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TITLE

PERFORMATIVE INTERVENTIONS TO RE-CLAIM, RE-DEFINE AND PRODUCE PUBLIC SPACE IN DIFFERENT CULTURAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper asks how forms of ‘performative’ interventions can prompt processes of re-thinking which can, in turn, instigate the critical production of public space. Most importantly it asks how this methodology can manifest within various cultural and political contexts. Today, public spaces tend to be controlled either by the state or by private corporations. Neoliberal policies promote commercial interests which subsequently drives inequality and determines what can and cannot be accessed by the public. What we currently have in our neoliberal cities are in fact ‘pseudo’ public spaces.

In an attempt to form new understandings of this problem, our approach is rooted in feminist theories of performativity, which focus on how identities are persistently re-produced through performance. These theories consider how the ‘self’ is always entangled within everyday life interactions and how it is shaped by both societal and bodily practices.

Framing spaces as shapable, informed by the embodied dialectic relations between spaces and social relations, the study uses forms of performative methodology to create productive disruptions and ‘constructed situations’ (Debord, 2012). This methodology consists of intervening within these spaces in order to produce alternative public space and forms of publicness. Based on research conducted at the Sheffield School of Architecture, as well as a four-day invited workshop at the Floating University Berlin, this study investigates applications of performative practice methodology in the cities of Amman and Berlin.

The paper will begin by exploring how the two cities are regulated through various political and planning policies that affect public spaces. This line of enquiry will also involve questioning physical, social and political access to public space in these contexts and analysing the various actants, performative actions and processes that were involved in producing performative interventions.

The paper will conclude by discussing the potential and limitations of applying and translating such approaches in public spaces within different cultural and political contexts. As such, the study proposes a new methodological framework for re-thinking and provoking the critical production of public space through forms of performative spatial practice.

KEY WORDS
public space; pseudo-public space; performativity; performative spatial practice; rethink; critical production; alternative publicness; right to the city; translation; Amman; Berlin

INTRODUCTION

Our cities suffer from the neoliberal practices of public institutions, whose policies regulate and control 'public' spaces by imposing who can use these spaces and how. Hoskyns (2014) has highlighted how neoliberal policies replace the democratic control and management of the public, with regulations similar to those of the private realm. However, the definition of 'public space', as a space open and accessible to all, has undergone change. This change reflects a shift from the perception of democratic public spaces to those in power now determining, through state laws or the private realm, how citizens should behave and perform within them. Therefore, it could be argued that real 'public' space no longer exists in our contemporary neoliberal cities.

In order to gain a deeper understanding, it is important to examine how the notion of public space relates to other forms of publicness within different contexts. Habermas's work draws attention to cultural specificity as an empowering tool to construct a new public, one which demands political expressions and active citizenship, including that of the urban right (Németh, 2012). This varies with each city, depending on both cultural and geo-political location. David Harvey (2003) argues that the right to the city is about claiming collective community power in order to shape and reshape our cities as a form of commons. This participatory right is a right of all citizens and something which can be exercised throughout everyday urban life (Marcuse, 2009, p193).

Therefore, those 'right to the city' arguments constitute a social justice platform which is centred around a moral claim to participate in urban life. Importantly, they take a stance against economic, social or political agendas that estrange or alienate particular groups (Marcuse, 2009). Stavrides (2016, p.6) described the production of common processes through 'collective inventiveness', structuring them as alternatives which go against and beyond capitalism. He advocates the need 'to explore the emerging potentialities of resistance and creative alternatives beyond contemporary forms of domination in today's cities' (Stavrides, 2016, p.1).

This paper, through practice-led research at Sheffield School of Architecture and a four-day workshop at the Floating University Berlin with the architecture collaborative Raumlabor, tries to formulate a response to the commodified pseudo public spaces. It questions how a set of performative interventions can re-think, re-claim, re-define and produce 'public' space and what the different consequences are of the same interventions when they happen in Amman and Berlin.

Amman and Berlin were selected as metropolitan city cases situated in different cultural and social contexts. Both cities as politically and culturally different urban sites, give opportunities to test how performative spatial practices can be implemented in public space. They further reveal how these implementations provoke different reactions and consequences, from which lessons can be learned about the nature of these public spaces in their own contexts and by comparison between them. These associations generate different understandings between the European and the Arab context. Although very different culturally and geopolitically, in terms of their reputations these two cities reveal similarities – for example, both are seen as having progressive and innovative public space policies and both cities

are currently experiencing the ramifications of gentrification and segregation. Although most of our cities are suffering from spatial and social polarisation, these phenomena are highly visible in these selected cities. The selection of spaces to conduct performative interventions within each city context was based on how representative these spaces were in terms of different layers of publicness, division, gentrification and neoliberal practices.

This study traces the emergence of 'performative interventions' as a mode of critical spatial production, drawing from the Situationist international and their constructed situations (Debord, 2012). It also responds to a contemporary call for the need for architects and planners to engage with art and performance in order to produce critical spatial practices and alternative methods and tools (Rendell 2006).

Rendell suggests answers to this call by associating critical spatial practice with interventional and transformative practices/processes that questions the social conditions of spaces and the boundaries they encompass. Thus, this research follows this approach and positions itself within the same ideology. Such a definition opens up possibilities for spatial practices to have a performative turn, one that goes beyond the object by crossing architectural boundaries to include live/performance art, site-specific art practice and provocations for public participation. Rendell takes the example of the London-based collective MUF. For her, MUF and other similar practices which involve forms of methodological creative interventions, represent a significant critique to architecture through focusing on the socio-spatial relations throughout the process rather than on the output or the product.

In addition, our study uses Bruno Latour's 'Actor Network Theory' framework (2005) which addresses how both physical non-human and social human are equal 'actants' within any network caring on socio-spatial relations. He defines actants as actors which are actively constructing relations. This research defines forms of performative interventions as actants.

This paper's structure starts by theorising performative spatial practice that is than contextualised in each city. Firstly, we start by exploring how spaces are performed in each city. The methodology that is used for the first stage is based on observation and critical analysis of the policies that affect and produce the so called 'public spaces'. Secondly, the paper explores and tests a series of performative interventions that have been used to re-think and re-define 'public' spaces; by using these spaces, we investigate access to space and the specific actants who use these spaces.

Finally, discussions and reflections on the forms of alternative publicness, as well as those sets of communing relations which function as outputs from our performative spatial practice, are instigated. The study proposes a methodological framework based on forms of performative spatial practice. It used provocative signs within the performative interventions that took place in two differently geopolitically located metropolises and parallelly reflected on the limitations and potentials of such a method when applied in different cultural contexts.

PERFORMATIVITY AND SPATIAL PRACTICES

The notion of performativity can be referred back to Jal Austin's book (1962) *"How to do things with words"*. Austin added performative words to constative, declarative, where he believed that words can do performative actions. There are two important concepts that can enrich Austin's idea. Firstly, *"the presentation of the self in everyday life"* (Goffman, 1959), outlines how we are performing in our everyday experiences. Secondly, the 'Speech Act theory', by John Seral (1969), proved itself influential to Austin as it engages with how we are actually doing something when we speak. However, performativity goes beyond language, especially when it comes to body performativity. This is because the material body exists prior to language and speech; the speech is therefore embodied and can be considered a behavioural practice.

Since the late 1960s, visual artists have used performative spatial practices to question power, land ownership and resources. Examples of these performative practices, as cited in (Mcgaw, 2010), can be traced back to the Situationists, and performance artists such as Allan Kaprow and Carolee Schneemann(ref). They were responding to capitalist environments and traditional art practices through embracing collaborations and/or challenging cultural habits.

In the field of architecture, although the past two decade have seen the introduction of words such as 'performative', 'unfolding processes', 'operative' and 'events' into architectural vocabulary, architects have rarely used them as a way of questioning power relations within critical spatial practice. Recently however, architecture practices are witnessing a performative turn, even if it is not that pervasive. Rendell (2006) highlights throughout her observations during the past two decades, that some architects are using architecture as an artistic practice for public engagement, as well as for critiquing social and political relations. Some of these critical spatial practices used the work of Foucault, Bourdieu, the Frankfurt School and recently Soja, to criticise modernist architecture.

To go back to the Situationists, the interest of performativity in architecture can be traced back to them, as they went beyond traditional critical spatial practices by proposing alternative approaches to re-thinking cities through what they called 'unitary urbanism'. They challenged the structure of the city through performance and 'psychogeography, essentially mobilising playing as a way to explore the city (Wigley, 1998).

The Situationists 'constructed situations' refer to the act of co-producing scenarios out of a group of people that incite and provoke active participation as a form of resistance to the typical passive consumerist life (Debord, 2012).
Through these situations, they are actively recapturing and transforming everyday lived experiences into politised experiences, as a form of reclaiming, through art and theorising, something Debord (2012) called the 'Society of the Spectacle'. He posited that the *"…spectacle is capital to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes an image…"*. As in the case of 'constructed situations', performative critical practice very clearly demonstrated and responded to the need for re-claiming the city; graffiti is an example of this, by being deployed in the streets, it produces a sense of ownership reclaiming at the same time a right to the city.

A notable architectural example of Situationist practice from the 1960s is the project ‘The New Babylon’ by architect Constant Nieuwenhuys. It puts forward a vision of a city in which people can play, produce and engage in a fluid way, critiquing modernism and re-defining architecture to become transformative, reassembled and spontaneous (Sadler, 1999). Constructing situations in architecture is further found in Bernard Tschumi’s project "Fireworks: An Architectural Performance”. Tschumi, who has used performative spatial practice in architecture since 1974, values those architectural practices in which ‘the architecture of situations’ is not physical, but rather socially constructed by people’s re-appropriations of physical spaces. (Tschumi et al. 1986).
Rem Koolhaas also appears to support Tschumi, when he argues that spaces should be produced by users’ re-appropriations, and that architects should only produce spaces where a multiplicity of events can occur (Koolhaas,1995). From this collection of arguments, it can be concluded that although performative spatial practices might not produce spatial forms, they can be collaborative or hybrid, and can question, reveal and unfold throughout the process. This in turn, produces social relations and enables critical ways of addressing issues concerning the right to the city.

Another theoretical perspective on performative practices stems from identity theory. In relation to this, I have argued that, Butler’s idea of identity shows how identities can be performatively reproduced and shaped by both societal expectations and bodily practices. More recently, Butler's work "Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly" draws on scholars of social movements such as Occupy Wall street, Tahrir Square in Cairo, Black Lives Matter, and others. She engages with various political philosophers such as Agamben, Arendt and Adorno to forge a new theory addressing the condition of global assembly through performative embodied interventions which are performed as forms of resistance. When bodies come together in the street, they are ‘here’, and they have the ‘right to appear’, for instance, in the United State Black Rights movements as well as in France, Muslim women were resisting the ban of veil (Yaghi, 2017).

Although the examples cited above are directly related to space produced through everyday life experiences, this is not the rule in contemporary architectural practice which tends to work with the idea of a depoliticized space. Prost (2008) argues that most architectural agencies place emphasis on what has to be photographed and published in magazines instead of focusing on the users’ adaptation to space. However, architectural practice should be able to accommodate politically active experiences. It could be argued that the more critical practices tend to be less spatial. For instance, the Arab spring started through a virtual ‘public’ space.

Similarly, in the book titled “This is Not Architecture”, Colomina (2002), remarkably proposed an approach of using architecture as an interpretive and critical act. Further, Schneider and Till (2008) addressed the question of “how an alternative model might contribute to the development of contemporary and future architectural practice”, presenting alternative forms of architectural praxis, which tackle social and political concerns. This includes re-defining the role of architects for civic society, both socially and politically. The authors provide examples, such as Santiago Cirugeda, Centre for Urban Pedagogy, Foundation for Achieving Seamless, Territory (FAST) and Jeanne van Heeswijk, and Jonathan Charley’s work which embraces

alternative forms to capitalism, Stratford, Petrescu and Petcou (2008) remind us of the performative work of Romanian architects in the 1980s, this time in a different political context, critically discussing architects' spatial practices which questioned orthodoxies in Architecture, challenged the Ceausescu totalitarian regime and proposed alternative approaches to architectural pedagogy.

It is clear that architecture needs to include performative spatial practices that intervene, mediate and sustain. They can serve to provoke, open up debates, question and raise ordinary citizens' awareness about people's rights to their city; they can mediate between the different actants and sustain long term citizen involvement. The aforementioned theories and practices have informed the employment of performative interventions. The inspiration behind how to design these interventions, which involved the use of provocative signs framed as relational actants which were used alongside other tools and actions, are drawn from two main fields. The first field is in the realm of contemporary art, in particular feminist approaches, notable examples being the work of Valie Export,Yoko Ono and Marina Abramovich.The second field is in the realm of activism and protest. Critical examples include the Femen movement in Eastern Europe whereby women display their naked chests in protest of the male-dominated religious order, the Arab Spring in North Africa where protesters occupy public spaces, Extinction Rebellion in London which sees activists holding climate protest panels, and the 'Cube of Truth' by the Anonymous voiceless group which protests corrupted politics. The methodological innovation in designing these performative forms centres on how these two approaches, the artistic and activist, can be combined together in order to re-claim, re-act and poetically provoke the inhabitants' right to their spaces. These processes construct situations which productively disrupt power structures and reveal power inequalities both of which unite to resist the commodified pseudo-public spaces in the city. Testing forms of performative interventions within various social, cultural and political contexts involves revealing, on the one hand, the various struggles for urban rights, and on the other, the potential for common(ing) processes in the production of alternative meanings of publicness.

AMMAN

Amman, as the capital city of Jordan, was appointed such by the new state of Trans-Jordan in 1921, which in turn ushered in significant changes for the country. The multiple waves of forced migrants, refugees, and the establishment of refugee camps have significantly contributed to the production of Amman. In particular, the influx of Palestinian refugees during the 1947-49 Arab-Israeli War *(Al Nakba)* had a large-scale effect on Amman's urban character and its architectural appearance. The people of Amman acknowledge the phenomenon that the city is socio-culturally divided between its Eastern and Western parts (Ham and Greenway, 2003). Although there is no physical line for this division, many scholars recognise that there is a clear border between the two Ammans; for example, Abbabsa cartographic research conducted in 2011 clearly illustrates this division line. Some scholars refer to the division as a consequence of the refugee influx which increased the demand on resources (Hacker, 1960; Munif,1994; Rifai, 1996). Others posit the division as related to the oil boom in 1973 which produced surplus capital from the Gulf states (Abu Khalil, 2007; Al Asad, 2008; Biegel, 1996; Shami, 2007).

Like all other major cities in the region, Amman has been experiencing the privatization of the public realm and an increase in neoliberal projects, visible examples being the Abdali Boulevard and numerous shopping malls (Taj, City, Abdali and Mecca). What is important in this discourse is to address how the definition of 'public' spaces in Amman has changed. According to Carmona et.al (2010,137), there are three vital principles that should be considered when defining a space as 'public'. Firstly, and most importantly, is the ownership of space. Secondly, is access to space, i.e. whether the space is open and available to everyone or if there are some conditions that allow people to access it, for example museum entry fees. Thirdly, is the ability for individuals and different groups of people to be allowed to use the space actively, for example for various social or political activities (i.e. protests, celebrations, picnics, etc…). However, the definition of public space has changed as a consequence of the implementation of a neoliberal management policy (Hoskyns, 2014). Neoliberalism and other political factors have replaced governmental democratic public management frameworks with private corporate management. The lack of political spaces in the Arab world results in citizens appropriating alternative spaces, either physical (cafés, roundabouts, etc…) or virtual (the internet, etc). Thus, it could be argued that the only spaces that are still able to host various socio-political activities in Amman are the re-appropriated roundabouts and specific virtual spaces.

Due to this reality, it was significant that Egyptian activists during the Arab Spring used the internet space to organise multiple protests at roundabouts. In a similar manner, Ammanis currently use online spaces to express their concerns in regard to government policies (Jordan Times, 2018). For instance, recent protests in June and November 2018 against the government's Income Tax Bill and other economic measures, took place at the Fourth roundabout (Aljazeera, 2018). Therefore, it could be argued that public spaces in Amman exist only through processes of re-performing and re-appropriating existing' pseudo public spaces. Re-appropriating roundabouts to protest is a manifestation of citizens' ability to claim unusual spaces as 'public', whereby public spaces are performed and re-appropriated in ways that go beyond their designed intentions.

During my fieldwork in Amman, which aimed at exploring how public spaces are performed in Amman city, I was asked by some members of the public, *"what do you mean by "public space"?"*. Hearing such a statement from ordinary citizens is understandable given the context. The city is a real pawn to a 'market-based paradigm' of development (Madanipour, 2009). It is in this context that I planned a number of performative interventions in various spaces in Amman, all of which were representative of the divided city (See Figure 1). This paper will include the forms of interventions made on one site, to illustrate the 'constructed situations' which were used. This particular study refers to the performative intervention that took place at "*The Boulevard".* This location was selected as it represents the contemporary downtown, which is 'publicly' owned and privately managed – in other words, the 'public' does not have open access. This space is vibrant and attracts many residents because it provides many opportunities for activities, especially during festivities.

However, it could be argued that this space participates in a heightened perception of the existing gap between rich and poor. The Boulevard is part of the Abdali Urban Regeneration Project, which includes a shopping mall, flats and a hotel. In fact, the

'private' Abdali is not completely private. It is, on paper, a publicly owned company with connections to the military foundation, the Royal Court, GAM, the Rafiq Hariri-owned Saudi Oger, the Kuwaiti Projects Holding Company (KIPCO), and the Royal family (Hanshaw et al, 2018). This reveals that the blurred line between the neoliberal public realm and private realm have produced an exclusive space. During festivities, access to The Boulevard is conditioned by an entrance fee. Observations of the various rules, as well as how people were performing in and using the space took place in order to gain an understanding as to what gestures people use in a privately owned and managed 'public' space. I concluded that rules, gates, policemen and security were significant actants of this space.

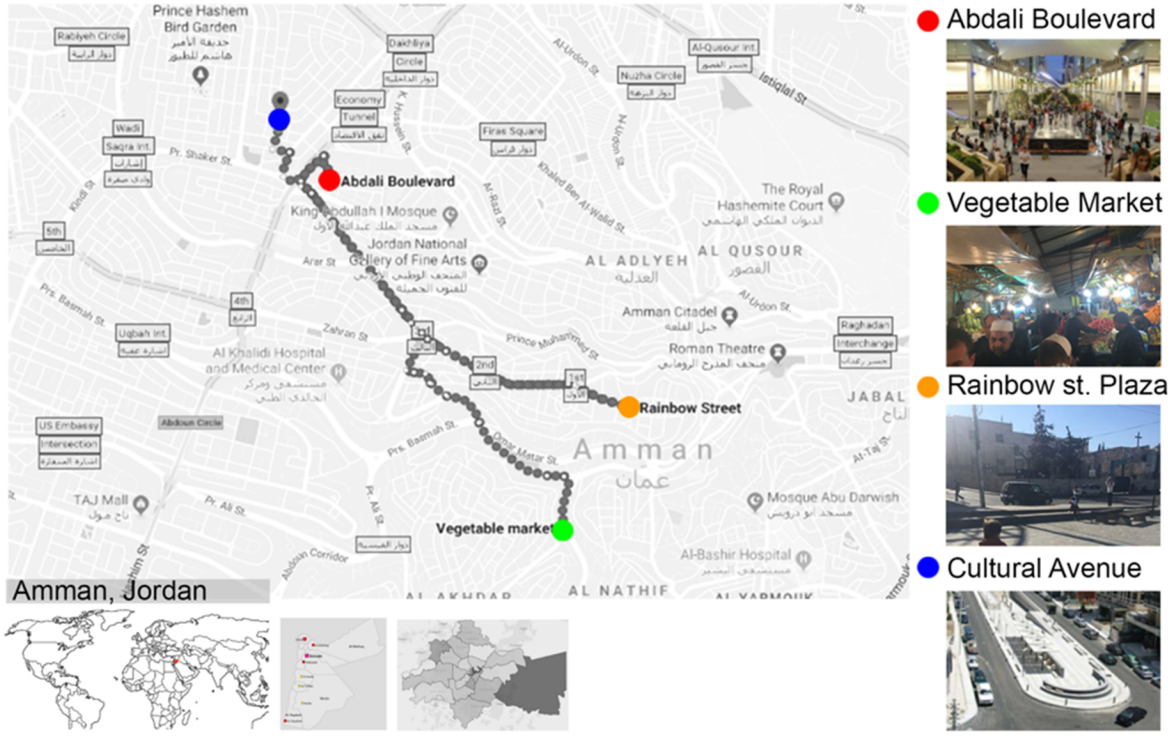

Figure 1. The locations where forms of performative intervention took place, Amman-Jordan (Author, 2017).

Performative interventions in Amman

The performative interventions in Amman took various forms throughout the research. This paper highlights only one of these forms, focusing on setting up the methodologies and approaches adopted for these interventions. The first performative intervention took place at '*The Boulevard'*. As a 'constructed situation', it involved carrying a provocative sign that read, *'I am a public space, talk to me'*, written in both Arabic and English (see Figure 2). Actions involved walking in and around spaces and stopping when approached by people in the afore mentioned spaces throughout the day. This form of performative action critically produced spaces of dialogue and provoked some residents to 're-perform' through standing, walking and having active conversations about their everyday experience in the space. Drawing from local and international alternative practices, such as Public works (UK), "Site-Seeing: Constructing the 'Creative Survey" (Butterworth et al, 2007), ON/OFF Berlin, MUF Architecture (UK), Textual public space from Hong Kong's umbrella movement, Sulimen Mansourt's 'Art and ambivalence in the Arab

Spring', Spider man metro performance in Egypt's Arab spring revolution and Performance project "Where are the Arabs?" – staged by local artist Samah Hijawi (Yaghi, 2017), these performative interventions have been designed to adapt to the cultural specificity of Jordan. Signs were somehow culturally acceptable because they have been often used in the region for political protests. However, it could have be seen as culturally inappropriate to use the body for performative interventions. As Ababsa states,

"Men control public space in Amman. This is true for nearly the entire city. […]. It isn't socially acceptable for a woman to walk alone after sunset […] Disregarding these unwritten rules will often expose women to suggestive remarks and unwanted compliments and/or insults." (Ababsa, 2017).

Although male bodies dominate Amman's public space, there are however a set of social and cultural norms that might restrict exposing any kind of body, whatever the gender. For instance, dancing in public space is socially and culturally unacceptable for both genders. These norms are resulting from the Muslim rule which prevails in Jordan..

The performative method chosen also provoked residents to participate informally through a self-selection process, rather than through choosing and enrolling them into a formal research inquiry. Moreover, this method proved be effective within the pilot studies conducted both in Jordan and in the German context. Additionally, using provocative signs made the performative spatial practice political. In terms of political activities in Amman, Tobin (2012) argues that since permission is required from the government for residents to protest, this can potentially limit the participation in such political activities. However, when permission is granted, political activities such as protests do occur in various spaces, such as outside Mosques (examples being Al Hussieni and Al Kaloti) after Friday prayer, a time and space which is typically the city's largest gathering of people. Another popular location of official protest is the parking space of the Professional Associations Complex or roundabouts (i.e. *Al Dakhliya* and *the Fourth* roundabout). The lack of political spaces in the Arab world results in citizens appropriating alternative spaces.

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Figure 2. Performative intervention which included holding a provocative sign that reads “I am a public space, talk to me” in Abdali Boulevard, Amman-Jordan (Author, 2017).

Alternative publicness in Amman

The performative intervention provoked residents to ‘re-perform’ by stopping, walking with me and having dialogues about their spaces. It also instigated a discussion into the reclaimed, redefined and critically produced alternative public space in which they found themselves and productively disrupted the perceived presence of power structures while simultaneously revealing power inequalities. Surprisingly, fourteen out of the twenty participants were women. Eventually, after two hours, I was approached by security and a policeman and was told to stop my activity, despite me having documents stating the purpose of my research. This raised more questions: what and whom is this space for? Who controls it? Why are we not allowed to talk about it, if public? Why does the owner and/or the state want us to be consumers only? Why does the state or the owner decide how we should perform in these spaces? Is it a real ‘public’ space?

On the other hand, the performative intervention did encourage and provoke some residents to participate and critically produce interesting ‘spaces of dialogues’ about their experience of this space. However, the method did not work with all, as some people were reluctant to talk. This could be considered as one of the limitations of the method; it may even be seen as factor of exclusion, as it was an unusual action for many people. Notably, most participants preferred anonymity for unidentified reasons. This could align with the lack of political activities and spaces in the city. As Schwedler argues, “protest activities in Jordan are affected not only by the non-democratic nature of the state, but also by the country’s physical changes that are the direct result of rapidly expanding neoliberal economic reforms” (Schwedler, 2012).

Despite this, 11 out of the 20 narratives that were collected valued the space and expressed their views about what makes it so great. For example, some women expressed how safe the space is, as the presence of police, security and cameras protected them from verbal harassment from men. The central recurring theme that emerged however was about the invisible rules that exclude the poor. Many narratives seemed to approve the privately-managed and securitised status of the Boulevard, and the way in which access is controlled for its users, noting aspects that give it an advantage over more democratic spaces with less surveillance. Such views contrast those of scholars who have expressed concerns about the ways in which certain spaces exclude precarious and underprivileged groups, or control behaviour via surveillance (Németh and Schmidt, 2011; Koskela, 2000). On the other hand, some families did critique their experience within the Abdali Boulevard, complaining about the entrance fee and other costs involved. As one participant said, *'….I have paid at least 20 JD for myself and my kids and that's only for popcorn, coffee, and the entrance fee, but since my kids like this place then the cost has to be covered.... by the way, this 20 JD does not include if my kids wanted to play in the mall'* (P13). Another criticism concerned the dress code; one visitor was rejected entry due his clothing style, *"…I came after work, tired and wearing my joggers and flip flops…the security did not let me in because I was wearing flip flops. I found it weird and I had no choice but to go back and change. Other than that the place is amazing" (P6).*

These narratives highlight the socio-economic barriers to overcome. Together with the entry fee, the dress-code proved to be a crucial factor for exclusion i.e. the "poor" will be identified through the dress code and will not be allowed to enter the space.

While the performative intervention may not have led many of the participants to question the tactics of exclusion in the public space they experienced every day, the act of creating a space for dialogue revealed some of the unspoken and unwritten rules that constitute this space.

Therefore, the performative intervention revealed how the production of alternative "publicness" could take place through provoking residents to question access to space. Moreover, standing in a privately owned space and holding a sign that read 'I am a "public space"' critically disrupted the rules of this space and functioned as an attempt to raise people's awareness about their right to access the city's spaces.

BERLIN

Politics affect how spaces are regulated and performed. From 1949 until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990, Germany was divided into East and West. Although the "how reunification is going" report (2015) highlighted that there is not much to distinguish in terms of living standards between Eastern and Western Berliners after reunification, there are still socio-economical divisions which manifest in different fields. An article published in 2014 in the Washington Post titled "The Berlin Wall fell 25 years, but Germany is still divided", highlighted these divisions, noting that the historical separation has not been wielded. One year later, The Guardian also published an article titled "German reunification 25 years on: how different are East and West really" highlighting the post- reunification divisions whereby differences

persist also in terms of wages: people in the East earn two-third in comparison to people in the West. In addition to wages inequality, poverty risk tends to be 25% higher in the East in comparison to the West (ibid). Overall, these facts prove that the Berlin wall still has a significant impact on the city.

The performative interventions took place within the premises of the Floating University Berlin (FUB) and in the neighbourhood where the project is located (See figure 3). This is a temporary structure that was conceived and built by architects Raumlabor as a civic university platform that connects academics, architects, artists, experts and citizens interested in collaboratively working together to deliver a program open to the public. Together with Helen Stratford, we were invited to run a workshop entitled 'Pseudo Public Space' aimed at generating performative explorations of spaces in the neighbourhood where the FUB is located. Through observation and direct actions, we explored the neighbourhood as a group, starting with the FUB itself and then going through Sudstern U-Bahn, Sehitlick Mosque, and Tempelhofer Feld. We observed and collected gestures, norms, rules, and actions that related to each space. Beyond our group, which included myself, my colleague and ten participants, different actants were involved in this process including, amongst others, a policeman, who was living and working in the neighbourhood for 30 years and the Imam at the Mosque who gave us a tour around the Mosque.

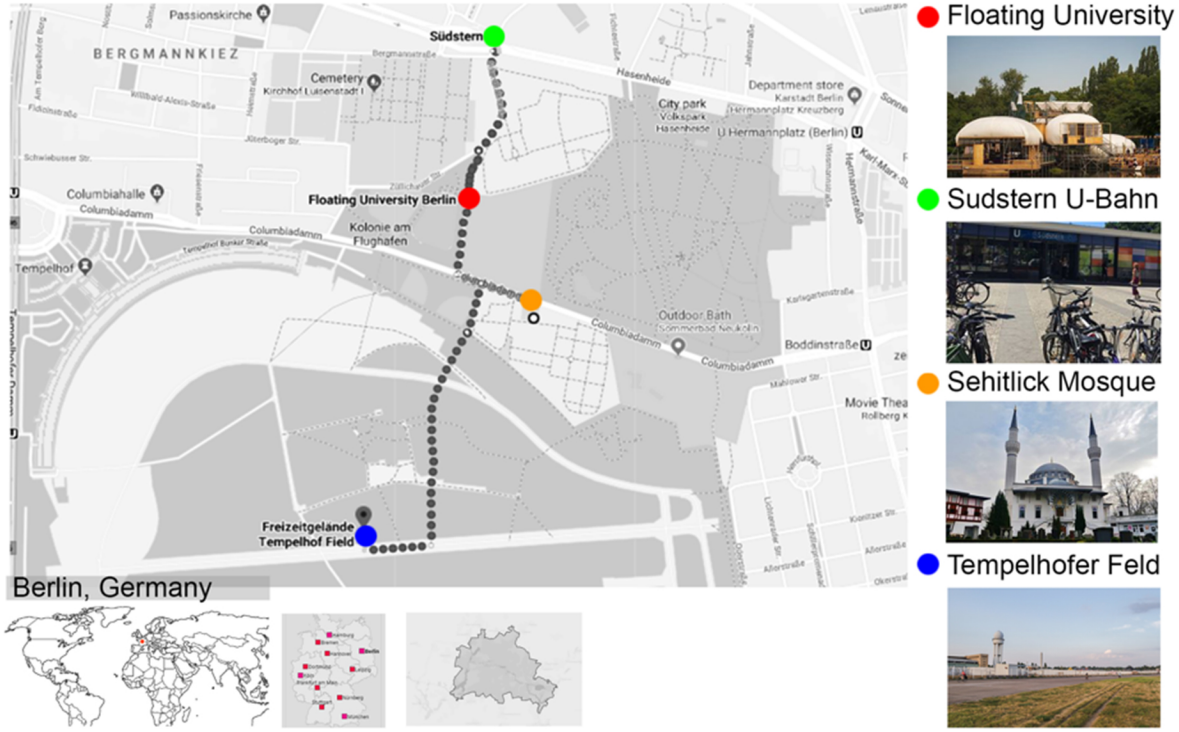

Figure 3. The locations where forms of performative intervention took place in the Floating University Berlin neighbourhood (Author, 2018)

Performative Interventions in Berlin

The workshop questioned 'how can public space be rethought and produced through performative methodologies?'. Throughout the workshop, we explored various forms of performative interventions and 'constructed situations', which engaged with different public spaces in the neighbourhood. The workshop also aimed to

encourage re-definitions of the notion of public space itself. Different forms of performative spatial practice were developed with architects and designers from the Berlin-based interdisciplinary design studio ON/OFF. This paper comments only on the performative interventions which used provocative signs within the Floating University neighbourhood. Through these interventions we also questioned and made visible 'whom are these spaces for?' and 'how are these spaces performed?'. Furthermore, we tested what these signs provoked in terms of exchange and critical interaction, which allowed us to compare them with experiences in Amman.

Throughout the Berlin workshop, our usual forms of performative interventions tested in Amman, were further developed. This initially involved collectively constructing situations around provocative signs; they were asked to use provocative signs relative to the space they were occupying, which prompted critical dialogue by provoking members of the public to re-think their spaces. Each group included three to four participants. The first group's sign read: "*Do you want to join us?"*, written in both German and English. Actions for the first group involved sitting down in a circle and occupying the space in front of the Sudstern Uban station. The second group held a sign that read: "*Which direction are we going in?"* written in both German and English. Actions involved standing in the middle of the Sudstern Uban station, occupying the space. The third group had a German only sign asking "*was kannst du heir ouf dem plotz mochen? und was nicht*" which translates to 'what can/cannot you do in this space?'(See Figure 4). Actions involved standing, walking and stopping when approached by members of the public. The third group occupied the front of a privately-owned space [an expensive café] close to the Sudstern Uban Station. The second and third groups constructed situations by provoking people to "re-perform" through active conversations about their everyday experience in the space. However, no members of the public joined the first group. It was interesting to see how some of these interventions provoked members of the public to join while others did not. This could have been in relation to what the sign stated, the nature of actions, the location, the cultural and social context and the way we were perceived.

Figure 4. Performative intervention between the privately-owned cafe and Sudstern Uban Station, Berlin (Author, 2017).

The second performative intervention involved using tape to write ‘WHY NOT’ on the Sudstern Uban Station wall next to the entrance, while also placing other instructions next to it (See Figure 5). These provocative interventions involved encouraging members of the public to play and challenge the rules and norms, highlighting the possibilities and limitations of that space. Leaving the sign and guidelines after the end of the workshop allowed the space to continue to be used for play, interpretation and experimentation.

Figure 5. Performative intervention at Sudstern Uban Station wall, Berlin (Stratford, 2017).

The final performative intervention in the FUB neighbourhood, involved developing the original intervention through combining the provocative signs performance with the project ‘Disco Spati’, designed by ON/OFF. This involved forming an assembly of participants who sat, stood and had conversations with members of the public (See Figure 6). Actions included the Disco Spati group, accompanied by loud music and a crate to sell beers, provocatively displaying dual-lingual signs saying ‘WHAT ARE WE ALLOWED TO DO HERE?’ The intension was to create a productive disruption in the neighbourhood around Floating University.

Figure 6. Combining provocative signs with the ON/Off 'Disco Spati' (Author, 2017).

Alternative publicness in Berlin

As mentioned earlier, the selected spaces within both cities are representative of the conditions of privatisation and gentrification. Engaging with these spaces therefore cemented a need to challenge these conditions through performative interventions. Doing this raised the same questions which arose in Amman, 'What and whom are these spaces for?' and 'who controls them?'

Different forms of alternative publicness were created through the various interventions tested, that produced spaces of dialogue. Members of the public stopped and had discussions, rethinking their spaces. This opened up the Floating University to the neighbourhood, through actively inviting passers-by and residents of the area to engage with these activities. Alternative publicness was produced by involving participants in the development of the proposition; In this sense, gestures like taping "WHY NOT" on the wall, hanging up instructions, and leaving chalk for further action, served to provoke the public. This proposition which was left open in the space after the workshop ended, was used by members of the public to re-think the space in a playful way, opening it up to new interpretations and possibilities. Finally, the collaboration with ON/OFF's Disco Spati proposition, resulted in the critical production of alternative publicness and knowledge which productively disrupted the space. ON/OFF's proposition by itself bends the rules, establishing where they are not allowed to sell beer. However, what makes the action permissive is the fact that it used a wheeled prop. This allowed the proposition to be rolled across roads from Marheinekeplatz to Sudstern accompanied by the provocative sign "what are we allowed to do?" Instigating participant actions and assemblage, was a way to critically produce spaces of discussion and debate. Notably it raised the question of restrictions citizens might have when using public space.

Furthermore, across the workshop, several re-definitions of public space took place with each intervention. Thus, shifting perceptions was the key theme that emerged throughout our intervention in Berlin. For example, at the beginning of the workshop, participants defined 'public' space as open for all. However, alternative definitions followed during the workshop, understating public space from 'highly controlled' to 'full of potential- open for interpretation and play'. The most interesting lessons that were learned from this context, were about how to engage in collective actions through assembling, collaborating with experts and external practices, reclaiming more recognition and making visible invisible rules. There were also about learning how the Floating University Berlin as a platform can be opened to the neighbourhood to more interpretations and experimentations.

DISCUSSION

Through testing and translating a series of performative interventions in selected spaces in Amman and Berlin, the strongest finding of the study derived from the Floating University Berlin (FUB) and its neighbourhood which was deemed public. FUB is recognized for its excellence as a platform for experimentation and collaboration. Other cities should learn from the success of this platform and implement its methodology: i.e. self-building, open programming and self-management, to name three. Furthermore, in comparison to Amman, testing spaces in Berlin was relatively easy. This was due to the pre-existing collective dimension and the fact that participants were asking questions regarding their right to the city. In Amman, performative acting in public space was clearly restricted. In both cases, the performative spatial practice questioned public spaces, provoked the public to re-think their spaces and produced spaces of critical dialogue.

Comparing Arab and Western contexts, this study highlights that forms of performative interventions can be embodied for a certain set of aims (as previously mentioned). However, employing performative interventions as a form of research is challenging (but not impossible) in the Arab contexts, considering that cultural norms and the political systems in place create restrictions for such types of actions. Challenging regulations and rules, whether from the state or private cooperation, can become problematic in these contexts, due to the security measures in place. However, in both cities, testing and translating forms of performative interventions critiqued these spaces, through re-defining the notion of public space differently in each city. Across their different geo-political and cultural settings, the definition ranged from open space for all, to highly regulated, to the private realm; through the appropriation of roundabouts and virtual spaces in Amman and full of potentials-open for interpretation and play in Berlin.

Moreover, the significant implication of this practice-led research is the critical production of alternative publicness in the selected cities, something which is rooted in Lefebvre's social production of space, i.e. 'the right for all citizens regardless of their backgrounds to fully participate in everyday urban life' (Marcuse, 2009). Thus, the production of inclusive and democratic public spaces should happen through public engagement, because the involvement of citizens themselves gives them the opportunity to reinterpret, critically produce and restructure their spaces, whether social or physical (Lefebvre, 1991; Saleem, 2015; Young, 2002). Importantly, the

performative interventions provided insight into how to claim a 'right to the city', (Lefebvre, 1991). In this case, it is the citizens' right to critically re-think, question, and critically produce alternative public spaces in their cities. Testing and translating forms of performative spatial practice, through the use of provocative signs which explicitly questioned the degrees of publicness within public space, provoked people to re-think and start dialogues about their everyday experiences.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that in our neoliberal contemporary cities, the degree of publicness within public space is regulated either by the state or by private corporations. In response, this practice-led research aimed at proposing a performative methodological framework in order to rethink and critically produce public space in various political and cultural contexts. Designing and operating forms of performative intervention, which involved the use of provocative signs together with various actions and tools, challenged and productively disrupted existing rules within different public spaces in an attempt to facilitate, as defined by Lefebvre, citizens' 'right to the city'.

Throughout the process of operating and testing forms of performative interventions in the different political and cultural contexts of Amman and Berlin, a variety of translation and construction modes were employed due to the different potentialities and limitations of these cities. The results provided insights into the diverse forms of alternative publicness and knowledge. Findings showed that in Berlin public spaces were relatively permissive and open for interpretation, while in Amman they were largely restricted. Additionally, this study produced alternative spaces of dialogue and alternative knowledges through uncovering and making visible hidden rules and norms and generating reflections out of the narratives which re-defined public space. This study argues that 'performing' differs from 'just observing', shown through its processes of making visible, and its ability to re-claim and generate alternative knowledge .Through such forms of performative practice, it was always power 'with' rather than power 'over' which was performed, in contrast to the top-down, modus operandi of traditional architectural practices. Forms of alternative knowledge were also socially produced through critical performative practices that revealed the invisible rules that regulate public space. As such the notion of public space was redefined each time, with each intervention: from a space open to all, to one highly regulated. In Amman, there was the re-appropriation of infrastructural space and virtual space, in Berlin, a space open for interpretations.

The key implication for this research is proposing alternative critical approaches to the normative architecture of public spaces. As mentioned earlier, Berlin, with the construction of FUB, is already starting to employ such civic, live and performative approaches through hosting workshops for experts and scholars, (as it was the case with us) in order enable alternative practices to emerge.

The critical production of alternative public space and how the right to the city is performed was different within each context. In Berlin, FUB offered access to collective forms which allowed further interventions. However, in Amman, I was by myself holding the provocative sign and the act was restricted by the security and police. However, how users performed and participated in Amman was encouraging.

This raises questions of ‘can we perform collectively in Amman?’ ‘What could be the equivalent of the FUB in Amman?’. Nevertheless, it could be possible to sustain this critical production of public space through re-shaping Amman’s higher educational institutions as partners and the foundation for such alternative practices which challenge, question and re-claim processes.

This study suggests a need for new practices, such as performative spatial practices to critique the role of the architect in shaping neoliberal cities. Further research and testing of provocative forms of performative interventions are needed, particularly in the Arab context where it can be used to critically challenge the cultural and political regulations of contemporary public spaces.

Performative interventions, in other words, force power to make itself visible in ways that lead to public questioning. This in itself can be a (albeit brief) stimulus for the critical production of alternative publicness in the social production of space. In Marcuse’s words, this critical production works towards ensuring “the right for all citizens regardless of their backgrounds to fully participate in everyday urban life” (Marcuse, 2009).

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