Public Art, Collaboration, and Serious Fun: Opening Dialogue and Building Trust in Tirana, Albania

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by
Brandon Fox
Erica Friel
Léo Gonsalves
Jessica Marquez
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Professors Leslie Dodson and Robert Hersh
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

This report represents work of WPI undergraduate students submitted to the faculty as evidence of a degree requirement. WPI routinely publishes these reports on its web site without editorial or peer review. For more information about the projects program at WPI, see http://www.wpi.edu/Academics/Projects.
Abstract

Where communication is hindered, public art plays an important role in creating dialogue. Working with students at the University of Arts in Tirana, we explored the function of public art as a means of addressing a lack of trust that is a remnant of the communist regime in Albania. We designed and implemented a series of public art pop-ups and workshops that generated an interest and willingness to discuss perceptions of the past, present and future. We found that serious fun related to public art can build trust and catalyze dialogue about a troubled past, turbulent present, and uncertain future.
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, we would like to thank our student peers, volunteers, and participants at the University of Tirana for all their efforts in helping our project to run smoothly. Our research would not have been made possible without their commitment and dedication. They have shown great resilience and humanity in sharing their stories and perspectives with us, expanding far beyond public art.

We would like to thank our advisors, Professor Leslie Dodson, and Professor Robert Hersh, for their unwavering guidance, insight, and support throughout the process of our project.

We would also like to thank our sponsors, Dr. Lori Amy with OTTonomy and the University of Arts at the University of Tirana, for giving us the means to make our research possible.

Finally, we would like to thank WPI for providing us with the opportunity to participate in this project.
Authorship

Each section of the report was split up into individual work which was then edited collaboratively by the entire group. Brandon and Erica typically took the lead on drafting and writing. Leo and Jessica took the lead on editing. Most of the photos, graphic design and visuals used in our report were produced by Leo and Jessica. Interviews were mainly conducted in pairs, consisting of both asking questions and taking notes.

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http://www.wpi.edu/Academics/Projects
Meet the Team

Brandon Fox is an industrial and mechanical engineering major from Hollis, New Hampshire.

Erica Friel is a biochemistry major from Rochester, New York.

Léo Gonsalves is a computer science major from São Paulo, Brazil.

Jessica Marquez is a biochemistry major from Easton, Massachusetts.
The Team
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- Dayna del Val
The Function of Public Art

Public art has many functions including aiding beautification and community dialogue, serving as an identity for both people and a place and as a means to push social and political agendas and commentary; it can construct identity not only to the physical location where it is installed, but to the people who surround it as well. as well as increasing community participation and engagement. As stated by Arts South Australia, “community involvement in public art projects can deliver a range of outcomes including increased community participation and engagement, opportunities for creative and practical skills development, and increased social capital” (Arts South Australia 2006).

“What is public art?” 2018

“The Association for Public Art

The Forms of Public Art

Public art can be defined as art in any media that has been planned and executed with the intention of being staged in the physical public domain (“What is public art?” 2018). One of the most important aspects of the phrase “public art” is the fact that it is public, free and accessible to all. Public art projects greatly vary in the forms they take. These forms include public art of natures that are temporary, ephemeral, and community-created. Public art can be observed commonly in the form of traditional arts such as murals and sculptures, but can also include street performances, concerts, and festivals. Art projects can describe a concept, an idea, or approach to an issue with a clear message, wording, or imagery. They may be realistic and explicit, abstract and implicit, or both (“Public Art” 2018).
Post-Communist Transition State

The communist regime gripped Albania from 1945 to 1991, and many Albanians were subjected to hard labor, sent to prison or internment camps, or put to death. By 1990, there were approximately 40,000 people in forced labor camps and 26,000 people in jails, as well as thousands who were killed throughout the rule of the communist regime (Woodcock 2016). It can be very difficult to talk about the past, but it can also be a way of rebuilding trust and allow for self-reflection. Public art is able to catalyze a conversation about these certain topics that may be otherwise difficult to address. While different forms and objectives of public art projects in Tirana already exist, there is an opportunity for collaborative, trust-building public art projects that rely on the participation of multiple community members, rather than just one artist, to create a collaborated piece of art.

“In the post-communist environment, socially engaged art projects had a relevant role to play in the shaping of a democratic notion of civil society...in post-socialist contexts, social capital has been used by artists and curators as a vital means for communication and action”

- Galliera 2018
Our Approach

Working closely with our two sponsors, OTTOonomy, a Tirana-based non-governmental organization, and the Academy of Art at the University of Tirana, our goal was to explore possibilities of collaborative public art in Tirana and how public art can be used to create a dialogue about rebuilding trust and addressing trauma. While different forms of public art projects in Tirana already exist, there is an opportunity for collaborative, trust-building public art projects that rely on the participation of multiple community members, rather than just one artist, to create a collaborated piece of art. To complete our goal, we designed and implemented art activities with students in the Academy of Arts to provide a space for students to assemble and engage one another; conducted workshops with a focus group of students to understand student perceptions of public art in Tirana; and explored and discussed collaboration among the art students through interviews and the creation of a collaborative mural. From this collaboration, we attempted to initiate a dialogue that could be used to build trust and create a space for students to congregate and participate in group discussions.

Findings

One of our findings included the use of serious fun as a means of building trust. The activities were to create a loose environment in which individuals could do an activity that allowed for creativity. While the activities may not have directly addressed topics of trust and trauma, they established a relationship not only between us and the Albanian students, but between the Albanian students themselves. These activities also encouraged participants to step outside of their comfort zone in terms of putting themselves in engaging environments that required their active participation.

Another common motif found in our time at the University was of students’ views on the troubled past, the turbulent present, and uncertain projections of the future. We observed that there is awareness of the past (it is not necessarily relevant to our research whether accurate or not) and desire to portray and address the issues they believe this troubled past has left on the population. There was also evidence of students being inclined to explore their sense of place in contemporary Albanian society, as well as attempting to address the many issues they see in it. Lastly, students showed a lot of interest and desire in exploring ideas related to the future of Albania and their part in it.
Using art to address this aforementioned turbulent present showed us that public art, as described by the students, is a way to beautify, express meaning, and send a message on both previous and current issues. Using art as a way to send a message also speaks to the participant's need to address the current issues pertaining to corruption that the students have said they see or face themselves on a regular basis.

We also found that the students were motivated to reflect on injustice and are hopeful of future improvements in the country. Through their artwork, many students expressed themes of contemplation about Albania's past, yet a sense of idealism towards where the future of Albania is headed. They typically represented this future through the use of bright colors and nature, whereas the representations of Albania's past were typically in shades of gray.

Our group also found that collaboration, while unexplored by the students, is desired. While they have experience giving personal critiques on individual work, they have never completed a project from start to finish in a collaborative group. While this lack of experience with collaboration caused slight conflict in terms of struggling to compromise with and accommodate one another when developing ideas on what type of art to create, the students expressed interest in exploring it further. Our work together addressed this through introducing them to what was at first, smaller collaborative activities which then built up into the culmination of a large collaborative activity which included the students working together to create an idea an execute the painting of a large mural.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, we have been able to better understand how the current generation understands the events that occurred during the communist regime. Through open discussions as well as in-depth interviews, we have tried to understand and have become humbled by the discussion of their experiences. The students that were a part of our focus group became very open and expressed great passion in their stories and opinions about their society. They did this both through interviews and through their artwork as documented in the findings section of this report. Not only have the students given us the image of their thoughts on the communist regime, but they have also shared very deep connections with people they had never met before. Being immersed within their culture has created a bond in which we are able to share our experiences from both of our cultures without judgment, and the community engagement facilitated by this project was one of the main reasons that was possible. Although we worked with a rather small group of students, it allowed us to deepen our connection and support the students in their artistic ideas through the creation of a final mural.
Recommendations

In order to build off the progress made within our project, we recommend the continuation of pop-up activities with a stronger focus on different locations around Tirana. Although our group found success in our pop-up activities, the focus group was located solely at the University of Tirana. If the pop-up activities were continued in a heavier foot trafficked area, outreach would be greatly expanded and there would be a greater representation of the Albanian population within datasets.

Another recommendation our group would make is for the creation of a public art exhibition in a more central and open location. Again, as our focus group was located at the University of Tirana, we also decided that our final canvas would be best received at the University. In order to expand the conversation about social engagement to address trust and trauma, a public art exhibition in a more central area would expand the reach of the project and therefore create a greater impact.
Introduction to Public Art and the Albanian Context
Public art plays a varied role in civic life: it can be an important medium for "[engaging] civic dialogue"; and can be a tool to establish a "sense of pride and community identity" (Becker 2004). Dialogue is a process to help with “understanding of others and ourselves through listening, sharing, and questioning” (Community Dialogue n.d.). Furthermore, dialogue is a “stream of meaning” among individuals in order to think of new ways to understand and address contentious issues (Community Dialogue n.d.). With this, public art can be a medium in order to start or continue a dialogue in a community by expressing meaning in the art.

From 1946 to 1991, Albania’s communist regime, led by the repressive dictator Enver Hoxha, directed a secret service known as the Sigurimi. The clandestine work of the Sigurimi, along with an extensive network of civilian informants and others who were complicit led to the imprisonment and deaths of an estimated 5,000-25,000 Albanians. Many Albanians were complicit with the regime by either joining the Sigurimi or who became informants who were paid per denunciation. The Lack of food, job security, and overall poverty led to a rising number of these informants. Those whom they denounced were deemed “enemies of the state” and were taken away, without substantial evidence, and sentenced to death, prison, and labor camps (Chodownik 2018). Others remained in their homes and communities to live with the tarnish of a “bad biography”(Woodcock 2016). This led to a great deal of distrust that has not only affected the survivors of the communist regime in Albania, but also those who were raised by that generation (“The Rise of Albanian Communism” 2018).

One term that aims to contain the idea of the transfer of trauma between the older and younger generation is “postmemory,” a word coined by Marianne Hirsch, a professor at Columbia University. Hirsch describes postmemory as “the relationship the generation after bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before” (Hirsch 2012). Postmemory speaks to the transgenerational trauma passed on before these traumas were thoroughly processed and understood by the afflicted generation (Hirsch 2012). Dr. Lori Amy, Professor of cultural studies and a scholar of memory trauma theory, suggests that many Albanians struggled, and continue to struggle, with the transition period from communist regime to parliamentary republic, stating that “if the perpetrator is your own government – and especially a government that you endorsed – fear and denial are even more pronounced” (Amy 2010). The memories passed on in Albania have led to a mistrust within the country. A survey was done by the United Nations Development Programme on the Trust in Governance in Tirana, Albania and found that the five out of the thirteen domestic institutions have received over “50% of public trust” from the Albanian public where the judicial system was ranked as “the most corrupt” by 36% of the respondents (United Nations Development
Programme 2017). This lack of trust has also been seen in opening of some of the Secret Police files. Gentiana Sula, who is the head of the newly created Albanian Authority for Access to Information on ex-Sigurimi files, says the society “needs to open up” and that “there is constant denial” (Ristic 2018). This speaks to the unwillingness to address the past even though it can be important to help improve the future.

Many forms of public art can be found around Tirana. A recent example in Tirana of sanctioned public art was the 2018 exhibition “Even Walls Have Ears,” which projected quotes of those who survived the communist regime onto monuments and landmarks in main squares of six cities including Tirana, Shkodra, Berat, Korça, Tepelena and Gjirokastra. The artist, Alketa Xhafa-Mripa, aimed to show the words that were not said -- not only during the communist regime -- but even after the regime fell due to the fear of informants (Mejdini 2018). Another example of public art to be found in Tirana is the Çeta group. In 2016, a group of student activist artists collectively known as Çeta began to create politically dissident street art in Tirana that criticized Albanian politics and social standards. Çeta members state that “[public art is] a form of art, and it carries a message, primarily a political or social message. It’s not just aesthetics; it’s a form of resistance” (Isto 2016). Most of their public artwork has since been covered up as they were not approved by city authorities (G. Permeti, personal interview, Nov 9, 2018).

While different forms and objectives of public art projects in Tirana already exist, there is an opportunity for collaborative, trust-building public art projects that rely on the participation of multiple community members, rather than just one artist, to create a collaborated piece of art. That way, community participation and engagement is highlighted and emphasized. One of this type of collaborative work can be seen in the Finding the Light Within mural in West Philadelphia, a public art project that attempted to deal with suicide in an urban community. This project utilized community “paint days” that gathered different community members together for the actual creation of the mural. Participants stated that the mural “[appeared] to have had a profound impact on participants’ sense of connectedness and social support” (Mohatt et al. 2013).

Working closely with our two sponsors, OTTonomy, a Tirana-based non-governmental organization, and the Academy of Art at the University of Tirana, our goal was to explore possibilities of collaborative public art in Tirana and how public art can be used for positive social change, including rebuilding trust among Albanians. We attempted to initiate a process of trust-building for social change through artistic self-empowerment by a variety of approaches including: developing and facilitating art
activities with students in the Academy of Arts to provide a space for students to gather, conducting workshops with a focus group of students to create a space to share stories, ideas, opinions, memories, and fears, and exploring and discussing collaboration among the art students through interviews and the facilitation of their collaborative mural.
Background on Public Art and Memory in Building Trust
• “Public art invites us to see our community and ourselves in a new light, and it does it in a way that is accessible to all because it exists in the public sphere. Public art is not about gatekeeping; rather, it is about taking down the gates and inviting all to see, learn, appreciate and grow”

• – Dayna del Val
Functions of Public Art

Public art has many functions including aiding beautification; community dialogue; serving as an identity for both people and a place; social and political agendas and commentaries; and increasing community participation and engagement.

Beautification, the process of making visual improvements to a place, is a common function of public art. As stated by the Arts Management and Technology Laboratory, “cities, especially cities that are losing population and/or facing severe budget shortfalls, are turning more and more to public art to revitalize areas and encourage more tourism” (Bowie 2012). Rather than spread a specific message or convey a certain point, this type of public art is more suited to draw people into an array and create something visually appealing. An example of this type of beautification can be seen in Grand Center neighborhood in St. Louis, Missouri. A Chromatic Confluence, a 25-feet by 65-feet mazelike string culture “attempts to grab people's attention and give them something to do” (Bowie 2012).

Community dialogue and debate is a crucial aspect of community problem-solving. According to the Urban Art Projects Company (UAPCompany), “an artwork's ability to delight, challenge, enrage, explain, beautify and tell stories may also prompt discussion among those at the site and with others who have visited it” (“Public Art- What is the Point?”
An example of community debate sparked by a work of public art can be seen in 1981 in Federal Plaza, New York City, USA. There, sculptor Richard Serra installed Tilted Arc, a 120-foot long and 12-foot high curved wall of raw steel that bisected the walking space of the plaza, causing passers-by to have to engage with the piece in order to circumvent the massive structure in order to get to their destination.

Serra cites this as the point of the sculpture; “the viewer becomes aware of himself and of his movement through the plaza. As he moves, the sculpture changes” (“Richard Serra’s Tilted Arc”). The site-specific art drew substantial criticism, mainly from the plaza employees. Protests for the sculpture’s removal began almost immediately after its installment. Public hearings ran for eight years before the decision was made to relocate the wall. Serra appealed the verdict as he believed that the wall was site-specific and that to remove it from the site is to destroy it. He stated that he would remove his name from the sculpture if it was relocated. Regardless, in 1989, federal workers cut Tilted Arc into three pieces and brought it to a scrap metal yard (Public Delivery 2018). While the dialogue may not always be positive, public art has the potential to generate a conversation in a community.

Public art is also able to give an identity not only to the physical location where it is installed, but to the people who surround it as well. The Arts Partnership, a nonprofit in North Dakota, USA that works to support local art and artists states that “public art invites us to see our community and ourselves in a new light, and it does it in a way that is accessible to all because it exists in the public sphere. Public art is not about gatekeeping; rather, it is about taking down the gates and inviting all to see, learn, appreciate and grow” (Val 2018). There are many examples of public art that give an identity to a specific city, such as iconic pieces including Make Way For Ducklings statues in Boston, the LOVE sculpture in Philadelphia, and the Cloud Gate in Chicago, Illinois, informally referred to as the “Chicago Bean.”
This art can generate immense significance to the community members that they share their location with. According to the President of The Arts Partnership, “These pieces of art matter because they have significance to their communities. They engage residents and tourists. They become places where people gather. They are destinations in and of themselves. They can be the introductory element that leads businesses and industry to investigate and invest in a community” (Val 2018). The LOVE sculpture in Philadelphia, which references the city’s motto of brotherly love, has come to symbolize the city. The Inquirer newspaper in Philadelphia states that “the sculpture has appeared in Visit Philadelphia marketing material since, popping up on everything from stamps and jewelry to T-shirts and everyday items.... So as much as it's a work of art, it's also become somewhat of an ad for the city itself” (Ao 2018).

Social and political agendas and commentary are often expressed through public art. Landscape architect Elizabeth Umbanhowar states that “public art is both the manifestation of the ideals of a democratic society and also the site of profound contention. As a result, the social and political agendas of individuals and groups often play a role in manipulating the site and content of public art to align with specific moral or aesthetic values” (Umbanhowar 2015). An example of this can be seen in the defacement of a public memorial done in 1991.
by artist David Černý. Born in Prague, Czech Republic in 1967, Černý grew up during communism and was a student during the Velvet Revolution (Pearse 2017). A green military tank placed in front of a church in the Czech Republic was originally meant to serve as a WWII memorial in Prague. The tank, though, came to symbolize the Soviet-led occupation in Czechoslovakia in 1986, rather than a symbol of the liberation of Prague by the Red Army in 1945 (Horakova 2005). To mock this shift in ideology, Černý and a group of college friends painted the tank a gaudy pink color and added a massive middle finger sculpture on top of the turret of the tank.

This act was deemed an act of civil disobedience, and Černý was in turn arrested. Three days after his arrest, the Czechoslovak army repainted the tank green. However, ten days later, a group of parliament deputies repainted it pink again in support of Černý’s act. At this point, to end the dispute, the tank was relocated to a permanent home in a military museum south of Prague - where it remains pink (Horakova 2015).

Additionally, public art can serve as a focal point to increase community participation and engagement. As stated by Arts South Australia, “community involvement in public art projects can deliver a range of outcomes including increased community participation and engagement, opportunities for creative and practical skills development, and
increased social capital” (Arts South Australia 2006). Rather than just being created by artists drawing from community experience, many public art projects are created with community members’ contributions to the art (“Public Art” 2018). An example of this type of implementation can be seen on the 2012 Finding the Light Within mural created in West Philadelphia, PA. This community-painted mural aimed to address the abnormally high suicide rate of African American teenagers in the area. Finding the Light Within sheds light on youth suicide by providing a visual voice for survivors, attempters, families, and friends by creating a community around this issue. Rather than relying on the skills of the artists to complete the mural, organizers scheduled paint days for different groups of people affected by the issue. This is a direct way to engage citizens to address a specific topic and get them involved in the solution (“Finding the Light Within” 2018).

**Forms of Public Art**

Public art can be defined as art in any media that has been planned and executed with the intention of being staged in the physical public domain (“What is public art?” 2018). One of the most important aspects of the phrase public art is the fact that it is public - free and accessible to all. Public art projects greatly vary in how they are funded, the media they use, times they are accessible, and the messages that they send. Public art can be observed commonly in the form of traditional arts such as murals and sculptures, but can also include street performances, concerts, and festivals. Art projects can describe a concept, an idea, or approach to an issue with a clear message, wording, or imagery. They may be realistic and explicit, abstract and implicit, or both (“Public Art” 2018). Public art projects greatly vary in how they are funded, the media they use, times they are accessible, and the messages that they send.
“Public art is a part of public history, part of our evolving culture and our collective memory. It reflects and reveals our society and adds meaning to our cities.”

- The Association for Public Art
One form that public art may take is relatively permanent, including displays such as murals and sculptures. With these long-lasting and fixed forms of public art, site-specificity is an important aspect. According to the Guggenheim Museum in NYC, “site-specific or Environmental art refers to an artist’s intervention in a specific locale, creating a work that is integrated with its surroundings” (“Site-Specific/Environmental Art”). An example of this permanent, site-specific form of public art can be seen in the murals developed during the Pow!Wow! Events in Worcester, Massachusetts and around the world.

“The physical location and surroundings of an artwork are inseparable from its identity”

- Artsy

Figure 2–BABC: Pow!Wow! Murals
Photo Credits: http://www.powwowworcester.com/2018-murals/
Figure 2–8D: Pow!Wow! Murals
Photo Credits: http://www.powwowworcester.com/2018-murals/
Participatory public art-making is another form of public art. The Department of Play, a Boston-based collective, attempts to address urban privatization through serious play with the use of temporary play zones (TPZs). These TPZs “are designed to be collaborative, immersive, irresistible and aesthetically appealing to people of multiple ages, interests, and backgrounds.” Through these zones, “participants envision alternative futures, share life experiences and knowledge, and collaboratively create artifacts.” A 2015 exhibition called Boxtopia: Boston 2130, asked Boston residents to create their vision of Boston 115 years in the future using cardboard boxes. This project relied on participation from community members to image the future of their city in order to “share experiences and knowledge, and collaboratively create” (“Department of Play” 2018).

“We explore play as a common language conducive to sharing unconventional knowledge and new perspectives, as a medium for collective creativity, and as a tool to forge horizontal social relations.”

- Department of Play

Figure 2-9: Boxtopia done in Boston, Massachusetts by the Department of Play.
Another form that public art may take is through ephemeral displays, those of that are displayed for very short amounts of time. Ephemeral public art include flash mobs and pop-up musical or theatre performances and offer “opportunities to artists to engage the public without being concerned about building a permanent installation” (“Temporary Public Art”). Other purposes of ephemeral art include creating public awareness for time-sensitive issues or temporarily beautifying a location. A standout example of this form of public art can be seen through the work of Balloonski, a balloon artist who creates balloon street art “for the unsuspecting public who needs a boost of color in the middle of their grey existence” (“Buster Balloon Caldwell”). Balloonski’s pieces can be both standalone and interactive with their environment.

“[Temporary public art] may benefit a particular cause; pique public awareness of an important or timely issue; or simply add momentary beauty to a site”

- Regional Arts and Culture Council

Figure 2-10AB: Artist: Balloonski Photo Credit: http://www.powwowworcester.com/2018-murals/
Post-Communist Transition State

The communist regime gripped Albania from 1945 to 1991, and many Albanians were subjected to hard labor, sent to prison or internment camps, or put to death. By 1990, there were approximately 40,000 people in forced labor camps and 26,000 people in jails, as well as thousands who were killed throughout the rule of the communist regime (Woodcock 2016). The Spaç Prison was one of the most gruesome, combining both hard labor and isolation. Terror and fear were promulgated by an extensive secret police service, called the Sigurimi. In Life is War, author Shannon Woodcock notes that, “in every apartment block was an informant for the Sigurimi who monitored and reported on visitors, conversations and relationships” (Woodcock 2016). One common expression used in Albania is that “the walls have ears” denoting that even speaking with friends and family members could be dangerous, particularly if someone criticized the Communist Party. Throughout the long run of the regime, some Albanians became complicit with the regime by joining the Sigurimi. Lack of food, job security, and overall poverty led to a rising number of informants, who were often paid per denunciation (Chodownik 2018). Despite the brutality of the regime, many Albanians remember it in a favorable light: in a 2015 survey by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe on the perceptions of the communist regime, 49% of the respondents said that it was a good idea, just poorly implemented (OSCE 2016).

After the communist regime in 1991, perceptions of the regime were passed down through the generations depending on the experience each individual or family unit had during the dictatorship. Postmemory, a term coined by Marianne Hirsch, describes the “relationship that the generation after bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before” (Hirsch 2008). During the communist regime in Albania under Hoxha, not only were physical, historical sites destroyed, but those executed were often buried in secret, preventing living relatives from filling the gap in their history with any knowledge of how these people lost their lives (Amy 2018). In considering the idea of post catastrophic mourning, Dr. Lori Amy, Professor of Cultural Studies and a scholar of trauma theory, says “the work of mourning allows us to bear witness to the past... and attain a critical frame of reference through which the past can be viewed in the present” (Amy 2018). Doing this then allows the people mourning to understand how or why those events happened, and allow to “turn to the futures we have to make” (Amy 2018). Dr. Amy suggests that in Albania, mourning will bring what is unconscious to the consciousness such as the stories that are often not told as well as to “embody the losses that must be acknowledged” which can be done through many different mediums including art (Amy 2018).
In trying to open a dialogue to discuss these memories, having trust within a community whether it be a town, state, or an entire country, is important to addressing and fixing issues in the community. In its most basic terms, trust is defined as the “assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something” (Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary 2018). Trust affects humans on all different levels including “societal, institutional, organizational, relational, and personal” (Matthews 2016). In the context of Albania, there have been points through the transition period after communist rule where trust has been an issue. A survey was done by the United Nations Development Programme on the Trust in Governance in Tirana, Albania and found that the five out of the thirteen domestic institutions have over “50% of public trust” where the judicial system was ranked as “the most corrupt” by 36% of the respondents (United Nations Development Programme 2017). The UNDP does say the trust is increasing but at a slow rate. In 2016, some of the files from the Secret Police in Albania were released. However, the daughter of Gentiana Sula, an Albanian who was part of the student movement in the early 1900s, asked her mother “is it worth it going that deep?” (Ristic 2018). Although opening the files has been revealing for some specific families that were persecuted, Sula say the society “needs to open up” and that “there is constant denial” (Ristic 2018). She says further that the younger generation should know about this too in the sense of being accountable for doing something wrong (Ristic 2018). These issues of not being very transparent and the unwillingness to face this past have been creating a mistrust in the country. With that, public art can be a medium in order to help bridge this unwillingness and help continue to build trust.

Public art has been utilized in post-communist societies as a means of collaborative political engagement. According to Izabel Galliera, “in the post-communist environment, socially engaged art projects had a relevant role to play in the shaping of a democratic notion of civil society...in post-socialist contexts, social capital has been used by artists and curators as a vital means for communication and action” (Galliera 2018). For some, it can be difficult to talk about the past, but it can also be a way of rebuilding trust and allow for self-reflection. For example, artist Christian Boltanski whose Jewish father escaped deportation during the German occupation in France created a public art piece near the Berlin Wall. Boltanski created this piece of art in a vacant lot between two other houses. This vacant lot was significant as it was bombed in 1945 by the Allied forces during the Holocaust. Boltanski gathered information from local residents and individuals who lived in the house including their name, professions, and residence dates (Quintais 2013). These were put onto plaques and put on the buildings to the left and right in the vacant lot, as can be seen below in Figure 5. Ernst Van Alphen, Professor of Literary Studies at Leiden University, remarks that the art piece doesn’t directly provide information about the Holocaust, but puts “the observer in a certain aspect of
the Holocaust” (Van Alphen 1997). John Czaplicka, a cultural historian, notes that the incorporation of residents’ documents points to a sense of mourning: “not a sense of loss, but a recognition of loss should be the result” (Czaplicka 1995). This art piece incorporates the individual in what is described as a “Rememoration” of the past and allowing the transition generation to talk about “an urban postmemory” (Quintais 2013). This self-reflection can have the ability to start a dialogue as it provides a new understanding.

In Life is War, the author says “meaning is made through sincerely knowing oneself in the human context of family and friends,” and that documenting history and having a conversation about the past can be an “act of remembering which makes meaning and community” (Woodcock 2016). Public art can be a medium to provide this conversation and, ultimately, meaning.

Figure 2-11: Example side of the Missing House by Christian Boltanski
Photo Retrieved from: https://tinyurl.com/y8pfhgax
Public Art Under the Communist Regime

One main ideal in Albanian socialist realist art was “the Worker” which signified the laborer who would work tirelessly in service of the cause. The beginning of social realist art in Albania was marked by Enver Hoxha’s 1966 speech entitled Cultural and Ideological Revolution where he describes the aim of the revolution (Oei 2015). In his speech, he describes the aim of the revolution to be to implant the “socialist ideology deep in the consciousness of all the working people and eradicate the old reactionary ideologies” (Cami 1980). The worker imagery was launched in the Soviet Union in Russia in 1934 at the Soviet Congress by Maxim Gorky. Early images of the worker were modeled on a Russian miner named Alexey Stakhanov who embodied the traits that described the worker: “healthy, muscular, selfless, and enthusiastic” (Ingram 2018). This ideal was reflected in public art at the time as propaganda for the party to show that those who adhered to the ideals put forward through “the Worker” would be protected by the state (Hoxha 2017). Figure 12, 13, and 14 show examples of socialist realism art by Albanian artists:
Social Realist art was considered “indispensable” to the socialist project of creating the ideal society (Isto 2015). In Hoxha’s speech, he describes art to be at a “high ideological level” but still “reflect our reality and current situation” (Oei 2015). During the Cultural Revolution, Hoxha’s ideological shifts affected the artists of the time: the artists that adhered to the previous ideology were often jailed even though they were often “conformists and followed what the party dictates” (Hoxha 2017).

In addition to these depictions of virile young men, the “emancipation” of women was also represented in socialist realist art under Enver Hoxha’s rule (Kushi 2015). During the communist regime, Hoxha put forth policies regarding women’s rights that “liberated” women by giving them the same rights as men which was the “right to slave children, and to slave day and night both at home and for the state” (Woodcock 2016). Scholars say this created a “paradox,” where women may have felt free and equal in the workforce, but were confined when at home (Kushi 2015).

One example is Zef Shoshi’s 1969 painting entitled The Turner, which can be seen in Figure 14. This painting depicts a woman working in a factory, wearing work clothing and operating machinery. What is not seen is that the woman will go home and continue to work by taking care of the household. When asked if there is a political message to painting of The Turner, Shoshi stated that it was tethered to a certain politics at the time, but sees the politics as “separate” form the artpiece: “I worked with the themes that the time demanded” (Hoxha 2017). The artist Shoshi also created a portrait of Enver Hoxha during the regime and describes how out of the regime came some “truly valuable works” (Hoxha 2017). A portrait he did of Enver Hoxha on the 1970s is very famous and is pictured in many history books today (Muka 2017). The painting of The Turner can be seen below in figure 15:
One main example of Socialist Realist art is the mosaic entitled “The Albanians” above the National History Museum in Skanderbeg Square depicted above in Figure 15. It is aimed to tell the story of Albania fighting against “invasion and occupation throughout the centuries” (Harrison 2017). This is depicted in the mosaic showing occupation first by the Romans, then the Byzantine and the Turkish Ottoman Empire which is the period where Skanderbeg became the national hero of Albania. Shoshi brings up the mosaic in Skanderbeg Square as a perfect example of a piece that “served an ideology,” but is “wholly realist that you could not label as socialist” (Hosha 2017).

Another example by Arben Basha, titled I Will Write, can be seen to the right (Figure 17).

Basha intended to paint the female as a “powerful witness” as if looking at the country and writing about what is happening (Hoxha 2017). Basha painted “I Will Write” in bright colors, consistent with the Party's aesthetic standards. Basha was accused of “hermeticism” which is a religion pertaining to the writings of Hermes Trismegistus. Since this was a religion, the painting wouldn't be displayed in the 70s since the party thought the meaning wasn't clear. Basha states that “the Party always wanted the meaning to be clear” (Hoxha 2017).
Current Public Art in Albania

There are many examples of public art in Albania, differing in form, function, and sanctioned versus not sanctioned.

Edi Rama, the current Prime Minister since 2013, was the mayor of Tirana from 2000-2011. Rama was a professor of art and an artist himself before pursuing politics. During the time of the communist regime, many buildings were drab, poorly maintained, and painted grey (Laura 2016).

When Rama came to office in 2013, there was “widespread civil unrest which was the result of a complete collapse of the economy: the capitalist shock therapy applied to Albania in the early 1990s led to a mushrooming of Ponzi investment schemes, which, once collapsed, left the majority of the population bankrupt.” In an attempt to “rejuvenate the city,” Rama instructed the paintings of buildings from their dilapidated gray to more vibrant and bright colors (van Gerven Oei 2015). Rama noted, “Once the buildings were colored, people started to get rid of the heavy fences of their shops. In the painted roads, we had 100% tax collection from the people, while tax collection was normally 4%” (Farago, 2016). However, it is hard to depict exactly if this was really effective; moreover, Rama faced criticism that he “failed to address the more pressing problems of Tirana” (Ugc 2012).

When one walks around the streets of Tirana, it doesn’t take long to observe electrical boxes decorated with street art. Most of these contain references to American movies, popular personalities, video-game characters, and other types of pop-culture. One of these examples, (figure R.3) contains a reference to the Facebook page of what translates to Decoration Company, part of the Tirana Municipality, implying that these art pieces are financed by the local government. When asked for more information, the organization denied it. None of this project is documented on the official municipality website. According to Genci Permeti, during a discussion with the students, an accomplished Albanian filmmaker and documentarian, municipality workers assisted artists in making these artworks and maintain and preserve such artworks periodically.
Figure 2-18A: Albert Einstein graffiti, on Rruga Ibrahim Rugova

Figure 2-18B: An electrical box in Bulevardi Gjergj Fishta

Figure 2-18C: The dude graffiti
However, there seems to be tension between city-sanctioned art and that created unsanctioned (and sometimes uninvited and illegally on private property) by local artists. As a diametrically opposed movement, there is the previously mentioned Çeta—a group of anonymous artists who use their anonymity to comment on their “disdain for the structures of neoliberal politics, corruption, and capitalism” and they “aim to send a powerful message to the public, as well as to the political elite that rules the country” (The Balkanista 2016). One example of their work is “Vojo Kushi is Still Alive” which was based on a socialist-realist painting by Sali Shijaku that depicted the Albanian-Yugoslav partisan Guerilla, Vojo Kushi.

Figure 2-19: Çeta’s graffiti criticizing irresponsible government spending

Figure 2-20: The original Shijaku painting
Kushi is famously depicted in his last act; after his comrades were killed in a long firefight against the occupying Italian Fascists, he stormed out to the opposition’s military tanks and was gunned down as he threw a grenade into one of the fascist tanks (Shijaku, 1969). Çeta depicted the Italian tank as a Jaguar with Edi Rama’s license plate number fueled by the Mussolini quote, “Perfect fascism will only be achieved when there is a marriage between corporation and state.” Their anger towards the corporatization of the state, as exemplified by public money being used to buy a luxury car instead of being used to make an improvement on Albania, was made clear through this work, that was subsequently taken down. This action of covering up subversive art would be repeated on other works: “A Lecture on Punishment” was a response to the multiple commissioned public artworks by the municipality of Tirana.

Although there is no official interpretation of this work, one can infer that it stresses the difference in street art and beautification; the duality of containing a message versus simply improving aesthetics. Çeta sees commissioned art as a way to distract the citizens from the issues of living there and avoid dealing with the fundamental problems the city has yet to deal with (Raino 2016). Due to the fact that the these commissioned works of public art tend to have little political undertone, they are viewed as a different type of propaganda (personal interview, Nov 9, 2018).
One of the most recent examples of a public art exhibition shown on May 8th, 2018 was “Even Walls Have Ears,” where testimonies and quotes of those who survived the communist regime are projected onto monuments and landmarks, across 6 cities in Albania, including Tirana. The installation is a multi-dimensional creation of the artist Alketa Xhafa-Mripa, a collective memory for those who were prosecuted, lost their freedom or lives in communist dictatorship prisons and camps (UNDP 2018); she aimed to use this presentation to expose topics that could not be mentioned during, and remain taboo even after communist regime fell (Mejdini 2018). This project is part of the “Remembrance to Heal and Prevent” project. The project supports the work of the Authority on Access to Information on the Former State Security Service (the Authority) to inform the Albanian public on communist crimes and promote democratic values of justice, truth and reconciliation. The project is supported by United Nations Development Programme, the Government of Italy, and the United States Embassy in Albania (UNDP 2018).

This project is also supported by local entities, such as the Authority on Access to Information on the Former State Security Service. The head of this organization, Ms. Gentiana Sula, states that “Through art, the project aims to familiarize and raise awareness among young people, communities and the public, with the legacy of the past” (UNDP 2018). A central aspect of this project is that its author attempts to subvert the idea of "art as a ‘narrow’ medium which is to be exposed only on conventional spaces such as museums, galleries, etc." (Dedja 2018) She proposes, instead, the use of urban space as an interactive collector, presenting this project as both performance and installation (Dedja 2018).

Figure 2-22: “Even Walls Have Ears” Exhibition
Our Sponsors

We worked in conjunction with two entities located in Tirana: OTTOonomy and the Academy of Arts. OTTOonomy, a non-governmental organization, aims to provide “a space for people in the Balkans to find common ground with each other, to develop relationships that create friendships, to embrace difference and handle conflicts peacefully, to work collaboratively across borders, and to reimagine futures of peace and possibility” (OTTOonomy 2018). The University of Arts at the University of Tirana is a public institution for performing, visual, and musical arts students. The school’s purpose is “to offer higher professional education and creative activities in the field of art and culture, to deepen the professional qualification of scientific specialist in the field of art and culture, as well as contribute to improving democracy and civilization standards” (Universiteti I Arteve 2008). For this project, we worked closely with students in the Fine Arts Department.

Our project was to develop a community dialogue through the use of art and understand the various ways that public art can be a medium to progress this dialogue. We hoped to allow space for an exchange of stories which has created a dialogue regarding how to address issues surrounding the memories from the communist regime.
OUR APPROACH TO FUN AND REFLECTION
Our Approach

Working with students and faculty from the Academy of Arts in Tirana, the goal of our project is to explore to what extent public art and serious fun can be used to build trust and open dialogue in the University of Tirana campus, considering the potential of expanding to the greater Tirana area. To achieve this goal, we have identified the following objectives:

- Determine the effectiveness of pop-up activities on communication.
- Identify student perceptions of public art and its function.
- Explore collaboration among art students at the academy.
- Participate and make sense of discussions with experts and students.
Implement Pop-Up Activities and Determine the Effectiveness of These Activities on Communication

Creation of Pop-Up Exhibitions

We created a cohesive four-day plan of pop-up activities, intended to be trialed once during our time in Albania, that simultaneously introduced new activities while still creating some continuity with previous activities. See figure 3-1 for activities schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Day 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Minute Portrait</td>
<td>1 Line Portrait</td>
<td>Circle Drawing</td>
<td>Peace Crane Origami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finish the Story</td>
<td>Shadow Puppets</td>
<td>Finish the Story Graphic Novel</td>
<td>Finish the Story Graphic Novel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cookie Decorating</td>
<td>Cookie Decorating</td>
<td></td>
<td>Circle Drawing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3-1: Schedule of pop-up events*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pop-up Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Prompts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Sugar Cookie</td>
<td>• Distribute basic sugar cookies and basic icing tools to decorate.</td>
<td>This activity attracts visitors and provides easy way to create an art item that participant can take with them (and consumed).</td>
<td>• What was the process of creating your cookie design?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decoration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| *Finish the Story*  | • Lay out a blank sheet of A4 paper with instructions for the game.  
• Invite each participant to add a single line, or sentence, to the story until someone declares the story is “finished.”                               | This activity Encourages cooperative writing and freedom of expression through anonymous writing. By the end, the story should be cohesive from beginning to end, and function like a short storybook. | • What was it like to create a sentence based off of previous sentences you had no control over?  
• Did you focus more on your individual sentence or making sure your sentence followed the context of the story that was already there?  
• What were the steps you took to create a sentence?                                                                                                                                 |
| *Finish the Story*  |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Graphic             | Stories that were created from the finish the story activity were set out on a table.  
• Participants were invited to create either a single drawing, comic strip, or series of pictures to represent the written story through hand drawn pictures and graphics. | This provides continuity to the previous activity. It allows for the same free expression but in a different medium, catering to art students more effectively.                                     | • How did the story written shape your graphic?  
• What were the steps you took to create this graphic?                                                                                                                                               |
| *Shadow Puppet Art* | • We set up a table with materials including cardstock, markers, scissors, bamboo sticks, and tape.  
• Provide examples of shadow puppets.  
• Provide a shadow theater—a cardboard box with wax paper in a cut out window of the box set up for the participants to perform improvised skits with the puppets they made. | This activity provides the means for the participant to embody a feeling, idea, or personality as a puppet. It also allows participants to create ephemeral stories about the puppets and freely express ideas in a way probably unexplored by most participants. | • What character did you produce?  
• What were the thoughts and steps that led to you create this puppet?                                                                                                                                   |
Sugar cookie decorating activity
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pop-up Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Prompts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Minute Portraits** | This activity was in a “draw or be drawn” setup. A 1-minute portrait often leads to the creation of funny and abstract portraits. Volunteers can choose to be drawn, choose to draw another participant (including us), or both. Participants were able to take their drawing.  
• Provide pencils, markers, pens, paper and a clipboard  
• Optional: Space to hang finished drawings to create a display | To create a space for communication through art as a medium.                                                                                                                                                  | • How did it feel to be drawn?  
• What were your thoughts when the artist was drawing you?  
• What were your thoughts when you were asked to keep the portrait?                                                                                                                                 |
| **One Line Portraits** | This activity was in a “draw or be drawn” setup. A 1-line portrait is a portrait of someone drawn in one continuous line without the artist picking up the drawing utensil, often creating funny or abstract portraits. Volunteers can choose to be drawn, choose to draw another participant (including us), or both. After documenting the portraits, participants were able to take their drawing.  
• Provide pencils, markers, pens, paper and a clipboard  
• Optional: Space to hang finished drawings to create a display | To create a conversation between artist and subject in a challenging but fun way. Like the previous activity, it helps create a visual artifact that can be used as a display. | • How did it feel to be drawn?  
• Did you feel exposed?  
• If you participated in the one-minute portraits, how did the portrait make you feel with the different style of drawing?                                                                                                                                 |
| **Circle Drawing** | This activity required a group of 3 or more people to participate at the same time.  
• Set timer for 2 minutes  
• Instruct participants to draw whatever comes to mind during the 2 minutes  
• Once the time was up, each participant passed their drawing to the next person in the circle.  
• Set timer to 1 minute, proceed with drawings  
• This process continued until each participant received their initial drawing. | To encourage and create a space for collaboration through creation of art.                                                                                                                                 | • How did it feel to spend time creating a piece and then have to give it away?  
• How did you feel about other people appropriating your art?  
• Did you still feel ownership of the art when you got it back?                                                                                                                                 |
| **Wish Crane Origami** | • Provide square sheet of paper  
• Instruct participants to write a wish or dream on the paper.  
• Describe and demonstrate steps for crane origami and make sure participants are following along.  
• Finished cranes can be displayed at the pop-up station | To create piece of art that has personal meaning through paper folding for a 3D representation of a life goal.                                                                                             | • If you were a crane, where would you fly to?  
• What might you see on your journey?  
• (After explaining cranes’ nesting habits) How do you feel about the idea of returning back to a location like the cranes do when they nest?                                                                 |
Methods to Evaluate Pop-Up Activities

Basic criteria to evaluate the pop-up activities included gathering participant demographic data including age, gender, and major. Data was collected by team members asking the participants for this information, with their consent, to be recorded in a logbook. Participant reactions, comments, and other personal observations were recorded through note-taking.

We also occasionally gathered reflective participant interviews after the pop-up activities. We reached out to some student participants after conclusion of popup activities for a semi-structured discussion/interview; their responses were audio-recorded and transcribed. This is the main approach to providing a sense of which activities were most effective and engaging to the students.

Questions:

• Can you tell me your thoughts about this [activity]?
• I heard that X is true/happens. Have you heard of this?
• How does [activity] make you feel?
• (Depending on if the activity was collaborative or not) What was the process of collaboration like?
• What do you want to see out of the pop-ups in the future?
Photo Documentation

The physical pieces of art that were created from the pop-up activities are photo documented as part of gathering and analyzing data. If the participant wanted to take the piece home, the piece was photographed before being taken. However, most often the participants would leave their pieces of art and these were photographed after the event was concluded.

Conducting Workshops with Students

In order to further explore and understand the students’ perspectives and ideas about art, society, and politics in Tirana, workshops were conducted in weekly meetings with our Albanian student peers. These workshops allowed us to form deeper relationships with the students as well as developing better comprehension of how trust and lack thereof affects them personally.

Skanderbeg Square Mural Activity

The prompt for this activity was that the students were hired to recreate the mural above the history museum in Skanderbeg Square. What would they create? For this activity, students were given paper and drawing utensils. The point of this activity was to be able to understand how students would utilize a space for public art in a heavy foot traffic area, and how important historical and political context is to that location and the art it contains is to them. It is important to note the permanent nature of this art piece, and the fact of it culminating the historical triumphs that occurred in Albania. Students were given a chance to explain their drawings which were analyzed for themes and messages.

Skanderbeg Square Statue Activity

The prompt for this activity was the following: if the Skanderbeg statue in Skanderbeg Square was to be recreated by the students, what would they create? For this activity, students were given a slab of clay. The point of this activity was again to be able to understand not only how students would utilize a space for permanent public art in a heavy foot traffic area, but how they would replace a statue of one
The Skanderbeg Statue by Paisley Haskell
of their national heroes. A statue replicating Skanderbeg has a very intense political connotation, so we were curious as to if they would maintain the political theme and/or nationalism. Students were given the chance to explain their sculptures which were analyzed for themes and messages.

Identify Students’ Perception on Public Art and its Function

In order to understand how the students view the art in Tirana, we conducted various activities with students in weekly meetings. These meetings happened in a classroom provided by the University of Arts. Some of these students were participants in previous pop-ups or acquaintances of those participants, others heard about the project before the pop-ups. Most students were some sort of arts major. More details about this subject group is given in the findings chapter.

Pile Sorting Activity

For this activity, students were shown a deck of cards that were colored printouts of different examples of public art around the city of Tirana including, but not limited to, graffiti, municipality-sanctioned electrical boxes, murals, and statues (see figure 3-2 through 3.4). The students were then asked to sort these cards into categories that made sense to them. After
Figure 3-4 and 3-5: The paper box model created for the workshop activity
they sorted the cards into categories, they were asked to explain why they sorted the cards the way that they did. The goal of this activity was to understand how the students view the public art in the city.

**Electricity Box Activity**

The prompt for this activity was that if the student had been asked to create one of the painted electricity boxes found all around Tirana, what would they create? For this activity, students were given paper that had been cut and folded in the shape of one of the electricity boxes (figures 3-4 and 3-5). The students then placed their recreation on a physical map of Tirana and were asked to both explain their choice of electricity box and location for their electricity box. The point of this activity was to be able to understand how students would utilize a space for public art in different areas of the city. As described in the background section under the section “Current Public Art in Albania,” there are over 500 electric boxes found all across Tirana. The difference for this activity is that the electric boxes were viewed as a form of beautification in public art, and we were curious whether they would try to attach political connotation to it or maintain the original themes.
Art students and WPI students working on the preliminary canvas design
Collaborative Preliminary Canvas Activity

This activity provided the means for the students to reflect on the idea of creating a public art display in the form of a canvas to hang in the halls of the University. The goal was to have them ideate designs and themes that would be represented in said display. To begin, students were asked to individually create a list of themes/ideas/topics they would want to include on the canvas. From here, participants were given paper and drawing utensils to individually draw out their idea for the canvas. Participants then had a chance to explain their drawings which were analyzed for themes and messages. Then, students were asked to collaboratively brainstorm a single idea for the canvas that combined some/all of everybody's individual designs. Once a final idea had been reached, students drew out their collaborative design on a large sheet of butcher paper. The students had a chance to explain why they chose to include or not include certain elements in the final design, which were then be analyzed for themes and messages.

Collaborative Final Canvas Activity

With permission from the Dean of the Academy, space for a 200x300cm canvas to be hung up in the Academy was granted. Using the design that was created in the mock-canvas activity as a base for the design, students again collaborated to create an idea for the final canvas. Once a final design had been agreed upon, students first sketched the design and then painted it on the canvas. The students had a chance to explain why they chose to include or not include certain elements in the final design, which were then be analyzed for themes and messages.
The usual setting for discussions in Tirana: a coffee shop
Interviews Focused on Collaboration

With permission from the students, interviews were conducted to better understand the process of collaboration that occurred among the students during the collaborative activities. Sample questions will include:

- How did you feel during the process of collaboration?
- How did it feel to arrive at one final idea after starting with many different ideas?
- How did the group handle any rising conflict?
The discussion with Sara Çapaliku on December 8th, 2018
Focus Group Discussion

In the beginning stages of our project, we discussed the issue of public trust with Dr. Lori Amy, Professor of Cultural Studies and the co-founder of OTTonomy, and a group of students from the University of Arts in the Fine Arts Department. The discussion focused on the students reflecting on ideas presented by Dr. Amy about memories of or knowledge about the communist regime, and discussion about its consequences in the present day Albania. Some of the topics included paying professors for good grades or losing a job for being a part of a specific political party.

For the conclusion of our field research, we organized a discussion on how the young generation of Albanians perceive the past, and, perhaps more importantly, how they see the future. This conversation was led by Sara Çapaliku, a non-profit and international development professional in the area of Youth Leadership and Professional Development, as she has experience talking about the past with youth as well as on the topic of youth education in Albania's past communist regime, collective memory, and legacy. This talk was not necessarily intended to establish historical accuracy, but instead to discuss the role of Albanian youth in the transitional period, how their memory of the past affects this role, and how addressing these topics can help in shaping the future of their country for the better. Some of the questions and topics to address included:

- What are the elements that we have inherited from that period of time [Post-Communist Transitional Period] and how can we deal with that?
- Do you see there's a difference between your parents generation and your generation?
Findings Relating Art, Trust, and Dialogue
General Findings

We strove to establish community dialogue and investigate how public art worked towards talking about and striving towards establishing community dialogue, and how public art can be used as a medium to communicate with each other. The research questions we were looking to address included:

- How do students who lived through the post-communist era see the troubled past?
- How can public art be used as a medium to further a dialogue and encourage reflection on the past, present, and future?
- What is the connection between using collaborative art and creating a dialogue to talk about public issues?

We explored these questions through three distinct mechanisms: pop-up activities for relationship building, workshop activities for deeper reflection on the past, present, and future, and discussions with experts and students on the focus of postmemory in the current post-transition era. In the beginning of our fieldwork, during pop-up activities, we continued to develop a relationship with the students through activities that were focused on building trust through serious fun. These activities created a relaxed environment where students could introduce themselves and express their thoughts or emotions on the art work or any other topics. These activities also opened a path to creating dialogue, consistent with what the organization Duncairn Centre for Culture and Arts calls “an unfolding process of transforming and deepening understanding of others and ourselves” (Community Dialogue n.d.). These relationships and the emerging dialogue were helpful as we moved into activities that had more overt meaning related to memory, post-memory, hopes for the future.

We conducted the Electric Box, Wish Crane, Skanderbeg Statue and Mural workshops at least once with the participants outlined on Table 2. During these sessions, we introduced prompts that stimulated more introspection and reflection about trust, the function of public art, and the relationship between the two. Although unplanned, the initial dialogue and relationships created from the pop-up activities were creating a trusting environment that allowed us to ask more thoughtful questions (outlined in the approach chapter) about Albanian students’ lives and memories. We asked participants to reflect on their pop-up and workshop experiences with regard to their perception of public art and thoughts while doing the activity. These opened a dialogue of deeper conversations and deepened the trust between the students and our team.
Serious fun as a means of trust-building

We conducted eight pop-up activities over the course of three days. Approximately 20-25 of participants, most of whom were university students, took part in one or more activities throughout each day. Although there was a variety of participants, we generally noticed that the gender ratio was 60:40 (Female:Male). Many students self-reported their majors, and we found that students from the Academy of Arts mixed from different departments including fine arts, theatre, and music. We were moderately surprised to see law and business at the pop-ups, but it appeared that they only interacted with our team and each other.

Students often participated in cycles for the art pop-ups and workshops, depending on their schedules. The participants listed below are the ones that participated in interviews and came to the workshops and meetings throughout the term. The first five participants were the ones we consider to be our core group. Participants 6-10 were general participants who only came to one or two of the meetings. The participants that dropped in to the pop-up activities are not referenced by name as solely observational data was gathered from their participation.

The pop-ups all shared a spirit of creative play: they were minimally structured, simple, open-ended, and highly imaginative. Upon conducting our pop-up activities, we found that this type of serious play allowed for reflection and dialogue between the students and us, along with building trust. That said, while the pop-up activities did not directly address topics of trust, they helped generate relationships not only between the Albanian students and our team, but also among Albanian students themselves. Our formal and informal interviews revealed that there is little inter-disciplinary contact among students at the University, nor is there much blending between art majors. The students we worked with were predominantly first years, some of whom were previously acquainted with one another through first year courses in general art courses as well as sculpture and color theory courses. Reflecting on the pop-ups, Paola welcomed the fact that, “I got to meet new people, I got to work for something fun [instead of just] doing those school routines, those boring ones...We should do this more because when we grow old, what will we remember? Our boring lessons?” (November 18, 2018). She later followed up by saying “we should do more of these activities to bring others together to be more sociable, and to help each other in any way, because it affects everything for our [well] being”(November 18, 2018). Kristi stated that “previously it was like monotony (sic) and it was a new thing, a new activity here at school. Also, I made new friends and I met people” (November 19, 2018).
Pop-Ups
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant:</th>
<th>Gender:</th>
<th>Age:</th>
<th>Major</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Mei</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18 years old</td>
<td>Graphic Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Paola</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19 years old</td>
<td>Graphic Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Kristi</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19 years old</td>
<td>Graphic Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Skerdjon</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20 years old</td>
<td>Painting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Klea</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18 years old</td>
<td>Fashion Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: Marino</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19 years old</td>
<td>Painting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7: Nadia</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18 years old</td>
<td>Multimedia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8: Klodiana</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19 years old</td>
<td>Multimedia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9: Edison</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19 years old</td>
<td>Graphic Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10: Rosie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19 years old</td>
<td>Graphic Arts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-1: Participants
Along with building trust, pop-up activities also encouraged participants to “step outside of their comfort zone.” This was particularly evident during the circle drawing activity, where participants were asked to hand their drawings off to another artist to add to or complete. When handing off their individual drawing, students had to challenge themselves to release their work, and overcoming this obstacle appeared to catalyze a process of being more open to discussion after the activity finished. Klea described the feeling of giving away her drawing as “scary,” speaking to the stress of giving away authorship and unifying with the rest of the group as they took the next person’s drawing and added to it themselves. We noticed this unification when we each saw our final drawings after they were added to by the rest of the group. This relates to the idea of trust in one another by taking the leap to pass our drawings on. Even though students were reluctant to pass their individual work onto someone else, we noticed that they generally enjoyed what the final picture looked like.

**Collaboration: A New Concept**

One of our most significant findings was the extent to which participants in the pop-ups and focus group have had little to no experience with collaboration. While they do have experience giving personal critiques on individual work, many had never completed a collaborative project from start to finish. This surprised us and revealed that, due to our extensive experience with project-based learning at WPI, we had assumed that the Tirana University students would also be familiar with group processes. According to a study on collaboration by Cogswell Polytechnical College, “the larger the creative team, the larger the art project, the greater the value for the individual with an open mindset, who is ready to learn, expand, connect and succeed.” (Dobos 2017).

The lack of experience with collaboration was starkest during the preliminary design exercise, when disagreement arose among participants. The nature of the conflict was not confrontational: it occurred because of differing opinions on what the final canvas should look like. The first group of female students wanted to portray a timeline that represented the past, represented by a brick wall, moving into the future with lots of colors and nature images.
Creative Process of Canvas
The second group of female students wanted to create a tribute to Albania including the Albanian eagle and national heroes.

The quarrel resulted in the first group of students working on the idea for the collaborative canvas, while the second group moved away and stopped participating because they felt their ideas weren’t being included when deciding on the final design. Yet another student began to draw on the canvas before everyone had come to an agreement on its final design. The disagreement over the topic for the canvas resolved itself when we mediated a conversation between the students and helped them reach an agreement: the design of the canvas would have to be versatile enough to be able to encompass a variety of ideas. On the process of reaching one final idea amidst disagreement, Paola stated that the process was “kind of hard because...it’s my first time [collaborating] and I don’t know how it works because everyone is different, has different ideas, and it’s kinda hard to get to [a single] idea” (November 27, 2018). Mei corroborated this point, saying “it was weird cause I didn’t expect it, then it felt good because we had a common point of view, like common interests” (December 1, 2018).

In terms of exploring further collaboration, we found that students were interested in incorporating collaborative activities in the future:

"I think we should collaborate more. We got to know each other [and because of that] we are more connected. Because we are humans. We should care about, because one human alone can’t survive. We should be more comparative [cooperative]"

- Paola (November 28, 2018).

“To have a chance to show yourself to someone that’s not gonna judge you, that’s not gonna make an ugly face about it, was nice. It was really comfortable to talk to someone about it and to actually hear more and get more positive vibes about wanting to know about the topic even more. We might have different points of view but we still try to create it with our own capabilities about it. We might speak differently but it has the same message”

- Mei (December 1, 2018).

“You learn to mix ideas and when you mix ideas you get better ones from the people you’re working with. From that you get the best idea”

Klea (November 27, 2018).
Students Collaborating
Views on a troubled past, turbulent present, and uncertain future

Our study affirmed the view of Sara Çapaliku, a non-profit and international development professional, that the younger generation of Albanians has a “muddied” view of the past and their place in the post-communist transitional period (Çapaliku, November 26, 2018). This muddied view pertains to the fact that when we asked about their lives, many of the students said their parents gave them little to no information on their experiences during communism. However, in the small-group workshop activities, we observed that there is awareness of the past and a desire to portray and address the issues they believe this troubled past has left on them personally and the broader population. We note that in our discussions about Albania’s brutal past, we were not probing for whether a participant had an historically accurate understanding of the past. Rather, we were more interested in how participants expressed their understanding of the past and how that understanding had been generated, i.e. through the lens of family stories (whether accurate or not), from lessons at school, or from their own personal research, etc.

We hoped that the workshop activities would generate conversations about memory and post-memory and found, in a few instances, that it did. While pile-sorting, Paola identified a group of artworks that she described as “history-related public art” (Figure 4-1). When asked to clarify, she explained: “I think that these are all connected to history because in Albania we didn’t have freedom of speech, like how in this one, the human is controlled by a puppet” (December 5, 2018) referring to Figure 4-1. She also said that this type of message is critical to the function of public art, as she stated that public art should be “useful” and is “not for everyone to just pass by” (December 5, 2018).
Figure 4-1: Human puppet graffiti
Photo Credit: Robert Hersh
During the same activity, we asked Paola to comment on the Western Pop-Art imagery contained in many of the Tirana electrical boxes, and she justified the importance of those images (Figure 4-2) by saying:

“When we were in communism we were very isolated from the world. We tend to explore different views of the country to live like that. So we in Albania like to see the West more because they are so free,” Paola (December 5, 2018).

Her comments reveal an awareness of the impact the dictatorship had on the mentality of many Albanians, and she made a connection to this past and the current public “art” on the electrical boxes. This same public art, while regarded as entertaining to some students, is often derided as inconsequential decoration. Art student Mei compared this type of beautifying public art to makeup saying, “you can put makeup on her and make her look pretty, but she could be a horrible person ... she might look pretty on the outside but she is still ugly on the inside” (December 5, 2018). Similarly, in the Skenderbëj Statue activity, Mei expressed the desire to put the statue of an elephant. Her rationale for this decision was the need to express the idea that “Elephants have a good memory ... Elephants never forget,” implying the need to remember the past.

Many students showed great interest and desire to explore ideas related to the future of Albania and their part in it. We observed this during the early stages of the creation of the collaborative canvas. During a brainstorming session when participants were asked to list ideas to be portrayed on the final canvas, more than half the students listed "past versus future," "present versus future," or a similar idea. We saw examples of this transition, or duality, between time periods, in a concept canvas design (Figure 4-3) by Jozefina, an 18-year-old female graphics major. Her design shows the Albanian people, represented by the stick figure,
rising up from the traumatic past, represented by a bloody river. The figure is shown fearful of reaching for the future, represented by the window in the sky haunted by unidentified shadowy figures.

Another illustration of the theme of a troubled, or confusing past came from an 18-year-old female painting major, Dea, who explained that her drawing was made to address a misconception that women were emancipated/liberated during the communist time. She said that she does not believe women were really treated as equally or fairly during the communist regime. She said that while they had to go out and work like their husbands, they were still expected to do the “womanly duties” like cooking, cleaning, and taking care of children (November 22, 2018).

We found evidence of students being inclined to explore their sense of place in contemporary Albanian society, as well as attempting to address the many issues they see in it, such as corruption and injustice. One participant mentioned the issue of corruption by claiming that “money controls everything in the country, and money can let you do illegal things and buy your way out of ... trouble” Skerdjon (November 22, 2018), implying that it’s difficult to effect change or do anything to address this problem. Participant 2 reinforced a perception of a closed-minded Albanian mentality by claiming that “[she] wants to be open-minded, because everyone is kind of conservative and it’s kind of a problem.”

Figure 4-3: A concept drawing made during the ideation stage
claims that this perceived conservative mindset prevents "[Albanians from] seeing new perspectives." (November 28, 2018).

To summarize, we found that art can be a means of creating a dialogue about the past, present, and future, and can allow participants to grapple with a difficult past. This relates to examples of public art such as Finding the Light Within and Even Walls Have Ears, where public art has helped people to understand and heal from troubled past events.

Peace Crane: Prospects and Destiny

The Origami Peace Crane activity generated numerous heartfelt conversations about the future. This activity included a square piece of paper and a marker. On the inside of the paper, participants were asked to write a personal wish or goal for themselves. They then followed a set of instructions to fold the piece of paper into a crane, which in turn hid the wish or goal that they wrote. In follow-up interviews, we asked individuals to imagine themselves as a crane. We asked where they would fly and where they would make a nest – noting that cranes always return to the same place to nest. Mei responded by saying

“I still haven’t created my nest. Like if it were here, I wouldn’t choose to come back, I’d destroy the nest and build it somewhere else”
Mei (December 1, 2018).

Her reference to wanting to “build the nest somewhere else” echoes the exodus of young people from Albania: A study conducted by Emerging Europe shows that “70% of young Albanians want to leave the country” and since 2012 there has been “an increasing number of young people willingly leaving Albania to study abroad and later find a job in their host country” (Shah 2018).
Origami Activity
Mei also reflected on her sense that the future is not ready as a result of an uncertain present:

“we still don’t have a generation that could be considered civilized” and “the time still hasn’t come when we could be properly developed” Mei (December 1, 2018).

Kristi echoed Mei’s response by saying

“Since some countries offer for better opportunities, I am considering creating a new home” Kristi (November 27, 2018).

However, Kristi also reflected on her sense of hope for the future of Albania by saying:

“I think we have a lot of potential. I love the history and everything and even though we have a negative part in our history, the fact that there were so many countries trying to invade us for hundreds of years, we still have our own language, our symbols, and everything. That means that we have deep roots” Kristi (November 27, 2018).

To summarize, this heartfelt exercise shows that public art in the form of serious, reflective fun can be a means of creating a dialogue about what people hope for themselves in the future. The activity also spurred the imagination of the possibility of different futures and possibilities for those that participated.
Reflecting on injustice, hoping for improvement

We saw evidence of hope for improvement in the future of the country, while still reflecting on injustices from both the past and the present. The purpose of this activity was to be able to generate dialogue on different themes that the students would like to display in their work, and then reflecting on these themes and what they mean to the students.

After finishing the collaborative preliminary canvas activity, Mei described her work as a timeline. The skull and communist star was meant to represent the lives lost under the communist regime, but the rainbow coming out of the mouth was meant to represent not only rebirth and the color the younger generation feels inside of them, but to also represent the desire for more LGBT rights in the country in the future.

Klodiana described her drawing as a colorful flower representing the rebirth of the country growing over old, gray buildings, symbolizing the communist era. When asked if she could talk more about her choices, she chose not to comment.
Edison explained his drawing revolved around the darkest aspects of the communist regime, including unregistered deaths, torture, forced work, and worshipping of the government. He included a communist star on the hat symbolizing the might of the government and how central it was to all aspects of life, and blood spilling out under the hat to represent the lives lost under the regime.
Paola describes her sculpture as “a person smiling to make people smile a bit, give hope, and brighten someone's day if they are having a bad day” (December 4, 2018). This speaks to her desire to create hope she feels some of her generation is looking for in Albania.

Nadia drew a courthouse with the work “iustitia,” or “justice.” She described how she feels there is a lack of justice in Albania, related to her knowledge of Albanians paying for grades, jobs, and to get out of trouble. She explained that “this would serve as a reminder to citizens that they need to treat others fairly” (November 22, 2018). With that said, she expressed hope for the future of the country and the ability she believes her generation has to fix the justice system.

Among further discussions with the students regarding their country, Skerdjon mentioned the issue of corruption by claiming that “money controls everything in the country, and money can let you do illegal things and buy your way out of ... trouble,” (November 22, 2018) illustrating the feelings of injustice many students make connections with in that they do not have trust in their public institutions.
Opening the Dialogue with Dr. Lori Amy on Postmemory

Early in this project, we met with students from other universities in Tirana along with our sponsor Dr. Lori Amy, Professor of Cultural Studies and a scholar in memory and trauma, who has been researching how the legacy of the communist regime continues to impact society today (Amy 2018). The meeting provided an opportunity for our team of American students to “bear witness” to the testaments of the Albanian students regarding the issues they face in the post-communist society they live in and how it affects them. We were told by Dr. Amy that our presence was crucial to the discussion as it allowed the Albanian students to share their stories and viewpoints to an outside group of people; this presence from foreign students provides some validation to their struggles and encouragement to take action, as Dr. Amy put it. (During this discussion, we (WPI students) actively listened, as was most appropriate for the topic being discussed.)

Participants were eager to address issues pertaining to corruption and numerous students spoke of witnessing or facing corruption on a regular basis. When Dr. Amy asked the crowd “How many of you have heard of someone or have experienced paying a professor for a good grade?”, all of them raised their hand; Dr. Amy verbalized that part of the reason this corruption is still so prevalent is because the old generation, their parents, also experienced it as part of their daily lives. With that, she started a conversation on how the older generation transmits their thoughts and traditions onto the younger generation: "corruption may be wrong, but everyone does it, and there’s nothing that can be done about it" is an idea that has been ingrained in the population for a while, according to Dr. Amy.

From here, Dr. Amy led a discussion on topics such as fear of retaliation (fear of being punished) in the context where it is better to stay silent to avoid any possible situation of being accused of something; lack of recognition for something done well while in the workplace or for jobs that people ask for; and lack of monetary compensation for hard work in completing a job. Students shared their knowledge and experience on these topics, all in agreement that they knew at least one person who had found themselves in one of these situations. The concern of no recognition or compensation is relevant to the idea of public trust among each other and in the institutions. When people are unsure if they will be recognized/compensated for their work, they are less inclined to do said work, and further lose trust among one another and the institutions.
Unfortunately, we did not document this important conversation by taking notes, nor did we take the time to ask if we could audio record the conversation. However, after this discussion, we felt much more comfortable talking with the students about more serious topics directly as it had established another layer of trust between us. This is key to starting community dialogue which is, again, a process to help with “understanding of others and ourselves through listening, sharing, and questioning” (Community Dialogue n.d.).

Understanding the past in order to move into the future

We contributed questions and topics for a discussion led by Ms. Sara Çapaliku on perceptions of the past by youth as well as looking at interpretations of public art. The discussion also included Tim Carroll, a current Fulbright scholar researching on the topic of “Perception of Albanian Youth on EU Integration.” Ms. Çapaliku framed our discussion by stating that “dialogue doesn’t mean to agree with one another, dialogue is finding that space and putting people together and listening, only listening without necessarily agreeing but accepting the others’ opinions” (December 8, 2018).

Regarding the transition period, which was defined by Ms. Çapaliku as the period from the the end of communism in 1991 to the present day, Ms. Çapaliku asked the gathered students what aspects of life have been inherited from the transition period after the end of communism up to the current day. She highlighted that “as a generation we shouldn’t see it [the past communist era] individually for how it affected us, but rather how did it affect us as a common society” (December 8, 2018). In discussing the difference between generations, Ina said “our parents were not taught to think during communism, they were instructed” (December 8, 2018). As Dr. Amy put it during the discussion, families simply survived by virtue of trying to not see or not to know, maintaining the status quo and not encouraging or discussing dissent or diversion in any form.

One student, Ina, said that “28 years is not long to change from one way of living and thinking to another very different one” (December 8, 2018). She further described that her parents had “very clear intentions in life” in regards to the social norm of raising a family living the so called traditional life. In this statement, Ina is describing the structured, family-centered, intransigent mentality that was learned through her parents’ lives. Her statement embodies the concept of postmemory, where the previous parent generation
Discussion led by Sara Çapaliku
passes on their perceptions of the traditions and routines of communist times in a way that is “whitewashed,” as stated by Dr. Amy due to what she called a “defense mechanism that exonerates ourselves from actions that we say were not our ‘fault,’” (December 12, 2018) which effectively covers up the truth—they were in fact forced to live a life dictated by the regime, rather than choosing that lifestyle.

In discussing the years of transition, Gerandi spoke about the protests currently happening, stating that “if the student protests happened eight years ago, nothing would have changed,” (December 8, 2018). Furthermore, Gerandi, who is majoring in Economics and Business Administration, described how his father has a different mentality towards the protests aiming to lower college tuition saying, “my dad in comparison does not like protesting. He’s like ‘why are you going [to protest], I’ll just pay [for] your school it’s ok.” Gerandi stated that although he can afford his school fees, he plans to protest in solidarity with students who cannot afford to pay their school fees. This sense of solidarity and public support for a cause is relatively uncommon in Albania since the fall of the regime. With the developing mentality that the government is listening, public art can function as an effective medium to help have the voices heard more clearly.

We were surprised by all the contradictory statements we heard about the past and the present as perceived by the students. We heard references to living a simple, family-centered life as the societal standard, but we also heard references to the younger generation attempting to break away from these expectations. We recognize that dialogue is a slow process and that it has to provide space for competing viewpoints to be verbalized and expressed. Public art has been extensively used as a method of engaging the community and continuing dialogue, may that be through the Department of Play in Boston, through their serious fun TPZs where “participants envision alternative futures, share life experiences and knowledge, and collaboratively create artifacts,” (“Department of Play” 2018) or through the co-creation of murals as exemplified by the Finding the Light Within mural project. This form of group participation illustrates how art can be used to understand the past in order to prepare and create a better future.
Conclusion
Limitations

One limitation our group faced was the limited number of students in our focus group who could consistently attend activities. Between three to six students might show up each day, and it was not always the same group every day. This not only made it difficult to look for patterns in student art production due to the fact that they did not each participate in every single activity, but the small number of students may have led to biased conclusions, but fortunately did allow us to develop relationships with these students and get to know them deeply.

Another limitation was language/translation issues. While many of the students we worked with spoke fluent English, it was difficult to expand our outreach to new students who did not speak English as well. While the students who worked with us were willing to translate for us, it was an added layer of complexity to communicate activities clearly. This also hurt our ability to form deep relationships with these students. Our lack of ability to speak Albanian created a slight barrier between our group and those students which blocked us from having one on one, meaningful conversations.

Another limitation our group faced was our inabilities as researchers, note-takers, and interviewers. We often felt discomfort with asking what we perceived as difficult or intrusive questions, especially in topics that we are not experts in. This hindered us as we hesitated asking some of these questions, that sometimes were crucial to our research, because we were not sure how to effectively ask them. We also did not always make the most out of our interview opportunities as we are not yet skilled note-takers and interviewers. This sometimes left unanswered questions and a lack of value from our deep conversations.

Lastly, another limitation our group faced was the conflicts we felt in developing deep friendships with our student peers, but simultaneously being researchers trying to collect data and findings. It was often difficult to draw a line between friendly conversation and prodding research questions, and this sometimes put us in uncomfortable situations where we could not define our relationships with the students. We were unsure how to approach each conversation; whether we should be recording, note-taking, or being active listeners in the conversation. It was challenging to convey that we were genuinely interested and devoted to building real, meaningful relationships with these students while still addressing the fact that they were a central part of our research.
Ethics

Our project sought to understand how community participation and engagement through public art could be a viable method for engaging a community as a form of trust-building and addressing traumatic topics. That engagement, though, raises some ethical considerations. For example, there was some misinformation about the end goal of our project that created a misunderstanding between our team and some of our focus group. Many people thought that upon our arrival, we would be facilitating the creation of a piece of public art in a major public space such as Skanderbeg Square or near the National Theatre. When the group explained that this was not necessarily the goal of our time in Tirana, we were met with disappointment from our Albanian peers that we were not creating enough of an impact. They referred to the way in which Americans plan, organize, and execute projects, specifically how it takes many steps of planning and discussion to get something done (as an example, how each of the activities had to be planned with not only the Sponsor’s view in mind, but also taking the advisors’ guidance into consideration). With this, we had to be very careful of making sure that the promises we made were within the scope of our project. The promise of addressing public trust turned out to be farfetched and ambitious, but our group did its best to leave the students with resources (paint, canvas, drawing materials), an online front (facebook and instagram pages), and a framework (our report and a physical pop-up cookbook in the form of a binder, containing instructions and materials required in order to recreate pop-ups, including templates in case they intend to add to it) to continue the project we co-named Iliart.

Another ethical consideration our project brought up was the idea of false hope. We did not want to come to Tirana, create a project that encouraged students to bring up difficult topics, and then leave them with few resources or ideas that will help them deal with any destabilization or trauma. To combat the issue of leaving students in a destabilized state, we revolved our project/group discussions around collaboration, as well as encouraging the participating students to remain in contact with individuals whose work is in line with our project goals (Dr. Lori Amy and Ms. Sara Capaliku). This way, when we leave Tirana, the students will have a support group of people they know, trust, and have discussed these difficult topics with, and will not be left to deal with any possible destabilization by themselves.
Recommendations

In order to build off of the progress we began with our project, we recommend the continuation of pop-up and workshop activities focused on collaboration with the students at the University of Tirana. While we introduced collaborative activities to this population, it would be useful not only to their education to have more experience with collaboration, but it would also aid in their ability to find common ground among one another. Collaboration typically requires compromising and a level of understanding amongst a group of people, which could be useful for the students in terms of learning how to discuss more difficult topics with one another including public trust and trauma. Our research showed that while introducing collaboration to a group that is unfamiliar with the concept can cause anxiety and stress, it is very rewarding when accomplished.

We also recommend the introduction of a curriculum taught on public art at the University of Tirana. As we learned within our own research, the forms and functions of public art are vast, and are often overlooked. However, a course taught on public art and what purposes it serves would teach the students not only about another avenue their art careers could take, but also introduce them to a method that could be used to address difficult subjects in their society. Our research showed that public art, among its many other functions, may be very useful in aiding the healing process of traumatic situations.

*Baby Steps* by Mei
Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, we have been able to better understand how the current generation understands the events that occurred during the communist regime. Through open discussions as well as in-depth interviews, we have tried to understand and have become humbled by the discussion of their experiences. The students that were a part of our focus group became very open and expressed great passion in their stories and opinions about their society. From this, we also learned the importance of starting and continuing a dialogue. The openness and passion from the students allowed us to express our ideas openly in conversation that, in the end, will help further the process of addressing public trust. They did this both through interviews and through their artwork as documented in the findings section of this report. Not only have the students given us the image of their thoughts on the communist regime, but they have also shared very deep connections with people they had never met before. Being immersed within their culture has created a bond in which we are able to share our experiences from both of our cultures without judgment, and the community engagement facilitated by this project was one of the main reasons that was possible. Although we worked with a rather small group of students, it allowed us to deepen our connection and support the students in their artistic ideas through the creation of a final mural.
References


Appendix A: Interview Questions for Workshop Activities and Reflections on Pop-up Activities

Overview: At the conclusion of each workshop activity, the participants were asked some questions in regards to what they had created. For the pop-up events, some interviews were conducted within the core group of students to reflect on the experiences during the activities. Specific questions were written for each of the activities and are listed below. Before giving the interview, the participant was informed and consented to being recorded and used as part of our research. Although not followed completely, below is an example containing all of the details of the informed consent:

Informed Consent Script for Interviews

We are a group of students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts. We hope this kind of research can explore the extent at which public art and Serious Fun can be used to build trust and open dialogue in the University of Tirana Campus. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Please remember that your answers will remain confidential. No names or identifying information will appear in any of the project reports or publications unless consent is given. Your participation is greatly appreciated. If interested, a copy of our results can be provided at the conclusion of the study. You can reach out to us at gr-PublicArt_IQP@wpi.edu with any questions or concerns. Please indicate if you would be willing to give consent for this interview to be audio recorded.

Below are examples of the interview questions based on the activity that was completed:

Skanderbeg Square Mural:

Hypothetical Scenario: The mural above the National Museum is being taken down. The organization has asked you to replace the mural. Any drawing can be put on it. What would you create?

Questions:

• Could you tell me about what you have drawn?
• How did you come to think of this?
Finish the Story:
Prompt: To start, the first sentence of a story is written. Write another sentence to continue the story. At any point, you can choose to end the story.

Questions:
- What was it like to create a sentence based off of previous sentences you had no control over?
- Did you focus more on your individual sentence or making sure your sentence followed the context of the story that was already there?
- What were the steps you took to create a sentence?

Origami Peace Crane:
Prompt: Write a wish, dream, or life goal in the center of a paper and follow folding instructions to create a crane.

Questions:
- If you were a crane, where would you fly to?
- What might you see on your journey?

(After explaining cranes’ nesting habits) How do you feel about the idea of returning back to a location like the cranes do when they nest?

Circle Drawing:
Prompt: To begin, a timer will be set for 2 minutes. During these 2 minutes, each participant will begin to draw anything they choose. Once the time is up, each participant will pass their drawing to the next person in the circle. The timer will then be set for 1 minute, and each participant will then continue the drawing that they received. This process will continue until each participant has received their initial drawing.

Questions:
- How did it feel to spend time creating a piece and then have to give it away?
- How did you feel about other people appropriating your art?
- Did you still feel ownership of the art when you got it back?
One-Minute Portraits:
Prompt: Draw your subject in one minute. GO!
Questions (for people being drawn):
  • How did it feel to be drawn?
  • Do you feel exposed?
  • What were your thoughts while the artist was drawing you?
  • What were your thoughts when asked if you wanted to keep the portrait?
  • If you had to draw yourself, how would you do it?

Collaborative Preliminary Canvas Design:
Prompt: After discussion of some of the themes associated with public trust, draw what you would want to put on the canvas. Be prepared to discuss what you have drawn and the steps that you took to get to this point. The next step is to combine these ideas and collaborate in creating one big drawing.
Questions:
  • What steps did you take in coming up with this idea?
  • What is the meaning you are trying to portray with this piece?

Skanderbeg Clay Statue Creation:
Prompt: The statue of Gjergj Skenderbeu is being taken down. You are asked to replace it with something else. Using a lump of clay, sculpt what you would put there.
Questions:
  • How did you come up with this idea?
  • How would your friends respond to seeing this piece?
  • Can you tell me more about what this would mean to have this in public?
Appendix B: Curiosity, Connection, and Creating Value

Being that our team was comprised of science and engineering students, we were often guided and inspired by our curiosity. This curiosity about how public art could be used as a means of addressing trust and trauma guided not only our research, but our conversations with our student peers. This curiosity also led us into deep conversations with the students, allowing us to ask meaningful questions and learn new information about how public art, trust, and trauma has specifically affected their lives, and where these topics connect.

For our majors, this project allowed us to expand beyond our major fields but still provide knowledge and experiences that can be applied. One aspect we brought into our project is in group development. WPI provides a great focus on team projects through technical courses but also specifically in leadership courses like Business 1010: Leadership Practice. Through this course, some important knowledge points included interviewing skills, identifying key stakeholders based on issues of leadership, and developing a persuasive and enlightening presentation on findings. These were helpful in the development of our project and learning more about these skills in ID 2050. Some other pieces of knowledge from our project include being in a new culture and learning how to gather data in the field of social science. Experience working in a team, considering different methods of gathering and analyzing data, and synthesizing this data in order to understand a bigger picture will be helpful for future academic careers and working on future projects within our major. The ideas of WPI to not only understand the theory of STEM fields but also apply it through practice can be supported through the experiences in this project to further enrich what we find and avoid being only technical. This experience allows us to identify our findings either in academics or in the real world on a social level and help to synthesize findings and insights that will occur in our lives.

Our project created personal, social, and community value. In terms of social value, our project started with a group of students who didn’t really know each other. We were all new to each other, but were able to create relationships and start a dialogue on the issues surrounding mistrust in post-communist Albania. Students that we met were able to meet others they might never have met before. In terms of community value, this project created relationships but also focused on collaboration. Even with a small group of students, the idea of collaboration was very new and created a means to express art in a group, something the students had never done before. Although this group is small, it is only the beginning of an opportunity for them to talk with their peers and continue collaboration. In terms of personal value, this project has introduced us to many different students from majors of graphics design to fashion design to economics to musical performance. These different background and viewpoints have really given us the great opportunity to be immersed in a different culture. The students we met really want to talk about what is going on in their country and how they can fix it.
Appendix C: Transmedia plan

Element 1: Audio interview -> Photographs of Murals -> An art graphic -> Video on YouTube DONE √

- Production
  - The idea is to use the audio interviews from various artists in Worcester connected with their mural art to create an art graphic to be posted on YouTube. This serves our project in using the experiences we have gained to create a public art event basically from the start of ID 2050 to the end of our IQP.

- Hardware: audio recording, high-quality cameras, video recording

- Software: Adobe Illustrator, Camtasia

- Equipment: tripod for pictures, external microphone for interviews

- Training: the building of interview skills, the building of photography skills, the building of video editing skills

- The hardware for interviews was the Zoom audio recorder and transcription was done through listening. The interview skills have been built from the start of ID 2050.

Elements 2: Brainstorming on chalkboard -> Creation of IliArt Logo -> Creation of social media

- Production
  - This idea was to create a logo to be used as a means of advertising and letting others know about the pop-up activities. This includes the ideas from the Albanian students collaborated into the logo.

- Hardware: Camera for documentation
• Software: Adobe Photoshop
• Equipment: art materials for design
• Training: Learning to use Adobe Photoshop to create digital version of the logo

Element 3: Pop-up interest exhibitions-> Photographs of activity --> Documented as part of Recipe Book

• Production
  • The idea is to document activity during popup events to be used as part of a cookbook whose main intent is to contain descriptions, dates, photos, videos, and possibly content central to the pop-up interest exhibitions, such as the "complete the story" activity.
  • Hardware: audio recording device (Zoom), High quality camera
  • Software: Google Slides
  • Equipment: tripod for pictures, external microphone for interviews

Training: learning Adobe Illustrator and Adobe Premiere, the building of photography skills, the building of video editing skills

Link to cookbook