



POLITECNICO  
DI TORINO

# Honors thesis

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MASTER'S DEGREE IN  
TERRITORIAL, URBAN, ENVIRONMENTAL AND  
LANDSCAPE PLANNING

*Abstract*

**Public spaces and temporary uses.  
The East End London case study**

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The thesis is focused on the functions and the urban and social dynamics relating to public spaces inside the contemporary city context and examines the temporary uses as a possible bottom-up solution to intervene in neglected and abandoned public space.

Two successful examples of temporary projects in Hackney Wick & Fish Island (East End London) are proposed in order to understand these practices: Frontside Gardens and Hub 67.

The dissertation is a part of the city planning and sociological disciplines; the first part addresses to the existing relationship among contemporary city, public space and the diversity of the community. The contemporary city is analysed as it appears today and for its economic, social and spatial dynamics. There is then the reflection about public space, about the rights it should guarantee and about the factors generating decline in it. Yet public spaces are living a sort of vitality and rebirth phase dues to urban acupuncture projects, like the temporary uses, and to experimentations of bottom-up practices which overcome their decline and take care of the city, moreover encouraging the community involvement in places construction.

The second part of the thesis is oriented towards the temporary uses and the two case studies which allow to comprehend how these projects can be developed in urban everyday life and which values they can produce. The features and the positive outcomes the temporary uses set are followed by the reference to the process of placemaking and by the published academic literature about temporariness. The case studies, developed in the East End London regeneration context and specifically in London 2012 Summer Olympic Games, allow to understand how both the urban fabric of Hackney Wick & Fish Island and its community take advantage from these experiences. The analysis of these temporary experimentations highlights the varied outcomes they produce; among them, for example, there is their ability to deal with the stated population demands, to reactivate and to redevelop vacant and unused spaces with direct and indirect citizen involvement, to promote the recycling of components as well as the creativity, the inclusion, the sustainability and the flexibility of the whole project.

This study aims to think and to make people reflect on the need of defending and taking care of the public space because it represents an essential part of the construction of public realm, in urban life and in the democratic functioning of the city.

The temporary use is highlighted as unconventional, flexible, dynamic tool for urban planning. The temporariness can, in fact, be a suitable solutions to face the contemporary city, public spaces and the complexity of the society; it furthermore allows to deal with the context of economic uncertainty and the difficulty of the usual planning methods by supporting transient strategies that generate new vitality, activities, identities to neglected public spaces and starting the re-appropriation of these spaces by the local community as well as the dialogue with the local authorities and between formal and informal projects. The role of temporary use as a functional strategy becomes important in order to fulfill the right to the city and the natural appropriation of the urban space.

## Keywords

Contemporary city; public spaces; temporary uses; experimentation; bottom-up; urban acupuncture; local community; urban regeneration; places; East End London; creativity; flexibility; appropriation; participation; community involvement; identity.



Picture 1. Panoramic view of Hackney Wick & Fish Island; Frontside Gardens e Hub 67 temporary projects on the right, the Olympic Stadium in the background (source: author's picture, 06/22/2015)

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