

French National Workshop

The French team held its national workshop the 23rd November 2009. Attention has been focused on political participation in the unemployment field, as well as on the analysis of (lack of) integration amongst young unemployed people across a number of European cities. Indeed, the national workshop has also relied on participation of urban sociologists who are members of the «Programme Ville et Territoires de Sciences Po» network at Sciences Po Paris. The workshop has been thought not only as an academic event, but it has also been opened to NGOs members and practitioners who are interested in issues of unemployment, and more broadly, social exclusion. Cinalli has opened up the day with a general presentation on the Younex project, its theoretical framework, and its aims in terms of outputs and policy prescription.

Afterwards, three papers have been presented by Younex members so as to provide a detailed overview of provisional findings. Lorenzini and Eggert have compared political opportunities and organisational agency in the two cities of Geneva and Lyon. Their main merit was to criss-cross data from WP1 and WP2 of the project, testing a number of Younex research hypotheses. In particular, they have engaged with factors that explain variations of strategies amongst organisations, looking both at their exogenous political context and at their endogenous characteristics. Bassoli and Monticelli have dealt with 'organisational activation' in the city of Turin, providing a paper that also relies on sophisticated network analysis. In so doing, they have underlined the difference between 'policy-oriented' and 'service-oriented' organisations, while at the same time detecting the resilient force of deep traditional cleavages in Italy (in particular, the cleavage between Catholic and Communist organisations). Chabanet has focused on associationism in Lyon, mapping out its organisational field and identifying potential space for active intervention of actors at the meso- level throughout key phases of policy-making.

Chabanet has also coordinated the long collective discussion which has followed the delivery of scholarly papers, prompting interventions from practitioners and non-academic participants. Amongst the main results of this collective discussion, emphasis has been put on ongoing processes of 'top-down co-optation' which are taking place across European cities. Most crucially, the French case seems to offer no exception to this trend, in spite of the usual portrait of « French contentiousness » that is often taken as unproblematic in the public opinion, but also amongst specialists of collective action. Put simply, the unemployment field, in Lyon as in other European cities, seems to be increasingly pacified, with a considerable proportion of the debate about unemployment being constructed by economic issues that occur beyond policy-makers' responsibilities. Interventions of political elites and city policy-makers seem to aim at reinforcing this trend; many efforts of top-down control thus take place through financial funding and cooptation of organisations and their leaders in a number of venues in their stakeholders' capacity.