



Conclusion

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Chapter 16

Conclusion: transforming cities through temporary urbanisms

Amy Y. Zhang and Lauren Andres

Purposes and contributions

The purposes of this edited collection are threefold. First, this book argues for and puts forward a research agenda for temporary urbanism. As highlighted in the introductory chapter, despite the increasing popularity of ideas and practices that can be understood as and grouped under ‘temporary urbanism’, the development of this concept has lagged behind. The conceptualisation in this emerging research area has, so far, been characterised by various scattered and disjointed terms that categorise particular practices as temporary (Andres 2013; Colomb 2012; Ferreri 2015; Madanipour 2018; Tonkiss 2013), guerrilla (Hou 2010), tactical (Lydon and Garcia 2015; Mould 2014), pop-up (Harris 2015; Schaller and Guinand 2018), DIY (Finn 2014; Iveson 2013), informal (Groth and Corijn 2005; Jayne and Hall 2019; Moatasim 2019), and so on, while the conceptual linkages among them are still relatively underdeveloped. As a result, there is a lack of reflection on the collective implication of these various forms of impermanence, whether by choice or by designation, for understanding the relationship between time and the (re)production of urban space. This book thus foregrounds the concept of temporary urbanism as an overarching framework that encompasses a variety of activities, practices and uses in cities that may be designed or designated as ‘temporary’ or ‘impermanent’, which in turn helps develop more in-depth understandings of the dynamics among time, urban space and urban politics.

Following from the first purpose of identifying temporary urbanism as an overarching concept and moving towards further shaping its research agenda, the second purpose of this edited collection is to recognise and demonstrate the diversity of temporary urbanisms – noting here the use of plural. On the one hand, by taking a comparative international overview approach towards this topic, this book significantly expands the geographical coverage in existing literature on temporary urbanism. As it is pointed out in the introductory chapter and by several contributors, the majority of the existing research on temporary urbanism focuses on North American, Western European and Australian cases (Andres 2013; Colomb 2012; Iveson 2013; Mould 2014; Schaller and Guinand 2018; Tonkiss 2013). Collectively, the chapters in this book present cases in both regions that are typically defined as the Northern ‘core’ (for example, USA, Canada, France, Spain and Switzerland) and those that tend to be seen as the ‘peripheries’ (for example, sub-Saharan Africa, Lebanon, Brazil and Chile), making a much-needed contribution to diversifying the geographical focus in the research area of temporary urbanism. It also looks at more unique cases in China, in the Republic of Macedonia and in Hungary.

On the other hand, this edited collection widens the research area of temporary urbanism, by not only enriching but also going beyond the strong focuses presented in existing literature on creative and artistic temporary uses and on the issues of engaging with temporary uses

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for urban regeneration. Given these perspectives, earlier studies on temporary urbanism often consider such practices as either subversive (grassroots, unauthorised, urban interventions) or complicit (sanctioned, sanitised, staging of alternative images of particular urban areas) in neoliberal urban development agenda (Colomb 2012; Ferreri 2015; Harris 2015; Schaller and Guinand 2018). These thematic focuses, although helpful for the initial recognition and development of this research area, can limit the understanding and usefulness of the concept of temporary urbanism if taken for granted. The contributions to this book thus make important interventions in the literature by problematising the established binary and demonstrating considerable diversity in temporary urbanisms that fall both within and beyond the thematic focuses identified above. Through these chapters, we see the diversity of temporary urbanism manifests in the form it takes, the function it assumes, the rationale behind it, the alignment of actors and the assemblage of time-space it creates, the effects it delivers, its relationship with the planning system and development model, and so on.

The thematic diversity of temporary urbanisms highlighted in this edited collection is also connected with the broadened geographical scope represented by the chapters. Studies of cases located outside of the Northern 'core' noticeably help enrich understanding of the concept of temporary urbanism. They call attention to issues of uses that are designated as temporary but are de facto much more 'permanent' in the case of informal housing structures (Bakare et al., chapter 5) and refugee camps (Moawad, chapter 6), and to the functions of temporary urbanism for deactivating urban space and symbols (Topuzovski and Andres, chapter 7) and for urban learning (García, chapter 9). The widened and diversified uses and interpretations of the concept of temporary urbanism shown in this book further strengthen the necessity of viewing and building temporary urbanism as an overarching concept, which, by encompassing a variety of practices and uses in cities and bringing them into conversations, would help deepen our understandings of the interactions between time and the (re)production of urban space.

The diversity in temporary urbanisms, as represented by the contributions to this edited collection, further needs to be emphasised as a result of and thus reflecting the complexity of temporary urbanisms. This book's third purpose is thus to prob into the complexity of temporary urbanisms and reflect upon its implications for methodological considerations. As several chapters included in this book point out, temporary urbanisms can be complex constellations of actors, processes, conditions and materials that may normally function in drastically different institutional and professional spaces (for example, Stevens, chapter 2; Mc Ardle, chapter 3; Maeder, chapter 4; Crump, chapter 8; Pinard, chapter 10). This boundary-traversing nature of temporary urbanism brings out its complexity in two main ways. First, the existing status and characters of the institutional and professional spaces that each specific case of temporary urbanism traverses inevitably shapes its look, form, use and effect, where certain fields may play a more dominant role than others (for example, García, chapter 9; Mackinnon, chapter 11; Bródy, chapter 12). As a result, a multitude of aspects and relationships need to be taken into consideration when examining temporary urbanisms while the borders of such examination need to be recognised as fuzzy, flexible and dynamic. Second, it can be challenging for all the factors that are drawn from different institutional and professional spaces and are needed to realise certain temporary urbanisms to be compatible

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or align properly for the intended purposes or functions of temporary urbanisms (for example, Mc Ardle, chapter 3; Maeder, chapter 4). Frictions and glitches are thus more common than exceptional in cases of temporary urbanism, which highlights the need for research on temporary urbanisms to closely attend to their complexity and, consequently, unpredictability.

The complexity of temporary urbanisms also comes from the variety of people who may be involved in producing, defining, maintaining, consuming and utilising temporary urbanisms. For one thing, and related to the aspects explored in the previous paragraph, the relationships and power dynamics between these different groups of people, which may be pre-existing or created through temporary urbanisms, add to the variables that may shape temporary urbanisms while such variables may also be reshaped through temporary urbanisms in the process (for example, Bakare et al., chapter 5; Crump, chapter 8; Pinard, chapter 10; Bródy, chapter 12). For another thing, temporary urbanisms, whether by design or by designation, create and demand their own audience, recipients and users (who sometimes may overlap with producers). The interpretations of, responses to and sometimes appropriations of temporary urbanisms from those who may be considered as being at the receiving end of these projects and practices, however, cannot be fully controlled or predicted (for example, Topuzovski and Andres, chapter 7; McCarthy, chapter 15). The possible variations of reactions induced by temporary urbanisms and sometimes the lack thereof further highlight the complexity of temporary urbanisms (for example, Moawad, chapter 6; Zhang, chapter 13; Rodrigues, et al., chapter 14). Taken the aspects explored here together, this book therefore emphasises that, to attend to the complexity of temporary urbanisms, research needs to pay close attention to the multi-layered contexts that specific case of temporary urbanism is situated in.

To conclude and synthesise the ideas and arguments from the contributors of this edited collection, we identify two main conceptual themes that connect all the chapters: one on time, temporality and temporariness and the other on urban planning, governance and politics. The rest of this chapter thus discusses how the contributions to this book engage with these themes and ends with a concluding reflection on the future directions of the research area of temporary urbanism.

Time, temporality and temporariness

While one of the most prominent features of temporary urbanism may be its temporariness as opposed to being permanent, the contributions included in this edited collection highlight temporal dimensions of temporary urbanisms that go beyond a simple dichotomy between 'the temporary' and 'the permanent' and that are more productive for elucidating these phenomena. To being with, as Stevens reminds us in chapter 2, the relationship between temporariness and permanence is dialectical. Both 'the temporary' and 'the permanent' need to be understood and defined relationally. Arguably, all urban built environments and uses of urban space are to some extent impermanent. As assemblages of materials, actors and capital, they are constantly shaped by multiple relationships that stretch across spaces and are at different scales. Permanence, thus, is more a reflection of perceived relative stability, based upon slowness of or difficulty in changes.

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Hence, the 'temporary' in temporary urbanism is better understood as a duration that is defined for the activities and uses in question in relation to perceived stability. Temporary, in this sense, is less about defining for how long the activities and uses in question will last but more about indicating that they will not or should not last, whether there is a designated duration for them or not. And as Stevens (chapter 2), Bakare et al. (chapter 5) and Moawad (chapter 6) highlight in this book, temporary urbanisms are as much about such activities, practices and uses in and of urban spaces as about the relationships that different urban actors construct with time and the temporality of urban spaces in such circumstances.

Especially, temporary urbanisms are about the relationships urban actors construct with and between the present and the future. The present in temporary urbanisms is often deemed as undesirable by some while 'the temporary' is deployed to mediate its relationship with the future. In some cases, such as the case of informal building structures discussed by Bakare et al. (chapter 5) and that of the Dbayeh camp demonstrated by Moawad (chapter 6), the present, due to its undesirability as perceived by the state, is defined as a temporary status. In such situations, those who live their day-to-day in these environments inhabit 'the temporary' while awaiting a future that is supposed to be a shift from the present but in an unclear and uncertain sense. Time and temporality to them are thus experienced and conceptualised as the constant rather than a movement.

In some other cases, 'the temporary' is seen as a way to move away from the present and/or to accelerate the arrival of a certain future. As Maeder (chapter 4), Pinard (chapter 10), Mackinnon (chapter 11), Zhang (chapter 13), Rodrigues et al. (chapter 14) and McCarthy (chapter 15) show in their respective case studies, 'the temporary' is mobilised by local authorities, planners, or real estate developers to stage alternatives to the present: for stimulating imaginations of possible futures, inducing desires for change, or gaining legitimacy for or support of particular visions. Through 'the temporary', a version of the future is accentuated to be experienced in a condensed and intensified way in the present and a spiral movement of time is inserted into the otherwise linear temporality of urban spaces. Relatedly, as García argues in chapter 9, 'the temporary' can also be a way to slowly and incrementally move away from the present and towards a future that has yet to be defined. It is through multiple iterations of 'the temporary' that a trajectory may be charted.

As shown above and as highlighted by several chapters in this book (for example, Stevens, chapter 2; Mc Ardle, chapter 3; Maeder, chapter 4; Topuzovski and Andres, chapter 7; Crump, chapter 8; García, chapter 9; Bródy, chapter 12), a key temporal dimension of temporary urbanisms is thus the temporalities and rhythms they create and cultivate, which tend to be ignored when they are only examined through a 'temporary vs permanent' lens. As Mc Ardle points out in chapter 3, the rhythms of temporary urbanisms often deviate from and add to existing, well-established and institutionalised rhythms of urban spaces. Temporary urbanisms therefore may create ruptures in such rhythms; for example, deactivating urban symbols as discussed by Topuzovski and Andres in chapter 7. And they may be accommodated by a rupture appearing in existing rhythms, such as urban vacancies resulting from the 2008 financial crisis. They may also be characterised by both, as shown in the case of the Dublin Biennial discussed by Mc Ardle in chapter 3, where the event was accommodated by a rupture

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of the neoliberal urban rhythms (vacancies) while creating ruptures in another set of rhythms (commuters).

Contributions to this book also emphasise pace as an important aspect of the temporality of temporary urbanism and for analysing temporary urbanisms. For one thing, the rhythms of temporary urbanisms may be derived from their paces, such as when they become recurring elements in urban spaces (for example, Mc Ardle, chapter 3; Maeder, chapter 4; Zhang, chapter 13). In such case, temporary urbanisms need to establish and maintain particular rhythms to meet the frequency, potentially becoming one of the more institutionalised rhythms of urban spaces. For another thing, while temporary urbanisms are often lauded for providing quick (and thus relatively easy and cheap) solutions to particular urban issues (for example, Crump, chapter 8; García, chapter 9; McCarthy, chapter 15), they may simultaneously be characterised by a certain level of slowness given their incremental nature in inducing changes (for example, García, chapter 9; Zhang, chapter 13).

And finally, paying attention to temporalities and rhythms helps probe into how temporary urbanisms may be conditioned and shaped by existing and institutionalised rhythms. For example, in the cases discussed by Bakare et al. (chapter 5) and Moawad (chapter 6), the institutionalised rhythms of the state condition these temporary urbanisms and define their rhythms as the constant. Relatedly, Bródy's comparative analysis of Barcelona and Budapest in chapter 12 shows that the existing rhythms of citizen participation and social movement are important for understanding the respective rhythms that temporary urbanisms align with in these two cities. In addition, García (chapter 9), Pinard (chapter 10), Zhang (chapter 13) and Rodrigues et al. (chapter 14) demonstrate that the broader and institutionalised rhythms may define a certain kind of temporality that is met by the rhythms of temporary urbanisms. However, as Mc Ardle (chapter 3) and Maeder (chapter 4) indicate, the rhythms of temporary urbanisms may also deviate greatly from the institutionalised rhythms that they interact with or are situated in, such as those of urban planning or the art world, which may create frictions and restrict the effects of temporary urbanisms. Overall, temporary urbanisms tend to intersect the rhythms of multiple spheres and bring them into conversation (for example, Stevens, chapter 2; Crump, chapter 8); how these rhythms interact with each other and with the rhythms, pace and duration of temporary urbanisms play important roles in shaping the outcomes of temporary urbanisms.

Urban planning, governance and politics

Building upon the multifaceted and nuanced understandings of the temporal dimensions of temporary urbanisms contributed by the authors, as discussed in the previous section, this section focuses on how they mobilise these understandings to unpack the meanings and functions of temporary urbanisms for urban planning, governance and politics.

First, a closer attention to the meaning of 'the temporary' presented by the contributions to this book helps shed light on the implications of assigning temporariness to certain activities, practices and uses in and of urban spaces. On the one hand, temporary urbanisms, especially those that aim at intervening in existing rhythms of urban spaces and inducing changes, may benefit from being defined as temporary for it makes it easier for them to be tolerated or

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unchallenged (for example, Stevens, chapter 2; Mc Arlde, chapter 3; García, chapter 9). The ruptures created in existing rhythms of urban spaces are seen as experiments that can be relatively easily reversed or removed, which reduces the hurdles for implementing temporary urbanisms and encourages innovation through temporary urbanisms (for example, Crump, chapter 8). On the other hand, temporariness may also be deployed, especially by the state, to justify the ignorance of and/or to demand acceptance of conditions that may be deemed as undesirable or unsuitable, as Bakare et al. (chapter 5) and Moawad (chapter 6) point out.

And second, examining the temporalities and rhythms of temporary urbanisms highlights both the transformative potentials and the limitations of temporary urbanisms. While temporary urbanisms may create ruptures in and disrupt existing, institutionalised and dominant rhythms of urban spaces, the potential long-term effects or legacies of temporary urbanisms depend on how such ruptures and disruptions interact with existing rhythms and whether and to what extent they are absorbed by existing rhythms (for example, Topuzovski and Andres, chapter 7; Bródy, chapter 12; McCarthy, chapter 15). The relationships that temporary urbanisms construct with and between the present and the future, although may to some extent challenge existing dominant rhythms (for example, Mc Arlde, chapter 3; García, chapter 9), can potentially fit into or help further legitimise them (for example, Pinard, chapter 10; Mackinnon, chapter 11; Zhang, chapter 13). The distinction between the rhythms of temporary urbanisms and the dominant and institutionalised ones becomes further blurred when temporary urbanisms are turned into recurring events and features of urban spaces. Furthermore, one key aspect of the transformative potentials of temporary urbanisms stems from the ability of temporary urbanisms in intersecting and bridging multiple rhythms that are less likely to interact otherwise, as argued by Stevens (chapter 2) and Crump (chapter 8). Nevertheless, clashes and frictions between these rhythms may also be common and can diminish the transformative potentials of temporary urbanisms (for example, Mc Arlde, chapter 3; Maeder, chapter 4).

The contributions to this edited collection thus demonstrate that careful attention must be paid to the temporal dimensions of temporary urbanism to sufficiently grasp the meaning and function of a particular case of temporary urbanism for urban planning, governance and politics. These include, and are not limited to, the use of and rationale behind temporariness and the temporality and rhythm of temporary urbanism in relation to the temporalities and rhythms that it intersects and interacts with.

Conclusion

Temporary urbanism is still a relatively new and emerging research area. Thus, this book intends to act as a timely overview and synthesis of the development of such a field of enquiry and as an effort to push the research area to the next stage. As highlighted here and through the contributions to this book, temporary urbanism needs to be viewed and engaged with as an overarching concept. It needs to be understood as being characterised by a relational understanding of temporariness and by the relationships with and between the present and the future that it enables urban actors to construct. In this way, temporary urbanism, as a concept, is able to account for a diverse range of activities, practices and uses of urban spaces. Conceptualised in this way, temporary urbanism also helps build more in-depth

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understandings of the dynamics between time and the (re)production of urban spaces. In addition, this edited collection highlights how temporary urbanisms function as complex constellations of actors, processes, conditions and materials that intersect and attempt to bridge multiple rhythms while constructing rhythms of their own. The complexity of temporary urbanisms emphasises the need for researchers to be attentive to the multi-layered contexts that temporary urbanisms are situated in and in particular the temporalities and rhythms of these contexts.

Temporary urbanisms can carry transformative potentials, especially when they create ruptures in dominant institutionalised rhythms of urban spaces or when they can address existing ruptures of certain rhythms without having to fit into such rhythms. Such transformative potentials are especially valued at the moment while we finish the manuscript of this book in mid-2020. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, cities around the world draw on temporary solutions to help mitigate the pandemic's impacts on people's daily lives, such as implementing temporary cycle lanes to accommodate the increasing number of cyclists as a result of people's attempts to avoid public transport (Martin et al. 2020). In addition to accommodating a rupture caused by the pandemic, the temporary reduction of automobile transport and expansion of space for cycling is a rupture of the urban landscape in 'normal times' and creates a possible future that many urban residents feel excited about. While it remains to be seen whether this temporary urbanism will transform transport planning in certain cities, it once again reminds us of the value and potential of temporary urbanisms and hence the importance of adaptability and flexibility in the production of spaces that are both liveable and resilient.

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