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Production and Management of Urban Diversity and Sociability in Place-Making of *Brunnenviertel*, Vienna

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Brunnenviertel is a neighborhood located in Ottakring, a district in the west of the inner city of Vienna. Ottakring, where its 36 per cent of the population of around 105,000 are non-Austrian nationals and the 42 per cent are foreign-born, has been referred by both scholars and policy-makers as a quintessential example of the city's multiethnic enclave. Brunnenviertel is the innermost neighborhood of Ottakring that sits right outside the Vienna's outer ring road, and hosts one of the largest street-markets in Europe, as well as a large open public space called Yppenplatz. Brunnenviertel epitomizes the city's multicultural competence – at least at a policy level. This urban space, which now welcomes around 59,000 visitors on a weekly basis, has transformed into a place, where a diverse range of people come together as public, who routinely encounter, manage, and navigate ethnic diversity and cultural difference. This living with difference that a diverse range of visitors and residents in Brunnenviertel practice in the everyday urban is the main theme of my talk today. In my discussion of everyday encounter with urban diversity, the main focus lies on the process of place-making – the transformation of Brunnenviertel that turned a once seedy working-class migrant neighborhood into the multicultural hub of Vienna.

Figure 1 "Do you want a hip place? Then keep Yppenplatz clean!" a Public Service Advertisement on Yppenplatz, Brunnenviertel, Apr. 2018

Through this lens, I argue that the sense of urban diversity is produced and managed in the broader structural context of place-making, to which all inhabitants must newly build their social relationships. While much has been done to explore the everyday dynamics of, what geographers have referred to as, urban multiculture, the key stream of the literature have delimited urban sociabilities to social interaction that is primarily rooted in ethnic plurality in the city's super-diverse neighborhoods. Of course, criticisms against the concept of super-diversity is nothing new in this debate. Indeed, this strand of research has also argued against a static depiction of urban multiculture based on a demographic abstraction, and argued for the role of terrain – or the ordinary social spaces, where multiculture is encountered and practiced. Despite the claims, this ethos of return to place, however, resorted to a multiplication of extra socio-geographical variables, such as place histories, occupational structures, residential segregation, and etc., to describe, quote unquote, the political, economic, and social settings of ordinary multiculture.

Against this treatment of ethnic diversity as the primary source of social relations in the city's multiethnic neighborhoods, I argue that overestimation of 'difference' obscures the political language of urban diversity that is shaped within the structural context of place-making. Rather than seeing encounter with urban diversity as cemented in the static socio-geographical configuration of a social space, I discuss the production and management of urban diversity at both policy and everyday levels in the process of urban transformation. By answering how difference is produced and managed, rather than what difference produces and manages, I reflect on its overall socio-spatial structuration, through which social interaction between the inhabitants in a multiethnic neighborhood emerges and plays out. In this vein, I situate everyday encounter with urban diversity in Brunnenviertel within the context of Vienna's shift from government to governance in its post-industrial transition. I consider urban multiculture to take place, not in spatial abstracts, but in interconnected social and political relations of power, through which space is constructed. By upscaling urban diversity beyond the physicality of a multiethnic neighborhood, therefore, I examine social interaction between the inhabitants of Brunnenviertel within the broader institutional context of the city in transition.

Despite its long history of social inclusion through redistributive policy interventions, Vienna's transition into a post-industrial urban economy in the 1980s meant new changes and challenges for the city's corporatist welfare model. Of course, neo-liberalization of urban economies has variegated trajectories and outcomes, which are mitigated through the existing institutional arrangements and opportunity structures that correspond to the structural specifics of the urban. Unlike more liberal cities, such as New York and London, where, quote unquote, many of the working-class quarters (are) invaded by the middle-class, the strict sense of gentrification is less prevalent in the case of Vienna, where its rent regulation system and resident-oriented redevelopment program has prevented the displacement of original residents from urban transformation.

That said, the production and management of urban diversity and sociability in today's Brunnenviertel should be understood in connection to the historical development of the city's urban planning strategies. Building on a strategic framework set in the early 1980s, the city's urban renewal paradigm, called soft urban renewal, sought to preserve its unique selling proposition, such as the extensive *Gründerzeit* urban landscape, and to refurbish its dilapidated residential quarters in so-called 'problem areas'. Faced with the combination of the rising migrant share of the local population and urban decay, the city government saw socio-spatial segregation of migrant families in these areas as a grave threat to social cohesion, which would eventually obstruct public-private partnerships for future development. With a growing concern over slumification, Brunnenviertel, a home to mostly low-skilled migrant families from Eastern and Southern Europe underwent a series of redevelopment processes in the mid-1990s.

The beginning of Brunnenviertel's redevelopment begins with Vienna's history of decentralized multilevel governance through cooperation between public and private, market and

civil society, and local, national, and supra-national actors and institutions. Following Austria's accession to the European Union in 1995, the first cooperative urban projects were launched along the city's outer ring road between 1995 and 2001 as a part of EU-funded *URBAN-WIEN Gürtel Plus*, one of which was an overall redevelopment of Brunnenviertel's open public space, Yppenplatz. In the coming years, a coordination between artists, residents, the Federal Economic Chamber, and the local planning authorities paved a way for a new urban economy in Brunnenviertel that was built around the narrative of, quote unquote, art as an engine of urban renewal. A further redevelopment of the overall neighborhood based on the existing migrant economies and networks was soon carried out. Between 2005 and 2010, the street-market of Brunnenviertel, Brunnenmarkt, and Yppenplatz went through 5 stages of redevelopment, which transformed empty dilapidated market areas into a vibrant multicultural space, where ethnic shops, intercultural art initiatives, and a thriving gastronomic scene attract thousands of visitors every day.

As the consistent neighborhood demographic trends in the last two decades point out, the redistributive policy arrangements of Vienna's urban governance prevented the mass displacement of the original residents in Brunnenviertel. However, the unique social mix between artists, middle-class visitors, migrant families, and working-class natives in the epitome of Vienna's soft urban renewal came at a price of new divisions between social groups, as well as conflicts of interest between different actors and institutions. Due to the uneven power relations in the decision-making process, as well as restricted streams of finance, these co-created spaces of encounter, a.k.a. urban living lab, remained an invited space without preconditions for equitable participation. One of the organizers of the first co-creative art initiative during the earlier years of Brunnenvertiel's redevelopment said: the multicultural art scene was being used for other purposes, such as the business interests of the Federal Economic Chamber. She continued: they could make money from turning empty stores into ethnic businesses...this wasn't publicly known, because their PR agency used art as the main motivation...our art initiative was used as their flagship project.

Figure 2 A Co-Creative Cultural Center on Yppenplatz, Brunnenviertel, Feb. 2018

Bars, cafés, and restaurants on Yppenplatz welcome thousands of visitors from different parts of the city, where people enjoy a variety of foods and drinks al fresco on a sunny weekend afternoon. Just off Yppenplatz, its street-market, Brunnenmarkt, offers a diverse range of ethnic

food products, as well as a café and a few food stalls for old working-class natives, where visitors congregate around in small groups – depending on the ethnic and class interior of each establishment. With its transformation, came a new image of the neighborhood. Yppenplatz now became a shared social space, where people from different areas travel to spend their weekend afternoon, where migrant families take their children out, and where trendy Austrian and German youngsters sit around with a drink. Mundane encounter with others is an ordinary feature of this epitome of the city's urban diversity, but this sense of sharedness is simultaneously accompanied by that of dividedness between different social groups.

Figure 3 The thriving gastronomic scene on Yppenplatz, Brunnenviertel, where 'young artists' hang out, Apr. 2018

This contradiction between sharedness and dividedness among the inhabitants has a strong connection to the political language of Brunnenviertel's transformation that was led by its progressive cultural scene. Although in physical proximity, their sociability is limited by the social and cultural distance that is firmly rooted in the image of those who do not embody the narrative of Brunnenviertel's multicultural scene. According to the respondents, who described their perception of the neighborhood areas they do not spend time in, it was the image of art, consumption, and young hipsters that dominated the north end of the market, whereas it was the image of conservativeness, racism, and right-wing politics that characterized the mid-section of the market. Old native visitors down the market describe Yppenplatz, as a place for young artists, where it's too expensive for them, while young visitors to Yppenplatz describe other areas as where they suspect less-progressive people to hang out. While both see Brunnenviertel's redevelopment as something positive – a large open public space, an affordable street-market, and a thriving urban economy, this transformation has engendered a particular order of social interaction between the visitors that is built around the artsy cultural consumption space of multicultural Brunnenviertel.

In sum, encounter with urban diversity in this co-creative space entail the language of social inclusion, which at the same time is followed by that of exclusion. It incorporates the language of multiculturalism, yet separates that of a less-progressive, migrant and working-class problem area. Contrary to much focus in the debate, urban sociability within the proximate urban space in multiethnic neighborhoods goes beyond the native and non-native binary. Living-with-difference not only emerges from ethnic plurality and spatial materiality, but is also shaped by the everyday grammar of urban diversity within the process of place-making. Here, a particular

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understanding of multiculturalism is reconfigured and its attendant narrative is spatialized, to which all inhabitants – regardless of their ethnic difference – shape their social world and form new sociabilities.

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