



Call for papers

8th Proximity

International Conference



Building Proximities in a Global World:

Territorial, Organisational and Societal Challenges

20-22 may 2015

Venue:

Université François Rabelais de Tours

Campus des 2 Lions

*Organised by the CNRS Research Unit CITERES,
the Planning and Environment Department of Polytech Tours
and the Research Network "Dynamics of Proximity"*

Informations : <http://coll-proximites.sciencesconf.org/>

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 **POLYTECH**
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PROXIMITÉS

The 8th *International Conference on Proximity* organised in Tours in May 20-22, 2015 aims at continuing the effort engaged by the Research Network “Dynamics of Proximity” since the early 1990’s for conceptualizing the coordination logics that underlie economic activities within multiscalar territorial dynamics. In this perspective, “proximities” are considered beyond the mere usual approaches of spatial localization of activities and focus, by contrast, on the organizational and institutional dynamics that characterize economic, academic, social, institutional... actors’ interaction within and across territories. Indeed, the Tours Conference covers the recurrent themes investigated by the research network, especially as regarding the nature of proximity among actors underlying the dynamics of innovation, creativity, and sustainability in the development of territories.

Besides, this 8th conference puts emphasis on three research dimensions that have been probably less explored up to now. Firstly, the conference ambition is to widen and deepen the interdisciplinary dialogue beyond the disciplines initially involved in the network (industrial and spatial economics, sociology, management sciences, and partially economic geography), and therefore to initiate a stronger exchange with scholars from spatial planning, urban studies, political science, geography and environmental sciences. This ambition is extremely relevant as it mirrors the research efforts engaged by several approaches of proximity over the past few years in investigating the analysis of natural resources management (water, natural and agricultural land use, etc.), the analysis of conflicts and cooperation and more broadly of actors’ systems of interaction in the use and management of space from an environmental point of view. Indeed, the research unit welcoming this 8th Conference (CITERES: Cities, Territories, Environment and Societies) is authentically characterised by a interdisciplinary approach (from social and humans sciences to ecological sciences) and has specialised in the study of the interactions between territorial development, spatial planning and the environment.

Secondly, the conference focuses with more attention on a crucial issue when dealing with proximity, namely: How to convert proximities that remain usually only “virtual” or “latent” into “active proximities”, i.e. proximities that become identified, appropriated, operationalized and valorised by the actors within and across territories? From this perspective, the necessity to open and organise the dialogue between the researchers and the “field actors” (whatever be they and at all spatial scales) is also a challenge addressed by the conference.

Finally, the conference ambitions to initiate a collective reflection on another key issue that has mostly remained implicit in the research on proximity, i.e.: How can one build local proximities in a global world, or at least in a “more open” one? The answer to such question is all but not self-evident, as it requires a change in approach that has not yet been enough recognized and investigated neither by the researchers nor by the field actors and decision-makers. In the case of France for instance (but it is very symptomatic of what can be observed elsewhere in various degrees), the reality of a world nowadays structurally more open and more interdependent (especially at the economic level) has not sufficiently penetrated the minds while this reality is already strongly impacting many territories, in terms of pressures and threats, but also by offering new opportunities and challenges that could be better addressed. Of course, the analysis of territorial dynamics is much more complex than what a mere economic approach suggests, be it institutionally inspired, notably because every territory has an intrinsic “thickness” based on its specific history, culture, landscape, amenities... Also, the impacts of globalization (often coupled with those of metropolization dynamics) are more or less intense among territories. However, whatever their nature and specificities, many territories are experiencing evolutions that are clearly inscribed in a “game” which “rules” and consequences (in terms of interdependencies, uncertainties and the capacity to preserve for a territory its identity and development bases) constraint them at least partly.

Hence, research and dialogue around the theme of **“dynamics of proximity in a global world”** constitute a real stake at the heart of most **territorial, societal, environmental and organizational challenges** that our “local” economies and societies endeavour to face if they want to continue to exist and develop within more permeable spaces.

Building on the valuable researches and the achievements of the previous conferences on proximity, the 8th international conference organized in Tours in 20-22 May 2015 ambitions to **deepen the reflection and exchanges on the stakes and challenges confronting the territorial actors for building the proximities that could spur the socioeconomic development, sustainability and innovation (in all their dimensions) dynamics of “territories within globalization”**.

This thematic orientation will be covered within the conference in various forms. First of all, it will be addressed through the papers that will focus on the **recurrent themes** of the proximity conferences (innovation processes, networks, actors' interaction and “games”, conflicts of use, territorial scales, etc.) but that should put a specific emphasis on the 8th conference main theme (and subthemes; see below) on the need to open further and deepen the approach to building proximities in a global world. Secondly, contributors have the opportunity to offer **specific sessions** related to research projects in tune with the conference focus. Thirdly, two **plenary sessions** will gather distinguished international researchers who will offer key insights on how they vision the building of proximities in a global world. Finally, two **round tables** will be devoted to the reflection and exchange around two main concerns of the conference. The first one, potentially of epistemological essence, aims at favouring and deepening the **interdisciplinary dialogue** among scholars from different disciplines of social, human and environmental sciences on the conceptual, theoretical and methodological foundations of ways of “thinking about proximities” in various fields of knowledge. The second round table will organize the exchange between scholars and “field actors” (political representatives, territorial planners, policy makers, economic and social actors, etc.) on **how “conceptualized proximities” and “experienced proximities”** (be they “hoped” or conversely felt of as “suffered”) **mirror/match one with each other or not**. From this perspective, the specific “colour” of this 8th international conference on proximity in Tours should lie in the questioning on the **role of spatial public policies in building proximities**.

Several **subthemes** for exchange and reflection appear to be particularly in tune with this 8th conference:

- ▶ Proximity as a policy and a as stake in local debate
- ▶ Proximity as mirrored in different social, human and environmental sciences
- ▶ New European policies and the (re)building of regional and local proximities
- ▶ Regions and inter-communal restructuring/merging: Which spatial reorganization of public action?
- ▶ Metropolization, globalization and new forms of proximity
- ▶ The role of small and medium-sized towns within the proximity dynamics among innovation and local development actors
- ▶ Actors' dynamics and multiscale territorial governance
- ▶ Global innovation networks and local/regional proximity dynamics
- ▶ The firm, between local anchorage and global networking
- ▶ Social networks, proximities and territorial dynamics
- ▶ Proximity, social innovation and territorial resilience
- ▶ Proximities, services, quality of life and territorial attractiveness
- ▶ The influence of the nature of spaces on proximities and their management
- ▶ Short delivery paths, circular economy and urban ecology
- ▶ Energy and industrial ecology within the urban space
- ▶ Transport systems and change in proximities
- ▶ Digital technologies and the reshaping of spaces
- ▶ Etc.

Abstracts:

- ▶ Proposals for papers: 1-2 pages extended abstracts describing the aims, methodology, expected results and key references.
- ▶ Proposals for special sessions: 2-3 pages highlighting the theme covered, related projects or networks, the nature of expected papers, etc.

Deadlines:

- ▶ Submission of proposals for papers or special sessions: **15th December 2014**
- ▶ Feedback from the Scientific Committee: **30th January 2015**
- ▶ Deadline for final papers delivery: **20th April 2015**
- ▶ Early bird registration and conference fee payment deadline: **20th March 2015**
- ▶ Ordinary registration and conference fee payment deadline: **5th May 2015**

Information and registration:

<http://citeres.univ-tours.fr/spip.php?article2025>

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