

## World Cultural Diversity Day



Bernhard Ebbinghaus, Professor of Social Policy, Department of Social Policy and Intervention, and Fellow, Green Templeton College.

“Many colleagues and friends have asked me why I would move from the Continent to Britain after the Brexit referendum. While we don’t know all the implications of leaving the EU, Oxford continues to stand for one of the world’s richest academic communities, enabled by global exchange. This can and must be maintained. Science knows no borders.

As a German and Swiss dual citizen who did his doctorate at the European University Institute in Florence, embracing cultural diversity has been part of my life. As a comparative social scientist, the diversity of cultures is main subject of my research.

The fact that our master students in social policy come from all over the world enriches our courses immeasurably, as we reflect on cultural differences and learn from these shared experiences. This is particularly valuable for understanding why societies differ in the degree of social inequality they accept and the values that underlie the social policies they pursue.

As a foreigner I am still learning to understand why one popular vote with a miniscule majority dominates Brexit politics. As a Swiss, I know about the contributions of referenda, but there are also safeguards in a confederation of culturally-diverse communities. A Swiss referendum requires not just the popular majority but also a majority of its cantons, thus balancing interests of groups speaking German, French, and Italian, areas more protestant or catholic, or urban and rural regions.

The more institutions, like the university, embrace diversity, the more they need to listen and understand those voices of seemingly minority status. Learning from others is not only rewarding personally. In understanding other cultures we better know our own, and this helps ensure peace and equality.”

<https://medium.com/oxford-university/world-cultural-diversity-day-32d1ef0e695f>