

## **Social space in times of ferment**

From ancient times to the present diverse forms of artistic practice are common to urban environments. Increasingly, and globally, these practices and other cultural manifestations are intrinsic to modern cities. They appear in public spaces, parks or plazas or, with greater frequency, in the private simulacra of public space. From Peking to Budapest to New York, throughout the spaces of the city, cultural practices and events influence the character of the urban environment.

Whether in the form of politically coded statuary, public art projects, or street art, the social spaces of cities become sites that can trigger diverse forms of discourse and facilitating intersubjective environments. Walter Benjamin sought to analyse aspects of this phenomenon in his Arcades Project.

The writings of Hannah Arendt, Henri Lefebvre and Chantal Mouffe, among others, provide a vocabulary of analytical tools that enable unpacking the layers of meaning and the dimensions of collective memory that define the politically and socially charged social spaces of cities. They can facilitate the decoding of existing art practices or broaden the scope of new projects that set in motion forms of social consciousness and discourse that contribute to the horizon of experiences that enhance the qualities of urban and rural life.