

Review report for a PhD. thesis submitted to the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław: „Stop Planning, Start Acting. Low-Budget Socially Engaged Projects in Public Spaces.“

Author: Michał Majewski

Supervisor: dr hab. Dominika Sobolewska, Professor

Dissertation co-advisor: Ph.D. Agnese Rebaglio, Assistant Professor

Submitted doctoral thesis includes without the supplement 180 pp., included is a small booklet zine of 27pp.

In his doctoral thesis "Stop Planning, Start Acting. Low-Budget Socially Engaged Projects in Public Spaces," Michał Majewski, offers a perspective on revitalizing public spaces with limited financial resources.

Majewski's thesis structure aligns well with the chosen topic. The preface offers a thorough rationale behind the topic selection, emphasizing the utilization of practice-based research as the primary methodology. Majewski further contextualizes the social and cultural aspects influencing the development of low-budget community projects, focusing particularly on the Polish landscape, a territory familiar to him. His delineation of key mottos in subsequent chapters resonates with the minimalist ethos of his approach, exemplified by phrases like *"Don't waste time philosophizing, get down to work."*

However, while the introduction of case studies in the following chapter serves as a source of inspiration, deeper insights into the divergent approaches of these projects, coupled with the author's critical evaluation, would enrich the narrative. The empirical research section, albeit meeting the requisite standards, could benefit from enhanced feedback mechanisms, such as user interviews or pre-existing hypotheses, to augment its depth.

The core of the thesis revolves around selected projects executed by Majewski in public spaces, ranging from minimal interventions to more expansive endeavours. While the focus on practical interventions is commendable, a more nuanced exploration of user experiences and cultural differences could enhance the analysis. For instance, the discussion on the "Waiting Room" project is significant in navigating encountered obstacles, that can provide valuable information for further projects.

Addressing pertinent societal issues like homelessness, as seen in the "Get Some Sleep" project, highlights the potential of community-driven initiatives to address pressing challenges. Again, it might be interesting to enter into dialog with the perspective users, such as the Japanese architect Kyohei Sakaguchi, who got inspired by the homeless community in designing emergency shelters. (Some of these model dwellings were documented in his *0 yen house* in 2004).

Additionally, the emphasis on providing simple solutions to disadvantaged groups („Read“) aligns with broader discussions in feminist urban planning, as exemplified by projects promoting safe meeting and sharing spaces.

Some similar approaches are currently introduced in an exhibition in Bratislava City Gallery, *Liberated Space: Care – Architecture – Feminism*, 21. 9. 2023 – 28. 4. 2024.

My personal favourite is the „Enter“ project, based on a good knowledge of the environment and its history. It combines the preliminary research with a very simple yet powerful solution that also sends a clear message. In the conclusion of the thesis the author advises us to consult

the small zine included and repeats some of main points. Being practical seems to fit the authors world view more than some of the playful projects, but in general I find his approach refreshing and his dedication outstanding.

In conclusion, Majewski's thesis offers a synoptically organized and engaging exploration of low-budget community projects in public spaces. The bilingual format, adherence to style guidelines, and meticulous attention to detail underscore the scholarly rigor of the work. By bridging academia with practical application, Majewski provides a valuable resource for practitioners and scholars alike.

As a closing inquiry for the thesis defense, I propose examining segments of the results that challenge or extend the author's preconceived notions. In a *research by design* oriented practice we frequently face to the fact that results confirm the authors opinion, so which segment of the results does the author consider a discovery in some extent and why? How is he offering novel insights into the research domain (if that might be his scope), or does he focus on the action compared with ignorance of the issues altogether.

In final evaluation - conclusion, I affirm that Michal Majewski's thesis demonstrates his creative acumen and meets the requisite standards for a Ph.D. dissertation. I therefore recommend accepting the thesis for defense presentation, with the expectation that all addressed issues and comments will be duly addressed, leading to the conferral of the academic degree of Ph.D. upon Mr. Majewski and propose the "A-Excellent".

Submitted in Brno, March 22., 2024

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Karin Pisarikova', is written on a light-colored rectangular background.

MgA. Karin Pisarikova, PhD. et PhD.