

**Laboratoire Architecture Anthropologie (LAA) & Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) Thematic Group “Public Spaces and Urban Cultures”**

**‘BECOMING LOCAL’**  
**Transforming spaces, redefining localities**  
**International workshop**

**October 23 - 24 - 25, 2014**  
**La Villette School of Architecture, Paris, France**

The Laboratoire Architecture Anthropologie of La Villette School of Architecture organizes a three-day workshop for the AESOP thematic group of “Public Spaces and Urban Cultures”. The Parisian meeting will be the fourth to take place under the ‘Becoming Local’ theme following Istanbul (November 2013), Bucharest (June 2014) and Vienna (August 2014). The aim of the ‘Becoming Local’ series is to discuss and share international, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary perspectives in the study of public spaces and urban cultures.

The Paris workshop will be dedicated to question the conflict between the local and global scale in contemporary public spaces by proposing a reflection on notions and categories used to describe local identities in the context of urban transformation. Through a “talk, walk and work” gathering, researchers, scholars and practitioners, will improve a comparative approach on the meaning of “local” in different case studies around the world and will live the experience of “becoming local” in Paris.

The Laboratoire Architecture Anthropologie has, since its birth in 1981, been rooted in the school of architecture of La Villette and works in the field of *anthropology of the city*. Its aim is to create a new understanding of urban transformation processes through an anthropological approach. Our interdisciplinary research considers these processes as moments in which space and time are continually imagined, narrated and negotiated by the people who live it and by those who design and manage it. Different tools drive this approach: 1) the articulation of spatial and temporal scales, narratives and imaginations; 2) the questioning of acquired notions and categories; 3) the methodological experimentation on representation tools (see: [www.laa.archi.fr/Cartes-habitanter](http://www.laa.archi.fr/Cartes-habitanter) and [www.laa.archi.fr/Chronotopies](http://www.laa.archi.fr/Chronotopies)). The LAA is one of the founding groups of the Laboratoire Architecture Ville Urbanisme Environnement (LAVUE), the biggest French research unit on urban studies.

**CONTACTS:**

Becoming Local Paris organizational group: [becominglocalparis2014@gmail.com](mailto:becominglocalparis2014@gmail.com)



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**Call for Papers**

(Deadline for abstracts: Thursday, July 10<sup>th</sup> 2014)



**‘BECOMING LOCAL’**

**Transforming spaces, redefining localities**

If we assume urban public space to be an arena of social conflict and collective strategies, what happens when places are under transformation? Urban transformation processes reveal the different types of conflicts occurring in uses, representations, and legitimacy.

These dynamics can be observed at all planning scales, from macro to micro, such as global metropolitan centralities planning, ex-industrial areas renovation, social housing renewal, public space reshaping, and urban furniture design.

In the ongoing debate about the city, from the critics of Modernism to the discussions about Globalization, architects, urban planners, and researchers have been called upon to develop new tools for considering and evaluating “local contexts”. The local scale has become a central issue in contemporary projects aiming to reconnect the multiple uses of public space with the human dimension and restore a social sense of community. At the same time the processes of metropolization and gentrification, which take place in large European cities like Paris, are dictating the need of conceiving the city as a polycentric ensemble of urban centers that should enhance its economic “international attraction”.

Through this workshop we propose to face this conflict between the local and global scale in contemporary public spaces by analyzing both the *words* we use to talk about this conflict as well as the *misunderstandings* that the use of these same words can provoke in different contexts.

Questioning *what the locality is* and *who the locals are*, is a way of challenging the contemporary notion of “commons” in global cities. To answer these questions, urban planners and researchers need to reassess the use of apparently neutral categories such as inhabitants, dwellers, users, citizens, as well as those categories with more specific connotation, such as gentrifiers or stakeholders. In order to question urban design and its relation to local identities, a better understanding of who the “locals” are in cosmopolitan and global cities, is needed. Which local identities are we talking about? How do we name the inhabitants of a street/neighborhood/city? What is the scale of locality? To what extent the notions and terms, applied to describe ‘target groups’ of urban projects, are problematic? The focus on “dwellers”, for example, could result in excluding other users of the public space of a neighborhood that utilize and transform the space daily. Moreover institutions and policies contribute to the redefinition of the scale of public spaces not only by implying a legitimate user but also by framing “sensitive areas”. These actions produce a continuous recomposition of urban identities and bring into question what it means to belong

to the local or global scale for inhabitants. What is the role of public spaces in this redefinition and reconfiguration of identities? For whom are public spaces designed in these contexts? Which names are used to describe the future users of a space? In the same way, participatory policies, lately introduced as a pivotal part of urban transformation processes, are relevant subjects for critical inquiry. These policies propose to focus on the needs of “inhabitants” or “citizens”. But to what extent is the use of “inhabitants”/“citizens” a relevant category for urban design in the context of globalising cities? With whom do experts and politicians “negotiate” their visions of the future in the urban environment? When inclusive public space is planned and designed, who are the interlocutors? Who is at the same time excluded?

This workshop intends to be a moment of shared reflection, an open dialogue between planners, designers, researchers, and the civil society. The aim is to reflect different points of view at the intersection of different disciplines and between theory and practice. Participants are invited to share analytical outcomes and practical answers from different fields and (self-reflected) experiences about the words and notions that are used for (re)defining locality.

The event will be developed in three parts:

**Talk** / International Conference: A public conference exhibiting participants’ reflections on, and practices in, projects and urban “rescaling” processes, with the aim of comparing and sharing different experiences and definitions. The interventions will seek to answer, from different points of view, the question: Who are the recipients of urban projects? And how does a “legitimate user” redefine the urban scale of a place/space? Contributions will also provide a reflection on the idea of “locality” and “users”.

**Walk** / In the Field: The ongoing process of Paris *metropolization* is rich in examples that can be used as fertile case studies for our group discussion. We will propose to focus on some emblematic Parisian areas on which our team is working at the moment (such as Barbès and la Chapelle in the 18<sup>th</sup> arrondissement and the town center of the Montreuil municipality). The objective of the fieldtrip will be to stimulate as many encounters and exchanges as possible with the involved actors (institutions, NGOs, architects, ...).

**Work** / Brain Storming: The final moment of collective discussion and work is producing a “word cloud” and a list of revisited definitions of the emerging notions. The words that will emerge during the debates and the field trips will be translated and associated in order to develop and enhance a comparative common approach. We expect this exchange to create new interpretative and practical tools for use in further research and project experiences. Participants and organizers will be challenged to experiment with methodological tools in approaching debate, translation, and description.

The event will produce two types of outcomes in different temporalities: a “word cloud” poster along with a blog documenting the workshop *in fieri*, and a final publication after the meeting.

## Abstract Submission

Please submit an abstract of no more than 300 words and a short biography of 100 words to the organizational board: [becominglocalparis2014@gmail.com](mailto:becominglocalparis2014@gmail.com) by **Thursday, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014**. We will finalize the sessions and inform all respondents of the outcome by **July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014**.

## Meeting Schedule

Thursday – October 23<sup>th</sup> 2014 – International conferences

Friday - October 24<sup>th</sup> 2014 – Fieldtrips and keynote speeches

Saturday – October 25<sup>th</sup> 2014 - Workshop and summing up

## Fees

Participation in the meeting is free of charge.

## Organizational Board

- AESOP**      **Sabine KNIERBEIN (coord.)**, Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space, Faculty of Architecture and Planning, Vienna University of Technology  
**Tihomir VIDERMAN (coord.)**, Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space, Faculty of Architecture and Planning, Vienna University of Technology
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- Tihomir VIDERMAN**, Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space, Faculty of Architecture and Planning, Vienna University of Technology

## Related Links

The meeting blog (operational from September 2014 on): [www.becominglocalparis.wordpress.com](http://www.becominglocalparis.wordpress.com)

Laboratoire Architecture Anthropologie: <http://www.laa.archi.fr/>

Laboratoire Architecture Ville Urbanisme Environnement: <http://www.lavue.cnrs.fr>

École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture Paris La Villette: <http://www.paris-lavillette.archi.fr/cms/>

Aesop: <http://www.aesop-planning.eu/>

Aesop Thematic Group Public Spaces and Urban Cultures: [http://www.aesop-planning.eu/blogs/en\\_GB/urban-cultures-and-public-spaces](http://www.aesop-planning.eu/blogs/en_GB/urban-cultures-and-public-spaces) and <http://publicspaces-urbancultures.wikispaces.com/How+to+join+us>

