

CONFERENCE REPORT

Issues of Legitimacy:

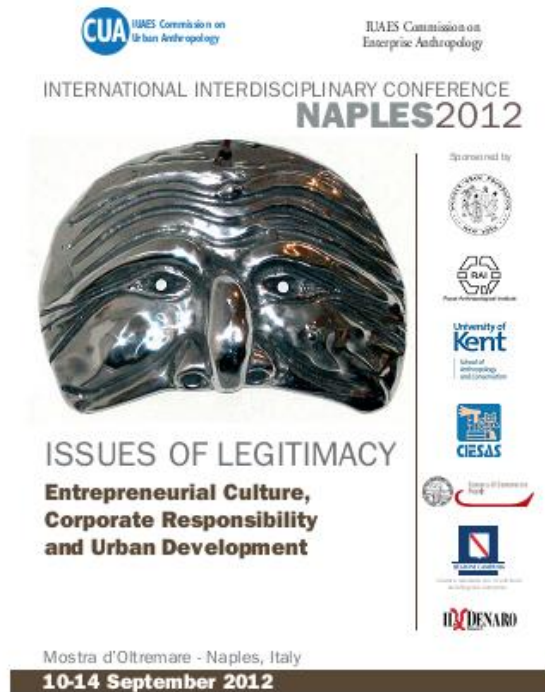
Entrepreneurial Culture, Corporate Responsibility and Urban Development

10-14 September 2012, Mostra d'Oltremare, Naples Italy

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Last September scholars from across the world and at various stages of their academic careers met in Naples to participate in this International Interdisciplinary Conference. The Conference was convened on the initiative of the IUAES (International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences) Commissions on *Urban Anthropology* and on *Enterprise Anthropology*. Italo Pardo was Scientific Coordinator. The media Group *Il Denaro*, the *University of Naples Federico II* and the *University of Naples 2* were local organizers. The organization of this event enjoyed the collaboration of the *China Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences* and the active involvement of the *Indian Anthropological Association*, the *Brazilian Anthropological Association*, the *International Association of Southeast European Anthropology* (InASEA), the *Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social* (CIESAS, Mexico), the *Colegio de Etnólogos y Antropólogos Sociales* (CEAS, Mexico) and the IUAES Commissions on *Anthropology of Women* and on *Human Rights*.

A generous grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation secured the participation of many scholars who would not have otherwise been able to attend. The Royal Anthropological Institute, the University of Kent and CIESAS were the other academic sponsors. Substantial funding from the Naples Chamber of Commerce, the Regione Campania and Il Denaro Group made it possible to hold the conference at the Mostra d'Oltremare, thus allowing participants to benefit from the Mostra's excellent facilities. The Adler Group and the Avvocato Gaeta Business Lawyers also contributed to the success of the meetings.



Naples, a major European city, was a particularly fitting venue for this conference. As visually synthesized by the clip by Lello Esposito that prefaced the opening session, and indeed by his art, this city encapsulates many of the complex economic difficulties and potentialities which, in various degrees, mark today's world-wide scenario, and a key part of that which this Conference aimed to address. The proceedings were structured around several sub-themes. They were: Access to Credit, in particular the problems for Small and Medium Enterprises; the Relation between Entrepreneurialism and the Law, Legitimacy and Ethics; Cross Cultural and Ethnic Business in Mixed Cities, Corporate Social Responsibility; Urban Development; Entrepreneurialism, Neo-Liberalism and Socio-Economic Policy; International Entrepreneurship and Women Entrepreneurs.

The Conference opened on the morning of September 10th with a plenary session. The customary welcoming addresses of the convenors and organizers were followed by short papers that spelled out the aims of the Conference and their significance for the scientific community, as well as the broader society. Anthropologists promoted this meeting because the anthropological study of economic systems empirically addresses the relationship between economic institutions and the broader society — that is political, legal and cultural institutions, as well as ordinary people.

Committed to ethnographic field research, anthropologists offer in-depth understandings of economic institutions and individual and collective economic behaviours. The meeting provided a forum for anthropologists to share their findings with scholars from other disciplines — particularly, sociology, economics, law and political science. Included in the assembly were distinguished practitioners in the fields of finance, business, legislation and policy-making. During the deliberations, several plans for publication of revised and expanded versions of the papers were developed.

Alongside the discussions and exchanges that marked the large number of well-focused sessions, were the debates stimulated by Christian Giordano's and Martha Scheingart's key-note addresses. The lunch-time breaks were enlivened by book launches and ethnographic films and the program included several round-table discussions involving academics and non-academics. These discussions stimulated reflection on urban policies and practices in different countries. In this vein, on 14th September the conference concluded with a plenary conversation among scholars, business people and jurists who, in the light of what had been discussed throughout the proceedings, debated the social relevance of empirical research. The interested reader will find detailed information on the programme, participants and papers at www.anthrojournal-urbanities.com/confna2012

The conference also enjoyed extensive media coverage. Reports in English and Italian appeared daily in important newspapers, and several interviews and comments were published in newspapers and magazines. There were several television programmes dedicated to the meetings, and all the plenary sessions were broadcast live on the web. Some of these broadcasts continue to be available at www.denaro.it

On a less formal note, a great deal of professional networking, academic exchange and socialization took place 'off-duty', throughout the various breaks, during the conference dinner and, perhaps most enchantingly, in the pleasant warmth of those Neapolitan evenings. While the conference as a whole was untouched by the normal scourge of 'academic tourism', many participants enjoyed ample local hospitality and took advantage of much of what the city of Naples has to offer historically and culturally.