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Diversity as a Resource?

Decolonizing urban regeneration programs between Berlin-Neukölln and Mexico City

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Abstract

This paper aims at dislocating the occidentalist invention of diversity by decolonizing the discovery of diversity within "western" metropolises. As a case in point, we focus on the rhetoric of the European Union´s Intercultural Cities Program (ICP). While the city becomes the privileged locus for "managing diversity" as largely neutral expressions of cultural hybridity, local practitioners are counseled to "tame" and "harness" a socio-spatial alterity that is perceived as a threat to modern and cohesive urban development (Wood 2009: 18). By applying a relational analysis (Massey 2005: 9) of urban regeneration programs in Berlin-Neukölln, which serves as a case of "best practice" in the ICP, and Mexico City as the only project partner that has been subject to European colonialism, we trace the zig-zag itinerary of "diversity as a resource". We identify a practice of "covering-over" (Dussel 1995: 12) of both countries' colonial past, and a subsequent normalization of the colonial legacies that constitute a continuum of power asymmetries between and within the two cities. On a theoretical level, by "locating" the invention of diversity within discourses and practices around *mestizaje* in Mexico City's Historic Center, we simultaneously aim at "dislocating" the production of a homogeneous "European metropolis" (Roy 2009).

Keywords: Decolonial Perspective; Urban Regeneration Policies; Diversity; Mexico City; Berlin-Neukölln; Relationality

1. Introduction: Diversity as a Resource in the EU Intercultural Cities Program

> [O]ne of the defining factors which will determine [...] which cities flourish
> and which decline will be the extent to which they allow their diversity
> to be their asset, or their handicap (EU-ICP 2008: 4).

In the following, we propose to re-think the invention of diversity as a resource from the perspective of colonial/imperial difference. With Doreen Massey and Enrique Dussel, we argue that against the assumption of a depoliticized abstract space where difference is "tolerated", the co-existence of social, spatial and temporal heterogeneity requires a perspective that accounts for the question of alterity in human relations (Dussel 1995: 64; Massey 2005: 15). In order to de-normalize an occidentalist hierarchy of gender, racial and ethnic differences, this paper draws specifically on Dussel's "Invention of the Americas", where the author explains how Columbus' dis-covery of the Other American as "Indian" enables a process of covering-over: "This Indian was not discovered as Other, but subsumed under categories of the Same […] and so denied as Other" (Dussel 1995: 32). We assume that by de-normalizing the invention of diversity as a resource, we can trace the occidentalist classification and control of social and territorial realities on the basis of colonial imaginations. With Massey, we argue that a power-sensitive analysis of such hierarchies in a specific (urban) space has to account for the social constitution of this space as "relational" (Massey 2006: 94) to other spatial levels and thus product of interrelations "from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny" (Massey 2005: 9).

In a similar vein, and inspired by Dussel's analectical perspective, Walter Mignolo develops the term "colonial/imperial difference", in order to describe "the space, where local histories, that invent and implement global designs, meet other local histories to adapt, contradict, integrate or ignore global designs" (Mignolo 2012, own translation). Thus, based on the local experience of a non-white, non-European alterity, Mignolo develops this term as the basic category of decolonial thought. A decolonization of modernities' rhetoric of national identity and homogeneity (Mignolo 2007) is translated from the local to the global level since "the fact of having to imagine a future that is not the future that those in Washington, or London, or Paris, or Berlin would like the people of the world to have can bring together all those who have been contacted in various ways by them" (Mignolo 2007:

498). The rhetoric of modernity is intrinsically tied to the "logic of coloniality", a global system of socio-spatial classification, exploitation and control that originates in the conquest of the Americas in the 15th century and still persists in the heart of today's "western" metropolises.

By conceiving the Intercultural Cities Program (ICP) of the European Union (EU) as part of what Mignolo describes as "logic of coloniality", this paper aims at unveiling colonial entanglements of ICP narratives and its local effects. Accounting for the continuum of power structures linking geopolitical locations from colonial to post-colonial times implies a localization of the socio-spatial effects of ICP's policies as well as the "decolonial" perspectives not only outside the geographical borders of a place called Europe, but everywhere where political-economic appropriation of otherness can be observed. By simultaneously "locating" and "disclocating" the production of urban theories, we follow Ananya Roy's call to decenter the "21. Century Metropolis" (Roy 2009). Such decentering rejects universal typologies and instead seeks to theorize on the specificity of one place (location) and to translate the insights to another place (dislocation).

How do the "rhetoric of modernity" and the "logic of coloniality" within urban regeneration politics translate into the construction of a "European" cultural identity between Mexico City and Berlin? In the following, we trace how the "diversity momentum" (UCLG 2006: 4) of the 1990s has been adapted by the European Union both as a strategy to construct regional unity, identity and social cohesion in the context of urban regeneration policies. A major promoter of "cultural diversity" in this context is the Council of Europe (COE) as has been established as early as in the "Declaration on Cultural Diversity" from 2000, where "the competent organs" of the COE are "requested to identify those aspects of cultural policy which are in need of special consideration in the context of the new global economy" (COE Committee of Ministers 2000). The objective of accommodating cultural difference in order to create politically and economically valuable diversity is reflected in the "Declaration on Fifty Years of European Cultural Cooperation" of 2005, underlining that "[w]e should deepen a sense of our *shared history and common future* among the peoples of our 48 states, within their diversity, so as to avoid the emergence of a sense of division within greater Europe" (COE Minister's Deputies 2005) A normative link to the "common values" of European Union member states is created half a year later in the Warsaw-Declaration (2005) by emphasizing

both the importance of a rights-based approach to diversity as well as its potential for "turning Europe into a creative […], a civic and cohesive community" (COE 2005).

As a concrete project, the European Commission and the Council of Europe adopt the "Intercultural Cities" program in 2008 in order to promote "capacity-building and policy development" (COE 2009) amongst the 21 EU-members and approximately 40 associated cities. Initiators of the project are the two British cultural and urban planners Charles Landry and Phil Wood, who in 1978 found "Comedia" as a think-tank on Creative Cities (Landry 2012). In 2004, the latter Phil Wood, currently principal adviser to the EU-ICP, conducts a two year research program on behalf of the COE – based on data from the UK, United States, Australia, New Zealand and Norway – with the aim to "consider the extend to which cultural diversity is a source of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship" (EU-ICP 2012b). Whereas this initial project focuses mainly on the economic potential of cultural diversity, the publication of *The Intercultural City: Planning for Diversity Advantage* in 2008 (Wood and Landry 2008) represents a shift in focus. The city is understood as a privileged locus for the re-imagination of intercultural relations and practices (ibid.: Introduction). Based on this premise, "a new intercultural leadership" is counseled to create institutional reforms that foster social cohesion (ibid.: chpt. 6).

ICP´s general goal is twofold:

(1) On an individual level, culture is understood as a property of the *homo oeconomicus.* The "citizen-subject" (Bodirsky 2012: 463) is required to activate its culture as a productive resource: "This imperative entails a hierarchy between 'Culture I' and 'Culture II', as two modes of *diversity*, and constitutes as *difference* those who are seen to resist their use as human capital by failing to cultivate their potential" (ibid.).

(2) On a city level, diversity policy promotes a multi-level approach: European, national and local actors form part of a governing alliance in order to improve the economic performance of a city. Diversity-as-resource is sustaining the creative potential of the city. ICP thus follows Wood and Landry´s (2008) idea that diversity triggers local competitiveness.

Diversity policy thus aims at providing integrative measures for empowering the (immigrant) individual to employ his/her culturally different background in order to improve a creative local urban development. In this direction Katharina Bodirsky (2012) concludes that "[i]nterculturalism thus feeds into the dismantling of welfare entitlements as well as processes of gentrification in the city that challenge the right to place of particular immigrant populations".

The first brochure of the EU-ICP, launched in 2009, reflects the ideas on the urban as a space for the encounter of "people with different nationalities, origins, languages or religions/believes" and the role of "city officials" to encourage "greater mixing" and "social cohesion" at the same time (Wood 2009). Coherence with the conceptualization by Wood and Landry can also be detected from the emphasis on "Managing Diversity", which is both the title of the first EU-ICP conference (EU-ICP 2009) and the preferred terminology in the above-cited book. The idea, that the management of cultural diversity in the sense of integration and economic exploitation is a precondition for "making modern cities work" is echoed in the Newsletter of 2010 (EU-ICP 2010). In a first evaluation of the *Economic and Social Advantages of the Intercultural Cities Approach* (Khovanova-Rubicondo 2009), commissioned by the COE, the EU-ICP is presented as a positive example for city-network by emphasizing its success in reaching the "overarching objectives" of "policy reformulation in pilot cities" and "to elaborate model intercultural strategies […] as an example for other cities in Europe (and possibly beyond)" (ibid. 3). The claim that the EU-ICP should serve as a model program is substantiated by referring to two "key tools" for fostering the adaption of policies amongst the participating cities: "the Ten Policy Steps document and the Intercultural Cities Index" (ibid.). In the logic of the ten elements that are supposed to define an "Intercultural City Strategy", public perceptions and policies have to be altered in order to "tame[..]" and "harness[..]" diversity (COE and EU 2009: 44). An idea of showcasing examples of strategic planning is reflected in the subtitle of a corresponding presentation, which clarifies the goal of providing "guidance for city-policy makers with good practice examples" (P. Wood, Comedia, and COE 2006). Amongst the explanation of the steps, the focus on "symbolic actions", "flagship trial projects", and the idea of establishing an "intercultural intelligence function" that "monitor[s] examples" in other locations and "dispens[es] advice and expertise" provides evidence for a self-conception as city-network

(COE and EU 2009: 44-45). This latter idea of creating an observatory or similar institution composed by "mayors, municipal officers, planners, urban professionals, private consultants, and civil society groups" who travel to "meccas of […] innovative urban management practices" (ibid.) can be interpreted as a prime example of "policy tourism" (Parnreiter 2011: 418).

In accordance with the idea of disciplining or controlling difference and economically exploiting diversity, the requirements to "acknowledge the inevitability of conflict in mixed communities" and to "ensure that all migrants are able to converse in the majority language" together with the invitation to "establish international trade and policy links" and to integrate "the private sector" can be interpreted as illustrative (ibid.). A closer examination of their operationalization for the Intercultural City Index[1] (ICI) shows that the method-mixing questionnaire – based on 66 questions to be filled out by city officials – extrapolates the assumptions on a causality between "intercultural policy" and "economic performance" (EU-ICP 2012a). As an example for this emphasis on economic development, the indicators refer to the "number of visitors, inward investors and relocating businesses surveyed who refer to the city's positive community relations", or the "growth in visitor and tourism numbers to ethnically-mixed hospitality and entertainment districts", and the "number of twinning and other international relationships by the city and local institutions" (Wood et al. 2006: 16, 25).

We learn that European´s cultural policy, in its concrete realization by the ICP constructs a narration of a homogeneous cultural society. In the following the ICP will be decolonized by a relational praxis of comparison. Such a critical standpoint towards its guiding principles –

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[1] The ICI combines quantitative facts mainly on demography with qualitative data on policies, structures and attitudes in order to assess the "progress" of a country's policies/governance over time and in comparison with the other cities. For the 14 Indicators, up to 100 points can be reached: "These indicators comprise: commitment; education system; neighbourhoods; public services; business and labour market; cultural and civil life policies; public spaces; mediation and conflict resolution; language; media; international outlook; intelligence/competence; welcoming and governance. Some of these indicators - education system; neighbourhoods; public services; business and labour market; cultural and civil life policies; public spaces are grouped in a composite indicator called 'urban policies through the intercultural lens' or simply 'intercultural lens'" (EU-ICP 2012a).

diversity as an economically exploitable resource, subordination of difference to a territorially defined cultural unity – addresses the ICP´s understanding of urban diversity as "invention" (Dussel 1995). This narration negates the itinerary of such a project, which we show by tracing the zig-zag-course which diversity has made from Mexico to Berlin and back again.

2. Territorialization, Commodification, Racialization as Occidentalist Policy Strategies

We identify three mutually enforcing and layered strategies to be virulent in the occidentalization of urban diversity policies, more precisely in the invention of diversity as a resource:

(1) Diversity-management employs **territorialization**: Such a strategy aims at defining a geographical area of intervention, its borders, and places with specific functions and a peculiar symbolic architecture. The territorialization of diversity politics further incorporates a set of actors, which take over control and complement each other or compete to control the territory of intervention.

(2) The assumption, that an effective governing of (urban) spaces and people is best achieved in homogeneous societies, frequently leads to an accommodation of differences in the sense described by Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre 1991: 280–281). The creation of an economically exploitable product through the regulation and classification of diversity within designated spatial units has also been critically denominated "the relentless **commodification** of all manner of difference" (Goonewardena and Kipfer 2005: 672). By reifying difference only in cultural terms, an "easily marketable" conception of diversity s created where the labeling of "food-and-festivals" as " 'visible' and 'edible' ethnicity" leads to an essentialization of racial signifiers (ibid. 672). Kanishka Goonewardena and Stephan Kipfer refer back to Lefebvre's Marxist critique of commodity fetishism that induces a spatialized form of "minimal difference" in order to quantitatively distinguish between homogeneous instances. In the context of "diversity", these would include all kinds of place-specific characterizations and "celebrations" around supposedly "exotic" expressions of cultural heterogeneity. The commodification of diversity according to some researchers

within the global flows of policies (Crang, Dwyer, and Jackson 2003: 447) can be traced back to the agents behind such forms of "bourgeois urbanism" (Goonewardena and Kipfer 2005: 672). Behind the power relations that determine "the boundaries of belonging" for "people of diversity" (Fenster 2005: 229) is an "alliance of real-estate capital, petty bourgeois circles, specialists of the urban (academic and professional), and the so-called 'creative class'" (Goonewardena and Kipfer 2005: 672). In the following, we distinguish between the conceptualization of diversity in international city policies as largely "aesthetic, politically and morally neutral expressions of cultural difference" (Eriksen 2006) and difference, as those expressions of "otherness" that are identified as a challenge to the socio-spatial implementation of these strategies.

(3) Diversity is correlative to homogeneity and thus to the normalization of a national homogeneous body. The global configuration of coloniality of power is constituted by the twofold capitalist strategy of dominating, and thus ordering and controlling difference (i.e. territorialization), and subsuming this difference as economic exploitable product (i.e. commodification). The idea behind this stratification principle is what Aníbal Quijano terms "**racialization**" (Quijano 2000: 24): During the conquest of the Americas, phenotypical differences between the conquerors and conquered have been biologized and used for producing the category of "race". The resulting attribution of new social and geo-cultural identities and their distribution in a capitalist world system have established the continuity of a global hierarchical system of racialized social classifications (ibid.: 29).

3. A Relational Analysis of Regeneration Policies in Mexico City and Berlin-Neukölln

To trace the way in which these three strategies unfold in regeneration policies is the task we set ourselves for the rest of this paper. The surplus of a relational analysis consists of taking serious an insight social sciences gain from the spatial turn: That no place can be understood as a container; and that instead, places should be seen as "articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings" and not as "areas with boundaries around" (Massey 1994: 66). From a decolonial perspective, the construction of a "European" identity as a model for the rest of the world cannot be understood as isolated but as related to a racialist/capitalist logic of construing places that originates in the conquest of the

Americas. A relational analysis of regeneration policies, aiming at a dislocating of place identity attributions, consequently demands us to reflect on the itinerary of the employed references. We therefore focus on the ways actors aspire territorial control, which interests they might have and how cultural belonging, identity and otherness are constructed. We argue that to the extent that diversity turns into a resource for improving the economic performance of a city, the valorization and de-valorization of subjects along racial ascriptions secures the continuity of the European project which in turn normalizes the invisibilization of the colonial entanglements and violent legacy of its imagined identity.

3.1 The Karl-Marx Straße: Covering-Over the Broadway of Neukölln

"Neukölln is Everywhere" (Buschkowsky 2012)

The title of this recently published book by Neukölln's mayor Heinz Buschkowsky goes beyond being a mere populist strategy: As will be shown in the following, city policies as implemented by the local marketing campaign "Aktion! Karl-Marx-Straße" can be analyzed as relational between the local, the national and the international level. Concerning the construction of diversity as well as the practices related hereto, the labeling of a street as "young, colorful and successful" is understood in the following as related to selection of the motto "city of diversity" for the 775th birthday of Berlin (Berlin.de 2012) as well as to global discursive shifts in urban policies from diversity as a threat to diversity as a resource. This shift materializes at the local level of a historic shopping street in the center of Neukölln, a district of the German capital formerly represented as prime example for the failures of integration policy in national media discourse, as well as in academic debates about "limited statehood" (Risse 2007). By narrating the story of Neukölln as a story of political failure to generate social cohesion, the district has been placed amongst cities, regions and countries in the so-called "global south" and thus constructed as "not (yet) modern", "chaotic" and "(economically) unsuccessful". In 2008, Neukölln receives the title "Place of Diversity" by the national government. In the same year, the district is evaluated as one of eleven "pilot partners" by the EU Intercultural Cities Program. Drawing on these eleven "best practice" examples, the ICP develops policy recommendations designed to "make modern cities work" (EU-ICP 2010). In the following, the socio-spacial effects of the above-described discursive shift are described as materializations of a process that we identify as "invention of

diversity". The "dis-covery" of a power-neutral diversity as a process of subsuming the other under categories of the same and thus a "covering-over" of colonial/imperial difference will be analyzed in the following as manifest in the logics of territorialization (1), racialization (2), and commodification (3).

(1)   By enacting the street as an "active center" of Berlin and its district Neukölln, the marketing campaign "Aktion! Karl-Marx-Straße" (A!KMS) mobilizes financial resources both by the Berlin Senate and the federal programme for the revitalization of German town and city centers. In the competition entry, the efficient management of the "diverse" population is advocated by referring to national discourses on integration. By forming part of the European Union's ICP, it is argued, cultural diversity can be re-conceptualized as a "chance" (Evertz et al. 2008).

This conception of diversity is implemented on a spatial level and thus **territorialized** by dividing the central "intervention area" of the street into three units: Members of the A!KMS differentiate between a "multicultural" unit (2) in the north, a tandem sector between "art/culture and commerce" (2), and the southern "development area" (interview, public relations manager, july 2012). The regulative intervention of the A!KMS follows a logic of categorized usage specifications, aiming at ordering and controlling a side-by-side of de-politicized diversity. The recent renovation of a central square (see Figure 3: green marker) as "lighthouse project" (Evertz et al. 2008: 22) in the geographical center of the street shows how a occidentalist construction of the local population from over 160 nations is emplaced as a "colorful mosaic"[2] into the pavement. Recently, the A!KMS has announced that the square will be renamed as Square of "Diversity", "Cultures", or "Tolerance" (Evertz 2013).

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[2]   See: http://www.meinstein-neukoelln.de (last accessed: 20/07/2013).

Figure 3: "Intervention Area" of Aktion! Karl-Marx-Straße

Source: Evertz et al. (2008: 44)

[Markers: orange: „development area"; green: „tandem: art/culture and commerce"; blue: „multicultural unit"]

(2)   The distinction between diversity, understood in terms of an economically exploitable and power-neutral category, as opposed to a classification of street users and usages as different, is manifest in what we defined above as the logic of **commodification**. Whereas "visible and edible" expressions of culture and ethnicity are transformed into "marketable diversity", the Other is invisibilized in the socio-space. By setting "impulses" in the realm of art/culture, specific aspects of diversity in terms of gastronomy or merchandise are highlighted, whereas other expressions of difference, such as Casinos, are excluded and marginalized (interview, marketing expert, july 2012; cf. Hentschel 2013). The Karl-Marx-Straße is festivalized as "Broadway Neukölln" (Ecke et al. 2010), where local cultural/artistic

events and temporary exhibitions and installations open up the city-space for a representation of exoticized and racialized stereotypes.

(3)   In it's "Intercultural Profile", the district of Neukölln, and specifically the Karl-Marx Straße (K.-M.-S.) in Neukölln is located as "still" outside or behind occidentalist standards: „For German and European standards, the K.-M.-S. is still a rather chaotic and unattractive place" (EU-ICP). One of our interview partners confirms this **racialized** description of the streets socio-space by stating that the "conflictive relations between Germans and Migrants" would hinder an "efficient management" of the street (2012). The physical ordering of K.-M.-S. is thus translated into a racial social classification, where the non-controllable or commodifiable expressions of difference are "tamed and harnessed" by A!KMS as proposed by ICP. A logic of "integration", is set "against a scientific mania that tries to represent all aspects of diversity" (interview, project management, july 2012). The idea of subsuming the Other, as described by Dussel, is represented by the logo of A!KMS (Figure 4), where a symbolic bracket around the lettering alludes to the goal of "creating consensus, not conflict" (ibid.).

Figure 4: Official Logo of Aktion! Karl-Marx-Straße

Source: Aktion! Karl-Marx-Straße, 2008.

In order to contextualize the local strategies of territorialization, commodification and racialization that together constitute a process we identify as "invention of diversity", we will relate our observations from Berlin-Neukölln to the socio-spatial transformations in the Historic Center of Mexico City. Following the logic of our decolonial approach, we carry out an analysis of the same three strategies in order to learn about the continuities that connect

the former colony to a colonizing capital of western Europe. We expect to learn from the Mexican example, by gaining a deeper insight into constructions of colonial/imperial difference as legacies that are still visible within the classification of the socio-space. The normalization of a territorialized, commodified and racialized diversity with its implications for the covering-over of power-relations and asymmetries related to difference can be decolonized, we argue, from the perspective of Mexico City's Historic Center.

3.2 The Historic Center of Mexico City

The regeneration policy in Mexico City´s Historic Center inserts into the city´s overall strategy of „Global City formation" (GDF 2011). Parallel to our second example Neukölln, the document makes explicit reference to **EU-ICP**. Mexico City is described as divers, historically multicultural and tolerant space, and with such values, a model in its cosmopolitan quality regarding the institutionalization of affirmative legislation of indigenous rights (Ley Indígena 2011).[3] Such diversity in the social structure is considered an important value to be conserved.

The Historic Center of Mexico City has experienced a profound socio-spatial reconfiguration during the last two decades. The central aim has been to counter the exodus of the center´s population – according to the regeneration agencies´ number, one third of the population has left since the 1980´s. Acknowledged as site of cultural heritage and human patrimony by the UNESCO, the 668 blocks in the Center of the Federal District of Mexico City have been converted into a place for tourism and investment for international real estate capital. Yet as various evaluations of two decades of regeneration politics show, the claim of creating a "city for all" (FCH 2007) has translated into a social cleansing strategy (Leal 2011). Central is the dislocation of street vendors in two steps (first 1993, second 2007) in connection with a criminalization strategy: Although it has always been prohibited to sell products in the street, since 2007 cases of illegal selling are recorded in crime statistics. According to the SSPDF more than 95% of all crimes committed in the area of intervention has a street vendor as its author"[4] – these crimes consist in the act of selling, but the statistics serve to

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[3] Mexico City Law of Interculturality, Care for Migrants and Human Mobility
[4] http://www.metropoli.org.mx/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=3823 (last

criminalize street vendors. Growing police violence is sided by the import of transnational policing practices as can be clearly seen in the invitation of New York's Ex-Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and the orientation of local policing strategies at his famous Zero Tolerance policies (Davis 2007). Thus, regeneration politics in Mexico City combine an entrepreneurial strategy of real estate valorization with politics of securitization and criminalization of unwanted subjects (Becker and Müller 2012). Including a critical examination of racialization in this double matrix of spatial and entrepreneurial strategies thus seems an important task, necessary to understand contemporary cultural urban politics. We therefor now turn to the above-mentioned three operational levels territorialization, commodification and racialization.

(1) In terms of **territorialization** the definition of the area of intervention into a primary and a secondary space, the Perimeter A and B, has brought with it a shift and augmented field of involved governing actors, now including cultural and anthropological, academic agencies (Instituto Nacional de la Antropología e Historia, INAH and the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, INBA), public and private agencies (Secretaria de Desarrollo Urbano y de la Vivienda (SEDUVI), Consejo Ciudadano, Autoridad del Centro, Fideicomiso del Centro Histórico) as well as international organizations (UNESCO and UN-Habitat). The regeneration policies have created specific microspaces of intervention. These aim at commodifying *artesanía* and bringing the newly established museums closer to tourists´ attention. Furthermore several specific strategic zones of intervention have been identified: The Alameda, west of the central plaza shall serve as a zone of recreation, similar to New York´s Central Park (Walker 2008), the Plaza Garibaldi symbolizes the culture of Mariachi and Mexico´s traditional beverages, *Tequila* and *Pulque*, the Zócalo as space for political articulation, festivals and cultural manifestations, several *corredores culturales-turísticos* (Figure 2) and the area of La Merced/Venustiano Carranza, which is considered as still "anarchic and problematic" (ibid).

The spatial dimension of this territorial strategy imagines the Historic Center as point of divergence of Mexico´s heterogeneity. In its latest publication the Fideicomiso del Centro Historic employs the spatial image of the classicist central perspective of lines converging in

accesed: 20/06/2013).

one space. In the projective vision of the regeneration agency, this spatial dispositive correlates with cultural diversity: The Center becomes a "place of integration for the emblematic multiplicity of cultural vectors of the nation, of past and presence, real or imagined, active or latent. (Guía 2011: 21) Such spatial dispositive is considered as powerful integrative project to allow the construction of the nation.

The very center of the city is thus considered as the "heart of the nation", not only in geographical terms, but rather as the collecting of what characterizes Mexico: the heterogeneous experiences and legacies of architecture, languages and social forms of organization of the Mexican Nation are mirrored and re-located in this area (Iturriaga 2012), projecting Mexico´s colonial history onto what is today called the "Perimeter A".

Figure 2: The "Cultural Touristic Corridors" of Mexico City's Historic Center
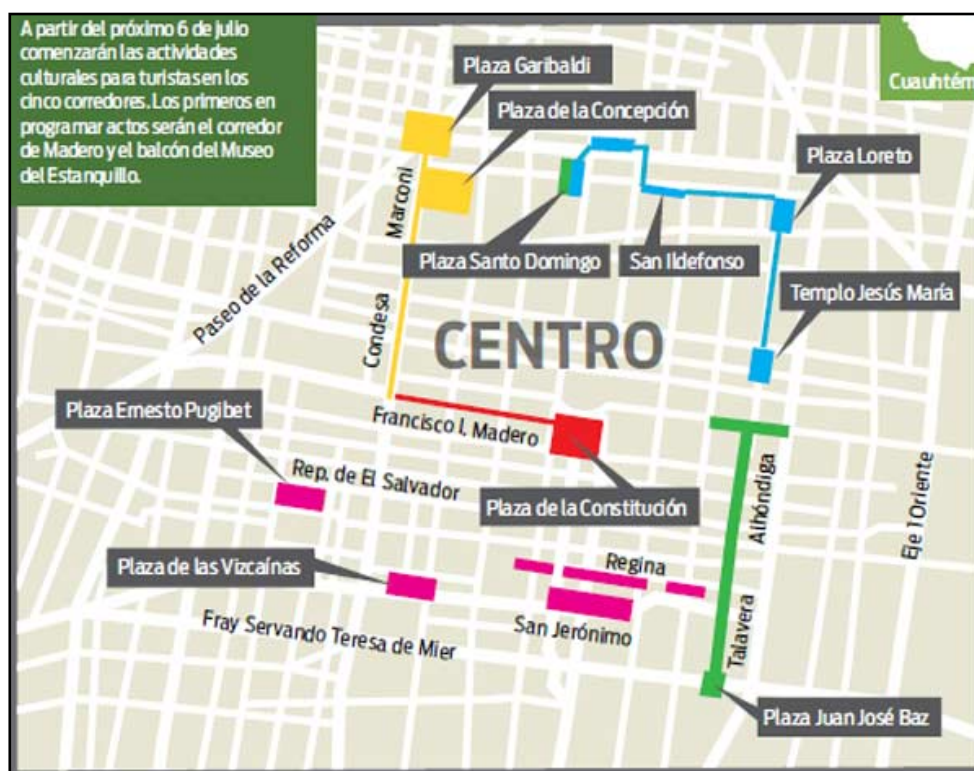
Source: Parámo 2012.

(2) In terms of a **commodification**, diversity has become a central feature to promote the Historic Center as place of intercultural encounter and multicultural cohabitation. The regeneration of the Center imagines the defined area as ill, employing the imaginary of an un-hygienic, smelly and violent city due to the abandoning by the middle class. The regeneration therefor primarily addresses the need for recuperation of the buildings from

their use as storage space for illegal selling in order to convert them into real estate (Plan Estratégico, FCH 2001). An investment-friendly legislation has had great success (Diaz 2012) by lowering ground rent, triggering image campaigns, regulating ownership and prescribing strict rules for renovating deteriorated historical buildings. The latter has lead to an exodus of the less-salaried population due to the fact that those prescriptions demand professional architects as well as the use of original materials.

(3) Social housing policies do not sufficiently address the necessities of a deprived population and contrary to its public discourse ("Vivir en el Centro") provide very limited possibilities to conserve the social structure or answer to the specific needs of the indigenous and female population (Lourdes Garcia 2009). What is more, when it comes to the level of everyday encounter, the ethnic difference between *urbana*s and *indígenas* is still underlying **racialization** and, as our own investigation shows, even aggravated in the existing housing improvement programs (interview "Josefina", october 2012).

Intrinsic to this commodification is the element of "culture" as asset. Reviewing the regeneration agencies´ (Fideicomiso del Centro Historico, Autoridad del Centro, Consejo Ciudadano, private-public initiatives) own online and print-publication, *KM Cer*o, we find frequent references to indigeneity as part of the area´s "wealth".[5] The construction of *mestizaje* as a national myth in post-revolutionary Mexico underlies the cultural policy. As an ideology, *mestizaje* is influenced by the concept of a "cosmic race", coined by Mexican writer and politician José Vazconcelos who described the hybrid Indigenous-European population as a prime example for the constitution of a new, superior "global" race (Alonso 2004).

Diversity as a resource turns into a "whitened" dispositive because it does not consider the intersectionality of class and race discrimination in the everyday encounters: As Oehmichen (2001) notes, the subordinate class position, in the case of the indigenous population turns

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[5] "Para los grupos originarios, menos visibles dada su asimilación al ambiente urbano, el Centro es el espacio sagrado donde refuerzan su identidad, sobre todo mediante ceremonias. Indumentarias tradicionales, artesanías, ritos, varias instituciones interculturales y 20 organizaciones indígenas ubicadas en el Centro, son algunos indicios visibles de esa enorme riqueza. Unos y otros son parte de una dinámica que, se espera, produzca en el futuro una sociedad capaz de reconocer y disfrutar su naturaleza multicultural" (FCH 2011)

into a normalized category: The ascription of a biological property, indigeneity, serves as legitimation for economic subalternity and des-respective treatment by the non-indigenous population, and further inscribes racialized difference into urban space.

The latest version of urban regeneration in Mexico City does not aspire a critical examination of the continuity with colonization. Yet, by employing a valorization of indigenous culture first and foremost as commodifiable asset regeneration follows the capitalist logic of creating urban space as such as exploitable commodity. Thereby the planners des-entangle the area of intervention from its historical embeddedness in a European project called colonialism. The effect of this non-relational planning agency is that, contrary to the celebration of its heterogeneous cultural myth, Mexico´s diverse society is reduced to a harmonious co-habitation and thereby not as the result of a violent appropriation by the European idea.

4. Conclusions: "Neukölln is nowhere"

This paper has shown how in local regeneration policies diversity serves as measurement of territorial control leading to a commodification and racialization of the respective areas of intervention. Commodification and racialization underlie a double-edged strategy: On the one side a festivalization of *mestizaje* understood as historical richness of Mexican´s National culture on a pre-columbian basis; on the other side the normalization of persistent exclusion of indigeneity. As affirmative politics localize the "indigenous other" in Mexico City´s Center they racialize urban space. The definition of such colonial gesture on the basis of the Mexican experience enables us to draw its power mechanism back on Berlin-Neukölln.

The logic of coloniality is translated to the local level of Karl-Marx Straße: By inventing the street's "diversity" as power-neutral expressions of culture and gastronomy, the Aktion! Karl-Marx-Straße reproduces an occidentalist dichotomization between "not yet modern" colonial spaces of difference, where conflict hinders cohesion and progress, and spaces of diversity, where it's discovery as a resource enables local policy makers to order and control socio-spacial relations accordingly. The strategies of commodification and racialization thus can be identified as strategies of covering-over a "colonial difference" by subsuming it under

categories of the European "same". The "invention of diversity", we have shown, is not a mere process of economic exploitation: It is enabled by an intersection of colonization and capitalization that is intrinsic to the European Union's Intercultural Cities Program.

By arguing that "Neukölln is nowhere" (Schack 2013), we contest the occidentalist logic of a local mayor's claim in its entanglement with a global logic: Instead of arguing that the "model Karl-Marx Straße" can serve as a European best-practice case for a city network that exports its insights into urban diversity policies to its non-European partners, we assume that Neukölln as a geographically fixed place does not exist. By dislocating the neighborhood-to-be-regenerated as "nowhere", we visibilize its dimension as a project, beyond being a geographically definable place. The colonial continuities behind this occidentalist invention of diversity can be unveiled by re-locating discourses and practices around colonial/imperial difference between Mexico City's Historic Center and Berlin-Neukölln.

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