



PARIS 2014  
BECOMING LOCAL

## TRANSFORMING SPACES, REDEFINING LOCALITIES

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP - LAA-LAVUE UMR 7218 CNRS, ENSAPLV / AESOP

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PARIS, FRANCE - LA VILLETTE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

<https://becominglocalparis.wordpress.com>

The meeting in Paris combined three formats of exchange, talk – walk – work, to address (emerging) conflicts in contemporary public spaces that are increasingly recognized and produced as spaces of concern between the local and global scale. The local scale has become a central issue in contemporary projects aiming to reconnect the multiple uses of public space with the human dimension and restore a social sense of community. At the same time the processes of metropolization and gentrification, which take place in large European cities like Paris, are dictating the need of conceiving the city as a polycentric ensemble of urban centers that should enhance its economic “international attraction”. The meeting’s tackled these issues by reflecting on the *words* we use to talk about this conflict as well as the *misunderstandings* that the use of these same words can provoke in different contexts.

### **Questioning *what the locality is and who the locals are.***

In order to question urban design and its relation to local identities, a better understanding of who the “locals” are in cosmopolitan and global cities, is needed. This pertains to identifying whose identities we refer to, how do we name the inhabitants of a street/neighborhood/city, and how do we define the scale of locality.

*Where do collective tactics and strategies aiming at counteracting practices of othering and exclusion emerge and develop?*

Institutions and policies, as well as emerging (counter-)publics and collective practices, contribute to the redefinition of the scale of public spaces not only by implying a legitimate user and uses but also by framing “sensitive areas”. These actions produce a continuous recomposition of urban identities and bring into question what it means for inhabitants to belong to the local or global scale. A fundamental critique has been put on the approaches to public space in many disciplines that disjoin object from method, meaning that they separate the object of research from gesture (as defined in anthropology).

Methodology and the object of research must be conceived in a close relationship, as the object cannot be discussed without considering the ways and means of how it has been produced.

In the span of three days the meeting brought together a large number of participants who joined in a moment of shared reflection, an open dialogue between planners, designers, cultural and social anthropologists, researchers in urban studies and planning, sociologists and actors of the civil society. Through various formats of exchange - panel talks on the planning, cultural, social and insurgent practices from around the world, visits to neighbourhoods at the Paris’ peripheries undergoing social transformation, and workshops on notions, meanings and definitions of planners’ and researchers’ categories - they reflected on plural perspectives at the intersection of different disciplines and between theory and practice. The event disclosed an extent to which various disciplines differently conceptualize public space, social practices and collective initiatives, thus rendering a true transdisciplinary work a great challenge. All the participants complimented this format of exchange across disciplines, which usually does not materialize at the conferences and symposia, as they tend to be directed at the members of certain scientific communities. Events like this are important for both the production of knowledge that would transcend disciplines and for sharing resources among professionals and concerned publics, thus allowing for action and social change.

More information on the meeting, including abstracts of the lectures, description of the visited sites, the themes of the workshops, and the involved people is available at <https://becominglocalparis.wordpress.com>.

*Publication on the Paris meeting “acts” is in preparation.*