



Land Seizure

Image 8
Private space, public service? A site once occupied by a tobacco factory remains private, but now with 24-hour public access. Does legal ownership matter?

We were asked to draw a map focusing on the issue of land seizure. This begged the question: Who is seizing what? The privatisation of land and services (even though temporary, but often extended, leases) is something which causes unease in the UK, mainly due to questions over accountability and the profit motive. For this mapping exercise, we embarked on a series of closely examined walks accompanied with maps of Bristol from a century ago. It became clear that land seizure goes both ways: public to private; private to public. Castle Park was once the city's commercial centre, defined by public highways and privately-owned buildings. The Harbourside of Canon's Marsh was once the site of railyards and industry. Asda remains in the private realm, but more open and accessible than the tobacco factory which once occupied the site. Our map highlights defined areas of central Bristol and draws in the street pattern of 1910, illustrating not only physical change but the sense of access and ownership which accompanies these spaces. The map is also a surface on which to record questions which raised themselves

during the walks. How do you know when you're in public or private space? Does it matter? How many of our essential services (food, drink, petrol, internet) are obtained from the private sector? How much access is there to public spaces such as hospitals, schools, prisons and City Hall? Who, really, owns public space? Private space (such as shopping malls) is often criticised for being 'controlled', but public space is subject to rules – parking restrictions, alcohol use, policing etc... who makes the rules and why? How does the difference between legal ownership and a sense of belonging map itself against the spaces of the city?

David Littlefield and Mike Devereux, June 2014

LAND SEIZURE

Street Carnival

Image 3
St Paul's Carnival Parade, 02.07.2011

Image 5
Bellevue Street – Party shared supper, 26.06.2014

The carnival map attempts to capture the key locations of Bristol's street parties and the St Paul's carnival. The locations of the street parties are recorded by the Bristol City Council, and the location of the stages for the St Paul's carnival are mapped onto the map of the city. This information is overlaid with language from twitter feeds about the events.

These carnivalesque events are celebrated as a critical contrast to the conformity of the everyday. As entirely playful events they seem to satirise the seriousness, utility and even productivity of everyday life. The Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin described the carnival as a "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order [which] marks the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions." This temporary liberation is evident in both street parties and the carnival. In the street parties the roads are closed to cars and the pedestrians take priority. Children are allowed to play out, on their own and out late. Doors are left open and food and drinks

are shared. The whole community is included, it is free to attend, with opportunities to dance together, eat together, sing together and perform together. The St Paul's carnival has similar qualities. Streets are subverted to become party spaces, places to dance, to eat, to drink, to get high, even to crash out. The informal market reigns supreme – private houses become £1 a go public toilets, street food stalls and market stalls, whereas the furniture of the house is often relocated onto the street. Houses are turned inside out; private spaces become public and vice versa. The events layer a colourful, humanising, temporary element over the commercial, formal and functional elements of the city.

Rachel Sara, June 2014

STREET CARNIVAL

Urban Explorers

Image 1
Bristol Ice Rink, May 2013, a real sense of achievement getting in here because it took us a while to figure out. All the lights were on and everything left in place, all the skates, ice hockey sticks as well. Very surreal feeling as well because I went a few times when I was younger. Unfortunately it's all been demolished now to make way for student accommodation.

Image 2
Froongate House, April 2014, went for the views of Bristol during sunset. A little scary at first but you get used to it quickly. We all really enjoyed the view from this vantage point.

Image 4
Rex cinema, November 2013, unfortunately a little bit stripped when we finally made it in, probably due to construction workers having been on site for a few weeks prior. Despite this it was still an incredible place to see, the decor was stunning, there were still cigarette butts in the ash trays in the aisles (yes, ash trays!)

Image 6
Former Bristol Magistrates Courts, visited many times starting in February 2013, an absolutely wonderful place, huge inside and like a maze. It was amazing to see all the courts intact, all dusty and forlorn looking. Even found a room full of old books dating back to the 19th Century! The roof on this building was nice too, spent many evenings chilling out up there. This is the building where I have seen a fox several times which I believe lived in the basement as I saw it wander in and out a few times whilst I was sat on the edge of the rooftop looking down.

Image 7
Malago Storm Water Interceptor, October 2013. Nicknamed Dreadnaught this storm drain is a large drain/culvert constructed in order to prevent flooding in southern Bristol as it used to be prone to flooding. The main tunnel is over 2 miles long and takes the flow of the river Malago and its tributaries into the river Avon. This was the first storm drain I have ever done and I have to say it was incredible very very daunting, walking into pitch black with nothing but a torch and a headlamp for light. A few minutes in and you can't see light in either direction. Rather dangerous, but we did observe the weather and the tide times so we were OK. Once at the other end the infall is a beautiful concrete construction with water cascading over it. We have seen a few eels in the stream under our torch light as well.

In simple terms, urban exploration (also known as urban exploring, UE, Urbex) is all about accessing locations that are off limits to the general public. When people traverse their cities they often do so without knowing that there are vast, forgotten areas of the urban landscape begging to be rediscovered. Most times these lie behind doors, fences or under our feet and are usually closed off to the public because they are deemed 'unsafe'. Unfortunately, in this modern age, health and safety regulations censor and govern our lives through blind compliance and fear. When I go to these closed off places I prefer to accept personal responsibility for my own actions. I think urban exploration is really a combination of seeing the unseen, going where people tell us we are not allowed to, allowing us chances to take photos that are otherwise impossible and quite often overcoming challenges when it comes to accessing these fenced off places. This combination of factors makes this probably my favourite hobby. I have had many truly memorable experiences whilst exploring these places. Many that I don't think I'll ever forget.

Matt Marks, June 2014

URBAN EXPLORERS

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