CITY FUTURES III

CITIES AS STRATEGIC PLACES AND PLAYERS IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

Paris, 18-20 June 2014

CALL FOR PAPERS AND SPECIAL SESSIONS

CITIES AS STRATEGIC PLACES AND PLAYERS IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

Cities have become ever more strategic in a globalizing world. Whilst they have always been at once social and cultural centers, key 'spatial fixes' for the reproduction of capitalist development, and loci of political control, their central role in a host of interlocking social, economic and political dynamics has been reinforced as they become the privileged sites of the actions of, and tussles between, national States, local authorities, firms, civil society and other actors.

The purpose of this conference is to document, investigate and question this reinforced position and status of cities in a globalized world. Two ways of looking at this are to consider cities as strategic places and as strategic players, and to analyse the interactions and possible tensions between these two dimensions.

As strategic places, cities are the locus of strategies and policies of major stakeholders: States when they choose cities as targets for their policies; firms when they decide to locate or to invest in these urban areas; local authorities when they try to cooperate to produce or when they conflict which each other; civil society when the issues of democracy and the 'right to the city' are put forward.

As strategic players, cities are competing in order to attract capital, firms and people. Strategic activities are very often presented as a key element of success in the competition between cities at the international level and many urban areas have embarked in the production and implementation of strategic activities (strategic plans, etc.) to respond to globalization and territorial competition. They do so either on a sectoral basis (e.g. economic development) or in more transversal forms (master plans, general strategic plans, etc.).

The forms of and interactions between these two dimensions of the 'strategicness' of cities will be explored and analysed through five main, but not exclusive, sub-topics.

1) CITIES AND SPATIAL JUSTICE / MORE INCLUSIVE CITIES

Both income inequality and social polarization and social and functional diversity are increasing in cities. Cities can be strategic places of diverse opportunities for jobs and services for migrants, but they are also places of social and territorial differentiation in access to employment, education, culture, transport networks, and urban and social services. How do cities as strategic players deal with diverse practices and changing demands from the elderly, young people, immigrants, men and women, etc.? How do cities play a key role in spatial justice and solidarity for a more equal access to urban amenities? What are the different challenges and opportunities all over the world for creating more inclusive cities ?

2) PRODUCTIVE CITIES / CREATIVE CITIES

In a time of economic dematerialisation, cities as spaces of production are facing new challenges: on the one hand, they greatly benefit from the concentration of economic activities; on the other hand, they are threatened by the mobility of capital and investments. These issues raise many difficulties for cities to elaborate strategies for being attractive. What does it mean to be attractive in a knowledge-based economy? Increasingly, to attract firms means also to attract their professional staff, so how can cities achieve these goals and, at the same time, better integrate their workforce? Economic development is becoming very selective by targeting high value added sectors, high skilled workers... How are urban and metropolitan spaces differently impacted by these kinds of strategies, and what does it mean for the spatial organisation of cities ?

3) CITIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The diverse forms, challenges and uneven outcomes of global environmental change (climate change, energy transitions, biodiversity, water scarcity…) can be analysed through the lens of the urban scale to explore how environmental issues are being differently interpreted, translated, experienced and grounded in/through context-specific responses, policies, practices and the repercussions of these in cities around the world. Within the confines and possibilities of multi-level governance, there is a potentially significant and growing role for urban actors in environmental change processes underway in various forms in different countries of the North and South.

The aim here is to analyse the extent to which cities are strategic places/players in the processes and politics of global environmental change by confronting and comparing the variety of local/urban responses to ecological challenges across North and South, and the ways in which diverse forms of collective governance of these issues on a local/urban level have been concretely initiated, sustained, and managed, but also blocked and contested. We are particularly interested in exploring the various issues, tensions and conflicts at play in differing urban contexts. For example: tensions between localist discourses and generalised or global 'models'/ways of doing; tensions between different actors and social interests over the degree, form, financing and repercussions of local environmental action; tensions between local policy agendas and national/international policy objectives…

4) CITIES, COSMOPOLITANISM AND MULTICULTURISM

With globalization, cities have attracted a high diversity of populations from all around the world. The issues of the social, economic, political and cultural integration of these populations have been high on societal agendas and cities have responded with a variety of answers. In this respect, we can investigate the gap between the rhetoric and reality of the cosmopolitan city by questioning the role of public policies and private projects in the production (or not) of a cosmopolitan urban space. The social practices of space, place and territory and cultural expressions of multiculturalism in urban space (art, segregation, auto-exclusion, exchanges…) also deserve further investigation. Finally, we can question the possibility to bridge urban divides and the various forms of discrimination in investigating how norms and identities can be more intertwined and express themselves more fully in urban space.

5) CITIES AND DEMOCRACY

Globalization and decentralization have strongly questioned cities as political territories. Access to power and the capacity of populations and civil society to have a say in political decision making are major issues to be addressed because they all refer to the capacity of cities to be or to remain the locus of democracy. The question of urban democracy can be investigated through various lenses, for instance that of scale in exploring the relationship between local/neighborhood democracy and the metropolitan level, or that of power relations and distributions between different actors.

INFORMATIONS FOR SUBMISSIONS

We expect proposals for papers and special sessions which can address these issues. We welcome scholars from diverse disciplines as well as practitioners. Comparative proposals addressing these issues with a focus on cities in both the North and South will be especially appreciated.

- **Paper proposals should be 300 words maximum**
  Paper proposals should outline research questions, methodology and results. They should specify to which subtopic(s) they are responding

- **Special session proposals should be 500 words maximum**
  In addition to the description of the session topic and the major issues to be addressed, they should include a list of likely contributors

A dedicated website will be opened mid september and on line submissions of proposals will be opened at the same time. DO NOT SEND PROPOSALS TO THE CONTACT PERSON.

- **Deadline for the submission of proposals : 15 october 2013**
- **Acceptance/Refusal : 5 december 2013**
- **Reception of final papers : 30 april 2014**

CONTACT :

Prof. Christian Lefevre

Director, French Institute of Urban Planing, University Paris-Est, France (EURA)
E-mail : christian.lefevre@univ-mlv.fr