



Social inclusion in the urban reality – Sustainable development through civil society empowerment

(Resource ID: 327)

Denis Cela

dcela(at)ubt.edu.al

This teaching resource is allocated to following University:

AUT – Agricultural University of Tirana

Institution:

AUT

<http://www.sustainicum.at/en/modules/view/327.Social-inclusion-in-the-urban-reality-Sustainable-development-through-civil-society-empowerment>



Group work



**11 to 30
students**



**4-7 lecture
units**



English, Shqip

The discussion about the new urban form in which we live started from the concept of "urbanization", with loose talk about the "death of cities" and even on what has been called "neo-ruralization". The idea that the city is dying is not new and it has surfaced periodically ever since the urban form made its appearance. However, the census returns, coupled with speculation on the social effects of the explosive diffusion of information technology, gave empirical body to the most recent version of this recurrent idea. In fact, the city, and even the large city, is far from disappearing. Trends observed so far, in urban systems in most of the advanced economies, indicate that cities are not declining but are

undergoing a profound transformation. Social inclusion and welfare state glorious past (1980s-1990s), have been undergoing a severe transformation, affected by new economy trends, rural and urban migration, the rise of new interest groups, all under the umbrella of globalization. Inclusion, concerning social, economical and political life seems more important than ever, in the eye of social studies but also in the area of policy making.

Both in its classical and contemporary versions, social ecology (which remains, despite all possible criticisms of the originator, the most substantial body of empirical knowledge on human settlements) is based on a version of the analysis of competition of different human groups for *living space*. It is true that in social ecological analyses many other functions are equally considered, but the *residential* one is largely prominent. Simple evidence of this lies in the fact that the great majority of statistics about cities are based on *residential patterns* and *residential units of observation*. On the other hand, it seems quite evident that the new form of urban morphology is largely the product of the progressive differentiation of several populations gravitating around metropolitan centres. With increased mobility of the population in numbers, direction, span and frequency, the relations between population and territory become highly dynamic, and the set of social ecological concepts aimed at reconstructing *structures* of spatial arrangement are strained to a critical point.

There is little doubt that one of the major issues confronting our society, and the European continent in particular, is the profound readjustment of established equilibria between populations and territory. These can be examined at three levels of analysis.

At the highest level, we have the disappearance of large *geopolitical* units, such as the former USSR or Yugoslavia, and their substitution with a host of new and often undefined political units, sometimes as new states and sometimes as quasi-states. European integration, albeit in less dramatic ways, has set in motion processes of the same type, as witnessed by the post-Maastricht controversies, and by the generalized growth of regional political movements.

At a lower level, we have the growth and competition of *large urban entities* competing with each other across national borders, and increasingly playing independent roles in the globalization processes.

At the microsociological level we find the complex interplay of ethnic, class and age traits defining populations with the social ecology of the city. It is

a particularly difficult situation when administrative areas in the city interact with culturally sensitive population-identifying morphologies, and social actors try to position themselves strategically inside the invisible network of administrative cages. This process is well-known, under the heading of "redistricting", and it is likely to become increasingly stronger even on the European continent.

Admittedly, the relation between population and land has never been totally stable, as is witnessed by large scale movements such as the shift of the agricultural frontier, the waves of historical migrations and the more recent urbanization dynamics that have given rise to the world in which we live. To be sure, not even the land has remained stable over time, as creation, destruction and transformation of the inhabitable land goes on perennially. Today, however, a new dramatic dimension has been added to this relation through the speed in which, physically or experientially, different points in the matrix of places can be connected with different points in the matrix of persons, social units, and events. This new dimension undoubtedly has far-reaching social consequences that we have recently begun to explore systematically and on which our knowledge is still greatly limited.

Class-based analyses meet equally serious difficulties in a period in which, on the one hand, actors such as social movements, become increasingly visible on the urban scene and, on the other, changes in the structure of the economy deeply affect established class patterns in all the advanced economies as well as in other countries. To give an example of both the simplicity of definition and empirical power of the concept of *population*, it is sufficient to look at current patterns of urban migration from developing countries to the developed ones. Migration flows are mostly composed of individuals moving according to random personal motivations. The effects of these aggregate decisions are far-reaching precisely because they are a loose sum of individual actions.

When we observe the dynamics that Durkheim, talking about the movement from the country to the city, called "*un courant d'opinion, une poussée collective*" one can be fairly sure that such *currents* reflect or anticipate the reactions of the "*social inclusion component*", to some great mutation of a deep structural nature. A phenomenon of this kind is affecting contemporary cities in these very years when, on the one hand, we can observe the interruption and even the inversion of century old urbanization processes and, on the other, there is a growing renewed interest in urban life where new technologies mix with the new urban middle age population, affecting all aspects of their past life (e.g. migration

flows from rural to urban areas).

In the traditional town, the *inhabitants*, or the population *living* in the city, largely coincided with the population *working* in the city. City limits encompassed both these populations in one territory or spatial unit for millenia and were, until very recently, encircled by walls and neatly separated from the rest of the land. The additional population of market-goers, visitors, pilgrims or suppliers, while not irrelevant numerically or functionally, did not deeply affect the social and ecological structure of the city.

The early metropolitan development that took place in the United States from the 1920s, and after War World II in Europe, can be seen essentially as a growing differentiation of two *populations*: the *inhabitants* and the *workers*. From the sociological point of view the class structure of the commuting population is quite different, and actually almost symmetrical in the USA and in Europe, and the urban morphology produced by this differentiation is similar. The result is what's called *first generation* or *early metropolis* largely based on a functional urban system (FUR) or daily urban system (DUS), or commuting basins, and is embodied in the concept of *metropolitan area*.

Some of the same factors that contributed to the *first generation metropolis*, however, contributed to a further differentiation, in particular the diffusion of private cars and, in general, of fast transportation systems. The increased mobility of people, combined with the availability of greater income and leisure, allowed the differentiation of a *third population* in the diagram, the *city users*, namely a population composed of persons moving to a city in order to use its private and public services: shopping, movies, museums, etc.,.

The size of the population is growing, but it is difficult to assess precisely because all our collective cognitive apparatus is geared to a traditional city that is undergoing a profound mutation and statistics still deal mainly with *inhabitants*, and to a smaller degree with *commuters*, but not at all with *users*. If we want to perceive these new trends systematically we have to look to entirely new sources of information.

For centuries the top ranking cities of European urban systems embodied the specificity of local culture and traditions. In the competition among these several populations, and related urban functions, it seems quite clear that the residential function and the urban *inhabitants* tend to be on the losing side. But the entire philosophy of local government is based on various degrees of self-government by the city *dwellers*.

The main topic may be the renewed assertion that urban systems in advanced economies are undergoing a deep change, not dissimilar in scope and consequences from the one that led to the formation of the industrial town and new social inclusion and exclusion forms. Globalization, transnationalization and internationalization are common terms used in the present literature, but further clarification will be needed because they are not totally synonymous. Globalization is more encompassing, while internationalization has more to do with processes involving nations and their relations. In any case, this process, or processes, can be studied from the point of view of their effects on society at large or for their effects on cities, or system of cities. The issue of *governance* of these new entities then becomes crucial both for the comprehension of current dynamics and for the action to be taken to influence the future social morphology. Globalization trends tend to "homogenise" cities, all around the world.

Teaching Tools & Methods



Written material



Simulation program



Simulation

Integration of Social Stakeholders

NGOs and civil society representatives get involved during the presentations, being part of an active portion of society that deals frequently with projects in the social development area, rural and urban development. students have the opportunity to deal with real case studies, projects, these stakeholders generally handle.

It serves as a "think tank" or "social lab", where both parties transmit and receive valuable information, new ideas and possible collaborations in the future, for students who want to be part of social inclusion and development of PCM.

Strength

1. High interaction levels with the students
2. The social approach to the study makes it easier to understand and interact

3. Students bring their personal experiences, related to the concept of future urban users
4. Stakeholders deal with new ideas and future partners in the social context
5. students deal with their own concepts and mind sets, regarding social life, policy making and future perspective

Weakness

1. Different mind sets, regarding the students bring group friction and broad discussions
2. Stakeholders may take the discussions to more complex levels (i.e. public policies), a very sensible matter, regarding different students perception
3. The course has at early stages a large number of concepts and definitions, that will need more time to be absorbed by the students

Learning Outcomes

Involving NGOs and interested groups in the creation of a "think tank" perspective, with the possibility of transforming the studies in future projects for social inclusion.

Relevance for Sustainability

The relevance to sustainability is crucial, as the proposed topics through discussions, will incorporate various aspects of social development and long term sustainability (urban or rural social studies, social aspects).

Related Teaching Resources

No specific previous knowledge / related resources required

Preparation Efforts

Medium

Preparation Efforts Description

The background and basis of the course rely on social matters, so preparation efforts depend mostly on student interest.

Access

Free

Assessment

None

Credit/Certification Description

Credits based on Bologna system

Sources and Links

Anthony GIDDENS, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Stanford University Press. Stanford 1990

Edward S. SOJA, "Inside Exopolis: Scenes from Orange County" in Michael SORKIN (Ed), *Variations on a Theme Park*, Noonday Press, New York 1992

Ivanov, A., "The economic crisis as a human development opportunity", *Development and Transition*, 2009

Jane MARCEAU, *A Family Business? The Making of An International Business Elite*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and 'Editions de la Maison des sciences de l'Homme', Paris, 1989

John FRIEDMANN and Goetz WOLFF, "World City Formation: An Agenda for Research and Action", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol. 6, 1984

Saskia SASSEN, *The Global City. London, New -York, Tokyo*, Princeton, 1991

M. Spoor, "Multidimensional Social Exclusion and the "Rural-Urban Divide" in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 2012

TransMonee Database, <http://www.transmonee.org>

European Center for Sustainable Development, <http://www.ecsdev.org/>

Global Sociology Blog, <http://www.globalsociology.org/>

Funded by

This teaching resource, realised within the project ConSus, has been funded with the support of the TEMPUS of the European Union. The contents reflect the views of the authors, and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the

information contained therein.