

## **GDAŃSK – FREEDOM OF CULTURE, CULTURE OF FREEDOM**

Ewa Salamon, City Hall of Gdańsk

In many countries of Eastern Europe, the philosophy about freedom and culture is the basement of the big festivals held by public administration. The public space is strongly intended as common heritage, and the participatory element is the winning card to establish a larger debate in social life and to overcome differences between cultures and generations. The intervention of Ewa Salamon at the Open MEETING in Montegranaro, has explained how this approach was the ground also for the candidacy of Gdansk to the European Capital of Culture 2016.

The public space as a common asset and the spread of democracy through art, active participation in culture, the potential freedom of digital media, the role of debate in social life, the free access to culture, the daily solidarity between citizens of different generations and ranks ... These are the key points inspiring the cultural politics of our city, which culminated with the nomination of Gdańsk as European Capital of Culture 2016.

Which pattern of culture should be adopted by a community that aspires to become truly free? The best answer to this question can be found in the ambit of street arts, because it is able to act a continuous transformation and revitalization of the city. Public spaces, social spaces: in Gdansk we moved towards a democratization of culture. Every place in town, just to always correspond to the idea of freedom, is open to arts. All places can be transformed into stages: concerts in elevators, shows in the shoe stores ... these places change through art, people change through art. Often, people who are not accustomed to attending cultural events, approach to them through street arts.

We invest in technical support, in materials of social utility, in the idea that citizens can change their perception of urban space. We operate in the most neglected areas of city, improving the quality of life of all citizens. The municipality and municipal institutions help local associations to carry out their projects, through financial support of many programs: in 2011 about 1 million euros was spent in this way.

MONUMENTAL ART STREET WAVES AND FETA are the main festivals that we deal with. These events are changing the city and its most neglected areas. In detail: Monumental Art - European Festival of Monumental Paintings (monumental painting) takes place in one of the most populated residential areas of Poland; Streetwaves offers concerts, exhibitions, events in unusual and surprising public places ; FETA - The International Street and Open-Air Theatres Festival (International Festival of street theater and outdoor) involves the community of the peripheral zone (Lower Town). "