

CSD lecture announcement:

The Role of Social Capital in Migrants' Engagement in Politics in European Cities

Laura Morales, Manchester University

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The talk addresses the debate that has emerged in the last decade among some scholars about the role of migrants' social capital and organisational networks in determining their capacity to become integrated in their host polities (Fennema & Tillie 1999, Berger, Galonska & Koopmans 2004, Tillie 2004, Jacobs, Phallet and Swyngedouw 2004, etc.). In particular, there is some debate as to whether migrant groups with denser inter-organisational networks are more capable to become politically integrated in their host communities by the effect that this collective social capital has on their capacity to mobilise the group as a whole and, thus, to become actively engaged in local politics.

Another important strand of the scholarly work in this area has pointed to the potential difference between 'bridging' and 'bonding' social capital. Thus, denser networks alone would not be sufficient to promote political integration into the receiving polity if this high connectivity remains ethnically segregated and contributes to the further isolation of the migrant groups. Consequently, 'bridging' social capital is expected to have beneficial properties for the political integration of migrants – both at the individual and group levels – whereas 'bonding' social capital might have no impact or a different one that relates to the nature of participation.

We expect that bonding social capital, more likely enables migrants to be attentive to and active in politics that relates to their own ethnic group, while they will be less inclined to sustain attitudes and behaviours with a focus on local, national or cross-ethnic issues.