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Chapter 1
Introduction: Setting-up a research agenda for temporary urbanism.

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What is temporary urbanism?

For several decades, claims for the need for more malleability and flexibility in the making and design of urban spaces have been voiced internationally; these principles have been considered, if not embraced, by practitioners, politicians, scholars, artists, creators and many others, in the way they think about the production of the city and how urban spaces are thought through, shaped and reshaped. Amongst several features of this malleability, 'temporary' uses or projects have been playing an increasingly key role. Initially, artists and those who could be widely referred to as 'creators' were at the forefront of informal and often illegal temporary occupations of buildings and spaces. Architects and urban designers then started to explore temporary uses in the making of the city, particularly of temporary structures, temporary installations or temporary features.

Overall, turning to temporary uses has been a response to specific needs. Need for physical space as a form of expression, need for experimentation, need for alternatives, need to respond to gaps and emptiness in the urban environment through temporary solutions, and need for emergency solutions (e.g. housing). As a result, a significant amount of temporary uses, projects, interventions, of various scales and lengths, have spread in cities. This non-exhaustively includes indoor temporary uses within physical structures from temporary art spaces, workshops, pop-up shops, to larger projects including temporary theatres and cultural spaces, mixed-uses facilities, often in containers (i.e. boxpark-types) and more recently temporary housing (e.g. PLACE Ladywell in London), to outdoor temporary uses (e.g. temporary gardens, temporary playgrounds and gyms, temporary cafes) and events (e.g. festivals, outdoor cinema etc.).

However, this concept of temporary uses has been mainly applied to the Northern context even if the uses as laid out above have spread into the Global South (and we will demonstrate this further in this book). So far, most of the literature looking at temporariness in the city (outside of 'informality') has been focusing on so-called developed countries (see for example Bishop and Williams 2012; Iveson 2013; Tonkiss 2013; Andres 2013; Finn 2014; see Madanipour 2017, 2018, and Andres et al. 2019 for an exception), specifically Europe, North America and Australia. Little is known about experiences set up outside of those contexts, hence ignoring the strong connection between temporariness and informality (Andres et al. 2019).

What has also been missing though in the recognition of the importance of temporary uses in cities, is an overarching concept allowing the cohesion of different ways of thinking, shaping, implementing and learning from temporary initiatives. Madanipour (2018)'s book on *Cities in time: temporary urbanism and the future of the city* has been decisive in finally

elevating this concept of 'temporary urbanism' (see also Andres et al. 2019). We follow here this trend and define temporary urbanism as processes, practices and policies of and for spatial adaptability, allowing the transformation of a space in perceived need of transition, and thus impacting the surrounding socio-economic urban environments.

By doing so, and as we will explain further below, this book advances the reflexion into how temporary urbanism is shaping cities across the world. It adopts an international overview to deepen the understandings of how temporary uses and projects participate in the transformation of urban environments and what this means, for research and for practice, in various contexts.

Temporary use and flexibility in the built environment

The Italian architect Bernardo Secchi used to argue that "cities have always been exposed to dereliction: new developments have always been built on the traces of old ones, partly using its remains. Abandon, reuse and substitution have always marked the transition between the key eras of urban history" (Secchi 2000, n.p.). What is clear is that temporary urbanism is associated with such transitions – whether economic, social or political changes. Now, those transitions have been associated with the transformation encountered by cities in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that led to differently scaled phases of urban renewal (Talen 2012; Oswalt et al. 2017). However, temporary urbanisms have a longer history as cities across different periods have been constantly built and rebuilt (Andres 2008; Pinol 2003) and characterised by diverse temporary uses and projects (Lydon and Garcia 2015; Oswalt et al. 2017).

There are three types of temporary urbanism:

- *Bottom-up temporary urbanism*, which sits outside any formal planning frameworks and hence are led by individuals or collectives (e.g. artists, activists, community members). Those uses often sit within a context of weak planning (Andres 2013), a context where no formal and planned transformation can occur (due to various financial, economic, planning deadlocks). Weak planning is permissive and characterised by its lack of co-ordination, strategic guidelines, clear objectives and control by any higher authority (Andres 2013). Such bottom-up temporary urbanism is strongly connected to 'everyday' needs and hence gaps (Temel and Haydn 2006; Oswalt et al. 2017). It can include a wide range of temporary uses from squatting to temporary uses connected to the informal economy (e.g. temporary street shops) to more pacified and community-led projects (e.g. temporary playgrounds, temporary gardens), hence promoting out-of-the-box thinking which challenges formal planning arrangements in contexts of transition (Tonkiss 2013).

- *Top-down temporary urbanism*, which reflects latest trends in neoliberal planning and development, supported by recent changes in the global economy, alongside new technologies, flexible working practices and the advent of knowledge economies (Bishop and Williams 2012; Oswalt et al. 2017; Bishop, 2015, 2019). Here temporary urbanism is planned and constructed by those who hold the power in

decision-making (i.e. landowners, developers, local authorities). Temporary initiatives are not merely seen as informal responses to urban challenges but form part of more formal reimaginings of cities and neighbourhoods, within wider strategies and visions of urban transformations.

- *Hybrid temporary urbanism*, which highlights the variable nature of temporary urbanisms and its complexity. A significant amount of small-scale temporary projects rests upon processes of bricolage amongst key stakeholders, both those holding power in the decision-making and those able to envision and deliver such initiatives. This means that boundaries between top-down and bottom-up are blurred. It is about local empowerment and adaptability in the process of making spaces and making those spaces viable and liveable, within a win-win situation for all.

To date though, the concept of temporary urbanism is still not widely used in academia and in practice. There are four main reasons explaining this.

First, because of its *ephemerality*. Temporary urbanism is by essence not permanent but also highly localised. The traces and memories it leaves on a space rely on the ability of the temporary instigators and users to perpetuate and sustain its memories, which is highly problematic. Temporary urbanism is an alternative and small-scale form of urban transformations, which also makes it very complex and diverse (as we note below) and hence any attempts of engaging with it further and comparing how it is deployed have been difficult to date. Madanipour (2017, p. 12) summarises this tension when he argues that "temporary urbanism is based on events that seem to be random, outside of the normal rhythm of things, disrupting the settled habits of society and disregarding the routines that regulate everyday life".

Second, temporary uses and projects have generated a lot of *preconceptions*. As per its historical connection with illegal artistic occupations and hence squats, for a long time, temporary uses have been reluctantly tolerated, especially by landowners and local authorities. The temporary nature of the uses or occupations were perceived as a source of conflicts due to temporary users then attempting to make them permanent, thus hindering any other processes of formal transformation envisaged for a space or area. The evolution of temporary urbanism towards planned, top-down forms of economic, social and urban transformations shifted around those preconceptions.

Third, there has been an *overaccumulation of work and interests towards temporariness* from both research and practice; this resulted in too many words and concepts looking at the same research objects but through diverse terms, and various analytical angles, with each individual and team wanting to create its own recipe (both theoretically and conceptual). Typically, literatures are replete with examples of 'insurgent and guerrilla' (Hou 2010), 'pop-up', 'DIY' and 'tactical' (Iveson 2013; Finn 2014; Lydon and Garcia 2015) and more general 'temporary' uses of space (Groth and Corijn 2005; Andres 2013; Bishop and Williams 2012).

Finally, because of its *complexity and diversity*, temporary urbanism is hard to characterise and unpick. Bishop and Williams (2012) framed out this complexity with five main criteria:

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temporary uses can be formal and/or informal; legal and/or illegal; planned and/or spontaneous; long-lasting and/or short-term; and, financed in diverse ways. Another layer of complexity is formed by the addition of geographic and context-specific diversity, which hence emphasises the need to reflect upon the processes of urban transformation of temporary urbanism internationally to set up the research agenda for the future research on such a topic.

A research agenda for temporary urbanism

Building upon the four challenges of temporary urbanism, as a commonly termed object of research and practice of urban and place-making, there is a need to compile and reflect upon the various attempts to reframe and reconceptualise temporary urbanism. This has to be achieved through two main paths of enquiry: *reframing and reconceptualising temporary urbanisms* (uncovered in the first section of this book) and *unwrapping the complexity and diversity of temporary urbanisms* (discussed in the second section of the book).

Temporary urbanism allows a reinterrogation of the role of temporalities and non-permanence into the place-making process and hence in the production and reproduction of cities, including the adaptability of existing spaces and production of new spaces.

First, apprehending those processes requires the *mobilisation of new frames of thoughts, to move beyond existing conceptions and disciplinary siloes*. This includes questioning how permeability and assemblage can be reinterpreted to assess the role of temporary urbanism in designing and changing spaces (chapter 2). To do so, Stevens interrogates the contemporary idea and practice of temporary use and emphasises that time is not just a passive backdrop against which the city is built up. Time is an actant: its properties materially influence other actants that it comes into contact with. Its speed, its texture and its durations all influence other actors in the city, shaping what they want and what they do. Temporariness is an actor with specific aims, needs and effects, which define specific kinds of 'building events'. Temporary urbanism makes space immutable and temporariness helps temporary uses, people, regulations and materials to resist challenges.

Temporary urbanism allows new ways of thinking about time and space and specifically queries how to better unwrap temporariness with the rhythms of cities and urban spaces (chapter 3). Here, Mc Ardle refers to how the temporal combined with the spatial can be brought together to better understand the continuous process of transformation of cities and particularly its unfinished and living character. Drawing upon the example of a temporary culture-artistic event (the Dublin Biennial), she argues that paying attention to artistic, non-economic timespaces of the city enables urban scholars to understand the city from non-capitalistic perspectives and thus engage with the inherent fluidity of cities.

Such a form of temporary urbanism also directly challenges standard forms of planning and allows opening the disciplinary boundaries of the profession to account for more innovative methods; this raises a key question on how the temporary artistic form of temporary urbanism affects professional practices (chapter 4). This question is decrypted by Maeder who through the example of temporary uses in Geneva unwraps the condition of innovation

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in urban planning methods in the context of event-driven temporary urbanism and calls for a rethinking of the modalities of collaborations between artists and urban planners in the case of artistic events used as planning tools.

Second, reframing and reconceptualising temporary urbanism rests upon *extending common areas of queries of temporariness to other fields where the temporary merges with other forms of non-permanence.* This is particularly important to unpick the complexity and diversity of temporary urbanism and specifically its richness in terms of geography, context and processes of temporary transformation. This includes reflecting on the relationship between temporary urbanism and informality, going beyond existing studies on insurgent urbanisms and highlighting the extent to which temporariness in the Global South context testifies from a permanent state of rejection and exclusion (chapter 5). To do so, Bakare, Denoon Stevens and Melgaco study temporary urban settlements in sub-Saharan Africa and demonstrate how such settlements, even if considered as temporary, are actually permanent and lead to various forms of urbanisms which are unwanted, often dangerous and rejected by the state.

Focusing on alternative forms of temporariness raises attention towards temporary housing, settlements and specifically camps set up to provide, in principle, temporary shelters for populations who fled away from their homes; such forms of temporariness allow interrogating the role of impermanence and permanence in a wider state of limbo. This has direct implications in the understanding given to temporary urbanisms here and particularly how the waiting is constitutive of temporary urbanism (chapter 6). Moawad, through the example of the Dbayeh camp in Beirut, highlights how camps can be transformed from being a temporary monovalent urban archipelago to a polyvalent permanent one, while remaining ostracised. As an extra-territorial space, temporary urbanism is expressed through waiting where hope, desire, subordination, stillness, productivity, and longing for 'home' is translated into space. Hence the camp within this urban sprawl and density turns into a space-in-waiting, an isolated and stigmatised urban archipelago.

Finally, such reconceptualisation of temporary urbanism raises questions about the nature of its process of transformation and the extent to which it relates only to giving new uses and meaning to change and temporal projects or can also aim to transform and reject existing uses in a situation of protests. Hence, can temporary urbanism not only activate but also deactivate space (chapter 7)? Topuzovski and Andres, looking at the colourful revolution in Skopje (Republic of Macedonia), develop the concept of deactivation through colourisation of buildings and monuments as a way to modify their meanings and symbols; they demonstrate how artistic means can be involved in civil movements and initiatives and feature the development of temporary spaces of resistance.

Pushing this research agenda forward also means securing a *better understanding of the complexity and diversity of temporary urbanism, including a dialogue between various experiences both in the Global North and in the Global South. It looks at the implications of temporary urbanism in the delivery of planning and considers how and by whom cities are governed and transformed*.

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Temporary urbanism indeed testifies from various process, mechanisms and approaches towards urban making and hence connects both research and practice. Temporary urbanism is not about certainty or about the 'planned'. By essence it *questions traditional models of planning and development and provides an alternative for when the latest models cannot be achieved*. This, of course, raises a range of questions.

As argued above, temporary urbanism is not new and has been characteristic of cities for centuries; nevertheless, it has never been accepted as a standard practice of urban making. Is it then time to consider temporary urbanisms as a universal mechanism to address urban complexity and experimentation (chapter 8)? Crump here mobilises the cases of London and Santiago (Chile) to examine the emergence of temporary urbanism in both capital cities and assess the impacts and prospects of temporary uses in relation to formal planning processes. She argues that temporary urbanism in both contexts is a valuable complementary practice to spatial planning for finding opportunity in complex and evolving urban conditions. Recommendations for planning practice are here identified, stressing the importance of temporary urbanism for urban planners and designers.

Temporary urbanism also raises wider questions in contexts where urban planning is not well represented as a profession. Such a dilemma is reinforced when cities are characterised by a mix of formal and informal as well as planned and unplanned. Interestingly enough, even in such urban contexts, temporary uses have been elevated as a commonly used practice which raises question about how temporary urbanism is instrumentalised (chapter 9). Pursuing the discussion, started in chapter 8 on temporary projects in Santiago, Garcia deconstructs how temporary practices have an ambiguous character as they use incremental learning and experimentation as a means to demonstrate possible changes, thus moving the limits of the production of public spaces; at the same time, such uses are used instrumentally and conceived as palliative solutions to urban problems, linked to scarcity of resources, absence of appropriate planning regulatory frameworks for engaging with creativity in practice and lack of ambition to deliver changes outside of political timeframes.

Reflecting on what temporary urbanism means for cities and how it has been now widely adopted by key stakeholders highlights that vision; strategies and urban development mechanisms have changed, and will continue to change. How is temporary urbanism leading to alternative and transitional forms of urban development involving a reconfiguration of skills and knowledge about urban making (chapter 10)? Pinard, assessing temporary occupations carried out by a large landowner and real estate player in France, details how temporary urbanism is here used as a new mode of action to support broader strategic policies. She demonstrates how this sits within a wider process of learning through experimentation influenced by a growing interest in transient urbanism.

Finally, the wide acceptance of temporary urbanism as an alternative model of development testifies how temporary uses have been perceived as activators and hence value providers. Now, what is the dark side of this neoliberal interpretation of temporary urbanism? Can all spaces, even the most forgotten, be transformed by temporary initiatives? If those spaces were used before as temporary shelters, what is the wider impact of temporary urbanism in fostering social exclusion (chapter 11)? Mackinnon looks at the activation of alleyways,

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through temporary uses, within Business Improvement Areas in Vancouver (Canada). Sitting with a wider strategy of 'clean and safe', beautification and place-making, temporary urbanism and design here participate in capturing public spaces for corporate use, with the view of tackling crime and disorder, and hence getting rid of any forms of temporary occupations (e.g. homeless shelters).

Now, temporary urbanism is about *urban transformations, at various scales; it is about people and the process through which actors and stakeholders engage in urban making*. This, of course, raises significant questions about *how cities and urban spaces are governed*. This is a very topical agenda noting the significant momentum for top-down temporary urbanism which raises questions of how non-decision makers and specifically citizens are included in the process of urban production. As such, what opportunities are offered to citizens to participate in temporary urbanism initiatives led by local governments on public spaces (chapter 12)? Bródy uses the case of Barcelona and Budapest to demonstrate how vacancy and hence temporary uses have become a visible and politically significant issue, playing a key role in determining how cities respond to both local and wider global challenges. She unfolds how such projects respond to post-crisis demands and are attached to values of social justice and equity.

Here context is key in researching the trajectory of temporary urbanism and this trajectory is influenced by both space and people. This is important in three ways which all question the translation of localities into general models of temporary practice, hence raising awareness about challenges and limitations.

First, there is still little understanding of how temporary urbanism can be instrumentalised by local authorities and decision makers, specifically when adopted for urban regeneration by city governments in non-Western and/or Global South contexts (chapter 13). Zhang here uses the example of Beijing, China to discuss how such temporary uses can sit outside of contexts of economic austerity and financial crises and participate in the wider strategy of creative urban regeneration. She demonstrates that while temporary creative uses and the resulting culture-led regeneration can play a role in pressuring local residents to move out of the area and open up more spaces for creative and cultural uses, they fail to demonstrate the expected effectiveness in drawing individuals and businesses into the creative and cultural sectors.

Second, the transformational potential of temporary urbanisms on local people is context-dependent (chapter 14). Rodrigues et al. look at the case of temporary uses in Sao Paulo (Brazil), and demonstrate how a temporary urbanism approach can contribute to the reactivation of particularly challenging, degraded areas that are near to central areas of a city; the authors note that such interventions, especially in the Global South context, must be designed and managed in response to the needs of each place, respecting the complexities of each neighbourhood and their residents.

Finally, temporary urbanism is not a ready-made solution, even if its elevation as a creative alternative to vacancy during downturns may make it appear as such, particularly for local authorities and developers. What are then the hidden barriers behind the implementation of temporary urbanisms (chapter 15)? Linda McCarthy ends this discussion by looking at the City

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of Milwaukee, which while open to temporary urbanism efforts, has not been proactive in promoting temporary urbanism, partly due to limitations of personnel and budget. She here provides a counterexample to the overall positive discourse around temporary urbanism, in the North, and demonstrates that in addition to the adjustment of regulations to accommodate temporary uses, attention also needs to be given to budget allocation, particularly when temporary urbanism is delivered by local authorities.

Reflecting on those new directions taken by debates on temporary urbanism, in the conclusion (chapter 16), we bring together the ideas and arguments from the contributors of this edited collection and highlight two key conceptual themes across the chapters. First, we emphasise that the chapters collectively demonstrate a variety of ways of conceptualising and utilising the 'temporary', and by extension, more in-depth and nuanced understanding of time and temporality in cities. Secondly, building upon the first theme, we argue that the various conceptualisations of time, temporality and temporariness presented in these chapters allow us to examine further the meaning and function of temporary urbanisms for urban planning, governance, and politics.

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