



EUROPEAN

POLICY BRIEF

GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS AND INITIATIVES: UTILISING URBAN DIVERSITY TO CREATE POSITIVE OUTCOMES



A variety of local governance arrangements and initiatives exist in urban neighbourhoods that use diversity in a positive way and aim to improve the social and economic conditions for its residents. This policy brief focuses on such arrangements. It calls for an increase in sustainable and flexible support for bottom-up arrangements that fill the gap between official urban policies and the needs of the population.

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INTRODUCTION

The DIVERCITIES project focuses on the effects of hyper-diversity – the diversification of the population in socio-economic, social and ethnic terms, but also with respect to lifestyles, attitudes and activities – on city life. This policy brief summarises results and recommendations concerning our research on local governance arrangements and initiatives in cities and neighbourhoods that **use diversity in a positive way**. It highlights the crucial factors influencing success or failure and shows how public policies may benefit from such arrangements.

Local governance arrangements and initiatives are defined as policy networks or informal collaborations involving a horizontal style of decision-making in order to solve societal problems or to create societal opportunities. Such arrangements are mostly formed bottom-up – they are sometimes developed as a cooperation between state and civic actors and sometimes as purely private or even individual arrangements. Hence, in this policy brief local governance arrangements and initiatives are understood as local projects dealing with urban diversity and pursuing at least one of the three overarching objectives investigated by the DIVERCITIES project: strengthening social cohesion, enhancing social mobility and boosting economic performance.

In this phase of the DIVERCITIES project we focus on **three research questions**:

- How is diversity conceptualised within the selected governance arrangements and initiatives?
- What are the main factors influencing success or failure of the selected governance arrangements and initiatives?
- Can we identify new ideas for innovative policies and governance concepts?

These questions, along with a general overview of the selected governance arrangements, form the structure of this policy brief.

Our **comparative work** shows that many governance arrangements and initiatives adopt highly innovative approaches and fill existing gaps in public services. In contrast to top-down policy programmes, local bottom-up arrangements make use of the positive potential that exists within diverse urban populations. Thereby, social connections and networks bring various forms of knowledge, expertise, and entrepreneurship to urban areas. These governance arrangements perceive the presence of diversity and difference as an asset rather than a problem. They show how positive aspects of diversity can be fostered and nurtured – for the benefit of the population, but also to complement existing EU, state, and city policies.

EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

Research was undertaken in eleven EU cities: Antwerp, Athens, Budapest, Copenhagen, Leipzig, London, Milan, Paris, Rotterdam, Tallinn, Warsaw; and three non-EU cities: Istanbul, Toronto, and Zurich. In each city, the research teams selected at least ten governance arrangements and initiatives within their selected case study area according to a **systematic screening tool** with comparable criteria. The governance arrangements could constitute forms of collaboration between private and public actors or perform purely as public, grassroots or commercial arrangements. The research teams investigated the selected cases by conducting semi-structured interviews with local project managers and undertaking systematic analysis of core documents and strategies. Preliminary conclusions were discussed in focus groups comprising the arrangements’ stakeholders and other stakeholders, such as national and local policy makers and researchers.

The 140 investigated cases give a powerful insight into the range and scope of contemporary bottom-up and top-down governance arrangements in urban policy. The research activities have generated a huge amount of **new and creative ideas** for innovative policies and governance concepts, in line with the needs of the people living in the research areas of the cities mentioned above. They shed light on the relationship between conceptions of diversity and policy interventions and outcomes.

Assessment of the governance arrangements in the case study areas

The **general characteristics** of the analysed governance arrangements and initiatives are always dependent on their specific context and frame conditions such as the historical background, the local political culture and city-specific social challenges and problems. Most of the arrangements deal with social cohesion in one way or another, other arrangements enhance social mobility or aim at strengthening economic performance. However, the focus is often multidimensional – targeting more than one of these objectives. Table 1 presents a general classification overview of the governance arrangements and initiatives with respect to their main objective.

Table 1: General classification of the governance arrangements and initiatives

Main objective of the governance arrangements and initiatives					
Social cohesion		Social mobility		Economic performance	
“Spaces of encounter”: arrangements focussing on a certain neighbourhood	“Spaces of joint activities”: arrangements focussing on a common activity	“Group-specific support”: arrangements empowering disadvantaged groups	“Tailor-made support”: arrangements empowering persons according to individual needs	“Enclosed space for development”: arrangements addressing certain areas or groups	“Free space for creativity”: arrangements addressing the creative potential of the population

Governance arrangements and initiatives targeting **social cohesion** share the general idea of improving interaction amongst members of society and strengthening the sense of belonging and the willingness to participate and help.

- **Spaces of encounter:** Governance arrangements targeting social cohesion are often *place-based* and involve the population of a certain area. Such arrangements could include neighbourhood action groups, community centres, play streets or local festivities. One example is *'Neighbours' Day* in the city of Antwerp – an attempt to reduce the anonymity in the city and to strengthen social cohesion, an arrangement run by the municipal administration and funded by the Flemish City Fund. The idea is that neighbours organise a get-together in as many streets as possible, so people in Antwerp get to know their neighbours better.
- **Spaces of joint activities:** There are several governance arrangements focusing on aspects of a hyper-diverse society by bringing together a large diversity of people in a common activity such as a choir, a theatre, a children's circus or a cooking course. The target audience in such arrangements is not restricted to a certain neighbourhood or a specific population group, but adopts a *universal approach*. These governance arrangements bring people together who may be very different in terms of age, social status or ethnicity but share a common interest. An example is the *'Intergalactic Choir'* in the city of Zurich – a purely private, bottom-up arrangement designed to bring people together from totally different cultural backgrounds by putting a common activity at the forefront. It constitutes a weekly meeting point and provides a friendly environment for the joint singing.

Governance arrangements and initiatives targeting **social mobility** generally aim at empowering certain target groups and enabling equal access to educational attainments or job opportunities by enhancing their social capital.

- **Group-specific support:** Governance arrangements in this field are often *group-based* and focus on empowering disadvantaged groups that regular social services fail to reach such as immigrants, underprivileged adolescents, single mothers, homeless people or refugees. An example is the *'Roma-Net'* in the city of Budapest – an arrangement run by the municipality with the objectives of, inter alia, facilitating the social inclusion of Roma, challenging negative attitudes by society, improving access to public services and supporting young Roma people at entry into the labour market.
- **Tailor-made support:** Taking into account the characteristics of a hyper-diverse society, several governance arrangements implement comprehensive, innovative and *universal approaches* tailored to different personal circumstances. These arrangements are not necessarily addressed at a certain group of people, but oriented towards individual needs or specific living situations, such as language courses taking into account the situation of single parents or the empowerment of adolescents through specific sports. An example is the *'Club Guides'* in the city of Copenhagen – a joint arrangement of the local municipal authorities and the Danish Refugee Council aimed at increasing the social mobility of children from marginalised families through their inclusion into the associational life of the city. The project involves a tailor-made approach since it is oriented towards the child's own interests in terms of the type of activity (e.g. sports clubs or cultural associations). It takes the everyday life of the family into consideration and assists in providing financial support.

Governance arrangements and initiatives targeting **economic performance** are concerned with the way individuals and groups perform in the city as entrepreneurs making them more competitive and creating more spaces in which local businesses can operate – as an essential condition for the economic performance of a city.

- **Enclosed space for development:** Our research revealed numerous *place- or group-based arrangements* such as design street fairs, career days for specific groups or job centres in neighbourhoods aiming at strengthening the economic performance of groups or areas. Quite often, arrangements targeting economic performance are also coupled with as-

pects of spatial urban planning such as using and/or regenerating vacant industrial sites. An example is the *'Golden Drops of Fashion and Design'* in the city of Paris – an arrangement that seeks to cluster the garment and fashion industries of the historic immigrant neighbourhood of *la Goutte d'or* (Golden Drop) and aims at promoting a positive image and identity of the area. The initiation of the project followed a top-down process under the lead of the city administration. It pursues its goal of strengthening the economic performance of the neighbourhood and its entrepreneurs and by putting professionals in contact with one another, providing them with skill development and helping to promote their productions outside the neighbourhood.

- **Free space for creativity:** Several governance arrangements take a *universal approach* and implement projects targeted at certain groups or places, for instance hubs for creative industries or networks for start-ups. An example is the *'Creative Factory'* in the city of Rotterdam – a public-private cooperation that supports young businesses active in the creative industries (e.g. architecture, consultancy, design, entertainment, music and media) and enables the growth of start-ups. It does so by providing affordable working spaces and services, by encouraging social ties amongst starting entrepreneurs and by bringing start-ups in contact with experienced professionals from local companies.

Perception of diversity – positive and inclusive

How is diversity conceptualised within the selected governance arrangements and initiatives? Within most investigated arrangements, the **concept of diversity** is used in a positive way and regarded as an asset and enrichment to society. The main dimension of diversity thereby pertains to ethnic and cultural aspects, and to the need to improve the social inclusion of minorities into society. Although most local governance arrangements understand diversification of the population as a positive feature, it should be noted that ethnicity and equality are still very sensitive topics: poverty, racism and discrimination are highlighted in many cases to emphasise the importance of recognising the vulnerabilities with respect to ethnic diversity of the population.

The approach of many small governance arrangements and initiatives clearly differs from the discourse related to public policies. While city policies often pursue a strategy of integration or assimilation, the analysed arrangements focus instead on **interculturality** – on cultural dialogue and spaces for interactions. They have a more pluralist and inclusive approach than city governments and sense the need to create spaces of encounter where people meet on equal footing and mutually learn from each other. While the complexity of diversity is not adequately mirrored and supported by public policies and bodies, local governance arrangements often do have an eye for the potential advantages of diversity. Their organisers and leaders are convinced that a diverse society comprises many non-financial resources to solve societal problems and to create societal opportunities.

With respect to **hyper-diversity**, several governance arrangements and initiatives are not only people- or place-based, but also focus on the huge diversification of the population in terms of lifestyles, attitudes and activities. Although the concept of hyper-diversity is seldom explicitly on the agenda, there are cases aiming at including all people in a certain neighbourhood rather than a specific target audience. They address people interested in a certain activity or lifestyle – for instance by means of the dramatic arts, sports or culture. A certain focus on hyper-diversity is perceivable in Toronto and London, where diversity has a broader meaning than ethnic diversity and most of the arrangements promote a pluralist conception of diversity. In London, however, local governance arrangements are premised on the belief that opportunities for community interaction are becoming more limited in a context of growing hyper-diversity. In a cosmopolitan and economically dynamic city there is a threat that social bonds and interactions are becoming more disconnected. Hence, these governance arrangements and initiatives aim at encouraging greater use of public spaces by different groups and are opposed to privatisation that impacts on the use of such public spaces.

Factors of success or failure – voluntary engagement vs. lack of resources

What are the main factors influencing success or failure of the selected local governance arrangements and initiatives? The most crucial factors of success or failure are **internal** to the arrangements:

The high commitment and strong **voluntary engagement** of the persons working in the sampled governance arrangements seems key for the successful operation of these projects. They have shared objectives, common interests, and this allows participants to connect. Furthermore, if the arrangements' leaders have strong personal and professional networks, the daily work, the fundraising and the handling of difficult situations are facilitated. It is often a challenge though for local governance arrangements to find volunteers who can perform complex and responsible tasks.

Regarding the programme and content of the investigated governance arrangements, most of them are **oriented towards the actual needs of certain population groups**. Arrangements are successful if they tackle current problems in everyday life and are able to act as bridge-builders between public policies and gaps in public services. They are flexible enough regarding their goals and programmes to meet shifting needs of the community and newly emerging problems and challenges.

With respect to the organisational structure of the governance arrangements, **bottom-up structure, flat hierarchies, and consensual decision-making** foster the identification with the project, dialogue and communication among the participants and strengthen their feeling of belonging and the commitment towards the objectives of the arrangement.

Another factor influencing the success of governance arrangements is their **local base and ability to network**. Cooperating with other organisations in the neighbourhood for instance broadens the opportunities to build on existing talents, to reach different target groups, and to learn by exchange. Preconditions to do so seem to be organisational stability and time resources. Furthermore, successful arrangements draw on extra-local networks and resources and spread their progressive ideas to other places and institutions. In order to receive public funding and political approval, organisational structures need to be flexible enough to enter partnerships with public institutions where decision-making is based on the hierarchic principle. If local governance arrangements are not able to handle such complex networks and are mainly based on voluntarism and individual enthusiasm, they will have difficulties to successfully implement their primary goals in the long term.

Spatial and locational factors are important as well: **the physical location of an arrangement** is key to reach the target audience. Governance arrangements and their activities need to be visible and accessible. Hence, it is in many cases an advantage if they have a central location in the neighbourhood. Some arrangements are defined by their location: using vacant urban plots, for instance by successfully mixing business and community spaces, by establishing a place to visit for local people and tourists and by providing spaces for start-ups, workshops, public events and exchanges between residents with diverse backgrounds and skills.

Besides these more internal factors affecting success or failure, there are crucial **external factors** that should be considered:

Stable internal structures, engagement and sustainable activities are no guarantee for success, especially where governments pursue **inconsistent and shifting policy agendas**. The ongoing shift from a pluralist approach to an agenda promoting integration and assimilation as well as the impacts of austerity and the shrinking of the welfare state open gaps for private actors and NGOs and give them a 'raison d'être'.

On the other hand, the **availability of public resources** is crucial for the long-term existence of many governance arrangements and for maintaining the quality and continuity of the services. However, the significance of this factor varies across cities: in Warsaw and Paris for instance, the innovative character of arrangements is strongly based on the role of the city authorities, which provide institutional and financial schemes for cooperation and coordination. Whilst in most other

cities, arrangements are far less influenced by public authorities or cannot expect much public support at all. Collectively, projects that exclusively rely on state funding are particularly vulnerable to change. Therefore a diversity of funding sources is a success factor. The charitable trust model in London – a form of trust established for charitable purposes and therefore exempt from most forms of tax – or examples of alternative resources derived from ‘commercial’ activities (e.g. rents, donations, incomes from services) can be mentioned as particularly innovative and successful.

In this context, there is often a contradiction between the advantages of voluntarism and flexibility, and the required formal structure and clear legal status in order to receive public funding. Thus, the **division of the public administration often hampers systematic and sustainable support** and funding of governance arrangements since they may not be assigned to a specific administrative unit. Also, different parts of a programme may need to rely on numerous governmental bodies for funding which undermines the addressing of needs through an integrated approach. Our research shows that public funds are often rather selective, isolated and not very sustainable, given the absence of a global, long-term policy regarding the implementation of measures and subsidies. However, there are examples where public administrative structures appear to be more flexible in dealing with the arrangements’ flat hierarchies. The Danish system for instance carries an innovative potential through an extensive collaboration between state, civil society and market.

Governance arrangements dealing with diversity – sources of creativity and innovation

Can we identify new ideas for innovative policies and governance concepts? As the analysis of the broad database shows, an important potential of the governance arrangements and initiatives investigated is the creation of effective programmes which adopt a **bottom-up approach and proactively utilise the positive assets that exist** within target groups. Through the involvement of key persons or direct participation of residents, the effectiveness and credibility of an arrangement may be considerably enhanced.

Unlike many public policies, small governance arrangements implement a **tailor-made and personalised approach** to address the diverse needs of a specific population group or a specific neighbourhood. By using case-specific, innovative and creative approaches, often combined with experimental and trial and error methods, they embrace the complexity of local conditions, individual requirements and societal problems in a manner that public authorities and policies are not able or restricted to do.

The arrangements’ added value is providing **spaces of interaction and encounter** where people meet on equal grounds without hierarchical structures. Creating spaces of interaction and encounter with a focus on activities may be more effective than traditional integration measures since people do not feel patronised. Thereby, the provision of visual events and spectacles involving music, art or theatre seem very promising, since they are accessible to a wide range of people as they do not require proficiency in the local language. Several innovative governance arrangements promote a modern ‘urban culture’ that accommodates different lifestyles. It attracts people from diverse ethnic origins and all layers of society. Such area-based cultural arrangements (e.g. festivals, dance workshops or song contests) help to construct an inclusive identity for the neighbourhood and contribute to new forms of local diversity, for instance, when residents with diverse backgrounds start new projects or develop new products.

Some governance arrangements and initiatives clearly demonstrate that **interdepartmental and intersectional platforms** or bodies could improve the efficiency of interventions by strengthening the cooperation with and between governmental and non-governmental actors. Community centres and/or professional coordinators can be highly important regarding the success of local governance arrangements as they function as an umbrella institution and facilitator providing support to the otherwise independent arrangements.

The DIVERCITIES project investigates the question: “Under which conditions can urban hyper-diversity **positively affect** social cohesion, economic performance and social mobility of individuals and groups suffering from socio-economic deprivation?” The analysis of the present governance arrangements and initiatives shows that to effectively strengthen social cohesion, social mobility and economic performance, it needs individual enthusiasm and organisational flexibility as well as the ability to enter partnerships with professionals and public authorities in order to have access to financial and political support.

Policy-makers should learn from local governance arrangements and initiatives

Traditional government interventions alone are no longer able to fulfil the needs of the increasingly diverse groups in urban society. Therefore, **governments should show their appreciation of local governance arrangements** since they fill important niches in public service provision, for instance in the support of marginalised groups. Politics and society profit from this voluntary engagement and in many cases the cost-benefit-ratio is excellent. Policy agendas should be opened up for new bottom-up topics, since it is at local level where social problems and demands become clearly visible and noticeable first. Governments should support arrangements by acknowledging their importance for the community, by recognising the significance of and collaborating with the people who initiate and lead successful local governance arrangements and by giving them more responsibilities.

Allow space for bottom-up arrangements so they are not over-controlled and over-powered

Urban policies should consider the structure of these arrangements as new governance input that promotes social cohesion, social mobility and economic performance. Moreover, governmental strategies may consider the importance of openness and consensus in decision-making to better support governance arrangements dealing with diversity issues in European cities. This means that **legislation should be flexible enough to support and to fund arrangements, which are less formally organised, have open and participative structures, and are not always to be evaluated in quantitative requirements**. Integrated and comprehensive social policies are required to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of these governance arrangements.

An organisation where different partners have the opportunity to launch their own ideas and responsibility is given to its participants can be very successful. They know best what the needs and interests of the target audience are. Moreover, when people feel responsible for a project, they also want the project to be successful. In order to achieve a better representation of the diverse population in projects, bottom-up approaches often have advantages with respect to local knowledge and closeness to the needs of certain neighbourhoods. Therefore, **local policy-makers should consider new and innovative arrangements as valuable governance input** and provide appropriate support, so that these projects gain legitimisation and may broaden their social impact.

Leave flexibility for the design, content and financing of programmes

It is important to meet shifting needs of a community. A successful governance arrangement should focus on **capacity building** in the community with a long-term vision. Staff and internal capacity should be able to respond to the changing demands of the group, to speak the language of the target audience and to engage members of the community. Hiring staff members from the target community seems very promising. They have the necessary knowledge (e.g. language), high motivation and street credibility. These are success factors to be improved upon by the arrangements themselves, or through advice and support from public authorities. In order to ensure sustainable development of social cohesion, it is indispensable to support robust links between professionals and volunteers.

Public funding is often crucial for local governance arrangements, but they should not exclusively rely on it since it may make them vulnerable to discontinuities in budgets, budget cuts or shifts in policy agendas. In some cases public funding carries the risk of not being regarded as independent anymore. Therefore a **diversity of funding sources**, also specific models such as charitable trusts, can be helpful. Alongside funding, one of the most significant issues local actors are facing

is that of asset ownership. Where assets – tangible or intangible items such as inventory, equipment, patents or programmes – are owned or managed by local actors, there are enhanced opportunities to promote arrangements that draw on and develop positive aspects of hyper-diversity. Policy interventions that cater for and support hyper-diversity can only be successful if the issue of asset ownership is targeted.

Support governance arrangements and initiatives that involve the community and implement an integrated approach

When it comes to local planning and development, **the emergence of collaborative policy-making through participatory democracy is eminent** – being inclusive to as many interest groups as possible. Participatory planning is an additional dimension in the otherwise top-down planning process and leads to increasingly diverse solutions in urban planning and development. Within these processes, governmental strategies should link diverse sectoral policies, for instance in the fields of education, culture, spatial development, and employment and social policy. In supporting local governance arrangements, governmental subsidies are important, but support in terms of staff and volunteer training, assistance regarding financial and organisational planning and provision of networking possibilities are needed as well. Policy-makers need to create space for innovation, for instance incubator units for small businesses and other types of support for employers.

Facilitate intercultural interaction and dialogue instead of exclusively focusing on traditional integration measures

The approach of numerous governance arrangements to use intercultural interaction and dialogue to foster social cohesion seems very promising. **The concept of ‘interculturality’ instead of the (often) patronising approach of integration or assimilation demonstrates positive effects** that should be acknowledged by local governments. Today’s rich diversity cannot be reduced to standard macro-categories. The political awareness of hyper-diversity and the arrangements’ activities may increase policy effectiveness by allowing better targeting. One of the means for spreading out the notion of diversity as a positive asset to the city and to a neighbourhood is the quest towards breaking down dogmas and prejudices and thus limiting the negative consequences of diversity such as racism and discrimination.

Implement a global approach cutting across different units of administration

Several governance arrangements experience difficulties with financial contributions by public administrations since many projects may not be assigned to a specific administrative unit. Local governance arrangements are often situated at the interface of subjects such as integration, community work, culture, youth or sports, and therefore, the division of public administration sometimes hampers a reasonable use of funds. The administrative systems are often not geared to handle the hyper-diversifying city. Therefore, **a system of cooperation between private and public partners** is to be promoted instead of letting the arrangements compete for the same money – at least as long as the arrangements render services complementing rather than competing with each other. Funding should be long-term and intersectional, covering different administrative units dealing with diversity. Governments should clarify, whether governance arrangements can play a crucial role in their overall strategy, whether they belong to long-term processes or not.

Interconnect and coordinate governance arrangements and activities that use diversity in a positive way

This recommendation is not only derived from our research results, but also from our positive experiences discussing preliminary findings in focus groups. In several cities, stakeholders and policy-makers appreciated the opportunity to exchange information, views, knowledge and experiences. Most of them agreed on the usefulness of coordinating such activities and found it worthwhile to continue them once or twice a year. To be involved in intra- and extra-local networks and to compete for political support and funding is time-consuming and requires **specialised skills or professional know-how**. This means that particularly innovative and creative bottom-up arrangements may fail if their work is predominantly based on individual enthusiasm and voluntarism, but lacks certain ‘professionalism’.

This danger could be diminished, if public authorities, in some cases also well-established NGOs, offer **platforms, help desks, joint locations and/or coordinators and facilitators** to interconnect stakeholders, administrative units and experts around the common targets of social cohesion, social mobility and economic performance. It helps to set up a dynamic and long-term framework in cities and neighbourhoods, which support voluntary policy coordination, mutual learning and strengthening synergies and complementarities between different local activities. Involving public and non-public experts could provide support with respect to financial, organisational and technical issues and may simplify the access for bottom-up organisations.

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

Our multi-method research deploys an interdisciplinary approach, which draws on urban geography, political science, organisational studies, law, history, urban planning, economics and sociology. It aims to provide a comprehensive approach to the governance of complex urban dynamics and understand the case-specific characteristics of diversity in different contexts, to analyse new policy approaches that recognise and manage hyper-diversity, and to suggest instruments that can work in a range of contexts. Field research is being conducted in 14 cities by 14 teams, which make up the project partnership. The authors of this report and the lead partner for the Work Package ‘Governance arrangements and initiatives’ are Dr Walter Schenkel (schenkel@synergo.ch) and Dr Larissa Plüss from synergo Mobility-Politics-Space GmbH, Zurich, Switzerland.

PROJECT IDENTITY

PROJECT NAME

DIVERCITIES

Governing Urban Diversity: Creating Social Cohesion, Social Mobility and Economic Performance in Today’s Hyper-diversified Cities

COORDINATOR

Ronald van Kempen

Utrecht University
Department Human Geography & Spatial Planning, Faculty of Geosciences
Utrecht, The Netherlands
R.vanKempen@uu.nl

CONSORTIUM

Aalborg University

Danish Building Research Institute (SBI)
Aalborg, Denmark

Delft University of Technology (TUDelft)

Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment
Department OTB – Research for the Built Environment
Delft, Netherlands

Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – UFZ

Department Urban and Environmental Sociology
Leipzig, Germany

Middle East Technical University (METU)

City and Regional Planning Department, Faculty of Architecture
Ankara, Turkey

National Centre for Social Research (EKKE)

Athens, Greece

Polish Academy of Sciences

Stanisław Leszczycki Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization (IGSO PAS)
Warsaw, Poland

synergo Mobility-Politics-Space GmbH

Zurich, Switzerland

University of Antwerp

Centre on Inequality, Poverty, Social Exclusion and the City (OASeS)
Antwerp, Belgium

University College London

Bartlett School of Planning
London, United Kingdom

University Paris-Est Créteil

Paris Institute of Urban Planning
Paris, France

University of Szeged

Department of Economic and Social Geography
Szeged, Hungary

University of Tartu

Department of Geography, Centre for Migration and Urban Studies
Tartu, Estonia

University of Urbino Carlo Bo

Department of Economics, Society and Politics (DESP)
Urbino, Italy

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WEBSITE

<http://www.urbandivercities.eu/>

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact: Ronald van Kempen
R.vanKempen@uu.nl

FURTHER READING

- Towards Hyper-Diversified European Cities. A Critical Literature Review
- Urban Policies on Diversity (14 city reports)
- Governance Arrangements and Initiatives (14 city reports, available in autumn 2014)
All available from our website www.urbandivercities.eu/publications/