

Relations and translations

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Since 2002, the Stalker cultural association has been developing a work methodology that concretises and transforms itself while evolving through participation and exchange with continuously different entities. This attitude has resulted in the Nomadic Observatory, an international and trans-disciplinary network of researchers who find a common tool of expression in the shared artistic practice.

Through the years, one of the characteristics, which traced the activity of the Nomadic Observatory, was the openness towards a public dimension of interaction and collaboration with the institutions and the public administrations. This methodology led to a debate about languages of communication and art production and, through a process of *cultural translation*, to the creation of a common ground for the construction of projects and relations. This was the case for *Imagine Corviale* (supported by the Municipality of Rome with the mediation of Fondazione Olivetti, 2003-5). It was also the case for *Egnatia. A path of displaced memories* (financed by the European Community and realised in collaboration with the Province of Lecce, 2005-2006) and also for *Campagnaromana* (sustained by the Municipality and Province of Rome).

An operative methodology that looks for its own elective space of application and experimentation in the public sphere, implies the choice of negotiation as its main tool of creativity. Meeting with the world of public administration requires the clear will to engage with a territory that, for those who build their own professional path with an investment in creativity, sometimes results in being sterile and sometimes even obscure.

The labyrinths of bureaucracy, the technicalities of the administrative languages, the paths and obstacles between hierarchies, are often a deterrent that create giant barriers between the art world and the public sphere. It's not

that the relations between these two do not exist, but often that they need exhausting paths of mediation in order to arrive to the definition of micro-portions of common ground. In the majority of cases, the mediation work is entrusted to specialist professionals who work as middlemen between two opposing pre-concepts: sterility on one side and whimsy on the other.

At this point, the outlined prospect seems quite discomfoting, but sometimes the discomfort itself or the urge for a seeming impossibility becomes the drive for the occupation of an apparently inaccessible space. Outside the metaphor, this is the challenge that the Nomadic Observatory has decided to engage in during the last years, trying to penetrate an unwelcoming world, looking for possible margins of intervention and sabotage.

To address one's own art making in the public sphere implies a clear ethical choice of investment on community and of the sharing of one's tools for the realisation of projects that have the construction of a common good (to use an old-fashion expression) as a final goal. Following this ideal prospective, the research for collaboration with public administrations somehow results naturally and unavoidably. The gamble remains in the construction itself of that meeting space in which communication does not seem to be happening in two different languages. The Nomadic Observatory invested a significant part of its own "whimsy" and creative unpredictability in the attempt to force the relational codes so that an exchange with various counterparts (who previously seemed inaccessible) could be opened.

In these terms, *Egnatia. A path of displaced memories* is a significant example. The project was born from the partnership between three cultural associations (Stalker, based in Rome; Oxymoron in Athens and Atelier d'Architecture Autogerée in Paris) as an answer to a call for funding by the European Community *Culture 2000* and realised in collaboration with the Province of Lecce.

The project initiated as an opportunity for reflection and reconnaissance on the political and symbolic values of the Via Egnatia, the first physical axis of connection between East and West. This is surely not the context in which to discuss in detail eighteen months worth of content. It is instead important to underline that a significant part of the work was the result of the attempt to

find a way in which the language and the requests of a European call could be modulated and shaped, in order to include the nuances and thousands of possibilities implied in an artistic process.

To build on the misunderstanding and on the possible linguistic and semantic impediments can become one of the tricks that helps the practice itself take on a surprising and unexpected form. In order to make even what is considered the simplest of languages understandable, as regards original meaning, the decoding process of codes becomes a founding and constituting part of an art making that re-discovers itself and that reinvents itself at each stage.

www.osservatorionomade.net

www.egnatia.info

www.campagnaromana.net