

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AT THE THEATRE: Reflections on the Debate in Zurich



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Diversity and Inclusion at the Theatre: Reflections on the Debate in Zurich

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Abstract: This case study examines the diversity politics of a prominent theatre in Zurich, Switzerland, and the corresponding public debate. Based on the example of *Schauspielhaus*, the study tries to answer the following questions: What is diversity in the context of a theatre? How can it be achieved? What are potential problems or trade-offs? And what can policymakers learn from all this? To answer these questions, it examines various aspects of diversity regarding the theatre's staff, its program, its audience, and its communication. Its main conclusions are: (1) The concept of diversity can be applied to various areas of a theatre, and various criteria can be relevant in each area. However, defining these criteria can be controversial. (2) Not much is known yet about best practices to promote diversity at a theatre. More research is therefore needed in this area. (3) Creating permanent positions for diversity agents at theatres may be a promising step toward achieving more diversity.

Keywords: diversity, inclusion, theatre, culture, cultural policy

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Introduction

'What's going on in Switzerland's most important theatre?' This was the title of an article published by one of the most influential Swiss newspapers (NZZ) on October 1st, 2022. Its main claim was that the Zurich-based *Schauspielhaus* was losing its audience because it focused too much on diversity. Thus, only 72% of all subscriptions were renewed for the current season. This was a considerably lower rate than between 2013 and 2019 at the same theatre and also at other Swiss theatres in 2022. The article therefore argued that, since such a drop in subscriptions was only observed at the *Schauspielhaus*, it must have been due to its focus on diversity.

What did the *Schauspielhaus* do? Several aspects were mentioned in the article: the theatre performed plays about diversity; they strove for diversity in their audience and in their team; they hired a diversity agent; and they asked their staff to participate in diversity awareness workshops. The *Schauspielhaus* was also not shy about communicating about the topic. They clearly stated on their website that they pursued a 'cross-sectoral, transdisciplinary, inclusive, and intersectional approach that strives for the greatest possible diversity'. In addition, they also published a *Talking Diversity* glossary, organised several public events in a series called 'Exit Racism', and created an audience group for BIPOC¹. Without a doubt, the *Schauspielhaus* indeed has a strong focus on diversity.

But can this focus on diversity really explain why people cancel their subscriptions? Another newspaper article (Republik, 5.10.22) opposed such a simple conclusion and discussed several alternative explanations for the observed drop in subscriptions. According to this article, the possible explanations could relate to a general long-term trend towards audience decline in all German-speaking theatres, short-term fluctuations due to COVID restrictions, and the audience's changing preferences regarding innovation or aesthetic criteria. Perhaps most importantly, however, the article emphasised that theatres often undergo a certain change in their audience in the first years of a new directorate with a new artistic direction. In such cases, the old core audience may not like the new style, but a new audience may be won over time. Not only has this been observed in other theatres but also during previous changes in management at the *Schauspielhaus*. Following this argument, it would not matter so much that the new management focused on diversity but simply that it introduced something new. In any case, the available data does not allow for a clear conclusion in the matter. More extensive studies based on a systematic comparison of different theatres would be needed if one wanted to test any kind of causal relationship.

Nevertheless, the original article in the NZZ sparked a vivid public debate about diversity at the theatre. Many more articles and comments were published by various newspapers (see references), the *Schauspielhaus* management issued a statement on the debate, and local

¹ BIPOC ist a political self-designation and abbreviation for Black, Indigenous and People of Color.

politicians even tabled two motions on the subject in their respective councils. While also discussing the original claim, the debate quickly became more general and also spilled over to the other German-speaking countries (Germany and Austria). Almost two months after the publication of the NZZ article, the debate is still ongoing.

This debate raises several interesting questions: (1) What is diversity in the context of theatres? (2) How can it be achieved? (3) What are potential problems or trade-offs? (4) What can policymakers learn from all this? The present case study aims at answering these questions. To do so, it summarises and organises the content of more than 20 newspaper articles on the topic published in 2022, a personal interview with the *Schauspielhaus's* diversity agent, Yuvviki Dioh, and additional documents such as publications of the *Schauspielhaus* or political motions.

This case study is structured as follows: The first section illustrates the importance of the topic to policymakers by showing how diversity is a central topic on political agendas from the local to the European level. The second section then provides a general conceptualisation of diversity by asking what it is and why it should be achieved. The main body of this study, however, is certainly the third section. It tries to answer the questions mentioned above for four different domains of a theatre. It therefore discusses diversity in a theatre's staff, its program, its audience, and its communications.

Policy context

The *Schauspielhaus* in Zurich is to a large extent publicly funded, as are many other theatres in German-speaking countries. By far the most important donor is the city of Zurich. In the season 2018/2019, for example, it contributed more than 38 million Swiss francs (CHF), while ticket sales only accounted for approximately 5 million CHF (*Schauspielhaus Zürich*, 2019). In total, public funds accounted for more than 80% of the total budget. Similar numbers can be found for other seasons as well, with the exception of the years during the pandemic, when public funding became even more important due to a lack of ticket sales.

It goes without saying that such public funding must be somehow legitimised. On the one hand, this includes well-known arguments for cultural funding in general, such as culture's 'contribution to an open and vibrant society' (*Stadt Zürich*, 2022). On the other hand, factors specific to the *Schauspielhaus* are mentioned in the cultural mission statement of the city of Zurich (*Stadt Zürich*, 2019). It mentions the high quality of the theatre's work, its high number of visitors, and its international reputation. However, institutions applying for public funding cannot define their own criteria for assessment. Instead, the city of Zurich defines these criteria and sometimes even actively makes certain demands. When the new directorate of the *Schauspielhaus* was elected, for example, it was explicitly stated that the *Schauspielhaus* should 'increasingly take on the task of representing diversity and variety of society in the house and in art, and to address further population groups' (*Stadt Zürich*, 2019).

Such demands are certainly not unique to Zurich and its *Schauspielhaus*. Many other local and national funding agencies have similar criteria for their assessments. This is also the case for the European Union. For example, the *New European Agenda for Culture*, which outlines the

cultural policy aims of the European Commission, also emphasises diversity and inclusiveness. It states the goals of ‘harnessing the power of culture and cultural diversity for social cohesion and well-being’ and developing ‘specific actions for social inclusion through culture’ (European Commission, 2018). In addition, different research projects on diversity and inclusion are funded by the EU under its Horizon 2020 program. The present study is part of one of them, with the title *European Inventory of Societal Values of Culture as a Basis for Inclusive Cultural Policies* (INVENT).

However, despite its popularity, the focus on diversity in cultural policies is also a controversial topic within the political sphere. The debate in Zurich illustrates this with two political motions handed in at local councils (Regierungsrat Kanton Zürich, 2020; Gemeinderat Stadt Zürich, 2022). One of them even explicitly refers to the article in the NZZ and challenges the responsible departments to explain and justify their policies. The third part of this study will present the controversial aspects and their corresponding arguments in more detail.

In sum, this short section shows that diversity in the context of theaters is an important but controversial topic with high relevance for cultural policymakers. At the same time, however, it is also a relatively new topic. This means that best practices have not been established yet, and many policies are somewhat exploratory. This is also reflected in the present study, which also follows an exploratory approach and asks questions rather than answers them. It therefore does not try to explain what happened at *Schauspielhaus* and does not make straightforward policy recommendations. Rather, it uses the debate in Zurich to identify areas of controversy that must be taken into account by cultural policymakers wanting to promote diversity.

Diversity: what and why?

The debate on diversity did not originate in the context of cultural policy but in the labour market. More specifically, it was introduced as part of a broader debate on equal employment opportunities in the USA in the 1960s. A central outcome of this debate was the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed discrimination based on race, colour, religion, sex, and national origin. In addition, an executive order was issued a year later that required government agencies and contractors to take affirmative action to ensure that all applicants have equal employment opportunities. Later, other countries also introduced similar legislation with the goal of fostering diversity at the workplace. This goal is also reflected in the scientific literature on diversity, which mostly deals with questions of diversity management. This includes questions on how to achieve diversity and how to deal with it once it has been achieved.

Based on the origins of the debate, several aspects of diversity that are important to this study can be highlighted.

First, diversity is closely linked to the concept of discrimination. Namely, discrimination is typically understood as the main reason why diversity is not achieved in the first place. Therefore, affirmative action must be taken in order to reduce discrimination and thus increase diversity.

Second, one must know the characteristics of people that are typically discriminated against in order to take affirmative action. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, for example, explicitly mentions race, colour, religion, sex, and national origin as the grounds on which one can be discriminated against. The goal of affirmative action, therefore, is to reduce discrimination and increase diversity regarding these characteristics. However, this list is certainly not exhaustive, and, depending on the circumstances, other characteristics can be added. Often, they also include characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation, and disability. Deciding which characteristics are relevant under certain circumstances can sometimes be difficult, however.

Third, it is sometimes not clear whether the goal of diversity policy is to achieve diversity regarding certain characteristics or whether it is to achieve equal opportunities. Often, it is assumed that equal opportunities lead to equal outcomes. This must not necessarily be the case, however. If members of a certain group simply do not apply for a job, for example, then equal opportunities in the application process do not lead to diversity. This raises the question of how far affirmative action should go. For example, should members of disadvantaged groups be hired, even if they are less qualified than others? And should measures be taken to increase the diversity of applications? Clearly, the answers here depend on what is interpreted as discrimination. For example, are there fewer women than men in STEM disciplines because of discrimination, or is this simply a matter of personal choice?

Fourth, diversity is often treated not only as a descriptive concept but also as a normative one. Accordingly, diversity is something that *should* be achieved. Clearly, this needs justification. In the diversity literature, three broad classes of reasons can be identified why organisations should foster diversity: (1) because discrimination is against the law. This is called the compliance-based model. (2) because discrimination is unfair. This is called the social justice model. And (3) because diversity pays off. This is called the deficit model, meaning that organisations with low diversity suffer from this deficit. Thus, diversity is assumed to increase productivity while also decreasing absenteeism and turnover rates (Harvey, 2012; Wise & Tschirhart, 2000).

Diversity at the theatre

Now that the context of this study has been established, the following section examines in more detail what diversity means for theatres. Based on an interview with the diversity agent of the *Schauspielhaus* in Zurich and newspaper articles on the topic, four different areas are identified that are relevant to this study. As has already been mentioned, diversity is discussed in the context of a theatre's staff, its program, its audience, and its communication. This section is structured according to these four areas and tries to answer the following questions for each of them: What is diversity in this context? How can it be achieved? What are potential problems or trade-offs? And what can policymakers learn from all this?

Staff

According to Yuvviki Dioh, the *Schauspielhaus*'s diversity agent, achieving diversity is a long process that includes different phases. The *Schauspielhaus*, however, is only at the very

beginning of this process, as Dioh's position was only created in early 2022. Thus, she set her first goal to raise awareness among the theatre's staff. This way, she thought she could create an environment aware of the topic, which would in turn facilitate all her further work. She has organised different awareness workshops, with participation strongly recommended to all staff. In addition, Dioh tries to take care of the diversity that already exists among the staff at Schauspielhaus. Examples include discussing the traditional gender norms institutionalised by men's and women's tailors or taking measures that accommodate the needs of actors with disabilities. These activities seem fairly non-controversial. The only exception actually relates to the suspicion of certain critics that staff members are forced to participate in awareness workshops against their will (Gemeinderat Stadt Zürich, 2022).

Much more interesting, however, is how diversity politics affect the hiring process at the theatre. This is clearly the area that relates most closely to the origins of the debate on diversity. The *Schauspielhaus*, for example, states in its job advertisements that they 'strongly encourage members of underrepresented social groups to apply'. This especially includes applications 'from BIPOC as well as from people with migration experience' (Schauspielhaus Zürich, 2022). In addition, the *Schauspielhaus's* diversity agent is also included in the application process and works closely with human resources. Not surprisingly, similar issues arise in the *Schauspielhaus* debate as in the general debate on diversity in the labour market.

To begin with, there is the question of relevant characteristics that should be considered when talking about diversity. In the case of the *Schauspielhaus*, this is not defined explicitly. Thus, the city of Zurich requires the *Schauspielhaus* to 'represent the diversity of society' without defining further criteria. The *Schauspielhaus* could therefore decide for itself how to deal with this request. As a result, it states on its website that it wants to achieve diversity regarding 'age, gender, race, and origin, as well as other categories of systematic discrimination'. Further, a special focus on hiring BIPOC and people with migration experience has already been mentioned. Finally, Yuvviki Dioh also explained that the *Schauspielhaus* is generally trying to consider all categories of systematic discrimination, depending on the situation. For this reason, they prefer to use a flexible understanding instead of following a fixed definition based on an exhaustive list of categories.

While such a flexible definition can be useful to quickly adapt to changing circumstances, it may also pose a challenge because, in this case, the theatre must legitimise its own choices. Thus, it may not always be obvious what groups are in fact discriminated against since this depends on the frame of reference. For example, does the theatre want to hire people belonging to groups that are discriminated against in general society, in the labour market, or in the theatre industry? Research shows that these are not always the same. People with migration experience, for example, are generally discriminated against in the German labour market, but in the theatre sector they even have a slight advantage (Gerhards et al., 2020).

A special case in this regard is diversity in political attitudes. Thus, the public debate in German-speaking countries also extensively discusses the claim that theatres exclude people with certain political views and thus produce ideologically homogenous institutions. More specifically, it was argued that theatres, and especially those theatres supporting diversity, exclude people with conservative views or views that are critical of diversity politics (FAZ, 4.10.22). Clearly, the question here is whether certain political views are discriminated against

and thus should be considered relevant for diversity at the theatre. If one takes general society as a reference frame, this is probably not the case. If one only considers the theatre sector, it may in fact be true. An interesting statement on this matter was made by the famous Swiss theatre director Milo Rau. He stated that 'the theatre scene [...] is and always has been rather liberal and left-wing' (NZZ, 8.11.22). Accordingly, there are simply not enough people with conservative views who even want to work in the theatre. This sounds very similar to the case of women in STEM. If political views should be considered relevant for diversity at the theatre, one must therefore ask how far affirmative action should go to include conservative views.

Closely related to this issue is the question of whether the goal of diversity politics is equality of opportunity or equality of outcomes. The *Schauspielhaus*, however, does not provide a clear answer to this question. On the one hand, they mention on their website that they follow an 'approach that strives for the greatest possible diversity', thus implying an approach that focuses on outcomes. On the other hand, however, their head of media and public relations stated in an interview that their goal is to 'increase and secure equal opportunities for marginalised people and to significantly and sustainably reduce discrimination by promoting and including diversity at all levels of the company' (NZZ, 12.10.22). This would imply that equal opportunities are the goal and diversity is but a means to achieve this goal. When asked about this, Yuvviki Dioh (the *Schauspielhaus's* diversity agent) answered that things are not that simple. Instead, she sees equal opportunities and diversity both as goals in their own right, while each of them has a positive influence on the other. Thus, equal opportunities are also a necessary condition for diversity. She would therefore not try to choose between the two goals and rather treat them as complementary instead of mutually exclusive.

Based on the examined material, three potential trade-offs can be identified when a theatre follows a diversity-based hiring process. First, members of certain marginalised groups may be reduced to their group-based identity. For example, they may not be hired for their skills but simply because they belong to one of these groups (Luzerner Zeitung, 3.11.2022). Or, as the black performer Ntando Cele complains in an interview, they may only play parts that are somehow linked to their group-based identity. Thus, she thinks that she could not do 'a play that wasn't about racism', even though her 'goal as a black artist would be to just make entertainment' (WOZ, 24.2.22). Second, more diversity in a theatre's staff may also lead to an increase in internal conflicts. Thus, a more diverse team may have more diverse needs that must be considered and balanced. Third, one may also worry that a more diverse cast drives away a theatre's audience. This claim, however, is quickly denounced as 'no more than a racist statement' by the two *Schauspielhaus's* directors (Aargauer Zeitung, 15.10.22). It is interesting to note, however, that this claim has not been found elsewhere in the source material. Therefore, it seems like this claim can be disregarded. Similar claims have been made that link the *Schauspielhaus's* audience loss with its diversity politics, but none of them concerns the diversity in a play's cast (see below).

In sum, these are important issues that are not easy to solve and often require a value-based decision. This can certainly be challenging for theatres. Even though they may lose some flexibility, more specific guidelines from policymakers could make it easier for them to legitimise their choices. Thus, policymakers could decide what characteristics should be considered for affirmative action in the hiring process and whether they want to achieve equal

opportunities or equal outcomes. This would also allow for better monitoring and reporting of relevant aspects of diversity.

Programme

Diversity in a theatre's programme has different aspects. Again, Yuvviki Dioh started by attempting to raise awareness for the topic in what already exists. Thus, she takes on an advisory role during the production of plays and helps to find solutions whenever a problem arises. For example, she worked closely with the director of a play based on a film that portrays a social outcast, originally displayed as a troll. In this process, they developed an idea of how an actor might represent such a character without invoking harmful stereotypes. Doing so, however, she emphasises that she does not censor plays and that directors are not forced to follow her advice. Rather, solutions are explored based on mutual agreement.

Again, however, the controversial aspects are not found in the immediate area of responsibility of Yuvviki Dioh. Thus, a concern often raised in public debate is that the *Schauspielhaus* shows too many plays that address diversity itself as a central theme. Additionally, several other public events take place at the *Schauspielhaus* that exclusively discuss topics related to diversity. Several critics argue that the *Schauspielhaus* is losing its audience due to this focus on diversity. Thus, the argument is that especially the older audience, people who traditionally had a subscription, are not interested in diversity as a topic and therefore cancel their subscription. This would not be very surprising and could also be observed in other cultural venues that adopted innovative concepts (Republik, 5.10.22). The interesting question, however, is whether new audiences can be reached with these topics and to what extent they can compensate for the loss of the old audience. The *Schauspielhaus* is optimistic that their plan will work out. One of the directors mentions in an interview that some of the plays that explicitly talk about diversity are among the most watched plays of the year (NZZ, 5.11.22). Perhaps the real issue lies somewhere else.

Some critics argue that the *Schauspielhaus* may in fact show plays about diversity and that they are even good plays, but that there are hardly any plays about other topics. This leads to a somewhat paradoxical situation where too much focus on diversity as a theme leads to a decreasing diversity of themes. A politician from Zurich therefore complains that 'the theatre wants to be diverse, but it only appeals to a certain segment'. According to her, this could be the reason why fewer people want to see a play at the *Schauspielhaus*. It appears that only people interested in diversity as a topic are catered to at the *Schauspielhaus*. Actor and director Robert Hunger-Bühler therefore demands that a theatre should 'bring different segments, for example, it must again have the courage to play a good light comedy off the page' (Luzerner Zeitung, 3.11.22).

If the diversity of topics in plays is considered a worthwhile goal, a similar question arises about diversity in the theatre's staff. Thus, one must ask what kind of criteria should be applied to increase diversity. Is it enough, for example, to play a mix of comedies and tragedies? Should the interests of certain marginalised groups be catered to, and if yes, what are these groups in a specific context? Or should all interests in a society be considered proportionally or equally? These are certainly questions that are controversially debated. For example, the original NZZ article (1.10.22) also asked why the *Schauspielhaus* does not address the situation

of the large community of Kosovars in Zurich in one of their plays. And, since diversity is typically considered a topic of the political left, it is also often discussed whether publicly funded theatres should aim for political diversity in their plays. Of course, however, a potential problem here could be again that the theatre sector currently does not have the people with the necessary background. Thus, *Schauspielhaus* director Benjamin von Blomberg raises the concern that he does not know any Kosovar theatre or directors. And, of course, Milo Rau's statement about the theatre scene being rather liberal and left-wing is also relevant here (NZZ, 8.11.22).

Similar lessons can therefore be learned by policymakers as before. They first must decide whether they want to let the theatre itself interpret what diversity in its program means or whether they want to give clear guidelines. Second, if they want guidelines, then they must decide on their content. This includes questions about different aspects of diversity in a theatre's programme and what characteristics should be considered relevant for diversity. Again, this can also allow for better monitoring and reporting of relevant aspects of diversity but may limit the theatre's own decision-making capacity.

Audience

Another central aspect of the public debate on diversity at the theatre is certainly the role of its audience. In this regard, one should keep in mind that the whole debate started because the *Schauspielhaus* lost a part of its core audience. This clearly points to the role of the audience in legitimising public funding for the *Schauspielhaus* and theatres in general. The political motion directed at the city council of Zurich, for example, asked whether the *Schauspielhaus* 'should not give more consideration to the needs of the population' (Gemeinderat Stadt Zürich, 2022). In an interview, one of the initiators further explained that 'the *Schauspielhaus* must offer a program that appeals to a broad audience and thus also brings in money' (NZZ, 12.10.22).

While this motion and other comments in the public debate are mostly concerned with the number of theatregoers, the *Schauspielhaus* itself seems to be more concerned with the diversity of its audience. Thus, they state on their website that they strive for the 'greatest possible diversity [...] among both staff and audience' (Schauspielhaus Zürich, 2022). To do so, they want to gain new audiences that were not frequent theatregoers before. Young people, or price-sensitive people in general, are attracted to special offers such as reduced ticket prices on Mondays or regular pay-as-you-want evenings, for example. In addition, they want to reach a diverse audience with the topics of the plays that they show. And finally, some of the events and the BIPOC audience group organised by the *Schauspielhaus* are specifically addressed to groups that are traditionally underrepresented in a theatre's audience.

Clearly, the size and diversity of a theatre's audience are not necessarily in competition with each other. Most likely, one can even lead to the other, for example, when new audiences are won and therefore the total number of theatregoers increases. However, several issues can be discussed in this context.

First, one must ask what groups should be targeted as potential new audiences. Or, in other words, one must pose the question again: what characteristics should be considered relevant for a diverse audience? The *Schauspielhaus* mentions the same characteristics as for its staff:

'age, gender, race, and origin as well as other categories of systematic discrimination' (Schauspielhaus Zürich, 2022). In the public debate, however, other characteristics are also discussed. One commentator, for example, complains that diversity at the theatre does not take into account people with conservative views or working-class people (NZZ, 5.11.22). Instead, he claims that diversity is mainly measured by a high share of BIPOC. In a similar vein, another comment states that '[publicly] funded culture remains an elitist art project for those who organise our society. Participation is possible, but one has to fit in with aspirations and rules. In other words, high culture is an exhausting assimilation process, not a defiant diversification process' (NZZ, 5.11.22). Meaningful arguments for and against the inclusion of such criteria can be found. On the one hand, for example, one may argue that conservative people are not discriminated against generally and therefore must not be considered in the debate on diversity. On the other hand, however, one may also argue that a publicly funded institution should offer something to suit all tastes. Clearly, this is a political issue where there is no right or wrong answer.

Independently of who should be targeted, another question is how these target groups can be reached. The assumption often seems to be that plays about diversity attract a diverse audience or that plays about a certain group also attract members of this group. However, this may not always be so clear. As has already been mentioned, too much emphasis on diversity as a topic may decrease the diversity of topics in reality. If only people interested in diversity would visit the theatre, the diversity of the audience would in fact decline. More generally, if one wants to cater to their taste, one needs to know what different groups are interested in. It should also be said that one could also find out that certain groups are simply not interested in going to the theatre in general, regardless of what plays are on offer. In such cases, one would probably need to rethink certain aspects of the theatre's diversity strategy. Yuvviki Diah confirms that these are questions that the *Schauspielhaus* is currently dealing with. However, she also emphasises that finding the answers to these questions will be a long process and that no simple answers can be given based on current knowledge.

The implications for policymakers are once again very similar to what has already been said. They must decide whether they want to define diversity themselves or whether they want to let the theatre decide what diversity means regarding its audience. Furthermore, if they want to define diversity themselves, they must define the characteristics of people or groups that are considered relevant for diversity. However, an important problem here is that diversity in a theatre's audience cannot be measured easily, and it is therefore difficult for policymakers to check whether their specifications have been met. The *Schauspielhaus*, for example, largely relies on qualitative assessments of their own staff. They claim that their audience has become younger in recent years, but they cannot show this quantitatively, even though they regularly conduct audience surveys². Their claim is that younger people participate less in the survey than older people, and the results are therefore not representative. A more reliable method would perhaps be to ask people about their characteristics when they buy tickets, but this

² https://www.schauspielhaus.ch/files/Ergebnisbericht_SHZ_BesucherInnen_Umfrage_2022.pdf (last retrieved: 6.12.2022)

might not be accepted by the audience, especially in the case of more sensitive information such as race or class.

Communication

Finally, the communication of a theatre can also be relevant for diversity. In contrast to the aspects discussed above, however, communication itself does not have the aspiration to be diverse. Instead, it is somewhat of a cross-cutting issue since it touches on all the other aspects mentioned above. Obviously, the *Schauspielhaus* does not only discuss its diversity politics internally; it also communicates about them publicly. This does not seem very controversial.

The only controversial aspect may be *how* the *Schauspielhaus* communicates. For example, the theatre communicators decided to use an inclusive language, most visibly in the often-disputed asterisk for gender neutral designations in the German language (e.g., 'Mitarbeiter*innen'). A journalist raised the issue that such a language 'might be inclusive in the humanities milieu but might be discouraging to everyone else' (NZZ, 1.10.22). Clearly, this statement can only be assessed empirically. If it should be confirmed, however, there may be a dilemma as to whether the inclusion of one group excludes another group. Careful deliberation and balancing of interests would clearly be needed in this case.

Conclusion

This case study examined the diversity politics of a prominent theatre in Zurich, Switzerland, and the corresponding public debate. It tried to answer the following questions: What is diversity in the context of a theatre? How can it be achieved? What are potential problems or trade-offs? And what could policymakers learn from all this? To answer these questions, it examined various aspects of diversity regarding a theatre's staff, its program, its audience, and its communication.

The study found that much of the public debate concerns the understanding of diversity in the specific context of a publicly funded theatre. The concept of diversity can be applied to various areas of a theatre, and various criteria can be relevant in each area. It is therefore often discussed why a certain group of people is or is not considered in the theatre's diversity strategy. Furthermore, one may ask whether the theatre's diversity strategy focuses on equal opportunities or equal outcomes. Since diversity is not further defined in Zurich, these are currently the most important issues for policymakers. They must decide whether they want to provide clear guidelines or whether they want to let theatres interpret for themselves what diversity means to them. Potential arguments in favour of guidelines would be that they provide theatres with a certain democratic legitimacy and that they allow governments to check whether theatres in fact fulfil the mission they are given. If guidelines are given, however, policymakers must also consider that this may restrict the artistic freedom of a theatre to some extent and limits the flexibility of the theatre's own efforts to increase diversity. Perhaps a good solution would be to come to a mutual agreement between the theatre and policymakers.

This study also displayed several approaches to how diversity is promoted at the theatre and what potential problems and trade-offs may arise when doing so. The main conclusion in this

regard, however, is that much in this area is still unknown. Thus, even experts at the theatre do not know how diversity is best achieved, and most discussed problems and trade-offs are simply hypotheses without much empirical foundation. More research is therefore clearly needed in this area.

Finally, the most important policy recommendation of Yuvviki Dioh, the theatre's diversity agent, is that more jobs such as her own should be created at other theatres. This way, theatres have the capacity to look for answers to these open questions. In addition, she emphasises several advantages of her position in Zurich in contrast to other theatres that also have similar positions. She argues that diversity agents should be given a permanent contract since their work is not done quickly but is in fact a long process. Also, she argues that diversity agents must be strategically positioned in their organisations if they are meant to work effectively. For theatres, she recommends a position closely associated with the directorate, with dramaturgy, and with human resources. This stands in contrast to institutions in Germany where diversity agents are given a temporary mandate and are thus not properly included in their organisation's processes.

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