

AFTERWORD

Valuing Informality of the City

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Architecture, urban design and planning build their hypotheses on the desirable livability in urban places and spaces. Their objectives focus on the impetuous informality in the public realm and in luring representations of vividly inhabited public spaces. Where does informality in urban public space derive from?

Architecture and physical form may contain or express informality, yet they have little to do with how it occurs and comes into urban life. Urban planning may give space for collective processes to take place, however unexpected events and conjunctures may twist plans and their actual implementation to the contrary. Students, children and youth, immigrants and refugees, artists and protestors, merchants and tourists – in small groups and greater crowds – add distinct vitality in urban public space. It is people on the move of all genres and subjectivities, their agency, actions and everyday creativity that bring concurrent informality and cosmopolitanism in cities to reality. All versions of everyday and temporary urbanisms address and attempt to grasp informality as their major field of design and action to vitalize the city. Even rational planning systems in several European countries open to integrate informality in space production to cater for urban complexity.

Since the dawn of the 21st century informality is an important aspect in thinking of the urban and dealing with actual spatial realities in cities on anthropological, political and geographical grounds beyond the modern and post-modern urban ideals. “Loose space” of Franck & Stevens arises informally [1], largely between all spatial aspects that have been systematically organized, as long as the possibilities for appropriation, tension, resistance and discovery have not been eliminated. It provides for informality, access, life and vitality to public space - it is an essential component of the city, for all people and for urban diversity, it is a possibility for play, desire, anonymity and variety in freedom. “Loose space” emerges between the private and the public, the hard and the soft, the front and the back, etc., “in direct contrast to the qualities of public space that many people uncritically value: certainty, homogeneity and order” [2]. Gwiazdzinski puts forward the concept of the “malleable city” that can welcome any informal changes and transform without significant ruptures (spatial, material, social, economic, environmental) [3]. A step further, Sim supports urban density to produce intense coexistence and subsequent informality in urban neighbourhoods

beyond the hard edges that modernism has bequeathed to the urban design and architectural gestures [4]. Tonkiss renders “the informal” as one of the critical aspects to discuss ordinary urbanism, next to the incremental, the improvised, the impermanent, the insurgent [5]. Sennett and Sendra support the preservation of an “open city” from impersonal urban planning or pointless architectural interventions and regulations, the privatization of public space and police surveillance [6]. Hue argues that “the future city is here”! [7]. It is grounded in the unexpected, the fuzzy, the unfinished, the everyday richness of informal making urban space and places. Carmona puts together all arguments of “engaging in informality” as a valid spatial strategy to deal with urban realities in the global context, as well as conveys the importance to decode, demystify and deepen our understanding of urban complexity through the informal [8].

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