Mara Ferreri

The Permanence of Temporary Urbanism

Normalising Precarity in Austerity London

CITIESANDCULTURES

The Permanence of Temporary Urbanism

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Acknowledgements

This book charts a decade-long scholarly and personal trajectory. It owes much, in its form and content, to countless encounters and conversations with fellow researchers and cultural practitioners in institutional and non-institutional settings. I admit that I am hesitant to release a book on the permanence of temporary urbanism at a time of unimaginable global upheaval, with our futures marked by increased social injustice exacerbated by the dual threat of pandemics and climate disaster. The London it evokes, and the cultural urban dynamics it discusses and the seductions it analyses, all appear to belong to a very distant past. While completing the manuscript, however, I was reinvigorated by the idea that this book could be a way of holding on to all the minor histories of places, collectives and ephemeral practices that have now disappeared, swallowed up by the centrifugal forces of financialised speculation and planned dispossession. Importantly, this book is a way of thanking and paying homage to all those who found themselves entangled in the field of temporary urbanism, people who attempted to challenge the dominant horizon of planned precarisation, and who, as research participants, have generously shared their reflections, experiences and critique with me over the years.

1. Temporary urbanism: a situated approach

Abstract

Over the past decade, temporary urbanism has emerged as an imaginary and a practice. This chapter introduces the importance of a critical and grounded approach to the phenomenon and outlines the key themes discussed in the monograph. It argues that the roots of temporary urbanism lie in established Western cultural tropes depicting vacancy and temporariness as urban social and spatial alterity. Linking its establishment to dynamics of austerity policymaking and urban restructuring, it contends that temporary urbanism has become a key imaginary in a recurrent urban crisis landscape geared towards greater life and place insecurity. The need for a situated and longitudinal approach undergirds the rationale behind a semi-ethnographic focus on the glamorisation of austerity culture in post-2008 London.

Keywords: situated research, temporary urbanism, precarity, austerity, London

The rise of temporary urban projects in cities over the past decade is a well-documented phenomenon and has increasingly gained visibility in the public discourse and in urban policy circles. Commentators in architecture, urban policy and the arts have used terms such as 'pop-up', 'temporary', 'interim' and 'meanwhile' to capture innovative forms of short-term use of urban spaces. From theatres to community spaces and homes, temporary urban practices have opened the temporary form to the operations of a variety of urban actors, from public institutions to private and third-sector organisations. New and established urban practitioners contributed to the emergence of small-scale projects such as short-term retail outlets, ephemeral art galleries and temporary community gardens, which have rapidly informed, as practices and policies, a 'new vernacular' of urban cultures in Europe and

North America.[1] Ideas of a 'pop-up' or 'temporary' city of voluntary small-scale projects such as community gardens and ephemeral cultural centres have rapidly become commonplace in London and other large Western cities and have been encouraged through cultural and urban policy.[2]

In the UK, the polyvalence of signification that characterises the discourse of temporary urbanism is well represented by two quotes, which can be taken to exemplify two distinct moments. The first is from the newspaper *The Times* in an article titled 'Art's great squatting revolution', which begins as follows:

> There is probably an empty building in your street, you may have walked past it a thousand times and not noticed its slow and mossy decay, or maybe you don't know it's even vacant because, theoretically, it's not: someone has taken it over, fixed it up a bit and is putting it to good use, using it as a theatre, a gallery, a shop, a community space or home. The chances are that they are not even doing it illegally.[3]

The quote typifies the ways in which temporary and 'pop-up' uses were represented across British media in 2010: a focus on innovation and unexpectedness, an association with cultural and artistic practices, the uncertain legal position that they may inhabit, but also their positive value when compared to the ghosts of decay and vacancy. The second quote, from a publication that came out exactly two years later, explains why temporary and interim uses have become so appealing to local authorities in the UK and beyond:

> Many city authorities in Europe and North America that are charged with the task of encouraging the revitalisation and redevelopment of urban areas are now finding that, for the most part, they lack the resources, power and control to implement formal masterplans. Instead some are beginning to experiment with looser planning visions and design frameworks, linked to phased packages of small, often temporary initiatives, designed to unlock the potential of sites.[4]

Each quote marks a politically significant discursive shift in the representation of temporary occupations: from marginal, ad-hoc and experimental

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1   Mould, 2014.
2   Throughout 2010 and 2011, publicly supported schemes for artistic temporary shop fronts appeared in New York as well as in San Francisco and Los Angeles. See Ferreri, 2016.
3   Hanra, 2010, 'Art's great squatting revolution', *The Times*, 16 January 2010.
4   Bishop and Williams, 2012, p. 3.

practices still shrouded in imaginaries of illicit urban counter-cultures to their celebration and appropriation by urban policymakers and planners at a time characterised by reduced public resources and regulatory powers, which some critical urban theorists have defined as 'austerity urbanism'.[5] In the months that followed the election in May 2010 of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government in the UK, temporary uses established themselves as a key marker of the time, and the period was later defined by another British newspaper, *The Guardian*, as 'the Autumn of Pop-Ups'.[6] It is in this relatively brief time frame that the term 'temporary urbanism' began to be used in the British context to encompass practices as different as short-term urban gardening, city festivals, the publicly funded re-purposing of large vacant buildings, squatted counter-cultural projects, political mass occupations and social enterprises. The combination of vastly different legal, institutional, economic, social and political conditions marked the discourse of temporary urban use as an ambiguous and dynamic field informed by competing claims and politics.

This book aims to tell multiple, entangled and situated stories about the emergence and persistence of the discourse and practices of temporary uses in London. It bears witness to a *form* of doing urbanism through ephemeral and short-lived projects by examining its mainstreaming as an answer to the effects of a global recession and how it has since become a celebrated while also problematic urban practice at a time of austerity.[7] From episodic and often spatially specific instances to results of copy-paste cultural and urban policymaking, temporary and pop-up projects have concentrated in a spatial form multiple and complex entanglements of competing and often contradictory ways of imagining and producing cities. In the United Kingdom, which this book explores, the 'pop-up revolution' of 2010 established itself through interesting and culturally specific associations with community-oriented practices, but also with illicit and politically radical traditions that have become increasingly entangled with dominant logics of urban development. The emergence of this specific kind of temporary urbanism has been described by a commentator as a 'splicing together of seemingly incompatible strands of profit and protest, corporate commerce and counter-culture carnival'.[8] The idea of a 'splicing together' captures this complexity, which generates a minor conundrum not only for the perceptive

5   Peck, 2012.
6   See also Cochrane, K. (2010), 'Why pop-ups pop up everywhere', *The Guardian*, 12 October.
7   St Hill, 2017.
8   Downing, 2012, p. 1.

cultural and urban observer—caught between puzzlement and outright rejection[9]—but also, importantly, for the urban researcher entering an emerging field, seduced by its promises and sieving through foundational elements, deviations, false starts and alternative possibilities. Temporary urbanism and its seductions were born from this complexity, but its roots run deeper.

Reclaiming spaces and the role of temporariness

The temporary use of vacant urban spaces did not begin with the 2008 global financial crisis. Despite the 'novelty value' attached to it by national media and urban practitioners, it would be misleading to approach the issue as an entirely new phenomenon. Its emergence was, instead, steeped in long-standing temporary experimentations in art, architecture and activism, which materialised in practices of reclaiming vacant buildings and land, often in areas of politicised and contentious developments. Such practices are often understood as site or place-specific, that is, as practices that respond to existing social and cultural conditions, and in this intent they often signalled important crossovers between art and activism, if not a blurring of the two.[10] The overlapping of tactics and strategies and the emphasis on process-based forms of encountering and shaping the uses of space drew on the historical critique of the separation between culture and life—and between art and politics—in a broader understanding of urban powers.[11] Prior to 2008, the last incarnation of this experimentation could be placed in the early and mid-2000s, when a series of projects in contested urban sites across Europe prompted a reformulation and reclaiming of imaginaries of urban occupations and a greater stress on collective social and cultural projects in dialogue with histories of urban dissent and cultural critique.[12]

It is at this point that the uncertain territory of temporary urban practices began to attract the attention of researchers and commentators navigating the blurred boundaries between practices, rationales and agendas. European Union-funded research such as the Urban Catalyst Project (2001-2003) listed strategies, typologies and examples and aimed to systematise 'the field'.

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9   Hancock, 2014.
10   Raunig, 2007.
11   Miles, 1997. For debates within the artistic and cultural fields, see also Felshin, 1995; Lacy, 1995.
12   See Petrescu, 2007a; Ferreri, 2009.

This taxonomic approach was further developed in a survey of almost 100 temporary uses in Berlin (2004/2005), which became the basis for Studio Urban Catalyst and Klaus Overmeyer's seminal *Urban Pioneers: Temporary Reuse and Urban Development in Berlin* (2007). Subsequent reports on temporary urban uses tended to bring together a range of very different practices, from short-term urban gardening to social projects in large vacant buildings, artistic practices, community-run initiatives and established social enterprises. In the UK, a number of reports emerged after 2010 in a similar vein: the Meanwhile Project report entitled *No Time to Waste... The Meanwhile Use of Assets for Community Benefit* (2010); the NESTA/CABE's *Compendium for the Civic Economy* (2011); Peter Bishop and Lesley William's *The Temporary City* (2012); the Empty Shop Network's report *Pop-Up People* (2012) and Killing Architects' report *Urban Tactics – Temporary Interventions + Long Term Planning* (2012). Most of these publications were based on case studies and placed emphasis on the self-reporting of practitioners such as architectural studios and artistic collectives.

What these publications had in common was an effort to define the object of study and, by doing so, find common threads through widely diverse practices and aims. The issue of defining precisely what does and doesn't belong to 'the field' of temporary urbanism is directly addressed by Peter Bishop and Lesley Williams in the introduction of *The Temporary City*:

> the boundaries between so many of the themes that could help organise the material are becoming blurred. In fact the blurring of traditional distinctions between land use types and activities, and the interaction and overlap between the factors that are driving temporary activities [...] are perhaps a key characteristic of temporary urbanism.[13]

A common hurdle encountered by these first studies was the qualification of urban practices as *temporary*. As explained in the introduction to *Urban Tactics*:

> the binary distinction of 'temporary' and 'permanent' is deeply inadequate to describe the range of projects which happen in a city. 'Temporary' is ascribed to projects which vary wildly in length, too much so for it to be a truly useful descriptor.[14]

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13   Bishop and Williams, pp. 6-7.
14   Killing Architects, 2012, p. 5.

Urban Tactics' proposal to distinguish between 'event-like projects' and longer-lasting ones offered only a partial solution, and the problem remains when the focus shifts from the need to order and create taxonomies and guidelines to the desire to pay attention to the relationships and communities that are established in and through the use of space. For this reason, more critical authors concerned with similar questions have opted for a thematic approach based on what such activities *do* in the city and with its communities: reclaiming, transgressing, contesting, appropriating, uncovering, pluralising.[15]

It is through such attempts at generating interpretative umbrella terms that, since the mid-2000s, practices as diverse as guerrilla gardening, pop-up shops, political occupations and artistic performances have been brought together and celebrated as ways of collectively appropriating and transforming cities. Importantly, commentators and practitioners alike often presented such practices as innovative ruptures with the 'city as it is'. In doing so, they contributed to establishing what could be defined as the 'alterity' trope that narrates temporary uses as 'other' and 'interstitial' to dominant urban economic and social dynamics—spatially as a rupture in the allegedly homogeneous space of the city determined by institutional and market logics, and temporally as a pause or syncopation in the rhythms and social organisation of everyday urban life. Through the alterity trope, 'temporary' was transformed into something more than an adjective: it became a signifier for doing things differently, for practices that were meant to challenge what existed and engender other, alternative forms of creating, using and relating to space and to each other.

The trope of temporariness as alterity

These expectations were, to some, a clear sign of collective delusion and wishful thinking. The possibility of rupturing or even challenging the rhythms of capitalist investment in the urban fabric, particularly in a city such as London, appeared to critical commentators as a skilfully choreographed mirage. As argued by Tim Abrahams in a review of Bishop and Williams' *The Temporary City* (2012):

> The increasing privatisation of ostensibly public space means that temporary usage often has a very specific role to play as a means of bolstering

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15   These are the chapter titles in Hou, 2010.

land prices in a downturn [...]. Far from being a sign that modernity is in crisis, the rise of temporary architecture in the cultural sphere could be posited as a sign that news of the death of capitalism has been exaggerated. While some of us run around with The End is Nigh signs around our necks, developers are sitting tight and waiting for the right time to sweep aside the apothecaries' gardens and build office blocks.[16]

Such a critique finds resonance and support in the critical urban studies literature. Vacant spaces and the cultural practices that inhabit them have been studied as the visible frontiers of processes and dynamics of urban gentrification, as evidenced in recent analyses of creative temporary uses in Berlin and Amsterdam during the early and mid-2000s.[17] The mobilisation of 'creative cities' ideas, albeit reaching their limits,[18] has played an important role within the neoliberal urban project through the capture of critical cultural practices and urban counter-cultural traditions for urban place marketing and development. This double discourse is perfectly captured by the Senator for Urban Development in Berlin, Ingeborg Junge-Reyer, in the preface to the already mentioned *Urban Pioneers* (2007):

> Temporary use has already become a magical term: on the one hand, for those many creative minds who, in a world ruled by the profit maxim, are trying nevertheless to create spaces that reflect and nurture their vision of the future; and, on the other, for urban planners to whom it represents a chance for urban development.[19]

In this analysis, the capture of practices of vacant space reuse is the result of a double move capable of harnessing and incorporating practices and strategies from urban social movements and the counter-cultural scene in the name of 'cultural creativity and entrepreneurial activation' while simultaneously dismantling existing social infrastructures and implementing stricter forms of urban policing.[20] In Western cities increasingly re-made according to the logics of privatisation and social control, temporary projects inhabit the contradiction between a celebration of temporary urban entrepreneurialism

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16   Abrahams, 2012.
17   See Colomb, 2012 for Berlin and Peck, 2011a for Amsterdam.
18   For critical questions around the limits of the idea of 'creative cities', see the pamphlet edited by Harris and Moreno, 2012.
19   Studio Urban Catalyst/ Klaus Overmeyer, 2007, p. 17.
20   See Peck, Theodore and Brenner, 2012.

and a punitive, revanchist political response that marginalises, forecloses and criminalises alternative ways of inhabiting cities.[21] An urban political economy framework is absolutely essential when approaching temporary urbanism in its emergence and development, as it brings into focus both the wider dynamics that produce urban vacancy as well as the conditions for its temporary use. As has been argued by Cian O'Callaghan, Cesare Di Feliciantonio and Mick Byrne with regards to temporary uses in Ireland, vacancy makes 'visible the contradictory nature of private property rights'[22] and becomes a key site from which to understand forms of urbanisation that emerge from the territorialisation of the global financial crisis and its aftermath.

Limiting a critical analysis to material conditions, however, risks downplaying the power of imaginaries and symbolic economies as well as depriving urban dwellers and practitioners—the organisers and volunteers of the 'apothecaries' gardens'—of any critical understanding of their position within these dynamics and, importantly, of any power to address and challenge them.[23] Rather than an interpretative solution to this tension, the analysis of the interconnection between temporary urbanism and neoliberal dynamics at times of austerity should be taken as a starting point for understanding and questioning forms of acting in contemporary cities. The global financial crisis of 2008 and its political response through the austerity discourse presented the perfect crisis scenario for implementing further neoliberal and revanchist urban agendas,[24] yet this has not gone unchallenged, even from those purported to produce and benefit 'creative cities'.[25] An analysis seeking to understand the material conditions of practices of temporary use, therefore, needs to be combined with a critical and sustained attention to practitioners' discourses, aims, strategies and self-reflection and their interaction with other sectors of organised urban dwellers. To do so, it is fundamental to problematise what is often presented as a binary choice between celebrating practices of temporary vacant space reuse as 'other'—intrinsically 'resisting' processes of neoliberal urbanism—or dismissing them as inevitably co-opted by forms of urban spectacle and place marketing.

21   MacLeod, 2002; Smith, 1996.
22   O'Callaghan, Feliciantonio and Byrne, 2018, p. 874.
23   Tonkiss, 2013.
24   See for instance volume 16, issue 6 of *City: analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy* and in particular, Mayer, 2012.
25   Novy and Colomb, 2013.

For a situated approach to temporary urbanism

The premise of this book is to maintain these critical tensions alive in a situated approach to temporary urbanism. It brings together a materialist analysis with cultural debates and a power analysis[26] of the strategies enacted by architects, artists and urban practitioners to propose urban alternatives through performative, and at times conflictive, encounters with other urban users.[27] My epistemological standpoint stems from the feminist tenet that all processes of knowledge production are situated in opposition to 'the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity'.[28] As a cultural practitioner, researcher and activist, I am interested in the frictions, difficulties, negotiations and power relations as experienced and understood by practitioners on the ground, which indicate the potentials and limitations of temporary reuse as a form of urban action. In practice, this means being attentive to the ways in which practitioners inhabit discourse and the shifting legal, social and economic dynamics that produce vacant spaces as well as their availability for cultural and political use. Shifting attention to the direct use of vacant spaces as forms of affirming and experimenting with alternative and critical urban imaginaries and practices means attending to the 'creative minds' mentioned in the preface of *Urban Pioneers* discussed earlier and their attempts 'to create spaces that reflect and nurture their vision of the future'. It requires valuing their critical and propositional potential without uncritically celebrating them as 'revolutionary', but also without succumbing to a totalising structural framing of crisis-induced and crisis-inducing austerity urbanism, which does not allow for more mundane and localised collectives coming together and organising around potentially conflictive vacant places.

In the search for a critical understanding of temporary spatial appropriation, I have found it useful to engage with ongoing debates around urban social movements and the constitution of autonomous geographies through practices of direct use.[29] From self-organisation as a survival strategy to forms of solidarity acting in response to an inadequate or shrinking welfare state, over the past decade community-led responses have often reclaimed vacant or under-used spaces through more or less visible practices of occupation that

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26   Along the lines of a cultural political economy approach to the urban, as outlined by Ribera-Fumaz, 2009.
27   Rendell, 2006.
28   Haraway, 1988, p. 589.
29   Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006; see also the 2012 special Anarchist Geographies of the journal *Antipode* 44 (5).

became temporarily iconic with the Occupy movement in 2011 that swept many Western cities, including London.[30] The prefigurative potentials of politically reclaimed spaces is framed through the Lefebvrian notion of the 'right to appropriation' as the exercise of direct use and the power to affect change in the city.[31] In this view, occupation and use are seen as posing a radical and direct challenge to the commodification of space and to neoliberal dynamics of temporal and spatial enclosure.[32] While such arguments can be captivating, the pre-emptive acceptance of use as temporary—that is, the temporal framing of such occupation—compels a problematisation of the idea that direct use is intrinsically emancipatory and an alternative to existing social, economic and power relations. Even in the case of critical and declaredly political projects of reuse, there remains a need to address their legacy—material and immaterial—beyond the short-termness to which they are relegated. Beyond direct re-appropriation per se, it is crucial to understand the ways in which collective use is negotiated, organised and sustained over time as well as the 'tensions they establish with their contexts and the forces which attempt to direct them'.[33]

The question of the power engendered through the temporary appropriation of urban spaces requires a methodological approach capable of overcoming the short-sightedness and insularity of investigations solely based on case studies. In answer to this issue, in this book I develop a longitudinal approach to what I call 'the entangled field' of temporary urbanism by examining its subjects, networks, interconnections and place-specific embeddedness in urban, social and cultural processes. As recently stated by planning scholar Ali Madanipour in the introduction to his *Cities in Time. Temporary Urbanism and the Future of the City*, the key question to be asked about the role of temporary urbanism is 'whether it is an interim fashion aimed at filling short-term economic gaps or a reflection of structural change and an instrument of transformation with long-term impact'.[34] In agreement with this trajectory for critical enquiry, the main argument of this book is that temporariness in city making—or rather, a specific construct of temporariness—is indeed here to stay, both as a practice and as an object of knowledge (and research) about forms of acting in the city. Its imaginary and values have become naturalised in the language of urban policymakers

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30   Halvorsen, 2015.
31   French original 'Le Droit à la Ville' (1968), in Lefebvre, 1996; see also Mayer, 2009.
32   Purcell, 2002.
33   Barry-Slater and Iles, 2009, p. 23.
34   Madanipour, 2017, p. 1.

and planners and in the ways in which cultural practitioners, architects and activists understand their engagement with people and spaces.

'Post-crisis' London

This book offers a detailed discussion of a range of temporary practices in London and their development over time in relation to neighbourhood and city-wide dynamics. A seven-year qualitative study—conducted between 2009 and 2016—of the emergence of the field of temporary urbanism provides a situated view of this emergence as seen from practitioners and their networks. Situating the generation and dissemination of discourses of urban temporariness is key to analysing the tensions, the multiplicities, and the cracks under the smooth polished surface of coffee-table books that commonly celebrate the temporary turn in urbanism and architecture. Mobilising multiple theoretical and substantive viewpoints, I reconstruct and delve into the evolving and never resolved nature of temporary urbanism as imaginary and practice, in dialogue with specific material dynamics as well as past and present cultural, political and architectural traditions. The brief hiatus in dominant economic dynamics triggered by the global financial crisis of 2008 was accompanied by a powerful movement of political and cultural rethinking, particularly in Global North cities that witnessed large-scale mobilisations, such as the Occupy movement in London and New York or the 15M movement that occupied squares in Madrid and other cities in Spain. The combination of a momentary recession, visible vacancy and the collective reclaiming of public and private spaces marked a generation and engendered new rebellious, hopeful and transformative imaginaries of urban living which spilled over to professionalised and institutionalised practices.

Such spillovers, although powerful, were to be revealed as out of sync with the profound retrenchment of neoliberal urban dynamics through widespread budgetary restrictions and 'austerity' measures, as I outline in the course of this book. The period under examination was marked by profound and extended processes of urban development that have rapidly transformed London's cityscape, particularly but not solely in its inner boroughs. As often is the case in a context of crisis, capital was quick to seize on opportunities for profit. The global financial crisis led to a greater concentration of international actors and investment in the real estate sectors, aided by shifts in planning policy and governance and the stranglehold on defunded local governments forced to quite literally

engage in 'selling off the future' to keep afloat.[35] The effects have become particularly vivid in the housing sector, but the displacement caused by the revalorisation and gentrification of formerly disinvested areas extended to small-scale traders and community organisations too. In contrast to the illusion of a regime change capable of questioning neoliberal urban models, the contested narratives of 'post-crisis' London only reconfirmed the centrality of urban space and finance in the neoliberal project. With the privilege of hindsight, in the UK and more globally, the post-crisis period saw the emergence of a new wave of accumulation by dispossession through more far-reaching financial and investment strategies in real estate markets.[36] Politically, these dynamics were supported by the introduction of a more hostile and repressive environment for protests and opposition, alongside and despite a growing public awareness of the importance of claiming space. A clear example of this was the 2012 criminalisation of squatting in residential spaces—a key counter-cultural reference for many temporary-use projects—for the first time in the history of England.[37]

Many of the post-crisis economic and political processes outlined above are clearly not specific to London or the United Kingdom, and references to international instances and examples are woven throughout the book. The focus of my study, however, was not to offer a comparative analysis but rather to bring wider economic and political dynamics into dialogue with thick, situated and in-depth knowledge of the complex and at times contradictory dynamics of cultural formations around urban temporariness and their interconnection with place-specific geographies of urban transformation, particularly at the lived scale of the neighbourhood. In my longitudinal analysis of narratives and debates around the emergence of the urban discourse on temporary uses, I bring together in-depth dialogue with networks of urban policymakers, activists, and urban and cultural professionals, understood as self-reflexive knowers of urban and cultural dynamics, and the lived experiences of the transformations of place at the borough, neighbourhood and street level. The focus on London's urban transformation and its inhabitants combines with a focus on the city as a global site of cultural production and dissemination of urban policy

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35   See Beswick and Penny, 2018; see also Penny, 2017.

36   See Beswick, Alexandri, Byrne, Vives-Miró, Fields, Hodkinson and Janoschka, 2016.

37   The 'Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012' only applied to residential occupations but was interpreted as an attack on all forms of temporary occupations, particularly after the episodes of student protests and university occupations (2010/11) and later the Occupy London camp in front of St Paul's Cathedral (2011). See Finchett-Maddock, 2012.

imaginaries globally. If the discourse of temporary urbanism emerged and spread across different sites in Northern Europe (notably Berlin) and North America, it is in London where much of its glamorisation took hold and from which the discourse continues to ripple out into the Anglophone world and beyond.[38] As a global site of higher education and knowledge formation on cultural production, urban planning and architecture, the metropolis is the professional or personal home of many of the professional actors whose activities and writing shape not only local knowledge claims and agendas but also transnational urban discourse and practice.[39]

A longitudinal outlook enables one to critically examine the ways in which practices and their accompanying narratives have been incorporated by established disciplines in the service of marketing and urban develop-ment, the tensions and potentials for contestation, and a discussion of shifts in the built environment and in social relations and the production of distinctively 'temporary' subject positions. It is not only a question of recognising the growth of short-termism in urban practice but of under-standing a more profound transformation in subjectivities, imaginaries and horizons for action. In this sense, I argue, temporary urbanism should be seen as emerging from the reconfiguration of crisis into an expanded and recurrent crisis landscape geared towards greater work, life and place precarity. As I have discussed elsewhere, precarity—understood as 'a condition of vulnerability relative to contingency and the inability to predict'[40]—is inseparable from the production of subjectivities, urban imaginaries and techniques of governing and self-governance.[41] Against the backdrop of austerity policies, the culture of temporariness both normalises and glamorises precarity. Such a critique does not mean that all temporary practices are doomed to be absorbed by such a crisis scenario: in attend-ing to practices and their development over time, I interrogate how they attempt to rethink and remake such a foreclosed scenario, generating critical alternative narratives and modes of acting in contemporary cities that test the power of aesthetic and cultural interventions while also shedding light on their interconnectedness with local and national social and political processes.

38   Colomb, 2011; St Hill, 2016; Till, 2005.
39   For instance, the design of the *Ephemeral architecture* theme in the 2016 Venice Architectural Biennale; see Mehrotra and Vera, 2017.
40   Ettlinger, 2007; for a theoretical debate on precarity in the context of migration, see Lewis, Dwyer, Hodkinson and Waite, 2015.
41   Ferreri, Dawson and Vasudevan, 2017; see also Lorey, 2015.

The book's questions

The book is organised according to four sets of interconnected questions. The first regards the politics of representation and self-representation in temporary urban practices. Temporary urbanism is a discourse: a cultural and imaginative construct as much as a tangible practice, with its institutions, networks and socio-economic dynamics. Key themes guiding my analysis were the relationship between temporariness creativity, the relentless push towards precarious entrepreneurialism, and how the positionality of different practitioners intersected or challenged narratives of exceptionality under conditions of austerity urbanism. In Chapter 2, titled 'The entangled field of temporary urbanism', I examine a range of visual and textual materials to shed light on the unfolding and articulation of the discourse of temporary uses of vacant spaces in the UK. Drawing on the media coverage, public events and forms of self-representation of London-based practices, I attend to the complex official and unofficial narratives constructed, mobilised and performed; the transfers and translations occurring between the 'official' narratives of central and local governments, those produced by third-sector temporary urban use intermediaries and finally by private sector actors such as property investors and estate agents; and their substantial narrative and practical overlaps. The ambiguities of the official discourse and its implementation into policy raised the seductive promise of community-oriented urban practices of dissent while simultaneously foreclosing them in practice. The different subject-positions from which the field of temporary and 'pop-up' urbanism emerged make it 'entangled': with this chapter, I offer a semi-ethnographic unravelling of its multiple facets and official actors in the first years of its emergence.

In Chapter 3, 'Not a pop-up!', I contrast the official narratives of policymakers and promotional materials with a critical analysis of the self-representations of socially engaged art practitioners and urban activists involved in reclaimed spaces. The chapter responds to the second set of questions concerning the materialisation of temporary urbanism through practices—their legal, economic and organisational forms—as seen from the standpoint of the practitioners, volunteers and users involved with them. In my analysis, official representations of community-oriented temporary practices often evaded questions about the production and availability of vacant spaces and the unease of practitioners and participants faced with precarious conditions. In the chapter I re-materialise these discourses by attending to the production of vacant retail units in specific neighbourhoods and to the lawful or unlawful negotiations that enable practitioners to access

them and to organise their temporary collective reuse. I pay attention to their self-reflexive reasoning to analyse the frustrations and desires of practitioners who find themselves explaining, justifying and representing their aims to local authorities, to property managers and to the wider public. The discourse of temporary spaces is shown as ambiguous and contested, as its promises of alterity are mobilised by a range of different practitioners to promote alternative urban imaginaries and political agendas.

The third set of questions concerns the performative urban experiences produced by temporary projects and their claim to publicness and openness to local communities. Chapter 4, titled 'Staging temporariness', addresses discourses and practices of temporary uses of vacant shops from the standpoint of debates around performativity and experiential economies. Through a critical discussion of the promises of 'vibrancy' and community engagement associated with temporary reuse, I undertake an in-depth examination of community-oriented temporary shops in their everyday performative encounters with participants and audiences. The chapter draws extensively on participant observation and on practitioners' own reflections on the potentials and limitations of claiming and negotiating openness and participation across the threshold of formerly vacant shops in the Elephant and Castle shopping centre. These experiences and reflections inform a critical discussion of the emotional and affective geographies engendered by the practices and by the performative production of meanings and subject-positions. Drawing attention to unexpected urban encounters and their subjective and affective dimensions, I interrogate the celebration of 'use value' as inherently beyond commodification and argue for the need to attend carefully to power entanglements and the potential for supporting broader solidarities and organising against the threat of demolition of the site and dispersal of its independent traders.

The fourth set of questions concerns the embeddedness of temporary ideas and values in city planning—both as a discipline and as a practice—as a response to changed conditions of urban 'regeneration' and development. Chapter 5, titled 'Planning a temporary city of on-demand communities', explores the ways in which temporary urbanism has come to the foreground as a tool for urban policymakers and planners in London. Looking at the institutionalisation of the discourse of temporary projects as pilot interventions towards 'place activation', it argues the importance of pop-up urban imaginaries in reformulating the role of urban policy and planning at times of austerity. The chapter draws on qualitative research into the use of temporary projects in the redevelopment of the London 2012 Olympic site and its surrounding neighbourhoods in East London, examining the

narratives and motivations of professionals and community organisations operating within and around the ongoing redevelopment of the area. The case of a community-oriented temporary project is taken as emblematic of trends in the deployment of temporary uses in the context of neighbourhood redevelopment and as indicative of a range of shifts towards increasingly short-term public provision at the margins of longer-term processes of privatisation. The pop-up urban imaginary of community participation follows an 'on-demand' logic, borrowed from logistics, which sits uncomfortably with both the needs and demands of local community groups, particularly those worst affected by austerity-led public sector withdrawal. I argue that such 'on-demand' logic belongs to the embedding of broader anticipatory politics into urban planning, risking further exclusion and precarisation.

Finally, in Chapter 6, titled 'The normalisation of temporariness', I bring together the different strands of my analysis to examine the mechanisms that have normalised precarious urban practices since the global financial crisis and their relationship to longer-term cultural and economic shifts. I show how the narrative construction of vacant spaces as a problem and the celebration of a projective logic of on-demand connectivity intersect to generate a specific 'glamorisation' of impermanence and ephemerality. In this final chapter I contrast the celebration of flexibility and the imaginary of a 'festivalisation of urban policy' with the changed materialities of urban work and living, contributing to debates around the potential for action in cities scarred by austerity and a state of permanent uncertainty. The emergence and establishment of temporary urbanism has ushered in a deeply problematic new model and ideal of urban life where the anticipatory politics of precarity become widely normalised and celebrated. Thinking ahead in terms of urban culture and politics *after the pop-up*, I conclude that it is only by addressing the effect of the precarity on ways of acting and the production of subjectivity that a propositional critique of temporary urbanism can emerge in response to and against planned spatial and temporal foreclosures in contemporary cities.

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