



HAL
open science

'Yes We Camp!' Marseille's artistic and participatory urban camp examined through a socio-materiality lens

Alena A. Siarheyeva

► **To cite this version:**

Alena A. Siarheyeva. 'Yes We Camp!' Marseille's artistic and participatory urban camp examined through a socio-materiality lens. Spool, 2016, Landscape metropolis #3, 3 (2), pp.59-82. 10.7480/spool.2016.2.1105 . hal-02094500

HAL Id: hal-02094500

<https://hal.science/hal-02094500v1>

Submitted on 9 Apr 2019

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

‘Yes We Camp!’

Marseille’s artistic and participatory urban camp examined through a socio-materiality lens

Alena Siarheyeva [1,2]

[1] *Yncréa Méditerranée*
Maison de l’Innovation
Toulon, France

[2] *Aix Marseille Univ,*
CNRS LEST
Aix-en-Provence, France

Abstract

The presented paper builds on theoretical language borrowed from post-modern philosophy and humanist geography to investigate particular features of the artistic and participatory “Yes We Camp!” The article emphasizes a mutually reinforcing relationship between static properties of the site – its spatial organization, built environment and selection of materials – and its dynamic characteristics – social interactions, organizational form and the emotional resonance evoked in people. The paper shows that place particularity is symbolically conveyed by the spatial organization and built environment and is collectively lived and felt as a unique atmosphere. Thus, our understanding of particular places cannot be complete without accounting for the complex interactions between their spatial, material, social and human dimensions.

Keywords

particular place, atmosphere, socio-materiality, heterotopia, Yes We Camp!

Introduction

In urban design and landscape architecture practice, designers often overlook the dynamic dimensions of place, tending instead to focus mainly on its static, physical and material characteristics. To contribute to the discussion about how to capture and conceptualize the dynamic particularities of the landscape metropolis, the presented paper will investigate the artistic and participatory 'Yes We Camp!' (YWC). It does so not to deny the importance of the static properties of places, but rather to argue that combining multiple dimensions may bring the conceptualization of particulars to a new level of understanding and favour site transformation practice over more open-ended work design approaches.

YWC was an experimental project, combining ecology and performative architecture, conceived on the occasion of Marseille Provence European Capital of Culture 2013. The project was initiated by Olivier Bedu, architect and creator of the project Cabanon Vertical, and Eric Pringels, designer at Natural Solutions and co-founder of the alternative festival Off Marseille 2013. The main mini-housing modular hexa-structures of the campsite were designed by BC Architect & Studies and Michael Lefeber. During the implementation phase, it was directed by Nicolas Détrie, urban economist. The campsite was built on the banks of Estaque, Marseille Area, between January and April 2013, open to public from May to September 2013 and dismantled in October 2013. It hosted more than 50 cultural events, 11 artists in residence, on average 130 campers per day at high tourist season and up to 800 visitors during cultural events and festivities.

Overall, the project had a strong social dimension. It hosted youths in the process of professional and social (re)integration, and worked closely with local communities to sensitize poor, often migrant, populations to culture. It promoted such values as sharing, convivial atmosphere and mixing of the public. Designed as an ephemeral space, its purpose was to recycle and promote a deserted site, and then ultimately give it back to its inhabitants. The initial ambition of the project founders was to create a 'multifunctional space attractive for various reasons, by their mutual proximity and by their organization on the site enabling a mix of uses and of public' [1]. A particular affective atmosphere consolidated collective action, nurtured the action potential of the volunteers, and gave material expression to the site's symbolic and emotional meaning.

The ambition of this article is to capture and emphasize the socio-material and spatial characteristics of the campsite that have made a particular place out of this spatial product. More specifically, I will analyse the symbolic meaning conveyed by the place, consider emotional affect and other forms of representations cultivated by the volunteers working at the campsite, and observe social practices that emerged at the site, which may be viewed as an enactment of the potential in place. I will attempt to provide a fine-grained analysis of the mutually reinforcing relationship between static and material properties of the site on one hand and the campsite's social dynamics on the other hand. To reach this objective, I will heuristically derive a conceptual framework that will help me to grasp the peculiarities of the site and then apply it to the empirical analysis of the campsite. The relevance to design and architecture practice is in bringing to the forefront new forms of professional practice, mixing traditional designer work with experimental and participatory practices on the site.

The rest of the article is organized as follows: the first section presents a heuristically derived conceptual framework for understanding particular places; the second section describes YWC as a particular place around seven hypotheses derived from the theoretical framework presented in the first section. The attention of the reader will be brought to the specificities of the place, such as being 'another place', social and artistic production occurring there, with a focus on designer practice intertwined with social practice, the campsite's affective atmosphere and its capacity to inspire action. The last section briefly elaborates on the value of the results for urban design, landscape practitioners and scholarly research, and concludes.

Conceptual framework for understanding particulars

In 1974, Lefebvre's 'The production of space' addressed a critique to the one-sided, static conception of space by professionals: "...[the] architect has before him a slice or a piece of space cut from larger wholes, that he takes this portion of space as a 'given' and works on it according to his tastes, technical skills, ideas and preferences." (Ibid.: p. 143). "When compared with the abstract space of the experts, the space of the everyday activities of users is a concrete, which is to say, subjective. ... [i]t has an origin, and that origin is childhood, with its hardships, its achievements and lacks." (Ibid.: p. 145). In assigning importance to situational and social properties of space and to symbolic meanings and codes it conveys, Lefebvre undertakes a careful description of the gap that may exist between the representation of space by professional landscape designers and users' practices in that space. His key argument is that space is produced by social practices; therefore, any structural understanding of space cannot be complete without surrounding societal context (epoch, mode of production, distribution of power). That is, in the design practice, space must not be seen a geometric container; rather, it must be considered as inseparable from lived experience, continuously shaped, 'produced' through social interaction.

While Lefebvre describes the relationship between space and society in general, Foucault focusses on the role of singular, specific places - particular places, called heterotopias (Foucault, 1984). Within a single location, heterotopias may concentrate several incompatible spaces and sites; mirror, designate or invert established relations of a culture or civilization; transgress time by linking several slices in time, accumulating time or being ephemeral, transitory. Heterotopias are at once isolated from the outside world and have open access or access subject to rites, rules or permissions. The role of heterotopias can be in creating "a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned" (ibid.: p. 9) or "a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled" (ibid.: p. 9). Heterotopias are a great reserve of imagination, adventure and dreams, a sort of source of renewal and regeneration for civilizations.

In describing the relationship between spatial, material and social dimensions of space, post-modern philosophy has a strong focus on power relations and established social order. Alternatively, contributions in humanist geography on affective atmospheres bring to the forefront the emotional component of the space-society relationship. Atmospheres emanate from the material and structural elements of space; belong to physical and/or aesthetic object; and at the same time to the perceiving subject (Anderson, 2009; Böhme, 2006, 1993). Places, buildings, sites are atmospheric, that is, animated by specific affective qualities, resonances or moods (Anderson, 2009). They possess intensive affective power (Böhme, 1993), an aura (Böhme, 2006) that is perceived and lived as something singular and unique (Böhme, 2006), creating a sense of place (Rodaway, 1994). Atmospheres are impersonal, they belong to collective situations and nurture collective consciousness; at the same time, they are felt as intensely personal, governing individual consciousness in place (Anderson, 2006). Atmospheres are an "assemblage of social, material and affective components linked together into practice, in the materiality of place, traversing peoples, things and spaces" (Anderson, 2009: p.78). The humanist geography emphasizes that atmosphere gives a motivating impulse to action, and that the potential of a place, conveyed by atmosphere, may be materialized through individual and collective action. More specifically, emotional affect may drive collective active engagement with the structural or material dimensions of a place in the process of the creation of a sense of belonging in a place, or in place-making (Thrift, 2007; Massumi, 2002) and may inspire future events or activities (Duff, 2010).

Grasping particularities of YWC

From the conceptual framework outlined above, I am able to formulate seven hypotheses about social, political, atmospheric and emotional dimensions of particular places to guide the observation of the site and to grasp its peculiarities. The empirical knowledge gained from the YWC case study can in turn validate or question the heuristically derived conceptual framework. From the professional practice viewpoint, the empirical description of the place dynamics around the hypotheses may directly inform and inspire urban space and landscape design.

Production of ‘another place’

Hypothesis 1: Material space of particular places is produced within an established order of social relations of reproduction (family) and relations of production (hierarchical social functions), or in an attempt to mirror, transgress, contest or invert them. Aiming to ‘recycle’ and revitalize an abandoned industrial site and to propose a “*real alternative to luxury hotels of Noailles*” [2], YWC contested the cultural and urban policy of the city of Marseille on the eve of Marseille European Capital of Culture 2013. The initiative highlighted the reality of poor and deserted urban areas in Marseille and its neighbouring suburbs, towns and villages contrasting with the official discourse and policy-making. To change the negative image of the site, show neighbouring inhabitants the value of the place, involve them in the collective dynamics and bring culture (in a broad sense) to deprived citizens, YWC hosted cultural events and projects in a location ‘snubbed’ by the official cultural program of the European Capital of Culture. The campsite was designed and built on a deserted industrial site of 6500 m² on the banks of Estaque, a suburb of Marseille. Before the campsite’s construction, the site was completely unoccupied and empty, with no constructions and few facilities. The adjacent areas were characterized by poverty and lack of security. Located between the city, the sea and the mountain, the campsite was a sort of condensed Marseille (Fig. 1 and Fig. 3), aimed at symbolizing the city as it is represented by its inhabitants.



FIGURE 1 The campsite location.



FIGURE 2 The campsite’s overall spatial organization scheme (Drawing by Audebert, A., 2013).

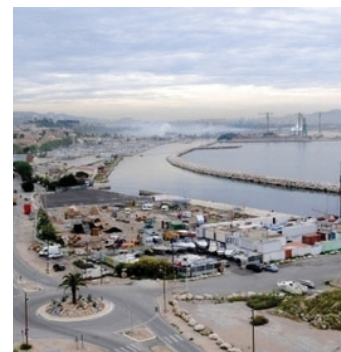


FIGURE 3 View of the camp (Photograph by Yes We Camp! 2013).

The project had a target of having a limited environmental impact, mirroring public debates about the environmental impact of the Marseille European Capital of Culture 2013. A 3-level shower system on scaffolding had a solar energy water heating system on the top, showers in the middle and a water

recycling system on the ground. Dry toilets, also on scaffolding, had recovery tanks on the ground and toilet cabins on the top.

Hypothesis 2: Particular places have spatial delimitations that both isolate them from the outside world and make them penetrable. Entry can be open, or submitted to rites, rules or permissions.

The location of the campsite was quite isolated, relatively far from urban life, with little public transportation from the centre of Marseille. By the time the campsite opened to tourists, a ferryboat linking Estaque to Marseille city centre had started circulating. Fences delineated the campsite from the outside world. Upon arrival at the site, one became completely immersed in the life of the campsite.

Hypothesis 3: Particular places transgress time by linking several slices in time, are oriented towards the eternal aspect of time, accumulate time or are ephemeral, transitory. The site was conceived as an ephemeral 'event-place'. Construction works started in April 2013 and the site was open to visitors from May to September 2013. At the end of the summer period, YWC was dismantled and its construction components, objects and equipment were sold at a big garage sale. Now, there is not even a single sign left as a reminder of YWC.

Space of new forms of social and artistic production

Hypothesis 4: The material space of particular places displays, contests, or inverts codes of social organization, subsuming established power relations and creates a space of illusion, sort of 'another real space'. In many aspects, the spatial and material structure of YWC conveyed an alternative form of spatial and socio-material structure, architectural design and artistic production. The campsite was designed as a mini-village with many places where one could isolate oneself, as well as private spaces, artistic work and making spaces, spaces for social life and a totem place above all constructions, wearing the symbol of the campsite (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3). These were organized around a central place, an 'agora' recalling and reproducing the roots of the Western society: the Greek city-state with its democratic form of social organization. At the same time, the concentration of leisure, rest and work, artistic production and consumption, public and private spaces in one central location blurred the traditional delineation of such spaces in Western society. Eleven mini-housing constructions, constituting the core of the campsite, were designed and built using a performativity approach. The flagship constructions included 'les Cabanons perchés' - 'Perched huts' and 'Moisseuneuses' - 'Combines' (Fig. 4), 'Semeuses' - 'Sowers' (Fig. 5) as well as la 'Gyagone', version 3.0 of 'Moissonneuses'. In line with the philosophy of place recycling, and due to scarcity of resources, many objects and construction elements were collected from Emmaus, an international charitable movement aimed at combatting poverty and homelessness. Some mini-housing facilities were built using recycled caravans, like 'Hameau de caravanes' - 'Hamlet of caravans'. The reception desk of the campsite was built out of a recycled container (Fig. 6). Some mini-housing facilities were built using recycled caravans, like 'Hameau de caravanes' - 'Hamlet of caravans' (Fig. 7).



FIGURE 4 'Moissonneuses' - 'Combines' on the front and Perched Huts in the background. Dorms and small rooms built on scaffolds made out of wooden materials and recycled pallets and 'Les Cabanons perchés' (Perched huts) two-storey perched and shady platforms for tents built on scaffolds are among the flagship constructions of the camping. Designed by BC Architect & Studios and Michael Lefeber. (Photograph by Yes We Camp! 2013).



FIGURE 5 'Semeuses' - 'Sowers'. Dorms and small rooms built on scaffolds made out of wooden materials and recycled pallets. Designed by BC Architect & Studios and Michael Lefeber (Photograph by Yes We Camp! 2013).



FIGURE 6 The campsite's reception desk. The reception desk of the campsite was built out of a recycled container (Photograph by Yes We Camp! 2013).



FIGURE 7 'Hameau de caravanes' - 'Hamlet of caravans'. The very first mini-housing facilities built on the campsite were 'Hameau de caravanes' (hamlet of caravans) - recycled caravans perched on scaffolds over two levels (Photograph by Yes We Camp! 2013).



FIGURE 8 Bubble house. Designed in the sixties by architect Jean Benjamin Maneval, the habitat is composed of six plastic shells. It was first used in the campsite Elf Aquitaine and then recovered by a group of artists and performers. An example of architectural utopias of pop art, Bubble house was one of the emblematic habitats of the campsite (Photograph by Yes We Camp! 2013).



FIGURE 9 Hive Bee Pass. The hive Bee-Pass equipped with a smokestack 2.5 meters high allows bees to live in proximity to humans (Photograph by Yes We Camp! 2013).

To further question the dominant model of cultural policy and that of cultural production in Marseille [1], the campsite adopted the 'open creativity' approach in campsite construction, through analogy with open source digital platforms, like Wikipedia or GitHub. Participation of various actors, such as artists, enterprises, neighbours and volunteers, was solicited for the implementation of the project. Some creative solutions and constructions that existed as independent constructions and artworks were borrowed to complement the architectural constructions conceived specifically for the camping project: la 'Maison bulle' - 'Bubble house' (Fig. 8), a hive Bee-Pass (Fig. 9), 'Valcoucou SDF-hotel' - 'Valcoucou, a hotel for homelessness' (Fig. 10). The campsite also hosted artists in residence who built original constructions -customized caravans (Fig. 15) and grew a garden (Fig. 11).



FIGURE 10 Valcoucou SDF Hotel. 'Valcoucou SDF-hotel' (Valcoucou, a hotel for homelessness), an artistic activist project built as a reaction to the policy of N. Sarkozy (Photograph by Yes We Camp! 2013).



FIGURE 11 The garden. The garden is an experiment with above ground permaculture adapted for urban life that made the campsite green (Photograph by Yes We Camp! 2013).

Professional design and social practices at YWC

Hypothesis 5: The design practice of particular places is inseparable from lived experience and is continuously enriched through social interaction. The YWC project experimented with new forms of social organization and power relations. Because it was mainly volunteers that implemented the campsite, the project's organizational structure was characterized by the absence of hierarchical employee-employer relations. Paid professionals were only solicited for specialized construction tasks when volunteers' skills were insufficient and where security requirements were strong (e.g. constructions on scaffolding, electricity and plumbing). A volunteer joining the campsite was given the liberty of choosing what he/she wanted to do, choosing from the list of tasks that were communicated by the project leader at regular volunteer team meetings: *"There is no chief, no timetable, no one obliges you to do that if you do not want to."* (volunteer A, member of the core team). On the negative side *"[t]oo much freedom also brings screwing around. People choose to do nothing, they do nothing. It happens"* (volunteer A, member of the core team). Recognition of individual efforts by peers served as a motivating factor: *"There is an important group dynamic... We make fun of those who do not do anything, on purpose: hey, you don't do anything... we motivate ourselves"* (short-term volunteer E). Those who were not willing to fully invest in the project had a feeling of not being part of the collective: *"There is a closed bubble mentality in here... people always do something..."* (short-term volunteer C). The rollover within the volunteer team was relatively high. Its size also varied depending on the season: large at high tourist season in July and August, and reduced during the construction and deconstruction periods. Although functional roles were more or less explicitly defined for everyone, the operational process implicitly agreed by the collective was open to input from all. The team was also open to newcomers: any person joining the project could make propositions about implementation or improvement of specific areas of the campsite's life-processes: *"Sometimes there are volunteers who have been here for two days and could give an idea ... it's funny"* (volunteer F, member of the core team).

However, it was not enough to bring an idea; it needed to be implicitly approved by the others. Only when other volunteers recognized the value added by a new initiative were they progressively joining to help and the initiator implicitly appointed by the community as a new task leader. *"Everyone has a small plot and everyone has his own ideas, there is no one person who holds things. Everyone has ideas ... and then there is an idea and when the idea becomes interesting, everyone joins and then it goes in one direction... That's how it works"* (short-term volunteer D).

This self-selection and self-appointment process shaped a highly dedicated core team. The members of the core group took the lead on organization and implementation of various functional tasks of the project: management of volunteers, camping reservations, manning the campsite desk, making and realization of small constructions, safety maintenance, stage management, bar holding, communication, and other tasks. The core team completely appropriated the campsite project and collectively shared the responsibility of the project outcome: *"There is responsibility, we are all responsible [...] This is crazy, this is a project that belongs to no one, but we are all concerned."* (volunteer F, member of the core team).

A number of young professional landscape designers and architects were part of the core team. Their professional design and making practice was intertwined with the campsite maintenance and management tasks. They perceived the democratic organizational form and the established freedom of initiative as an opportunity to try, to commit errors and to retry in their professional practice: *"... if it does not work we undo and redo it differently, and if it works then we make it even better... and it's true that it works well"* (volunteer H, member of a core team).

The team's diversity in terms of professional occupations, and its size, flexibility and openness to newcomers, combined with large needs for construction, maintenance and animation of the campsite

provided it with unlimited opportunities for the exchange of ideas and collective experimentations with the material space. “Everyone feeds with the vision of another. This happens when sharing around a table, or at a construction site. “Look, I see it more like this” – “Yes, you’re right”. And we try” (volunteer H, member of a core team).

Affective atmosphere of the campsite

Hypothesis 6: Material space of particular places possesses a singular and unique surrounding atmosphere, arousing emotional affect in individuals, nurturing a collective sense of place and collective imagination. The initial ambition of the project founders was to create a “multifunctional space, with different equipment and activities that make it attractive for various reasons, by their mutual proximity and by their organization on the site enabling a mix of uses and of public” [1]; “a place of realization of dreams of artists makers and performers” (ibid.) but also “a place where one feels good and where one stays, for a drink or for a long weekend” (ibid.) , a “sort of summer 1936, where perfume of possible is floating in the air” (ibid.).



FIGURE 12 Ranch Pony/turtle. Ranch Pony is an example of humour radiating from the constructions, reflecting social practices in place – a two level construction of scaffolds made out of recycled wood for a bar at ground level and a terrace on the floor above, which became the Ranch Turtle by simply putting a mask on the green pony toy hooked above the bar (Photograph by Yes We Camp! 2013)



FIGURE 13 Gastonette. “Gastonette” is a recycled caravan that served as an exchange point at the camp illustrates socio-material practices inverting the real world: to purchase food and drinks in the camp the visitors had to convert money into the local currency, Gaston (Photograph by Yes We Camp! 2013)

The atmosphere of YWC was indeed permeated with the sense of ‘another place’ where realization of dreams was possible, and where one could escape the everyday rush and routine and find rest. The campsite radiated a special mood evocative of an island of freedom, humour, joy, and the transgression of established codes that was collectively experienced in bodily presence by the people there. As examples of transgression and humour, one can refer to Ranch Pony/Ranch Turtle (Fig. 12) and ‘Gastonette’ (Fig. 13).

Interviewed volunteers attested to a deep feeling of attachment to the atmosphere traversing the people, the constructions and the place:

"At the beginning, I came as a camper, I stayed for one week and after that I never wanted to leave. I became a volunteer, I've being here for two and a half weeks. [...] I fell in love with the project" (short-term volunteer D)

"I just came to see my buddy [...] He talked me about volunteering quickly. I said hey, I was on vacations, I planned to go on holiday and in fact I found myself doing everything. [...] Yes, there is a good atmosphere" (short-term volunteer E)

Many tourists and visitors were attracted by the alternative and artistic side of the campsite:

"We came to stay a couple of days and to support the project because it is alternative" (tourist A)

"I have read about the camping on a web site and decided to come to the South of France to see it in real" (Tourist B).

Among the typical profiles for whom the campsite created an emotional resonance were young 'cultural rebels', those new hippies aged between 18 and 25, lower-and mid-income families with children, curious amateurs of culture, and groups of 'soixante-huitards' -older generation of participants of the 1968 movement.

Materializing potential in place

Hypothesis 7: The atmospheric expression of particular places radiates a motivating impulse to actively engage their structural or material components to materialize the potential of the place. The idea of building an alternative place and realizing its potential for people nurtured the collective sense of place and collective action of the YWC core team. The material characteristic of the campsite – its ephemeral constructions – combined with the democratic and socially organized design, incited risk-taking in design practice, experimentation and search for innovation: *"...the ephemeral [nature] ... opens a venue for testing, experimentations. It is less risk-taking compared to long-term projects, you learn things without leaving traces too long"* (volunteer G, a member of the core team).

The early visitors and the campers gave positive emotional feedback about the particular atmosphere emanating from the camping place. The positive collective mood and lived collective experience of joy, humour and shared sentiment of freedom reinforced the campsite's atmosphere. A virtual emotional circle was created: an enthusiastic echo from the public deepened the emotional attachment of the volunteers to the project and reinforced incentives to further realize campsite's constructions, furniture and creative prototypes. In addition to main mini-housing and functional constructions, the team created numerous experimental landscape constructions and 'bounty spaces': 'Passage au frais' – 'Passage into fresh' (Fig. 14); an open kitchen with barbecues (Fig. 15) and adjacent to it 'Chéri, j'ai agrandi la cuisine' – 'Darling, I extended the kitchen' - an extension of the caravan for serving breakfast and snacks, built with recycled wood and concrete and equipped with a phytoremediation system.

Recycling as a ground philosophy, but also as a solution to scarcity of available means, further nurtured the collective creativity and experimentation. The volunteers themselves qualified this situation as 'system D', where D means 'la débrouille', which in French means ingenuity in a context of scarce resources, making do with the limited resources available. Recycled materials and objects served as raw material for realization of

some of the campsite's constructions and furniture, realization of small objects - the campsite's 'goodies', or equipment for specific events, for example, deck chairs made out of recycled pallets (Fig. 16); refurbished old radios for the Yes We Radio space (Fig. 17) and a giant grill.



FIGURE 14 Passage au frais. In addition to the main mini-housing and functional constructions, numerous landscape constructions and 'bounty spaces' were created. One is 'Passage au frais' (Passage into the fresh) – a system of water spray constructed out of plastic boxes (Photograph by Yes We Camp! 2013).



FIGURE 15 The camping's 'permanent' BBQ and some customized caravans. An open kitchen with barbecues was realized with recycled wood. The camp hosted artists in residence who customized recycled caravans (Photograph by Yes We Camp! 2013).



FIGURE 16 Deck chairs. Recycled materials and objects served as raw materials for the realization of some of the camp's constructions and furniture, such as the construction of deck chairs out of recycled pallets (Photograph by Yes We Camp! 2013).



FIGURE 17 A customized radio. In line with the recycling philosophy of the camp, old radio sets were restored and placed in the Yes We Radio space for the camp's radio broadcasts (Photograph by Yes We Camp! 2013).

The realizations reinforced the material expression of the site, in both symbolic and emotional ways, meaning it conveyed and strengthened the emotional resonance of visitors with the camping atmosphere. The mutually reinforcing, dynamic relationship between spatial, material, social and atmospheric dimensions of the campsite fed the understanding of the young volunteering professionals about the way public spaces can be shaped: *"I think projects as YWC bring a lot of different elements, that it is people who come by*

curiosity, people who do not have a lot of means and want to live at low cost rate during the summer season, people traveling through or any other ... but also volunteers who are here, who know the site [...] there are so many things I think it feeds the project and the way to design spaces created either for housing and for other activities” (volunteer H, member of a core team).

Conclusion

The presented article proposed to use the socio-materiality stream of literature to describe particular places beyond their static - material and spatial - characteristics. A set of hypotheses were derived from theoretical contributions of post-modern philosophy and humanist geography and tested in the case study of the artistic and participatory campsite ‘Yes We Camp!’. The article demonstrates that particular places are designed within established models of social relations or in an attempt to transgress, contest or invert them. That is, space design can at once mirror, contest and invert the established order of social power relations. For instance, the motivation to “recycle” abandoned places, observed in the YWC project, influenced the site choice and adopted design solutions and selection of materials. The reliance of the campsite on external contributions, borrowing from the open source movement, challenged the dominant model of cultural and creative production focused on individual creations and the personality of artists and designers. At the same time, it reflected the growing societal trend of experimenting with open-ended design approaches of co-creation and open innovation.

This paper highlights the fact that, through the built environment and spatial organization, the produced space can be a vehicle to establish societal order or messages of rebellion and activism, radiating searches for a new societal organization and forms of production. A place located at some distance from other human activities, or having other forms of delineation from the outside world (fences or natural isolation like sea or mountain), and its temporal, ephemeral nature amplifies the sense of the particular. Such a place, emitting strong symbolic meaning, may create a deep emotional resonance in the public and professionals in that place, felt as a particular atmosphere or a unique aura. Both the experience of the place and the experience lived in the place nurture a collective sense of belonging, a profound feeling of interconnected humans who share the same values and aspirations.

The immersion into the atmosphere of particular places may invite people to action, to materializing the potential embedded in a place, through the emotional channel of affect and attachment. At YWC, this process was primarily fed by the emotional resonance of the volunteers with the meaning conveyed by the built environment. It was additionally supported by open forms of organization. This spatial, material and social mix produced a space for design experimentation, including interdisciplinary collaboration, making and re-making. Individual and collective creative potential of young professionals working on the site found expression in the production of diverse prototypes and artefacts.

To sum up, the YWC project is a rich illustrative example of a particular place that combines several co-existing and mutually shaped spatial, material and social ingredients. Their particularity is symbolically conveyed by the spatial organization and built environment. Above all, this particularity is collectively lived and felt as a unique atmosphere. The emanating symbolic message is able to drive individual and collective action that materializes the potential embedded in the place. Thus, our understanding of particular places cannot be complete without accounting for this complex interaction between space, material elements and humans.

The results of the research call for further empirical investigation of the solidity of the selected theoretical language for academic codification of knowledge about particulars. Additionally, they open numerous practical questions. How can we ensure in the design of places that the symbolic meaning instilled into a place by the designer will be interpreted by the public in the same sense? If it is possible to do so through open, creative practice and through professional practice in place, what specific design methods and tools can be offered to ease their practical implementation? What professional skills should urban space and landscape designers acquire to implement such open-ended approaches? With what criteria can such design works be assessed?

References

- Anderson, B. (2006). Becoming and being hopeful: towards a theory of affect. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 24, 733-752.
- Anderson, B. (2009). Affective atmospheres. *Emotion, Space and Society*, 2, 77-81.
- Böhme, G. (1993). Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics. *Thesis Eleven*, 36, 113-126.
- Böhme, G. (2006). Atmosphere as the subject matter of architecture. In Ursprung, P. (Ed.), *Herzog & DeMeuron: Natural History* (pp. 398-407). Zurich, Switzerland: Lars Müller Publishers.
- Duff, C. (2010). On the role of affect and practice in the production of place. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 28, 881-895.
- Foucault, M. (1984). Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias. *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, 5. Retrieved from <http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf>
- Leatherbarrow, D. (2005). Architecture's unscripted performance. In Kolarevic, B. & A. Malkawi (Eds.), *Performative Architecture beyond Instrumentality* (pp. 7-19). New York, NY: Spon Press.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of Space*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell.
- Massumi, B. (2002). *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Rahim, A. (2005). Performativity: beyond Efficiency and Optimization in Architecture. In Kolarevic, B. & A. Malkawi (Eds.), *Performative Architecture beyond Instrumentality* (pp. 179-192). New York, NY: Spon Press.
- Rodaway, P. (1994). *Sensuous Geographies*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.
- Thrift, N. (2004). Intensities of feeling: towards a spatial politics of affect. *Geografiska Annaler Series B*, 86, 57-78.

Notes

- [1] http://www.apeas.fr/IMG/pdf/Projet_YesWeCamp_8janv.pdf p.4 (Accessed 5 February 2014)
- [2] Favouring support of already known artists and organizations whose productions depend on public funding and are protected by copyright