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Chapter 5

Short Term Projects, Long Term Ambitions: Facets of Transience in Two London Development Sites

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Abstract

Exploring the phenomenon of short term projects on vacant land through empirical research in London in the latest downturn, this chapter draws on two case studies which reflect different attitudes to transience and permanence in urban development. Through defining the notion of 'short-term', the chapter locates the case studies in a historical framework. A complex systems/resilience framework brings the socio-environmental dimension of temporary uses to the foreground, while collaborative planning theory frames the way in which they can be portrayed as tools for community co-authorship of development. The chapter discusses the following key themes that emerged through the case study approach: the environmental and social contribution of vacant land in relation to urban systems, sustainability and resilience; urban development as an incremental, collaborative process, and emerging patterns of collaboration and synergies between involved actors, within the context of recession; and planning policy implications.

Key words

Temporary use; historical evolution; complex systems; resilience; collaborative planning; upcycling; social enterprise; urban farm; Caravanserai; Cultivate London

Introduction

As the 2008 recession started to make its mark on the development sites of London, a number of top-down initiatives attempted to open up stalled land for temporary uses. Two of them are documented here with the aim to explore whether officially licensed temporary uses on vacant land can have a beneficial effect on communities under conditions of recession. The initiatives occurred in a paradoxical context within which developers explored ideas about the temporary occupation of their stalled sites through architectural competitions, professional magazines campaigned for the property sector to bring back life to empty sites and the Mayor of London supported the Capital Growth initiative for bringing underused plots of land back into productive use through urban agriculture (see Kamvasinou, 2014). However, such circumstances are not unusual in the history of London and the not-so-well-known history of temporary uses more generally, which over a century has often seen these kinds of initiatives occur under conditions of war, environmental crisis or economic depression. Awareness of this historical framework is useful in identifying the evolution in approaches to temporary use to date.

The case studies that I will be discussing present the opportunity for comparison between two different approaches to transience in urban development. They also present the two ends of the temporary spectrum – at one end, an initiative that has endured, although not on the same site, and at the other end, a site and time-specific initiative that has officially closed. I will explore the tensions between short term projects and longer term ambitions, and ways that the latter can be sustained and integrated in more permanent development. Framing such ambitions are the socio-environmental aspects of the interventions studied as well as their contributions to collaborative planning that are responsive to the needs of both the community and the development sector.

Historical framework

Short term projects on vacant land in the UK are often termed ‘interim’, ‘interwhile’ or ‘meanwhile’ projects (Reynolds, 2011; Kamvasinou and Roberts, 2014). These terms invariably refer to vacant urban land used temporarily for purposes other than their long-term designation. Hence they are not just temporary but are an in-between stage of development (assuming some more permanent state before and after). Whilst ‘interim’ uses have often existed in the past in an unofficial and informal manner (with examples ranging from children using vacant land as an adventure playground, to people squatting on derelict land and

buildings) the term has taken on a new dimension in recent years with interim uses frequently becoming official and licensed.

Short-term projects on vacant land are not new. From the appropriation of wastelands to 'graffiti art' and 'guerrilla gardening', there has been a historical evolution internationally with key milestones that show significant parallels in the UK with experience in Europe and the US. These include the late 19th century philanthropic projects aimed at social reform in Detroit, Philadelphia and New York, which encouraged cultivation of vacant land to support food growing for the urban poor (Lawson, 2005); the 'Dig for Victory' gardens during the two World Wars, with even London's Kensington Gardens being cultivated for food supply. The 1970s gave prominence to activist projects and the emergence of Guerilla Gardening as a form of resistance to urban abandonment, in parallel with a growing and increasingly vocal squatting movement (Lawson, 2005; Awan *et al*, 2011). The 1980s recession and the collapse of the real estate market in the US led to the proliferation of garage sales and street vending (Crawford, 2008, p. 29), while art projects on vacant development sites such as Agnes Denes' New York 'Wheatfield – A confrontation' (1982) paved the way for an increased environmental awareness.

In the 1990s community 'gardening' became community 'greening', with environmental concerns and entrepreneurial and training programs dominating the temporary agenda (Lawson, 2005). The failure of speculative development plans that followed the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall led to the rise of informal and insurgent planning, "civil society-based, smaller 'developers' [...] and urban creative industries", through temporary use of "idle land and buildings" (La Fond, 2010, p. 62). In the 2000s temporary use projects were characterized by recreation, community food security and food growing, job training and education (Lawson, 2005). Food growing projects seemed to contribute to the resolution of community conflict and many non-profit food organisations were operating from vacant lots (see, for example, the 2003 Garden Resource Program Collaborative, Detroit); a move that gradually became formalized, for example, with the 'Capital Growth' program in London (2010, funded by the Mayor of London).

London has had its own position in this evolution of temporary uses. High land values and Global City status mean that vacant land for temporary uses has become exceptionally scarce in London. Despite this, there were examples of temporary use in the 1970s, when the community gardens movement flourished (see Nicholson-Lord, 1987; McKay, 2011; Turner, 2012) and the 1980s, when reclamation and occupation of vacant land by community-based actors resulted in temporary projects becoming permanent (see, for example, Camley Street

Nature Park at Kings Cross; and the Coin Street redevelopment in the South Bank). These projects with their socio-environmental credentials and community focus form useful precedents for charting the recent emergence of short-term projects with long-term ambitions.

Indeed, the recent literature on complex systems and resilience is consistent with this historiography and is useful for understanding how small scale interventions influence city-scale transformation, and, by extension, how short term projects may influence long term development. Urban systems are “the result of emergent processes [...] myriad interactions between elements, including people, business, institutions, culture and physical conditions” (Radywyl and Biggs, 2013, p. 160). Thus “transformative social innovations”, such as temporary land uses, must be replicable in space (horizontal scaling) and must interact with systems at larger scales (vertical scaling) in order to effect broader systems change (Westley *et al*, 2011, cited in Radywyl and Biggs, 2013, p. 160). For example, temporary uses that have a purpose beyond the mere physical installation on a given site, such as the training of unemployed youth or an enterprising component, will have a more lasting effect on the community. Such uses can interact vertically with a number of actors (local councils, philanthropic organisations, commercial clients), are less dependent on site specificity and are more replicable, as one of the case studies will show.

Németh and Langhorst (2014, p. 149) conceptualise vacant land as a system that “facilitates, provides or accommodates critical infrastructural services that are comparatively expensive to produce artificially”. Such services include green infrastructure as advocated in recent UK policy documents (see the National Planning Policy Framework, 2012 and the Localism Act, 2011). Temporary land uses on vacant land can be framed as a “critical instrument of social and environmental justice” (Németh and Langhorst, 2014, p. 149). Thus they have the potential to contribute to community resilience at times of economic and environmental crisis in ways that will be explored through the two case studies.

Finally, the conceptualization of temporary uses is closely related to collaborative planning theory (Healey, 1997, pp. 38, 195). Local knowledge needs to be recognised by “widening stakeholder involvement beyond traditional power elites” (Healey, 1998, p. 1531). Temporary intervention depends on the formation of a ‘community of practice’ or ‘custodial practices’: where community membership is consolidated through shared participation in meaningful activities that connect their lives (Radywyl and Biggs, 2013, p. 164). The process is eloquently described by Németh and Langhorst (2014, p. 149) as a “continuous editing...of urban transformation” in which communities’ role in spatial planning and design is “as co-author of the spaces and places they inhabit and as empowered participants in urban development

processes". Such co-authorship has often been confirmed through the unofficial historical legacy of temporary uses (see Kamvasinou and Milne, 2017). However, it has taken on a slightly different twist in the two recent cases studied, both of which have been officially licensed. Therefore, the question might now be: where is the fine line between co-authorship and co-option in the role of temporary uses in urban development?

Case study 1: Canning Town Caravanserai: semi-public community and events space with emphasis on upcycling

This short-term project in East London was a winning entry in the 'Meanwhile London: Opportunity Docks' competition launched in late 2010 by *Property Week* together with the now defunct London Development Agency (LDA), the Mayor of London and the Mayor of Newham. The competition aimed to promote three strategic redevelopment sites in the Royal Docks by finding temporary uses for them as part of the 2012 Olympics regeneration legacy. Ideas tested on these sites could be transferred to other sites in the locality, and could help to promote the future regeneration of the wider area (Mallett, 2010).

The project used a vacant site owned by the London Borough of Newham opposite Canning Town tube station (see Figure 5.1). The area is one of the most ethnically diverse and deprived in London. However, big regeneration projects have been encroaching in nearby Canning Town and the Royal Docks. These include the ExCeL London Exhibition and Convention Centre; the Crystal building (a sustainability exhibition and education centre sponsored by Siemens); the Millennium Village; and the Emirates Air Line (a cable car over the river Thames connecting Royal Victoria Dock and Greenwich Peninsula).

INSERT FIGURE 5.1 ABOUT HERE

The proposal aimed to turn the large stalled site into a temporary micro-scale urban 'oasis'. The winning team included ten different organisations, most of which dropped out at the implementation stage, and the project was eventually single-handedly led by Ash Sakula Architects. They initially concentrated on "trading, making, cooking and eating" activities that would attract both locals and tourists during the 2012 Olympics (Ash, 2012, p. 27). The project would contribute to upskilling local youths through workshop-based training, to community cohesion through food growing allotments, and to putting the space on the map through

ticketed events. As Ash (2013) puts it, "*it was always in the DNA of the project to be a collaborative design and build project... using skilled labour very sparingly and training up lots of people*". This would be achieved through a panelized system of construction based on a template, so that people could get building, even if they just had a few days to spare, because everything was marked out (Ash, 2013). This experience would be important for a community very much in need of skills.

In November 2012, 'Flitched: the upcycler's design competition' was launched for the construction of a more sheltered and enclosed structure for activities on the principle of putting waste back to use. The construction phase of this project proved particularly attractive to architecture students wanting to learn building skills (see Figure 5.2).

INSERT FIGURE 5.2 ABOUT HERE

The project was to have a temporary lease for five years before it was handed over to Canning Town's new Town Centre by developer Bouygues. It started in November 2010 with a two-year lease, followed by another two-year one. The project came to an end in October 2015. The site conditions changed between competition and implementation. The site initially had a block of fourteen flats on it which were demolished before the beginning of the project. This hindered a number of proposals that had been dependent on this building, including a pop-up Hotel to generate precious start-up income during the Olympics (Ash, 2013). The next biggest drawback was the decision by the local authority and Transport for London not to allow passengers to alight at Canning Town tube station during the Olympic Games. This was one of the factors that led to the failure of most other 'Meanwhile London: Opportunity Docks' projects which had been counting on the increased footfall through Silvertown Way (the main avenue in the area) during the Games.

One of the key issues with managing the project was how to get different groups of people involved, so as to have a "*resilient network of weak links that would create enough of a trampoline in the project to keep it going*" (Ash, 2013). According to Ash (2013) these groups could include people interested in collaborative and service design, those exhibiting at ExCel who could use the site to demonstrate their building materials, developers from nearby large scale sites (for example, Prospect GB) who could use a local site for their corporate social responsibility programs, or the local schools.

Ash contends (2013) that it was always difficult to imagine that the project was going to be completely commercially self-funded because of its location. It was not on a pedestrian route or a shopping street. On the contrary, people had to cross a major road from the train station to reach the Caravanserai. After unsuccessfully attempting to self-fund by applying for 'Create London' money in 2011 (£40,000), the winning team, which included practices experienced in running and delivering art and community projects (such as EXYST, Space Makers and Bonny One) quickly disintegrated, and Ash Sakula found themselves having to run the project (Ash 2013).

A lot of the funding and management of the site had to do with "*resilience training and learning how to scavenge and talk your way into borrowing things*" (Ash, 2013) including recycling material from the Olympic sites and obtaining donations from construction companies. Some contributions came from corporations such as the Bank of America, Deutsche Bank and Jones Lang LaSalle who have used the site for their away days – but these days required a lot of input from the hosts.

The lack of continuity of income has meant that each year priorities had to be set that excluded other potential uses. For example, in 2013 regular local sessions and events did not receive so much attention, because the priorities were to build a toilet, to build a shelter (the 'Flitched' building), to establish cooking facilities and "*enough trees and raised allotment beds and cupboard space*" that would then enable "*corporate dinners and supper clubs cross-funding local events*" in the year 2014 (Ash 2013). This was achieved through the award of £10,000 from the Comic Relief fund, the result of a fierce competition with only a 6% success rate (see Figures 5.3 and 5.4).

INSERT FIGURE 5.3 AND FIGURE 5.4 ABOUT HERE

The impact on people is debatable. As Ash (2013) explains, "*it's really a mood dependent project, so depending on what the weather is like, the site looks either beautiful or dreary. Depending on the energy in the team, the whole opportunity seems either catalytic and exciting, or 'this is just a kind of last ditch place for people who can't get a job'*". Aside from architecture students and those looking for hands-on experience in construction, the support of the neighbourhood varied. There were those who bought their flat and were really disappointed that the site across the road was not 'nice and clean'. There were others who were very supportive and provided water and electricity in the early days of the project but did

not use the site, despite having children who could do with an outdoor space for play (Ash 2013). Both reactions, however, may have been because in 2013 Caravanserai looked and felt like a building site, due to the construction of Flitched. Nevertheless, there was involvement by the local primary school as well as the hosting of events such as 'Light night' run by various artists and involving light installation, music and performance that gave the site a special identity and atmosphere. There was also the hosting of different, non-continuous activities, such as a twice-weekly pan drumming workshop, a theatre company and various growers and supper clubs (Ash 2013; see Figure 5.5).

INSERT FIGURE 5.5 ABOUT HERE

Case study 2: Cultivate London Brentford Lock: urban farm and social enterprise project

Cultivate London is a social enterprise with a training programme which operates from development sites in West London. It consists of an urban farm where long-term unemployed youth – known as 'neet' youth (not in employment, education or training) – receive training on the essentials of plant life, growing and selling plants, and maintaining a plant nursery.

Cultivate London was originally set up as a youth training programme by a bigger organization called the Housing Pathways Trust which operates in Ealing and Brentford and provides "grant funding to small charities and community groups in the local area who work to help disadvantaged people or create stronger bonds between members of the community" (Housing Pathways, 2014). The project started in 2010, with their first growing season in 2011. The training aims to get young people back into employment through the business model of an urban farm. The programme consists of a four-month voluntary traineeship, with work placements in local partner businesses provided in the fourth month. Cultivate London recruit youths from "*job centres, probation services, and the community at large... The urban farm is the means to an end, in providing training and experience for the trainees, and is also partially funding the project*" (Attorp, 2013; see Figure 5.6).

INSERT FIGURE 5.6 ABOUT HERE

The site studied in this research was derelict and awaiting redevelopment. It was at Brentford Lock, in the London Borough of Hounslow (see Figure 5.7). Cultivate London rented the site on the basis of a 2-year renewable lease at a peppercorn rent. They also have other sites with longer term, 10-year leases while as a Charity they get 80% tax relief.

INSERT FIGURE 5.7 ABOUT HERE

After substantial consultation with the local community, the overall residential development scheme in Brentford secured outline planning consent in March 2012. The first phase of homes was completed in late 2015. Phase two of the development at Brentford Lock West achieved detailed planning permission at the end of 2014, with works commencing in 2015 (ISIS Waterside Regeneration, 2012), including the Cultivate London Brentford Lock site studied in this research (see Figure 5.8).

INSERT FIGURE 5.8 ABOUT HERE

Having been involved with Brentford Lock West since works first began and having previously grown a range of fresh produce on site, the Cultivate London team will later manage the roof gardens in the new development, which will include a series of private allotments, providing “green fingered residents with an opportunity to grow their own fresh produce, while getting to know their new neighbours.” (ISIS Waterside Regeneration, 2012) The Cultivate team will “offer residents advice and guidance on how to make the most of their plots. They will also be responsible for their general upkeep and will ensure any unused plots are tended to.” (ibid)

In terms of the developers’ and landowners’ approach, this was an idle site, so the temporary use was a bonus to them because they would not have to pay council tax or business rates on it. Another reason the developers have been positive is because such projects demonstrate corporate social responsibility, which is important for companies nowadays. In addition, the temporary nature of the project means that “*it can be picked up and dismantled and reassembled elsewhere while still making good use of the land while nothing else is happening*” (Attorp, 2013).

However, the process of getting a lease for vacant land is not easy. It involves “*finding out who owns the land, who manages the land, usually a property management/real estate management company, meeting them, talking to their lawyers, and getting all the contracts drawn up, ...a sort of a treasure hunt*” as well as securing public liability insurance (Attorp, 2013). Operating from vacant land as a temporary use with a long-term agenda can thus be an ongoing struggle to ensure continuity in the enterprise plan.

As a Charity, Cultivate London has a Board of Directors and the chair of the Board is a Councillor in Ealing. Through this and other contacts, Cultivate London have good links with Ealing Council and Hounslow Council that both supported the project. For example, Hounslow Council paid for the Brentford Lock site to be cleared (Attorp, 2013). Cultivate London have also established links with many community groups and get approached with offers for land as they now have a track-record of what they do (Attorp, 2013). They also have strong links with the local community through the Brentford High Street Steering Group – a committee of local businesses, business-owners and others involved in Brentford community who are very supportive. They participate in local markets through which they sell their produce. Critically, they have a significant social impact through engaging with youth who are long term unemployed and/or on probation. When speaking with apprentices on the site the general consensus was that their involvement with the project had improved their skills and knowledge in relation to food growing, and hence their job prospects. It had also contributed to their health and wellbeing by keeping them physically fit and active. Many of the apprentices reported that working outdoors was genuinely enjoyable.

Initially the site at Brentford lock was just a car park and an area of tarmac. Since then it has grown hugely, “*from concentrating on just five different herbs up to a huge range of herbs, vegetables and flowers... from one poly tunnel to four poly tunnels on one site and ... expanding [to] potentially three sites three years later*” (Connor, 2014). It has contributed to educating local unemployed young people on “*where food comes from, in general, and what work actually goes into it*” so they can become more aware of food quality issues, and even specialise on food production (Connor, 2014). It has provided initial training as well as practical experience for those who wanted to work in horticulture. It has made this area of Brentford more noticeable and more accessible; simultaneously creating an awareness of other similar projects elsewhere (Hurwood, 2014). Finally it has provided short term employment for young people whilst they learn how to care for plants (Byrne, 2014; see Figures 5.9 and 5.10).

INSERT FIGURE 5.9 AND FIGURE 5.10 ABOUT HERE

Analytical framework: key themes

The two case studies form useful examples of the historical evolution in approaches to temporary use. They continue a lineage that started with the environmental concerns of the 1990s projects and the subsequent community food security and training emphasis of the 2000s. Additionally, they focus on making new use of waste materials through upcycling (Caravanserai) and on selling their produce in order to self-fund (Cultivate London). Beyond the historical evolution however, they exemplify the tensions between short term projects and longer term ambitions. In Caravanserai, the ambition to act as a model for local authorities wanting to inject some creative life into hoarded plots of land was frustrated by various planning, physical and financial obstacles over the course of the project, and by its lack of replication after closure. Conversely, Cultivate London has developed a model of working continuously across multiple sites and times, fulfilling a long term agenda. The organisation has even made its way, in a new capacity, into the development that replaced it (tending their roof allotments). The sites present different aspects of the relationship with development actors, a relationship that appears to be more positive in the case of Cultivate London, accounting for its longevity.

The intention of the case study approach was to explore whether vacant land can be beneficial for local communities and urban resilience if officially brought into temporary use; and through comparative analysis to identify key themes that could be generalised. These themes are outlined in the following sections.

Environmental and social contribution in relation to urban systems, sustainability and resilience

Short-term projects on vacant land have been historically linked to cycles of resilience to crisis in socio-ecological terms. They reconnect people and nature, have been used to provide education, skills, and civic-mindedness, and create participatory spaces where diverse groups can come together in mutual self-interest (Lawson, 2005).

True to this history, Caravanserai presents various facets of sustainability, through reactivating dormant open space, with the upcycling of construction waste, gardening sessions and small allotments in raised beds, and the hosting of low budget activities and events. It engaged

communities of interest - those wanting to learn more about food growing, upcycling and self-build – and was particularly successful in providing hands-on experience in construction to unemployed architecture graduates during the recession. Cultivate London educates on the origin of food, contributes to local resilience by training young unemployed and vulnerable people in organic cultivation through the business model of an urban farm, and turns otherwise bland spaces into green oases of edible and ornamental plants.

Urban development as an incremental, collaborative process, and emerging patterns of collaboration and synergies between involved actors

Short term projects' influence on long term development can be threefold. First, they open up previously inaccessible land, making it known. Second, they integrate small scale community action and landowners' or developers' sustainability and corporate social responsibility programmes, preparing the ground for mixed communities. Third, they are live experiments with land uses and activities that, if successful, might be incorporated into permanent development.

To create and maintain the conditions of collaboration, appropriate management is necessary. Contrary to popular belief, short-term projects do not happen spontaneously. As Ash (2013) confirms, local authorities could help by subsidising a post to deal with project administration and day-to-day project needs. In collaborative development, community participation is paramount but very difficult to achieve. Community engagement requires investment in time, but short term projects often do not have the luxury of time to make an impact on communities. As Ash (2013) puts it:

“you want to work with the grain of these things, and other people will come on board afterwards. Because some people are not initiators, some people are kind of joiners, so, you don't want to wait for everybody...”

The trend towards the installation of short-term projects on vacant land through collaboration with developers and landowners in the recent recession, showcased in Cultivate London, has led to a significant debate on the extent to which these projects can be seen as 'creative conversations' or as part of co-option (see Tonkiss, 2013). However the near abandonment of the Caravanserai by both the local authority and the developer suggest that top-down initiatives are perhaps more of a 'tick-box' exercise than genuine attempts to initiate change and to support the community. In contrast, the case of Cultivate London is an example of a

win-win situation, with developers gaining in tax relief and corporate social responsibility, and the organisation gaining in land resources and financial support.

Planning policy implications in the UK context

A major challenge for short term projects is the considerable time that it takes to set them up within current planning policies and procedures. If short term projects were to become part of policy, the gain for planning would be that new thinking might emerge in relation to valuing land, wasted resources and processes of place-making. A 'light touch' framework for the inclusion of short-term projects in planning would need to allow for flexibility and speed (in time, space and regulations); enable innovation and experimentation (aided by their short-term character); and mediate for genuine collaboration between different actors. Policy makers could help by not only 'licensing' short-term projects in a non-restrictive way, but also by relaxing the planning permission processes and by financially supporting some basic costs of their management.

Concluding thoughts

In this chapter I have explored the issue of short term projects on vacant land through empirical research in London in the latest downturn. Such projects seem to be moving into the mainstream while top-down involvement has become increasingly common. This is in contrast to traditional perceptions of vacant land as marginal and its usual appropriation and reclamation through activist, bottom-up action. However, it is consistent with less known historical cycles of resilience to crisis, for example philanthropic projects on vacant land since the late 19th century.

This chapter has touched upon the special nature of London today, dominated by the property market, which renders it unique in relation to other places in the UK. This affects the extent to which the conclusions of this study can be generalized. However, the replicability of the projects' principles is perhaps a key contribution of the case studies. For example, Caravanserai's experimental ethos might make it an interesting model for local authorities UK-wide who are willing to accept "*their liability*" and "*comfortable with the idea that some creative energy could be injected into a piece of land that otherwise is just hoarded*" (Ash 2013). Crucially, short-term projects are also important as a 'methodology' to 'prove an impact' and test whether there is a particular need for future projects (Ash, 2013). Indeed, one key lesson learnt from the study of short-term projects is that "*...if you're not allowed to experiment and*

fail, your likelihood of being successful is a lot lower" (Attorp, 2013). Cultivate London were very fortunate to have a lot of freedom, particularly in the initial stages of setting up the project. The support of the Housing Pathways Trust allowed them to persevere, despite a less-than-successful first year, until they succeeded (Attorp, 2013). The importance of allowing time for experimentation and for learning from what did not work, often a luxury in temporary land uses, cannot be underestimated.

One significant conclusion is that short term projects can link to very important longer term agendas, such as sustainability and food security. Establishing longer term policy routes for urban food growing is necessary, if food growing is to be integrated in the sustainability agenda of cities, and not just to be considered a temporary stop-gap between more permanent phases of development. One of the challenges that Cultivate London faces is that *"every time [they] have to move, everything gets completely uprooted"* (Attorp, 2013). This wouldn't matter so much if the training programme was the sole purpose of the organisation. But as the business side of the social enterprise is very important, too, *"that huge upheaval every couple of years is a big problem"* (Attorp, 2013). Indeed, because of the amount of space required, most of the growing projects in London are currently in the outskirts where land is more readily available. However, some of that use could be integrated in long term developments or existing inner city parks, if policy allowed (Attorp, 2013).

Equally important is the long-term impact on the community. Caravanserai for example was not exactly a community facility, an open public space, because it had to be locked up at night, it was behind hoardings, and it needed active hosting and intelligent programming. But although the impact on the immediate community was limited, it did mobilise a number of communities of interest, from architecture students and interns, to local growers and performers. This was due to the activities Caravanserai supported and the way it responded to a broader need for an alternative to public spaces offered in new developments, which are too focused on consumption, but also to parks, which are less attractive for those who do not have dogs or children (Ash, 2013). As Ash puts it, *"repair, up-cycling and also creating new pieces with some ingenuity and sharing some skills is very much becoming the thing for a lot of young people because there's only so much shopping you can do if you haven't got much money anyway"* (Ash, 2013).

One of the issues with the timescale of short term projects is that they are often perceived as completed projects, while actually they are works in progress, with the uncertainty of the process of implementation having a direct effect on their evolution. In Caravanserai, from the beginning, there were issues with funding, because the local authority supplied the site free of

charge, but did not financially support the project or even waive the planning permission fee, nor was there funding from the prospective developers (Ash, 2013). According to the competition's 'small print' all risks lay with the competitors for delivering an idea; however, any profit could be claimed by the council. This contradiction is indicative of the difficulties in fully thinking through temporary projects, even when those are the result of top-down initiation.

I have also hinted at criticism of top-down initiatives that appear only to be *promoting* short term uses of vacant land without in essence *enabling* them – financially or otherwise. Proper involvement would require a designated local authority department, or the financing of an administrative post not usually available to short-term projects, in order to translate potential interest into financial or in-kind support. As Lawson (2005, p. 3) puts it in relation to urban garden programmes in the US,

“such ventures rely on a network of citywide, national, and even international sources for advisory, technical, financial, and political support. Quite often, the local, often voluntary leadership relies on staffed organizations and policies generated outside the community...”

Despite these setbacks, the two case studies demonstrate a real need for urban spaces that are the subject of more participation and hands-on action, by a wider range of social groups. Although short-term projects cannot claim to offer solutions to all societal issues, they are able to test ideas that can be refined and integrated into more permanent developments. Hence the gains - social cohesion, environmental sustainability, open space provision – do not have to be only transient.

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