APPROPRIATE THAT BRIDGE

Appropriation As a Way of Intervention
Appropriation is an action of intervention in many fields, including legislation, culture and design. To appropriate something (or someplace) means to violate its original ownership and claim it, which in most cases is illegal. However, appropriation doesn’t have to be an illegal act: it can be permitted by the authority and become a “reuse” of an object or space. For example, street dining is often authorized by city governments, so they indicate a transition of the ownership of the street from the vehicles and pedestrians to the restaurants and diners. In architectural terms, appropriating a space (or structure) mostly equals giving it a new program. Lara-Hernandez, Melis and Caputo (2017) define appropriation of the built environment as a continuous synergy between citizens and the urban landscape displayed through specific activities that contributes to the edifice of the social urban landscape. “Appropriation of public spaces allows citizens to take part in the production of urban space, beyond the mere inhabitation/fruition of the already formed urban space by giving citizens the right to completely manage and use their everyday life” (Lefebvre, 1992).

Another action of appropriation is to “Squat”. It is the action of occupying an unoccupied area of land or building that someone does not own. This usually refers to homeless people occupying part of the streets, houses or other types of space owned by the others. In Architecture of Appropriation, there is a seven-step-practice of squatting that can legalize the act of squatting. “In the Netherlands, squatting a building is a complicated and now criminalized intervention in the built environment, yet one that requires an organized structure of solidarity and support as well as specific knowledge and experience.” (Boer, 2019). It is possible to have legitimized squatting. It is also possible to peacefully appropriate something without causing any tension or violating any law.

In summary, the appropriation of architectural space might be illegal in the beginning, but like the artists moving into SoHo in NYC, the act of appropriation or even squatting can be a way to stimulate the economy and eventually completely transform the space. I wish to find possible methods to appropriate the Crook Point Bascule Bridge, the selected site properly and create new programs for the neighborhood. This intervention is not only re-appropriating the urban space, but also making new spaces that have the potential to be appropriated by the locals in the future.
COLLECTED RESEARCH

Cultural Appropriation
Painting of Japanese Female wearing a Japanese Kimono

VS

Painting of White Female wearing a Japanese Kimono

VS

Traditional African Dreadlocks

VS

White Male with Dreadlocks

VS

Native American wearing a War Bonnet

VS

White Person wearing a War Bonnet

VS

Chuck Berry, Black Rock & Roll Singer

VS

Elvis Presley, White Singer who mixed Country Music and Rock & Roll
COLLECTED RESEARCH

Artist Appropriation
Keith Haring
Started by appropriating vacant subway boards as canvas; his art works became famous and were shown in the museums and art galleries. Finally they became pop culture and were appropriated and used on shirts.

Christo and Jeanne Claude
Their art works are famous for taking existing natural or built environments as the foundations and playing with the form and materiality. Without going into the underlying philosophy, their works are the appropriation of the environments. But they are not violating the ownership since the works are authorized and temporary.

Do Ho Suh
The works of Do Ho Suh usually represent architectural spaces, but made in different materials such as translucent polyester. He has modeled his apartment unit in this method. In a way he has appropriated the original architecture form and made something new out of it.
COLLECTED RESEARCH

Urban / Architectural Appropriation
SoHo NYC
The transformation from industrial area to commercial-residential complex due to the artist’s appropriation in 1960s to 1970s.

Street Dining
There are different types of street dinings - from a traditional food cart to the restaurants taking the entire street, each indicating a different extent of appropriation. The timeline from the unauthorized food carts appropriating the streets to the city-held on-street-dinings nowadays is also interesting to think about.
Community Gardens

The community gardens are the example of the neighborhood appropriating the vacant lots and transform them into beneficial spaces for the residents.

Fox Point Community Garden, Providence

Community garden in Chicago

Rushall Garden in Melbourne, Australia, on land that was formerly a railway junction

Community Gardens

The community gardens are the example of the neighborhood appropriating the vacant lots and transform them into beneficial spaces for the residents.
COLLECTED RESEARCH

Squatters
Squatting, although it is the word usually describing the homeless people sleeping on a bench and not being a legal concept, can somehow be considered as a way to utilize a vacant house by gradually changing the ownership in several legitimate steps. The diagrams above from Architecture of Appropriation shows how to squat and occupy a vacant building in the following steps:

1. Finding vacant buildings
2. Researching vacant buildings
3. Mobilizing supporters
4. Preparing the squatting action
5. Carrying out the squatting action
6. Maintaining the occupation
7. Beyond squatting: eviction or legalization

We should no longer see squatting as an entirely illegal and disgraceful act. It is actually a useful step to turn the abandoned or vacant structures into useful spaces. In that way, squatting is an act of re-appropriation of the urban space. Of course, the legality is still an important part.
The spatial practice of squatting in seven steps
René Boer, Marina Otero Verzier, Katja Truijen

1. Finding vacant buildings
2. Researching vacant buildings
3. Mobilizing supporters
4. Preparing the squatting action
5. Carrying out the squatting action
6. Maintaining the occupation
7. Beyond squatting: eviction or legalization

How to turn a vacant lot into a community garden: A primer
Katie Lorah

1. Make sure the site is suitable
2. Get permission from the owner
3. Check zoning laws & water availability
4. Crowdsourcing & formalize your efforts
5. Brainstorm your garden
6. Protect your arrangement
7. Budget & fundraise
8. Prep & build the site
9. Celebrate—and keep celebrating!
ARTIFACT 2

Bring it to anywhere and Appropriate the Space

HoMe as in Haochen Meng
Crook Point Bascule Bridge

The Crook Point Bascule Bridge (or the Seekonk River Drawbridge) is a defunct Scherzer rolling lift railway bridge which spans the Seekonk River, connecting the city of Providence, Rhode Island, to the city of East Providence. Stuck in the open position since its abandonment in 1976, it is known to nearby residents as the “Stuck-Up Bridge” and has become somewhat of a local icon of urban decay.
HISTORY OF CROOK POINT BASCULE BRIDGE

The bridge was built in 1908 as part of the East Side Railroad Tunnel project and provide a direct connection to the old Union Station along the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad line.

850 feet (260 m) across
raises to a 64 degree angle
opens a clear waterway 125 feet (38 m) wide.
HISTORY OF CROOK POINT BASCULE BRIDGE - EAST SIDE RAILROAD TUNNEL

Railroad Bridge being teared down in 1983
CROOK POINT BASCULE BRIDGE TODAY
Existing Bridge Documentation

- Railway Track
- Truss
- Stone Base
The project proposal is to reappropriate the Crook Point Bascule Bridge as a connection between Providence and East Providence. Due to the lack of bike lane, public parking and recreation area in the East Providence side, reconnecting the bridge and transfer it into a bike path and utilize the vacant lot on the east side would create more balanced programs. The idea of the project is to “re-appropriate” the bridge’s function as a connection, and create space that can be appropriate by the locals and visitors. As a result, there are not so much fixed programs on site besides the essential ones such as bathroom and accessible passage.

Renovation of the bridge body is necessary. New flooring system will be applied to bridge bodies on both sides, and the east bridge body will be widened to allow more access.
The new park & recreation at Crook Point is responding to the Gano Park at the other side. The park at where bridge meets the ground is more of a fixed program, with fixed benches or public Barbeque grills. As it move to further north, the program become blurred, which means less defined areas and facilities, and more vacant lots for people to use freely.

(Possible usage: flee markets, street food trucks parking, or even squatters).
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The Act of Graffiti as a type of Appropriation
APPROPRIATE THAT BRIDGE

Appropriation As a Way of Intervention

Rhode Island School of Design Thesis

Instructor: Marthe Rowen

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