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Radical Diversity and De-integration: Towards a Political and Artistic Project

The concept of "integration" is all the rage in public discourse. There's no party manifesto where it doesn't occupy a central position, and there's no discussion about migrants in the media where it isn't used as a shorthand for the problem of "people who aren't like us". But what exactly does integration mean? And how about inclusion? And could the concepts of radical diversity and de-integration herald a paradigm shift?

Integration as a shorthand for the problem of "people who aren't like us"

The German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) defines integration as "a long-term process" whose "aim is to include everyone in society who lives in Germany on a permanent and legal basis"; although "immigrants should have the opportunity to participate fully in all areas of society on an equal standing", it is "their responsibility [...] to learn German and to respect and abide by the constitution and its laws".¹ Alongside this normative definition, there's also the more empirically based definition given by the German Immigration Council (Zuwanderungsrat), which also formed the basis for a study on schoolbooks and Germany's society of immigration published by the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration in 2015. According to this definition, integration is

“measurable participation by people with or without an immigration background in key areas of life in society, such as early childhood education, school education, professional training, labour market access, participation in legal, social security and protection systems and (status-dependent) political participation”.²

This empirical definition of integration attempts to measure the degree of social participation, with more integration equated with more participation.

Today's discourses of integration are based on assumptions about who exactly has to integrate into what.

Hence, a distinction between "us" and "you", between "natives" and "foreigners", is integral to demands for integration. Mechanisms of othering transform people into "people who aren't like us", regarded as something negative. Rather than integration being conceived as a "social policy for

everyone",³ as Klaus Bade and Jochen Oltmer propose, it instead functions as a demand imposed on people labelled as "immigrants". But if people whose parents come from Israel, Turkey or Senegal are not recognised as Germans in the same way as people whose parents were born in Germany, this reveals a failure to embrace diversity and challenge existing power relations. Accordingly, the debate about integration is symptomatic of Germany's deficiencies as a society of immigration.

Just like *Leitkultur* (core or primary culture), a term that was coined in Germany around the turn of the millennium and adopted by conservative and hard-right politicians,⁴ the integration paradigm is based on a set of implicitly nationalist expectations placed on people who are othered as "foreigners", "asylum seekers", "immigrants" or "refugees". The social scientist Birgit Rommelspacher describes these expectations in terms of a *Dominanzkultur* (dominance culture), a category encompassing various forms of exclusion and discrimination.⁵ The *Dominanzkultur* does not necessarily represent a majority, but is an expression of existing power relations and structures of dominance. In the discourse of integration, it sets the boundaries for the discursive and material participation of marginalised groups. These groups' participation in the public realm and societal resources is structured by labels, expectations and specific demands, and social recognition and material resources are allocated unequally. It is the *Dominanzkultur* that gets to decide what counts as successful integration, just as it gets to define the image of a "good Jew" - a notion shaped by German processes of remembrance which dictate how Jews are permitted to think and act in "post-National Socialist" German society.⁶ Hence, the discourse of integration also defines the discursive and political positions available to anyone attempting to construct an identity as a "Muslim", "post-migrant", "Jew", etc. In the case of Jews, the demands imposed by this discourse are expressed in a dynamic of reconciliation, admonition and exoneration. They are only granted social and material recognition if they take the circuitous route through this "theatre of memory".⁷

From integration paradigm to inclusion paradigm

Critiques of the integration paradigm are nothing new. In Germany, they can be traced back to the 1970s backlash against the so-called *Ausländerpädagogik* (pedagogy for foreigners), a deficit-based educational approach that was intended to integrate guest workers and, especially, their children into German society. In the 1980s, it was replaced by intercultural pedagogy and intercultural social work. These were "resource-based" approaches, which means they start out from learners' or clients' existing resources. A distinction between integration and inclusion eventually emerged from these approaches in the 2000s, which in turn led to finer distinctions between concepts such as anti-racist pedagogy⁸ and anti-discrimination approaches.⁹ While integration is about people *assimilating* into society and

giving up their distinctive *way of being*, inclusion is about involving previously excluded groups in (sub-)systems such as business, politics, teaching, academia and education,¹⁰ or (drawing on the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu) achieving full social participation and solidarity.¹¹ Roughly speaking, in the context of this discourse the integration paradigm is based on the idea of a dominant society into which others are (or can be) integrated, whereas the aim of inclusion is to expand the range of groups that society strives to include.

However, despite their differing premises and perspectives, the two paradigms are united by the lack of *radicalism*: they confine themselves to merely expanding participation in already-existing structures, instead of forging a path to radical diversity.

A paradigm shift: radical diversity

The notion of radical diversity¹² was developed in connection with Leah Carola Czollek, Gudrun Perko and Heike Weinbach's concept of "social justice and diversity", an educational approach that is rooted in anti-discrimination principles.¹³ The approach is characterised by a pluralistic way of thinking that holds up the model of radical diversity as an alternative to (at least implicitly) centralist conceptions of society. "Radical diversity" refers to

"a social phenomenon and practice concerned with transforming homogeneous institutions and practices into plurality, diversity, heterogeneity [...]. This would make diversity itself mainstream."¹⁴

Society is characterised by structural discrimination, defined as the interweaving of individual, institutional and cultural practices of exploitation, exclusion, violence, marginalisation and/or cultural imperialism. As a result, certain groups are subject to structural discrimination based on various often-intersecting categories or labels (e.g. anti-Semitism, homophobia, transphobia, ageism, ableism, racism, anti-immigrantism, classism, sexism). The approach of "social justice and diversity" is based on the recognition that *every* person can be socially privileged *and* discriminated against in a multitude of ways, which means that a simple model with those who discriminate on the one side and those who are discriminated against on the other would fail to do justice to the full complexity of structures of power and control. Radical diversity emerges where we develop a sense for all these varied forms of discrimination and situatedness, and where we are open to the possibility that we do not yet have terms and concepts for all these forms. This openness in turn forms the basis for alliances and for the state that Perko and Czollek call "being-allied" (*Verbündet-Sein*): a condition "of political friendship where others' concerns are our own, and that is not conditional on an identitarian We or features based on a logic of identity".¹⁵ The state of being-allied is aimed at creating new alliances based on recognition of the

radical diversity of possible social (self-)positionings and the associated demands for how people want to be and live. Of course, we are speaking of radical diversity in the context of referential frameworks such as the UN Convention on Human Rights and the politics of recognition.

The big challenge is not to lose sight of the fact that we are dealing here with concrete *structures and relations of power*. Hence, by "diversity" we do not merely mean "(cultural) variety". As Hannah Arendt remarked, "If one is attacked as a Jew, one must defend oneself as a Jew."¹⁶ The concept of radical diversity recognises that self-definition is possible only by addressing the disempowering structures, labels and economic inequalities that always exist in advance of us. Despite this, or precisely because of it, it is crucial that we take radical diversity as our starting point: at the level of representation, as perception and recognition of diverse positionings that never coalesce into schemas of "We", "You" and "They"; at the level of action, as the shared practices of people who do not have to give up their way of being in order to form a political perspective;¹⁷ at the level of alliances, as a state of being-allied that, by going beyond the celebration of different "identities" and the "needs" that supposedly follow from them, is able to tackle problematic power structures.

De-integration and radical diversity

De-integration is an attempt to inject the idea of radical diversity into societal and aesthetic discourses too. The concept of de-integration was unveiled at the three-day conference *Desintegration. Ein Kongress zeitgenössischer jüdischer Positionen* (De-integration: A Congress on Contemporary Jewish Positions), which ran from 6 to 8 May 2016.¹⁸ Since the conference, a series of de-integrative intervention strategies have been trialled and refined at Berlin's Maxim Gorki Theatre. These experiments, carried out under the direction of Max Czollek and Sasha Marianna Salzmann's curatorial team, have attempted to critique and resituate the ways that Jews are positioned in societal discourse. The artists began by exploring the positioning of Jews in German society, before connecting this positioning with other identity categories in order to reveal intersections. De-integration is significant outside the Jewish context too, as shown by the fact that it was chosen as the theme for the 3. *Berliner Herbstsalon* (Third Berlin Autumn Salon), which will be held at the Maxim Gorki Theatre in November 2017 in conjunction with the *Radical Jewish Cultural Days* (which are also being curated by Czollek and Salzmann).

The aim of de-integration is to turn the utopia of radical diversity into concrete reality. It also responds to the climate of fear that currently dominates politics by formulating an attitude of strength and the initiative to take action. And by presenting the mentality of radical diversity as a model for how we can live together in society, it opposes conceptions of *Leitkultur* and of integration into

or inclusion in a German *Dominanzkultur*. In the specific case of Jewish de-integration, it represents a strategy for reflecting on Jewish identity constructions in the German-Jewish theatre of memory. Hence, de-integration can be understood as a kind of "hinge" that facilitates the transition from the mindset of integration and inclusion to the mindset of radical diversity. It is based on the recognition that social participation is only possible on the basis of (at least partial) self-definition.

Accordingly, it is only by thinking about Jewishness outside *German* labels and expectations that the marginalisation of Jewish positions becomes clear.¹⁹ The adjective "German" is shorthand for the invisible normativity of the post-National Socialist *Dominanzkultur* that structures the theatre of memory, and hence for practices of labelling that situate "Jews" as bystanders in a German discourse of remembrance. These expectations of Jews' roles largely exclude Jewish perspectives and experiences in their diversity and in their (non-)identity with the German gaze - perspectives and experiences that cannot be formulated within the theatre of memory's field of coordinates. A de-integrative intervention in the spirit of radical diversity reveals that marginalised positions constitute the "outside" against which German identity and society can be defined in debates about integration or *Leitkultur*: "If we're your Jews, then you're our potatoes."²⁰

In order to disrupt this dynamic, it is necessary to rethink ingrained patterns of stimulus and response that marginalised groups have internalised too, and to seek out new alliances. Accordingly, underlying de-integration is a recognition that these groups can only achieve an autonomous self-definition by reflecting on the ways in which they are instrumentalised by, and complicit with, the labels of the *Dominanzkultur*. In the Jewish context, this means adopting a critical stance towards processes of public recognition and their influence on the self-image of individual Jews and the Jewish community as a whole.²¹ Only this kind of self-reflection can enable the exploration of difference required for an emphatic concept of radical diversity as a lived practice. To achieve this, we need to transform our political and discursive attitudes (at the levels of art, scholarship and everyday life). Theatre, literature, the visual arts and music can all play a key supporting role in helping to further refine the societal discourses that are already being imagined and implemented today through the approach of "social justice and diversity".

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¹ This definition comes from the BAMF glossary.
<http://www.bamf.de/EN/Service/Left/Glossary/function/glossar.html?nn=1449076&lv2=5832434&lv3=1504366> (accessed on 27 October 2017).

² Klaus J. Bade and Jochen Oltmer (2004) *Normalfall Migration: Deutschland im 20. und frühen 21. Jahrhundert* (Bonn: bpb), cited in Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration (ed.) (2015) *Schulbuchstudie Migration und Integration* (Berlin: Selbstverlag): p. 11.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ The *Leitkultur* debate was rekindled on 2 May 2017 when Thomas de Maizière, German minister of the interior, presented his ten-point plan on *Leitkultur* in *Bild am Sonntag* (cf. "'Wir sind nicht Burka': De Maizières Thesen zur Leitkultur", in *Bild*, 2 May 2017, <http://www.bild.de/news/aktuelles/news/wir-sind-nicht-burka-de-maizieres-thesen-51560496.bild.html> (accessed on 9 June 2017)); for a summary in English, see Lizzie Dearden (2017) "'We are not burqa': German government sets out 10-point plan to define national identity", in *The Independent*, 2 May 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/burqa-germany-government-10-point-plan-national-identity-define-culture-open-society-show-face-a7713406.html> (accessed on 27 October 2017)). Three of the editors of *Jalta* responded in *taz* (cf. Lea Wohl von Haselberg, Max Czollek and Hannah Peaceman (2017) "Gegen die deutsche Einheit", in *taz*, 9 May 2017, <https://www.taz.de/!5403929/> (accessed on 9 June 2017)).

⁵ Cf. Birgit Rommelspacher (1995) *Dominanzkultur* (Berlin: Orlanda).

⁶ Cf. Astrid Messerschmidt (2008) "Postkoloniale Erinnerungsprozesse in einer postnationalsozialistischen Gesellschaft: Vom Umgang mit Rassismus und Antisemitismus", in *Peripherie - Zeitschrift für Politik und Ökonomie in der Dritten Welt* 28: 109-110, pp. 42-60.

⁷ Y. Michal Bodemann (1996) *Gedächtnistheater: Die jüdische Gemeinschaft und ihre deutsche Erfindung* (Hamburg: Rotbuch).

⁸ Cf. Paul Mecheril (2004) *Einführung in die Migrationspädagogik* (Weinheim and Basel: Beltz Juventa).

⁹ Cf. Leah Carola Czollek, Gudrun Perko and Heike Weinbach (2012) *Praxishandbuch Social Justice und Diversity: Theorien, Training, Methoden, Übungen* (Weinheim and Basel: Beltz Juventa); Gudrun Perko (2017) "Social Justice im Zeichen von Diversity, Pluralität und Perspektivenvielfalt: Philosophische Grundlagen für eine *diskriminierungskritische* Soziale Arbeit", in Gudrun Perko (ed.) *Philosophie in der Sozialen Arbeit* (Weinheim and Basel: Beltz Juventa), pp. 48-70.

¹⁰ Cf. Niklas Luhmann (1997) *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft*, 2 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp).

¹¹ Cf. Rudolf Stichweh (2005) *Inklusion und Exklusion: Studien zur Gesellschaftstheorie* (Bielefeld: Transcript); Rudolf Stichweh and Paul Windolf (eds) (2009) *Inklusion und Exklusion: Analysen zur Sozialstruktur und sozialen Ungleichheit* (Wiesbaden: VS).

¹² Cf. Leah Carola Czollek and Gudrun Perko (2007) "Diversity in außerökonomischen Kontexten: Bedingungen und Möglichkeiten seiner Umsetzung", in Anne Broden and Paul Mecheril (eds) *Re-Präsentationen: Dynamiken der Migrationsgesellschaft* (Oldenburg: IDA), pp. 161-181, <http://bieson.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/volltexte/2007/1105/html/index.html> (accessed on 20 April 2017); Leah Carola Czollek, Gudrun Perko and Heike Weinbach (2011) "Radical

Diversity im Zeichen von Social Justice: Philosophische Grundlagen und praktische Umsetzung von Diversity in Institutionen", in María do Mar Castro Varela and Nikita Dhawan (eds) *Soziale (Un)Gerechtigkeit: Kritische Perspektiven auf Diversity, Intersektionalität und Antidiskriminierung* (Berlin: Lit), pp. 260-277.

¹³ Cf. Czollek, Perko and Weinbach, *Praxishandbuch Social Justice und Diversity*.

¹⁴ Perko and Czollek, "Diversity in außerökonomischen Kontexten": p. 166.

¹⁵ Gudrun Perko and Leah Carola Czollek (2014) "Das Konzept des Verbündet-Seins im Social Justice als spezifische Form der Solidarität", in Anne Broden and Paul Mecheril (eds) *Solidarität in der Migrationsgesellschaft: Befragung einer normativen Gruppe* (Bielefeld: IDA), pp. 153-167: p. 153.

¹⁶ Hannah Arendt (1994) *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954* (New York: Schocken Books): p. 12.

¹⁷ The distinction between a "subject of representation" and "subject of action" is drawn from the work of Hakan Gürses (Hakan Gürses (2004) "Das 'untote' Subjekt, die 'ortlose' Kritik", in Gudrun Perko and Leah Carola Czollek (eds) *Lust am Denken: Queeres jenseits kultureller Verortungen* (Cologne: PapyRossa), pp. 140-159: pp. 149-150).

¹⁸ On this topic see also Max Czollek and Sasha Marianna Salzmann (eds) (2017) *Desintegration: Ein Kongress zeitgenössischer jüdischer Positionen. 6.-8. Mai 2016* (De-integration: A Congress on Contemporary Jewish Positions), catalogue (Berlin: Kerber).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*: p. 122

²⁰ Cf. Max Czollek (2017) "Manifest der Desintegration", in *Jalta: Positionen zur jüdischen Gegenwart* 1:1, pp. 121-123.

²¹ Cf. Max Czollek and Sasha Marianna Salzmann, "Spielt Euer Theater doch alleine!" (Go Play Your Theatre Alone!), preface to Czollek and Salzmann (eds) *Desintegration*, pp. 10-16.