

way of an international competition held in 1997. The winners of the competition, South Africans Janina Masojada, Andrew Makin, and Paul Wygers were commissioned with the project.

The project is based on two fundamental principles—reflecting the sense of transparency, openness, and democratic diversity laid out in the Constitution and the use of construction materials, landscape, art, and craftwork typical of South Africa.

The project, situated on Constitution Hill, is flanked by another two hills—Hillbrow and Braamfontein—in the city of Johannesburg. The site devoted to the Court houses a group of prisons—among them Fort Prison, Section 4 and Section 5, the Women’s Jail, and the Pre-trial Holding Cells. Imprisoned at Fort Prison were Mahatma Gandhi, on four occasions between 1906 and 1913, and Nelson Mandela from 1956 to 1961, as well as many victims of political persecution and racial discrimination under the apartheid system, including the children arrested as a result of the Soweto Uprising in 1976. The prisons on Constitution Hill were, therefore, deeply etched in the collective memory of the general population as places representative of the apartheid system in the city of Johannesburg.

Today, the Constitutional Court houses the Human Rights Commission and the Commission for Gender Equality, a number of museums and cultural facilities, offices, stores, and restaurants. The design of the project has substituted the closed-off and isolated massiveness of the original group of buildings with an intricate fine-grained fabric, deliberately fragmented and interconnected with its urban context through public spaces, covered connectors, and pedestrian landscapes. Incorporating an ample public art plan, the building opens itself up to the general public with a diverse hybrid program that defies the traditional conceptualizations of government buildings.

The new compound of the Constitutional Court is integrated into the city without denying the weight of the history it houses, neither past nor present. Entirely to the contrary—the site’s design constructs a narrative of place by intertwining memories of tragedy and discrimination with hope, projecting a shift in social, civic, and political paradigm onward into the future.

## 5. PUBLIC SPACE AS DEMOCRATIC SPACE

In the intervention strategy for the Constitutional Court of South Africa, public space, its continuity, and openness played a central role. Within our own context in Puerto Rico, recent events have challenged the idea regarding how public space actually is. If public space is the place of convergence for the citizenry, it must be democratic space par excellence—that of daily social interaction and exchange both in celebrations as well as in protests.

Extending it to the streets, sidewalks, parks, plazas, and gardens, public space cannot yield to the privatizing impulse and neoliberal concepts of administration of the public by the private sector. Much less can the public sector give up its responsibility to manage public assets.

Nevertheless, public space cannot revitalize a city on its own. Interconnection, diverse planning, and joint action on projects is required, whether they be cultural in nature such as the Matadero in Madrid or civic, as is the case with the Constitutional Court in Johannesburg. The conjunction of public space with mobility systems is paramount to creating a vital and accessible city. The great challenge lies in how to insert public space infrastructure into cities capable of linking isolated interventions as part of a broad-scale urban fields and networks.

The five points discussed here represent a list of topics of action for architecture in the 21st century. They suggest that the great challenge still lies in the construction of the everyday environment where architecture and public space serve as settings for an urban culture. They also suggest that buildings and spaces are part and product of cultural processes that overlap through time. The construction of the everyday brings people to the forefront as the subject and purpose of architecture, both in their individual term as citizens, as well as in their collective term as citizenry. The city does not exist without the experience and presence of its people. In the words of Catalanian Jordi Borja, “the city is simultaneously personal living and collective action.” For Borja, the city is a metaphor of democracy, in which the public space, as the seat of the everyday, plays a central role. It is through our experience of being residents of the city that we construct our collective memory. Time, change, transformation, the role of type and the narrative of place as experience all contribute toward building our sense of place.

Above all, the city as a metaphor of democracy invites us to reflect on the possibility of a future in which public spaces are seen as places of inclusion and diversity, where the city is made and citizenship is forged; places for varied, rich, intense interaction where meaning and quality are given to daily life.

## P

### REUSING THE CITY, OCCUPYING URBAN SKELETONS.

**Santiago Cirugeda**

Numerous buildings, both public and private, remain empty and unused in Spain, especially in our inner cities. The uses that gave them meaning, now obsolete, or urban processes of very different problems brought about the causes of



their abandonment. This situation has been accompanied by late or non-existent policies proposing the incorporation of new uses and the instant use that these buildings could generate.

The growing interest that exists in different European projects in reusing these urban elements, due to their suitability for incorporating temporary (Catalyst program) or definitive uses, compels us to tap into the functional and symbolic capacity of the thousands of square meters of the array of structures coexisting among us. Adapting them opens the doors to hybrid architectural typologies, as well as easily implemented economic and social processes, which oftentimes become catalysts and activators of the rehabilitation of neighborhoods where they are located. All of this without the need for greater territorial consumption.

Also spread throughout the country, we have hundreds of examples of buildings and infrastructures that were never finished due to being burdened by zoning violations, speculative processes, or unknown causes. The location of these urban skeletons is essential for evaluating their environmental impact, and to be able, by way of the self-organized citizenry, to request measures that return the territory to its original state, given that on many occasions no one wants to take on the responsibility of demolishing these buildings or ghost towns.

We should find a way to create a local list of empty buildings and urban skeletons, which would subsequently be used to put together a guide describing the empty buildings, along with their location, floors and elevations, constructed surface, and the uses for which they were intended. The list should contemplate:

Unfinished works through urban planning proceedings (urban skeletons)

Abandoned facility structures (public and private)

Unused or unfinished public infrastructures

Empty housing, standby housing, housing in a state of ruin, etc.

In order to articulate all the contradictory or erroneous records and information that administrations boast about, we should create consensus among the heap of public entities responsible for this informational void: the National Statistics Institute (and those of the Autonomous Communities), the Ministries of Development and Housing, Urban Planning Offices, Property Registries, etc.

What I have been left with from these past 13 years of work, nearly on my own, affected and absorbed by urban interests and needs, of a social nature, is setting up situations in which citizens' innate right to use the city they live in is claimed. The question: What should a group of citizens do

or contribute in order to attain the right to use an obsolete building or plot of land that is public property? We already know—a developer...

That is when the concept of occupying arises.

Lately I hear the term "occupy" at every architectural and artistic forums I attend. Oddly enough, most people who use that word as part of a project strategy only do so in terms of its spatial qualities, and never as a quest to reuse constructed elements, of bringing ailing urban fabrics back to life, perhaps, because they think the natural terrain surrounding cities is limited.

While we attempt to encourage or obligate administrations to the "appropriate compliance" of the legal supports, we occupy and reuse these elements built out of cement and steel. Organized as groups or collectives, we occupy streets, plazas, facades, rooftops, decks, trees, buildings, and lots with a series of diverse "chickens," as I like to call them.

In parallel, let's remember that Spain is at the tail-end of European countries in the reuse and recycling of construction waste and materials, despite the importance and development of the sector over the past fifteen years.

The Aula Abierta experience that we performed in Granada ([www.recetasurbanas.net](http://www.recetasurbanas.net)) marks a way of demonstrating that even an architecture that was designed to be static can perform in a dynamic manner and transform itself into another entirely flexible building. One way of transforming an obsolete public property about to be demolished into another (im)moveable property whose citizen-based management and contributions convert it into a self-managed public facility that breaks from codified urban planning, as a result of an attitude held by people who reinvent the situations surrounding us, is through the creation of applicable refuse.

Currently this building has been installed in the artistic space La Carpa. Espacio Artístico - La Carpa, which serves as the main office of the Varuma Teatro company and the future Escuela Superior de Circo de Andalucía, is an ambitious project with stable scheduling according to the technical needs in order to develop the disciplines they work with and research. A storage space for technical and staging material. A training and meeting place. It is most definitely a different nook that until today did not exist in Andalusia which seeks to be a gateway of reference to the Andalusian artistic world. With 6 months of life and no public support, it is set up as a self-built and self-managed project.

On the grounds where it is located, La Carpa socio-cultural space, different self-constructed structures and installations appear from the concession, recycling, or re-use of other elements



that came from previous experiences, such as the tarps, pergolas, spider office, refrigerator truck, portable workshop, etc...

There is Aula Abierta ["Open Classroom"], which was first built in Granada in 2004 by a group of students out of materials salvaged from the dismantling of another building set to be demolished. It was born out of the need to obtain a physical and mental space for work and urban reflection.

The appearance in an outlying neighborhood as well as the concession of different collectives, positions it with a clear will to decentralize culture and support locations abandoned by public management.

Aula Abierta is divided into three spaces:

- Polyvalent lecture hall
- Sewing workshop
- Outside aerial dance rehearsal space with an aerial silk, lyre, and trapeze thanks to a portico measuring 4½ meters wide by 7 meters high.

The sewing workshop is geared toward costume production for the La Carpa Artistic Space, which holds circus, dance, and flamenco shows. The polyvalent lecture hall will be open to collectives. The outside space is devoted, by schedule, to collectives and individuals who wish to practice or rehearse for circus arts as well as classes given by La Carpa Artistic Space. Varuma, Recetas Urbanas, La Jarapa, La Matraca, El cuarteto Maravilla, Straddle3, Porompomperas, Coceptuarte, etc... are some of the collectives that have participated in the mounting of the different spaces.

#### Basic Characteristics

Ground floor - 57 m2

Second floor - 24 m2

Campus - 2,250 m2

Another proposal for salvaging and reusing public property assets is that of relocating fourteen 42m2 housing units, built using prefabricated modules, that have been used as provisional shelter, where the population inhabiting them has been accommodated in subsidized housing, thereby leaving the housing modules empty. This unused asset is transferred by the Municipal Urban Rehabilitation Society of the Zaragoza City Council.

On March 1, 2007, a mailing from [sc@recetasurbanas.net](mailto:sc@recetasurbanas.net) was sent out providing different cultural and social collectives and associations with the possibility of awarding them with one or two housing units (3 containers per unit) as a residential headquarters and work center.

Transporting, installing, and managing them is run by the groups that are responsible for them,

while coordinating and modifying (tuning) them is performed in collaboration with recetas urbanas (urban recipes).

All due occupation and installation licenses are requested, whether on public or private lands or real estate. The technical justifications or installation projects will be signed by the studio, which will put up its professional insurance to take civil liability for them.

With this project currently underway, and with 13 structures already built, we obtained management, financing, re-use, and recycling protocols, lot and building occupation mechanisms, as well as ways of working as collectives, associations, and cooperatives, which serve as examples and incentives for groups of citizens that want to collectively engage in the cultural and social management of their city.

Especially among the projects carried out using containers, the Benicassim project has been the project that has had the most interaction with other agents, including politicians. Proyectalab is a multidisciplinary space geared toward housing different cultural activities such as courses, workshops, exhibits, conferences, and meetings, that stems from the will to convert it into a headquarters available for those people or collectives that do not have the necessary resources.

Initiated in 2011 by Asociación Proyecta and built by Recetas Urbanas in collaboration with Rehasa Estructuras, Lucas Construcción, and the assistance of several collectives (straddle13, New Now, Todo por la Praxis, Conceptuarte, Aoskuras), this space initially promoted by the Benicàssim City Council is based on the reuse of 6 living modules from Zaragoza belonging to the Camiones, Contadores & Colectivos project. The current city council has kept it closed for the past year for partisan reasons.

The project has involved the rehabilitation and improvement of a former Renfe warehouse to which containers have been attached to form a prosthesis that tailors the structure for new uses. Through this process of collective participatory construction and recycling of spaces and materials, a new installation has been attained in a greatly rapid and inexpensive manner.

Equipped with different classrooms, workshops, meeting rooms, artist residences, and warehouses, this nearly 400m2 space houses the activities of both Nau de les Arts during the summer and Proyectalab in the summer by way of a shared management model which thereby makes it possible to take advantage of one same infrastructure for multiple uses.