

walking seminar

Participatory Arts, Design and Crafts



AMASS AS SOCIAL SCULPTURE Trust, collaboration and visibility

AMASS collective from Portugal

The Association of Teachers of Expression and Visual Communication (APECV) has been developing, in the last ten years, artistic projects with vulnerable communities. The APECV team, in this context, builds participatory and collaborative strategies based in activist art and pedagogy of hope. At the heart of the strategies are: group knowledge and the establishment of trust activities, collaborative design of actions, creation of collaborative art and design work, and public visibility of processes and products.

As such, APECV received an invitation in 2019 to integrate the European project “AMASS: Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture”, funded by the European Union’s research and innovation program Horizonte 2020 (agreement n° 870621), coordinated by the University of Lapland (Finland), with other partners: the Karlova University (Czech Republic), the University of Malta, the Hogskolan i Boras University (Sweden), the Corvinus Egyetem University (Hungary), the company PACO Design (Italy), the University of Leeds (England) and the Association of Teachers of Expression and Visual Communication - APECV (Portugal).

This project seeks to investigate the role of the arts in the challenges that the increasing complexity of society poses, namely, in vulnerable fringes, in places located on the margins. It aims to promote and investigate transformative actions, based on the arts, with minority or disadvantaged groups from marginalized places in Europe. In this communication we will describe the experiences of AMASS in Portugal, with four communities that, in some way, fit the objectives of the project. A group from Centro Alexandre Correia, Social Solidarity Association of Lafões in Oliveira de Frades, a group of unemployed people supported by the Parish Council of S. Félix da Marinha-Vila Nova de Gaia, a group of residents of

the establishment Vítor Fontes in Viseu and a group of children, young people and adults residing in the social neighborhood of Paradinha on the outskirts of the city of Viseu.

Art as social sculpture

Artist Joseph Beuys, who invented the term art as social sculpture, believed that art was present in life, in the world, everywhere. For him, all people have creative capacities to be developed.

For the artist, it is in the process of organizing thought, as well as in the process of creation, that the first basis of the idea of sculpture lies. Ideas should potentially be considered by people as form, a form created through thought, which could be directed towards political and social attitudes. The researchers of the international project AMAS took up the concept of social sculpture as a participatory action process, as a method of social action, drawing on research methodologies in the arts and design.

As starting hypotheses, the coordinators put the role of the arts directly linked to the community as promoters of social transformation, in disadvantaged contexts, the promotion of artistic and communicative literacies as factors of personal fulfillment, the involvement of citizens in society and strengthening of their social presence.

The researchers started from a state of the art study, moving forward to a list of practical cases that was published on the Project’s website, and, to carrying out educational experiences through the arts with communities in six countries (Portugal, Hungary, Republic of Czech Republic, Italy, Finland and Malta), in order to contribute to professional, academic and research discourses on cultural policies.



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