

Diversity beyond Separation – An experimental Approach on the Edge of Human Condition

ABSTRACT:

Matters of **diversity, equity and inclusion** are deeply enshrined in the body of **human rights** and its respective institutions. As Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” (UDHR 1948), there is the fundamental claim for equality and anti-discrimination, implemented as a cross-cutting theme in the overall human rights framework and explicitly enshrined in two core instruments, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD 1965) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW 1979).

Nowadays the global diversity agenda embraces a whole range of dimensions and pervades almost all stakeholders in the profit and non-profit world. Nevertheless, everyday’s experiences and the impact of diversity initiatives are mixed and sometimes frustrating. It is therefore a matter of state-of-the art inquiry on how to **create a truly lived, inclusive agenda in communities and organisation**, how to close the **knowing-doing gap** and how to **avoid (unconscious) underlying separating patterns**, that often go along differentiated identity lines – as far as identity politics.

I hence choose an **experimental approach** and want to introduce the concept of **Unconditional Spaces** to the field of diversity, which builds upon universal, inalienable human rights. The primary statement of the Office of the High Commissioner of Human rights somehow opens the door to unconditionality: “Human rights are rights we have simply because we exist as human beings - they are not granted by any state.” (OHCHR 2022)

As elaborated in my previous works, I construct **Unconditional Spaces as an open Gestalt** according to Gestalt psychology by Fritz Perls (1969). Due to the principle of correspondence, they can be found on the internal, as well as on the external level of human being and behaviour. Unconditional Spaces are thus incomplete, a matter of approximation, and they resonate with the concept of imperfect peace by Francisco Muñoz (2006). They add a **non-judgemental attitude** (Rogers 1986) to individuals, groups and communities and thereby foster homeostatic self-regulation processes (Emerson 1954, Von Bertalanffy 1968, Fischer 2007 et al.), very much needed in a complex, disruptive, fast changing world.

This contribution to the ivr world conference 2022, wants to raise an out-of-the-box question: **How does the introduction of Unconditional Spaces impact the field of diversity?**

I seek to explore constructive strategies that foster a comprehensive understanding of diversity, inclusion and equity by twisting these core terms on the edge of **human condition and the open Gestalt of unconditionality**. Following the traces from Thomas Hobbes to Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, Steven Pinker to Carl Rogers, John Paul Lederach and Marshall Rosenberg, and their very distinctive philosophical views on “human nature” and condition, I intend to reconnect matters of diversity and differentiations of “the other” with an **underlying, experienced humanity**.

Therefore, I continue exploring prerequisites and challenges of unconditionality and trying to understand its uniting potential. As an open Gestalt strives for closure, Unconditional Spaces themselves could be a missing link in the diversity world, as they deeply remind people of their connectedness, the interwovenness of light and shadow aspects, the healing potential of not being judged, and the gift of transformation. This approach goes beyond specific diversity patterns or categories and thereby creates a lived sense of inclusion, tolerance and human connection.