

Tools to document and disseminate the conservation of urban art: the experience of the CAPuS project

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The CAPuS project (Conservation of Art in Public Spaces), implemented between 2018 and 2021 within the European Programme Erasmus+ Knowledge Alliance, aimed to develop a shared approach to the conservation of artworks in public spaces. The project involved 17 different partners from 5 member countries of the EU, and most of the research teams focused on street art and contemporary murals. Participants in the project were academic researchers, heritage professionals, companies, artists, and students. The final goal was the dissemination of knowledge to all stakeholders involved and the implementation of e-learning and training modules for conservation students and professionals.

The collaboration among the partners highlighted not only the need of sharing best practices and approaches, but also to create a common vocabulary referring to some of the most relevant issues to include in the study of graffiti and street art for conservation purposes, such as style, execution technique, deterioration processes and possible conservation treatments. This encouraged the creation of a multilingual glossary (English, Italian, Spanish, Croatian, Polish, German), to be used as a tool for training activities: the glossary counts 141 definitions, divided into two sections, respectively entitled "Street Art & Graffiti" and "Conservation" (www.capusproject.eu/glossary). Whenever possible, already existing international glossaries were taken into account as a reference and terms were accompanied by an illustrative picture, selected within the photographic documentation collected by the partners. Indeed, the project was structured in several phases: after the selection of a number of artworks, basic information about the materials and the artistic techniques, as well as some details about the social, cultural and geo-political context, were collected through photographic documentation and interviews with artists. Then, an analytical report about the characterisation of the materials and a condition report about the deterioration processes of each of the artworks were filled out.

This wide range of information and documentation was collected in a freely accessible online database, which gathers a data sheet for each mural. Each data sheet includes the location and general information about the mural, the year of realization, the artist's name and the technique of execution. Representative pictures and archival records are also uploaded, as well as a video or audio interview to the artist, if available. Finally, technical and conservation reports can be found. The CAPuS Digital Repository (www.capusrepository.unito.it) may be of great help for future conservation interventions on the examined artworks, but also represents a starting point for the study and treatment of other pieces. Finally, it can support teaching and learning activities, besides raising public awareness and understanding of urban art.