TEMPORARY PLACE OF ASSEMBLY: CERTIFICATE OF OPERATION

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This title is borrowed from the New York City Department of Building's Temporary Place of Assembly Certificate of Operation (TPA) authorization 'for temporary premises' where members of the public gather for religious, recreational, educational, political or social purposes, or to consume food or drink. The Certificate of Operation exists as a shorter-lived relative of the Certificate of Occupancy, granted at the completion of building construction.

While the architect's legal and professional status in the Temporary Place of Assembly (TPA) permit in practice primarily concerns questions of life safety via fire egress and sanitation, the criteria used to define assembly suggest a sense of scale in time and space, united through action - number of people (more than 200, when outdoors), length of time (less than 30 days), and the presence of a collective act (religious, recreational, educational, political or social). How is 'place' assembled or made through this time duration, through a shared purpose in otherwise undetermined environments?

Of interest here is the recognition that the simple gathering of people is a space making enterprise, attributed to the field of architecture and professional judgement of architects. This paper explores how temporary assemblies can both re-appropriate a space, and also fundamentally re-cast that space in the collective imagination, and that such re-casting can ultimately influence the transformation of spaces and their relationships to the urban environment.

As such, space 'made' the temporary assembly of people in the city is an architectural practice that can be used to challenge and contradict typical and seemingly concretized spatial boundaries and forms of isolation that exist in the city. Specifically, this paper explores design tactics for temporary assemblies to re-engage sites of industrial operation within the everyday life of the city.

Urbanists and architects have analyzed the political and social dimensions of temporary gathering and events as an everyday phenomenon in the urban environment. Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, folklorist and professor of performance studies, writes of events such as parades in Everyday Urbanism, saying that they represent "the epitome of one form of the urban vernacular - namely, the success of enormous numbers of strangers in producing an improvised ensemble performance on the basis of tacit understanding in a space not designated for the purpose. Ephemeral as they may seem, events like the Easter Parade or the St.Patrick's Day Parade, which dates to the mid-eighteenth century, have outlasted many buildings in the city.…These activities are themselves architectural in the sense that performance (broadly conceived) gives form to space. This is space constituted in performance." (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1999, 20)

Margaret Crawford suggests that a value of events like garage sales, temporary markets, and protests is to reconstitute social relations away from the rigid hegemony implied by the fixity of architecture, allowing for and promoting new urban freedoms, stating that, "juxtapositions, combinations, and collisions of people, places and activities…create a new condition of social fluidity that begins to break down the separate, specialized, and hierarchical structures of everyday life." (Crawford 1999, 34)

Crawford continues, "Specifically constituted counter-publics organized around a site or activity create what anthropologist James Holston calls "spaces of insurgent citizenship". (Crawford 1999, 35)

While Vevents and assemblies of people themselves create space, form and traditions that structure the urban environment and such events play a continual role in reformulating political and social space of the city, then it is necessary to consider the relationship between the design of the built environment and the event.

Kirschenblatt-Gimblett identifies the seeming contradiction between the self-organized and spontaneous, independent nature of events in the city, and the inherent quality of spaces to allow or disallow this potential, arguing that, "these events indicate the effectiveness with which people, even complete strangers, can act in concert, a cohesiveness that cannot be legislated or designed, though certainly some designs are inimical to such activity while others are conducive to it." (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1999, 20)

This statement about the complexly independent yet interwoven nature of architectural design and the event echoes Bernard Tschumi's earlier Manhattan Transcripts, exploring the interrelation of objects, movements, events, which he describes as three levels of

reality, stating, “It is the Transcripts’ contention that only the striking relationship between the three levels makes for architectural experience. So entangled are these levels with one another that at any moment they are perfectly interchangeable. Thus the Transcripts never attempt to transcend contradictions between, object, man and event in order to bring them to a new synthesis; on the contrary, they aim to maintain these contradictions in a dynamic manner, in a new reciprocity and conflict.” (Tschumi 1981, 9)

‘Reciprocity and conflict’ reinforces the point by Kirschenblatt-Gimblett that events operate with an independent self-propelled structure while shaped and made possible by the forms and frameworks of the built environment. The following examples focus on the form and frameworks of industrial and infrastructural spaces specifically, and related design tactics for making temporary places by staging events that create new forms of access into those territories.

Industrial infrastructures and their labor communities are most commonly isolated and made remote from many aspects of urban life by conventional regulatory and physical frameworks, such as use-based zoning, security and access regulations, and physical barriers such as fencing for security or privacy. From these measures, industrial infrastructure and the city have developed on divergent paths such that industrial activity is commonly perceived as harmful to the city, and the constraints of the city and urban development are seen as a hindrance to industry.

Alternatives to these spatial practices of isolation may be developed through temporary design tactics that mine the particularities of industrial infrastructure landscapes to, in Tschumi’s words, aim to ‘maintain these contradictions in a dynamic manner’ in order to create new ‘reciprocity and conflict.’ The following design tactics do not describe fixed architectures, but temporary assemblies of elements, parts, bodies and materials- interventions that make new or shared forms of habitation possible.

LARGE SCALE EMPTINESS

Industrial infrastructure sites tend to be large, exceeding the size of typical parcels in the city. Industrial landscapes like marine docks, and trucking or rail terminals are also built to allow for spatial adaptation as goods temporally flow through the environment, and some tend to operate with specific seasonal demands that create busy and dormant seasons - salt docks are busy in the winter in cold climates for road de-icing-similarly home heating oil terminals are busy only in cold seasons – gravel and sand yards are busy during the construction season – and many such terminals and yards shut down on weekends or evenings. Such predictable patterns of emptiness allow for temporary re-inhabitation of vast territories in the city and can allow for scales of events and installations that are not afforded elsewhere. The big, empty and robust character of these landscapes

Figure 1: Artist Alien Moon Partnership performance at Lumen on salt dock Staten Island, NYC, 2012.

Figure 2: Salt ship unloading in Chelsea, Massachusetts, 2012
Atlantic Salt Maritime Festival on salt dock, Staten Island, NYC, 2009.

is an open and liberating invitation to imagine even dramatic re-organization of the landscape through temporary assemblies.

Festivals held on salt docks in Boston Harbor and New York Harbor are able to accommodate thousands of people across multiple acres of seasonally opened waterfront surface. The robust infrastructure of these sites, which typically support massive docking vessels, is capable of supporting equally robust community uses not allowed elsewhere, such as helicopters, pyro-technics and ships-docking.

Lighting is an often vital element to support assembly in such big and empty sites. It is a medium that is uniquely capable, with relatively minimal and non-intrusive means, of re-characterizing areas at the scale of such operations.

INFRASTRUCTURAL CAPACITY

Industrial infrastructure sites have specific operational logistics, capacities and skill-sets that are not available elsewhere in the city. Such capacities allow the efficient transfer of material or large objects; to lift, dig, bury, push and crush things; and to receive or dock large vehicles or vessels. Such unique infrastructural capacities with capable laborers are a resource that can be translated to support new forms of urban and community engagement that breaks down the separating structures and hierarchies that frame everyday life, wherein curators of performance art work alongside loader operators.

At salt docks in Staten Island New York, and Chelsea Massachusetts, dock equipment and laborers quickly build salt landscapes that serve as scaffolds to support specific events. The dock workers, who are skilled at moving material and sculpting piles, construct and deconstruct such landscapes in a matter of hours. Simple salt piles are built throughout the Lumen video and performance art festival in Staten Island (in collaboration with Staten Island Arts) to serve as a malleable framework for artists to use in various ways. Artists climb, dig, perch, disperse and project onto the salt. The unique capacity of the infrastructure adds the new dimension of landscape malleability through the temporary assembly.

NEW NETWORKS

Beyond the embedded capacities of industrial infrastructural sites themselves, such facilities have inherently rich and diverse networks of resources, materials, and labor intrinsic to their operations (See right- 'Partial List of Triggered Activities'). These material, resource, and personnel networks uniquely contribute to temporary assemblies in the industrial environment.

Ubiquitous port elements like shipping containers, tug boats, helicopters are made available to shape assemblies on salt docks in Staten Island New York and Chelsea Massachusetts. Shipping containers are bartered for through exchange of services between

docks, and are used as temporary galleries to house projections, sound installations, or simply serve as surfaces/volumes in the landscape. The US Coast that provides security services to the dock provides exhilarating entertainment to an assembled public.

OPERATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Infrastructural sites have embedded spatial parameters created by the operations and maintenance of the infrastructure itself. For example, such requirements as the ability to access ship lines on a dock create driving lanes for vehicles through cargo laydown areas, or the ability to conduct aerial inspections of gas/oil pipelines through grasslands and woodlands creates mowing and felling plans that preserve sight from helicopters to the utility lines. Such operations and maintenance regimes become imprinted physically and spatially in the landscape. In the interim, such operational spaces can be reinterpreted for other uses.

In the case of elevated highway viaducts, the structure requires regular maintenance and inspections from the ground. This maintenance regiment effectively circumscribes the perimeter of a machine access zone wherein vacuum trucks and man-lifts are brought in under the highway to undertake their work. On the ground, these access routes create open easement areas that on-one-hand necessitate a clear open path, free of obstructions, and on the other hand are accessed for a matter of only a few hours each month. This predominance of dis-use allows temporary assemblies to re-occupy the intermittently used space and creates unique spatial frameworks to shape the activities of the space. In the case of the Underground project under I-93 in Boston, a series of man-lift access plates built into the under highway landscape are sized, positioned, surfaced, striped and opened to support flexible events and temporary recreational uses.

REGULATORY CODES

[Just as the spatial envelope of maintenance regimes can be calibrated to support temporary assemblies, the regulatory codes that order such infrastructural landscapes can be tuned to facilitate and encourage temporary assemblies in gaps in space and time of industrial operation. Such legislative frameworks are manifest in laws, security regulations, zoning codes, and use agreements. In conventional practices that seek to differentiate and clarify the boundaries between uses, spaces, and peoples (public vs. employees for example) such documents tend to divide isolate and preclude the ability for shared use of landscapes. To open opportunities for shared inhabitation, these documents must be critiqued and implanted with new coding, which just as the physical environment, must be nuanced to capitalize on the particularities of the infrastructural environment.

At a salt dock in Chelsea Massachusetts, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the city and a private salt company was written to outline an annual cycle of shared use between cold season salt storage and warm season public access and recreation. Wherein typical city zoning as well as state industrial waterfront

Partial List of Triggered Activities.

The Polish Ocean Lines vessel America arrives in Boston Harbor.
"Port of Boston Economic Development Plan." Section 5.7.4

1. **Steamship Agent** prepares paperwork for arrival of vessel.
2. **Freight forwarder/custom house broker** prepares cargo paperwork.
3. **Port Authority** arranges export cargo on the pier for fast loading.
4. **US Coast Guard** undertakes ship inspections
5. **Steamship company** maps out vessel cargo storage.
6. **Longshore gangs** are hired and alerted to vessel arrival.
7. **Boston Pilot** boards vessel at pilot station.
8. One to **four tugs** guide ship into the main shipping channel .
9. **Line-handlers** tie up the vessel at the pier.
10. Terminal or **water truck** provides water to the vessel.
11. **U.S. Customs** examines ships manifest.
12. **Sewage pump-out service** is arranged.
13. Vessel **garbage hauler** arrives.
14. **Crew members** may leave the ship and **patronize on-shore establishments**.
15. Replacement crew member arrives at **nearby airport**, takes **taxis** to pier.
16. **Captain** arranges for minor **equipment repair**.
17. **Nearby Machine shop** repairs broken equipment.
18. **Trucker hired** to deliver samples to **U.S. Customs inspection station**.
19. **Agen**t sends crew members to **local doctors** for routine services.
20. **Truck drivers** arrive to pick up cargo
21. **Chassis lease company** arranges services.
22. **Chassis shop** repairs chassis.
23. **Shippers** receive cargo at **warehouse** door and arrange for unloading.
24. **Intermodal yard** receives container, unloads truck, and places it on a train.
25. **Fuel barge** pulls up alongside vessel and fuels it.
26. **Chandler** delivers food and supplies to vessel.
27. Dented ship hold inspected by **independent marine surveyor,** and sent for repair.
28. **Ship repair firm** does minor steelwork to vessel.
29. Paperwork delivered by **ship's agent**.
30. Paperwork delivered by **freight forwarder/custom house broker**.
31. **Water and electrical service** lines detached from vessel.
32. **Pilot** boards.
33. **Line handlers** untie ship.
34. **Tugs** assist ship off of pier.
35. **Pilot** launch driven to vessel by **pilot boat operator**.
36. **Pilot** leaves vessel.
37. **Coast Guard** monitors vessels departure.

Figure 3: Partial list of triggered activities.

policy specifically calls for the separation (in separate zoning districts) and isolation (through setbacks and perimeter fencing) of the industrial landscape from other more residential, recreational or community based uses, the MOA reflects the seasonal character of the dock operations by stipulating specific dates that the site switches between storing approximately 50,000 tons of salt and opening for hardscape public recreation and event use. A second document, a Request for Proposals (RFP) released by the MassDOT seeking land-lease agreements with possible private tenants for the under-highway landscape of the I-93 viaduct in Boston, not only requests bid proposals and specifies maintenance requirements, but also requests applicants to communicate their willingness and detail the degree of support that they would be able to offer for events in the infrastructural landscape.

Temporary assembly is a spatial practice with unique capacity and character to challenge conventional means and methods of defining and therefore partitioning space in the city. Ultimately, such challenges to inherent boundaries may permanently recast the perceptions of such environments and shift their physical form, therefore creating new urban programs and hybrid typologies. As a collective, the tactics presented here aim to identify ways that particularities of infrastructural space and regulations in particular can be translated through design, with a desire to dissolve boundaries that have been developed between the industrial operations and everyday life of the city.

Figure 4: Designed maintenance landscape under the I-93 viaduct, Boston, 2017, photo by Landing Studio.

ENDNOTES

1. Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, *Everyday Urbanism* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1999), 20.
2. Margaret Crawford, John Leighton Chase, John Kalinski, *Everyday Urbanism* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1999), 34.
3. Margaret Crawford, John Leighton Chase, John Kalinski, *Everyday Urbanism* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1999), 35.
4. Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, *Everyday Urbanism* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1999), 20.
5. Bernard Tschumi, *The Manhattan Transcripts* (Massachusetts: Wiley Press, 1981), 9.