"Planning for / in the super-diverse city: between celebratory policy narratives and the reality of planning policies in London"

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In recent decades cities in Europe and North-America have become more economically, socially, and culturally diverse than ever before, in quantitative and qualitative terms. This increasing diversity has been labelled 'super-diversity' (Vertovec, 2007) or 'hyper-diversity' (Tasan-Kok et al., 2013). The latter refers to 'an intense diversification of the population in socio-economic, social and ethnic terms, but also with respect to lifestyles, attitudes and activities' (ibid: 4). Increasing urban diversity has generated new challenges for policy-makers and planners, faced with the risks associated with social exclusion, urban disorder, and competition amongst groups for scarce resources. In a context of economic crisis, austerity politics and increased threats of terrorism due to instability in various parts of the globe, such increasing diversity has generated political anxieties and defensive discourses in national and local policies. At the same time, diversity is also heralded as an opportunity by policy-makers at different levels of scale, notably by European Union (EU) institutions but also, as will be discussed in this paper, in some cities, where the (co)presence of hyper-diverse citizens has been portrayed and promoted as an asset.

This paper aims to analyse the conceptions of, and approaches to 'diversity' present in recent policy narratives in London, paying particular attention to planning and urban policies. We will particularly focus on ethnic diversity and socio-economic diversity (although other forms of diversity will be mentioned when relevant). The paper builds on the findings of a broader European research project comparing the governance of diversity through urban policies in 14 cities.[1] London is the most ethnically and socio-economically diverse city in the EU. The 2011

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[1] This paper presents some of the results of the empirical work carried out in London by a team of UCL researchers in the framework of a large comparative EU-funded project entitled *Divercities: Governing Urban Diversity* (2013-2017). This project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under Grant Agreement No. 319970 - DIVERCITIES. The views expressed in this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission. This interdisciplinary project, which draws on urban geography, political science, urban planning, economics and sociology, is fully described at http://www.urbandivercities.eu/. Comparative research was undertaken in 11 EU cities (Antwerp, Athens, Budapest, Copenhagen, Leipzig, London, Milan, Paris, Rotterdam, Tallinn, Warsaw) and 3 non-EU cities (Istanbul, Toronto, and Zurich). This paper is based on the results of Work Package 4 and parts of Work Package 5 and 6. In WP4 the research teams explored dominant narratives and conceptions of diversity in urban policy programmes and discourses, through a (simple form of) discourse analysis of key policy documents and semi-structured interviews with policy-makers, business leaders, and civil society actors. The main focus was on the city-wide (or metropolitan) scale of analysis, and included both area-based policy initiatives applied to defined and bounded urban areas or neighbourhoods as well as city-wide policy initiatives in

census revealed that out of a total population of 8.17 million, 2.6 million (31%) were born outside of the UK. Moreover, 55% of respondents defined themselves as *other than White British* (this includes both residents who hold a foreign passport and British citizens from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds). This proportion rose from 31% in 1991. The city is home to 41% of all non-White British residents of England and Wales, to 37% of all residents born outside the UK and to 24% of all non-UK nationals[2]. It has subsequently been described as '*the world within a city*' (GLA, 2005) and the most '*cosmopolitan place on Earth*' (Vertovec, 2007). In terms of socio-economic diversity, levels of inequality in London are strikingly high, and comparable with cities in the Global South. Dorling (2011) shows that the richest 10% of London's residents have 273 times the income and assets of the poorest 10%. Despite London's economic strength, 28% of the population live in households that are in poverty (after housing costs)[3] compared with the UK figure of 22%, meaning more than two million Londoners are in poverty (Leeser, 2011). Half of these are in working households. It is, therefore, a hyper-diverse city and one in which policy-makers, planners, politicians, civil society representatives and non-governmental organisations have been compelled to address broader questions of diversity.

The paper first briefly reviews how planning theorists have, over the past decade, engaged with notions of diversity in relation to planning and urban policies, and introduces the analytical framework offered by Fincher and Iveson (2008). In a second part, the paper

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various policy fields (e.g., intercultural dialogue, public participation, education, economic development, rights and equality) which directly engage with diversity or have a strong relevance to/impact on the governance of diversity in the city. In London, the team carried out a systematic analysis of national and city-wide strategies on diversity and the governance of urban policy; and 17 interviews with policy-makers, planners, government officials, business organisations and civil society representatives between July and December 2013. In WP5 the research teams investigated how particular initiatives and governance arrangements on the local (neighbourhood, city or metropolitan) level help to increase positive aspects of urban diversity and what their success and fail factors are, through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in one area per city that is relatively large (around 100,000 inhabitants), deprived, diverse and dynamic at the same time. In London, 14 interviews with key policy makers, project managers and community activists were conducted between February and June 2014 in Haringey and Tottenham, supplemented by the analysis of a range of background documents, strategies, and other materials. In WP6, 50 interviews were carried out in the winter of 2014-2015 with a broad range of residents from the borough of Haringey to understand their views and experience of the diversity which surrounds them, and of the public policies addressing that diversity.

[2] A self-identifying question on 'ethnic group membership' was introduced in the census for England and Wales in 1991. For an overview of how ethnicity and identity is measured in the UK, see http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/rpt-ethnicity.html#tab-Measuring-ethnicity-. In the 2011 Census 18 'ethnic' categories were defined. Additionally, the 2011 Census included questions on religious affiliation, language spoken at home, and national identity. To define international migrants, the census used country of birth and passport held.

[3] In the UK the poverty threshold for a household is defined as an income after tax which is below 60% of the average (median) household income for that year. It can be measured before or after housing costs.

analyses the conceptions of, and approaches to 'diversity' present in recent policy narratives at the London-wide level, paying particular attention (although not exclusively) to planning and urban policies. The analysis is based on a close reading of recent policy documents and a series of interviews carried out with policy-makers and other actors at the London-wide level and in the borough of Haringey (see Raco et al., 2014). We embed our analysis of 'policy narratives' in cognitive and discursive approaches to public policy (Fischer, 2003), which treat policy issues as socially constructed and reproduced through discursive practices. In such approaches, 'narratives' and 'discourses' are conceptualized as one of the possible explanatory variables deemed to influence politics and policy (along with interests, institutions and culture) (Hall, 1993; Fischer, 2003). Finally, in the third part of the paper, we analyse how diversity is construed in the policy discourse of the London borough of Haringey, a 'hyper-diverse' borough which has been subject to political attention and policy change in the aftermath of the 2011 London riots (which started in Tottenham, in the eastern part of that borough). We discuss how the type of diversity envisaged by policy documents has been contested by some segments of the local population who contest the rhetoric of a 'diversification from above'.

Our findings show that planning policy narratives in London tend to promote or celebrate (a certain kind of) diversity as an asset that is integral to London's globally-oriented economic growth - a model of globally-focused economic growth which requires international migration and a diverse workforce (Raco et al., 2014). The primary focus of policy narratives at the city level is on fostering recognition. Hyper-diversity has become a symbol of London's cultural and entrepreneurial vibrancy and is marketed in positive terms to attract inward investors and creative workers. This reveals an increasingly marked divergence between the national policy discourse on 'diversity' and the London-wide policy narratives and agendas with respect to diversity. Dominant narratives of diversity at the London scale have taken on a consensual, rather than contested, form and emphasise London's wider 'success' as a leading global city. Diversity governance has been characterised by a pragmatic managerialism and an emphasis on legal compliance and individual responsibility which, in some ways, differs markedly from national policy agendas. They have been used to legitimate policies that promote an 'equality of opportunity' for all of London's citizens, whilst deflecting attention away from more structural forms of inequality that would require radical forms of intervention to resolve. Little attention is, therefore, given to questions concerning the redistribution of economic resources and the increasing, or new, forms of inequality.

In London at large, and in the borough which has been the focus of our research, official policy narratives on diversity (exhibiting a rather celebratory tone) and the reality of (planning and urban) policy practices and key strategic decisions which cumulatively lead to the gradual displacement or erasure of socio-economic diversity (see also Imrie and Lees, 2014). Planning tend to reinforce difference through a control of forms of diversity that have been regarded as unruly, a shift away from redistributive outcomes and the prioritization of divisive models of economic growth/capital accumulation through real estate development and housing growth at all costs. Such contradictions between a positive discourse on diversity and the reality of policy decisions which threaten it are particularly palpable in a borough like Haringey. Yet collective action and social mobilizations have emerged based on the place-focussed defence of public services, social housing, and community spaces from private incursions. Urban conflict can, therefore, act as a resource reinforcing diverse encounters as different interests argue over the meaning of diversity and quality of life in urban neighbourhoods. Local groups are determined to forge a different narrative of place, in which the hyper-diversity of local communities is seen as an asset worthy of real protection (and not just discursive recognition) through demands for firm and interventionist public policies and active forms of community engagement. In Fincher and Iveson's (2008) terms groups seek to use projects to attain enhanced *recognition* of their needs and, in some cases, their very existence. Such mobilizations are '*a crucial means to challenge injustice by de-naturalising assumptions about proper forms of urban conduct and urban forms which underpin planning and governance, making them open to debate and to political determination by diverse publics*' (Fincher and Iveson, 2008: 120).

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