EDITORIAL
Let's Put an End to the 'Hijacking' of Diversity…

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> "Every portion of matter may be conceived as like a garden full of plants and like a pond full of fish. But every branch of a plant, every member of an animal, and every drop of the fluids within it, is also such a garden or such a pond."
> Gottfried Leibnitz (1714). *Monadology*.

> "We have a moral duty to understand the world as best we can, and that includes coming to terms with its real diversity."
> Peter Wood (2003)

Beyond 'Artificial' Diversity?

The idea of diversity has been 'hijacked' in research, politics and daily life for quite a while in some contexts, while only today e.g. in the Nordic countries, diversity is increasingly used in its limited understanding especially in conjunction with the already well-worn subject of social justice. The problem with the use of the word diversity in this context (but not only) is that people refer to what P. Wood calls "Artificial diversity" in his book *Diversity. The Invention of a Concept* (2003).

'Artificial diversity' signifies a selective and limited portion of the population of a specific place. For Wood (ibid.: 11) ancestry as well as group identity are often constructed as being more profound, more important than e.g. "our individuality or common humanity". Various actors, amongst others researchers, practitioners, decision-makers, etc. play with this: Wood calls them *Diversilogues, diversidacts* and *diversicrats* (ibid.: 16). These actors recycle the word diversity as if it was a magic wand – a magic wand that often (in)directly contributes to discrimination and power differentials.

Let us take an example from the media to illustrate 'artificial diversity'. The programme *Wife Swap* puts into scene two families from different/diverse backgrounds (social class, ethnicity, sexuality, etc.) who swap wives/mothers for two

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weeks. The show has been adapted in many countries such as Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, India, Israel, Serbia, etc.

The following excerpt is taken from *Wife Swap UK.* The two families represent two opposites: a typical 'diverse' family from a Pakistani background and a White working-class English family. Here is the beginning of the programme:

> (Voice-over): Traditional Muslims XXX and XXX have left Pakistan 20 years ago and now live in Birmingham with their three children (…). The XXX are a liberal family who live in Liverpool. XXX and XXX have a daughter XXX and a stepdaughter from a previous relationship. The wives have agreed to swap husbands, homes and children for 2 weeks to see what they can learn from the experience.
> (Voice-over): What happens when religion clashes with reality?
> ('Diverse' mum): Sorry but this lesbian thing is not acceptable at all in Islam.
> (Voice-over): How do you cope when your new family rarely lifts a finger to help?
> ('English' mum): I felt subordinated like a slave to them.
> (Voice-over): And what effects will the experience will have on each family?

In this excerpt a real 'clash of civilisations' (or a clash with 'diversity') is depicted. It is easy to see how religion, gender and attitudes to sexual minorities are put forward as being problematic for the mums to 'integrate' in their new families. At the same time, one could argue that the programme implicitly constructs the 'diverse' characters as less tolerant/advanced than the 'white' family (they are 'traditional' vs. liberal; rejection of sexual minorities; subordination, etc.).

A lot of researchers and practitioners see diversity precisely as this: skin colour, ethnicity, first languages, and origins different from the 'standard'. Even though diversity is perceived as a positive word in most contexts, it is now used as a way of empowering the Other who is made to represent the 'non-normal' – see the 'abnormal' in some cases.

In a recent call for papers for a new journal called *Diversity* the word diversity is clearly 'hijacked' in its artificial format. Though the journal editors indicate the 'complexity' hidden behind the word Diversity at the beginning of the call, they soon fall into the trap of using the word to refer to the Other – only: "diversity refers to the existing diversity and the promotion of multiple ethnic cultures". Suddenly diversity becomes the old and tired concept of "culture" (Dervin, 2012), to which they attach another contested concept, ethnicity (see Brubaker, 2004).

To us, this is precisely the kind of discourse on diversity that we wish to avoid because it seems to contribute to what F. R. Lynch (2005) calls the "diversity machine". This example seems to correspond to Wood's harsh critique of Diversiphiles (ibid.: 16): "Diversity is an idea without a clear intellectual context. Its background is murky, and the language in which its proponents speak is often misleading". This diversity is selective, limited, see biased and it often becomes a mere synonym of the old and oppositional idea of *difference*. There appears to be little criticality or reflexivity in the reproduction and use of such limited conceptions (Byrd Clark and Dervin, 2014). Cultural anthropologists have criticized a naïve belief in cultural difference and insisted on considering constructivist approaches to examine other 'cultures'. In *Ethnic Boundary Making: Institutions, Power, Networks*, Andreas Wimmer (2013) acknowledges that "by the end of the 1990s, constructivism had gained the upper hand over essentialism, instrumentalism over primordialism,

circumstantialism over perennialism" (ibid. : 2). In associating Diversity with 'cultural' categories, we can say that a certain form of neo-essentialism, neo-primordialism and neo-perennialism (and neo-differentialism, Dervin, 2012) is rising under a more fashionable euphemism, occulting the necessary inclusion of interactions and the individuality of people. What we observed for the opposition between Identification vs. Identity (Dervin, 2008; Machart & Lim, 2013) can now be noted with Diversity taking over Difference: a simple word exchange without any shift in the static, hegemonic meaning of outdated concepts. Further to this, we can also observe the use (and hijacking in some cases) of words coined by well-known scholars, such as *superdiversity* and *hyperdiversity* that appear or seem intended to represent the fast paced-processes of globalization, mobility, and migration.

In many cases artificial diversity is also very ideological. In a recent doctoral viva/defence a member of the committee attacked a student because she felt that the student's work on interculturality was too "Western" and thus not diverse enough. She suggested that the student might want to explore 'Asian' literature on the issue because "their way of thinking about identity and interculturality is very different from our Western way of thinking".

First of all, what is the West and what is Asian? Peter Wood (2003: 24) reminds us that "The label "Asian", for example, lumps together the immigrant hotel manager from Gujarat State in Western India, the Japanese-American business executive, and the Khmer-American fisherman". Furthermore, while the member of the committee wished to infuse more diversity in the way in which the student conceptualised interculturality, she herself fell into the trap of limiting diversity by suggesting to include another imagined element to her work… Finally, ideas and ways of conceptualising phenomena might share many (more?) similarities across places and times than within… Inventing and imagining such diversity contribute to hijacking the notion!

Who is diverse? Who decides?

The *International Journal of Education for Diversities* takes a more critical perspective towards the concept of diversity. Let us go back to *Wife Swap* for a while to discuss this. Here is another episode from the UK version:

> (Voice-over): Meet the XXX family. XXX and XXX have been married for 9 years and live with their daughter XXX in XXX, East London. Meet the XXX, XXX and XXX have been married for 5 years and they live in XXX near Edinburgh with their son XXX. The two women have agreed to swap homes, children and lifestyles for two weeks to see what they can learn about their own lives.
> (Voice-over): What's it like when your new husband won't let you relax at home? (…)
> (Voice-over): How do you react when you are being waited on hand and foot by a child?
> (Voice-over): and what happens when the families meet face-to-face?
> (London mum throws a jug of water at the other mum): I'll tell you what, fucking whore!

These two families do not correspond to the 'artificial diversity' discussed earlier (both white, English, live in a big city, one child, etc.) and yet they appear to be

extremely diverse in the way they live their lives, treat members of their families, etc. This kind of diversity (again: diverse diversities) that goes beyond the imagination of diversity related only to linguistic, ethnic and cultural origins should also matter to us researchers and practitioners. Instead of concentrating only on the Other (the migrant, the religious other), we feel it is now important to compare experiences of diversities beyond these limiting identity markers and static categorizations (see Byrd Clark, 2012).

Our Journal thus suggests refraining from concentrating on 'vertical identities' (especially when they are related to "ethnic cultures" as asserted above) and privileges 'horizontal identities', and/or their intersections. These concepts, proposed by Andrew Solomon in his book *Far from the Tree: Parents, Children and the Search for Identity* (2012), refer on the one hand to identities/traits that can flow down the generations (vertical: social class, language, religion, nationality…) and on the other identities that represent a rupture between children and parents (horizontal: different religion or worldview, different political orientations, sexuality, etc.). Horizontal identities challenge and interrupt the 'continuity' that many artificial diversiphiles promote. For that reason, and in agreement with Edgar Morin (2013: 25), uncertainty is a fundamental characteristic of diversity, which means that researchers and practitioners alike should question how they qualify/view diversity and accept their (our) limitations in terms of how and if one can analyse the *diverse diversities* (Dervin, 2008) that characterise each individual. In a very positive move, the Council of Europe, in their new version of the *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters,* defines an intercultural encounter as something that "can be an experience between people from different countries or it can be an experience between individuals from other cultural backgrounds in the same country, for example, from other regional, linguistic, ethnic or religious backgrounds" (see http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/autobiography/default_en.asp#lien_inactif). Though the list of identity markers is still limited (what about gender, social class, etc.?), the move towards diverse diversities is clear.

This second issue of the IJE4D represents an attempt to take on some of these discussions – though more needs to be done! The issue contains four research articles and one initiative in relation to multicultural education. The following spaces are covered: Croatia, Israel, Malaysia, Sweden and the US.

The first two articles tackle the important issue of multilingualism in schools in two different countries. **Ann-Christin Torpsten** and **Mirja Betzholtz** have done research on Swedish preschools and multilingualism. They argue that children who are very competent in their first language (other than Swedish) have more chances of learning Swedish at a higher level. Their approach is derived from both postcolonial theory and critical multicultural education. In "Minority Language Policy in the Primary School System of Croatia – A Comparative Case Study", **Ljubica Kordić and Nihada Mujić** explore the example of Serbian as a minority language in Croatia. The two researchers examine the correlation between different models of education, attitudes towards minority languages and the preservation of two contested concepts, identity and culture.

The next article was written by **Roni Reingold, Lea Baratz** and **Channa Abuhatzira**. It deals with religious state schools in Israel and the teachers' morally courageous behaviour. The authors are also interested in how the teachers position themselves towards the concept. Based on a narrative analysis of interviews, Reingold, Baratz and Abuhatzira discover that teachers attribute their moral

behaviour to their conformity to the values and norms of their specific educational system.

In "Foreign Language Lecturers in Malaysia and Interculturality: Common (Mis-)understandings" **Chin Sin Zi** explores the interesting context of teaching the intercultural in higher education. The author examines the representations of interculturality among native and non-native language lecturers in this context. In her analysis, Chin demonstrates that the role of the prefix "*inter-*" has been neglected and the word "intercultural" is used as synonym of cultural without the meaning of interaction.

The final contribution to this volume is an essay written by **Phyllis Ngai** in which she shares insights gained from experience integrating Indigenous education into the mainstream curriculum in Montana (USA). The article presents the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes of the program.

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