

Intercultural Mediators: the experiences of migrant NGO workers in Austria

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Personal and Professional Experiences



- Much academic freedom
- The status of 'the visitor' and access to facilities...
- Speaking German? Speaking Austrian German?? Speaking academic Austrian German vocabulary???



- Time passes quickly
- Think ahead of the next step...
- Maintaining contacts?
- Exchange between your different locations?

Employing the Cultural Broker in the Governance of Migration and Integration (BrokerInG)

 Marie Curie Intra European Fellowship within the 7th European Community Framework Programme



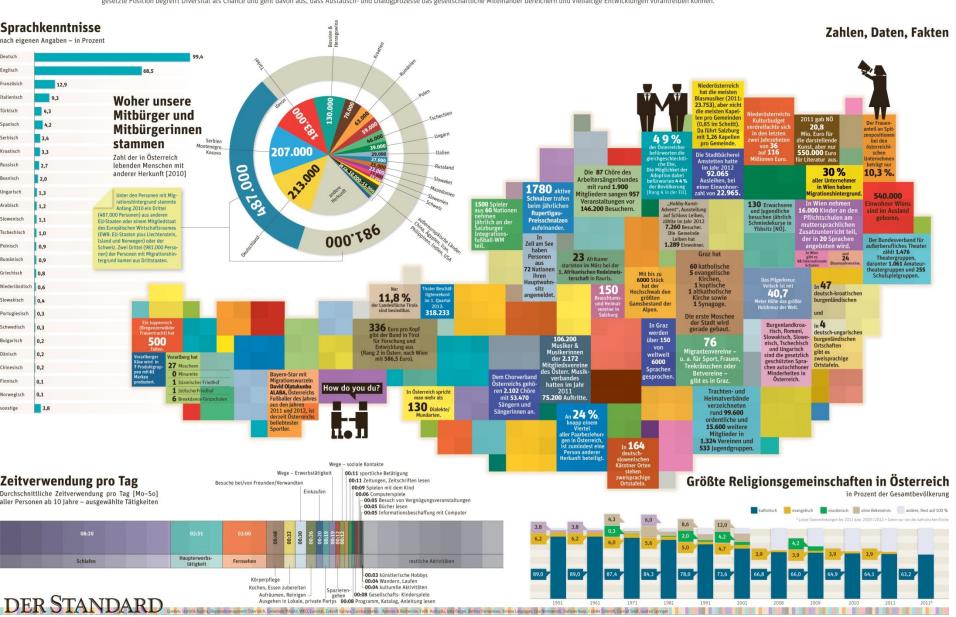
- Project Period: 1 March 2014 29 February 2016
- Case Studies: Austria, the Netherlands, the UK
- Ethnic minority employees of non-governmental organisations that support migrants
 - (e.g. Caritas, Volkshilfe)
- Combining Political Science, Anthropology and History



Oh du buntes Österreich! Unsere kulturelle Vielfalt



ultural diversity", ein Begriff, der im Deutschen in der Regel mit "kulturelle Diversität" oder "kulturelle Vielfalt" übersetzt wird, ist ein zentrales Thema der aktuellen Kulturpolitik und verweist auf die kulturellen Unterschiede in einer globalisierten Welt, die sich seit der Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts immer deutlicher zeigen. Soziale und kulturelle Differenzen werden auf verschiedene Weise wahrgenommen. Oft empfindet man die Unterschiede zwischen den Kulturen als Bedrohung
für die eigene Identität, wogegen es sich zu wehren gilt. Dem steht eine Position gegenüber, die Diversität als Reichtum versteht, der zu Austausch- und Dialogprozessen und danzt zur Belebung der Gesellschaft maßgeblich beiträgt. Diese entgegengesetzte Position begreift Diversität als Chance und geht davon aus, dass Austausch- und Dialogprozesse das gesellschaftliche Miteinander bereicher und vielfältige Entwicklungen vorartreiben können.



Diversity (politics/management)

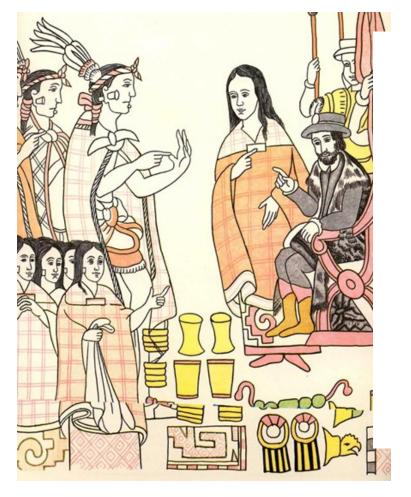


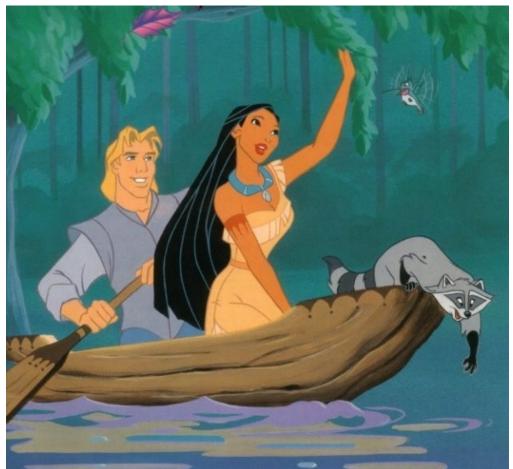
- 'Difference' as a skill, competence
- Focus on the individual instead of on collectivities

"Das Diversitätsmanagement der Abteilung Integration und Diversität (MA 17) setzt sich mit der Frage auseinander, wie eine Stadt mit der vorhandenen kulturellen, sprachlichen und sozialen Vielfalt umgehen kann, dass möglichst alle Kundinnen und Kunden, Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeiter sowie die Organisation davon profitieren. Um diese Vielfalt konkret nutzbar zu machen, ist es notwendig, gezielte Strategien zur Implementierung und Umsetzung des Diversitätsmanagements zu entwickeln. "









- 'Difference' as resource, as 'capital' is not new...
- Translating is about more than language

'Lucky' Recruitment as Broker

"I was looking for accommodation for myself at the time. Then I arrived there, and for some reason the manager at the time from the accommodation office [of the NGO] approached me to ask me if I would be interested in working with them, because he liked the way how I had searched for apartments on the phone. And that's how I started this work".



"And after this exam, I went to the Employment Office [AMS], and I had a strange counsellor there; because I wanted to continue studying, do something better, and I had only As in these exams. [...] And I was talking to this woman and she said: Yes, you can work at BILLA behind the till. And I said: I do not want to become saleswoman, I want to work in an office, like you". Then she said: Here there is no opportunity". Then I just went outside I never went back to the job centre. And then I was searching for something else, another possibility. And so I came to [name organisation] to ask: please help me, "how shall I continue?" And this colleague, when he saw my transcript with all As, he said: "Oh, great, maybe you can do an internship here". Because I also speak foreign languages, [...], and a lot of refugees come from Chechnya, and that language I know. That is why I got a job here."

'Lucky' Recruitment as Broker

"[Doing interpreting work for an NGO supporting migrants] that was also paid, that is how I got my money. In that time there was no governmental support, no health insurance, zero, seriously zero cents. I had to somehow find a way to protect oneself. I was in a shelter for homeless people, there was also nothing to eat, just shelter, otherwise there was nothing".

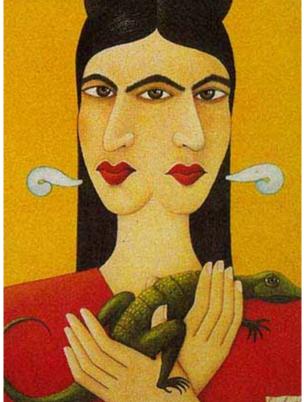
"What do I offer what an Austrian candidate cannot offer? [...] In the beginning that was difficult of course, to have that confidence, and to say, I bring something, because I only thought, I am just a poor foreigner, I have nothing, I am a refugee [...] I speak the language imperfectly, and that will never work out".

"Diversity management calls upon the migrant as actor with his/her specific interests and peculiarities, to bring them to make the best out of themselves. While difference can become selectively occupied and recognised, at the same time it results in a normalisation and depoliticisation of social contradictions" (Neuhold und Scheibelhofer 2010)

Moving Across



"[They] apparently perceived her [Eva/Krotoa] as an irredeemable sell-out" (Wells 1998:426)



Double Vision/Double Burden

"We have a lot of colleagues here who have a refugee background, who can talk to the clients differently. I have for example heard conversations of colleagues without refugee background with their clients, who would ask questions that I would never ever ask, which are clear to me. That is like a woman, who has given birth, knows how that is, and also a woman who has not given birth, can certainly imagine that better than a man."

"Of course it is also a burden, when one has experienced this himself and then one has to see everything again, to relive it again so to say. But it is also helpful at the same time, because one has seen himself how everything functions, and therefore one knows what is to be done. Not that I learned that anywhere in a Social Work course, but I lived through that myself, saw myself how things worked, how one should go about it".

"Success at walking the multicultural tightrope can be ephemeral, elusive, and, in several cases, ultimately destructive (Weibel-Orlando 1994)

The Governance of Migration/Integration

- 'Diversity management' replaces 'migrant deficit model'?
- But what about power, inequalities and complicities with migration regimes?
- The figure of the cultural broker with its historical roots in colonial power relations can remind us that the broker is a privileged but precarious, and highly charged position



