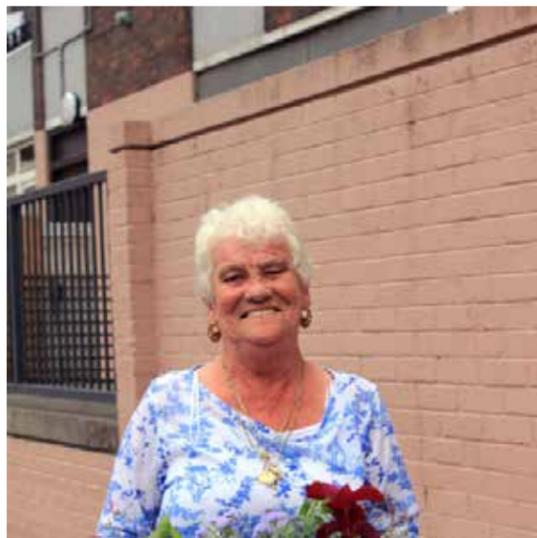


Granby Park, Dublin



Granby Park, Pop-Up, Crowd Sourced Event

The Case Study	Characteristics	UpStart form limited company (Granby Park Co.) to create a 30 day pop up park event in an interdependent collaboration between key actors. 'A matrix of green space and art' on a vacant Dublin City Council (DCC) site. Aiming to encourage citizens to use/engage in their public spaces.
	Key Resources	Temporary use of public vacant land. DCC grant (€50,000), Crowdsourcing Fund:it (€21,000), Volunteer hours (estimated €500,000), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Donations (€20,000+), Organisational office space for UpStart (12 weeks).
	Key Actors	UpStart, core team of 20 people, 500+ volunteers, Artist communities, Local communities, community practices, city visitors (40,000+) DCC departments of: Planning, Architecture, Events, Community and, Parks and Landscaping. Housing Manager for North-West inner city.
The Process	Issues & Challenges	Finding a site, Health and Safety, outlay costs including unforeseen costs, 30 days too short an event time in relation to input resources required. Volunteering issues. Contractor pulled out last minute.
	Power & Agency	Process increased network power; DCC encourages UpStart to tackle problems as they arise. Highly collaborative.
	Knowledge Gap	Mechanism for process on pilot and temporary collaboration projects emerges, (learning by doing). Toolkit for future processes is being created.
The Outcomes	Outcomes	The project enabled perspective, had a high civic and social value and energy. It was a new way of collaboration in the city. The space was safer for the duration of the park. Business in the area increased.
	Social Value	Public domain as experience, 40,000 people visiting and additional social media exposure. New networks built, potential for future projects, toolkit for process. Because DCC had no expectations, and Upstart had a vision for the space, high creative potential and social resilience was enabled and demonstrated.
	Lessons Learnt	Value in opening up complex collaborative dialogue between public and stakeholder actors to effect their space positively, on a temporary basis. Social media networking publicises the benefits and potentials of collaborative event creation and place making. Once a toolkit is in place, citizens may apply mechanisms to affect place and social resilience. Precedent for future projects.

“If we can’t do it this way... what other way can we do it”

Sean Smith, Dublin City Council

Introduction

Granby Park – Product & Process

There are two parts to Granby Park, the first was the product: the highly managed, contemporary park that opened for a month. Events were compressed into curated spaces within the park – activities such as workshops in GAA sports, poetry, yoga, astronomy, printing, language, literature, and gardening or the public could just sit or have their lunch in a covered space or watch a performance in the amphitheatre. Twenty-nine spaces in the park were designated for art installations. The second was Granby Park as a process: “a demo model to show it can be done. Creating a platform for this – a collaboration between Dublin City Council (DCC), national companies, artists– Granby Park was a product of this” (Bishop). Maher from DCC says, “the Art & Culture promoted civic engagement; the ‘feelgood’ factor was very high from everyone’s engagement on the project”. Those involved mentioned this ‘intangible something’ they experienced, being part of something worthwhile and big that had a life of its own.

Granby Park was a place making project. It was a product of themed events, where many groups of people from diverse interests collided to create a new public domain in Dublin. A public domain as an experience. (Hajer, 2002)

Context

The atmosphere in the area is a grubby, busy, back street hub of Dublin where people mill in and out of the ILAC centre, Burger King and McDonalds, Moore Street market begins, cheap bags and trainers mix with discounted ripe fruit in prams to shouts of “tow for 1 yorow!”, budget tourists mix with locals, different languages are heard, African hair salons, Indian cafe, Tesco, Lidl and Aldi are nearby. The edge of Dominick Street, which Granby Park is on, is lined with rows of social housing flats, doors on the ground floor are padlocked on the outside or boarded up.

Original Plans

Before 2008, the plan was to demolish the existing flats which were in poor condition and regenerate the area with mixed use development. The residents would then be re-housed in new apartments (social housing) along with new facilities, residential and commercial development. In 2006, as part of the first phase, the flats on the site were demolished. With the economic crash in 2008, developers pulled out, the site was left vacant and residents are awaiting their new housing in the mixed use development.

“A controversial piece of land, failed PPP, social housing site that did not get developed and social housing quota not delivered” said Bishop. The Arts Collective UpStart created a collaborative spectacle and saw an opportunity to make a comment on the “vacancy and lack of green spaces in this area of the city where there are working class communities”. The context at the time (which still remains) is of “young people having to leave the country to find work. Granby Park provided a place for them to express themselves. A boost in the despondent feeling.” Upstart’s vision was to create multiple parks around the country and create a matrix between art and green space.

<http://builtdublin.com/granby-park-dominick-street-dublin-1/>

UpStart – Arts Collective

Before creating Granby Park – UpStart had put up 1000 ‘agitational’ messages in the form of election posters in the 2010 elections.

<http://upstart.ie/poster-project/>

They describe themselves as a non-political, not-for-profit, voluntary Arts collective and are interested in encouraging citizens to use their public spaces. They organise this through ‘Happenings’ which are film events or yoga in parks where people are informed about it 36 hours beforehand through social media, Twitter or Facebook. In 2009, Peter O’Brien from UpStart was instrumental in negotiating public ownership for Dartmouth Square.

http://www.triposo.com/poi/W__32744530

Characteristics

More than a Crowd Sourced Pop-up Park Transformation

On August 22nd 2013, Granby Park opened to the public in the north side inner city Dublin. The project was created by the Arts Collective called UpStart in collaboration with many diverse groups.

The project has been described as a pop-up park. But Granby Park was more than just a 'pop-up' park on the corner of Dominick Street and Parnell Street. It was an experiment in how diverse networks collaborate, become interdependent and create a park which was "a matrix of green space and art".

Social equity and Volunteering

Maher from DCC says that: "It was about investing in your own social equity, volunteering through community (about 500 volunteers) and donation of professional services from communities of practice such as artists, architects as well as Dublin City Council donating services and funding."

Two bloggers describe the effect of Granby Park on the site:

"Granby Park is beautiful. It's a transformation of the site and it's clearly a testament to the work, thought and creativity of everyone involved." (Lisa Cassidy)

<http://builtdublin.com/granby-park-dominick-street-dublin-1/>

The blogger Jools describes the effect of Granby Park: "Granby Park is like a delightful feast for your eyes. A fantastic dream that became reality. A labyrinth of delights to explore. We climbed in and out and on top of everything. Looked at everything sideways and upside down. There is even a Trade school tucked in there teaching all sorts of crafts and creations with classes daily." (Jools Betts)

<http://www.granbypark.com/granbypark/>

<http://provisionaluniversity.wordpress.com/2013/08/30/thoughts-on-granby-park/>

http://www.frg.ie/wp-content/uploads/9570190257_5e07c8c2d1_o.jpg

<http://cora.ie/wordpress/index.php/granby-park-dublin-2/>

<http://www.granbypark.com/whats-happenin/>

Key Resources

Land and Negotiations

"It took 20 months from inception to implementation, process to product. The actual build took 17 days and it opened for a month" (Bishop). Seven months was taken up by negotiating for a CIE site on Jervis Street which had joint ownership between CIE and a company in NAMA and that fell through at the last hour. In January 2013, with the support of DCC they obtained an alternative, the Dominick Street site.

Size

The land belonged to DCC. Granby Park was approximately 0.86 acres on the east side of a larger site which is about 3 acres (Smith). DCC Senior planner Paraic Fallon walked with O'Brien from UpStart around a few sites that DCC owned in the city.

Organisation & Attitude

In January 2012, O'Brien invited residents from communities who lived in the flats, DCC members Ali Grehan (Architecture), Les Moore (Landscape), Charlie Lowe (Area Manager) and Paraic Fallon (Planning) for a meeting. There was also an engineering firm, Casey O'Rourke, A2 Architects, and an architect, Sean Harrington, who were involved through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

UpStart formed a limited company called Granby Park Co. for the project. Bishop mentions that DCC events department were very proactive and assisted them with the Regulations, Architecture and Health and Safety. Maher says that it was easy to work with UpStart, as they always checked with DCC before going ahead with something and followed advice closely. Upstart are highly organised and Bishop talks about the confidence his training gives him to be diplomatic and to have the right language to talk with DCC. They developed trust and built a relationship. Their attitude was: "We went with the flow, chance, serendipity. We know what we are good at, where we needed we got skills on board, being open to people."

Space

DCC allowed UpStart use of an office space for 12 weeks next to the site, with phones and computers. Furthermore, It facilitated face to face contact between the members of UpStart and the housing manager, Sean Smith.

Funding

Related site costs of clearing and reconnection of utilities were borne by DCC and were unexpectedly high. Maher says when they began “DCC had thought that UpStart would crowd-source most of the funding for the park, however, the budget was underestimated”. “At first UpStart said they just needed the site however, after six weeks DCC realised that UpStart was not ready to mobilise, as the site required more clearing and commissioning than expected. The demolished buildings had not been completely cleared, rubble, needles and broken glass were on the site”. Fallon also stated that: “The water and electricity connections were not left intact during the demolition, as new buildings were intended for the site”.

“The contractor who had volunteered to clear the site at no cost pulled out at the last moment and a new contractor had to be found and funds had to be raised.” (Smith)

A major part of funding came from DCC and the rest came from crowd sourcing, businesses, and community organisations. The exact figures for funding Granby Park were not clear. Bishop mentioned a cash flow of 80 – 90K, and some of the items are listed across.

Bishop estimated a sum of over €500,000 in time, resources and expertise.

Items
UpStart budget (€6K)
Grants from DCC (€50K)
Donation from The Wheel Community Organisation (€10K)
Donation from EU Youth Theatre Funding for theatre (€11K)
Crowd sourcing Fund:it (577 funders) (€21K)
Site clearing & reconstructing water and electricity connections (€30K)
Groundworks (€20K)
Railing around the site
Hired generators, associated fuel costs and toilet blocks (€5K)
24-hour security for a month (€15K)
Waste management, Health & Safety measures (e.g. Fire retardant spraying), Hire of cherry picker, Insurance, structural engineer
Volunteer hours from public and DCC staff, stewards for park, building and assembling park, running workshops, managing cafe, organising and managing volunteers, PR and blogging
Design of polytunnels, amphitheatre, Structural Engineering by Architects A2 and Sean Harrington and Casey O’ Rourke (Corporate Social Responsibility)
Donation from businesses

Expert Language

Professional expertise was required to communicate with DCC. Bishop explains: “The volunteer from UpStart dealing with Dublin City Council Planning Department and Architects was able to understand issues of design and construction and read drawings. Whereas UpStart’s community liaison volunteer had a strong Dublin accent so that people she was communicating with felt at ease.”

Knowledge

Different types of knowledge were required from DCC, such as Event licensing, Health & Safety and Architecture. UpStart could tap into the network Sean Smith (DCC liaison with the community network) had already built with the communities from the Regeneration Project for the last two years. Other sources of knowledge included Structural Engineering, Architectural Design and Layout, Public Relations, social media & funding. Maher says “There were lots of meetings with the Gardaí [police]”.

Art & Gift economy

For the art installations in the 29 spaces, UpStart operated on a gift economy culture with the artists where they built social capital on both sides. They stated their mission “is to highlight the importance of creativity and ingenuity when society is in need of direction and solutions, and to emphasize the value of arts to public life”.

Key Actors

Core Team & Single Point of Contact

Key actors for Granby Park were UpStart (Granby Park Co.), Dublin City Council, communities of interest who lived in the area, Artists communities, volunteers and different communities of practice. There was a core team of 20 people in Upstart who understood the values of this project and they were the project leaders who were given specific areas to lead. They made decisions in those areas. Maher says that the single point of contact with Upstart was important for continuity.

Sean Smith was a key actor. He is the Housing Manager for North West innercity of which one part is Dominick Street. He describes himself as someone who “constantly looks to do things slightly outside the box”. He worked with the community in the area for two years before this project. The relationship with DCC and community was already established and a lot of work had been done with them. He was the person to go to – the ‘go between person’ who knew people in different divisions. He had a corporate understanding and “knew who to see, how to ask”. Smith’s skills were that he was able to design the specification to fit in with the requirements, knew how it was explained from the proposers and how it should be sold to the council. He said that DCC officials gave willingly, once senior management was behind it.

Linking to Existing Networks

The focus of Granby Park was the communities who lived in the three blocks of flats, wider residents and people in Dublin and the artist communities. Maher says: “It was the cooperative approach of community engagement. DCC Housing Redevelopment Regeneration Board had proactively engaged with the community who live in social housing in the area for two years before. These network structures were set up before Granby Park. Youth groups and Art groups were linked with them and volunteerism was key.”

Smith’s unique contribution was that he told UpStart that “this wasn’t a normal vacant site. This was where people’s new housing was going to be.” He also spoke to the community and said that this was up to them. Smith said that the Community was happy with it. During construction there were one or two complaints about noise. There were no complaints during the event.

The Amphitheatre – Iconic Piece

“The amphitheatre was designed by Sean Harrington Architects and built in collaboration between local kids (Bradog Youth Services) and children from Belfast (NEELB), with the pallets referencing the areas significance as the home of Dublin’s markets (as well as sectarianism in Northern Ireland¹). A2 Architects worked on the park’s masterplan and also designed the polytunnels that provide shelter, keeping the outdoor space functional and welcoming even when the weather turns a bit Irish.” (Cassidy)

Planting

Coillte donated plants which the residential communities grew on their balconies. Some of this plant material was used as landscaping in the temporary park. Upon completion of the project, plants were returned to the residents or sold. Herbs planted by companies on CSR were grown in wooden pallets in Granby Park and used in the café, ‘The Granby Grazer’.

Social Media & Place

Social media (Facebook and Twitter) was a key actor, as it was the main interface for communication, volunteering and blogging. The medium helped to expand the collective idea of Granby Park into a much larger network and rapidly built the shared context of the project. There was live streaming 24/7 for the duration of the build which created ground swell and acted as security. Bishop says that “the project would be different wherever you put it– it was specific to Dominick Street. Granby Park required a certain type of people to pull it together and a certain type of people to make it happen. People who participated were personally vested in making this project happen, so even when there were major challenges they decided to press on rather than withdraw”.

<http://www.granbypark.com/visual-art/>

¹ In Northern Ireland, wooden pallets are traditionally stacked up like towers with Republic of Ireland flags on top and burnt for ‘11th night’ before the 12th July that commemorates the 1690 Battle of the Boyne where Prince William of Orange defeated the Catholic King James II.

Issues, Challenges and Alternatives

Learning from failure

Bishop says: “The project began two years before, and could not move forward on the first site as there was controversy about ownership. So we learnt a lot in the first year when it didn’t happen. It was an iterative process as we learnt the process as we went along. Now we would negotiate with different organisations on a few different sites so that if one fails, we have the other to fall back on.”

Health & Safety

There were challenges for Upstart around the high standards of Health & Safety, such as taking fire precautions, Bishop questioned “is it necessary to spray everything (seats, tables, polytunnels etc) with fire retardant for a temporary project?”. Furthermore, every night the wooden pallet amphitheatre was hosed down just in case someone lit it and burnt it at night and there was a 24-hour security guard in addition to permanent railings built around the park. These services requested by DCC increased the budget.

Volunteerism to run a project

On the planning authority side, Maher states: “It was challenging because of the unstable nature of volunteerism to BUILD a project, as opposed to volunteerism to RUN a project. Unforeseen costs, lack of access to funding, credit control. It was a weather-dependent piece. It was heavily managed there were 10 stewards on site. In public standards of delivery, there is a different concept to private standards of delivery”.

There is a higher standard required of public projects in terms of professionalism, safety, liability, standard of work, materials and finish as the delivery mechanism and the product are monitored and scrutinised more than in a private project. Maher explains: “We enforce these on ourselves – foundations are deeper, trip hazards are neutralised, hardcore goes in and temporary things are built to the same spec. as permanent really. In the mindset of the public they are more accepting that things were done on a budget by voluntary entities but from government or state organisations the same offering would most likely bring complaints if not law suits.”

Short term

Putting in so much effort and organisation for an opening of one month was a challenge for Upstart and all the volunteers. Bishop has said that he would need to be paid if they had to do it again, as it took an immense amount of time and resources from all those who volunteered. The challenge now lies in people being rewarded for their efforts, a longer window for an event to occur and deciding what aspects were worth keeping or transferring.

What was at stake?

When asked what was at stake, Bishop replied that there was a lot at stake for them, because “we had put it out there, we received a grant of €10,000 and we involved so many people”. Fallon says that for DCC there is the fear of adverse possession (even though the rules are biased to the owner, i.e. 30 years for publicly owned land and 12 years for privately owned land).

Conflicts

For UpStart, most of the conflict came up when they were looking for a site, very little conflict came up once they had the site in Dominick Street. DCC experienced conflicts about crowd control and security. “It was a new venue in the city and the risk of it being mobbed or taken over by a gang was high. DCC had to take into consideration the risk to the communities living in that area from the effects of an event. DCC also considered if the event would displace homeless and people who drink alcohol in the area in the daytime (as they would need an alternative place to go) and would this be a risk to the communities around the area”. (Maher)

Power & Agency

Network power

The process of Granby Park increased network power. Maher states that DCC introduced UpStart into a network. They stepped into the network and became a new node connecting different networks, such as artists, residents in the area, different departments in DCC, communities of practice and institutions like NUI and young adults from Northern Ireland. Furthermore, social media (Facebook) was used to create new networks with each other to work towards an event that had never been attempted before in the present structure and system.

Working within legislation and collaboration

UpStart found a way to work with DCC to create an event working within the legislation, hence the 30 days of opening. The spectacle and the experience signified possibilities for collaborative ways of working.

High level of trust

The land was owned by DCC and the majority of funding came from them. The process of dialogue and decision-making about Granby Park was “highly collaborative” and “the process of participation was transparent, high level of trust, no one was being paid” (Bishop). DCC provided “Hands-on Guidance” and found they had to answer lots of “what do we do about this?” questions. DCC encouraged UpStart to tackle the problem solving as it came up.

Attitude

As it was a new project that was delivery dependent, DCC used all possible resources to assist Upstart to meet the opening deadline. Maher said working with UpStart was good as their attitude was “whatever DCC want, they get” and UpStart always came back with solutions every time.

Knowledge Gaps

Transfer learning into more permanent projects

Pop-ups are a valuable learning tool, and have a purpose within themselves. The next step forward for agency is to transfer the learning into more permanent projects to facilitate the life of the city that people would like to experience, not just as pop ups or intangible “feel good” experiences.

Precedent

The precedent used by UpStart to begin with was the Union Street Orchard in London that was part of the Festival of Architecture and is of a very small scale compared to Granby Park.

<http://www.unionstreetorchard.org.uk/>

Questions that arise

There is an overall feeling from people involved in Granby Park of being enlivened by the process, questions that arise are:

- What is Granby Park (as a product and process) telling us about what we yearn for in the life of our city?
- How did this Trojan horse get in and keep going? Which relationships and what networks?
- Has the experience changed the way we look at values which translates to how we look at space? What are the views of the

people waiting to move into the apartments on that site?

- Granby Park worked within the legislation, what might change in the legislation to support and serve citizens better so that events and efforts like these may be sustained and rewarded?
- If the public or a group were to occupy the site ‘adversely’, to fight for the space to be public, would that not be a question to be addressed rather than feared?

Alternative site

Bishop says: “To not put all the eggs into one basket at the start have an alternative site”.

Event licensing form

Maier says it was a very ambitious event and advises that any new organiser should look at the headers in the event licence form, when considering a proposal. It includes headings like evacuation plan, toilets, waste management, fire and emergency services, security, funding

and delivery mechanisms.

Practical knowledge

Knowledge that would help to support the practice would be an understanding of the Regulations, for example, number of days you can run an event to circumvent certain fees. How to define or categorise an event, for example, “something could be labelled a demonstration rather than a parade and would incur less criteria”. Information on Creative community practices, some practical guidelines on managing volunteers, Aspects of Dublin City Council that work or do not, would be useful to know. (Bishop)

Theoretical knowledge

‘Public Domain as an Experience’, by M. Hajer (2002), includes precedents of Thompson Square and Stuyvesant Park in addition to concepts on ‘theming, connecting, compressing’ and belonging of place.

Outcomes

Different perspective

In terms of people’s attitude towards resilience and community capital Bishop says: “It was an act that enabled people and the council to take perspective”. Maher further states that the process in Granby Park was really effective engagement that changed people’s perspective of the city.

New networks and reflexivity

UpStart created new networks and a new way of working with DCC. The process showed the beginnings of reflexivity in relationship to all collaborators.

Public domain as an experience

40,000 diverse people visited the park, some blogged about it, over 500 volunteered for it, over 500 helped fund it and connected with the public domain of the park and its network. People came into contact with other people and experiences that they would normally not come across.

Model for contemporary parks

It provided a model for what contemporary parks could be, with public engagement, art, interactive activities, trade school, a restaurant, a garden, education and theatre. A temporary park, New Street Garden opened in Waterford in June 2014 and “hundreds of volunteers spent weeks transforming the area into a unique community space”. It was officially visited by the Irish President, Michael D. Higgins.
<http://www.wlrfm.com/news/local/8450-festival-at-new-street-gardens-this-weekend.html>
<http://www.waterford-news.ie/2014/06/17/president-higgins-visit-new-street-garden/>

Mainstream

The Irish Leaving Certificate Art Exam 2014 had a question that referred to Granby Park. It was a question that asked for response to the interview in the Irish Times by Patrick Freyne.
<http://aoifebarry.com/2013/08/>

Visibility for the site’s story and identity

It created visibility of the history of the site and a platform for comment and discussion about property speculation, privatisation of space and social housing provision. It created identity for those who participated.

Value

A space that new communities could be part of

Bishop said that 48% of the area's residents were not born in Ireland and "some of those they met said that community buildings were not for them, not an amenity they felt connected with". Cassidy says that "maybe the addition of new public spaces as the city changes can allow for a sense of ownership and being there from the start that's not possible with only older spaces".

<http://builtdublin.com/granby-park-dominick-street-dublin-1/>

40,000 People

40,000 people visited Granby Park over the month. Over 1000 people were involved in its creation. (From crowd source funders, volunteers, residents, businesses, communities of practice, DCC and Upstart)

Safer area, Art & perspective

"The area has become safer and may be likely to be used again. The delivery of the project depended very much on people and networks". The 29 spaces for art and iconic amphitheatre brought beauty and order into the area.

Praxis & Toolkit

No one in DCC or UpStart had done something of this scale, so they all learnt as they went along. DCC had no expectation and UpStart had an ability to respond to whatever was asked of them. Out of the process, a mechanism for doing pilots and temporary projects has emerged. UpStart plans to create a toolkit of the process which includes social media.

Smith mentioned that UpStart are to produce a document to show other communities how to do it - documenting the engagements.

Strong vision

Bishop says they had a strong vision, stuck closely to their principles, there was no branding and no logos from commercial funders. Hundreds of people volunteered to give their time and worked to build a green space out of rubble. "Out of vacancy, came generosity and for me a refreshed understanding of space, history and what it means to be here and to be socially engaged with challenge, disappointment and hope." (Bishop)

<http://www.granbypark.com/whats-happenin/>

Legacy & Memory

Fallon's perspective is that the value it brought is something more intangible than a measurable metric. And he asks: "Could something have been left, a temporary ecology or a small memory of trees, instead of rubble? Is there a fear that if some memory of Granby Park is left, the residents may feel fear that the housing is not going to proceed?"

Moreover, Smith asked: "What about the legacy? It wasn't about just the now- it's also about the after - what about job creation?"

Lessons Learnt

A Radical Idea Normalised

It was a trouble free precedent for Ireland – no one was sued, had an accident, no complaints about displaced homeless and no one occupied the site after the event. The Green Party stated that Granby Park was “an indicator for how things could be”.

In terms of the bigger picture of resilience, Bishop’s focus is on social resilience “This project was all about people. It started off as a radical idea that now has become normalised and is applauded by everyone. Now other councils are interested in doing something like that.

Urban Ecology

Fallon says: “It would be great if the wider concept of urban ecology could be brought in when a project begins so that there is a strategy for what happens to the site ecologically after the event. That is where the learning needs to take place.”

Valuing the Work Done

When asked what needs to change, Bishop says that he “couldn’t do it again without being paid. It was accepted by institutions as a valuable thing. DCC has invited UpStart to be part of the organisation of a permanent park”.

Two Lessons

For Maher there are two lessons that arise: The first is that DCC is bad at saying “No”, they say nothing and sometimes that is taken as “Yes”. She says: “We should learn to say ‘No’ earlier”.

The second is: “The nature of the community project is that everyone is new to the scene so that a lot of learning happens as the project goes along. It is not like an event managed by professionals.”

30 days too Short

Maher said: “If you are going to heavily curate, manage and service a pop-up park, 30 days is sufficient...enough time for volunteers. If you are going to curate things, it’s an event”. Fallon remarked: “There needs to be some way to prolong the event, so that it can be extended. The requirements are of a very high standard. For all the investment put in to the initial stages of the project, it would be more beneficial to citizens if it was on for longer time”.

Plan B

“Have a plan B!” is one of the most important lessons learnt. For example, UpStart spent about seven months meeting people in relation to the CIE – NAMA site on Jervis Street but it fell through. That is when DCC walked them around to three other sites owned by DCC. Fallon advises that DCC land is best for temporary use as it can be fully determined by a single entity.

Contingency Fund & Site Clearing

He also says: “Have a contingency fund”. After demolition, the contractor should be required to leave the site in a cleared and levelled condition, with potential connections to utilities left intact on the site. This would mean much lower costs for preparing the site in the case of a future temporary project. It would be best to work with companies with CSR that are interested to provide time and expertise for free.

Contested space? Debts and Land

There is a lot of discourse in other cities in Europe about contested space; however, Fallon says “in the Dublin context, there is a problem of tolerance rather than democratic discourse. Space is not contested in Dublin, there seems to be apathy, then people take over and abuse the space. In terms of NAMA and the action they could have taken, Fallon explains: “After the crisis the loans were socialised so the debts are nationalised and society has to pay for the debt. The assets were not socialised so land was not nationalised and therefore there is no action required by managers of the land to engage with the activity of the land. NAMA’s focus is to just pay off the debt”.

Smith said that “Senior management was behind the idea, had a great vision and all other people volunteered to get this done”. It wouldn’t have happened without Dick Brady, Brendan Kenny and Ali Grehan (Assistant City Managers and City Architect at the time).

Wide Perspective & Focus on the ‘Life’ First

This was a project where the perspective of community was wide, as it included many communities of interest in the inception, design, operation and access of the project. The Local Authority has limited municipal power so ‘urban design’ (physical) is often the line taken for urban projects. Granby Park focused on ‘life’ first.

Dialogue & Shared Meaning

The knowledge that UpStart learnt through working with DCC and the communities of interest and practice is valuable because they opened up dialogues between DCC, community residents and themselves. They managed to create trust and shared meaning in the collaboration of Granby Park.

Johanna Varghese did desk top research and interviewed Siobhan Maher, Sean Smith & Paraic Fallon from Dublin City Council and Sam Bishop from UpStart. Interviews were conducted in June and July, 2014.