. The appellations used to differentiate the research programmes vary. Here, I will focus first in an ontological perspective on the phenomenon of diversity and its dimensions, in an epistemological perspective on the criterion of critique and in a thematic perspective on the criterion of the primary research interest.

bring them into a hierarchical relation or to combine them in an eclectic way, but in order to illuminate their blind spots.[14] It thus attempts to transform the oppositions between the two research programmes, thus far perceived as dualistic, in a dialectical perspective. In the spirit of reflexive constructivism explained above, it neither ontologically presupposes a positively given diversity or normality, nor does it limit itself to de- or reconstructing the processes of construction of diversity and its dimensions (and their manifestations). Thematically, it researches not only the ways in which diversity management or diversity policy concepts work, their implementation and effects. Rather, it regards these explicit ways of responding to diversity as forms of social differentiation and openly asks for the reasons given for problematising and "dealing with" diversity at different levels. As well as social structures, cultural representations and social interactions, the different ways in which differentiations materialise and become institutionalised or organised are taken into view. Finally, reflexive diversity research is interested in the intended and unintended effects of its studies.[15] Riding a "second wave of critique" (Metcalfe and Woodhams 2012, 78), it draws on performance theoretical considerations of Patrizia Zanoni et al. (2010) and calls for more "performative critical diversity studies" (Zanoni et al. 2010, 19). These should however not only focus "on examining and developing practices and interventions reflecting an affirmative, engaged and pragmatic ethos on diversity" (ibid.), but also conceptualise research itself as performative practice and therefore, in a reflexive sense, turn it into an object of research. So not only the *What* of research (what is researched), but also the *How* of research (how is the researching done?) and its consequences are of interest.

Structure of the introduction

How exactly this transformation could or can take shape in theory and practice – that is the question this introduction to reflexive diversity research deals with.

Following this introduction, chapter 2 introduces essential characteristics of the research programme of reflexive diversity research at a theoretical level: first the research perspective (chapter 2.1), then the research style (chapter 2.2). The considerations on research perspective depart from a post-foundationalist stance. Thus, reflexive diversity research opposes the

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[14] Renate Martinsen (2013, 70) speaks of "polycontextural theoretical goings-on" (own translation).
[15] Judith K. Pringle and Glenda Strachan (2015) recently developed a similar thought; however, they did not spell it out.

idea of starting from superordinate principles, natural laws or metaphysically grounded realities that are, on principle, exempt from all possible questioning and therefore change (see, for example, Marchart 2010). In the context of such an "organized skepticism" (Merton 1973), we search not for *final* grounds, but rather for *good* reasons for certain positions. Attempts at justification must, therefore, always be understood as provisional.[16] The epistemological foundation of reflexive diversity research (chapter 2.1.1) is the "critical ontology" of the present (cf. Foucault 1997). Its defining characteristic is that it problematises the present with regard to its historical conditions of possibilities. It surmises that phenomena – or the imaginations of and about phenomena – form in specific, historically concrete complexes of power-knowledge. Diversity is therefore understood as an effect of dispositive interactions of discursive and non-discursive practices and elements as well as their real (*wirk-lich*) consequences. It proves to be a materially existing actualisation of different practices or praxes of differentiation. Setting out from here, the starting point of reflexive diversity research lies "deeper", if you will, than that of both positivist-functionalist and critical-emancipatory diversity research programmes: It asks about the discursive and non-discursive ways of problematising and responding to diversity rather than assuming it is given. At the same time, it observes its real (*wirk-liche*) consequences. In the sense of reflexive constructivism, the inquiry into these ways of problematising and responding to diversity itself becomes something to investigate. Thus, the view is broader. Following these considerations, chapter 2.2.2 will set forth central conceptual and theoretical foundations of reflexive diversity research. On the one hand, there follows an archaeological sketch of talking about diversity. On the other hand, because diversity and the aforementioned different understandings of diversity have been and continue to be generated in and by dispositifs, a genealogical classification is made. Here, the question of the normalisation of diversity (as mentioned above) is at the centre. It is possible to show that since Enlightenment, processes of othering and normalising[17] are closely linked in the societies of the Global North. In

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[16] This also applies to the following considerations on the defining elements of reflexive diversity research. In this sense, I am not going to introduce any kind of final form (*Gestalt*) of reflexive diversity research, but the current state of well-justifiable considerations.

[17] Gayatri Spivak originally coined the term "othering" in order to show how hegemonic (discursive) practices produce (excluded) Others (Spivak 1985). Othering is understood as a process of rendering one's own self-image positive by classifying persons with other properties which are perceived as relevant as

the perspective of normalism theory (see Link 1996), it is possible to differentiate different phases of problematising and responding to diversity. Chapter 2.2 then deals with the reflexive diversity research style. First, intersectionality is presented as "fitting" heuristics of reflexive diversity research (chapter 2.2.1). For such an intersectional perspective makes it possible to research different dimensions of diversity and their interplay without presuming the relevance of certain dimensions and by extension specific configurations of diversity. A multi-method research design that examines different levels of inquiry and their interplay is particularly suited to researching these diverse configurations (chapter 2.2.2). Finally, the systematic reflection of every researcher's own research practice is at the focus (chapter 2.2.3). If we assume that research always implies preconceptions about the quality of the research subject and the possibilities for researching it as well as a corresponding ethical positioning of the researchers (who accord value to it), the following questions are particularly important:

- The position of the researcher in the field (ethical-positional question),
- The effects of the chosen research methods (epistemological question) and
- The criteria of critique and their ontological premises (ontological question).

Chapter 3 presents these characteristics of reflexive diversity research, which I have presented theoretically, by way of an empirical-practical case study. This case study has at its centre the explicit ways of responding to diversity at the aforementioned UC Berkeley. UC Berkeley is particularly interesting in this context for several reasons: Here, central initiatives for the preservation and the promotion of diversity have their starting point. In the 1960s, UC Berkeley was the starting point for many new social movements that fought not only for the reduction of social inequality, but also for equal rights as so-called others. They cared and care about the appreciative recognition of diversity. It comes as no big surprise, therefore, that UC Berkeley was one of the first large and renowned US-American universities to make an explicit effort to deal with diversity and developed a diversity strategy in 2007. The case study departs from the state of research on ways of explicitly responding to diversity in organisations (chapter 3.1). This focuses mainly on typical forms of responding to

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"different" and thus "foreign". Thus, a distancing takes place by way of a deliberate differentiation from Others. This also engenders processes of normalisation.

diversity. There follows an outline of the epistemological and conceptual foundations of the case study, followed by an explanation of the methodological-methodical approach (chapter 3.2). Then the central contours of UC Berkeley are outlined in order to then describe the findings and discuss them against the background of the current state of research. This includes a critical reflection of my own position in the field, the effects of the methods and concepts employed and the explication of my ontological presuppositions (chapter 3.3). One central result of this case study is the description of a new type of dealing explicitly with diversity. This "inclusive and transformative" type pursues a double goal: For UC Berkeley to become an inclusive organisation and, what is more, to contribute to diversification in the region. The case study serves as an exemplary sketch in order to clarify the contours of reflexive diversity research: Essential theoretical considerations and methodological elements of the research programme are applied; at the same time, further research perspectives are addressed. Finally, the results are discussed and perspectives for further research are identified (chapter 3.4).

The structure of the introduction, which I have sketched out here, may give rise to the impression that I first undertook theoretical reflections that I then applied practically. This impression is false! Rather, this is itself a reflexive process and therefore, in my view, one that is necessarily always uncompleted/unfinished. Repeatedly, in my research practice, I have searched for theoretical solutions starting from research practical challenges and, conversely, for research practical solutions to theoretical challenges. Moreover, for as long as I will study the topic of diversity, my reflections on a reflexive diversity research will – hopefully, I should add – continue to develop. This is why, in chapter 4, I draw a summarising conclusion in which I recapitulate the central determinants of reflexive diversity research and discuss further research perspectives. However, with a view to my reflexive and therefore always unfinished research practice, this can be "only" an interim conclusion, which – hopefully – offers not only irritations, but also heuristics for a further research into diverse presents.

CHAPTER 2

THE REFLEXIVE DIVERSITY RESEARCH PROGRAMME (THEORETICAL EXPLICATION)

The following chapter will present the reflexive diversity research programme at a theoretical level. In a first step, it focuses on main determinants of the reflexive diversity research perspective (chapter 2.1.). Afterwards, the reflexive diversity research style (chapter 2.2.) will be explained.

2.1 The reflexive diversity research perspective

As mentioned in the introduction, reflexive diversity research adopts a decidedly post-foundationalist stance. It therefore opposes those positions "which assume that society and/or politics are 'grounded on principles that are (1) un-deniable and immune to revision and (2) located outside society and politics' (Herzog 1985, 20)" (Marchart 2007, 11). In the first instance, cosmologies appear to be ideal types of such foundationalist thought: They assume humans, along with their environments and the phenomena included therein, to be part of a natural – and therefore immutable – divine order. A natural world order is presumed, irrespective of who or what created it. In this perspective, humans were "endowed" with specific skills and capabilities according to their social and ethnic background, their gender and often also their religious affiliation. This thinking has been massively challenged, since Enlightenment at the latest. Nevertheless, it having become impossible to invoke a divine order of whatever kind, repeated attempts have been made to find scientifically grounded – and often monistically structured – final grounds for such arrangements of differences.[18] In "Modernity and the Holocaust", Zygmunt Bauman comments on this development – perhaps somewhat too – sceptically:

> "First, with the Enlightenment came the enthronement of the new deity, that of Nature, together with the legitimation of science as its only orthodox cult,

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[18] I purposely do not speak of invention here, as the proponents of foundationalist positions at least seem to believe in their position.

and of scientists as its prophets and priests. Everything, in principle, had been opened up to objective inquiry; everything could, in principle, be known—reliably and truly. Truth, goodness and beauty, that which is and that which ought to be, had all become legitimate objects of systematic, precise observation. In turn, they could legitimize themselves only through objective knowledge which would result from such observation" (Bauman 1989, 68).

Thus, not only were observed differences in the characteristics of bodies made responsible for a hierarchical order of sexes/genders in the laboratories of Enlightenment in the 18th and 19th centuries, or the "racial" structure of the population for societal developments in biologically deterministic genetics, but certain Marxist approaches ultimately also stood for economic determinism. Admittedly, foundationalist and monistically inspired approaches are currently enjoying a certain (renewed) popularity. For example, orthodox neoliberalism assumes supposedly unchangeable market laws, and some branches of genetics search for genes that can ultimately be made responsible for certain character traits or behaviours.[19]

It is these positions and positionings that post-foundationalist thinking opposes. It radically questions (metaphysical) arguments of a (monistic) final ground. However, unlike relativist or anti-foundationalist approaches, "it does not negate the necessity of (partial) grounds outright. Rather, it works on the assumption of the absence of a *final*, not of *any* ground" (Marchart 2010, 16, original emphasis, own translation). Accordingly, post-foundationalism is not to say that "anything goes". It is, however, to understand attempts at grounding as being always only provisional. It is not about the search for final grounds, but for "good" grounds. Even with such "good" grounds, it is important to always disclose them and ask why, for whom and in which case they are to be considered "good". "Good" grounds are therefore always provisional and always up for discussion.[20]

Of course, such a post-foundationalist stance also informs the following considerations on reflexive diversity research. It is always in a state of development: "work in progress" – or better: the provisional – is its programme. Nevertheless, it builds on certain "good", while "contingent foundations" (Butler 1992). The post-foundationalist "certainty about the dissolution of certainty" (Marchart 2007, 86), the certainty that "every

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[19] Since the beginning of the 21st century, they are being increasingly often and successfully adopted by right-wing conservative circles in political debates in Europe and the USA.
[20] In the sense of this post-foundationalist attitude and with a view to a reflexive constructivism, it is therefore necessary to systematically reflect on research itself (see also chapter 2.2.3.).

attempt at grounding will ultimately fail" (Marchart 2007, 157), therefore also applies to reflexive diversity research. This – if you will: ontological – difference between possible and provisional groundings is at its epistemological core. It uses the "critical ontology" of the present (cf. Foucault 1976; 1979; 1980; 1998)[21] as a "method" for systematically inquiring into conditions of possibility. Reflexive diversity research therefore does not itself presuppose a certain ontological understanding.

2.1.1. Epistemological foundations

Departing from the "critical ontology" of the present, diversity is not given, but is produced through specific practices in historically concrete power-knowledge complexes. This is no mere linguistic idealism which abstracts from societal relations of power and domination. Neither is it a pure materialism, in which materiality is conceptualised only as passive objectivity rather than also potentially powerful.[22] Rather, it assumes that humans make their own history and their own conceptions – in this case, of diversity – "but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past" (Marx [1869] 2011, 103). In these historically-concrete "circumstances" (ibid.), societal arrangements of differences form and transform by introducing differentiations that make events tangible and intelligible as societal reality. This occurs independently of their respective peculiarities, which are produced by processes of inclusion and exclusion through societal arrangements. Arrangements of

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[21] Michel Foucault illustrated and plausibilised his reflections on the "critical ontology" of the present by the example of the subjectivation of the self as a modern subject (cf. 1979; 1976b; 1998; 1980). He shows that the phenomenon of the modern subject first emerged in discourses of Enlightenment and that it was subsequently attempted – very successfully, it must be said – to make this form of subjectivation of the self a hegemonic ideal by way of various non-discursive practices and with the help of various objects. As I hinted at in the introduction, bodies were classified according not only to certain classes and races, but also genders, in the context of the dispositif of sexuality. In the course of the twentieth century, this ideal was to serve as orientation no longer only for bourgeois men, but also everyone else – regardless not only of gendered and religious affiliations, but also of social and ethnic background.

[22] In terms of current neo-materialist approaches, this is not only about so-called artefacts' own logics, but also, for example, about such urgent and current challenges as impending climate change, as well as epidemics which can be sometimes destructive and often uncontrollable.

differences thus gain relevance through the iterative and "happy" or "successful" repetition of differentiation in arrangements of difference.

Reflexive diversity research aims to study whether diversity is problematised at a certain historically-concrete point (in time) and amidst manifold and multi-layered events – and if so, what is problematised as diversity, and through which practices these conceptions of diversity as a phenomenon are formed and transformed. Reflexive diversity research itself, therefore, has no conception of what diversity "really" is in an ontological sense and whether – and if so, which – dimensions – in whichever manifestation – "really" belong to it or not. In this sense, it is impossible to consider "all" dimensions of diversity. Where certain dimensions are "forgotten", this is also interesting, as such a perspective also refers to a certain conception of what diversity is given. It is precisely this conception of diversity, then, that would be explored: when it appears, under what circumstances, who stands for it and who resists it and, of course, what consequences could arise for whom.

The concept of dispositif[23] is particularly well suited for studying the processes of formation and transformation of such modes of problematisation and their material consequences, also in the form of arrangements of difference. This concept makes it possible to inquire into the empirical-practical transformation processes of social phenomena as well as the historically-concrete conditions of their formation. The focus is on the interplay between rationalities, technologies and subjectivated as well as objectivated materialisations.[24] Unlike in positivist-functionalist diversity research programmes, diversity is not only regarded as "real" (*wirk-lich*), but also as "made". Unlike in critical-emancipatory research programmes, diversity is not only regarded as "made", but also as "real" (*wirk-lich*). The phenomenon "diversity" and conceptions thereof are therefore understood to be effects of dispositifs. In and through these dispositifs, differentiations are carried out and differences made. Thus, conceptions of diversity are developed, which then materialise (or not).[25]

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[23] As Matti Peltonen writes: "In English translations of Foucault's works *dispositif* is translated using various terms (apparatus, deployment, construct, alignment, positivities, etc.) which together make the central importance of the concept unnecessarily difficult to detect" (Peltonen 2004, 206, original emphasis). Throughout this volume, I will use "dispositif" as a noun and "dispositive" as an adjective.
[24] With the transcendence of the merely discursive addressed here, dispositif analysis shows itself to be inspired by the so-called *material turn*. For materialisation is not only understood as an effect of discursive practices.
[25] Reflexive diversity research thus ties in with the considerations of Mats Alvesson, Cynthia Hardy und Bill Harley (2008). However, reflexive diversity research is not

Diversity as effect of dispositive practices[26]

With Foucault (1980, 194), a dispositif can be defined as the interplay of various discursive as well as non-discursive practices and different elements – such as "discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid[27]." In analysing dispositive interplays, the elements and practices[28] shall be captured both in their conditionality and in their own respective effectiveness. The main function of dispositifs is to react to an existing or emerging societal problem – i.e., a societal problem that has been problematised and is therefore "true", in the sense of having been made "perceptible" (see Foucault 1980, 195ff.). Foucault characterised the functionality of dispositifs as essentially productive: In addition to (new) institutions or technical and social innovations and their organisational materialisations (for example, schools and higher education institutions, health care institutions, hospitals, prisons or businesses), in the midst of the respective historically-concrete conditions, dispositifs produce differences – for example with regard to certain (groups of) persons (subjectivations) or certain things (objectivations).

While discourse analyses aim to dis-cover the conditions and rules of specific discursive practices through and beyond utterances and to draw conclusions from there about the preconditions and effects of the thus processed "true knowledge" (see, for example, Wetherell 2001), dispositif analyses take the formations of statements in their spatial-temporal situation as their analytical starting point. This research perspective centres on the power-relevant connection between arrangements of knowledge and social praxis or social existence. However, the concept of dispositif devotes itself not only to the analysis of the "non-discursive", the materialised, the

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only interested in reflective practices aimed at or based on texts; rather, it is also interested in non-discursive practices and their possible material effects.

[26] The following remarks are similar to the ones expanded upon in Bührmann and Schneider 2012.

[27] The translators of the conversation quoted here chose "apparatus" as translation for the French "dispositif". However, as mentioned above, "dispositif" has been chosen for this volume.

[28] Foucault has been criticised on several occasions for only considering practices by and limited to people, and also for restricting the productivity of power relations to the social sphere (cf. for example Barad 2003; 2007). Based on this, a post-humanist concept of practice or performativity is then called for. I do not share this criticism. Rather, I think that Foucault left the opportunity open in many places to include post-humanist practices and corresponding power effects. Admittedly, he did not spell out this perspective.

tangible or the act as such. Rather, in a way that ultimately complements the discourse-analytical gaze, it is directed at the analysis of what, from discursively mediated orders of knowledge, has real (*wirk-lich*), i.e. effective (*wirk-sam* – and therefore "powerful"!) effects, insofar as it has an effect on the actions of actors in its collective and individual mediation and in the self- and world-relation of those actors. This enables it to retroact on those orders of knowledge. The empirical fields of research can accordingly be as varied as institutionalised or organisational action[29], "simple" everyday actions, the processing of materialities and/or their effects, the handling of things, objects as well as buildings, feelings and, of course, also such phenomena as are usually attributed to the area of nature. For it is not the research objects that constitute and form the research perspective, but vice versa: The respective concept of dispositif shapes the research perspective.[30]

Defining relations in dispositif theory

Based on these brief theoretical considerations, with regard to the phenomenon of diversity and corresponding conceptions of it, the main focus is on defining the following four relationships in order to illuminate the different relationships between discursive and non-discursive practices, objectivations and subjectivations and the social contextualisation of all these aspects:

(1) How do discursive practices – e.g. in the form of scientific specialist discourse, journalistic interdiscourse and/or everyday elementary discourse – relate to non-discursive (everyday) practices? For example: what is considered as diverse in social science specialist discourses? Which dimensions of diversity are considered relevant? How is this justified and (how) do these modes of problematisation manifest themselves in everyday life?

(2) How do discursive practices, non-discursive practices, symbolic and material objectivations and subjectivations relate to one another? Based on what practices, for example, are which groups of persons (or materialities) distinguished from one another, within the framework of which arrangements of difference? Do certain "things", such as a specific body shape or a specific (skin) colour,

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[29] See, for example, Raffnsøe, Gudmand-Høyer, and Thaning 2016.

[30] In this respect, the concept of dispositif could be understood as directed – and thus "established" – assemblage, i.e. as a situational emergence of dispositions from a stream of free singularities (cf. Deleuze and Guattari 1992).