

Long-Term Strategies Based on Temporary Interventions.

Helena Casanova &
Jesús Hernández

LONG-TERM STRATEGIES BASED ON TEMPORARY INTERVENTIONS

Posted on September 15, 2016 by urbanNext



Categories: [Essay](#), [Helena Casanova](#), [High Density](#), [Jesús Hernández](#), [Middle Density](#), [Public Space Acupuncture](#), [Territory and mobility](#)

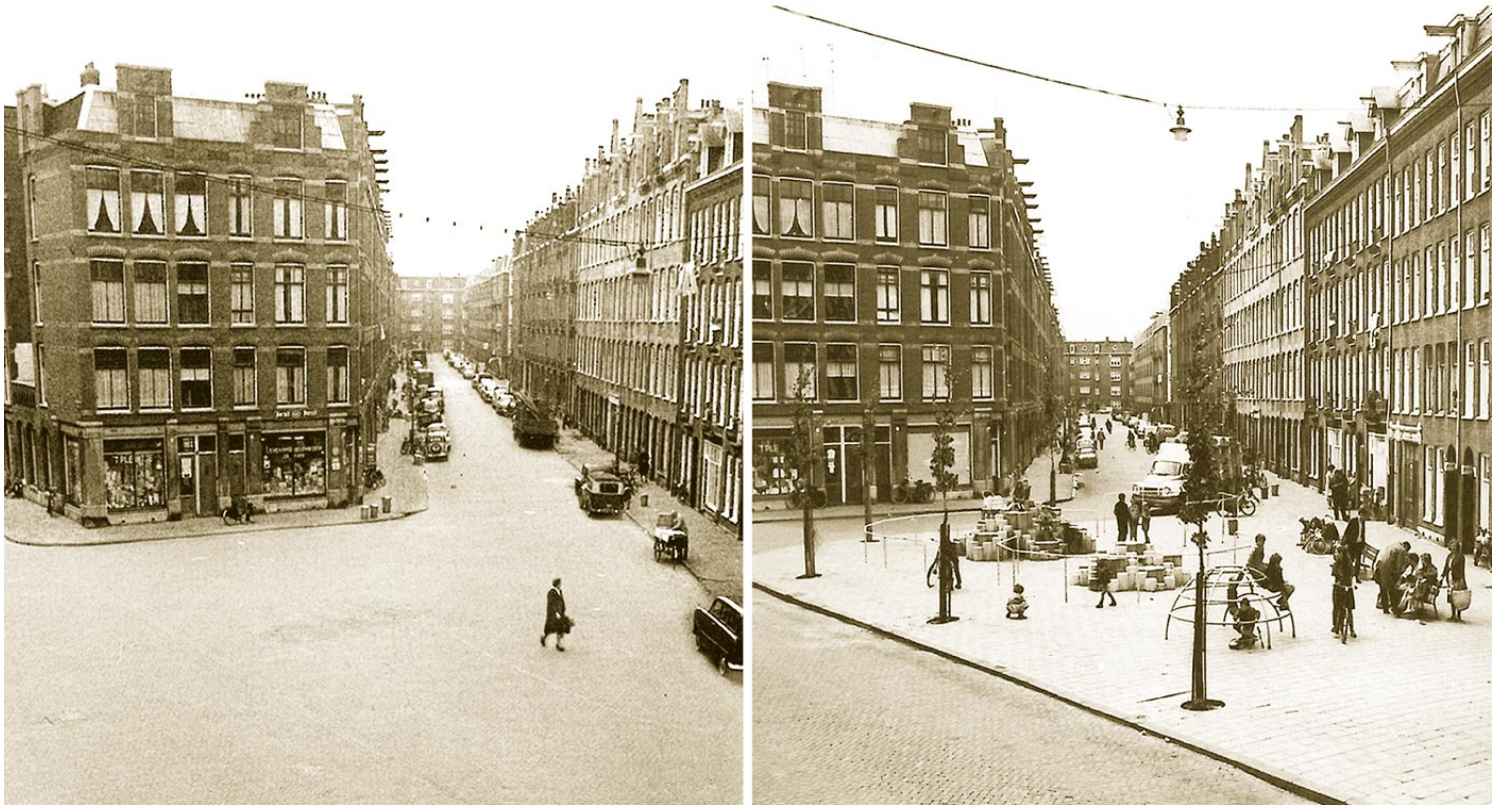
Tags: [Active Public Spaces](#), [Amsterdam](#), [Citizen interaction](#), [Essay](#), [Facilities](#), [Long-term Strategies](#), [Public engagement](#), [Public Space](#), [Public space role](#), [Spatial Ideologies](#), [Temporary appropriation](#), [Temporary Interventions](#), [The Netherlands](#), [Urban conditions](#)

urbanNext Lexicon

Long-Term Strategies Based on Temporary Interventions

<https://urbannext.net/long-term-strategies-based-temporary-interventions/>

"You have to change to stay the same" is a well-known quote by the artist Willem De Kooning, which he frequently used to describe the challenge that contemporary artists face in maintaining their art alive over time. Maintaining public space constantly alive also requires the reflexes De Kooning referred to, and it implies a constant questioning of what exists in order to modify it and adapt it to an ever-changing context. This way of understanding public space, not as a unique entity that is static over time, but as a sequence of temporary interventions that are always changing to adapt to the reality in every moment, demands an extra effort that can only be effective and feasible if it is channeled through a calculated strategy.



Amsterdam. Temporary intervention by Aldo Van Eyck in a vacant lot, part of a long-term strategy developed between 1947 and 1978.

Conventionally, the design of public space elements such as streets, boulevards and squares has a limited lifespan, since the natural deterioration of the materials used, damages resulting from

ISSN : 2575-5374

accidents and acts of vandalism, or a decrease in use due to changes in the surroundings at some point make their partial renovation, and in many cases their complete transformation, a necessity. In light of this fact, new alternative interventions in public space take into account the estimated lifespan of the work to a greater extent, adjusting design and materials to achieve a more efficient and sustainable product. At the same time, the careful synchronization of an adequate program of activities with the lifespan of the intervention helps to promote maximum use of the public space during that period.

The need to maintain and renew public space is not understood in this case as a tedious and costly burden to be combated by creating more durable designs, but rather as an opportunity for keeping public space up to date. If parts of public space have to be subject to continuous renewal, strategies that are based on short-term interventions that overlap over time can be a solution for breathing new energy into urban life. Designing with the idea of temporariness does not just mean designing with flexibility, it can also imply designing with sustainability in the precise choice involving the durability of the materials according to the programmed lifespan of the intervention.

A well-known example of a long-term strategy based on temporary interventions realized in public space was the one developed by Aldo van Eyck between 1947 and 1978 which consisted of creating more than 700 interventions that transformed the many vacant lots and unused small interstitial spaces in Amsterdam's public space into children's playgrounds. The strategy provided a response to the growing need for children's play areas, while also fostering the use of public space and citizen interaction. For more than thirty years, temporary interventions were created and subsequently demolished as other new interventions were being built in other places. Each intervention took on a more or less temporary nature, while the overall strategy had a long-term duration that spanned several decades.

At present, one of the challenges for contemporary urban design is envisioning a living city over the long term, at a time when society, the economy and citizens' needs are changing very rapidly, especially given the fact that public space has traditionally been managed by public bodies that centralize the decision-making power with respect to its design, maintenance and renewal. This centralization means that in many cases urban public space is understood as a single project directed by municipal specialists who are concerned, above all, with controlling costs and management efficiency. This management efficiency often translates into a tendency to unify the design of public space based on a pre-selected catalog of urban furniture and design solutions that clash head on with the existing urban reality, which tends to be characterized by substantial physical

and social diversity, subjected to rapid transformation.

Assuming that it is more effective from the standpoint of municipal management to maintain certain uniformity in the conception of urban public space, there is a growing interest in many cities in developing parallel or complementary strategies that act temporarily on specific points within the network of public space. These urban acupuncture strategies are highly flexible and dynamic and are sometimes coordinated by independent teams or groups working in parallel with municipal experts. These teams tend to have a certain amount of autonomy in generating their own strategies, which are made up of coordinated temporary interventions that can be executed quickly and are easy to dismantle or that may be based on a fleet of mobile interventions that can travel to different points in the city to supplement the fluctuating shortages of facilities in each neighborhood. Like in a city with two speeds, these urban acupuncture strategies need a very dynamic team and management system that allows for constant monitoring of urban activity and certain autonomy to allow for making rapid decisions concerning the interventions.

urbanNext Lexicon

Long-Term Strategies Based on Temporary Interventions
<https://urbannext.net/long-term-strategies-based-temporary-interventions/>

ISSN : 2575-5374