

Title:

Adaptable DIY urban spaces and social capital: Investigating the reciprocity of spatial and social affordances

Abstract:

In recent decades, adaptable do-it-yourself (DIY) urban spaces have proliferated in many cities across the world. Such spaces have become solutions to local problematic, misused or underutilised spaces. Citizens have taken power into their own hands, with the aim of developing the places with a better purpose, for and by themselves. The research defines adaptable DIY urban spaces as 'citizen-led interventions activating open urban spaces for social life.' Examples of such spaces include Oak Cliff Build a Better Block intervention in Dallas, USA, el Campo de Cebada in Madrid, Spain, and Ebenezer Gate in Bristol, UK. There are a number of claims in the literature (although not rigorously evidenced), that adaptable DIY urban spaces may contribute to the development of social capital in the neighbourhoods close by. However, these spaces can be controversial too – as they are unregulated and may not be desirable for everyone.

The research examines whether, and to what extent, adaptable DIY urban spaces promote or hinder social capital; and uses spatial and social affordances to examine the relationship(s) of adaptable DIY urban spaces to social capital. There are eight domains of social capital developed by Forrest and Kearns (2001): empowerment, participation, associational activity and common purpose, supporting networks and reciprocity, collective norms and values, trust, safety, and belonging. These social capital indicators are used in the research to study spatial interactions, i.e. the flow of people, objects and materials.

The presentation focuses on developing a methodology that maps out afforded socio-spatial relationships within adaptable DIY urban spaces. Alongside observations and interviews, the focus is on developing sketching as an analytical technique. Analytical sketching techniques include thirty-second sketching sequences, socio-spatial analytical plans, sections and diagrams, and documentary sketching. The sketches are piloted and further developed to provide a framework for socio-spatial analysis to examine the connections between how adaptable DIY urban spaces are used and developed (processes), their features and qualities (forms), and their relationship with the elements of social capital described above.

Forrest, R. and Kearns, A. (2001) Social Cohesion, Social Capital and the Neighbourhood. *Urban Studies*. 38(12), pp.2125-2143.

Keywords:

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affordance  
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social capital

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