

**Animation of Public Space through the Arts: Innovation and Sustainability
International Symposium (and Workshops)**

27 SEPTEMBER 2011

9:30 – 14:00

Special Session:

CULTURAL INDICATORS AND WELL-BEING: MONITORING SMALL CITIES – COMPARATIVE INTERNATIONAL APPROACHES

Centro de Estudos Sociais (CES), University of Coimbra – Sala 2

Cities and regional municipalities around the world have come to increasingly rely on the monitoring of key demographic, economic, social and cultural indicators to assess the performance of local and regional policies. A legacy of the 1970s' relevance wave in social sciences and of the social indicator movement, indicators are measurements that are intended to summarize important characteristics of well-being and of quality of life by simplifying complex phenomena into easily understandable indices. Their usefulness lies in the fact that structural changes in the indicators can be tracked over time and space, and against some specific social or policy objectives.

Small city well-being indicators?

While international research shows that larger urban centered regions and smaller communities are on different demographic, economic, social and cultural trajectories, indicator research has to a large extent paid little heed to this reality – the analysis of the situation in larger urban-centred region having since recently monopolized most of the research community's attention. Questions are therefore raised about the extent to which the conclusions drawn and public policies influenced by analyses performed mostly on larger cities and regional municipalities can be transposed to the distinct contexts and breadth of experiences faced by smaller towns and cities.

Cultural indicators?

As culture becomes increasingly recognized as integral to social and human development, there has been a global resurgence in cultural indicator initiatives in cities and communities of all sizes. A variety of policy frameworks are employed across a broad scope of cultural indicators, many with externally imposed benchmarks. Yet cultural indicators are notoriously difficult to operationalize. The net can quite easily be cast so broadly as to render the data meaningless, or measurement can be also focused so narrowly that it overlooks crucial determinants and impacts of arts and cultural activity in the community. Further, this monitoring of culture becomes an ethical issue when the values of the mainstream are privileged over that of others.

As an applied field, research and practice are interlinked and mutually inform progress in this area. This session brings together researchers and researcher-practitioners who have been examining and developing cultural and well-being indicators for small cities and neighbourhoods to share observations and issues, identify trends, reconcile methodological approaches, and explore avenues for international comparative research in this area.

Coordination: **Paula Abreu**, Faculty of Economics and Centre for Social Studies, University of Coimbra

20 participants maximum

Registration is free

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9:30 – 11:30	<p>Roundtable: Presentations and sharing of perspectives, practices, and research interests, including:</p> <p>Gilles Viaud, Thompson Rivers University, Canada – Getting to know small cities and helping small cities to know themselves: An overview of the Small Cities Quality of Place Reporting System and Toolkit</p> <p>Marnie Bedham, University of Melbourne, Australia – ‘Naming the world’: Cultural indicators of development as relational and representational practice</p> <p>Svetlana Hristova, South-West University, Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria – Once again on cultural indicators</p> <p>Paulo Peixoto, Faculty of Economics, University of Coimbra / CES – Perspectives on well-being indicators in Portugal</p> <p>Claudino Ferreira, Faculty of Economics, University of Coimbra / CES – Perspectives on cultural indicators in Portugal</p> <p>Natália Azevedo, Faculty of Humanities, Sociology Institute, Oporto University, Porto – Cultural indicators and public policies: Assumptions and challenges of a qualitative approach</p> <p>Paula Abreu, Faculty of Economics, University of Coimbra / CES (Chair)</p>
11:30 - 12:00	Break
12:00 - 14:00	Continue presentations and discussion regarding international comparative research, reconciling methodological approaches, etc.
14:00 –	Lunch (at participants’ own cost)