DIGITAL SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THE RECONCILIATION OF ABANDONED URBAN LAND

The formulation of a process model for urban change

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ABSTRACT

Key Words:
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FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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1. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary city presents us with a kaleidoscopic array of functions, experiences and potentials with the modern metropolis, an image of vast arrays of infrastructure (both physical and unseen), dwelling space, cultural spaces and natural elements (see Jacobs, 1993; Calvino, 1997; or Smith, 2012 for example). Some examples of newly emerging cities and urban spaces have been exhaustively planned and thought through, whilst other, more historical examples, have, and continue to, evolve and grow over time. A movement toward standardisation of infrastructural systems, between 1850 and 1960 (Graham and Marvin, 2001) began the more contemporary practices of urban development. The underlying infrastructural elements of urban spaces were laid down between this period, enabling a paradigm shift from antiquated and fragmented islands of production towards an overall 'Fordist' view of the metropolis (ibid, 2001). This 'Fordist' shift toward standardisation, scientific management, rational organisation and mass production (eponymously titled from the father of industrial organisation and mass production, Henry Ford), allowed the metropolis to be reborn into an era of integration and consolidation (Ibid, 2001). The

speed of process within these newly emerging, consolidated urban centres began to increase with 'notions of space and time, speed and culture, subjects and objects, technology and society, […] gradually recomposed' (Ibid, 2001). Universal rationality and social justice were the founding ideologies of infrastructural development and urban planning, and these have been applied to all notion of life within the modern metropolis. 'Infrastructure is the framework that supports more transient and varied activity […] that can be infilled by social, environmental and economic activities' (Cumberlidge and Musgrave, 2007). As the contemporary metropolis has become so heavily reliant on infrastructure, with the comprehensive digitalization and globalization of peer-to-peer communications and commercial transactions, the default modus operandi of most functioning, democratic westernised societies is to be constantly 'plugged in,' 'always on' and indefinitely connected to the network. This past policy of rationalising and linking together, through the creation of and laying down of infrastructural elements, previously disparate elements within the urban realm has been fundamental in engendering the 'Network Society' (Castells, 1996, 2000, 2010). The component for existence within the 'Network Society' urbanity has become the infrastructure it relies heavily upon and with it, the creation of series, upon series of networked and interconnected disparate elements. A situation where 'over 60 percent of people […] have access to wireless communication' (Castells, 2010) and omnipresent mobile digital technology (MDT), that is able to allow citizens to augment their reality with layers of information; to add a 'digital layer on top of the physical world affording new practices for social interaction that would not be possible otherwise' (Bilandzic, M. and Foth, M., 2011). This has allowed MDT to 'facilitate the flow of new kinds of information into public spaces and as such can rearrange social and spatial practices' (Humphreys, 2010). This paradigm shift from fixed-line communication infrastructure to mobile provides a stage for a 'real time' vehicle for change in the modern metropolis. No longer do citizens have to wait to contact those in charge, they can

contact them with, on-the-ground, real time digital messages (DiGangi, 2012); digital messages that can be sent at little or no cost and can quickly gather support from like minded people, to go 'viral' (see Watts, D. J., Peretti, J., 2007; Petrescu, M., Korgaonkar, P. 2011; Berger and Milkman, 2012). This new way of communicating effectively breaks 'the power relations of the old hierarchical world [and it has become] as much about individuals versus hierarchies as it [has] about the rich against poor' (Mason, 2012).

The unrepentant spread of MDT has engendered a rise of reality-centric elements to the Internet and World Wide Web (web). It has produced a highly mobile web that is able to grant one access to information anywhere and anytime through such devices as smartphones or tablet computers. This mobile web is not only more personally attuned to the needs of the user, it has become in some terms 'geospecific.' There are many millions utilising the mobile web to take part in all manner of social media and differing ways to connect with each other (Shannon, 2008); where the 'newest, most satisfying and most immersive user experience is reality [itself]' (Mason, 2012). Social networks are based, historically, around an 'offline' circle of friends, family and colleagues who share common viewpoints and connections; in a reality where people would meet periodically to engage in face-to-face contact. They have great lobbying power when the amount of people reaches a critical mass, as in the case of previous 'social movements [building a] constituency for each separate issue, year by year and country by country, in order to reach a scale that [is able to] make a difference' (Avaaz, 2011). However, following the rise of the Internet and secondary thanks to MDT, traditional social networks have become digitised. Digital social networks (DSN) have become even more powerful than traditional 'offline' social networks, in the fact that they are neither constrained by locality nor timeframes. They are extremely dynamic, instantaneous and able to evolve and build momentum rapidly

(Shirvanee, 2007; Boyd and Ellison, 2010). That is not to say that they are, wholesale, taking place of existing 'offline' social networks, rather they are becoming fundamental in how they function; namely in the sharing of experiences and information.

In understanding these current trajectories of social upheaval, the overall aim of the research project is to explore the potentials of DSN and MDT to gather support and gain political momentum, in the processes of reconciliating abandoned and derelict land. The research also aims to understand how the geospatial nature of DSN may enable a faster execution of local, national and international governmental and NGOs directives and policies; it is seeking another model for abandoned urban land.

1.1 Research Question

How can abandoned urban land be recovered by local actors through the use of a digital network platform?

1.2 Sub questions

- With the UK's political agenda now emphasised toward localism, can locally networked abandoned and derelict sites, gain sufficient amounts of social capital to influence the outcome of its use?
- Are these systems capable of being integrated in both the public and private realm?
- What is the impact of greater interconnectivity between user, local government and their locale?
- What knowledge gaps are there between end of use and owner of the site?

1.3 Research Motivation

> It is necessary to critically examine planning practice […] Buildings [and land] left vacant for a period of years are evidence of the weaknesses [inherent within it.] The current economic crisis makes the situation even worse. Private investments are not forthcoming and public coffers are empty so they cannot fill the gap. (Oswalt, et al, 2007)

The current, ongoing, global financial crisis has engendered an economic landscape of abandonment and neglect bound together with a political one of austerity. This austere political agenda has created a fragile and risk-averse economic atmosphere, one where land owners do not have readily expendable capital or inclination to undergo development projects. The need to perpetuate financial markets and the surpluses of both capitalism and real estate agency has created a shift in thinking from those who control the processes of urban regeneration in the name of the constituency. The 'quality of urban life has become a commodity […] as has the city itself in a world where consumerism, tourism, cultural and knowledge-based industries have become major aspects of urban political economy' (Harvey, 2008). Vast tracts of land are often seen lain to ruin throughout urban localities, with scarce resources to produce a viable plan for their final use; a growing resource of abandoned, derelict and underdeveloped land littered throughout the urban environment (Taylor, 2008). Of the total 1,028,214 ha of urban land, as defined by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), within England there currently lies around 62,000 ha of Brownfield land; with a further half of that currently lying in a completely static state, classed as derelict or vacant (Kelly, 2011). The current situation has become a highly visible side affect of the ongoing global financial crisis and brings forth a tangible disconnect between abandoned land and the context within which it sits. Abandoned development sites and derelict land are not only a visual blight on the surrounding locality but present a drain on all socioeconomic resources (Taylor, 2008; Greenspace Scotland, 2010). These sites of abandonment can potentially be seen as highly visual clues to the inner most

workings of the local council and developer collective minds to signify that they have given up on a particular area (Greenspace Scotland, 2010). Where there *are* instances of reactivation of abandoned land, the field of affect does not expand outside their defined boundaries; the reactivation projects of the past have become piecemeal additions of the urban fabric, at best. So by utilising a networked approach to reactivation, and harnessing the rapid deployment it affords, we can begin to rebalance the democracy of space throughout society.

Traditional planning procedures are based on ideas of permanence, linearity and control, with contemporary thinking on the city, creating an image of one intimately networked within itself and throughout its greater context (Castells, 2010; Humphreys, 2010; Smith, 2012). The shaping of the city, under traditional planning procedures, is controlled solely by high capital investments and governments (both local and central) where there is a 'tendency to spend any available money on capital works with physical outputs' (Taylor, 2008). This persistent, top-down approach to urban planning and development can exacerbate social exclusion and further increase division within communities, as it is unable to respond and adapt to the volatile economies of market driven development (Oswalt, et al, 2007; Harvey, 2008). This creates planning and development procedures removed from the communities they serve, it belittles the constituents who dwell within and 'limits the impacts of creative destruction [by becoming] bureaucratic and anti-intellectual' (Naik and Oldfield, 2009). The current global financial crisis, exacerbated by lack of capital availability for developers, has forced abandoned land and derelict landscapes to become static; devoid of any fully functioning sociocultural network systems. This static nature of abandoned land creates a disconnection between it and its contextual setting. Complex interconnections and social networks are already in place throughout the urban realm, between inhabitant, visitor, custodian and overseer; some of them physical, whilst others intangible.

Disconnection between these networks brings an unclear process between the beginnings of dereliction and abandonment, and the ultimate end use or user of the site.

61.3 Hypothesis

Through the initiation of digitally networking of abandoned spaces, an 'Urbnet' of sorts, local, interested parties concerned with abandoned urban land, can be appropriately engaged so as it can be brought back into use.

1.4 The Delimitations

Firstly, the research project has been undertaken in 2012 and is based on literature and research published before July 2012. The project also notes that locative media is a powerful tool in engaging with users and the general public but, theoretical applications notwithstanding, due to budgetary constraints is unable to test this within the case studies selected. The project is solely concerned with analysing what could happen to the process of reactivation of derelict land, were there a network infrastructure for them. The project is not concerned with nationality or culture within its scope. The complex mechanisms apparent in the urban environment make this too large a query to answer within the given timeframe, as 'cities are typically characterized by diversity along nearly almost every social axis' (Humphreys, 2010)

1.6 Overview to the organisation of the study

The project will begin by explaining and defining the terms and concepts associated with this area of study. This will be followed by a literature review summarising the various sources of research available to the author. The project will then the discuss methods of research and reasoning behind their choice before analysing the selection of scenario based case studies. These

findings will be further developed into a series of principles that will explain the application of the findings. Discussions will test the hypothesis before concluding the findings.

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2. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS & CONCEPTS

The following ideas, theories and concepts are critical in the approach to this research project. The research will be underpinned with theories such as the 'Network Society' and recovering landscape but also the understanding of the terms mobile digital technologies, digital social networks and the city.

2.1 Digital Mobile Technology and Digital Social Networks

> 'The impacts of [digital] social networks on knowledge, community and individuals constitutes a challenge to three kinds of hierarchies that stood at the heart of twentieth-century reality: repressive states, corporations and hermetically sealed ideologies' (Mason, 2012)

The impact of technology in modern day life cannot be understated; we live increasingly in a digital, technological age with much of what we take for granted, the outcome of a technological advancement. The outcomes of the technological revolution in the 1970s have filtered through into all facets of living (Castells, 2010), with the contemporary urban centre an expression of this. Cities have become a delicate intricacy of social and digital networks,

continually effervescent with cultural, financial and service exchange. The more recent advent of higher capacity phone networks and availability of larger bandwidths within urban areas has engendered a simultaneous rise in mobile digital technology. Not on a scale of such seen since the industrial revolution, have these unprecedented advances, accelerated, transformed and expanded so far from the norm 'the power and space of the individual' (Mason, 2012). The term 'Mobile Digital Technology' (MDT) encompasses any hand held, technological hardware that can be linked to a farther reaching network; in essence a smart phone or tablet computer that has the ability to connect to the Internet. In attaining the ability to connect to the Internet, MDTs have become greater than the sum of their parts, in that they allow interconnections between disparate members of society and sharing of experiences, facilitating what Humphreys (2010) terms 'synchronous mediated communication' whilst in transit. So the all encompassing scale of the 'digital urban' has altered how far communication can reach, so to have the fundamentals of society changed in tandem; in that social circles and communities are farther reaching and exponentially quicker to react than ever before.

Digital Social Networks (DSNs) are a technological extension of existing friendships and common connections. Whilst true that DSNs have shown a tendency to build on existing relationships rather than forge new ones with unfamiliar people (see for example: Coyle and Vaughn, 2008; Boyd and Ellison, 2010; or Takhteyev, et al, 2011), where there are common goals, views and extended social connections, DSNs have remarkable capacity in the instantaneous dissemination of knowledge, authority and experiences; to 'expand and grow in ways that were previously unanticipated' (Coyle and Vaughn, 2008). DSNs and MDT have spawned specific Internet applications that augment traditional 'offline' social networks, such as Wireless Community Applications (WCAs) (Sun and Poole, 2010). These WCAs have come

to more fully represent 'offline' social networks than those applications (such as Facebook, Twitter or Linkedin for example) that allow people to simply connect with one another, in that they are able to engage more so with locality and physical/social context (Sun and Poole, 2010). DSNs have the potential to transcend distance to allow connectivity between everyone and anyone (Takhteyev, et al, 2011), however it is in the ability to engage with the specifics of who, and more particularly, where any one particular person is, that has had the greatest bearing on the social diffusion of DSNs.

2.2 The City and its 'Network Society'

The city can be viewed as many things. Indeed, it has been likened to a multitude of things: a cultural machine (Smith, 2012), a bundle of infrastructural networks (Graham and Marvin, 2001; Castells, 2010), a sociotechnical process (Graham and Marvin, 2001), connective tissue (Angelil and Klingmann, 1999, cited in Graham and Marvin, 2001), a cyborg (Mitchell, 2004; Gandy 2005), a manifestation of capitalist ideals (Lefebvre, 2003, cited in Harvey, 2008), or in fact, a laboratory (Jacobs, 1993). These metaphors allow us to begin to understand the complex nature of urban landscapes, in that cities are ultimately an amalgamation of culture, technology and territory. The city is more an idea than it is a tangible 'thing,' it is the concrete manifestation of the desires of those who reside within it; a remake of the world around us, driven by mans desires (Harvey, 2008). It is a landscape draped over a skeletal network of physical, technological and biological layers. As a product of a time of great interconnectivity and relentless technological diffusion throughout society, the city's 'technical networks, such as those of the Internet and other kinds of virtual communication, [can be seen to] surround us' (Knox, et al 2006). These technical networks allow us to communicate instantaneously with each other, 'from where the rest of the world can be reached,' (Castells, 2010) through the

application and integration of information technology within every realm of urban existence. This comprehensive 'plugging' into technological networks of all facets of contemporary life, has made reality the so called 'Network Society' (Castells, 1996, 2000, 2010). The rapid deployment of wireless infrastructure, alongside the take up of wireless phone subscriptions throughout the global community, (conservatively estimated by Manuel Castells (2010) to be around 60 percent of the global population in 2009) allowing for greater penetration of Internet access, has subsequently brought the developing world online. Thus, with this ever expanding reach of wireless technology into the furthers reaches of humanity, it could be said that online communities 'are fast developing not as a virtual world, but as a real virtuality [...] in an increasingly hybridized everyday life' (Castells, 2010). Increasingly, this has led to a shift in the experience of urban living, even within the simplest of tasks of moving from one point to another; as 'we move through spaces that are [increasingly] networked, [and] where our movements can be tracked' (Berry, 2008). The definition of the urban realm has changed irrevocably. No longer is 'urban' simply confined to the boundaries of physical space or land use, it is fast becoming defined by loss of digital connectivity (mobile signal coverage or WIFI) ruled by a space of connectivity, networks and flows (Mitchell, 2003; Gandy, 2004). The urban realm has always been seen as a laboratory, where trial and error, failure and success should be played out without fear of reprisal (Jacobs, 1993), however, as a consequence of rampant interconnectivity, the urban realm is overshadowed by a vast polarising affect. Castells (2010) refers to the catalyst of this polarising affect emerging from the increasingly technologically mediated, flow of information and finance as the 'space of flows: the material support of simultaneous social practices communicated at a distance' (ibid, 2010). Wealth, investment and development all flow into the 'space of flows,' exponentially increasing its importance to the overall health of the are it resides in. The more affluent areas within the contemporary

metropolis become more and more interconnected, 'being drawn into powerful articulation with global communications infrastructures' (Graham and Marvin, 2001), whilst other, less affluent area become increasingly marginalised from the technological society. These marginalised areas are literally outside of where the global network punctures the fabric of the city, they are peripheral areas.

TALK ABOUT SMART CITIES HERE?

> For decades policy makers, institutions and architects have tried to persuade people to actively participate in shaping their cities. Often these remain top-down trajectories. The bottom-up extreme is a community model rooted in proximity, shared interests and similar lifestyles. Yet this denies the nature of cities as places of heterogeneity and the fact that many urbanites shiver at the thought of village-like parochialism. With digital media new networked publics can be activated, beyond top-down or bottom-up but peer-to-peer and distributed. An illustration is Verbeterdebuurt (the Dutch take on Fixmystreet). This is a mobile and web app that allows citizens to report problems in their neighborhood, but also to suggest improvements and vote on each other's ideas, and therefore assemble others around collective issues. Michiel de Lange, 2011
>
> (http://www.themobilecity.nl/2011/12/07/social-cities-how-to-engage-citizens-with-digital-media/)

2.3 Recovering Landscape.

> The scenic image stands only as a historical sign, a mere picture, while the experience of land moves from engagement and change to mere voyeurism […] setting these programs within a codified scene. (Høyer, 1999)

The term recovering landscape refers to a movement in landscape theory where the idea of landscape was changed irrevocably from that of a passive, static picture or green setting for architectural interventions in space. The theory was pioneered by the British Landscape Architect James Corner as a culmination of work and research that counteracted the typical staid view of landscape, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century 'as the soothing antithesis to the placeless frenzy of technological urban life' (Corner, 1999). Recovering landscape is the belief that landscape underlies our daily interactions with the world around

us, and ‘does not stop where the city starts but is a continuum in both space and time’ (Gross Max, 2007). Recovering landscape works through varying channels, or scales, of engagement; cultural, physical, ecological and geological and temporal. In the planning for and design of landscape, these elements can provide a unity across many disciplines and enable a framework for recovering landscape (Corner, 1999) to address the complete spectrum of sociocultural environmental damage, recovering landscape to its complex functionality. By working through the scales, landscape can become greater than the sum of its parts and generate a greater depth of experience; these scales allow us to see beyond the site as an isolated object and reveal the extent of layers that have influenced the shaping of place over time.

The application of these principles elsewhere, under differing conditions, is valid as they underwrite the scales previously mentioned, and in so deal directly with themes of memory, preparation for and the staging of new conditions, sequencing and relational structuring. These principles take the continuity and temporality of landscape as a metaphor (Marot, 1999); one of a narrative or conversation where one cannot, or should not, impose ones own sensibilities and thoughts without first listening to what has been said before. Adding to the conversation as if just to keep the discourse flowing (ibid, 1999). Developing the metaphor further, and secondly, the subsequent principle in the process reads the landscape as an open ended process rather than an end product; an open ended strategy ‘reading the site as a living and dynamic organism [to] revitalize and incorporate once abandoned sites into present and larger fields of effect’ (ibid, 1999). And to finalise the fourth principle of relational structuring, what seems to conclude these all encompassing principles, a principle that focuses more on the relationships between objects in the landscape rather than on the objects themselves. Recovering landscape is an important theoretical approach to landscape design that will influence the continuing approach

to this research project.

3

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review has been divided into a series of subject themes. Firstly expanding on the idea of the 'networked city,' with a focus on the role MDT and the greater connectivity it gives us has had in revolutionising societal norms. The closing section will discuss temporary landscape solutions as an on-the-ground action against political misgivings. In understanding how deep the connectivity we have with one another runs within the cultural fabric of the urban realm and how this has altered our perception of the contemporary metropolis, it will enable the reader to understand how we can foster creative use of abandoned urban spaces even in the most testing of times.

3.1 The city's metaphysical networks - The City as Cyborg

> 'Cities are held together by intimately linked social and technical assemblages that mutually construct one another in seamless ways.' (Graham and Marvin, 2001)

The city has become a vision of intensely complicated webs of both, physical and imaginary networks at play. Matthew Gandy (2004) sees the city as a metaphorical cyborg, whereby it is 'most strikingly manifested in the physical infrastructure that links the human body to vast technological networks.' With these infrastructural networks forming a concrete example of this idea of 'cyborgian' city life (Gandy, 2004). The cyborg city represents a paradigm shift from a city understood to be 'organistic' (see Graham and Marvin, 2000, p62), insomuch as it could be represented by disparate parts, each of its own distinctiveness and particular function, to one that this distinctiveness is completely lost, or at best becomes blurred. Through technological connectivity, users of a particular space can check what is happening around them on multitude of societal levels: as immediate as a few metres away and as global as you can dear to dream. There are many ideas as to how best to visualise this cyborgian space, Hannah Knox, et al (2006) re-conceptualise the city image, as a societal shift, beginning to alter the structure of the corporeal world; where daily life is intricately interwoven with and through layers of 'technical networks, such as those of the Internet and other kinds of virtual communication' (Knox, et al 2006). It is an urban realm seemingly fast becoming that of an appendage to the human body and with that, additional experiential layers of reality. The augmenting of reality is altering how society can be conceptualised also. William J. Mitchell (2003) reinterprets the cyborgian metaphor, by introducing the concept of 'connecting creatures' (ibid, 2003) whereby, the biological meshes with the urban and the city and becomes, 'not only the domain of networked cognitive system, but also [...] the spatial and material embodiment of that system' (Mitchell, 2003). Mason (2012) elaborates on this point further where it is the 'networked individual'

that has exploited this interconnectivity between society and 'the driver of behavioural change has been technology' (ibid, 2012). The digital revolution has produced a hybrid space that is at once tangible and vastly spacious; from every digital interaction comes the feeling of shared consciousness and multifaceted personality. It also is self-referencing and appears to constantly upscale and improve the network it has created, whereby users use the network, and in doing so, engender a cyclical, ever-enriched environment and the creation of a 'third thing' (Mason, 2011). This 'third thing' could simply be sharing a view on something and reaffirming ones outlook or distribution of knowledge or indeed a financial transaction; with each action subsequently having its own effect on the whole of the network. This 'network effect' can have a profound effect on the content of the city and how it is governed; with every upscale of the network it becomes more and more powerful in the pursuit of justice in the modern metropolis. By drawing on Mason (2012), Gandy (2004) and Mitchell (2003) it could be said that the networked individual has become a conduit for the far-reaching, globalised tools at their disposal, as we become more and more entwined with technology.

This digital revolution alongside the inter-networking and meshing of society and technology, within the urban realm has given birth to a new digital platform, termed 'Locative Media' (Tuter and Varnelis, 2006 cited in Berry, 2008). Locative media is a form of location-based or location-aware technology that utilises the intimate proximity of MDT in the pushing of commercial information onto a specific location, route personal navigation through space, or enable 'geotagging' of personal online content, and has irrevocably changed how we interact with our surrounding environment (Collis and Nitins, 2009). The urban realm is the singular platform for the emergence of locative media as it relies on the physical infrastructure through which MDT functions; cellular infrastructures such as towers must exist in order to receive and transmit digital information (Berry,

2008). Locative media enables the inhabitant of the urban environment to not only add geospecific information to the Internet, allowing people to understand what surrounds them, it embeds 'that content to physical geography itself' (Collis and Nitins, 2009). The ease at which users can augment their reality can be seen 'as a means to overturn state control of geographical data ownership and authorship' (ibid, 2009), insomuch as you are the key to your own spatial experience.

What has been critical in the emergence of locative media is the 'Space of Flows' as termed by Manuel Castells (2010). The space of flows allows for the 'simultaneous social interaction at a distance by networking communication, with [the] support of telecommunications, interactive communication systems, and fast transportation technologies' (ibid, 2010) and encompasses both the social and technological aspects of urbanity (Berry, 2008). The interconnectivity of the urban realm has engendered locative media's birth and continues to underpin its existence. Locative media creates social spaces where the interaction with the fabric of urban realm allows a collective sense of belonging (ibid, 2008). Locative media is unlike other more traditional sources of media or advertising as it becomes embedded into the landscape, utilises digitally networked systems and is passively encountered through the act of passing through a specific location (Weight, 2007, cited in Berry, 2008). Shirvanee (2007) refers to the rise of locative media in the urban realm as 'Social Viscosities' in that the overlapping of physical space with locative media, is able to create an environment that is at once both social, interactive and storied. The rise has formed an 'inscriptive' and augmented urban environment through which information flows. In understanding this, locative media can be conceptualised as a bridge between those that reside in the urban realm, and the vast amount of information that now resides in the ether of the Internet.

3.2 Social networks and the digital society - Connectivity in the city

Social networks and the desire to communicate are fundamental, all encompassing human requirements and essential societal conditions (Coyle and Vaughn, 2008). Social networking is not a recent term and existed long before the advent of the Internet, as it is necessary for humans to have contact with others to survive (ibid, 2008). So it would seem that 'information exchange alone can hardly lead to a sense of social interaction close to what happens in the real world' (Sun and Poole, 2010) and so DSNs have a long way to go before they replace face-to-face societal contact. 'Being social is a multisensory event, and not one that technology-based communication has been able to fully simulate' (Coyle and Vaughn, 2008) therefore DSNs are in a position to augment rather than replace offline social networks. However in saying that, with the well documented use of social media throughout the Arab Spring of 2011, the 'occupy' movement and the UK summer riots of 2010 have shown that digital networks and social media are now at a stage were they can enable multiple, disparate members of society to engage in changing political order, and the idea of leadership (Mason, 2012). The beginnings of the technological revolution gave birth to the belief that 'distance is dead' (Cairncross, 1997) that seemed in the most part to predict the side effects of increasing interconnectivity of modern society. Through this statement Cairncross (1997) surveys the proposed effects that the communication revolution will have on such things as, how businesses function to satisfy the needs of consumers, how governments respond to constituents and how individual lives will forever be altered. This bold statement has, in most parts, not come to fruition. Certain DSN sites, such as Twitter, do however offer a promise to change this as they are both joined relatively effortlessly and easily initiated from both personal computers or through MDT (Takhteyev, et al, 2011). The problem lies in the previously stated predisposition of humans requirement for face-to-face contact. Indeed, the 'distance is dead' (Cairncross, 1997) statement is further

undermined by both Yuri Takhteyev, et al (2011) in the fact that 'social contact benefits from physical proximity' (ibid, 2011) and by reiterating Boyd and Ellison's (2010) definition of digital social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to:

1. Construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system
2. Articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection
3. View and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (ibid, 2010)

These fundamental constituents of DSNs are intimately linked to existing offline social circles and networks, creating a digital landscape constrained by physicality and location. It is difficult to form bonds between those that we don't know, or who we have previously met, on a DSN where the relationship is so public. So it would seem that DSNs have become an integral part of contemporary social interaction, one only limited by access to bandwidth and technology. They have become a public display of existing 'offline' social networks, aimed at facilitating the ongoing communication within existing, extended social network ties (ibid, 2010). These 'public display[s] of connections' (ibid, 2010) are a fundamental component of DSNs functionality, whereby they are intimately organised around the individual and people, not their interests; which more accurately represents reality in a world composed primarily of networks and not groups per se (Wellman, 1988 cited in Boyd and Ellison, 2010). Digitally networked and interconnected practices are able to draw on known everyday practices and have begun to mirror, support or alter how people connect with each other and publicly display themselves (ibid, 2010).

3.3 Temporary landscape solutions and the political machine - Changing the City

The city is the embodiment of capitalist ideologies, and along with the city, comes vast concentrations of surplus. Harvey (2008) understands this as social concentrations of these

surpluses with the individuals access to these surpluses and resources. The making and subsequent remaking of the city is a human act that leads, or rather has lead, to vast inequalities and social injustice as noted when Harvey (2008) writes:

> Urbanization has always been, therefore, a class phenomena of some sort, since surpluses have been extracted from somewhere and from somebody (usually an oppressed peasantry) while the control over the disbursement of the surplus typically lies in a few hands. This general situation persists under capitalism, of course, but in this case there is an intimate connection with the perpetual search for surplus value (profit) that drives the capitalist dynamic.

It is probably the correct train of thought to say that urbanisation has gifted a whole generation radical transformations within their lives, particularly in the developing world. However, as Harvey (2008) will also attest to, society within the realms of urbanity has become a commodity, 'as has the city itself in a world where consumerism, tourism, cultural and knowledge-based industries have become major aspects of urban political economy' (ibid, 2008). This current situation is unfortunate as it is at the time of writing, the global financial crisis has brought both financial institutions and state wide regimes to breaking point. Mainly the product of past deregulation of monetary systems and encouragement of investment type banking to generate economic growth, the level of sovereign debt between countries has gone largely unchecked (or at least hidden from public view) (Minton, 2009; Mason 2011). Emerging into what Harvey (2008) describes as the societal landscape that we now see, where profit trumps all else. Defaults on mortgages, loans and credit cards began a wholesale break down of institutional monetary systems. With mounting levels of debt throughout westernised countries reaching saturation point, leaving nowhere for the banking system to go, other than default (Minton, 2009). This has forced the hand of governments, who are dependent on financial institutions to generate fiscal wealth, to initiate large scale bail outs of private banks with public money, avoiding unprecedented defaults from the banks themselves and avoiding intergovernmental/international

debts defaulting. Investment banking was found wanting. If this debt defaulting scenario was allowed to happen, capitalist systems, which includes the majority, if not all westernised societies, would have been left broken, unable to financially substantiate themselves. The only route left out of this situation was to self impose wholesale restrictions on governmental spending within their respected public realms, in order to balance the books. Mason (2012) posits that these austerity measures, through unprecedented cutting of public expenditure and capital investment, was the only viable options available to the affected countries; toward the end game of reducing fiscal debt (ibid, 2012). The effect of these impositions of wholesale austerity measures (coupled with ongoing uncertainty in the global economy) has been that there is a very small amount of capital available for businesses to invest or indeed grow, causing many scheduled development projects to be mothballed, vast tracts of underdeveloped land to lie abandoned and businesses to shut their doors. These abandoned and derelict parcels of land can, however, become a platform for more creative spatial planning and innovative land use; a low cost alternative to more permanent, cost driven development, where the previous use has ceased and the land static. Vacant land is never truly empty, save for the vacancy of human presence, it is 'neither physical nor occupational - it is temporal' (Doron, 2007). Kang (2010) refers to these spatial anomalies as 'deferred space' whereby abandoned land becomes 'a space of differ(a)nce [sic] [...] not attached to a fixed meaning or norm' (ibid, 2010). These vacant spaces begin to litter the wider functioning context with sociocultural voids, becoming tangible evidence of the presence or absence of the hand of the institution in charge (ibid, 2010). Vacant spaces can be perceived as 'social breathing spaces' (Shaw and Hudson, 2009) and when appropriated through temporary use, abandoned land can grow to become dynamic elements of the urban fabric; representing places 'where the city is no longer' (ibid, 2009). Through the process of temporary use, Shaw and Hudson (2009) also note that, the 'forgotten,' 'unwanted'

or ‘marginal’ groups within society can be allowed full control of specific space; adding a ‘sociocultural veneer’ to the transcribed nature of the city. In studying temporary use, the research collective Urban Catalyst noted that financially weak players who were allowed access to a space, ‘grow in a protected but unsubsidized environment [to] become active participants in the shaping of their city’ (Oswalt, et al, 2007). All this at minimal cost to society where such ‘forgotten’ and ‘unwanted’ people are not allowed such freedom in the more high profile public spaces, such as civic squares and shopping centres. Through rapidly deployed temporary utilisation of these static, ‘deferred’ spaces, a whole raft of social, economic and environmental benefits can be brought to the fore. These benefits are far ranging but are generally concerned with elements of place making and the strengthening of community bonds to their locality and context (Greenspace Scotland, 2010; Coombs, et al, 2011).

So what is the current context for temporary use? USE URBAN CATALYSTS DOCUMENT...

Ferreri (2009) writes that ‘urban spaces are never neutral containers in which social processes unfold, but are constantly produced […] by changing social arrangements,’ and in understanding this viewpoint, derelict urban space can give temporary spatial solutions greater power over more traditional permanent conditions, akin to those parachuted in by governing bodies and planners alike (Oswalt, et al, 2007). However, whilst Farreri (2009) sees that the dynamic nature of the city should readily facilitate the temporary use of space, as punctures into the hyper-controlled and overwhelmingly hegemonic urban landscape (Hou, 2010), it is rarely the case due to a number of factors. These range from fear of litigation, reluctance of developers to allow, lack of awareness in the local community/landowners and

shortage of resources, to name but a few (Greenspace Scotland, 2010; Taylor 2008). Through shear pressure of a mounting number of derelict or abandoned sites, this shortsightedness and fear in the mindsets of governments and private landowners is slowly beginning to change. Many European cities have a tradition of temporary or meanwhile use and it is these that are providing the creative collateral to instigate change.

3.6 Summary of Literature Review

> 'Despite the power of digital networks, so much of our lives is still negotiated from the meter or so of intimate and personal space that separates faces' (Townsend, 2006)

The pervasiveness of the Internet has

4

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of this section is to undertake the following research methods as a means to develop a process model, using social media as a platform, to address long timeframes between end of use of a site and interim or future use. The data being collected seeks to combine diverse threads of research on the MDT, DSN and temporary uses of space; with this data further evaluated from a landscape architectural perspective. This chapter will describe the chosen research strategy, data collection methodology and data analysis framework that is to be applied to the project and explain why these specific approaches have been chosen.

4.1 Research Strategy

Through employing multiple case studies it will enable the research into contemporary phenomenon within the context of its happening (O'Leary, 2010; pers. comm. Andy Boorman, 14/12/11) this form of qualitative research will be integral to the final outcome of the research

project. By utilising case study research the hypothesis can be tested thoroughly as it will involve prolonged engagement and in-depth exposure with the site. Case studies become particularly useful between the limits of both studied phenomenon and context, a situation where this study may be forced to reside in. It also enables possible triangulation of other data collection methods, and provide supporting evidence for the research hypothesis and existing theories. Case studies also offer the opportunity to gather an understanding of complex social issues and theories, so by using case studies, rather than empirical statistical analysis, the research project may also be used collectively to form a basis for new theories and generate new understandings (O'Leary, 2010). The multiple case study approach will enable a direct comparison and evaluation of the different ways through which abandoned and derelict space has been reactivated in the past. Multiple case study research also allows for the testing of the findings within selected sites that are currently derelict.

The research approach will be undertaken through qualitative analysis of scenario based case studies. This multiple case study approach will enable a comparison and evaluation of the various approaches used within the processes of reactivation, through the conceptualising of a theory based scenario. The research strategy will posit the study questions against the previous findings of the literature review alongside the case study sites themselves; this will help to strengthen the findings of the research.

4.1.1 Case Study Sites: Design Approaches & Locations

The following case study is an informed speculation, drawing on the research obtained through the literature review, on the future of the urban realm within the framework of abandoned land. The scenario is sited within a timeframe of between 10 and 20 years in the future and posits the

instances of abandoned land within an urban realm that is entirely networked; inasmuch as the every minutia of existence is sensed, measured, recorded and analysed through the 'smart city.' The rising amount of data that is collected throughout the urban realm, in today's society can only be seen to continue its stratospheric trajectory. As technological hardware becomes smaller, processors faster and inter-networking wholesale so too will there be a greater dependance on real-time data collection and analysis for both private investors and public bodies; in order to fully serve their respective 'customers,' various forms of data analysis and collection programs will be required to understand what is needed.

4.1.2 Outline of scenario

As the world becomes more and more urbanised, the pressures on urban land to be used more sustainably will become an ever increasing social endeavour; the socioeconomic pressures on land will force us to be more flexible toward land use. One side affect of society becoming ever more urbanised is that more people are coming online, predictably via the use of mobile digital technology e.g. Mobile phones, tablet computers, ereaders, etc.

By piggybacking on the ever pervasive nature of network penetration, we can conceptualise the creation of a network system, the 'urbnet,' that networks parcels of derelict land and could potentially facilitate the reactivation of abandoned land. The 'urbnet' tags onto the idea of smart cities. It could also be able to utilise locative media to reach out to its immediate context, collectively reaching out to alert others of its plight.