How one tree can change the future of a neighbourhood: The process behind the creation of the Boerenhof Park as an example for tactical urban planning

Aurélie De Smet, Hanne Van Reusel

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Action-research
Boerenhof Ghent
Strategic gardening
Temporary use
Tactical urbanism

ABSTRACT

In this paper, the process behind the making of the Boerenhof Park on an urban Waiting Space in Ghent (Belgium) is discussed. We are highlighting how in this case ‘tactical urbanism’ actions, such as planting a tree, turned out to have a long-term impact and as such can inform a ‘tactical urban planning’ approach. Through a learning by reflection methodology, the Boerenhof Park case has been re-analysed using a conceptual framework built up around the concepts of ‘scratch’, ‘scar’ and ‘score’. The focus was on discerning the transregional elements for moving from short-term interventions to long-term change. Three key aspects are brought to light: the incremental approach, a desire-driven program, and a transversal collaboration. We argue that these are key aspects for the operationalisation of a tactical urban planning approach.

1. Introduction

“To start and plant a first tree was just a small trigger, the spark the inhabitants needed to start and go ahead. As a (political) anti-parking statement the tree is planted in the middle of the planned parking zone, blocking future car circulation.” — fragment of the Scratch, Scar, Score logbook (Van Reusel, 2014).

On March 23, 2014, a small but very symbolic tree was planted on the vacant and bare terrain of the Boerenhof. This act triggered a series of self-organised, bottom-up actions and events that eventually altered the future of the Boerenhof. The planting of the tree was done by a group of dedicated neighbours and represented a critical moment in their resistance against the planned redevelopment of the site. This tangible action initiated a transversal (Petrescu, 2005), incremental and desire-driven process that gradually accumulated into the creation of a collective neighbourhood park instead of the officially planned parking lot.

The civic contestation against the government’s plans for the Boerenhof-site is exemplary for the complex context Western-European spatial planners, designers and managers need to deal with today. On a spatial level it is no longer possible, nor desired to plan an area starting from a blank page. Previous projects and visions have left traces on the space surrounding them. And besides providing answers, scientific and technological developments have also brought up many new questions, sometimes causing the feeling that our ignorance is bigger than our knowledge (Callon et al., 2009). As a result, people are confronted with pressing social, economic and ecological issues, that due to their transcending scale and complexity seem intractable (Murray, 2009). In parallel with – or as a reaction against – this globalising trend, small and local grounds are more and more appreciated (Schumacher, 1973; Castells, 1996; Osman et al., 2014). What could be called ‘cosmopolitan localism’ (Sachs, 1992) thus combines a multiplicity of cultures and scales for spatial professionals to deal with.

In this complex context, the conventional urban planning approaches and instruments are becoming inadequate to guide the processes of urbanisation and urban transformation (Corboz, 1992; UNHABITAT, 2009; Baldacci et al., 2011; Oswald et al., 2013). This situation has brought into the spotlight and enhanced, the emergence of a plurality of experiments with alternative approaches (Centrum voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling, 2013; De Smet, 2013; BRAL vzw, 2015a, b). Quite recently the term ‘tactical urbanism’ was brought forward in...
literature to indicate a more flexible, participative and innovative approach to shaping urban spaces (Street Plans Collaborative and NextGen, 2011; Street Plans Collaborative, 2012; Ecosistema Urbano, 2011; Zeiger, 2013; De Smet, 2015; Lydon and Garcia, 2015). In this paper, the process behind the creation of the Boerenhof Park on the Boerenhof-site in Ghent (Belgium) is presented as an example of tactical urbanism. In line with other authors, we are arguing that cases like this can inspire the development of a renewed approach to spatial planning, development and management (Müller et al., 2008; Urrahm Urban Design, 2010; Street Plans Collaborative, 2012; Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving en Urrahm Urban Design, 2012; Bergevoet and Van Tuijl, 2013; Oswalt et al., 2013; Rosa and Weiland, 2013; Lydon and Garcia, 2015). In the field of urban studies such cases are however usually dealt with in a descriptive and reflective manner (Street Plans Collaborative and NextGen, 2011; Street Plans Collaborative, 2012; Ferguson, 2014; Fabian and Samson, 2016; Prudic-Hartl, 2016). A translation from case-studies to planning theory is needed. Key lessons should be synthesized, abstracted, and articulated from on-the-field experiences. In this paper, we are first presenting a conceptual framework to analyse the case at hand. Based on this analysis we are then trying to discern possible characteristics of a renewed approach to spatial planning, development and management, that we are proposing to call ‘tactical urban planning’.

2. Background

In the 19th-century urban planning was adopted in Western Europe as a state function and a technical activity to be carried out by trained experts. Since the 1960s there has however been a growing unwillingness on the part of communities to passively accept the planning decisions of politicians and technocrats impacting on their living environments (UNHABITAT, 2009). Amongst others through the work of Jane Jacobs (1961), voices started to rise against the modernist ways of planning the city and for a more humane approach. As spatial professionals realised that participation of society is indeed important and necessary several attempts were made at formulating answers to this. In 1965 Paul Davidoff for example introduced his ideas on ‘Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning’ and several authors – like Healey, Forester, Innes, Hoch and Baum – started to work on what would later be called ‘communicative and collaborative planning theory’ (Healey, 1997). Later Margret Crawford (2007) developed her ideas on ‘everyday urbanism’. And in Europe the idea of ‘strategic spatial planning’ was developed, with the aim of increasing the flexibility of the planning process and creating the possibility to include market parties. However, a gap remains between theory and practice, as o...
دریافت فوری متن کامل مقاله

امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات