

## **Executive summary**

*Mobile Access to Knowledge: Culture and Safety in Africa.*

*Documenting and assessing the impact of cultural events and public art on urban safety.*

### **1. The research plan**

#### **1.1 Problem statement**

As the Millennium Development Goals declare, the achievement of a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers is essential. To produce such improvement safety is a priority, as the UN-Habitat publication on enhancing urban safety and security has also presented in 2007 (UN-Habitat, 2007) and the arts could contribute to this process.

#### **1.2 Research objectives**

The research “Mobile A2K: Culture and Safety in Africa. Documenting and assessing the impact of cultural events and public art on urban safety” was conceived to document and assess the impact of cultural events and public art on urban safety in relationship with the Millennium Development Goal 7d (“By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers”).

More specifically the objectives of the research were:

1. Documenting and mapping cultural events and public art produced between 1991 and 2013 in the cities of Douala, Luanda and Johannesburg and making this documentation accessible through ICT.
2. Assessing the impact of cultural events and public art on urban safety by exploring a series of case studies and comparing them.

Since its very conception, the research did not aim at influencing or providing guidelines for artworks. An asset of the research is that safety is not an objective or an expected result of cultural productions, and it should not be. The arts need to be a space of experimentation and research; analyzing their impact and side effects is a way to highlight the unforeseen, and to take advantage of what a space of freedom can teach us. Without that space of freedom in any case we would not have art.

#### **1.3 Research hypothesis and questions**

The research was based on the hypothesis that the arts are a space for experimentation and research, not directly connected to urban safety, but capable of triggering unforeseen ways of producing higher livability, civil cohabitation, and social cohesion.

The research focused on the following questions: how do cultural events and public art affect urban safety in African cities? Can we assess these changes as positive according to a group of factors?

#### **1.4 Methodology**

To document and assess the impact of cultural events and public art on urban safety, the interdisciplinary and comparative research “Mobile Access to Knowledge: Culture and Safety in Africa” worked between December 2011 and June 2014 with literature reviews, field research, visual representations, and analysis to collect and then compare findings. The research team was composed of scholars in the fields of arts, communication, design, architecture, anthropology and sociology, and with representatives of institutions working in the three cities involved in collaboratively designing the research methodology.

#### **1.5 Schedule**

The schedule of the research project was originally of two years (December 2012 - December 2014). A request of extension of one semester was accepted by SNIS. The plan included a workshop for the definition of a shared methodology of research, two periods of field research in the African cities, and a final work of comparative analysis of results.

## **2. The results obtained and an analysis of them**

Related to the direct and indirect impact of cultural events and public art on urban safety, the research findings suggest:

1. Urban safety does represent a central issue in the context of our research: Johannesburg in South Africa, Luanda in Angola, and Douala in Cameroon. It is of course an indicator of quality of life, and it is a concern appearing constantly in the background. Its relevance is not only determined by the presence and fear of criminality and violence, but – according to the living conditions – also by the threat of forced evictions and natural and man made disasters.
2. Cultural events and public art do have a direct impact on urban safety, by producing works including infrastructural-functional elements, by “making space” (and triggering the establishment of shared spaces) and by contributing to urban branding among niches. Artworks can also generate conflicts (with references to historical, political, social and ethnic issues) and it is necessary to mention that the maintenance of infrastructural-functional elements can indeed be a risk in particular for the rapid deterioration of materials in tropical climate.
3. The indirect impact of cultural events and public art is related to their capacity of being an entrance point in informal settlements, to initiate change and to contribute in changing behavior, by triggering relationships, ownership, humanity, empowerment, and active citizenship; It is the process, the construction of value and the sense of pride which appear to have a determinant role. Few specific artworks present the capacity of establishing a personal relationship with the viewer, and they are described as something that “wakes you up” (“Ça réveille”).
4. Different typologies of productions appear to present common patterns in the way they are implemented and perceived, and in the impact they produce: proximity artworks, artworks in passageways, large-scale sculptures and monuments, urban-scale artworks and cultural events. *Proximity artworks* tend to provide infrastructural-functional elements that can directly respond to safety-related problems; *large-scale sculptures and monuments* tend to be more contested and they can generate conflicts; *urban-scale artworks and cultural events* participate in urban branding. *Artworks in passageways* are specifically relevant: they do not produce direct impact on urban safety, but they are more likely to establish a personal relationship with the viewer, triggering humanity, ownership, empowerment, active citizenship, value, and sense of pride.

## **3. Whether the results obtained correspond to those expected at the beginning of the research**

What has emerged from a comparative analysis of the research findings is that our initial hypothesis did not correspond fully to reality. We expected the arts to be a space for experimentation and research, not directly connected to urban safety, but capable of triggering unforeseen ways of producing higher livability, civil cohabitation, and social cohesion. In reality the arts can also be directly connected to urban safety, and their space of experimentation and research appeared much more limited than we expected.

From a methodological point of view, the research also diverged from the initial plan in two main ways:

1. A specific emphasis was given to the city of Douala in Cameroon, which is characterized – compared to Luanda in Angola, and Johannesburg in South Africa – by a larger variety of types of public artworks and locations, and by a production led by a non-profit organization. The cultural scenes of Luanda and Johannesburg were mainly used in the comparative analysis to confront the findings of Douala. It was also possible to extensively collect and use images of the artworks of Douala which allowed to focus more specifically on the before and after situation.
2. We expected the use of technology – and in particular mobile technology – to be an efficient tool to document on-site both culture and safety. The use was tested in Douala (mapping and user-generated content) but it appeared inefficient due to difficulties in particular in uploads. Mobile technology might be used to provide the data collected in the future through mobile applications

and access to Wikipedia on mobile phones; the data collected are in fact made available with an open license, and images and content have been uploaded.

Please also note that the main focus of the research was on public art. Cultural events were considered only associated to public art, as an urban scale public art intervention (in the case of the Luanda Triennial) and as productions specifically focusing on public art (SUD Salon Urbain de Douala, Scénographies Urbaines, and workshops).

#### **4. Information regarding the practical application of results**

Due to its applied nature (which characterizes research at SUPSI, the institution leading the project), the research was specifically conceived not only to contribute to existing literature, but also to support cultural institutions (directly involved in the project) in evaluating their work, impact and methodology and to use the research findings to plan their current and future working directions. At the same time the research was meant to allow policy-makers, grant makers, and stakeholders to better understand the wide implications of the cultural projects they are supporting, to invite them to confront the issue of safety with a different approach, and to consider new factors in order to promote a higher livability, according to Millennium Development Goals. The necessity of including information and communication technologies in the project aimed at contributing to the research communication and impact.

As planned, the research has produced content specifically designed for practical application. In particular the research has documented cultural events and public art in Douala, Luanda and Johannesburg between 1991 and 2013. A series of case studies provides more specific insight about the impact of those cultural events and public art on urban safety.

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#### **5. Questions that merit further exploration or that have arisen as a result of the research**

1. The research has documented cultural events and public art in Douala, Luanda, and Johannesburg between 1991 and 2013. These data merit further exploration and it can be used to support new studies, facilitate the inclusion of case studies from Africa in international research about art and public art, and to produce tools and applications to browse and take advantage of this information for commercial and non-commercial purposes.

2. The research results should be compared to case studies outside Africa. The contexts of Douala, Luanda, and Johannesburg at the center of this research represent very particular case studies compared to the publicly funded art programs, which have received the largest attention in the field of art and public art studies. In particular the relevance of the taxonomy system, the role of land ownership and the direct and indirect impact on urban safety need to be confronted with case studies outside Africa to verify their relevance and their capacity of highlighting issues that in other contexts might appear less visible.

#### **6. Practical and policy recommendations that follow from the results obtained**

As stated in the project plan, this research does not aim at influencing or providing guidelines for artworks. The arts have to be a space for research and experimentation, not commissioned to produce urban safety. We present below a short list of recommendations suggested by our research findings.

1. Shared vs. public. The involvement of the community and the construction of a sense of ownership, empowerment, and active citizenship emerge from the process applied in the production of the artworks. In particular the process of cultural production appears to sabotage consolidated dynamics of power and to trigger the participation of more transversal groups. This involvement is central in the construction of value (humanization and value of the space), which appears to have a key role in encouraging people in taking action and change behaviors.

2. Value. The production of artworks with infrastructural-functional elements shows that the esthetic elements of the work do play a role in providing a site with a value and a pride, which can play a role in triggering new behaviors. These value and pride are specifically relevant when associated with a sense of ownership.
3. Land ownership. The research results suggest that land ownership characterizes the process undertaken for cultural productions. The choice of producing cultural events and public art in informal settlements outside governmental land requires for NGOs and informal groups some sort of negotiation with the community; this negotiation can trigger community-based projects with their specific capacity of building relationships and reinforcing sense of ownership and empowerment.
4. The ephemeral nature of public art and cultural events. In the attempt of discerning permanent and ephemeral cultural productions, the research has highlighted the ephemeral nature of all productions. The constant need of maintenance shows that also the productions conceived to be permanent have indeed a strong ephemeral nature due to the deterioration of materials (particularly fast in tropical climates), accidents, and vandalism. The possibility of assuring the maintenance of public art conceived to be permanent relies on ownership and responsibilities, defined formally and informally with public agencies, groups and communities. Regular cultural events (i.e. biennials, triennials, and annual festivals) can play a significant role in triggering maintenance, by bringing regular attention to the artworks.
5. The capacity of producing. People and institutions who have the skills to produce events and public art acquire the role of key stakeholders of cultural productions, and they have – or they tend to be regarded to have – a monopoly. Due to lack of training, limited training opportunities or lack of local professionals in this field, the central role of producers is specifically determinant in Africa.

## 7. Information regarding past and expected publications and other activities

### 7.1 Publications

- D. Fornari, (2012), *Mobile Access to Knowledge: Culture and Safety in Africa. Documenting and assessing the impact of cultural events and public art on urban safety*, in: “We, the public” Swiss Artistic Research Network Conference Proceedings, Luzern, 26-27 April 2012, <http://tinyurl.com/pk2jhs5>
- M. Pucciarelli, L. Cantoni, (2012), *Mobile Access to Knowledge*, in: Enrique Canessa, Marco Zennaro (eds.), *Mobile Science & Learning*, ICTP, Trieste, pp. 71-77.
- M. Pucciarelli, A.G. Sabiescu, L. Cantoni, (2013), *What do we know about Douala? Access to information in and about the largest Cameroonian city*, in: *Proceedings of the 7th IDIA Conference*, Bangkok, Thailand, 1-3 November 2013, <http://tinyurl.com/pfh6fkz>
- I. Pensa, (2014), *System Error. We Would Never Have Thought of It: Contemporary Art as a System Error*, in: P. Stupples, K. Teaiwa, (eds.), *Contemporary perspectives in art and international development*.
- M. Pucciarelli, L. Cantoni, (forth.), *A Journey through Public Art in Douala: Framing the Identity of New Bell Neighbourhood*, in: *Visiting Murals: Politics, Heritage and Identity*.
- F. Vanin, (2014a) *Empowering cultural spaces in Luanda: from public art to instant events. The parallel urbanism of Luanda and Maputo - differences and common features*, in: “Planning Perspectives - An International Journal of History, Planning and the Environment”, Routledge.
- E.F. Bonini Lessing (ed.), (2014a), *Design practices for urban safety and security. The impact of public and cultural events: case studies*, Il Poligrafo, Padova 2014.
- E.F. Bonini Lessing, (2014b), *The safety and security issue*, in: Bonini Lessing 2014a.
- D. Fornari, I. Pensa, (2014), *Culture and safety in Africa: art as safety and security trigger*, in: Bonini Lessing 2014a.
- M. Pucciarelli, (2014), *The case of Douala*, in: Bonini Lessing 2014a.
- F. Vanin, (2014b), *The case of Luanda*, in: Bonini Lessing 2014a.
- C. Wanjiku-Kihato, (2014), *The case of Johannesburg*, in: Bonini Lessing 2014a.

M. Pucciarelli, S. Vannini, (forth). *Mapping the digital Douala*. in *Proceedings: CIRN 2014 Community Informatics Conference: "Challenges and Solutions" Monash Centre, Prato Italy 13-14 October 2014*.

## 7.2 Working papers

Mobile A2K, *Mobile A2K Methodology Guide - 1<sup>st</sup> edition*, October 2012,

<http://tinyurl.com/k4ba5q8>.

Mobile A2K, *Comparative analysis*, December 2013.

M. Pucciarelli, *Panoramic report. Culture and Safety in Douala*, 2013.

M. Pucciarelli, *Case Study Report. Bessengué*, 2013.

M. Pucciarelli, *Case Study Report. New Bell*, 2013.

F. Vanin, *Panoramic report. Culture and Safety in Luanda*, 2013.

C. Wanjiku-Kihato, *Background and overview to public art in Johannesburg*, 2013.

C. Wanjiku-Kihato, *Public art in Johannesburg. Case Studies*, 2013.

## 7.3 Conference presentations

D. Fornari, (2012), *Mobile Access to Knowledge: Culture and Safety in Africa. Documenting and assessing the impact of cultural events and public art on urban safety*, in: "We, the public" Swiss Artistic Research Network Conference Proceedings, Luzern, 26-27 April 2012,

<http://tinyurl.com/pk2jhs5>

D. Fornari, I. Pensa. *Culture and Safety in Africa. About the impact of public art*, in the panel "Kunstförderung: Der gesellschaftsvertrag mit der Kunst", moderated by Rachel Mader, Andreas Münch & Peter Stohler, Second Swiss congress of art history, Université de Lausanne, Lausanne, 24/08/2013.

D. Fornari, I. Pensa. *Culture and Safety in Africa. About the impact of public art*, within the conference "Design practices for urban safety and security", University IUAV, Venice, 17/10/2013.

C. Wanjiku Kihato. *Culture and Safety in Africa: Johannesburg*, within the conference "Design practices for urban safety and security", University IUAV, Venice, 17/10/2013.

F. Vanin. *Culture and Safety in Africa: Luanda*, within the conference "Design practices for urban safety and security", University IUAV, Venice, 17/10/2013.

M. Pucciarelli. *Culture and Safety in Africa: Johannesburg*, within the conference "Design practices for urban safety and security", University IUAV, Venice, 17/10/2013.

I. Pensa, *Douala. The Social, Political, and Artistic Value of Public Art*, Moments of Artistic Articulation in African Cities: Between Politics and Imagination, ACASA Art Council of the African Studies Association, March 2014.

I. Pensa, *Mobile A2K: Culture and Safety in Africa*, meeting at the Collège Universitaire d'architecture de Dakar, May 2014.

M. Pucciarelli, G. Santanera, (2013), *Addressing the public: processes and impact of art on safety and security in Douala*. International Conference of the Centre for Cultural and African Studies (CeCAST) and the College of Art and Social Sciences on Culture and Conflict Resolution (CECAST2013), October 21-23, 2013 at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi, Ghana.

M. Pucciarelli, *Mobile A2K: Art public et sécurité à Douala*. Façonner la ville, Rencontres Ars&Urbis, Pavillion Urbain de Bonanjo, Douala, 4-6 December 2013.

## 7.4 Workshop

A three-days kick-off workshop was organized in 2012 in Vico Morcote, Switzerland. The workshop involved the research team and allowed presentations and discussions to produce the research methodology edited in the form of a methodology guide. The approach followed the example of the African Copyright and Access to Knowledge methodology guide, a similar comparative research project engaging ten different African countries. Our methodology guide was

reviewed by internal and external reviewers and made available on-line in October 2012. Field researchers have based their work on the methodology guide in collaboration with local partners.

### 7.5 Mapping

Public art has been geo-referenced on the Harvard World Map, an online open map aggregator (developed initially with a focus on Africa and the arts), facilitating research using geo-referenced data, historical and contemporary maps.

For the Harvard World Map and the Mobile A2K layers see:

<http://worldmap.harvard.edu/maps/MA2K> and [http://www.mobilea2k.org/?page\\_id=480](http://www.mobilea2k.org/?page_id=480)

### 7.6 Wikipedia and Wikimedia Commons

Around 4'000 images of Douala and its cultural production between 2011 and 2013 have been uploaded on Wikimedia Commons, thanks to the collaboration and support of doual'art, photographers and artists.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Commons:Culture\\_and\\_Safety\\_in\\_Africa](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Commons:Culture_and_Safety_in_Africa)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/SUD\\_Salon\\_Urbain\\_de\\_Douala\\_2007](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/SUD_Salon_Urbain_de_Douala_2007)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/SUD\\_Salon\\_Urbain\\_de\\_Douala\\_2010](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/SUD_Salon_Urbain_de_Douala_2010)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/SUD\\_Salon\\_Urbain\\_de\\_Douala\\_2013](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/SUD_Salon_Urbain_de_Douala_2013)

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Public\\_art\\_in\\_Douala](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Public_art_in_Douala)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_public\\_art\\_in\\_Douala](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_public_art_in_Douala)

### 7.7 Media coverage

I. Pensa, (2012), *Public Art and Urban Change in Douala*, in: "DomusWeb", 9 April 2012, <http://tinyurl.com/o8nyyha>.

E. Spoerl-Vögtli, (2012) *L'arte pubblica aumenta la sicurezza*, in: "La Regione Ticino", 4 May 2012, p. 25.

Enrica Alberti (2013), *Cultura e sicurezza in Africa e su Wikipedia* (intervista a Iolanda Pensa), with the program *Il Bello della Vita*, RSI Rete Uno, 23/04/2013.

Red., (2013a), *Mozambico, Sudafrica e Camerun: tre progetti ICT per una "società della conoscenza"*, in: "Square", Spring 2013, n. 11, pp. 16-17, <http://tinyurl.com/os3rujh>

C. D'Alonzo, (2013), *Intervista a Fabio Vanin*, in: "Doppiozero", June 2013, <http://tinyurl.com/ncltsx3>.

K. Anguelova, C. D'Alonzo, (2013), *Lo spazio metamorfico della città di Luanda*, in: "Doppiozero", 10 July 2013, <http://tinyurl.com/p9btphx>

Red., (2013b), *The metamorphic space of the city of Luanda*, in: "Lettera27", 12 July 2013, <http://tinyurl.com/plscctl>

F. Vanin, (2013), *Il Leone dell'Angola*, in: "Il Giornale dell'Architettura", Autumn 2013, p. 18.

Red., (2013c), *Urban transformations: the 2013 edition of SUD, in Douala*, in: "Lettera27", 29 November 2013, <http://tinyurl.com/ooyx8ed>