

Marie Joja

POP-UP - TREND OR A NEW DIRECTION?

AUTHOR

PhD candidate,
Faculty of architecture, Brno University of
Technology,
brab.marie@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Generation called “millenials” comes up with a new lifestyle the market needs to adapt to in order to keep up with the latest trends. The generation is provided with almost unlimited possibilities for their own realization in the field of interest. The passion for traveling and discovering new things is not endowed with long-term planning and the generation prefers temporary forms of functioning, identifying with emerging trend of pop-up. The success of pop-up builds also on unlimited opportunities of abandoned and neglected places directly in centres of cities following the economic recession of past decade. There exist providers that mediate information between landlords of abandoned spaces and initiators of temporary activities. Most of them offer complete packages of end-to-end service, starting from an initial concept to accomplishing the project. The trend is moving further across continents. What is the key to success of pop-ups abroad? What is the story of individual projects in Brno (CZ)? Is a platform for communication the way to boost Czech pop-up scene? These are only some of issues that are being solved in this article.

POP-UP IN ABANDONED CITY SPACES

Definition

Pop-up trend brings a vision of a new dimension of architectural space. Traditional design approaches have focused primarily on a specified function of a building. Modern approach works with versatility of building use and its transformation over time in changing environment. Architects of pop-up present a proposal that results from conditions of that particular moment. Pop - up reflects the current economic situation, hot trends of society, potential of the building and possibilities of the owner; consequently every aspect of temporary use is individually adjusted to the specific environment. Moreover, temporary constructions can themselves become a catalyst of a lasting change. (de Smet, 2013)

Background

Experts often set revival of pop-up trend down to economic decline after 2008. Long-term business was replaced by an alternative that offered an option of short-term functioning without the need for fixed planning; a type of operation that brings opportunity of experiment, low cost running and creative self-realisation. These criteria address particularly the generalisation of Millennials so the market has started to orientate itself towards demands of them. Consequently the offer comes with a temporary concept. Pop-up focuses on a moment of surprise, on discovering something new and unusual, and thus Millennials are the first to go. A generation that craves for a unique experience is often considered to be the most enterprising generation of all time. Now more than ever is a fertile ground for starting own business and short-term planning offers almost unlimited possibilities for realization. (Gibbs, 2015)

Vacancy

Pop-up activities solve an absence of suitable places for running a new business by discovering and using abandoned spaces. It deals with temporary functions that adapt themselves to a given location, not the other way round which is a process common for long-term activities. It activates the place by placing minimum requirements on it. In every city there exist countless places that are vacant, there are no financial means for maintaining them, and they lie idle without any future plans for operation. Therefore they are suitable candidates for locating pop-up activities. (Bishop and Williams, 2012, p.24)

GENERATION OF MILLENNIALS

Millennials is a title ascribed to generation born at the turn of 20 century. The explanation generally defines two groups: generation Y born between 1981-1991 and generation Z born between 1991-2001. The fundamental difference is a level of technological development of the time. Generation Y has grown on personal computers, mobile phones and video games while generation Z has been influenced by arrival of tablets, smartphones and a boom of applications. A common feature of both generations is, however, a change in the way they communicate, in global measure. (Main, 2013)

They spend most of their lives online, connected to social media such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, counting on average up to 3 hours a day. Companies that want to get in the centre of their attention need to adapt to their style of communication. Nowadays it is not enough to be engaged on Facebook or Instagram profiles. Entrepreneurs need to attract people who dictate modern trends and are followed by masses, including major bloggers or important cultural journals. Sharing the moments of everyday life through web interface is significantly compared to the level of experience alive. (Makortoff, 2015)

Millennials love to discover new things, they keep up with technological progress, they are interested in healthy lifestyle, they are obsessed with sport activities and spend most of their time away from home. They yearn for relevant supply of information. They are noticeably affected by peer pressure; hot styles and direction of trends are dictated by individuals who have earned their prominent place on social networks. (Wright, 2013)

This generation has grown up in times that provide them with almost unlimited possibilities for self-development. Thanks to the technological advancement they success in their careers much earlier than it was common past decades. It is no exception that they start their business before they reach adulthood. Most of them have built their business on the internet and information technology. (Forbes, 2017)

Contemporary lifestyle comes with a revolution in organization of employment. Phenomenon called flexible office has created a demand for working places behind walls of offices and homes. There is a boom of places for meetings and working spreading across cities that adapt to flexible working hours of their customers. These are cafés and so called business hubs that often together with standard offer come up with additional value of Wi-Fi, coffee or printing in price of short term rental, even for an hour. They also do not have to be opened all-year-round, temporary or especially summer modes are trend of the present time. An example is the “Summer Pop-up Office” launched from 2016 by KOGAA in Brno on premises of former distillery (for more information about the project in case studies down in the article). (Bishop and Williams, 2012, p. 26)

PARTICIPANTS OF THE PROCESS

Owner of property

Abandoned spaces in the cities deserve more attention from the side of owners as they possess an unexpected potential in times of pop-up revival. The process of suburbanization concentrated interest further from the city centres, however, now is the time to search for available units back in these central parts. The idea of permanent designs becomes more and more just an unattainable goal due to frequent changes in demands of customers on market. Contemporary trends are directing the course of architecture in the way of temporary use which gives buildings the title of multiple use. It is inefficient to plan a complete reconstruction of a building at once not only due to financial cause but also absence of convictive permanent functional use. By the means of temporary activities the owner receives many advantages, many of them listed below. At first, pop-up industry builds on a moment of surprise. It draws attention to the space occupied even if the activity lasts for a day. By restricted lifespan it gives the owner possibility to try number of functions and receive feedback from the side of customer and tenant immediately on spot. It puts the venue in the centre of attention from the early beginning of a field test when the chosen temporary activities are matching hot trends of surrounding community. (Bishop and Williams, 2012, p. 37-42)

The scheme of fundraising can be simplified as following. At the beginning of activating a place the owner needs just a couple of square meters and a suitable activity that does meet zero requirements (i.e. no electricity, hygienic facilities, etc.). Each day of lease financial supplies are gathered with the help of efficient promotion and social communication. Attractiveness of the place rises with every other successful pop-up activity. In case of self-sufficient functioning activities are able to sponsor consequent phases of reconstruction and thus to widen an offer of temporary functions that can occupy the space.

Among other positives is the fact of maintenance and security. Temporary functions manage without large remodelling of a space, besides, tenants are often enthusiastic to take part in modifications. Activities in progress are likely to cooperate among themselves and complement each other in a way to make the place more attractive. They also watch over the place for their time being and provide the owner with basic security.

Pop-ups are also becoming a popular tool of representatives of city municipalities who are gradually detecting advantages of temporary use of vacant spaces. They are able to generate profits by encouraging commercial revitalization of these places and furthermore by enforcing appropriate steps

in revitalisation these they activate the spot and adjacent community, thereby bringing it back to city life. (Independent Retailer, 2015)

Idea holder

Followers of pop-up expect unique experience - selective services and products for optimal prices. The foremost advantage of these activities is its lifespan- a visitor is left the choice to participate; however, the short-term character of an event gives itself a clear notice "now or never".

In consideration of changing attitudes of customers towards buying and selling manners, long-term rents are becoming less common. Brands are looking for more flexibility: the average length of retail rental has declined over the last 20 years from twenty to five years. Pop-up stores and temporary retail spaces are becoming more attractive. The long-term massive construction of new commercial complexes is less widespread as retailers are more likely to engage in short-term experiments. (Milnes, 2017)

Pop-up activities are able to share space with others, mutually cooperate and complement each other and benefit from presence of other related functions. Consequently a cost of temporary businesses is reduced even more. A functional scheme is easy to modify and make variable and attractive. (Independent Retailer, 2015)

More and more companies which exist mainly online are discovering the benefits of introducing additional, physically-active pop-ups. Consumers still value personal experience that cannot be compared to the virtual one. They want to try things out, to have live experience. Even though online stores is growing exponentially, the number of goods returned is increasing. According to the research, society tends to return to so-called offline shopping. (Independent Retailer, 2015)

In some cases pop-ups are used as testing platforms. These may serve as a market survey since temporary style of operation does not create any large commitment for an entrepreneur and during a test phase it will show whether there exists demand for a specific kind of function. In other case it can present a product and verify if it is ready for production on a larger scale. Foremost advantage of these short-term releases is undoubtedly the increase in awareness of both the brand and the product. (The Economist, 2015)

Mediator

Current situation of Czech environment is described by absence of any functioning platform of a provider who would set the process of legal authorisation of a temporary activity. Pop-up businesses run as individual experiments without any unifying generic scheme. Therefore many promising temporary

concepts come to a grief early from the start as they get stuck in bureaucratic system. Systematic approach towards temporary activation of vacant places would bring benefits to all parties involved, not only owners or tenants. There exists a great demand for an institution that would be able to collect all data needed and to make the process of launching a pop-up business comprehensible. It would not only make the process faster but also it would prevent many valuable spaces in cities from destruction.

POP-UP PROVIDERS ABROAD

Pop Up Republic in the USA

Pop Up Republic (PUR) has belonged to leading end-to-end service providers of pop-up industry since 2012. Projects of them count to more than 30,000 pop-ups, including restaurants, events and promotion casts. The company has worked with a number of famous brands to create and launch their pop-up concepts.

PUR offers services to all parties involved in pop-up activities. It provides individuals who come with an idea with comprehensive information including legislation process, execution and operation. It assists trademarks to promote their visibility and awareness of people by creating pop-up concepts and their subsequent realization. For real estate owners PUR is one of the most suitable servers to find temporary tenants for their premises and to draw added financial resources from vacant space. At least, pop-up fans can visit their site where they can find hot information about newly launched pop-up activities. PUR maps and mediates all temporary happenings and has nearly 35,000 successful implementations.

The range of services starts from a primary idea and concept through a process of finding suitable premises, solving conditions of temporary rent, hiring employees, handling all necessary licenses and permits, logistics settings, data collection and analysis, and finally the whole event planning. At the same time the site works as a list of spaces for rent and without the need to log in you are given a list together with a map and detailed description of spaces matching entered criteria. Information is easy to read including specific location, measures, and price per day, week, or month. A simple web interface leads a potential user through a list of services to a form where they briefly describe their intention, and the whole process can begin. (PUR, 2017)

Go-PopUp in Europe and Asia

The Go-PopUp Alliance is one of the initiators of the first world alliance for

cooperation of five European and Asian pop-up markets - Berlin, Barcelona, Paris, Milan and Hong Kong. They all function at similar principle - the main objective is to promote communication at international level and to encourage the exchange of experience between cities, brands and last but not least followers of temporary business. The forementioned server offers a list of free places available for rent and issues a magazine that provides information about hot trends in pop-up industry. The added value, unlike the previous one, is that the owner of the object for temporary rent is able to assign his destination to the list of places on his own directly on the website. (Go-Pop-Up, 2017)

CASE STUDY - THE DISTILLERY / SOCIAL REACTOR

Intro

They call themselves “a custom-made community” (The Distillery, 2017) although they began as a studio of three called KOGAA. In a search for a place for their work they came across a vacant building in the centre of Brno. They introduced a contemporary world trend - pop-up - in a bigger scale than it was common in the city those days. Now they expand very quickly and present co-existence of various functions in the same space of an old distillery. And their activities have been meeting with an enthusiastic response of the public nowadays.

Where and why?

Objects of an old distillery were abandoned decades ago and no future plans were clear. As real professionals they revealed the real potential of the building from the first sight and a long process towards the step-by-step recovery was launched. “The Distillery is a convenient combination of small scale industrial building with a private ownership. Such a correlation enables quick and flexible dialog about the tenancy terms and conditions. The dialog is an essential part leading towards a contract which should become a solid foundation for any pop-up project.” (Joja, 2017)

The Owner

They described a relationship with the owner as quite challenging. “It is almost impossible to discuss an innovative architecture / urban vision with out-of-field clients who are, in a fact, grown up in different socio-urban environment than our generation. Our strategy was built upon the business plan introducing potential income to the owner from a building that didn't generate

any profit. Even though it sounds like an offer that cannot be refused, it consumed a significant time to convince them. We did highlight the benefits of a restoration development of the ruined estate, turning abandoned yard into a point of a social interest rising the public estimate of the property and bringing considerable amount of potential clients to all commercial subjects dwelling in the building. The strongest argument though was the fact that we started investing our time and work much sooner than the official contract was signed. An act like that brought the property owners to the understanding that our visions can be fulfilled.” (Joja, 2017)

Legal background

The obstructions of bureaucratic character have been present through the whole process of reconstruction. “The whole project is based upon creative approach in any possible field. Therefore the legal definition of The Distillery is a hybrid function reacting on aspect we want and regulations we need. Among major obstacles that slowed the whole process down belong insufficient education within the business field, minimal knowledge of development strategies (the real ones) and of course our limited funds.” (Joja, 2017)

Social reactor

The space is divided into a variety of different spaces. “The Distillery is multi-functional venue and is approved as a lasting function. Us, the management body - Social Reactor, sublet it to any client who fits and enriches the social scheme of our environment. In a case of subletters who demands higher hygienic or another regulation standard (by the law) then our approval allows are accepted in the form of pop-up (limited period functional intervention). Main cash flow is coming from the rent of subletters which is partially paid in advanced. Such a financial policy enables to cover costs for construction enhancement needed by the tenant.” (Joja, 2017)

Reconstruction in progress

Reconstruction in consecutive phases gives the community an opportunity to understand previous functioning of the building and to reflect the understanding in a decent intervention. As a consequence the genuine impression of the space is highlighted, a new function is introduced together with conserving the past character of the building for next generations of users. The building functions as a laboratory of different experimental approaches towards historical object. (Ruppert, 2017)

Influence

The community does not intend to provide public with any kind of sample manual for starting their own pop-up yet. “Our close encounters with a number of pop-up shows that big percentage of those are lossy (anti-profit). We are still searching for a profitable pop-up pattern that could move this phenomenon from the level of a trend up to the level of viable business.” (Joja, 2017) One of the beliefs of the founders is that if they succeed to make The Distillery a self-sufficient project they prove that a group of young enthusiastic penniless people can save abandoned building from decay and activate it again. They hope to motivate other architects in their effort. (Ruppert, 2017)

CONCLUSION

There can be found many servers of pop-up providers all across the globe, all based on the transfer of information from owners to end-users. They function as mediators who accelerate the whole process of activating abandoned city places and help to save them from final decay. At the same time these services bring significant social benefits, they enrich cultural life at a given location, and raise awareness of activities that are often hard to find without help of a functioning network of providers and information channels. A systematic approach to temporary activation of vacant spaces would bring benefits to all parties involved. There exists an increasing demand for the kind of institution in the Czech Republic. The aim is to gather all necessary data and make the process of launching and operating a pop-up business more accessible. The process would not only be faster but it would also prevent final decay of many valuable places in the cities. And pop-up activities are a tool to enrich community life and bring abandoned places back to life.

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