

writinG urban places

Zoom, October 12, 2020, 13:00- 14:30 COST Core Group meeting

Present: Klaske Havik, Jorge Mejía, Lorin Nicolae, Sonja Novak, Angeliki Sioli, Carlos Machado e Moura, Luis Santiago Baptista, Slobodan Velevski, Marcel Pikhart

1. Introduction

Welcome to the new Core Group members: Sonja Novak and Angeliki Sioli, (co) leaders of WG2. Also, we announce that Carlos Machado e Moura, with the withdrawal of Mark Proosten, will join as co-leader for WG3.

All Core-Group members briefly announce themselves and welcome the new members.

This week, the MC vote will be raised to formalize the new positions

2. Budget

Our budget this Grant Period is 137.500 euro but without the possibility to travel, we hardly spend anything.

We proposed to COST to re-allocate a small part of the budget to dissemination, so that we can print more copies of the Vademecum, so that all members of the network can receive a physical copy.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to reallocate budget to pay experts or external guests to act as key note speaker or reviewer at our meetings, as COST only covers expenses, not paid hours. Thus, we can invite external speaker, but we cannot pay them a fee.

We expect that all COST Actions are facing the same problems, and that the Actions will be extended, so that we will have more than 4 years to reach our goals.

3. Fieldwork projects

As discussed in the previous meeting, the call for projects has resulted in 21 proposals of great diversity. All core group members have received the files and have been able to look into the projects and send their response to Slobodan and Luis. (Sonja, Angeliki and Carlos received them later, so they're excused). Marcel and Lorin congratulate Slobodan and Luis for their work and the great potential that lies in the collected projects.

Slobodan and Luis share their ideas (and questions) of how to bring these proposals further.

The order of events has changed due to Covid-19: First, we expected to present the wide scope of projects at the Porto meeting in November, now that that has been postponed, we have to adjust the process: first select, edit, curate, then present more elaborate fieldwork projects in Spring.

Issues discussed:

-What is the definition of 'project'- should there be an aspect of design/transformation? (see also last meetings' discussion)

Lorin suggests making a distinction between 'reading place' and 'making place':

Reading place in the sense that the work aims to offer 'reading' of the place that provides valuable perspectives to communicate to architects, local stakeholders, communities, for further development;

Making place in the sense that the work aims to offer actual strategies for spatial transformation (urban development, architectural projects)

-How to make this into a coherent whole without losing diversity?

Jorge comes with a proposal to pose every author/proposer four clear questions, which will not only make the value and aim of the projects more explicit, but also makes them more coherent in their presentation

-How do the projects relate to the proposed 3 webinars?

In the last meeting, we discussed the option that each webinar could focus on one key theme of the action (meaningfulness, appropriation, integration), and divide the projects over the webinars for a cross-WG discussion. Slobodan says this would be too complicated as the projects are not that crystallized yet and a discussion of the projects together would be needed first. Slobodan proposes a webinar around the (more elaborated) projects in January.

Following the proposals and the discussion at the meeting, we come to a strategy for the next steps:

A Select which proposals are off-topic (and communicate to those authors that, and why, their proposal falls out of the selection)

B Communicate to all selected ones an assignment to elaborate along a few clear lines:

-a precise description of the context (mid-size European city, perhaps a particular site or neighborhood, which social/spatial challenges are at stake?)

-why this matters to the main objectives of the Action

-how the place is approached: which methods of analysis (and possibly design) are used

-how the work leads to (potential for) positive urban transformation

Set a deadline in Dec to be able to properly prepare the webinar in January?

C. Present and discuss the elaborated proposals through a webinar in January.
Possibly, shape this as a virtual two-day meeting.
(see webinars below)

4. Webinars

We discuss how to give shape to the webinars.

While we hope they will be attended by different working groups, to establish links between theory, methods, fieldwork and communication/dissemination, each of them will be organized by one particular working group, for clarity and focus.

Webinar 1: Key terms, organized by WG2, November

Sonja and Angeliki offer to organize the first webinar, that will focus on the 'Major terms' of the Action.

As Sonja argues, the Vademecum of Minor terms has allowed the network to bring in a highly diverse set of terms from the different theoretical backgrounds of the members, now is a good moment to converge and focus on the key notions of the Action, including Narrative, European mid-size city, urban places, Meaningfulness, Appropriation, Integration.

Jorge welcomes this initiative and says it is very timely. He mentions that on the website there is already some anticipation to the outcome of this session: the 'glossary' section that is yet unfilled.

Klaske mentions that Sonja and Angeliki can ask assistance from the core group, as well as more practical assistance from Willie (project assistant) and Salma (administrative assistant) to organize and announce the webinar.

We suggest thee webinar could take place at the dates originally reserved for the Porto meeting, 17 or 18th of November.

Sonja and Angeliki will keep us posted and come with a proposal.

Webinar 2: Fieldwork projects, organized by WG4, January

See above: this could be a virtual 1 or 2-day meeting in which the elaborated fieldwork projects will be presented and discussed. Members for other working groups can join to give input and feedback regarding theory, methods and other topics.

Slobodan expect that this might take more than one day, and given the academic responsibilities of many members, he suggests we could consider scheduling this (partly) in a weekend.

Klaske mentions we could look for a format by means of which we are 'visiting' the places by a short visual excursion, to give some liveliness to the discussion.

Angeliki suggests that to avoid too long sessions, we could consider sharing the material on the forehand to participants and preparing questions for discussion rather than having long presentations.

Slobodan and Luis will come with a proposal for date(s) and set up of the webinar.

Webinar 3: Methods as link between theory and fieldwork, organized by WG3, February

When the key terms are defines and the fieldwork projects have become more clear, explicit and coherent, it is time to bring together theory, practice, and to discuss *how* this is done: which methods are used in the fieldwork projects and how do these relate to particular theoretical notions.

5 Closing remarks

Jorge invites the WG leaders to collect photos and biographies of the group members for the website.
He will send an email to all WG leaders. (already done, thanks to Sonja and Jorge!)

Klaske thanks everyone for their patience and their contributions to this productive meeting.