

ADAPTIVE URBANISM FOR TIMES OF CRISIS

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[The temporary city](#), written by Peter Bishop and Lesley Williams, is a very well organized journey through the different types of temporary projects in the city, whatever the names they take (**temporary, transitional, interim, pop-up or meanwhile**). Although the book is basically a review of **British experiences**, the analytical framework is perfectly valid for other contexts in which urban planning has tools for formalizing and solidifying uses. And, although it does not pretend to be useful as a practical guide, it is one of the most complete approaches that I have found on this issue that has been receiving so much attention lately. So much so that there are those who are already rushing to reject so much attention. In any case, the text clearly outlines the **reasons for the effervescence of this type of urban projects** and the ways in which they slip through as relevant instruments for urban management. In fact, the idea of adaptive cities with which I am working lately in the blog coincides quite with the approach of this book in the sense that the authors place a main value on the context of the economic crisis as the main argument to support the suitability of the temporal approach. and adaptive to favor crisis intervention strategies.

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The journey in Human Scale Cities has gone through different phases in relation to the analysis of the **economic crisis**, starting from those series on [local funds for the employment](#) of Plan E (how far is it!) and going through the follow-up to [waste of infrastructures](#) until reaching a more propositional phase and identification of experiences from the idea of [adaptive urbanism](#). Somehow, this book covers the desire to want to systematize typologies and contexts in which these interventions arise since the text covers this in a very broad way, so I almost got rid of the temptation to write a book. I arrive at this temporary urbanism looking for answers to the crisis, alternative projects to the dynamics of large urban interventions and masterplans that have been the general rule in urban development and regeneration strategies and that will not have much of an outcome in the coming years in the face of the crisis. of the real estate sector and the perfect storm that affects the municipal coffers. And yet, the cities keep on moving. For this reason it is good to bring these projects - which are nothing new but are largely unknown - with an accessible language to those who until now were not interested in this type of urban intervention.

THE LIDO (Southwark, London)

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Image taken from [The Oslo School of Architecture and Design](#)

At the same time, the book tries not to discredit these projects by assigning them a secondary function from the meanwhile logic, as if they were just a second-best option, because they have a value in themselves. But, tactically, this is the best time to broaden the horizon of formal urbanism and top-down urban projects. There are 68 **cases** described in the book and together they give many clues about what alternative actions exist to reactivate abandoned spaces, closed premises, detained masterplans, etc. I think the logic of your proposal is also good, since they clearly define the areas in which temporality and informality are expressed in other contexts where urban planning does not work as we are used to in more developed countries.

Being that the economic crisis is one of the engines that may be spreading this type of practice, financial problems are not the only reasons. Phenomena such as the **shrinking cities** (Detroit, Flint,...) have made us wonder what to do with so many literally abandoned urban extensions. In the last two decades, the **large industries in decline** in the most advanced economies have generated large industrial solar plants in which new regeneration formulas have sometimes been tried beyond the uniform project. The streets of our cities have seen how commercial premises were closed and the question of what to do with so many resources has been asked. But it is not only this. The change in work organization patterns is creating **new forms of occupation of public space** and diversification of office spaces, while progress in the connected society is intensifying the organization of new activities in the public space (festivals, happenings, installations or flashmobs,

for example) using digital technologies as favoring elements. In the same way, **activism** and countercultures continue to struggle to find in the city the answers that formal urbanism and the real estate market do not offer.

THE DEPTFORD PROJECT (Deptford, London)



Image taken from [Cure Studio](#)

There are many almost emblematic projects that circulate on the networks and are gaining attention, to the point of becoming icons. Some of them appear in the book and precisely those in which private owners understand these projects as **viable alternatives** are significant. The great difficulty is not the legal, financial or urban barriers. The obstacle is conservatism when facing urban problems by changing logic. It is the lack of vision that can be tackled from another perspective. They are projects that put into crisis and the contradictions between the regulatory and formalist procedure of urban planning and the enormous dynamism of social needs and citizenship emerge. Those contradictions will continue to exist, forever. The question is whether the regulatory framework will need to learn to **incorporate short-term logic as opposed to the long-term mentality of the masterplan**, transitory logic as opposed to the rigor of urbanization. This is the only way to release, case by case, the **liabilities** that fill the cities and that have to be activated as soon as possible.

This dynamic to favor spontaneous, temporary, accidental or informal uses in the interstices of formal and planning regulation can reach all functions of the city. Fit here are **temporary spaces for consumption** in the form of pop-up restaurants or shops, which activate open or closed spaces to give life to declining or abandoned places or streets, but also interventions capable of expanding the range of **urban "settings"** such as public spaces, such as marginal spaces of residual use gained as attention grabbers on rooftops, underutilized infrastructure, abandoned lots or spaces between buildings. These are uses that in the research **Post-it City** were already well explained and also defined as **forms of resistance** to the normalization of public behavior in urban space by renewing the character urbanization of these spaces in terms of access, freedom, density and interaction, emphasizing use value over exchange value. They are spaces where sports uses can re-emerge or are expanded, as spaces for children's play, as cinemas or artistic exhibition spaces or, above all, as spaces for protest and demonstration.

DUMPSTER SWIMMING POOL (New York)



Image taken from [Modestoblog](#)

They are interventions that broaden the possibilities of expression of social commitment and in themselves, experiments in **social innovation** taken to the streets by expanding new forms of citizen participation and organization through tools and contexts of dialogue and confrontation. .

SADLER'S WELLS THEATER (London)



Image taken from [The Guardian](#)

As in previous posts, I am convinced that this is the **right time** to look at this type of project with eyes wide open. As the book highlights, it is not only about projects against, but also institutional initiatives in the form of complex regeneration or urbanization developments that can benefit from more transitory and flexible intervention models. In times of great doubt and near paralysis, **inaction can be the worst of mistakes**. But large interventions, with long-term executions, can accommodate in the meantime initiatives that give them a more flexible character and that allows them to adapt to the social, financial or technical changes that many urban projects undergo over time. A tactical way of negotiating and intervening in the city that includes the variable of time and the real needs of people, a day-to-day urban planning that is permeable to the dynamism of cities.

There are no comments yet.