Chapter 23

Reactivating Urban Voids Through Sensory and Pop-Up Design: Changing Citizen Perceptions of Remaking With Waste

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ABSTRACT

This chapter reflects on the implementation of pop-up architecture and sensory gardens made with waste reuse in brownfields. The selected experiments, MOBILELAND® (2014-2016) and DOT TO DOT® (2017 onwards), investigate waste reuse as pop-up sensory reactivation of gap sites in Glasgow. Experiments explore constructive sensibilities embedded in material sensory by interlinking tangible place-making, sensory gardens, eco-design, and self-build solutions in public spaces. The cases underline design as sensory medium to effectively co-develop innovative environmental changes, societal challenges, and co-creation, including experiential outdoor learning and public engagement, throughout the reuse of waste applied in remaking by testing/piloting the C2C theoretical framework. Trials apply the principles of temporariness, portability, and sensory of waste as social value and material culture in cities. These live projects explore constructive and somatic sensibilities and critically investigate the cultural embodiment of material sensory by remaking.

INTRODUCTION

This study reflects on the implementation of pop-up architecture and sensory gardens made with waste reuse in brownfields. The selected live experiments MOBILELAND (2014-2016) and DOT TO DOT (2017 onwards) investigate pop-up and sensory reactivation of gap sites in Glasgow through waste reuse. Trials apply the principles of Temporariness, Portability and Sensory of waste as social value and
material culture in cities. They explore perceptual and somatic sensibilities and critically investigates the cultural embodiment of material sensory.

As senior architect and educator in architectural design, the author approaches architecture from the everyday production of temporary self-build structures –buildings and landscapes. Key questions inspire the author’s practice and studies: How does the act of self-build affect individuals and communities emotionally? How will it contribute to future place making of urban voids? How will this then change people’s perceptions of delegated spaces in cities? Remaking provides a sense of joy, identity, and place-ness by filling gap sites, changing people’s perceptions of their everyday life in cities.

This chapter reviews the perceptual and somatic experiences involved in the self-building of sensory landscapes a number of projects led by the author. In these projects, waste reuse advocates a participatory and user-centred design approaches based on the cradle-to-cradle design principles and appropriate technology. It encourages consuming less energy by engaging in do-it-yourself live projects and self-sufficiency, either repurposing the given materials or changing the quality of artefacts produced, and local impacts in circular economy. These experiments commonly pursue design through full-scale fabrication, assembly and installation; critical exploration of design and co-production; and study of the potential of waste as structural frames in buildings, furniture, playgrounds and sensory gardens in public spaces. In trials, “architecture without architects” (Rudofsky, 1964) is consistently tested through sensory remaking.

PLACE-MAKING AND PLACE-LEARNING THROUGH REMAKING

Our planet is a fragile organism, so our cities. Our habitats are being urbanised, furnished and restructured and, in this process, they are being radically altered both ecological and socially. Today the Neoliberal model applied in urban economies (Brenner, Peck & Theodore, 2012) is promulgating a “new geography of centrality and marginality” (Sassen, 1997) not only between countries or regions but within cities. This phenomenon is characterised by motion, contestation, internal asymmetries, and discontinuous transgressions between territories in friction. Border conditions are connected with the establishment of socio-economic forces that rule the production and occupancy of everyday spaces generating discontinuities and voids in cities. Like borderlands, brownfields are heterotopic places that construct transitory, intermittent or spontaneous living conditions, away from any conventional planning (Suau, 2015).

People’s perceptions of cities are influenced by the built environment and sensorial body activities. In this context, temporariness, portability and sensory are essential components for the transformation of the built environment. The culture of building is grounded in the material object, through the use of construction materials, tectonic articulations and structural and climatic technologies. Architecture is placed in wider societal context, in which material uses and meanings are usually attributed to the “built object” regarding spatial, social, economic and cultural factors. As a living concept, the act of building connects users and building processes through design. It comprises both tangible and symbolic features.

In present building cultures, there is a correlation between social form, architecture and appropriate building material, suggesting that although nature provides resources In Europe, social asymmetry is the new urban question (Secchi, 2013), which is convoyed by the abrupt inequity of income distribution; environmental disasters; demographic shrinkage; inner displacement of urban communities; rising of informal cities; and the proliferation of urban voids. They define the “new imprint” of our everyday life. This subaltern urbanism is defined by stigmatised, residual and contaminated spaces (Suau, 2014). Citizens demand the-right-to-the-city and the democratic occupancy of public spaces. They demand
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