

Urban Space, Art and Social Movements (Tours, 28–29 May 19)

University of Tours, France, May 28–29, 2019

Deadline: Dec 15, 2018

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REBEL STREETS: URBAN SPACE, ART, AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Art's practical place in reconstituting the urban space, as one of the defining elements of urban culture, renders a twofold role. The role of art in the neoliberal urban planning shows that art is an integral part of current capitalist processes that are turning the neoliberal art subject in a source of capital—both as a resource for tourism and a real estate investment. However, recent research has found that arts and art establishments are not as significant in gentrification processes as before (Grodach, Foster, Murdoch 2018). Indeed, art has been both a product of and a response to the unequal distribution of resources and visibility in the city through the processes of new urban planning. For example, a growing resistance against neoliberal urbanism in Europe (Colomb & Novy 2016) demonstrates the relationship of artist communities and neighborhood organizations and challenges the prescriptive approaches to art's role in neoliberal aestheticization.

Art's presence in the urban space is dynamic and interactive that communicates the complex forms of globalization, cultural hybridity, and plurality in contemporary daily life—where we experience politics. The new forms of agencies and strategies of urban creativity in the form of graffiti, wall paintings, yarn bombing, stickers, urban gardening, street performances, tactical art, creative campaigns and theatrical actions—among others—demand an active spectatorship (Whybrow, 2011) and have a growing power to renegotiate space for new forms of political participation.

Social mobilization in the neoliberal cities constitutes a common theme in texts inspired by Henri Lefebvre's colossal work on production and reproduction of urban space (Lefebvre, 1968) and David Harvey's book *Rebel Cities* (Harvey, 2012). Urban creativity has a broad scope of interests from a clear "right to the city" perspective with its ecological, spatial, and ideological agenda to the struggles of civil rights, and individual and collective freedoms. While this aspect has opened the research into recognizing street art as a genre for "political democratization" (Bengtson 2014), the growing significance of art in social and spatial justice movements has been neglected by both social movement theory and art theory. Thus, the analysis of art and urban social movements is still academically insufficient, although street art is well-recognized to have had an essential part during the Egyptian (Abaza 2016), Tunisian (LeVine 2015) and Syrian (Crooke 2018) revolution, Spanish Indignados (Ramírez Blanco 2018), Greek Aganaktismenoi movement (Tsilimpoudini 2016) and the Gezi Uprising (Tunalı 2018).

Rebel Streets conference aims to shift the focus from a rather disempowering critical perspective

towards urban art to one that stresses its aesthetical and political powers as a part of the urban social resistance. We ask participants to investigate the hypothesis that the aesthetic reconfiguration of the neoliberal city does not only allow for a hegemonic restructuring of the urban environment, but it also facilitates the growth of counter-hegemonic resistance.

Critical inquiries should adhere to one of the three areas of the conference theme:

1. Street art and everyday life in the city
2. Art and anti-gentrification resistance
3. Art and the urban social movements

We invite papers from all humanities and social sciences disciplines that investigate the way art:

- exists in the increasingly policed, surveilled, designed and otherwise controlled urban contexts,
- confronts and reconstitutes the concept of public space,
- provides the citizenry with new and innovative ways to engage,
- activates, captures, and subverts the experience of the urban space,
- enables reflexive processes and co-creation of knowledge and worldview,
- reveals hegemonic and counterhegemonic interactions among city authorities, urban developers, and artists,
- empowers the resistance movements in the gentrified neighborhoods,
- is a part of the aesthetics of the urban social movements and its commitment to participative (direct) democracy.

Rebel Streets conference will engage in the questions that scrutinize the complex relationships between urban space, social resistance, and art, such as: How can art in the public space be used as a weapon of resistance and a means of reconstruction? Are street artists obliged to be a part of the urban resistance against neoliberalism? How does art respond uniquely to gentrification? How do public artistic expressions reveal, delimit or question the complexity of neoliberal urbanization? How can we interpret the poetics of urban art from the perspective of subcultures, freedom of expression, and the limits of criminality? How is street art activism perceived by the authorities, politicians, businesses, and the wider public? What prompts urban artists to communicate with urban dwellers with their marks on the city's surface? What kind of public should critical urban art try to constitute and what kind of public spaces are needed to that effect? What can we learn from street art about visual resistance in the interplay with political power structures? Under what conditions could art become effective in reclaiming the cities as sites of resistance and change?

The 2-day conference will be held on the campus of the University of Tours France on 28-29 May 2019. There is 25 Euros attendance fee and the presenters are expected to cover their travel and accommodation expenses.

Keynote speakers:

Peter BENGTSÉN (Art History and Sociology, Lund University)

Myrto TSILIMPOUNIDI (Geography, University of the Aegean)

The paper proposals and presentations can be in English or French, but the conference language will be in English and no interpretation services will be provided. Interested participants are requested to submit an abstract of maximum 500 words accompanied with a 2-page CV no later than 15th December 2018.

International Scientific Committee:

Tijen TUNALI (Art History and Visual Studies Université de Tours)
Gülçin ERDI (Sociology, French Center for Scientific Research-CITERES)
Bénédicte Florin (Geography, Université de Tours)
Temenuga TRIFONOVA (Visual Studies, York University)
Christophe GENIN (Philosophy of Art, Université de Paris 1 Sorbonne)
Christian GERINI (Philosophy, Université de Toulon)
Peter BENGTSSEN (Art History and Sociology, Lund University)
Myrto TSILIMPOUNIDI (Geography, University of the Aegean)
Tatiana DEBROUX (Geography, Université Libre de Bruxelles) 4
Julia RAMIREZ-BLANCO (Art History, Universitat de Barcelona)
Ilaria HOPPE (Art History, Katholische Privat-Universität Linz)

Reference:

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