THE POWER OF
TEMPORARY USE

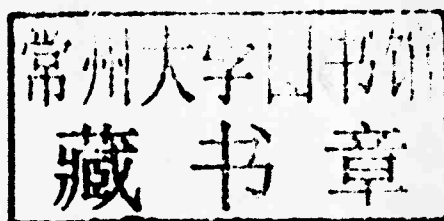**urban**

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This publication is the product of a long-term and intensive engagement with the phenomenon of temporary use. The initiators and editors of this book, collectively known as Urban Catalyst, have succeeded in generating an international public discourse on temporary use, and in developing their research findings into a new form of professional practice. The team formed in the late 1990s and the award of a major European Commission research grant created their first opportunity. Between 2001 and 2003 Urban Catalyst investigated the potential of temporary use as a motor for urban transformation using five European cities as case studies: Helsinki, Amsterdam, Berlin, Vienna and Naples. Based then at Berlin's Technical University, Urban Catalyst coordinated a network of twelve European partners. The strategic planning tools and action models which they developed during this research form an important background and basis of this book.

Formerly, a project like Urban Catalyst would have been seen by the investment establishment simply as a hobby for some left-wing, socially engaged planners of the leftist-scene. But today, business developers, municipalities and property owners alike have woken up to the fact that the sustainable and successful development of urban life cannot be achieved without a consideration of contextual aspects. This is true for physical structures, as well as for existing activities and programs. Traditionally seen as threatening the interests of owners and developers, informal uses are now increasingly embraced as valuable indicators for potential growth. Temporary use can provide impetus to new developments and influence the urban quality of those developments. This is nowhere more relevant than in urban wastelands and other residual spaces where traditional development methods have failed. High construction costs, the frequent popular resistance to homogeneous mass investment projects, the long planning processes and strict regulations, the uncertainties and risks connected to fixing use programs in times of economic and social change, the lack of municipal budgets to subsidize such developments and, most of all, low or even shrinking investment in many cities have left numerous spaces vacant.

Urban Catalyst demonstrates the limitations of established development tools, making a compelling argument for temporary use. This includes case studies of urban wastelands, developed into new forms of public space which provide a vibrant alternative to commercialized city centers—often perceived as homogeneous, boring and regimented. Rather than campaign for a dogmatic preservation of the status quo, Urban Catalyst advocates intelligent incorporation of temporary uses into a new form of urban planning based on the formalization of the informal and the informalization

of the formal. When the members of Urban Catalyst started their research, most of these ideas were alien to planners and investors. Since then the stagnating economy experienced by many Western cities has catapulted Urban Catalyst strategies into the centre of this discourse. Instead of approaching temporary use as a problem, it is now increasingly considered a pivotal component of new development strategies. Urban Catalyst itself has initiated and participated in a range of projects that test these strategies in practice and demonstrate that this new approach has the potential to fundamentally alter the way we think about our role as architects, designers, city administrators or investors. For urban designers—or let's rather talk about urbanists— this generates tremendous new opportunities. Within this more holistic approach, urbanists become spiders in a web of stakeholder interests—filling a gap as coordinators, managers, and visionaries, even becoming developers themselves. A perhaps simplistic, but nevertheless illustrative precedent is the architects' role in communal participation projects in the 1970s and 1990s, or the stakeholder management that is already practiced by many architects. In the 1970s, however, squatters, residents and local councilors dominated such initiatives, taking a confrontational approach towards investors or central government, which often led nowhere. But in the 1990s there was an almost complete reversal: investors and central governments regained power and today's stakeholder management brings together a range of participants, capitalists and local activists alike, mediating conflicting interests within an integrated decision-making process.

Urban Catalyst has generated a thriving debate on the production of urban space involving numerous architects and planners, local authorities, property owners, and users from all over Europe. The debate has attracted public and professional attention through conferences, workshops and high profile public actions, such as the appropriation for temporary use of Berlin's most controversial building—the former East German parliament, known as Palast der Republik. Distant at first, public bodies like the German Ministry for Building or Berlin's Senate began to embrace the issue, commissioning further research on the subject and first implementation projects. Urban Catalyst has succeeded in opening up a new frontier of discourse on the city. This discourse has gained tremendous momentum and impacted on the way we engage with the urban environment.

Urban planning and urban reality are generally poles apart. In the past twenty years, for example, this has become particularly noticeable in Berlin. While in the euphoria following the fall of the Berlin Wall the city's Senate assumed vigorous population growth and commissioned a profusion of master plans for large-scale renewal areas, only a small number of these plans could actually be implemented. After a brief construction boom in the first half of the '90s, most projects were put on hold, planning goals had to be drastically reduced, and vacancy rates of the existing fabric rose considerably. Even the widely discussed, official "Planwerk Innenstadt" ("Inner-city Plan") was only partially put into effect. In many respects, it remained pure planning. At the same time, the city developed to an extent seldom seen before. However, it did so without planning. What constituted the "New Berlin" [1] at that time took place outside urban planning.

A vibrant temporary use scene developed on much of the derelict land and in many of the spaces between buildings that remained in Berlin after 1990. There were numerous nomadic bars or clubs. Close friends and casual acquaintances improvised parties in vacant buildings or former industrial areas, primarily in the eastern part of the city. New forms of leisure-time culture developed, as did a variety of migrant economies. Rents were often insignificant. Berlin became an attractive place for the younger generation, as the city allowed for an improvised, inexpensive lifestyle. Word got around.

It was precisely that which was officially considered a flaw—high vacancy rates, derelict land, slow economic development—that became the city's most valuable resources. None of these attractive sites appeared on the city administration's radar. Rather, the issue of temporary use was a taboo. Representatives from the local authorities as well as the real estate industry considered temporary use "uncontrolled growth," which at best had to be kept at bay. The opinion was that informal use would only interfere with urban development. Interim users neither fit in with what the "Planwerk Innenstadt" proclaimed to be "Stone Berlin," nor with the visions of shopping and office districts in investors' brochures. Planning seemed increasingly to operate beyond reality. After the Internet bubble and the New Economy burst, it was only a question of time before Berlin's planning bubble would burst as well. It was in this context that the idea for Urban Catalyst developed in the late 1990s. [2]

As architects, we, the authors of this book, are dealing with a progressively schizophrenic situation: the disparity between the surplus of non-implemented plans on the one hand, and on the other the large proportion of open, incomplete spaces that serve as breeding grounds for a multitude of temporary uses. What interested

us was the contradiction between formal urban planning and informal urban use. After 1945, the bizarre political history had turned Berlin into a laboratory for urban derelict sites and temporary uses. Yet the current situation was revealing a trend that can be found in every other city to a lesser or greater extent. For us as architects and planners, this discovery led to posing the question of how the growing irrelevance of our own profession could be overcome. If temporary uses are an important factor for urban development, how can they be incorporated into planning and urban development? How can planning open itself up to the unplanned? And, conversely, can the unplanned be planned, the informal formalized?

In order to get to the bottom of this set of problems, Philipp Oswalt and Klaus Overmeyer developed a concept for the two-year research project "Urban Catalyst—Strategies for Temporary Uses," based at the Technical University of Berlin under the aegis of Kees Chistiaanse and funded by the European Union.[3] Philipp Misselwitz joined, as well twelve partners from five research cities. After the research project was completed, Philipp Misselwitz, Philipp Oswalt, and Klaus Overmeyer founded the spin-off "Urban Catalyst" as a working group. The research approach was elaborated within the framework of new studies and interim use projects that had been implemented. The present book is an attempt to take stock of a nearly ten-year-long theoretical as well as practical examination of the issue of urban development through temporary use.

Our investigation of informal urban development takes up the traditional methods of works published in the 1960s and 1970s and which by means of an analysis and conceptualization of the real-life city served as a valuable impulse for a renewal of the urban planning debate. Whether *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* by Jane Jacobs (1961), *Learning from Las Vegas* by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown (1972), *Collage City* by Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter (1978), or, published that same year, *Delirious New York* by Rem Koolhaas, all of these very different studies are based on the examination of unplanned and unconscious processes, of aspects of urban development that were repressed, went unnoticed, or marginalized whose potential for future planning practices was opened up. The structures of the unplanned were developed and harnessed. Thus, the investigation of the real-life city also served as a critique of the prevailing orthodoxies of urban planners and architects.

The issue of informal urban development virtually came into vogue in recent urban planning discourse. Yet it only made reference to the rapidly growing metropolises in the Southern Hemisphere. This perspective overlooks not the quantitative

but the strategic relevance of the informal for the old industrial nations of the North. In view of advancing urbanization and the considerable number of existing buildings, unlike in the developing and threshold countries, advancing urbanization and the growing building stock in the North is not about the provision of new buildings for a quickly growing urban population but about creating new uses in the existing fabric. Urban planning has always moved in the field of tension between planned and unplanned development, with informal for the most part prevailing over formal processes.[4] It will consistently be necessary—precisely in the interest of planning—to call existing formalizations into question and subject them to an analysis of those processes that take place outside the established rules and structures. In view of this Sisyphean task, we will be bound time and again to dissolve existing formalizations and formalize informal practices and integrate them into established structures.

NOTHING NEW

Temporary uses are neither marginal nor novel manifestations. They have existed in the old industrial nations for a long time now. In their growth stage during the second half of the nineteenth century, shanty towns were widespread on the urban periphery. In the wake of the Great Depression, in the late 1920s and early 1930s squatter settlements and self-built structures flourished. After World War II, emergency housing and subsistence food cultivation were widespread in Europe's devastated cities. In the course of the 1970s and 1980s, politically motivated squatting occurred in numerous large European cities that engendered alternative lifestyles and housing models in protest against clean-sweep planning and speculative vacancy rates.

With the collapse of the socialist states and the end of the East–West confrontation in 1989, new streams of migration developed in Europe accompanied by informal trade. In lieu of planned economies, the small-scale capitalism of informal economies flourished in Eastern Europe. Yet what is decisive for the boom of temporary use in Europe over the past two decades is first and foremost the transition from Fordism to knowledge-based economies. It was not only the culture economy that gained in importance: the economy and urban structures were entirely transformed. What had previously been permanent unraveled. What had been life-long employment was replaced by a flexible, dynamic, and often precarious working world. Welfare-state security was relaxed and cut back. The relocation of industrial production to low-wage countries as well as the advancing rationalization of production led to the emergence of vast industrial wastelands in Europe, North America, and Japan. On the other hand, new working, consumer, and recreation programs were concentrated in

new exurban centers and sub-centers such as shopping malls, leisure parks, or office districts. This resulted in enormous vacancy rates in inner-city strip malls and office buildings. In many places, out-migration and falling birth rates led to population loss; residential buildings fell empty.

These empty spaces are often condemned to a waiting loop with no prospect of being made use of in the medium term. Hence, the transformation process leads to a spatial polarization: on the one hand, zones with high development pressure and a shortage of space are created at both a regional as well as a local level; on the other hand, areas of stagnation and shrinkage develop where there is a surplus of space. Decay and growth frequently occur hand in hand.

TEMPORAL INSTABILITY

Post-Fordism is characterized by a flexibilization and dynamization of social processes. This is also reflected in the use of space. Temporary uses are only one example of a broader tendency of particular interest to us that includes the "eventization" of urban spaces as well as the spatiotemporal dynamization of services. Where employees are often in transit or work at home, they no longer have a fixed workplace in an office but various working options in a differentiated environment such as hot-desking a lean office space. Permanent ownership is increasingly being replaced by sporadic access, as shown, for example, by the growing number of car sharing schemes.[5] These developments are being reinforced by opportunities for mobile communication and site-related information, by locative media and social networks.[6] The potentials of this augmented urbanism stimulate—and indeed generate— completely new urban practices, of which flash mobs and virtual urban games were only the first, early examples. Architecture is for the most part too sluggish for the innovations of the post-Fordian knowledge society, which has led to the emancipation of numerous new urban practices from building production.

FROM ISLAND URBANISM TO THE URBANITY OF IN-BETWEEN SPACES

These developments are accompanied by a changing planning culture. In the initial decades following World War II, urban planning policies were shaped by the ideas of classical modernism influenced by social democracy, above all in Western Europe. Integral and comprehensive urban planning was to ensure quality living conditions for the entire population. Yet by the 1970s, this model fell into a state of crisis and was replaced by the concept of the "corporate" city. The primary goal of planning was now the stimulation of private investment. However, a policy of this kind

only has its eye on the financially sound, solvent strata of the population. A typical example of this is public–private partnership, in which urban planning increasingly occurs on the part of the investor. In terms of land management, this concept manifests itself in a kind of island urbanism: sites that are relevant for investments are planned as projects, while the territory in between disappears from the public consciousness. Enclaves develop in which everything is planned down to the last detail—such as influencing buying patterns by means of color, music, and the design of floor surfaces. But the territory between the investors' islands is ignored. And along with that, the socially and financially weaker residents as well. What was once a continuum of urban space ultimately disintegrates into two areas with virtually opposing characters.

Yet it is precisely those areas neglected by the state, capital, and planning that often stand out due to their special urbanity. Because here, the city is designed and influenced by financially unsound players who are excluded from the projects supported by corporate urban policy. By exhausting non-monetary resources—such as derelict spaces, unofficial network and people power—these players succeed in inhabiting another form of city in zones that are temporarily unusable in traditional real-estate terms. Only here, beyond the controlled enclaves, can such temporary, informal, and innovative practices unfold.

THE NEW UNDERCLASSES AS THE AVANT-GARDE

The social background of many temporary users is prototypical for the changing social composition in what were once the industrial nations characterized by Fordism. Temporary users are the pioneers of different uses of space and increasingly unstable, deinstitutionalized ways of life. This development is reflected, for instance, in ever more rapidly changing employment relationships as well as in the abundance of the self-employed, of small-scale business enterprises, and of part-time employees. Alongside the obsolescence of the ideal of permanent employment, today's knowledge society demands additional qualifications. Networking culture and the development of a diversified knowledge environment are not only of growing importance for the individual, but for cities as well.

The departure from traditional working structures is reflected in the working biographies of today's temporary users. In many cases their activities alternate between project-related work, unpaid involvement, unemployment, or illicit, temporary, and part-time employment, while these different types of work are frequently combined. Depending on the perspective, these players are either members of the

new underclasses or of the avant-garde. Knowledge society's innovations tend to develop outside the classic economic apparatus and are frequently based on the principle of traveling light: free not only from the architecture of large businesses and institutions, but also from their inflexibility and from the obligation of large-scale investments. The heroes of our epoch are the garage do-it-yourselfers. With solid know-how, with ideas and their power of imagination yet with few means they succeed in developing the innovations of our new age. The lack of institutionalization or financial means is not an obstacle, but more a precondition for success.

CULTURES OF MIGRATION

The current practices of urban use are at the same time strongly influenced by migration and shifting sociocultural processes. Self-confident new players thrust themselves into the public space of traditional European cities and have a profound influence on conventional, everyday practices and established points of view. European metropolises are increasingly colorful and culturally diversified, and while the children of earlier immigrant worker generations are aspiring toward emancipation, many of the newcomers who joined the regional and international labor migration movements have also contributed to cultural diversification, in particular in the last two decades. The gradual opening of Eastern Europe, increased migration within Europe through the liberalization of the job markets, as well as the growing global networking of European cities fueling increased migration from countries outside of Europe explain this new reality. Informal markets and new forms of trade, imported from threshold countries, are progressively defining the everyday image of our cities. Immigrants have in many cases occupied niches that play a subordinate role for established social classes. The acceptance of lower standards opens up new scope for immigrants, which they skillfully exploit for the development of their own networks and economic cycles. In metropolises such as London or Paris, parallel, largely informal economies developed long ago that ensure the livelihood of many newcomers as well as many refugees, asylum seekers, and illegal immigrants without financial resources.

FROM ENCLAVES TO MAGNETS

Middle-class bohemians and destitute newcomers frequently meld into temporary use environments. Unlike the sub-cultures and protest movements in the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, whose attempts to implement an alternative or counterculture also made them interim users and squatters, today's temporary users are generally skeptical

about all too high political demands. Their actions are less oriented toward a utopia of liberated society and more toward personal visions, be it entrepreneurial self-fulfillment or a specific cultural project.

Temporary uses also distinguish themselves spatially from the sub-cultures mentioned above in the sense that these tended to form enclaves of a collective shaped by political leanings, whereas contemporary informal urban users operate almost diametrically. Instead of creating self-contained areas, they create public places as magnets that, if they are successful, function as urban hot spots. The basic principle is not exclusion, but creating attractors, even if these places target a very specific public. In terms of politics and culture, today's temporary uses are marked by a great deal of permissivity, if not promiscuity. The importance of the spaces and platforms that develop is for the most part attributable to their public character, which plays a considerable role with regard to life in the respective city and thus for its identity and image. These places act as breeding grounds for innovations, and even as trendsetters for the mainstream.

"CREATIVE CITY": A MISUNDERSTANDING

While temporary uses continued to be almost a non-issue in the public debate into the late 1990s subsequently the situation has radically changed. On the one hand, a large number of architects, planners, and urbanists entered the debate, which rapidly became more dynamic and led to new research, new publications, and new projects.[7] On the other hand, many municipalities have opened themselves up to the issue, to the extent that temporary uses have almost become an integral part of official urban planning jargon. However, many of the urbanist and urban policy debates are marked by fundamental misunderstandings and instrumentalizations that should be judged critically, as city administrations and landowners often attempt to strengthen their own interests by way of temporary uses.

While cities still liked to adorn their advertising brochures with classic investor projects until well into the 1990s, today one finds attractive illustrated descriptions of a "creative micro-milieu of temporary users," small businesses, and start-ups from the area of the so-called creative economy. In the meantime, even small and medium-sized cities chant the mantra of the "creative class," which has become the primary beacon of hope for investments and economic growth. But does the concept of the "creative city"[8] really lead to a new municipal policy that is not only more positive toward temporary uses and takes advantage of them for the purpose of site marketing but also actively supports them? In most cases, talk about the "creative city" is hardly more than an