

# Pop-ups: has innovation been replaced by exploitation?

## YES

**James R Payne**

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The appropriation of the pop-up by the marketing men is unfortunate but perhaps inevitable, as the Boxpark demonstrates. The more important issue is what it says about the situation of students and young architects in the UK today.

The very term "pop-up" is irritating, the temptation is to dismiss it, together with the words Facebook and Twitter, in a fit of Ludite rage. No matter that such innovations may have helped to bring down governments, these terms speak of fashionable disposability with hipster affectation. A steady diary of events replaces the permanence and immutability of architecture.

The construction of temporary structures or exhibitions of course pre-dates the coining of this PR-friendly phrase by a very long time. You could say Le Corbusier's Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau was a pop-up. A friendly and interactive way of informing a visitor of what the Paris Expositions des Arts Décoratifs of 1925 was planning for our cities.

But these recent projects "popped up" from the stinking corpse of the last speculative boom. Apparently there is no more money left, so the structures will have to be temporary and, oh sorry, we can't pay you much money to design them. The danger of exploitation of the younger generation is always there, especially when access to education, employment or independent work is increasingly limited.

The slightly more long-in-the-tooth architects of this latest proposal may find the skinny jeans a bit too tight.



Wagh Thistleton's Boxpark in Shoreditch, made from shipping containers, is set to be the world's first pop-up shopping mall.

## NO

**Andrew Waugh**

Director, Waugh  
Thistleton Architects



I love pop-up stuff. I certainly much prefer a pop-up shop to an empty shop or a pop-up shopping centre to any empty building site. By allowing these retail weeds to grow into our streetscape and then to disappear again we give opportunities for invention and creativity, we breathe new life into tired streets and sad city centres.

This is certainly a symptom of recession, but perhaps one of the positives to come from these troubling times. Having lateral planning policies and open-minded landowners allows these left-over spaces to be imaginatively used as showcases for innovation and endeavour.

Using what's available — from

derelict buildings to shipping containers — there is an opportunity for creativity where architects can take up the challenge. From planning these guerilla moves to fitting out these little gems gives space for creatives to make the most of their talents and ingenuity.

Is it sustainable? This should be recycling at its best — recycling cities and boxes and materials, for these pop-ups are by definition re-used and short-term; making the most of what is available there and then.

My only worry is that we keep this fun and fast and that we don't start thinking that perhaps pop-up schools and hospitals might be a good idea...

Given these tools we can make instant, if small, flourishes to our cities.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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