2 Culture and Safety in Africa

2.1 Mobile Access to Knowledge: Culture and Safety in Africa. Documenting and assessing the impact of cultural events and public art on urban safety

di Iolanda Pensa and Davide Fornari

In a video clip, Sadrake - a Cameroonian musician - spreads his arms and invites us to Douala: “the economic capital”, he blesses it with a malicious smile. “The economic capital of Cameroon”, Douala, a city of almost 2.5 million inhabitants, is almost pierced by the equator line in the armpit of Africa. “The city centre of Douala doesn’t look like the centre of an economic capital” – admits the urban planner Olivier Priso during a presentation of the newest Douala urban plan (the most recent urban plan dated 1958). But the real question is what should the centre of an economic capital look like in a place where 3 out 4 people have an informal job, unemployment reaches 20%, there are no infrastructures, green areas, sidewalks, public transport, and where over 70% of streets are in bad conditions, 80% of the houses do not have electricity, and bandits (“bandits” is the word used) terrify the neighbourhoods without interference from the police.

Disfigured: this is the word used to describe Douala in the name of the conference of the SUD Salon Urbain de Douala 2013, a public art festival promoted by doual’art every three years to present the works created in the city. Disfigured is also the word used to describe Douala in the speech given during the official opening of the event by this small non-profit organisation which has achieved the production in twenty years of over 30 public artworks in 12 city areas. In the presence of the Government Delegate appointed by a presidential decree (the person we would call mayor if he was elected), the public administrators, the traditional chiefs, consuls, sponsors, donors, artists and curators, the president of doual’art Marilyn Douala Bell, with princely

1 Sadrake (Negrissim), On se connaît a Douala, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8z-ZkOLk4yxc.
2 Olivier Priso, Ars&Urbis Conference, SUD Salon Urbain de Douala, December 2013
grace, describes the context in which her organization works: Douala is a city disfigured and devastated by economic interests which ignore and violate the city itself and its inhabitants; doual’art aims at producing a metamorphosis of the space «to transform the way the inhabitants consider themselves and how they project their image in the city and in the world». Cultural events and public art are the way doual’art contributes to the transformation of its disfigured city.

The role of the arts in extreme contexts

In an extreme context dominated by poverty, abandon, resignation, crime and violence such as Douala, cultural events and public art can be a vision: they can open a space for research, experimentation and freedom which boosts the way people see themselves and take control of their lives. The arts can deliberately choose a different way, independent from the economic interests which aspire to shape a city into the rhetoric of an “economic capital”.

The capacity of the arts to contribute to the urban transformation has being highlighted in a series of studies. The creative sector can drive the development of new neighbourhoods and enhance the real estate value (with the so-called effect of gentrification); events generate indirect income and trigger tourism; the broken window theory highlights the role of design in influencing behaviours (Wilson, Kelling 1982). Those studies have being focusing mainly on European and US cities: what about other contexts? What can the production of cultural events and public art teach in cities such as Douala, Luanda and Johannesburg? What is its role and impact?

Douala, Luanda and Johannesburg are three “economic capitals”. While their economic development is at the core of their political interests and strategies, these three cities have been at the centre of a unique production of cultural events and public art. In the case of Douala, the independent non-profit art organization doual’art has played a leading role since 1991; in Luanda, the Trienal de Luanda was established in 2006 as a cultural event, but also as a visionary urban artwork by Fernando Alvim; in Johannesburg art has become part of the regeneration plan of the Johannesburg Development Agency.

The meaning of safety and security

Sadly, those three cities remain disfigured. Side by side with gated neighbourhoods, urban and regeneration plans, poverty, abandon, resignation, crime and violence characterise the life of the majority of their inhabitants.
We are talking about a population who can describe in details the paths they take – or they don’t take – everyday to go from one place to another, the places they do not go to and at what time. Their life is determined by the precautions they follow to protect their clothes, food and belongings, and by the awareness of the permanent risk of losing everything during floods and evictions. They can name their relatives and friends who died in car accidents, from illness and who have being victims of robberies and aggressions. They invoke the presence of the police, but they do not necessarily denounce crimes. Their voice and silence is a dance between what they can say, what they can say if they remain anonymous, and what they need to protect behind a shadowy curtain. Their memory and the memory of their close ones marks their mental map; layers of institutionalised violence perpetrated by protesters, police and the military force occupy what we would call the public space: streets and squares have been battlefields, places of high risks and had curfews.

In these contexts the word “safe” means something people can relate very clearly with. It might be difficult to agree on a theoretical definition of it, but the term ‘safety’ clearly implies an interest for the well-being of people and urban inhabitants, differently from a focus on economic interests and in building “economic capitals”. For the purpose of achieving a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers (the Millennium Development Goal 7d), safety – described as livability, civil cohabitation and social cohesion and not as repressive military control – plays a key role.

**The impact of cultural events and public art on urban safety**

In the context of Douala, Luanda and Johannesburg, exploring the impact of cultural events and public art means dealing with extreme contexts and observing the actual ability of the arts to produce a metamorphosis of the space «to transform the way the inhabitants consider themselves and how they project their image in the city and in the world».

Focusing on the impact of cultural events and public art on safety in Douala, Luanda and Johannesburg means documenting a massive production of cultural events and public art which is still poorly acknowledged at an international level, and it also means highlighting the perception of the inhabitants and how sites and behaviours change after those productions. It means focusing on the role played by the arts in improving the lives of people, and to observe a side effect which is not an objective or an expected result of any of those productions.

Exploring the role and impact of cultural events and public art on urban
safety in African cities means to contribute with a different methodology to the research in the field of visual arts, design and architecture (Ixia 2009), and – in line with the Millennium goals – it means to acknowledge the potential role of the arts in the improvement of safety and the lives of people.

**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 2011 and 2014 with literature reviews, field research, and visual representations and analysis to collect and 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 those three cities involved in collaboratively designing the research methodology.

The research focused on cultural events and public art produced between 1991 and 2013 in Douala (Cameroon), Luanda (Angola) and Johannesburg (South Africa) and it addressed the question: “How do cultural events and public art affect urban safety in African cities?” and “Can we assess these changes as positive according to a number of factors?” These questions rely on the hypothesis that 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.

Due to its applied nature (which characterises research at SUPSI, the institution leading the project), the aim of “Mobile Access to Knowledge: Culture and Safety in Africa” was not solely to contribute to scholarly research, 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 the Millennium Development Goals. 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 re-

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sults of cultural productions, and it should not be. The arts need to be a space of experimentation and research; analysing 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 we would not have art.

After having defined the methodology, the research team produced a series of panoramic reports on the city and country, and a series of specific reports on public artworks. Marta Pucciarelli in collaboration with doual’art mapped all the interventions in the public sphere in Douala and provided pre and post assessments of the situation in the two neighbourhoods of Bessengué and New Bell that are the centre of cultural events and public art produced not only by doual’art and the SUD Salon Urbain de Douala, but also by other institutions. She produced qualitative interviews, a survey of 200 people and she set up a mobile phone number to test in Cameroon the applicability of Ushahidi to report and map information online; the test on mobile phones produced limited results and showed the infrastructural limits of the current internet connectivity in Cameroon; we therefore decided not to rely on this tool for the research. Carolina Wanjiku Kihato together with Andy Spitz and in collaboration with the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town mapped state-led public art installations in Johannesburg, and they recorded with interviews and video interviews the opinions of the inhabitants and viewers about the effects of these installations on their perception and behaviour. Fabio Vanin has treated the Luanda Triennial as an urban scale public art installation, according to the statement by the curator Fernando Alvim; the ensemble of shows, exhibitions, and performances was meant since the beginning to be a way to deal with the trauma of a long period of civil war, and to trigger social change. Vanin also mapped the presence of a number of monumental installations secured by military presence: his analysis focuses on the influence of these different typologies of installations on the public space.

All researchers collected data on crime in the cities of Douala, Luanda and Johannesburg. Even when available and accessible, the official data was not precisely geo-referenced, which prevented the observation of a relation to sites of public artworks. The survey and the interviews confirmed that crimes – in particular domestic violence – are not systematically denounced and that the police and the military forces can be themselves perpetrators of crimes. Interviews and images of the sites before and after the installation of public artworks were used to highlight transformations (presence of businesses and informal traders, new buildings, behaviours and use of the space).

The comparative analysis investigated the findings collected in Douala, Luanda and Johannesburg according to the definition of the major safety and security-related threats presented in the 2007 UN-Habitat report Enhancing
Urban Safety and Security\(^4\). The choice of orientating our analysis on this report is due to the applied nature of both our research and this document. The 2007 UN-Habitat report is conceived as a tool to guide and provide the best practices with the pragmatic and specific aim of Enhancing Urban Safety and Security, considered a priority for governments and the international community. Focusing our comparative analysis on this document was conceived as a way to contribute to a larger discussion and to facilitate the application of our results. The 2007 UN-Habitat report has also the advantage of referring specifically to urban safety and security and to taking into consideration a broad spectrum of threats and factors related to crime and violence, tenure insecurity and forced eviction, and natural and human-made disasters. The comparative analysis put in relation the findings of our qualitative interviews and case studies with the safety and security-related threats and factors.

**Land determines the impact of cultural events and public art on urban safety**

From a comparative perspective, the research has highlighted that land ownership and negotiation determines the impact of cultural events and public art on urban safety. The process of producing cultural events and public art can support community building, it can reinforce sense of ownership, it can trigger individual and group actions in maintaining and improving a shared space and it can produce the restoration and repurposing of sites. At the same time the production of cultural events and public art can lead to forced evictions, vandalism and conflicts. The process and who is involved in the process is a direct consequence of land negotiation. Differently from other land occupations which follow established practices, the arts can displace them: the decision making process is not necessary consolidated and new people can join the discussion. The existence or not of established processes, who owns the land and the choice of occupying the land in an authorised or unauthorised way will have consequences on who is involved, how people perceive the work and its ownership, and the way cultural events and public art will trigger transformations.

In informal settlements the complexity of land management makes land negotiation a necessity. The planning and implementation of cultural events and public art can produce research, gatherings and discussions. Art can intervene with a large margin of freedom in contexts characterised by abandon,
resignation and sclerotised power dynamics. The complex issue of land ownership is at the same time an obstacle and a chance to generate consensus: the owner needs to be identified or a proper location needs to be selected. The positive effect of this negotiation on urban safety appears in the establishment of groups taking leadership in defending and maintaining the artwork and its site, in the emerging of new behaviours and in the creation of shared spaces.

The production of a public artwork in a roundabout, public square or park is occupation of a government land. If the work is produced by the government no negotiation is required; if the work is produced by someone else, there is a negotiation with the government or an unauthorised use of the government land. The productions of public art by the Johannesburg Development Agency is a government lead production on government land. Except for specific community projects, the negotiation process does not involve inhabitants and the artists come up at the end of a regeneration plan. The production of an artwork without authorisation can represent, within an established process, a gesture of self-ownership capable of triggering a community around it. A monumental artwork in a roundabout or a public square will be perceived as an institutional statement regardless of who produced it and it tends to generate conflicts and debates in the local press in particular. Interviews in informal settlements have highlighted the need to feel the presence of the State and the police, a presence that is invoked as sign of safety and security.

The urban, national and international scale of the curatorial work of Fernando Alvim for the Luanda Triennale in Angola implied negotiations with building owners, sponsors, and the public administration; land negotiation was necessary to intervene in restoring, repurposing and using specific buildings; as promoter of the exhibition Check List Luanda Pop land negotiation was also necessary to secure a space at the Venice Biennale.

At the moment, the emphasis on the role of cultural events and public art in contributing to urban transformations, development and community-building focuses on the process (Abdoumalik 2003, Rao and Walton 2004, Pieterse 2008, Stuppes 2011)\(^5\). The comparative nature of this research 5 and the observation of the impact of cultural events and public art in Douala, Luanda and Johannesburg highlight the determinant role played by land ownership and negotiation in orientation processes and their fall-outs.

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\(^5\) The process is also highlighted in the practices promoted by Les Nouveaux Commanditaires http://www.nouveauxcommanditaires.eu and in the emphasis on the role of the arts in social change and development stressed by Arts Collaboratory http://www.artscollaboratory.org and the Prince Claus Fund http://www.princeclausfund.org.
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2.2 Culture and safety in Douala: The cases of New Bell and Bessengue

di Marta Pucciarelli

Douala is a chaotic metropolis of Sub-Saharan Africa, facing the Atlantic Ocean, populated by three million people. It is the most developed and economically successful city in Cameroon, in continuous horizontal expansion, officially divided in six administrative districts for a total of 118 neighbourhoods. With the exception of a few prestigious neighbourhoods\(^6\), Douala is characterised by a lack of public services (like regular electricity, access to water, sewers, and paved roads), the presence of informal settlements, widespread poverty and diffused unemployment (Loe & Meutchéhé Ngomsi, 2004). This situation generates a complex urban landscape, in which, in the last twenty years, a new contemporary cultural sector has flourished, making the city a stage of art festivals, workshops, trainings, as well as ephemeral and permanent art installations addressed to the local public (Babina & Bell, 2008; Diwota-Kotto & Manga, 2011; ICU, 2012).

According to Marilyn Douala Bell\(^7\), president of doual’art, a local contemporary art centre working and funding public art into the city, permanent art installations can be classified as follows:

1. Monumental installations: large scale sculptures generally positioned in high traffic areas.
2. Passageways artworks: murals and small scale sculptures positioned along the roads of poor neighbourhoods.
3. Proximity artworks: architectural installations with very specific functions located close to living spaces of marginalised neighbourhoods.

Based on this classification, an ethnographic study has been conducted from December 2012 to January 2013 with the aim of exploring the impact of permanent art installations on safety and security. The research has been circumscribed to New Bell and Bessengue, two popular and central neighbourhoods of the city hosting the three types of public art. In New Bell\(^8\),

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\(^6\) With prestigious neighbourhoods I’m referring to the ones located at the coastal side of the city, in particular Bonanjo, Bonapriso, Bali, Akwa, and to the new residential area located at north east of the city, including Bonamoussadi, Kotto, Makepe and Logpom.

\(^7\) Personal conversation with Marilyn Douala Bell, president of doual’art, 08/01/2013.

\(^8\) Formally the city is divided in six administrative districts or arrondissements, each one hosting different neighbourhoods. New Bell is the arrondissement of Douala II to which belong 32 neighbourhoods, including New Bell-Ngangue. Bessengue, on the other hand, is a neighbourhood belonging to the arrondissement Douala I (which major headquarter is based
the study has been concentrated in two areas: 1) around the monumental Colonne Pascal (Fig. 1) of Pascal Marthine Tayou (2010), a twelve meter installation made of enamel pots superimposed in the heart of the very busy roundabout Shell New Bell; and 2) in the Ngangue neighbourhood, hosting Les Mots Écrits de New Bell (Fig.2) of Hervé Yamguen (2010), a series of five mural installations. In Bessengue, the investigation focused on the impact of two proximity artworks: 1) the Borne-Fontaine of Bessengue (Fig. 3) of Danielle Diwouta-Kotto (2003), a fountain kiosk built around a frame structure and steel beams covered with an inverted sloping roof which recalls the shape of a butterfly wings; and (2) La Passerelle de Bessengue, (Fig. 4) a wooden bridge with iron handrails representing people of different ethnic groups holding hands, designed by the artist Alioum Moussa (2005).

New Bell

New Bell is the typical kwatt of Douala, where «you’re going to walk and fall down in the mud, you’re going to cross dirty rivulets to go in the sub district, you’re going to enter people’s homes to get to yours» ⁹. It is just one kilometre away from the administrative and commercial centre of the city but, unlike those areas, since the independence it has been massively and spontaneously occupied by the immigrant population that moved to Douala in search of work (Schler, 2008). From a safety perspective, New Bell is marked by a seriously unhealthy environment stemming from the lack of sewers, garbage collection and the regular provision of running water. At the same time, the scarcity of public enlightenment, and the diffused poverty and unemployment often drive people to commit thefts and aggressions, giving the district a very dangerous reputation (Loe & Meutcheché Ngomsi, 2004). This negative image seems to be often exaggerated and stereotyped by two main factors: firstly, by its long history of immigration and welcoming attitude toward foreign immigrants, in particular the Nigerian, Malian and Ivory Coast communities (Njoh, 2007); and secondly, by hosting the city jail with the consequent popular fear that criminals could escape and hide in the district (Loe, Meutcheché Ngomsi, & Nken Hibock, 2007). As a response to this bad reputation, inhabitants have strengthen their sense of belonging to New Bell, which allows them to feel unique and truly distinct from all

in Bonanjo).
⁹ Personal conversation with Junior Ndalle, journalist living and working in Douala (19/12/2012).
others dwellers of Douala, in their way of being, of moving, of talking, and enjoying life. Their relationship with cultural activities and public artworks usually depends on their level of involvement in the process of production and the choice of location of the installation.

**Monumental installations: the case of La Colonne Pascal**

Monumental installations in Douala are the most criticised and controversial types of public artworks. The high visibility of these installations, generally located at the intersection of busy roundabouts or crossroads, calls into questions judgments and opinions of several local actors, including inhabitants, media and public authorities (Malaquais, 2006). The materialisation and magnification of a singular piece of reality chosen and represented by a unique artist makes inhabitants feel excluded from a discussion that mainly concerns them (or their lands). During the process of production, indeed, the negotiation regarding the artwork happens between the funding agency (doual’art) and the artists, without including the local community’s voices in the artwork conceptualization and development. From the inhabitant’s point of view, this direct flux of decision-making can be perceived as imposed, and often it becomes an occasion to raise cultural and historical disputes as a response to popular discontent and negative attitudes toward the installation.

On the other hand, the presence of monuments attracts local media, which contributes to the improvement of the place’s image, to the discussion about aesthetical changes into the districts, and to the generation of new visual landmarks at the urban level. Finally, the sites of the monuments also receive significant attention from public authorities, in terms of investment and service provisions. The case of the Colonne Pascal is representative of this public response. There are two main criticisms raised by inhabitants who do not appreciate the installation (36%). The first one, strongly supported by the traditional chief of the neighbourhood, accuses the installation of disrespecting the memory of the place: «this (the Colonne Pascal) does not reflect the history of the area. We should build a monument to present to our children as well as our grandchildren»10. The reasons can be related to the riots of May 1955, preceding the independence of Cameroon, during which around one thousand people died (as recalled by Avenue de l’Indépendance, the main road crossing the square). A second criticism moved by inhabitants on the Colonne Pascal considers the installation «the evidence that New Bell’s
inhabitants have a hungry belly»¹¹. This interpretation is generally associated with a refusal to be identified as poor. At the same time, more than half of the population declares to appreciate the installation, attributing to it a sense of requalification of the public space (20%), of modernity (12%), or even without understanding its meaning (30%). Despite this divergence in public opinion almost everyone (96%) perceives Shell New Bell as a safe landmark to move about, but also a safe place to go on dates, meet friends, have lunch or enjoy a beer. The number of informal markets offering bakery products and take away foods has exponentially increased.

Concerning security and criminal issues, 84% of the interviewees report that aggressions are diminished, thanks to a recent established self-defence group and the mutual surveillance of informal traders. Despite those declarations, a significant number of people (64%) suggest that during the night and the first hours of the morning, when the place is empty, their perceived level of security strongly decreases. Based on locals’ statements, the reputation of the area has improved, and tourists have increased as well, even if their presence is not regular. This can be related to the resounding media attention given to the Colonne Pascal by newspapers, newscasts, and TV series for representing the entire district.

This improvement in reputation has also fostered public authorities to take some measures to fight the disorder: first of all, bins have been located on the sides of the roundabout and the state-controlled company whose service is to collect garbage (HYSACAM) passes by there every morning. Secondly, the police have increased the frequency of patrols accessing the area, even if interviewees demand regularity and efficiency in their interventions.

Finally, just in front of the Colonne Pascal, the Urban Community of Douala has funded and created (in the same year of the Tayou’s installation) a small green area furnished with some benches and lights, reinforcing the sense of the area as meeting place, and with a white tiled monument that has an eagle at the top of it (Fig.5).

**Passageways installation: the case of Les Mots Écrits de New Bell**

The impact of artworks positioned in passageways is completely different from monumental installations, and it certainly is more absorbed in the ordinary life of the inhabitants. In New Bell Ngangue, people are pleased to host public art and their presence is totally (100%) accepted, appreciated and investigated. A widespread enthusiasm towards the installations emerg-

es from interviews and questionnaires, and it seems to be strictly related to the people’s feeling of inclusion and participation in the art production process. This may depend on the fact that the artist Hervé Yamguen is living and working into the neighbourhood and he is widely known and respected by the community. For the Mots Écrits de New Bell, he directly involved three local rappers in the record production of songs, from which Yamguen has extrapolated the sentences that nowadays appear on the walls around the neighbourhood. Additionally, during all the production process, dwellers were introduced to the project through performances, ephemeral events, and meetings, creating unusual opportunities for debate on artistic and social issues. When it came to decide the location of the installations, the inhabitants decided to offer the use of the facades of their houses (or their commercial activities) for hosting public art installations, so much so that the inhabitants’ offers surpassed the demand of locations by the artist.

After two years of production, Ngangue’s dwellers report that public art has an educative role in society and it contributes to make «the neighbourhood shine»12. The sentences of Mots Écrits de New Bell reveal concerns and expectations of New Bell’s young generation, and they are interpreted as «another vision of our realities as a shout of alarm»13. They foster people’s pride toward their neighbourhood, contributing to improve its image within the city, by publically showing «the originality of a district judged as wild»14, and opening new possibilities toward modernity, progress, and renaissance of public spaces. At the same time, as declared by a schoolteacher, public art «awakes. It awakens great people as it awakens children. Pupils also took leaves into classrooms. They made drawings. Actually, it was like a competition»15. Aside from the imitation of children, within the neighbourhood it is possible to notice that the facades of some houses reproduce drawings similar to the wall of Hervé Yamguen’s house. At the individual level, the presence of art installations has stimulated inhabitants to take care of their private and public surroundings. Evidence of this includes the introduction of plants and flowers outside informal settlements located around the installations, as well as signs forbidding people to throw garbage on the ground. The owner of “La joie de Njongmabi”, the bar hosting the blue neon, stated his intention to renew the facade of his bar every year. In 2010, he accepted to pay for electricity himself, in order to ensure the visibility of the artwork. After two years he had improved and enlarged the surface of his bar, by tiling the floor

12 Quotation reported from the survey conducted in New Bell Ngangue on 17 January 2013.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Personal conversation with teacher David from the CBC Babylon school (11/12/2012).
and changing old wooden tables with plastic ones, more practical to move and to clean. Compared to other clubs of the neighbourhoods, the Joie de Njongmabi is now considered a safe landmark for the young and women as well, even at the night, when in Ngangue the security level is not guaranteed.

Another significant example regards the murals of the CBC Babylon School, which have generated an astonishing impact in terms of reputation, providing the institution with an image of cleanliness, modernity and seriousness. In less than three years, the number of students enrolled has increased from 57 to 400; ten more teachers have been employed; a new block have been built; and the pedagogical offer has been extended, offering a bilingual curriculum. The school is now visited by tourists, who access it to take photos and ask for information, but also by locals coming from the near sub-districts, who are attracted by curiosity and desire to enrol their children.

Despite those artworks formally belonging to the local authority, i.e. the Urban Community of Douala (CUD), the public intervention on this neighbourhood until now has been limited to the introduction of a few bins along the main paved road of the neighbourhood, and their collection is not always regular. Two cultural and security issues still remain open. The first one regards the maintenance of artworks and wall paintings that after few years require restoration. In particular there are two of the Mots Écrits de New Bell that have been seriously damaged by water, in one case, and by vandals in the other. The second one concerns the implementation of security measures to respond local community requests. Indeed, since September 2012, Ngangue’s dwellers driven by the artist Hervé Yamguen, have started a petition against public disorder, aggressions, violence and prostitution which perpetuate around two main bars of the neighbourhood: the “Prolongation” and the “Exclusive Dream”. They have hanged banners along the neighbourhood to intimidate bandits, stating that entering would put their lives in danger. As of December 2013, the inhabitants’ demands of support to the CUD has not yet been considered.

**Bessengue**

Bessengue is a small and overcrowded stretch of informal settlements, enclosed in a wedged valley between two waterways, the Mbopí and Nguétét rivers, and two main streets, the Boulevard de la République and the Boulevard de l’Unité. This position is particularly disadvantaged during rainy seasons when regular floods increase the risk of the neighbourhood of remaining obstructed by its borders (The World Bank, 2010). Two main ethnic groups populate Bessengue: the Bamoun, emigrated from the north-west of
Cameroon, and the native Duala. Up until now, the Bamoun and the Duala have been struggling to live peacefully, due to historical reasons related to the urbanisation process of the area. The current disputes between the two ethnic groups depend on the fact that the native Duala accuse the Bamoun to have denigrated their lands, making them unhealthy and impacting the welfare of other people.

**Proximity artworks:**
*the cases of La Passerelle and La Borne-Fontaine de Bessengue*

Bessengue is the first district in which proximity artworks have been produced. Since 2003 the process of art production of this type of installation has been refined and improved, involving also foreign artists in residence programs to directly negotiate with the community their public art concepts.

However, in the specific case of Bessengue, the process have been slightly different: after a long negotiation between doual’art and the community, the concepts of the Passerelle and the Borne-Fontaine were defined, and local communities selected the prototypes which better represented their ideals. This strong commitment of the inhabitants has been used to generate art installations that embedded very specific utilitarian features.

After ten years of the Passerelle and the Borne-Fontaine production, only 12% of the population recognises these installations as artworks. When inhabitants demanded to know their meaning, three main words came out: aid, development and utility – in accessing water and facilitating the circulation of people and vehicles. People’s feelings of social exclusion have strongly decreased: they explicitly affirm that the Passerelle and the Borne-Fontaine are the demonstration that someone has finally noticed (and improved) their previously austere situation. Almost all interviewees (98%), indeed, are proud of those installations, also because they can now «be protected from cholera»\(^{16}\) and «live in a more pleasant, coloured environment»\(^{17}\). Two individuals, talking about the bridge, have indicated that the handrails produced by Alioum Moussa signify the peaceful collaboration between the Bamoun and the Douala ethnic groups.

The process of production of the Borne-Fontaine and La Passerelle has generated advantages not only in terms of facilities, but also of social cohesion and responsibility. After an initial involvement in the definition of the

\(^{16}\) Quotation reported from the survey conducted in Bessengue on 16 January 2013.

\(^{17}\) *Ibid.*
Borne-Fontaine, members of different ethnic groups living into the neighbourhood decided to establish a Development Committee (Communauté de Développement de Bessengué-Akwa, CDBA), asking doual’art to be trained on development project management. The work of the CDBA is completely voluntary and its function is to organise regular meetings to discuss district improvements. The active engagement of the CDBA has attracted international funds, making the Bessengué a pilot district for development projects supported by the World Bank (UN-HABITAT, 2011). Without CDBA’s presence and actions in improving Bessengué, the participatory strategy of funding agencies would not be possible.

After the implementation of the Borne-Fontaine and La Passerelle, two additional water pumps have been installed in the second and third block of the Bessengué. The lanes of the valley have been paved, and a wide strip has been created along the Mbopi River, allowing ambulance and firemen to access the district in case of emergency. As declared by Ndoumbe Ebenezer, the president of the CDBA, «before the bridge and before all the pedestrian passageways, it was a landlocked area. That is to say, it was not possible to get around the neighbourhood, and people did not have access to the area. And even for the disposal of refuse, bringing them on the road where now you can see the bins, it was not possible. And even taxi cabs couldn’t enter the area in case of an emergency such as illness during the night. And even when there were fires - as we have recently had a fire here- the cars of the firefighters had no access to the area in order to extinguish the fire».18

At the same time the CDBA has also demanded and obtained a certain support from the Urban Community of Douala, in order to drain the bed of the Mbopi River, taking away the plastic garbage, to help the soil absorb raining waters. This operation has now been guaranteed every two years, allowing the prevention and reduction of flooding and man-made disasters. Moreover, just out of the district, two bins have been placed to collect waste material. The agency in charge of this service, HYSACAM, passes every day to empty them. These actions have also induced local communities to take care of their surrounding environment by sweeping the street outside their houses and engaging adolescents in cleaning activities, such as pulling weeds and collecting dirt.

Finally, the creation of the Passerelle has disclosed the neighbourhood to the commercial district of Akwa, and opened a new squared area between the Passerelle and the Borne-Fontaine. This square has become a safe landmark for children’s open-air games, while women meet there to chat around the

18 Personal with Ndoumbe Ebenezer, President Communauté Developpement Bessengué-Akwa (14/12/2102).
fountain or do some shopping. In this area new informal business activities have sprouted, and existing businesses improved their commercial activities, including coffee shops, hair salons, tailoring shops, boutiques (12%), call boxes, restaurants and bakery vendors, counter sales of fruits and vegetables, and informal pharmacies.

**Conclusion**

This chapter describes the impact of monuments, passageways and proximity artworks of Douala on urban safety and security. It can be argued that public art generates positive effects on the urban landscape and actions of the local community. The impact of public art generally depends on the types of installation and the negotiation processes between the funding agency, artists and local communities. In some cases, the influence of public art on safety and security is more direct, while in other cases it happens more at an individual level rather than a collective one.

Finally, it is important to note that it is not the mere presence of public artworks that generate safety and security, but the quality of the production process, the intellectual value of the artwork, and the engagement of local communities, that in Douala triggers social reactions and civic responsibilities of citizens and public authorities.
References


1. La Colonne Pascal, by Pascal Marthine Tayou, 2010
2. Monument de l’aigle, CUD, 2010
3. Les Mots Écrits de New Bell, by Hervé Yamguen, 2010
4. La Passerelle de Bessengue (A. Moussa, 2005)
2.3 Physical and ephemeral devices for urban security: the case of Luanda

di Fabio Vanin

The Manifesto of Aubervilliers and Saint-Denis adopted during the international conference “Security, Democracy and Cities: the Future of Prevention” (2012) by the European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS) points out how «social prevention policies are especially effective in terms of the fight against violence and crime» and that «prevention is less expensive than other policies, both in terms of costs for our economy and for our society» (2012:3).

Despite the focus on European cities, the document traces a direct connection between public spaces - defined as spaces shared by diverse population groups that «embody social cohesion and symbolise the relationship between citizens and their city» in which the safety of all must be ensured - the way they are designed and the role that art and culture play in enhancing urban security.

Moreover, public spaces are acknowledged as “spaces for mediation”, where the needs of citizens, residents and users must be taken in account in the design and where art and culture can be strong elements in preventing isolation and social fragmentation and in fostering new social practices towards a “peaceful coexistence”.

The recognition of the importance of those aspects and their relation in preventing urban crime provides a significant vision that might be reasonably extended beyond the European borders. Additionally, the Manifesto indirectly highlights how much the link between space and practices is fundamental and how urban forms cannot be detached from social and cultural meanings, which have the ability to play a key role in reaching adequate levels of urban safety and security.

City form and security

Today Luanda can somehow be described as a prototypical African city – it might be better to say post-colonial – composed of three different parts, each of which corresponds to three distinct urban forms that are representative of a diffuse grammar of the built space recognisable in similar contexts. The city centre, the bairros (“neighbourhoods”) and the southern area (Luanda Sul and Belas) are in fact expressions of Luanda’s urban history, but they also lay out patterns of socio-economic differences and ways of living that are mirrored by architectural forms, spatial blueprints and physical traces of daily uses.
Even looking at Luanda from above, one can easily recognise the aforementioned divisions that make up the landscape of the city: besides the topography, there are clear fractures and formal differences between the former colonial centre of Luanda, the southern gated neighbourhoods and the precarious conditions of the peri-urban bairros surrounding the city – called Musseques until recently – that are the so-called “spontaneous” settlements where people from the outlying areas, migrants from all over the country that make up most of the population, live. They have been entry points for families and individuals who migrated from war-torn areas of Angola. As Marissa Moorman (2008) states: «The musseques, while on the physical periphery of the ever-growing city, have always been at the centre of urban discourse and life» (fig 1).

Understanding and recognising those formal differences is important not only for a correct reading of the city but also because of the direct relation that exists between urban spaces, the perceived and real security and the production of cultural events and artworks specifically.

Coming from over thirty years of civil war and ten years of conflicts for independence, the city appears as the result of experienced unprecedented violence. Political chaos has caused a perceived fragmentation that can also be traced in the physical condition of the city as divides have been politicised and militarised since the years after independence in Angola and its capital.

Luanda has just recently - after the ceasefire in 2002 - started to re-establish planning rules and a sort of urban design, including the provision of basic facilities, although with significant contradictions related to spatial and class differences.

New developments and buildings, that concentrate in wealthier areas (centre and south) do not go hand in hand with the provision of diffused public services – water and electricity – but on the contrary, new projects, mostly designed by foreign firms, are often costly and non-sustainable constructions with independent water and electricity supply and with no relation to the rest of the city. The “gated community” models together with Dubai-like aesthetics are the driving paradigms behind most of new constructions (fig 2).

Looking at Luanda’s urban spaces, security issues emerge in different ways. In the last Decade, the city centre, which corresponds in general terms to the former colonial city and grew until the early 70s, according to various planning interventions, has been extensively modified through demolitions and new constructions. This process has caused a rapid change of the socio-economical geography of the downtown area where weaker groups have been forced to move away without planned alternatives. Moreover, mapping the number of military departments, institutions, private housing and facili-
ties, barracks etc. just in the centre of Luanda, one can easily realise that the city is constellated and largely occupied by militarised areas. The presence of different military forces that circulate in Luanda, some of which survey sensitive spots, is very high. Additionally, traffic police stand in small groups at almost every major crossing in Luanda and private guards companies patrol the front of bank offices, malls and other facilities. The result is that on the one hand the centre can be perceived as secure thanks to the presence of patrolling forces, on the other hand the large distance between the population and the decisional power that modifies the city produces a general sense of insecurity. Another interpretation of security standards is given by the blueprints of Luanda Sul and Belas. Planned in the 50s as new residential areas in the city outskirts, the neighbourhoods appear today as a sum of gated communities with no open public spaces, enclosed malls, facilities and services, organised according to a mash of roads where it is difficult to navigate and even walk. Large non-linear roads are surrounded by high walls and defensive systems are strengthen by cameras and electrified wires, seen as efficient devices against crime by the high and middle class of Luanda living there (fig 3).

The bairros, which represent the other face of Luanda, due to the precarious constructive and living conditions, are generally perceived from the outside as dangerous places. For that reason, inequalities are strengthen not only by physical separation but also by the perception of insecurity (fig 4). Forced evictions, military control, lack of information and basic infrastructure (water, electricity, a sewage system), social recognition (no census) keep the population of the bairros under a constant state of insecurity. Moreover, these dense settlements are a true challenge for the State as they are nearly impossible to govern and they are seen as impossible to upgrade. In fact, little effort is registered in trying to improve the living conditions in these parts of the city.

**The role of artworks**

Understanding the impact of public artworks in Luanda on urban safety and security is challenging, due to problems related to both recognition and accessibility. Luanda is a city with (apparently) a very limited presence of permanent artworks.

Most of the public permanent artworks visible in the city are monuments and murals, both dating back to the colonial times or realised in more recent years. Many pedestals of colonial statues, with their ancient presence, can be found in important public spaces or have been replaced by monuments
celebrating the independent Angola. Almost no contemporary artwork can be found. The most renown contemporary sculpture is called *Mitologias* (“Mythologies”, 1986) by the artist Antonio Ole (fig. 5), placed in the *Marginal*, the wide public space that faces the bay of Luanda. Despite its prominent position, according to the author (Ole 2013), it never played a significant role in that space, both from the viewpoint of the usage of the surrounding space and in terms of safety and security.

Other minor examples can be found in private, enclosed areas, next to hotels or in front of gated public buildings and they contribute, weakly, to the beautification of those spaces rather than bringing an important message or having a strong presence in relation to the surroundings.

Besides that, well known monuments celebrating the political power (MPLA) or important political figures from the Angolan history are in considerable number and they represent a specific case for the relation between artworks production, public space and security. The monument of Agostinho Neto in Largo da Independencia is a good example of this. The statue of the father of independent Angola, commissioned to a North Korean firm, represents Agostinho Neto on top of a tall pedestal at the centre of a large roundabout. If one compares the colonial monuments that have been removed after the independence to the new ones – this one, the *Monumento as Heroínas* and others – the similarity is tangible. The way they work in public spaces as well as their use is in fact very similar to the previous Portuguese ones. The difference lies in the way they are controlled, since some of them, including Largo da Independencia, are considered sensitive military spots that are therefore patrolled by the police and not freely accessible. As it happens in the centre of Luanda, security is guaranteed, but at the same time the control on space is pervasive.

*From physical to ephemeral*

We could argue that, for a variety of reasons, artworks in public spaces do not play a significant role in Luanda. For the Angolan capital it is therefore necessary and particularly fruitful to expand the definition of artwork to a wider range of pieces and objects that embed similar meanings. Landmarks, buildings, ephemeral events, artworks and movable objects constitute in fact important examples with deep cultural meanings and tangible influences regarding the perception of security and the use of public spaces.

For example, landmarks play a key role both in moving in the city and in the identity and memory of its inhabitants. Street names are generally substituted by an orientation system based on visual references. Urban landmarks
like the BPC tower (fig 7), the Teatro Elinga or the Mausoleo Agostinho Neto embed historical and artistic values as well as cultural ones. But new constructions do not seem to reflect Angolan identity and today massive demolitions occur, threatening the actual heritage stock and generating a physical and mental sense of insecurity. Luanda, as other “new” African cities, well reflects the dichotomy between superimposed, external patterns and local use. Moreover, the rapid and drastic urban transformations highlight the ambiguous relation of the government with its patrimony and its recent and ancient history. Demolitions of historical buildings (like the one of the Kinxixi market by Vasco Vieira da Costa) and the removal of the label “architectural heritage of the city of Luanda” from some protected buildings can be considered attempts to transform the capital into a distorted future dream.

On a more ephemeral level, the two photo series made by the Angolan artist Kiluanj Kia Henda called **Redefining The Power – 75 (2013)** (fig 8) and **Homem Sô (“Lonely man”**, (2011-2012) exhibited at Art Basel in 2012, are interesting examples of artworks that play a role between physical and mental spaces (Njami 2012). The first set of photos represent lively sculptures on existing pedestals of former colonial monuments in the squares of Luanda while the second one shows the dismantled statues next to tanks and cannons inside Luanda’s fortress. The images are internationally recognised and discussed by a large audience that crosses the national borders. The fact of representing urban spaces of Luanda transcends the limits of the city and constructs an immaterial, “mental space” where the meanings of art in Luanda start to take new forms.

Similarly, but with different intentions, the recent work of the photographer Edson Chagas, who won the Golden Lion for the Angolan Pavilion at the Art Biennale in Venice in 2013, is a set of photos representing “informal monuments” in the streets of Luanda. The echo generated after the award and the refined images of everyday objects found in the streets of Luanda and repositioned against different walls, revealed Luanda to the international public and to the art world contributing in shaping mental spaces, not only the ones of those who have never been in Angola, but especially the ones of Angolans (Njami 2012; Alvim 2013).

**Cultural events**

Today, cultural events and ephemeral artworks in Luanda have perhaps the most relevant impact on the city. The **Trienal de Luanda**, the complex triennial event that was set up in 2003 by the artist-curator Fernando Alvim, is surely the most important and famous Angolan cultural event worldwide
(fig 9). However, besides that, there is a number of other institutional and independent art and cultural centres that constitute an interesting constellation in the capital. Their production often show how the cultural and art scene is lively in Luanda: universities (Lusiada, Agostinho Neto), foreign cultural centres (the Goethe Institut, the Alliance Française, the Portuguese Embassy), private foundations and associations (Teatro Elinga, CELAMAR, Fundação Arte e Cultura), public ones (Associação Cultural Cha de Caxinde, KALU, CeFoJor – Centro de Formação de Jornalismo) and independent initiatives (E-studio, independent UNAP artists) are able to promote various sorts of events for different audiences.

Understanding the impact that cultural events can have in reshaping the city, especially concerning the relation between spaces and urban security, the Luanda Triennial can be considered in itself the most relevant artwork for the complexity of the intentions, the number of events and the effect it produces. The Triennial is a regular large-scale exhibition organised every three years (in average) in Luanda and it includes exhibitions, temporary outdoor installations, multidisciplinary events and educational programs. Its duration and extension varies according to the edition and each one is anticipated by a number of anteprojectos (preliminary events) that have national and international visibility. As Fernando Alvim argues, the concept of the Triennial is the one of a long term “cultural movement” and not principally an exhibition, with Luanda as its home. In this sense the city is seen as a “laboratory” where Angolans can experience it as citizens, reflecting on the relation with the history of Luanda, their intimate history and the collective one, and the relation with the war (fig 10). «It is not a Triennial in Luanda but the Triennial of Luanda» Alvim states. According to the curator the idea was to unfold Luanda, including its contradictions and highlighting the city’s inconsistency, its limits and hybrid nature, that do not mean a place without identity, but on the contrary a place with many identities together. Reconstructing the cultural identity of the country after three decades of civil war - as addressed in the first Angolan Triennial of Luanda - was the main goal: «what is your geography in a country during the war? It is characterised by the places where you escape. You escape and your emotional state is profoundly altered» (Alvim 2013). Therefore everyone’s “emotional geography” is far more relevant than the physical space and the influence produced on Angolans as well as on a broader audience is the main goal. Accordingly, Simon Njami insists on the importance of the non-physical, immaterial aspects, which are the most important achievements, arguing that the spaces transformed by the Triennial have been in fact just simple containers: «everything was done to build mental spaces» (Njami 2012). The Triennial clearly shows how the relation between security and the city is played first of all on an immaterial
basis. The event is a way to heal from the devastating violence of the civil war and the colonial period and the Triennial is seen as having a sort of cathartic effect on the city and its inhabitants, shifting existing perceptions and memories, overlapping new ones, and projecting the compressed energies in the construction of a future society.

References


1. Luanda Masterplan 1973 with the indication of unhealthy neighbourhoods that highlights the poor urban conditions of the Bairros. Source: IPAD archive, Lisbon.
4. View of Rangel neighbourhood (bairro), 2013 © Latitude Platform.
7. Axonometry of the BPC bank tower, day and night - © Latitude Platform
8. ‘Redefining the Power’ by Kiluanji Kia Henda - © Vincenzo Todaro

10. Outdoors on Angolan literature at the 1st Trienal de Luanda - © Trienal de Luanda.
2.4 Public Art and Safety in Johannesburg

*di Caroline Wanjiku Kihato*

The notion of a relationship between the physical environment and the safety and well-being of its users is not new. From the 1970s various theoretical and behavioural/empirical approaches have explored the nature of this interaction. Today’s approaches draw directly from, amongst others, early incarnations of Ray Jefferey’s concept of “Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design” (CPTED) (Jeffery, 1977) and almost concurrent work by Oscar Newman (Newman, 1973) entitled “Defensible Space – Crime Prevention through Urban Design” through to the 1980s “broken windows” theory of James Wilson and George Kelling (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). Time and research have allowed these approaches to evolve and become more integrated and multi-disciplinary but the endeavour of mediating the environment and thereby enhancing the social experience of it remains core.

These broad theories and frameworks form the backdrop of this article of case studies of public art project in Johannesburg. As part of the broader Mobile A2K Project, the Johannesburg team selected three public art initiatives – the Troyeville Bedtime Stories, Oppenheimer Park and Diepsloot I Love You projects – to explore the relationship between public art and safety. Case selection was based on a number of criterion including: geographic location; whether the funding was public or private, curatorial intent and the nature of community participation. The project aimed at selecting cases that were different in order to explore the link between public art and public safety in varied contexts. The research explored the artwork through two main registers: space and people. Using visual evidence, interviews and participant observation, it looked at the physical and material geography of the artwork and explored people’s behavioural responses to the art.

**Background to the Case studies**

*Troyeville Bedtime Stories*

The Troyeville Bedtime Stories project was privately commissioned by Lesley Perkes, an art commissioner and long time resident of Troyeville. The artwork by artist Johannes Dreyer is a concrete sculpture of a bed with a base headboard pillows and a duvet set in a public park on the south-side of Albertina Sisulu road in Troyeville. Troyeville is a suburb located east of Johannesburg’s Central Business District. Historically, it was a suburb
for Portuguese migrants, but is now also home to migrants from other parts of South Africa and the continent. Despite the growing migrant population, Troyeville has a stable long-standing population, and this has been a significant factor in the implementation of the Bedtime Stories Project. The park is maintained by City Parks, and even before the Troyeville bed, City Parks cut the grass, and picked up the garbage in the park. In the last decade and a half, Troyeville has undergone decline, with some of the residences occupied by squatters, others used as tenement buildings. A report written for the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) by MMA Architects highlights the signs of decline and neglect in the area surrounding the park. It lists the presence of unoccupied buildings, uncontrolled trading activities, and environmental degradation as some of the challenges facing the area. «Many buildings are vacant and unattended and this contributes to the feeling of neglect and insecurity», the report states. It is as a result of the neglect of the park that Lesley Perkes decided to invest in a sculpture. «There was a pile of rubble that was unsafe and unhealthy. It was not safe for children to go play in the park. Because nothing had been done about it for a long time by the authorities, it attracted rubbish. People see a dump and they dump»19.

**Oppenheimer Park**

Oppenheimer park is located in Johannesburg’s inner city. The project was publicly funded by the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) and involved the participation of five artists. The art project produced a series of five sculptures including park benches entitled park texts; the Ernest Oppenheimer diamond replica, cast iron laying impala, the Standard Theatre and Rissik street post office wooden facades. These sculptures are fenced-in and control into the park is regulated by security. There was no direct com-

19 «At Disney, Everyone Picks Up Trash! From the start, it’s been a hallmark of Disney to keep the parks clean for the guests. Jack Lindquist, a former Disney executive and legend, recalled a journalist telling Walt he believed that the park was beautiful that day – but would rapidly become dirty and scarred as the crowds continued to flow through. Walt disagreed vigorously. Said he, “We’re going to make it so clean that people are going to be embarrassed to throw anything on the ground”». Lindquist recalled, “I saw that happen continuously. I’d see people flick cigarette ashes into their hands or carry cigarette butts until they could find a trash container to put them in. Now, on Rodeo Drive or Fifth Avenue or Regent Street, London, they’d never think twice about throwing a cigarette butt on the ground. At Disneyland they thought about it. Because there wasn’t any litter or dirt on the ground”». http://www.mouseplanet.com/6971/At_Di-sney_Everyone_Picks_Up_Trash.
munity participation in this project. Unlike Troyeville, which is set in a low-density residential part of the city, the Oppenheimer Park is in Johannesburg’s high-density Central Business District (CBD). A report by the City of Johannesburg estimates that the CBD has one million commuters passing through daily (City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, No Date). Johannesburg’s center has seen periods of booms and busts. At the culmination of the CBD’s decline in the early 1990’s was the flight of big capital. Big business like the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, De Beers, Gold Fields, and the iconic Carlton Hotel closed down their inner city locations, many relocating to the northern suburbs (Fraser, 2010). Over the last decade however, the city has began to see private capital investment in precincts like the Maboneng district on the city’s eastern edge. Alongside private capital has been a concerted effort by the city to upgrade certain areas like Faraday market station, the Mining District, Jewel District, the Fashion District and Joubert Park, through an investment in art, infrastructure and security upgrades.

**Diepsloot I love you**

Diepsloot is located at the northern edge of the city of Johannesburg, 30 km from the Johannesburg’s CBD. The project was publicly funded by the JDA. The Diepsloot art project involved performance and the construction of a series of metal sculptures placed along a public pavement outside a school in Diepsloot’s extension 2 residential precinct. Each sculpture is a combination of symbolic form and text taken from a poem written by a local schoolgirl and revised by the community through a workshop process. The artwork was inspired by a poem about how difficult it is for school children to do their homework in the township. Of the three projects, Diepsloot was the most community engaged, using local artists in the creative and performative process. The final poem used in the artwork reads:

«Dear Diepsloot,

From Monday to Wednesday, you make me love you like a butterfly, that comes out of it’s cocoon.
I can only have a good time then, like a cat drinking its milk, like a rabbit eating its carrots.
When it’s Thursday, my feelings change about you.
You turn into a pack of angry dogs.
You make me angry like a chicken whose chicks have been taken away.
When it’s Thursday Diepsloot, you act like a bunch of baboons.
You forget I need to hunt like an owl, searching for knowledge, working at night.

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When it’s Thursday Diepsloot, you let my prey escape me.
DEAR DIEPSLOOT, I LOVE YOU, BUT YOU BREAK MY HEART.»

When it was founded in 1995 Diepsloot was geographically a far-flung area, spatially marginal in relation to the rest of the city. Now, twenty years later, the wealthy areas of Dainfern, Fourways, Northgate and Sunninghill surround this once isolated area. The Diepsloot project is located in one of the poorest areas in the city. This is a fast growing settlement as people from other parts of South Africa and beyond try and find a place in the city in which they can live and find economic opportunities (See Harber, 2011). The JDA estimates there are 24,737 informal dwellings with inadequate services alongside and 5000 formal housing units with access to electricity, water and refuse removal services.

Diepsloot is infamous for its violence. In May 2008, it became the centre of xenophobic violence that spread across South Africa. New York Times journalist Barry Bearak portrays this orgy of violence in his film Life and Death in Diepsloot (Mayers, 2011). In the same year, Diepsloot appeared in a British documentary Law and Disorder in Johannesburg. Local and international newspaper headlines have made the name Diepsloot synonymous with crime. Headlines are inevitably linked to violence of one form or another “Diepsloot shooter in court” “Xenophobic attacks condemned”, “Paranoia led Somali shopkeeper to kill”, “Nine held after Diepsloot shooting”, “Two killed in alleged robbery”. When there are no incidences in Diepsloot, the settlement still makes the headlines “All quiet in Diepsloot”, as if the absence of crime is so shocking that it is newsworthy. Indeed Diepsloot is post-apartheid’s problem child, the confluence of South Africa’s post-independence challenges – poverty, immigration, service provision, unemployment, housing, infrastructure and crime.

Key findings

«The art itself becomes a mnemonic that allows people to do other things. Being able to use public space [have a] place to sit and have lunch. Most of the older monuments people were saying are fantastic places to sit and have lunch. Then the security will not ask them to move off because they are not loitering and there is a bench to sit at.»

(Lester Adams, 2013)
**Public Art and Social change: Myth or reality?**

Can art interventions shape social behaviour and improve security in urban spaces? The causal link between a public art intervention and a shift in people’s behaviour is at best tenuous and the evidence across all three South African case studies highlights that public art alone cannot address issues of public safety and crime. In a conversation with Stephen Hobbs, who has curated commissioned and produced art in Johannesburg, he argues that art commissions in South Africa rarely overtly aim at shifting criminal behaviour. Foremost in the minds of public artists and commissioning agencies is the safety of the artwork and of the people using it. In other words, the priority in public art interventions has been ensuring that the artwork does not provide a danger to those that make use of it and that the artwork itself is safe from vandalism.

Although the evidence in the South African cases cannot provide a link between public art intervention and a reduction in crime, there is evidence of behaviour change as a result of the public artwork in all three cases. In Troyeville, a group of residents contribute to cleaning the park around the area where the bed sculpture lies. «We all live here» Lesley Perkes who commissioned the sculpture said, «that means we clean it. If the litter gets too much before City Parks comes we clean it». Similarly, in Diepsloot, the owner of a tavern located not far from the artwork offered to clean the area beyond the perimeter of tavern in order to contribute to the cleanliness of the environment around the artwork. Other respondents in Diepsloot noticed that the art had made a difference in the way the community behaves around it. Silas Morudu, a resident in Diepsloot makes the point that: «...the art has value for kids. The environment is nicer, bright colours are nice, we appreciate that. People feel proud. Since they started this, you don’t see any littering. Even kids do not litter». He continued: «art makes it safer for kids to play and relax... It’s safe because it is in the open compared to the paths in the squatter camp. Everyone can see you. If people try to do some harm they can be seen».

Silas’ observation makes a connection between the physical environment and social behaviour. The idea that physical interventions like street lighting and broader streets can help reduce crime because they provide better visibility is not new. Urban planners and architects have long understood that simple design features can help reduce crime in an area. To be sure, Ingonyama road in Diepsloot where the artworks are located is wide, has street lighting and is visible to the homes right across from the school. These physical features and the proximity to a residential area helps keep the artwork safe. One of our respondents said: «residents in the area keep an eye on what happens on the street, and they tell us if something happens».
Both the physical environment and the community engagement make the area around the Diepsloot artwork area safer than the narrow labyrinthine streets in informal settlements which are difficult to navigate, and where visibility is poor. We cannot delink the impact of public art and cultural events on safety from the surrounding physical and social environment. Indeed for public art to have a positive influence on safety, it has to be accompanied by a variety of physical design and social factors. But these alone cannot guarantee a shift in behaviour. The built environment may be a necessary, but not sufficient condition.

If an art piece on its own does not give people a sense of security, its presence triggers activities that improve the sense of security in an environment. In the case on the Troyeville Bedtime Story, the sculpture had ripple effects on City Parks’ investment in the park. According to community members and park users, City Parks installed more benches and dustbins in the area after the sculpture was built Community members and the artists maintain the sculpture – painting it, adding pieces of artwork and generally are more involved in cleaning the park. As a result of the interest and activity around the sculpture, the park looks better cared for and as a result people feel safer coming to the park.

**Wellbeing, environment and safety**

Beyond the visible security and fencing, I explored whether there were other environmental factors that contributed to people’s sense of safety in the case studies. The responses I got linked safety around the artwork to the appearance and general cleanliness of the area around. Respondents used proxies like cleanliness, the number of people in the area, the trees, benches and the general feeling of the environment as ways of explaining why they felt safe in the park. A High School boy I spoke to in Troyeville said the park «is beautiful because there is a lot of trees. I enjoy this park. It is very tranquil, the view, the birds, its very tranquil». It is interesting to see the adjectives respondents’ used to describe how they felt in the park, and how notions of comfort and relaxation act as alternate descriptors for people’s own sense of security. For Lindile, a mother and Troyeville resident, in addition to commenting on the cleanliness of the park, she described her sense of feeling relaxed, comfortable, confident and proud as ways of articulating an overall sense of security and wellbeing.

At the Oppenheimer park, Acilia Makhapa a long-term resident in the inner city said to me, «the park is nice and beautiful it has got flowers – that’s why I like it. The park is clean, we are safe». George Ndlovu who has lived in
Johannesburg since 1987 said he comes to Oppenheimer park because, «it is healthy because it is clean. Now we are sitting within the flowers and trees».

There are certain visual cues that respondents associated with safety in the park – flowers, an environment that is well kept and clean, the presence of other people enjoying the park, and so on. Whether conscious or not, there seems to be an association between a sense of wellbeing (which includes safety) and the nature of the environment. Men and women, young and old, used environmental registers of beauty and cleanliness to relay their sense of comfort, relaxation and safety in their park.

Does public art matter?

In Oppenheimer park I was surprised that few people mentioned the sculptures in our conversations. I tried to understand why this was the case: Was it because people did not notice the artwork? Was it because they did not understand it? Was it because they did not easily associate sculpture with safety as they did flowers, or cleanliness? I asked one of my respondents, George Ndlovu if he had noticed the benches in the park, which in addition to providing people a place to sit, have words of inspiration attached to their backs. Ndlovu had not noticed the words, but he had noticed that they were better than the chairs that were in the park before it was revamped. He said: «let me say I just noticed it now. I like it. Actually I did not notice these exactly. It is part of the new environment, having flowers».

Responses to questions around the benches, which are themselves sculptures, were mostly utilitarian. Acilia one of the park users said: «They are nice but in winter they are cold. They are only nice when it is summer because you become cool when you are hot from the sun. I have never read the words on the bench. I just noticed those words today but I didn’t read them. It’s for the first time I read them like you are asking me now».

When I asked people whether they had noticed the six-meter sculpture (the Oppenheimer Diamond piece) that towered over the centre of the park, they said they had. Yet when I prompted them to tell me more about the sculpture, most of them did not know what it was, despite the fact that there is a plaque in front of it that explains its origins. George said: «I don’t understand the sculpture. It is beautiful but I don’t know what is the meaning of that. I don’t know what the park is called. It is for the first time that I hear that [it is the Oppenheimer Park]».

Could the seeming invisibility of the art and a lack of curiosity around it mean that it is considered not valuable? Is art in public space considered to be a stupid idea? The response to this question surprised me. Even though
people seemingly did not notice the art or understand its meaning, there was an overwhelming response that it was an important feature of the park. I asked Ishmael, basketball player who frequented Oppenheimer park whether he would rather have more courts and less sculpture at the park. «That won’t make sense being in town» he said. «There are different people that come in here – people from outside. There are some who haven’t seen such parks like it is in here. It is an attractive park. I can say it is fine the way it is. It is not only for the basketball. It is about the beauty. It makes the city look more attractive, it attracts a lot of people looking by».

Contemplating the value of the art in an environment Philemon Diale explained: «You see with art, especially in a public place like this, first of all for me it makes the environment look very good. It’s art. It’s planned. The air that you breath is so excellent it is not like in a place where you feel ah no, things are not [good]… now you feel relaxed. Adults, children everybody is welcome here, even pensioners». (Philemon Diale at the Troyeville Bed, July 2013)

**Can public art make urban spaces safer?**

One of the questions I was interested in is whether users and artists of public art thought that it improved safety in the city. When I asked Clifford, who frequents Troyeville park, whether the presence of the sculpture in the park made him feel safer he had this to say: «Art allows me to reflect and think, it does not make me safe. Security is the job for the police». So while there is a sense that art is important, to say that it makes an environment safer would not be accurate. In Diepsloot, Thandiwe the author of the poem that inspired the artwork had this to say: «No it hasn’t done anything because the corruption keeps going on». She then continued to narrate the recent killing of a shop owner in Diepsloot who was killed for food. Lucky Nkhlali, a Diepsloot resident’s response was more ambiguous: «I wouldn’t say it’s more safer, I wouldn’t say that. But it has changed people’s minds. It has changed the nightwalkers (thieves) minds… the safeness I wouldn’t know».

When I asked Lesley Perkes, whether she thought that her initiative in the Troyeville park had reduced the crime statistics there. «I have no idea», she said honestly. «It might have something to do with it, but I wouldn’t know. The bed is part of it, but I don’t think it’s the whole story. It’s too much to ask from the bed. I am 100% behind the idea that you might want to prove that making art is good for the safety of a community but it depends on how its made. If it is a commission and a person comes and sticks a piece in the ground and there is vandalism then I am sorry. You must ask people what they want».  

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Conclusion

In the context of South Africa where huge inequalities exist, there is a sense of gratitude for beautiful, clean spaces in the city which people can use. I experienced this sense of gratitude in Diepsloot in particular, «I am grateful because we have parks in section 8» said one interviewee. «It (the sculpture) gives a shine to Diepsloot”, said Unitie Ndlovu, “I like the way it’s written».

In a sense it is impossible to measure the impact of public art in a community because there is an unquantifiable process of humanising people and spaces that plays a powerful role in improving conviviality and wellbeing. And while the installation of art and performance of cultural events are part of the process of humanizing, they are not the whole story. Indeed how communities are included in the process of the intervention, the physical environment, and the socio-economic context all play a part in whether the outcome can make a difference in public safety.

References


La sicurezza sui social media
di N. Vittori

1.1 Tweets with [#cityname + #art], [#cityname + #crime]

1.2 Design & art magazine* articles about the cities

1.3 Newspapers** articles about the cities

1.1 Twitter

The graphs represent the number of tweets (notices sent and read through Twitter) that-between January 2009 and December 2013-have been written using the name of the city surveyed by the research, plus the word "art", and subsequently the "crime" keywords, as an hashtag (that is a form of metadata tag).

Source:
https://twitter.com/i/discover

1.2/1.3 Online magazine/newspaper

The graphs show the number of articles having as a main subject, the city surveyed by the research, from January 2009 to December 2013. The research has been divided in two part. The first part analyzes the "art & design" online magazine counting the number of articles. The research was done using the internal website engine along a period from January 2009 to December 2013. The same procedure was used for online newspapers, where, in combination with the city name, the "crime" keyword was added. In both cases, the results provided by the search engines, have been checked with a quick analysis of relevance and pertinence.

*Gazetted, Frame, Dezen, Wallpaper, Designboom, Frieze, Kaleidoscapes, Typo, Dezeen, Eye
**New York Times, Le Monde, La Repubblica, El País
1.4
Trends: Worldwide / Jan 2009 - Dec 2013
Visual art&design / Web search

1.5
Trends: Worldwide / Jan 2009 - Dec 2013
Crime & Justice / Web search

1.4/1.5
Google trend

Google Trends is a public web facility of Google Inc., based on Google Search, that shows how often a particular search-term is entered relative to the total search-volume across various regions of the world, and in various languages. The horizontal axis of the main graph represents time (starting from 2004), and the vertical one represents how often a term is searched for relative to the total number of searches, globally. The graphs reflect how many searches have been done for each city surveyed by the research, from January 2009 to December 2013, relative to the total number of searches done on Google over time, in the “Visual Art & Design”, and “Crime &Justice” category. They don’t represent absolute search volume numbers, because the data is normalized and presented on a scale from 0-100. Each point on the graphs are divided by the highest point and multiplied by 100. When there are not enough data, 0 is shown.

Source:
http://www.google.com/trends/
3 Sharing spaces

3.1 Sharing spaces in multicultural cities\(^1\)

*di Giovanna Marconi*

It is now well over two decades that governments all over the world have been introducing increasingly restrictive measures and toughening stances with the aim of curbing the flows of migration into their countries. Initially the justification for such measures, hardly in line with international agreements and even universally recognised human rights, was that migrants posed a security issue since they would result in an increase in the crime rate. With the burst of the economic crisis, the focus has moved to the fact that migrants “steal” jobs from the natives, contributing to the rise of unemployment and the impoverishment of the population, especially low-income groups.

Yet, the number of people in search of better economic prospects for themselves and those who remain back home, those forced to flee their homes and communities as a result of conflicts or generalised violence, and those escaping from political persecution continues to grow. According to the UN, in 2012 more people than ever were living abroad, adding up to 232 million compared with 175 million in 2000. Interestingly, though the perception of international migration is essentially of a south-north flow, the data show that south-south migration is increasing and by now is as common as south-north migration (UNDESA, 2013). There are good chances that south-south migration flows will soon and definitively outpace the traditional south-north flows, as a consequence of the economic performances many countries in the South are likely to record in the coming years, with rates of growth significantly higher than in Europe, Japan and North America.

\(^1\) The contribution to this book by Giovanna Marconi, Jo Vearey and Sergio Kaminker is among the outcomes of the scientific exchange and collaboration that occurred among the authors within the “SharingSpace – research on intercultural city and collective space” Project, financed by the European Union Marie Curie International Research Staff Exchange Scheme (FP7-PEOPLE-2012-IRSES).
Both in the global North and South, there is evidence that international migration is an urban issue. Most migrants head to cities where employment opportunities and the prospects for better living conditions are higher. The majority of migrants now move to cities even in those regions of the world where migration flows have traditionally been linked to the rural economy, as those between Burkina Faso and Côte d’Ivoire where the migration dates back to the French colonization, those directed to Southern Italy and Spain from Morocco and Tunisia during the tomato harvesting season, those from Mozambique to South Africa pulled by foreign workers demand by the gold mining industry, not to mention the flows from Mexico to California, Texas and other Southern US states, once involving nearly exclusively farm-hands.

The reasons for heading to the cities, particularly but not only the largest ones, are many. The growing “urbanisation of migration” is linked to the relentless concentration of the world population in cities (UN-Habitat, 2013). With globalisation, cities are increasingly becoming the nodes of all flows of exchange, communication and information, the so-called global cities epitomizing the places where people and cultures intersect and interact at the highest level. Most of all, cities are the place that offer the best chances of making an income, even for those who have only limited or no professional skills. As it is well known, the demand for low-skilled labour emerges mainly from the urban economies, providing important employment niches to migrant workers, though in precarious and sometimes dangerous conditions, including activities that are borderline illegal or worse.

In addition, cities offer the highest chances of accessing services highly valued by immigrants. Health services for the migrant workers themselves, as well as the possibility of accessing educational and training programmes for their children upon family reunification, are major incentives to head to cities. Though all generalisation is hazardous and not all migrants make it, it is safe enough to state that cities offer much greater perspectives for better living conditions than rural areas.

An even more important benefit cities provide are the networks that international migrants can rely on when they have to look for work, find a place to stay and decipher the administrative and cultural codes to access urban services. Parental and community networks are vital when arriving for the first time in a country of which little is known in terms of bureaucracy, rules and lifestyle. As highlighted by numerous studies (see for example: Massey et Al. 1993, Arango, 2002; Castells and Miller, 2009), migration “chains” involve different actors at different economic, social and institutional levels at both origin and destination, channelling entire flows of migration to specific destinations, in some cases the same ones for entire communities of migrants. Ethnic networks and, more in general, the density of social interactions that