Berlin experiences and expectations:
On the way toward a more diverse cultural sector

Focus group interviews with non-visitors and non-actors

Analysis and report

Joshua Kwesi Aikins, Naomi Bechert,
Daniel Gyamerah, Lucienne Wagner

VIELFALT
ENTSCHEIDET
Diversity in Leadership

**Diversity
Arts Culture**
Berliner Projektbüro
für Diversitätsentwicklung

There is no art without audiences and there are no cultural institutions not interested in their audiences. Though these audiences differ depending on the respective arts practice and cultural institution, many of Berlin's cultural institutions have also noticed for some time now that their audiences do not or only insufficiently reflect the diverse makeup of the city's population.

The topic of diversity has now reached the upper echelons of the art and cultural sector. The way cultural institutions tackled diversity in the past was often limited to reaching out to new target groups. But now the question of diversity recruiting is also increasingly taking centre stage. The correlation between "representation on stage" and "the attending audience" seems compelling. Recognising this, however, often does not lead much to a shift of focus on the part of institutions. Neither does their overall approach to becoming more diverse change at all. Instead of grappling with the question of "How to reach out to this target group as audience?" the pressing issue now is how to hire and engage this "target group" as staff members.

This narrow understanding of diversity as a mere representation problem simply does not go far enough. Long-lasting effects can only be achieved through a holistic understanding of diversity that takes into account the structural power dynamics inherent in institutions and the experiences of discrimination in the art and cultural sector encountered by marginalised/disadvantaged groups. Among the group of so-called non-visitors of cultural activities are not only – as is often suggested – people who are not interest in the arts and culture. The fact that more white persons without disabilities apply for job vacancies also does not mean that there are no qualified artists of Colour and/or with disabilities. Often, the reasons why people from marginalized communities who are in principle interested in art and culture and/or work as artists stay away lie elsewhere: Given that they experience(d) forms of exclusion and discrimination in the art and cultural sector, such persons end up taking a conscious decision to refrain from visiting certain cultural institutions, engaging in cultural activities or from applying for vacancies in the cultural sector. Even institutions that manage to interest persons from marginalized communities in a specific job opening sometimes find it difficult to also hold on to them. All too often, the commitment to diversity which is set out in an institution's mission statement is not sufficiently reflected in its day to day practice.

The perspectives of those who are interested in culture and/or create art and who consciously take the decision not to engage in the art sector are indispensable, especially if we want to understand how cultural institutions that appeal more to people as a place to work for and that would offer cultural programmes that are frequented and appreciated by more diverse audiences could look like. This group and its experiences are too often ignored when it comes to audience development. In fact, members of this marginalized group could serve as valuable multiplicators in the respective communities. Moreover, they could be won back relatively easily given their interest in arts and culture.
The personas created by Citizens For Europe make visible the experiences encountered by this group of people and provide clear and data-based information to help institutions develop a sustainable understanding of diversity.

Diversity Arts Culture

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This publication is a slightly abriged version of the study.
The complete study is available on request.

1 Invitation/Introduction

As the city's flagship industry, Berlin's art and cultural sector is known for being colourful, hip, young and vibrant, but also for being steeped in tradition. The range of cultural activities on offer appeal to visitors from Germany and around the world alike. As the creative hub of Germany, or perhaps Europe, Berlin attracts artists and creative minds from both within Germany and abroad. This self-portrayal of Germany's capital is rather true. But, there is also another side to Berlin's cultural sector: More than one million Berliners do not or hardly ever make use of the city's cultural activities as visitors nor engage in the capital's cultural production as artists. A growing number of them belong to communities that experience discrimination from Berlin's cultural institutions. Despite the city boasting an abundance of cultural backgrounds, perspectives, origins and experiences, this diversity is, however, too little reflected in the cultural sector. The question of diversity and inclusivity in Berlin's cultural sector remains a fundamental question for the future given Berlin and Germany's growing diversity and also because of the rising number of visitors coming to Berlin. Racism, sexism, ageism, ableism create barriers that make Berlin's cultural sector less diverse than the city of Berlin is in reality. Apart from figures and demographic trends, this fact is underpinned by the experiences of all those who encountered forms of exclusion from Berlin's cultural sector and thus have decided – or were even compelled – to reduce their artistic engagement or cultural activities, and dedicate their skills and interests to other localities and cultural scenes.

Given Berlin's image as a cultural hub, the experiences of the groups of people excluded from the city's very own cultural sector provide key insights: How is diversity faring in this key industry? What are the barriers that prevent the art sector from being as diverse as the society reflected in the streets of Berlin?

What experiences and coping strategies exist? What creative solutions do people find who have become non-visitors and non-actors, often against their will? To explore these and other questions, the authors invited people with diverse experiences and interviewed them in four focus groups: The interviewed participants came from groups of people who made different experiences in Berlin's cultural sector with regard to their diasporan linkages, gender diversity and the diverse landscape of Berlin's artistic fields, and due to racist and sexist discrimination as well as other forms of exclusion. In the interviews, participants shared a variety of experiences, expectations and coping strategies, which shed light on their diverse life realities. In order to enable an honest and deep sharing, participants were granted full anonymity. To make their insights accessible, the participants' experiences, perspectives and expectations were assigned fictional personas by the authors after a thorough analysis of all the interview contents. The portraits depicted on the following pages are fictionalised; yet the contents are ever so real. The personas enable us to better understand how existing barriers impact people's lives and are an invitation to decision-makers in cultural policymaking, administration and cultural institutions, as well as those interested in critically challenging the status quo. They also offer the opportunity to put to test new ideas to effect real change. In fact, in order to be really inclusive, upcoming measures ought to effect real change in a range of aspects mentioned by the personas. The personas translate political questions into real-life issues; they combine story and structure and thus enable a genuine discussion from which lasting change can arise.

Arfase Bedhasa

Ethiopian woman, 32 years of age theatre and film actress with a history of displacement

Persona I, focus group: non-visitors

" I worked as an actress in a supporting role on a film set. A refugee who was supposed to re-enact his own displacement played the main character. No one on set was allowed to talk to him. When he ended up having a breakdown and I endeavoured to help him I was prevented from doing so. All this happened on a set of a public broadcaster.

Criticizing the cultural sector for …

being so precarious that artists are compelled to take on roles that are discriminatory and cli-ché-ridden

upholding, behind the scenes, entrenched hierar-chies that put you at their mercy – forcing you to just play along

normalizing hierarchies and discrimination al-ready during training and studies: people do not learn to be cognisant of discrimination

the ubiquitous nature of exploitation and for being expected to do unpaid work

I expect the cultural sector to …

require institutions to undergo diversity aware-ness training that critically engages with racism.

restructure decision-making processes.

make structures more flexible and receptive to innovation and ideas "from below".

ensure decisive actions in response to discrimi-natory behaviour and misconduct.

> I work at a cultural institution where I started a project that was very well received by the audience. But my superior sabotaged and derailed it through his constant harassment. In order to save my own project, I continue to work on it in a freelance capacity. This has me working a 60-hour week, which leaves me totally exhausted.

Negative experiences

directors offering me a role in exchange for sex

often being cast to play a sex worker
→ *racist and sexist stereotyping*

being rejected by artist agencies because of an accent

Believing them to be authentic, white decision-makers choose performances that are reproducing clichés.

no space for nuanced performances

I cope with barriers by …

creating my own spaces (e. g., starting my own projects).

doing artistic work without relying on institutions and funding.

showing perseverance.

networking among colleagues who work in the same field.

engaging in lobbying.

I expect policymakers to …

make funding conditional upon meeting diversity criteria.

change the cultural administration's human resources concept and hire people with diversity and specialized skills and competences.

make diversity an integral part of curricula in art and culture.

provide long-term funding for artist groups, beyond the duration of three years.

I engage in cultural life by …

consciously deciding to consume art and cultural contents of artists from BPoC communities.

by particularly paying attention to what friends, acquaintances and reviewers who I trust post on social media or on other community-based channels – and specifically choosing to attend such events with friends.

Elisabeth Nguyen

35 years of age, culture aficionada, mother of two,
Vietnamese diaspora

Persona II, focus group: non-visitors

" I feel rejected because of my social background
and my supposed origin. It seems that these two rea-
sons alone are enough to make me feel as though this
is "not my culture" – but the thing is my parents immi-
grated to the GDR; I was born here.

Criticizing the cultural sector for …

failing to challenge procurement practices and
not engaging in provenance research

excluding people from humble backgrounds from
having a say and pursuing a career in the sector

failing to accommodate parents' needs: on a
cultural visit with your kids, you often can't go
on a lunch break once you're inside; you can't
leave and come back either because you won't
be allowed back in with the one ticket you have

"You basically pay money only to find yourself
being subjected to discrimination!"

I expect the cultural sector to …

include a decolonial aesthetics.

restructure institutions, also by hiring people
that reflect that change.

not tolerate discrimination, also if inflicted by
the audience: making clear what behaviour will
not be accepted; visibly putting up house poli-
cies and rules and enforcing them.

make visits more interactive, flexible and inclu-
sive (e. g., allow visitors with children to enter
and exit freely; gastronomy).

> At the ballet in the opera on my way to my seat, I once purposely slid past other visitors "the wrong way around" – facing them instead of having my back to them – because I worried I would brush them with my buttocks and wanted to avoid certain comments. I was met with disdain for doing that. This was very unpleasant, experiencing this visibility and how normal it was for them to sneer at me. That drove home the fact that, in their view, I don't belong there.

Negative experiences

white people playing People of Colour on stage – stereotyped as animals!

disparagement/ ridicule by the audience

being excluded as a child of working class parents due to a biased canon and bourgeois etiquette

cultural education without truly including the community

I cope with barriers by …

taking last seat in a row and/or leaving early

criticizing: booing; subsequently engaging in critical discussions; writing an email afterwards

creating spaces of refuge

claiming spaces by inviting my own audience

going with my mental guard up

I expect policymakers to …

make funding conditional upon diversity skills and competence.

set up complaint mechanisms for anti-discrimination within Berlin's cultural sector.

introduce a quota to ensure that all of Berlin is represented within cultural institutions and the administration.

I engage in cultural life by …

taking my children to libraries that, through their profile and programme on offer, are welcoming to a diverse audience (such as the Amerika Gedenkbibliothek).

visiting cultural events abroad.

visiting cultural venues in Berlin whose programmes and audiences demonstrate: "Diversity is important to us".

> When we're on a "cultural" family outing, I end up having to explain discriminatory contents to my children and I have to brace myself for problematic contents. On top of that I am expected to pay for this?!

Julia(n) Villasenor

Colombian diaspora, 44 years of age, non-binary

Persona III, focus group: non-visitors

"" I once attended a guided tour in an art gallery and one of the paintings depicted the only Black person portrayed in the gallery – a nanny. She was the only person the guide did not mention with a single word.

Criticizing the cultural sector for …

lack of awareness when it comes to discriminatory contents

being compelled, as a visitor, to do emotional labour because institutions are hardly critical of their own work (Note: emotional labour means constantly having to deal with people's positions of privilege and having to expend great personal and emotional effort to convince them that barriers do exist, for they are not exposed to them)

merely reproducing itself without really embracing new approaches

I expect the cultural sector to …

rebuild trust.

hire people with diverse backgrounds.

speak to and reach out to the public in a more inclusive way and make information more easily and widely accessible.

prepare and publish a letter of intent on antiracism and diversity mainstreaming.

set up complaint mechanisms within institutions.

> When levelling criticism at large institutions, criticism that is constructive but perhaps at times also confrontational, it is mostly dismissed or met with defensive rejection.

I engage in cultural life by …

creating my own contents as I translate texts from different languages and come up with my own formats.

experiencing culture as a social happening in the sense of interaction and creation.

engaging with contents in different languages.

Negative experiences in the cultural sector

racist contents being enacted on stage: 'slit eyes' scandal, blackfacing etc.

Eurocentric provincial portrayals even when colonialism is being addressed

lack of an intersectional approach to topics despite the existing need for it among visitors (such as LGBTIQ* parents and persons with impairments)

I cope with barriers by …

receiving support from community spaces

choosing my company for cultural events: When to go with my white mother, or when better to go with my friends of Colour?

not forgetting where discrimination has been performed – being conscious that change also requires recognition of what happened in the past

I expect policymakers to …

hire people with diverse backgrounds to occupy decision-making positions (within cultural institutions and the administration).

redistribute funds: distribute funding more widely and take also smaller institutions into account.

> At an artist talk with a Spanish performance group, the hosting institution had failed to provide interpreting service. Having been among the audience, I offered to help out and ended up interpreting for an exhausting 90 minutes. However, I didn't receive a thank you, nor recognition or compensation.

Grace Edoma Iniabasi

Afro-German, 19 years of age, female

Persona IV, focus group: non-visitors

" My class once went on a school visit to the Technikmuseum. One part of the museum's exhibition about ships also addresses the enslavement trade in Brandenburg. To re-enact it, the museum is using black puppets. This is extremely racist and it left me feeling trapped since I was there with my class. I felt isolated and wondered why visitors like me are not considered.

" It was offensive to see just how differently this subject is being dealt with and taught in comparison to the Shoa, where quite rightly so, no cliché puppets are being used to re-enact parts of it. Unfortunately, colonialism is not afforded the same manner of treatment in school curricula. I even had to argue about this with the teacher. In terms of teaching this subject, the museum and the school have clearly failed …

Criticizing the cultural sector for …

the fact that discriminatory contents are so pervasive that you are practically compelled to expect them

trivializing racism

not taking into account People of Colour as part of the audience

I expect the cultural sector to …

include more positive People of Colour narratives.

have more diverse audiences and actors.

conduct trainings on decolonial cultural education.

allow young people to put forward and realize their own topics, for example in museums.

> When it comes to cultural activities in Berlin, I don't really follow what's out there on offer, because I don't find myself represented. Sometimes though, when I have to go with my school, my expectations are rather negative.

Negative experiences in the cultural sector

lack of awareness about the history of racism; no efforts to decolonize cultural education

exclusion created through cultural education

feeling trapped on compulsory school visits

experience of being racialized and being consumed as objects of culture

I cope with barriers by …

having no expectations at all or lower my expectations of cultural institutions.

choosing to go in company of white people instead of friends of Colour in order not to stand out even more.

remembering discriminatory incidents to demand change.

> I have little faith in these cultural programmes because on school visits I experienced a number of times that they happily present biased views and discriminatory notions as though it were entirely normal. It would be nice to get decent input for a change.

I expect policymakers to …

provide fellowships for young People of Colour in the art and cultural sector.

rewrite curricula from a decolonial perspective.

hire more people with diverse backgrounds to occupy decision-making positions.

I engage in cultural life by …

going to events with my mother, who carefully hand picks them for us both.

finding culture everywhere around me: among family and friends and in my community.

visiting events of and with BPoC from my circle of friends.

Armin Farahani

48 years of age, queer Iranian filmmaker and single father on parental leave

Persona V, focus group: non-actors

"" At a queer film festival, I once called out racist depictions shown in a film from within the audience. This sparked an intense and heavy debate – I expected it would somehow be all right to do so in what is clearly a "tolerant" space. Fortunately, I had prominent support from others in the audience. Though this happened years ago, the incident is still brought up in my work environment. This aftermath could diminish my prospects as a filmmaker.
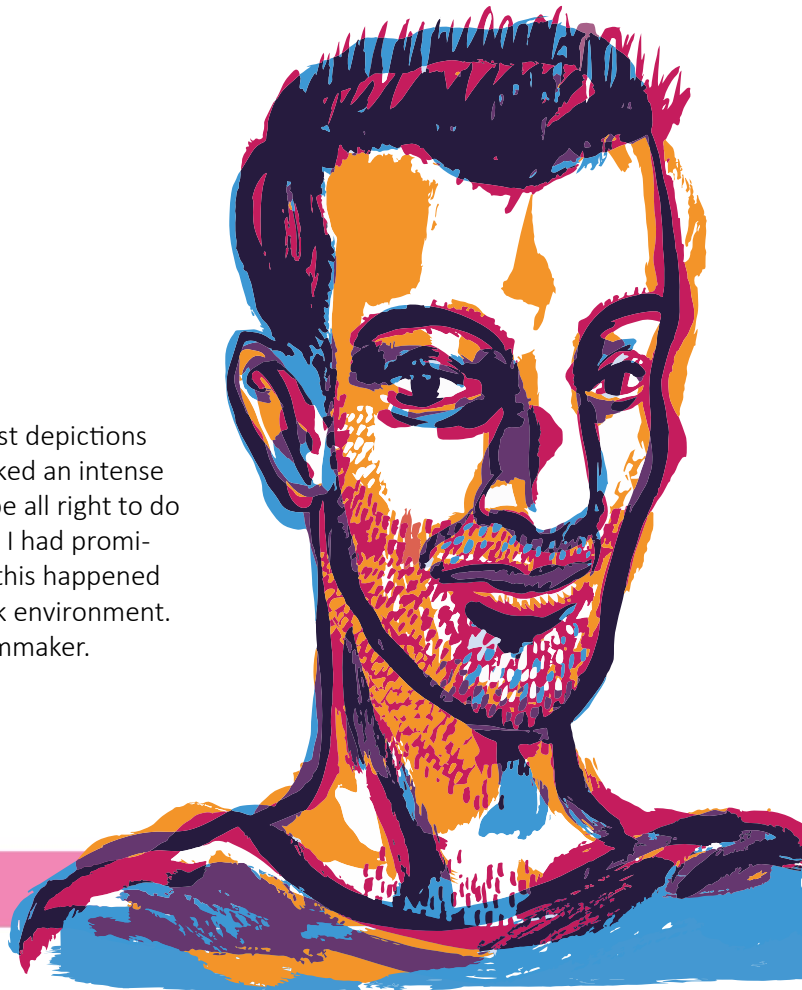
Criticizing the cultural sector for …

requiring a lot of advance work to be eligible for film funding; you literally need to have the film completed, but the thing is, you don't get paid for the time that went into producing it

forcing artists to take on side jobs to be able to afford the application process in the first place

the dilemma of having to work odd jobs to earn a living vs. working as an artist

not providing artists with any feedback if their projects are rejected, hence, also denying us the opportunity to learn from this experience

turning down projects and dismissing ideas simply citing an audience, presumed homogenous, that purportedly is not open to diverse contents and protagonists

failing to provide training and information on how to fundraise for art projects

I expect the cultural sector to …

set up a database of diverse artists and cultural workers to directly facilitate more diverse crews and groups.

provide more funding for independent projects.

set up mentoring programmes.

meet community concerns with openness.

require juries to provide feedback or explanations after having turned down projects.

observe a code of conduct during film shootings, which is announced and explained at warm-up so that everyone involved can invoke it.

> **"** Access to qualification programmes in film is subject to an age limit. It basically means that as a parent you are precluded from being eligible if you have taken time off to take care of your children. This is a structural barrier telling us that our life experience is not valued.

Negative experiences

contents were rejected on account of "being too minority-related"

White colleagues are being favoured for minority topics while you are repeatedly being turned down.

You are constantly being labelled as "other" and subsequently reduced to that label.

I cope with barriers by …

organizing film groups and workshops specifically for People of Colour ➜ *creating alternative structures.*

finding a niche, working within the community context.

rendering artistic work possible through bartering, e. g., camera work in exchange for editing.

creating our own spaces, e. g., organising our own film festivals.

ensuring a critical mass of diverse actors within projects.

I expect policymakers to …

take political measures that promote diversity in Berlin's cultural sector.

appoint an ombudsperson to support those who are experiencing language and other barriers when applying for funding.

provide funding and qualification programmes with eligibility not being tied to age and without imposing age limits ➜ *taking life experience into account*

provide an overview of funding and qualification programmes for each art/cultural discipline.

> **"** Juries are mostly made up of people who are not personally affected by the topics I address (as they are mostly white, cis male and hetero). I'm wondering how they are supposed to decide about my work, how can they actually evaluate my projects? Do they possess the competence to do this?

Aslan Aykut

39 years of age, Turkish Jew, musician,
music producer, working in social music projects

Persona VI, focus group: non-actors

" The work permit that is part of my
residence document stipulates that for two
years I am only allowed to work in the field I
trained in. I couldn't make a living from making
music and producing alone and so I started also
working in music education projects. Here, I am
often criticized for my creative and intercultural
approaches, which is very frustrating for me.

Criticizing the cultural sector for …

lacking nuance when it comes to classifications
in music; often only the broad category of
"world music" is used

relying on the written form, which constitutes a
barrier, e. g., when submitting funding proposals

being labelled as "other" and simultaneously
being reduced to that label

tokenism: it's popular to include diverse protag-
onists and themes in funding proposals; during
realization we may be involved as tokens, but
without having any say in the project or the
concept

" I experience racism in the cultural sector
time and again. I feel this limits my professional
prospects. You have to be very careful not to re-
strict yourself even further through anticipatory
obedience, so to speak.

I expect the cultural sector to …

mirror the diversity of day-to-day life in Berlin.

create new spaces.

> Being a Turkish Jew, I understand the sensitivities of both communities. My projects were popular and in demand in both communities. Notwithstanding this, my superior, a white German Islamic scholar, claimed I wasn't suited for the job and thwarted the project.

Negative experiences

limiting funding logics, e. g., Turkish musicians would only be hired for Turkish productions

exploitation by large labels
➜ *low-paying contract work*

White so-called "experts" claim we are not competent when it comes to our own communities and cultural references.

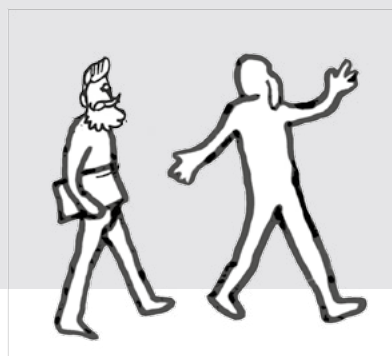art education: Teachers do not speak to the diversity reflected in the classroom and outsource this task to art projects that are too small in terms of scope and too short in terms of time

I cope with barriers by …

supporting community-friendly spaces.

learning from other communities.

venturing into other fields (from music production into music education).

I expect policymakers to …

provide smaller funding amounts and distribute them more widely.

take into account the reality of the labour market in the arts for residence permit requirements, e. g., work permits recognize and accommodate competences that are broadly conceived.

reframe integration as being reciprocal.

provide more resources for artistic education to do the diversity among students justice.

Sweta Agarwal

Indian woman, 27 years of age, visual artist, neurodiverse, single mother

Persona VII, focus group: non-actors

,,Curators often use my work as "exotic" flavouring in group exhibitions. I am expected to give in to curatorial decisions without raising criticism when it comes to decisions that are at odds with my critical views on discrimination.

Criticizing the cultural sector for …

reducing artists to mere ornaments, and consuming and exploiting them as objects of culture

making it almost impossible for artists to maintain a family due to financial insecurity

having to depend on private buyers as visual artists

I expect the cultural sector to …

understand diverse perspectives not as a trend but as a vital part of artistic creation.

set up a placement platform to publish cultural sector projects and hire suitable artists.

introduce a quota for People of Colour in curatorial and other decision-making positions; and to consider, in particular, local and diverse artists and cultural workers for these positions.

set up complaint mechanisms within institutions.

> In order to provide financial security for my family, I would need to work 50 to 60 hours a week. But I am not able to do this, being a single, neurodiverse mother.

Negative experiences in the cultural sector

Stories with a critical perspective on white society don't get a platform.

Artists of Colour are invited as experts on diversity, not as artists → *diversity is being replaced by internationalization.*

Artists of Colour are invited as experts on diversity, not as artists → *emotional labour (meaning: constantly having to deal with people's positions of privilege and having to expend great personal and emotional effort to convince them that barriers do exist, for they are not exposed to them).*

I cope with barriers by …

drawing on my experience of discrimination for my artistic work.

rooting my artistic creation in the community: community as audience, customers and forum.

discussing views on artistic work with peers.

presenting utopias to create change.

I expect policymakers to …

provide basic social security for artists.

create access: open up training and study programmes in arts and culture to disadvantaged groups.

make cultural news and information compulsory in daily broadcasting due to the high economic import of the sector in Berlin.

> As a child from a working class family, it was never an option for me to work in the arts, due to our financial constraints and background. Discarding their inclination as mere dreams, many others decide against studying even though they harbour artistic visions. I did go on to study art, but always felt like an outsider in this white and privileged environment.

❸ Structured collection of experiences and expectations

The following chapter describes the methodology used to collect and analyse the experiences and expectations illustrated by the personas. It also describes the setup and structure of the focus group interviews as well as the analytical method applied. The expectations of participants for the cultural sector and decision-makers in cultural policymaking and administration are listed in a table.

❹ Concept and objective of interviews

The association Vielfalt Entscheidet (VE team) was commissioned by Diversity Arts Culture to carry out groundwork research on diversity and barriers in Berlin's cultural sector. For this, the association Vielfalt Entscheidet – Diversity in Leadership conducted focus group interviews in collaboration with Diversity Arts Culture. The focus group interviews are the part of the groundwork research that focuses more on the perceived experiences of people from marginalised or underrepresented groups in the art and cultural sector than on figures and structural data. In the cultural sector, similar as for artistic contents, mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, addressing and barriers also follow certain patterns and conventions that come, for example, in the form of microaggressions. At the same time, these patterns and conventions change and adapt to new situations. This is why the experiences and expectations of the participants of the focus groups shed light onto the patterns and structural conditions underlying these concrete experiences.

The authors set up two focus groups of people who experienced forms of exclusion either as visitors and/or non-visitors or as artists and/or non-actors (see chapter 3 for more). The primary objective of the research was to bring together persons who experience different relevant forms of exclusion (i.e., discrimination based on race, class, gender, age or other forms of discrimination relating to socialisation in East/West Germany as well as residence status) and explore how they cope with them. The purpose of conducting focus groups was to provide a space for the participants' diverse perspectives to mutually complement each other and become more accessible. Due to Diversity Arts Culture's past experiences with facilitating roundtables that bring together relevant stakeholders from artistic fields and cultural institutions, the authors were already aware of how complex such sharing of experiences with persons exposed to different forms of discrimination can be. The aim of the focus groups was to create a constructive atmosphere for sharing experiences.

The qualitative interviews were evaluated with the objective of identifying certain barriers and patterns of exclusion underlying the supposedly single cases of exclusion, but also of uncovering creative coping strategies. In addition, the authors created 'personas' based upon the qualitative analysis of the interview contents. 'Personas' are particular fictional characters that represent a condensed 'type' of person based upon the collected experiences of exclusion and the analyses, motives and interests shared by the participants of the focus groups. Personas respect the anonymity guaranteed to participants and at the same time help name the intersectional dynamics of exclusion that are condensed into participants' experiences as individuals and members of a group exposed to these dynamics of exclusion.

5 Methodology: Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews help provide an insight into the sense-making of participants, namely how groups and individuals perceive their realities and the way they reflect and communicate about them. The shared as well as diverse experiences explored in group interviews offer conversational impulses that culminate in intensive discussions about experiences and perspectives. This interview situation encourages participants to recount, explore and illustrate their own perspectives and thus allow for additional and in-depth insights. The primary focus of this research is on barriers, experiences of discrimination, participants' own coping strategies as well as expectations for Berlin's cultural sector and policymaking. However, due to participants' personal as well as professional involvement with the above topics, the interviews required a special framing: The authors had to guarantee anonymity and the anonymization of the entrusted contents and, at the same time, ensure a respectful interview atmosphere based on confidentiality.

The four focus group interviews were conducted by two researchers (one person from the VE team and one person from Diversity Arts Culture) with groups of five to a maximum of eight interviewees. The recorded interviews were subsequently transcribed and subjected to a qualitative analysis carried out by the VE team. The discussions in the groups primarily focused on the concrete experiences of participants while endeavouring also to cover collective aspects (experiences of being excluded as a group, not being addressed or being degraded as well as the intra- and inter-community discourses thereof) with the help of speech impulses. This resulted in a tension between the focus on experiences on the one hand and the dynamics of abstraction and generalisation on the other hand. Such tension can, in particular, occur when people affected by structural exclusion share their concrete experiences.

To dissolve this tension without compromising any of the aspects mentioned, the interview questions and/or speech impulses were put forward in three steps: In the first step, participants were invited to recount concrete experiences and were subsequently asked, in a second step, to discuss among them which dynamics of exclusion and/or mechanisms are behind a concrete experience or incident and how experiences as well as barriers are interrelated. In the third step, participants were asked questions about their coping strategies and expectations for the cultural sector, decision-makers in policymaking and administration. At the end, participants were invited to give their feedback.

6 Addressing and selection criteria: Non-actors and non-visitors

In order for focus groups to achieve the desired insights, the selection and addressing of participants had to take into account several intersecting aspects: On the one hand, the mandate was to invite and address persons from different communities affected by racism, persons of different genders and age groups in such a way as to allow for true sharing among participants of the focus groups. The selection of participants for the focus groups was informed by theory: In order to do justice to a perspective that critically engages with racism, the focus groups must represent persons from groups who are exposed to racism in Germany. Such groups are, according to the reports of the Federal Government of Germany to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Jewish people, people discriminated against as Muslims, Sinti and Roma and Black people. In accordance with the parallel report of the civil society to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, it was valuable to include, as a fifth group, people of Asian descent.

In addition, the focus groups were set up to take account of the intersectional dimension of discrimination, namely, the intersection of multiple forms of exclusion, such as racial discrimination linked with (hetero/cis) sexist discrimination. To ensure this diversity, women and queer persons, among others, from different racially discriminated communities were invited to talk about how they experience discrimination and exclusion in the cultural sector and how these forms of discrimination intersect, for example, with class-based exclusion and/or exclusion related to being a parent. In order to provide a safer space, a space wherein confidential issues can be discussed and all participants shared a similar level of knowledge due to collective experiences, it was decided that participants of the focus groups – interviewees and interviewers alike – should exclusively come from groups exposed to racism.

This conceptual approach to the focus groups enabled authors to tap into participants' relevant experiences and context-related knowledge from the focus groups: Addressing, constellation of the group, speech impulses and the anonymization of the results were tailored to the needs of the participants, thereby ensuring that as bearers of collective knowledge of shared but also diverse experiences, they are taken seriously.

Two research groups were identified and targeted and addressed separately in order to create an interview context that leaves room for relevant overlaps but also differing views, which as a whole offers a stimulating basis for discussion, and thus open up the space for real sharing.

Non-visitors are persons who do not engage in cultural activities provided by publicly funded cultural institutions or do so only to a limited extent. It does not, however, mean that these persons generally do not have any interest in arts and culture. Rather, such individuals consciously made the decision not to visit certain event formats and/or venues due to perceived barriers or the nature of the respective cultural activity.

Non-actors are persons who underwent an artistic training or embarked on an artistic career but, due to perceived barriers, no longer work as artists or do so only partially.

In the pre-interviews and invitations and participants' address, great value was placed on emphasizing that the prefix 'non' does not mean a categorical rejection of activities, cultural practices and artistic fields, cultural consumption or artistic production. Rather, it describes the conscious decision not to show up as a visitor or actor in certain contexts.

7 Analysis: Interview process and dynamics

7.1 Non-visitors

The authors met with a total of 11 non-visitors in two focus groups to discuss their experiences with a range of creative practices and cultural institutions based in Berlin, such as museums, galleries, theatres, concert houses and libraries. Participants mainly discussed visits they made in a voluntary capacity in their leisure time. But several also explored one specific situation where visits to cultural institutions are not voluntary: School excursions are mandatory for all students. Among those who still attended school and also those who left school up to a decade ago, there were participants who remembered and perceived such visits as being problematic due to their discriminatory contents. They consistently reported being exposed to sexist and racist contents or degrading depictions of subjects, such as the trans-Atlantic enslavement trade, and that it was impossible to challenge certain contents in discussions with the cultural educators of the respective institutions. Along with racist and sexist discriminatory contents, participants found in particular the way contents were being communicated and conveyed to be problematic: In their view, neither the institutions' cultural educators nor the accompanying school teachers attuned their roles as educators to the students' diverse horizons of experience and thus contributed to their marginalisation and re-traumatisation as well as to the normalisation of discrimination in the classroom. This is still common practice today as imagined recipients are still white, German, heterosexual and devoid of any historic references[1] – which would call for visitors to be addressed in a more differentiated manner.

Participants also mentioned the differing level of engagement with, on the one hand, enslavement, colonialism and their impacts, and on the other hand, National Socialism and Shoa and their impacts. They expect a reflection on the latter to allow for a more nuanced discussion and analysis of the former. In view of the growing diversity among Berlin's students, it is of utmost importance to acquire relevant skills; not least also to help spare future generations of visitors the negative experiences and negative implications repeatedly mentioned by the participants in the focus groups.

Key topics discussed among non-visitors were also the perceived intersections of different dimensions of discrimination, coping strategies as well as everyday solutions participants found in the face of the perceived barriers.

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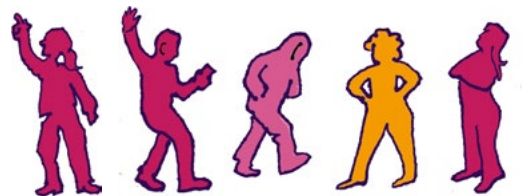
[1] In the Jewish community and among Sinti and Roma, but also in connection with the history of euthanasia, there are experiences of re-traumatisation occurring at schools in Berlin. This is not least due to the fact that in school curricula and in class it is usually assumed that students do not belong to the above-mentioned groups. However, this ignores the fact that some students or families make a conscious decision not to reveal that they are members of these groups.

For example, persona Elisabeth Nguyen illustrates how she perceived the intersection of different dimensions of discrimination. She describes the rejection she feels as a child of Vietnamese working class parents who had migrated to East Germany.

This rejection depicts intersecting elements of discrimination based on class as well as race. On the one hand, there is this demonstrative display of certain conventions, behaviours and rituals fellow visitors and staff members of cultural institutions enact – in a nutshell: A habitus that forms part of a specific class-based consumption of culture performed, for example, on visits to the ballet or theatre. This habitus in itself would be little to worry about if its performance did not also encompass labelling, judging and excluding those who cannot resort to this register of conventions. A person unfamiliar with this etiquette, customs and language convention is met with disdain, aggression or demonstrative ignorance. In addition to this habitus, there is, on the other hand, the racist ascription, which locates Elisabeth outside of the 'culture' the described audience consumes in a demonstrative fashion. For her, these two ascriptions intersect to create a negative and even hostile environment that sometimes erupts in derogatory language.

Participants agreed that experiences like that constitute a major barrier and that, as a result of being exposed to them, they minimise their visits. Many of the strategies described by the participants are designed to cope with this form of exclusion. It is telling that participants consistently reported that visiting cultural institutions in a group of people with diasporan background or persons of Colour (PoC) noticeably aggravates such reactions of others. Apart from staying away or reducing their visits, participants described in particular two strategies they deployed when visiting cultural institutions under these difficult circumstances. While some deliberately chose to visit certain cultural institutions or events in company of white persons in order not to stand out even more or attract unwanted attention and be subjected to people's reactions, others preferred not to be the only PoC.

Irrespective of the chosen strategy – choosing to be accompanied by persons with or without experiences of racism – participants stressed this: Along with sharing their views on the cultural event they visited together, they also greatly appreciate being able to review this other dimension of their experience with their companion.

Other coping strategies include consciously seeking out alternative venues and so called 'community spaces', as referred to by participants. Such spaces focus on the art production, the representation and perspectives of different and always inherently diverse communities exposed to racism. Several participants pointed out that these spaces are notoriously precariously funded and artists and staff members are precariously paid despite the vital role they play for Berlin's art scene. Others stressed the importance of 'word of mouth' recommendations. Given that the media hardly covers in its reporting about and in its reviews of cultural events this dimension of perceived diversity and inclusivity (or lack thereof), the recommendations or dissuasions offered by visitors with experiences of exclusion must be given particular importance. From these and the other experiences and strategies documented in the personas, a set of expectations follow for cultural institutions: In order to reduce the described exclusion, institutions must formulate clear house policies and rules that ban discriminatory behaviour and also enforce them in case of violation.

Another expectation formulated by participants is that particularly cultural educators working in Berlin's cultural institutions must undergo training to live up to the demands of the city's growing diversity, especially among younger audiences. This includes learning to address, speak and cater to audiences in such a way that takes into account the discrimination realities among target audiences instead of ignoring them by focusing on a fictitious so called 'normal visitor'. Recognizing these realities is ever so important, especially when bearing in mind that cultural institutions harbour this perceived discrimination in the way they present culture and artwork, address and speak to audiences and communicate and convey contents – i.e., conduct cultural education.

This is not to suggest institutions must either narrow events or contents down to issues of discrimination and diversity or relegate these topics to separate special events. Rather, it is about mainstreaming – i.e., considering, identifying and addressing barriers in the daily operations of cultural institutions. Apart from these expectations for the cultural sector, participants also expressed concrete expectations for Berlin's decision-makers in cultural policymaking and administration. Positions at the decision-making level in Berlin's cultural institutions and administration must be filled in such a way as to reflect the city's diversity more clearly. To achieve this, it is necessary to find out why this is still not the case. Along with having such a personnel policy in place that seeks to actively dismantle barriers, cultural funding should be made conditional upon diversity skills and competence to ensure that those responsible for programming and implementing publicly funded cultural offers also take into account all those who have helped pay for them. All citizens of and visitors to Berlin must have access to cultural offers relevant to them without having to face and deal with major barriers. Again, it is important to find out in which areas this target has not yet been reached and what the reasons behind this shortfall are. Other expectations and recommendations expressed in the focus groups with non-visitors are listed under 7.3.2.
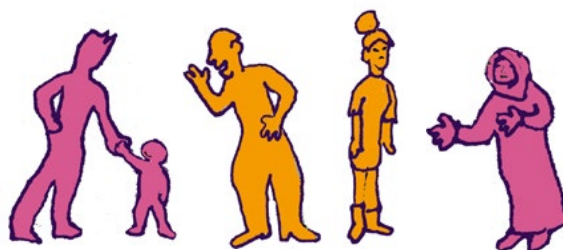
7.2 Non-actors

The authors met with a total of 15 non-actors in two focus groups to discuss their experiences with a range of creative practices and fields, such as film and theatre acting, directing, camera, contemporary arts, performance, pop music, European and Turkish classical music, sculpture and curatorial work. Participants named a number of mechanisms of exclusion that prevent them from bringing their works, skills and perspectives into Berlin's cultural sector. In the performing arts, for example, the assumption that artists have to be presumably 'authentic' in their acting leads them to be cast in stereotype roles – needless to say that such expected representation is based entirely on ascriptions imposed by the dominant group in society. Artists subjected to this are used as a surface onto which others project their assumptions, but are kept from presenting their own experiences or community-relevant contents. A project example demonstrates this: This project engaged different Jewish as well as Muslim communities from a Turkish-Jewish perspective with regard to contents and aesthetics. Irrespective of the project's great popularity among these communities, it was thwarted by one individual with reference to that person's alleged expertise in 'Islamic Studies'. This specific individual does not even belong to any of the communities mentioned. In this case, not even the communities' needs and their support for this project weighed as heavily as the projections made by one individual, who lacks direct contact with the contents negotiated. A project which is of great importance for the cultural exchange between the above-mentioned communities was, in consequence, made precarious and discontinued.

Another example showing the violent nature of ascriptions and their impacts is the incident on a film set illustrated by Persona I Arfase Bedhasa. A person with experiences of displacement was asked to re-enact his own displacement story. Upon instructions from those in charge of filming, nobody on set was supposed to talk to that person. Another actress on set, who herself had similar experiences of displacement, could feel that both the re-enactment of the experience and the isolation of the actor on set – a measure presumably to increase the authenticity of the performance – caused severe re-traumatisation. There was no code of conduct in place, which could have offered a means by which to address and handle the situation so as to offer lasting assistance to the actor and stop such discriminatory behaviour. This case exemplifies the impact an 'authenticity fetish' can have, something other artists of the focus groups recognised to exist not only in the field of acting, but also in contemporary arts, music production or sculpture: Artists are hereby reduced to the ascriptions others impose on them, but their own artistic exploration, for example, of their diasporan threads and linkages or experiences of discrimination and/or empowerment, is made irrelevant.

Persona Armin Farahani's case illustrates that critically engaging with racial discrimination can be problematic even within so called progressive spaces: At a queer film festival, Persona Armin Farahani called out racist depictions shown in a film from within the audience and received prominent support from others in the audience. Nevertheless, years later, this incident is still a critical subject in conversations among filmmakers and funders. Several participants of the focus groups related to this incident because whenever they call out discriminatory contents in public, including among experts from their own field, they always have the question "What am I gambling away with this?" at the back of their minds. They feel that many juries still lack in particular relevant intersectional competence. Given that jury members do not take into account intersectionality, namely the intersections and mutual reinforcements of dynamics of discrimination, artists who are subjected to multiple forms of discrimination are bound to expect negative consequences when addressing racism.

Intersectional experiences of discrimination, which have a particularly strong impact on individuals and groups adversely affected by multiple dynamics of discrimination (e. g., women from the Asian or African diasporas) were also addressed by participants in the context of sexual assaults. One example mentioned was the case of directors making sexual advances on Asian actors when offering them roles.

Participants highlighted the interactions of racism and sexism and the huge power gap prevailing in the film sector, which – not least because of the important role informal networks play for artists in this field – enable exploitation. This feeling of being trapped and defined by ascriptions is something participants not only experience in front of the camera but also within the social spaces of the film industry: Reduced to playing Asian stereotype roles, for example, actors feel a form of exoticisation coupled with expectations ranging from sexualised stereotyped casting to sexual availability.

Tokenism, mentioned and called out by many of the interviewees, is yet another example of how stereotyped labels can lead to a problematic involvement of artists of Colour. Tokenism is understood to be what is often a mere fig leaf of inclusion based on ascriptions and/or critical positions or perspectives critical of discrimination. Though communicating appreciation, such engagements never go beyond symbolic and ultimately imposing gestures. An example of tokenism is when filmmakers are invited to film festivals to talk about diversity and discrimination in the film industry, but neither their own nor the works of other diverse filmmakers are included in the actual festival programme. The topic can thus be considered 'covered', but is relegated to panel discussions and not negotiated within the medium of the festival itself. However, this form of tokenism can also go as far as including artistic works without curators taking the associated positions seriously.

One example from contemporary art struck a chord with many participants: The artist described how her works are often shown as an isolated 'exotic flavouring' in otherwise homogeneous group exhibitions, while at the same time her suggestions to avoid certain Eurocentric, (hetero/cis) sexist, neuro-normative[2] or otherwise problematic framings of the works are rejected. This dynamic was also experienced and criticised by others across all artistic fields.

In spite of this form of inclusion, participants reported that they are facing precarious working and living conditions, which are compounded by the fact that works or projects that critically engage with discrimination or 'merely' show diverse representations find it difficult to obtain funding. They also took issue with the fact that the composition of juries does not in any way reflect the diversity among Berlin's artists. The judges themselves do not have diverse references, or any other proven expertise to evaluate works and projects that explore the growing diversity of Berlin in terms of contents and/or aesthetics. In addition, there are practice-specific hurdles that indirectly discriminate against artists who cannot draw on private funds to pre-finance projects: Participants criticised, for example, that a film project must be almost completed in order to be eligible for funding in the first place.

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[2] *The artist positions herself as being neurodiverse and thus is part of a movement which sees, for example, the autism spectrum no longer as an illness and pathology but as part of a spectrum of human diversity. This is not least about making the discrimination of neurodiverse people visible by questioning the unspoken assumption that there is an overwhelming majority of 'neuronormal' people to whom cultural and funding programmes are tailored (see for example the input "Neurodiversity: A Person, a Perspective, a Movement?" on the "The Art of Autism" website https://the-art-of-autism.com/neurodiverse-a-person-a-perspective-a-movement/). Significantly, there is increasing evidence that the visual and performing arts have been and still are a professional refuge for neurodiverse people, especially in Western societies. Against this background, the inclusion of neurodiverse perspectives in the reflection on forms of exclusion in the cultural sector is particularly urgent.*

Berlin's cultural sector harbours specific dynamics of discrimination related to residence and employment law regulations: The requirements for access to the labour market, for example, are very closely linked to the creative practices and work fields specified by the artists. This is despite the fact that even only very few German artists can actually make a living merely working in very narrowly defined fields of work. In this restrictive environment, artists attempting to secure a long-term residence permit are exposed to specific dynamics of discrimination, either leaving them prone to increased exploitation or forced to go into other fields.

In view of the forms of exclusion described above, participants developed strategies, such as bartering, to still be able to engage in artistic production. They described how in the film sector artists exchange services and skills among each other, such as offering camera work in exchange for editing to help realise projects despite the lack of funding. Other strategies among the many shared by participants included networking with artists from the same artistic field who are also exposed to discrimination and artists creating their own spaces.

From these experiences and strategies, some clear expectations for the cultural sector arise: Given that rigid hierarchies and discrimination are already being normalised during students' training und studies, participants clearly expressed that they expect discrimination awareness to be instilled already at the beginning of a career in the cultural sector. Cultural institutions would have to ensure that discrimination and misconduct have consequences and that employees in managerial positions receive training on these issues. Moreover, entrenched hierarchical structures must be dismantled and reorganised to reduce dependencies, which make it difficult to talk about and sanction discrimination.

Many participants stressed that diverse perspectives must not be understood only as a passing trend, but as a core component of artistic production in Berlin. To this end, several measures were proposed, which, if implemented by policymakers and administration, could help the cultural sector reflect the demography of Berlin more realistically: A quota was suggested for people with experiences of racism, (hetero/cis) sexism and/or ableism, which places a focus on local diverse actors. In order to integrate these groups into Berlin's cultural sector, a platform was suggested which project planners could join to look for suitable artists for their projects, also beyond the often too homogenous informal networks.
From the participants' point of view, access must be created by opening up training and study programmes more decisively to disadvantaged groups in the art sector. Funding for cultural education in schools should be increased to better respond to the diverse makeup of Berlin's student body through appropriate teaching and a variety of methods and programmes.

Specific dynamics of discrimination related to work and residence permits could be reduced by applying an interpretation of the requirements for residence permits that takes into account the realities of Berlin's cultural sector: Recognizing broad areas of competence for work permits would enable foreign artists – who are working towards obtaining a permanent residence – to offer their skills and expertise to the real existing labour market. Finally, it should not go unmentioned that in the focus groups with non-actors, participants also often discussed the important role the cultural sector plays in and for Berlin. In light of this sector's major economic importance, participants suggested making cultural news and information compulsory in daily broadcasting. Other expectations and suggestions for improvement expressed in the interviews with the non-actors are listed under 7.3.1.

7.3 Overview: Expectations for policymakers, administration and cultural sector

The following overview lists some of the expectations participants mentioned in the interviews for deci-sion-makers in policymaking, administration and in the cultural sector, according to different topics.

7.3.1 Non-actors

Expectations for policymakers and administration

Funding

- provide fellowships for young PoC in the art and cultural sector
- enable funding without age limit
  → *taking life experience into account*
- provide funding that secures basic social security for artists
- provide long-term funding for artist groups: beyond the duration of three years
- provide an overview of funding possibilities for each artistic field
- provide feedback/statement after rejection by the jury
- make funding conditional upon diversity skills and competence

Structural change

- provide a political signal for diversity in Berlin's cultural sector
- cultural sector must reflect the diversity visible in the streets of Berlin
- cultural administration needs a new HR concept: employ persons with diversity competence and professional expertise
- hire people with diverse backgrounds to occupy decision-making positions
- reframe integration as a reciprocal process

Access and education

- create access: open up training and study programmes in arts & culture to disadvantaged groups
- make diversity an integral part of art curricula
- provide smaller funding amounts and distribute them more widely
- residence permit requirements should take into account the real labour market situation in the cultural sector, for example, by accepting broad areas of competence for work permits
- provide more resources for artistic education to adequately address the diversity among students
- daily cultural news should be compulsory, given that they are a key economic driver for Berlin

Protection from and prevention of discrimination

- appoint an ombudsperson to support those who are experiencing language and other barriers when applying for funding

Expectations for the cultural sector

Organisation development and competences

- align institutions toward diversity sensitivity by introducing new recruitment practices
- restructure decision-making processes
- make structures more flexible and receptive to innovation and ideas 'from below'
- understand diverse perspectives not as a trend but as a core element of artistic work
- provide racism and diversity awareness training at institutions

Target groups / relations with communities

- set up a database of diverse artists and cultural workers to directly facilitate more diverse crews/groups
- set up a placement platform to publish cultural sector projects and hire suitable artists
- create mentoring programmes
- introduce a quota for PoC in curatorial and other decision-making positions; and consider, in particular, local and diverse artists and cultural workers for these position

Immediate action

- address and reach out to the public in a more inclusive way and make information more easily and widely accessible
- prepare and publish a letter of intent on antiracism and diversity mainstreaming
- set up complaint mechanisms within institutions
- incorporate a decolonial aesthetics, at least for relevant projects and topics

Protection from discrimination

- establish a code of conduct that is observed during film shootings and cultural productions, which is announced and explained at warm-up so that everyone involved can invoke it
- ensure decisive actions in response to discriminatory behaviour and misconduct

7.3.2 Non-visitors

Expectations for policymakers and administration

Funding

- provide fellowships for young PoC in the art and cultural sector
- make funding conditional upon diversity skills and competence
- provide smaller funding amounts and distribute them more widely also to smaller institutions

Structural change

- hire people with diverse backgrounds to occupy decision-making positions
- introduce a quota: cultural sector and administration must represent the whole city

Access and education

- rewrite curricula from a decolonial perspective

Protection from and prevention of discrimination

- set up complaint mechanisms for anti-discrimination in Berlin's cultural sector

Expectations for the cultural sector

Organisation development and competences

- align institutions toward diversity sensitivity by introducing new recruitment practices
- offer training on decolonial cultural education
- promote diversity skills and competence

Target groups / relations with communities

- provide more positive PoC narratives
- include decolonial perspectives
- engage more diverse target groups and actors
- allow young people to put forward and realise their own topics, for example in museums
- rebuild trust
- fill positions with more diverse candidates
- address and reach out to the public in a more inclusive way and make information more easily and widely accessible
- prepare and publish a letter of intent on antiracism and diversity mainstreaming

Immediate action

- make visits more interactive, flexible and inclusive e. g., allow visitors with children to use their ticket to enter and exit freely, provide affordable gastronomic options that also take into account different eating habits)

Protection from discrimination

- ban discrimination, also if inflicted by the audience: making clear what behaviour will not be accepted; visibly putting up house policies and rules and enforcing them
- establish complaint mechanisms in institutions