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# DiffUrb News



## Difference Oriented Urban Planning (DiffUrb)

by the DiffUrb team

Our research project started one year ago and we are happy to present our first newsletter that includes some insights on our empirical work and first results. The idea of this Newsletter is to keep informed our partners and to permit a dialogue with us. Our project is without doubt oriented to create fundamental knowledge

Cities are characterised by pluralism. This fact is becoming increasingly relevant in the practice of urban governance and planning

- but also to change practices. The field work started in different cities last year and with different methods. We will talk about it in the next pages. But first of all: what is our project about?

### DiffUrb at a glance

The aim of this research project is to study the concepts and practices adopted by cities to deal with pluralism and to develop new planning conceptions oriented to differences.

Cities are characterised by pluralism. This fact is becoming increasingly relevant in the practice of urban governance and planning. The handling of differences is usually based on an understanding that favours only one individual feature (such as income) and addresses only specific groups. The proposed study critically examines this restrictive understanding of differences; an understanding that imposes exclusive features on individuals or groups and thereby simplifies complex identities. First, we will include in the concept of differences numerous existing features such as age, gender, language, disability and religion, aiming to understand these characteristics in their intersectional combination and dissolve representations of supposedly homogeneous groups. Second, we want to challenge the idea of pluralism by establishing a new, innovative urban planning approach, called difference-oriented urban planning. This approach conceptualises differences in planning theory and practice.

Empirically, we work on six cities:

**Geneva.** The border city of Geneva has a highly mobile population, the majority of which have a background of migration and mobility. The differentiated social status of mobile people and the absence of strong communities shape a very particular context of difference and distance between the populations. Geneva allows us to see how a city with a tradition of strongly contested spatial policies — where insurgent groups have finally been acknowledged (see the squatters' movement) — deals with new forms of insurgency, such as those brought into the urban arena by mobile people and alternative

### *Considering or not differences in the city*



Planners are sensitive to differences, but have no instruments to put differences in the forefront of their practice. Reactive adaptations are the result: mixing up segregated neighbourhoods, installing access ramps for people with disabilities, securing streets for children. How can the reactive logic be turned into a proactive logic?

subcultures. The areas we study are situated in Vernier, which has several restructuration projects: the neighbourhoods of the Libelulles and Gordon-Bennett.

**Hamburg.** As a city with a large industrial port it has transformed, in the last 30 years, its waterfront. It is probably one of the most innovative and also controversial areas of transformation in Europe, dealing with claims of grandeur, social movements in favour of affordable housing, and complex and dense industrial and housing spaces. Hamburg is traditionally a diverse urban area with a strong tradition of experiments in participation, but is also a city in search of a planning strategy able to answer challenges related to economic and social transformation, and characterised by controversies and participative models in search of a new urbanism. The area we

study was planned as an answer to pluralism, new technologies and sustainable development, and includes the neighbourhood of the port and the inner-city.

**Brussels.** It is the capital of the “Eurostar” and a case characterised by economic and image-driven transformation. Nevertheless, Brussels is also known for experiments in urban renewal, based on participative processes. For Brussels, we focalise on the area of the canal that can be seen as the border between the brilliant and the shadow city. On one side of the canal are tourist attractions, on the other side poor neighbourhoods like Moelenbek and Anderlecht. The area that we analyse is characterised by an incremental inclusive planning logic trying to conserve the popular characteristics by a negotiated transformation.



Parc de jeu, Genève 2023

**Turin.** This city is an example of a non-homogenous architectural and social urban structure: the historic city centre is a high cultural tourist attraction, while peripheral areas have long been examples of abandonment, degradation and divestment. However, for the last couple of decades there has been initiatives of reuse and redevelopment of the former industrial areas and the housing areas attached to them. Many and varied were the areas affected by these projects: for example, the tobacco factory, transformed into a university campus of the avant-garde; or the mechanical workshop for train repair 'OGR' becoming one of the largest spaces for art and culture in Italy. We study the district of Barriera di Milano, an erstwhile industrial area, struggling over the years with degradation, and today a territory of strategic economic, environmental and cultural development.

**Montreal.** This city has mixed and homogenous neighbourhoods, like the gay

neighbourhood and Chinatown, both characterised by marked differences. City governance is community-oriented and has a strong interest in the areas with a high share of residents with disabilities, LGBTQ and people of different origins. The city's deep-rooted local autonomy and language issues contrast with its policies regarding difference.

**Pristina.** It is the capital of the newly created state of Kosovo. The city was at the centre of two quite different types of logic of transformation. In the 20th century, the city was completely rethought and planned by the state; after independence, the major logic of development was the market and informal decisions (with illegal construction activities). We are interested in this case of post-conflictual planning practice because it permits the analysis of spontaneous transformations in the context of a city with a long history of difference-orientation.

## Pristina

by Sandro Cattacin, Fiorenza Gamba and Olivier Waeber

The Pristina fieldwork began in a pre-phase of the project in 2019 when Sandro Cattacin and his class in sociology analysed how it is possible to be innovative in a place characterised by adverse conditions. This exploratory field trip resulted in many useful contacts for the DiffUrb project and in a publication ([Cattacin and Pignolo 2020](#)).

The DiffUrb team working on planning instruments went to Pristina last year. During the different visits, more than 30 interviews and a high number of observations were performed, with the help of colleagues and students of the University of Pristina. Archival documents about planning history were also collected such as local press archives, master planning documents and related plans.



[Presentation of the DiffUrb project by Sandro Cattacin, University of Pristina, 2022](#)

The data collection was done using digital photography in the reading rooms of city and state archives, or in associative archives. A first analysis of the Pristina fieldwork is not written yet, but was presented by Sandro Cattacin in Pristina during a lecture at the department of Sociology.

## Hamburg and the HafenCity

by Sandro Cattacin, Fiorenza Gamba and Olivier Waeber

The fieldwork in Hamburg took place between September and December 2022. Almost 40 interviews were conducted with urban planning's observers and stakeholders, from the public, associative and private sector. The interviews covered a wide range of point of



### Neunutzung Kaufhaus Mönckebergstraße, Hamburg 2022

views, from journalists and historians to architects and urban planners, along with deputies and members of parties, heads of private companies, NGOs and associations. Audio-visual recordings and photos were also produced for analysis and illustration, focusing on urban public spaces of various neighbourhoods and mostly conveying the landscape of spatial and temporal differences.

The historical perspective revealed an increased interest in city planning for differences. Already in the 19th century, socio-economic differences were addressed and working-class neighbourhoods were first transformed (under the auspices of the hygienic

movement large parts of the Gängeviertel were destroyed) and then build up, in particular in Barmbek. The destruction of Hamburg during the II WW was also used to rebuild the functional city and to demolish large parts of the historic central neighbourhood. Until the 1970s, the idea of a city of differences was marginal.

Urban social movements changed such an indifference and have been the driving force behind the creation of a new image of Hamburg as a 'city for all'. One of the most important project of transformation, sustainability and inclusiveness - politically pushed - was the planning and building of the new central neighbourhood HafenCity. Thought at the end of the 20th century it was mainly as a place for investors, it was then transformed in a project sensitive to questions related to ecology, socio-economic differences, different abilities, as well as to children and users of the territory. The next development steps seeks to influence the near poor neighbourhood of Veddel by creating physical and social interrelations with the central neighbourhoods.

The analysis of the planning and urban history of Hamburg with a focus on the HafenCity will take place in summer 2023.

## Work in Progress: Cognitive Experiment

by Heidi Baumann

In November 2022, a first round of the cognitive experiment was conducted in Geneva, in which 100 participants took part. The mobile experiment was located in three public places, Place de la Navigation, Plaine de Plainpalais, and Place du Pré-l'Évêque. People were approached on site and invited to take part in the experiment. Using a virtual reality headset, each participant was exposed to four 360°-images showing different types of neighbourhoods in Geneva, with scenarios representing varying degrees of greenery and biodiversity. People's affective responses to these images were captured through physiological measurements (electrodermal activity) using electrodes attached to the fingers. Initial results reveal differences in affective responses to the different neighbourhood types and scenarios. A second round of the cognitive experiment is scheduled for spring 2023.



Mobile field experiment measuring affective responses using electrodermal activity, Geneva 2022

# Survey on mobility

By Benjamin Gramsch and Florian Masse

During February and March 2023, the DiffUrb survey was conducted in Geneva and Brussels. We have invited 10,000 people in each city to participate. Each potential participant has received a letter explaining the project, the scope of the questions, a QR code, and a link to participate in the survey. The survey consists of three stages. The first stage includes questions on the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondent, knowledge of activities in the city, attitudes towards diversity, and others. The second stage relates to regular leisure activities carried out in the city. Finally, the third stage includes questions on the individual's social network, including the regularity of meeting friends and family. With this information, we can understand differences in people's spatiotemporal behaviors and their relation with the city. The same survey will be conducted in Turin and Hamburg during spring 2023.



Veddel Metrostation, Hamburg 2022

# Publications and other outputs

## Publications

Cattacin, S., and Gamba, F. (2019). The necessity of a difference-oriented urban planning practice. Conference : Getting the measure Baukultur – 4th and 5th November 2019 at the Pavillon Sici in Geneva. Parallel session 1: Streetscapes. Geneva: Davos Declaration 2018: 1-4.

Gamba, F., and Cattacin, S. (2021). Le quartier suspendu. Adret Pont-Rouge une projection entre cartographie et Facebook. E|C Rivista dell'Associazione Italiana di Studi Semiotici XV:31, 42-49.

Gamba, F. (2023). Imaginer la ville du futur. Créativité et rituels urbains d'inclusion. In Gamba, F., Cattacin, S., Alzola Viana, N. Ville et créativité. Zürich-Genève: Seismo.

Gramsch, B., and Axhausen, K. W. (2022). Place generator & place interpreter: A new survey method to understand regular destination choice. Arbeitsberichte Verkehrs- und Raumplanung, 1769.

## Conferences

Forum sociologique 2022 La ville des différences, Conference cycle at the University of Geneva organised by Sandro Cattacin, Fiorenza Gamba, Nerea Viana Alzola and Olivier Waeber, spring 2022. Find all conferences on the project webpage.

The DiffUrb project, by Sandro Cattacin. Department of Sociology, University of Pristina, 08.12.2022.

De la ville inclusive à la ville ouverte. Narration et planning pour la ville du futur, by Fiorenza Gamba. Workshop, University of Grenoble, 13.12.2022.

Les enjeux de la ville ouverte : différence et inclusion, by Fiorenza Gamba. Workshop, University of Grenoble, 12.12.2022.

Seeing the city through flesh and stone: the case of Vernier's cités in Switzerland, by Viana Alzola Nerea & Olivier Waeber. RN37 Midterm Conference of the European Sociological Association, Session 28.1, Territorial changes - evolution on planning, urban transformations and perceptions, Humboldt University Berlin, 06.10.2022.

Social Networks, Location Choice and Urban Diversity: Survey methods and results, by Benjamin Gramsch and Kay Axhausen. 16th International Conference on Travel Behaviour Research, Santiago, Chile, 11-15.12.2022.

Habiter les multiples, by Sandro Cattacin. Journée du Logement, Office cantonal du logement et de la planification foncière (OCLPF), Maison de la Paix, Geneva, 27.01.2023.



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Aim: The DiffUrb Newsletter informs project partners about the advancement and the results of the project. It is also addressed to all people interested on the project and in particular people that helped us during the empirical work (interview partners, contact persons).

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Place Generator Place Interpreter: A New Survey Method to Understand Regular Destination Choice, by Benjamin Gramsch and Kay Axhausen. Transportation Research Board 102nd Annual Meeting, Washington, USA, 8-12.01.2023.

## Podcasts

Traitement des différences dans la planification urbaine, by Sandro Cattacin, 2022.

Quelle mobilité pour le 21ème siècle?, by Vincent Kaufmann, 2022.

## Short videos

The ideal city of differences according to Vincent Kaufmann, 2022.

The ideal city of differences according to Adrienne Grêt-Regamey, 2022.

## Media

Sandro Cattacin, Ces bars qui sortent le grand jeu, Tribune de Genève, 26.11.2022.

Vincent Kaufmann, Pour qui il faut mieux encadrer la voiture, Le Temps, 15.12.2022.

Sandro Cattacin, La questione 'woke' tra realtà e strumentalizzazioni, La Regione, 22.03.2023.