

Rebel Streets II: Urban Space Art and Social Movements

Berlin, Jul 1–03, 2020

Deadline: May 15, 2020

rebelstreet.sciencesconf.org

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Please note: The following conference is canceled due to COVID-19, however, abstracts are accepted for the edited volume until May 15, 2020.

The second of the Rebel Streets: Urban Space, Art and Social Movements conference series brings together a team of international scholars with interest in urban transformations, spatial justice, right to the city, aesthetics and politics, cultural and artistic rebellion, activist art and public art. The central goal of this “traveling conference” - each year in a different city in Europe - is to engage in a multifaceted, multi-disciplinary and multi-geographic perspective to articulate and promote a richer and a more integrated understanding of the ideologies, relationships, meanings and practices that arise from the diverse interactions among the three social spheres: urban space, art, and social movements.

Art’s role in the urban space of social mobilizations results in a multitude of spatial dynamics and the emotional, communicative and aesthetic interactions. Such 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 of urban creativity has opened the research into recognizing street art as a genre for “political democratization” (Bengtson & Arvidson, 2014), the growing significance of art in social and spatial justice movements has not met with a rigorous academic undertaking.

Art had an essential part during the Egyptian and Tunisian revolution (Abaza 2012), Spanish Indignados (Ramírez Blanco 2018), Greek Aganaktismenoi movement (Tsilimpoudini 2016) and the Gezi Uprising (Tunali 2018). It is even argued that the civil war in Syria is triggered by a graffiti work in Dara’a (Asher-Shapiro 2016). The socio-political character of these movements has been explored extensively from the point of plural resistance against authoritative government, collective identity and a political struggle over public space. This material emphasis has often focused on what was done, not what was made visible, despite the popular use of the urban space for immense creativity and the increasing influence of electronic mobility and communication networks that have helped the aesthetic strategies of the movements. On the other hand, most research related to the arts in social resistance, both from a social science perspective and from a community arts perspective, tends to emphasize the therapeutic, unitary or reconciliatory attributes of art, paying attention to how art contributes to ease tensions between communities and city authorities. Although such criticism for socially engaged art is sound, it undermines art’s

capacities of struggle and agonism, of contestation and re-appropriation that emerge through the creation of common and shared spaces for socialization, mobilization and political action.

The increasingly visible aesthetic dimension of the recent political protests, revolts and uprisings has not only challenged what is acceptable as politics in the society, but it has also problematized what is acceptable in society as art (Tunali 2017). In the recent social movements the artistic practices, interventions and performances, with the accompanying talks and manifestos, have further challenged the traditional political critique on the relationship of aesthetics and politics. In the current condition of the world connected through hegemonic discourses and authoritarian politics, which tend to erase the conditions that make democratic participation and grassroots mobilization possible, the political capacity of art that becomes a conditioning factor for social resistance is a fundamental and timely issue.

To push forward the dialogues and widen the debates on art's relationship to the political, Rebel Streets conferences interrogate what the reconfiguration of difference, equality, and equity entail at present moment, and what it is to aesthetically and politically experience the world from the perspective of social dissensus and rebellion. Inspired by the visual outburst of the uprisings around the world between 2011 and 2014 and recently at the end of 2019, the overarching theme "Urban Space, Art and Social Movements" envelops this year's following four tracks:

1. Art and aesthetics of urban social movements
2. Street art activism
3. Artistic mobilization and visibility in protests
4. Urban Art and Everyday Resistance

The participants are invited to analyze the relationships between art and social movements in various historical and local contexts. The proposed papers should engage in questions such as:

- How do artists get involved in social movements, and how do social movements deploy art?
- How are symbols, slogans, and visual expressions communicated in the urban space of resistance
- What kind of political and aesthetic possibilities could emerge in the intersection of the dialogical premises of art and the ideological premises of political mobilization?
- Could aesthetics of occupation, communing and communality deployed in social movements be the arena and context for political transformations?
- How could artistic expressions in the urban space reveal, delimit, question and resist the complexity of the socio-political crisis?
- What kind of role do art narratives play in incorporating marginalized subjects and voices as dissidence?
- Under what conditions could art become effective in reclaiming the cities as sites of resistance and change?
- What can we learn from street art about visual resistance in the interplay with political power structures?
- How are the artistic strategies and performances in social movements transmitted to other local contexts?
- How can we analyze the political significance of art in increasingly militarized, policed, surveilled, or otherwise controlled urban contexts?

- What is the role of music in street activism?
- How can art in the urban space be used as a tool of collaboration and a means of imagining alternative political communities?

Rebel Streets is an initiative developed by the Art Historian Tijen Tunali (Berlin /Aarhus). The first Conference took place at the University of Tours-France in 2019, the 2nd Rebel Streets Conference will take place in Berlin at the Forum Transregionale Studien in the framework of its research program Europe in the Middle East – The Middle East in Europe (EUME), and as an activity of the Academy in Exile – a joint initiative of the University Duisburg-Essen, the Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut Essen, the Freie Universität Berlin and the Forum Transregionale Studien.

There is no conference fee. The presenters are expected to cover their travel and accommodation expenses. Interested participants are requested to submit an abstract of maximum 500 words and a 2-page CV as one PDF document to the conference convener Tijen Tunali [eume\(at\)trafo-berlin.de](mailto:eume(at)trafo-berlin.de) no later than March 31st, 2020. Selected papers will be invited to contribute to an edited volume by Routledge.

Please also submit your abstracts by creating an account on the conference page and by following

My Space>Submissions>Submit Abstract <https://rebelstreet.sciencesconf.org/>

Scientific Committee (Rebel Streets 2020)

Konstantinos Avramidis, Architecture, University of Portsmouth

Susana Jimenez-Carmona, Aesthetics and Politics, University of Barcelona

Amal Equeiq, Comparative Literature and Arabic Studies, Forum Transregionale Studien

Georges Khalil, Academic Coordinator, Forum Transregionale Studien

Friederike Pannewick, Modern Arabic Literature and Culture, Philipps-Universität Marburg

Vittorio Parisi, Aesthetics, University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

Heather Shirey, Art History, The University of St. Thomas, Minnesota

Tijen Tunali, Art History, Frei Universität Berlin and Aarhus University

Reference:

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