

AESOP Thematic Group “Urban Cultures and Public Places”
Annual Meeting November 2011

Hosting Institution: IRAT - CNR (National Research Council of Italy)
Via Schipa, 91 I - 80122, Naples, Italy

MEETING REPORT

The annual meeting of AESOP Thematic Group “Urban Cultures and Public Places” take place at 10th November - 12th 2011 in Napoli.

10th November

November 10th there was an internal group meeting at the IRAT - CNR (National Research Council of Italy). Topics were content and organization of the Naples workshop and ongoing Thematic Group (TG) activities as the Human Cities Festival in Brussels (2012), the AESOP-Conference in Ankara (2012) as well as further potential TG meeting opportunities: EURA conference Vienna (2012) and Lisbon Workshop (2012, to be confirmed).

11th November

The Workshop “Conviviality in Public Places: planning for Security and Multiculturalism” took place in Villa Doria d'Angri (Conference Center of University of Naples Parthenope). After Registration Gabriella Esposito de Vita (IRAT) and Nikolai Roskamm (TU Berlin, Germany) welcomed the workshop participants. Sabine Knierbein (SKuOR TU Vienna, Austria) outlined an overview about the history of the TG and about the recent topic “Conviviality”.

The first morning-session was about an overview on Naples experiences.

- Massimo Clemente and Stefania Oppido (IRAT) presented a case study to “Public Spaces in Coastal Cities: Linking People by the Sea”. Several seaside projects were introduced.
- Laura Lieto, Marina Rigillo and Cristina MaJello (University of Naples Federico II) represented an local Naples project: The rehabilitation of the “Pedamentina” hillside steps in Naples, where the project tries to work out the opportunities of a participatory planning process. The hillside steps from the castle to the Spanish quarter should reorganized with the local inhabitants to a vivid public space.

- Luigi Fusco Girard (University of Naples Federico II) suggested a change in mind and a more open and more sustainable approach concerning urban planning activities in public space.
- Gaetano Mollura (URBACT Naples City Council) introduced the European Programme tools to improve sustainable urban policies and showed the experiences on public spaces regeneration in Naples. Mollura gave a lot of Naples examples, particularly in the context of building new Subway-stations and the connected redesign of the entrance areas.

The afternoon-session focused on international examples.

- Matej Niksic (Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia) spoke about the conditions of conviviality in the post-socialistic-neoliberal city and represented the case of public spaces in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Niksic showed the contradictory processes in public space between city center and periphery. Meanwhile the city center in Ljubljana is completely renovated in a brightly tourist place with a lot of public money, the public space in the outer city is in almost the same condition like in socialistic times.
- Laura Calbet i Elias (TU Berlin) suggested a historical view to the public space in Barcelona. Calbet worked out the political significance of public spaces and the change of political charging. During the years of Franco dictatorship the big public spaces had have the function for representing the state power, meanwhile the public space in the neighborhoods were already the nucleus for democratic movement. Calbet spoke for a consciousness of the political and democratic function concerning the debate on public spaces.

In the evening roundtable session the different views on public space came together in a vivid discussion about the idea of convivium and the conditions of research and practice. Claudio Pellone (Consortium Antiche Botteghe Tessili) reported from a local initiative in the Mercato quarter where shop owner and inhabitants are trying to start a rehabilitation process for the local public space. One result of the roundtable discussion was that the key for planning and thinking public spaces is the role of the inhabitants. To talk about public spaces has always to do with the special configuration of participation. The political context of public space and public space planning needs to be considered equally.

12th November

Guided from Gaetano Mollura and Gabriella Esposito de Vita the TG was invited to a roundtrip to recent public space projects particularly at the new Underground stations. The Line M1 has been turned into "Il Metro dell'Arte" as six stations have been upgraded with a lot of artworks. The Museo station accommodates an archaeological exhibit of many objects found during metro construction. The other points of the roundtrip were the Station Salvator Rosa and the Università station. There are more interesting stations to follow when line M1 will be extended to finally become a circle line.

The AESOP thematic group for Public Spaces and Urban Cultures explicitly thanks Gabriella Esposito de La Vita and Massimo Clemente, their institutions and the IRAT for the very convivial atmosphere during the symposium, and for their great work.