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Dealing with social diversity in Warsaw: Between reality and policy

Ewa Korcelli-Olejniczak
IGSO PAsc, Society of Polish Town Planners



Preface:

Urban social diversity as *signum temporis*



- **social heterogeneity referring to socio-economic, social and ethnic status is one of the basic characteristics that define cities (Wirth 1938)**
- **social diversity creating ‘cities of difference’ (Sandercock 1997) is increasing in most advanced countries due to transnational migration, post-colonialism, population aging, the rise of civil society**
- **urban social diversity is a complex and multi-layered phenomenon - traditionally attributed mainly to class and ethnic divisions, its scope is being extended due to the growing complexity of individual and group behavior, lifestyles and attitudes**

- **in a specific way, this also pertains to post-socialist cities where social diversification is intertwined with (or imbedded in) the process of socio-economic transformation**
- **in such cities it is less ethnic differentiation, rather increasing intra-urban spatial mobility, internal in-migration, suburbanization, as well as an early-stage gentrification (Sykora 2005; Jakóbczyk-Gryszkiewicz 2015) that contribute to the social diversification at the local level**



- **diversity is also propelled by economic forces and metropolization processes**
- **it involves the division lines within the society into the ‘winners’ and the ‘losers’ of the systemic change (Węclawowicz 1996)**
- **it leads to inter-urban, as well as intra-urban socio-economic polarization**



**Divercities –
Governing Urban
Diversity:
Creating Social
Cohesion, Social
Mobility and
Economic
Performance in
Today’s Hyper-
diversified Cities.
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Governance of
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contexts**



**Case study areas: 14 cities
and their selected subareas**

**Methods: contents analyses
of policy documents;
in-depth interviews with
policy-makers,
representatives of local
initiatives, residents and
entrepreneurs**



Chapter 1

Diverse cities as a challenge to urban governance



Four challenges to planning systems, policies and practices in socially diverse communities (Sandercock 1997)

Challenge One - Legislative framework:

values and norms of the dominant culture (political option, religion etc.) are usually embedded in legislative frameworks of planning, in planning by-laws and regulation;

Challenge Two - Attitudes of planners and policy makers:

values and norms are embodied in the attitudes, behaviors, practices of actual flesh-and-blood planners



Challenge Three - Attitudes of communities:

radical attitudes within communities and neighbourhoods find expression or outlet through the planning system;

Challenge Four - Resistance of planners to different traditions:

there is a considerable lack of tolerance and understanding of planners for practices that are incommensurable with their own values



Chapter 2

Framework and specificity of diversity policy in Warsaw (with national level policy in the background)



The 4 challenges are evident in Warsaw's diversity policy, while their character derives from:

- **specificity of local social diversity;**
- **legislative framework of the administrative system;**
- **cultural/ideological background of national and local policy**



specificity of local social diversity



Warsaw of 2014 unveils the marks left by its recent and older history:

- **the diversity within its ethnic and social composition, relative openness and accessibility of its society in the interwar period (1918-1939),**
- **the ideologically and politically restrictive closeness of the socialist era (1945-1989),**
- **the transformative process after 1989 which restores the idea of liberty and tolerance in the course of economic and political debate of interventionist and neo-liberal forces**



1918-1939

**an ethnically
and socially
heterogeneous
city**



1939-1945

**huge
devastation**



1945

**city newly
built from
ruins by
survivors and
in-migrants**



1945-1989

**despite state-
socialism, the
population of
Warsaw is
never truly
saturated
with the
ideology of a
closed
community**



- **contacts with Polish emigrants to the West;**
- **the most liberal passport policy in the Eastern Block;**
- **persisting importance and the major role of the Catholic Church, as a moral fundament;**
- **relatively sizeable private sector, mainly in agriculture, but also in handicrafts and pettytrade**



legislative framework of the administrative system



- **guidelines concerning standards and the overall framework for policy formulation are transferred from the level of central government to regions, and then directly or indirectly to the local level**
- **local governments have to comply with standards and directives which result from documents prepared at the higher level, but they have a considerable amount of autonomy to tailor policies to specific needs of the local communities;**
- **the main subjects involved in the elaboration of place-based policies are city level authorities supported by other actors: NGOs, representatives of various interest groups, voluntary, non-registered associations, church organizations, and other community groups**

**cultural, ideological and economic
background of national and local policy**



- **strong influence of the Catholic Church/a considerable conservative turn in the national-level policy;**
- **low ethnic diversity/large share of immigrants from other regions of Poland;**
- **neoliberal forces within local government perceiving Warsaw as an engine of economic growth;**
- **high level of human capital (29% of the population has academic or higher vocational education)/low level of social capital, trust and reciprocity within communities**
- **considerably high share of elderly people (24.5% of Warsaw's population are residents in the age group 65+)**
- **large socio-spatial polarization**



until recently, focus was put on the problem of emigration to wealthier EU countries, a major social and political issue in Poland

presently, Polish politicians and the society had to take a position with respect to the global migration crisis of 2015

although Poland remains a less attractive country for migrants, an increased aversion to accept immigration is observed, as well as a growing fear of negative consequences relative to the influx of different (non-European) ethnicity and (non-Christian) religion



there are no parallels between the conservative, Catholic national-level policy and city-level policy in Warsaw which is moderately open to diversity and all kinds of „otherness”

the more extreme the conservative turn at the national-level, the more open, liberal and inclusive Warsaw policy becomes



Framework of diversity policy in Warsaw

Main issues within policy:

- **socio-economic;**
- **inter-generational;**
- **disability-based diversity**

Issues recalled upon less frequently, or neglected:

- **ethnic diversity;**
- **cultural diversity, including issues of sexual orientation, lifestyle, individual options, choices;**
- **gender-based diversity related issues, including policies referring to the professional mobility of women**



	Planning for redistribution	Planning for recognition	Planning for encounter
Integration via education and culture	Warsaw Educational Development Programme , Warsaw Culture Development Program, Warsaw Cultural Education Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operational Programs Family and Seniors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The European House of Encounter for the Youth</i> – a public institution which supports and initiates international cooperation of young people; The Warsaw City Programme <i>Summer/Winter in the City</i>
Inclusion via social support	OP: Housing Policy aimed at groups with diversified housing needs, OP Development, Activeness, Self-reliance (social mobility), Local Systems of Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warsaw Programme for Disabled Population assistance to foreigners within social policy 	Network program Universities of the Third Age
Active pro-diversity policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> international project: <i>'Study In Warsaw'</i>, supports the recruitment of foreign students , internationalizing educational institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> policy programs in elaboration: Diverse Warsaw, Warsaw for Women 	Warsaw Multicultural Center



7 facts about diversity policy and action in Warsaw



1. Warsaw's diversity is still being discovered which finds reflection in the documents and policy discourse;

2. Warsaw's policy rhetoric focusses on domestic in-migrants, which are attracted by the city's dynamic and diversified labor market

In-migrants are perceived from the economic perspective as a stimulant for the overall development and competitiveness of the city, as well as taxpayers contributing to the city budget, on the other hand, the so called „glass jar” phenomenon is a controversial matter;



3. Warsaw's diversity policy addresses in the first place issues related to socio-economic diversification, inter-generational communication, problems of disability

It is dominated by such notions as: 'equal treatment', 'equal opportunities', 'common good', 'social inclusion' and 'integration'. Policy therefore rather focuses on redistribution, to a lesser extent refers to recognition and social encounter;



4. Diversity policies aimed at the recognition of diversity are mostly declarative and reflect statutory obligations;

5. The most complex area of diversity policies concerns integration – via education and cultural programs;

6. Ethnic diversity is not significantly represented in the policy discourse

The policy towards ethnic minorities is restricted mainly to social support to migrants with refugee status, and to the ethnic minorities listed in the Act of Ethnic and National Minorities. Equally, there is a lack of active approach to gender and sexual-orientation-related diversity;



7. There is, however, evidence of a growing awareness of diversity issues in the public debate, as well as within certain units of the City of Warsaw authorities



Examples:

- The revision of the Warsaw Development Strategy Warszawa 2030 which accounts for issues such as diversity and inclusiveness;
- The elaboration of the „*Fall in love with non-governmental Warsaw*” (meaning also: not governmental Warsaw) program, concerning the reception and integration of refugees



Chapter 3

**The other side of the coin: diversity policy
contested by non-profit and private private
actors**



Legislative framework

most of the operational programs are de facto non-operational, as they refer usually to catchy slogans, are declarative, demonstrating that the city authorities are active with respect to solving social problems;

non-holistic approach towards diversity policy - some features of which the phenomenon of diversity is composed of (gender-type, life style, religion) are treated as problems of awareness rather than issues to be tackled by urban policy, therefore they don't constitute separate aspects of labor, housing or social policy programs;

policy documents prohibit every kind of intolerance but the the frame for creation of openness and accessibility is too wide (too general) to find concrete programs actually promoting diversity as an asset

Attitudes of planners and policy makers

undervaluation of the 'glass jar phenomenon' effect (temporary labor-in-migrants) for the growth of the city economy;

religious and ethnic diversity is obvious, but the city gives no effort to recognize it or benefit from it ;

weak cooperation with NGOs active within diversity policy

Attitudes (and features) of communities

Weak interaction between older residents and newcomers in districts, negative attitude towards urban regeneration-effected gentrification ;

low level of social capital and social solidarity;

low level of spatial mobility of population

Indifferent and prevailing passive attitude of policy-makers to substream traditions

focus on traditional issues of social policy related to the disabled population, generational diversity - problems of elderly population, socio-spatial inequality referring to children, dysfunctional families, marginalisation and exclusion;

other dimensions of diversity such as ethnic origin or sexual orientation or gender-related issues of inequality, imbalance etc. are perceived as marginal (and politically irrelevant)



Chapter 4

Governance arrangements and initiatives positively contributing to diversity policy in Warsaw



1. Public-non profit governance arrangements

Local Systems of Support

a local semi-partnership initiative based on an open cooperation between a public partner and NGOs, which chose to collaborate within a formalised consortium

Target audience: children 7-18 attending selected schools in the target area;

Aim: improving educational attainment of children



The Warsaw Multicultural Center

operating since 2014, as a result of long lasting non-governmental organizations' communication with the City Hall

Target audience: migrants and refugees

Aim: creating better conditions for migrants in Warsaw



2. Non profit initiatives

Neighbourhood libraries - a place of encounter for the local community

working on rather informal relations of cooperating civic actors

Target audience: new and old residents of the immediate surroundings

Aim: make books accessible to neighbours



Social Street Circus

a short-term initiative of a local association

Target audience: children living in Brzeska street

Aim: strengthening their self-esteem, identity, ilocal integratio
and fostering of local social cohesion



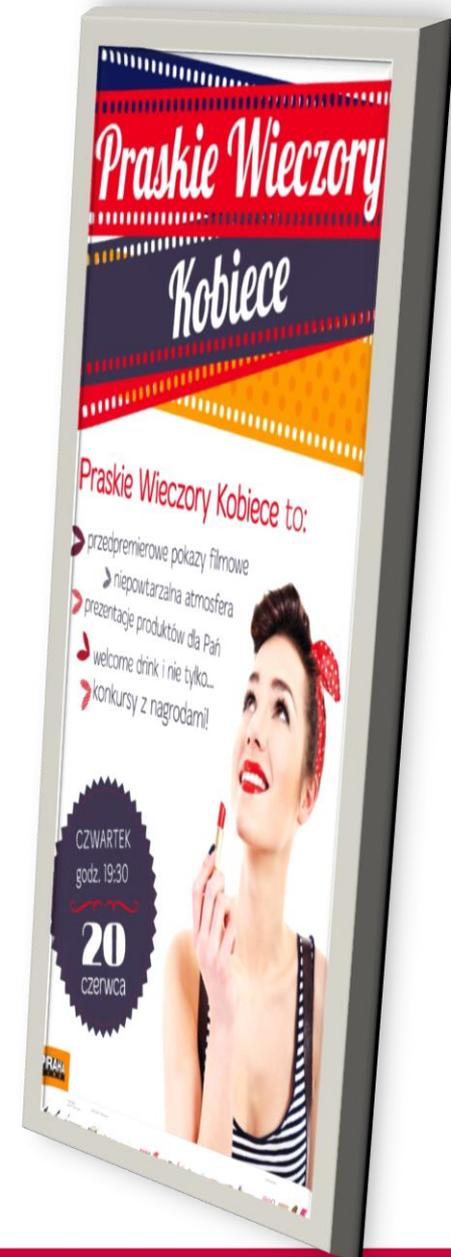
3. Private initiatives

Praga Women's Evenings

private, commercial initiative developed on the basis of cooperation of the arts cinema 'Praha' with the non-profit foundation 'Generator'; 'cinema therapy' used as a form of therapy and education where motion pictures are a main tool

Target audience: women

Aim: providing support to women in solving problems related to their particular societal role



CONCLUSIONS



diversity in Warsaw is being (re)-discovered:

- recognized as a fact, identified and defined within programs in urban policy;
- while undesired diversity is perceived as a challenge, desired social diversity is started to be understood as an opportunity/asset
- the conservative turn at the national level has supported the latter process

new governance solutions are emerging:

- new approach: shared responsibilities – public authorities with supporting social partners - social partners with supporting public authorities;
- new mechanism: Local Support System – framework for programs and projects, comprehensive and long-term
- new partners: proactive and creative NGOs and private sector representatives



required changes in policy making:

- **more courage in undertaking new challenges**
- **education and culture as a strong medium of diversity policy;**
- **constant search for creative bureaucracy – new forms of local governance based on participatory models;**
- **recognizing that effective social policy can bring economic benefits;**
- **understanding diversity as a natural and required component of ‘metropolitan’ development**



eko@twarda.pan.pl
www.igipzpan.pl
www.urbandivercities.eu

