The hidden word spelled across the page reads: *t e m p o ,,,*

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image 1.

Contents

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tem.po.rar.y [tem-puh-rer-ee] *adj.* lasting for only a short time.

- derivatives – temporarily *adv.*

- origin Latin temporaries [1]

tempo... is a collection of observations (both in the first person or as

a mediator) on different types of temporary disturbances in cities, their quali-

ties, purposes, their interactive role with those who were, in a certain occasion,

removed from their everyday routines and directed to take a different acknowl-

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edgement of where they live; but mostly, on their value in a social and architec-

tural context in relation to master planning and permanent constructions.

image 2.

It is a current practice to interpret cities from a large scale to a small

one. Statistics and reports on density, demographics, speed, size, sustainability,

economic development and growth, invade the newspapers' articles, dictate

exhibition themes', rule our awareness of urban fabrics. This great vision of

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the current and future status of the world works as a directive for the master

planning of cities leaving very little scope for gradual changes that should result

from an understanding of spaces when in use, rather then on drawings.

+++

...the micro scale...

In contrast with the permanent urban fabric that has been taken as a

given package where buildings, squares, parks, structures are sedentary pieces

that have a perdurable and normally immutable location, even if occasionally

interchangeable programs, temporary interventions do not have to be site

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specific and are often pure infiltrations within the system. They do not belong to

the city within its regular fabric except throughout their limited duration. Most

of these interventions are a pure turmoil of the perpetual, and appear as simple

changes within the citizens' routines. They can be interpreted as an amplifying

mirror of our lives, the mirror that reveals what one normally doesn't see, that

delineates the faults in society and tries to make us respond to them, as much

as the one that praises the beauty of what is regularly un-noticed. Temporary

interventions can only be possible when one learns how to appreciate the value

of the mundane and explore it within its ordinary condition. **see chapter Contempla-**

tion of the un-noticed

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"But we are unable to seize the human facts. We fail to see them where they are, namely the humble, familiar, everyday objects. Our search for the human takes us too far, too deep. We seek it in the clouds or in the mysteries, whereas it is waiting for us, besieging us on all sides." [2.]

Henri Lefebvre

+++**+++**

...building up to the Macro scale...

Society, in abstraction from the urban fabric, is in constant change. People shift from one country to another, one house to another, one job to another, a partner to another. The idea of stability is an obsolete notion within the contemporary society. These incessant permutations lead to different everyday scenarios as a result of the transition of contexts, and inevitably of particular needs within cities. The permanent does not fulfill the necessities of the mutant city, there is a constant urge to extent and disrupt the existing urban functions. The short term human occupation of certain urban spaces can sometimes result in social isolation, lack of attachment to those places and consequently, lack of care. Technology expedites incessant communication, but human interaction becomes scarcer. Distance can be an obstacle, but proximity does not necessarily imply communication. Most permanent buildings are part of these routines and are immediately associated with them. Temporary interventions

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often aim to regain human interaction, to depict the transformations that are

constantly taking place in the city.

"Practical experience shows that there can be growth without qualitative development. […] the

development of society can only be conceived in urban life, by the realization of urban society. [3.]

Henri Lefebvre

Temporary urban interventions can take place in settled public spaces

but, in many cases, they emerge in urban pockets (phenomena of urban gaps

and spatial misuses) giving a hint of their spatial misuse. These spaces might

then be rediscovered and re-cogged into the urban dynamics. This can only hap-

pen when, as indicated by Margaret Crawford, *"Designing within everyday space must*

start with an understanding and acceptance of the life that takes place there." [4.] **see chapter**

ad hoc interventions within the planned urban fabric

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... the Macro scale...

Figures, inevitably, seem to take over human relations and social values.

The way how society is currently organised makes it impossible to disassoci-

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ate economical growth with urban scale. Such would not be condemnable if it would still allow space for human networks to emerge. In reality, though, these networks are harder to establish as they are recurrently being obstructed by rather ambitious urban doctrines that categorise 'the local grocery' with the same coloured label as 'the international supermarket chain'. Although obviously linked, the two food suppliers offer a completely different attitude towards those they serve not only in terms of the quality of their products, but mainly when in comes to human relations.

Master Planning cannot be dismissed, but it should be questioned. As stated in Chora's manifesto *"How do we create instruments for planning that use the emergent phenomena to implement alternative development? (...)How do we affect, mutate, the existing institutions that make the rules, the policies that regulate the making of cities?"*[5.] Two different branches should be analysed. The one where an urban strategy starts from scratch, and the one where settled developments prove to be partially faulty. Both have their frailties as in many cases there is no long term invest-ment plan that allows for the users to re-shape their public environment. ***see chapter The bigger picture, aka The malfunctions of master planning***

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... interdependence of scales...

Most cities benefit from an uneven set of scales within their imaginary boundaries. Such condition contributes to an embodied selection of diversities. Form, height, aesthetics, velocity are just a few of these variances both in permanent and temporary urban elements. An unalterable formula to design cities is no more then a distorted dream. Social dynamics and interaction should, as a principle, be the starting points for any project, regardless of it scale, as ultimately the city is for those who use it. It is still ambiguous when it comes to give a title or a role to those who do care about and consider the small movements within the public realm. This ambiguity can become an obstacle as such roles are not always cogged with the system.

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Regardless of their title or exact tasks there are people who have already started reshaping fragments the urban jigsaw by questioning how certain conditions seem to work, while others reveal terribly defective even (and sometimes mainly) in newly built contexts. These people investigate, document, temporarily change and eventually inform future permanent constructions that result from analytical needs, rather then speculative ones.

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Introduction

"What would it be, this architecture which 'crops up in the everyday' not to give it a form, but to inform it?"[6.]

Doina Petrescu

see chapter From micro to Macro or Macro to micro?

+++++++++

Throughout *tempo...* the gradual interconnections between the chapters should become clear and allow us to draw a conclusion on the physical and social advantages and necessity of all the urban experiments that were never meant to last beyond our own recollection of the city but that should often inform its bigger image.

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[1.] *The New Pocket Oxford Dictionary,* 9th edition

[2.] *The same and the other,* Henri Lefebvre

[3.] *Writings on Cities,* Henri Lefebvre – pg 177

[4.] *Everyday Urbanism,* Margaret Crawford – pg 10

[5.] *Urban Floatsam,* Chora – pg 25

[6.] *How to make a community as well as the space for it,* Doina Petrescu – http://www.peprav.net/tool/spip.php?article31 - 24.08.2007

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image 3.

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"Practical exercise

Observe the street, from time to time, with some concern for system perhaps.

[...] Note down what you can see. Anything worthy of note going on.

[...] Nothing strikes you. You don't know how to see." [1.]

Georges Perec

Perec was a thorough observer of his surroundings. When first read, Species of Spaces and Other Pieces, one tends to feel unconvinced about his discourse. Slightly obvious, certainly repetitive, and mostly his writings do not seem to bring us anything new.

Is our everyday that obvious then? The fact is though, when engaging someone in conversation regarding the different elements of their quotidian, very few would probably ever be able to describe them accurately, with the level of attention and detail that those deserve. Our minds are often occupied with the so-called serious and important matters. However, once they are removed from the daily context, there seems to be very little to take note of. Most of us can unquestionably be described as unobservant. It is this lack of observation that makes us unable to appreciate and value our everyday lives.

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chapter one. Contemplation of the un-noticed

"Not surprisingly, since everyone is potentially an expert on everyday life, everyday life has never been of much interest to experts." [2.]

Margaret Crawford

The Situationist International movement, initiated in the 1960's, attempted to start mapping cities in a way that differed from geographic notations. Whilst they *"(...)were naturally inclined towards the goals of social geography, which opposed academic geography's reduction of the city to 'the undifferentiated state of the visible-readable realm' (...) and "Drift had to alert people to their imprisonment by routine."* [3.] the actual conundrum rests on the acceptance of the routine parallel to its conspicuous observation. The escape to the mundane relies on its simple exploration rather than on disconnected alternatives. The routine can be easily broken by re-directing our observations towards different subjects. For instance, our perception of the city should differ on a daily basis as the consequence of a variety of enumerable factors that periodically affect us in distinct ways.

Starting by the weather and how that can influence ones mood and immediately, through these two factors, reflect our understanding of certain conditions of the city. The lack of sheltered outdoors spaces; the bad road drainage; the urban vandalism that contributes to the destruction of covered bus stops; the appalling traffic congestions that result from a slight drizzle and delays the

public transport... just to name a few small details that are usually un-noticed.

The change of perception of the city that merely results from an adjustment of

ones viewing level is another interesting way of disrupting ones' routine.

image 4.

When cycling we should focus on the traffic flow. We will see in detail

what is ahead of us, but less meticulously what happens around us. We will

notice, though, the holes on the tarmac; the dubious driving skills of some taxi

and lorry drivers; the narcissistic pedestrians that cross the roads without

considering any other potential road users; the inconstant weather; the city's

topography. We will know the frequency of the traffic lights and the prevailing

road works...

When walking we will notice the uneven surfacing of the pavement, the

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boroughs where it is impeccably clean and the ones where litter appears to be the mark of excellence. The slowness of some walkers in contrast with those who always seem restless; the change of shop window displays **(image 4.)**; the short life of certain commerce and its quick replacement for another poten-tial ephemeral competitor; the difference between the tourism areas and the residential ones, where street life often seems to have disappeared; the days when rubbish has not been collected and piles of full bin liners rest on the street amplifying our awareness of how easily and massively waste is generated; the change of seasons through the different flowers, daffodils in March, tulips in April, daisies in May, roses in June...

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When taking the bus on the upper deck one can observe beyond the street level and briefly penetrate in peoples' private spaces. It is rare to encoun-ter spaces within the city where the boundary between private and public has been blurred. Being able to mentally invade the private domain can become a pleasant challenge that easily generates imaginary stories about those who inhabit those spaces. Unfortunately, i-pods, mobile phones, flashy adverts and many others, seem to have conquered our attention and being on the upper deck is perceived in the same way as being on the lower one, or even in the tube, where the visual connection to the city is non-existent.

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The problem, though, is that days pass, seasons pass, and some people

never notice these small changes. They are mystified by their own lives and tend

to neglect what exactly they are composed of. It is within these constant obser-

vations of the city and of each of its microelements that "temporary urban inter-

ventions emerge" and help us realise that boredom and routine should become

obsolete concepts as our lives and surroundings are inconclusive and dynamic

resources of beauty and creativity.

Suddenly, there are alternative bus stop shelters;

the city is populated by a series of umbrellas that form a

canopy that only functions when is raining;

there are flower pots attached to your postbox

and you know that is not November but May, even if cold outside, as you can

contemplate the daisies that have just blossomed;

the shop by your local train station is no

longer an obscure off-license, but an off-license with an enormous screen where

football is constantly being shown and the whole demographics of its customers

has changed along with the surrounding atmosphere;

and all the curtains that you had

never noticed before have different printed scenes that illustrate fragments of

the lives of those who inhabit the spaces behind them...

Suddenly, the city has become different in a few minimal ways. There aren't necessarily any new noticeable buildings, there were simply a few subtle intrusions in your routine, a collection of different seasonings to your everyday life. Temporary, possibly dispensable, but that, for a moment, made you appreciate those instances of mundaneness, that are an unavoidable part of your life.

· · · · · · · · **18**

image 5.

"Carry on

[...]Until the scenes become improbable

until you have the impression, for the briefest of moments, that you are in a strange

town." [4.] **[image 5.]**

Georges Perec

chapter one. Contemplation of the un-noticed

Some people have an inert skill to obtrude in our everyday lives. It can

be triggered at any time when noticing beauty, charm or amazement in certain

small things. Many of these people are the so-called artists, architects (less

often) and 'cultural steerers'. Sophie Calle is one of them. As Susanne Kuchler

wrote *"(...) Calle's trademark remains consistently that of 'the self-styled' ethnographer of the*

everyday." **5**. Calle's work might not appear inventive or particularly attractive as

it does not embody the qualities that many conventional artworks may have.

She does not aim to create luring paintings, or materially seductive sculptures,

but instead, she observes and documents the prosaic by presenting a methodic

taxonomy of everyday moments carefully arranged depending on the themes

she hopes we focus on.

In one of her early projects, *Birthday Ceremony* (1980-1993), Calle col-

lected every year, for 15 years, the gifts received at the her ritualistic birthday

parties. Every year she invited the same number of guests as her age that year.

Each gift was unwrapped and kept unused until the day when they all became

part of an installation where 'medicine cabinets' displayed the carefully arranged

presents received on each birthday **(image 6.)**. In this case, both Sophie Calle (seen

by her friends) and each friend as an individual character are the two *objects* to

be analysed. The choice of presents works as the provoking element that allows

a further introspective understanding. The birthday and the gifts are what make

her installation so close to anyone's empathy with the importance of the mun-

dane.

Another of her projects, this time focusing on the public as *'the agent'* as

well as *'the object of observation',* is *The Gotham handbook* (1998). Incarnating

Paul Auster's character Maria, from the book Leviathan, Calle rebuilds, re-fits

and stocks with cigarettes, food, drink, flowers... a phone booth, placing it in a

Manhattan street. Throughout several days she inhabits the phone booth and

initiates conversation with strangers. The days and conversations are docu-

· · · · · · · · 20

mented in *The Gotham handbook,* but the memory of such unusual scenario is

kept in the minds of those who ventured inside the deceiving everyday object, of

those who altered their routines and engaged in conversation with a stranger.

"Participant observation has continued to be used as the basic method that enables one to cap-

ture how others live their lives, uncovering the salient dynamics of social relations, of attitudes

and beliefs, by noting the many verbal, gestural and material exchanges which compose the

minutiae of everyday life." [6]

Susanne Kuchler on Sophie Calle's work

image **6.**

Calle's work, although accessible to the public, might require an effort of

the latter to understand the message and the intentions hypostatised in each of

her projects. Other people aim to reach the public deliberately dropping the veil

that might interfere with their ultimate intention.

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The Artichoke Trust was responsible for a great example of how ordi-

nary Londoners were brought together to view their city in a totally different way

to the London that is part of their routines. In May 2005 The Sultan's Elephant

and the little girl "captured the heart of the city" and brought an innocent burst

of happiness to all of those who had the pleasure of meeting them and who

have, since then, retold their tale to those who did not have the same magi-

cal experience **(image 7).**. The impossible grew, for once, from a dream to reality

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and all the economical, bureaucratic, 'health and safety' related conditionings

were overcome or molded to allow such wonderful event to happen. The usu-

ally practical minded concerns gave place to joy and enchantment as Justine

Simons explained *"I loved its magic and the way it really captivated people. These days we*

tend to measure success in the form of targets, outputs, tickets sold, number of key rings

bought in the gift shop etc, but looking at the value of culture in this way kind of misses the point.

[...] People talked of their amazement, the magic, the way it made them look at the word in a

new way, talk to the person next to them." [7.] London had to be adapted to the passage

of the Elephant through the narrow crowded streets, but his passage also lead

to a different appreciation of certain parts of the city. It filled them with a bright

· · · · · · · · · 22

colour palette, a vibrant collection of odours and sounds, and feelings invaded

the solemn bodies that gelidly ambulate through the streets normally entrapped

in their daily monotony. *(see the appendix 'Interviews and other literature')*

image 7.

chapter one. Contemplation of the un-noticed

"If art is about transformations, there's no more transforming experience than The Sultan's

Elephant. This is a show that disrupts the spectacle of everyday life and transforms the city from

an impersonal place of work and business into a place of play and community. It does something

very simply and important: it makes you feel incredibly happy and gives you permission to let

your imagination take flight.

...What The Sultan's Elephant represents is nothing less than an artistic occupation of the city

and a reclamation of the streets for the people." [8.]

Lyn Gardner

The delicacy of certain aspects of our everyday lives should only be

· · · · · · · · **23**

praised, so that some people will try to occasionally magnify them and let each

of us be able to experience our surroundings in a very special way where jaded

obstacles are reconfigured to allow a sparkle of magic to sprinkle our routines

and brighten our surroundings.

_____

[1.] *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces,* Georges Perec – pg 46

[2.] *Everyday Urbanism,* Margaret Crawford – pg 13

[3.] *The Situationists City,* Simon Sadler – pp 92-94

[4.] *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces,* Georges Perec – pg 53

[5.] *The Art of Ethnography: the case of Sophie Calle* in the book *Site-Specificity: The Ethnographic Turn ,* Susanne Kuchler – pg 97

[6.] *The Art of Ethnography: the case of Sophie Calle* in the book *Site-Specificity: The Ethnographic Turn ,* Susanne Kuchler – pg 97

[7.] *Four Magical Days in May – How an elephant captured the heart of a city* – article by Justine Simons – pg 35

[8.] *Four Magical Days in May – How an elephant captured the heart of a city* – original quote from an article in The Guardian (06.05.2007), Lyn Gardner – pg 10

image 8.

+++**+++**

... the *planned*

... the *urban*

... the *fabric* ...

The *planned urban fabric* - an interesting linkage of words, an interesting

concept, but a generally failed reality.

The vulnerable planned urban fabric

Certain changes in the city happen in a parallel reality to the one of plan-

ning. There are innumerable 'urban pockets' waiting to be appropriated and oc-

cupied to serve the city and its users. Temporary interventions emerge in them

or through them. They are generated by different entities, have distinct aims

and result from unequal urban conditions. They emerge within 'the vulnerable

planned urban fabric'. One day they appear, the other, they are gone. By being

temporary they bear certain advantages. They have the power to be noticed

and make one become aware of evident urban aspects that go beyond routines.

These 'disturbances' are aimed for the public as they interfere in their realm

and usually call for their comments and interaction. Sometimes legally, others

illegally, they always come to disturb what is seen as a stable dynamic compass.

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chapter two. *ad hoc* interventions within the planned urban fabric

As recently investigated by Urban Pioneers *"Temporary uses are now becoming more diverse, are putting a stamp on a growing number of city locations and are increasingly a structural component for urban development."* [1.]

The city can never dare to aim to be a smooth place. It has always been a stage for emergent contrasts and it is within them that temporary disturbances materialize.

Different types of interventions have been grouped, in this chapter, according to the urban conditions that have lead to their materialization. Their temporary role within the city and in relation to the users is crucial to the understanding of their importance within the public realm. Regardless of their possible impact as a large scale, these interventions became, for a moment in time, more than ideas and had the power to affect and transform people's lives in such way that made them appraise their urban environments stimulating their desires for urban transformations.

Design flaws

Design flaws is the first category of possible conditions that generate 'ur-

ban disturbances'. Although applicable to almost anything, it refers to buildings'

design in particular. It is not uncommon to find examples of poorly designed

buildings that do not connect to their natural or built surroundings. Awkward

structural limbs, dismissal of the circumscribing public ground, topographic

negligence are just a few possible flaws. An example of a temporary 'urban dis-

turbance' caused by a design flaw is the project **Amnésias Topográficas** [2.] in Belo

Horizonte, Brazil. It was developed by a local architecture practice, Vazio s/a,

that could not let unnoticed the absurdity of building streets in a parallel level to

the ground as a means of avoiding the steep local topography. Belo Horizonte's

centre has been built on an artificial level, an artificial flat level built on stilts. The

· · · · · · · · · **27**

natural changes of the terrain were ignored creating, instead, a series of voids

within the stilts, on the real ground. Those voids were obviously neglected, as

there is no evident circulation within the real ground level. Vazio s/a designed a

temporary theatre stage that grew underneath the buildings. A new construc-

tion made of different levels allowed for an alternative space to exist **(image 9.)**.

Several performances were played in this new theatre attracting people from

different places. Unfortunately, local people were not curious enough to want to

be part of this make-shift use of the exiting urban fabric and their lack of inter-

est inhibited the perpetuation of *Amnésias Topográficas.* **(see the appendix 'Inter-**

views and other literature')

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image 9.

The lack of success within the local sphere might have been caused by

a modest communication with the local residents. It was an idea of an indepen-

dent collective that, although brilliant, did not necessarily relate to the needs

or desires of those who normally use that part of the city. Having designed it in

a constant dialogue with them could have lead to a different design altogether

that might have become permanent. As it was, it should be interpreted as a mo-

ment in time that caused jubilance and entertainment to a fragment of society

through an imaginative adaptation of a fault within the urban plan of Belo Hori-

zonte. Other cases could be listed, as cities throughout the world suffer from

equally bizarre flaws.

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Perishing urban conditions

As the cities suffer constant transformations, certain urban sites often

become abandoned as a result of innumerable possibilities. **(image 10.)**

Examples of *perishing urban conditions* are the sites of former industrial

units that have been abandoned whilst the city grows, and moves the indus-

tries to its physical edges. It is also more frequent to find that industries are

being fragmented and therefore made out of smaller units. War scared sites

are other places for potential 'urban disturbances' as they often imply different

bureaucratic and economic contingents that delay their development. Spaces

of limbo are equally vulnerable locations, as no-one takes responsibility for their

maintenance. Areas of social tension are also often neglected as they inevitably

involve a profound dedication from the local authorities and community groups.

· · · · · · · · ·29

image **10.**

chapter two. *ad hoc* interventions within the planned urban fabric

It is not always easy to get through all the obstacles that disturb the smooth temporary revitalisation of some of those areas, but there are already some examples of how hindrances have been overcome. ***Zwischenpalastnutzung***

[3.] is an example of how a building and a site loaded with historical connotations, but in the verge of demolition, could gain a temporary alternative life within its skeleton. *Zwischenpalastnutzung* means 'temporary palace use' and it took place in the Palast der Republik, the former East Berlin parliament or 'People's Chamber'. It had been decided that the interior of the building was going to be removed, as it was infested with asbestos, and the façade refurbished so that by 2012 Humboldt Forum can open retaining part of the historical value of the building. Whilst the decision on the building's future was being made, Urban Catalyst *(see the appendix 'Interviews and other literature')* was commissioned to evaluate the conditions of the building skeleton and its potential uses. Between 2002 and 2005 the *Zwischenpalastnutzung* hosted exhibitions, plays, guided tours, concerts, installations other activities opened to the general public.

Its temporary use converted a building that was seen as an inaccessible landmark into a space for events opened to everyone **(image 11)**. The veil of the Palace was removed and one of Berlin's most central spaces gained a vibrant charm that was known to be only possible for a short period of time and, there-

fore, could be explored to its limits as the building was going to be demolished.

This is a perfect case of a temporary urban disturbance with an equally aimed

temporary success and social involvement that contributed to the development

and wellbeing of a city.

image **11.**

Another completely different example of a temporary action is *Guerrilla*

gardening [4]. Firstly established in the 70's, it is another case of re-appropriation

of derelict urban spaces. A group of activists, in New York, decided that spread-

ing seeds in places that had the potential of becoming pleasant urban patches

of green (some of them future gardens, others mere green edges or central

passage spaces) was the way forward. Plots of land were being misused and

had their future traced as big development sites leaving no space for green to

infiltrate the city.

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Planting urban spaces without permission is illegal, hence the term

'Guerrilla gardening'. Despite its unofficial condition, it is seen as a very positive

move in cities, having now been spread through different countries worldwide. It

brings life and colour to non-vibrant, colourless public spaces and it has pro-

voked a smile on many faces, especially as it comes as a surprise. One day the

streets are full of neglected patches that are seen as places of disposal and

despise, but overnight a team of dedicated gardeners sneaks through the city

and transforms those same patches into delightful green urban relics **(image 11)**.

People will then start respecting the formerly neglected places, as they now

radiate care and beauty. The passers by and the locals are invited to look after

them so that a sense of ownership, and consequently care, can be spread.

The two examples above are quite distinct but they both require the

same level of participation, boldness and initiative. A group of people allow them

to happen, but they are aimed at a wider public, a public that is meant to con-

tribute to the development of those projects, as they should be perceived as

their own. The city changes for the better when temporary actions like these

blend into buildings and streets everyday lives. It is hard to be indifferent to such

actions as, after all, they were designed and put into practice to make each of

us fully enjoy our urban environments.

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Unsound social conditions

Cities are complex organisms made out of different people with completely distinct social, cultural, ethnic, economic, religious … backgrounds. When placed together certain tensions are inevitable. These can cause a series of different social problems that affect families and neighbourhoods. Although the local authorities might try to exercise some influence in some cases, the intricacy of networks within them make any attempt to improve certain situations a rather effortful task often without any visible results.

An example where a collective of artists and architects have approached the residents of a certain area with unsound social conditions is the project

Kioskisierung [5.] . It is a successful example of how a temporary structure can complement permanent urban design. *Kioskisierung* took place (between 2004 and 2005) in several austere and isolated housing estates in Germany, and eventually toured around Eastern Europe. By placing numerous different types of kiosks in purely residential urban areas, the local inhabitants temporarily benefited from a diversity of local shopping facilities, entertainment (cinema) and mostly they had the chance to meet their neighbours within a local sociable context **(image 12)**.. The implementation of local facilities through the kiosks aimed to revitalize the former urban Russian tradition of small neighbourhood-based

shopping in the city. It had been lost and, instead, has given place to the imper-

sonal shopping centres far from residential clusters.

image 12.

The interference of non-local people can sometimes lead to uneasy situa-

tions as they can be seen as intruders. One has to approach the right people at

the appropriate occasion rather then aim to appear without warning disturbing

the local habits. Communication has to be done in a serene way and often relies

on the 'word of mouth' method, as it embodies a sense of trust coming from the

one who first spreads the word. In *Kioskisierungs'* case the kiosks are not only

a social gathering point, but they should also be interpreted as a physical need.

They are focal areas of exchange (of goods, entertainment, words…) that do not

necessarily have to interfere with ones' lives but that aim to cause some curios-

ity and, through it, lead to social interaction.

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chapter two. *ad hoc* interventions within the planned urban fabric

By being temporary, they performed their triggering role. They restored

social dynamics that had been lost or that had always been inert. Their aim was

to awaken some minds for certain social issues. They worked as 'social urban

catalysts' that, once their action had been completed, would moved else-where,

where social relationships remained waiting to be trigged by those 'urban distur-

bances'.

In praise of beauty

Beauty is an adjective very rarely linked to certain urban clusters. Cities

are often busy or tranquil, clean or dirty, pleasant or horrid, safe or frightening,

grey or full of sunshine, dark or colourful… but very rarely one would describe

them with the expression 'Oh, what a beautiful city!'. Buildings can be beautiful

or ugly. It is actually quite frequent to comment on buildings aesthetics without a

sustainable justification, but merely on an emotional basis.

Urban clusters, though, are often disregarded. One does not always pay

attention to their existence or value their role in the city. These small spaces

are part of our everyday lives, but almost no-one seems to notice them. Folke

Köbberling & Martin Katwasser, though, are some of the people (artists) who

try to make those invisible urban clusters tangible for all of us. *Kleinod* [6.] , a very

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small temporary project in Berlin, is no more than a makeshift bridge, made

out of scaffolding poles and planks, that leads to a colony garden in the middle

of the city. Its location is awkward which restrains its potential use . Many of

the neighbours had no knowledge of this garden's existence before *Kleinod* was

erected **(image 13.)**. During the bridges' short term life the garden became a place

for the neighbours to gather and take advantage of the diversity of vegetables

and plants that had secretly grown behind their homes. *[see the appendix 'Inter-*

views and other literature']

The importance of such event is evident. Just like this small garden there

are plenty of other neglected urban spaces with comparable beauty or interest.

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Some of them are so close to us and we are still unaware of their existence.

Nowadays traveling is extremely accessible and people are easily fascinated

about unraveling other countries and cultures. Unfortunately, many of them

never seem to be willing to discover the small spaces that surround them.

People like Köbberling & Katwasser only state the obvious, but if not for

them maybe we would never notice it.
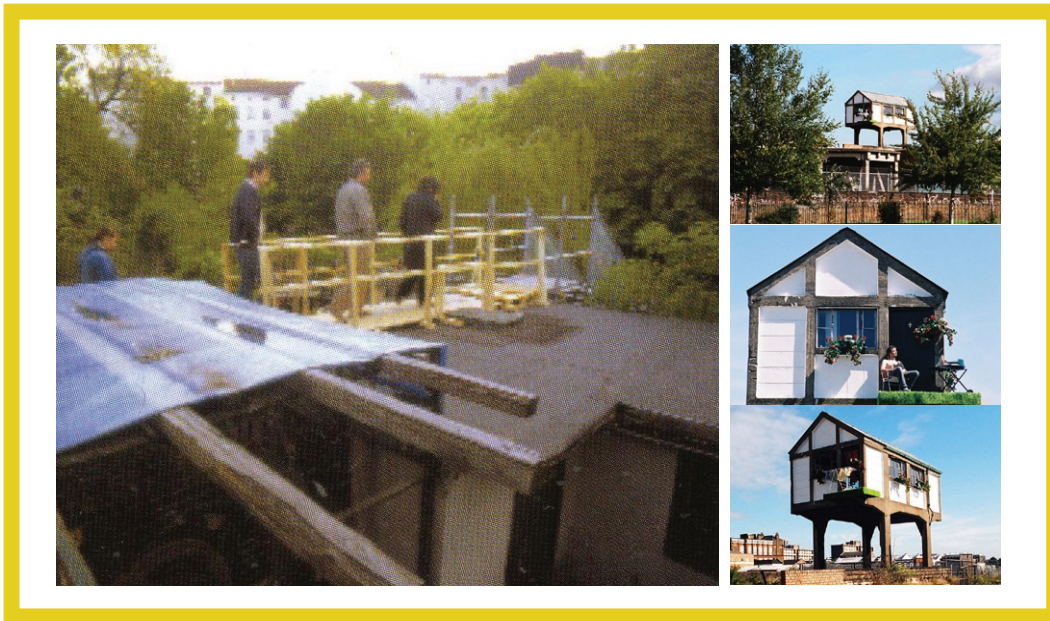
image **13.**

In London, Office for Subversive Architecture (another collective of archi-

tects and artists), has *"(...)spotted a little house on stilts, formally used as a signal box but*

now as defunct as the disused viaduct it stands on." **7.** in Shoreditch, by Brick Lane. OSA

called it Intact and decided to illegally refurbish it between 2004 and 2006.

The building's fairy tale like size, age and appearance invoked a refurbishment,

a deserved embellishment. Its peculiar location, raised from the ground almost

as if a statue on a plinth, also emphasized its need for a tread **(image 13.)**. OSA

attempted to apply for permission, but as such task revealed so unfruitful, an

illegal action had to be taken. *Intact* was embellished in the time frame of 10

intense hours of work. According to their review *"Public reaction to this project and*

other interventions of its kind has been overwhelming. Through a simple, low budget and tem-

porary action on a specific site such projects capture the imagination and raise awareness and

debate around the spaces that we often pass by without so much as a glance." **8.**

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Intact might not have lasted long, but whilst it did, in a similar way to

Kleinod, it brightened up a certain part of the city and made it accessible and

approachable to everyone. Clusters of beauty were undisguised. The city gained

a new sparkle.

Political discontentment

Political discontentment is intrinsic in citizens. Regardless of who is in

power and how well the country is being managed or not, discontentment is in-

evitable as the city is constituted of many people. Although in constant transfor-

mation, the city can not function without faults. From those functioning lapses,

political comments materialize in temporary ' urban disturbances'. **Reclaim The**

Streets (RTS) [9.] is one of those disturbances where a guild was established shar-

ing the same discontentment about the overwhelming way how traffic takes

over public space. To react against it, *RTS* guild (that started in the early 90's)

took over certain areas of London and invaded the streets with sound systems,

creativity and a considerable number of people **(image 14.)**. Gathering all different

people was only possible through the 'word of mouth' spreading method. The

idea was to disturb the traffic routine in a friendly way and make the message of

discontentment reach the governing authorities.

chapter two. *ad hoc* interventions within the planned urban fabric

Several of these events occurred throughout the years not only in London, but in many other capital cities sharing similar or other political concerns about public space. In England, though, a new act was written in 1994 to re-impose order in cases like the *RTS*. These kind of governmental attitudes can only provoke more tension within the citizens and lead to less peaceful demonstrations of discontentment. *RTS* was a way of reaching the governing bodies and, simultaneously, a method of changing the city's scenery and trigger new social relationships through communal use of public spaces.

image **14.**

Pillow Fight [10.] is another example of an 'urban disturbance' embodying a pinch of political comment mixed with a pure desire for public fun. *Newmindspace* [11.] propelled, via email, New Yorkers to meet at Union Square, each with a pillow. Once the sign was given, all the present people started to pillow fight

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each other creating a white cloud of feathers soundtracked with giggles of joy

and amusement **(image 14.)**. One of the most emblematic New York public spaces

became more then a mere place of passage or photographic memorabilia.

For a moment, it emanated a shared feeling of celebration proving that public

spaces can be more than sites of contempt occupation and passage, they can

also be boisterous.

Both events, *RTS* and *Pillow Fight*, proved that open air shared urban

spaces can be the stage for playful events with or without political connotations,

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with or without strict rules. Both cases trigged social connections and shared

emotions between different people who would, otherwise, probably never have

met.

In need for new urban challenges

This last category of 'urban disturbances' mainly involves bold public art

works that temporarily intervened the city converting it into a live gallery where

everyone can be exposed to artistic work undressed of institutional preconcep-

tions.

Rucksack House [12] is an example of an art based 'urban disturbance'

placed into different contexts. This black cubic box hanging from a building

façade was created by the German artist Stefan Eberstadt. Eberstadt wanted

to conceive an enclose inhabitable sculpture displaced from the conventional

art gallery. This project is does not aim to be interactive with the public, but it

certainly surprises any passer by, as it challenges the conventional building ex-

tension and it alters the local surroundings. *Rucksack House* has been attached

to different buildings in different European cities creating, inevitably, distinct

urban effects and inciting different reactions from the public. Although, socially

less powerful than other examples mentioned, it has a comparable boldness of

thought and visual effect on the public sphere.

· · · · · · · · · 41

image 15.

Another example of an art-base intervention is **Park(ing)** [13.]   started by

the American collective Rebar. Although it is an art-based project it embodies

a very strong political message and could equally go under the label *Political*

discontentment. It started in San Francisco and has now been spread through-

out 13 different cities around the world. Parking space is rented out through

park metres, but instead of having cars parked, parks are parked **(image 15.)**. Turf

is rolled out on the parking plot, urban benches and tables, trees, flowers... are

placed on the street taking up a parking space and allowing the general public

to enjoy the new temporary miniature parks. Many passers by are surprised by

such a playful intervention and join in for a chat and a 'breath of fresh air'. This

way of showing discontentment is, once more, a sensible way of 'screaming for

attention' on important social matters without creating major disturbances. It

involves everyone who is willing to be part of such movement and, again, leads

to new human connections and social interaction.

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Creative minds working together have a very important role to perform

in the development of cities. As mentioned by Lewis Mumford *"By the diversity of its*

time-structures, the city in part escapes the tyranny of a single present, and the monotony of a

future that consists in repeating only a single beat heard in the past. Through its complex divi-

sion of labor, life in the city takes on the character of a symphony: specialized human aptitudes,

specialized instruments, give rise to sonorous results which, neither in volume nor in quality,

could be achieved by any single piece." **14.**.

The examples cited above are just a fraction of different creative in-

terventions happening in urban contexts. These are transient intermediators

between the small scale observations and cogitations described in *Contemplation*

of the un-noticed and the small scale temporary actions that have lead to perma-

nent constructions and informed the large scale restructuring at a master plan

level described in *From micro to Macro or Macro to micro?* The importance of each

of these stages can not be neglected as they very often lead to extremely impor-

tant social improvements.

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1. *Urban Pioneers*, Studio UC/ Klaus Overmeyer - pg 21

2. *www.vazio.com.br*

3. *www.urbancatalyst.net*
   Temporary Urban Spaces, Floryan Haydn and Robert Temel – pp 214-217

4. *http://www.guerrillagardening.org/*
   The good life, Zöe Ryan – pg 29

5. *www.peterarlt.at*
   Temporary Urban Spaces, Floryan Haydn and Robert Temel – pp 222-225

6. *http://folkekoebberling.de/*
   Ressource Stadt, Folke Köbberling and Martin Kaltwasser – pp 96-97

7. *http://www.osa-online.net/de/flavours/up/intact/a/index.htm*

8. *http://www.osa-online.net/de/flavours/up/intact/a/index.htm*

9. *http://rts.gn.apc.org/*
   Temporary Urban Spaces, Floryan Haydn and Robert Temel – pp 138-141

10. *The good life*, Zöe Ryan – pg 78

11. *http://newmindspace.com/*

12. *Talking Cities*, F. Ferguson – pg 152

13. *http://www.rebargroup.org/*
   The good life, Zöe Ryan – pg 29

14. *The good life*, Zöe Ryan – pg 12

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tempo ...

image 19.

chapter three. The bigger picture,
aka The malfunctioning of master planning

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A brief introduction to the historic background of urban planning

Cities have been planned and designed since the Enlightenment when lack of order was not acceptable as it defeated scientific norms. Since Voltaire's essay "The embellishment of Paris' first published in 1749, the approach to cities layout has changed. The aim was, and still is, to transform cities in healthier, convenient, and functioning spaces. From that time onwards, transport systems were designed to interweave with houses, offices, leisure spaces, green spaces and they aimed to facilitate social connections bringing people together regardless of distances. Specific locations were chosen to accommodate different typologies of buildings. Roads were designed for pedestrians and transport to coexist. Parks were erected to contribute to people's health and enjoyment.

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In London's case, a great percentage of eighteen century 'urban housing' was built under a speculative development. It was only when John Gwynn (1713-86) made large urban planning proposals that went beyond domestic architecture and John Nash started applying them during the period between 1811-25, that the city started gaining a geometric pattern where buildings, infrastructure and public spaces followed a system of rules. [1]

Nowadays, local authorities try to reinforce a rational organization of

spaces by commissioning architects and urban planners to design master

plans for certain areas. Raw pieces of land are a rarity, so these master plans

usually encompass spatial regeneration of specific sites. Planning should al-

ways go beyond allocation of spaces. A site investigation and analysis should be

thoroughly made. Historical and social backgrounds should always be taken into

account in a parallel line to future economic prosperity.

· · · · · · · · · 46

image 17.

The two branches of master planning

When considering mater planning examples, two different branches can

be established. The first refers to raw sites, virtually empty plots of land; the

second refers to specific urban areas in need for refurbishment and redevel-

opment. The latter being more common in London, as there are less and less

vacant plots of land.

Master planning is divided into different stages, starting from a very

broad strategy that implies bigger scale decisions to be made by the govern-

ment (new roads to be opened, transport networks to be established, schools

and hospitals to be built...) and grows towards the small scale, where little occu-

pation details can start to be taken into account. *(see the appendix 'Interviews and*

other literature') It would only be appropriate to believe that *"Urban design can incor-*

porate prototypes that use and enable emergent phenomena to construct new organizational

forms, to mutate existing ones, to manage change. Practioners adapt to changing necessities,

new practices form. Architects are designers of spaces for emergent phenomena, for social,

political, economic and cultural change." [2.] as suggested by Chora, but unfortunately

such smooth development of projects is not always a reality.

Master planning can be fairly flexible, as certain things might need to

be accommodated differently to what had been initially envisioned, but conven-

tional-minded developers (who general are the main investors) do not always

have the same level of flexibility towards their aimed market, or towards a less

rushed economic profit **(image 17.)**. It is rather disappointing to realise that a great

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part of cities is being shaped according to developers' financial philosophies

instead of through a more organic urban growth resulting from constant mate-

rialization of fruitful conversations between users, designers, investors and local

authorities.

Creating a master plan from scratch on a vast empty site can be ex-

tremely complex as there is very little to hold onto. There are no communities

established, no real existing life in the area, and as much as one might desire

to predict how things will evolve through time, the conditionings are so diverse

and vast that it can be rather ungratifying. It is a common ambition to hope that

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those places will almost immediately feel welcoming and personalised, 'homy'

one could almost say. The bleakness or sleekness of certain designs along with

all the occupation restrictions attached to them will, though, inevitably delay any

will of spontaneous personalisation and appropriation of those spaces. As men-

tioned by Peter Blundell Jones *" [...] a standardized version of living and abstract notions*

of 'community' were imposed statically by a supposedly benevolent bureaucracy, rather than

being allowed to grow more spontaneously according to people's wishes." [3.] The concept of

consultation has now been incorporated in the feasibility stage of different scale

projects aiming to mimic the idea of social involvement and contribution to deci-

sion making and design process. One should question, though, the real value of

the statutory consultation in relation to a creative one resulting from dialogues

rather then inaccessible questionnaires.

The consultation process – genuine or purely compulsory

There are different ways of perceiving consultation and participation.

Although it has now been made compulsory in the feasibility process of most

projects, the crucial aspects to consider are how one should lead the consulta-

tion process to actually engage people; how to make people believe their opin-

ions and needs will be taken into account and, therefore, make them feel brave

enough not to approach the people running the projects in a timid way; how to

make people's wills be sensibly incorporated into the design rather then as-

suming the consultation was a mere waste of time; how to approach the right

people from an early stage (i.e. the people that have a distinct role within certain

communities); how to be inventive and creative in the way how one approaches

these people considering their particularities and make them feel special, rather

then treating them like anyone else; how to make them feel ownership of the

project and allow them to follow and be part of the development process. *"The*

way the space of participation is organized has consequences for the result of discussion. Rigid

discussion spaces produce rigid conclusions, and liberated speech can liberate space as well." [4.]

The preliminary stage of any project should always involve the final users, rather

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then the mere financial representatives of certain areas, as an initial involve-

ment leads to a more likely long term success.

Human networks

Human networks often form different communities, clubs, associations,

guilds, that contribute to the vibrancy of a place. These networks are, in many

occasions, the driving motors for urban changes as they are often the ones

that approach local authorities asking for help, hoping to be heard, and making

things happen. They are part of what makes cities so wonderful, as they orna-

ment and colour in areas of grayness. As stated in Chora's manifesto *"Navigating*

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from person to person, through the different strata, another map of the city appears – a map of

relations, of networks, of soft structures that maintain an identity, a cohesion, necessary in the

current state of uncertainty, but acting as seeds for the next state of development."[5.] **(image 18)**.

Knowing and understanding these communities is a step forward in any mas-

ter plan, as they are a fragment of what will bring personality to certain places

whether they are brand new, or refurbished.

Sports clubs, play time clubs, pram clubs, breakfast clubs, reading clubs,

gardening associations, allotment societies... are just a few examples of small

self-structured and self-organised groups that will contribute to the well being

of certain urban spaces. By having these kind of occupiers in specific parts of

the city, those areas are less likely to become derelict and unloved. They induce

permanent care and occupation what brings a sense of security and respect

for public spaces, making them more pleasant and certainly unique as, through

these groups, the city gains more ambition and power to be adapted *"(...)partici-*

pation is not merely a means to engage users more fully in the production of space, but also a

means to criticise and redirect architectural culture. (...) through introducing alternative means

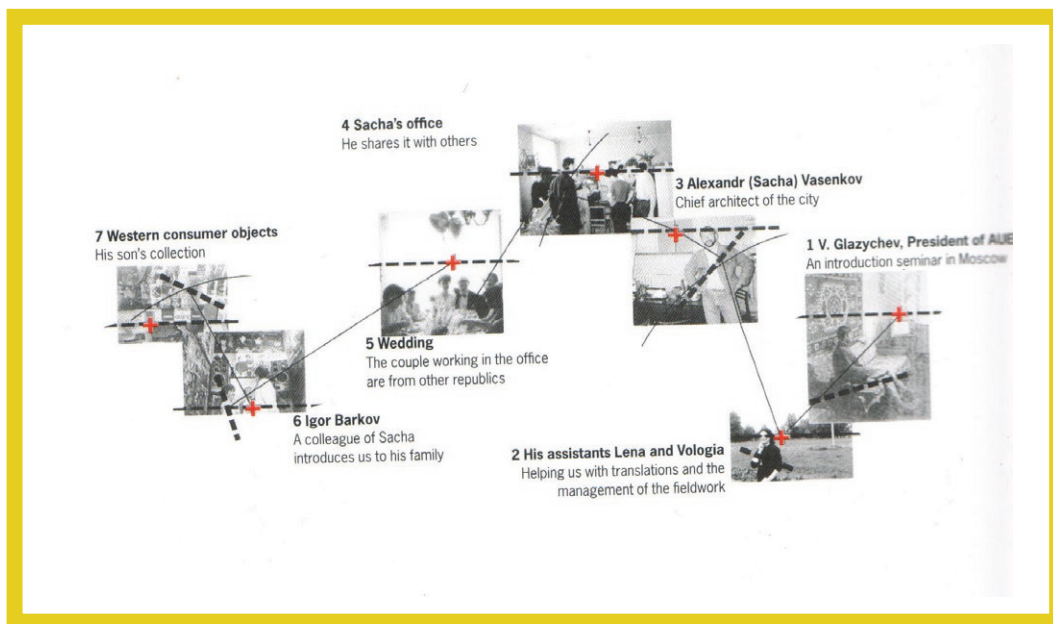*of production, leads to alternative aesthetics and spatialities."*[6.]

image **18.**

Fear of spontaneity – the architects' obsession with design sleekness and over protection

towards their creations vs natural occupation of spaces

A common practice amongst brand new buildings or areas is the lack of

flexibility given to the users. Generally, neither architects nor developers seem

to have the intention of creating buildings that will look habitable and special

where each user can personalise his home or part of the building. If the first are

reluctant to design something that might allow for a deformity of their stainless

creations, the latter is averse to the idea of a distortion of the buildings' *saleable*

image. Creating buildings to which each occupant might decide to give a person-

al touch is almost seen as an outrageous concept. Instead, developers expect

the future users to have bought a 'lustrous Selfridges life-style pack' that shows

no risk of infamy towards the buildings' aesthetics. To avoid such barbaric ap-

propriation of their own homes, when buying or renting a house the conditions

are so intimidating that one almost does not dare to challenge them, risking a

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financial penalty.

      A similar situation seems to be applicable to public spaces. As Jane

Jacobs cited *"Streets and their sideways, the main public places of a city, are its most vital or-*

gans... If a city's streets look interesting, the city looks interesting; if they look dull, the city looks

dull."[7]., so if one does not have the capability of shaping one's environment we

might fall into the trap of allowing spaces to be pure creations of those without

imagination. As it happens, though, cases like over designed children's play-

grounds, described by Susan Solomon as spaces that *"(...) 'used to reflect theories*

about how children learn; today they are largely unconnected to seasonal beliefs on the subject...

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the playground has become so safe that it no longer allows children to take on challenges that

will further educational and emotional development.'" [8].,invade our streets allowing very

little opportunity for one to re-arrange, mould or adapt according to different

needs that certain urban conditions might call for.

Monitoring post construction and learning from existing cases

To finalise this chapter, it is of most relevance to mention one of the

great reasons of potential failure either on small projects or on master plans.

Architects and all those involved in design projects very rarely have the care

to follow the development of their projects whilst in use, go back to their draw-

ing boards and commit to push their ideas further once deficiencies have been

identified. There is no funding reserved for this type of monitoring and the slack-

ness of those initially responsible can transform potentially successful projects

into urban wrecks. Mile End park is just a possible example of how much effort

was put into the design and building stages, but none seem to have gone into

the regular looking after (i.e. reassuring its constant vibrancy and well function-

ing). As a result, the park is now seen as a not evenly pleasant public space (as

it is populated by vandals and other people with no affection for it) where its

potential prosperity went astray.

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If only architects and urban planners could *" (...)make architecture practice*

more relevant to and more engaged with the everyday world."[9],both large and small scale

projects could become more flourishing as they would directly connect to the

end users.

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[1] *A History of Western Architecture,* David Watkins - pp 434-438

[2] *Urban Floatsam,* Chora - pg 27

[3] *Architecture and Participation,* Peter Blundell Jones – introduction pg. xiv

[4] *Loosing control, Keeping desire* in the book '*Architecture and Participation',* Doina Petrescu – pg 50

[5] *Urban Floatsam,* Chora - pg 96

[6] *Architecture and Participation,* Peter Blundell Jones – introduction pg. xv

[7] *The good life,* Zöe Ryan – pg 14

[8] *The good life,* Zöe Ryan – pg 13

[9] *Architecture and Participation,* Peter Blundell Jones – introduction pg. xvi

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image 19.

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"Well designed urban public spaces should aim to address the needs of city dwellers to rebal-

ance their lives, offering a refuge from the hustle and bustle or a place in which they can develop

through learning and new experiences. People need to connect with their environment and feel

a sense of belonging, to feel good being there – therein lies the good life." [1.]

Zöe Ryan

Interdependence of scales

Big meets small and big needs small.

The crescendo that has been illustrated up to now, has finally reached

its extremity. Independent cases have been listed, some successful others less,

and an agreeable thought has been acknowledged. Urban clusters can only

work when there is a dynamic of scales. Big and small cannot be dissociated

and for connections to be successfully made, an understanding of the different

spectrums is not always enough. They both have to be willing to tolerate each

others' differences and learn from them. Boundaries between private and pub-

lic, personal and shared should become blurred so that the public spaces can

have the qualities of private domain whilst being exposed to a diversity of con-

texts and users. The role of user and designer must meet and be transformed

into a single individual with a double personality. The big and the small should

also be placed in the same pocket and, as we walk, their crumbs will become

mixed. What remains is an uneven dough of scales and ideas that can now

raise together as one – the design of the public realm.

The collective permanent user

As well intentioned as it might be, a willing participation from local people

does not always happen. Not everyone wants to be equally active within their

local environment but, instead, they expect others to be and transform it on

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their behalf. In these cases, the possibility of a failed idea is more viable than

when there is a collective involvement from scratch. The dialogue between the

designer and the user is now limited to a very small sample of those who will

eventually benefit from the local improvements. The designer has to be more

involved as an intrusive investigator of that specific area and analyse, through

intense observation, what already exists to be able to judge what is missing. By

considering each case with all its particularities, the designer can respond with

an adequate proposal. It is almost certain that those interventions will respond

to the local needs, but the margin of uncertainty can lead to a vulnerable condi-

tion. In these cases, the initially 'temporary' gives place to the 'permanent'. It

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works as a test piece that will be vetted by the users in its potentially permanent

context.

Dietrich Brennenstuhl and Nimbus Design [2.] were responsible for a

thoughtful project for a collective permanent user that started from a tempo-

rary intervention and became a permanent public living room. Brennenstuhl

temporarily placed giant shaded lamps in front of Römerkastell Events Hall

testing their acceptance and success towards the town's inhabitants. The inno-

vative and playful light design made the initially temporary project into a perma-

nent one. Their success was such that, what used to be unpleasant deserted

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dark areas became bright, colourful and jubilant public spaces.

The collective designer

muf's work is now well renowned for developing a thorough and at the

same time intuitive analysis of borderline urban conditions. They seek alterna-

tive ways to captivate people and make them want to value the small wonders

of those peculiar spaces by learning more about them through experimentation.

muf is an example of a collective of architects and artist whose work is

based on the enlargement of their own collective in such an extent that it will

eventually involve all the clients (who for them are the end users) and the local

authorities who will become aware of what the needs of a collective designer

are. The real value of their work lies on the inventive ways how they manage

to seduce all the different levels of the collective and make each project into

something that will belong to each individual and improve their lives, even if in a

microscopic scale.

It is curious to observe, though, how such dedication and strength of will,

can cease at the level of the project not being carried back to the other side of

who is involved. Looking back towards those who made such interventions pos-

sible and establish the same level of engagement should be equally valued, as

successful results can only be achieved when everyone who is part of them can

also be part of the steering conversations.

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My dream today, your dream tomorrow [3.] is an example of how a small need

resulted in an ongoing relationship between users and designers. The local resi-

dents of a housing estate in Tilbury asked for a communal garden with a play

area for the children. When muf first went to the site they encountered an excit-

ing unmentioned resident and potential park user that had not been included

in the brief – the Tilbury horses. Tilbury has a tradition of horse riding and the

horses freely populate different parts of the town fields. From a normal park,

the project evolved to a horse-riding arena and to several horse related activi-

ties that made the local people understand and value the privilege of cohabiting

with such wonderful animal **(image 20.)** . From those projects, other local projects

emerged as the community realized how those small changes have added value

to small everyday details that until then had been dismissed.

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image 20.

" Issuing from an idea of 'direct democracy' rather than 'representative democracy', this trans-

formation affects both places and people, who start to change their roles from mere users to

citizens, from mere residents to interventionist residents."[4.]

Doina Petrescu

The collective maker

As hard to engage with local people as it might sometimes be, there

are also remarkable cases when the final user wants to simultaneously be the

designer and maker permanently shaping and adapting his local environment.

Within deprived urban areas where social anxieties can be problematic there

are some peculiar people with an immense inner desire to make things happen.

They want to engage the others and share with them their passion about their

collective spaces. They want to transform neglected areas into delightful ones.

Their desire and active attitude is the motor that steers further materialization

of their ideas. A help from third parties is not always welcome by some, but is

often seen as the most appropriate measure by make it all real.

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"Driven by desire, participatory design is a 'collective bricolage' in which individuals [...] are able

to interrogate the heterogeneity of a situation [...]" [5.]

Doina Petrescu

Ecobox [6.] and ***Somoho (Soweto Mountain of Hope)*** are two very different proj-

ects, in terms of final product, that can be linked by the driving will of the locals.

The first was developed in La Chapelle, a degraded area in Paris with a very high

immigration rate, the latest in Tshiawelo a waste dump area in Soweto (South

Africa). *Ecobox* is a garden under constant construction generated, with the

help of aaa (atelier d'acrhitecture autoregée), to rescue an underused public

space. With the help of many people, from different backgrounds that lived in

the same neighbourhood, a self-built garden is being built with found materials

gathered by all those involved. Almost cost free, it was a small move to engage

a series of different people and motivate them to value their surroundings by

making them be part of the project. Mobile units, such as a kitchen on wheels,

were placed in the new urban garden to add to the small day-to-day links that

can easily be established between a diversity of people. *Ecobox* is being built with

a temporary aesthetic look that results both from the low cost materials and its

unfinished look. Although it is not disposable, as a result of its temporary conno-

tations, it still has the freshness of a new project and as it is in constant trans-

formation, it will always be perceived as something new. If one day, a convention-

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al garden replaces the existing diy one, the intention will be lost and people are

likely to loose their interest, as it might fall into the trap of becoming too sleek.

image 21.

chapter four: From micro to Macro or Macro to micro?

Somoho **(image 21.)** was equally built by its users. Mandla Mentoor, a community leader, managed to gather a few local people to transform a dangerous waste dump into a community centre. As Mandla Mentoor said *"It required a lot of public participation to put us where we are. I am very proud to say we are boasting plus minus 250 volunteers who are not only encouraged by our talks but also encouraged by the call of our president (...)"*[7]. The whole town eventually became involved in the clean up process and recycling programme. Paper was re-use and transformed into papier mâché art pieces that eventually became part of the transformed water tower. With its new face, the Mountain of Hope is now a very successful area of Soweto where local youth and culture meet and give back livelihood to the whole town. Such intervention has a double role, as it also works as a democratic catalyst post apartheid.

When initially temporary events become extremely important social turbines, their role can be expanded throughout different places bringing more people together and allowing other events to then happen.

Small within big

All the above cases are examples of how environments have changed within existing conditions. With brand new housing developments, for example,

chapter four: From micro to Macro or Macro to micro?

looking into networks of people is something not envisioned from an early stage.

Partially, the developers are to blame, as mentioned before, partially the design-

ers.

    Abbott's Wharf [8.] is an example of a new canal side development com-

parable to many others by its glossiness and lack of imagination. It sits in the

middle point between to roads of degraded council flats and is 'protected' by

a fence that only emphasizes the social boundaries. If on the council flats one

sees life, social interaction and occupation of the space, in *Abbott's Wharf* the

empty balconies and the clinic style blinds fence off each tenants' little urban

territory. No-one meets each other throughout the years, as the common

spaces are not designed for interaction or personalisation. The dead communal

spaces have been filled in with plastic plants to fake the idea of comfort that

was never meant to exist.

    Brand new developments also need looking after. They are the base of

the individualistic society that has been growing. Small should rescue big and

disguise the farce that masks new urban clusters. These spaces are the caves

for the modern hermits who might, one day, wish they had realised there is a

world full of potential one step away from their fence.

Luísa Alpalhão
MA Architecture and Interiors

tempo ...

With these examples where temporary and permanent meet we can

finally reach the end of the process.

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1. *Loosing control, Keeping desire* in the book '*Architecture and Participation*', Doina Petrescu – pg 44

2. *The good life,* Zöe Ryan - pg 32

3. *muf,* http://www.muf.co.uk/ahorsestale/process.htm

4. *Loosing control, Keeping desire* in the book '*Architecture and Participation*', Doina Petrescu – pg 41

5. *Loosing control, Keeping desire* in the book '*Architecture and Participation*', Doina Petrescu – pg 45

6. *Ecobox* in *Loosing control, Keeping desire* in the book '*Architecture and Participation*', Doina Petrescu – pg 45

7. *part of an interview with Mandla Mentoor ,* http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/global/mm1.html 08-09-2007

8. *Abbott's Wharf is* a new gated community designed by Jestico Whiles and developed by Telford Homes

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tempo ...

image 22.

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tempo... is expiring. Many thoughts have been put together and ana-

lysed individually to build up to the terminus of a journey from small to large,

from neighbourhood, to city, from an individual to a crowd. Different scales and

dynamics have been described in relation to singular moments materialised in

urban interventions. The multiplicity of questions that have been muttering in

our heads throughout the discourse can finally be unraveled.

The dilemma that drove the core of the research was *How can temporary*

or small scale urban interventions inform the paths of master planning? How do we reverse · · · · · · · · ·67

design scales and grow from the small to the large? Even if the answer still has not been

encountered, we can certainly feel more elucidated about the complexity of

urban sways when generating mixed scales spaces. Throughout the different

chapters, where distinct scales were considered, a pattern started to emerge.

Regardless of the preliminary conditions of each specific circumstance,

if a project gathers creative and inventive ways of involving local people from an

early stage, the final design product will most likely become a success once in

use. Temporary or permanent, small or large, projects can always gain by get-

+++**+++**+++**++++**+++**+++**+++**+++

ting the final users involved, allowing them to express their desires and discontentment. A dialogue of words and action between designers, users, passers by, local authorities, developers... is very hard to attain, but all the different efforts to make such possible, will result in shared spaces that belong to each individual as part of a collective. The concept or ownership and respect starts growing and becomes transparent both in the process and in the final result. Different people learn to coexist through their mutual creations transforming shallow urban spaces into vibrant locations of constant celebration.

The vibrancy that results from the mix of people and their personal ways of intervening within the public realm will attract a diversity of businesses and facilities that enrich, once more, those previously dead spaces. The land will then, inevitably, gain more value, attracting more invested development. The risk lies in the limbo between development and diversity. Keeping a vibrant mix can become toilsome, as an intense development tends to generate gentrification. Those areas become unaffordable for those who lived in the neighbourhood, and less seductive for creative minds inspired by interwoven communities.

Generating new spaces can only work when there is an understanding of what those areas already have to offer and build from it, rather then against

it. Such is applicable to areas of potential gentrification. When there is a thor-

ough awareness and respect of communities and human networks, historic,

social, religious, environmental and architectural testimonials, the crucial mix

of spaces and people can happen and lead to successful cases. The complex-

ity then lies in how to make developers less apprehensive towards creative and

bold interventions build as a joint effort between designers and users. It is often

at this stage that temporary interventions play a vital role in the evolvement of

large urban plans.

    Temporary interventions work as mediators in time and action. They

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have the power to surprise and engage the public and the users, making them

more aware of the potentials of their surrounding urban environment. Tempo-

rary 'urban commentators' analyse, criticise and inform about urban particulari-

ties. They facilitate social interaction at different levels and create new urban

dynamics. They start by being temporary, but in many cases evolve towards a

permanent status as they reveal to be of most value for the success of certain

urban clusters. It is often the case when temporary interventions work as cata-

lysts to break the boundaries between the given urban product and the truly

desired one. They work with and for the local people, becoming part of the intri-

cacy of their everyday lives. It is in this manner, that temporary starts informing

master planning.

They might never become permanent, as such could be unnecessary and beyond the initial intention. Their temporary status is often enough to spread the seeds that lead to the development of playful, enjoyable, cozy, human, social, secure, crimeless, inventive urban areas where transformation is not perceived as an intimidating concept, but as part of the natural urban flow. These catalysts are undressed of preconceptions and pretentiousness. Their neutral aesthetics is free to be moulded through the users, to weather through time.

Most of the illustrated case studies were marks of social and urban success creating an aura of perfection and an immediate association of the word temporary with prosperity. It is, though, obviously not always the case. Many non-successful examples would be listed if not for the fact their documentation is virtually non-existent. Amnésias Topográficas is the only case presented where a certain lack of success has been reported. The awkward urban condition where it took place could have been seen as a completely revolutionary way of using the alternative public space that was available within the stilts. The buildings used for the installation were a representative fragment of the vast

propagation of those artificial roads. A new opportunity for alternative designs

and construction was missed as a result of the lack of involvement with the local

people. The opportunity to capture their attention and lead them to approach

local authorities was equally lost. The attempt to make them care for their new

public space by giving them some plants to be looked after only resulted on a

cemetery of greeneries. This is a perfect example of how a temporary inter-

vention could have influence master planning, but the lack of vision lead to its

ephemeral urban occupation.

More of small and temporary interventions at a human level should exist

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to demystify the role of those responsible for these processes to happen with

and for the local people allowing the charm of their everyday lives to come to

the surface, release them from their inertia.

All these stages are of most value to the improvement of urban relation-

ships. When what has been built throughout all the different steps, all the intri-

cate networks, connections, conversations and actions is not followed up and

looked after, all the effort, like in anything else, can easily reverse to the prelimi-

nary stage. Converting temporary into permanent through an analysis of failure

and successes will assure a healthy enduring of a collective urban achievement.

Conclusion

The spark of surprise and novelty in connection with a continuous use and adap-

tation can make every day special and different, converting the permanent into

a collection of vigorous temporalities.

"The most banal and repetitive gestures of everyday life give rise to desires that cannot be

satisfied there. If these desires could acquire a political language, they would make a new set of

personal and collective demands on the social order.[1]*.*

Margaret Crawford

_____

[1] *Everyday Urbanism* , Margaret Crawford – pg 13

Luísa Alpalhão
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tempo ...

image 23.

Appendix: 'Interviews and other literature'

Dear Klaus,

I first came across your work through the publication 'Temporary Urban Spaces' whilst re-searching on different current materials for my dissertation. Despite the briefness of the article in that publication, I developed some curiosity about your work, as it seemed to focus in several issues relevant to my research and my personal architectural and social interests.

As I briefly mentioned, I am currently finishing my dissertation on temporary structures and events in an urban context and I am about to start my final year of architecture studies at the Royal College of Art, in London. The aim of my thesis is to prove that small temporary events should inform master planning rather then having the later inhibiting most actions in the city as a consequence of their lack of flexibility.

The thesis is divided into four chapters creating a crescendo in scale, in contrast with what usu-ally happens.

As most of your work seems to be so clearly connected with the theme of my research I thought that you might like to contribute to the last chapter. It is meant to gather a selection of projects and information on different examples of how such small temporary interventions have indeed changed the city in a more permanent basis informing urban planning and improving the social quality and interaction within certain communities or even help generating new communi-ties. I imagine that you might have something to add to this particular chapter.

Here's the introduction to chapter 4:

... interdependence of scales...

Most cities benefit from an uneven set of scales within their imaginary boundaries. Such condi-tion contributes to an embodied selection of diversities. Form, height, aesthetics, velocity are just a few of these variances both in permanent and temporary urban elements. An unalterable formula to design cities is no more then a distorted dream. Social dynamics and interaction should, as a principle, be the starting points for any project, regardless of it scale, as ultimately the city is for those you use it. It is still ambiguous when it comes to give a title or a role to those who do care and consider the small movements within the public realm. This ambiguity can

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become an obstacle as such roles are not always cogged with the system.

Regardless of their title or exact tasks there are people who have already started reshaping fragments the urban jigsaw by questioning how certain conditions seem to work, while others reveal terribly defective even (and sometimes mainly) in newly built contexts. These people investigate, document, temporarily change and eventually inform future permanent constructions that result from analytical needs, rather then speculative ones.

"What would it be, this architecture which 'crops up in the everyday' not to give it a form, but to inform it?" 6.

Doina Petrescu

see chapter From micro to Macro or Macro to micro?

If you do have the time and will to help me, I have collected a series of questions that I would like to ask you. As I live in London, I thought it would be easier to ask them via email.

I hope not to bother you too much.

Kind regards,

Luísa Alpalhão

Klaus Overmeyer, landscape architect and founder of the international research project ' Urban Catalyst', September 2007

Q.1. How did the need for creating such projects (socially aware projects that involve a constant interaction with the users, rather purely design based ones) emerge? Who usually has the initiative (urban catalyst or the public) and how do those projects grow from an idea to a physical reality? Is the government/local authorities ever involved?

Q.2. Which were the conditions implied in some of your projects' temporary urban placement? How did you manage to convince the different people responsible for the city's functioning to

accept such 'intrusions'?

Q.3. How were the different interventions funded?

Q.4. Who were the different people involved in the construction and use of the different projects? How was their experience in both circumstances (as creators and users)?

Q.5. Which were the immediate social outcomes and the long term ones? Do you think people started appreciating the potentials of such unconventional constructions in a different way? Do you know if those spaces have been used for other temporary events since your 'disturbances' in the area?

Q.6. Do you think that those parts of the city have changed since your projects took place there? Were your projects ever converted into similar permanent constructions?

Q.7. Were people sad about the projects' ephemeral condition, or were they pleased to keep it as a moment in their memories (for example in 'Zwischenpalastnutzung')?

Q.8. Were local authorities ever involved in analyzing the outcomes of such temporary transformations? Did your projects leave a trace in those urban fragments?

Q.9. Did those events lead to local people to meet each other or were they mainly/strictly beneficial for outsiders?

Some of the questions may seem slightly dry and also not project specific as they are part of a collection of interviews that should help me to analyse a diversity of cases and create a conclusion on how all these different events are extremely important for a better development of 'happy cities' where people can feel joy within their urban contexts.

Thank you for your time and patience.

Luísa Alpalhão

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tempo ...

Dear Eleanor,

I hope you are well.

I am writing to you as I need your help. I am now about to complete my dissertation (for my MA at the RCA at that should be finished by next week) on how temporary structures and interventions in the city should inform master planning rather then having far too abstract urban strategies that leave no space for future small adaptations once those public spaces are in use. In a certain way, it still relates back to my 3rd year project with Jason where the small allotments infiltrated Charlton, and to the 'Manor Gardens' case, where a large scale intervention managed to completely destroy what had been put together for years by a very strong community that has now been torn apart.

Considering that you are working at the GLA and involved with several master plans for different parts of London, I thought that you might be willing to help me by answering a few questions that should help informing chapter 3 "The bigger picture, or the malfunctions of master planning" (title to be revised!).

I have divided my thesis into four chapters creating a crescendo in scale, in contrast with what usually happens.

Here's the introduction to chapter 3:

… the Macro scale…

Figures, inevitably, seem to take over human relations and social values. The way how society is currently organised makes it impossible to disassociate economical growth with urban scale. Such would not be condemnable if it would still allow space for human networks to emerge. In reality, though, these networks are harder to establish as they are recurrently being obstructed by rather ambitious urban doctrines that categorise 'the local grocery' with the same colour blob as 'the international supermarket chain'. Although obviously linked, the two food suppliers offer a completely different attitude towards those they serve not only in terms of the quality of their products, but mainly when in comes to human relations.

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Master Planning cannot be dismissed, but it should be questioned. As stated in Chora's mani-
festo "How do we create instruments for planning that use the emergent phenomena to imple-
ment alternative development? (...)How do we affect, mutate, the existing institutions that make
the rules, the policies that regulate the making of cities?" 5. Two different branches should be
analysed. The one where an urban strategy starts from scratch, and the one where settled
developments prove to be partially faulty. Both have their frailties as in many cases there is no
long term investment plan that allows for the users to re-shape their public environment. see
chapter The bigger picture, or the malfunctions of master planning

I hope not to bother you too much.

Kind regards,

Luísa Alpalhão

Eleanor Fawcett, architect in the Design For London team - GLA, September 2007

eleanor.fawcett@london.gov.uk

Design for London is a branch of the GLA concerned with London's present and future urban

coherence and development.

Q.1. When does the GLA/Design for London approach architecture/urban design/ landscape

design practices to make thorough researches on certain areas?

Q.2. How does the GLA/Design for London react/welcome external proposals for urban re-

search and analysis with possible physical projects as outcomes?

Q.3. How is the funding distributed when it comes to Master Planning? Is there a financial frag-

ment kept aside for future investments that may result from further analysis of those areas

once in use?

Q.4. How flexible is the Master Planning stage towards future alterations? Does it allow a spa-

tial margin for small changes that result from particular uses of the formed communities?

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Q.5. How does the GLA react to the influence/ effect of small temporary urban interventions in relation to the bigger strategies? Does someone in the DfL team analyse those outcomes and reconfigure them so they can merge into larger schemes?

Q.6. Small practices, such as East, develop work that is directly connected to a larger entity. However, there are practices such as Public Works, or atelier d'architecture autogerée, in Paris, that create independent projects with immediate outcomes for different communities. As they are directly involved with those whose problems and concerns they acquire a more in-dept perception of the needs of such people within the public realm. How is that viewed and accommodated with the larger scale?

Q.7. Considering that large scale design often neglects small anomalies, unpredictable lack of adaptation, space for different individuals to coexist within a pleasant atmosphere, how could we make it possible to address such considerations at the scale of master planning?

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Some of the questions may seem slightly dry, but they are part of a collection of interviews that should help me to analyse a diversity of cases and create a conclusion on how all these different events are extremely important for a better development of 'happy cities' where people can feel joy within their urban contexts.

Thank you for your time and patience.

Luísa Alpalhão

Dear Yoshiko,

To follow our brief conversation on the phone on Wednesday I am writing to you to ask for your help on behalf of Atelier Bow Wow. Although it is a little bit short notice, I would be extremely grateful if you could get back to me by next Tuesday, even if you cannot answer all the questions.

As I briefly mentioned, I am currently finishing my dissertation on temporary structures and events in an urban context and I am about to start my final year of architecture studies at the Royal College of Art, in London. The aim of my thesis is to prove that small temporary events should inform master planning rather then having the later inhibiting most actions in the city as a consequence of their lack of flexibility.

The thesis is divided into four chapters creating a crescendo in scale, in contrast with what usually happens.

I first came across Atelier Bow Wow's work through the book "Made in Tokyo" that I received as a gift. I am very found of Japanese culture in general and as an architecture student I was equally fascinated by the book. It revealed a different image of Tokyo then the one encountered in most magazines and books. I also had the privilege of visiting the exhibition Berlin Tokyo, last September, where some examples of both books were also displayed in an interesting way.

The reason why I am writing though, is not to ask you to necessarily talk about Atelier Bow Wow's projects, but about your interpretation and understanding of the urban rarities shown on the books. I am very pleased that you accepted to contribute to my dissertation. I thought it would be appropriate to include the outcome of the interview on my last chapter From micro to Macro or Macro to micro?. Chapter 4 is meant to gather a selection of projects and information on different examples of how such small temporary interventions have indeed changed the city in a more permanent basis informing urban planning and improving the social quality and interaction within certain communities or even help generating new communities.

I hope not to bother you too much.

Kind regards,

Luísa Alpalhão

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MA Architecture and Interiors

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Appendix: 'Interviews and other literature'

Yoshiko, architect in the Japanese architecture practice Atelier Bow Wow, September 2007

info@bow-wow.jp

Atelier Bow Wow has written the books "Made in Tokyo" and "Pet Architecture" where a selection of buildings located in unusual urban conditions has been described and analysed.

Q.1. Are there particular urban conditions that lead to the emergence of da-me buildings?

Q.2. Are most of those buildings legally or illegally built?

Q.3. Is there a particular building typology that kept reoccurring?

Q.4. Were those buildings meant to be temporary and have somehow managed to remain or do they comply

Q.5. Were these buildings designed or/and built by their owners? Was there any design advise involved?

Q.6. Do da-me buildings follow building regulations and comply with planning permission?

Q.7. How do these buildings perform next to 'standard' buildings? Do they change ones' experience of those parts of the city?

Q.8. How does it feel to be in such unsound buildings?

Q.9. Have the local authorities changed urban planning outlines after learning from such unusual cases? Ie. Are certain urban areas now being master planned in such way that they would never allow space for such cases (da-me buildings) to happen? Or, are these cases appreciated by local authorities?

Q.10. What is the main thing to learn from da-me buildings?

Thank you for your time and patience.

Luísa Alpalhão   *tempo ...*
MA Architecture and Interiors

Appendix: 'Interviews and other literature'

David Powell, director of David Powell Associates – cultural advisors, September 2007

david.powell@dpa-ltd.co.uk

"We research, review and develop cultural and creative policy for local, regional and national agencies, organisations and businesses.

We are catalysts and development managers for cultural and creative organisations and projects.

We are committed to promoting the role of culture and creative industry in regeneration and in economic and community development."

http://www.dpa-ltd.co.uk/

Q.1. Is dpa usually commissioned by local authorities or governmental bodies or does it take the initiative to research certain locations?

Q.2. Which parametres do you take into consideration when researching the possible need for cultural interventions in certain areas?

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Q.3. Do you contact specialised offices and organisations to individually create responsive projects that reflect the needs of those areas?

Q.4. Do you work with local communities, at a preliminary stage, to find out what their needs for their urban environments are, or do you suggest other people to do it?

Q.5. Who usually commissions them? Local authorities or private entities? What are the main differences between those clients? Do you work as a mediator between the clients, the design offices and the final users?

Q.6. Have you witnessed and contributed to the transformation of a temporary project into a permanent one? How easy is it do make that shift? Do you make an analysis of their performance whilst in use and advise them to settle as a permanent facility, if that is the case?

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tempo ...

Q.7. Do you have the power to influence local authorities on this matter? Would you be able to convince them of the importance of such initiatives?

Q.8. Do you work with urban planners at an early stage of master planning to advise them on what might be culturally beneficial for certain areas? How can you make such analysis in 'raw sites' where there is no history of a social background or if there was, it has been erased (the Olympics site, for example)?

Q.9. How do you contribute to the long term monitoring of a project? I.e. How do you make sure that its failures can be analysed and corrected by pushing the design process further?

Dear Folke,

I first came across your work through the publication 'Talking Cities' whilst researching on different current materials for my dissertation. Despite the briefness of the article in that publication, I developed some curiosity about your work, as it seemed to focus in several issues relevant to my research and my personal architectural and social interests. I then acquired your book 'Ressource Stadt' that gave me a better understanding of your work as a whole. My main common interests with your projects are the way how in your work you often try to temporarily awaken local people to small details in their surroundings. One of my favourite projects is the one where you built the little bridge that allowed most of the people from the neighbourhood to discover, appreciate and enjoy the hidden local garden. It was such a simple idea and at the same time so beautiful. I also find extremely interesting the way how you reconfigure existing derelict materials into new useful constructions, as it extends the materials' lives and allows people to understand that not everything that seems rubbish actually is, it reveals their obscure potential.

As I briefly mentioned, I am currently finishing my dissertation on temporary structures and events in an urban context and I am about to start my final year of architecture studies at the Royal College of Art, in London. The aim of my thesis is to prove that small temporary events should inform master planning rather then having the later inhibiting most actions in the city as a consequence of their lack of flexibility.

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The thesis is divided into four chapters creating a crescendo in scale, in contrast with what usually happens.

As most of your work seems to be so clearly connected with the theme of my research I thought that you might like to contribute to the second chapter where I am writing about the impact and consequence of some small temporary constructions in the city.

Here's the introduction to that chapter.

"...building up to the Macro scale...

Society, in abstraction from the urban fabric, is in constant change. People shift from one coun-

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MA Architecture and Interiors

try to another, one house to another, one job to another, a partner to another. The idea of stability is an obsolete notion within the contemporary society. These incessant permutations lead to different everyday scenarios as a result of the transition of contexts, and inevitably of particular needs within cities. The permanent does not fulfill the necessities of the mutant city, there is a constant urge to extent and disrupt the existing urban functions. The short term human occupation of certain urban spaces can sometimes result in social isolation, lack of attachment to those places and consequently, lack of care. Technology expedites incessant communication, but human interaction becomes scarcer. Distance can be an obstacle, but proximity does not necessarily imply communication. When walking on the street one seems to have the invariable need to be permanently occupied with a task that transcends the pleasure of walking, observing, mentally documenting the changes within the regular. Most permanent buildings are part of these routines and are immediately associated with them. Temporary interventions often aim to regain human interaction, to depict the transformations that are constantly taking place in the city.

"Practical experience shows that there can be growth without qualitative development. […] the development of society can only be conceived in urban life, by the realization of urban society."
Henri Lefebvre

The city is not only the stage for these interventions but it is often the supplier of materials as well as spaces. Even if not as a rule, many temporary urban structures are opposed to building waste. They often embody several lives before finally being discarded. These structures work as a means of understanding how the city can be occupied in a totally different way by using the same resources. Those embed traces of previous use add a special value to the transformed urban spaces. They can take place in identified public spaces but, in many cases, they emerge in urban pockets (phenomena of urban gaps and spatial misuses) giving a hint of their spatial misuse. These spaces might then be rediscovered and re-cogged into the urban dynamics. This can only happen when, as indicated by Margaret Crawford, "Designing within everyday space must start with an understanding and acceptance of the life that takes place there." chapter 2. ad hoc interventions within the planned urban fabric"

Appendix: 'Interviews and other literature'

If you do have the time and will to help me, I have collected a series of questions that I would like to ask you. As I live in London, I thought it would be easier to ask them via email.

I hope not to bother you too much.

Kind regards,

Luísa Alpalhão

Folke Köbberling, artist and writer of the book ''Ressource Stadt', September 2007

folkeKoebberling@gmx.de

Folke Köbberling, in cooperation with Martin Kaltwasser, are responsible for several projects, mainly in Germany, where urban derelict materials are converted into functional temporary structures.

Q.1. How did the idea of creating such projects emerge? Who had the initiative and how did they grow from an idea to a physical reality? Was the government initially involved or/and how did it eventually become involved?

Q.2. Which were the urban conditionings and obstacles encountered during all the preparation period in the different projects? Were most of your projects illegally placed in the city, or did you have to apply for permission? Were there 'planning restrictions'? What were the risks/conditions implied in their temporary urban placement? How did you manage to convince the different people responsible for the city's functioning to accept such interventions?

Q.3. How were the different installations funded?

Q.4. Who were the different people involved in the construction and use of your projects? How was their experience in both circumstances?

Q.5. Which were the immediate social outcomes and the long term ones? Do you think people

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started realizing the potentials of such unconventional constructions in a different way? Do you know if those space have been used for other temporary events since your installations were taken down?

Q.6. Do you think that those parts of the city have changed since your projects took place there? Were your projects ever converted into similar permanent constructions?

Q.7.Were people sad about the projects' ephemeral condition, or were they pleased to keep it as a moment in their memories?

Q.8. Were local authorities ever involved in analyzing the outcomes of such constructions? Did your projects leave a trace in those urban spots?

Q.9. Did those events lead to local people to meet each other or were they mainly/strictly beneficial for outsiders?

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Some of the questions may seem slightly dry, but they are part of a collection of interviews that should help me to analyse a diversity of cases and create a conclusion on how all these different events are extremely important for a better development of 'happy cities' where people can feel joy within their urban contexts.

Thank you for your time and patience.

Luísa Alpalhão

Appendix: 'Interviews and other literature'

Dear Carlos,

I have come across Vazio S/A's work in a lecture, last Spring, at the RIBA. I found the way I which 'Amnésias Topográficas' appropriated the city quite fascinating. It seemed almost ridiculous to try to understand how such constructions on top of the extremely tall multiple concrete stilts were allowed on the first place. However, what interested me the most was the boldness of your project, to create a temporary 'underground' stage within the stilts. It seemed rather unfortunate that the neighbours were reluctant to make the most of the new space by their feet!...

I am about to start my final year of architecture studies at the Royal College of Art, in London, and currently finishing my dissertation on temporary structures and events in an urban context. The aim of my thesis is to prove that small temporary events should inform master planning rather then having the later inhibiting most actions in the city as a consequence of their lack of flexibility.

The thesis is divided into four chapters creating a crescendo in scale, in contrast with what usually happens.

As 'Amnésias Topográficas' is so clearly connected with the theme of my research I thought that you might like to contribute to the second chapter where I am writing about the impact and consequence of some small temporary constructions in the city.

Here's the introduction to that chapter.

"...building up to the Macro scale...
Society, in abstraction from the urban fabric, is in constant change. People shift from one country to another, one house to another, one job to another, a partner to another. The idea of stability is an obsolete notion within the contemporary society. These incessant permutations lead to different everyday scenarios as a result of the transition of contexts, and inevitably of particular needs within cities. The permanent does not fulfill the necessities of the mutant city, there is a constant urge to extent and disrupt the existing urban functions. The short term human occupation of certain urban spaces can sometimes result in social isolation, lack of attachment

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to those places and consequently, lack of care. Technology expedites incessant communication, but human interaction becomes scarcer. Distance can be an obstacle, but proximity does not necessarily imply communication. When walking on the street one seems to have the invariable need to be permanently occupied with a task that transcends the pleasure of walking, observing, mentally documenting the changes within the regular. Most permanent buildings are part of these routines and are immediately associated with them. Temporary interventions often aim to regain human interaction, to depict the transformations that are constantly taking place in the city.

"Practical experience shows that there can be growth without qualitative development. [...] the development of society can only be conceived in urban life, by the realization of urban society."
Henri Lefebvre

The city is not only the stage for these interventions but it is often the supplier of materials as well as spaces. Even if not as a rule, many temporary urban structures are opposed to building waste. They often embody several lives before finally being discarded. These structures work as a means of understanding how the city can be occupied in a totally different way by using the same resources. Those embed traces of previous use add a special value to the transformed urban spaces. They can take place in identified public spaces but, in many cases, they emerge in urban pockets (phenomena of urban gaps and spatial misuses) giving a hint of their spatial misuse. These spaces might then be rediscovered and re-cogged into the urban dynamics. This can only happen when, as indicated by Margaret Crawford, "Designing within everyday space must start with an understanding and acceptance of the life that takes place there." chapter 2. ad hoc interventions within the planned urban fabric"

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If you do have the time and will to help me, I have collected a series of questions that I would like to ask you. As I live in London, I thought it would be easier to ask them via email.

I hope not to bother you too much.
Kind regards,

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Appendix: 'Interviews and other literature'

Carlos Teixeira, main architect in the Brazilian practice ''Vazio S∕A', September 2007

vazio@vazio.com.br

Carlos Teixeira graduated from the AA and set up his own practice in Minas Gerais, Brazil, that

has been involved in several projects related to the misuse of public space. One of his main

projects is 'Amnésias Topográficas' where a temporary theatre stage takes place underneath

a series of houses held on stilts creating an 'artificial' road creating an agglomeration of urban

voids.

Q.1. How did the idea of creating such project emerge? Who had the initiative and how did it

grow from an idea to a physical reality? Was the government initially involved or∕and how did it

eventually become involved?

Q.2. Which were the urban conditionings and obstacles encountered during all the prepara-

tion period? Were there 'planning restrictions'? How did you manage to convince the different

people responsible for the city's functioning to accept such changes?

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Q.3. Were there any 'Health and Safety' constraints?

Q.4. How was such an event funded?

Q.5. Who were the different people involved in the preparation and in the event itself? How was

their experience in both circumstances?

Q.6. What were the immediate social outcomes and the long term ones? Do you think people

started realizing the potentials of such an urban phenomenon in a different way? Do you know if

that space has since been used for other temporary events?

Q.7. Do you think that that part of Minas has changed since 'Amnésias Topográficas' took place

there?

Q.8.Were people sad about its ephemeral condition, or were they pleased to keep it as a mo-

ment in their memories?

Q.9. Was the possibility of making the theatre into a permanent construction ever taken into account?

Q.10 Did such an event lead to local people to meet each other or was it mainly/strictly beneficial for outsiders?

Some of the questions may seem slightly dry, but they are part of a collection of interviews that should help me to analyse a diversity of cases and create a conclusion on how all these different events are extremely important for a better development of 'happy cities' where people can feel joy within their urban contexts.

Thank you for your time and patience.

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Appendix: 'Interviews and other literature'

1

A paisagem das grandes cidades é composta por muitos elementos residuais. Regiões vacantes, vazios sub-utilizados e terrenos baldios configuram áreas abertas e sujeitas às pressões econômicas e sociais que produzem a cidade. Áreas vizinhas a ferrovias, regiões desindustrializadas, centros históricos em declínio, portos desativados – todos vêm se trans- formando num imenso manancial propício para megaintervenções, uma tendência mundial que tem gerado várias formas de revitalizações e transformações urbanas. Amnésias Topográfi- cas, no entanto, é um projeto que procura estender as estratégias de projeto nesses locais, buscando mostrar tanto os limites das intervenções convencionais quanto as possibilidades de intervenções efêmeras.

2

Os prédios do Buritis, um bairro montanhoso na zona sul de Belo Horizonte, só podem contar com quatro pavimentos, ficando sem qualquer utilização as estruturas em terreno de declive acentuado - o que forma as assim chamadas palafitas (ou "paliteiros") sob os prédios. Como conseqüência da rigidez da Lei de Uso e Ocupação do Solo (que então não permitia prédios com mais de quatro pavimentos), construções onde as palafitas têm a mesma altura ou mesmo são mais altas que o prédio que sustentam são elementos comuns naquela paisagem. Lançado para o mercado imobiliário no início da década de noventa, em seis anos todos os morros desse bairro antes marcados por uma palmeira típica do cerrado – o buriti –, foram todos rapidamente ocupados por prédios caracterizados pela uniformidade volumétrica, pela falta de uma melhor relação terreno-projeto, pela mesmice e sobretudo pela falta de imaginação de seus arquitetos.

3

Os pilotis desses prédios são como plataformas que dividem dois espaços absolutamente desconexos: abaixo, um labirinto de pilares de concreto; acima, apartamentos classe média. E no meio, os pilotis que funcionam como garagem e/ou área de lazer. São prédios com uma única estrutura em um único lote em um mesmo imóvel, porém gerando duas possibilidades de ocupação independentes, radicalmente separadas e espelhadas pelos pilotis.

4

Uma dessas ocupações está determinada (os apartamentos); a outra encontra-se espantosa- mente em aberto. É evidente que o potencial arquitetônico desses prédios está precisamente nessa organização atípica, na lógica de assentamento das Amnésias Topográficas, nessa

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surpresa gerada por um acidente arquitetônico. Ora, o labirinto formado pela seqüência das palafitas de concreto, a natureza explicitamente residual desses labirintos e a uniformidade dos prédios suportados pelas palafitas conformam, todos eles, um potencial que é inversamente proporcional à qualidade arquitetônica desses objetos. Terrenos acidentados são vencidos através de uma malha sincopada de pilares e vigas, cintas e contraventamentos que, juntos, materializam fantasias arquitetônicas. São espaços piranesianos não idealizados por arquitetos; produtos de calculistas que jamais imaginaram o espaço que projetaram; surpresas espaciais que nunca acontecem no mundo previsível da arquitetura.

5

Duas coisas marcam a esquizofrênica identidade visual desse bairro: as palafitas e a mata atlântica sobre as encostas. Grandes áreas verdes permeiam os prédios palafitados. A topografia do bairro é tão montanhosa que partes de muitos quarteirões não puderam ser loteadas. É por isso que várias reservas naturais são vizinhas às sequências de palafitas; reservas estas que não são parte do plano urbano do bairro e tampouco foram uma exigência legal para equilibrar a quantidade de área verde por habitante – elas são simplesmente uma consequência topográfica. São manchas verdes isoladas e totalmente inacessíveis por causa da declividade e da fileira de palafitas que as protege e as isola de todo contato com as ruas e com os próprios prédios.

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6

Na arquitetura moderna, o pilotis dos edifícios foi concebido como um elemento que permitiria soltar o edifício do terreno, liberando no térreo uma área aberta, coberta, geralmente contígua a áreas verdes e úteis como play-ground, local de eventos, etc. "Que a casa seja suspensa por estacas, que se erga no ar, que o jardim penetre debaixo da casa". Dessa forma os pilotis permitiriam uma continuidade do parque ao redor dos prédios ou das casas. Brasília e suas super-quadras são uma ótima tradução desse elemento, sendo que seus blocos residenciais permitem o livre caminhar pelas super-quadras por estarem sempre apoiados sobre pilotis. Por mais geométricos e duros que sejam, esses prédios procuram ser permeáveis e penetráveis pelo público, integrados que estão na vegetação rala do cerrado.

7

No caso de Amnésias Topográficas, é como se o pilotis tivesse sofrido uma mutação, resultado de um tumor (maligno?): no lugar deste, as palafitas fazem a conexão arquitetura-natureza.

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Com algumas semelhanças: ambos servem para separar os prédios da natureza e do contato direto com o terreno. E com diferenças fundamentais, também: ao contrário dos pilotis, que em princípio servem para integrar os prédios e moradores nas áreas verdes, as palafitas mantêm a natureza como algo inatingível. No final, os dois principais elementos do bairro (matas e palafitas), ambos de uma beleza espetacular (ainda que um espetáculo despercebido), ironicamente não são acessíveis nem para moradores e nem para a comunidade em geral.

8

Invento para Leonardo, peça do grupo de teatro, foi a primeira transformação desse resíduo em palco de um espetáculo. Partimos então de algo existente - uma estrutura arquitetônica ordinária e agressiva - que se transformou em matéria plástica espacial. Prédios vizinhos aqui se tornam uma única e contígua estrutura de concreto aparente; um continuum de vigas e pilares prontos para receber qualquer função. No palco do espetáculo, passarelas de madeira, escadas, rampas e plataformas possibilitaram o uso extensivo das palafitas em diversos níveis pelos atores. O público ficou acomodado em uma arquibancada tubular desmontável, que transformou o lote vago nos fundos das palafitas em platéia do espetáculo. A situação da platéia nesse lote vago com dois prédios de apartamentos vizinhos (um à direita e outro à esquerda), além das palafitas no fundo, criou uma outra relação entre espectadores, palco e cidade. Simultaneamente à apresentação da peça, os prédios vizinhos apresentavam cenas cotidianas que se tornaram públicas: famílias jantando, tomando banho, conversando, dormindo e, eventualmente, assistindo à peça de suas janelas.

9

O espetáculo possibilitou também uma inversão no quadro de privatização dos espaços da cidade. Em um país de cidades cada vez menos públicas e mais violentas – um país onde a cidade é vista cada vez mais como um inimigo ou ao menos como um obstáculo entre a casa e o trabalho –, o projeto funcionou como um urbanismo efêmero que mostra os desequilíbrios urbanos de uma forma sem precedentes. Nesse sentido, Armatrux foi um fator crucial nesta investigação: ao contratar-nos para a escolha do local para uma nova peça, o grupo com tradição de teatro de rua estendeu a pesquisa do teatro para a pesquisa de novos conceitos de rua.

10

A segunda intervenção ocorreu em 2004, quando grandes volumes de plantas comuns e vulgares invadiram as palafitas definitivamente. Amnésias Topográficas II, última intervenção com o grupo Armatrux, esteve marcada por jardins suspensos, plataformas de madeira, escadas,

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rampas e uma grande superfície de fibra de côco que revestiu toda a encosta das palafitas. Uma seqüência de palafitas contíguas passou a ser penetrável por meio de várias passarelas que permeiam dois prédios e terminam quatro andares acima do nível de acesso, que é um lote vago nos fundos das palafitas. Não mais a separação entre platéia e público: o projeto Amnésias II mistura público e privado, atores e audiência, e usa as passarelas de circulação do público como local de apresentação e encenação.

11

A tela de fibra de côco (da Deflor Bioengenharia) foi mais que uma simples indutora de uma nova cobertura vegetal das palafitas. Ela transformou aquela paisagem (antes) de escombros, entulho, ratos e escorpiões em uma topografia cenográfica, abraçando toda a encosta sem deixar nenhum centímetro de terra ou lixo à vista até descer lote abaixo, ocupando todo o terreno dos fundos como se fosse um tapete de gramíneas pervagante e onipresente. Toda a superfície do solo foi embrulhada pela tela; todo o entulho foi removido e/ou escondido pela superfície invasora da tela, e tudo ficou como morros côncavos e convexos de fibra de coco.

12

A semente que foi plantada com a tela foi a aveia, uma gramínea de crescimento rápido e ideal para o evento nas palafitas. Azevém, braquiara, arroz e alpiste são as outras gramíneas que compõem o mix de matos da tela de côco. Assim, o aspecto de "por fazer" das palafitas foi modificado a partir de plantas típicas dos campos agrícolas.

13

Mas além dessa superfície agrícola, os capins também subiram pelas vigas e cintas para então ganhar as alturas palafitadas. Caixas de madeira ruim, as mesmas usadas para transportar frutas, foram usadas para plantar mais capins fora das palafitas. Foram 180 caixas com mais ou menos 28 mudas em cada (ou 5.040 mudas), ocupando uma área de 100 m2 e apoiadas sobre perfis "I" (Usilight série VE, da Usiminas). Cada muda foi plantada em saquinhos de plástico preto de 8 centímetros de diâmetro, e com terra adubada o suficiente para que todas as plantas daninhas crescessem em tempo recorde. Alpiste e o milho – capins sabidamente rápidos – cresceram mais ou menos 50 centímetros com apenas um mês de vida. Arroz e capim meloso, um pouco mais lentos, foram importantes para gerar variações de textura e tonalidades (têm verdes mais claros), além de provocar interessantes nuances volumétricas no matagal suspenso.

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14

Algumas plantas invasoras e/ou comestíveis levadas para as palafitas: azevém (Lolium multi-florum), aveia (Bromus catharticus), arrozinho (Luziola peruviana), braquiara (Brachiara decumbens) e capim meloso (Melinis minutiflora), além de alpiste, painço, e milho.

15

Na data do início do espetáculo teatral os capins turbinados já haviam crescido mais do que o previsto. O sol esturricante de outubro e as chuvas caudalosas de novembro fizeram as plantas crescer muito mais que capim. Plantados numa flora (Terra Boa Paisagens) e depois transportados para as palafitas, a umidade do local fez com que os caixotes com capins permanecessem viçosos e exuberantes por muitas semanas, mesmo com a luminosidade infinitamente menor dos labirintos das Amnésias. A tela de coco lentamente se transformou em uma penugem de mudas recém-brotadas – nas profundezas das palafitas menos; nas áreas próximas do sol, mais – passando dos tons de marron para uma superfície de verdes esparsos e concentrados em tufos. Quase cem madeirites 110x220 cm foram usados na confecção das passarelas, além de vários metros lineares de peças de madeira 15x6, centenas de metros lineares de peças 6x6 e 27x6, 200 parafusos 3/8 x 5" e dez kilos de pregos – totalizando uma área palco-platéia de 250 m2, além dos 100m2 de capins suspensos apoiados em perfis Usilight.

16

"Pessoas em busca de um lugar. De alguém. De uma condição ideal. São peças submersas de um jogo cotidiano marcado pela solidão e boas doses de prazer. O tempo é uma questão de ponto de vista. E em cada ponto do caminho uma história diferente. O concreto é falso e a realidade é dura como um papel. O seu. E o deles."

Nômades, um drama sobre a solidão e a esperança do Grupo Armatrux, é um diálogo com as contradições e ambigüidades expostas na intervenção Amnésias Topográficas II. Começando o espetáculo na rua, homem-cone, mulher-das-caixas, homem-cabeça, e mulher-da-TV trazem a platéia para as Amnésias e percorrem as passarelas lentamente, fazendo comentários sobre o espaço do evento e terminando a cena em meio ao público, no quarto e último andar do palco-platéia.

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