

ESF Exploratory Workshop on

**PUBLIC ART AND ITS DISTRESSES.
From mainstream city marketing
strategies to a tool for social
regeneration.**

Milan (Italy), 20-22 October 2010

Convened by:
**Laura Bovone, Lucia Ruggerone
and Silvia Mazzucotelli Salice**

SCIENTIFIC REPORT

Contents

1. Executive summary	3
2. Scientific content	5
3. Assessment of the results of the workshop	7
4. Final programme	9
5. Final list of participants	12
6. Statistical information on the participants	14

1. Executive summary

The workshop was held from Thursday October 21 until Friday October 22, 2010 at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan. 14 participants from 11 European countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungaria, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom) attended the meeting and discussed. Unfortunately, the participant from Spain (Prof. Antoni Remesar) and one of the participant from United Kingdom (Prof. Roger Bromley) had to pull out at the last moment.

These scholars were selected on the basis of their competences in the field of public art. Moreover as far as public art is a multifaceted field of inquiry which encompasses a wide variety of creative expressions in the public realm and whose functions are often considered endless - some communities see public art as a way of enhancing or personalizing otherwise impersonal spaces while others view it as a means to activate civic dialogue or provide a vehicle for the community to express its identity – during the selection of participants greater attention has been paid also to the disciplinary representation. In other words the workshop was intended to be multidisciplinary because public art *per sé* touches different fields, such as anthropology, sociology, cultural and leisure studies, art, architecture and design. Overall, the workshop fulfilled the aim of a broad representation both from most European countries and from the many relevant scientific and cultural backgrounds requested by the suggested workshop topics.

The workshop lasted two days. The first day aimed at providing a deep overview of the current state of public art and urban development, the second day was devoted to discussion on follow-up activities, networking and collaboration. It was largely carried out as planned, with some variations which, on the one hand, were due to Prof. Bromley and Prof. Remesar unexpected un-attendance but, on the other hand, were also aimed at meeting the needs for broader discussions on interesting topics and crucial points.

The format of the first day of the workshop included an institutional welcome by the convenor, a detailed presentation of the ESF financing opportunities, carried out by the *ESF rapporteur*, Prof. Ilona Palné Kovacs, an address by keynote speaker and three thematic sessions within which six designated speakers, two per session, had prepared a substantial address. Each presentation lasted about 30 minutes and was followed by a broad discussion. Participants were asked to produce their presentations in advance and all presentations were forwarded before the workshop to all delegates who acted as discussants. The latter were invited to present commentaries which provided critiques and additional elements to short presentations and which were the point of departure for further discussion within the workshop. For each session a chair was appointed beforehand, with instructions to keep track of the discussion and to manage the time schedule.

The keynote address. Due to Prof Bromley absence, Dr. Lucia Ruggerone read his paper and moderated the lively discussion which followed. During the debate, questions for Prof. Bromley were collected for further online discussion (via e-email).

The thematic sections. The second part of the day was devoted to the presentation of papers regarding the different national contexts, grouped according to macro-areas that mirrored the existing critical issues in the field of public art: the relation with architecture and urban development, the differences between public and private programmes for realization of artworks in the public space and, finally, the tension between public financing and the nature of social resistance practice. The first of these sessions included case studies from Belgium and Finland; the second one included Italy and Poland; the third one included Portugal and Bulgaria. The scholars presented an overview of the state of sociological research on public art in their country of reference and discussed the theoretical and methodological choices

that they made in their own research experience in order to take account of the specificities of the local context.

The format of the second day allowed two sessions of open discussion on follow-up activities. The first session, chaired by Prof. Svetlana Hristova, was devoted to summarizing the most interesting research topics for the attendees and the possible common research areas which came out during the first day of the workshop. As far as we aimed at being more realistic in our expectations and more accurate in suggesting, designing and planning any eventual project of joint collaboration, Prof. Svetlana Hristova arranged a questionnaire on past research experiences which the convenors distributed in advance among all participants. The form helped us collecting detailed information about each participants' research background and interests. The second session, chaired by Dr. Lucia Ruggerone, was more concretely devoted to planning further activities. Operative short-term goals (revising) as well as medium and long term goals (publication of a book, mapping networking and research opportunities etc.) have been fixed and duties and task have been assigned to all participants.

In order to provide a space for intensive interaction, the workshop was held in a quiet conference hall in the heart of the university, fully equipped with computers, internet connection and coffee break buffet, lunches were served in a reserved foyer, set aside the main hall of the *Domus University Restaurant* and, finally, dinners were arranged in two different restaurants conveniently located in the University District, at a walking distance from both the hotels in which participants lodged. This setting was definitely successful: it in fact encouraged and sustained mutual knowledge and ongoing exchange among the participants well beyond the scheduled sessions.

The main aim of the workshop was to share knowledge on public art in the different national contexts, with the final goal of making space for alternative interpretative frameworks to emerge. Centro per lo studio della moda e della produzione culturale (Modacult) aimed at performing as an academic forum for scholars to reflect on the role of public art and to develop an international network with the potential to promote and carry out future research on the function and role of public art in transforming European cities.

In respect to this goal the workshop was a precious occasion to develop relations among scholars working on the same topics but not having met before and to produce successful interaction between theoretical approaches and contiguous research areas too often treated as independent objects of investigation.

The workshop, in fact, has increased communication with and between the different scientific communities and marked the start of a fertile and rich interaction between independent, yet conceptually close, groups of research at the boundary between cultural studies, art history and urban development.

Overall, the workshop demonstrated the richness of the subject and highlighted a series of possible practical and scientific areas for further development. The meeting helped in making visible growing academic community that is currently scattered in several separate departments, universities and, of course, countries.

A first concrete outcome of the workshop is the awareness of a more integrated approach to the study of public art. The development of a theoretical approach which takes into account the collaboration between social sciences, urban development and art history has been considered a critical and pressing goal. In such a context, the group of participants agreed on publishing an edited book focusing on the role of public art in processes of transformation of western European cities and centered on the development of a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of public art. Such a goal will allow the community to strengthen their links and to focus on a series of applications and research targets.

2. Scientific content of the event

The workshop, as stated in the proposal and confirmed in the invitation sent to participants, aimed to contextualize public art within contemporary regeneration processes and to challenge the view of public art as a collective good, by examining the role of specific works in terms of forms of urban resistance. As a consequence, one of the most important points of discussion within our workshop was sharing and debating ways of raising awareness of all mechanisms which empty public art of its most crucial purpose: building sociality.

In such a context the keynote address written by Prof. Roger Bromley reconsiders the role public art has played in urban regeneration in the past two decades and examines whether public art can have a different, challenging part to play in rethinking urban futures. Prof. Bromley, especially in the context of the current economic recession, recommends the participants to go beyond the habitual questions of whether public art is a good thing in urban regeneration in order to question to which extent and under which conditions public art could/should have a non-instrumentalist contribution in building social bonds.

In particular I argues the necessity to examine whether public art can be seen as part of a counter-hegemonic/resistant narrative based upon the rediscovery of an active voice and the restoring of the idea of community as a site of decision.

If, on the one hand, Prof. Bromley claims that artists are not social workers nor are they the handmaidens of market-led regeneration, the six papers presented tried to show different ways and different national contexts in which artist may play a role in setting the idea of a community of citizens back into motion by creating new processes of social cooperation.

Prof. Panu Lehtovuori, who opened the first thematic session on *Terminology: from art to architecture, what is public art?*, ideally continued Prof. Bromley discourse focusing on three consequent large projects – Arabianranta (planning started in early 1990s), Kalasatama (early 2000s) and Kruunuvuori (late 2000s) – realized in the city of Helsinki and in which public art has been considered an integral part of urban life and a central element toward a inhabitant scale regeneration process. Dr. Eefje Vloeberghs, continuing a national focus, presented a Belgian initiative called Festival Kanal. The latter, realized in Brussels, is meant to be an occasion to focus attention on the challenges, possibilities and problems of the area around the canal via artistic and cultural project. To this end, the festival aims firstly to invest the Canal Zone as a public space and to develop the possibilities of using this public space as meeting and collaboration place.

During the debate that followed participants agreed that what is actually missing from contemporary European cities is precisely the “civic” society, which despite sharing the terminological root with the word “city”, nevertheless seems to be notably absent from postmodern cityscapes. Tales from several European national contexts followed.

The cases from Helsinki and the one from Brussels raised an important topic to the workshop agenda: the role of the artist. As far as the re-generation of cities has to tackle the architectural decline and to re-qualify post-industrial wasteland to make the city attractive again, but also to take on the problem of the lack of conviviality and find ways of repairing the city’s torn social texture rebuilding a public sphere for its inhabitants, the new role artists are called to play in contemporary public art has to be called into question and a change in the relation between art and the society has to be discussed.

In this direction go the addresses presented in the second thematic session named *Between institutionalized and informal system of public art: law, rules and aims*. The session opened with the contribution of Dr. Ewa Majewska. She concentrated on artistic freedom and censorship through the analysis of several Polish public art projects.

The discussion on restrictions on public art in Poland provided a departure point for a wider debate on the strategies of financing and supporting public art, of the restrictions of participating in the city development imposed on the inhabitants and generally – of a general crisis of vision and decision making within the field of cultural production in Europe.

Dr. Silvia Mazzucotelli Salice made a point between section one and section two and returned to the main focus: understanding to which extent contemporary public art practices can balance practices of resistance to the establishment and community involvement within public art programmes financed by local and regional authorities. She addressed the issue of public financing trying to answer whether or not artists should be government-supported activists and also trying to define which are the features defining an artist keen to work in the public realm. She made clear that because of its dynamics and because of the collaborative process that undergoes its realization, public art, since its very beginning, engenders the development of a relational layer, either within residents and between residents and the social actors which is certainly a structural condition for a sustainable planning process but which challenges the main assumptions of contemporary art theory because it dramatically challenges the autonomous conception of creative work.

The debate that followed showed to different beliefs within participants. On the one side social scientists and urban planners made clear that if, in the post-fordist era, culture has become the drive for economic regeneration, it is called upon to recreate the conditions for cities to be attractive to tourists but also liveable for the inhabitants and it has to engage with social problems, art, as part of culture, gets involved in this process. On the other hand, art historian and art critics argued in favour of art's autonomy from any other discipline.

This lively debate was an ideal bridge to the last thematic session entitled *Public Art as social resistance: between building public space and socializing the role of the artist* in which on the one hand Prof. Hristova presented example of the growing use of art in everyday life, and especially in everyday practices aimed at building public space, as part of the intrinsic need of arts themselves to redefine their status; as a consequence of the democratization of culture, art it is called upon to become approachable by people and to open itself up for public usage; In this respect public art can be seen as a forerunner in this trend since it takes for granted the relation between art and the society.

On the other hand Prof. Cunha Leal reported herself to the idea that public art cannot be merely thought as yet another available ground for contemporary art. That, on the contrary, public art has to adapt itself to the complex and demanding context of the public space, where artists should never be allowed to freely play their creative will.

As it should be clear by now, the papers that were discussed in the thematic sessions addressed in particular the issues of the importance of public art in building civic society, the need to borrow soft instruments from the public art world to urban planning in order to foster active participation in the decision making, the changing relationship between culture - and thus art - and society, the new role of artists and, finally, the debate on public financing.

All the papers presented referred as far as possible to existing local research and suggested tentative answers or opened up to new questions. In such a context all participants agreed on taking stock of the state of knowledge so far, and further explore the empirical and conceptual challenges posed by the public art in urban regeneration processes further elaborating the papers presented in a collective volume.

The debate which accompanied all the workshop made also clear the necessity of developing an interpretative approach and constructing comparative research tools able to integrate the art history and art criticism theoretical perspectives with the point of view of social sciences and urban studies.

3. Assessment of the results, contribution to the future direction of the field, outcome

As an exploratory workshop, our meeting was a striking success. On the one hand the workshop was successful in providing a reflexive space and thereby improving critical understandings of the current state of public art research in Europe. On the other hand it made very clear the necessity of setting an agenda for interdisciplinary research and cooperation within an emerging network of European scholars and practitioners interested or devoted to the study of public art and urban development.

To summarize, the workshop suggested Construction of new theoretical models through which public art should be studied

Future plans.

The meeting made clear to us the value of moving away from the boundaries of all our scientific domains in order to open up a discussion which takes into account a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of public art. On the basis of an acknowledgement of these important results, different possibilities for follow up activities were envisaged:

Revision Of Presentation

With deadline in January/February, the participants agreed to revise and share the presentations that they had proposed in the workshop. This extremely operative and exceptionally concrete short term goal could be used as an intermediate step to achieve a greater cohesion and knowledge inside the community.

Publishing

Secondly, as far as we aim at publishing the result of the workshop, the next weeks will also be dedicated to the preparation of a synopsis that will summarize the different views expressed during the workshop and sketch the European state of the art on theoretical approaches related to the study of public art.

After that we will engage in editing and publishing a book collecting the contributes presented during the workshop and other papers specifically written by attendees. The book will concentrate on three issue related to public art programmes: the first will be the social impact of public art interventions; the second is related to art history; the third finally will present the concept of mediation and will also figure out how this concept is elaborated in the field of public art practice.

The convenors and some attendees are actually verifying few selected international scientific publishers as to the possibility of an edited volume on this topic.

Networking

Moreover, all participants agreed about keeping up and developing the network among scholars established during the workshop (and well grounded upon the personal knowledge allowed by intensive interaction).

On the one hand we will consolidate our network through mutual alerting about relevant events and forthcoming publication and through exchange of published and unpublished writings. On the other hand, we will be very eager to develop a strong proposal for the ESF Networking Programme.

In the meanwhile a further meeting has already be fixed next May. This summit will be the occasion for updating all participants on the eventually forthcoming publication and to finalize research or networking call for proposal.

Research

In light of the plan sketched above, we are also currently exploring the opportunity to propose a larger project in keeping with the Framework Programme.

4. Final programme

Wednesday, 20 October 2010

Afternoon	<i>Arrival</i>
18.30	<i>Social event and welcome buffet (Old Fox Pub, Milan, Italy)</i>

Thursday, 21 October 2010

09.00-09.20	Welcome by Convenor Laura Bovone (Modacult – Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, Italy)
09.20-09.40	Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF) Ilona Pálné Kovács (ESF Standing Committee for Social Sciences (SCSS))
09.40- 10.20	Spaces for a New Belonging: Public Art, Interculturalism, and Urban Regeneration Lucia Ruggerone reading of Roger Bromley's paper (University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK)
10.20-10.40	Discussion and collection of question for Prof. Bromley
10.40-11.00	<i>Coffee / Tea Break</i>
11.00-12.40	Morning Session: Terminology: from art to architecture, what is public art? (chair: Prof. Emanuela De Cecco)
11.00-11.30	Urban design, art and the experience of place. Cases from Helsinki, Finland Panu Lehtovuori (Estonian Academy of Arts, Tallinn, Estonia)
11.30-12.00	Arts and negotiated gentrification. Festival Kanal in Brussels Dr. Eefje Vloeberghs (Free University of Brussels, Bruxelles, Belgium)
12.00-12.40	Discussion
12.40-14.00	<i>Lunch at Domus Restaurant (Università Cattolica)</i>
14.00-16.00	First Afternoon Session: Between institutionalized and informal system of public art: law, rules and aims (chair: Prof. Katie Milestone)
14.00-14.30	Between censorship and appropriation. The neoliberal financing of Public Art in Poland. Ewa Alicja Majewska (University of Warsaw, Poland/Örebro University, Sweden)
14.30-15.00	Should Artists be Government-Supported Activists? Cases from Italy and USA. Silvia Mazzucotelli Salice (Modacult-Università Cattolica, Milan, Italy)
15.00-16.00	Discussion
16.00-16.20	<i>Coffee / tea break</i>

- 16.20-18.20** **Second Afternoon Session: Public Art as social resistance: between building public space and socializing the role of the artist**
(chair: Prof. J.T. Hans MOMMAAS)
- 16.20-16.50 **Public Art - Between Social Resistance and Social Inclusion?**
Svetlana Hristova (South-west University Neofit Riski, Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria)
- 16.50-17.20 **On the strange place of Public Art in contemporary Art Theory**
Joana Cunha Leal (Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal)
- 17-20-18.20 **Discussion**
- 20.00 *Dinner at Restaurant Acqua di Mare*

Friday, 22 October 2010

- 09.30-12.30** **Morning Session: Planning future cooperation**
- 09.30-10.30 **discussion on follow-up activities/networking/collaboration**
Svetlana Hristova (South-west University Neofit Riski, Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria)
- 10.30-11.00 *Coffee / Tea Break*
- 11.00-12.30 **discussion on follow-up activities/networking/collaboration**
Lucia Ruggerone (Modacult – Università Cattolica, Milan, Italy)
- 12.30-14.00 *Lunch at Domus Restaurant (Università Cattolica)*
- 14.30 *End of Workshop and departure*

5. Final list of participants

Convenor:

1. **Prof. Laura BOVONE**
MODACULT
Department of Sociology
Facoltà di Scienze Politiche
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Largo A. Gemelli, 1
20123 Milan
Italy
laura.bovone@unicatt.it

Co-Convenor:

2. **Prof. Lucia RUGGERONE**
MODACULT
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore Largo A. Gemelli, 1
20123 Milano
Italy
lucia.ruggerone@unicatt.it
3. **Dr. Silvia MAZZUCOTELLI SALICE**
MODACULT
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore Largo A. Gemelli, 1
20123 Milan
Italy
silvia.mazzucotelli@unicatt.it

ESF Representative:

4. **Prof. Ilona Pálné KOVÁCS**
Department Centre for Regional Studies
Hungarian Academy of Sciences
Pécs, Papnövelde street 22
Budapest, 7621
Hungaria
palne@rkk.hu

Participants:

5. **Prof. Joana Cunha Leal**
Art History Department
Art History Institute
Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas
Universidade Nova de Lisboa
Av. de Berna 26-C
1069-061 Lisbon
Portugal
j.cunhaleal@fcs.h.unl.pt
j.cunhaleal@gmail.com
6. **Prof. Emanuela DE CECCO**
Facoltà di Design e Arti
Libera Università di Bolzano
via Sernesi, 1
39100 Bolzano
Italy
edececco@unibz.it

7. **Prof. Svetlana Hristova**
Department of cultural studies
Faculty of arts
South-West University (SWU) Neofit Rilsky
66, Ivan Mihailov Street
Blagoevgrad 2700,
Bulgaria
sv.hristova@aix.swu.bg

8. **Prof. Panu Lehtovuori**
Department of Urban Studies
Faculty of Architecture
Estonian Academy of Arts
Pikk tn. 20
10133 Tallinn
Estonia
panu.lehtovuori@artun.ee

9. **Prof. J.T. (Hans) Mommaas**
Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences
Universiteit van Tilburg
PO Box 90153
5000 LE Tilburg
Netherlands
j.t.mommaas@uvt.nl

10. **Prof. Ewa Alicja Majewska**
Gender Studies Department
University of Warsaw (Poland),
Institute of Thematic Gender Studies,
Örebro University (Sweden)
ul. Konduktorska 3b/91
00-775 Warszawa
Poland
ewamajewska@o2.pl

11. **Prof. Katie Milestone**
The Manchester Institute of Social & Spatial Transformation
Department of Sociology
Manchester Metropolitan University
Geoffrey Manton Building 462
99 Oxford Road
Manchester M1 7EL
United Kingdom
k.l.milestone@mmu.ac.uk

12. **Dr. Eefje Vloeberghs**
Social Geography Department
Faculty of Sciences
Free University of Brussels
Urban Research Centre COSMOPOLIS City, Culture & Society
WE DGGF, 6F326
Pleinlaan 2
1050 Brussels
Belgium
eefje.vloeberghs@vub.ac.be

6. Statistical information on participants

1. Repartition by age brackets.

Age	Male	Female
Less than 40 yrs	0	3
Over 40 yrs	4	7

2. Repartition by country of origins

Country	Male	Female
Belgium	0	1
Bulgaria	0	1
Estonia	1	0
Hungaria	0	1
Italy	0	3
Netherlands	1	0
Poland	0	1
Portugal	0	1
Spain	1	0
United Kingdom	1	1

3. Repartition by scientific speciality

Scientific Speciality	Male	Female
Architects/Urban planner	1	0
Art Historian	1	2
Cultural Sociologist	1	4
Urban scholars	1	3
Civil society movement representative	0	1