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Structure of the book

We collected a variety of papers analyzing how issues of mobility and aestheticization are represented and handled in different ways across different world cities. Although the two notions were treated equally in the call for papers, the pool of applications that we received plainly favored aestheticization as an area of attention. This unbalance was further amplified at the chapter-submission stage. Perhaps the aestheticization scholars are more proactive in their approach to (or obsession with) their issue. Still, the theme of mobility was important to our original conception of the seminar, and, rather than edit it out, we decided to open the book with one such exploration.

In the introduction written in co-authorship by Oleg Pachenkov and Lilia Voronkova, the organizers of the seminar, the issues of mobility, aestheticization and interdisciplinarity are addressed as the main challenges that contemporary social scientists are facing when they deal with urban processes. And the cities themselves experience new processes developing along these three dimensions and changing the realities, perceptions and future of urban environment. The shift from modernity to the late or post-modernity is treated as one of the key factors affecting those changes and calling for the interdisciplinary approach to the understanding and transformation of cities.

The collection of chapters begins with the work of Julio Mattioli (Chapter 1), who addresses the issue of public transport as mobile public space. Apart from a rich and profound overview of the literature dealing with the issue of public-space for public and private transport in contemporary cities, Julio also offers the results of his own research, in which he attempts to "...go beyond the general division of private/public space and to analyse more in depth the practices, attitudes and experiences that are associated with private and public space in the daily lives of urban dwellers". Julio stresses the relativity and ambiguity of the 'public' nature of public transport as that of a space provoking sociability as well as indifference, tolerance as well as aversion.

Tobias Scheidegger's article (Chapter 2) makes a shift from the theme of mobility to that of aestheticization, though it combines both. Tobias analyses the ways that certain urban lifestyles expressed in the dress codes, gestures, and motion of abstract people are represented in architectural renderings. His interest in the renderings of not-yet-built/designated spaces and buildings is not one of an architect or designer; he approaches these images as a social scientist and treats them as a form of enacting power, a type of manipulation, not reflecting but shaping and imposing reality onto cities and their inhabitants. Tobias begins with a look at Walt Disney's sketches and ends with the current construction work going on in Zurich, and on the journey between he shows that images possess a continuity of both meanings and functions, from innocent entertainment to the means of control over spaces and people. Aesthetic manners of rendering become a tool of segregation, prescribing particular groups of people to particular urban spaces and imposing these conceptions via beautiful images onto the 'actual' realities of cities.

Clara Fohrbeck (Chapter 3) addresses the issue of the relationship between proclaimed values and performed activities. She analyses the implementation of the project of an art space in Madrid, one aimed originally at the most well-intentioned values of the inclusive approach to public art, implying a design of the space and activities openly directed at the people inhabiting the areas where urban public art projects are performed. In reality she finds the situation to be much more problematic. Is there a balance to be struck between artistic ego and egalitarianism on the one hand and the needs, attitudes and everyday realities of the dwellers of a far-from-wealthy area of a big city on the other? Everybody knows public art is an aesthetic possessing protest and democratic potential and that it can provide otherwise disenfranchised people with a voice and the means of shaping their own environment in the way they want it to look, etc. But fewer people know how to realize this in real cities with real people, some of whom are lower and working class urban dwellers, and some middle and upper middle class artists. This does not mean we should stop trying. Clara's article explores the successes and failures of this Madrid attempt, thereby providing insights into how and if true balance in this area might be possible.

Laura Panait (Chapter 4) addresses in her article a phenomenon of public art. Using the example of two art festivals that took place in two different cities in Romania (Bucharest and Cluj), she analyses the variety of forms public art can take and the different effects it can have on the life of a city. As the indicators for "testing urban tissue" she uses cultural and artistic activities performed in the public spaces of cities. Laura brings together the issues of aesthetic and political, which she examines in the context of post-communist Romanian society. Being herself an anthropologist and an active participant in the art practices she examines, Laura chooses an interdisciplinary approach for her chapter and shifts in the text from the perspective of a social scientist to one of an artist and back, making her text rich and lively.

Celia Ghyka, another Romanian author in this collection (Chapter 5), also addresses public art projects and their potential of changing urban life and space. She considers the work of two world-famous artists, Zrzysztof Wodiczko and Jenny Holzer. Her choice of focus is conditioned, on the one hand, by the fact that both artists perform their projects in urban public spaces, and on the other hand, by Wodiczko and Holzer's awareness of the notion of communication as a driving motive of public spaces. Their projects challenge the image of 'ideal'
public space as potentially harmonious and suggest that we approach urban public spaces as permanently exposed to conflict and negotiation. Celia utilizes Hanna Arendt’s ideas on public-ness, communication, action and work as a theoretical framework that facilitates the bringing together of these two artists, public art as such, and the notion of urban public space itself. As in Laura Panait’s chapter, what follows is an examination of the role, potential, and particularities of artistic activity in the production of public space and public life of cities.

An article by Jekaterina Lavrinec and Oksana Zaporozhets finishes the series of texts (Chapter 6) dealing with urban public art. Oksana and Jekaterina focus on the creative actions and events that change urban scenarios, transform space, intensify urban emotions, and affect the daily lives of city dwellers. The co-authors treat their own study as “both an urban adventure and a theoretical challenge” that requires the revision of reflexive tools applied to the analysis of urban settings. The theoretical framework of this article rests upon the works of Lefebvre, Debord, De Certeau and Benjamin that Oksana and Jekaterina deftly combine with empirical observations on modern cities. By bringing together traditions of situationism and a “micro-optics” in observation and analysis, these scholars explore the potential of urban interventions and creative actions in the co-production of urban space and life. Besides relying on their own exciting experience of participation in situationist actions and public art projects, the authors argue on the importance of a trans-disciplinary approach in urban studies in the form of the “mutation” of researcher into “reflexive activist”.

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Oleg Pachenkov, Lilia Voronkova

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Oleg Pachenkov
CHAPTER 6

Shaping Spaces of Shared Experience: Creative Practices and Temporal Communities

Jekaterina Lavrinec, Oksana Zaporozhets

Introduction

The paradox of current Urban Studies is a wide application of the concept of creativity to whole cities, but not to particular sites within (Landry, 2000; Florida, 2002; Evans, 2009). Although creative campaigns and actions obviously shape both urban and virtual spaces, fascinating and inspiring the public and turning thousands of Internet users into devoted followers of the creative groups who initiated them, the actions themselves rarely become an issue for analysis. Being brought to life, these creative practices as “a new combination of bodies (actions and passions, which are strung together…) and … the verbal statement as result, as effect of the corporeal combination” (Lazzarato, 2003) make new urban scenarios possible. They enrich and reinvent urban everyday life by filling it with vividness and emotionality.

The study of creative practices is both an urban adventure and a theoretical challenge necessitating the revision of reflexive tools applied to urban settings and the very notion of the urban itself. Understanding the city as a changing configuration of practices is the basic attitude of the micro-perspective developed by de Certeau (de Certeau, 1988) and Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 1991). Surprisingly, the idea of practices both shaping urban space and being shaped by it becomes the statement, which has too long been taken for granted in Urban Studies instead of being problematised and developed. We consider creative practices as the means of reconfiguration for the cityspace and the intellectual-space of Urban Studies. Giving birth to “urban enthusiasts” who reinterpret and reinvent the city combining the means of reflection with the means of knowledge, these creative practices add a new figure to the list of urban characters such as flâneur (Benjamin, 1968; Benjamin, 2006) and drifter (Debord, 2006a).

Creative practices increase the diversity of urban scenarios attached to particular places and the intensity of urban emotions. Involving citizens in creative events, they change the routine urban choreographies and increase the significance of bodily contact, synchronized movements, and simultaneous emotions. Thus, the urban places where these practices are set become “spaces of shared experience” formed by mobile situations or prolonged rituals.

Applying micro-optics: co-creating urban space

Describing the art of “making do”, de Certeau points out the practices constituting everyday life or the “ways of using” (de Certeau, 1988, p. 35). These invisible ways of dealing with things, spaces, and time create the essence of the everyday life revealed by the researcher: “[t]he practices of consumption are the ghosts of the society that carries their name” (de Certeau, 1988, p. 35). de Certeau concentrates on these ways of using and almost avoids the conceptualization of the actors, preferring to describe them through the practices they are involved in (for instance, the opposition of strategies and tactics) and their more or less materialized footprints.

Applying micro-optics, which actualizes the state of being in the city, we will bring the actor to the urban scene58. The “actor’s comeback” is a part of the oligopticon vision59 (Amin & Thrift, 2002; Latour, 2005) allowing us to look at urban life from different sites “to see little, but to see it well” (Latour, 2005, p. 181). The “humanization” of these practices makes evident the omissions in de Certeau and Lefebvre’s theorizations. Their concentration on practices implicitly subscribes an individual or an aggregate actor such as the “authorities”, “ordinary people”, etc. Changing the scale of consideration, we will here focus on the co-actions constituting everyday life and shaping urban spaces. The theoretical frames of co-action developed by the Symbolic Interactionism (see: Goffman, 1961) or Situationism (Debord, 2006b) are undeniably insightful but at the same time quite restrictive in their understanding of urban life, stressing either an abstract scenario of social interactions or their political significance.

We begin our analysis of urban co-actions by acknowledging a tendency of mutation of researcher into reflexive activist. This figure is quite similar to what Knight calls the “outsider artist”, keeping in mind activists whose aims and actions lay “outside of the art world’s conventions and strictions” (Knight 2009, p. 115). The reflexive activist is conscious about urban problems and tendencies and reacts to them by initiating actions in urban space, which are addressed to a wide audience. S/he considers the urban art interventions and creative actions to be the inseparable “means of knowledge and the means of action”60 (Chtcheglov 2006). The urban interventions and creative actions are

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58 This study comprises research findings from the project 'Graffiti and street art in the cultural space of big cities' carried out within The National Research University Higher School of Economics’ Academic Fund Program in 2012, grant No 12-05-0002

59 Here we understand oligopticon as “series of partial orders, localized totalities, with their ability to gaze in some directions not others” (Amin, Thrift, 2002, p. 92)

60 Ivan Chtcheglov in Situationist “Formulary for a New Urbanism” develops the idea of reflexive action as a key principal of new architecture, which is supposed to be "a
comprehended as a tool for re-inventing and revitalising urban settings while initiating intensive interaction and cooperation between citizens. Considering interventions and creative campaigns as the process of co-action, we admit that at some point the interaction based on the active involvement of urban dwellers dissolves the difference between the initiator of the event and its participants. Shared space and actions shaping the common experience and intense emotional atmosphere of the event turn the active actors into the new group, which we call "the urban enthusiasts". The notion of urban enthusiasts does not eliminate the other positions and distinctions kept alive during the interventions, rather it stresses the new form of solidarity and permanent conversion of the roles of the initiators of and participants in the creative campaigns.

This space of co-action filled with co-presence, communication, and emotions becomes "the space of shared experience". We develop this term to explicate the micro-perspective on public place and demonstrate its heuristic potential. The term "space of shared experience" is not seen as an alternative or a substitute of "public place". Instead, it opens a new layer – the layer of instant actions that reinterpret the scenario of the space, creating its own story, one that is evidently missed in numerous approaches conceptualizing public space mainly as a part of a general social landscape (modern city (Sennett, 1977), symbolic production (Zukin, 1995), or group interaction (Carmona, 2010), etc.).

A position toward urban environment, which we define as enthusiastic and which implies active participation in shaping urban space, is close to the situationists’ idea of initiating "emotionally moving situations" in the city. Reconstructing the concept of "situations", which was the essential part of the Situationist International’s program, Simon Sadler points out that "the constructed situation would clearly be some sort of performance, one that would treat all space as performance space and all people as performers" and each of the situations "would provide a decor and ambiance of such power that it would stimulate new sorts of behaviour, a glimpse into an improved future social life based upon human encounter and play" (Sadler 1999, p. 105). Recognizing the importance of emotions in urban experience, situationists developed a vision of urban space that is open to changes brought by citizens: e.g. Debord sees the potential of architecture in "emotionally moving situations, rather than emotionally moving forms" and believes, that "experiments conducted with this material will lead to new, as yet unknown forms" (Debord 2006 b).

An important insight of the situationist movement was the idea that spatial structures produce certain types of behaviour as well as an emotional experience (a key element of psychogeographical mapping) and that said structures are able to "activate" citizens and encourage them to take part in the construction of their urban surroundings. From this perspective, creative actions and urban art interventions constitute a quite productive method of articulating urban experience and rearranging the emotional landscape of the city. By disturbing the usual everyday rhythms and trajectories, urban interventions establish a reflexive distance from the routine choreography of the place and propose alternative scenarios of behaviour in public space. Therefore urban art interventions and urban games can be considered as a tool for the creative reconceptualization of spatial structures and social order, embedded in urban space.

Creative practices and the space of shared experience

What we call creative practices is an active reinterpretation of urban space, which is produced by urban enthusiasts. Creative campaigns (flash mobs, urban games, and various other public actions) and urban art interventions provide a possibility of publicly-shared emotional and bodily experience and establish momentary citizen solidarities. While art interventions reinterpret spatial structures using the potential of the place for further reorganizations, creative actions reinterpret routine scenarios embedded in various types of urban spaces (airports, squares, train stations, shopping malls, bridges, etc.). But in fact, these two vectors of reinterpretation of urban space are interconvertible, as a long-term art intervention in an urban space can initiate alternative scenarios of behaviour in a particular place, and some creative actions become urban ritual (a repetitive symbolic action, connected with a certain urban place or element and which reinterprets not only spatial, but also temporal structures of urban places).
As an example of an art intervention that radically changes the routine choreography of a certain place, we may consider “Miracle tile”, an installation created by Lithuanian artist Gitenis Umbrasas. A tile with a word “Miracle” inlaid in it was installed on the Cathedral Square in Vilnius (Lithuania). As it differs from the other tiles, it naturally caught attention of the passers-by and inspired them to search for an interpretation of this element, a tile. The tile became an object of active bodily interpretation: while making a wish, citizens began stepping on the tile. This developed into some people turning around on the tile and others jumping on it. The ritual of turning around seemed to “catch on” and has expanded among citizens over the several months that followed the tile’s installation.

As a new urban element, the tile proposed a certain urban choreography: it turned into an off-beat on the way of passers-by who cross the square. After the tile was installed, passers-by received a place to stop and to perform simple movements when crossing the space. The instructions on how to make a wish have spread among citizens spontaneously and now are usually included in urban narratives for tourists. It is no wonder that the “Miracle tile” became a point of attraction for groups of tourists but, what is more important, this small urban element became a place of shared emotions and the articulated intimate experience of making a wish.

Art interventions, as well as performances and flash mobs, are a heuristic tool that reveals the interconnections between spatial structures and everyday practices by creating points of attractions (or spatial obstacles) and disturbing everyday routes and scenarios. In this sense, art interventions are quite closely with the idea of situationists, that urban routine must be “disturbed” in order to produce conditions for the re-examination of everyday experience. Interventions propose micro-practices, which differ from routine choreography: e.g. stopping in a crowded place to throw back a head, rubbing the hand of a street sculpture, leaning over some object to scrutinize it, jumping over some obstacle, etc. Those art interventions that affect the bodily experience of passers-by in a playful way or leave a possibility for establishing a bodily connection saturate a place with vivid emotions and usually become a point of attraction for locals and travellers, which after some time turn into an official sight.

Creative events (dancing flash mobs, hugging campaigns or a campaign of a salutation of passengers who alight from public transport) reinterpret actively routine scenarios and reinvent scenarios of social interaction by introducing alternative models of behaviour to a certain type of place (railway stations, bus stops, lecture rooms, big shops). Many alternative scenarios, invented by urban enthusiasts, spread across the world and can be repeated in every similar urban place. Being a type of “open-ended medium with endless variables” (Goldberg, 2001), creative events broaden the scope of urban scenarios attached to particular places and to urban settings in general. Shaking the very idea of urban alienation and the “right to be left alone” (Tonkiss, 2005), they are not targeted to explode or completely substitute for urban conventions but rather to awake citizens from somnambular walks and make them more sensitive to the variety of scenarios potentially suggested by urban places and city in general. Despite this opportunity, the walkers still have a chance to skip the event, to pass it by and restore distance and emotional “neutrality” as well as to get a feeling of security by hiding themselves in the “safe bubble” of urban conventions.

Creative campaigns (be it hugging, dancing, or mass reading in public) imply certain choreography of participants, different from their usual behaviour and as a result, provoking vivid emotions. Such campaigns are aimed at producing a certain emotional effect, e.g. at surprising and sharing the joy with casual passers-by: as announced at the official site of the “Improv Everywhere” collective, they cause “scenes of chaos and joy in public places” (Improv Everywhere 200163). Initiating flash mobs and urban games is also a temporal solution for the problem of hunger for emotions and bodily contact. According to the initiator of the worldwide “Free Hugs Campaign”, the inspiration for this campaign was the experience of loneliness he had when arriving in Sydney after being absent for a long period of time:

“Standing there in the arrivals terminal, watching other passengers meeting their waiting friends and family, with open arms and smiling faces, hugging and laughing together, I wanted someone out there to be waiting for me. To be happy to see me. To smile at me. To hug me” (Free Hugs Campaign 201164).

62 Some of the actions can spread spontaneously, such as the so-called love padlocks. Padlocks with the engraved names of couples get affixed to fences and railings of bridges; the keys are thrown away after the padlock is locked. This ritual saturates the place with romantic feelings. Even those who have never taken part in this ritual and have never before heard about it recognize the structure of symbolic action. And maybe it is partly because of its recognizable structure that this urban ritual has expanded into many cities across the world. It takes only a few weeks for several padlocks to appear on the railings of a bridge; after a couple of months more no free place will be left there.
63 See http://improneverwhere.com/.
64 See http://www.freehugscampaign.org/.
In many creative events passers-by are invited to be the participants of the action. Moreover, the initiators of such campaigns as “Free Hugs” or the series of dancing or singing performances arranged by “Improv Everywhere” use the potential of urban spaces for establishing contact with passers-by. It is the same scenography of flash mobs and performances that reconceptualizes the relations between the performer and the viewer, and reinvents the idea of proximity. As a rule, participants of flash mobs and urban games “dissolve” in the crowd before the action starts. Even in cases where passers-by remain in the position of viewers, still the usual distance is being overcome, as participants of flash mobs or performances appear to be a random person next to the viewer. Thus, in a public musical arranged by the T-Mobile creative group at Heathrow airport (“Welcome Back”, 2010), singers are the part of the crowd. Some of them have mixed into the group waiting for arriving persons and some emerge from the arrival gates. In this case, only singers were equipped with microphones and others were not encouraged to sing; instead, some of the viewers became addressees of welcome songs. The common experience of arriving, departing and welcoming became a ground for building a new experience of the same place (airport), which turned into a playground for sharing joy and surprise. The reaction of the viewers is an essential part of the event and has become an important part of any records of the event, as it communicates the same atmosphere of the event and its emotional saturation.

By initiating and participating in urban events, which set up an alternative model of behaviour, and sometimes reshape the usual temporal model by mixing usual scenarios of leisure and work, citizens establish new solidarities. Being an alternative to the monotony of urban everyday life, creative campaigns provoke intense emotional reactions from citizens. Appealing to the reaction of the passers-by, they give a way to a variety of feelings and emotions based on surprise. Surprise becomes an emotional trigger that leads to the changing emotions (suspicion, interest, fascination, etc.) that saturate subsequent communications and actions. This rapidly changing variety of feelings contrasts with the typical emotional cityscapes, which usually serve to actualize the “stable” emotions attached to places, such as boredom, grief, joy or fear.

These creative practices do not simply break the flow of everyday life. They foster and prolong the state of uncertainty and the spontaneity of the situation as grounds for social creativity. The uncertainty of the situation provokes actors to coordinate their reactions “here and now”, adjusting to the moment and to the actions of the others and, at some point, also to avoid the “usual” schemes, which are inappropriate or ineffective. So, the creative campaigns foster not only the very fact of interaction, they also develop communication skills and valorize the state of creativity and mutual adjustment.

This is the case when the logic of social exchange (as a basis for solidarity building) substitutes, although temporarily, for the mainstream scenario of city spaces. One of the implicit schemes undermined by the creative practices is the commoditization of urban life – the essential characteristic of the modern city (Simmel, 1998; Lefebvre, 2008, etc.). Doing something not for money is the motto unifying the wide range of urban activists (from guerilla gardeners to street-artists, from performers to interventionists or different type of “bombers” (Reynolds, 2009)) and has been enthusiastically supported by citizens. Emphasizing the significance of social skills, the logic of enthusiasts and wonderers becomes the basic stepping block for new solidarities. That is why the issue of “being sold out” as undermining the very idea of social cooperation (the core value of these associations) has become a frontier issue for such communities. The social exchange based on the bodily co-presence, communication, and shared emotions devaluate the urban convention of being “socially distant yet physically close” (Wirth, 1938). Physical closeness supplemented with communication and orientation to the other gives the actors of the creative campaigns a chance to manage the social distance, to balance the individual and collective efforts.

The scandalous action “Dick Captured by the FSB” of the Voina group, which took place in Saint-Petersburg in 2010,55 became the local top news story at the time, filling the city with rumors, guesses, and talk. Here is an example of one blogger’s comments on the citizens’ reaction: “Everybody talked about it in Saint-Petersburg… everybody saw it. Even those who didn’t see it, they definitely knew about it.”56 The event temporarily changed the social and emotional scapes of the city. The emotional richness and energy of creative actions and their adventurous inclinations are key moments giving a birth to new urban solidarities. The “unusual” intensity of emotions adds a special importance to the common experience, signifying it as a different compared to the routine “ethics of indifference” (Tonkiss, 2005) or “mutual neutrality” (Sennet, 2010). This intensity and variety makes the emotional cityscape more diverse and vivid.

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55 “Dick captured by the FSB” the action of Voina group including the drawing of the penis on Liteiny Bridge in 23 seconds. It is an erecting bridge with the FSB building situated in its surroundings.

56 See: http://placer.livejournal.com/262707.html
Virtual co-being: media platforms and temporal solidarities

Shared emotions and actions produce short-term as well as long-term solidarities influencing the contacts of citizens and widening the audience of an event. The more emotionally intensive an event is, the more it breaks the routine of a place, the more it impresses citizens and intensifies the social nets of communication. The role of media here can be crucial: the archive of such events (writings, photos and videos accessible in the Internet) is also a chronicle of the temporal solidarity, the legitimation and the evidence of its fluid or permanent existence. Internet platforms (such as flickr, youtube, facebook, twitter, and blogs) provide conditions for sharing the experience of taking part in the events, attracting more potential participants and transcending the local context of the creative action. Recording media and interactive media (especially, mobile phones and Internet) are important tools in constituting urban creative events, enhancing them with their technological opportunities.

Recording the event (or the reaction of passers-by toward an intervention) and sharing pictures and videos afterwards has become a form of participation. As soon as participation of the videographers became an essential ingredient of creative campaigns in urban space, the choice of place for the action began to take into consideration the spatial potential of a place to provide several surveying points. For the documentation of mass actions, such as dancing flash mobs, it is important to record a whole group of participants and the reactions they cause. The place itself usually interpreted more as a scene for action than as a particular site with its specific traits. Often for flash mobs and creative campaigns (such as mass singing in squares), sensitivity towards the spatial structures of a place does not imply attention to the identity of the place itself. In these cases, information on the location of the event is provided by commentators, left by photographers or operators. The action itself, the effect it causes, the emotions of participants and the reactions of viewers is the main object of documentation for many creative campaigns. And records, shared on the Internet, provide valuable instructions on how to arrange similar events and encourage enthusiasts to repeat the experience in other cities and countries. In the case of creative campaigns, which are aimed at revitalizing concrete places in a city, place identity becomes a topic of concern for photographers. Creative

reinterpretation of spatial structures of particular places become a main topic of documentaries, devoted to urban art interventions.

Shared on youtube, flickr, and at social networking services, these records become a point of attraction not only for participants of the event and thus widen the auditory scope of the event. The interactive media contribute to creating an augmented public space for a wider audience by making the event more visible and activating communication and debate, leaving the meanings of the event open-ended and ready for reinterpretations. Being a "witness of the event" and acting as the virtual billboards announcing the event, platforms of interaction and instant communications, free accessed archives, and media "rather enhance than annihilate" the urban life (Aurigi, De Cindio, 2008). For instance, sharing the information and photos of the event is the next step in the cooperation and community building inspired by the actual event, now realized in virtual space.

This media communication explicates and reinforces convertibility as an important trait of creative gatherings. Thus, the convertibility of the roles from viewer/follower to participant and vice versa increases the openness and attraction of the event. Just as a passerby might be occasionally turned into a participant in creative actions, the Internet follower of a group might become the initiator or the "agent" of the next performance (as it happens with Improv Everywhere) or simply join the group by sharing emotions inspired by the action. Some virtual communities, based on the shared interest of taking part in creative actions, remain active even during periods when no events are being initiated by the creative group (for example, during cold winter time). It is also quite possible that on the basis of a community that gathered around a special kind of event, some new ideas and alternative sub-groups emerge.

decativated squares for periodical playful activities, became a series of photos of representational places of Lithuanian cities, which are now used gladly by tourism centres. The periodic urban event, which brings citizens of all ages to the center of the city transformed into a type of photography symposium, where photographers exchanged their professional experience and searched for new visual solutions to documenting the event. The event provided a ground for the emerging of professional communities of city photographers.

67 One of many examples is the initiative "Dispatchwork", the idea of which was to reconstruct urban objects using colorful construction sets and became popular in many countries. See: Dispatchwork.info (www.dispatchwork.info).

68 For example, the creative campaign “Bubbly city” (“Burbuliatarius”), which was initiated in Lithuanian cities during 2009-2011 and which brought citizens to

69 For instance, before-mentioned “Bubbly your City” event (“BC”), organized by “Laimikis Li” group in Lithuania, inspired the emergence of “Sofa evenings” activities in the city of Kaunas (2010-2011). “Sofa evenings” was the initiative of Kaunas citizens, who created a home-like space at the central alley of the city, by the place where “BC” is being arranged, and use it for concerts and playing board games. This initiative prolonged “Bubbly your City!” gatherings, proposing alternative formats of leisure in the city and leading to the periodic reviving of the area.
Another type of convertibility is the virtual/real transformation. Media can in fact facilitate the de-virtualization of social communication by becoming “a catalyst for gathering and community activities” (Uricchio, 2009) or by means of the “echo effect” (Auge, 1995) — reproductions of events in other urban surroundings. They also work as “virtual stabilizers” by prolonging the effect of an event in media space, keeping alive the solidarities that emerged and stimulating new ones. For the participants of the event, its prolongation in the media (especially in the form of internet communities) provides a perspective for further development.

Beyond all of this, various media also provide “the frame of orientation” articulating, debating and legitimating new meanings of the places and new urban scenarios. For example, the fact that the mentioned action of the Voima group turned Liteiny Bridge into an urban attraction with a new meaning attached to it is ironically reflected in the title of another YouTube video, “Liteiny Bridge. Not about dick!” Although the previous meanings seemed to be unquestionable, stable, and shared by the Saint-Petersburg citizens, the new one successfully competes with them, turning the urban symbolic landscape into the palimpsest of senses.

Creative events enforce the role of the media as the tool of “emotional management”, giving the viewers the opportunity to run the communication and appropriate the event (for instance, increasing its emotional intensity through banal “likes” in social networks or comments). The prolongation of the creative event in the media somewhat “neutralizes” its momentary-ness and spontaneity located in urban spaces, contrasting with the logic of stability inscribed in urban materiality and interactions and valorizing the ephemerality of the actual event.

Conclusion

Numerous creative practices being suddenly brought to life have impressively reconfigured urban and virtual spaces over the last decade. Creative actions widen the experience of the city, attaching new values and meanings to certain places. Urban creative practices re-interpret the spatial and temporal urban structures and regulations affecting the everyday bodily and emotional experience of urban dwellers. Producing new forms of solidarities and co-actions, they challenge the very notion of the urban as well as the reflexive tools and concepts applied towards understanding urban life.

The choreographies of creative campaigns involve citizens in new, playful, spontaneous, and emotionally intensive co-actions, undermining the distinction between initiators and viewers. The experience of communication based on spatial and emotional proximity forms new social skills, presents an alternative to distant, neutral, and prescribed urban communications, and creates the “space of shared experience”. Thus, creative campaigns become an improvised educational platform developing and introducing new social scenarios and training communicational skills. Being media-ized and presented on the web, scenarios of creative actions spread worldwide. The web-platforms are turned into the virtual site of community support and building, preserving established contacts and facilitating new ones.

We hope that this concentration on the “spaces of shared experience” will provide material for questioning the social, spatial, and many other structures shaping the cityscape, as well as the established notions such as “public spaces” that make up the landscape of Urban Studies.
References

PROJECTS AND ACTIONS
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Laura Panait holds a PhD in Anthropology at the European Studies Faculty, Cluj. She is engaged both in research and in practice of public space and art interventions in Romania, working constantly in interdisciplinary projects with architects, artists and sociologists. She is also a member of the Paint Brush Factory. Now she is currently investigating the creative community in relation to the actual protests started in Romania at the beginning of 2012.

Tobias Scheidegger, PhD Student, teaches and researches at the Institute for Popular Culture Studies, University of Zurich, Switzerland. In his 2009 published master's thesis „Flanieren in ArCAMedia“ he analysed the culture of digitally rendered architectural visualisations, by focusing on their impact on the contemporary production of urban space. Furthermore he wrote several smaller articles about hegemonic design of urban public space and on the rhetoric of urban planning.

Lilia Voronkova is a social anthropologist, photographer, and curator. She has been working in the state independent research institute the Centre for Independent Social Research (CISR, St.-Petersburg, Russia) since 2003 as a researcher, and since 2011 as a coordinator of trans-disciplinary art-social science projects. Lilia facilitates the development of diverse forms of collaborative work between artists and scientists such as presentation of research projects to the public in the form of exhibitions, publishing catalogs, organizing art-science seminars and collaborative research projects. She has realized several art-science projects in the form of seminars, visual presentations and exhibitions.

Oksana Zaporozhets, Ph.D.(Candidate of Science in sociology), is currently a Moscow-based researcher in the field of Urban Studies. She is a leading research fellow at the Poletayev Institute for Theoretical and Historical Studies in the Humanities, National Research University Higher School of Economics (Moscow) teaching courses on Urban Studies and World Cities. She is a participant of the Laboratory of Critical Urbanism and a visiting lecturer at European Humanities University (Vilnius, Lithuania) giving a course in Urban Studies with Jekaternina Lavrinec.
Urban Public Space

Urban public space continues to be the focus of debate regarding its conceptualization and how it is designed, (re)produced and managed. Nowadays public spaces are facing new challenges conceptually and practically. This book focuses on two of them: mobility and aestheticization. Mobility and flows are considered to be key characteristics of the post-modern era. While for some scholars it means the “end of place”, others are trying to re-conceptualize it by bringing together notions of space, place, mobility and identity. Still surprisingly few authors address the concept of public space in this respect. Principles of aesthetic and diverse forms of aestheticization seem to have affected urban space and culture throughout Modernity, forming a dimension where power and conflict around urban space are performed. In this book nine authors with social science and arts backgrounds from six countries discuss how these processes shape the life of modern cities, and where the social sciences should move for a better understanding of them.

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