Inflating the Public: A Series of Urban Interventions

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Abstract—The Green Urban Lab took the form of public installations that were placed at various locations in four cities in Cyprus. These installations - through which a series of events, activities, workshops and research took place - were the main tools in regenerating a series of urban public spaces in Cyprus. The purpose of this project was to identify issues and opportunities related to public space and to offer guidelines on how design and participatory democracy improvements could strengthen civil society, while raising the quality of the urban public scene. Giant inflatable structures were injected in important urban fragments in order to accommodate series of events. The design and playful installation generated a wide community engagement. The fluid presence of the installations acted as a catalyst for social interaction. They were accessed and viewed effortlessly and surprisingly, creating opportunities to rediscover public spaces.

Keywords—Bottom-up initiatives, creativity, public space, social innovation, urban environments.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE Green Urban Lab (GUL) is a project carried out by the Urban Gorillas NGO together with two partners, the Architecture Department of the University of Nicosia and the Dendros Ltd. It is an initiative to regenerate public spaces in Cypriot cities. The project intends to raise awareness on the importance of public spaces, which are lacking from the Cypriot urban culture. It aims at developing socially sustainable cities through bottom-up initiatives that endorse participatory democracy. The main tools adopted for the realization of this mission consist of utilizing participatory action research, both in terms of direct urban interventions and with observatory on-site research. Inflating the temporary structures is the vehicle through which urban spaces are claimed within urban significant fragments that were not originally intended for public use: As urban dreamers, the project participants literally and provocatively 'inflated the public' instantaneously yielding to a temporary regeneration of the area, thus setting the preconditions of the emergence and re-emergence of the public realm. The active participation of the local community in its diverse members, including a wide spectrum of minorities was the major precondition of the project.

This research paper pursues in parallel a theoretical and applied part on how the project GUL was developed and implemented. The theoretical part presents literature on social innovation and its importance in the development of a sustainable and healthy city. Literature on public spaces will put forward their importance as a fundamental ground where social innovation patterns within the city emerge. The applied part analyzes how the project brought forward issues of participation and social sustainability through the concrete examples of a series of urban interventions that took place in Cyprus in 2014-2015. In this part the examination involves the study of everyday public spaces and their transformation that related to the notion of the space not as a site but as an event.

The project has a particular focus on grassroots initiatives of interconnected communal networks that lead to a reorganization of urban spaces and generated social innovation schemes and produce a new model for improving public spaces.

II. PUBLIC SPACES AS A SETTING FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION

"Public spaces are a platform where numerous public concerns can be addressed and where fundamental questions such as citizen participation in public life can be scrutinized. Simply defined, public spaces should be accessible to all groups, allow freedom of action, contain playful social interactions, and permit inclusion and privilege of common ownership" [1].

In this section, we will discuss the importance of public spaces as a ground where social innovation practices can emerge. Firstly we will define public spaces and their defining role for strengthening civil society, a prerequisite of the project that was carried forward. Secondly, we will discuss on how public space is an adequate ground to put it practice grassroots and innovative practices.

Successful public spaces are vital ingredient for every healthy and sustainable city. Throughout the GUL project, our mission was to create awareness to the general public about the important role of public spaces as a common good. As Joan Clos stated:

"What defines a character of a city is its public space, not its private space. What define the value of the private assets of the space are not the assets by themselves but the common assets" [2].

Simply defined, public spaces should be accessible to all groups, allow freedom of action, and permit inclusion and privilege of common ownership. Given that public spaces are the platform where public life manifests itself, or as Carr *et al*. puts it, they are *"the stage upon which the drama of communal life unfolds,"* they are a very rich entrance point to evaluate societal behaviors, trends and cultures [3].

Reference [4] lists three defining elements that when combined together bring about a successful cotemporary

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World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology
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public space. Firstly, public spaces need to be loaded with certain "public" features in their practical uses, such as free access to all; public facilities; second they should respond to their users' needs; and third they should give to their users possibilities to appropriate the spaces and participate in their formation. As a result, public spaces should not and cannot be homogenized solutions to societal demands; rather they should be in constant evolution; propose various features and possibilities, adapt to the surrounding environment, and be places of diversity that cater to the multidimensional needs of citizens. Hence, loaded with the above characteristics, the use of a public space as a ground to achieve the development of democratic practices is not incidental. Historically, public spaces represent a ground for expression of democratic values, where voices of people can be heard, either through public debates or large-scale demonstrations. Public space is also a site where all activities of civic life can be manifested in a common ground shared amongst citizens in terms of freedom and equality.

The GUL project was based on these fundamental viewpoints. The GUL project set forward public space as a ground that fosters social innovation for a sustainable, vibrant and inclusive city. Public spaces in Cyprus as will be discussed in Section III are lacking these basic characteristics that endorse their key role as a democratic ground. According to [5] social innovation is defined as innovative activities and services that are designed to meet a social need and that are predominantly developed and diffused through organizations whose primary purposes are social.[i] Our goal as designers throughout the project was to produce innovative practices for public space utilization by introducing a series of public interventions was to increase awareness of the general public and get people involved in improving their everyday spaces. Social innovation in the creative context as defined by Mumford is "the generation and implementation of new ideas of how people should organize interpersonal activities or social interactions to meet one or more common goals."[6].

We will present below the challenging context, which these public interventions were made, as the interventions have questioned and altered existing conditions that have not been confronted until present with the most sustainable solutions.

III. THE CHALLENGING CONTEXT OF PUBLIC SPACES IN CYPRUS

The lack of the public spaces in Cyprus' cities dates back from the old times. This lack was enhanced by the nature of the Ottoman Empire rule over the country in the 16th century. The modernization brought along with the British colonization of the island from the end of the 19th century did not manage or rather did not intent at all to alter the urban scape towards the direction of the public manifestation in the cities. The independent new State of Cyprus did not proceed in even addressing the issue. The urban design is characterized by bland 1960s modernism, with a conspicuous lack of established public space [7]. The recent efforts of various groups of people to claim public spaces, including the 'Occupy the Buffer Zone' movement inspired by the global

'Occupy movement' [8] still did not manage to change the urban scene. Rather, they were negated by the explosion of the vast numbers of eating and drinking facilities during the current Great Financial Crisis. Claiming of the public spaces has even become more problematic, since every single empty corner is conquered by the sprawl of the cafeterias, bars, and restaurants in the city [1]. Another concern revealed by a recent study is that urban studies carried out in Cyprus have demonstrated that these places are used in a fragmented way therefore creating concerns of social and spatial segregation [9]. Throughout the project there was an attempt to dilute these divisions and make public spaces as an essential platform for immigrants' socialization amongst themselves and with the locals. The project has addressed these concerns through a) the introduction of participatory tools for the design of the installation structures b) the documentation of immigrants' needs during the research phase and c) the organisation of specific events for which immigrants were addressed.

The lack of affluent public spaces in Cyprus is not only palpable in their physical existence in the city, but also there is a notable shortage of academic literature on the subject. In order to fill a gap in the literature, in October 2014, a large-scale survey [10] focusing on public spaces in Cyprus was conducted by Urban Gorillas taking a random sample of 1,000 representative individuals of the population of the four major Cypriot urban districts: Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaka and Paphos. The main research question was to address how local Cypriots access, use and interact with their urban open public spaces. Table I shows that overall, 61,4% of the respondents had a "neutral" or "negative" view on urban public spaces. These results corroborate more qualitative responses, which were collected during 6 focus groups conducted on the topic of public spaces in Cyprus. A majority of participants stated that safety, cleanness and the lack of activities were reasons leading them to negative or neutral perception of Cypriot public spaces, leading to a low usage especially of parks and squares as they do not seem to offer in the respondents view comfort and possibility for social interaction. They were rather enticed to visit semi-private public spaces such as Malls and shopping plaza, linking to the more general discussion of the privatisation of public space and the creation of hybrid spaces in fast developing cities [11]. In another research study conducted by Urban Gorillas, the quality and quantity of seating spaces within the walled city of Nicosia were examined. The results were not so encouraging. Public seating, a major element of public offering in the city, was low in quantity and quality, and at most of the times empty. Our research study about public spaces in Cyprus has revealed that 42,6% of the respondents to the national survey consider public spaces as a space for social interaction with people outside their close circle of friends and family [10]. As a response to this concern the site installations on the assigned public spaces were considered as an 'urban melting pot'. They were designed to bring together people from diverse social, cultural, and racial background and initiate action and interaction between these different types of people.

World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology
International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences
Vol:9, No:11, 2015

TABLE I
PERCEIVED QUALITY OF PUBLIC SPACES IN CYPRUS

Quality of Public Spaces	Nicosia	Limassol	Larnaka	Paphos	Total
Negative view	17%	14%	26%	21%	18%
Neutral view	48%	35%	47%	43%	43%
Positive view	33%	49%	32%	27%	37%
Don't Know	1%	1%	0,6%	0%	0,9%
Respondents	420	315	155	110	1000

With the Cypriot context as a backdrop, we will present the tools adopted for the development and implementation of the public interventions that took place, in an attempt to challenge the traditional ways of doing things and the failed current paradigm with a new different and more socially sustainable alternative that could become a ground for a great systemic change.

IV. TOOLS ADOPTED TO REINVENT PUBLIC SPACES

Given the above challenging context of Cyprus public spaces we wanted to present to the citizens with conscious and alternative socially sustainable solutions where they can start to take ownership of their public spaces. Reference [12] pointed out:

"*Design for social innovation and sustainability is a domain of design that deals with services for people whose social needs are not met and their relation to sustainability.*"

Our role as designers within in this field was to take this matter at grassroots level make a social innovation pattern to emerge by designing conditions that empowers people to conceptualize, create and implement solutions for a transition to take place.

The objective of public space revitalisation in the GUL project was based on the democratic principles of mutual support, participatory citizenship and social interactions. The methodology adopted for the design and building process of the GUL will follow co-design principles and models in order to create an enabling and creative city. There were constant interexchange between researchers, designers, the scientific community and various public bodies during the conceptualisation and design phases of the project. Another crucial operation of the site-specific interventions in public spaces was to highlight issues like creative revitalization of underused urban spaces and the creative transformation of those into a playful and enjoyable practice for the everyday citizen. The choice of public spaces has been therefore crucial to create such an interdisciplinary interactive environment.

The decision of choosing significant historic landmarks to start the attempts of claiming a public identity not just for the monuments themselves but also for the city was not accidental. We wanted to question the designated function of the monuments by the urban planners: Lukasz Stanek, following Garivia's studies for spaces of leisure he comments on the understanding of 'spontaneous urbanism', differing from that foreseen by the planners [13]. The project aimed at highlighting public spaces that are under public governance but they do not satisfy those characteristics that a successful 'public space' should ensure. Therefore, the project challenged the identity of 'public' spaces that are not fully accessible and do not fit into those definitions of public space which we described before. In order to challenge the existing identity of a public space and reinvent it, we have investigated into diverse theoretical backgrounds for creating our own tools to use in our site-specific interventions.

Firstly, we based our interventions on theories of Lefebvre and the notion of total reinvention of a space into the unexpected. Lefebvre stated that "any location can serve as a site for pleasure and joy once it has been hijacked, as in the case of a warehouse that becomes a ballroom on theater" we purposefully and provocatively aimed at 'hijacking' the material presence of the history and national identity in order to offer it to the people for their enjoyment and active use [13]. By using historical landmarks that are present in the collective memories of most of the Cypriot, we could build our intervention on a known location and challenge its everyday use, or rather its non-use a non-place in a middle of the city.

Secondly, we introduced the notion of the dissolution of architecture into momentary enjoyment. Lukasz Stanek in his introduction to the Henri Lefebvre's *Towards an Architecture of Enjoyment* states that: "Lefebvre seems to argue that the dynamics of the social production of space require a dissolution of architecture into a momentary enjoyment, a flash of desire, an ephemeral situation created by "activities of groups that are themselves ephemeral" which served as the triggering spark for the injection of a temporary fluid structure supported by series of events within the 'gravity' of the monumental structure [13]. The chosen sites were not taken as mere landmarks but were rather thought as a continuation of the city's flows as another urban artery, which should have been freely and invitingly accessed by people. Our aspiration was to alleviate the permanent, uninviting and strong attributes of the monuments by creating exactly the opposite situation with the light, ephemeral and transparent inflatable structure and with the introduction of joyful events.

Thirdly, we consider the streets and the public spaces as an open museum area, based on Yona Friedman's writings where the street is the prototype. On one hand, the specific monuments serve as museums in the centre of the cities. In his discourse of the 'architecture with the people, by the people and for the people', Yona Freidman offers a challenging understanding of the museums: 'the true prototype for a museum, for me, is simply a street, any street. You see various objects, exposed intentionally. There are also people, real ones not museum visitors, everyday objects behaving 'normally' [14].

Lastly, in the same lines as Friedman's theorems, in his treatise on the situationists, Sadler points out the importance attributed to the street in French cultural discourse "which conveys a sense of the general desire for a culture that is more open, fun-loving, and free-wheeling as opposed to the allegedly stifling, pompous and enclosed world of high culture. The situationists sought out the unite d' ambience - an area of particularly intense urban atmosphere" [15]. Furthermore he comments on the importance of exciting the

World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology
International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences
Vol:9, No:11, 2015

senses and the body and the situationists' promise: "we will play upon topophobia and create topophilia" which is a major concern of the GUL project: not only to claim the urban space but to generate ways to make people not to feel intimidated by the historical connotations intrinsic to the site but to start loving it as an everyday life moments' site, to see the events of the city unfold and be seen from this fresh viewpoint.

The above elements: a. open and fun-loving (Sadler); b. the street as a museum (Friedman); c. momentary enjoyment (Lefebvre); and d. hijacking and totally inverting the spaces' functionality (Lefebvre) were considered crucial for the development of the workshop's design structure and to the mission of designing for a public space.

V. Public Space Interventions

The public interventions presented in this chapter that resulted from a series of events ranging from educational workshops, focus groups, lectures, seminars, that led to the exhibition of temporary situations that challenged the boundaries of space, interaction and innovative social expression. Throughout all the interventions, flexible inflatable structures that were produced and placed in cities around Cyprus arose from participatory design models that aim to endorse participatory democracy. The workshops matched community involvement, collaborative design and learning interchanges amongst all stakeholders.

The installation sites were numerous and distinctly different from one another; accordingly the attempt for the regeneration of the urban spaces in question resulted in different approaches addressing the frame that each project was set, the diverse site conditions and overall ambiance of the given setting.

The primary principle of these series of public interventions focused on providing the means for ordinary citizens to participate in their reinvention and collaboratively reclaim these spaces as a vital ingredient of everyday urban life. The public interventions were designed to transverse daily routines, create places to relax, play, and learn while providing novice possibilities to initiate socialization with the diverse communities of the island.

As an outcome the series of public interventions had an impact at addressing minority and youth issues in various levels ranging from their direct involvement in the implementation of these interventions to the provision of activities and situations that were tackled in order to meet their needs. The introduction of different participatory processes and continuous direct contact with all stakeholders generated an empowering collaboration and grass roots activities with the general public, ethnic minority groups and youth. Particularly for the *ΦουσκόPolis* event, a large-scale campaign was introduced to invite anyone from an ordinary citizen to civil organizations, informal groups and artists to propose an activity in the temporary space that was offered for usage.

A. Inflating the Public Part I

The GUL started its series of vibrant experimental activities on September 2014. The two week workshop 'Inflating the Public_Part I' led to an experimental pop-up event in the city of Nicosia, entitled Five Installations_Five Locations_1 City. The young participants of the workshop installed temporary interactive inflatable structures at four different locations in the walled city of Nicosia. These inflatables acted as ephemeral spatial structures that altered the use and perception of existing spaces in the city, along the contested areas of the Green Line. Been low-cost, flexible and light, they could pop up in urban areas effortlessly and bring new aesthetic and energy to public spaces in the city that are often underutilized, abandoned or forgotten. Each of these installations proposed a different experience at the specific site of intervention, where the young students were free to develop their own program.

During the 2-day pop up installations, the students were engaged to carry out the first testing phase of the research by engaging the public to a discussion through questionnaires created by the research Director of Urban Gorillas. This was an initial footstep to create awareness on the matter of reclaiming and reinventing public spaces in the city. These five thematic interventions declared the beginning of expression, learning and regeneration of public spaces through a participatory model. These structures provided the means in which passersby engaged for the first time with places of the city that were rarely visited before.

Collaboration with local authorities meant that the entire design team got the chance to foster effective involvement between municipalities on topics affecting active citizenship, and the importance of grassroots initiatives aiming at social and multicultural inclusion.

B. Serenity Bubbles

The inflatable structures managed to raise curiosity and invite public participation with multi-sensory interactive experiences with sound and visual installations. These installations offered a relaxing urban moment with mint tea and shisha at the Hamam Square within the 'serenity bubbles'. The luxurious renovation of the traditional Omeriye Hamam on the one hand did attract new groups of people, but appealed other groups of people of visiting it due to the forbidding cost for casual usage. The 'serenity bubbles' intervention aimed at grasping the almost eternal milieu of the Hamam and transmitting it with simple means and free of charge to all the public.

C. Malice in Bufferland

'mAlice in Bufferland' intrigued the visitors with the interacting play of boundary and adventure with an installation inside the magnificent but unknown space of the Phaneromeni Library. The space is located exactly next to the buffer zone and its entrance is located at an unnoticeable corner of an impressive building. Even architects and literature lovers were not aware of the presence of this hidden treasure in their city. A labyrinthine-like cluster of elongated inflatable structures were situated on the impressive set of stairs as a continuation of the maze of the old city. Visitors could enter the inflatable structure within the main hall of the library were surreal atmosphere was generated to accommodate life streams of

World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology
International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences
Vol:9, No:11, 2015

poetry. The installation and the happening instantaneously managed to render and transform the unknown library into a rich and diverse set of layers displaying densities of publicness and creative expressions. The installation triggered the mechanism for exploration of public realm and set a stage for encounters to take place.

D. Inside outside a Dream

At the dilapidated hotel 'Hotel Ypnos' or Hotel Sleep, the visitors were mesmerized and offered an enhanced corporeal and sensory experience through interactive exploration. In this intervention the designers questioned the thread between public and private through an incessant interexchange between these two notions. The intervention exposed the contents of the bedrooms through a transparent layer, and later exposed the structure with the memories of the visitors at the street.

The ramshackle premise that flanks on one side of a street of the buffer zone, while the other side is replete with barbed wires, sandbags and barrels, was literally inflated. The transparent inflatable structure allowed the participants of this exploration to act as intruders of a forbidden world, to see, touch and perceive the spaces, the surfaces, objects, the frozen moments and the atmospheres of the interior of the hotel. Everyone was asked to trace the impressions, thoughts and even literal items, textures conditions while moving in the various spaces and corridors of the hotel. The installation was deflated and re-inflated once more along the barbed wires of the Dead Zone, revealing the memories gained from the visits and merging them with the 'imprisoned memories' of the site. The mysteries and the traces of the more private hotel did render the public area of the dead zone reversing in this experimental way the notion of what might be private and what public.

E. Agoraphobic Storm

The 'Agoraphobic storm'_ 'Nicosia traces' at Stoa Tarsi managed also to encourage the passerby to perceive in alternative ways the notion of this public space that was used primarily as a mere passage. The visitors' path towards the stoa was traced living the echoes of their presence evident long after their visit, accompanying thus every new passerby. Furthermore, any passerby was forced to enter an interactive cave- labyrinth, surprising space in order to go through the stoa. Each visitor could select the most desirable spot or even generate it, as the inflatable structure was malleable easy to handle and alter it for everyone, with the use of strings. The conventional function of the stoa as a passage attained the quality of an urban magnet where people wanted to pause for a short or long while, generating the momentum for new encounters and socializing.

F. ΦουσκόPolis and Inside-Outside a Bubble

Unlike the pop-up installations described above, the ΦουσκόPolis and Inside-Outside a Bubble events, were organized happenings that presented a series of activities proposed by citizens within the inflatable structure. These planned interventions of ΦουσκόPolis took place in the historical sites: the Limassol Castle, the Paphos Castle and the

Larnaka Castle. In this context, in Nicosia we used the open space of the Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation. During the same timespan, the project acquired a bi-communal dimension and with the support of the European Commission a two-day installation event, Inside-Outside a Bubble, took place in St. Nicolas Church, nowadays called Bedestan.

The ΦουσκόPolis and Inside-Outside a Bubble event was a result of an open call of participation to the wider community to present activities in and around the inflatable space offered to them. A committee was structured between the Urban Gorillas and partners EMMA a Turkish Cypriot NGO, and Plastique Fantastique to evaluate the proposals based on the guidelines, the objectives, and themes of the project. After the selection of projects to be presented, the site-specific interventions were organized by Urban Gorillas and Plastique Fantastique. Over 60 applications from individuals, artistic groups and civil organizations were evaluated and the selected proposals made up the program of events for five installations in four cities (North and South Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaka, and Paphos). The event provided opportunities for freedom of expression for the wider public in particular for youth and migrants, either as a viewer or though active participation in a proposed activity.

Forty-six different activities where presented in total during the timespan of the two events, of which fifteen where permanent features in all the cities. The program of activities was selected in a way that the different needs and tastes of diverse citizens were met. Activities were ranging from educational workshops for children and adults, social activities, a culturally induced program, alternative lifestyle workshops, exposition of the work of local artists, and sport activities like skateboard and yoga. All of these activities were offered to the public free of charge.

ΦουσκόPolis brought together a series of socio-cultural topics and as a result managed to attract people to the sites that they had never visited it before. The program of events managed to reinforce the notion of participation as the driving force for the development of democracy and participatory democracy. The diverse range of actions- from creative groups, collectives, artists, community organisations, other NGOs, designers and performers and offered urban games, exhibitions of photography, printmaking and architectural design work, dance, storytelling, drumming, musical workshops for young children, video installation, projections, theatre performance, yoga, capoeira, film and documentary screenings, free hugs, a sculpture installation, a piano recital and other interactive installations and games as well as a mobile cafe, food from diverse minority groups living in Cyprus and a DJ closing party inside the inflatable-attracted people of different backgrounds, different interests, different socio-demographic profiles to come together and connect with each other.

The chosen sites were not taken as mere landmarks but were rather thought as a continuation of the city's flows as another urban artery, which is freely and invitingly accessed by people. By using historical landmarks that are present in the collective memories of the citizens, the intervention

World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology
International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences
Vol:9, No:11, 2015

challenges its everyday use or rather its non-use in the middle of the city. The injection of the inflatables with their the almost immaterial behavior, their malleable 'liquid' spaces and the accompanied rich series of events into the historical sites managed to efface the historical gravity of the sites, converting them into more enticing and accessible spaces for all people. In all the locations the actions and interventions explored different ways of claiming the public space from each existing situation.

In Larnaca castle, moments of the activities were placed in front of the castle as alluring fragments that led to the surprising inflatable bubble and the collateral installations that rekindled the monumentality of the castle's courtyard. In Limassol, the elongated inflatable structure linked the adjacent urban spaces with the monument through the intermediate space of the castle's garden. In Pafos, the inflatable structure and the accompanying installations and events reoriented the remote vast area in front of the castle. In the Lusignian monument of St. Nicholas Church-Bedestan the inflatable structure was inflated both outside and inside the refurbished gothic arched building, integrated into its unique spatial, indoors and outdoors conditions. Within this framework the project behaved as the catalytic approach towards the acclaiming of the public not as creators- designers of objects and materials, but rather as instigators of the main parameter of the urban domain, the events.

The events hosted under the festival ΦουσκόPolis have met the objective of initiating bottom-up initiatives for developing socially sustainable cities. This was made possible as the event attracted the engagement of the local communities and passers-by through design and playfulness. Social interaction was an important outcome that has unfolded from the opportunities created in an effort to rediscover the cities' public spaces and affirming a shared identity. The selection of events and performances acted as a generator of constructing situations, collective ambiances as well as impressions that determined the qualities of a given moment.

G. Pame Kaimakli

One of the inflatable structures of the Fuskopolis events, the more enduring one, was injected inside the narrow streets of the traditional neighbourhood of Kaimakli, during its regenerating festival organized by its inhabitants.

The 'Pame Kaimakli' festival was an initiation of the residents of the neighbourhood in which Urban Gorillas has participated. 'Pame Kaimakli' running for the second year has attracted various and diverse experimental activities. It gave the chance to the visitors, the residents and the participants of sensing in alternative, more public ways of living in the neighborhood. It brought forward various issues of what a public space is where visitors were engaged in the private realm of this neighborhood. The most radical intervention was the injection of the elongated inflatable structure in the middle of a central street of the traditional core of Kaimakli. People felt the intimacy of the structure that was at some points squeezed with the neighborhood buildings. People had to squeeze through to pass by, touch, or even get inside the

structure which was hosting various activities in order to get through their way. This provocative usage of both the street and the structure intrigued the people, challenging their understanding of what their public space may become. During the festival, while the private houses gained a public significance through the 'open houses' and the 'open windows' where people could either enter or have glimpses to the houses of Kaimakli, the so deemed public street was all of sudden shut for vehicles and accommodated a new linear enclosed space where semi-public activities took place. This happening not only inverted the concept of the public space claiming the actual street to be given to the residents, but it offered new perspectives of how you can publicize such an urban feature and restructure this emergent public element of the neighbourhood. This 'decision and making' involvement of the residents took a new, further enhanced shape during the culminating part of its function late in the night. The 'anthropometry' live painting performance redefined the usage and significance of the injected inflatable structure. The dance and painting improvisation performance by artist Mathieu Devavry and the dancer Charlotte Kirschner was a witty interactive play with movements of the human body that prevailed in the space. This has left its indelible traces onto the place, the surfaces of both the structure and the street, but above all in the collective memories of the neighbours.

H. Youth Festival

Urban Gorillas in this case has used its existing resources for an installation at Irinis Park where a new programmatic use was introduced. The DNA tube that was created for the ΦουσκόPolis event made its last appearance at the event organized by the Youth Organisation of Cyprus and curated by Afro Banana Republic. This festival focused at raising youth awareness for participatory democracy practices and was held at a central park in Nicosia. The structure has been strategically placed in an open green space, surrounded by trees.

The inflatable space has acquired a multi-purpose induced program during the festival. At the same time the structure became a platform for public discussions, a children's playground and a graffiti wall where local artists could express themselves. The multi-dimensionality of its functions was also manifested spatially, as the positioning of the structure distributed the different activities equivalently in each of its sides. The imposing image of the structure on the park varied depending on the viewing perspective. One side of the structure was transformed into an innovative space to host a series of public talks as part of the Pecha Kucha project, where eight presenters from various NGO's (including Urban Gorillas) gave a presentation about their pioneering work. On one of the long sides of the structure, artists were performing a work in progress were they were observed by a vast crowd of people who watch the whole painting process as they were relaxing on the grass. On the second long side of the structure, immigrants used it as a backdrop while playing volleyball. Urban Gorillas succeeded in placing 8 tons of sand in the inside of the structure creating a magical environment for

World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology
International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences
Vol:9, No:11, 2015

children to play. The positioning of structure in the park also created new paths of spatial movements in the park as festival visitors were circulating around the structure, as a practice of the festival strolling routine.

VI. Conclusion

Cities provide the raw materials in the production of human experiences that are characteristics of the modes of life in terms of three perspectives: first as a physical structure; second as a specific system of social organization, and third as a set of attitudes and ideas. Public spaces offer the tools for the city to unfold the hidden power that influences urban livability, active citizenship practices, sustainable lifestyles, cultural diversity and social inclusion. The main results of the project already show how social innovation could be activated and reinforced by actions combining participative action with a creative intervention in a city. Public spaces are a place for creativity in the city, but there is a need to create an ecosystem where creative actions can take place and flourish to counteract negative perception attached to them. In attaining this goal, playful and participatory design has the potential to produce perception changes and new usages, thus turning under-utilised public spaces into vibrant places suitable for public life [16].

Connected to these findings, this work has shown that proposing a flexible, playful structure at the heart of underused public spaces, new usage pattern can emerge and provide the basis for the re-appropriation of public spaces and hence a more active use of the city. There are some idiosyncratic elements to the Cyprus' urban spaces, but overall the events created new spaces urbanistically and mentally, therefore changing to way the spaces are interpreted by citizen. Public spaces are still underutilized and misunderstood in the Cypriot context; it certainly derives from historical, economical and sociological reasons.

Finally, the GUL has demonstrated an important role for the designers is to facilitate the ever-changing nature of the city by creating conditions for people to use creativity and innovate at the local scale. If the design process is generated through exchanges with research (theoretical and applied), social innovation processes will flourish.

Acknowledgment

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