



SOCIAL POLIS Newsletter: September 2011

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Urban conflicts, comparative studies and planning

The call for papers for the RC21 sessions at the 2nd ISA Forum, held from the 1st to the 4th of August 2012 in Buenos Aires (AR) is now available. You can find the details on www.rc21.org.

Carlos Vainer, from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, a Social Polis stakeholder, invites you to submit abstracts to the session he will chair: urban conflicts, comparative studies and planning. On-line abstract submissions are open from August 25 to December 15, 2011. Below you can find the description of the section.

”Cities speak through conflicts. Different cities speak different languages through different conflicts. Through riots, meetings, sit-ins, street blockages, rallies, petitions, neighbor quarrels, rhetoric and symbols, organized social movements, urban actors and stakeholders express the diversity within and among cities.

On the one hand, all these dimensions and practices offer a rich material to urban comparative studies; on the other hand, planners have a lot to learn if they are able to hear and understand the voices from the city, its agents and conflicts. As insurgent planning and some rich experiences on advocacy and participatory planning suggest, instead of a sign of urban pathology, conflicts can be

seen as a sign of urban vitality and dynamics, and can offer possible counter-hegemonic planning practices and experiences.

When urban studies and urban planning seem to be condemned to offer ready-to-go models diffused worldwide by international consultants and multilateral agencies, critical comparative approaches, with their focus on conflicts, may represent a challenge to new forms of ethnocentrism and their supposedly universal planning practices – such as competitive strategic planning, private-public partnerships, large urban projects and mega-events.

This session intends to bring researchers together in order to explore the contributions of urban conflicts when doing urban analysis and urban planning and to explore the potentialities of comparing conflictual planning practices”

The fourth international architectural competition in the Think Space programme: Moral Borders

The Zagreb Society of Architects is launching the fourth and last competition for this year's Think Space cycle. For this year's annual cycle, the main theme is Moral Borders.

Devised by Hrvoje Njirić, founder of the Zagreb based Njirić+ arhitekti, the Moral borders competition challenges contestants to radically examine the present day conditions by going beyond the stereotypes, patterns and typologies that have proven their inoperability, while exercising their own imperfect duties of civic agents in search of morally diverse frameworks of affordable utopias.

“The escalation of the market economy in the recent decades has resulted in a complete exclusion of architects as credible civic agents. „The Faustian bargain“, as Koolhaas puts it, accepted widely by the architects themselves, has promoted them into the members of the star-system and their work has gained the media presence indeed; but its creators became more and more eliminated from the decision-making and their public role significantly diminished.

If we want to think about architecture as a social project today, it requires some support, more than ever. If we tend to believe it is possible to reinstall it, there are some questions to be answered. How to recreate any form of idealism as a necessary prerequisite, even if it is provisional, simulated or temporary? What forces can we mobilize to improve the weak impact on the public sector? How to regain the trust of the society? How to treat vague moral borders of the architecture discipline? And finally, how to articulate the first utopias of the 21st century and how plausible can they be?”

More information on: <http://www.think-space.org/competitions/>

Submission deadline for Moral Borders is 28 October 2011

Repairing broken communities: Clear Village project in Italy

After the 'Dynamic Dialogues' process in Helsingborg and the 'Repairing Broken Communities' well-being analysis in a deprived area in Kiel earlier this year, Clear Village is carrying out its third main project in 2011 in a rural village in Italy.

The context

Atina has a strong sense of identity and tremendous cultural richness including art competitions, festivals and a manifold diversity of exhibitions. However, Atina also faces the typical rural-village challenges of depopulation, limited services and economic dependence on subsidies. Additionally, Atina's population seems to be fragmented in two main parts, which exacerbates developing a collectively developed vision and change process.

The aim of the intervention

Under the header 'Conversations about the Future of Atina' CLEAR VILLAGE is working in Atina in mid Italy from July 21st until August 1st 2011 to kick off a multiple phase project to regenerate a fragmented local community, trying to co-create a shared vision for an ancient rural village of tremendous cultural and social richness as well as generate new opportunities for the benefit of all inhabitants.

The project

The project is divided in three main parts: The first phase of the project, called 'Discovering Atina' will start the conversation during the well-known Atina Jazz Festival in 2011; the second phase 'Dreaming Atina' will continue the local conversations about a sustainable future for the village with a Clear Village lab, where local community members and global experts will work on co-creating a strategy for redevelopment and revitalisation at the village scale.

The vision and action plan derived from the lab will be put into action in the third phase 'Recode Atina'. The team will publish a report giving suggestions on how rural villages in the Mediterranean can be revitalised effectively, defining a vision and an action plan.

New book: institutions, human development and economic growth in transition economies

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the economies of Central and Eastern European countries and Former Soviet Republics have developed in different ways, with some considerably outperforming others. This book explores the reasons behind this: the models of capitalism that each country aimed at, the role of institutions and of institutional change in development, and the main determinants of economic and human development. Moreover, it also examines the relationship between democracy and development, and questions whether democracy is a prerequisite.

The book also considers the relevance of social capital in transition economies to test the relationship between social capital and development. A comparative analysis of state policies is conducted in order to assess which policies have helped societies in transition to boost democracy, reinforce the middle class, reduce the influence of oligarchs and fill an initial systemic vacuum.

This book will be essential reading for scholars and researchers working in the field of transition and development economics, as well as those with an interest in the rise of the 'New Europe'.

SOCIAL POLIS Newsletter

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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