

## Symposium

# *Urban Governance in Europe: Preparing for Diversity, Social Sustainability and Migration*

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The international symposium entitled *Urban Governance in Europe: Preparing for Diversity, Social Sustainability and Migration*, hosted and organised by the Department of Public Management of the Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences was held on September 28-30, 2016 at Oslo and Akershus University College in Oslo, Norway. The symposium welcomed more than 50 academic researchers and participants from all over Europe. The main goal of the symposium was to address the governance of urban areas and the various challenges they face. With that in view, the symposium addressed a range of issues, from socio-economic segregation and inequalities to citizen participation and the work of interest groups in urban governance. The members of the executive committee were: Æge Johnsen, Harald Koht, GroSandkjør Hanssen, Kristin Reichborn-Kjennerud, Heidi Woll, Mary Ann Stamsù, and Eli-Anne Bjørkedal. Over a period of three days, 30 papers were presented in three thematically different strands: (1) local governance and diversity, (2) local governance and social sustainability, and (3) local governance and migration. Two plenary sessions with keynote speakers also took place, and there were two pre-symposium events, one of which was a PhD seminar on the topic of research design and methodology, presented by Harald Koht and Per Arne Tufte (of Oslo and Akershus University). The symposium formally began on Wednesday, 28 September, with a welcome speech by Vice-Dean Ivan Harsluf, followed by a special performance by the Vivaldi Youth Orchestra of Oslo (conducted by Igor Rybak).

The symposium started with the plenary session *Planning for diversity - is it possible?* delivered by keynote speaker Terje Wessel (University of Oslo) and was followed by a panel discussion that included panellists from a variety of backgrounds. Wessel stressed that diversity can be seen as a strong paradigm in governance that brings about many benefits in terms of architecture and economic development, but processes such as globalisation do bring diversity into question. Nonetheless, Wessel pointed out that policies of diversity have their empirical foundation, but can hardly be used to solve the bigger problems of urban areas.

The second plenary session was delivered by the main speaker Sako Musterd (University of Amsterdam) and was entitled *Social and Social-spatial Inequality – Understanding (causes), Potential Effects, and Possible Interventions*. Musterd addressed the questions of socio-economic segregation in European cities, with a particular focus on Amsterdam. With an in-depth view of the variety of data that present inequality in cities and the concept of the welfare state, Musterd proposed different solutions for governments to implement in order to reduce inequality in cities. The solutions vary from those that are not so likely to happen (affordable housing) to those that are easily implemented (the importance of public spaces).

On both days, following the plenary sessions, papers were presented for each of the three thematic strands separately. The third thematic strand was devoted to questions of migration and local government and was moderated by Margarita Barađano (Complutense University of Madrid) and Pål Veiden (Oslo and Akershus University). The first paper was presented by Marco Hofman and Machteld De Jong (University of Amsterdam), and dealt with the perception ordinary Dutch people have of refugees. Next, a research design that will deal with the question of *HOST* – a small refugee housing centre established in Amsterdam – was presented by Sandra Bos (University of Amsterdam). Željko Poljak (University of Zagreb) talked about the policy image concept and its application to local governance in the case of the city of Zagreb. The concept of social innovation across borders (the case of the Estonia-Latvia border) was presented by Santa Daume (University of Latvia). Andres Walliser (Complutense University of Madrid) presented how city governance in Madrid has changed since the economic crisis in 2009. Margarita Barađano and Daniel Sorando (Complutense University of Madrid) talked about their analyses of three different neighbourhoods in Madrid in order to understand changes in terms of their gentrification, transformation, and so on. Aija Zobena (University of Latvia) talked about service provision in rural areas in the case of Latvia. The strand was closed by Anton Steen

and Maiken Rød (University of Oslo) with their analysis of the role of the Central Executive Officer (CEO) in Norway when local government makes decisions about refugee settlement. The participants were invited to submit their papers for review to be published in a special issue of the *Scandinavian Journal of Public Administration*, which will be devoted to questions of urban governance.

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