



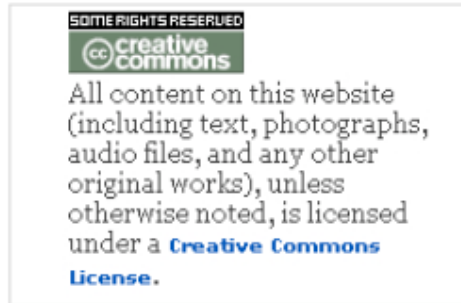
Cities and emerging networks of learning communities

Maria José Gonçalves

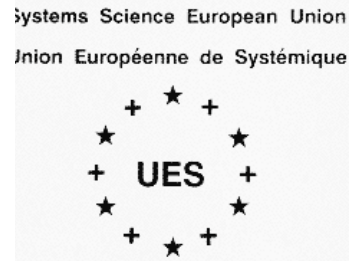
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Systemic Complexity for human development in the 21st century
Systemic Complexity : new prospects to complex system theory
7th Congress of the UES **Systems Science European Union** Lisbon, Dec. 17-19, 2008



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From cities to megacities: increased complexity

**Concentration of great multinationals and
clusters of firms in certain places of the world**



Huge migrations



- **New problems**
- **Widening existing ones**

Challenges or new opportunities?

- **Resilience to cope with changes**
- **Strategic adaptation as crucial to resilience**
- **Strategic choices of actors**

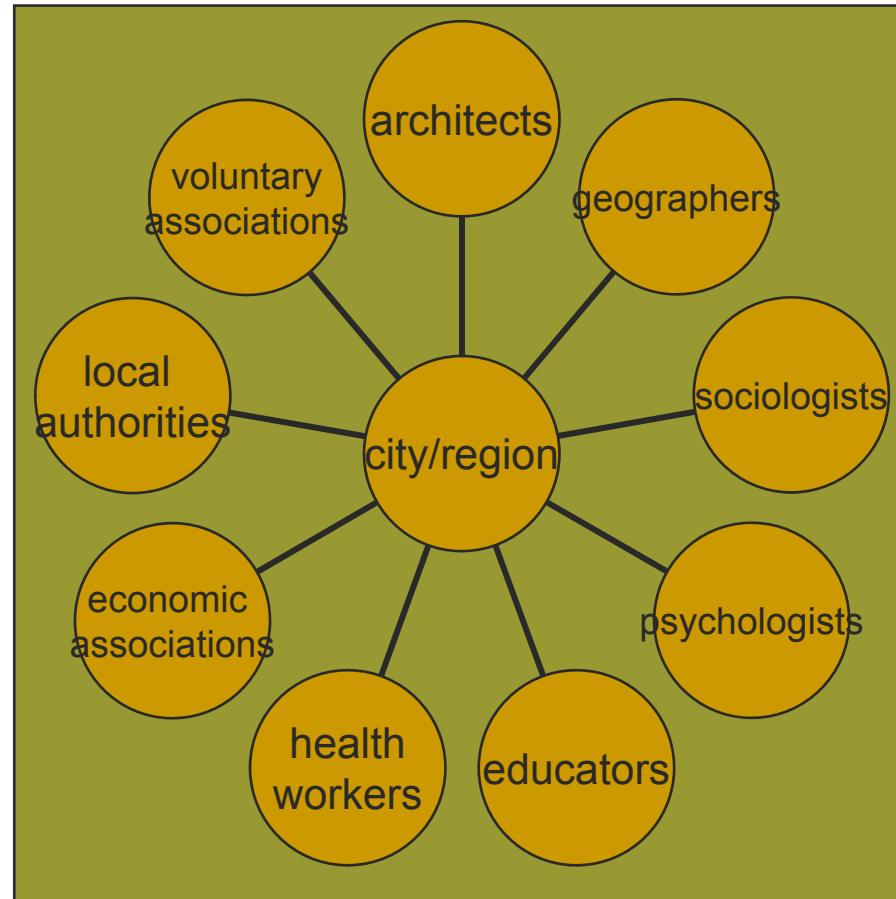


For cities/regions to sustainably adapt, renovate themselves and (re)shape their environment and quality of life

New opportunities through Learning **(communities and organisations)**

- **A plurality of ways by which individuals, organisations and systems implement new processes, products, technologies, etc and change behaviours.**
- **Confusion, ignorance and chance can be driving forces to development**

A plurality of insights



Learning city/region: a conceptual framework

- 1973 OECD initiative – *the educating city*



- education at the forefront of strategies and policies to improve economic performance
- foster a sustainable economic development and a better living for citizens

Since then...

- More and more municipalities worldwide define themselves as *learning cities, learning towns* or *learning villages* (learning communities)

From the *educating city* to the *learning city*

People at the centre of policies

- People learn, not places
- Learning occurs within a **context** and **culture**, in **social interactions**, because it is socially constructed.

A new field of research

- **Different perspectives and models of analysis**
- **Significant theoretical and political divergences**

However

- **A common objective: to try to understand the social dynamics and meaning of these new phenomena**

The way...

The complexity of such phenomena demands...

- a reflexive, multidisciplinary, systemic approach in order to capture this new and multifaceted reality
- a bottom-up approach and people's commitment in the transformation of their communities
- Promoting commitment of private entities
- enhancing people's political activity
- encouraging consumers' ethics
- promoting social inclusion
- Modernising and reinforcing local democracy

Several perspectives

An economic view

Learning cities/regions have created a new organisation:

- **A hierarchy of interpenetrating territorial scales of economic activity and governance relations, ranging from the global to local, and in which the emerging system of global city-regions figures permanently (Scott 2002)**

The four principles of this new hierarchy

- 1. A huge and ever growing economic activity that occurs in extensive cross-national networks**
- 2. As a corollary of those pressures during the last decades there has been a proliferation of multinational blocs (EU, NAFTA, MERCOSUR, ASEAN, APEC, CARCOM and many others)**
- 3. Sovereign states and national economies remain prevailing elements of the contemporaneous political and economic scene (despite the loss of autonomy of sovereign states)**
- 4. Accordingly, there has been a resurgence of region based forms of economic and political organisation**

A sociologic view (1)

Subordination of the political to the economic (Jarvis 2007)

- The state is no longer sovereign but needs the investment of the economic sub-structure – so, states claim for **partnerships** with the economic world
- Governments wish to encourage citizens to take an interest in their democratic possibilities through LLL
- LLL as the cushion against the harsh realities of the forces of the global markets
- Education as the key to social inclusion, even if it is *no more than a step on the ladder towards social equality*

A sociologic view (2)

Local political power, citizens' democratic participation, and public funds
(Giddens 2004)

- **A strong political local leadership (crucial role of mayors)**
- **A wide democratic citizens' participation**
- **A growing role of residents in decision taking processes**
- **Public funds used to attract private investment through the market**
- **Education, debate and information sharing are crucial**

New Urbanism view

- **The Congress for the New Urbanism – 1993**
- **CNU – members in 20 countries.**

The aims

Promoting policies to make cities and towns more liveable than ever

Special concerns with

- **Common use of public spaces**
- **Urban places design should take into account and preserve local history, climate, ecology, and building practice**

New Urbanism view

Interdisciplinary congresses

Architects, landscape architects, planners, economists, estate agents, lawyers, government officials, educators, citizens, activists, and students

- **They consider that creating shared spaces in towns and cities where citizens can meet, dialogue, and feel proud of their communities is profoundly interdisciplinary**

Environmental psychology view

- An emerging field of knowledge within applied psychology
- Linked to studies carried out by researchers from other areas
- Mainly responds to needs of 2 fields:
 - Architecture and urban planning
 - Natural-biological sciences
- Argue that there are no proofs that population overdensity influences, by itself, significantly in a negative way, leading to anomy, and the loss of social links in the urban space
- View city as a *multicultural mosaic*, with a multitude of social work

Learning cities/regions

Sustainability, equity and well-being cycle

