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## Newsletter - July / December 2011

*Research Committee 21  
The Research Committee for the 21st century*

*Sociology of Urban and Regional Development  
International Sociological Association*

*Editor: Paul Watt*

[www.rc21.org](http://www.rc21.org)

## 1. PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Dear Colleagues,

2012 just started and this late newsletter tries to catch up with the long overdue 'presidential address' which should have been distributed shortly after Gothenburg. This delay – for which I apologize very much – gives us the opportunity to present to you the activities we have organized over the last year and a half.

It is rather banal to affirm that our societies are changing fast – actually faster than ever. Less banal is for us to investigate and understand the spatial impact of these changes – from changing economic relations and their globalization/localization to the spread of new information technologies, to name a few. All changes are questioning spatial boundaries, in particular those of the nation-state, providing the basis for a *new* role of cities and regions – but are our methods and concepts adequate to grasp the implications of these changes? Are we aware of our ethnocentric view of spatial relations and of our lenses through which to observe them?

As incoming RC21 President, I would like to foster critical comparative scholarship in addressing the implications of these changes from two meta-perspectives, related to the toolbox of the critical urban scholar: a) the methodological and empirical perspective; and b) the perspective of concept formation and theory. These two perspectives can be addressed by working on several levels at the same time. During my four years of presidency, I would like therefore to target some objectives as key building blocks of what I consider crucial for a vital scientific association:

1. To support and strengthen the role of young scholars. This will help us to build the basis for the generational change in the years to come by providing a solid basis for critical scholarship;
2. To strengthen strategic relations, in particular between RC21, IJURR and FURS as fundamental players in comparative urban scholarship, but also with other actors and associations;



3. To consolidate a post-disciplinary approach to Urban Studies broadly conceived, going beyond disciplinary boundaries (for example organizing joint sessions with other RCs at international conferences and fostering collaboration with other associations);
4. To foster the scientific dialog over urban and regional issues across the globe, not only organizing conferences both in the global-north and global-south, but also easing the exchange of scholars, the provision for training and participation;
5. To second the diffusion of effective and innovative tools for networking and scientific exchanges (Facebook, Twitter, online activities), which are talking new languages and are taking advantage of the opportunities by the new social media;
6. To share and invest in people by sharing responsibilities and involving them in the decision-making process of RC21.

Since Gothenburg, together with the board, I started to follow these objectives in a more systematic way.

On §1 and §2 – together with Jeremy Seekings and in agreement with the RC21 Board, we organized under the auspices of IJURR and FURS – which generously funded it – and the University of Amsterdam which hosted it, the second School in Comparative Urban Studies. It was targeted to young scholars across the globe, involving both participants and scholars from the global south. The feedback was extremely positive: see the report by Jeremy Seekings in this newsletter.

On §3 and §4 – the annual RC21 conference which took place in Amsterdam July 2011 was an incredible success. It was the largest conference RC21 ever organized with nearly 450 participants from many different disciplines (sociologists, geographers, political scientists, economists, planners, anthropologists, etc.) and countries across the globe. Personally, I found the discussions during the sessions I attended unusually lively and thought provoking and this seemed a shared opinion. See the report in this newsletter by Jan Willem Duyvendak, Walter Nichols and Clemens de Oude who should be thanked for the terrific job they did in hosting and organizing the conference.

In the same direction goes also the main event in 2012, which will be the ISA Forum in Buenos Aires where RC21 will have 20 sessions (RC21 is one of the two largest Committees!). Fernando Diaz Oruenta, Eduardo Marques and I organized the scientific program which you can find here in this newsletter. Soon we'll inform you about the availability of the draft program with the list of the selected papers (out of more than 400 proposals!).

On §5 (and §1) – since Amsterdam I established a Facebook page for a RC21 Young Urban Scholars Network which reaches more than 400 people from literally all over the



world. Marc Pradel also activated a Twitter account and he will start tweeting soon. Together with Claire Colomb – RC21's new Secretary – we'll feed information on issues relevant to RC21 members.

So far, 2011 was a dense year, with a lot of work, but it was worth doing it. Claire Colomb – with whom most of you will have been already in touch – provides a substantial help, not only in all practical issues (members' database, payments, etc.).

Unfortunately in 2011 there were also two sad events. Ray Pahl and Hartmut Häussermann – both former RC21 Presidents and friends – passed away. You will find two brief obituaries in this newsletter, but further collective and not just academic obituaries online on the RC21 website.

I hope that the coming year will be a good year for all of you, and with good I mean a healthy, intellectually fulfilling, relationally rich year, in which collaboration and sharing ideas will guide not only our professional, but also our more private life.

**Yuri Kazepov**  
RC21 President

15th January 2012

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## 2. CONFERENCES

### 2011 RC21 Conference

#### ***The Struggle to Belong: Dealing with Diversity in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Urban Settings***

Report by *Jan Willem Duyvendak, Walter Nichols and Clemens de Oude*

### **University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands**

**7-9 July 2011**

The University of Amsterdam had the opportunity to host RC21's annual meeting in July 2011. The conference theme was the 'Struggle to Belong'. The general aim of the conference was to explore how cities are strategic places for making places of belonging for marginalized peoples. Amsterdam was a unique place to host such a conference because the city has historically been an open place for marginalized groups. However, with the rise of nativist ideologies and neoliberal policies in the Netherlands, many groups are finding it increasingly difficult to assert their right to belong in the city. The local organizing committee planned regular sessions, special sessions, key note lectures, and field trips to address how the struggle to belong unfolds in cities throughout the world.



### Organization

The co-chairs of the local organizing committee were Jan Willem Duyvendak and Walter Nicholls both of the Department of Sociology. Clemens de Olde played an instrumental role in managing logistics. The local organizing committee was made up of approximately 10 regular members from the departments of Anthropology, Geography, and Sociology and met on a monthly basis. Early on (October 2010) the local organizing committee divided the central tasks of conference organizing in specialized sub-committees. We coordinated our local work with the RC21 board through regular emails and Skype conversations. Yuri Kazepov was also able to visit the local organizing committee in fall 2010. These regular communications between RC21 and the local organizing facilitated the planning process and provided important information in how to plan a large conference. During the conference a team of 30 student volunteers was present to take care of registration and logistical matters.

### Sessions and papers

The local organizing committee selected proposed sessions on the basis of two criteria: resonance with the conference theme and match with important areas in urban studies. Considering the high number of quality proposals received, the selection process was a challenge and involved the whole local organizing committee and the chair of RC21, Yuri Kazepov. Once the sessions were selected, the local organizing committee asked session organizers to limit the number of paper presenters to four and include a discussant. Based on previous experience, the local organizing committee believed that such limits would improve the quality of sessions and permit time for presenters to discuss their papers in sufficient depth. Conference organizers were also challenged by the record number of paper submissions (614 submissions). To accommodate the maximum number of papers, the local organizing committee expanded the possible number of regular paper sessions and introduced 'roundtable' sessions. Through the regular and roundtable sessions, we were able to accommodate approximately 343 paper presentations. While there were several glitches with the roundtable format, most attendees found them to be an intimate and satisfying way to present and discuss their work. In order to further structure the program, we clustered the session in thematic streams, facilitating participants' choices and giving more coherence to the program. A special group of participants were the 25 Ph.D. students, who attended a Summer School in Amsterdam before, during and after the Conference.

### Selection and diversity

In terms of regional diversity, the meeting attracted a substantial number of applicants from the Global South (30.9% of total submissions - see Table 1). Europe attracted the most applicants (56%), followed up by the United States and Canada (17%). The prom-



inence of European scholars reflects the historical ties of RC21 to the region but also the location of the actual meeting. It would be interesting to compare these rates with RC21 meetings held in the Global South. The relatively low number of submissions from the United States, an important center of urban sociology, marks another interesting regional trend. We also note trends with respect to acceptance rates. European acceptance rates were stable (56% submitted versus 55% accepted). Acceptance rates from United States and Canada were high (75% accepted). Lastly, acceptance rates from the Global South were lower than expected (39.5% accepted). We have provided this data to the RC21 in the hopes that it will inform future policies regarding outreach and achieving regional diversity.

**Table 1: Applications and Acceptance Rates by Region**

	Submitted		Accepted		Acceptance rate
	Nr.	%	Nr.	%	%
<b>Europe</b>	344	56.0	190	55.4	55.2
<b>US / Canada</b>	104	16.9	78	22.7	75.0
<b>Latin America</b>	58	9.4	24	7.0	41.4
<b>Asia</b>	50	8.1	21	6.1	42.0
<b>Middle East</b>	34	5.5	18	5.2	52.9
<b>Africa</b>	24	3.9	12	3.5	50.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>55.9</b>
<i>Global South (total)</i>	<i>190</i>	<i>30.9</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>21.9</i>	<i>39.5</i>

#### Conference attendance

The conference was attended by 360 paying visitors. Along with local organizers and invited speakers the total attendance estimated was 400. Of these 31 attendees were from B&C countries. The institutional and financial difficulties of attending academic conferences in the global north remain high for scholars from the global south. RC21 will have to make continued efforts to include researchers from these countries.

The conference site was the historic Oudemanhuispoort building in the city center of Amsterdam. This former elderly men's home on the Amsterdam canals, turned universi-



ty building in the twentieth century, provided an atmospheric backdrop to our discussions. The historic architecture sometimes posed a challenge, as session rooms were not always easily found (but the group of volunteers was always at hand to helpfully point the way).

### Conference events

The opening panel focused on "social justice and the city". Key-notes speeches were given by Justus Uitermark (kick-off), questioning whether Amsterdam is still a 'just' city. Responses to his thought-provoking lecture came from and Susan Fainstein and Jan Rath. The plenary was opened by the Rector of the University of Amsterdam, Dymph van der Boom.

In the IJURR plenary meeting, AbdouMaliq Simone and Mike Savage discussed innovative methods in Urban Studies, this meeting was chaired by Jeremy Seekings of the International Journal of Urban and Regional Research and board member of RC21.

The concluding panel dealt with "the politics of belonging". More precisely, the panelists – Jan Willem Duyvendak, James Holston, Patrick Le Galès, chaired by Isa Baud- discussed how various actors at the local level pursue policies of 'home making'. They used various perspectives, in particular paying attention to similarities and differences between the Global South and the North in terms of 'politics of belonging'.

Next to plenary sessions, a number of special sessions were held. Among these were a number of author meets critics (Fainstein, Duyvendak, and Holston) and sessions on publication strategies and understanding Amsterdam.

During the last conference day, conference participants could join one of the 10 excursions taking them all over the city with diverse themes among which the city as a financial hub, deprived neighbourhoods, and the red light district in the center of Amsterdam.

The conference dinner held on July 10 took place on a boat moored in the Amsterdam Docklands. It was attended by 150 participants. They were transported to the dinner venue by canal boat on a scenic tour of the Amsterdam canals.

### Sponsors

The conference was sponsored by many organizations (the Dutch Royal Academy of Sciences, the Amsterdam School for Social Science Research, the Center for Urban Studies, International Journal for Urban and Regional Research, NICIS Institute and the municipality of Amsterdam). The municipality also hosted the conference reception.



## **2012 The Second ISA Forum of Sociology Social Justice and Democratization**

**Buenos Aires, Argentina  
August 1-4, 2012**

The meeting will be held in Buenos Aires from August 1st to 4th 2012 and RC 21 will participate with 18 Academic sessions organized around the theme 'Cities at the cross-road: Social justice and democratization from below'.

### **Programme Coordinators**

Fernando Diaz Orueta, *Universidad de La Rioja, Spain*

Yuri Kazepov, *University of Urbino, Italy*

Eduardo Marques, *Center for Metropolitan Studies and University of São Paulo, Brazil.*

### **Theme of RC21 Sessions**

Social justice and democratization have been topics tackled at length by urban studies in general and urban sociology in particular. Cities have always been social laboratories in which the mechanisms that create and reproduce social inequalities are addressed and innovative solutions are found. Political transition processes experienced by different countries over the past decades have shown how social justice is just at the centre of democratization demands, and how social movements rooted in cities, or focused on urban demands, have been at the forefront of those demands.

Democracy is not possible without social justice, without the yearning for a world where the struggle against social inequalities is at the forefront of state policies, social movements and of public debates. Understanding the mechanisms at work and their interplay with the spatial dimension is the main concern of the RC21's sessions.

Taking the spatial dimension into consideration allows us to disentangle some specificities of both topics of 'social justice' and 'democratization'. First, it allows us to identify how the tension between social justice and inequalities deploys at different territorial levels, between cities or regions and within them. Different social groups have different life chances, they are distributed differently in space and they are also reproduced through mechanisms associated with spatial processes, for example, segregation, gentrification, etc.

Second, it allows us to identify the forms through which these differences might give rise to specific social struggles which express demands for more democratization in



decision-making and resource allocation processes at different scales. The interplay of local and regional actors involved in these democratization processes, and the ways in which experiences of citizen participation in social, economic, cultural and territorial development are promoted and/or shared, are key elements in understanding these social struggles.

Third, it allows us to critically analyze the transformation- in particular the rescaling- of contemporary forms of governance and policy interventions which seek to influence two fundamental aspects of social justice: the distribution of material resources, and the existence of forms of domination and oppression. Space plays a major role in the analytical models we use to understand these three dimensions.

The analysis of the relations between democratization, social justice and spatial processes of change is the focus of the following sessions proposed by RC21:

- A - Segregation(s) and urban inequalities in major cities around the world
- B - Community governance: Contesting power and socio-spatial inequality
- C - Public spaces in global metropolises: Form, function, and meaning
- D - Urban conflicts, comparative studies and planning
- E - Urban planning and public policies for social and ethnic mix: 'faith-based displacement activities' or effective instruments against socio-spatial exclusion?
- F - Social justice and voice: Urban suffering between transformations of the city and participation
- G - Urban outskirts: Renewed conflicts in a comparative perspective
- H - Do urban planning and practice contribute to social justice and democratization in cities?
- I - The role of design and social justice in 21st century cities: Paradoxes and challenges
- J - Governing cities: A comparison of large cities
- K - Local welfare: Changing states, stakeholders mobilization and policy rescaling
- L - Urban studies and the challenge of travelling concepts and comparative methods

#### **Joint Sessions with other RCs**

- M - Housing and the right to the city - Joint with RC43 *Housing and Built Environment*
- N - Cities and climate change - Joint with RC24 *Environment and Society*
- O - Urban movements in the new metropolitan context - Joint with RC47 *Social Classes and Social Movements*
- P - Migration, migrants and the development of inclusive urban cultures and identities - Joint with RC31 *Sociology of Migration*
- Q - Leisure, urbanization, migration and ethnic relations - Joint with RC05 *Racism, Nationalism and Ethnic Relations*, and RC13 *Sociology of Leisure*

Abstracts can be accessed at:

[www.isa-sociology.org/buenos-aires-2012/rc/rc.php?n=RC21](http://www.isa-sociology.org/buenos-aires-2012/rc/rc.php?n=RC21)





### 3. SECOND RC21-IJURR-FUR SUMMER SCHOOL ON COMPARATIVE URBAN STUDIES (Amsterdam)

Report by *Jeremy Seekings*



With funding from the Foundation for Urban and Regional Studies (FURS), Research Committee 21 (RC21) of the International Sociology Association and the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (IJURR) collaborated with the Amsterdam School for Social Science at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) on a second Summer School on Comparative Urban Studies held in Amsterdam from 1<sup>st</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> July 2011.



The Summer School 'piggy-backed' on the RC21 conference, incorporating conference sessions into its programme and taking advantage of scholars who attended the conference as lecturers in the Summer School prior to and after the conference itself (in addition to local scholars).

A total of 25 younger scholars – PhD students or recent PhD graduates – participated, including fifteen originating from countries across the global South who were awarded scholarships to cover travel, accommodation and other expenses. The successful applicants comprised twenty different nationalities. Europe (including Central and Eastern Europe) and Latin America were especially well represented. Africa was not well represented. The nineteen women greatly outnumbered the six men. A 26<sup>th</sup> student was accepted into the School and awarded a scholarship, but was unable to get a visa in time.

The School provided younger scholars with an opportunity to learn from established scholars, from diverse disciplines and parts of the world, through both formal classes and informal interaction. The School also helped younger scholars to present, discuss and prepare for publication their own work, and a session was held on raising research funding. Sixteen scholars participated: John Mollenkopf, Phil Kasinitz and James Holston (from the USA), Jenny Robinson, AbdouMaliq Simone and Mike Savage (from the UK), Patrick Le Gales (France), seven Dutch scholars who are or were at the University of Amsterdam (Jan-Willem Duyvendak, Ewald Engelen, Clara Mulder, Jeroen van der Waal, Isa Baud, Anouk de Koning and Leon Deben), together with Talja Blokland (Humboldt U, Berlin).

The School was organised by Yuri Kazepov and Jeremy Seekings, together with a team from the University of Amsterdam, and with the excellent assistance of Clemens de Olde and Bahar Zakizlioglu. Although only one of the participating scholars is based at a university in the global South, five others had expertise in cities in the global South and several others had expertise in immigration from the global South into cities in the global North. The programme also included walking tours of Amsterdam and a pre-release showing and discussion of a new documentary film on Amsterdam as a "creative city".

One of the highlights of the programme was an exercise in ethnography, proposed and supervised by James Holston. Students were challenged to walk around Amsterdam, to formulate an ethnographic research project based around the problematisation of observable social action, to take photographs, and to upload these onto a map of Amsterdam through the new Berkeley-based "citysandbox" (see <http://citysandbox.herokuapp.com/>), using precise GIS coordinates. Students were also asked to comment on each others' proposals on the website.

The next Summer School is planned to coincide with the RC21 conference in Berlin in 2013. The School will be advertised in the second half of 2012.



## 4. RC21 MEMBERSHIP

Report by *Claire Colomb*

Since the ISA World Congress of 2010 in Gothenburg, the membership of RC21 has increased considerably. Between August 2010 and December 2011 we have welcomed 189 new members (30 of which also took their ISA membership), and 38 existing members renewed their membership (20 of which also renewed their ISA membership). As of 18<sup>th</sup> December 2011, this meant that RC21 had just under **500 members** in good standing order, which makes us the second largest Research Committee of the ISA! This rapid increase is partly due to the very successful conference held in July 2011 in Amsterdam (see newsletter article), in which the significantly reduced registration fee offered to RC21 members acted as an incentive for new memberships. A large part of these new members are young researchers (either doctoral students or early career researchers) who come from dozens of countries and from all continents.

Over the past year, communication with our members has been greatly facilitated by:

- A newly redesigned webpage with a new online membership and payment system (<http://www.rc21.org/membership.php>), accompanied by a new mailing list management system;
- A new Facebook page for RC21 Young Urban Researchers, currently followed by 407 people (as of 18<sup>th</sup> December 2011): <https://www.facebook.com/rc21.young>

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## 5. OBITUARIES

In 2011 two former RC21 Presidents and outstanding urban scholars - Ray Pahl and Hartmut Häussermann - passed away. Further collective and not just academic obituaries are available on the RC21 website.

### Ray Pahl

On Friday June 3rd Ray Pahl died after a long lasting illness. He was a very special person, innovative and generous, with sociological imagination and a multitude of interests, including the role of space in social relations. In 1970 at the world congress of sociology in Varna (Bulgaria) he was one of the founding members of the *Research Committee on Urban and Regional Development* (RC21) and – from 1974 – its second president. In 1977 he was one of the founders of the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (IJURR) and later he became the first chair of the *Foundation of Urban and Regional Studies* (FURS). <http://www.rc21.org/remember/>



## Hartmut Häussermann

After three years of illness, Hartmut Häussermann died on Friday October 31st. He was president of RC21 from 2002 to 2006, during which time I served as RC21's secretary. Together, we launched important changes in the management of the Research Committee (yearly conferences, a new website, a new mailing list, a new online payment system, etc.) which helped to consolidate RC21 as one of the most successful scholarly networks in urban studies. I met Hartmut for the first time in 1990 when he was still teaching in Bremen and I was entering my PhD studies. He became my co-supervisor and I benefitted greatly from his concrete and practical advice. My research compared poverty in two rich cities (Milan and Stuttgart) and he drew my attention to the importance of identifying the mechanisms behind social inequalities and poverty, reproducing and consolidating them in real life. This led me to become interested in how institutions work and shape social processes. Like the rest of us, Hartmut had his quirks, but they did not prevent him from being a generous person, engaged in the public debate, committed to the ideal of social justice. When we last met – less than one year ago – we had breakfast in a nice French Café in Prenzlauerberg and discussed how to put this into practice by being 'critically involved' in 'changing the world'.

*Yuri Kazepov*

*<http://www.rc21.org/remember/hartmut-haussermann.php>*

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## 6. CALL FOR NEWSLETTER ITEMS

Please send any contributions for the next RC21 Newsletter to the newsletter editor:

**Paul Watt**

p.watt@bbk.ac.uk.