Ferreri, M. (author's version 2020) *The Permanence of Temporary Urbanism: Normalising Precarity in Austerity London*.

The Permanence of Temporary Urbanism: Normalising Precarity in Austerity London

Dr Mara Ferreri

Author's version (2020)

Published as:

Ferreri, M. (2021) *The Permanence of Temporary Urbanism: Normalising Precarity in Austerity London*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press. *ISBN 978 94 6298 491 2; E-ISBN 978 90 4853 582 8*

Temporary urbanism has become a distinctive feature of urban life after the 2008 global financial crisis. This book offers a critical exploration of its emergence and establishment as a seductive discourse and as an entangled field of practice encompassing architecture, visual and performative arts, urban regeneration policies and planning. Drawing on seven years of semi-ethnographic research, it explores the politics of temporariness from a situated analysis of neighourhood transformation, media representations and wider political and cultural shifts in austerity London. Through a longitudinal engagement with projects and practitioners, the book tests the power of aesthetic and cultural interventions and highlights tensions between the promise of vacant space re-appropriation and its commodification. Against the normalisation of ephemerality, it presents a critique of the permanence of temporary urbanism as a glamorisation of the anticipatory politics of precarity which are transforming cities, subjectivities and imaginaries of urban action.

Amsterdam
University
Press

Mara Ferreri

The Permanence of Temporary Urbanism

Normalising Precarity in Austerity London

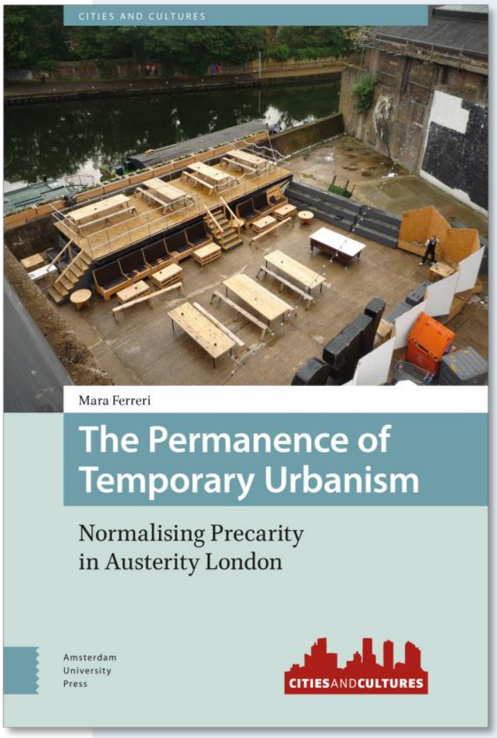
Temporary urbanism has become a distinctive feature of urban life after the 2008 global financial crisis. This book offers a critical exploration of its emergence and establishment as a seductive discourse and as an entangled field of practice encompassing architecture, visual and performative arts, urban regeneration policies and planning. Drawing on seven years of semi-ethnographic research, it explores the politics of temporariness from a situated analysis of neighbourhood transformation, media representations and wider political and cultural shifts in austerity London. Through a longitudinal engagement with projects and practitioners, the book tests the power of aesthetic and cultural interventions and highlights tensions between the promise of vacant space re-appropriation and its commodification. Against the normalisation of ephemerality, it presents a critique of the permanence of temporary urbanism as a glamorisation of the anticipatory politics of precarity which are transforming cities, subjectivities and imaginaries of urban action.

BIOGRAPHY

Mara Ferreri is an urban and cultural geographer. She is VC Research Fellow in the Department of Geography and Environmental Sciences at Northumbria University, UK.

'This is an excellent book. The author combines an analysis of the complex narratives and policy rhetoric surrounding the temporary uses of urban space, with an in-depth ethnographic observation of practices of temporary use and their perceptions by various stakeholders. She embeds the London field work in contemporary debates and recent scholarship from urban and cultural geography, urban studies, architectural and planning studies, in a perceptive and refined manner, leading to powerful conclusions about the ambiguous role of temporary uses of space in a post-austerity, neoliberal city where precarious forms of living and working have become dominant.'

-Professor Claire Colomb, The Bartlett School of Planning, University College London


CITIES AND CULTURES
Mara Ferreri
The Permanence of Temporary Urbanism
Normalising Precarity in Austerity London
Amsterdam University Press
CITIESANDCULTURES

Cities and Cultures
March 2021
194 pages, 10 b/w illustrations
Hardback
156 x 234 mm
€89.00 / £81.00 / $110.00
€88.99 / £80.99 / $109.99

ISBN 9789462984912
e-ISBN 9789048535828
BISAC SOC026030 / POL002000 / SOC045000
BIC JFSG / JFFB / RPC

KEYWORDS
Pop-up, Temporary Urbanism, Architecture, Art, Activism, London

To order this book visit www.aup.nl

Distribution Rest of World via Ingram Publisher Services UK (formerly NBNi Ltd.) | www.distribution.nbni.co.uk
Distribution North America via Baker & Taylor Publisher Services | www.btpubservices.com

Amsterdam University Press
Nieuwe Prinsengracht 89
1018 VR Amsterdam

T +31 (0)20 420 00 50
info@aup.nl
marketing@aup.nl

www.aup.nl
facebook.com/AUPAcademic
twitter.com/AmsterdamUPress

Acknowledgments

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.

The book has taken over seven years to research and nearly three to write. Over such a long time period, it has benefited from conversations with more people than can be named in these brief acknowledgments. I am grateful to David Pinder and to students and staff in the School of Geography at Queen Mary, University of London, where much of this research was undertaken, first while I was a doctoral student and then as a postdoctoral researcher. The thinking undergirding this book has been developed alongside a number of collaborative projects and related publications on urban and labour precarity, gentrification, temporary architecture and platform urbanism. For these nourishing and inspiring collaborations, my thanks go to Alex Vasudevan, Andreas Lang, Gloria Dawson, Kim Trogal, Loretta Lees, Luna Glucksberg, Romola Sanyal and Valeria Graziano. Special thanks are also due to my colleagues in the Social and Cultural Geographies Research Group at Northumbria University, whose support and collegiality have been invaluable during this last year, as well as to everyone in the Cities and Cultures series at Amsterdam University Press for their excellent and patient steering.

Lastly, I would have never been able to bring this manuscript to completion without the unfailing support of my parents, of the editorial collective of the Radical Housing Journal (especially Ana, Erin, Mel, Meli and Michele) and of my transnational family: Andrea, Chris, Erica, Gabriella, Janna, Laura, Luna, Manuela, Nelly, Rakhee, Veronique, Valeria, Seeta and Susan. I hope that you will find in these chapters traces of our shared past in London and our collective desire for a less precarious urban future.

Table of contents

Chapter 1. Temporary urbanism: a situated approach 6
  Reclaiming spaces and the role of temporariness 7
  The trope of temporariness as ‘alterity’ 9
  For a situated approach to temporary urbanism 10
  ‘Post-crisis’ London 12
  The book’s questions 14
Chapter 2. The entangled field of temporary urbanism 16
  The emergence of a discourse 16
  Countering recessional perceptions 17
  ‘Creative’ fillers 19
  Art showcasing to the world: pop-up in the shadow of the 2012 Games 21
  The rise of the pop-up intermediary 23
  Meanwhilers: a clever rebranding 24
  The Meanwhile London Competition 25
  Enrolling urban professionals in the shift to austerity 26
  The unresolved question of unlawful occupations 28
  Conclusion: the primacy of property 31
Chapter 3. ‘Not a pop-up!’ 33
  The experience of performers and visual artists 33
  A well-established history 35
  ‘Provided you can beg, steal or borrow a space’ 37
  Group+Work and 1990s myths in public commissioning 39
  Pop-ups in Westminster 40
  ArtEvict in ‘forgotten spaces’ 42
  Settling down in Hackney Wick Fish Island? 44
  Pop-up spaces as festivals and digital arts incubators 48
  Conclusions: in the cracks of the creative city promise 50
Chapter 4. Staging temporary spaces 53
  Experiential economies and the performativity of urban activation 53
  The Elephant as a site for ‘community engagement’ 57
  Studio at the Elephant 58
  A strategy of open programming 59
  Visibility for recognition 62
  Mediating face-to-face interactions 64
  Empowerment for surrender? 65
  Conclusions: the openness of agonistic encounters 68
Chapter 5. Planning a temporary city of on-demand communities 70
  Temporariness in planning at times of austerity 70
  ‘Stitching the fringes’ before and after the Olympics 71
  Learning from Others: interim uses as urban ‘testing sites’ 73
  Vacant land and setting up a temporary community hub 74
  Young people and the ‘two communities’ 76
  Risky grassroot 78
  Temporary ‘urban vitality’ in the LLDC Local Plan (2015-2031) 80
  ‘Seeding’ long-term uses 82
  Learning to become ‘on-demand communities’ 84
  Conclusions: the risk of planned precarisation 85
Chapter 6. The normalisation of temporariness 87
  Underused spaces as a ‘problem’ 88
  The projective logic 90
  Ephemeral architectures 91

    Permanent ‘times of uncertainty’ 95
    Tactical or precarious acting? 97
    Precarity as temporal foreclosure 98
    Reclaiming urban space-time after the pop-up 100
Bibliography 102

Ferreri, M. (author's version 2020) *The Permanence of Temporary Urbanism: Normalising Precarity in Austerity London*.

Chapter 1. Temporary urbanism: a situated approach

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 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.

---

[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.

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 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]

---

[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.

[9] Hancock, 2014.

[10] Raunig, 2007.

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'. 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]

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]

---

[11] Miles, 1997. For debates within the artistic and cultural fields, see also Felshin, 1995; Lacy, 1995.

[12] See Petrescu, 2007a; Ferreri, 2009.

[13] Bishop and Williams, pp. 6-7.

[14] Killing Architects, 2012, p. 5.

[15] These are the chapter titles in Hou, 2010.

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 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]

---

[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.

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 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.

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.

---

[20] See Peck, Theodore and Brenner, 2012.

[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.

[26] Along the lines of a cultural political economy approach to the urban, as outlined by Ribera-Fumaz, 2009.

[27] Rendell, 2006.

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

---

[28] Haraway, 1988, p. 589.

[29] Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006; see also the 2012 special Anarchist Geographies of the journal *Antipode* 44 (5).

[30] Halvorsen, 2015.

[31] French original ‘Le Droit a la Ville’ (1968), in Lefebvre, 1996; see also Mayer, 2009.

[32] Purcell, 2002.

[33] Barry-Slater and Iles, 2009, p. 23.

'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]

---

[34] Madanipour, 2017, p. 1.

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

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

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 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 development, 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 understanding 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 attending 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.

---

[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.

[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 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.

Ferreri, M. (author's version 2020) *The Permanence of Temporary Urbanism: Normalising Precarity in Austerity London*.

Chapter 2. The entangled field of temporary urbanism

The emergence of a discourse

On the surface, the central assumption shared by all proponents of temporary urbanism is that it is better to use vacant spaces such as empty shops, even if temporarily, than to let them lay empty. This seductive proposition is only apparently straightforward: to the immersed observer, the discourse of temporary urbanism has emerged through time- and space-specific translations of multiple and at times contradictory and contested rationales and value judgements. Approaching the emergence of the discourse of temporary urbanism requires understanding how assumptions and arguments are mobilised through competing position-takings and cross-pollination across a range of urban practices from architecture to visual and performative art to marketing and urban design. It is important to note, following Bourdieu, that the 'field of position-takings' of temporary urbanism does not arise from an overarching coherence in the position of participants or from an underlying consensus: the field is itself 'the product and prize of a permanent conflict' over the production of meanings, and participation in this struggle becomes the main criterion for belonging to the field.[1] I approach the discourse of temporary urbanism as relationally constituted through processes of establishing semi-stable meanings and narratives, which are contingent and produced through time- and space-specific power relations, both in the creation of discursive formations and in the struggle between them. It is in this sense that I understand the cross-disciplinary field of temporary urbanism as *entangled*: in terms of distinctive disciplines and urban and cultural practices; in terms of the actors that willingly or unwillingly became entangled in its emergence; in terms of the spaces and institutions it has reached, permeated and transformed; and in its relation to broader imaginaries and the settling of new, habituated forms of understanding and making sense of cities.

The chapter is organised chronologically as well as thematically. The first part outlines key moments and actors in the formation of an official discourse and the emergence of specific 'creative fillers' and their subsequent splitting between traditional temporary use through exhibitions and through more participatory and community-oriented practices. Keeping close to the messiness of an evolving field, this chapter draws on a multi-site ethnography of the multiple origins of the official discourse of temporary urbanism in post-2008 London, combining participant observation, policy analysis and in-depth, repeated interviews. Moving from institution and intermediaries to practitioners, it addresses frictions and ambiguities in meaning-making practices on the ground and the emergence of 'pop-up' professionals, and how the language of 'meanwhile', while borrowing from multiple and competing narratives, can be traced back to the repertoire of urban regeneration. Finally, addressing the movement between compliance and challenges to mainstream narratives by 'fringe' urban and cultural practitioners, the artificial distinction between official and unofficial narratives is undone in the analysis of processes of circulation and translation and of moments of individual and collective self-reflection. What emerges is far from a coherent narrative: practices and practitioners inhabit but cannot be reduced to discursive formations that are constantly negotiated and re-constituted fluidly, according to the ways in which practitioners position themselves in relation to the boundaries constructed by institutions, communities of practice and external observers.

---

[1] Bourdieu, 1993, p. 34.

Countering recessional perceptions

The first theoretical and discursive element of the temporary urbanism narrative begins with the socially and culturally constructed idea of 'vacant spaces' and the ways in which their representation and characterisation is mobilised. Wastelands and empty properties have been aptly described as 'the morning after of our romance of the new':[2] it is in the space of ambivalence and slight discomfort that vacancy is inextricably linked to a culture of incessant urban creative destruction and projection toward a newer, better future. This reflection became increasingly clear in the first wave of nation-wide institutional support for projects of temporary use during the brief recession that hit the United Kingdom after the global credit crisis of 2008. At a moment of crisis for a traditional consumption-led urban model, the re-appropriation of vacant spaces, albeit on a temporary basis, was explicitly about superposing positive images of occupation and vibrancy over negative imaginaries of abandonment, vacancy and decay.

With public attention on boarded-up high streets, the vacant shop front emerged as both a symbol and a real site of intervention through temporary—or 'pop-up'—projects, which greatly strengthened and popularised the discursive embedding of temporariness into urbanism.[3] A clear and early example of the institutional narrative of temporary shop front use was the short guide *Looking After Our Town Centres* launched by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in April 2009. The foreword, jointly signed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, set out the official reason for providing government support to temporary projects in vacant spaces:

> The downturn is giving rise to challenges: the sight of boarded-up shops can be depressing. But turbulent economic times can also herald a period of remarkable innovation, energy and creativity. For example, we are already seeing how some town centre managers are taking swift and positive actions to, for example, fill empty shops and other spaces with art galleries to create opportunities for communities to engage in learning, and provide access to local information and services, farmers' markets and community centres.[4]

Euphemistically named 'downturn', the recession that hit the UK is presented as an 'opportunity' for 'remarkable innovation, energy and creativity'. Boarded-up shops are characterised as problems, not because they are symptomatic of broader and complex socio-economic processes but because their presence 'can be depressing', causing negative perceptions and emotions. In these few sentences lies a central representation of vacant spaces in temporary urbanism: the emphasis on a problem of perception and their role as opportunities for a wide range of public-facing activities.

The 'swift action' of town planners mentioned in the *Looking After Our Town Centres* document was illustrated by examples of positive fillers that local authorities are putting into place across the country: from unspecified art galleries to community learning and information centres and farmers' markets. The text also names the actors who will be responsible for this urban transformation: town centre managers, to whom the guide is addressed, but also businesses, local groups and communities—'local partners'—who are encouraged to develop 'a clear vision' and to 'actively plan to take advantage of new opportunities when the recovery begins'.[5] The guidelines identify the role of local groups and communities as playing an active role in these schemes with the future promise of a recovery, as visible in the repetition of key words such as ‘local’ and ‘community’. Responsibility for the success of these policies is displaced on to local communities which are expected to become bidders for resources and to manage and staff the empty sites.

---

[2] Stam and Shohat, 2002, p. 41.

[3] Ferreri, 2016.

[4] Department for Communities and Local Government 2009, p. 2.

[5] Ibid.

The policy agenda was accompanied by the creation of a small DCLG fund, in 2009, of about three million pounds awarded to ‘reduce the negative impact’ of empty shops on ‘consumer and business confidence’. The grant was to be subdivided evenly into small grants of around £50,000 each to 57 of the ‘hardest hit’ councils, selected on the basis of a combination of the Index of Multiple Deprivation and vacancy rates. A glance at the spatial distribution of local authorities in receipt of funding shows all major cities in England outside London (with the exception of Leeds), an unsurprisingly high concentration in the North West, the North East and the Midlands, which maps quite neatly the extent of—and regional differences in—not just the crisis of the retail sector but of longer trends in de-industrialisation and socio-economic deprivation.[6] In London, the only borough in receipt of the fund was Hackney, which used it to launch its ‘Art in Empty Spaces’ programme. In practice, the funds could be used ‘to help with cleaning and decorating vacant premises, basic refit for temporary uses, publicity posters, and other activities that can help town centres attract and retain visitors’.[7] The objective of ephemeral beautification behind these interventions and its purported positive impact on external visitors have led sector analysts of tourism to describe these policies as a novel approach to creating micro-tourism, pointing to the use of temporary schemes as cosmetic interventions geared towards place marketing.[8] The desire to work on perceptions and the emphasis on visual interventions belong to the ambiguous normative vision set out by the DCLG’s policy, whose guide’s front page illustration showed a curious combination of non-commercial ‘creative’ community-oriented activities: a library, a ‘scouts’ stand and a shop labelled ‘Art’ where the silhouette of a woman holding a shopping bag is placed before a modernist-looking painting and sculpture [Figure 1].

The reinvented urban high street of temporary interventions begins with an ambiguous characterisation of the two preferred activities to occupy vacant spaces: ‘art’, equated with ‘galleries’ and traditional object-based practice, and ‘community’, associated with civic spaces and charity. The idea of using art and community to ‘revitalise’ vacant shop fronts had important and lasting implications for the ways in which official temporary use schemes were to be imagined and implemented on the ground.

---

[6] The complete list comprised: Corby, Nottingham City, Boston, Mansfield, Ashfield, Derby City, Leicester City, Harlow, Great Yarmouth, Ipswich, Hackney, Gateshead, Middlesbrough, Hartlepool, South Tyneside, Darlington, Sunderland, Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside, Durham, Rossendale, Salford, Barrow-in-Furness, Blackpool, Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Halton, Rochdale, Copeland, Liverpool, Tameside, Pendle, Knowsley, Manchester, Sefton, Bolton, Hyndburn, Preston, Wigan, Thanet, Hastings, Bristol, Stoke-on-Trent, Walsall, Wolverhampton, Coventry, Sandwell. DCLG website, *£3 million empty shop revival fund for most deprived and hardest hit high streets*, published 13 August 2009, page and site archived.

[7] Department of Communities and Local Government, 2009, p. 31.

[8] Cambie, 2010.

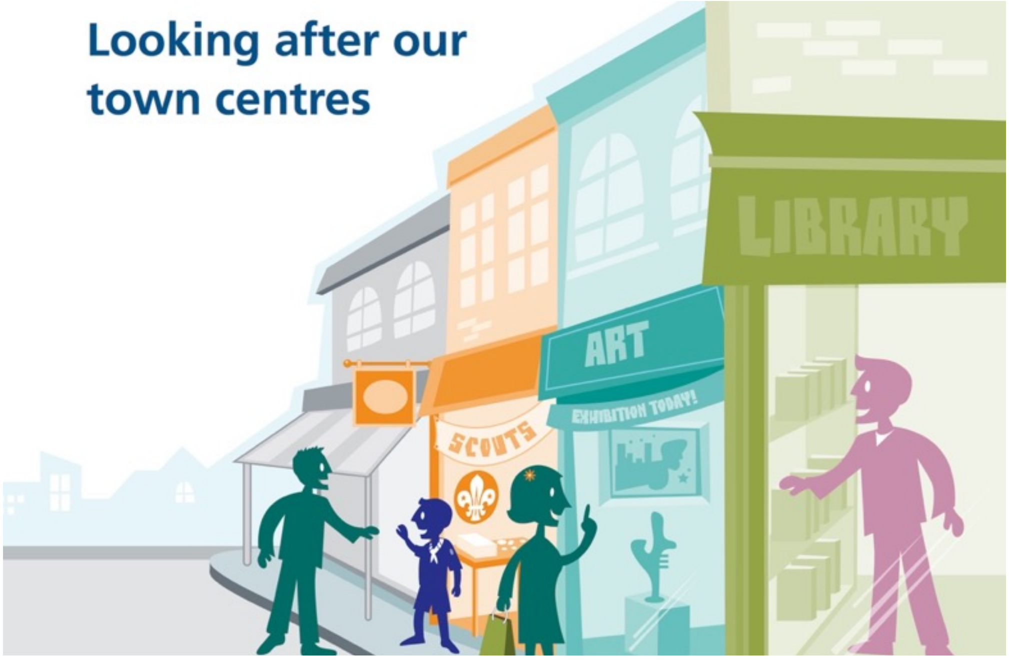


Figure 1. Detail of the front cover of 'Looking After Our Town Centres', Communities and Local Government (2009) © Crown Copyright, 2009.

‘Creative’ fillers

If the central assumption is that vacant spaces are better in use than empty, the idea that cultural activities are the best ‘filler’ is not a given and requires a careful reading of the specific context within which culture—and more specifically art—became the favoured element in the temporary urbanism narrative. As the national policies for reusing empty spaces discussed so far were drafted in collaboration with the then Labour Government’s Department for Culture, Media and Sport, it is not surprising that artistic and cultural activities came to play a central role in the construction of positive examples of short-term reuse and in the official imaginary of temporary and pop-up shops. However, the idea has a longer lineage that emerges from a pre-recession policy discourse of ‘creativity fix’ promoted by the advocates of ‘creative city’ models, from Charles Landry and Franco Bianchini to Richard Florida.[9] The use of ‘creative city’ ideas as a fix in times of uncertainty belongs to what Jaime Peck has called the ‘Floridisation’ of urban policy: a creative policy ‘syndrome’, in the words of Allen J. Scott, affecting policymakers in cities around the globe.[10] In the UK, the ‘syndrome’ involved the unresolved blurring of ‘creative’ economies, arts and culture, as has been noted by sociologist Angela McRobbie with regards to the official definition of ‘cultural industries’ offered by the Department for Media, Culture and Sport and NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts).[11] Such blurring was visible in 2009 in the press release launching the DCLG fund: ‘culture and creativity bring life to our town centres. Transforming empty premises into galleries, studios or rehearsal spaces will help restore confidence and regenerate local communities'.[12] Later that year, the connection between vacant space reuse policies, 'creative' fillers and art programming was further strengthened by a match-funding scheme launched in July 2009 by Arts Council England, the *Art in Empty Spaces* Grant for the arts, a £500,000 pot from the National Lottery meant to help artists and arts organisations 'to carry out artistic activities in vacant premises made available to them through the DCLG scheme'.[13]

---

[9] Originally articulated by Landry and Bianchini in 1995, the idea of the ‘creative city’ gained international fame with Richard Florida’s *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002), which combined individualistic, market-oriented elements with liberal and progressive themes such as the embrace of social diversity, arts and culture. For a critique, see Peck, 2005, 2007 and 2011.

[10] Scott, 2006. See also Peck, 2005 and 2011b.

[11] McRobbie, 2002.

The national and local governments' schemes discussed so far reveal a set of implicit conceptual and practical assumptions about the interrelation between art practices, community projects and 'creative fixes' for urban issues. In British urban and cultural policymaking, 'culture and creativity and their spatial and place-making dimensions […] [have been] used in arguments in support of the social and community cohesion impacts of the arts *as well as* the more overtly economic development objectives pursued in creative cluster and class policies'.[14] According to Malcom Miles, the origins of this double argument have to be found in the 1980s, when 'public art agencies began to lobby [...] for art as a driver of urban renewal [...] as a solution to the problems of inner-city decline, or a means to revive zones of de-industrialisation' with the result that '[a]rt's expediency is now regarded by most city management as a norm'.[15] This argument was central to the cultural and urban policies developed in the 1990s by the newly elected New Labour government, which critics have defined a 'new social-cum-cultural policy imperative'.[16] National events began to appear all around the country to promote the idea of temporary community and cultural uses of vacant shops, such as the *National Empty Shop Conference* in October 2009. By the end of the year, many local authorities in London and across the UK had 'temporary shop uses' or 'pop-up uses' policies and schemes advertised on their websites. The normative vision of encouraged temporary activities became apparent in a publicly funded national evaluation of temporary use schemes carried out by an ad-hoc organisation, the Meanwhile Project, between 2009 and 2010.[17] The survey revealed that art projects and exhibitions took hold of the imagination of local authorities. In the words of one of the freelance researchers who worked on the report:

> it was very obvious how many of the projects were just using art! 'Creative' directly got translated into art. […] There's a lot of small towns in Britain that are just slowly decaying because the shops are closing. And then, quickly just putting in some art, and not thinking what other things we could try. That's the safest option, almost... and for the councils as well, it's the safest thing, let's just put up a nice picture in the window.[18]

By calling art exhibitions 'the safest thing', she refers both to the ease with which art exhibitions can be rapidly installed and uninstalled in a vacant site as well as to the alleged predictability of the social impact of 'putting a nice picture in the window'. This is a mainly visual and static understanding of use: putting up pretty pictures recalls the practice of renting vacant retail space for art installations in New York during the recession of 1991-1993, described by Sharon Zukin as ‘an even more surreal example of culture framing space to project an image of urban growth’ and to ‘promote imaginative reconstructions of the city’.[19]

---

[12] DCLG website, *£3 million empty shop revival fund for most deprived and hardest hit high streets*, published 13 August 2009, page and site archived.

[13] Arts Council England, 2009, p. 1.

[14] Bain, 2010.

[15] Miles, 2009.

[16] Evans, 2009, p. 21; see also Evans and Foord, 2000.

[17] The Meanwhile Project was set up with the tripartite aim of researching existing projects of vacant spaces reuse across the UK, discovering and providing practical solutions to legal and financial barriers such as developing legally recognised forms of 'meanwhile' leases, and showcasing successful meanwhile shops. See the report Meanwhile Project 2010: *No Time to Waste... The Meanwhile Use of Assets for Community Benefit*. London: Meanwhile Space CIC.

[18] Conversation with Mariana, 9 August 2011.

Art showcasing to the world: pop-up in the shadow of the 2012 Games

An interesting case of an agenda of ‘safe’ artistic use for vacant shops was the Hackney’s ‘Art in Empty Spaces’ scheme. As previously mentioned, Hackney Council was the only local government in London to receive the DCLG grant, and its inclination towards ‘art’ as the preferred filler became clear when it established, in early 2010, an ‘Art in Empty Spaces’ programme. As stated on the website of the project, the aim of the scheme was

> to provide a platform for local artists utilising empty commercial space across the Borough. We hope to have an embedded empty properties plan, helping to support our local economy, promote the arts and support community cohesion ensuring that Hackney’s creative and cultural base has an opportunity to showcase to the rest of the world.[20]

As an addition to the official narrative of temporary vacant space reuse, temporary art projects are here presented as a means of furthering Hackney’s position as an art and culture destination for global tourists visiting London. Such a global outlook must be placed in relation to Hackney’s visibility in the run-up to the 2012 Olympic Games, of which it was a Host Borough. Several of the projects sponsored or facilitated through the Art in Empty Spaces scheme, such as the Farm:Shop on Dalston Lane, took place in and around Dalston, a neighbourhood that had recently been subjected to large-scale developments and was rapidly gentrifying.

The close relationship between the schemes’ aims, local redevelopments and the upcoming Olympic Games became apparent to a group of artists who applied to the scheme. The group was composed of individuals who had lived and worked in the neighbourhood since the late 1990s and were keenly aware of the impacts of infrastructural developments and the rapid gentrification of the neighbourhood. The idea for their project came from a conversation with an architect working on the development of Dalston Square, a large development realised on a plot of land owned by Hackney Council and Transport for London that included over 700 new apartments, a library, a public square and large retail spaces. When the architect complained about the negative visual and social effect of the many £1-pound shops as ‘urban blight’, somebody retorted that if the urban ‘regeneration’ promoted was just replacing them with more expensive places, ‘you are just moving out people, you are not re-qualifying it. You know, you should just help people to build a £100 shop!’.[21] From this humorous remark came the idea to set up a temporary £100 Shop, where £1 shop items would be sold for £100. The project would take place precisely in one of the now vacant shops along the neighbourhood’s shopping street, Kingsland High Street, and would embody in a hyperbolic way the imaginary of a vibrant Dalston as dreamt up by developers and produced by gentrification processes, ‘hybridising the luxury shop and the lowest end’ of budget shops.

When the group received a letter of rejection, explaining that their application to the scheme was unsuccessful, they realised that decisions about pop-up art shops in Hackney were not taken by the Council’s own cultural department but by a committee of the Five Olympic Host boroughs, which was at the time closely curating the image of the borough as projected to the world at large. As explained by the artists, ‘the empty shop fund was not prescriptive about its uses. It was suggesting art as one of its possible use, but not its only use. Therefore, it was not administered by the cultural unit because it was not specifically about art... It could have been social enterprise, it could have been a library, it could have been… it could have been any kind of worthy project’. Ever more convinced of the need for a critical intervention, they turned instead to local community organisations and negotiated to use the shop front of Centerprise Trust Community Art, Bookshop and Café, a historical site for Black British culture on Kingsland High Street. Since the practitioners could appropriate only the window, they thought of ‘a new aesthetic, like “look but don’t touch”’, something like ‘the betting shops and sex shops’ still present in the area, many of which at the time were beginning to have their licenses terminated. Contrary to ‘activating’ the site, for two weeks in November 2010 they blocked the shop window with a boxed display frame [Figure 2].

---

[19] Zukin, 1995, pp. 15-17.

[20] See Art in Empty Spaces http://artinemptyspaces.org.uk/ [accessed 13 March 2011]. Website no longer available.

[21] Conversation with Alberto Duman, Alistair Siddons and Michele Panzeri, artists of The £100 Shop practitioners, 2 March 2011.

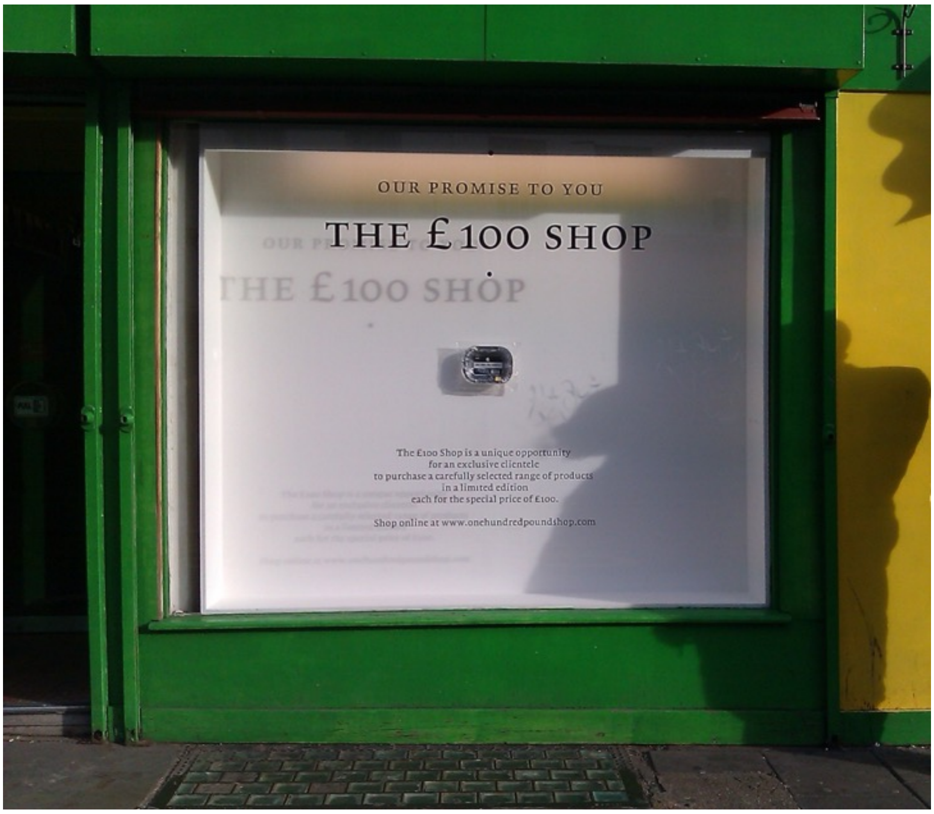

OUR PROMISE TO YOU
THE £100 SHOP
The £100 Shop is a unique opportunity
for an exclusive clientele
to purchase a carefully selected range of products
in a limited edition
each for the special price of £100.
Shop online at www.onehundredpoundshop.com

Figure 2. The £100 Shop at Centerprise, Dalston, London. Source: www.onehundredpound-shop.com. Courtesy Alberto Duman © Alberto Duman 2011.

The window displayed the title of the project and the address of an e-commerce website, which was live and functioning and sold common £1 shop items for £100. The website contained ‘a pre-purchase agreement’, which on close reading constituted the only explicit ‘key’ to interpreting the project as an ironic commentary on the transformations of Dalston and on the relationship between creative symbolic economies and gentrification.[22] Reading ‘The £100 Shop’ in relation to the official Hackney narrative of the ‘Art in Empty Spaces’ schemes, the project delivered, in a subtle and ironic way, a hyperbolic embodiment of the urban growth that a part of the Council aspired to, and its predictable gentrification.[23] The Art in Empty Spaces scheme in Hackney revealed that the allocation of vacant spaces to practitioners on a temporary basis requires frameworks of filtering, selection and evaluation according to an implicit urban agenda of global place marketing. On an experiential level, the blocked shop window subverted the expected positive impact of commissioned temporary uses, evoking instead closure, secrecy and displacement. During the exhibition, many passers-by and shoppers came through the door, afraid that the bookshop too had been forced to close by the rising rents like many other independent shops in the neighbourhood. The Centerprise was eventually evicted on the 2nd of November 2012 after a year-long legal battle with its owner, the Borough of Hackney, which had demanded a market-price commercial rent of £37,000 per year instead of the peppercorn rent they had paid over the years; local knowledge has it that the first place had originally been squatted.[24]

---

[22] See The £100 Shop ‘pre-purchase agreement’, available on the project’s website http://www.onehundredpoundshop.com/our_promise_to_you.html [accessed 22 March 2011].

[23] See ‘Historical black bookshop evicted from Hackney premises’, *The Voice online* 6 November 2012,

The rise of the pop-up intermediary

Set up alongside the *Looking After Our Town Centres*, the already mentioned Meanwhile Project was to act as a promoter and intermediary for temporary uses. Between 2009 and 2010, and subsequently in its incarnation as the Community Interest Company Meanwhile Space, the organisation became an important player in the dissemination and framing of ideas of temporary vacant space reuse in London. Its promotional material succinctly framed the company's approach to and rationale for promoting temporary 'meanwhile' empty space reuse, as stated on one of their promotional postcards: 'Empty spaces are a blight to communities, a financial drain to owners and stimulate wider civic problems. To us they are an opportunity.'[25] Beyond reproducing the official dual narrative of vacant spaces as a wasted resource and as an opportunity, it positions the company as an expert vehicle through which the problem of vacancy can be solved: as a temporary use intermediary. The writing of specific policies as well as the choreographing of this specific urban-cultural configuration identifies certain groups as invested with the power to manage and facilitate temporary use. It points in the direction of a range of collectives, agencies and organisations acting as intermediaries between visitors, users, property owners and local authorities.

Around this time, organisations such as the Empty Space Network, Space Makers Agency and Wasted Spaces occupied this position of trusted middle persons.[26] Some of these intermediaries and agencies coined neologisms to self-identify as 'meanwhilers' and 'pop-up people'. The *Pop-Up People* report published in February 2012 by the Empty Shop Network, for example, offered a depiction of the personal and professional characteristics required to become a pop-up shop practitioner. 'Pop-Up People', it declared, 'are truly entrepreneurial, even if their project is more about community than commerce'.[27] The entrepreneurial narrative promoted by temporary uses intermediaries about their own role in the field of short-term urban uses is centred on the idea of connecting two resources: the 'wasted' empty spaces on the one hand and the creative practitioners lacking spaces to experiment and work on the other. This 'connectionist' narrative is clearly exemplified by the words of a Meanwhile Space founder: 'we know there

---

http://www.voice-online.co.uk/article/historical-black-bookshop-evicted-hackney-premises [accessed 12 December 2012] and Barnett, Adam, 'Centerprise Bookshop seized by Hackney Council', Hackney Citizen online, 4 November 2012, http://hackneycitizen.co.uk/2012/11/04/centerprise-bookshop-seized-hackney-council/ [accessed 12 December 2012].

[24] Duman, 2013, pp. 19-20.

[25] Meanwhile Space 'Have you got space ache?' postcard, 2009, personal archive.

[26] Interview with Meanwhile Space member, 1 July 2011.

[27] Thompson, D. 2012: *Pop-Up People: We Can Do So Much More Together*, p. 5. Accessed from the Empty Shop Network's website www.howtopopup.co.uk [accessed 15 June 2012].

are spaces out there, we certainly know there are projects that are looking for space, and we want to connect them'.[28]

There is a second key narrative of the official discourse of temporary urbanism: the entrepreneurialism of connecting practices and resources. As declared by the creative cities' advocate Charles Leadbeater writing in 1999 in the *New Statesman*: '[r]esources do not allocate themselves: they have to be organised by people, above all the entrepreneur'.[29] In this narrative, some well-positioned individuals and groups act as intermediaries to connect a network of cultural and social practitioners available for short-term projects and a fluid network of empty spaces awaiting occupation.[30] As clearly stated on its website, 'Generating creativity and enterprise from empty spaces and places, the Meanwhile Project works with landlords, agents, potential occupiers and local authorities to enable uses that benefit the community while something else is waiting to happen'.[31] This narrative presents a vision of total flexibility and availability in which people and resources are only awaiting a good and timely connection. Counter to this vision of seamless connectivity, the following chapter will shed light on the materialities of place and the often complex and multi-layered histories that engender encounters and temporary uses, with and without entrepreneurial intermediaries.

Meanwhilers: a clever rebranding

Terms such as 'pop-up' and 'meanwhile' became contended titles to group the activities of these intermediaries and position them professionally within an emerging field. Many of them had experience with creative city and culture-led regeneration programmes and could speak persuasively to different 'stakeholders', from policymakers to practitioners. The role of the intermediaries of these organisations involved acting as discursive intermediaries between the official policy discourse and its implementation on the ground, translating the government's discourse into existing networks and local practices, enrolling willing practitioners and property owners and developers, and promoting the discursive and imaginary framework through public events, workshops and talks, and thorough documentation. The founders of the Meanwhile Project, for instance, understood part of the role as making the term—and the very concept of—temporary reuse 'more acceptable' and creating 'a more normalised version for dealing with temporary space'. By 2011, 'meanwhile use' had 'started to become an accepted standard phrase [entering] the lexicon of the property world'.[32]

The idea that 'meanwhile' emerged as and became 'accepted' in the property world is, however, only a partial truth. The representation of empty shop fronts as 'spaces of opportunities', 'in the meanwhile' relies on an understanding of vacancy as a spatial and temporal exception within a dynamic of continuous urban development.[33] Individuals involved in Meanwhile Space came from the urban regeneration sector and explicitly commented that the idea of 'meanwhile use' derived from practices of temporary uses that could take place during the period of brownfield land assembling and property acquisition of large-scale projects. In the words of a regeneration officer, the 'meanwhile' idea appeared more as the clever rebranding of already existing practices than as a new idea:

---

[28] Interview with Meanwhile Space member, 1 July 2011. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello (2005) use the adjective 'connectionist' to discuss the workings of networks in their analysis of the projective city, as will be explored in more detail in the following chapter.

[29] Charles Leadbeater cited in Armstrong, 2005, pp. 39-40.

[30] As discussed in Chapter 1 in relation to Richard Lloyd's analysis of place-based networking and creative work in Chicago (2006); see also Arvidsson, 2007.

[31] Meanwhile Project website, http://www.meanwhile.org.uk/about-us [accessed 12 February 2010].

[32] Interview with Meanwhile Space member, 1 July 2011. See also the report *No Time to Waste... The Meanwhile Use of Assets for Community Benefit*, 2010. London: Meanwhile Space, p. 11.

[33] See contributions in Henneberry, 2017.

> meanwhile… as far as I understand it, is like a rebranding of... it just means temporary, isn't it? [...] It has become fashionable... it makes it seem like the new thing that we are all doing, whereas people have been doing lots of interesting temporary things for a long time, and maybe for various reasons this idea has resurgence, and somebody clever came up with a new word for it.[34]

The Meanwhile Project's campaign to make the term more widely 'accepted' involved over 30 talks, presentations and workshops in the nine months between June 2009 and March 2010, including collaborations with other intermediaries and public and private organisations and institutions.

During the summer of 2010, for instance, the team of the Project organised a roundtable discussion titled 'Site Life Debate' in association with *Property Week*, a UK-based magazine for national and international property news that had previously run a temporary uses competition and had been active promoting interim uses on stalled development sites through their Site Life campaign.[35] The aim of the campaign was 'to breathe life back into stalled development sites and empty buildings […] through temporary uses from allotments to art fairs until development can start'.[36] Among the members on the panel was the editor of *Property Week*, the director of Public Space, a government's advisor within the Commission for the Built Environment (now defunct), the chief executive of the British Property Federation (a campaign group lobbying on behalf of the commercial property industry), a member of the Department for Communities and Local Government, the development manager for Land Securities' London Portfolio, various representatives of real estate companies and law firms, and the Director of Innovation at the Development Trusts Association which was running the Meanwhile Project in partnership with Meanwhile Space CIC. One of the issues debated was 'incremental upgrading', that is, the need for incremental developments rather than all-in-one-go developments, which had stalled because of the recession. Crucial to this was the introduction and growing use of low liability and legally recognised 'meanwhile' leases for tenants, who could be asked to move out at shorter notices. The relatively smooth ways in which 'meanwhile' entered the lexicon of the property world is therefore unsurprising and shows the permeability and the translation of policy discourse and ideas between local authorities, private developers and urban professionals.

The Meanwhile London Competition

The interest of some local regeneration departments for 'meanwhile' uses needs to be contextualised in relation to wider development plans, and here the London 2012 Olympic Games loom large. The 'Site Life Debate' roundtable, for instance, took place in Stratford Town Hall in the London Borough of Newham. The location is significant, as a few months later officers from Newham Council launched the 'Meanwhile London Competition' to seek proposals for temporary projects in three vacant development sites in the Royal Docks. According to Fred, an officer of the Newham Regeneration team, the competition was the direct result of a conversation between a senior officer in Regeneration and the editor of *Property Week* on the possibility of 'animating in the short term' empty land in public ownership.[37] For Newham Council, the notion of ‘meanwhile use’ became a marketing vehicle to push for a locally specific agenda of rebranding and real estate development, which received public backing from the Mayor of London and was directly influenced by City Hall through a partnership between Newham Council and Design for London, since one of the ‘meanwhile’ sites was owned by the London Development Agency. As explained by Fred, one of the priorities of the Council in recent years had been to raise its media profile, as for example by rebranding itself as ‘Newham London’:

---

[34] Interview with a Newham Council officer, 27 September 2011.

[35] Rigby, J. 2010, 'Join our campaign to bring the UK's empty sites back to life'. *Property Week*. In July 2010, a report of the 'Site Life Debate' was published on the Meanwhile Project website.

[36] As reported in Baker, K., 2011, 'Harrow Council opens fake shop to attract retailers'. *Property Week* online magazine.

[37] Interview with a Newham Council officer, 27 September 2011.

> The Council wanted to start making sure people knew Newham was London, not some... place... miles away, that this is real London, the Olympics are happening here. This is London. And for the people from the outside that you are trying to attract, the Japanese or Chinese, or Russian investors, as might be for some of these big development sites... that’s quite important.[38]

In this context, calling a temporary reuse competition ‘Meanwhile London’—meant to market the Royal Docks as belonging to London as a global centre of real estate investment and of urban innovation—and the dropping of Newham in the name of the competition clearly indicated this intention:

> it’s just marketing, isn’t it? It’s a way of saying, this is really important on a London-wide scale [...] It’s about trying to make the case that what we’re doing in Newham […] is not just some little thing going on, this is really important. […] Meanwhile Royal Docks, or Meanwhile Newham maybe isn’t quite as attractive as Meanwhile London.

Initially the title raised some resistance within council officers outside the Regeneration team who felt that there was no need to use the term ‘meanwhile’ if what was intended was ‘temporary use’. In response to this, Fred thought it important to push the remit of the concept beyond the idea of temporarily using shop units, with which it is usually associated:

> I don’t see any reason why we shouldn’t have used [the term] meanwhile for our competition. It’s no more applicable to shop units than to development sites [...] The competition was on a different scale to a lot of the temporary use stuff, it wasn’t about paying a few artists to make a shop unit look nice, as important as those things can be, it was... a big, high profile site, in London’s most important regeneration area next to an Olympic venue.

This remark clearly shows how art projects in vacant shops are a crucial reference in the circulating imaginaries of temporary vacant space reuse and how notions such as ‘interim’ and ‘meanwhile’ reuse were deployed by *Property Week* and the ‘Meanwhile London Competition’ to expand the idea of temporary uses to development sites. For Newham Council officers working in regeneration, the audience of the context appeared to consist not simply of investors but also of other town managers and urban professionals. They wanted their competition ‘to go viral and to be adopted elsewhere and for other people to come to us, and ask us how we did it and what we did, and what the issues were. [...] We wanted it to be something which would... catch up’, a clear indication of the dual nature of many of these practices in a context of interurban and inter-borough competition but also of the ways in which temporary projects acted as testbeds for policy ‘best practice’ among other local authorities and urban professionals.

Enrolling urban professionals in the shift to austerity

---

[38] Interview with a Newham Council officer, 27 September 2011.

The promotion of temporary uses by the Meanwhile Project, the Meanwhile London Competition and Design for London were important to gather support for temporary projects in the field of architectural practice. The official position of architects in the discourse of temporary urban reuse seemed committed to extending meanwhile mainstream narratives to the reuse of vacant sites. An example of this was the public talk organised at the main venue of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) on 28 June 2011 and titled 'A Flourish of Meanwhiles'. The introductory remarks described London as a city in flux and urged urban practitioners to embrace change and to integrate the proliferation of terms such as pop-up, interim, temporary and meanwhile into planning strategy. Most presentations appeared to be addressed at local government's planning officers, developers and investors, mentioning figures such as the '43 million lost revenue for dilapidated and underused spaces in Central London'[39] and explaining how temporary uses could mitigate the risks of rejection of planning applications by developers to test out aspects of their place-making strategies.

Looking at the audience, however, the event was just as much about translating the official narrative into a script for urban professionals. Many members of the public were in their twenties and thirties; when speaking from the floor during the question and answers session, most identified themselves as young professionals in the fields of architecture and urban design. The event seemed to offer and re-enact a series of arguments that those junior workers in the fields of architecture and design could reuse at a later stage in their promotion and rationale for temporary projects. This was consistent with RIBA's previous role in promoting temporary uses through a design competition titled *Forgotten Spaces* (2010 and 2011), run in collaboration with Design for London and aimed at architects and social entrepreneurs asked 'to nominate a forgotten space in Greater London and conceive an imaginative and inspiring proposal for its regeneration'.[40] In this context, the event could be seen as playing an important role in setting a script and a set of tasks for young urban professionals, who were to map 'forgotten spaces', use their skills to extract existing knowledges about places and draw on their social and professional networks to create short-term spatial interventions. In the years immediately after the 2008 global financial crash, this would have been an appealing proposition to the many architects and urban designers looking for opportunities to raise their profile at a time when many developers and architectural firms were downsizing in response to economic uncertainty and the stalling of large-scale development projects.

Entrepreneurship as a way of rethinking the urban economy based on the voluntary organising of civic society was the framing for this script. The presentation of the *NESTA 2011 Compendium of the Civic Economy* report during the event illustrated this clearly and celebrated the ability of 'civic entrepreneurs' to draw on existing local resources—both in the form of participants and volunteers and in the form of monetary and in-kind support—for running short-term spaces.[41] In this respect, the 'A Flourish of Meanwhiles' event was important politically to re-position discourses of temporary uses in light of urban and social policies promoted by the Conservative-Liberal Democrats Coalition Government (2010-2015), which involved a combination of a drastic reduction of government spending and a promotion of voluntarism and civic enterprise under the slogan 'Big Society, Small Government'.[42] The ambiguity of this combination has been defined by critical geographer David Featherstone et al. as 'austerity localism'.[43] It was unsurprising, therefore, that NESTA's *Compendium* to promote the 'new civic start-up domain' was prefaced by then Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron. The definition of civic economy offered by the report centred on the idea of 'unlocking dormant assets' through

---

[39] Diary entry from the 'A Flourish of Meanwhiles' event.

[40] See *www.architecture.com/forgottenspaceslondon* [accessed 12 September 2012].

[41] NESTA, CABE and 00:/, 2011: *NESTA 2011 Compendium for the Civic Economy*, p. 9.

[42] The notion of 'Big Society' was raised in the Conservative Party's 2010 electoral campaign; see Conservative Party, 2010: *The Conservative Manifesto 2010*.

[43] Featherstone, Ince, Mackinnon, Strauss and Cumbers, 2012, p. 179.

‘collaboratively “mapping” the assets of places (both physical spaces and hidden talents and learning dreams)’.[44] The idea of dormant social and physical assets needing to be unlocked or activated by urban professionals was also central to the presentation by architect Klaus Overmeyer, one of the editors of *Urban Pioneers* (2007) and the person commonly referred to by employees of the London Development Agency as ‘the pop-up guru’.

Similarly, architect Tobias Goevert from the public agency Design for London argued that the ‘activation of community spaces’ through temporary projects was the true incarnation of the ‘Big Society’.[45] In his talk, he brought together as ‘best practices’ the Meanwhile London Competition and the Dalston Curve, presented as a pop-up garden in Hackney in a former car park and dumping ground, less than a five-minute walk from the site of The £100 Shop. The presentation glossed over the fact that the initial proposal for reusing the site had originated in the voluntary work of local community group Open Dalston in collaboration with architects muf and J & L Gibbons as part of the ‘Making Space in Dalston’ strategy project in 2008-9. While the profile of the site was raised by an installation by the architectural platform EXYZT as part of the Barbican’s *Radical Nature* exhibition (Jun-Oct 2009), the community group remained on site and, after receiving a two-year grant, established a social enterprise for gardening and education, the Dalston Eastern Curve Garden.[46] Since then, the reclaimed garden has functioned almost uninterruptedly as a volunteer-run community garden, a cafe, a children’s playing area and a workshop space. The site is partly owned by the Borough of Hackney and partly by the owners of the Kingsland Shopping Centre and has been continuously under threat of demolition to make space for a paved alley to connect the planned residential redevelopment of the Shopping Centre to Dalston Lane. When discussing the project in 2015, the space coordinators Marie Murray and Brian Cumming adamantly refused the label of temporary space and described feeling a ‘pop up disquiet’ whenever they observed how society’s taste for exciting pop-up events erases the value and possibility for developing ordinary, everyday relationships and a growing community of learning and caring.[47]

The unresolved question of unlawful occupations

The ‘A Flourish of Meanwhiles’ event in 2011 encompassed and promoted the full range of narratives that constitute the official discourse of temporary urbanism: creativity, entrepreneurialism, community orientation, the stress on activation, the fundamental alignment of practices of reuse with urban regeneration and redevelopment aims, and the idea of voluntarism and civic enterprise at times of austerity. It also included, somewhat indirectly, a key issue as yet unaddressed by advocates of temporary uses of vacant spaces: the question of unlawful occupation through squatting. A tangential lone celebratory voice came from the spokesperson for Space Makers Agency, Dougald Hine. In his presentation, he mentioned their involvement in the Brixton Village project and introduced the network as a coming together of squatters and people from think tanks interested in improvisational DIY ways to deal with empty spaces.[48] The mention of squatting appears to have been unflinchingly accepted by the members of the audience as one of the many traditions informing the idea of DIY practices of empty space reuse. The obvious inherent contradiction between encouraging developers and investors to understand temporary uses as a strategy aligned to their own agendas and the presentation of unlawful political occupations as a source of inspiration was raised neither by the other speakers nor by members of the audience.

---

[44] NESTA, CABE and 00:/, 2011, p. 2.

[45] Goevert was referencing an article on the Dalston Curve garden which had appeared in the *London Evening Standard* article ‘The big society begins in Dalston’ (30 June 2010).

[46] See Dalston Garden, www.dalstongarden.org.

[47] See Ferreri, 2014.

[48] Space Makers Agency (2010) [Online] Brixton Village, http://www.spacemakers.info/projects/brixton-village [accessed 15 March 2014]; see also Ferreri, 2016.

The reason for this could be found in the peculiar but by no means new distinction between 'good' and 'bad' squatters that permeated the media in the mid-2000s. Since the 1960s, the imaginary of squatters in modern British media has been informed by contradictory and often polarised representations in what critical media scholar Bob Franklin has defined as 'a symbiotic—albeit often viciously antagonistic—relationship'.[49] In the legacy of the creative city imaginaries, however, the celebration of middle-class entrepreneurship and 'creativity' has gone a step further by legitimising the idea of squatters as the perfect 'lifestyle avant-gardists' in contemporary cities.[50] Building on the visibility of a string of high-profile art squats in inner London such as the *DA! Collective* and the *Oubliette Art House*,[51] national and local newspapers and magazines seemed to promote near-acceptable imaginaries of what was termed 'a new breed of squatters', characterised as creative workers and young professionals.[52] The *Oubliette Art House* collective was especially taken to embody this 'new breed' of occupiers who publicly claimed: 'We're not squatters'.

The PR-savvy group occupied seven high-profile locations in Central and West London between mid-2009 and late 2010 and appeared to consciously reproduce the 'good' squatters discourse by distinguishing themselves from political countercultural spaces that 'tend to be chaotic and anarchic'.[53] Their declared aim was 'to turn squatting into a legitimate way to showcase art', offering in exchange property caretaking for free as well as professionally credited plumbing skills.[54] The high profile of their practice is visible in their inclusion as a case study in *The Temporary City* (2012)—of which one of the two authors had been the head of Design for London and the deputy CEO of the London Development Agency—in a section headed 'Countercultural and activism' where the arts-based squatters' collective *Oubliette Art House* is taken to illustrate anarchist writer Hakim Bey's notion of Temporary Autonomous Zone as 'times in which these spaces are relatively open, either through neglect on the part of the State or because they have somehow escaped notice by the mapmakers'. [55] With the fluctuating legitimisation of such a position by the press, 'the function imagined for squatting is spelled out quite clearly: a minority taste that complements the proper range of capitalist life-skills; a quirky cultural niche in the market surrounding it'.[56]

In the first few months of the Coalition government (2010-2014), a further connection was made between this newly legitimised lifestyle squatting imaginary and the 'austerity localism' of the Big Society discourse, informed by Phillip Blond's *Red Tory* (2010), to the extent that in 2011 a London-based artist-squatter interviewed by the *Independent* concluded that 'squatting is the perfect example of the Big Society'.[57] Squatting had indeed been mentioned in the Conservative Party's 2010 electoral manifesto but as a pledge to turn it from a civil to a criminal offence.[58] With student occupations multiplying across universities in the UK in the autumn of 2010, many daily and weekly newspapers started propagating sensationalist and negative depictions of squatting in what the activist campaign Squatters Action for Secure Homes defined as 'sensationalist media hysteria'.[59] The free London newspaper *The Evening Standard*, for instance, ran a series of articles and editorials on the squatting issue, asking the government for firmer action and a review of the existing legal framework.[60] *The Daily Telegraph* and its associated *The Sunday Telegraph* went a step further in early 2011 by launching the 'Stop the Squatting' campaign through a series of articles from the middle of February to the middle of March 2011, which argued for the necessity to change the existing legislation, deploying similar arguments to those used in 1975 to promote the Criminal Trespass Act of 1977.[61]

---

[49] Franklin, 1999, p. 107.

[50] Hyland, 2007.

[51] See for instance Littlejohn, G., 2009, 'Our £20m squat in a premiere location'. *London Lite*, 27 October.

[52] This was exemplified by an article titled 'Free house minders available' in *The Daily Telegraph*, in which the new squatters were described as young professionals: fashion designers, artists, students, self-employed businessmen, architects, journalists, teachers, translators, waiters and chefs. Little, W. 2006, 'Free house minders available'. *The Daily Telegraph,* 11 November.

[53] Pidd, 2009,'"We're not squatters," says art group occupying Mayfair mansion'. *The Guardian*, 21 December.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Bey, 2003 [1985]. Bey's TAZ is mentioned in an arguably individualistic, depoliticised and hedonistic interpretation; see Bishop and Williams, pp.30-32.

[56] Hyland, 2007. See also Conlin, 2009.

[57] In Bell, 2011, 'Home truths: "Squatting is the perfect example of the Big Society"'. *The Independent*, 29 May.

Particularly vitriolic was the paper's attack on the 'Really Free School'.[62] The Really Free School, a sarcastic allusion to the Conservatives' education policy that favoured private 'free schools', was an itinerant collective that squatted four high-profile venues in Central London between January and April 2011 and which defined itself as 'a pop-up space with no fixed agenda, unlimited in scope, [that] aims to cultivate equality through collaboration and horizontal participation'[63]. *The Telegraph*'s media campaign culminated on 20 March 2011 when the paper declared 'Victory against the squatters' and published a letter by the then Minister of State for Housing and Local Government Grant Shapps stating: 'we understand the strength of public feeling about this, and are taking steps to lock the door to squatters for good'.[64] The paper announced a parliamentary bill criminalising squatting in residential properties in England, which became Clause 145 of the *Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act* (2012). The moral rhetoric around squatting and its 'vulnerable demons' had won.[65] As Alex Vasudevan observed, the proposed bill needs to be understood in the context of the wider 'austerity' reforms of housing and work benefit policies and as such was aimed not just at squatters but also, more importantly, at other forms of student and housing activism, a direct attack on vulnerable communities' 'right to the city'.[66] In 2013, members of the 'Really Free School' were involved in the landmark exhibition 'Made Possible by Squatting', which celebrated the uncountable ways in which squatting histories since World War II played a fundamental role in shaping culture, life and politics of London.[67]

---

[58] Conservative Party 2010: *The Conservative Manifesto 2010*, p. 56.

[59] See SQUASH: the Squatters' Action for Secure Homes campaign group, http://www.squashcampaign.org/blog/ [accessed 25 September 2011].

[60] Examples include: Dominiczak, 2010, 'Basking in the Limelight...Art Squatters Take Over Superclub. *The Evening Standard*, 16 December; Moore-Bridger, 2011, 'Squatters Sent Packing As They Try To 'Re-House' Themselves in £7m Home'. *The Evening Standard*, 18 January; Parsons, 2011, 'Resistance Party' at Ritchie Squat'. *The Evening Standard*, 18 February; Parsons, 2011, 'Squatters Quit Guy's £6m House... for a Pub Lock-in'. *The Evening Standard*, 21 February.

[61] Some examples: Hollingshead, 2011, 'Lock, Stock and Squatters. A Dozen Invaders in a Salubrious London Square Have Guy Ritchie Over a Barrel'. *The Daily Telegraph*, 16 February; Hamilton-Brown, 2011, 'Burglar Alarm? No Problem. Squatters Pool Their Skills on the Internet to Find New Homes', *The Daily Telegraph*, 27 February; Harrison, 2011, 'I'm Forced to Beg Squatters Through My Own Letterbox'; 'Squatting Laws Endorse Theft'. *The Sunday Telegraph*, 27 February. On 6 March 2011, *The Daily Telegraph* also published the editorial 'Stop the Squatters: Criminalise This Unjust Behaviour' and the editorial comment 'How Squatters Evade the Law'.

[62] Jamieson and Leach 2011, 'The Middle-Class Serial Squatters Exploiting the Law'. *The Sunday Telegraph*, 6 March.

[63] See Really Free School, 2011.

[64] Howie, 2011, 'Victory Against the Squatters'. *The Sunday Telegraph*, 20 March.

[65] O'Mahony, O'Mahony and Hickey, 2014.

[66] Vasudevan, 2011b.

[67] Made Possible by Squatting, 2013.

Conclusion: the primacy of property

The law of the thing is that it must remain temporary. In this way, it can easily be replaced by a new thing. And another. And another... [68]

The discursive field of temporary practices in vacant spaces is complex, contradictory and at times elusive of clear and definite positions. Its study shows shifts, slippages and unlikely alliances across a spectrum of practices and political positions. Official promotion by national and local government institutions intersected slightly jarring direct and indirect critiques, delineating a composite discursive territory where the multiple values of using vacant spaces contend with each other. The original official narrative of temporary reuse hinged on a combination of 'creative city' discourses and policies and a new urgency to provide visual fixes to the effects of the recession on negative perceptions and experiences of urban spaces. Underneath the discourse of creative and community uses lies a strong need to mimic economic activity through symbolic public occupations that produce a sense of 'vibrancy' and activation. This provided a 'script' for urban practitioners and intermediaries that persisted and expanded in the brief yet important recessional interval when community and voluntary organisations, the 'Big Society', and short-term fixes were heralded as the solution to public budget reductions under the austerity discourse. At the heart of the imaginary of temporary reuse is an argument for looking at vacant spaces as wasted resources and a claim that it is better to use empty spaces, even temporarily, than to let them lie empty. It is therefore not surprising that in the complex discursive positioning of intermediaries and practitioners, squatting is an explicit cultural point of reference. At times, the overlaps were not just symbolic. Only a few months before the 'A Flourish of Meanwhiles' event, Space Makers Agency had publicly supported the much attacked Really Free School collective through their social media and even participated in a public talk in the collective's first squatted premises in Bloomsbury.[69]

Direct involvement in squatted spaces was, however, a red line for temporary urbanism intermediaries who, while accepting and even promoting the imaginary of the creative 'good squatter', continued to assert the prominence of the right to private property over the right to use. As explained by one of the founders of Meanwhile Space:

> we don't want Meanwhile to become associated with squatting in any way [...] sometimes we have sympathy for [squatters], there's genuinely empty space going to waste and they try to approach it
> [...] So for that, at times I do have some sympathy for why they have chosen to squat it. Especially those that... I mean, there are two types of squatters: the responsible squatters, who want to create somewhere to live and have a positive impact on spaces, and they are the ones that we can work with, and then there's people who just want free space and, you know, are destructive and... you know, we don't want anything to do with them. [70]

This reflection was concluded with the argument that Meanwhile Space 'are achieving similar things as squatters, but in a way that benefits all parties' and that while there can be overlaps in the approaches deployed by squatters and by 'pop-up people', in the last instance 'there should be a meanwhile use as opposed to squatting'. With limited exceptions, such as Space Makers Agency, therefore, in the official narrative of intermediaries the temporal limit of use coincides with an affirmation of the legal right to private property, above and beyond circumscribed professed sympathies for the squatting scene. As discussed in Chapter 1, the claim to use value is central to the notion of the 'Right to the City' as a right to spatial appropriation in a direct challenge to capitalist forms of urbanisation and spatial management. The stress on terms such as 'short-term', 'meanwhile', 'interim' and 'temporary' acts as an indicator of the exceptional nature of these spaces in relation to existing urban dynamics. The deliberate use of counter-cultural references maintains a certain ambiguity with regards to its political potential. In the words of architecture critic Tim Abrahams, the deliberate associations between slightly illicit or unlawful occupations and temporary urbanism ultimately 'raise the idea of an architecture of protest but fail to see it through'.[71] This is both the attractiveness of temporary urbanism and its intrinsic limit.

---

[68] Homelesshome blog, 2011.

[69] The talk focused on the importance of autonomous spaces of encounters for the establishment of new forms of social relations and conviviality. From the Really Free School website [now archived] 'Dougald Hine: Third Places, Web 2.0 and First Life' talk on 10 February 2011.

[70] Interview with Meanwhile Space member, 1 July 2011.

The ambiguity of temporary urbanism raises the seductive promise of an urban practice of dissent. The multiple origins of the field of temporary urbanism make it *entangled* not only because of the community orientation and the more or less deliberate ambiguity of official narratives but because many of the values it purported to defend found fertile societal support at a time of crisis and large-scale public unrest against austerity measures. Between the scepticism and outright opportunism of some of its official proponents—such as those behind The Meanwhile London competition, the ironic mockery of The £100 shop and the disquiet felt by those such as the volunteers at the Dalston Eastern Curve Garden who refuse to abandon the space and continue to struggle for a permanent local garden and community space—the field of temporary urbanism was also produced by, and retained, a shimmer of hope that points at other values and ways of understanding the production of urban spaces. Examining the origins of a discourse and its transformation from a recessional to an austerity strategy is fundamental to understanding the ways in which it has introduced new habituated forms of thinking and acting in the city as well as its intrinsic limits. Nonetheless, such an analysis is not sufficient. The multiple and often radical genealogies that gave temporary urbanism its fertile ground and the local conditions that enabled its flourishing all point to some practitioners' and communities' unease with the official discourse: this demands that we pay greater attention to the critiques and tensions generated by the conditions and forces that attempt to recode, govern and foreclose their practices of urban re-appropriation.

---

[71] Abrahams, 2012.

Chapter 3. 'Not a pop-up!'

The experience of performers and visual artists

The relationship between art, vacant spaces and temporariness runs deep, but the 2009 recession gave rise to a real renaissance when the explosion of temporary artistic practices in empty spaces ensured the establishment of seductive cultural imaginaries of temporary urbanism. Key to this process was the glamorisation of temporary artistic uses, grounded in imaginaries of urban vacancy as secretive and exciting and the celebration of the city's creative inhabitants. In 2009, the magazine *The Art Newspaper/Frieze Art Fair Daily*, distributed for free at the London commercial art fair Frieze, published a full-page article titled 'Do it yourself: pop-up galleries' with a motivational recipe for young art practitioners wanting to start a contemporary art gallery in London: 'You must have inexhaustible reserves of energy, a large helping of missionary zeal, and a healthy dose of chutzpah'.[1] The string of temporary venues that emerged in this period had the attraction of being there only in the short term and were often presented as 'secret art spaces', as in a 2011 feature that ran in the popular weekly magazine *Time Out London* titled 'Secret Galleries. Discover the best galleries you never knew existed... Visit them this weekend!'.[2]

At the time, there was indeed a sense in the contemporary art scene that temporary spaces were becoming increasingly popular among young performers and visual artists. As commented on by a London-based visual artist in his mid-twenties: 'it's hard to say when was the first spark... it seems everyone is doing [pop-ups] now. Access must have got easier'.[3] The perception of increased accessibility partially reflects the mainstreaming of ideas of temporary use into cultural and urban policies and the extensive promotional work of intermediaries and other temporary use entrepreneurs as well as of local boroughs: 'artists are all like, you know, the council gives us the money to do this and that'.[4] Official schemes, however, accounted for only a small fraction of the many and diverse artistic practices that made use of vacant spaces on a temporary basis and that played a strategic role in processes of cultural valorisation. For young artists trying to gain visibility in the capital, a 'pop-up' was generally thought of as a good platform for exhibiting 'because once you are out it might not be a gallery again, so you don't have to live with, to deal with the association, which is quite important'.[5]

Despite the sector's rhetoric and the perceptions of practitioners on the ground, using vacant spaces for producing and exhibiting art was certainly not novel. The idea belongs to a composite imaginary of attractive urban lifestyles, and the association of creativity with urban vacancy, that had a powerful moment in late 1970s New York, when the decay produced by a municipal fiscal crisis created a testbed for the development of new approaches to urban branding. As argued by sociologist Miriam Greenberg, the experimental artistic scene that developed at the time had a wide social and cultural impact, in part also due to the availability of space, through a site-specific concurrence of policy interventions, marketing, the film industry and the work of newly established urban lifestyle magazines.[6] An important component of the seduction of this imaginary is the role it assigned to art practitioners in the fringes of the established cultural sector. Depopulated inner neighbourhoods became 'abandoned movie set[s]' where it was possible for 'visionary young people to assume new identities and styles, invent new artistic scenes, and imagine themselves as stars in their own New York movie'.[7] These were critical to the promotion and propagation of the urban trope of 'creativity amid urban decay' identified by many commentators as a focal point of symbolic identification between art practices and marginalised urban areas.[8] Famous examples of artists taking over vacant spaces in New York included Andy Warhol establishing the Silver Factory and George Maciunas opening the first Fluxus shop, called the Fluxhall, in the 1960s, and, in 1971, the opening of a shop and restaurant ran by artists Carol Goodden, Gordon Matta-Clark, Tina Girouard, Suzanne Harris and Rachel Lew as a live art piece.[9]

---

[1] Millar, 2009. 'Do it yourself: pop-up galleries'. *The Art Newspaper/Frieze Art Fair Daily*, p. 5.

[2] Time Out London, 2011. 'Secret Galleries. Discover the best galleries you never knew existed... Visit them this weekend!'. *Time Out London Magazine*, 23 February - 3 March 2011.

[3] Conversation with Werner, a London-based visual artist in his mid-twenties, 15 July 2010, London.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Greenberg, 2000 and 2008.

The UK, too, had its own prestigious precedents. As explained in 2010 by the London-based visual arts web platform ArtQuest in a section titled 'how to set up an artist-led space', 'there is a well-established history of artists taking over empty shops for temporary exhibitions or community projects'.[10] In London, a widely known example was The Shop (1993), a space set up by Tracey Emin and Sarah Lucas, two members of the Young British Artists group, in a former doctor's surgery in Bethnal Green for six months.[11] In late 2009, The Shop's ephemera were included in the Tate Modern exhibition 'Pop-Life: Art in a Material World' (2009-10) showcasing 'how artists since the 1980s have cultivated their public persona as a product'.[12] The exhibition was a clear example of the ways in which high art institutions recognised and legitimised entrepreneurial practices in unusual places in the contemporary art canon. Yet commercial success has been only one side of the story. The well-established history mentioned above importantly maintains a distinction between art and community projects. While mirroring the dualism between community-oriented and artistic 'fillers' discussed in relation to the 2009 official urban and cultural policy of *Looking after our town centres*, this is an important distinction between two arguably opposed modes of understanding the relationship between artistic practices and urban spaces.

Openly at odds with the widespread celebration of pop-up galleries of the time, other art practitioners strongly rejected the 'pop-up' label when defining their practices in vacant spaces. This was the case with Rebecca, a community artist involved in a temporary project in an empty shop in Elephant and Castle. During our first meeting, she shared an anecdote that had upset her: 'on the closing night this girl came up to me and said, so, how would you describe this space, is it like... pop-up? And I was like, ugh, no! It's only popped up because I have only been allowed to have this space for two weeks'.[13] Her frustration with her project being labelled a pop-up signalled a distancing from the imaginary of temporary art shows, asserting instead that it belonged to a different genealogy of community-oriented artistic practices that rejected instrumental modes of relating to space in favour of more participatory, and usually continued, engagement with place and its communities.

This chapter explores the tension between these traditions and the critical positioning of art practitioners within the dominant celebration of artistic temporariness. It discusses how temporary cultural practices in vacant sites have become a trope in contemporary Western art and, by extension, an accepted cultural vehicle for the wider normalisation of temporary urbanism. While official narratives about the relationship between artistic production and urban spaces generate precise expectations about the role of artistic projects and place, practitioners involved in temporary use projects across London questioned sanctioned histories, revealing contradictions and slippages but also an awareness of fundamentally different and new urban conditions within which they operated. In this chapter I approach the issue of expectations, cultural imaginaries and critique from interviews—participant observations of small-scale public events and case studies—which will likely not be included in the sanctioned art history of that period. The rationale for including them is to shed light on specific tensions and conflicts and on the rapidly established shared languages and narratives that have sustained views of temporariness in the wider art scene. As sociologist Richard Lloyd observed in his analysis of the creative scene in Chicago, 'to focus only on the successful artists obscures the fact that even the poseurs and dilettantes play an important role, showing up at performances, gallery openings, and loft parties, and thus ensuring that there is a scene at all'.[14] Moreover, a focus on self-representation and self-reflexive narratives as well as repeated in-depth interviews as sites of shared critical reflection are key to a longitudinal analysis attentive to knowledge co-production.

---

[7] Greenberg, 2008, p. 146.

[8] Zukin, 2008.

[9] Ferreri and Graziano, 2014.

[10] 'Artquest' is a popular web platform for visual artists launched in 2001; see https://www.artquest.org.uk/ [accessed 10 September 2017].

[11] The Young British Artists have been one of the most important cultural references for commercially oriented, 'transgressive', contemporary art in urban crisis. See Harris, 2013.

[12] As recorded in the exhibition information available at http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/pop-life-art-material-world [accessed 15 November 2017].

[13] Conversation with Rebecca, practitioner of *Studio at the Elephant*, 15 December 2010.

A well-established history

The 'well-established history' of the ArtQuest quote above refers to two very different ways of understanding the relationship between visual and performing arts and the production of urban spaces. In bringing together 'temporary exhibitions' with 'community projects', the text refers to—while also glossing over—an incompatibility between two political and artistic approaches that emerged from a transformation in the ways in which visual and performative have been produced and experienced. Two conceptual and substantive cultural shifts underline this tension: the development of a critique of the role of established cultural institutions, such as galleries and museums, and a rejection of the division between artistic production and everyday life.[15] For some practitioners, the rejection of institutions opened up the possibility for artistic events to take place outside institutional settings, producing unconventional exhibitions and projects that were 'social statements and artwork in themselves—content-focused, temporary, gritty and grumpy', extending the critique from the moment of production of art to its dissemination and distribution.[16] In art theorist Owen Kelly's humorous critique, it was because artists wanted to 'give it back to the people' that 'some artists began to take their work out of the galleries to places where they imagined "the people" naturally gathered, in the hope that it would then receive attention'.[17]

For others, unusual spaces provided extra-institutional visibility to potential collectors. In the official history of the Young British Artists, for instance, the beginning of their success is marked by the visit of advertiser and art collector Charles Saatchi to their exhibition *Freeze* (July 1988), which they had self-organised and promoted in an empty London Port Authority building at Surrey Docks in the London Docklands.[18] The young practitioners went on to become acclaimed and commercially successful art-world stars, due also to a rising contemporary art market with vast amounts of disposable capital at the time. Ever since, unconventional spaces such as shops, warehouses, offices and even residential spaces for artistic projects have increasingly become 'not only places to accommodate the art of the past thirty years […] they have become an integral part of the work of art, a culturally resonant and living material to be transformed through intervention, addition or subtraction'.[19] Unusual spaces have become, in the imagination of art practitioners, opportunities for cultural production in its expanded sense, including performances and relational practices.[20]

---

[14] Lloyd, 2006, p. 246.

[15] Buchloh, 1999; see also Bradley and Esche, 2008.

[16] Lippard, 2008, p. 419; see also Sheikh, 2009.

[17] Kelly, 1984, p. 1.

[18] Harris, 2013.

The second trajectory associated with the transformation of the relationship between visual and performing arts and urban spaces was informed by a move towards more politicised, process-based and 'public' forms of artistic production that critiqued the separation between art and politics by blurring the distinction between artistic and activist strategies and knowledges.[21] The aim for artists and theorists associated with this moment of critique and experimentation was to situate alternative practices in a wider urban and social discourse. In the UK, according to Owen Kelly's classic *Community, art and the state: storming the citadels* (1984), the origin of community arts was in wider activist movements that came to the surface in the late 1960s when 'artists claimed to share the political, social and cultural goals of those other movements: the underground press, organised squatting, free festivals, the yippies and the Black Panthers'.[22] According to Kelly, however, by the 1970s many projects and collective practices had become professionalised, and by the 1980s the notion of community art had lost most of its critical edge and 'allowed itself to be changed from an area of shared cultural activity, which was avowedly partisan, to an area of neutral professional concern, within which it was *possible* to be radical, but no longer obligatory or even helpful'.[23]

Artistic practices belonging to this period included forms of community organising that often operated in connection to concrete spatial issues, for instance around questions of homelessness, urban development and gentrification where concrete places—be it a building, a neighbourhood or a city—became integral to the project.[24] Practices often took place outside official venues and funding structures and were often temporary.[25] Some of these approaches transformed conventional public art practice, which tended to be object-based, into 'interventions in a public realm which include[d] the processes as well as locations of sociation [sic]'.[26] The stress on process-based artistic production has been referred to as 'new genre public art', defined by artist and theorist Suzanne Lacy as 'process-based, frequently ephemeral'.[27] For art theorist Grant Kester, the main difference was the replacement of a 'conventional, "banking" style of art [...] in which the artist deposits an expressive content into a physical object, to be withdrawn later by the viewer—with a process of dialogue and collaboration'.[28] What remained consistent across these artistic practices and movements was an understanding of the importance of reclaiming spaces as an alternative to the dominant modes of artistic and institutional valorisation.

By the 2000s, this tradition had become a relatively established form of local outreach for many London public art institutions and programmes. Pressed for space, many of these projects were temporarily housed by vacant spaces. Between 2009 and 2011, several high-profile public art galleries and cultural institutions ran a series of public outreach temporary shops, such as Tate Modern's *Twenty for Harper Road*, a 32-day 'temporary creative project space operating out of a disused travel-agent' at 24 Harper Road, Southwark.[29] While engagement with local schools, community groups and residents usually develops over many years, many of the venues opened as part of public outreach programmes tended to be short-lived, which was often seen as problematic when attempting to encourage continuity in participation.[30]

---

[19] Lingwood, 1993, p. 23.

[20] The widespread use of unusual urban spaces as a setting for expanded art practices has been observed by Pratt, 2009. The term 'relational aesthetics' usually indicates the proliferation of processed-based 'relational' contemporary art projects, often temporary and site-specific. See Bourriaud, 2002 and Bishop, 2004.

[21] Felshin, 1995.

[22] Kelly, 1984, p. 1

[23] Kelly, 1984, p. 36.

[24] AAA/PEPRAV, 2007; see also Rosler and Wallis, 1991; Park Fiction, 2008.

[25] Phillips, 1993, p. 301.

[26] Miles, 1997, p. 164.

[27] Suzanne Lacy, quoted in Miles, 1997, p. 165.

[28] Kester, 2004, p. 10.

[29] The shop acted as a platform for twenty projects in April 2010 and offered free workshops and

These two major shifts—institutional critique and the rejection of the division between artistic production and everyday life—have contributed to a reframing of the relationship between artistic production and urban spaces, establishing a set of shared cultural imaginaries for contemporary temporary artistic practices in vacant urban spaces. These referents, rooted in the broader movements of cultural and political dissent of the 1970s and their subsequent translation and refinement in the 1980s and 1990s, frame temporary practices of vacant space occupation through a tension between the autonomous reclaiming of spaces and highly prized and entrepreneurial approaches to the occupation of space.

‘Provided you can beg, steal or borrow a space’

While the official discourse of reuse promoted by the government, local authorities, private property owners and public art institutions was attentive to stressing the legal dimension of meanwhile and interim schemes, in the wider imaginary, temporary spaces inhabited a grey area between lawful and unlawful occupations. The symbolic proximity to potentially illicit activities, far from being problematic, seemed to offer additional value by association with spaces and practices belonging to the countercultural urban imaginary. Public representations of ways of accessing vacant spaces for artistic purposes often maintained this blurred line. As cheerfully proclaimed in 2009, ‘[t]he minimum budget required to put on a show [...] is zero—provided you can beg, steal or borrow a space’.[31] Through the celebration of art exhibitions ‘by any means possible’, what is also reproduced is the trope of passionate but resource-poor artists prepared to go to any length in order to fulfil their vocation. Mirroring the entrepreneurial narrative associated with the official discourse of temporary urbanism, the artist-entrepreneur is presented as capable of unlocking the potential of underused space and of breathing (artistic) life into semi-abandoned buildings; what is different, though, is that artists would do it with little or no budget and out of sheer vocation.[32] As noted by Bourdieu, the production of value in the cultural field functions as a reversal of ‘ordinary’ economic logic, a ‘generalised game of “loser wins” where self-reliance and poverty are a sign of commitment and passion’.[33]

Examples of entrepreneurial pop-up galleries that became well-known in the emerging art scene at the time were the James Taylor Gallery and Auto-Italia South East. The first had been founded in 2008 by successfully negotiating rent-free use of a privately owned 10,000 square foot warehouse, formerly a squat, in Hackney, North London. Use of the space had been granted on a rolling month-by-month lease on the condition that they would act as guardians against the squatters that had occupied it before and that they would move on as soon as the property would become again ‘ripe for redevelopment’.[34] The second gallery was described in *The Time Out List* of Secret Galleries as ‘an old VW garage [that] has been hijacked by young

---

activities ‘for people to assemble and talk, think and make creatively. Young artists, architects and musicians will each be programming a day of free events, activities and workshops in the space’ as declared on their Facebook page.

[30] See Steedman, 2012.

[31] Millar, 2009, ‘Do it yourself: pop-up galleries’. *The Art Newspaper/Frieze Art Fair Daily*, p. 5.

[32] This imaginary ignores the many economic and spatial barriers facing practitioners, particularly in contemporary London. See Ferreri and Graziano, 2014.

[33] Bourdieu, 1993, p. 39.

[34] The ‘Towards a zoology of spaces’ event took place on the 16 January 2010. The panel included several representatives from self-organised art spaces in London.

artists as a chop-shop of performance art, lectures, symposia'.[35] The use of the adjective 'hi-jacked' indirectly implied a subversive action of spatial appropriation, and indeed, while on their website Auto-Italia South East collective presented itself as 'working out of temporary donated buildings in south east London', the project had started in a squatted vacant car showroom, whence the name.[36] Threatened with eviction, they had then negotiated an agreement with the owner and finally approached the local authority to ask for a vacant building to reuse rent-free. As explained by an artist in their scene, they brought 'their portfolio' to the local administration and 'basically showed how serious they were, and what they had done, the rest of it. And the owner said ok. They are very enterprising'.[37]

In 2010, both galleries participated in a public debate titled 'Towards a zoology of spaces' about self-organised 'fringe' temporary art spaces, which took place at Auto-Italia South East. The relationship between temporary not-for-profit 'fringe' art spaces and the established art scene was a crucial issue raised several times during the public discussion. While some panellists argued that they were reclaiming autonomous spaces to 'do things without the threat of being always monetised', an audience member polemically asked: 'the career question is the elephant in the room. Who do we think is watching us? To whom are these spaces addressed?', which sparked a heated discussion. It was common knowledge in the audience that low-budget emerging galleries belonged to a space between not-for-profit and the commercial art sector as well as to the fast-paced scene of independent commercial and (some) non-commercial art fairs, which happened annually around the time of the commercial international Frieze Art Fair, such as Free Art Fair, Zoo Art Fair and the Sluice Art Fair. As someone else from the audience provocatively concluded, temporary arts spaces ultimately are 'market facilitators' that rely on the artists' charitable economy but feed a monetised economy elsewhere.[38]

The professional status acquired by 'fringe' spaces is also reinforced by large-scale public cultural institutions, which validate them to validate themselves as 'at the cutting edge' of experimental art production and consumption. Auto-Italia South East, for instance, was included in the event *No Soul for Sale*: *A Festival for Independents* (NSFS), a 'pop-up village of global art' hosted by Tate Modern in the summer of 2010 as part of the institution's ten-year anniversary festivities.[39] Incidentally, the inclusion of 'fringe' independent art spaces sparked controversy precisely around the question of monetised economy: in an open letter titled 'No Soul for Sale: the elephant in the room', the institution was denounced for not providing fees nor reimbursement for independent art spaces, thus reproducing exploitative labour conditions and a widespread culture of free labour in the arts.[40] The 'No Soul for Sale' controversy can be seen as indication of the power dynamics at play between (large) public and private institutions and 'fringe' experiments around the issue of symbolic value extraction but also, importantly, on the general recognition of semi-licit, self-organised, temporary art venues by sites of mainstream cultural valorisation. The question of professional valorisation constitutes an important discursive and substantive context against which critical practitioners articulated their positions and rationales for engaging in temporary projects. This becomes especially visible once independent projects begin to engage with funders, as in the case of *Group+Work*, discussed later, and when—even though public funding and recognition is secured—projects are faced with exclusionary local dynamics of culture-led urban development, as in the case of *]Performance Space[* discussed later in the chapter.

---

[35] Time Out London, 'Secret Galleries'. p. 15.

[36] Auto-Italia South East website, http://autoitaliasoutheast.org/about/ [accessed 22 October 2012].

[37] Conversation with Werner, 15 July 2010.

[38] Ibid.

[39] See http://www.nosoulforsale.com/2010 [accessed 11 October 2011].

[40] The letter was circulated on various art-related e-lists.

Group+Work and 1990s myths in public commissioning

The dynamics of institutional valorisation of low-budget art projects in 'begged, borrowed or stolen' spaces is visible through the public commissioning of temporary art spaces.[41] The experience of the young artist collective *Group+Work* is illustrative of the unresolved tension between the two imaginaries of temporary art spaces as community-oriented and career-oriented.[42] In 2010, the collective was awarded a small commission to propose and manage a new artist-run space in Westminster, West Central London.[43] The funding came partly from Westminster Council and partly from Arts Council England—the main public arts funding body in England—through a creative development agency for emerging artists called 'Emerge'.[44] The commission, titled Arts Activists, was for an 'ongoing or temporary project that would develop the skills of the organising artist or group as well as providing an opportunity for a public audience to engage with work in the artists' run space'.[45] The organisation offered advisory support by the local authorities' arts officers on empty properties and legal issues as well as a research and development budget of £1,800. The expected outcome of the commission was to secure a venue and have a draft programme for six months' worth of art and community-oriented activities. Based on these expectations, *Group+Work* proposed to work towards an artist-led exhibition and production space to support young arts graduates like themselves.[46]

In their proposal for a space 'in dialogue with local communities', the artists were wary of short-term projects in empty spaces, which they described as 'smash and grab', as opposed to projects that established longer-term relationships with a place. On this point, however, soon after securing the grant the young artists were at odds with the agendas of the two funders. On the one hand, the creative development agency was pushing them to organise anything, even if it was just a one-off event or a two-week exhibition. The agency's approach appeared to be that 'whether it comes to funding or just having a reputation, it's better more often than not just to do small things that lead on to something else and something else and something else, [so] you are demonstrating that you are able to do it, so that people trust and give you a space in the future'.[47] The collective explained this approach by referring to the background of the art consultant, who used to be 'in an artist collective in Shoreditch, Hoxton, Hackney in the 1990s [...] and it was obviously [a] different kind of environment then. And her group did lots of "smash and grab" kind of things'. In their explanation, they resisted the implicit purpose of an instrumental approach to the commission: 'we were pushed to be temporary when, at the end of the day, we were not bothered about exposure and furthering our careers'.

On the other hand, the artists were also confronted with what they called a 'non-vocalised point of conflict' with the other funder, the local authority, around the expectation that they would work with the most deprived communities in the borough:

> [t]he other big thing was the pressure from Westminster council to engage with communities and look for a space in a deprived area [...] there was always that pressure and checking up on us to make sure that we were getting in touch with people in the community.[48]

---

[41] As was also discussed in the previous chapter in relation to the case of Hackney's Art in Empty Spaces.

[42] For a more in-depth analysis, see Ferreri and Graziano, 2014.

[43] *Emerge*, 2010, Emerge Art Activist Commissions Guidelines, online, www.emergelondon.org.uk [accessed 11 March 2011].

[44] See *Emerge* webpage, www.emergelondon.org.uk/commissions/archive [accessed 11 March 2011].

[45] Emerge Art Activist Commissions – Guidelines, 2010.

[46] *Group+Work*, application to 'Art Activist' commission, from the *Group+Work* archive, 2010.

[47] Conversation with *Group+Work* practitioners, 6 May 2011.

[48] Conversation with Emily, *Group+Work* practitioners, 6 May 2011.

The description of this double pressure clearly illustrates the tension between an entrepreneurial, careerist art narrative and a socially engaged, community-oriented approach to work in vacant spaces. They described this conundrum as an expectation to 'take on an empty property and jazz it up, and also, make life better for the people that live there in the community'. While expected to 'make life better' for local people, the description of the role of artists as 'taking on empty properties to jazz them up' implies recognition of the place marketing agenda of artistic pop-ups and their official role as creative fillers. Given that the commission was called 'arts-activists', one of the artists commented ironically that maybe it 'had to do with activating instead of activism!', referring to the tension between the promise of arts/activist autonomy and the encouraged assimilation of their project into the mainstream discourse of short-term pop-up projects as the 'activation of people and places'.

Analysing this commission provides an entry point into the process of negotiating access to space within the boundaries of the City of Westminster, a notoriously expensive borough in terms of residential and commercial rents and one with relatively few vacant spaces. When *Group+Work* began contacting local estate agents, they eventually found themselves developing a 'property pack' with information about their project. One of the artists, Emily, felt particularly strongly against the push to reproduce the 'really problematic' language of the economic benefits of pop-up art projects and felt that they were constantly degrading their original proposal by saying '"it's going to be good for you because [...] you are going to increase footfall, you are going to make the area more desirable for future investors and businesses" and so on. It's really, really horrible to say that kind of things...!'.[49] The experience of this young art collective is revealing not only in terms of the complexity of negotiating competing expectations while having to present a completely different discourse towards property owners and their intermediaries; it also shows how rapidly the 'official' narrative of temporary and meanwhile spaces had spread and become commonplace, if problematic, among practitioners. Ironically, after spending two months unsuccessfully trying to convince estate agencies and property owners to let a place to them rent-free, the artists were told off the record by a property advisor that for their kind of project they would be 'better off squatting'. Although meant as a joke, the remark underlined the extent to which art and community-oriented practices of temporary reuse belonged, in the collective imaginary, to a cultural history of semi-legal practices and spaces, which clearly did not fit in the real estate geographies of West London.

Pop-ups in Westminster

> *One of the big problems is accessibility to the owner, to landlords, because they hide behind so many companies or agents [...] and to get hold of them is very, very difficult... and especially if they don't really care, then it's nearly impossible.*[50]

The work of searching for a vacant site was a revealing moment. The original commission had promised advisory support in searching for a venue; however, the management of most council properties had been outsourced to a private real estate agency, Knight Frank, unravelling the idea that the local authority had properties to 'activate'. Once the main public property owner was discarded, it became incredibly difficult to get the interest of any other property owner or, as was more often the case, their intermediaries. The geography uncovered by *Group+Work* was remarkably similar to that discovered by another community-oriented temporary art project in the borough, the Serpentine Gallery's The Centre for Possible Studies (2009-2016), whose programme of participatory projects involving local residents, students and traders relied on finding a rent-free venue near Edgware Road.[51] In their search for a suitable temporary venue, the co-ordinators of the Centre had also found that they could not negotiate directly with the property department of Westminster Council, and approaching the private estate agency Knight Frank proved unfruitful, as they were 'very unlikely to give anything [for] free'.[52] Direct phone inquiries for existing vacant shops on the road were equally unsuccessful, as many vacant ground floor spaces and shops were traceable only to intermediaries for Middle-Eastern or Far-East-based companies or companies based in offshore territories. According to a 2015 report by Transparency International, an anti-corruption NGO, it was estimated that 'almost one in ten properties in the City of Westminster (9.3 per cent) […] are owned by a company registered in an offshore secrecy jurisdiction'.[53] As one of the most expensive boroughs of the capital, Westminster has become an example of one of the areas affected by the investment practices of the 'super-rich' on prime real estate in London, a category of investment that Luna Glucksberg has defined the 'buy to leave': properties 'bought and left empty to store capital, using London prime real estate literally as a bank'.[54] The presence of high-profile squats in the borough, and particularly around Mayfair, were allegedly nearly welcomed by local council officials, as the court cases 'would finally help them in establishing who owned the properties in the first place'.[55]

---

[49] Conversation with *Group+Work* practitioners, 6 May 2011.

[50] Interview with a *Meanwhile Space* member, 1 July 2011.

The coordinators of the Centre for Possible Studies were eventually able to negotiate directly with two key property owners in the borough, the Church Commissioners and the Portman Estate,[56] and to gain access to three different properties between the summer of 2009 and the summer of 2012. The first, which was only open to the public for four months (May to November 2009), was a former hairdresser on Porchester Place, a small street adjacent to Connaught Square. The organisers learnt that the many vacancies in the area were the result of a rent raise by the owners, who had planned the rebranding of the area as a high-end boutique called 'Connaught Village: The Hyde Park Estate Retail Quarter' (2010). Given the level of vacancy and in line with the luxury retail aim of the rebranding, in 2009 the Church Commissioners had been running a pop-up scheme that gave vacant shops to young graduates from the London School of Fashion to showcase their work.[57] By early 2011, the Centre's first venue had become a boutique shop for a celebrity's jewellery brand.[58]

The second venue (May 2010 to August 2011) was a former restaurant on Seymour Street, on the ground floor of a building known as Marble Arch House, which the Portman Estate had decided to demolish and redevelop as offices, retail space and luxury residential apartments.[59] The 'official' pop-up discourse around the performance of vibrancy played a role but was not the main reason for the Estate to support the Centre's activities: 'having an empty space makes things look abandoned, and they wanted the place to look vibrant, and there is a business case for us being here, but it wasn't only about that'. Thanks to prior involvement with the gallery, they were able to work with someone who had an interest 'in site-specific art and socially-engaged art'.[60] After the move from Marble Arch House, they were in fact provided with another property, this time a vacant residential building, at 21 Gloucester Place where the Centre relocated to in autumn 2011 and where it remained until it left it in the spring of 2013. None of the vacant places they inhabited were empty because of the recession or a crisis of the high street, and none would have been affordable for rental even by a high-profile West End contemporary art gallery such as The Serpentine. While the idea of a temporary art shop had percolated to the Church Commissioners in the form of pop-up fashion exhibitions, the three venues temporarily used by the Centre for Possible Studies were short-term gaps in dynamics of up-market redevelopment and a rebranding exercise that did not require any 'activation' by the arts.

---

[51] See the Centre for Possible Studies project website, https://centreforpossiblestudies.wordpress.com/ [accessed 10 August 2017].

[52] Interview with a Meanwhile Space member, 1 July 2011.

[53] Transparency International, 2015.

[54] Glucksberg, 2016, p. 251.

[55] Ibid., p. 252.

[56] The Church Commissioners is the organisation charged with managing the assets of the Church of England, see http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/churchcommissioners.aspx [accessed 12 May 2012]. The Portman Estate has been one of the largest landlords in Marylebone since the 16th century; see http://www.portmanestate.co.uk/index.html [accessed 12 May 2012].

[57] Interview with a Meanwhile Space member, 1 July 2011.

[58] See Vogue Britain 2010: De Roemer's Home, http://www.vogue.co.uk/news/2010/12/14/de-roemer-opens-a-store-in-connaught-village [accessed 12 March 2012].

[59] British Land, 2011, *Committed Developments: Marble Arch House*, https://www.buildington.co.uk/london-w1/62-64-seymour-street/marble-arch-house/id/1459 [accesses 11 September 2017].

ArtEvict in 'forgotten spaces'

The third experience, the case of the art platform *]Performance Space[*, offers insights into the trajectory of an independent collective art practice from precarious squatted sites to a rented space and public institutional recognition. On the surface, it is a perfect illustration of the mythology of 'zero budget – borrowed space' artistic success. A longitudinal analysis of the art platform between 2009 and 2016, however, enables us to interrogate the myths and realities of the nomadic-made-permanent artistic space and its intersections with local and city-wide dynamics of urban development pre- and post-Olympic Games London. Its origins are emblematic of many lesser known and less visible practices that moved between squatted and legal empty space reuse at the time, such as the already mentioned Auto-Italia South East and the James Taylor Gallery. *]Performance Space[* began in 2009 with a different name when a loose network of young performance art practitioners came together to develop and show work in spaces where they could self-organise and experiment with total freedom of expression.

Unsurprisingly, the first event they organised was motivated by a classified ad posted on the popular online art listing and newsletter Arts Jobs, which was seeking performance artists for a free event in a venue near Elephant and Castle, in Southwark. When Hikaru, a London-based Japanese performance artist in her mid-twenties, met the organiser of the event she discovered that the venue was in fact a squatted pub and that the performance was to take place at a party on the last night before the eviction.[61] This gave them the name for the network: 'ArtEvict'.[62] Between December 2009 and February 2011, the platform organised a regular public performance art event in eleven social centres and squatted spaces across three London boroughs, involving as many as forty artists. The events were advertised via their website, paper leaflets [Figure 3], an extensive e-list and a blog where performances were described in highly poetic language.

---

[60] Conversation with Janna, 13 June 2011.

[61] Conversation with Hikaru, 14 February 2011.

[62] In the squatted social centre scene, the name raised some eyebrows as defeatist, but despite questioning the platform stuck to it.

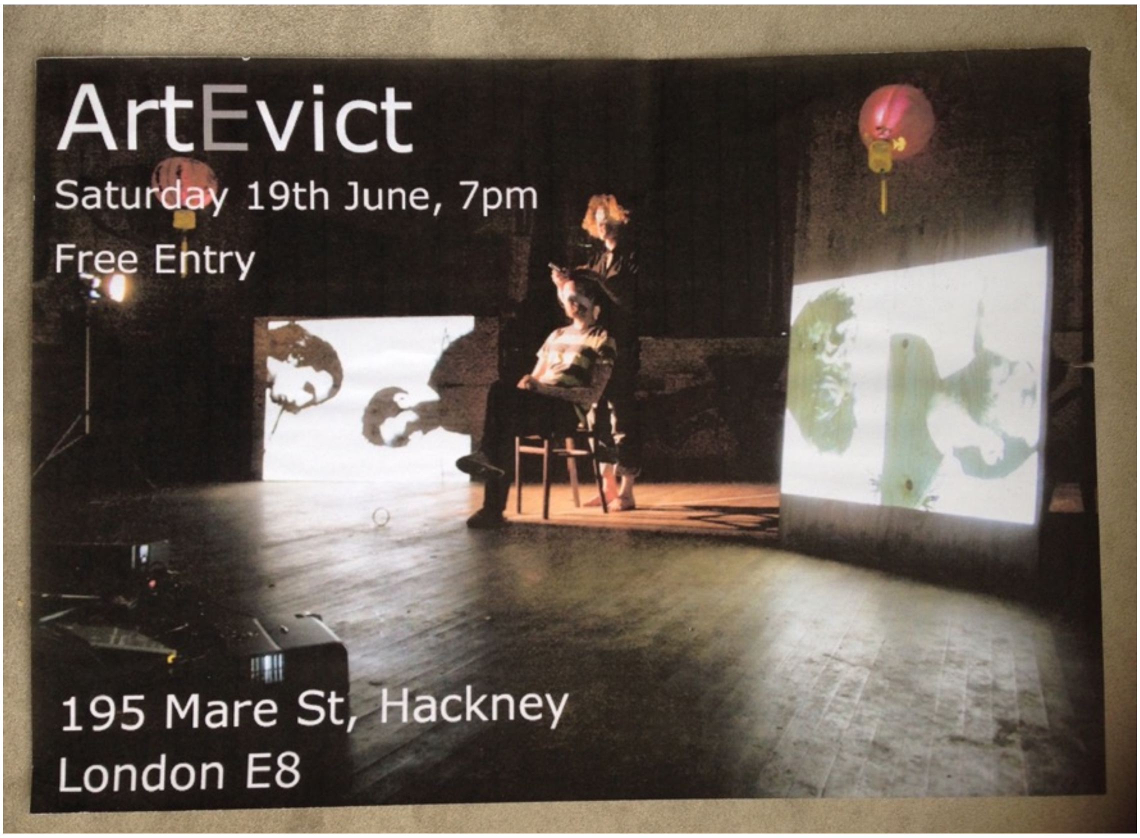


Figure 3. Flyer advertising an ArtEvict performance by Kimbal Quist Bumstead at Mare Street squat, 19 June 2010 © Kiki Taira and Benjamin Sebastian. Source: author's archive.

A review by a fellow performance art group called OUI Performance, posted on the ArtEvict website, explained the relationship between the platform and the spaces where they performed:

> ArtEvict happens in empty disused buildings, forgotten spaces, usually squats [...]. Using spaces such as this, those that in a social context are in direct opposition to state control are also, in an artistic context in direct opposition to the institutionalized control exercised by theatres and galleries. This negation from establishment […] permits ArtEvict to perform its own autonomy and simultaneously perform its political stance.[63]

Couched in this poetic language is a direct reproduction of the myth of temporary autonomy both from 'state control' and from institutional sites of art and culture identified in the form of theatres and galleries. While squatted spaces were considered central to their practice, however, in their promotional material these were rarely addressed as anything more than a depopulated gritty backdrop, with little mention of squatters' politics. For ArtEvict to happen, continued the review, 'it must keep moving, between abandoned spaces, between artists, between practices and between times'—an imaginary that reproduced a-critically social and spatial imaginaries of flexibility and nomadism as countercultural and dissenting.[64]

Not everyone in the collective agreed with this celebration of nomadism and constant spatial transience, however, and by the end of 2010 a core group of six artists from the network decided to get together and rent a warehouse in an industrial estate in Hackney Wick. This is how *]Performance Space[* (*]PS[*) came into being as a venue and studio space.[65] Kiki poetically explained to me that if you imagined ArtEvict as a stream, fluidly appearing in the occupied cracks of the city, always on the go, then *]PS[* would be a pond where the fast-moving water of the performance art network could finally collect.[66] A different and more pragmatic explanation was given at a public event four years later by *]PS[* founder Bean. Reflecting on their origin as ArtEvict, she noted that in less than five years virtually all those occupied spaces had been evicted, making a once-established political and artistic community in London largely invisible. In her recollection, it was the transience and insecurity of squatted spaces that had informed the decision of setting up *]PS[*, together with the observation that despite the cultural recognition gained by live art as an artistic practice, there was not as yet an organisation in the UK providing both event and studio space specifically for live art performance artists. *]PS[* was to be a stable home for performance and live art through which a community and network of support and practitioners could be built and maintained.[67]

---

[63] Victoria Gray and Nathan Walker, 2011, O U I Performance, *Out of Time: Group Action and Temporary Autonomous Zone, almost*, 11 January 2011, http://aetxt.blogspot.co.uk [accessed 11 March 2012].

[64] Victoria Gray and Nathan Walker: O U I Performance, *Out of Time: Group Action and Temporary Autonomous Zone, almost*, 11 January 2011, http://aetxt.blogspot.co.uk [accessed 11 March 2012].

Settling down in Hackney Wick Fish Island?

The choice of renting a warehouse in Hackney Wick was, to a certain extent, predictable, both because of its relatively accessible location and of the fame of the neighbourhood as an artistic hotspot in a largely de-industrialised landscape often described as a 'semi-secret, unregulated and cheap (post-)industrial area in East London'.[68] The area had slowly been reconverted into flexible 'live-work' spaces: a survey conducted in 2009 had found more than 700 artist studios in the area.[69] The high presence of artists led to the oft-repeated statement that Hackney Wick Fish Island had 'the highest concentration of (art) studios in Europe'. The performance artists signed a three-year lease until January 2014 in a small industrial estate surrounded by an industrial bakery; storage facilities for distributors of meat, fruits and vegetables; and some empty warehouses. The connection between ArtEvict and *]Performance Space[* was celebrated with a graffiti on a nearby billboard [Figure 4]. At the time, the road it was on—White Post Lane—was blocked to the east by the blue fence that surrounded the construction of the Olympic site for nearly eight years, and the area had the feeling of a cul-de-sac at the edge of the city. This appearance, however, did not mean that it was in any way separated from the large-scale urban development plans for the Olympic site and adjacent neighbourhoods. A year later, in 2012, across the road from *]PS[*, a large warehouse would be inaugurated as the White Building, a top-down attempt at culture-led regeneration and a 'key part of the arts-led strategy for the legacy of the Olympic Park and surrounding area'.[70]

---

[65] See *]Performance Space[* website, http://www.performancespace.org/artevict.

[66] Conversation with Hikaru, 14 February 2011.

[67] Ferreri, 2014.

[68] Marrero-Guillamón, 2017, p.207.

[69] See Brown, 2012; muf architecture/art, 2009.

[70] Weber-Newth, Schlüter and Helbrecht, 2017, p. 723.

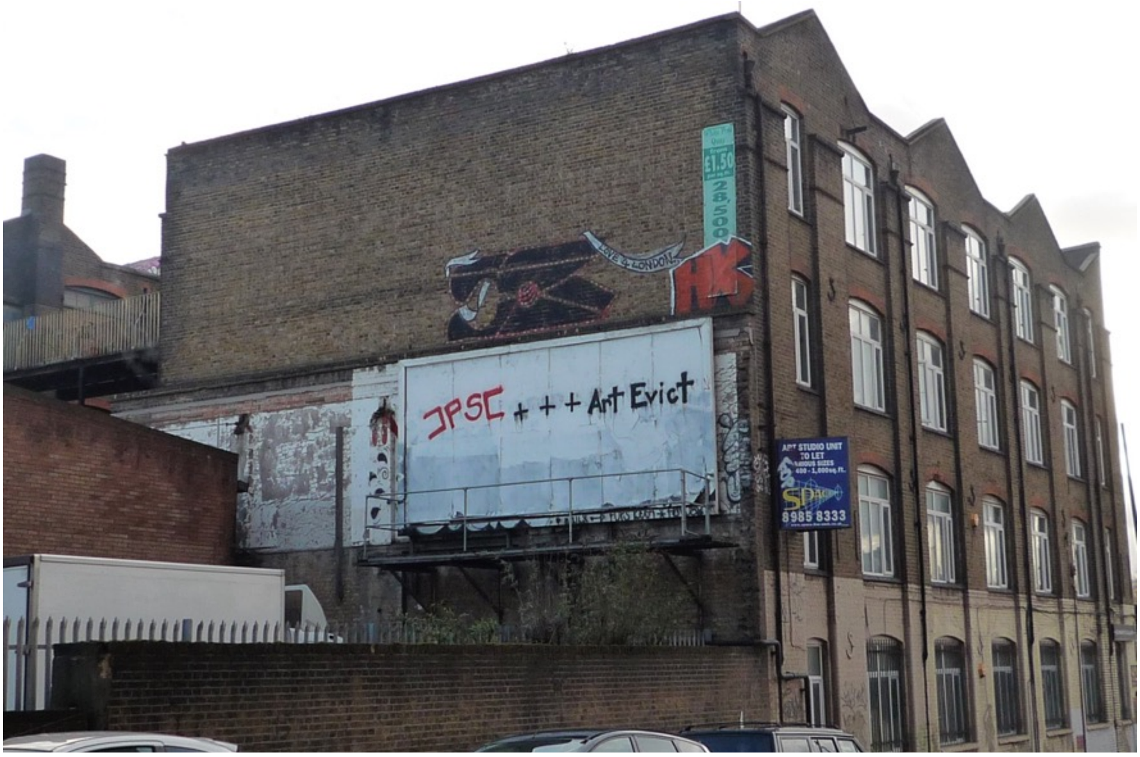


Figure 4. Billboard above the warehouse of]Performance Space[, Hackney Wick, London, 14 February 2011. Source: author.

After a short respite, with the end of the London 2012 Olympic Games the landscape changed rapidly. As discussed by Isaac Marrero-Guillamon, 'starting in late 2012 a steady stream of development proposals were put forward for Hackney Wick. Most were rather predictable plans for replacing industrial buildings or vacant lots with cheaply produced, high density residential or mix-use developments',[71] and by 2015 there were 17 active planning application proposals. Pressure on many low-budget, independent local art activities increased, as epitomised by the cancellation of the grassroot Hackney WickED festival in 2015.[72] In the autumn of 2013 the lease of *]PS[* was not renewed, and the collective had less than six weeks to find an alternative venue and studio space. The collective had just recently received institutional recognition through a large Arts Council England production grant for a programme of events, which was meant to start in April 2014, and the lack of a stable event space placed them in a difficult position. Looking for alternative venues, they came across a classified ad on the online platform ArtQuest about a warehouse and wharf in nearby Fish Island, around a fifteen-minute walk from their space, that had recently been opened as a workshop and workspace for creative projects.

The place was a semi-refurbished warehouse and wharf complex overlooking the canal called Swan Wharf. The complex, belonging to the Old Ford Works, had been nearly empty since the middle of the 2000s. In 2011, its use had been changed from industrial to 'sui generis hospitality' and had been lightly refurbished to become, during the Olympic Games of 2012, 'a pop-up private members' club'.[73] Again, it was empty between September 2012 until the summer of 2013, when two friends who worked in PR and festival production had come across it by chance while looking for a place to moor their canal boat [Figure 5].[74] When contacted, the owners explained that they were about to submit a planning application to demolish part of the building and build a residential and commercial complex of over 1,700 m^2 on the site.[75] They expected the review of the application to take at least two years, and because of this, despite having tried to lease the space on a temporary basis, 'they couldn't find anyone who was willing to take it for [only] two years'.[76] The friends decided to found a company, The Hive, to manage the site rent-free in the interim period. The logic of festivals and event management was at the core of the model of temporary occupancy. As was explained by one of its project managers, the people behind the HIVE 'design and build stages, they do brand activation and so on. In winter, most of their time is spent on product launches, PR events, Christmas parties... parties, like the Red Bull parties... Google parties... things like that. [...] They also have a talent agency.'[77] For the managers of a company working for such clients, it was easy to draw up a business proposal and negotiate a temporary lease for the property.

---

[71] Marrero-Guillamón, 2017, p. 211.

[72] Weber-Newth et al., 2017. See also Ferreri and Lang, 2016.

[73] February 2011: planning application submitted for 'temporary change of use from Class B1/B8 industrial to sui generis hospitality venue' [PA /11/00481]. Approved.

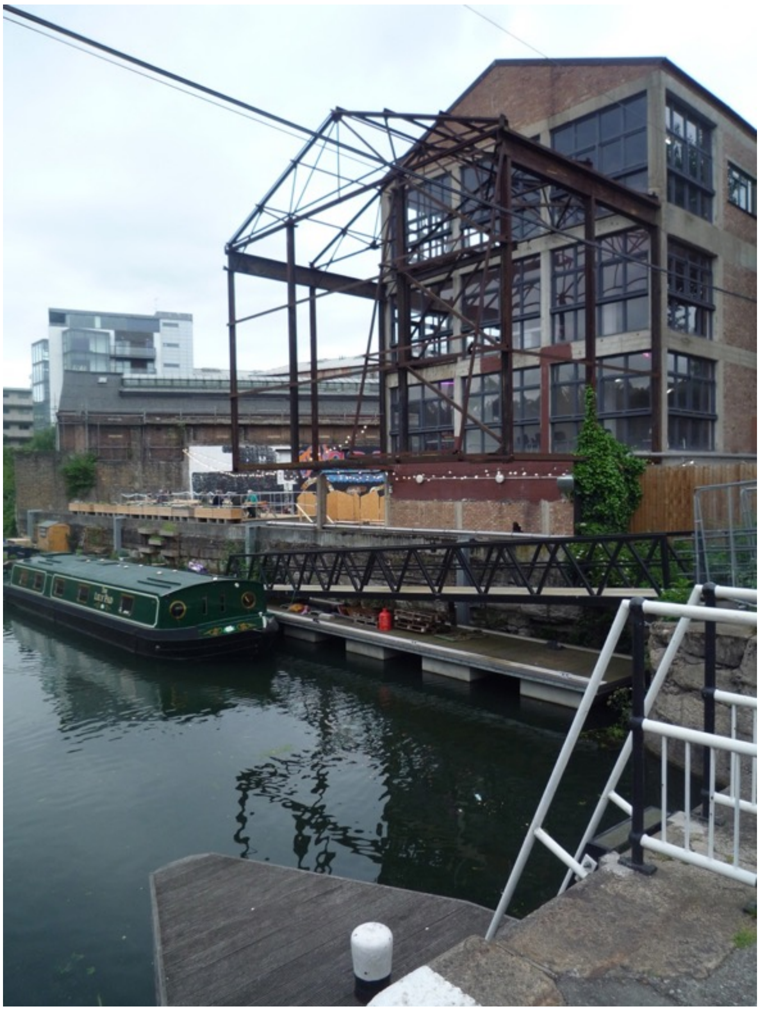


Figure 5. A barge is moored by Swan Wharf, as seen from the opposite shore, 11 August 2015, Fish Island, London. Source: author.

---

[74] Interview with one of the managers of The Hive, 4 June 2014.

[75] The first iteration of planning application was presented by the Anderson Group in 2013 [No.14/00262/FUL].

[76] Interview with one of the managers of The Hive, 4 June 2014.

[77] Conversation with P., 2014, in Ferreri and Lang, 2016, p. 135.

The fact that they managed a production company as well as a series of ancillary services meant that they had at their disposal ‘a very strong network of capable metalworkers and scaffolders, general jobsbodies[sic], very competent. But also ticketed and insured, and almost always freelance.’ This, it was explained to me, was very good, as it was ‘such a benefit not to have to employ somebody’.[78] The model was for a low-cost or even free-of-costs mobilisation of existing networks:

> one thing that we agreed on all together was that we wouldn’t invest any money into this building, and that everything you see, building the restaurant, the workshops and the studios, the revenue would all be generated from the space. Our first focus for the first few months was to rent it out to short-term projects, things like film or photography. […] [contacts] came from networks that already existed, like location agencies. [...] you call them, and you get on their books.[79]

In this context, *]Performance Space[* presented a proposal: in exchange for paying a limited rent for an open plan studio space, they would run their Arts Council-funded programme on the first floor, using it as an exhibition and performance space. At the time, they felt that the programme would be perfect to meet the needs of the managers ‘to create a cultural hub’ and hoped that the success of the space would convince the owners to maintain part of the site for creative uses. As explained by Bean, the collective did not want a temporary space but decided to move in nonetheless: ‘moving was such a nightmare that it made more sense to move in here because there was a chance that it could become permanent, rather than moving into studios where we knew we would definitely be temporary’.[80] Six weeks after the move, however, they heard that a large cultural institution based in the City of London, The Barbican, had started negotiating with The Hive to set up a temporary performance and studio space with an attached event space. This created friction with the collective, who thought that it was problematic both on a practical and symbolic level: ‘because that’s actually what we do […] we aired that, and then the next we heard was that we had to move out of the space’ and use other, smaller venues in the building. The main issue was not simply a question of being supplanted by a regularly funded organisation but that it disrupted their programme, which included high-profile international performance artists, as they could no longer secure a venue, since the use of the other venues was always subordinated to commercial bookings. After postponing the programme from April to September and following a ‘difficult conversation’ with Arts Council England, they moved out of the space.

In the words of a manager of Swan Wharf, the founders of The Hive belonged to ‘the festival network’ and had brought with them a pragmatic and temporary approach to space as well as the distinctive *modus operandi* of festival production. This enabled them to transform the wharf and make it fully operational in a very short period of time: ‘the term is production, but it’s essentially building it, to build a festival. It is a uniquely talented industry because you have five days to essentially build a small town’.[81] The production of festivals is based on fluid and short-term relationships as well as a relatively informal combination of in-kind and favour economies alongside more conventional monetary exchanges. This way of working was translated into the way in which Swan Wharf was brought into being: a professional welder, for instance, had done all the metal work needed in return for a discounted rent to use the warehouse as a workshop, while *]Performance Space[* had offered visibility in the contemporary art scene in exchange for lower rent and the use of one of the event spaces. As seen in the case of *]PS[*, there is a drawback to the fluidity and loose nature of these agreements: they can be very precarious and susceptible to rapid withdrawal and adjustments as situations and priorities change. Most of the revenue of The Hive was generated by renting the space as a location for film and photography production as well as weddings and parties, and these had priority over other more informal arrangements.[82] Upon leaving Swan Wharf, *]Performance Space[* tried to remain in London and set up a performance space in the garages of a council estate in Tower Hamlets, but the project had to be abandoned due to residents' protest at the lack of communication regarding the closure of the garages and its lease to the artists. In 2015, the collective eventually decided to leave London and relocate to Folkestone, in Kent, joining many formerly London-based artists who have relocated to smaller towns and villages due to the rising rental costs in the capital.[83]

---

[78] Conversation with P., 2014, in Ferreri and Lang, 2016, p. 135.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Interview with Bean, July 2014.

[81] Interview with one of the managers of The Hive, 4 June 2014.

Pop-up spaces as festivals and digital arts incubators

The experience of *]Performance Space[* over this period of eight years is indicative of a bursting of the foundational narrative according to which entrepreneurial fringe art practices in 'begged, borrowed or stolen spaces' to become recognised by the cultural establishment, securing success as well as continuity. The myth, which had sustained much of the 'temporary art space' promise for arts and cultural practitioners, remained an unachievable ideal. Over a short period of time, the platform had been remarkably successful from its beginning as an informal network in the squatted 'cracks of the city' to assembling enough capacity to rent and manage a building for studio and events to finally gaining international profile and recognition by the main public funder for the arts in England. None of this enabled the project and its network to remain in the neighbourhood that purportedly housed the highest number of artists in Europe.

Reflecting on their last year in Hackney Wick Fish Island, Bean outlined a tension between the valorisation of the neighbourhood through art and culture, mostly unfunded and independent—the 'area has become what it is because of artists, spaces and people who have been working and doing things here'—and the capital valorisation that they were witnessing which was eroding the possibility for art collectives such as theirs to build a degree of longevity in the neighbourhood. The aim of creative spaces like Swan Wharf was 'not about making a cultural hub, but about building revenue out of pre-existing artists and practices, and a creative environment'. In summing up the experience: 'there was an empty building in what is a very cool up-and-coming creative place and it's people who don't necessarily have a direct interest in the arts or culture who are now cashing in'.[84] The result is displacement for many artistic practices unable to afford higher rents or resist the transformation of their working spaces into more profitable spaces.[85] This opinion regarding the end of Hackney Wick as an independent art haven was shared by one of the developers working across the canal on the redevelopment of the London 2012 main area, renamed Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. In a conversation with a local artist, the developer reflected that in ten or fifteen years there would not be any artists left in Hackney Wick: 'he said it openly... as a matter of fact. That's the commercial way, the way of things.'[86]

These readings offer an important insight into the critique of pop-up spaces from one part of the artistic community of Hackney Wick and Fish Island at the time. It is, however, a view that requires careful scrutiny. The artistic community under threat—which found its voice in campaigns such as Affordable Wick (2013-5)[87] and the work of the Hackney Wick and Fish Island Cultural Interest Group and Save Hackney Wick (2015-2017)[88]—is in fact considered by many to have contributed to the first wave of gentrification in Hackney Wick in the mid-1990s, when artists started renting former industrial spaces after 'having been outpriced in other more central London locations'.[89] During the 1990s and early 2000s, the area had also seen several examples of high-profile squatting, mostly linked to the squat party scene.[90] Whether the area was a 'cool up-and-coming creative place' by 2013 was hotly debated, as many saw it instead as already irredeemably lost to residential developments and to the influx of professionals priced out of the rest of the borough.[91] When shifting the focus from the art performance collective to the causes and rationales for re-using a concrete vacant site, it is thus possible to see a palimpsest of different values and ideas ascribed to temporary urban practices, many of which do not have much to do with the co-optation of cultural and artistic capital.

---

[82] Ferreri and Lang, 2016, p. 138.

[83] Higgings, 2013, 'Art in the countryside: why more and more UK creatives are leaving the city', *The Guardian*, 26 August.

[84] Ferreri and Lang, 2016, pp. 81-87.

[85] A successful counter-case study that started as a pop-up space and has remained in the neighbourhood is The Yard Theatre, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

[86] See *Notes From the Temporary City*.

At the core of the model of Swan Wharf's temporary occupancy was the arrival in the neighbourhood of what long-term artists and residents called 'more creative rather than cultural industries': design, information technology, marketing, fashion, event management and the hospitality industry. The arrival of The Barbican in Swan Wharf, for instance, drew on a combination of temporary use intermediation and long-term institutional outreach. In 2009, a company called The Trampery was set up to act as an intermediary managing disused or under-used buildings as short-term workspace for digital and creative practice.[92] In 2013, the Trampery had organised a temporary takeover of the main venue of the central London organisation, titled 'Hack the Barbican' (5-31 August 2013), a 'playground for arts, technology and entrepreneurship' aimed at 'getting away from the institutionalisation of the art world.' [93] Wanting to extend the 'Hack the Barbican' experiment over a longer period of time, in June 2014 The Barbican and The Trampery launched the Fish Island Labs: a one year 'incubation project' and a 'tech accelerator for the new generation of digital arts'.[94] As explained by a local entrepreneur, The Trampery negotiated access to the space and the Barbican provided small sponsorship, but its most important contribution was symbolic—'the Barbican offers a brand association'—and it was an association that shifted from visual and performative arts towards the digital creative sectors.

At the time, some local cultural practitioners welcomed the arrival of The Barbican and Fish Island Labs as a way of bringing visibility and capacity building for the local artistic community, offering 'the credibility of a major London, a major national arts institution. […] there is a spotlight [...] the more profile there is on Hackney Wick and Fish Island, the better the opportunity for people being discovered'.[95] The narrative of discovery once again produces the idea of pioneering art and cultural practices welcoming the arrival of a long-awaited recognition from the established cultural sector. In the case of Hackney Wick and Fish Island, this view is at the very least misguided and appears to overlook the fact that the winning of the London 2012 Olympics had already increased the visibility of the area, both in terms of its real estate values and as a site of cultural production, particularly though institutional networks. As commented by a former employee of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiads (2008-2012), many of the 'high end' cultural institutions that were publicly showing an interest in Hackney Wick and Fish Island in 2014 had been introduced through partnerships and networks created during the four years of extended programming;[96] The Barbican, for instance, had been an Olympiads' Delivery Partner.

---

[87] http://affordablewick.com/ [accessed 15 September 2017].

[88] https://savehackneywick.org/ [accessed 22 July 2017].

[89] See Weber-Newth et al., 2017, p. 731.

[90] See the entries for Hackney Wick and Fish Island in the (inevitably only partly complete) Squatting European Kollective map of London: https://maps.squat.net/en/cities/london/squats# [accessed 12 October 2017].

[91] Pratt, 2009.

[92] http://thetrampery.com/about/ [accessed 21 June 2017].

[93] Hack the Barbican <www.hackthebarbican.org> event in June 2014.

[94] Charles Armstrong, founder and director of The Trampery, quoted in the press release www.barbican.org.uk/news/ artformnews/education/barbican-and- the-trampery-to-open.

[95] Interview with O. See *Notes From the Temporary City*.

While the idea of setting up a new Cultural Quarter in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (QEOP) was being publicly aired by the then Mayor of London, the shifting focus away from the arts and culture and towards digital technologies aligned with the government-led Old Street initiative, which aimed to 'connect the technology start-up cluster of Old Street (Shoreditch) to Hackney Wick, in particular to the former Olympic International Broadcasting Centre (now called Here East), which is to provide a new digital quarter for so-called "creatives"'.[97] In March 2016, The Trampery announced its partnership with housing association Peabody and private developer Hill for the construction of Hackney Wick & Fish Island Village, a mixed-use development beside the Hertford Union Canal comprised of 580 flats and '50,000 sq feet of premium quality studios at genuinely affordable rates', to be managed by The Trampery Fish Island Village 'at a time when established workspaces are being redeveloped and rents are rising out of reach'.[98] The plans mirrored both the small-scale experience of Swan Wharf and the larger-scale push towards a model of the digital-entrepreneurial city in the adjacent Here East media complex in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, defined as a home for 'business, tech, media, education and data in the pursuit of innovation'. In both cases, however, the real engine of local economic development was not the new digital economy but rather the construction of newly built residential quarters. Aside from the former athletes' village, the rebranded East Village London (2,800+ flats), five new residential complexes are currently planned for the QEOP and wider Olympic Legacy area for a total of approximately 8,000 new housing units.[99] Despite the competition between low-budget independent performance art, the rent-seeking behaviour of location managers, and pop-up digital arts incubators, the ultimate endpoint of places like Swan Wharf, as of many other warehouses to be demolished or refurbished in the neighbourhood, was residential development. The experience of *]PS[* in Swan Wharf is thus not only indicative of different modes of conceiving and inhabiting spaces on a temporary basis but of a shift in the urban imaginary from artistic use to the 'creative' industries of high-tech incubators to mixed-use residential, commercial and flexible workspace.

Conclusions: in the cracks of the creative city promise

The celebration of short-term artistic fillers played an important part in the creation of the official narrative of recessional temporary use in 2008 and 2009 and in the establishment of a seductive imaginary of temporary urbanism as counter-cultural, secretive, exciting and slightly illicit. In the discursive entanglements crossing over between community-oriented and career-oriented practices, between squatted and rent-free spaces, I have examined in this chapter the specific agency of visual and performative arts practitioners to understand the positions they inhabited and the extent to which they accepted or critiqued the roles ascribed to them as temporary space activators. Approaching artistic temporary spaces through the narratives and the experiences of practitioners negotiating access provides an important, situated critique to this imaginary. It is a critique that analyses the competing positions and value claims within the formation of the discourse of artistic temporariness, together with, necessarily, the material conditions of their vacancy and rationale for temporary use. Each of the three experiences of temporary art practice examined here—*Group+Work*, the Centre for Possible Studies and *]Performance Space[*—inhabits a different position in the contemporary art spectrum, and each is important to illustrate a dimension of the relationship between art and temporary urbanism within processes of cultural valorisation of urban spaces.

---

[96] Garcia and Cox, 2013. *London 2012 Cultural Olympiad evaluation*, p. 145.

[97] Weber-Newth et al., 2017 p. 731.

[98] http://thetrampery.com/workspaces/fishislandvillage/ [accessed 27 October 2017].

[99] At the time of writing, these are: Chobham Manor (820+ units), East Wick (870 units), Sweet Water (650 units), Pudding Mill (1,300 units) and Stratford Waterfront (780 units).

Firstly, the discourse of temporary urbanism appears to be marked by the still captivating legacy of a mythologised relationship between independent 'entrepreneurial' artists and art spaces and the more established commercial and public cultural sector. It is an idea that many related to the 1990s, grounded in the professionalisation of artistic practices in unusual urban spaces and often informed by opportunistic approaches to places. The concrete case of *Group+Work* is an example of the permeation of this mythology into the public commissioning of temporary use projects but also of self-reflexive questioning on behalf of young practitioners. Their self-reflexive critique of a careerist approach to temporary use embodied a wider critique of low-budget independent spaces acting as market facilitators for the established cultural sector. It also pointed in the direction of a critique of the community-oriented expectation of such commissions, which reproduced the official narrative but also intersected with a substantially different genealogy of socially engaged practice, the other side of the 'well-established history' of art in empty spaces. One important outcome of their residency was the production of graphic work that critiqued and laid bare the process of consultation and working with the community as part of regeneration processes. This uncomfortable positioning understands vacant sites as places requiring an ethical and continued approach that jars with the opportunistic approach of a nomadic collective such as *]PS[*.

Secondly, each experience of temporary use provided invaluable insights into the material conditions of vacancy in different areas of London. The young artists' discomfort with making an economic case of cultural valorisation through temporary use brought to the surface an awareness of the phenomenon of art-led gentrification, according to which artists act as unwillingly catalysers for processes of urban valorisation.[100] This self-critique, while legitimate and well-intentioned, proved misguided, lagging behind an understanding of very different real estate dynamics. The two examples of setting up temporary art spaces in Westminster pointed to the phenomenon of super-gentrification and to global dynamics of valorisation and speculation. The presence of vacant spaces was not the result of the global recession in the ways in which it was imagined by the national official policies but rather a result of the investment strategies enacted by powerful property owners and their intermediaries, aimed at luxury rebranding and redevelopment. The experience of the Centre for Possible Studies, backed by a prestigious West London institution, provides the counterpoint to the unsuccessful young practitioners; and even they were only able to negotiate temporary leases.

Thirdly, the professionalising trajectory of *]Performance Space[* embodies the 1990s narrative of the entrepreneurial artist collective surviving with little budget until it finally obtains institutional recognition. Public recognition, however, did not translate into stability of place. The collective's experience in Hackney Wick illustrates the reach of the long-term dynamics of real estate valorisation unleashed in 2005 when London won the bid for the 2012 Olympic Games. Still basking in the imaginary landscape of a de-industrialising neighbourhood, the vacant warehouses and wharves were in fact only available on a temporary basis. The performance art practitioners resigned themselves to temporariness in the hope of making the case for more permanent creative uses, as vaguely promised by the work of the Cultural Olympiad and the establishment of the White Building. That official discourse of culture-led regeneration, however, was shown to be threadbare. A double displacement appeared to be at play here: first, from an imaginary of temporary urbanism through low-budget art spaces, which is supplanted by publicly funded institutional temporary use and short-term profit-generating film and photography productions, and then from these to mixed-use residential redevelopment, the true economic engine of neoliberal cities, particularly after the 2008 global financial crisis. A longitudinal look at the contemporary instances of that ‘well-established history of art in empty spaces’ reveals deepening cracks in the surface of the creative city promise and a cultural sector ever more at odds with and at times in critical antagonism with the urban political economy of a global and financialised real estate hotspot.[101]

---

[100] The debate requires a more in-depth discussion than is possible here. For key international references on the role of artists and cultural producers in processes of urban revalorisation and gentrification, see Ley, 2003; Harris, 2012 and 2013; and Novy and Colomb, 2013.

---

[101] See Harris and Moreno, 2012.

Chapter 4. Staging temporary spaces

Experiential economies and the performativity of urban activation

In April 2010, the retail magazine *Shopping Centre* published a series of articles on 'more creative ways of filling vacant space' to counter the impact of the recession on shopping malls' occupancy in the UK.[1] A 'best practice' example was the case of the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre in south east London, where the management had encouraged art and community events within vacant units. As explained by the manager, 'the last thing anyone wants is a barren unit. Posters are good, but what you really want is people milling around inside'.[2] In crude but unambiguous terms, his response sums up a key experiential dimension of temporary urbanism: its performance of vibrancy and ´space activation´, intervening in perceptions of vacancy and abandonment. Beyond a merely visual transformation of the space, artistic community-oriented programming is a highly prized filler for its ability to generate social activity. In the case of the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre, they enabled the traders—in the manager's words—to 'capitalise on [the] sense of community and interaction'.[3] The performance of the urban activation of vacant spaces through the staging of urban sociability is a central component of the pop-up urban imaginary. On a first reading, the verb 'staging' can be interpreted in an instrumental way to indicate practices of 'immersive' marketing developed in relation to the idea of 'experience economy'. In the fields of retail as well as in urban economics and planning,[4] the concept has been used to refer to new forms of marketing that involve personal and customised aesthetics, an 'emotional-experiential marketing framework', as defined by Joseph B. Pine and James H. Gilmore in their 1999 bestseller *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre & Every Business a Stage*.[5] Experiences, defined as 'events that engage individuals in a personal way', are produced by marketing professionals through targeted activities and face-to-face performances.[6] In this sense, the idea of experiential temporary uses within a shopping centre is grounded in a long tradition of 'staged' performative spaces of consumption, which have been the subject of critical scholarship in cultural geography.[7]

There is, however, a more diffuse way in which immersive and experiential economies are mobilised in temporary uses, for instance in theatre performances and pop-up cinemas.[8] As discussed by Ella Harris, immersive temporary spaces are often celebrated as capable of encouraging the discovery of new layers of meaning or understandings of place, but, fundamentally, they also 'transform perceptions of the sites they pop-up in'.[9] Moving from the promotion of products to the staging of specific urban atmospheres, place activation through temporary projects has been interpreted as a legacy of the 'creative cities' narrative and the idea of generating a 'people climate' and a 'context of 24/7 experiential intensity [...] for face-to-face relations'.[10]

---

[1] 'Shopping centres look to more creative ways of filling vacant space'. *Shopping Centre* online*,* 26 April 2010.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] See Lorentzen and Hansen, 2009; Lorenzen, Scott and Vang, 2008. An exception is Pratt, 2009.

[5] Pine and Gilmore, 1999.

[6] The notion of 'experiential economy' was coined to stress the moment of production of value after and beyond the service as 'the value of the experience lingers in the memory of any individual who was engaged by the event', in Pine and Gilmore, 1999, pp. 11-12.

[7] For instance, Crang, 1994; McDowell and Court, 1994.

[8] Pratt and San Juan, 2014.

[9] Harris, 2015, p. 600.

[10] Peck, 2011b, pp. 41 and 13; Peck comments how the 'alternative' broedplaatsen programme in Amsterdam served as a marker of authenticity for the coordinated branding efforts of the city council, in Peck, 2011a, p. 15. See also Zukin, 2003.

Over the last decade, as observed by Heather McLean, the mobilisation of immersive theatre and performative practices to promote distinct urban imaginaries has become commonplace, as ‘city boosters, including business improvement area groups and planners, increasingly view neighbourhoods as spaces to encourage face-to-face interaction and experimentation in festivals and a range of artistic interventions’[11] in what has been termed a growing ‘hyperawareness’ of ‘spectacle and theatricality’ in urban policymaking.[12]

While the hyperawareness of theatricality leads to ideas of ‘staging’ experiences, it also opens up the possibility of unplanned and antagonistic encounters. Practitioners claiming open spaces for public use can, through encounters, be confronted in their assumptions about the ‘local community’ in ways that would otherwise be disguised by ‘discourses of fun, play, discovery, and political progressiveness’ that often surround imaginaries of temporary creative urban activities.[13] In Laura Levin and Kim Solga’s analysis, the effects of these assumptions are ‘in many ways more meddlesome’ than those created by the briefs of managers and property owners ‘because they are not foremost about money’ but about more complex and specific spatial politics of visibility and about practitioners’ own expectations.[14] Moreover, although the ‘experiential economy’ logic might inform decision-making at the level of coordinating a public image of temporary reuse, the practices and social interactions that occur through the temporary spaces may exceed and consciously disrupt the implicit or explicit roles assigned to audiences and participants.

The expectations and potential disruption of immersive face-to-face encounters through temporary uses have two significant implications for understanding temporary urbanism. Firstly, it implicitly requires, but does not explicitly acknowledge, the diverse economies and the labour involved in generating immersive experiences and ‘bringing together people and spaces’, as in the official narrative of temporary connectivity. Secondly, experiential economies are the product of coordinating and choreographing uses through practices of staging and mediation. The presence of vacant spaces often signals sites of urban transformation, and their use can bring to light antagonisms and conflict.[15] If temporary urbanism ‘positions immersion as instrumental in reimagining places to facilitate gentrification’,[16] attending to the embodied interactions with visitors and passers-by enables us to examine the effects of these ‘experiential’ framings and the extent to which they generate the kinds of pacified spectatorship imagined by property managers. To do so, a longitudinal analysis of both the material conditions of temporary use and the performativity of experiences they generate is necessary to unpack the wider political implications of long-term engagement with place. This chapter focuses on the staging of art and community temporary uses in the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre in Southwark, its relationship to wider dynamics of gentrification and redevelopment, the experience of two artists who have been involved with the space between 2010 and 2018, and their encounters with local political organising.

Staging ‘pop-up shops’ in the Elephant & Castle Shopping Centre

> *We’re always on the lookout for local projects to fill up vacant space and bring life and creativity into the shopping centre.*[17]

---

[11] McLean, 2010, p. 207.

[12] Levin and Solga, 2009, p. 39.

[13] Ibid., p. 45.

[14] Ibid., pp. 45-46.

[15] Harvie, 2009a, 2009b, 2011; Opkins and Solga, 2009.

[16] Harris, 2015, p. 593.

[17] ‘Shopping centres look to more creative ways of filling vacant space’. *Shopping Centre,* 26 April 2010,

The Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre is a rather peculiar space in contemporary London. It is located in the North part of the Borough of Southwark and is a three-floor mixed-use centre combining retail, residential, office, community and leisure facilities. Built in 1965, it remains the oldest shopping centre of its kind in Europe.[18] After years of semi-abandonment and lack of maintenance, mirroring similar underinvestment in its adjacent council housing estates, in the late 1990s Southwark Council decided that the Centre and the adjacent Heygate Estate were to be demolished to make way for a comprehensive 'regeneration' of the area. The controversial history[19] of the demolition of the Heygate Estate was marked by a long period of uncertainty, from 2004 until 2013, during which the estate's over 3,000 residents were slowly moved out and their flats boarded up.[20] The first residents to be moved were mostly housed in the high rise towers on the edges of the estate, which projected an image of abandonment to the surrounding areas, affecting perceptions of the shopping centre too: 'it doesn't help having the Heygate sitting there empty, it gives that perception of inactivity... we want to create a busy, busy centre. Busy places tend to be safer places. And there is a strong perception about people not being safe around here'.[21]

Besides the Heygate Estate, the planned demolition and redevelopment of the Shopping Centre has been an issue of contention in the long and conflictive public consultations around the regeneration plans for Elephant and Castle. In 2007, the bid to regenerate the area was won by a consortium of developers headed by the Australian real estate developer Lend Lease. One of the unsuccessful bidders was the owner and manager of the shopping centre, St Modwen Properties PLC. With the financial and credit crisis of 2008, however, the redevelopment plans stalled until local elections in May 2010, when the newly elected Labour Council finally signed a regeneration agreement with Lend Lease. This agreement, however, was not made public until after the approval of the planning applications.[22] The period between the summer of 2010 and the summer of 2011 was thus marked by opacity and uncertainty, as the agreement contemplated different options regarding the proposed redevelopment and demolition of the shopping centre, all of which left St Modwen in a strong negotiating position. As explained by the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre's representative, redevelopment had been on the horizon since the acquisition of the site by St Modwen in 2002 and was the main reason why they had refrained from signing in large businesses, which would have demanded long-term leases. Since the failing of their bid and the selection of a different development partner, the company had quite literally 'been holding the Centre',[23] and in so doing had retained control of the centrepiece of the Elephant & Castle Opportunity Area.

In holding the Shopping Centre and waiting for the regeneration scheme to 'break ground', the management of the Centre had decided to hold off refurbishment and thus offered vacant units as office space for existing businesses and frontline services, such as the NHS, as well as retail space on insecure short-term leases.[24] During this period, the Centre gained popularity as a site of small, independent migrant businesses, which were more willing than high street retailers to accept flexible and short-term leases. As a result, the Centre has since been overwhelmingly characterised by affordable independent retailers and services owned by and serving the diverse local ethnic mix, especially its Latin American community.[25] In this uncertain political and economic situation, the management's encouragement of short-term artistic projects in vacant shops, ranging from exhibitions to theatre performances, most of which took place on the first floor [Figure 6], formed a micro-strategy paralleling the offer of short-term leases and break clauses to the other traders.

---

[18] Elephant Trumpet, 2017, p. 9.

[19] For a history of the two regenerations of the Elephant and Castle, see DeFilippis and North, 2004. See also Southwark Notes, 2013.

[20] Lees and Ferreri, 2016; Ferreri, 2020.

[21] Interview with a representative of the shopping centre, 10 October 2011.

[22] Southwark Council and Lend Lease 2010 *Regeneration Agreement*, see http://southwarknotes.wordpress.com/2013/02/04/council-leaks-southwark-lend-lease-confidential-regeneration-agreement/ [accessed 22 April 2012].

[23] Interview with a representative of the shopping centre, 10 October 2011.

[24] See also Southwark Council's *Supplementary Planning Document* December 2011, baseline information point 3.6.

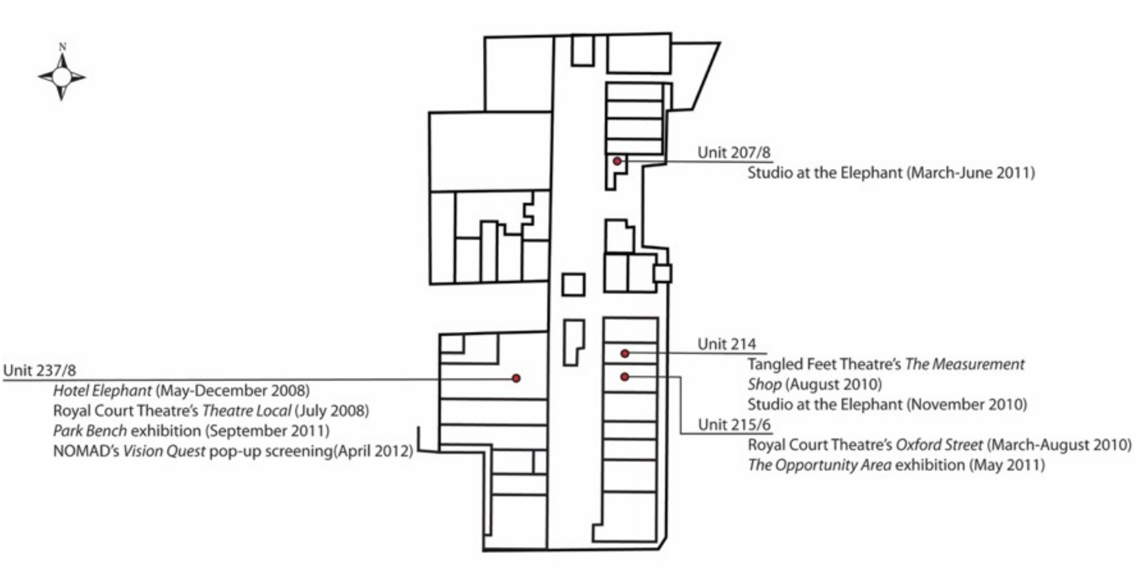

N
Unit 207/8
Studio at the Elephant (March-June 2011)
Unit 214
Tangled Feet Theatre's *The Measurement Shop* (August 2010)
Studio at the Elephant (November 2010)
Unit 215/6
Royal Court Theatre's *Oxford Street* (March-August 2010)
The Opportunity Area exhibition (May 2011)
Unit 237/8
Hotel Elephant (May-December 2008)
Royal Court Theatre's *Theatre Local* (July 2008)
Park Bench exhibition (September 2011)
NOMAD's *Vision Quest* pop-up screening(April 2012)

Figure 6. Map of pop-up shops in the Elephant and Castle shopping centre's first floor, 2008-12. Elaborated from floor plan October 2011, courtesy of St Modwen. Source: author.

For the Centre's representative, the main rationale for cultural projects in vacant units was to catch the attention of commuters:

> getting these people to stop and look and say, oh look, there's a shop here, and, there's a vacant shop being used by community groups and offering different events, and, you know, both visually and audio, people would stop and look and say 'oh, there's things happening!'.[26]

The narrative produced by the shopping centre's management represents a top-down official version of the reasons for the proliferation of temporary art shops in the centre, which was, however, challenged by many practitioners who saw it as an instrumental *a posteriori* labelling of cultural practices and processes that were already taking place within and around the site.[27] Moreover, the use of vacant shops for art projects could draw on a much longer history, at the very least since the mid-1990s when the centre became famous as a dystopian 'failed' space and a perfect location for experimental art projects such as Salon3 (2001), a temporary publicly funded art gallery run by professional contemporary art curators Rebecca Gordon Nesbit and Hans Ulrich Obrist.[28]

---

[25] See Román-Velázquez, 2014.

[26] Interview with a representative of the shopping centre, 10 October 2011.

[27] Conversation with Rebecca and Eva, 2 August 2011.

[28] Cooke, 2006.

The Elephant as a site for ‘community engagement’

Talking about the temporary artistic programme within the units, the shopping centre’s management described its role as being very light-touch, when in fact several considerations informed decision-making processes:

> we very rarely say no. Very, very rarely. Art as you know is a very big word, and you have to make sure that the images they put up aren’t, you know, anti-religion, or degrading to women, or of a sexual nature, or oppressive, you know, you have got to be very careful in terms of people walking by. Most people are fully aware they are in a shopping centre, that their target audience is from zero to ninety-five and every race, every religion they can imagine. It’s a very open canvas, and I think that’s what makes it attractive.[29]

The centre’s shoppers are represented here as an audience, an open canvas, and their variety is invoked to explain the degree of filtering out that precedes the moment of visibility of a project. A survey of the projects that took place between 2008 and 2012 revealed degrees of similarities in content, with several activities and programmes that directly referenced and celebrated ‘the local community’, ‘the Elephant’ and its past. Between 2008 and 2010, temporary projects included a series of ‘fringe’ performances by the Royal Court Theatre’s ‘Theatre Local’ programme, which aimed at ‘taking productions out of our Sloane Square home and placing them in alternative spaces at the heart of London life’.[30] The designation of ‘the Elephant’ as a site for ‘community engagement’ shaped the branding of the shopping centre, which was described in the centre’s press releases as a ‘true community hub’ and ‘a community venue as well as a place to shop’.[31] The centre’s representative explained jokingly that the reason for this was that ‘people don’t tend to want to come in here unless they have an interest in the Elephant!’—a reference both to the relatively ‘local’ character of the area’s traders and shoppers, despite its hyper-diversity in cultural terms,[32] and its relative marginality and negative fame at the time.

Because of negative public perceptions, a central issue underlying the choice of temporary projects was their position in relation to the longer-term planned regeneration of Elephant and Castle:

> a big issue for us, when people come in here, if they are doing projects on the Elephant, [is] that it is positive. It’s very easy to be negative about the Elephant and Castle, both past and future, and what we say is, if you want to be here, we want you to say positive things not negative things. […] all the messages, I always say: positive, positive, positive […] otherwise you’d be adding fuel to fire.

The combination of the simulation of trading, people ‘milling around inside’ vacant shops, and the ‘positive, positive, positive’ message to be expressed about the past and future of the Elephant is a clear example of the way in which the framing of temporary ‘pop-up’ projects tries to aid the positive imagery that developers and the local council were promoting in relation to the stalled regeneration scheme.

St Modwen’s symbolic capitalisation on Elephant and Castle as a cultural site for ‘community’ outreach and its appearance of supporting local community businesses and residents thus appear to be a careful short-term branding strategy within the long-term refurbishment plan, which couldn't be further from this 'community' imaginary. Indicative plans presented to the public in the spring of 2011 implied a total redevelopment of the site, with a luxury residential tower and larger (and more expensive) shop units. Most traders within the shopping centre were on short-term leases, which made them easy to move once plans were underway. As candidly explained by the centre's representative,

---

[29] Interview with a representative of the shopping centre, 10 October 2011.

[30] The productions included *Oxford Street* (2008)*, Random*, *Disconnect, The Empire* and *Spur of the Moment*, the latter three being Jerwood Theatre Upstairs productions.

[31] St Modwen, 2010, *Elephant breaks a leg! Retail and acting come together at iconic centre*, press release (online) 12 March 2010.

[32] Hall and Datta, 2010.

> tenants, they are all aware of the redevelopment. We have told them all the way through their leases, including the break clauses, and they've agreed to the redevelopment. Not all of them, a couple are protected, you know, but... unfortunately, as they say, you can't make an omelette without breaking a few eggs. Unfortunately, you know, there is going to be some tenants who are very disappointed, unfortunately, and, to redevelop the centre we'll need to move them out.

The precarious situation of the Shopping Centre continued throughout the first half of the 2010s until 2013, when St Modwen announced the sale of the shopping centre to British developer Delancey, as will be discussed in the latter part of this chapter.

Studio at the Elephant

The history of one specific community-oriented art project within the Centre, called *Studio at the Elephant*, intersects with these changing plans and illustrates the development of a relation with place—from a critique of a short-term connectionist 'meanwhile' idea towards a longer-term continued engagement with the place and the local community—over nearly a decade. The *Studio at the Elephant* project was a temporary community-oriented project and residency space in two vacant shops in the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre. The first was open from 1 to 12 November 2010 and the second from 4 March to 24 June 2011. The initial idea came from a project by artist Rebecca Davies that used illustrations and filmmaking to document the life and social uses of the centre. As a child, she had lived in estates around the Elephant and Castle area and often used to come to the centre. The project started with a series of semi-ethnographic observations. Upon returning to the neighbourhood after studying in another city, between 2008 and 2010, she visited the centre regularly and collected observational sketches and drawings, sound and video material, interviews with local traders and residents as well as excerpts of overheard conversations: 'There's a lot to be said for just sitting in a cafe for hours, a lot, and especially in the Elephant [...] you have got your builders, you've got your traders, you've got your elderly ladies and gents...[…] the Colombian community, African, West Indian, and then the Irish and English'.[33] The planned demolition of the shopping centre added urgency to her project, which she saw as a memento and a celebration of a community about to disappear:

> although a lot of people have a kind of love-hate relationship with the actual building, essentially what makes this building are the people who are inside it. The atmosphere and the activity that goes on in here [...] I'd quite like people to see this, because... because I love the Elephant, and I just like other people to see what the Elephant is like because as you probably know lots of people go past it and almost never come in.

The material she collected and produced converged in a free newspaper publication titled *The Elephant* (2010). In the summer of 2010, she started looking for a vacant unit in the centre to launch and distribute the newspaper to traders and passers-by 'because it was about them and it was for them'.[34]

---

[33] Conversation with Rebecca, 3 December 2010.

Rebecca was finally offered a rent-free unit by St Modwen, to be used for two weeks in November 2010, at which point she came across 'the next problem, which is obviously money'.[35] The question of funding is an important issue often overlooked by the official narratives as well as by the art history canon of temporary galleries 'on zero budget'. Obtaining a space rent-free on a temporary basis does not mean that its use will be 'free'. In Rebecca's case, she assembled what was needed for her project by drawing on a range of networks. She solicited limited donations from Elephant-based family businesses and was able to obtain in-kind support, such as furniture from local organisations: 'I got.... the armchair and the sofa from the Walworth Methodist Church [...] a lot of chairs and furniture from my TRA [Tenants and Residents Association]'.[36] In relation to paying herself, thanks to an unexpected tax rebate the artist was able to leave her full-time job in the service industries, a common occupation for young art graduates, and free up time to prepare beforehand as well as for being in the space every day during the two weeks of opening. She also decided to reinvest in the project the little revenue she had made from selling work related to the Elephant, such as drawings and any donations received for the newspaper. Taken all together, the space was clearly supported by the mobilisation of a combination of diverse economies, both monetised and non-monetised.

Beyond monetary and in-kind support, the project needed people to populate the space. The official temporary narrative of connecting 'people and places' is pivoted on the existence of networks of individuals readily available on a voluntary basis and, importantly, at short notice. To set up the space and fill a two-week programme, she started calling out to 'friends and artists whose work I liked, and to people that I thought would get something out of putting on a workshop [...] luckily, I had a few friends that were in a position where they could give their time for free. And I really, really relied on that'.[37] By the end of the two weeks she estimated that around twenty people had put up an event or otherwise helped her with the space. The availability of 'friends and artists' at such short notice points in part to the organising skills of the artist and in part to the unspoken rationale for people in the artistic network to work for free in somebody else's project. Research on the cultural and creative sectors in Britain has shown that voluntary and free labour is widespread in the labour experience of young as well as more established practitioners, especially in London, yet is not limited to it.[38] According to labour sociologist Guy Standing, in order 'to function well in a tertiary flexible-labour society, much time must be used in "work-for-labour", work that does not have exchange value but which is necessary or advisable' to guarantee current and future employment, even if just through sheer visibility.[39] Temporary spaces not only rely on and activate networks of professionals available at short notice, they also produce new connections. During her time in the first *Studio at the Elephant*, in fact, Rebecca started collaborations with researchers and artists who had worked in the area for a long time. One of them was local resident and photography artist Eva Sajovic, who had been running a long-term oral history project in Elephant and Castle and had recently received a small grant from Southwark Council towards the production of a book based on interviews with current and former residents, called *Home from Home* (2010).

A strategy of open programming

---

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

[38] See for instance McRobbie, 2009; see also Gill, 2002; Gill and Pratt, 2008.

[39] Standing, 2011, pp. 120-122.

The second *Studio at the Elephant* took place within another rent-free vacant unit from March to June 2011. It was a former Southwark Council office that apparently had been vacated a few months prior when, allegedly, the local government 'pulled out suddenly because they couldn't be seen on St Modwen's turf while trying to negotiate with Lend Lease'[40] during the decision-making around the redevelopment of the area. Once again, cultural programming was run on a voluntary basis and was virtually unfunded, except for limited sponsorship from the centre's management. The artists mobilised in-kind support from a range of sources: furniture from the local Council, video equipment from the nearby London College of Communication, free food for events from the local traders and free internet through Blooming Fields, an advice centre for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in a shop opposite their unit. At the end of the project, they could claim that the three-month project was run on a production budget of only £750.[41]

Their first public action in preparation for the launch of the second *Studio at the Elephant* unit on 4 March 2012 was to circulate an invitation via email to people who had been part of the first *Studio at the Elephant*, presenting the new space as providing 'an opportunity for locals to voice their opinions creatively'.[42] It also invited people to get involved and to propose activities. An open call was posted on their website describing the shop as 'a place of temporary residence to visiting artists'.[43] Practitioners were invited to propose events or one-week residencies in the space, in exchange for which each practitioner or artist collective would run a free community event or a workshop. For the programme to develop organically from encounters through the duration of their stay, the schedule of activities was decided a few weeks at a time so that there would always be space for new people to propose events and workshops.[44] They also kept an open-door policy two days a week to enable encounters beyond already established networks. The final programme was the result of a combination of a constellation of artists, researchers, residents and organisations, as drawn in the diagram [Figure 7] during one of our conversations, each link marking a story of personal and professional connections.

---

[40] Conversation with Eva and Rebecca, 2 August 2011.

[41] See also Sajovic and Davies, 2012.

[42] Studio at the Elephant *Launch Party* invite, Friday 4 March 2011. The invite was also published on the *Studio at the Elephant* blog and the subsequent announcements on blogs, websites and printed press releases. See http://studioattheelephant.blogspot.co.uk, 2 March 2011 [accessed 7 March 2011].

[43] Conversation with Eva and Rebecca, 15 March 2011.

[44] Conversation with Rebecca, 12 February 2011.

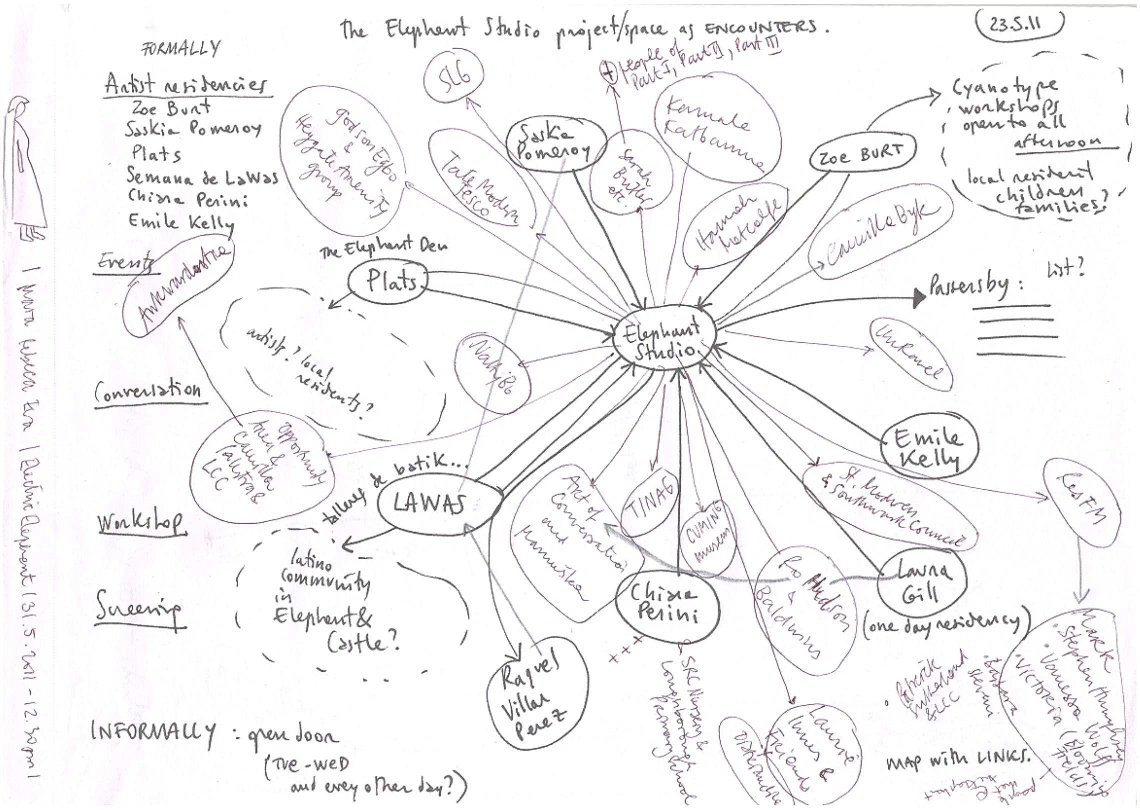

The Elephant Studio project/space as ENCOUNTERS.
23.5.11
FORMALLY
Artist residencies
Zoe Burt
Saskia Pomeroy
Plats
Semana de LaWas
Chiara Perini
Emile Kelly
Events
Conversation
Workshop
Screening
INFORMALLY : open door (TUE-WED and every other day?)
SL6
Saskia Pomeroy
Tate Modern Tesco
Sarah Butler etc.
people of Part I, Part II, Part III
Kennale Katbanne
Zoe BURT
Cyanotype workshops open to all afternoon
local resident children families?
Hannah Metcalfe
Camille Byk
Passersby : list?
The Elephant Den
Plats
artists? local residents?
Elephant Studio
Nathi86
Unravel
Emile Kelly
St. Modwen & Southwark Council
LesFM
Opportunity Area & Camilla Tallstrom LCC
talleres de batik...
LAWAS
latino community in Elephant & Castle?
Art of Conversation and Mammistas
TINAG
CUMING museum
Chiara Perini
Laura Gill
(one day residency)
Raquel Villar Perez
Ro Hudson & Baldwins
SLC Nursery & Longborough Primary School
Laurie Innes & Friends
MAP with LINKS.
Mark
Stephen Humphreys
Vanessa Wolf
Victoria (Blooming Fields)
1 Maria Eva 1 Electric Elephant 1 31.5.2011 - 12.30pm 1

Figure 7. Diagram produced during a conversation with artists at Studio at the Elephant, Elephant & Castle, London, 31 May 2011. Author's archive.

As explained by Eva, 'the whole point of our space is that it's a platform for people to come and do and bring whomever they want, to pitch it the way they want. It's very, very free.'[45] The 'free' platform, however, was centrally coordinated by the two organisers, who retained full decision-making powers on the programme and on the types of content. On some occasions, they decided to refuse projects that were explicitly critical towards the developers and the local authorities, as they wanted 'to be neutral, we don't want to be political [or] unnecessarily controversial [..] we are not really interested in saying, oh, they [the developers] are horrible […] that's not our role'.[46] Instead, they understood their role as one of facilitators of the space, which had become semi-public. Acting as facilitators of the space, the artists found themselves in a mediating position. Reflecting on the proposals accepted and on those refused, Rebecca commented that:

> We had to tread softly while being quite stern [...] it's been quite interesting that [with regards to] the space where we are in and the relationships that we formed […] we should be proud of ourselves that we managed to hold hands with [the managers] while holding hands with people that hate [them] and kind of being in the middle of that, and be very aware of that.[47]

The figurative expression of the artist 'holding hands' with individuals and groups who would have otherwise been in strong antagonistic relationships illustrates the position of symbolic and political intermediaries inhabited by the artists and the awareness of their mode of approach towards the many different urban actors, participants and visitors involved in the space, with the artists' body becoming, metaphorically, the connector.

---

[45] Conversation with Eva, 31 May 2011.

[46] Conversation with Eva and Rebecca, 31 May 2011.

[47] Ibid.

Understanding their own work as facilitators raised the question of what was performatively produced in the space: experiences and connections. In describing the project, Rebecca explained that there is 'no final product, it's about experience and it's about what we are doing whilst here, and all of these events, and the people we are drawing in.'[48] The production of experiences and its audiences was therefore understood as one of the outcomes of the project, and the practitioners felt that attracting audiences was part of their role and that they needed 'to give something back to St Modwen'.[49] Months after the end of their project, they acknowledged the labour of mediating and connecting and discussed hypothetically how different it would have been to do the same project but receive a salary from St Modwen. They reflected that a clearer monetary mediation might have made their relationship with the management of the centre more straightforward. As employees, they hypothesised, 'paradoxically [we] would have had perhaps more space to negotiate [our] own position [and] bring a bit of our own to the system'.[50]

Visibility for recognition

Despite the intention 'not to be political', however, on a few occasions the Studio offered a platform to political projects and the space became a platform for public discussions of local labour and social issues. This was the case with a three-week residency of the Latin American Workers Association (LAWAS), a labour rights voluntary organisation founded in 2002 with a focus on the rights of Spanish-speaking migrants from South and Central America living in the United Kingdom, affiliated with the international anarchist union IWW (Industrial Workers of the World).[51] At the time, LAWAS' regular activities consisted of campaigns around living wages and fair labour conditions as well as regular free Spanish and English language conversation sessions hosted on the premises of the local Southbank University. The decision to host LAWAS had developed 'organically' through contacts with two different women artists, one of whom was Spanish-speaking, whom the artists working at the Studio had met through their open programming. LAWAS chimed with the practitioners' desire to reach out to the Latin American communities in the shopping centre, considered one of the cultural centres of the Latin American community in the UK.[52]

The Studio was beneficial to LAWAS' local organising strategy since it offered them visibility without a direct association with a specific Latin American business, which could have undermined their outreach to other traders: it was 'a completely neutral turf for them to be on, and yet it [was] very central because it [was] right in the shopping centre'.[53] The residency was celebrated by the local multicultural newspaper *The Prisma* in an article entitled 'Art and Activism Unite', which described the openness of the Studio to a public of 'all ages and cultures [...] people from the African and English [sic] community'[54] beyond the Latin American one. According to LAWAS' coordinators, the residency was their first successful experience of organising a cultural event beyond their labour rights work, and beyond marches and campaigns, and enabled them to reach out to new members of the Spanish-speaking community.[55] LAWAS' residency ended on 1 May to coincide with the march for Labour Day, for which the studio was used as a workshop to make banners. LAWAS' residency took place in the middle of a three-year effort by several Latin American groups headed by the Latin American Recognition Campaign (LARC) and marked a high point in raising the political visibility of Latin American communities in London. In May 2012, the campaign finally succeeded in making Southwark Council recognise Latin American communities as an official ethnic minority. It was the first London borough to do so.[56]

---

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

[51] LAWAS ceased to exist in 2013. Their important labour organising work in London is now documented on the May Day Rooms archive, see http://maydayrooms.org/archives/lawas/.

[52] See McIlwaine, Cock and Linneker, 2011.

[53] Conversation with Eva and Rebecca, 31 May 2011.

[54] See: Art and activism unite at Elephant and Castle. In *The Prisma: the Multicultural Newspaper*. 15 May 2011, http://www.theprisma.co.uk/2011/05/15/art-and-activism-unite-at-elephant-and-castle/ [accessed 22 March 2012].

The residency increased visibility to Latin American issues within the space and impacted on the outreach activities of the project. After the residency, the Studio began publishing their press releases in Spanish and posting them on the door of the space among the posters for events and workshops. It also kept LAWAS political leaflets on display inside the shop. The residency was considered very successful because it drew in audiences from the Latin American communities that had not previously visited the space.[57] When asked whether it contradicted their professed desire to be apolitical, the practitioners replied that the residency was 'political for the community' while the projects that they had rejected were perceived as disconnected individual critique.[58] They had agreed to host a group that operated transversally to the cultural sector, since they felt that their political demands and aims revolved around migration issues that were close to the less visible communities in the area. In this way, the Studio opened up the space to other kinds of activities and audiences and, by offering a resource, created direct solidarity with local struggles for visibility and recognition. While on the surface the performance of positive activity suited the discursive framing of 'community hub', the residency provided space for workers' rights meetings and for organising support for a labour march, activities that would most probably not have been offered a space by the shopping centre's management. By framing their activities as a cultural programme and by keeping the programming of the temporary studio as open as possible, the practitioners—acting as intermediary and mediator—were able to accommodate political organising activities within a supposedly 'a-political' space.

These kinds of connections transversal to artistic audiences and established 'local communities' are often the result of in-depth knowledge of a place and of a long-term engagement with it, which is highly valued in community art but often impractical. After the end of the Studio in June 2011, the artists discussed among themselves and with other community-oriented practitioners how to give 'longevity to the project', but the lack of continued funding translated into a lack of a continuative temporal horizon. By November 2011, Eva had been able to start a funded project at the local Cuming Museum on Walworth Road, but in Rebecca's opinion such an outcome was rare. Despite their intentions, community artists are usually unable to 'stick to an area' because the valorisation of community engagement is not complemented by adequate long-term funding. 'There is a strong pressure on artists involving themselves in a community, and running some sort of art project... [it is about] how involved [one] gets..' but when public funding 'runs out, they go on to another place to do another project'.[59] The tyranny of project-based funding to which community artists are subjected is here described as requiring the ability to detach oneself from a place and a project and move on as a coping 'strategy', which enters into conflict with commitment to place. As recounted by Rebecca, 'I got a bit too involved in a way […] it got a bit hard for me at times...and I couldn't detach myself.'[60] The emotional connections and commitment to the place that had been such an important rationale for the project and for gaining local support are seen almost as a professional shortcoming running counter to the demand for flexibility of existing arts funding structures.

---

[55] Conversations with a member of LAWAS, 11 June 2011. A similar account was voiced also during LAWAS' public presentation at *Who are the Migrant Workers Today?,* INIVA (Institute of International Visual Arts), London, on 14 September 2011.

[56] Southwark Council, 2012: 'Southwark becomes first council to officially recognise its Latin American community', http://www.southwark.gov.uk/news/article/953/southwark_becomes_first_council_to_officially_recognise_its_latin_american_community [accessed 10 September 2012].

[57] See also Sajovic and Davies, 2012, pp. 79-83.

[58] Conversation with Eva, 31 May 2011.

[59] Conversation with Rebecca, 11 November 2011.

Mediating face-to-face interactions

You can't really do [a pop-up] in a place like this, that is so politically heavy, and people are so attached to it.[61]

The temporary Studio was expected to act as a cultural institution in a context of regeneration, promoting inclusivity and steering clear of 'unnecessary controversial' activities. In the Elephant and Castle, however, on the cusp of comprehensive redevelopment marked by opacity and controversy, mediating semi-public interactions inevitably revealed lines of tensions. As was observed by Kay, a visual artist who ran a short-term project in a vacant unit in the summer of 2011, while some people refused outright to engage with her participatory project, others were more outspoken in their suspicion that the artist was 'part of the Council' and complicit with the process of demolition and displacement of residents from the nearby council estate. She recounted a particularly antagonistic meeting with a long-term resident:

> he would not believe that I didn't have the plans for the Heygate [Estate] redevelopment. He wouldn't really... and I was saying, no, I am not part of the Council, you know, and this isn't the consultation xyz, this is an art project. I was a bit hurt that he couldn't tell![62]

Reading beyond the artist's intentions to its contextual framing, the response reveals a suspicion of the use of artistic and community projects as 'artwashing'[63] within a wider urban regeneration agenda aimed at reshaping, alongside the built environment, the social and cultural fabric of the neighbourhood. Any participatory project was easily lumped together with the work of the Council and the developers and the controversial 'public engagement' activities of its 'consulting' promoters.[64]

Practitioners of *Studio at the Elephant* also recounted being aware, from the very beginning of their project, that running a temporary shop in Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre was going to attract criticism and antagonism. On several occasions the artists described the area as 'gutsy' and explained that any artist truly trying to engage with the people of the Elephant would 'need to stand their ground' because 'people are cocky and speak their mind'. Subtle forms of disapproval involved people murmuring while passing Rebecca as she was making drawings in the corridors of the shopping centre, or staring at them inside the shop, like 'being a zoo, with people watching you from the outside': 'people here think, oh, it's two artists having a studio, taking the piss, in one of the units of the Elephant'. As reflected by Rebecca:

---

[60] Ibid.

[61] Conversation with Rebecca, 3 December 2010.

[62] Conversation with Kay, 15 February 2012.

[63] 'Artwashing' is usually understood by anti-gentrification activists as a process by which 'pioneering' artists and art institutions become complicit in masking the violence of gentrification and displacement in working class and often racialised neighbourhoods. See, for instance, the important critique of and mobilisation against artwashing in Los Angeles, USA, by the Boyle Heights Alliance Against Artwashing and Displacement, in O'Brien et al., 2019.

[64] See Southwark Notes, 2013.

> when you are doing art in the community, or community art, or certainly art in a public space, like this, and you have got an open door policy, people are quite opinionated and they feel like they have the right to come in and go, this is crap [...] there were a couple of incidents where a couple of people came by and maybe they thought that I was just another artist that was just popping in and sodding off again, excuse my language but that's how they'd put it, you know. I think that some people do think that.[65]

The reflection and the interaction are revealing of how practitioners involved in temporary art projects were perceived as opportunistic, 'popping up and sodding off again', without connection to the area and its issues and leaving no legacy. Given the programme of temporary uses and the conditions under which vacancy and their creative fillers were experienced by local residents, it was 'inevitable that occasionally discussions in this space become quite political'.[66]

The underside of the demand for 'positive, positive, positive' experiential economies by the shopping centre manager was the types of encounters facilitated by the daytime open door drop-in sessions, described by the artists as a combination of 'very exciting moments with very depressing moments', with some specific encounters simply being 'draining'. The labour of managing expectations, responding to criticism, facilitating encounters and, at times, listening to personal histories of dispossession and despair all points to a mobilisation of emotional labour: 'it's important to have a presence but at the same time it's a very charged presence'. The participatory and open format of many of the projects within the vacant units created an amplifier and a sounding board for this underlying general frustration, creating an unpredictable space of encounter. Rather than a performance of frictionless experiences of activation, interactions revealed an actively and critically engaged audience, far from the passive spectatorship imagined by ideas of place marketing through temporary use but also by critics of the production of 'pop-up spectacles'. In her book titled *City publics. The (dis)enchantments of urban encounters* (2006), urban sociologist Sophie Watson has argued that it is inevitable that urban encounters become 'agonistic' once differences are engaged with, imbalances of power are acknowledged and addressed, and outcomes are not pre-determined.[67] The anecdotes above voiced the anxieties of local residents and traders affected by processes of displacement and redevelopment as well as by the sense of uncertainty and lack of transparency that surrounded the regeneration plans—the making of agonistic encounters in the shopping centre.

Empowerment for surrender?

After the end of their residency and a pause of nearly one year, in 2013 *Studio at the Elephant* artists returned to the area under the name of *People's Bureau*, a Tate Modern pilot programme of skills exchanges and oral history collection, through a mobile installation in the form of a barrow, or replica of the carts that other traders use locally, to be parked in and around the shopping centre. Their website explained:

> through skill exchanges the project activates individuals from local communities and collaborates with local organisations. The project collects evidence and makes visible the diversity of cultures, skills, networks and resourcefulness present in an area, currently undergoing a large-scale redevelopment that is likely to permanently displace local individuals, traders and organisations.[68]

---

[65] Conversation with Rebecca, 3 December 2010.

[66] Conversation with Eva and Rebecca, 31 May 2011.

[67] Watson, 2006, p. 3.

[68] See People's Bureau website: https://www.peoplesbureau.co.uk/

Since 2011, plans for the regeneration of Elephant and Castle had progressed once the final hurdle, the demolition of the Heygate Estate, had been secured through the Compulsory Purchase Order of the homes of the last residents.[69] In early July 2013, the shopping centre owner St Modwen announced its intention to sell the centre, which was purchased for £80 million by a partnership of British developer Delancey Real Estate Asset Management Limited and Dutch pension fund APG. Delancey was the same developer that had partnered with Oakmayne to develop Elephant One, the luxury flat and student-housing towers built on former industrial land in the north-west corner of the Heygate Estate, whose main site had been rebuilt by real estate developer Lend Lease as 'Elephant Park'. In a striking parallel between the stories collected in this book, developments on the Elephant and Castle and on the London 2012 Olympic site intertwine. In 2011, Delancey acquired London's Olympic Village (now rebranded East Village) from the Olympic Development Authority, which had in turn bought it from Lend Lease when it had renegotiated the terms of their development contract in 2008.

Back to *People's Bureau*, in 2014 Tate Modern introduced the artists to the new owner of the shopping centre, and they accepted the developer's offer to fund their programme (2014-2016). The decision to accept funding from Delancey was not uncontroversial, and in 2016 *People's Bureau*'s position was publicly challenged in a long article published on the influential local blog Southwark Notes. The article, titled 'Empowerment for Surrender: People's Bureau, Engaged Art & The Elephant', examined the claims of the project and criticised their focus on skills exchanges and one-to-one encounters as 'dialogue to defuse and manage' dissent rather than acting truly in support of the individuals, traders and organisations that will be displaced by the redevelopment.[70] The skills exchange facilitated through the programme, they accused,

> do not empower people to step outside of the frame they have been put in. That frame is the frame of everyday activities as defined by the artists. The everyday concerns of where the shopkeepers and traders will go, where will local people be able to hang out affordably, what can be done to alter the oncoming tsunami of regeneration etc.—all of these are strangely brushed aside. The empowerment of these skills-exchanges is therefore an empowerment to surrender, to go on with their lives as if nothing was happening in their community.[71]

The artists responded directly with a rebuttal, which was published on *Southwark Notes* blog, that acknowledged 'the risk that in co-operating with a developer such as Delancey (including by receiving funding) we are co-opted to their purposes' and that they 'suspect that Delancey is more concerned with creating the appearance of community engagement and consultation, than with its substance'.[72] They concluded by stating that it was 'on the basis of such concerns that we have decided against accepting further funding from Delancey' and that 'if individuals and citizens platforms come together to make their voices heard, co-operating and exchanging skills, we can ensure there is no meek surrender to the forces of blind capital'. The statement marks a decisive shift from former attempts at 'holding hands' and claiming neutrality against 'unnecessary controversy', a shift that certainly also derived from a wider greater awareness of the deleterious effect of the regeneration plans after the demolition of the Heygate Estate and its replacement by luxury flats towers and chain shops.

At the time of this exchange, in December 2016, Delancey's redevelopment plans were made public and revealed substantial disregard for the demands of traders and local communities with respect to the relocation of traders before the demolition, the percentage of affordable retail spaces in the new developments and the lack of social rented housing in the residential towers that would also be built on site. These and other details of the proposed redevelopment were published in Issue 1 of *Elephant's Trumpet*, a 'collaboratively produced community newspaper that aims to organise, promote and share resources, ideas and concerns about Elephant & Castle shopping centre' [Figure 8]. The community newspaper was produced with funding from the *People's Bureau* together with traders, local organisations and residents and included both an analysis of the development plans and oral history interviews that provided an informed and detailed overview of the situation.

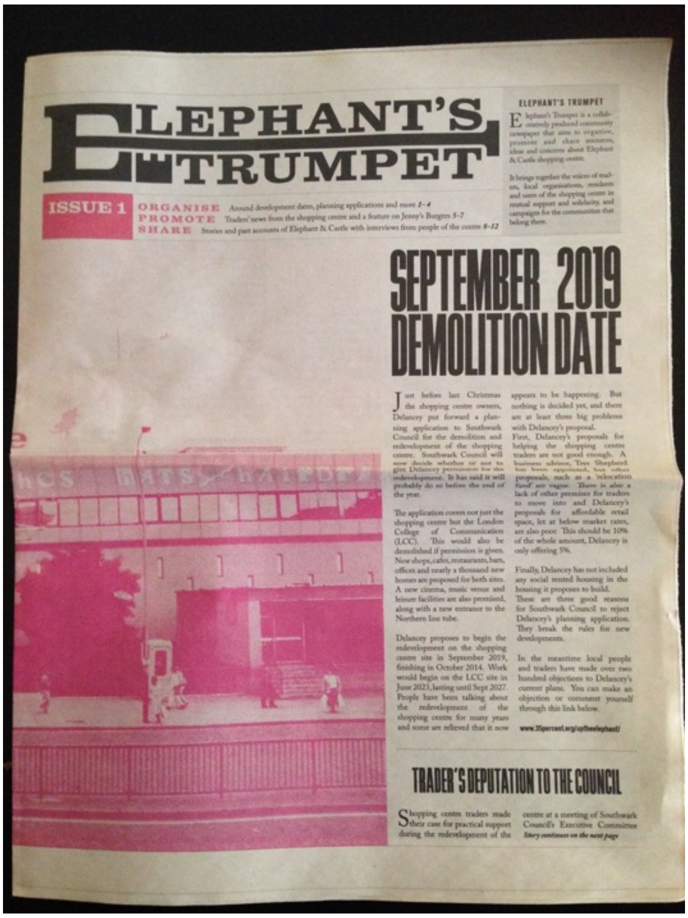
---

[69] Lees and Ferreri, 2016.

[70] Southwark Notes, 2016.

[71] Ibid.

[72] People's Bureau, 2017.



ELEPHANT'S TRUMPET

ISSUE 1

ORGANISE Around development dates, planning applications and more 1-4
PROMOTE Traders' news from the shopping centre and a feature on Jenny's Burgers 5-7
SHARE Stories and past accounts of Elephant & Castle with interviews from people of the centre 8-12

ELEPHANT'S TRUMPET

Elephant's Trumpet is a collaboratively produced community newspaper that aims to organise, promote and share resources, ideas and concerns about Elephant & Castle shopping centre.

It brings together the voices of traders, local organisations, residents and users of the shopping centre in mutual support and solidarity, and campaigns for the communities that belong there.

SEPTEMBER 2019 DEMOLITION DATE

Just before last Christmas the shopping centre owners, Delancey put forward a planning application to Southwark Council for the demolition and redevelopment of the shopping centre. Southwark Council will now decide whether or not to give Delancey permission for the redevelopment. It has said it will probably do so before the end of the year.

The application covers not just the shopping centre but the London College of Communication (LCC). This would also be demolished if permission is given. New shops, cafes, restaurants, bars, offices and nearly a thousand new homes are proposed for both sites. A new cinema, music venue and leisure facilities are also promised, along with a new entrance to the Northern line tube.

Delancey proposes to begin the redevelopment on the shopping centre site in September 2019, finishing in October 2014. Work would begin on the LCC site in June 2023, lasting until Sept 2027. People have been talking about the redevelopment of the shopping centre for many years and some are relieved that it now appears to be happening. But nothing is decided yet, and there are at least three big problems with Delancey's proposal.

First, Delancey's proposals for helping the shopping centre traders are not good enough. A business advisor, Tree Shepherd has been appointed, but other proposals, such as a 'relocation fund' are vague. There is also a lack of other premises for traders to move into and Delancey's proposals for affordable retail space, let at below market rates, are also poor. This should be 10% of the whole amount, Delancey is only offering 5%.

Finally, Delancey has not included any social rented housing in the housing it proposes to build. These are three good reasons for Southwark Council to reject Delancey's planning application. They break the rules for new developments.

In the meantime local people and traders have made over two hundred objections to Delancey's current plans. You can make an objection or comment yourself through this link below.

www.35percent.org/uptheelephant/

TRADER'S DEPUTATION TO THE COUNCIL

Shopping centre traders made their case for practical support during the redevelopment of the centre at a meeting of Southwark Council's Executive Committee

Story continues on the next page

Figure 8. Front cover of Elephant Trumpet's issue 1, 2017 © Eva Sajovic. Source: author's archive.

Building on existing networks as well as on newcomers contacted through the labour of distributing the newspaper, in September 2017 a series of regular meetings were set up to coordinate opposition to the local plans. The campaign, named 'Up the Elephant', rapidly gained strength, bringing together local community groups, citizen platforms, the shopping centre's traders, and students from the local London College of Communications who occupied part of their college to protest the complicity of the University of the Arts in promoting gentrification and displacement. Among the organisations involved were Latin Elephant, an organisation that emerged from the Latin American Recognition campaign discussed earlier in this chapter. Ever since, thanks to energetic and high-profile campaigning, Up the Elephant has reframed the terms of the debate and put pressure on both local councillors and the developers. It initially blocked the planning application in February 2018 and later obtained better compensation for independent traders, many of whom were migrants or from minority ethnic backgrounds.[73]

---

[73] On 7 April 2020, despite the lockdown triggered by the Covid19 pandemic, Southwark Council decided in a virtual committee meeting to proceed with a Compulsory Purchase Order of the Elephant and Castle

Starting from a pop-up art shop, over the years the encounters and relations through and around the space have become part of a much wider set of relations at the basis of still ongoing mobilisations.[74] While still far from generating an anti-gentrification coalition between artists and social movements,[75] the consistent presence of temporary community-oriented art programming is evidence of a commitment to place rarely found in the 'pop-up' logic of artistic interventions. It is through a longitudinal and grounded approach to the agonistic encounters they generated that the relationships between anti-gentrification campaigning and temporary artistic projects can be appreciated as controversial but also as dynamic and potentially generative.

Conclusions: the openness of agonistic encounters

I wonder—everybody here on the block wonders—why are you here?[76]

In the early 1980s, the artist collective Group Material (1979-1996) opened an exhibition and production space in a shop front located in a black and Puerto Rican neighbourhood on Manhattan's Lower East Side. As recounted by Grant Kester, a local resident openly questioned the artists and challenged the 'community' claims of the art space. The recorded exchange offered 'a rare glimpse of the complex negotiations that took place at the time across boundaries of race and class difference'.[77] According to a member of Group Material, this conversation was the trigger of a wider political reflection that made the collective close the shop and decide to work more intensively in the community without having a site. This example is illustrative of forms of place-specific cultural work based on an ethics of attentiveness to encounters and the possibility of transforming engagement by responding to local conditions. As with the story of Group Material, the intentions of *Studio at the Elephant* practitioners encountered the thick connections and local histories of organising, which made visible the contradictions and which questioned their claims. Understanding space by focusing on the ways in which it is 'brought into being through performances and as a performative articulation of power' means to attend to complex entanglements of power dynamics that shape interaction and the production of experiences, particularly for temporary projects entering the fraught terrains of large-scale urban development programmes.[78]

By reconstructing the conditions for temporary projects in Elephant and Castle spanning nearly a decade, in this chapter I have placed the specific material and symbolic framing of 'pop-up' cultural production in critical dialogue with the claims of practitioners and the responses of the wider community. At the start of *Studio at the Elephant* in 2009, the expectations to provide 'positive, positive, positive' experiences of the space framed the cultural programme within a strategy of place marketing in times of vacancy and economic uncertainty. This created unspoken pressure on practitioners to maintain a neutral stance towards powerful local agents and to filter out negative and critical voices. The decision to host open door drop-in sessions, however, made space for passers-by and visitors to question the role of the project and its real openness to the community. Agonistic encounters in the studio exposed and rejected the 'symbolic integration' of local communities often performed by participatory artistic practices within urban

---

shopping centre, on behalf of the offshore real estate developer Delancey. The centre finally closed on 24 September 2020; at the time of writing, the campaign for fair rehousing of trades continues, see Latin Elephant https://latinelephant.org/ [accessed 25 September 2020].

[74] See 'Up the Elephant campaign', http://35percent.org/uptheelephant/ [accessed, 15 April 2020].

[75] In contrast to those outlined by Novy and Colomb, 2013.

[76] Kester, 2004, p. 124.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Gregson and Rose, 2000, p. 434.

regeneration programmes,[79] instead redirecting attention to social and economic exclusion and to the looming displacement.

Mainstream discourse around temporary urbanism promises to *activate* spaces.[80] This is a vision that implicitly reproduces the idea of urban vacant spaces as inert backgrounds, or containers, rather than as spaces dynamically produced through social, economic and cultural processes and practices. It is also a view that celebrates and promotes specific economies of experience as an inevitable and positive component of urban living—again, erasing other modes of experiencing a space through everyday life and uneventful encounters. I have argued throughout that temporary projects always exist at the intersection of many other temporalities and forms of engaging with space, and this is particularly felt where vacancy is the result of long-term uncertainty not just for investors and local governments but also for workers and residents in particular, as in the shopping centre at Elephant and Castle. The position of art practitioners is complex and inevitably fraught: offering visibility to communities under threat of displacement thanks to funding or access provided by the very actors that will cause such displacement is a hard test for the autonomy and integrity of their claims to socially engaged practices. Breaking from the straitjacket of managed and instrumental temporal community engagement, the open-endedness of the encounters enabled practitioners and participants to generate an open space that could break from the prescribed performance of temporariness. A fine-grained and longitudinal analysis of the experiential economies produced through temporary uses can reveal, as in this concrete case, the performative indeterminacy that marks the limit of the scripted interactions and that sometimes enabled agonistic encounters that not only puncture the dominant framing but may even contribute to the formation and development of new political alliances and coordinated efforts to inform, protest and propose more just alternatives to market-led urban logics.

---

[79] Vickery, 2007, p. 77.

[80] St Hill, 2016.

Chapter 5. Planning a temporary city of on-demand communities

Temporariness in planning at times of austerity

In the relatively short temporal arc traced over the course of this book, temporary urbanism has been discussed as a heterogeneous field of practice. Urban planning is one of the disciplinary origins and a constant element in the development of a shared discourse on temporary urbanism: from the urban regeneration officers involved in setting up the Meanwhile Project to local boroughs promoting ad hoc developments, such as Hackney's Art in Empty Spaces or Newham's Meanwhile London competition, to various development agencies acting as commissioners or discursive intermediaries. Planning is the realm where references to temporary uses of land and buildings was most common: short-term commercial and non-commercial uses of vacant buildings and land have always been part of the cultural and economic landscape of cities. However, it is only recently that interim, temporary and meanwhile uses have started to be defended as key tools of urban regeneration[1] and as capable of bringing long-term community benefits, often through collaborations with civic and third-sector organisations. Temporary urban projects, it is argued, are ideal for community-oriented activities,[2] and forms of collaboration can enable more environmentally sustainable and participatory ways of designing, delivering and organising space.[3] The embedding of temporary projects in future planning, in this view, would open up the possibility for them to be more than a 'creative filler' and become a transformative component of a longer-term community-oriented programme.

The debate on the role of temporary projects, community organisations and wider urban planning has become more polarised with the austerity responses to the situation caused by the global financial crisis of 2008. To critics, the inclusion of interim uses and projects in urban policymaking has turned them into strategic tools belonging to the 'new vernacular' of austerity urbanism[4] and post-recession 'creative city policymaking'.[5] With vacant and abandoned spaces becoming key sites from which to understand forms of urbanisation emerging from the territorialising of the global financial crisis,[6] the implication of community groups in their uses requires critical examination. As such, scholars who have engaged with temporary urban practices under austerity have highlighted how short-term uses become practical and symbolic sites of negotiations. The sharing of responsibilities and the transformative potential of interim uses requires careful analysis of the conditions within which they develop as well as the agendas of the different actors and power relations. As argued by Lauren Andres in her comparative study of Lausanne and Marseille, temporary uses have the potential of transforming urban development dynamics into more community-oriented approaches. To assess this potential, however, it is necessary to analyse the specific distribution of power between sets of stakeholders in the emergence of 'multistage governance arrangements'.[7]

In British cities affected by decreasing public spending, the question becomes particularly significant with regards to the role of community groups and voluntary organisations in the design and delivery of public services. 'Austerity localism' combines localism and the 'Big Society' discourse to serve the political function of refracting criticism through a celebration of community responses and voluntarism in the context of a shrinking public sector.[8] Local authorities, forced to become 'agents of austerity', were encouraged to establish new partnerships and collaborations with service users and civil society groups as part of their strategies for maintaining social programmes while also managing and administering budget cuts.[9] The establishment of community-oriented temporary uses under conditions of urban austerity requires that attention be paid to the assumptions, frictions and power relations at play. Since ‘tactical forms’ of organising in emerging ‘pop-up geographies’ rely on the mobilisation of users at short notice and for short or uncertain periods of time, the possibility of transposing this logic to community organising and service provision is far from given. In this chapter, I propose to look at this question through an examination of the temporalities of participation in the design and delivery of community-led interim uses. Borrowing a concept from studies of flexible and casual labour, I argue that the logic of temporary uses in community-oriented activities can be seen to parallel that of ‘on-demand’ labour, based on notions of networked connectivity that presupposes both mobility and flexibility.[10] In what follows, I explore the idea of ‘on-demand communities’ through the analysis of the imagined and actual role of ‘the community’ in the commission of a temporary youth centre in Hackney Wick, London. The temporary centre, built on a vacant plot of land, was part of a number of interim uses programmes in the areas surrounding the London 2012 Olympic Games site. I contrast temporary use mechanisms with the promise of long-term social benefits to discuss the normative and exclusionary logic of ‘on-demand community’ as an important element of wider pop-up urban geographies at times of austerity and precarisation.

---

[1] Reynolds, 2011.

[2] Bishop and Williams, 2012.

[3] Petcou and Petrescu, 2015.

[4] Tonkiss, 2013.

[5] Mould, 2014.

[6] O'Callaghan, Di Feliciantonio and Byrne, 2018; see also Ferreri and Vasudevan, 2019.

[7] Andres, 2013, p. 760.

[8] Featherstone, Ince, Mackinnon, Strauss and Cumbers, 2012.

‘Stitching the fringes’ before and after the Olympics

Many of the practices of temporary use in the borough of Hackney have taken place either directly or indirectly in the shadow of the London 2012 Olympic Games and its planned transformation of East London. The Olympic Games is a significant tool for contemporary urban development and is often used as a testbed for large-scale urban transformation.[11] Given the broad institutional support for temporary urbanism by London’s architectural and urban planning establishment, it is unsurprising that temporary schemes emerged as an important component of the post-Olympic redevelopment agenda both within the main Olympic venue and its surrounding areas through the Legacy agenda. To understand their emergence, it is useful to revisit the longer urban genealogy of the Games and its legacy. As has been widely argued, the Olympic bid was publicly justified through the promise of regenerating a derelict and neglected area of East London. The discourse of post-Olympic legacy relied on a long-term portrayal of the Lower Lea Valley and its surrounding urban areas, spanning three different London boroughs, as an urban ‘edgeland’.[12] As early as 2005, the Valley was identified as a strategic area for urban development, as demonstrated by the establishment of the London Thames Gateway Development Corporation (LTGDC).[13] In 2012, some of the LTGDC’s functions and assets were taken over by the London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC), which replaced the Olympic Delivery Authority and the Olympic Park Legacy Company. As London’s first Mayoral Development Corporation, it was tasked with planning and delivering the legacy of the Games and combined the functions and powers of its predecessors, such as the assembly and management of vacant land, with new powers inherited from local government. This included the responsibility for local planning well beyond the boundaries of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (QEOP), including Hackney Wick and Fish Island, from which it is separated by the Lee

---

[9] Penny, 2017; Lauermann, 2018.

[10] Malin and Chandler, 2016. For a critique of imaginaries of networked urbanism and its relationship to existing social and spatial inequalities, see Blokland and Savage, 2008.

[11] Chalkley and Essex, 1999; Gold and Gold, 2008.

[12] See Davis, 2016; see also Davis and Thornley, 2010.

[13] Poynter, 2009.

Navigation canal.

Temporary projects have had a longer trajectory as urban design tools in the areas within and adjacent to the Games' main site, with deep roots in the history of the LLDC and its staffing. Many officers in the LLDC had previously worked at Design for London, a team within the Greater London Authority that played a central role in the development of an urban policy discourse around temporary uses in the capital, under the leadership of Peter Bishop, co-author of *The Temporary City* (2012). After the disbandment of Design for London, several planning and urban design officers moved to the Olympic Park Legacy Company and then to the LLDC, in what one of them described as a 'transfer of team'.[14] The continuity of approach to local development and the introduction of socially oriented temporary projects in planning derived from their previous experience in the area, particularly through a programme of small-scale architectural, planning and design interventions in the areas adjacent to the QEOP, as reviewed in the 2013 publication *Stitching the Fringes: Working Around the Olympic Park*. The programme spanned five areas: to the west of the Park, Hackney Marshes, Hackney Wick and Bromley-by-Bow; and to the east, Leyton and Stratford. Interventions varied and ranged from physical improvements in the public realm and green landscaping to the pop-up reuse of shop fronts and the establishment of new venues for the arts and creative industries, such as the White Building, in Hackney Wick.

In the publication, the Lower Lea Valley was described as a 'tear in London's fabric' which required 'stitching' through targeted interventions on the landscape.[15] The overall pro-growth purpose of the programme was clearly stated in the Mayor of London's foreword to the document, which described local development in these areas as 'central' to the realisation of the 'real promise' of the 2012 Games: neighbourhoods such as Hackney Wick and Fish Island 'must grow and improve in parallel with those in the [Olympic] Park. [They] cannot feel like they are on the edge, looking across at something new. Instead they must be a central part of the transformation'.[16] The 'fringes' thus denoted both a discursive peripheralisation of the entire area in relation to the city's core and the more local marginalisation in relation to the Olympic main site. The metaphor of 'stitching' extended beyond physical redevelopment to its residents who were presumed to be both spatially and socially disconnected. In the urban regeneration discourse, depictions that devalue existing residents and spatial uses is a common mechanism used by both public and private agencies to justify the need for redevelopment, generating marginalisation and territorial stigmatisation of working class spaces such as formerly industrial areas and council housing estates.[17] The production of spatial stigmatisation has been a common feature in redevelopment through mega-sport events.[18] In the run-up to the London 2012 Olympic bid, it has been argued that the marginalisation of inhabitants and prior uses of the Lower Lea Valley had supported arguments in favour of the compulsory purchase of land and property, including of publicly accessible private land such as the Manor garden allotments.[19]

The 'stitching' metaphor persisted in the LLDC's approach towards the neighbourhoods surrounding the main Olympic site and in the justification for promoting temporary uses after the sport event in 2012. In the words of an officer, the key purpose of commissioning interim uses was about 'trying to make it all feel like one place rather than two places'.[20] In this phase, the LLDC commissioned and supported temporary uses through calls for proposals and small-scale funding aimed at so-called 'Grassroot Interim Uses Projects',[21] most of which were to be placed around new mobility infrastructures, which included the development of public transport links as well as green pathways and the construction of new bridges. Strategically located temporary uses played both a practical and a symbolic role in bridging areas that had been separated from the main site by an insurmountable and heavily militarised fence:

---

[14] Interview with LLDC officer, 15 July 2014.

[15] Design for London, 2013, p. 15.

[16] Ibid., p. 4.

[17] Slater, 2018; see also Ben Campkin's book *Remaking London: Decline and Regeneration in Urban Culture* (2013).

[18] Paton, 2018.

[19] Davis and Thornley, 2010; Raco and Tunney, 2010.

[20] Interview with LLDC officer, 15 July 2014.

[21] London Legacy Development Corporation, 2014.

> those are routes that are unfamiliar at the moment and that need to become part of people's local mental map of the place and by lining these routes we can shorten the distance, the sort of mental distance, between here [Hackney Wick] and here [Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park].[22]

Small urban design interventions were meant to involve community groups in the development of activities and projects that animated new landscapes and signposted new paths.[23] Beyond this spatial use, in the early phases of the post-Olympic legacy, interim uses were also deployed for the first time as 'testing sites' for community-oriented activities, as I examine in more detail below.

Learning from Others: interim uses as urban 'testing sites'

The idea of deploying community-oriented interim uses as planning and policy 'testing sites' was a key component in the local development strategies of the LLDC. In 2012, the Corporation commissioned a series of research reports from a range of organisations and researchers titled *Learning from Others.*[24] The seven-volume publication was delivered in 2013 for internal distribution and policy guidance and covered a range of topics such as 'Live Art and Performance Projects', 'Delivery and Financial Models for Interim Projects', 'Local and Community Projects', 'Material Recycling and Reuse Projects'. The reports used case studies from London and other global cities to present recommendations and 'lessons' for the delivery of the Olympic legacy. Its significance was twofold. Firstly, it introduced community-oriented temporary uses as a subset of 'interim use' practices and as different from temporary commercial leases, such as for parking, storage or private events, which have become customary in large-scale development. Secondly, it promoted the idea that interim uses could act as 'testing sites' and 'be used to test design agendas'.[25] As stated in the first volume of the report, 'Interim uses are a key ingredient to evolving and applying long-term strategies to specific areas for a specific purpose and group of people, and are therefore an opportunity for the LLDC to test and build its long-term aspirations through a meaningful interim phase.'[26] In practice, the notion *of testing* meant that some of the key elements in the agenda of the Olympic legacy could be 'experimented with' through temporary commissions and projects: both in terms of new architectural and design approaches to physical redevelopment and in terms of new approaches to 'grassroot' urban design and the delivery of socio-economic regeneration programmes. This was particularly valued in relation to the delivery of community facilities required as a condition of the planning permission for the Legacy Community Scheme and would be achieved by focusing on uses that promoted the regeneration objectives of 'sports, healthy living, arts and culture and community engagement'.[27]

---

[22] Interview with LLDC officer, 15 July 2014.

[23] Ferreri and Trogal, 2018.

[24] London Legacy Development Corporation, 2012.

[25] London Legacy Development Corporations, 2013c, p. 7.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Interview with LLDC officer, 15 July 2014.

To LLDC officers, the programme offered a valuable opportunity for undertaking 'different types of interim use experiments' and for 'tak[ing] risks'.[28] The risk-taking dimension of interim uses was understood both in terms of new design approaches and in relation to process-based collaborative design and governance in partnership with local groups, organisations and urban professionals. According to the *Learning from Others* report, one of the benefits of interim uses is that 'projects can be easily created and collaboratively delivered by the community, young professionals and the public and private sector, allowing a healthy mix of different people involved in the place shaping of an area'.[29] Partnerships between public and private sectors, community groups and professionals were presented as a desirable 'healthy mix' for delivering community facilities. The loose usage of the language of risk and testing appears to apply a design and architectural framework to the delivery of social benefits and community engagement, with problematic deterministic undertones as the fringes that needed 'stitching' become experimental sites for social and architectural 'tests'. The notion of 'testing points' echoes what Lauermann has described as a shift within entrepreneurial urbanism characterised by the emergence of the mechanism of 'policy experiments' in parallel to conventional growth politics and involving 'a variety of metrics for evaluating entrepreneurial "success" and "failure" in terms other than local economic growth'.[30] In what follows, I draw on the planning and delivery of Hub67 to examine tensions emerging between the official urban agenda with its specific metrics and the professionals and community groups that constituted the 'grassroot' counterpart of the commission.

Vacant land and setting up a temporary community hub

To residents, the idea of setting up a community hub originated in 2010 when the organisers of the annual Hackney Wick Festival won the £1 million Big Local fund. The Big Lottery fund had been awarded to a hundred community groups in the UK with the aim of supporting residents 'to make [their] community a better place to live, changing things for the better'.[31] With money from the fund, the organisers set up the 'Wick Award' and led a local consultation to decide how to spend it.[32] As narrated by the former chair of the Hackney Wick Festival, a youth worker, the results of the consultation were clear: a 'community hub, particularly for young people, was something that was coming up again and again' at a time when the area was increasingly witnessing the opening of 'eateries, the cafes, those kind of places that the average Hackney Wick residents can't afford or don't identify with'.[33] The perceived alienation of local residents—and particularly young people—from developments linked to the arts and creative industries finds an echo in demographic data. According to the 2011 census, the two wards to which Hackney Wick belongs are among the most deprived in London; in the Wick Ward, 40.8 per cent of dependent children are in out-of-work households, compared with a national average of 18.1 per cent.[34] Despite the Big Local funding, finding a local venue to establish a youth centre proved difficult: 'that all went very wrong. We didn't really have a venue, we couldn't find anything'. For two years, the former chair of the Hackney Wick Festival arranged meetings with civil servants, local politicians and officers from local councils to garner support for the centre. One day she was approached by an LLDC officer at a local community event and told about their decision to commission a temporary purpose-built youth centre on a vacant plot of land, property of the

---

[28] Interview with LLDC officer, 2 September 2014.

[29] LLDC, 2013, p. 7.

[30] Lauermann, 2018, p. 214.

[31] The Big Local 2015, http://localtrust.org.uk/library/programme-guidance/what-is-big-local/

[32] Wick Award. Retrieved from http://wickaward.co.uk/

[33] Interview with the former chair of the Wick Award, 17 July 2014.

[34] Weber-Newth, Schlüter and Helbrecht, 2017, p. 723.

Corporation.

Accounts of temporary and interim uses often present vacant spaces as spontaneous 'interstices' in cities, and there is limited scholarship to date presenting in-depth analyses of the politics of vacancy production.[35] To avoid a tabula rasa approach to temporary uses, it is important to briefly explain the history of the site on which Hub67 was built. The land, at 67 Rothbury Road, was one of seven plots and buildings acquired by the London Thames Gateway Development Corporation (LTGDC) in the summer of 2010. The plot had been purchased from PricewaterhouseCoopers—administrators of the property after the original owner, land trading company Rock Investments, filed for bankruptcy in 2009 following the global financial crisis. The purchase was accompanied by a £3 million investment by the LTGDC in improving access to and through Hackney Wick through the redesign of alleyways, paths, pedestrian bridges, new lighting and surveillance of public spaces, delivered in conjunction with the London Development Agency and the Olympic Delivery Authority. Prior to the acquisition, the land had been occupied by a warehouse that since 1999 had hosted the studios of Bangla TV, later relocated to Pudding Mill Lane.

The vacant plot was located a few hundred metres from the exit of the Hackney Wick Overground station and on the pedestrian route along White Post Lane towards the popular Queen's Yard and the White Building, a temporary art studio and exhibition space refurbished as part of the *Stitching the Fringes* programme and owned by the LLDC. As reported by *The Estates Gazette* in 2010*,* the LTGDC chief executive wanted Hackney Wick to emerge 'from underneath the shadow of the Olympic stadium to become the next *destination* for creative industry creation and growth after the 2012 Games'.[36] The vacancy of the plot of land on which Hub67 was built was thus the result of both the eastward expansion of London's urban growth strategy—through the LTGDC, the Olympic bid and the establishment of a post-Games Mayoral Development Corporation—and of the effect of the financial crisis on speculative real estate investment. In 2011, a planning application submitted by the LTGDC proposed the construction of a mixed-use development of over 100 flats, 60,000 square feet of workspaces and 17,000 square feet of retail, indicating a clear public-led policy direction for the development of the mainly light-industrial area and low-income residential area.

When the proposed redevelopment of the site was delayed, the LLDC was approached by a series of private companies seeking to lease the vacant site and establish temporary food and retail outlets, in the expectation of high footfall in the area during the London 2012 Games.[37] Officers working in urban design proposed instead to 'let it for free and do a "meanwhile" competition'.[38] As narrated by another member of the team:

> We thought, we have got these sites, wouldn't it be great to do something that was more open to the community? That made the most of it and met our objectives and our priority themes? That looked at animating routes, ultimately, in the longer-term, into Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park? [Something] that came and was grown from the local community? And had maybe a different offer than some of the other projects that we've been doing, like the White Building, which was more for the artistic community and creatives?[39]

In the positive narrative of the officers, the 'meanwhile' use would be offering something distinctively different from other artistic and 'creative' temporary uses that the Corporation had already supported in Hackney Wick. Beyond 'animating' routes into the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and meeting the 'priority themes' of the Legacy, the programme was to involve a 'local community' understood as distinct from other local artistic and creative communities. Such a distinction shows the establishment of temporary uses as a vernacular of creative cities policies, as argued by Oli Mould. It also indicates a clear separation in the vision of the LLDC between different inhabitants and uses of the neighbourhood, which, nonetheless, are positioned both on the same plane, regardless of social inequalities. Two months before the London 2012 Games, a call was put out for the three-month use of one part of the 67 Rothbury Road site and was won by Frontside Gardens, a temporary volunteer-run skate park assembled through recycled materials.[40] At the end of the following year, a call for tender was put out for the land beside the skate park, whose lease had been extended [Figure 9].

---

[35] See O'Callaghan et al., 2018 and Safransky, 2014.

[36] Emphasis added, quoted in Norman, Paul (2010, July 1). LTGDC confirms Hackney Wick buys from Kemsley's Rock. *The Estates Gazette*. Retrieved from http://www.egi.co.uk/

[37] The high footfall did not materialise because Transport for London decided to alternate traffic at Hackney Wick Station to control passenger flow during the Games.

[38] Interview with LLDC officer, 15 July 2014.

[39] Interview with LLDC officer, 2 September 2014.

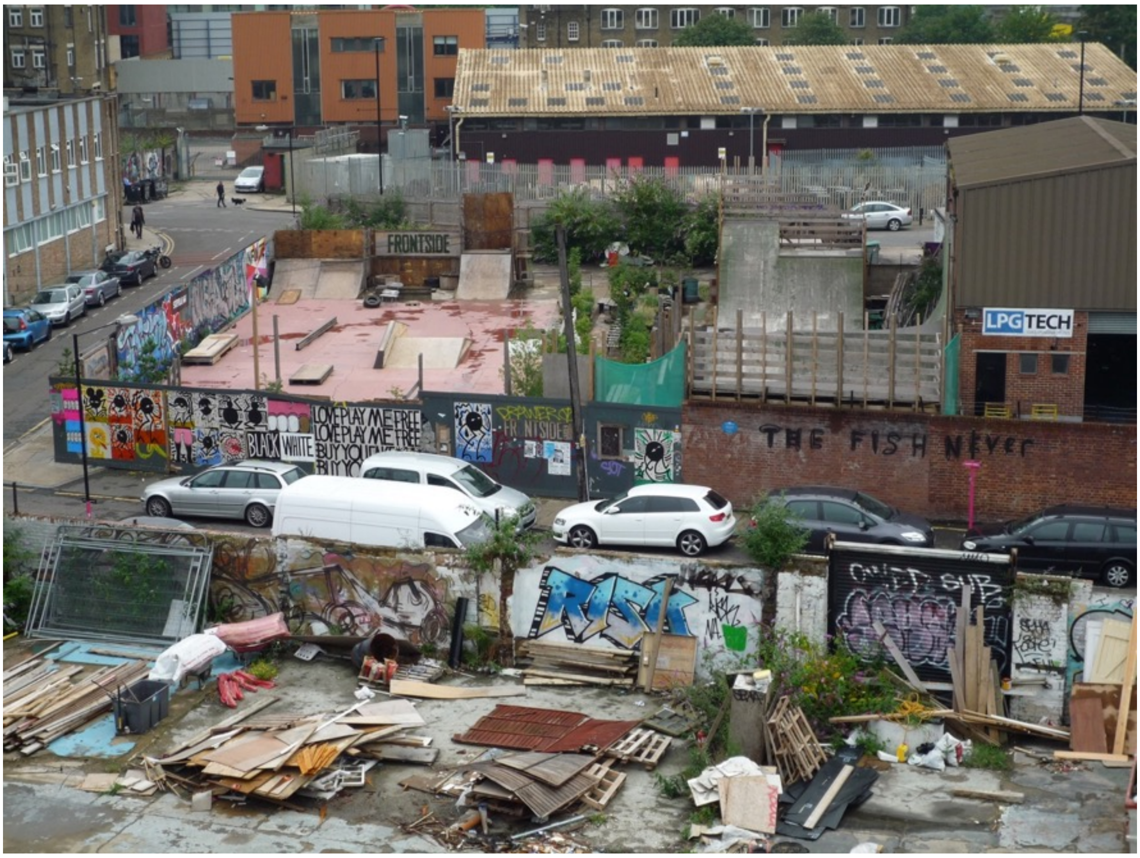


Figure 9. View from the platform of the Hackney Wick Overground station. At the back of Frontside Gardens, the temporary skate park, the still vacant 67 Rothbury Road site, Hackney Wick, London, 11 July 2014. Source: author.

Young people and the 'two communities'

Originally, the hub was to be built during the spring and summer of 2013, but the project was delayed by logistical and legal issues internal to the LLDC. It was only in late autumn 2013 that a selection of socially engaged architecture and design studios were invited to tender for a temporary community hub. The winning architectural project was centred on two elements: a participatory design process that would involve future users and a sustainable approach through the reuse and repurposing of existing materials from the Games, mainly the metal containers and fences. These two components motivated what the Hub67 architect defined as 'a pragmatic' approach to the proposal:

---

[40] Frontside Gardens was presented as a positive case study in the 'Interim Uses' section of the LLDC Local Plan (2015).

> given where we are and given what we got, the whole premise being [that we] need to reuse and [given] the uncertainty of what we were really going to be [re]using […] the detail and the niceness would be in the detail rather than in the actual form. I liked the idea that you find some cabins and stack them up on top of each other and say this is a community centre, [and] now we are going to make it nice. That tends to be our approach.[41]

Given the community-led consultation exercise of 2011 and the identification of the need for a community youth centre, the architects at Hub67 expected to be connected with an already established youth group ready to engage in the design and decision-making process. Their original plan was to 'try to make it as simple a thing as we can and then get the community in to make it their own', since it was understood that the more the building would be designed, the less ownership there would be by the community.

The initial youth group, however, was no longer active. The long delay between the consultation, the offer of the site in 2013 and the actual beginning of design in the spring of 2014 had negatively affected the participation and interest of local young people and youth workers. During this time, attempts had been made to set up an itinerant youth club with the aim of building a potential user group to be involved in the design. As explained by the former chair of the Hackney Wick Festival, many venues around Hackney Wick had offered spaces, but their uncertain and flexible availability over time was disruptive to the process of developing a consistent youth group:

> we needed to develop some consistency. We needed to have stuff happening at a time when they knew that it was happening. We couldn't shift things from one week to the next because on an outreach basis we didn't have that sort of relationship with [young people]. So, we needed to be able to say to them, pitch up on a Tuesday night, wherever it is and we'll see you there. And that wasn't possible because of the shifting nature of a lot of stuff that happened in the Wick.

The second issue affecting participation and interest in the design process had to do with the actual building location. In her view, drawing or experience as a youth worker, the 'two communities' that needed to be connected were not the old and the new neighbourhoods in the QEOP, as was the objective of the LLDC, but rather the two socially, culturally and economically different communities within Hackney Wick itself. Apparent to local residents at the time was the separation between the communities living in council housing, such as the Trowbridge Estate and the Eastway Park Estate in the northern part of the Wick Ward, and the 'creative' area south of the railway line, where most cafes, restaurants and nightlife venues were located. The relationship between the residential side and the creative areas was, in her opinion, 'very limited' because of the unaffordable prices of food and beverages and because young people tended to be 'intimidated by these spaces'. It was for this reason that they had planned a youth hub, which was intended 'for people who haven't made a lifestyle choice to live in Hackney Wick, but who have no choice but to live in Hackney Wick […] This isn't another trendy venue where you can get a flat white or a flapjack… it really is about people who I think have been left behind'. The physical and cultural distance between the two areas, cut by a railway line, was an issue of concern, as the Rothbury Road site offered by the LLDC was located in the southern ‘creative’ side of Hackney Wick. In 2014, concerns were expressed that this might constitute a barrier to participation, as ‘it might be [too far] and there will be people who will have problems getting there’ given that it was ‘not uncommon’ for teenagers to have never crossed ‘the Wick’ beyond the railway station.

---

[41] Interview with the former chair of the Wick Award, 17 July 2014.

Risky grassroot

Hub67 was a key project within the LLDC’s Grassroot Interim Uses programme. To the Corporation, it exemplified the two main values ascribed to temporary uses, namely experimenting with new approaches to urban design and ‘testing’ new ways of working with local communities:

> from a design perspective […] more ambitious, creative, recycled, reused, up-cycled approaches. From a community perspective, it is about trialling and piloting models, new approaches, new kinds of facilities, which is exactly what Hub 67 is aiming to do. And it’s always about doing that in a temporary, kind of light-touch way, where we can take a few more risks and we can try things out.[42]

In the experience of the Hub67 architects, however, the risks of repurposing and reusing existing materials fell mostly on them due to the discrepancy between the unpredictability of innovative designs and the institutional demands of the LLDC. To begin with, the decision to extend the temporal length of the project to over two years meant that the construction had to be subjected to building regulations and the formerly temporary and makeshift structure had to be anchored by deep cement foundations.[43] Secondly, although the containers had been assembled for short-term summer use, the LLDC required the building to have full certification for thermal efficiency, so the architects had to rethink their approach to repurposing. The tendering requirements of the LLDC, moreover, meant that the building specifications agreement shifted the risk of experimenting with recycled materials from the organisation to the suppliers, in this case the architectural studio. As explained by one of the architects of Hub67 ‘it’s all about liability, [about] who will take on the risk of reused stuff’. At the same time, the experimental character of the project made it valuable to the studio, despite their expectations to make a loss or at most to break even with costs:

> to prove that the LLDC can produce something with recycled materials, there should be real life building contracts in order to make this happen, and so I hope at the end we could sit down and say, ok, we’ve learnt this and this and this, and we are not going to do again like this, or we will, and that it does become constructive.

For the architects, the value of the project thus resided in the chance of testing an approach with and for the LLDC through yet untested design processes revolving around the sustainable reuse of existing materials. The delivery of the building would become tangible evidence of how it was possible ‘to change the way we build buildings’ with the possibility that the lesson could inform future LLDC commissions and building contracts. The building was finally completed in November 2014 and opened to the public in the middle of December 2014.

Beyond the construction, the governance and funding structure set up a model that also involved a degree of risk for community groups involved in the project, as is common in urban entrepreneurial models. The LLDC had provided the plot of land, managed its commission and funded the construction of the building. During its first year, it was also involved in its management, setting key performance indicators such as opening hours every week, the number of visitors through the doors, and the number of community groups supported by use of the space. Setting indicators clearly shows that despite the rhetoric of a ‘grassroot’ space, the management framework of the Hub was substantially top-down and followed corporate standards of performance assessment. This was matched by a mixed funding approach through which the Wick Award was asked to contribute part of the salary of the only full-time paid staff. Moreover, in the management and funding structure there was an expectation that Hub67 would achieve financial sustainability by its second year. The possibility that alternative income would need to be sought through commercial hire of the venue had already been written into early drafts of the Hub67 Management Plan in 2014, framing a strong push for an entrepreneurial and self-funded approach to the delivery of the activities in the medium term, which members of the Hub67 steering group[44] saw as highly unrealistic. In May 2016, as the centre’s lease continued to be extended, the LLDC finally gave the management to The Yard Theatre, an independent pop-up venue and theatre group based in nearby ‘creative’ Queens’ Yard [Figure 10].

---

[42] Interview with LLDC officer, 2 September 2014.

[43] Ferreri and Lang, 2016.

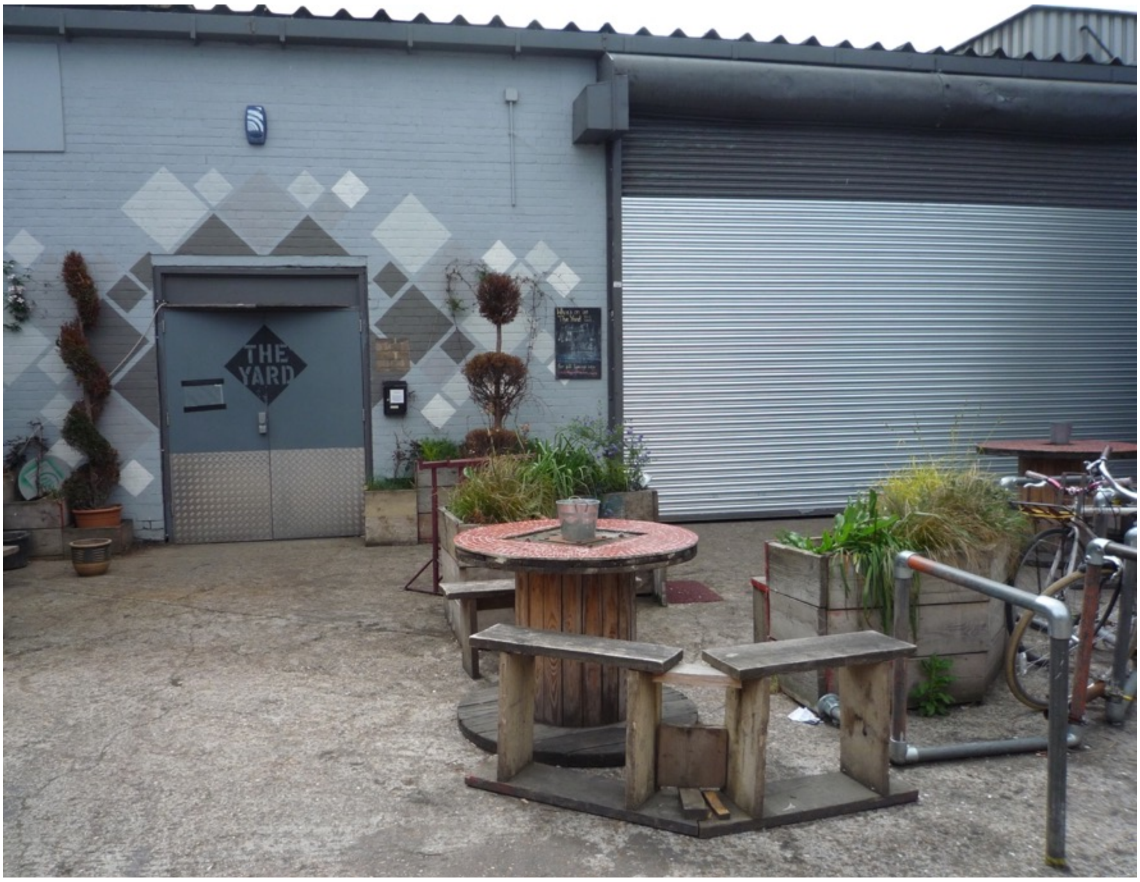


Figure 10. The Yard Theatre, Queens Yard, Hackney Wick, London. Source: author.

---

[44] The governance of the centre involved a multi-stakeholder management structure and a voluntary steering group composed of residents, local and non-local professionals as well as the Hackney Wick Festival committee.

Temporary 'urban vitality' in the LLDC Local Plan (2015-2031)

Alongside a directly managed 'grassroot interim use programme', temporary pilot projects were also commissioned and supported through small-scale funding and commissions. In 2014, LLDC officers had identified specific sites for interim use on the 'fringes', including along the Lee Navigation Canal. Policy documents and pilot projects fed into the LLDC Draft Local Plan 2015-2031, published in August 2014, which set out the parameters of 'local development'—economic, social and cultural—for the following sixteen years. The draft was open to public consultation, and in autumn 2014 local community groups, residents, researchers and businesses as well as members of the planning network Just Space sent comments and objections to the Planning Inspector.[45] They called for and obtained an Examination in Public (EiP) of the plan, which was held at the LLDC's headquarters in Stratford during the first week of March 2015. Within the Draft Local Plan, temporary uses had a small but significant place in section 4 of the 'Developing Business Growth, Jobs and Lifelong Learning' chapter.[46] Policy B.3, titled 'Creating vitality through interim uses', outlined the circumstances in which the Corporation would support interim uses:

> 1. Land has been set aside for development in the longer term and the proposed interim uses will reinforce the long-term leisure, cultural or event-based uses;
> 2. Vacant premises will be used for small-scale retail, community, sporting and leisure, community uses, or cultural and creative industries; or
> 3. Managed or affordable workspace is proposed prior to delivery of long-term phased development with planning permission.

In addition, proposals were asked to demonstrate that 'The interim uses will not impact upon the deliverability of the site allocations within this Local Plan or extant permanent planning permissions' and that 'The uses will have no unacceptable adverse impacts on the amenity or function of the existing permanent business or residential community'.[47]

In preparation for the Examination in Public, the objectors took issue with two points of the policy. The first concerned the overall approach of the urban development vehicle to temporariness. Policy B.3 frames interim use proposals in negative terms by outlining what interim uses are not supposed to do: they are not supposed to impact on existing planning permissions, on the allocation of vacant sites for development and on the 'amenity or function' of existing businesses or residents. That is, interim uses would be supported and encouraged if and when their presence does not pose a challenge to existing as well as future uses of the land or the building. In other words, they would be supported only if they prove useful to local promotional activities while remaining easily removable in the trajectory to future transformations, as clearly explained in the Reasoned Justification for the policy:

> Within the Legacy Corporation area, there are many land parcels awaiting redevelopment within the longer term, as well as unoccupied small, retail or business units. Derelict sites and buildings can impact negatively on the perception of the safety and visual quality of the public realm. Interim uses can have potential to bring positive impacts through character and footfall, promoting economic prosperity. For these reasons, interim uses shall be supported where they create vitality and viability to

---

[45] Just Space (2015, LLDC Local Plan Examination starts this week, online, 1 March, available at www.justspace.org.uk [accessed 15 September 2017].

[46] LLDC, Draft Local Plan 2015-2031, p. 41.

[47] Cross-reference to policies: B.2; B.4 London Plan policy: 4.6 LLDC, Draft Local Plan 2015-2031 (August 2014).

> streets, and create active frontages, as well as 'green' proposals such as community allotments and gardens.[48]

The focus on positive ideas of safety and the improvement of the 'visual quality' of the public realm reproduces an imagined role of vacant space reuse as a performative tool to dispel negative place perceptions, in continuation from their role as creative cities' 'fillers' at times of recession. Moreover, temporary uses are imaged as 'active frontages' to generate character and footfall, generating dynamism and 'vitality'. In parallel to the example of the experiential economy of Elephant & Castle, here too they are valued in so far as they promote economic prosperity by offering a spectacle of active frontage for streets needing injections of vitality. Interim uses are deployed to gain a competitive advantage in dynamics of urban and interurban competition for tourists and visitors and thus become explicit tools for urban place marketing.[49]

The second issue raised by objectors concerned community engagement. Policy B.3 belongs to 'business growth, jobs and lifelong learning' and, in the language of the Olympic legacy, local communities should be key beneficiaries. Yet it is not explained anywhere how local businesses and residents would benefit from such projects, whether they would be involved in deciding what will happen in the temporarily available 'land parcels and buildings' and how they could participate in commissioning them. While all precautions are taken for projects not to cause adverse impact on future development plans, the policy doesn't acknowledge the contrary scenario: their likely adverse impact on the community after their end if and when it is not possible to extend the community-oriented uses longer-term or relocate them to suitable, affordable local buildings or plots of land. On this second issue, the Planning Inspector formally asked the objectors to present evidence about the need for more community engagement in the design and implementation of interim uses and to submit potential proposals for policy change. Objectors responded in writing that Policy B.3 should 'ensure that interim use proposals are in line with the needs of local communities in the area and will benefit them in the long-term' and proposed to include the following additional paragraphs:

> Where the proposals are community-led, the policy should ensure the opportunity for the interim use to be continued or relocated if necessary according to the needs of the local community. [...] Proposals must be able to demonstrate that [...] they have been developed in collaboration with local business and community groups from the initial stages of scoping and design through to implementation and delivery.[50]

During the EiP hearings, evidence was given by representatives from local artists' studios and studio providers in support of these additions. Together and separately, they voiced a critique of the conceptual association between the 'creative and cultural sector' and flexible, temporary spaces. They drew on experiences of art spaces in Hackney Wick and Fish Island, such as Mother Studios and SPACE, and of artists' studios demolished to make space for the Games or at the time threatened by the development of the areas south of the Park, such as ACME Studios on Rowse Close in Stratford. They argued that cultural and creative communities need long-term affordable facilities and that the rise in pop-up spaces has an overwhelmingly negative impact on the sector, whose spaces are becoming ever more precarious. Research presented as part of the objections also considered that short-term availability risks excluding community groups and businesses in favour of temporary use professionals and intermediaries.[51] LLDC's representatives from the Planning Department maintained throughout the hearing that Policy B.3 was ‘sound’ and did not require any amendments. As explained in writing:

---

[48] Ibid, paragraph 4.26, p. 33.

[49] Colomb, 2012.

[50] Just Space, REP.LP.096-02 Just Space, Matter 2 Economy.

[51] Ferreri, M. REP.LP.069, Statement for the LLDC Publication Local Plan Examination. Response to Matter 2, question 18.

> Community engagement through the development of all proposals is encouraged, and this includes temporary use applications; however, it would not be appropriate to single out interim uses as specifically requiring community engagement in their development, as they are by their very nature temporary. The policy stipulates that interim uses should have no unacceptable adverse impacts on amenity, function, business or residential communities so these matters will be considered.[52]

The Inspector was satisfied with the response, and Policy B.3 remained unchanged and will characterise LLDC support for temporary uses until 2031, as long as they ‘create vitality’ without interfering with the potential ‘business as usual’ activities of investors in the form of upmarket residential developments, and as long as local communities and creative practitioners do not expect to have a say in the future of the site and in actually shaping their long-term possibility to respond to actual local needs.

‘Seeding’ long-term uses

Returning to the case of Hub67 is useful to illustrate precisely the kind of objections raised by community groups and researchers with regards to community involvement in temporary uses and their inscription in local urban design and development. In promotional materials and in interviews with LLDC officers, Hub67 was presented as a ‘prototype’ for delivering longer-term regeneration benefits. The LLDC had justified building a temporary rather than a permanent community youth facility in Hackney Wick as a question of building a social infrastructure before the actual building: ‘what we don’t want to do is to build a community place, a youth club, a community hall, [which] then just sits empty because there isn’t anyone who identifies with it, or knows it’s there, or feels any ownership of it’.[53] The future of these temporary community-oriented experiments, however, was beginning to be publicly questioned, for instance in the context of public examinations of the local development plan.[54] As commented by the same officer: ‘people are realizing that interim uses are all very well, but it is disappointing when they finish’, so the LLDC was keen to experiment with ‘using these sites as opportunities for seeding long term uses’.

Rather than ‘seeding long term uses’ in the areas where the projects were set, the officers imagined the seeding as part of the design of new neighbourhoods on the QEOP site where the facilities would be transferred to after an ‘incubation’ period in Hackney Wick. When asked for details, the ‘seeding’ was explained through another metaphor: that of a ‘stepping stone’ towards the new developments in the Park: ‘[Hub67] is meant to be a place or a facility that people feel ownership of and then could hopefully transfer, like a pop-up. We can’t carry lock stock and barrel into the park, but at least, whoever is running it, and the user groups, can transfer in’.[55] Using the interim uses as stepping stones, user groups and the hub managers were imagined hopping over the canal to the newly developed neighbourhoods. The ‘stepping stone’ metaphor could not offer a clearer vision for the logic of pop-up networked and mobile connectivity, which the local users would ‘hopefully’ be able to comply with.

---

[52] Statement on behalf of the London Legacy Development Corporation (9 February 2015), available at: www.queenelizabetholympic park.co.uk/our-story/transforming-east- london/local-plan/examination-of-the- legacy-corporation-local-plan [accessed 10 October 2016].

[53] Interview with LLDC officer, 15 July 2014.

[54] London Legacy Development Corporation. (2013a). Local Plan Consultation Document (December). London: LLDC.

[55] Interview with LLDC officer, 15 July 2014.

The idea that the social infrastructure of Hub67 could transfer so easily was met with scepticism and described by people involved in its steering group as ‘really unrealistic’. As evidenced by the experience of trying to set up a pop-up youth club, young people found themselves marginalised by the local geographies of the ‘creative industries’, by their housing situation and by their relative spatial isolation in the northern part of the Hackney Wick Ward, and therefore would be unlikely to be able to ‘transfer’ their activities elsewhere. The transferring scenario showed a potential lack of understanding of the human investment and commitment required to build a youth community facility: ‘it’s not as simple as just picking something up and moving it somewhere else’.[56] The idea of transferring a community club away from the neighbourhood raised questions about the involvement of local residents, community groups and potential other welfare and public sector officers, in contrast to the temporally limited investment of a development company. As observed by a local youth worker:

> from a political point of view, with a small p, I think it can be quite challenging for people like the Hackney youth services and the [local] councillors … not for the Legacy Company because I genuinely don’t think that they need to have that on-going investment in it. You know, they do their bit, it’s a pop-up and they go away again.

In addition to being a challenge for formal infrastructures of public and community support, the ‘pop-up’ imaginary of an interim-use project can foreclose involvement, as ‘it can be a bit of a get out. If something is not permanent, it could mean it’s not needed. It’s not relevant’. [57] A stark juxtaposition is made between the rootedness of Hackney Wick’s long-term residents and local authorities and a ‘pop-up’ development corporation whose investment in local regeneration was to be limited in time. In relation to the specific needs of young people in low-income areas, ‘making a temporary provision […] is actually quite irresponsible’. The temporary nature of the social benefits was remarked upon by local campaign groups, such as Save Hackney Wick, which challenged the idea that the Games’ legacy was ‘improving historically deprived areas’ by pointing out the lack of replacement, in the local plans, for the functions of Hub67 once the lease of the land ended (Save Hackney Wick, 2018). The difficulties in promoting participation of young people in the programming at Hub67 could also be ascribed to a contradiction between ‘on-demand’ and ‘pop-up’ approaches and the temporalities of creating a consistent group. As concluded by the authors of the Wick Award Big Local report in 2016, despite the centre being in operation for over a year, ‘none of the young people [interviewed] mentioned Hub 67’;[58] the authors recommended a specific outreach programme on the Trowbridge Estate and in the surrounding area.

The lease of the management to The Yard Theatre led to the creation of The Yard’s Young Artists programme, which enabled a more continuative approach to young people and youth-oriented activities. In 2019, the programme involved 75 young people from the ages of four to nineteen. As was observed by youth workers in the initial phase of the hub, participation of local teenagers was difficult to generate and sustain. Awareness of barriers to participation as well as of the distance between the ‘two communities’ led to a strategic approach, as explained by a Yard Theatre local coordinator:

> because there has historically been a lack of provision for young people in this area, it is a long-term project to bring people from the local area in. So, we have played a long game. In our primary years, from four to eleven, we work in partnerships with the local

---

[56] Interview with the former chair of the Wick Award, 17 July 2014.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Wick Award, 2016, p. 34.

> primary schools […] and we offer the activities through the schools' clubs provisions, so every week our artists go out and collect children from the schools and bring them to the hub. The idea being that we build connection with these young people […] so that in 5-year time, we will have local 15-year-olds involved too, because they have gone through the process with us.[59]

Despite the longer-term strategic planning, the future of the youth activities and of the centre remains highly precarious, as the management lease for Hub67 has only been renewed until the end of 2019. The original plan to relocate the centre across the canal by 2017 was delayed, and in 2019 it appears that it will not take place because the site of the new neighbourhood, Sweet Waters, is currently being redesigned as Clarnico Quay, a temporary 'creative' site to be managed by a temporary use company called Makeshift in a further extension of the temporary urbanism paradigm. The possibility that youth-oriented activities will continue at The Yard Theatre's main site also remains highly uncertain, given that the planned demolition and redevelopment of Queen's Yard are likely to result in the relocation of the theatre. The shift in the management of the centre demonstrated the alignment between the imaginary of a pop-up community infrastructure and cultural practices of temporary uses built around flexible and short-term planning. But the desire to develop a long-term programme responsive to the needs of local young people reveals the limits of a precarious infrastructure based on on-demand connectivity. Without a promise to relocate the Hub67, and with the main theatre site under threat of residential development, seeding long-term uses in the neighbourhood appears at best uncertain.

Learning to become 'on-demand communities'

'Grassroot' temporary uses in the neighbourhoods surrounding the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park were commissioned as sites for experimenting with new forms of producing urban spaces, both architecturally and in terms of community engagement. As the case of Hub67 has shown, translating the rhetoric of experimentation into practice created tensions not just in terms of complex contractual negotiations but also, importantly, in terms of the needs and temporalities of its direct beneficiaries in the local resident community. The self-organised approach to identifying limited resources for social programmes and fundraising for it at the national level—initiated and undertaken by volunteers in the spirit of the 'powerful spatial imaginary' of austerity localism[60]—met the insurmountable hurdle of a lack of institutional support to develop continuity of use. Under these conditions, establishing a relationship with the LLDC as one of the main landowners in the neighbourhood was a necessary tactic for gaining access to space. According to the metrics of experimental entrepreneurship, the case of Hub67 could be interpreted as a successful one: proactive civil society organisations deployed entrepreneurial and flexible tactics to gain community facilities, generating new governance and management models for the delivery of a social programme, particularly thanks to the involvement of The Yard Theatre, itself a successful example of a pop-up and self-funded cultural venue. However, the governance model set up by the LLDC through its interim use commission ultimately revolved around the externalisation of part of the funding and management risks to community and artistic organisations, making it a highly precarious arrangement.

Beyond the immediate concerns of the architectural design and the question of young people's participation, this model of interim use commission also externalised the political responsibility for the longer-term needs and expectations of its users. To those involved in Hub67, the longer-term horizon continues to be dominated by the likely replacement of social and community activities by more profitable residential uses, making visible a fundamental chasm between the rhetoric of community-led temporary use and the experimental and pro-growth urban agenda of the LLDC. The proposed regeneration benefits of the youth centre were fundamentally conditional on the acceptance of its future uprooting; the intended temporary beneficiaries—young people and the wider community—were not being worthy of long-term investment unless they themselves become mobile and transferrable. The idea of negotiating social benefits through interim uses reproduces imaginaries of 'drag and drop', temporary pop-up urbanism predicated on a normative fantasy of spatial mobility and flexibility that excludes large sections of the urban population, in particular young people from low-income backgrounds. In relation to their needs, Hub67 presents a clear case of welfare conditionality, where provision of a public service becomes dependent upon compliance with specific patterns of behaviour: acceptance of 'on demand' social connectivity and resignation to its 'transfer' elsewhere. Unsurprisingly, the favoured vehicles for the construction and management of a community centre were projects belonging to the repertoire of 'creative cities' tactical urbanism, such as self-organised pop-up theatres and temporary architectural projects. In a further extension of interim uses' 'creative' vernacular, excluded low-income communities are asked to learn from precarious creative practitioners and be ready to be summoned when and where needed, accepting that (social) collaborations will be pre-emptively short-term. The institutional incorporation of community-oriented 'grassroot' temporary uses could thus play a highly problematic role in ushering in and normalising new precarious ways for local communities to obtain social infrastructure and benefits at times of austerity.

---

[59] Interview with a Yard Theatre local coordinator, 18 February 2019.

[60] Featherstone, Ince, Mackinnon, Strauss and Cumbers, 2012.

Conclusions: the risk of planned precarisation

Community-oriented temporary uses are emerging as a subset of interim use practices in vacant spaces, alongside but distinctive from creative and commercial practices. In the context of urban austerity policymaking in the United Kingdom, they have become vehicles for delivering social benefits, normalising exclusionary logics of 'on demand connectivity' and temporal foreclosure. As explored in this chapter, such a normalisation becomes particularly problematic in the case of projects commissioned by a public development body under an 'urban regeneration' agenda, in an area already marked by stark inequalities, the production of negative imaginaries, displacement and exclusion.[61] Beyond the specificities of Hackney Wick and the post-Olympic Games development site, it points to the possibility of a wider deployment of community-oriented temporary and interim uses as a planning tool used to 'lubricate structural changes and its associated risks' and normalise 'an attitude that takes inequality for granted'.[62]

Two significant issues emerge for understanding the role of communities in temporary-use policies and practices at times of austerity. The first concerns the vision of temporary and interim projects as 'testing grounds' for regeneration agendas. The language of 'tests' and 'prototypes' reveals an underlying experimental entrepreneurial approach to local planning and community participation, which relies on devaluing existing residents and users and their long-term needs and plans. Underneath the language of experimentation lies a fundamental retreat from any attempt to invest long-term in areas of high deprivation; on the contrary, temporary places for welfare provision, such as containers for pop-up housing, appear to be on the rise.[63] The second issue concerns the idea of temporary community projects functioning as 'stepping stones' for the creation of other places, potentially for other users. In this problematic notion, ideals of transferrable social infrastructures become normative in pro-growth strategies that openly disregard multiple forms of social disadvantage and the complexities of developing community-led spaces and provision. In the case of 'people who haven't made a lifestyle choice to live in Hackney Wick', the only proposed option for negotiating social benefits from the post-Olympic redevelopment is through mobility. This, however, is a highly exclusionary option whose effects can only be mitigated through a substantial expenditure of energy and mediation on behalf of youth organisation.

---

[61] Davis, 2014; Watt, 2013.

[62] Madanipour, 2018, p. 1106.

[63] See Osborne and Norris, 2016.

As is clear from the example of Hub67, the notion of pop-up transferability shows a profound disconnect between the application of temporary use discourses in planning and the social dynamics that make possible meaningful community engagement over time. Moreover, the inscription of community-oriented and community-engaged projects in planning policy does not *per se* offer a guarantee that community groups will participate in important decision-making around its benefits, its management and the territorial continuity of a project. On the contrary, what appears to be at play is a further disciplining of local community groups to neoliberal urban planning and the externalisation of risk away from public sector institutions. Temporary community spaces such as Hub67 could be seen as the visible, architectural embodiment of broader anticipatory politics of service withdrawal at times of austerity, which in the UK have been noted to particularly affect children and young people.[64] As community-oriented temporary uses become more established, residents and community groups may find themselves increasingly entangled in precarious, entrepreneurial and 'on-demand' engagement with public institutions and faced with the impossibility of laying claim to social services and places in the long term. While the hope for more incremental, sustainable and community-led urban policymaking remains a valid aspiration for practitioners and community groups on the ground, the inclusion of temporary projects in a resurgent entrepreneurial urban agenda at times of austerity risks generating new models of exclusionary governance and more uncertain public service delivery. Understanding the transformative embedding of temporary urbanism in city planning requires a clear and situated analysis of the hidden and potentially deeply regressive shifts produced by new forms of anticipatory politics and their push towards a further, planned precarisation of the urban.

---

[64] Horton, 2016.

Chapter 6. The normalisation of temporariness

…land is often only available in chunks of time.[1]

The rise of temporary urbanism has undoubtedly become a defining feature of the past decade in architecture, artistic practices and urban policy circles, above and beyond responses to vacant and empty spaces. From theatres and community projects to green spaces, shops and art galleries, the 'pop-up' adjective has come to embody a normalisation of the temporary as an imaginary of urban inhabitation and urban experience. Performative, transformative, cosmetic: understanding this strand of urbanism requires a thick and situated account of its contested emergence and of the unresolved tensions that continue to inform contemporary urban practice *after the pop-up.* In this book I have presented contested, multiple, entangled and situated stories about the emergence of temporary urbanism and its development in post-2008 'austerity' London. Through in-depth semi-ethnographic accounts of different places, urban practices and their narratives, I have examined the establishment of the seductive ideal of the temporary city: an urban model that glorifies ephemerality and disruption over continuity and permanence. The ideal was nourished by multiple and divergent cultural genealogies and longer histories of alternative artistic and architectural practices, which have too easily associated vacant spaces and temporariness with the imagined 'interstices' of the city. I have called this construct the 'alterity trope' of temporary urban practices. To explore this trope as a field of position-taking, I have drawn on situated accounts of ten years of pop-up and temporary practices in London and made the case for the need for a longitudinal analysis of narratives and counter-narratives, policies and performative practices. Temporary urbanism is not a top-down blueprint: it is a relatively open signifier capable of mobilising support and meanings beyond prescribed policy frameworks and institutional debates. Understanding this requires us to be attentive to the translation of ideas, imaginaries, practices and positions from architecture to socially engaged art and urban planning.

Emerging from the analysis of the ideal of the temporary city is the much broader normalisation of the precariousness of place and people in contemporary cities. The attractive promise of nomadism, experimentation, surprise—and even the potential for incremental transformation—have (re-)asserted themselves and become more mainstream at a time when the conditions for acting are being reformulated into the further foreclosure, spatial and temporal, of alternatives. Temporary urbanism's discursive polyvalence holds the suspense of multiple possibilities—the possibility of alterity—at the same time as it 'normalises the idea that some claims to space are provisional and temporary'.[2] This normalisation is not without its contentions or attempts to reclaim different genealogies or potential futures; it is, nonetheless, a pervasive normative construct. A thinly disguised core of the culture of temporary urbanism is a form of acceptance of impermanence: of resigning oneself to a city where space and place are as easily made as they are unmade, where belonging is precarious, and where people are pushed to be ever more adaptable and flexible. As in the opening quote, to practitioners as well as city dwellers, space is often only available in chunks of time, and people can only make claims to use it if they accept their temporal finiteness. Such acceptance is profoundly jarring when juxtaposed with the material and symbolic erasure of the past and existing city towards an aspirational horizon of continuous upscale redevelopment.

Five years after I began researching temporary urban uses, I published a short article titled 'The seductions of temporary urbanism'.[3] In it, I argued that one of the reasons why the idea of temporary use spread so rapidly across the worlds of architecture and the arts was that it responded to changed conditions and appealed to—and in so doing produced—flexible urban subjects, investing them with a degree of agency to shape vacancy and the city more widely. The abstract subjects of temporary urbanism were embodied in networks of intermediaries and promoters who propagated its form and agendas in their practice in the political climate of austerity-driven urban policymaking—upholding, in some cases, ambivalent or contradictory stances. As already noted, in 2012, critical commentators lamented the celebration of temporary projects and called them out for bolstering land and property prices in a momentary lull of the market.[4] What was not visible at the time was the full extent of the new modes of enclosure and dispossession that had been ushered in by the post-2008 austerity measures, in the UK as elsewhere, and that have been making contemporary cities more unjust and urban living more precarious. The normalisation of temporariness occurred at a historical conjuncture that has now fully bloomed into a far deeper transformation and entrenchment of urban injustices. With its normalisation and glamorisation of ephemerality, what has emerged is a distinctive resignation to urban precarity. Beyond pop-up projects and temporary uses, in this concluding chapter I reflect on how the cultural myths, practices and discourse of temporary urbanism have become widespread and unquestioned. Such a reflection requires expanding the optic of my argument both empirically and theoretically and engaging with the implications and overspill of the multiple narratives of temporary urbanism into the contemporary conceptualisation and practices of city-making.

---

[1] Conversation with art-architectural studio public work's Andreas Lang, September 2014.

[2] Harris, 2015, p. 595.

[3] Ferreri, 2015.

Underused spaces as a ‘problem’

As I have examined in Chapter 2, a key tenet of the dominant discourse on temporary urbanism is the symbolic production of vacancy as a ‘problem’: calling a space empty or ‘underused’, drawing on and instilling societal fears of imagined urban decay, is a necessary step to make the case for using them. The construction of determined spaces as problematic has not only cultural but also material effects. Once vacancy is presented as problematic and wasteful, the ground is, logically, prepared for calls for its (re-)activation. On the surface, arguments to utilise underused resources appear matter-of-fact and sensible. When the groundings of such calls are critically examined, however, we are faced with what scholars working on waste geographies refer to as ‘the politics of waste’. Questioning the existence and nature of public discourses about waste requires examining ‘policy tools to deal with waste, the people enrolled in dealing with waste, and the goals of political instruments that define and manage the waste/non-waste divide’.[5] The politics of viewing vacant spaces as wasted—a view that is at the core of temporary urbanism—certainly veers towards an understanding of ‘waste as resource’, a conceptualisation in which the stress is placed on redeeming the value of waste ‘either by reintegrating it with the production system somehow, or by recognizing the use value’.[6]

The close interconnection between the production of vacancy as a ‘problem’ and urban regeneration discourses has been widely acknowledged in critical urban studies literature. In Chapter 5, I have offered an in-depth discussion of the relationship between temporary projects on the ‘fringes’ of the London 2012 Olympic site. The depiction of urban landscapes as marginal, wasted, depopulated and ‘blighted’ has long been a powerful tool of symbolic dispossession and subsequent territorial colonisation. When such a depiction intersects with an entrepreneurial urban logic of development, the city is re-imagined as being composed of neglected or abandoned spaces whose value begs to be realised, making temporary use become ever more pervasive culturally and geographically. Combining this conceptualisation with the ‘scarcity mentality’ of austerity governance has led to unexpected and deeply problematic consequences. In austerity London, from visible, street-level spaces such as shops and vacant plots of land, the idea of underused spaces has crossed the frontier of domestic spaces and entered people's homes. I am here referring to the micro-entrepreneurship of home-sharing mediated by digital platforms such as Airbnb, often celebrated under the misnomer of 'the sharing economy'. Over the last five years, such micro-entrepreneurship has received support from the UK government to the point of informing policy change and forms of planning deregulation in the name of personal empowerment and increased connectivity between users and durable assets.[7] With the rapid growth of digitally mediated sharing through platform economies, goods and spaces are all simultaneously seen as 'underused' and as income-generating opportunities in a pervasive logic that allegedly promotes use above ownership and promises a deep societal transformation: in this way, it has been argued that 'cities are being reshaped around mobile communicative spaces rather than physical forms'.[8] The profound transformations of urbanism by information and communication technologies have long been shown to belong to what Graham and Marvin have called a 'splintering effect' of contemporary urbanism, which exacerbates existing social, economic and geographical divides in cities.[9] In fact, the possibility of rent extraction from goods and spaces through platform economies not only relies on ownership but has also been shown to exacerbate existing dynamics of real estate accumulation and to contribute to asset-based inequalities.[10]

---

[4] Abrahams, 2012.

[5] Moore, 2012, p. 792.

[6] Ibid., p. 785.

In the context of a prolonged reduction in public budgets, both at the local and national level, in the name of fiscal austerity, the imaginary of vacant spaces as underused has become a weapon in the discursive arsenal of a wide 'politics of scarcity'. If space is a scarce resource, at a time of general economic restraint, there is an even stronger imperative to put it to use. In such a view, scarcity of space is naturalised while the necessity of redeeming its value leads to a conceptualisation of spaces as 'underused assets', understood either in purely economistic terms or the sense of social and cultural 'assets' for local development. Within the same logic of vacant space as problematic at times of austerity, in fact, we find policymaking directed at low-income tenants living in council housing. The notion of 'underused' domestic spaces entered national policymaking in 2013 through the removal of the spare room subsidy, known as the 'bedroom tax', 'whereby social tenants deemed to have one or more spare bedrooms see a reduction in availability of housing benefit'.[11] The policy has been shown to increase the likelihood of tenants going into arrears and increasing the precarisation of social housing, particularly in London. The same Coalition Government that introduced the 'bedroom tax' to address the perceived problem of 'underused' spaces passed the Deregulation Act in 2015 which removed barriers for platform economy companies and their users, encouraging micro-entrepreneurship with spaces.[12] In the differential politics of reuse, a spare room in public housing is portrayed as an unsustainable luxury, while a similar room in a private home is an asset that should be put to value.

In turning vacant spaces from 'problems' into opportunities, temporary urbanism emphasises and celebrates their unrealised *use value*, a move that attracts the sympathy of those who profess to oppose the logic of exchange value in the name of social benefit. When the use ceases to be free and begins to attract rent, however, the argument embeds itself and mutates into yet another form of marketisation of spaces in cities. Extracting rent from temporarily unused spaces is certainly not a recent phenomenon in large cities, but practices of infra-housing or lodging, which used to belong to the realm of informality and small-scale everyday economic practices, have now taken centre stage in urban policy and planning. Platform-mediated flexible uses of space have been incorporated into what is presented as the cutting edge of social and economic innovation, as a ‘social revolution’.[13] This is a techno-utopia of flexible connectivity that conveniently overlooks the exclusivity of such imaginaries and that ridicules and casts aside the permanence of social relations—as well as relation to place—as an obsolete ‘dream’ while simultaneously repackaging it as on-demand authenticity ready for consumption.[14]

---

[7] Ferreri and Sanyal, 2018.

[8] Sennett, 2017, p. 5.

[9] Graham and Marvin, 2001.

[10] See, for instance, Cocola-Gant and Gago, 2019; Yrigoy, (2019).

[11] Nowicki, 2017, p. 122.

[12] Ferreri and Sanyal, 2018.

The projective logic

A city made of ‘underused’ spaces that await the realisation of their value through (new) uses, whether paid or unpaid, becomes suddenly made of ‘empties’ and abandoned patches: through the entrepreneurial gaze of waste minimisation and the maximisation of value, whether economic or social, the city is a territory to map out and intervene in. Such a gaze belongs to those—policymakers, artists, architects—who offer to replace the emptiness with the vision of an unexpected, new, experimental city. It is a gaze that is capable of transforming and activating: an opportunist gaze belonging to mobile urban dwellers seeking the ‘cracks’ in the city, offering to connect them with people. The gaze that produces vacancy as an opportunity and as an empty container for activation could be seen to belong to an entrepreneurial ‘connectionist narrative’ based on a positive imaginary of connectivity in which intermediaries and users come together and disperse again effortlessly and seamlessly. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello’s concept of a ‘projective city’ is useful to understand the ideology of the ‘project’ as a ‘connectionist’ mode of labour and life.

In their book *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2005), Boltanski and Chiapello theorise on the cultural and political implications of a macro-societal shift towards the acceptance of temporary and project-based work. The notion of the ‘spirit of capitalism’ allows them ‘to combine in one and the same dynamic the development of capitalism and the critiques that have been made of it’;[15] to the latter, they assign a powerful transformative role. They examine the ideology of work organised through hierarchically managed firms—in which workers fulfil precise functions, can count on continuity of workplace and are rewarded for longevity of service and loyalty—and conclude that it has been radically transformed. The 1960s social and cultural critique of work and sociability led to a reimagined system of relatively freer agents, organised in a reticular fashion, through connections that are not intended to last beyond the temporary coming together in ‘projects’. Continuity of workplace and function was replaced by a continuity of belonging to specific networks that enable such coming together in the first place. In a reticular world, work as well as social life are:

> composed of a proliferation of encounters and temporary but reactivatable connections with various groups, operated at potentially considerable social, professional, geographical and cultural distance. The *project* is the occasion and reason for the connection. It temporarily assembles a very disparate group of people, and presents itself as a *highly activated section of the network* for a period of time that is relatively short, but allows for the construction of more enduring links that will be put on hold while remaining available. [emphasis in the original][16]

---

[13] Slee, 2016.

[14] Such is the case of Airbnb, which promotes global hypermobility but also ‘authentic’ encounters with place, all the while fuelling processes of gentrification and touristification that erode the very emplaced practices it celebrates. On the symbolic economies of authenticity, see Zukin, 2008.

[15] Boltanski and Chiapello, p. 27.

[16] Ibid., pp. 104-5.

In a perfectly reticular world, temporary connections would only amount to flows and ephemeral, ad hoc assemblages of people. Capital's demands for combinatory flexibility, however, requires the possibility of accumulation, which is why the project, as an ideal form of organisation, becomes necessary:

> Projects make production and accumulation possible in a world which, were it to be purely connexionist, would simply contain flows, where nothing could be stabilised, accumulated or crystallised. [...] it is thus a *pocket of accumulation* which, creating value, provides a base for the requirement of extending the network by furthering connections. [emphasis in the original][17]

The project, according to Boltanksi and Chiapello, identifies both a form of management and self-management of labour and sociability and a discursive system in which deterritorialised and networked forms of acting are given meanings, values and justifications. The logic associated with the project promotes the value of flexibility over reliability, and of disruption over continuity. Attachment or loyalty to place—in terms of job positions or departments within an organisation—is a drawback because it makes the individuals (and firms) in question less agile and less adaptable to changes. Once the logic extends to the society at large, they argue, we see the emergence of a 'new spirit' of capitalism in which permanence and continuity are devalued while individualised mobility and flexibility become both necessary and highly regarded.[18] In different ways, the policies and practices discussed in the previous chapters are evidence that the temporary city follows a fundamentally projective logic. The temporary city, as a vision, is built on networked short-term encounters, flexible and adaptable to changes in real estate dynamics and policymaking. In the urban pop-up imaginary, temporary projects in vacant and underused spaces become highly activated nodes of overlapping, intertwining networks of on-demand connectivity. Their activation not only is transient but also belongs to a logic of re-adaptable use of undifferentiated and undistinguishable spaces: a shop becomes a theatre, a container becomes a community centre or a home. In the temporary city, place, history and function become obsolete in an imaginary of an architecture of total flux that is also, in part, a result of the social and cultural critique from the middle of the 20th century.

Ephemeral architectures

The transposition of the values of flexibility and adaptability in temporary spatial imaginaries and practices has long roots, as visible in the critical urban and architectural practices that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as intrinsic to a project of social and spatial transformation. Examples of these experimental architectural ideals were the 'No-Stop City' (1968-1972) by Italian architecture collective 'Archizoom', the 'plug-in city' of New Babylon (1956-1974) designed by artist and architect Constant, and the itinerant units of Archigram, which imagined transient inhabitation in spaces that could be moved and recomposed at will.[19] The No-Stop City, as an example of anti-architecture, has been interpreted as 'a cynical parody of the dreams of flexibility and choice in the architectural landscape', pushing architecture and the urban to 'an absolute limit' in which undistinguishable spaces, without detail and specific functions, would be completely re-adaptable, and in which the very idea of functionally differentiated spaces loses meaning.[20]

---

[17] Boltanski and Chiapello, p. 105.

[18] Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005.

[19] See Pinder, 2001 and 2011; Murphy, 2016.

[20] Murphy, p. 150.

As has been noted by Harris, these experiments re-imagined a city life of non-stop, on-demand occupations, which foreshadows the more contemporary urban landscapes of pop-up geographies. Contrary to ideals of social liberation, however, critical scholars have noted that what is liberated in such models is the flow of capital: by ‘overcoming the immobility of real estate’,[21] temporary cities of flow materialise ‘a capitalist fantasy’ of ‘expansionary and nomadic drives’.[22] The dwellers of such a fantasy become themselves a fantasy of limitless adaptability and disembodiedness. As Henri Lefebvre observed in 1970 in relation to the architecture of Mona Friedman:

> What of that residential nomadism that invokes the splendours of the ephemeral? It merely represents an extreme form, utopian in its own way, of individualism. […] If at some time in the near future, the ephemeral becomes more prevalent which is entirely conceivable, what would it consist of? In the activities of groups that are themselves ephemeral […] in which their lives and their group existence would be realized and exhausted by momentarily freeing themselves of the everyday. But what works, what groups?[23]

Lefebvre’s commentary hinted at the elitism of nomadic utopian architecture, but his reflection on the ephemeral becoming more prevalent remains prescient of a burgeoning and increasingly rapid undoing of the permanence and rigid functionality that constituted the historical backdrop of ephemerality as transgressive.

Ephemeral architecture certainly appears to be becoming ever more the norm in the rapidly changing world geographies of hyper-mobility and mass displacement. Recent work by Rahul Mehrotra and Felipe Vera has proposed the term ‘ephemeral urbanism’ to bring together a taxonomy of contemporary ‘temporary cities’ across the globe, from the ‘informal’ housing and infrastructures that constitute vast and widespread refugee settlements to religious festivities and large-scale festivals.[24] These and other similar examples are discussed as a growing ‘shadow urbanism’, invisible due to its impermanence, which architects and urbanists should pay better attention to. The idea that more makeshift approaches to urbanism should be incorporated into Western architecture and urban design practice is not novel, at the very least since the widely influential work of John Turner since the 1970s.[25] Ephemerality and informality are often associated, and the latter appears to have been rediscovered in critical urban scholarship, signalling both a growing phenomenon globally as well as a more critical gaze directed at taken-for-granted binaries between a planned, formal urban ‘North’ and an unplanned, informal urban ‘South’.[26] With residential real estate becoming a central piece of global economies, informality as a coping mechanism responding to the lack of affordable housing appears to be on the rise in cities in Western Europe and North America, through both old and new mechanisms.[27] While urban forms and architectures might show similarities, bringing together spaces of mass celebration with those caused by war, mass natural disasters and dispossession is questionable. The resurgence of attention to makeshifts and informality is nonetheless telling of what appears to be a general acceptance—and even glamorisation—of provisional spatial forms emerging from globalised mass mobility and the spread of exclusionary practices of real estate development that lead to mass urban dispossession.

---

[21] Harris, 2015, p. 595.
[22] Pinder, 2011, p. 183.
[23] Lefebvre, 2003 [1970], p. 98.
[24] Mehrotra and Vera, 2017.
[25] See Turner and Fichter, 1972.
[26] Mukhija and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2014; see Yiftachel, 2009.
[27] Durst and Wegmann, 2017; see also Ferreri, Dawson and Vasudevan, 2017.

In this glamorisation of provisionality, the world of festivals, event production and event management has become a particularly significant point of reference. With mass tourism and mass mobility on the rise globally, experiences of urban spaces are increasingly meant to last only for a short time. The experiential economies of pop-up spaces, discussed in Chapter 4, respond to and feed into the guiding principle of space activation. Festivals thus become key models for contemporary cities of flow, built on short-term encounters, with on-demand workers, visitors and, increasingly, communities. The alterity trope is once again at play. In popular culture, festivals are often presented as 'time outside time', as alternative spaces autonomous from mainstream social and economic activities, as universes in themselves. Critical sociological scholarship on the development of festival culture, however, has argued for a more nuanced understanding of the cultural economies that informed their origins as well as the more recent exponential growth of festivals and other ephemeral cultural manifestations such as art biennales.[28] The positioning of festivals as spaces of alterity appears to overlook a long history of using fairs and festivals to promote new imaginaries and models of urbanism since the 19th century. This tradition has continued, and during the latter part of the 20th century, festivals and festival-like events have increasingly permeated the public sphere and intersected with culture-led regeneration policies and programmes.[29]

Adding to the genealogies of architectural and artistic practices outlined earlier, it has often been the case that temporary urban projects in the fields of architecture, cinema and the arts emerged within or in correspondence with city festivals.[30] Cate St Hill's analysis of architectural practices and studies in her *This is temporary. How Transient Projects are redefining architecture* (2016) makes very clear that art and architecture festivals, as well as short-term residency programmes, provide a fundamental conceptual as well as practical framing for temporary practices. In her analysis, she sees them as a fundamental testing ground for young architects and architectural firms to experiment with new solutions or aesthetics and to gain greater visibility.[31] The idea of a 'testing ground' is defended by architects on the basis of notions of experimentation and the possibility for more improvisational and open practices. Seen from the standpoint of the precarisation of the profession, however, they appear more and more as a material expression of the often extenuating demand for unpaid productivity and creativity and as a way of maintaining a pool of talent from which the sector can draw on.

Urban festivalisation and labour precarity

Pop-up cinemas and other temporary projects can be seen as the product of a wider 'festivalisation' of urban space rather than a cause of it.[32] The widespread proactive organisation and promotion of flagship urban cultural events in many European cities since the 1980s has led sociologists Häussermann and Siebel to introduce the idea of the 'festivalisation of urban policy'.[33] For Colomb, writing about reunited Berlin, in the 1990s this festivalisation went one step further with the transformation of the 'ordinary' and 'unglamorous' into the spectacular through processes of 'staging'. Now an integral part of urban reimagining, pop-up urbanism is a clear example of the festivalisation of the ordinary. As observed in 2014 by a London-based cultural promoter involved in a number of short-term urban projects, 'the whole rise in pop-ups and temporary uses and what have you has been massively fuelled by festival culture'.[34] Summoning

---

[28] Papastergiadis and Martin, 2011.

[29] Giorgi, Sassatelli and Delanty, 2011.

[30] Pratt and San Juan, 2014.

[31] St Hill, 2016.

[32] Pratt and San Juan, 2014, p. 170.

[33] See Häussermann and Siebel, 1993, in Colomb, 2011.

[34] Conversation with O. in Ferreri and Lang, 2016, p. 140.

‘culture’ as a driver here, however, risks rendering opaque the very practical and material reasons why festival culture has become so intertwined in the production of urban spaces. In my analysis of the temporary shops in the Elephant and Castle shopping centre, the unspoken labour of preparation and coordination undertaken by *Studio at the Elephant* practitioners offered insights into the relationship between temporary uses and the wider dynamics of flexible work, particularly in the cultural sector. The type of total availability at short notice required to ‘fill in’ the space reproduced increasingly common dynamics of on-demand and insecure work, particularly characteristic of the so-called ‘creative industries’. These, formerly ‘the saviour and future of cities and nations’, are actually characterised by ‘some of the most unstable and precarious work, that reproduces the most regressive social and economic structure’.[35] Beyond cross-disciplinary practices and imaginaries of alterities, both festivals and temporary projects require minimal support and socio-technical infrastructure while providing multiple positive externalities in terms of urban boosterism and place marketing. The example of the staging of Swan Wharf in Hackney Wick, introduced in Chapter 3, may be helpful to examine Lefebvre’s question of what kinds of works and what kinds of people are involved in the production of the ‘splendours of the ephemeral’.

In parallel to the ‘festivalisation of urban policy’, the festival industry has grown and become established as a global sector in its own right, with examples involving a few thousand to over 2 million people at a given time.[36] From a labour standpoint, the fit between the festival industry and the ‘production’ of temporary projects is perfect and points to a growing precarisation. Networks of production are crucial to the reticular world, but so are all those users and visitors whose presence informs and sustains the performative economies of the festivalisation of the city. Both in the case of festivals and of temporary projects, it is key that they are available at short notice to rent or pay for visiting the space or using it on a short-term basis. The mobilisation of these different and transient uses relied on the fluid work arrangements of sectors historically characterised by temporary engagements, such as the film and photography industry, but also by new forms of organising work in the digital sector. The physical manifestations of this are visible—in London as well as many other global cities—in the growth of co-working spaces offering the bare infrastructure for a range of professions, whose main tool of labour is a laptop and a reliable internet connection.[37] As already discussed, The Trampery, an organisation that promotes pop-up co-working spaces for ‘digital and creative practice’ in temporarily vacant buildings, was one of the tenants of Swan Wharf in Hackney Wick, having negotiated an ‘incubation project’ or ‘tech accelerator for the new generation of digital arts’ in collaboration with the cultural organisation The Barbican.[38]

While pop-up spaces promise to give ‘new visibility to users until now excluded from the structures of power’, such visibility is the result of the invisible labour of networking, organising and maintaining connections with a ‘scene’ of equally available and precarious workers and users.[39] The role of intermediaries such as the HIVE or The Trampery marks the emergence of a more professional typology of organisation that purports to act in the ‘interstices’ of the city while in fact facilitating what is a sea change in social and working practices. These are not isolated practices; rather, they intervene in the changing nature of work that has emerged from the post-2008 economic recession. In 2014, over 13 per cent of the UK workforce worked from ‘home’—an increase of over 20 per cent since 2001—alongside an exponential growth of self-employment, making necessary the existence and the proliferation of co-working and on-demand workspaces.[40] The Trampery is now currently managing four ‘creative workspaces in East

---

[35] Pratt, 2011, p. 129.

[36] Mehrotra and Vera, 2017.

[37] Merkel, 2015.

[38] See The Trampery, http://thetrampery.com/ [accessed 14 May 2019].

[39] Tonnelat, p. 160.

[40] Office for National Statistics, ‘Characteristics of Home Workers (2014)’, 4 June 2014.

London', one of which sits within Here East, the digital technology campus built on the former London 2012 Olympic site, as well as managing residential buildings that combine short-term rental with co-working spaces. The logic of the project becomes so embedded into the very fabric of a new city emerging from the greatest urban festival of all, the Olympic Games.[41]

Coordinating and networking are thus central activities in the production of the temporary city, without which on-demand connectivity cannot take place. The rise of temporary urbanism intermediaries professionalises and capitalises on the need for space and the precarisation of its uses, often gaining economic advantage for their services in a model that is not dissimilar from the 'on-demand' urban economies and the dream of infinite connectivity through digital technologies. The rise of connectivity intermediaries is certainly not new, but their interconnection with urban planning practice is a clear indication of the expansion of networked ways of work and life in contemporary cities. Although more widespread, it must be specified that this is a socially and economically uneven expansion. As critics of 'networked urbanism' have long noted, the celebration of such a highly mobile and fast-paced form of urbanism often neglects to account for forms of exclusionary social capital that exacerbate rather than address existing inequalities.[42] The example of Hub67 in Chapter 5 has shown the profound disconnect between the application of temporary use discourses in planning and the possibility for meaningful community engagement over time. Over and over, pop-up connectivity and the idea of place-less transferability present a highly exclusionary urban imaginary at times of relentless enclosures and dispossession.[43]

Permanent 'times of uncertainty'

The rise of intermediaries and the normalisation of temporariness and of the precarious material configurations necessary to sustain it are often framed in terms of a response to 'times of economic uncertainty'. In the arguments of their proponents, the flexibility of use of vacant spaces through temporary arrangements becomes a valuable urban model, providing 'reduced economic risk given shorter durations of projects'[44] while guaranteeing capital flow without the need to dispose of temporarily 'inactive' immobile real estate assets. As has been analysed by Ali Madanipour in his recent book *Cities in Time. Temporary Urbanism and the Future of the City* (2017), urban planning policy and temporariness are not novel, but their current nexus has been strengthened by locally specific yet widespread contextual crises. The spatial and temporal fluctuations that produce vacant spaces are the result of a multiplicity of global dynamics:

> the relocation of activities, the cyclical nature of capitalism and its recurring crises of overproduction, made more frequent and magnified by globalisation. Changes in technology and the global division of labour have exposed local development processes to the wild moods of a blind force, creating long-term vulnerability and emptiness.[45]

In response to these fluctuations, spatial production is becoming more flexible thanks to a combination of changes in government regulations and market mechanisms 'which includes the temporary use of space, alongside the more traditional methods of price adjustment, functional conversion and supply reduction'.[46] While the infrastructures of properties remain in place, uses become project-based, in a shift towards a more widespread and unlimited uncertainty. Pop-up spaces, in this context, lead the way in promoting the 'innovation, fluidity and flexibility' needed in 21st-century cities.[47]

---

[41] Ferreri and Trogal, 2018.

[42] Blokland and Savage, 2008.

[43] See Hancox, 2019.

[44] Bishop and Williams, p. 3.

[45] Madanipour, 2017, p. 13.

[46] Ibid.

As has been noted by Ella Harris writing about the geographies of pop-up uses, however, in Global North cities such as London, flexibility is not an adaptive response to a momentary crisis but rather a fundamental rethinking of claims to space. The temporary city relies on and reproduces the acceptance of the precarisation of uses as inevitable, which has contingently emerged from a historically determined 'crisis' conjuncture. As spatial production becomes flexibilised, so do the imaginaries of possibility for urban living. With the introduction and normalisation of methods of spatial production that rely on conditions of flux, the image of the temporary city 'lubricates structural change and its associated risks' and promotes a 'cultural value that goes beyond its conditions of possibility, normalising an attitude that takes inequality for granted, and hiding the unbalanced outcomes for different stakeholders'.[48] Temporary urbanism redefines modes of relation to the city and to urban dynamics through an entrepreneurial gaze that sees places as underused assets—or as 'windows of opportunity'—while deep transformations are occurring in the land and real estate ownership structures and in the mechanism of value extraction in urban places, leading to ever-increasing precarisation.

If the emergence of temporary urbanism in London are certainly specific to this global capital, the conditions favouring the 'pop-up city' model are easily recognisable in other urban spaces as financial capitalism, vacancy and dispossession become common characteristics of the reconfiguration of the urban after the 2008 crisis. In European countries heavily impacted by economic recession and widespread vacancy, such as Spain and Ireland, temporary uses have emerged and become increasingly established through official programmes, for example the transformation of vacant lots for community gardens (or the 'Pla BUITS') in Barcelona[49] as well as more informal practices such as in Dublin, where inhabiting vacancy through practices of collective use became an example in urban commoning against everyday enclosures.[50] Ever since, the vocabulary of 'pop-up', 'tactical urbanism' and 'parklets' has become part of urban design, architectural and planning practice from Bologna[51] and São Paulo[52] to Philadelphia[53] and Perth.[54] Far from being 'creative fillers' of vacancy in uncertain times, temporary projects have been incorporated into mechanisms of city revalorisation, often becoming sites of conflict as they reflect, in their origins, implementation and governance, the consensus of 'neoliberal urban development, with its uneven, boom-bust cycles of creative destruction, its loosening of regulations and its public support for private entrepreneurship'.[55]

Confronted with such seismic shifts, the cultural debate around temporary urbanism which I have outlined in the course of the book appears to be singularly out of touch with the changed material conditions in terms of urban living and working as well as policymaking and governance. Proponents of temporary urbanism knowingly or unknowingly draw on cultural and spatial critique that emerged in the 1950s in response to a model of top-down blueprints for city-making that relied on stability of function and use. While top-down planning continues, as shown by the examples of Elephant & Castle and Hackney Wick, the relative stability of use has become obsolete. The permanent city that temporariness allegedly 'disrupts' is no longer a reality for a majority of urban dwellers, whose home, work and livelihood have become increasingly insecure. The utopian ideal of a temporary 'fun palace' or palace of delights, while prescient of the projective city to come, contributed to a mythology of the need to escape long-term planning, the alleged social engineering of statist urban management. This social and cultural critique, explain Boltanski and Chiapello, has long been included at the very core of the new spirit of capitalism.[56] Perhaps the time has come to recognise that this social and cultural critique has been included at the core of the new spirit of urbanism, too. The critique of temporary urbanism today should therefore not only recognise the major societal and cultural shifts of the last 50 years but also acknowledge the deep transformation of the meaning of imaginaries of urban alterity under radically changed conditions. This would involve understanding—and critically challenging—the fallacy of images of permanence that are constantly mobilised as the alleged dominant urban mode in need of disruption in arguments in favour of temporariness and flexibility.

---

[47] Harris, 2015.

[48] Madanipour, 2017, p. 13.

[49] See Helena Cruz i Gallach and Ruben Martínez Moreno's chapter 'I si "mentrestant" creem institucions comunitàries? Els buits urbans com a oportunitat', in Diputació de Barcelona, 2016, pp. 172-183.

[50] Till and McArdle, 2016; see also Bresnihan and Byrne, 2015; O'Callaghan et al., 2018.

[51] Gullì and Migliorisi, 2020.

[52] Brena and Lino Izeli, 2020.

[53] Németh and Langhorst, 2014.

[54] Stevens, 2020.

[55] Ibid., p. 21.

The persistence of the idea of permanence still distorts the framing through which it is possible to understand such changes and the practices that inhabit them. In her analysis of temporary uses of vacant spaces in Berlin, Karen Till proposed the term 'interim space'[57] precisely to avoid the common dichotomy of temporary/permanent, placing her focus on the ways in which urban initiatives evolve and exist in the fluid space-times of the city. In more recent work with Raquel McArdle on post-2008 Dublin, Till deploys the concept of the *improvisional city* to encompass the creative modus operandi as a 'making do' with what is available.[58] Their *improvisional city* highlights the possibility of non-market base values and of coming together to 'share responsibility for place-caring and social sustainability'.[59] The experience of interim uses across a ten-year timespan in the Elephant & Castle Shopping Centre discussed in Chapter 4 bears witness to the potential for positive legacies: but for activists, artists and volunteers, it is also a painful reminder of the powers stacked against collective organising to engender a more improvisional city that is open to processes and different values than those of real estate markets. At the core of the matter is a change in emphasis: the need to shift from an evaluation of practices, eschewing the facile dualities of permanent/temporary, towards a more political-economic analysis of the mode and logic of acting that temporary urbanism is currently promoting.

Tactical or precarious acting?

Underneath the overwhelming celebration of a temporary festival city of never-ending connectivity, of pop-up hubs, of creative professionals calculatedly going along and clinging to the hope that the rising tide will take them up with it—underneath this all are practitioners, architects, artists and local community groups trying to inhabit the practice of temporary urbanism with different values and aims. In contrast to a never-ending festival of short-term connectivity, transient freelance work and the acceptance of the long-term logics of real estate investment, practitioners have engaged with the space opened up by 'the temporary city' to interrogate, contest and disrupt business as usual. The temporary mode of thinking about and acting in the city has been described as an instance of 'tactical urbanism'.[60] Tactical thinking, explains Oli Mould drawing on Michele De Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), differs from strategic thinking in that it assumes an instance of incursion, transgression or subversion: a tactic 'must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into "opportunities"'.[61] Mould critically questions the idea that the temporary practices of tactical urbanism are true to their name: rather, by becoming the 'new vernacular' of post-recession creative city policymaking, they are turned into a strategy. While this argument is consistent with the examples in this book, the critique risks continuing to romanticise tactical acting as inhabiting alterities: De Certeau's own writing celebrates it as making 'use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected.'[62] As with the dichotomy between temporary and permanent, the much emphasized distinction between tactical and strategic acting reproduces an urban totality based on the idea that any interstice is somehow inherently subversive. Having learnt the lessons of transgression, temporary urbanism appears to wholeheartedly tolerate tactical urban acting as long as it does not challenge the longer-term goal of (more) permanent development.

---

[56] Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005.

[57] Till, 2011.

[58] Till and McArdle, 2016.

[59] Ibid., p. 47

[60] Mould, 2014.

[61] De Certeau, cited in Mould, 2014, p. 533.

The city of never-ending connectivity, where all is 'improvisional' and creative, is revealed as the unsustainable logic of work and living in post-industrial urban spaces. The 'blend of bohemianism and entrepreneurialism' that sustained this imaginary worked on a reversal of economic rationale as well as of long-term gains. Writing about the situation in Chicago, Richard Lloyd used the term 'neo-bohemia' to capture the repackaging of the virtue of marginality and intellectual and artistic disinterestedness in the changed environment of an urban world constructed on creative value and interurban competition. In the context of widespread deindustrialisation and entrepreneurial capitalism, he concluded, 'the bohemian disposition that makes "living on the edge" a supreme virtue is in fact quite adaptive to labour realities'.[63] The polyvalent genealogies that informed the embedding of temporary urbanism and its intersections with critical and community-oriented practices become entangled even further at a moment of institutionalisation and expansion of greater precarisation. The desirability and acceptance of impermanence—celebrated by the 'pop-up gurus'—is bursting at the seams, and 'tactical acting' appears less as a counter-cultural or transgressive choice and more as the only horizon available for urban action. In this context, rather than tactical, what temporariness points to is precarious acting.

Precarity as temporal foreclosure

The challenge for a critical and propositional reading of temporary urbanism after the pop-up hype involves maintaining a productive tension between the promises of experimentation and process-based, socially oriented spatial practice and the changed conditions in response to which they take place. The question of the production of temporary urban subjectivities, seduced by tactical project-based thinking, is closely interconnected with a more nuanced understanding of precarity and precarisation. Urban precarity can generate highly ambivalent experiences, as Gloria Dawson and I have concluded in a study of property guardianship, a temporary form of vacant property protection through live-in licenses.[64] Ambivalence appears to be fundamentally entangled with a clear perception of the limitations of temporary project-based acting. Practitioners whom I interviewed or collaborated with over the years often articulated this complexity. As explained by Andreas Lang, public works architect and co-author of *Notes from the Temporary City* (2016):

> [in London] the availability of land is quite crucial, and it seems that for projects that are not based on money-making per se, land is often only available in chunks of time. And

---

[62] Ibid.

[63] Lloyd, 2006, p. 241.

[64] Ferreri and Dawson, 2018.

> it's really that dilemma of being very precarious. Of precarity allowing certain reconfigurations, but also of the vulnerability that comes with that precarity.[65]

When space, be it land or buildings, is only available 'in chunks of time', precarity becomes something more than a question of subjective positioning, moving in the direction of what Isabell Lorey has called the 'ambivalence [of self-organisation] between subjugation and empowerment'.[66] Within this ambivalence, the discourse of temporary urbanism pulls us towards a resignation to uncertain material conditions and its celebration through a discourse of experimental, exciting, marginal practice. Both are intimately related: one feeds on the other, and both constitute conditions for action. Temporary urbanism thus diverts collective energy and attention towards finding interstices and alterities to a system that has fundamentally transformed itself. As profit-seeking activities erode breathing space, assimilating all the 'margins and interstices' of the urban, precarity is acknowledged as the only acceptable mode for acting. But, as Lang has noted, precarity also allows for a reconfiguration of positions and approaches to spaces in the city—a reconfiguration that had led public works' own consistent experimenting with forms of social and ecological commoning across several East London sites.[67]

To reverse the temporal foreclosure of temporary urbanism requires understanding and responding to the normalisation of precarity. Here, I understand foreclosure not in terms of reappropriation or co-optation but as the encroaching of vital and prospective thinking, the occupation of emotional and imaginative territories, and the pre-emptive closure of multiple horizons of possibility. The precarisation inherent in temporary urbanism is fundamentally a question of pre-emptive foreclosure: practices will not exceed the dimension of the project because space is only available through the promise of giving it back. Politically, such an approach empties the potential of spatial occupation through the acceptance of the absence of any power to negotiate otherwise. By relinquishing this 'power to' at the level of the wider frame—the temporal horizon of spatial appropriation—practitioners and users are only left with improvisional acting, immanence and ephemeral delights. To understand precarity as foreclosure requires a critical understanding of the effect of precarisation on the power to act. Broadening the framework from instances of extreme vulnerability and conditions of unfreedom, precarity has been defined as 'a condition of vulnerability relative to contingency and the inability to predict'.[68] As pointed out by Lorey, the process of precarisation involves the emergence of new techniques of governing as well as of subjectivation.[69] New subjectivities are emerging and becoming territorialised in places of heightened precarisation, such as contemporary cities. As I have argued elsewhere,[70] it is through the intersection of the dynamics of work, place and life insecurity that precarity becomes embedded in spatial processes. Place and work/life precarity feed off each other and become intertwined in a spiral of intensified and never-ending precarisation that is deeply transforming urban living.

When urban inhabitants anticipate precarity, they participate in the perpetuation of a condition of impotence in relation to the dynamics that produce and reproduce cities and urban spaces. Impotence is here not understood as a lack of power but rather as the absence of potentiality.[71] Potentiality exists in the virtuality of what is not but could be, the power to create: in cities, it is the power to imagine and engender modes of reclaiming and transforming space that break with existing and prescribed frameworks. '*Im*potence' here regards the self-imposition of limits and limitations to action projecting onto territory and spatio-temporality in the future. In this context, the internalisation of the foreclosure of space-time inherent in temporary urbanism involves accepting 'power over' and relinquishing 'power to'. Limitations are internalised—both on an individual and on a collective scale—in the normalisation and glamorisation of transience and temporariness. Besides ephemerality, central to the idea of temporary urbanism is also a certain inability to visualise and imagine a future distinct from 'on demand' urban connectivity. It is this inability, the product of precarisation, that needs to be addressed.

---

[65] Conversation with Andreas Lang, 10 September 2014.

[66] Lorey, 2015, p. 35.

[67] See public works' website https://www.publicworksgroup.net/

[68] Ettlinger, 2007. For a theoretical debate on precarity in the context of migration, see Lewis, Dwyer, Hodkinson and Waite, 2015.

[69] Lorey, 2015.

[70] Ferreri, Dawson and Vasudevan, 2017.

[71] Agamben, 1999.

Reclaiming urban space-time after the pop-up

Temporary urbanism is here to stay. To understand the significance of its permanence requires going beyond individual pop-up projects and temporary uses programmes to acknowledge its interconnections with profound social, economic and cultural transformations. As I have argued throughout this book, the persistence of temporary urbanism as a field of practice is proof of its seductive power at times of increasing urban precarisation. The stubbornness of the alterity trope at the nexus of temporariness and vacancy reveals an almost desperate attachment to an urban vision which could not be further removed from the growing precarity and dispossession that characterise life in advanced capitalist cities. As observed by Kristin Ross in her book *Communal Luxury* (2015), it is becoming increasingly apparent that 'we are not all destined to be immaterial labourers inhabiting a post-modern creative capitalist techno-utopia the way some futurologists told us we were ten years ago'.[72] In the face of growing evidence of its unsustainable and highly exclusionary nature, the vision of a creative techno-utopia of on-demand connectivity is beginning to unravel. Even those creative immaterial labourers—the makers and audiences of the temporary city—are often permanently 'early career' or 'young' artists and architects, supporting themselves through part-time or intermittent jobs, volunteering and relying on volunteers and other unpaid work. It is not surprising that some of them, in London as in other cities, are beginning to recognise that they share with other urban inhabitants a similar vulnerability to multiple spatial and temporal enclosures.

Against the glamorisation of temporariness, at such times of widespread enclosure and precarisation, the real political and vital challenge is to carve out spaces and practices that test 'the possibilities and limitations of living differently now within a thriving—if crisis-ridden—global capitalist economy'.[73] In this challenge, reclaiming space remains a powerful act. Despite the discourse of place 'activation' and staging, the experience of the Elephant and Castle shopping centre is testament to the vital force of agonistic encounters that challenge and defy capture by strategies of place rebranding. The possibility of potency, as 'power to', can feed logics of urban marketing, be transformed into individual professionalisation or flow into spaces of bottom-up organising and critique.[74] Often, the emotional geographies of temporary spaces ebb over time and need reconfiguration. The condition of generalised work and life precarity that affect participants contributes to the difficulty of sustaining 'power surges' over time. As observed by Till and McArdle, the intense encounters generated through temporary uses can lead to practitioners and volunteers suffering from burnout.[75] Against the memoryless festivalisation of place and utopias of project-based connectivity, practices of temporary urbanism can still be mobilised to reclaim spaces—not just those that are vacant but all spaces that are needed to sustain life and everyday use as opposed to unfettered commercialisation and enclosure.

---

[72] Ross, 2015, p. 10.

[73] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[74] St Hill, 2017.

[75] Till and McArdle, p. 61.

As the pop-up fad wears off, the question of place—and claims to place—returns in full force. The longitudinal approach that I developed in the course of this book has revealed that temporary urban practices are not as inconsequential and co-opted as they appear on the surface. It also shows that the possibility of grounded engagement is and continues to be foreclosed by the celebrated glamorisation of ephemerality. Of all the multiple practices and projects encountered during my research, only a handful now remain in place, and even those that have, have remained so precariously. As many of my examples have made abundantly clear, the flip side of on-demand connectivity is on-demand displacement, understood both in physical terms and in terms of the ability to participate and shape urban transformations. And the only way to stop displacement is through emplacement: reclaiming and maintaining positions and the possibility to live in a time described by Raquel Rolnik, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, as one of global 'urban warfare'.[76] When valuing reclaiming, it is time to move beyond a fetishism of emergent spaces and practices and fundamentally reclaim urban time. Drawing on Doreen Massey's reflections on the possibility for radical political openness, for space to be genuinely open, time must be open too: 'to envisage temporality/history as genuinely open is that spatiality must be integrated as an essential part of that process of the "continuous creation of novelty" [...][This] cannot be "space" [...] as temporal sequence, for here space is in fact occluded and the future is closed'.[77] After the pop-up, space and time need to be reclaimed together in order to transform processes of subjectivation marked by resignation and the internalisation of the inability to predict and to lay long-term claim to inhabitation.

Moving beyond the glamorisation of precarity will take time and can only happen once we shed the scarcity mentality that makes us resigned to permanent austerity. Not to be suffocated by its impossibility, any critique will also need to uphold and nourish the alternative values that run through the seductions of temporary urbanism. As explored in this book, in austerity London as in other cities, multiple and competing values coexist uneasily, at times even within the work of single collectives and individuals. It is in practice that these tensions become visible and can be debated and acted upon. In practice, individuals and groups meet, their interests and positions shifting or strengthening in response to—and themselves shaping—different situations. In the multiple practices that constitute this emerging temporary city, the processes of recuperation become visible in small details as much as in the wider temporal and economic governance frameworks. But it is also here where critique can become embodied and where different, more socially and environmentally just forms of urban living could be articulated and given substance. I conclude with the challenge of radically rethinking urban life after the pop-up by engaging in a speculative exercise. What if we rejected resigning ourselves to a permanent horizon of urban displacement, refusing once and for all the futurology of networked utopia and hyper-connectivity, and embraced instead a politics of embodiment and radical emplacement?

---

[76] Rolnik, 2019.

[77] Massey, 1999, p. 272.

Bibliography

AAA/PEPRAV (eds.) (2007), *Urban/Act: A Handbook for Alternative Practice*. Montrouge: PEPRAV.

Abrahams, Tim (2012), 'Review of The Temporary City by Peter Bishop and Lesley Williams', *The Architects' Journal*, 22 March.

Agamben, Giorgio (1999), *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*. Ed. and trans. by Daniel Heller Roazen. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Amin, Ash and Nigel J. Thrift (2002), *Cities: Reimagining the Urban*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Andres, Lauren (2013), 'Differential Spaces, Power Hierarchy and Collaborative Planning: A Critique of the Role of Temporary Uses in Shaping and Making Places'. *Urban Studies* 50(4): 759-775.

Armstrong, Paul (2005), *Critique of Entrepreneurship: People and Policy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Arts Council England (2009), 'Art in Empty Spaces: Turning Empty Spaces into Creative Spaces'. Available at: http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/about-us/investment-in-arts/action-recession/art-empty-spaces/ [accessed 11 January 2010].

Arvidsson, Adam (2007), 'Creative Class or Administrative Class? On Advertising and the "Underground"'. *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization* 7: 8-23.

Avis, Hannah (2002), 'Whose Voice is That? Making Space for Subjectivities in Interviews'. In Liz Bondi (ed.), *Subjectivities, Knowledges and Feminist Geographies: The Subjects and Ethics of Social Research*, pp. 191-207. Oxford: Rowan & Littlefield.

Bain, Alison (2010), 'Creative Suburbs: Cultural "Popcorn" Pioneering in Multi-purpose Spaces'. In Tim Edensor, Deborah Leslie, Steve Millington and Norma Rantisi (eds.), *Spaces of Vernacular Creativity: Rethinking the Cultural Economy*, pp. 63-74. London: Routledge.

Banks, Mark (2009), 'Fit and Working Again? The Instrumental Leisure of the "Creative Class"'. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 41(3): 668-681.

Berry-Slater, Josephine (ed.) (2009), 'The Creative City in Ruins'. *Mute Magazine* 2(12).

——— and Anthony Iles (eds.) (2009), *No Room to Move: Radical Art and the Regenerated City*. London: Mute Publishing.

Bey, Hakim (2003) [1985], *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*. New York: Autonomedia.

Beswick, Joe, Georgia Alexandri, Michael Byrne, Sònia Vives-Miró, Desiree Fields, Stuart Hodkinson and Michael Janoschka (2016), 'Speculating on London's housing future'. *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 20(2): 321-341.

Beswick, Joe and Joe Penny (2018), 'Demolishing the Present to Sell Off the Future? The Emergence of "Financialized Municipal Entrepreneurialism" in London'. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 42(4): 612-632.

Bishop, Claire (2004), 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics'. *October* 110: 51-79.

Bishop, Peter and Lesley Williams (2012), *The Temporary City*. London: Routledge.

Blokland, Tania and Mike Savage (eds.) (2008), *Networked Urbanism: Social Capital in the City*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Blond, Phillip (2010), *Red Tory: How the Left and Right Have Broken Britain and How We Can Fix It*. London: Faber and Faber.

Boltanski, Luc and Eve Chiapello (2005), *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. Trans. by Gregory Elliott. London: Verso.

Bonnett, Alastair (1992), 'Art, Ideology, and Everyday Space: Subversive Tendencies from Dada to Postmodernism'. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 10(1): 69-86.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1993), *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourriaud, Nicholas (2002), *Relational Aesthetics*. Trans. by Simon Pleasance, Fronza Woods and Mathieu Copeland. Dijon: Les Presses du Réel.

Bradley, Will and Charles Esche, eds. (2008), *Art and Social Change: A Critical Reader*. London: Tate Publishing.

Brenner, Neil and Nick Theodore (2002), *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe*. Malden; Oxford: Blackwell.

Brenner, Neil, Peter Marcuse and Margit Mayer (eds.) (2011), *Cities for People, Not for Profit: Critical Urban Theory and the Right to the City*. London: Routledge.

Brena, Barbara and Rafaela Lino Izeli (2020), 'Disputes and Conflicts about Tactical Urban Planning. The Implantation of Paulista Aberta and Parklets in São Paulo'. *Lo Squaderno* 55: 15-19.

Bresnihan, Patrick and Michael Byrne (2015), 'Escape into the City: Everyday Practices of Commoning and the Production of Urban Space in Dublin'. *Antipode* 47(1): 36-54.

Brown, Richard (2012), 'Made in HWFI: The Live-Work Collectives'. Supplement in *The Hackney Paper* 2. London: Studio.

Buchloh, Benjamin (1999), 'Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetics of Administration to the Critique of Institutions', *October* 55: 105-143.

Cambie, Sue (2010), 'Pop-ups. Part 1: Creating Micro-Tourism, Tourism Insights', available at: http://www.insights.org.uk [accessed 10 March 2011].

Campkin, Ben (2013), *Remaking London: Decline and Regeneration in Urban Culture*. London and New York: IB Tauris.

Chalkley, Brian and Stephen Essex (1999), 'Urban Development through Hosting International Events: A History of the Olympic Games.' *Planning Perspectives* 14(4): 369-394.

Cochrane, Kira (2010), 'Why pop-ups pop up everywhere', *The Guardian*, 12 October 2010.

Cocola-Gant, Agustin and Ana Gago (2019), 'Airbnb, Buy-to-let Investment and Tourism-driven Displacement: A Case Study in Lisbon'. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 0308518X19869012 (online first).

Colomb, Claire (2011), *Staging the New Berlin: Place Marketing and the Politics of Urban Reinvention Post-1989*. London: Routledge.

——— (2012), 'Pushing the Urban Frontier: Temporary Uses of Space, City Marketing, and the Creative City Discourse in 2000s Berlin'. *Journal of Urban Affairs* 34(2): 131-152.

Conlin, Peter (2009), 'Slack, Taut and Snap: A Report on the Radical Incursions Symposium'. *Mute Magazine*, available at: http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/slack-taut-and-snap-report-radical-incursions-symposium [accessed 22 October 2010].

Cooke, Jacqueline (2006), 'Heterotopia: Art Ephemera, Libraries and Alternative Space'. *Art Documentation* 2: 37-40.

Crang, Phil (1994), 'It's Showtime: On the Workplace Geographies of Display in a Restaurant in Southeast England'. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 12(6): 675-704.

Cruz i Gallach, Helena and Rubén Martínez Moreno (2016), 'I Si "Mentrestant" Creem Institucions Comunitàries? Els Buits Urbans com a Oportunitat'. In Diputaciò de Barcelona (ed.) *La utilització temporal dels buits urbans*, pp. 172-183. Barcelona: Diputació de Barcelona.

Currid, Elizabeth (2009), 'Bohemia as Subculture, "Bohemia" as Industry: Art, Culture, and Economic Development'. *Journal of Planning Literature* 23(4): 368-382.

Davidson, Mark and Loretta Lees (2009), 'New-build Gentrification: Its Histories, Trajectories, and Critical Geographies'. *Population, Space and Place* 16(5): 395-411.

Davis, Juliet (2014), 'A Promised Future and the Open City: Issues of Anticipation in Olympic Legacy Designs'. *Architectural Research Quarterly* 18(4): 324-341

——— (2016), 'The Making and Remaking of Hackney Wick, 1870-2014: From Urban Edgeland to Olympic Fringe'. *Planning Perspectives* 31(3): 425-457.

——— and Andrew Thornley (2010), ‘Urban Regeneration for the London 2012 Olympics: Issues of Land Acquisition and Legacy’. *City, Culture and Society* 1(2): 89-98.

Debord, Guy (1994), *The Society of the Spectacle*. Trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith. New York: Zone Books.

De Certeau, Michael (1984), *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. by Steven Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Decter, Joshua (2009), ‘Art and its Cultural Contradictions’, *Afterall* 22, available at: http://www.afterall.org/journal/issue.22/art.and.the.cultural.contradictions.of.urban.regeneration.social.justice.and.sustainability [accessed 15 March 2018].

DeFilippis, James and Peter North (2004), ‘The Emancipatory Community? Place, Politics and Collective Action in Cities’. In Loretta Lees (ed.), *The Emancipatory City. Paradoxes and Possibilities*, pp. 72-88. London: Sage.

Department for Communities and Local Government (2009), *Looking After Our Town Centres*. London: Department for Communities and Local Government.

Design for London (2013), *Stitching the Fringes: Working around the Olympic Park*. London: Design for London.

DeSilvey, Caitlin and Tim Edensor (2013), ‘Reckoning with Ruins’. *Progress in Human Geography* 37(4): 465-485.

Deslandes, Ann (2013), ‘Exemplary Amateurism: Thoughts on DIY urbanism’. *Cultural Studies Review* 19(1): 216-227.

Deutsche, Rosalyn (1996), *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

——— and Cara G. Ryan (1984), ‘The Fine Art of Gentrification’, *October* 31: 91-111.

De Ville, Nicholas and Stephen C. Foster (1993), *Space Invaders: Issues of Presentation, Context and Meaning in Contemporary Art*. Southampton: John Hansard Gallery.

Diputaciò de Barcelona (2016), *El uso temporal de los vacíos urbanos*. Barcelona: Diputaciò de Barcelona.

Downing, Henderson (2012), ‘Between the Long Roll of Thunder and the Long Fine Flash. A Brief History of a Little Pamphlet Bought from a Pop-up Shop on Redchurch Street in December 2010 on the Shortest Day of the Year’. *Dandelion, Postgraduate Arts Journal & Research Network* 3: 1-3.

Duman, Alberto (2012), ‘Dispatches from “the Frontline of Gentrification”’. *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 16(6): 672-685.

——— (2013), ‘Place Branding Agency’. UCL *Urban Pamphleteer* 2: 19-20.

Duncombe, Stephen (2007), *Dream: Reimagining Progressive Politics in an Age of Fantasy*. London: The New Press.

Durst, Nicola J. and Jake Wegmann (2017), ‘Informal Housing in the United States.’ *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 41(2): 282-297.

Edensor, Tim (2005), *Industrial Ruins: Spaces, Aesthetics, and Materiality*. Oxford: Berg.

———, Deborah Leslie, Steve Millington and Norma Rantisi (eds.) (2010), *Spaces of Vernacular Creativity: Rethinking the Cultural Economy*. London: Routledge.

Elwood, Sarah A. and Deborah G. Martin (2000), ‘“Placing” Interviews: Location and Scales of Power in Qualitative Research’. *The Professional Geographer* 52(4): 649-657.

Ettlinger, Nancy (2007), ‘Precarity unbound’. *Alternatives* 32: 319-340.

Evans, Graeme (2009), ‘Creative Spaces and the Art of Urban Living’. In Tim Edensor, Deborah Leslie, Steve Millington and Norma Rantisi (eds.), *Spaces of Vernacular Creativity: Rethinking the Cultural Economy*, pp. 19-30. London: Routledge.

——— and Jo Foord (2000), ‘European Funding of Culture: Promoting Common Culture or Regional Growth?’, *Cultural Trends* 9(36): 53-87.

Featherstone, David, Anthony Ince, Danny Mackinnon, Kendra Strauss and Andrew Cumbers (2012), ‘Progressive Localism and the Construction of Political Alternatives’. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 37(2): 177-182.

Feindt, Peter H. (2010), ‘The Great Recession — A Transformative Moment for Planning’. *International Planning Studies* 15(3): 169-174.

Felshin, Nina (1995), *But Is It Art? The Spirit of Art As Activism*. Seattle: Bay Press.

Ferreri, Mara (2009), ‘Self-Organised Critical Spatial Practices and Affects in Conflictive Urban Developments’. In Deepa Naik and Trenton Oldfield (eds.), *Critical Cities. Ideas, Knowledge and Agitation from Emerging Urbanists* vol. 1, pp. 27-35. London: Myrdle Court Press.

——— (2014), ‘The Competing Values of Temporary Use’. *Wick Zine* 5(19), 4-7.

——— and Valeria Graziano (2014), ‘Passion without Objects: Young Graduates and the Politics of Temporary Art Spaces’. *Recherches Sociologiques et Anthropologiques* 2: 83-102.

——— (2015), ‘The Seductions of Temporary Urbanism’. *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization* 15(1): 181-191.

——— (2016), ‘Pop-Up Shops as Interruptions in (Post-)Recessional London’. In Christoph Lindner and Shirley Jordan (eds.), *Cities Interrupted: Visual Cultures and Urban Space*, pp. 141-156. London: Bloomsbury.

——— and Lang, Andreas (2016), *Notes from the Temporary City: Hackney Wick and Fish Island*. London: public works.

———, Gloria Dawson and Alexander Vasudevan (2017), ‘Living Precariously: Property Guardianship and the Flexible City’. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 42: 246-59.

——— and Kim Trogal (2018), ‘“This is a Private-Public Park”’: Encountering Architectures of Spectacle in post-Olympic London’. *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 22(4): 510-526.

——— and Gloria Dawson (2018), ‘Self-Precarization and the Spatial Imaginaries of Property Guardianship’. *Cultural Geographies* 25(3): 425-440.

——— and Romola Sanyal (2018), ‘Platform Economies and Urban Planning: Airbnb and Regulated Deregulation in London’. *Urban Studies* 55(15): 3353-3368.

——— and Alexander Vasudevan (2019), ‘Vacancy at the Edges of the Precarious City’. *Geoforum* 101: 165-173.

——— (2020) Painted bullet holes and broken promises: understanding and challenging municipal dispossession in London’s public housing ‘decanting’. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 44(6): 1007-1022.

Finchett-Maddock, Lucy (2012), ‘No Home for Squatters’ Rights: Limitations and Legitimated Violence’. *Critical Legal Thinking*, available at: http://criticallegalthinking.com [accessed 12 March 2013].

Florida, Richard L. (2002), *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It’s Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. New York: Basic Books.

Ford, Larry R. (2000), *The Spaces between Buildings*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Foucault, Michel (1980), *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972/1977*. Brighton: Harvester Press.

Franck, Karen A. and Quentin Stevens (2007), *Loose Space: Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life*. London: Routledge.

Franklin, Benjamin (1999), *Social Policy, the Media and Misrepresentation*. London: Routledge

Garcia, Beatriz and Tamsin Cox (2013), *London 2012 Cultural Olympiad Evaluation*. Liverpool: Institute of Cultural Capital.

Gill, Rosalyn (2002), ‘Cool, Creative and Egalitarian?: Exploring Gender in Project-Based New Media Work in Europe’. *Information, Communication & Society* 5(1): 70-89.

——— and Andy Pratt (2008), ‘In the Social Factory?: Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work’. *Theory, Culture and Society* 25(7-8): 1-30.

Giorgi, Liana, Monica Sassatelli and Gerard Delanty (eds.) (2011), *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*. London: Routledge.

Glucksberg, Luna (2016), ‘A View from the Top: Unpacking Capital Flows and Foreign Investment in Prime London’. *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 20(2): 238-255.

Gold, John R. and Margaret M. Gold (2008), ‘Olympic Cities: Regeneration, City Rebranding and Changing Urban Agendas’. *Geography Compass* 2(1): 300-318.

Graham, Steven and Simon Marvin (2001), *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition*. London: Routledge.

Gray, Victoria and Nathan Walker (2011), O U I Performance, *Out of Time: Group Action and Temporary Autonomous Zone, almost*, available at: http://aetxt.blogspot.co.uk [accessed 11 March 2012].

Greenberg, Miriam (2000), ‘Branding cities: A social history of the urban lifestyle magazine’. *Urban Affairs Review* 36(2): 228-263.

——— (2008), *Branding New York: How a City in Crisis Was Sold to the World*. London: Routledge.

Gregson, Nicki and Gillian Rose (2000), ‘Taking Butler Elsewhere: Performativities, Spatialities and Subjectivities’. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 18(4): 433-452.

Gullì, Luca and Ambra Migliorisi (2020), ‘Promises and Uncertainties of Temporary Uses in Emilia-Romagna, Italy’. *Lo Squaderno* 55: 9-13.

Hall, Suzanne and Ayona Datta (2010), ‘The Translocal Street: Shop Signs and Local Multi-culture along the Walworth Road, South London’. *City, Culture and Society* 1(2): 69-77.

Halvorsen, Sam (2015), ‘Militant Research Against-and-beyond Itself: Critical Perspectives from the University and Occupy London’. *Area* 47(4): 466-472.

Hancock, Dan (2014), ‘Fuck your Pop-up!’, *Vice Magazine,* 21 February.

——— (2019), ‘Number of London Youth Clubs Nearly Halved Since 2011 Riots, Report Finds’, *The Guardian*, 22 March 2019.

Hanra, Hannah (2010), ‘Art’s great squatting revolution’, *The Times*, 16 January 2010.

Haraway, Donna (1988), ‘Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective’. *Feminist Studies* 14(3): 575-599.

Harris, Andrew (2012), ‘Art and Gentrification: Pursuing the Urban Pastoral in Hoxton, London’. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 37(2): 226-241.

——— (2013), ‘Financial Artscapes: Damien Hirst, Crisis and the City of London’. *Cities* 33: 29-35.

——— and Luis Moreno (2012), *Creative City Limits: Urban Cultural Economy in a New Era of Austerity*. London: UCL.

Harris, Ella (2015), ‘Navigating Pop-up Geographies: Urban Space-Times of Flexibility, Interstitiality and Immersion’. *Geography Compass* 9(11): 592-603.

Harvey, David (1989), ‘From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism’. *Geografiska Annaler* 71(1): 3-17.

——— (1989), *The Urban Experience*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

——— (2008), ‘The Right to the City’. *New Left Review* 53: 23-40.

——— (2012), *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. London: Verso.

Harvie, Jen (2009a), ‘Agency and Complicity in “A Special Civic Room”: London’s Tate Modern Turbine Hall’. In D.J. Hopkins, Shelley Orr and Kim Solga (eds), *Performance and the City*, pp. 204-221. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

——— (2009b), *Theatre and the City*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

——— (2011), ‘Democracy and Neoliberalism in Art’s Social Turn and Roger Hiorns’ Seizure’. *Performance Research* 16(2): 113-123.

Haydn, Florian and Robert Temel (2006), *Temporary Urban Spaces: Concepts for the Use of City Spaces*. Basel: Birkhäuser.

Häussermann, Hartmut and Walter Siebel (1993), ‘Die Politik der Festivalisierung und die Festivalisierung der Politik’. In *Festivalisierung der Stadtpolitik*, pp. 7-31. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, Wiesbaden.

Hein, Jane R., James Evans and Phil Jones (2008), ‘Mobile Methodologies: Theory, Technology and Practice’. *Geography Compass* 2: 1266-1285.

Henneberry, John (ed.) (2017), *Transience and Permanence in Urban Development*. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.

Higgings, Charlotte (2013), ‘Art in the Countryside: Why More and More UK Creatives Are Leaving the City’. *The Guardian*, 26 August.

Hochschild, Arlie R. (1983), *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hodkinson, Stuart and Paul Chatterton (2006), ‘Autonomy in the City? Reflections on the Social Centres Movement in the UK’. *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 10(3): 305-315.

Holmes, Brian (2002), ‘The Flexible Personality: For a New Cultural Critique’, *Transform*, available at: http://eipcp.net/transversal/1106/holmes/en [accessed 11 January 2010].

——— and Marco Deseriis (2009), ‘Concerning Art and Social Change’. *Mute Magazine* 2(12): 44-57.

Hopkins, D.J., Shelley Orr and Kim Solga (2009), *Performance and the City*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Horton, John (2016), ‘Anticipating Service Withdrawal: Young People in Spaces of Neoliberalisation, Austerity and Economic Crisis’. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 41(4): 349-362.

Hou, Jeffrey (ed.) (2010), *Insurgent Public Space: Guerrilla Urbanism and the Remaking of Contemporary Cities*. London: Routledge.

Homelesshome (2011), ‘We Are Still Bored in The City’, *Homelesshome* blog, 9 September, available at: http://homelesshome.blogspot.com/2011/09/we-are-still-bored-in-city.html [accessed 14 September 2018].

Hyland, Matt (2007), ‘Embedded Adventurism’. *Mute Magazine,* available at: http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/embedded-adventurism [accessed 27 June 2012].

Imrie, Rob, Loretta Lees and Mike Raco (2009), *Regenerating London: Governance, Sustainability and Community in a Global City*. London: Routledge.

Iveson, Kurt (2007), *Publics and the City*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Jiménez, Alberto C., (2014), ‘The Right to Infrastructure: A Prototype for Open Source Urbanism’. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 32(2): 342-362.

Jordan, John and George McKay (1998), *DIY culture: Party and Protest in Nineties’ Britain*. London: Verso.

Jordan, Shirley and Christoph Lindner (eds.) (2016), *Cities Interrupted: Visual Culture and Urban Space*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Kelly, Owen (1984), *Community, Art and the State: Storming the Citadels*. London: Comedia.

Killing Architects (2012), *Urban Tactics - Temporary Interventions + Long Term Planning*, available at: https://issuu.com/alisonkilling/docs/urbantactics_tempinterventions_longtermplanning [accessed 13 September 2013].

Kester, Grant H. (2004), *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kwon, Miwon (2004), *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Lacy, Susie (1995), *Mapping the Terrain*: *New Genre Public Art*. Seattle: Bay Press.

Landry, Charles and Franco Bianchini (1995), *The Creative City.* London: Demos.

Lauermann, John (2018), 'Municipal Statecraft: Revisiting the Geographies of the Entrepreneurial City'. *Progress in Human Geography* 42(2): 205-224.

Leadbeater, Charles and Kate Oakley (1999), *The Independents: Britain's New Cultural Entrepreneurs*. London: Demos.

Lees, Loretta (2002), 'Rematerializing Geography: The "New" Urban Geography'. *Progress in Human Geography* 26(1): 101-112.

———, Tom Slater and Elvin K. Wyly (2008), *Gentrification*. London: Routledge.

——— and Mara Ferreri (2016), 'Resisting Gentrification on its Final Frontiers: Learning from the Heygate Estate in London (1974-2013)'. *Cities* 57: 14-24.

Lefebvre, Henri (1991), *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

——— (2003) [1970], *The Urban Revolution*. Trans. by Robert Bononno. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

———, Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas, trans. and eds., (1996), *Writings on Cities*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Levin, Laura and Kim Solga (2009), 'Building Utopia: Performance and the Fantasy of Urban Renewal in Contemporary Toronto'. *The Drama Review* 53(3): 37-53.

Ley, David (2003), 'Artists, Aestheticisation and the Field of Gentrification'. *Urban Studies* 40(12): 2527-2544.

Lewis, Hannah, Peter Dwyer, Stuart Hodkinson and Louise Waite (2015), 'Hyper-Precarious Lives: Migrants, Work and Forced Labour in the Global North'. *Progress in Human Geography* 39(5): 580-600.

Lindner, Christoph and Miriam Meissner (2015), 'Slow Art and the Creative City: Amsterdam, Street Photography, and Urban Renewal'. *Space and Culture* 18(1): 4-24.

Lingwood, James (1993), 'Place'. In Nicholas De Ville and Stephen C. Foster (eds.), *Space Invaders: Issues of Presentation, Context and Meaning in Contemporary Art*, pp. 23-29. Southampton: John Hansard Gallery.

Lippard, Lucy R. (1997), *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society*. New York: New Press.

——— (2007), 'Time Capsule'. In Will Bradley and Charles Esche (eds.), *Art and Social Change: A Critical Reader*, pp. 408-421. London: Tate Publishing.

Lloyd, Richard D. (2004), 'The Neighbourhood in Cultural Production: Material and Symbolic Resources in the New Bohemia'. *City & Community* 3(4): 343-372.

——— (2006), *Neo-Bohemia: Art and Commerce in the Postindustrial City*. New York; London: Routledge.

London Legacy Development Corporation (2012), Call for proposals: 'Learning from Others'. London: LLDC.

——— (2013a), *Learning from Others*, Vol. 1. London: LLDC.

——— (2013b), Draft Local Plan 2015-2031. London: LLDC.

——— (2014), Grass-root Interim Uses Project Guidelines. London: LLDC.

Lorentzen, Anne and Carsten J. Hansen (2009), 'The Role and Transformation of the City in the Experience Economy: Identifying and Exploring Research Challenges'. *European Planning Studies* 17(6): 817-827.

Lorenzen, Mark, Allen J. Scott and Jan Vang (2008), 'Geography and the Cultural Economy'. *Journal of Economic Geography* 8: 589-592.

Lorey, Isabell (2006), ‘Governmentality and Self-Precarization. On the Normalization of Cultural Producers’. *Transversal*, available at: http://eipcp.net/transversal/1106/lorey/en [accessed 22 June 2012].

——— (2015), *State of Insecurity: Government of the Precarious*. Verso, London.

MacLeod, G. (2002), ‘From Urban Entrepreneurialism to a “Revanchist City”? On the Spatial Injustices of Glasgow’s Renaissance’. In Neil Brenner and Nick Theodore (eds.), *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America And Western Europe*, pp. 254-276. Oxford: Blackwell.

Madanipour, Ali (2017)*, Cities in Time: Temporary Urbanism and the Future of the City.* London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

——— (2018), ‘Temporary Use of Space: Urban Processes between Flexibility, Opportunity and Precarity’. *Urban Studies* 55(5): 1093-1110.

Made Possible by Squatting (2013), ‘Made Possible by Squatting Exhibition Catalogue’. Available at: https://archive.org/details/MadePossibleBySquattingZine/page/n18 [accessed 11 February 2019].

Mahony, Nick, Janet Newman and Clive Barnett (2010), *Rethinking the Public: Innovations in Research, Theory and Politics*. Bristol: Policy.

Makeham, P.B. (2005), ‘Performing the City’. *Theatre Research International* 30(2): 150-160.

Malin, Brenton J. and Curry Chandler (2016), ‘Free to Work Anxiously: Splintering Precarity Among Drivers for Uber and Lyft’. *Communication, Culture & Critique* 10(2): 382-400.

Marcuse, Peter (1985), ‘Gentrification, Abandonment and Displacement: Connections, Causes and Policy Responses in New York City’. *Journal of Urban and Contemporary Law* 28: 195-240.

Marrero-Guillamón, Isaac (2017), ‘Expert Knowledge and Community Participation in Urban Planning: The Case of Post-Olympic Hackney Wick’. In Phil Cohen and Paul Watt (eds.), *London 2012 and the Post-Olympics City*, pp. 205-231. London: Springer.

Massey, Doreen (1999), ‘Space-Time, “Science” and the Relationship between Physical Geography and Human Geography’. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 24(3): 261-276.

——— (2005), *For Space*. London: Sage.

Mayer, Margit (2009), ‘The “Right To The City” in the Context of Shifting Mottos of Urban Social Movements’. *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 13: 362-374.

——— (2012), ‘Beyond Austerity Urbanism and Creative City Politics’. *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 16: 558-559.

McCann, Eugene and Kevin Ward (eds.) (2011), *Mobile urbanism: cities and policymaking in the global age*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

McDowell, Linda and Gill Court (1994), ‘Performing Work: Bodily Representations in Merchant Banks’. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 12(6): 727-750.

McFarlane, Colin (2011), *Learning the City: Knowledge and Translocal Assemblage*. Oxford: John Wiley & Blackwell.

McIlwaine, Cathy, Juan Camilo Cock and Brian Linneker (2011), *No Longer Invisible: The Latin American Community in London*. London: Trust for London.

McLean, Heather E. (2010), ‘The Politics of Creative Performance in Public Space. Towards a Critical Geography of Toronto Case Studies.’ In Tim Edensor, Deborah Leslie, Steve Millington and Norma Rantisi (eds.), *Spaces of Vernacular Creativity: Rethinking the Cultural Economy*, pp. 200-213. London: Routledge.

McRobbie, Angela (2002), ‘“Everyone Is Creative”. Artists as Pioneers of the New Economy?’. *Be Creative!,* available at*:* www.k3000.ch/becreative/texts/text_5.html [accessed 12 April 2010].

——— (2004), ‘Making a Living as a Visual Artist in London’s Small-Scale Creative Economy’. In Dominic Power and Allen J. Scott (eds.), *Cultural Industries and the Production of Culture*, pp. 130-138. London: Routledge.

——— (2007), ‘The Los Angelisation of London: Three Short-waves of Young People’s Micro-economies of Culture and Creativity in the UK’, *Transversal*, available at: http://eipcp.net/transversal/0207/mcrobbie/en [accessed 10 March 2011].

——— (2009), ‘Reflections on Precarious Work in the Cultural Sector’. In Bastian Lange, Ares Kalandides, Birgit Stöber and Inga Wellmann (eds.), *Governance der Kreativwirtschaft: Diagnosen und Handlungsoptionen*, 123-138. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag.

Meanwhile Project (2010), *No Time to Waste... The Meanwhile Use of Assets for Community Benefit*. London: Meanwhile Space CIC.

Mehrotra, Rahul and Felipe Vera (eds.) (2017), *Ephemeral Urbanism.* Rovereto, TN: LIStlab.

Merkel, Janet (2015), ‘Coworking in the City’. *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization* 15: 121-139.

Merrifield, Andy (2006), *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Millar, Ben (2009), Do It Yourself: Pop-Up Galleries. *The Art Newspaper/Frieze Art Fair Daily 2009*, p. 5.

Miles, Malcom (1997), *Art Space and the City: Public Art and Urban Futures.* London: Routledge.

——— (2009), ‘Airing Dirty Laundry in Public Art’. *Mute Magazine*, available at: http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/airing-dirty-laundry-public-art [accessed 18 April 2012].

Moore, Sarah A. (2012), ‘Garbage Matters: Concepts in New Geographies of Waste’. *Progress in Human Geography* 36(6): 780-799.

Mould, Oli (2014), ‘Tactical Urbanism: The New Vernacular of the Creative City’. *Geography Compas*s 8(8): 529-539.

Mukhija, Vinit and Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris (2014), *The Informal American City: Beyond Taco Trucks and Day Labor*. Boston, MA: MIT Press.

Murphy, Douglas (2016), *Last Futures: Nature, Technology and the End of Architecture*. London: Verso.

muf architecture/art. (2009), *Creative Potential: Hackney Wick and Fish Island*. London: Muf publications.

Neff, Gina, Elizabeth Wissinger and Sharon Zukin (2005), ‘Entrepreneurial Labour among Cultural Producers: “Cool” Jobs in “Hot” Industries’. *Social Semiotics* 15: 307-334.

Neilson, Brett and Ned Rossiter (2008), ‘Precarity As a Political Concept, or, Fordism as Exception’. *Theory, Culture & Society* 25(7-8): 51-72.

Németh, Jeremy and Joern Langhorst (2014), ‘Rethinking Urban Transformation: Temporary Uses for Vacant Land’. *Cities* 40: 143-150.

NESTA, CABE and 00:/ (2011), *NESTA 2011 Compendium for the Civic Economy*. London: NESTA.

Novy, Johannes and Claire Colomb (2013), ‘Struggling for the Right to the (Creative) City in Berlin and Hamburg. New Urban Social Movements, New Spaces of Hope?’. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37(5): 1816-1838.

Nowicki, Melanie (2017), ‘Domicide and the Coalition: Austerity, Citizenship and Moralities of Forced Eviction in Inner London’. In Katherine Brickell, Melissa Fernandez Arrigoitia and Alexander Vasudevan (eds.), *Geographies of Forced Eviction: Dispossession, Violence, Resistance*, pp. 121-143.London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Oakley, Kate, Brooke Sperry and Andy Pratt (2008), *The Art of Innovation: How Fine Art Graduates Contribute to Innovation*. London: NESTA.

O’Brien, Kean, Leonardo Vilchis and Corina Maritescu (2019), ‘Boyle Heights and the Fight against Gentrification as State Violence’. *American Quarterly* 71(2): 389-396.

O'Callaghan, Cian, Cesare Di Feliciantonio and Michael Byrne (2018), 'Governing Urban Vacancy in Post-Crash Dublin: Contested Property and Alternative Social Projects'. *Urban Geography* 39(6): 868-891.

O'Mahony Lorna Fox, David O'Mahony and Robin Hickey (eds.) (2014), *Moral Rhetoric and the Criminalisation of Squatting: Vulnerable Demons?*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge.

Osborne, Hilary and Sophie Norris (2016), 'Pop-Up Village in South-East London to House Homeless Families', *The Guardian*, 22 March.

Osborne, Thomas (2003), 'Against Creativity: A Philistine Rant'. *Economy and Society* 32: 507-525.

Oswalt, Philipp, Klaus Overmeyer and Philipp Misselwitz (2013), *Urban Catalyst: The Power of Temporary Use*. Berlin: DOM publishers.

Papastergiadis, Nikos and Meredith Martin (2011), 'Art Biennales and Cities As Platforms for Global Dialogue'. In Liana Giorgi, Monica Sassatelli and Gerard Delanty (eds.), *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*, pp. 45-62. London: Routledge.

Park Fiction (2008), 'Rebellion on Level P'. In Will Bradley and Charles Esche (eds.), *Art and Social Change: A Critical Reader*, pp. 283-289. London: Tate Publishing.

Pasquinelli, Matteo (2008), 'Beyond the Ruins of the Creative City: Berlin's Factory of Culture and the Sabotage of Rent', *Rekombinant*, available at: http://www.rekombinant.org/docs/Beyond-the-Ruins-of-the-Creative-City.pdf [accessed 13 October 2017].

Paton, Kirsteen (2018), 'Beyond Legacy: Backstage Stigmatisation and 'Trickle-Up' Politics of Urban Regeneration'. *The Sociological Review Monographs* 66(4): 919-934.

Peck, Jamie (2005), 'Struggling with the Creative Class'. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29(4): 740-770.

——— (2007), 'The Creativity Fix', *Variant* 34, available at: http://www.variant.org.uk/34texts/creativityfix.html [accessed 11 January 2011].

——— (2010), *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

——— (2011a), 'Recreative City: Amsterdam, Vehicular Ideas and the Adaptive Spaces of Creativity Policy'. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 36(3): 462-485.

——— (2011b), 'Creative Moments: Working Culture, through Municipal Socialism and Neoliberal Urbanism'. In Eugene McCann and Kevin Ward (eds.), *Mobile Urbanism: Cities and Policymaking in the Global Age*, pp. 41-70. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

——— (2012), 'Austerity Urbanism'. *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 16(3): 626-655.

———, Nick Theodore and Neil Brenner (2012), 'Neoliberalism Resurgent? Market Rule after the Great Recession, *South Atlantic Quarterly* 111: 265-288.

Penny, Joe (2017), 'Between Coercion and Consent: The Politics of "Cooperative Governance" at a Time of "Austerity Localism" in London'. *Urban Geography* 38(9): 1352-1373.

People's Bureau (2017), 'Empowerment for Surrender? A Response from The Artists, People's Bureau & Our Reply to the People's Bureau', Southwark Notes blog, 7 January, available at: https://southwarknotes.wordpress.com/art-and-regeneration/empowerment-for-surrender-peoples-bureau-engaged-art-the-elephant/ [accessed 11 January 2018].

Petcou, Constantin and Doina Petrescu (2015), 'R-URBAN or How to Co-Produce a Resilient City'. *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization* 15(1): 249-262.

Petrescu, Doina (2007a), 'How to Make a Community As Well As the Space for It', *Re-public: Reimagining Democracy*, available at: http://www.re-public.gr/en/?p=60 [accessed 1 May 2015].

——— (ed.) (2007b), *Altering Practices: Feminist Politics and Poetics of Space*. London: Routledge.

———, Constantin Petcou and Nishat Awan (eds.) (2010), *Trans-local-act: Cultural Practices Within and Across*. Paris: AAA/PEPRAV.

Phillips, Patricia C. (1993), ‘Temporality and Public Art’. In Harriet Senie and Sally Webster (eds.), *Critical Issues in Public Art. Content, Context and Controversy*, pp. 295-304. New York: HarperCollins.

Pickerill, Jenny and Paul Chatterton (2006), ‘Notes towards Autonomous Geographies: Creation, Resistance and Self-Management as Survival Tactics’. *Progress in Human Geography* 30(6): 730-746.

Pile, Steven and Michael Keith (eds.) (1997), *Geographies of Resistance*. London: Routledge.

Pinder, David (2001), ‘Utopian Transfiguration: The Other Spaces of New Babylon’. *Architectural Design* 71(3): 15-19.

——— (2005a), ‘Arts of Urban Exploration’. *Cultural Geographies* 12: 383-411.

——— (2005b), *Visions of the City: Utopianism, Power and Politics in Twentieth-Century Urbanism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

——— (2008), ‘Urban Interventions: Art, Politics and Pedagogy’, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32: 730-736.

——— (2011), ‘Cities: Moving, Plugging In, Floating, Dissolving’. In Tim Cresswell and Peter Merriman (eds.), *Geographies of Mobilities: Practices, Spaces, Subjects*, pp.167-189. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate.

Pine, Joseph B. and James H. Gilmore (1999), *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre & Every Business a Stage*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Power, Dominic and Allen J. Scott (eds.) (2004), *Cultural Industries and the Production of Culture*. London: Routledge.

Poynter, Gavin (2009), ‘The 2012 Olympic Games and the Reshaping of East London’. In Rob Imrie, Loretta Lees and Mike Raco (eds.), *Regenerating London: Governance, Sustainability and Community in a Global City*, pp. 132-148. London: Routledge.

Pratt, Andy C. (2009), ‘Urban Regeneration: from the Arts “Feel Good” Factor to the Cultural Economy: A Case Study of Hoxton, London’. *Urban Studies* 46(5-8): 1041-1061.

——— (2011), ‘The Cultural Contradictions of the Creative City’. *City, Culture and Society* 2(3): 123-130.

Pratt, Geraldine and Rose Marie San Juan (2014), *Film and Urban Space, Critical Possibilities*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Purcell, Mick (2002), ‘Excavating Lefebvre: The Right to the City and its Urban Politics of the Inhabitant’. *GeoJournal* 58(2-3): 99-108.

Raco, Mike and Emma Tunney (2010), ‘Visibilities and Invisibilities in Urban Development: Small Business Communities and the London Olympics 2012’. *Urban Studies* 47(10): 2069-2091.

Raunig, Gerald (2007), *Art and Revolution: Transversal Activism in the Long Twentieth Centur*y. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e).

——— and Gene Ray (2009), *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique*. London: MayFlyBooks.

Really Free School (2011), ‘Communique #1’, January. Available at: Reallyfreeschool.org [accessed 2 February 2011].

Rendell, Jane (2006), *Art and Architecture: A Place Between*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Reynolds, Eric (2011), ‘Interwhile Uses’. *Journal of Urban Regeneration and Renewal* 4(4): 371-380.

Ribera-Fumaz, Ramón (2009), ‘From Urban Political Economy to Cultural Political Economy: Rethinking Culture and Economy in and beyond the Urban’. *Progress in Human Geography* 33(4): 447-465.

Rolnik, Raquel (2019), *Urban Warfare: Housing under the Empire of Finance*. London and New York: Verso Books.

Román-Velázquez, Patria (2014), ‘Latin Americans in London: Claims over the Identity of Place as Destination’. In Clara Sarmento and Ricardo Campos (eds.), *Popular and Visual Culture: Design, Circulation and Consumption*, pp. 21-38. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press.

Rose, Gillian (1997), ‘Situating Knowledges: Positionality, Reflexivities and Other Tactics’. *Progress in Human Geography* 21(3): 305-320.

——— (2001), *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*. London: Sage.

Rose, Mitch (2002), ‘The Seductions of Resistance: Power, Politics, and a Performative Style of Systems’. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 20(4): 383-400.

Rosler, Martha and Brian E. Wallis (1991), *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory, and Social Activism*. Seattle: Bay Press.

Ross, Kristin (2015), *Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune*. London and New York: Verso Books.

Safransky, Sara (2014), Greening the urban frontier: Race, property, and resettlement in Detroit. *Geoforum* 56: 237-248.

Sajovic, Eva and Rebecca Davies (eds.) (2012), *Studio at the Elephant*. London: Studio at the Elephant.

Scott, Allen J. (2000), *The Cultural Economy of Cities*. London: SAGE.

——— (2006), ‘Creative Cities: Conceptual Issues and Policy Questions’. *Journal of Urban Affairs* 28(1): 1-17.

Senie, Harriet and Sally Webster (eds.) (1993), *Critical Issues in Public Art. Content, Context and Controversy*. New York: HarperCollins.

Sennett, Richard (2017), ‘Preface’. In Rahul Mehrotra and Felipe Vera (eds.), *Ephemeral Urbanism. Does Permanence Matter?*, pp. 4-8. Rovereto, TN: LIStlab.

Sharp, Joanne P., Paul Routledge, Chris Philo and Ronan Paddison (eds.) (2000), *Entanglements of Power: Geographies of Domination/Resistance*. London: Routledge.

Sheikh, Simon (2009), ‘Positively Trojan Horses Revisited’, *E-flux* 9, October 2009, available at: http://www.e-flux.com/journal/positively-trojan-horses-revisited/ [accessed 12 February 2010].

Slater, Tom (2009), ‘Missing Marcuse: on Gentrification and Displacement’. *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 13(2-3): 292-311.

——— (2018), ‘The Invention of the “Sink Estate”: Consequential Categorisation and the UK Housing Crisis’. *The Sociological Review* 66(4): 877-897.

Slee, Tom (2016), *What’s Yours is Mine: Against the Sharing Economy*. New York and London: Or Books.

Smith, Neil (1996), *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. London: Routledge.

——— (2002), ‘New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy’, *Antipode* 34(3): 427-450.

Southwark Council (2012), ‘Southwark becomes first council to officially recognise its Latin American community’, accessible at: http://www.southwark.gov.uk/news/article/953/southwark_becomes_first_council_to_officially_recognise_its_latin_american_community [accessed 10 September 2014].

Southwark Notes (2013), ‘Soundings: The Consultation Industry in the Elephant & Castle’, *Corporate Watch Magazine*, available at: http://www.corporatewatch.org/?lid=4635 [accessed 22 January 2013].

——— (2016), ‘Empowerment for Surrender: People’s Bureau, Engaged Art and the Elephant’. *Southwark Notes blog*, available at: https://southwarknotes.wordpress.com/2016/12/14/empowerment-for-surrender/ [accessed 22 June 2019].

Springer, Simon, Anthony Ince, Jenny Pickerill, Gavin Brown and Adam J. Barker (2012), ‘Anarchist Geographies’, *Antipode* 44(5): 1579-1754.

Squatting European Kollective (2014), ‘Map of London’s Squatted Spaces’ online, available at: https://maps.squat.net/en/cities/london/squats# [accessed 12 October 2017].

SQUASH and Alexander Vasudevan (2011), ‘Legal Activism: The Spatial Politics of Squatting in the UK’, *Shift Magazine*, available at: http://libcom.org/library/legal-activism-spatial-politics-squatting-uk [accessed 14 November 2011].

Stam, Robert and Eric Shohat (2002), ‘Narrativising Visual Culture (the Aesthetic of Garbage)’. In Nicholas Mirzoeff (ed.), *The Visual Culture Reader*, pp. 41-45. London: Routledge.

Standing, Guy (2011), *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Steedman, Marijke (2012), *Gallery as Community: Art, Education, Politics*. London: Whitechapel Gallery.

Stevens, Quentin (2020), ‘Pop-ups in Perth. Potentials and Problems of Temporary Urbanism’. *Lo Squaderno* 55: 19-22.

Steinert, Heinz (2009), ‘Culture Industry Cities: From Discipline to Exclusion, from Citizen to Tourist’. *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 13(2-3): 278-291.

St Hill, Cate (2016), *This is Temporary: How Transient Projects Are Redefining Architecture*. Newcastle upon Tyne: RIBA publishing.

Studio Urban Catalyst and Klaus Overmeyer (2007), *Urban Pioneers. Temporary Use and Urban Development in Berlin*. Berlin: Jovis Verlag.

The Archigram Archival Project (2010), The Archigram Archival Project, available at: http://archigram.westminster.ac.uk/project.php?id=56 [accessed 22 January 2018].

Thoburn, Nick (2007), ‘Patterns of Production: Cultural Studies after Hegemony’. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24(3): 79-94.

Till, Jeremy (2013), ‘Constructed Scarcity’, paper presentation at PhD Conference ‘Within the Limits of Scarcity: Rethinking Spaces, City and Practices’ 26-28 February 2013, University of Westminster, London.

Till, Karen E. (2005), *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

——— (2011), ‘Interim Use at a Former Death Strip? Art, Politics and Urbanism at Skulpturenpark Berlin_Zentrum’. In Marc Silberman (ed.), *The German Wall: Fallout in Europe*, pp. 99-122. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

——— and Rachel McArdle (2016), ‘The Improvisional City: Valuing Urbanity beyond the Chimera of Permanence’. *Irish Geography* 48(1): 37-68.

Time Out London (2011), ‘Secret Galleries. Discover the Best Galleries You Never Knew Existed... Visit Them This Weekend!’. *Time Out London Magazine*, 23 February - 3 March.

Tonkiss, Fran (2013), ‘Austerity Urbanism and the Makeshift City’. *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 17(3): 312-324.

Tonnelat, Stéphane (2013), ‘Interim Uses in Residual Spaces: An Inquiry into the Career of a Pier on the Hudson Riverfront’. In Andrea M. Brighenti (ed.), *Urban Interstices: The Aesthetics and the Politics of the In-between*, pp. 153-161. Farnham, Burlington: Ashgate.

Transparency International (2015), *Corruption on Your Doorstep: How Corrupt Capital Is Used to Buy Property in the UK*. London: Transparency International.

Turner, John F. and Robert Fichter (eds.) (1972), *Freedom to Build: Dweller Control of the Housing Process*. Collier Macmillan.

Vickery, Jonathan (2007), ‘The Emergence of Culture-Led Regeneration: A Policy Concept and its Discontents’. Working Paper. Centre for Cultural Policy Studies (Research papers). Coventry: University of Warwick.

Vasudevan, Alex (2011a), ‘Dramaturgies of Dissent: The Spatial Politics of Squatting in Berlin, 1968-’, *Social & Cultural Geography* 12(3): 283-303.

——— (2011b), ‘Criminalising Squatting Would Threaten Our Rights’. *The Guardian*, 22 June.

Waite, L. (2009), ‘A Place and Space for a Critical Geography of Precarity?’, *Geography Compass* 3(1): 412-433.

Watson, Sophie (2006), *City Publics: The (Dis)Enchantments of Urban Encounters*. London: Routledge.

Watt, Paul (2013), ‘“It’s Not for Us”’ Regeneration, the 2012 Olympics and the Gentrification of East London’. *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 17(1): 99-118.

Weber-Newth, Francesca, Sebastian Schlüter and Ilse Helbrecht (2017), ‘London 2012: “Legacy” a Trojan Horse’. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 16(4): 713-739.

Wick Award (2016), *Wick Area Big Local Report March 2016*. London: Wick Award.

Yiftachel, Oren (2009), ‘Critical Theory and “Gray Space”: Mobilization of the Colonized’. *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action* 13(2-3): 246-263.

Yrigoy, Ismael (2019), ‘Rent Gap Reloaded: Airbnb and the Shift from Residential to Touristic Rental Housing in the Palma Old Quarter in Mallorca, Spain’. *Urban Studies* 56(13): 2709-2726.

Ziehl, Michael and Sarah Oßwald (2015), ‘Practices In Second Hand Spaces: Producing Value from Vacancy’. *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization* 15(1): 263-277.

Zukin, Sharon (1988), *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change*. London: Radius.

——— (1995), *The Cultures of Cities*. Cambridge and Oxford: Blackwell.

——— (2003), ‘Urban Lifestyles. Diversity and Standardisation in Spaces of Consumption’. In David B. Clarke, Marcus A. Doel and Kate M.L. Housiaux (eds.), *The Consumption Reader*, pp. 127-131. London: Routledge.

——— (2008), ‘Consuming Authenticity’. *Cultural Studies* 22(5): 724-748.