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Contemporary Architecture & Urbanism in the Mediterranean & the Middle East

CAUMME 2018

Projects of Architecture & Urbanism in the Mediterranean & the Middle East



BAU Bahçeşehir University | FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

CAUMME 2018
International Symposium
BORDERS IN ARCHITECTURE

PAUMME 2018
Architectural Projects Exhibition

WAUMME 2018
'Borders in Place' Workshop

Istanbul, November 22-23, 2018

CAUMME abstracts/ PAUMME Projects Book
includes CD with conference proceedings

Edited by (alphabetical order):
Suzan Girginkaya Akdağ, Sema Soygeniş, Meltem Vatan

Graphic design and application (alphabetical order):
Elif Şen, Canay Tunçer

Cover design (alphabetical order):
Elif Şen, Canay Tunçer

Website design (alphabetical order):
Canay Tunçer, Deniz Yaman

Publisher adress:
Mentora Yayıncılık ve Eğitim Hizmetleri Anonim Şirketi
Abbasağa Mahallesi Ihlamur Yıldız Caddesi No: 8/A Beşiktaş/ İstanbul
Tel: +90 (212) 660 58 41
Certificate Number: 41452

e-ISBN: 978-605-9532-13-6

BORDERS IN ARCHITECTURE

CAUMME PAUMME 2018

International Symposium
Proceedings

Istanbul, November 22-23, 2018

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REVITALIZING UNDEFINED URBAN SPACES BY TEMPORARY URBAN STRATEGIES

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Keywords: undefined urban areas, vague borders, public realm

Undefined urban open spaces, forming the heterogeneous structure of urban tissue, are perceived differently by users. These areas, which are thought to impair the relation between people and public life, are generally seen as empty, vacant, disorganized, uncertain areas in spatial terms. Because of their perception of being empty, abandoned, having no function, being in a forbidden zone or leftover, these areas are often referred to as negative associations by citizens and designers since the beginning of urbanization discourses. However, within the framework of urban developments, approaches to these areas in cities are increasingly changing in a positive and constructive way.
This paper attempts to focus on examining undefined urban open spaces and tries to justify temporary interventions as positive inputs because of their contribution to new publicness and progressive planning design approach of the city. In this study, a selection of latest examples of temporary uses in world literature are compiled and classified according to the qualities that distinguishes undefined areas from each other. Thus, specific interventions for different type of spaces are put forth. The motive of this study is, beyond the problems of undefined urban open spaces, to discuss and highlight the opportunities that they provide and to create a perception and an input that offers alternative approaches for future studies.

1. INTRODUCTION

The urban tissue is a pattern of -defined and undefined- solids (built fabric) and voids (open spaces). Voids often are discussed as the vital parts in the context of the built environment. Moreover, distinctions and relationships in between solid and void spaces determine successfulness of spatial relations in a city. Otherwise, unused and lost spaces may rise. However, in case of any spatial intervention, a spatial formation which is characterized as uncertain or idle may appear. One of the most well-known examples of this situation is the construction of a 'flyover'. Despite its functional benefits on vehicular traffic, 'under-flyover space' is discussed as unnecessary and uncanny by most of the scholars as well as the users. The paradox here may be seen as an integral part of spatial arrangements since the practice of architecture and urbanism. At this juncture, it would be inadequate in fact inaccurate information to discuss undefined spaces as the outcomes of an unplanned development. The variety of descriptions on the issue such as; the residue, empty, lost, abandoned, vague, obsolete expose the problematics in the concept of undefined spaces. Although these terms generally refer to descriptive adjectives, they are still insufficient to explain the quality of the spaces. Undefined spaces shall be determined by several variables, since, the spatial arrangements in them occur as the products or the extensions of the different developments and changes. Distinctive spaces such as; abandoned industrial areas, dark alleys, parking lots, ruins and old buildings can be classified and discussed under a common title of disused areas. Hereby the novel characteristics of the different spaces are degraded as well as their **possibilities for the city**.

Regarding the existing literature on the concept of undefined spaces, the study and development of the subject are based on a recent past. The comprehensive literature review in this study highlights approximately eighty (80) distinct terms by various scholars on the issue (Table 1). These terms, vary according to social events and different countries, are included in a daily language where **physical, social, and spatial boundaries** can -visibly or invisibly- exist in the city. Besides, the spatial reflections of these boundaries alter through the characters of the spaces. Where the borders are about to fade away, spatial definitions such as; ambiguity and uncertainty arise. The question regarding what kind of intervention should be taken to these areas is still an open-ended question that has not been explained. Since any intervention to be developed for these spaces cannot be specified under a single title or term because of the historical background and the characteristics of the city which may include subjective approaches. In addition to the necessity to develop improvement and transformation strategies for these spaces, there is a challenge here for each community. While the qualities and values of the terms reveal information about the history by giving clues on how to approach them.

1951	space left over	1996	parafunctional space
1961	border vacuums	1996	space of ellipsis
1964	vacant land	1996	free space
1959	derelict land	1997	ambivalent landscapes
1966		1997	badland
1967	dead spots	1997	blank space
1967	zero panorama	1998	no man's land
1967	other space	1998	third space
1968	empty/abstract settings	2000	residual space
1970	defeatured	2000	dead zone/white areas
1973	SLOAP (Space Left Over After Planning)	2000	in-between space
		2000	liminal space
1973	worthless land	2000	Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS)
1974	sinks'		
1977	wasteland	2000	warped space
1978	urban desert	2000	edgeland
1981	LuLu (Locally Unwanted Urban Lands)	2001	junkspace
		2001	post-it
1982	dead space	2002	loose-fit landscape
1984	void	2002	threshold
1986	lost space	2002	porous space
1986	found space	2002	space of uncertainty/the margins
1986	conceptual Nevada	2002	superfluous space
1988	smooth space	2002	contingent parts
1990	backsides	2003	le tiers paysage
1990	TOAD	2003	les delaisses
1990	place of waste	2003	fallow land
1990	contaminated land	2003	leftover space
1990	urban wilds/sinks	2004	gapscape
1991	TAZ	2004	landscape of contempt
1991	marginal space	2004	overlooked banal intermediate sites
1992	brownfield	2004	terra incognita
1992	architectural uncanny	2005	indeterminate space/space of indeterminacy
1992	interdictory space		
1993	new, nameless space	2005	industrial ruin
1993	landscapes of power	2006	drosscape
1994	stim/dross	2006	loose space /-tight space
1995	actual territories	2007	slack space
1995	terrain vague	2007	open-ended space
1995	fortuitous landscape	2007	urban wildscapes
1996	blight/ed areas	2008	urban interstices
1996	crack in the city	2012	zombie property
1996	out of place		

Table 1. List of similar concepts in the literature that are interpreted as undefined urban areas (composed by the authors)

The paper focuses on the importance and positive outcomes of temporary use as a significant factor of cities' socio-cultural, economic, spatial revitalization. This study aims to show how undefined spaces can participate the city by employing temporary uses. For this purpose, the examples of undefined urban spaces will be categorized regarding their physical, social and spatial boundaries in between the spaces. So that ideas about what kind of temporary interventions are applied in what kind of areas will be presented and this examination will create an input for future studies.

2. UNDEFINED SPACES: PROBLEM OR A HIDDEN POTENTIAL

When the urbanization process and spatial practices are examined, the first concept known as undefined urban areas is 'space left over' which was considered as 'the potential problem' early during the period of post-war in the Architectural Review journal which was published in 1951[2]. Later this phenomenon becomes identified by the acronym SLOAP which is coined literature by Leslie Ginsburg who pointed to a layout full of useless, unusable places of open space and said, "look at all this space left over after planning", writing SLOAP on the drawings. This term is described as "useless bits of ground left between streets and rigidly rectilinear international modernist buildings" in Oxford Dictionary (2015).

Contrary to the relations and continuity between urban space and architectural space in conventional urban planning, the architectural space structurally and perceptually differs with modernism. The urban space becomes a space of independent buildings. The quality and organization of the spaces between these independent buildings are left to a great deal of chance and as a result, urban spaces have taken the appearance of SLOAP. By showing the stereotypical forms and boundaries of modernism as a factor in the formation of spaces that are described as 'waste of space and useless, unusable parts of the city'; it is emphasized that these leftover spaces will lead to bigger problems in the cities in the future. However, as an example of the argument that this study strongly emphasizes, after a few years, the city has reached an agreement with these areas about the fact that they have a great potential to bring publicness to the city and accordingly various urban strategies and models have been developed to reclaim these spaces to the city. Thus, the concepts listed in Table 1 have evolved to become the most influential element of a paradigm shift, rather than just a criticized urban regulation element.



Figure 1. Southbank Undercroft; a. Southbank Center and arched space left vacant in design; b. The skateboarders who occupy the leftover space

From the end of World War II until around 1980, concepts of undefined urban areas were identified only on negative terms such as zero panorama, border vacuums, dead spots, worthless land etc. Although these terms have negative meanings such as ambiguity and vagueness, their feature of the absence of any limit or boundary also includes mobility, free time and expectation of freedom. These spaces exist in the city in two forms; they are either not used and are pending for a new edit or used and take an active role in the city. Indeed, the functions and users of these spaces are crucial in terms of affecting the public understanding of the city. Southbank Undercroft in London is the very picture of this situation. The underground arched area under the Southbank Art Center, built in London in 1967, was left as free space without any arrangement done by architects who thought people around would find an alternative use for this area if they do not put program and function there. The skateboarders realized this expected use and occupied the area (Fig 1). In a sense, they were complementary to the designers. This SLOAP area, which was supposed to be a dead space in the 1970s, has been transformed into a public space privatized by skateboarders. Jane Jacobs (1961) criticized the modernist city, referring to the 'border vacuums' that have caused destructive neighborhoods in cities as a common feature of single massive or stretched-out use of territory. Transportation infrastructure, large office, and housing blocks, sports stadiums, waterfronts are different in many respects, but - when

we consider the tendency to exist in very bad or deteriorating environments - they have many common points. They are vacuum generators. It's not as much about the lines that are drawn, it's the void they produce with dead-end city streets and thus a border vacuum. That promotes vacancy and urban decay (Url 1). Often borders are thought of as passive objects, or matter-of-factly just as edges. However, a border exerts an active influence (Jacobs, 1961). Jacobs quoted Kevin Lynch on the solution to borders; an edge may be more than simply a dominant barrier if some visual or motion penetration is allowed through it—if it is, as it were, structured to some depth with the regions on either side. It then becomes a seam rather than a barrier, a line of exchange along which two areas are sewn together (Hirt & Zahm, 2012). Embarcadero Freeway in San Francisco is an example that breaks 'the curse of border vacuum'. In 1958, when an elevated freeway in front of the historic Ferry Building was built, it blocked the section of the waterfront and cut off public activities. This freeway not only created a barrier also produced a vacuum that left unused space. The freeway was a border vacuum; it was completely removed after the damage made by the earthquake because it was economically not feasible making a new one in 1989 (Url 1). Today Embarcadero Coast is a square with a view of shopping, trams, and bridges (Fig 2).



Figure 2. San Francisco Embarcadero Freeway; a. A view from the time it was built, b. The city square that emerged after the removal of the highway.

The concept of terrain vague derived by Solà-Morales has given these studies a different dimension. The French 'vague' has Latin and Germanic origins. Woge (the German) refers to a sea swell, significantly alluding to movement, oscillation, instability, and fluctuation. Two Latin roots come together in the French 'vague'; descends from 'vacuus', 'vacant' and 'vacuum' in English, which is to say "empty, unoccupied" yet also "free, available, unengaged." The relationship between the absence of use, of activity, and the sense of freedom, of expectancy, is fundamental to understanding the evocative potential of the city's terrain vagues. Void, absence, yet also promise the space of the possible, of expectation (Solà-Morales, 2014). In this respect, another similar term that refers to previously used land is vacant land which is now vacant and could be redeveloped without treatment, where treatment includes any of the demolition, clearing of fixed structures or foundations and leveling. 'Vacant land' does not have to be vacant that makes this definition even vaguer-it can include, for example, structurally sound buildings. The vacancy is neither physical nor occupational-it is temporal. Vacant land is de facto never empty but is sometimes empty of human presence (Doron, 2007).

3. TEMPORARY INTERVENTIONS FOR PUBLIC REALM

The dilemma between the action that the urban voids offer as loose space and the inaction that exists within them, develops formal and informal relationships that are tightly connected with the formal and informal use of space. Informal relations are one of the main actors in these areas that carry the expectation of change and recovery. According to Groth and Corijn (2005), urban residual spaces provide opportunities for new, transitional re-appropriations that are assumed by civil or 'informal' actors coming from outside the official, institutionalized domain of urban planning and urban politics.

In the transformation process of the cities that are trying to keep up with rapidly changing living conditions, developments and new needs, besides the projects developed mainly on the case of persistence, the phenomenon of "temporariness" which appears as a new intervention approach, has begun to play an active role in forming cities. While artists, activists and event organizers have embraced the pop-up phenomenon which provides temporary experience and interaction areas for limited periods, urban visionaries and planners have remained overwhelmingly concerned with permanence. This situation may be changing according to the alternative approach so called 'temporary city'[3] to master planning (Lepeska, 2012). Andres (2012) defines temporary use as 'a set of practices with

short term return developed in a context of economic, urban or political disorder in a nearly unplanned way.' The sequential temporariness term is mentioned various times in RAAAF's book (Rietveld, 2015) which implies that a clear time span and a following move are healthy. If a space is available for a limited time, this very fact makes people design, build, invest and work differently. This understanding embraces and seeks to stimulate the constant and desired dynamic nature of the city (Url 2). To demonstrate how an urban open space is divided, leftover and occupied, this study uses some typological names of interventions such as appropriating, transgressing and pluralizing according to borders' types, respectively; physical, spatial and social borders.[4] Thus in this article, which interventions can be developed for which type of spaces will be suggested.

3.1. Appropriating of Undefined Urban Spaces

Maeklong Railway Market (Talad Rom Hoop) is an example of informal occupation of space in Mae Klong district, Samut Songkhram province in Thailand. The project situated itself on the tracks of a working railway line. The railway line is not completely idle. The commuter train goes by few inches away from vendors eight times a day. Through the engaging of the market makes this temporarily inoperative area interactive and unique (Fig 3).



Figure 3. Street vendors in Talad Rom Hoop Market, Thailand.
When the train whistle is heard, the vendors start to move their goods and shop awnings away from the tracks. The action of pulling down umbrellas has caused this market to also be called Talad Rom Hoop, which means the 'closing of umbrellas' in Thai language.

Another example is an amusement park transformed from an old electric train ruin in Lima, Peru. The Spanish group Basurama, who are a group of artists engaged in design and production to ensure reuse of waste by making permanent or temporary projects, has reclaimed abandoned industrial land and turned it into a re-purposed amusement park (Fig 4). In 1986 a large strip of land was aside for what was to be Peru's new electric train. The project was halted and it was partially constructed with concrete columns. The group joined up with local artists, architecture students, and activists to design a colorful amenity space. Basurama's aim was to study those phenomena inherent in the massive production of real and virtual trash in the consumer society, providing points of view on the subject that might generate new thoughts and attitudes (Url 3).



Figure 4. Basurama's project 'Ghost Train Park', a. Old structure of electric train, b. New project.

In Basurama's project, the entire playground was built up of entirely recycled materials such as tires and other car parts. Swings and climbing frames made from old tires, a rope slide, and graffiti art turned a mile-long stretch of elevated train overpass into a temporary urban fun park. The project turned out to be interesting for the discussion and debate it aroused about the property and management of public space, infrastructures, public works, etc., including reflections about urban needs and desires, political creativity (Url 4).

3.2. Transgressing of Undefined Urban Spaces

Berlin-based architects Raumlabor designed and developed an architectural work entitled as 'the Space Buster' by temporarily transforming locations. This work was developed to explore the qualities and possibilities of public space in New York City in 2008. It interacts with the architectural and the social space and its conditions and opens urban space for temporary collective uses (Url 5). The 'Space buster' is comprised of a big inflatable bubble-like dome coming out of the back of the van fitting up to 80 persons in it. People enter the space through the passenger's door of the van. The bubble space has the ability to adjust its surroundings whether it is placed in a parking lot, under a flyover, or an abandoned area. The bubble is supported by air pressure generated by a fan underneath the ramp. The membrane of the bubble is specially designed translucent plastic so people on the inside can see schematically what´s going on outside. The membrane acts as a semi permeable border between the public and the private. This flexible space establishes a whole new atmosphere as well as 'the momentum of the visibility of the things happening to the public' (Url 6) allowing the varying activities to take place inside the bubble such as lecture series, dinners, dance parties through being furnished with desks, chairs, tables (Fig 5).

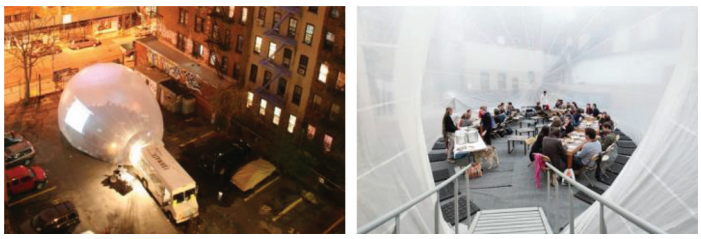


Figure 5. Space Buster pavilion by Raumlabor; a. Installation in parking lot, b. a view from inside the bubble.

The Red Planet is another example of an intervention of transgressing borders between public and private spaces. The Red Planet is a public space intervention designed by 100architects. It's a circulation area to attract customers and to spend quality time interacting with other people. It is organized in one of the biggest shopping centers in Shanghai and enhances the experience in the privately-owned public space (POPS) within an open-air Retail Street. The project serves as a surreal playground with its bubbling basketball field, chalkboard pyramids, benches, and other random games. It provides an artificial topography for playing, climbing, sitting, laying. More particularly, how to colonize and use the spaces of installation has been left to the imagination of children (Fig 6). 100architects explains this unusual playground as follows: 'our proposal arose from a surreal approach, from the intention of breaking the conventional rules of perception, of what is already conceived as reality, in order to trigger kids' imagination and creativity as well as immersing them in a colorful experience.'(Url 7)



Figure 6. The Red Planet; a. Installation in POP, b. a top view of playground.

3.3. Pluralizing of Undefined Urban Spaces

The intervention entitled as Gefundenes Fressen (Donation Dinner) is a 'sculptural installation work of social interaction becoming from a simple meal of leftover food'. Guerilla Architects asked the traders of market square to donate their leftovers for a common dinner. They cooked several foods, and everybody was invited to join the dining table. The only tools brought were: a stove, some pots, paper plates, and cutlery. The table and the seats were improvised out of empty cardboard boxes. This 'donation dinner' project gave a new platform for communication without barriers to its users who came from various backgrounds (Fig 7). The empty table remained at the end of the market as the only evidence of what had temporarily emphasized the square's key function as a place of social exchange (Url 8).



Figure 7. Gefundenes Fressen (Donation Dinner); a. Installation in Public Square, b. Joining the dining table.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Temporary urban strategies may have a strong impact on future plans of cities. They can be functioned as a catalyst for the long-term sustainable development of urban spaces. Temporary use is a learning process of accommodating innovation and adapting needs and capacities to available resources through helping to shape new forms of cooperation between public administrations, private property owners and citizen initiatives. It offers benefits to owners and users, in terms of security, maintenance; anchor tenants and social vibe on the one side, and affordable rents and spaces on the other (Url 9). There are several useful reasons about the interest towards temporary uses. Temporary use in the production of space is an innovative intervention model in design, which provides easy-to-produce, portable, adaptable, low-cost, interactive and experiential environments. Temporary uses can change the perception of leftover spaces serving in terms of economic, spatial, social opportunities for cities and they embody flexible methods of space production. Transient uses, which exist temporally and allow human interaction, may be an alternative model for urban intervention in the process of revitalizing of urban voids. The concept of temporary, in which time and human factor are of great importance, can be organized together with many practices such as flexibility, interaction, experience, performance.

As an output of this study, it can be said that the intervention types reveal the potential of publicness in leftover spaces. Through the intervention type of appropriating an abandoned area such as community gardens, parking days, etc., can break physical borders in the city. Likewise, publicness can arise in privately owned public spaces or pseudo public areas through transgressing borders between private and public spaces. With the way of pluralizing actions such as guerilla urbanism, people from the different background can meet in a social space through breaking social borders.

There are various benefits of making temporary interventions also for the actors of cities. The strategic interventions offer a new and flexible platform for designers to show their ideas. For government institutions, the temporary projects can raise the profile of a space to help captivating further investment. For landowners, they can provide a discussion platform to make some community interviews effectively. Thus it may reach a wide audience and draw attention for the initiate of consultations about design proposals. Besides, for local people, experimentation in public space helps people to be aware of a greater range of actions that it is possible to do to enhance public spaces.

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Fig4.a.b.https://www.treehugger.com/sustainable-product-design/ruins-of-electric-train-turned-into-terribly-cool-amusement-park-in-lima-photos.html

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Fig 6.a.b. https://100architects.com/project/the-red-planet/

Fig 7.a.b. http://www.guerillaarchitects.de/portfolio/gefundenes-fressen/

[1] This paper was developed as a part of the PhD thesis of the first author under the supervision of the second author.

[2] The journal can be reached from: 'Space Left Over: Making the Best Odd Corner', Architectural Review, 1951, October, ss.233-41.

[3] For details of the concept of 'temporary city': Bishop, P., & Williams, L. (2012). The temporary city. London: Routledge.

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