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Ephemeral landscape and urban shrinkage

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Abstract

The paper investigates the phenomenon of short-lived landscapes in European cities, analysing the causes and contexts of their emergence, exploring their links with urban shrinkage, and examining their roles in urban transformation. Five cases from Liverpool, Glasgow, London, Paris and Brussels are studied in two groups of garden festivals and temporary parks, covering a range of scales, periods, locations and agents of development. Economic, political and cultural changes have created the conditions of urban shrinkage and temporary interventions, whereby landscape is treated as a flexible means to an end, a short-lived event that reflects, and paves the way for, structural change. As the cases demonstrate, however, the instrumental use of landscape for economic purposes is not the only way forward.

From popup shops to street festivals, from mobile buildings to temporary gardens, the temporary construction and use of urban space is widely discussed and practised, as part of a growing international trend that is seen as innovative and fashionable in different fields. The subjects of temporary urbanism vary from buildings to cities (Scardino et al, 2004; Koolhaas et al, 2008; Tschumi, 2010; Jodidio, 2011; Geppert, 2013), from the ways of planning them to the ways of making them (Jovis, 2007; Zander, 2008; Temel and Haydn, 2006; Bishop and Williams, 2012 ;Oswalt et al, 2013; Ziehl et al, 2012), and from how they are represented to how they are experienced (Eberle et al, 2001; Weitzel, 2011; Bauman et al, 2010). A critical examination of this trend, therefore, is needed (Madanipour, 2017). In this paper, the focus is on critically analysing temporary landscapes and exploring their links with urban shrinkage.

The paper investigates five case studies of temporary landscapes in two groups: garden festivals and temporary parks. The garden festivals include those in Liverpool and Glasgow, which are large-scale projects established in the 1980s by the British government as a strategy for urban regeneration. The temporary parks include three newer, smaller-scale cases: Ruskin Square in London, which is being developed by a private developer; the Parisian beaches, which were started in 2002 by the municipality; and Place St Antoine in Brussels, which was initiated by the local community groups. The cases are selected to reflect a range of periods, scales, intentions, and agents of development, but they all exemplify short-lived landscapes in the circumstances of urban shrinkage. The primary feature of shrinkage that is shared by all five cases is population loss and reduction in the range and intensity of activities, which are associated with structural economic, political, and cultural change. Nevertheless, the cases show different responses to a wide variety of circumstances, ranging from abandoned industrial sites in peripheral regions to hollowed out historic cores of prosperous metropolises. The aim

of the paper is to investigate if there are commonalities in these examples of ephemeral landscapes, searching for the ways in which the ephemerality of these landscapes can be understood and explained.

Urban shrinkage and temporary space

Temporary landscapes and urban shrinkage are emerging in the context of three interrelated structural crises: economic, political, and cultural. The first structural crisis is economic, such as the crisis of deindustrialisation and the global financial crisis of 2007-8, whereby one economic structure is dismantled but the shape of the next structure gradually emerges through cautious and speculative steps. The cyclical nature of the market economy is reflected in the periods of expansion and contraction, expressed in patterns of spatial change. The engine of the market economy 'represents an enormous productive potential but it is also a blind force' (Aglietta, 2000:397), regularly going through periods of crisis. The shorter economic cycles mark a crisis of overproduction, caused by a gap between the decline in demand and the continued supply of goods and services. The longer cycles are thought to be triggered by technological innovation, which transforms the context of economic production, whereby some places and processes are considered obsolete and ready for 'creative destruction' (Schumpeter, 2003; Perez, 1983).

The result is a sequence of shrinkage, experimentation, and, if successful, growth. Global economic change, and the crises that have been associated with this process, have generated a diverse pattern of urban growth and decline (Richardson and Nam, 2014). Economic and demographic shrinkage are interrelated; while economic growth attracts populations, economic decline sends them away. In Europe, larger cities are growing fast, while the populations of small and medium-sized cities are stagnant or shrinking. The growth of larger cities is often on the peripheries, and their centres show long-term decline and population loss (Ecotec, 2007; RWI et al, 2010). The economic and demographic shrinkage finds a clear spatial expression, leading to the proliferation of abandoned or vacant spaces in centres and on peripheries, which no longer have a clear function or role.

The pattern of this shrinkage varies from place to place. The former industrial areas have been in longstanding decline, with decaying spaces on the periphery or even at the heart of cities (Kivell and Lockhart, 1996). The central areas of many historic cities have also suffered from long-term decline, intensified by technological change, accelerated suburbanisation, and top-down modernisation. Services are expanded to fill in these spaces and the urban landscape is adjusted to regenerate. The global economic crisis in the recent years has shown, however, that the new sectors of the economy are equally exposed to structural crises and decline, causing a new wave of shrinkage (BBC, 2012).

The second crisis is political, whereby the relationship between the state and the market changes, as the state transfers some of its role and responsibilities to the private and voluntary sectors. In what is known as neo-liberalism, two principles are promoted: envisaging the society on the basis of enterprise and promoting competitiveness that regulates the relationship between individuals (Foucault, 2008:160). The process of urban development, which was driven by the state during the postwar welfare

state, is transferred to the private sector, which operates on the basis of entrepreneurship and market competition. Re-envisioning the society through an economic lens defines the main problem as 'one of rapid adaptation to changes in the particular circumstances of time and place', to be better addressed through the market and its price mechanism (Hayek, 1945:524).

As the state changes its priorities and withdraws from direct investment in urban development, the idea of long-term provision of public parks and other hitherto permanent features of the urban environment is replaced with the vision of short-term commodities that should be open to rapid adjustment. The response to urban shrinkage therefore changes from long-term commitments to temporary interventions. Long-term investments, such as the construction of new infrastructure, bring in fresh resources at a general level, framing the conditions of possibility for economic revival. In comparison, temporary interventions are short-term and often small-scale, taking small steps in a cautious process of filling the gaps, waiting for recovery and experimenting with change.

The third crisis is that of cultural consumerism, in which cultural products and relationships are turned into ephemeral episodes in the construction of an experience economy. This partly follows technological change, in which the concepts and experiences of time and space are modified, thought to be annihilated, converged (Janelle, 1968), compressed (Harvey, 1989), stretched (Giddens, 1984), and made timeless (Castells, 1996), whereby 'the strategic value of the non-place of speed' (Virilio, 1986:133) becomes predominant. It is turning this nomadic urbanity into a permanent experience, narrowing the relation between the visitor and the urban space to a visual encounter (Sennett, 1994), treating the city as a stage for events and performances (Madanipour, 2003), and blurring the boundaries between tourism and everyday life (Urry, 1995). All three crises of structural transformation engender a sense of transience, in the context of which the production of ephemeral landscapes can be analysed.

Garden festivals

Garden festivals are one of the instruments of bringing life back to the shrinking cities, not as a permanent feature of the city but as a catalyst for change. These festivals are temporary events, and therefore not only the landscape that is created, but also the revitalisation that is hoped-for afterwards, may be short-lived.

The British garden festivals are an early manifestation of temporary urbanism, using short-term interventions for long-term aims. They were introduced by the government as a catalyst for attracting investment and as a means for urban regeneration in the declining industrial cities (O'Connell, 1986; Beaumont, 1985). Garden festivals were short-term events that combined different aims: acting as a catalyst for change; facilitating the reclamation of land; encouraging short-term tourism; transforming the image of decline; and serving as a stepping stone to longer-term urban revival. Their ephemerality was in line with their commercial character and had a direct impact on their quality and after-use.

The British garden festivals were inspired by the German *Bundesgartenschauen*, horticultural shows rooted in 19th century local garden shows. Since the 1950 show in Stuttgart, they have been running on a biennial basis, initially as a contribution to the revival of war-torn German cities (Holden, 1989; Sheard, 2011). In 1980, the Joint Council for Landscape Industries, and others, lobbied the government to use the existing land reclamation funding to introduce a similar exercise in the UK (Holden, 1989:18). The British experience, however, was different in its aims, timescales, and durability: it was itself a temporary one, coming to an end by 1992, while the short time available to develop each case had a negative impact on its quality (Holden, 1989).

The garden festivals drew on the tradition of British civic parks, but were not meant to recreate them, as they were explicitly planned to be temporary interventions. As the government minister in charge had announced at the time: 'The British do not need large new parks and such influence as I have in government will be directed to ensuring that garden festivals are not used for that purpose' (Quoted in Holden, 1989:17). They also drew on the tradition of large-scale exhibitions, such as the Empire Exhibition of 1938 in Glasgow, which had aimed to boost the Scottish economy after the great depression of the 1930s. The 19th century exhibitions had showcased the emerging might of new industrial nations; festivals were now set up in the hope of recovering vibrancy.

In 1984, the Liverpool International Garden Festival opened its doors. As a shrinking city, its population had diminished from a peak of 846 000 in 1931 to around 500 000 in 1981 (University of Portsmouth, 2014a). In the wake of inner city riots in 1981, the garden festival was set up as a short-lived event that aimed at changing the image and use of land in a declining industrial area (Murphy, 2015). The 100-hectare riverside site of contaminated dockland, with an oil storage facility and a waste-tip, was 'totally derelict, almost entirely flat, devoid of vegetation, featureless, exposed to strong winds, heavily disturbed and with no natural ground condition' (Clouston, 1984:327). The task was to reclaim the land and prepare it for an international garden festival, which involved moving 4.2 million cubic metres of fill and importing 135 000 cubic metres of topsoil (Cass, 1983). The garden festival's masterplan listed its benefits as: stimulating the regeneration of the inner city by creating employment opportunities and improving the environment; developing leisure and recreational facilities; boosting the local landscape and building industries; providing an opportunity for the horticultural and landscape industry to show its capability and future potential; and projecting 'the virtues of tourism' (Beaumont, 1983:27).

By the time the festival closed in 1985, it had attracted 3.8 million visitors. While parts of the site were used for housing, the gardens were abandoned and the site became derelict by 1997. For 30 years, it failed to become a catalyst for change. The garden festival and its aftermath were both ephemeral. After the 2007-8 credit crunch the site was passed from a bankrupt private developer to another one, who opened the gardens to the public in 2012 as part of a major project of residential and leisure development. The 'festival gardens', with their Chinese and Japanese themes, were restored by Lottery funding as an ornamental urban park run by the charity Land Trust (The Land Trust, 2016), although

the quality of the gardens was in dispute (Weston, 2014). The Liverpool City Council declared in 2015 its intention to buy the site and turn it into a new cultural destination (Murphy, 2015).

Liverpool was followed by Stoke-on-Trent in 1986, Glasgow in 1988, Gateshead in 1990, and Ebbw Vale in Wales in 1992—all were garden festivals set up to help reclaim the contaminated industrial land, rebrand the image of an area through tourism and marketing, and pave the way for its revival. The old manufacturing industries were no longer considered to be a secure base for the economy, but it was not clear what could replace them.

Industrial decline left vast areas of derelict and vacant land in need of reclamation (Kivell and Lockhart, 1996). Similar to Liverpool, Scotland's largest city—Glasgow—had been losing population for decades, from a peak of 1 000 000 population in 1951 to 700 000 in 1981 (University of Portsmouth, 2014b). The reclamation of the 49-hectare dockland site along the river Clyde in Glasgow was easier than Liverpool, as it was not contaminated in the same way. The Glasgow Garden Festival in 1988 was also more successful in attracting 4.3 million visitors (Holden, 1989). It was hailed as 'a crucial step' in developing the city as a tourism destination, enhanced by being designated as the European City of Culture in 1990, together forming the basis of 'a strong events-led tourism development strategy' (Heeley and Pearlman, 1988:65). It was argued, however, that the flagship events and projects could not address the city's deep structural problems (Mooney, 2004; Evans, 2011). For the festival, the site was leased from a private developer who had designated it for housing development, making the after-use controversial, as the intended development did not take place. After the closure of the festival, it remained vacant for years, before parts of the site were used for the development of science and media spaces.

The Glasgow Garden Festival was designed on the basis of a Disney theme park: formed of a main street hub surrounded by themed areas (Holden, 1989). Even though the themed areas were less convincing than a Disney counterpart, the similarity in the overall concept shows the intended character of the garden festival. This was the time of the emergence of festival shopping, which had been used in the regeneration of urban areas, as exemplified in Baltimore's waterfront and Boston's Faneuil Hall by the Rouse Company, and the design of shopping malls, which envisioned recreating the atmosphere of European shopping streets (Maitland, 1990). The aim of garden festivals, like their retail counterparts, was to link culture to commerce (Theokas, 2004). Their aesthetics, therefore, largely coincided with the commercial aesthetics of the time.

This was the time of postmodern aesthetics, of playfulness and colourfulness (Jencks, 1992). However, while the postmodern writers criticised modernism for its radical break from the past, these postmodern landscapes presented an even more radical discontinuity. The functions that were introduced and the images that were used to represent and recreate these areas of decline and dereliction had almost no relationship to the reality on the ground or to the people who lived in that reality. The outcome, therefore,

was fleeting and ephemeral in many senses of the word, without a clear relationship to the social and spatial grounds on which it stood.

The garden festivals heralded a new model of urban development, as they turned the concept of a permanent urban feature into a temporary one: the long-established idea of a permanent urban park into a temporary event in a fleeting landscape. Urban parks that had been a key feature of British cities for more than a century were now reincarnated as ephemeral landscapes. The appetite and capacity for investment in civic institutions and spaces that characterised the 19th century urban improvement movements were no longer present. The garden festivals also turned the experience of visiting a park, which was based on the ideas of health and enrichment of urban life, into tourism, a once-only visit for pleasure and exploration. Being a festival, a short-term event which offered an experience, defined their character. It was turning an ordinary visit into a tourist's excursion, and a day out into a commercial opportunity.

Furthermore, in comparison to the urban parks, which were public spaces with free access for citizens, garden festivals prepared the land to be used as private property for future development. The urban parks inserted spatial buffers between functions and social classes in crowded Victorian cities and provided access to an urbanised version of the countryside. In comparison, the garden festivals would provide a fleeting image of the natural environment as a cleansing device before the development of new housing and other urban functions on contaminated industrial land surrounded by deteriorating working class neighbourhoods. In this sense, the garden festivals acted as a temporal buffer between two states of being, between a declining past and an uncertain future. Acting as a temporal buffer was the key message of many urban regeneration processes, preparing the ground for a future prospect without a clear idea about its form and content.

The idea of short-term events as the catalyst for change was the idea behind many mega events, such as world exhibitions, sports games, and cultural festivals. A garden festival is defined as 'a world's fair but with a strong horticultural theme and presence' (Theokas, 2004:1). The international fairs also follow the same formula of event-based transformation, as exemplified in Milan's 2015 Expo: taking up large areas of peripheral land, promising to bring in large numbers of visitors and extra new resources and to revive a part of the city, but also being criticised for failing to deliver the promised outcomes.

Temporary parks

While garden festivals were large scale events initiated by the government as a catalyst for the regeneration of declining cities, temporary parks are public or semi-public spaces which may be created by the public, private, and voluntary sectors, often at smaller scales, with more modest ambitions and investments. The nature of the intervention and its outcomes may vary widely, depending on the nature and intentions of the initiators and the specificities of the context. Three examples show a range of these ephemeral landscapes: Parisian beaches, Ruskin Square in London, and Saint Antoine Square in Brussels, which are initiated by the municipality, a private developer, and the local community,

respectively. The relationship between these ephemeral landscapes and urban shrinkage also varies. Although none of the three cities of Paris, London, and Brussels may be considered a shrinking city in the way that Glasgow and Liverpool have been, they have their internal patterns of expansion, densification, and shrinkage. Despite the booming population of their metropolises in recent years, the three cities all show a historical trend of population decline and shrinkage in some districts.

Since 2002, as one of the city's 'flagship events', the municipality of Paris has turned some parts of the banks of the Seine into sandy beaches each summer. Car traffic is stopped, sand is spread, deck chairs appear, concerts and games are set up, water sports and open air attractions operate, all for four weeks in July and August (Paris Municipality, 2016). The first phase included three kilometres of river banks from the Louvre to Pont de Sully, running through the historic core of the city. The Georges Pompidou Highway is pedestrianised each summer for the duration of the event, swapping asphalt with decks and sand along the river Seine.

For decades before the turn of the current century, the city of Paris had been losing population, amounting to 27% since its peak in 1921, caused by suburbanisation, deindustrialisation, diminishing household size, conversion of residential places to workplaces, and gentrification. The historic 1st and 4th arrondissements, where the beaches were first installed, had been shrinking at much higher rates. The population of the 1st arrondissement declined from around 32 000 in 1968 to almost 17 000 in 1999, fallen to less than a fifth of its 19th century peak (Map-France, 2016a; Demographia, 2016). Similarly, the population of the 4th arrondissement changed from around 45 000 in 1968 to around 30 000 in 1999 (Map-France, 2016b). The area of Bassin de la Villette was added to the beaches in 2007, but the 19th arrondissement had been growing from around 149 000 in 1968 to 184 000 in 2007 (Map-France, 2016c), so here it was a case of extending an existing policy.

According to the municipal website, 'A Seine-side holiday. That, in a nutshell, is what Paris Plages is all about– complete with sandy beaches, deckchairs, ubiquitous ice cream sellers, and concerts for French and foreign guests.' (Paris Municipality, 2016). The socialist mayor of Paris who was behind the scheme argued that this would help the low income Parisians who otherwise would not be able to visit the seaside. Meanwhile, the Parisian beaches have created a stage for events and spectacles (Fagnoni, 2009), mixing the urban life with tourism (Urry, 1995; Gale, 2009).

The concept of urban beaches is widely used in other cities, as more cities are rediscovering their long forgotten waterfronts, and as the experience economy increasingly becomes a driving force in the regeneration of urban centres. The reconnection of the city to the waterfront, as the cases of Barcelona and Boston had shown, has been a key element of urban revitalisation, aiming at the permanent transformation of a declining area. The urban beaches, in contrast, are temporary installations, changing the relationship between the city and water for a brief period before reverting to the previous state of the city.

The urban beaches are temporary parks which, like their 19th century predecessors, bring some natural elements into the crowded modern city; but unlike these predecessors, they disappear after a fleeting appearance. The banks of the river are temporarily transformed into a festival place, a stage for events, a place of repose, sociability, and pleasure. The boundaries between the familiar and the exceptional become hazy, and the experience of tourism becomes integrated into everyday life. For a brief period, the city is remade in the image of the seaside, before it becomes a city once again. As the beaches are recreated every year, they generate a repetitive pattern of routine expectation, becoming a recurring feature of the urban environment. Although their privileged position at the centre of Paris distinguishes this area from the other case studies, the temporary urban beaches are comparable to the garden festivals in a number of ways: fleeting landscapes that are created as a catalyst for urban animation; adding colour and vibrancy to the city; folding the urban space for additional layers of use; and being used as instruments of long-term urban transformation.

In Ruskin Square, a temporary park has been created as a transitional stage in the rebranding and redevelopment of a large brownfield site in London. It fills the gaps and holes left by economic and technological transformation, and is considered to be an opportunity to change the image and the use of land at the heart of a global metropolis. A major development company owns the land and has planned to change an entire area of Croydon. The district of Croydon had a shrinking population, declining from a peak of almost 44 000 in 1911 to a population of almost 3 000 in 1991 (Southampton University, 2016c). The derelict site next to East Croydon railway station was the subject of controversy and a public inquiry over two developers' competing visions for the area: a 12 500 seating arena or a 200-seat theatre as part of a mixed-use development (Croydon Guardian, 2007). The former scheme was ultimately rejected in favour of the latter, a development that is well under way.

The private developers used temporary interventions as an interim arrangement, paving the way for a larger development later, animating the site with some activity while waiting for the time when the market conditions were ready. In Ruskin Square, a firm of designers worked on an abandoned area's interim uses in preparation for its development. The project, as introduced on the designers' website, is about public space and interim uses (muf, 2015). The designers aimed to be sensitive to the existing features of the site: 'Ruskin Theatre Garden focuses on revealing and augmenting the existing "as found" qualities of the site'. Rather than 'just a patch of weeds', the site is home to a wide variety of wildflowers, which are used as a backdrop for a series of interim uses, which include a Chelsea Fringe flower show, a lunch club for the local office workers, and a cricket ground for the young refugees living in Croydon. The 'first step in occupying and animating the site', however, is 'a rehearsal for the future', which is conducted by the rehearsal of a play: 'It is an act that says: *watch this space*' (muf, 2015).

To an architectural critic, this project seemed to be remarkably subtle, but this subtlety was lost to his readers who thought the great majority of people who pass the area everyday could not even notice it (Moore, 2012). The problem becomes much clearer when we see the developer's vision of the future for the area, which 'is to create an exciting new business, residential and leisure quarter within the

centre of Croydon' (Stanhope, 2015). It is a 9-acre site destined to be a high density, major development with 185,000 square metres of leisure, office, and residential spaces, but with no apparent place for the wildflowers and refugees. Even the designers' website images of the finished project do not show the wildflowers, but display sharp borders and hard surfaces (muf, 2015).

A part of the site, in the first phase of development, named Platform and designated as 'a community space designed to add to Croydon's culture by hosting community events and showcasing local talent', is managed by a private company on behalf of the developer (Platform, 2016). Since its launch in 2014, Platform has hosted sporting, arts, and social events, ranging from St George's Day to Chinese New Year, from Christmas celebrations to festive food markets. The ephemeral landscape of the Theatre Garden and the Platform in Ruskin Square is the stage for temporary events, turning the urban space into an atmosphere of ever-repeating festivals. The Ruskin Square shows a number of similarities to the garden festivals: the revitalisation of derelict industrial land; rebranding of the area through temporary garden-related activities; encouragement of urban tourism; and commercialisation of the development afterwards.

The case of Place St Antoine includes St Antoine and Orban squares and the surrounding areas in the municipality of Vorst, Brussels. Despite the growth of the city in recent years, the municipality of Vorst had shown a degree of shrinkage, from a population of almost 50 000 in 1984 to around 45 000 in 2000 (Compare, 2016). In St Antoine Square, the local residents were able to use temporary interventions as a catalyst for transformation and to demand flexibility from planning restrictions (Artgineering, 2016). Similar to the Paris case, it suppresses an existing activity to allow for another, replacing the dominance of cars with freedom for pedestrians. It is a pedestrianisation project driven by community initiative and participation in a temporary project.

The residents were able to overcome municipal resistance by testing the waters for the successful introduction of a drastic traffic-calming plan that would enable children to walk to school across two pedestrianised squares (Bakker, 2014). A Rotterdam-based firm of designers, Artgineering, worked with the local residents in this lower-income neighbourhood, developing a plan to limit the heavy traffic and street parking that dominated the area. Their aim was to activate the public space by: supporting the local groups, such as the neighbourhood associations; enhancing the existing functions, such as shops, restaurant, and market; and adding new uses for the space, such as a children's playground, recreational, and green spaces. The plan proposed closing off the through-traffic and banning street parking, but it was first rejected by the local council, under pressure from a strong car lobby.

To change the council's opinion, the local groups involved in the new community centre proposed a temporary intervention, which was carried out by the designers. A group of children, parents, the local women's organisation, and other supporters occupied the space, cordoning off the square and the crossroads by concrete blocks and large sacks. The sacks were filled on the spot with soil and plants, generating an instant temporary park, which was watered and looked after by the owner of the café at

the crossroad. As a result, drivers had to find alternative routes and children were safe to walk to school and play around the new plants. The opponents of the scheme changed their mind and two months later the local council approved the plan. The scheme was selected for the 2014 Dutch Yearbook for Landscape Architecture and Urban Design, as the selection committee found the design 'attractive and surprisingly inexpensive' and was particularly impressed by the willingness of the designers to show initiative and political engagement (Bakker, 2014:156). The temporary intervention was a catalyst for transformation, facilitating a more permanent arrangement that benefited the local community.

The three cases in Paris, London, and Brussels are all interim spaces with different intentions, pathways, and contexts. However, they all show the desire for the animation of urban space through the creation of ephemeral landscapes that are used as stages for transient events. The agents initiating them vary, including public, private, and community organisations, which has implications for the character of the outcome. All are intermediaries for the conversion of a site from one state to another: from a road to a beach; from derelict land to apartments, shops, and offices; and from being dominated by cars to being dominated by pedestrians. The Parisian beaches revert back to their normal use, but the temporary usage will be repeated each year. They reproduce the image of somewhere else—the seaside—but not a condition that can be sustained. The temporary park in Croydon is an interim space, paving the way for the emergence of a completely different character for the area. In the process, it may disappear, physically or representationally, as the aim has always been the achievement of something else. The temporary park in Brussels is also an interim space, but not as a road to a different future, but to a sustained usage for the local community; it is its own end, rather than being an intermediate stage to a commercial operation.

Landscape as event

The two approaches of creating garden festivals and temporary parks, through the five examples that have been discussed here, show at least three noticeable similarities, despite their vast differences in location, scale, period, and agents of development. The first similarity, which is the primary reason for bringing them together here, is that they are all examples of ephemeral landscapes, created for a short period of time before they are replaced by something else. From a few weeks to a few months, they are all designed to be short-lived events. The second similarity is that they are all related to shrinking parts of large metropolitan areas. The third similarity is the instrumental use of the short-term events towards the creation of new circumstances.

Prior to the development of these schemes, all the five areas had been losing population, although for different reasons and from different levels of vibrancy and prosperity. Industrial decline and the hollowing out of historical centres are among the main reasons for this shrinkage. The creation of short-lived landscapes in these cases is therefore closely associated with socio-economic change and urban shrinkage at the historic core or on the urban periphery. These cases exemplify short-lived landscapes in shrinking urban areas.

While the urban space has historically been a stable setting for the fleeting events within it, now the setting is also transitory, together with the events that take place within it. These five cases demonstrate a new relationship between the city and the event, in which the nature of both is changing. In other words, the setting is an event itself, soon to be replaced by another event. The interaction between the relative durability of the physical infrastructure of the city and the ephemerality of the social life and biological processes within it has always been a central feature of the city. Any single space can house a continuous flow of different events. The interplay of the physical infrastructure and the flow of life, of the durable and the ephemeral, therefore, has always been an integral character of the city. What is new, however, is the intensification of ephemerality and its extension to the physical infrastructures. The entire city may therefore be treated as a soft tissue, continually going through an accelerated process of reshaping, based on ever-changing utilitarian considerations. The balance of the durable and the ephemeral, which together constitute the urban landscape, changes in favour of the ephemeral. The urban landscape becomes an event.

This ephemerality works in two temporal directions, looking both to the past and to the future. On the one hand, when cities shrink, landscapes and urban functions, which had been established for decades and even centuries, start to decay and disappear. The aforementioned description of the Liverpool Garden Festival by a landscape architect dealing with its reclamation shows how an entire way of life could disappear with little trace. What was considered to be permanent loses its function and value, falling into disrepair and decline, and ultimately deleted from the surface of the land. On the other hand, what is created in its place is done so on a provisional, temporary basis. The confidence with which the previous spaces were created no longer is on display. Temporariness shows cautiousness, testing the water for what is feasible and possible. The thought of loss may instigate a romantic nostalgia for what has gone, and the unknown future may generate a sense of anxiety. Looking to the past and to the future both result in ephemerality.

As Lefebvre (1991) argues, each society creates its own space, and in this process it recreates itself. The conversion of space into event is a clear reflection of this process, displaying the instrumental character of the event. The creation of ephemeral landscapes appears to be treating them as means to certain ends, instruments of achieving something other than themselves. The event finds a dual character of satisfying a desire, rather than a need, and paving the way as a catalyst for something else, which is often an economic end. The desire and the commodity become the two ends to which the event is expected to lead.

The landscape as event therefore finds an increasingly commercial character, as both the place and the experience are commercialised. As the economy has become the main preoccupation of public authorities, and as the balance of roles between the public and private sectors has changed, the driving agenda of urban change is primarily finding ways of generating monetary value. Many areas of urban life that might have been spared from economic considerations are now included in monetary calculations. While public parks and gardens might have been considered to have a social value at one

point, they are now seen through the prism of hedonic experience and economic value. All the cases, perhaps with the exception of the St Antoine case, show this attention to the economic aspects of the urban landscape. As the city becomes an event, as events become commodities, and as economic considerations take precedence over other concerns, the process of urban development becomes the creation of events that would have sensory capacities to promote financial association. As commodities need to be adjustable to the vagaries of the market, the events and the city become ephemeral, an exchange in the marketplace that needs to have the agility of continually renewing itself in new guises. The fact that the event is not directed at itself but towards something else shows the gap between the existing reality and the future image, in which the area is gentrified and cleansed of its memory and former identity. However, as the Brussels case shows, events are not limited to commercial operations, and they can be set up to deliver alternative results. The creative potential of the event, therefore, is open for exploration, rather than fully closed by narrow interests.

Conclusion

Five cases of garden festivals and temporary parks are introduced in the context of urban shrinkage in historic cores and deindustrialised areas. They exemplify the ephemerality of the landscape, which becomes an instrument of achieving certain ends, a temporal buffer between two states of being, and therefore expected to be removed after they have facilitated this transition. The urban landscape becomes a stage and an event, which is dismantled after the event. It finds an entrepreneurial character in the context of the shrinkage and transience associated with the major structural changes in the economic, political, and cultural dimensions of the urban environment. These examples show how the temporary use of space may mean different things to different parties. Local authorities, private companies and civil society groups have different ideas and expectations from temporary urbanism. Their interventions, however, are ambivalent in nature, as the contours of the future are unclear, and so they can be vehicles moving simultaneously in different directions. Depending on who is involved and to what purpose, the interventions may have completely different characters and outcomes.

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