

Urbane Dynamiken: Globale Perspektiven für ein soziokulturelles Stadtmanagement

Cities have always been a primary destination (whether temporary or permanent) for transnational migrants, and are thus invariably a location where different cultures meet, interact, and – on occasion – come into social conflict. Yet “urban laboratories” have also given rise to creative activity and political reform movements. Currently, Europe’s urban societies are confronted by massive new challenges: the trend toward urbanization continues unabated; existing infrastructure is threatening to collapse; economic crises have increased the risk of social dislocation; and political and economic factors have given rise to increasing migratory movements that are generating heterogeneous spaces.

Existing occupational fields concerned with management of urban areas have not been able to sufficiently respond to these trends. On the one hand, academia is only partially in a position to accept these intercultural challenges and to develop solutions for dealing with them; on the other hand, there is a need to improve the career opportunities of graduates in cultural studies by adapting and updating existing fields of study.

In light of the foregoing, the SP aims to create the institutional conditions necessary for the education of skilled experts in the area of “urban dynamics.” Clearly, an increased emphasis must be placed on conducting interdisciplinary work at the interface between the social sciences and humanities. Yet to this end, networking between institutions on a European level is not the only thing required; transcontinental ties need to be leveraged if sustainable solutions are to be developed.

Accordingly, in order to realize the goals of the SP, two Latin American partners will be integrated into the project. The partners have been selected based on their research interests as well as existing relationships. The dynamic urbanization trends underway in Latin America – which are likely to be witnessed in Europe, as well – have confronted the population with specific problems. For this reason, the SP expects that a valuable exchange of knowledge will take place, allowing creative and innovative solutions to be shared.

In this regard, two key goals will be pursued: On the one hand, the SP will seek to establish itself as a robust network of “knowledge and services” that can be used for further activities beyond the funding period. In this regard, the aim is to establish a network of contacts that remains in place over the long term. On the other hand, education-oriented goals will be pursued that are of sustainable value to universities. Specifically, the SP will seek to (1) generate and share new knowledge about global urban dynamics as well as general professional expertise that promotes employability; and (2) to create interdisciplinary and international learning modules with specific relevance to professional fields.

The curricula will be directed toward interested MA students as well as postgraduates in both the humanities and social sciences, including in particular those studying urban and spatial studies. Additional planned formats will be directed toward a broader audience, and will take the form of targeted further education programs for professionals dealing with urban issues that have socio-cultural relevance (e.g. municipal officials; developers; investment promotion agencies). In total, some 5,000 people (300 in limited-enrolment activities) and over 20 institutions in five countries stand to gain from the developed curricula.

Network-oriented events will be among the activities planned by the SP, including a kick-off meeting, an international symposium, and international workshops that will be organized by the three European project partners. In this connection, the placement of participants in foreign professional internships that deal with urban dynamics will play a key role, as will the development and application of teaching material that uses blended learning concepts.

Methodologically, the SP will contain the following elements: (1) international exchange and interdisciplinary cooperation; (2) the development of intercultural teaching material that makes use of blended learning concepts; (3) career-oriented curricula that enable dialogue with professionals; and (4) a dynamic feedback structure that allows the educational process to be directly revised and improved.

In sum, the aim of the SP is to make a contribution to vocational fields that deal with urban issues, fields that have gained increasing importance within the scope of current urbanization trends. A secondary goal is to increase the employability of the participating students. In this way, the SP can have positive social and political impacts: beyond the aim of increasing intercultural awareness, the spread of cultural knowledge helps one to critically assess policy decisions, to promote intercultural tolerance and understanding, and to creatively leverage the potential of the urban spaces.