



SOCIAL POLIS Newsletter: March 2010

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Social PolIS extended till November 30, 2010

We just received the excellent News from the European Commission that the Social PolIS contract has been extended till the end of the year. This will give us the possibility to continue publishing the Newsletter, valorise outputs from the first period and introduce new functions to the Website. Moreover, a number of new stakeholder activities will be launched in the near future. These should reinforce the role of Social PolIS as a learning platform, where participants learn from dialogue. To this purpose, starting from the experiences of Social PolIS, methods of collaboration in research and practice must be further documented, developed, tested and evaluated.

Using the platform for collective design of a strategy to valorise educational resources and a European agenda for the analysis of the challenges of urban social cohesion offers us the frame to structure cooperation in which activities around the application of the educational resources in the practice of stakeholders will further the documentation, dissemination and popularization of methods of collaboration in research and practice, thus allowing a continued production of knowledge that is policy relevant and able to impact on urban spaces.

These activities will follow the line of Social PolIS till now and thus combine research, practice and policy in a networking approach. The knowledge on social cohesion in urban spaces built in Social PolIS will be mobilized to underpin concrete initiatives of stakeholders regarding social cohesion in urban spaces. Knowledge exchange will be achieved by learning events bringing together policy-makers, civil society organisations and academics to apply the knowledge and the educational resources of Social PolIS.

A calendar of the new activities will soon be available.

Educational materials: Toward Knowledge Alliances

The report *Towards knowledge alliances* popularizes the results of Social Polis with regard to the theme “Cohesion of the city as a whole”. It draws mainly on the two survey papers which deal with this theme (EF0 and EF12) but highlights from the other themes have been picked up as well. The report presents Social Polis as part of the current re-contextualisation of science where science and society have started to “reach out” to one another. The relationship between researchers and stakeholders serves as a red thread throughout the report. First of all, the report tries to gain a foothold in everyday European life by questioning the use of the concept of social cohesion. Is it really a general issue and is the issue everywhere known as social cohesion? If not, stakeholders do not know what the researchers are talking about. Moreover, the report makes sense of the European dimension by presenting results from Social Polis which explains differences and similarities respectively. It highlights to what extent practitioners working in urban neighbourhoods around Europe face the same problems. It provides reasons for stakeholders to be interested in each others’ work and learn from each other. Furthermore, the report explains the approach to social cohesion maintained by Social Polis, understanding it as a “problématique”. The profound change of attention that this approach urges on, means that problems have to be redefined, but not on the basis of the dominant approach, called inclusive liberalism, which has come to dominate so much of thinking, policies and problem-solving in the last decades. Instead, a new approach is needed that treats the existing order as something created and temporal. Finally, this new approach has to be developed jointly with stakeholders. Social Polis favours a continued re-contextualisation of science by involving stakeholders on an equal footing.

Workshop: Comparative Research on Urban and Regional Contentious Dynamics

We would like to signal the workshop “Comparative Research on Urban and Regional Contentious Dynamics”, part of the “Social movements and participation” section of the Italian Society for Political Science congress, which will take place in Venice on September 16th - 18th 2010.

The study of local conflicts is at the crossroad of many major debates of contemporary social and political sciences (such as urban segregation and its politicization effects, the transformation of citizens participation, the deliberative turn in public policies design, urban power structure and translocal élite circulation, the new multilevel dynamics of urban politics). Literature on urban conflicts has stressed how regeneration policies become target of protests organized by groups of citizens. Some of these conflicts simply block the implementation process, while others are ineffective. In other cases, local contention enacts institutional innovation, opening up room for discussion and changes in urban plans and resources allocation. Although the study of urban conflicts has developed in the last ten years, most of the research has been based on single case studies.

The workshop aims to collect and discuss *comparative* research in this field.

Papers based on comparative qualitative researches, on comparative – historical approaches, on small-N data sets, as well as comparative research mixing different data collection techniques are welcome. Paper proposals are expected to be around 5.000 character.

Final Papers can not exceed 50.000 characters (spaces, notes and references comprises). To allow maximum time for discussion, we intend that all papers should be circulated by e-mail and put on the SISP website.

Paper proposals should be sent by June 1st 2010.

Please send proposals to both the two convenors: Noemi Podestà, noemi.podesta@sp.unipmn.it; Tommaso Vitale, tommaso.vitale@unimib.it.

For more information about the XXIII Congress SISP, please look on: www.sisp.it

Upcoming events

Date	Title
28 May 10 - 30 May 10	1st World Congress on Cities and Adaptation to Climate Change - Bonn
21 May 10 - 22 May 10	Annual Scientific Meeting on Social Enterprise - Rome
22 Apr 10 - 24 Apr 10	Room in the City: A Forum for the Civic Square - Glasgow

Post-Doctoral Fellowship York University, Toronto

The City Institute at York University - Towers in the Suburbs: Fixing the Modernist Suburban Legacy in Toronto

The City Institute has developed a profile for suburban research and has been a centre for work on Toronto suburbs in particular since its inception in 2006. We have just completed an Infrastructure Canada sponsored project on infrastructure in the area around suburban York University, and we have been awarded a Major Collaborative Research Initiative on Global Suburbanism. For more information on the City Institute, please visit www.yorku.ca/city

We are seeking a researcher at the post-doc level to work with our MCRI researchers and students on the Toronto part of our "Suburban Redevelopment and Tower Renewal" research project. The post-doc will include work on the renewal of building stock in the older suburbs of Toronto. Concentrating on Toronto's Tower Renewal program, the post-doc will demonstrate the significance of improvements to the built environment of suburban areas that have been characterized by physical and social problems. The decline of the so-called "old suburbs" has perhaps been nowhere as apparent as in the apartment towers built in the 1960s to 1980s which make up large parts of the built residential environment in Toronto. As older housing stock becomes subject to regeneration, often led by the state, gentrification may be a consequence and income disparities rise. The post-doc position will be guided by the overall objectives of the MCRI (<http://www.yorku.ca/city/Projects/GlobalSuburbanism.html>) but also by a specific conceptual lens that is provided by a combination of urban political economy and ecology as well as social and cultural geography in order to understand multiple processes that enter into the renewal of aging suburban housing stock.

Deadline: Applications must be received by May 3, 2010. It is expected that the successful applicant will begin postdoctoral research at York by July 1, 2010.

For more information click on: <http://www.yorku.ca/acadjobs/index.htm>

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The **SOCIAL POLIS NEWSLETTER** is published by the SOCIAL POLIS coordination Team at Newcastle University and the Catholic University of Leuven

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