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European Cities in an Urban World

What Will Be the Cities of Tomorrow? How Can Urban Planners Act Today for a Prosperous, Inclusive and Sustainable Future?

These will be the key questions at the URBACT Annual Conference and the answers given during plenary sessions and workshops will be informed by the experience of URBACT projects and European Cities.

But the debates will not only focus on Europe, and one of the key plenary sessions will focus on European Cities in an Urban World.

Here are four very good reasons to come and listen to such a fascinating panel:

1. Europe is not an island. The development of other regions has a strong impact on European cities and one can learn from other parts of the world to develop better regional policies.

The European Commission has understood it and has involved in a dialogue with China on spatial development. The process gave birth to a report presenting comparative perspectives of regional policies in China and Europe, which points out learning points for both parties. Peter Ramsdem, the moderator of the debate, was part of the research team. That’s why I am sure he will come up with insightful questions to Li Tie, the director of the China Centre for Urban Development at the National Development and Reform Commission.

2. The great dynamism of cities in the rest of the world should not scare Europeans but inspire them.

Maybe Sandro Balducci, Professor in Planning and Vice-rector of the Politecnico di Milano, who also has teaching experience in the US and Shanghai and is a specialist of European cities development, will be able to tell us more about the way European cities too demonstrate a strong dynamism and how they can hold the distance and remain functional, competitive and attractive!

3. Building a prosperous, sustainable and integrative city is hard work and cannot rely on mainstream policy discourses.
John Lovering and Ivan Turok in their articles in *China and Europe: The Implications of the Rise of China for European Space* look at the international competition between cities to become ‘the most creative city’. By analysing this discourse and its implementation all around the world, they uncover its limits: It is unlikely that all jobs will be creative in the future; not all cities will qualify as creative cities and one should create a space adapted to all members of the society.

Building a truly sustainable and just city may require a more complex approach. Since this is one of the main areas of interest of Susan Fainstein, Professor and senior Research Fellow in the Harvard Graduate School of Design, she will certainly give a fascinating input on how one can tackle inequalities in cities today and in the future.

4. **Latin America has a great experience in collective management of places and goods at a local level.**

European policy makers focus today on citizens’ and stakeholders involvement in policy making as a new tool for sustainable development. Maybe there is something that Europeans could learn from Latin America? I really hope it’s an insight we’ll get from Patricia Torres, principal Urban Development Specialist, Inter-American Development Bank and former Vice minister for Housing and Urban Development in the Colombian Government.

There will certainly be even more fascinating questions arising during that debate, which I have not foreseen yet, but we’ll have many opportunities to discuss them in Copenhagen. Yet another good question to come!

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**One Response to “European Cities in an Urban World”**

1. *Segolene* says:  
   October 15, 2012 at 6:29 pm

   With the participation of Professor Babatunde Agbola is currently the Director of Physical Planning at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, all continents will be represented!  