

DELIVERABLE 5.5

AMASS CONFERENCE

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VERSION 1.2022

Acting on the Margins: Arts as Social Sculpture
AMASS 870621



REPORT DESCRIPTION: DELIVERABLE 5.5, WP5

PROJECT PERIOD: FEBRUARY 01.02.2020 – 31.01.2023

REPORT TYPE: PUBLIC

PURPOSE:

The AMASS Conference report presents the outcomes of the conference to all the communities, artists and researchers involved in the activity, in addition to wider audiences. In addition, this report seeks to share the evaluation results of the conference with participants and wider audiences. The number of participants in the evaluation were 58 (on Day 5 after the conference). This report will first provide an overview of the conference, followed by the description of the theme, approach and format, general organisation of the online event, and the evaluation results. The report provides both quantitative and qualitative feedback from conference participants.

SUMMARY:

Title:	DIALOGICAL ARTS THROUGH SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES: Acting on the margins, Redefining Empowerment
Conference Dates:	16-18 February 2022
Pre-event Date:	15 February 2022 (AMASS POLICY ROUND TABLE)
Venue:	Online platform – Zoom
Website:	https://www.amassconference.com/

CONFERENCE THEME:

Entanglements of social realities may expose or hide the margins of society. One of the key roles of the arts is to elicit dialogue and generate discussion around important societal challenges that often are entangled with, and located at, margins. In his well cited interview of 1976, Joseph Beuys maintained that ‘social sculpture’ is based on dialogical practices, that he described as ‘thinking, speaking and listening with others’ (Harlan, 2004, p. 2; Kuspit et al., 1993; Sacks, 2004, p. ix; Thistlewood, 1995). Beuys sought to transform the ways artists would interact with both the wider public and their own audiences. Through these ideas of social sculpture, he would set the trend for a more deliberate strategy for socially engaged practices as artists began to interact with institutions by way of their artistic methods and approaches (Harlan, 2004). Social sculpture (also re-sculpting or de-sculpting) can be considered to consist of an array or collection of multidimensional actions that shape the arts as a vehicle for social change through dialogue and activism.

Central to this conference was a core question: ***How can the arts serve as a means to bring people together, from both the mainstream and the margins?***

Four key themes, which were the conference tracks, were proposed for exploration during the conference:

- The power of the non-visible as the unrecognised or unseen connections between people and their communities (both towards the margins, and from the margins).
- Connection between these people and communities can take place in many ways, and these connections are often complex and tangled.

- From certain positions and in certain contexts, the strengths of communities (rather than their challenges or weaknesses) can be overlooked and remain unrecognised. What will be lost and, importantly, what can be gained if such strengths are visualised?
- Challenges may often be difficult (or, at times, impossible) to solve due our proximity to them as some perspectives, often determined by a distance from such challenges, do not enable detailed views.

The conference, therefore, sought to uncover, through deliberately diverse and creative forms of dialogue, what social sculpture can mean today. We were interested in how and whether the arts can continue to play a role in social change, especially when margins are continually moved to elicit new spaces for transformation. The metaphor of a picnic as a shared space for social nourishment and communal sharing was used throughout the conference as a way to ensure a relaxed atmosphere within which potential connections were explored, develop and co-create dialogue and as an opportunity to think with others.

CONFERENCE APPROACH AND FORMAT

Collaborative action between researchers, academics and artists in ‘pre-pairing’ and executing their contributions will be encouraged. Research presentations, artist talks, artistic poster presentations and workshops will explore case examples of artistic experiments, projects and interventions conducted in the AMASS testbed and elsewhere. Each conference day will end with a picnic that will focus on a group discussion to reflect on, analyse and create dialogue in order to capture and share our experiences and learning from the day.

We encourage researchers and academics to pair with artists and collectively pre-pair contributions to explore:

- Emergent dialogical opportunities for all ‘voices’ and experiences of contributors (artists and researchers or academics) to emerge;
- Innovative ways to perform your pre-paired dialogue;
- Different ways to express synergies and differences between the work of researchers and artists.

CONFERENCE ORGANISATION

Committees:

The conference was organised by two committees, the conference chairs and the scientific committee. The conference chairs prepared the overall functioning of the conference, and implemented the presenter’s selection process, while the international scientific committee reviewed the abstracts.

Chairing Committee:

Conference Chair: Satu Miettinen

Academic Chair: Teresa Torres de Eça

Program Chairs: Maria Huhmarniemi (artist talks), Paul Wilson (academic presentations), Mira Alhonsuo (workshops) and Ângela Saldanha (artistic posters)

Exhibition Chair: Raphael Vella

Student Volunteer Chair: Amna Qureshi

Pre-event Chair: Melanie Sarantou

Technical Committee: Teresa Torres de Eça, Raquel Balsa, Ângela Saldanha, Celia Ferreira, Maya Maksimovic, Kiwoong Nam.

International Scientific and Art Committee:

Satu Miettinen
Melanie Sarantou
Mirja Hiltunen
Maria Huhmarniemi
Raphael Vella
Valentina Vezzani
Marie Fulkova
Paul Wilson
Teresa Torres de Eça
Roger Blomgren

Leading Partners:

The following partners implemented the conference, with APECV leading all technical implementation of the conference.

1. Associação de Professores de Expressão e Comunicação Visual (APECV), www.apecv.pt
2. University of Leeds, www.leeds.ac.uk
3. University of Lapland, www.ulapland.fi/AMASS

Website and Social Media:

The links to the AMASS Conference website and social media are:

Website: <https://www.amassconference.com>

Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/amassproject>; Instagram: #amassproject

PRE-EVENT

The AMASS Policy Round Table (PRT) was delivered as the pre-event to the AMASS Conference. The event invited policy makers, sibling consortia and relevant organisations and communities to participate in the event. Although the round table report is beyond the scope of this report, a brief overview is provided here as the event was linked to the conference. The purpose of the PRT was to bring together the sibling consortia of the AMASS project to discuss and share preliminary findings on cultural policy. Secondly, the latter part of the PRT was a practical online workshop during which participants had the opportunity to give constructive feedback on the policy white paper presented by AMASS. The feedback data was captured in the Miro platform and will be analysed to improve the AMASS white paper.

Quantitative Data:

Hours:	4 (2 hours seminar and discussions and 2 hours workshop)
Registrations:	60 persons
Seminar:	58 persons
Workshop:	42 persons
Data notes and feedback collected:	104 comments and notes (sticky notes) in the Miro platform
AMASS Policy Round Table information:	https://www.amassconference.com/pre-event-round-table.html

CONFERENCE EVALUATION

Quantitative Data:

The following quantitative data is provided to generate an oversight of the conference:

Days:	3 (conference) + 1 (pre-event)
Registrations:	230
Speakers:	48
Keynotes speakers:	2
Artists talks:	9
Sessions:	27
AMASS Testbed presentations:	7
AMASS Exhibition Opening:	1
Posters:	3
Workshops:	6
Moderators:	18
On-line organisation:	5 persons
Filled evaluation forms:	58

Evaluation Form:

The online evaluation form is here:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdnyV0WSps1xlzXGb771tsqB2t76QvDFIdSF6KxxH7ZmwW0Rg/viewform>

Conference Video Links:

The conference video link is here: <https://youtu.be/Q3erl5mbEng>

Book of Abstracts:

A book of abstracts was prepared and published via the conference website: https://www.amassconference.com/uploads/1/3/8/9/138965550/book_of_abstracts_amass_11_3.pdf

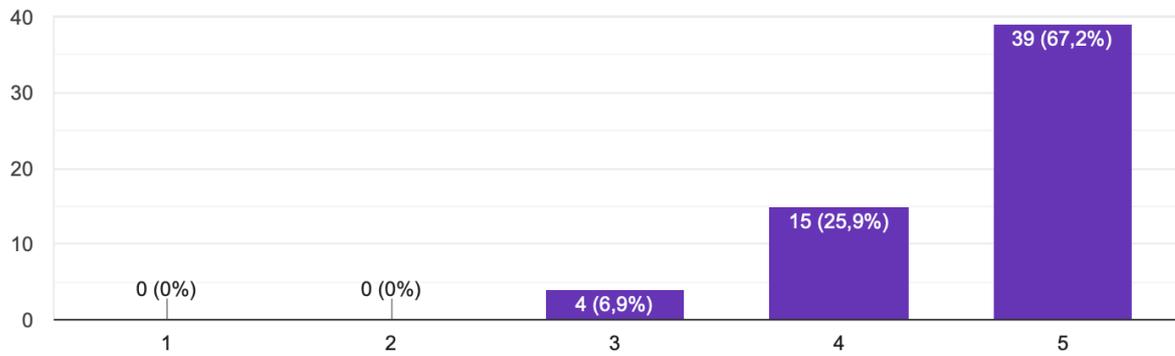
The purpose of the book of abstracts was to guide the conference participants to select tracks and presentations that were of interest to them. In addition, it served as a tool for reflection on the concepts that the participants presented. The metaphorical images and text configuration, based and structured in successive questions, also enunciates the book as a reflection tool. This book was produced in order to disseminate the themes and contents discussed at the conference, as well as serving as a memory of the debated.

PARTICIPANT EVALUATION

How would you rate the overall conference experience?

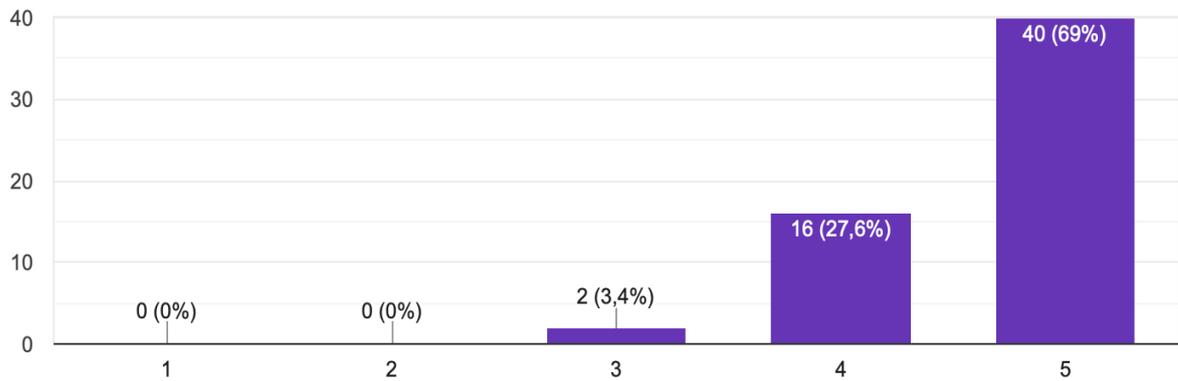


58 respostas



There was an opportunity to discuss practice relevant issues with the speakers

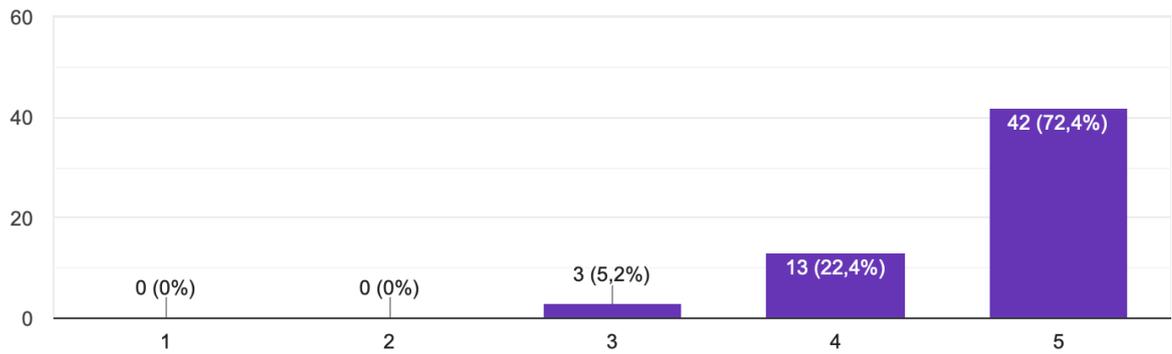
58 respostas



The conference was an opportunity to connect with colleagues and share ideas

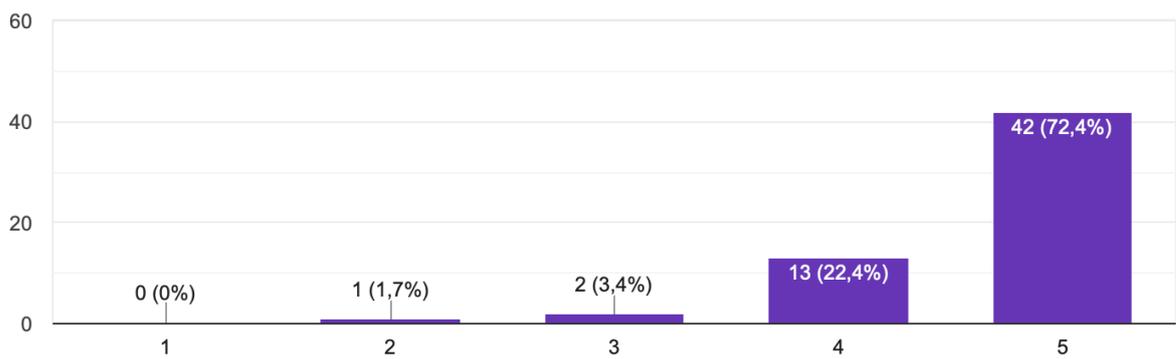


58 respostas



The overall organization of the conference functioned well

58 respostas



Qualitative feedback:

The conference evaluation was overall positive. We have received 58 responses to the evaluation survey 5 days after the end of the conference. The participants appreciated the richness of the presentations, to exchange knowledge and engage with the four themes of the conference.

Some comments and suggestions from participants:

- *The conference had very interesting topics and the exhibition connected to the conference is great. I could participate only to few sessions, but they were really fascinating. Thank you!*
- *Very interesting communications and great references of practices and reflection for teachers working in the arts.*
- *It was an opportunity to hear about artistic educational experiences and how the arts can contribute to social empowerment.*
- *In my opinion the facilitation went impeccably well, any issue that came up was approached thoughtfully and respectfully, so that the experience felt seamless. The information from the organizing team was absolutely clear and enough support and guidance was provided. The exchange itself was rich and the participants were engaged. Really have nothing but compliments for the tremendous work done. Congratulations!*
- *The conference was packed from morning till evening. Since this was online, the days were long. Otherwise the conference content was varied with some excellent speakers and papers by academic researchers and artists while also making space for students' voices some of whom made fascinating contributions. Well done all.*
- *Thank you! Very insightful 3 days of great talks and new perspectives.*
- *This was my first conference and the whole experience was great even though live conference is assumingly very different to experience.*
- *Very inspiring conference, huge density of shared knowledge, research and practice. Very grateful to been able to listen and feed from such a vast community of scientist and artists.*
- *AMASS Conference is truly fascinating! I have enriched myself as an artist, person and researcher! It is an open and borderless process of presenting the multi-references and connections of Art that brings people together!*
- *I really enjoyed the conference - it was a nice mix of artists' talks and more academic presentations.*
- *I believe it was an essential moment to share artistic experiences with groups that still live on the margins of society. It was very useful to understand how in different parts of the globe very valid projects are being implemented, new perspectives for an artistic sensibility for everyone. Thank you for the effort and commitment.*
- *It was an honor to participate at the conference and be able to meet international colleagues.*
- *The program was very dense, it was impossible to follow everything online, in addition to the different time zone. However, the presentations I listened to were very thought stimulating,*

and helped the planning of projects we have here. I am looking forward to having time to watch the recordings. These are very much appreciated and essential to continue the reflection.

- *Most of the artists presentations I attended were well planned. I'd have wished some more references and connections to previous similar actions or theories though. Some of the presentations seemed to lack the science part, I don't know whether or not it was the purpose, but I thought this was mainly an academic seminar and sometimes it didn't feel like it. Thank you for this!*
- *I found the online format of presenting on zoom extremely difficult as I was unable to see anyone once my PowerPoint started so I also wasn't aware my internet connection was failing. I am also not sure that my presentation was aligned with what the conference was about which I tried to confirm prior to accepting the invite - however, little clarity was offered and in the end, it felt a very specific focus on how to use art as a tool.*
- *This was a stimulating assortment of topics which I greatly enjoyed. My only feedback would be technical, to make sure presenters are fluent with screen sharing presentations in advance, and to set up the zoom so that participants are automatically muted when they join the meeting.*

REFERENCES

Harlan, V. (2004). A Note on the Text. In: V. Harlan (Ed.), What is art? Conversation with Joseph Beuys. Clairview Books.

Kuspit, D. B., Beuys, J., Warhol, A., Malevič, K., Mondrian, P., Duchamp, M., & Picasso, P. (1993). The cult of the avant-garde artist (pp. 98-99). Cambridge University Press.

Sacks, S. (2004). Forward. In: V. Harlan (Ed.), What is art? Conversation with Joseph Beuys. Clairview Books.

Thistlewood, D. (Ed.). (1995). Joseph Beuys: diverging critiques. Liverpool University Press.