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Perspectives, positions and responses to the temporary use of land in Bristol and Liverpool

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Abstract

This paper provides a critical examination of experiences of the reuse of land on a temporary basis as part of regeneration programmes in two British cities. It attempts to extend existing efforts to interpret the temporary reuse of brownfield land by developing an approach more reflective of the multivalent character of temporary land use, focusing on ‘extraordinary’ compared ‘ordinary’ forms of reuse. The analysis explores the experience of two areas: one, Bristol’s Temple Quarter where regeneration policy has tried purposely to promote temporary use, and the other, Liverpool’s Creative Quarter, where policy has tried to capitalise upon ‘meanwhile’ development that has more organic roots. Through a programme of semi-structured interviews with key regeneration and development actors, the paper assesses perspectives on different approaches to the temporary use of land in contrasting local economic contexts. It concludes by drawing upon case study evidence to argue that understanding of the evolution of local structures and actions over time and across space is critically important in explaining the nature and form of temporary development.
Introduction

There is a growing research literature documenting empirical experiences of the temporary reuse of urban land in multiple international contexts (see, for example, Haydn and Temel, 2006; Colomb, 2012, 2017; Andres, 2013; Andres and Chapain, 2013; Oswalt et al, 2013). Some of this research has focused on the prefigurative potential for temporary development of land to accommodate alternative or innovative uses which challenge existing development orthodoxies or provide a voice to marginalised communities to influence the direction of future urban change (Andres, 2013; Finn, 2014). As part of this, there has been growing research interest in the possibilities of experimental forms of cultural-creative temporary uses as part of wider urban regeneration programmes in Britain and elsewhere (see, for example, Urban Catalyst, 2007; Bishop and Williams, 2012; Armstrong and Mellick-Lopes, 2016).

Accompanying this have been critical accounts of temporary uses, emphasising their role in assisting efforts by policy elites to market their cities and extend place-based competitive advantage but in doing so helping to commodify urban space, reinforce gentrification and accentuate the displacement of non-conforming land-uses (Colomb, 2012, 2017). For Madanipour (2017: 2), the ‘multivalent’ character of temporary use means that its progressive purposes can sometimes be subverted in the context of wider development processes, reinforcing unequal power relations while accentuating economic precarity for temporary users.

Against this backdrop, this paper provides a critical examination of the reuse of land on a temporary basis as part of urban regeneration programmes in two British cities. In doing so, it examines how the opportunities and risks associated with temporary use of land were experienced and negotiated by actors operating within regeneration programmes in two contrasting local economic contexts. The first is Bristol’s Temple Quarter, where regeneration efforts have tried purposely to promote temporary use, using it to stabilise local land markets and actuate wider property-led revival. The second is Liverpool’s Creative Quarter, where policy actors have employed a more passive approach, attempting to capitalise upon organically rooted ‘meanwhile’ developments and linking them to wider regeneration strategy.

Exploring what Healey (1991: 97) terms the ‘development industry’ in these two case study areas, the research involved 28 semi-structured interviews undertaken in 2016 with key policy actors, community stakeholders, developers and land owners. The approach sought to reflect the multivalent character of temporary land use by focusing on what might be understood as ‘extraordinary’ as well as ‘ordinary’ forms of reuse. This is a response to widespread criticism that analyses of temporary use over-emphasise the particular at the expense of the general, and the pioneering at the expense of the everyday (Munzner and Shaw, 2015). The analysis illustrates how temporary use can engender opportunity for creativity and innovation as part of the regeneration process. But it also demonstrates how what Peck (2012) calls ‘risk-shifting rationalities’ in the development industry can mean that economic, social and political costs accrue inordinately to temporary users.
Temporary use amongst the development process

The temporary use of space has become a major urban trend, attracting increasing popular, policy and academic attention since the emergence of seminal texts on the concept in the early 2000s (Bishop, 2015; Portas, 2011; Madanipour, 2017). Focusing on beach bars, open air theatres, community gardens, sculpture parks or alternative living projects (Colomb, 2012), to name but a few examples, scholars have increasingly reported on the “power of temporary use” to alleviate vacancy and dereliction in cities (see Haydn and Temel, 2006: 14 and Oswalt et al, 2013: 5). Discussions around these temporary urban uses gained significant momentum within the framework of recession, austerity and weakened land and property markets following the global financial crisis of 2007-08 (Moore-Cherry and McCarthy, 2016). Where former models of regeneration and development were challenged in the immediate aftermath of 2007-08, temporary solutions were quickly held up and valued as cheap, fast responses to address the ‘blight’ of vacancy and neglect (Andres, 2013 and Harris, 2015).

Looking at interim use through the lens of ‘austerity urbanism’ (Peck, 2012) has been increasingly topical, attracting critical questioning from scholars including Tonkiss (2013, 2014), Ferreri (2015) and Harris (2015) as part of a broader critique of austerity measures (Madanipour, 2017). Through these studies, a more advanced scholarly critique on the subject of temporary development has ensued, moving beyond the valorisation of the potential of interim use. Scholars such as, Tonkiss (2013, 2014), Colomb (2012, 2017) and Ferreri (2015), illustrate how policies which seek to capitalise on and incorporate forms of improvised, temporary and creative uses of derelict unused spaces – such as the Broedplaatsenbeleid policy in Amsterdam, the Raumpioniere strategy in Berlin or London’s programme for Meanwhile Uses – can act as high-cred seed-beds for creeping gentrification or serve as PR exercises and warm-up acts for speculative private developments. Moreover, for Colomb (2012, 2017), temporal tensions typically arise between temporary as a delimited stop-gap solution by local authorities and private developers and, owning to their popularity, meanwhile users vying for permanency. These interpretations have served to highlight critical implications for the development industry when creative temporary solutions are mobilised as a roll-out response to vacancy, austerity and economic decline (see also Madanipour, 2017).

Nevertheless, appreciations of the different ways in which temporary use practices are perceived, and strategies to manage them performed, receive relatively little attention in the literature (see Moore-Cherry and McCarthy, 2016; Madanipour, 2017). While there has been growing interest in the possibilities of experimental forms of cultural-creative interim uses as part of wider regeneration programmes (Urban Catalyst, 2007; Haydn and Temel, 2006; SfS Berlin, 2007; Oswalt et al, 2013), limited research has actually questioned “the potential contribution of temporary uses in a long-lasting process of urban regeneration” (Andres, 2013: 760).

Alongside this, a clear sense has emerged that temporary urban uses should be understood as a part of the urban development cycle and process (see Moore-Cherry and McCarthy, 2016; Madanipour,
What has come to the fore, is that only by highlighting specific perceptions and perspectives from groups of stakeholders, can the antagonisms and prejudices between users, developers, citizens and policy makers be identified and new dialogues opened up on the influence of temporary urban uses in planning and development processes (Moore-Cherry and McCarthy, 2016; Madanipour, 2017). In support of Moore-Cherry and McCarthy (2016), Madanipour (2017) and Henneberry (2017), greater appreciation of variations in perspective from the multitude of actors who encompass regeneration and development should be better incorporated into the discourse on interim use. By doing so a more sophisticated understanding of the role of temporary solutions in the re-use of land and property could be developed.

This paper attempts to contribute to this area of research by highlighting the importance of reconciling debates on redevelopment and urban regeneration and the role of vacancy and temporary use as part of the wider development process. In doing so, it highlights how understandings of temporary solutions could usefully be extended by augmenting the existing emphasis concerning new and innovative land uses on vacant space together with more mundane versions of the phenomena. Through this dichotomy, it became possible to track how development actors’ perspectives toward temporary solutions may change over time.

‘Ordinary’ and ‘extraordinary’ temporary solutions

Literature on the concept of temporary use is somewhat disjointed, promoting multiple coinciding terms and definitions of temporary urbanity. Even in spite of continued research on the topic, there is still no accepted definition of the theory, rather a collection of terms, some more popular than others. These include temporary use/urbanism (Desimini, 2015), interim use (Németh and Langhorst, 2014), meanwhile use (SQW Consulting, 2010), DIY urbanism (Iveson, 2013), tactical urbanism (Mould, 2014), indeterminate spaces (Groth and Corijn. 2005) or even makeshift city (Ferguson, 2014) and interwhile use (Reynolds, 2011). Nevertheless, despite the lack of consensus on the theoretical definition of temporary use, much of the literature on the concept, regardless of country of origin, is consistent in its emphasis on similar themes (see also Moore-Cherry and McCarthy, 2016).

Hijacked by “boosterist mayors and architectural style-mags” (Tonkiss, 2013: 320), temporary uses, are increasingly representative of a catch-all urban solution (see Ferreri, 2015; Németh and Langhorst, 2014 or O’Callaghan and Lawton, 2015). Dominated by high profile cases, research on temporary development is concerned almost entirely with a preconceived type of practice. Temporary solutions of this kind include cultural activities, leisure, trade, tourism and urban greening (Pratt, 2009; Stevens and Ambler, 2010; Tardiveau and Mallo, 2014). Ultimately, there is now widespread criticism that analyses of temporary use over-emphasise the particular at the expense of the general, and the pioneering at the expense of the everyday (Adams and Hardman, 2013; Deslandes, 2013; Munzer and Shaw, 2015). More generic, ordinary temporary developments in cities such as advertisement hoardings (Adams et al, 2002; Reynolds, 2011), surface car parking (Parris, 2013; O’Callaghan and Lawton, 2015) or even
public open space (Handley, 1996; CABE, 2008) remain detached from the discourse on the short-term use of vacant land and property. This raises questions about the role of ‘acceptable’ compared to ‘unacceptable’ temporary solutions in cities (Deslandes, 2013).

For Henneberry (2017), consideration should now be given to the relation between one type of temporary solution compared to another. The paper takes forward this notion by presenting a conceptual approach which sought to better reflect the multivalent character of temporary land use by focusing on what might be understood as ‘extraordinary’ as well as ‘ordinary’ forms of reuse. Here, ‘extraordinary’ temporary uses refer to deliberately high-profile landmark and/or creative or innovative developments, whereas, ‘ordinary’ temporary uses refer to interim developments such as surface car parks, which typically occupy redundant land for indeterminate periods pending site development on a more permanent basis. Dissimilar to previous studies on the subject, this conceptualisation understands temporary use as a formal part of the planning/development cycle, thus, temporary use is defined through the mechanism of planning permission, as uses that apply from the outset for permission that is restricted to a limited period of time/duration.

**Perspectives of development actors toward temporary use in British cities: Bristol and Liverpool**

In seeking to apply this framework empirically, we focus on the experience of temporary solutions as part of urban regeneration programmes in two British cities over a fifteen-year period (2000-15). The delimitation of a time-period for study was based on converging temporal trends between the literatures on temporary urbanism and impacts of the 2008-2010 economic recession on development cycles (Martin, 2012). Temporary use has been the subject of an ever expanding literature since the mid-2000s (Haydn and Temel, 2006; Urban Catalyst, 2007) coinciding, within the chosen context, with the governments crystallisation of the brownfield land agenda and successive waves of urban regeneration initiatives following the Rodgers report and subsequent Urban White Paper (Urban Task Force, 1999; DETR, 2000). The year 2000 therefore served as a natural entry point, while the boom and bust nature of recession (2008-2010) and subsequent recovery (2011) served as the dominant characteristics affecting development cycles between 2000 and 2015/16, the year in which the data was collected (Gardiner et al, 2013; Hincks et al, 2014).

In defining two cities for empirical study, three aspects were considered. The first was to expand upon the limited coverage of temporary development in England (SQW Consulting, 2010). The second concerned an exploration of policy provisions for temporary use in this context and the third was to investigate cities with contrasting economic and social characteristics. Coverage of temporary development in England is limited in terms of both its substantive and geographical focus. In terms of geography, research on temporary use tends to focus disproportionately on London (see, for example, Reynolds, 2011; Bishop and Williams, 2012; Tonkiss, 2013 or Madanipour, 2017). Understandings of the interconnectivity between temporary use and regeneration outside of the capital are scarce. To that
end, the research defined England’s second tier or core cities – the eight largest city economies outside of London – as a functional geography from which to conduct the analysis (Core Cities, 2016).

Policy analysis of these cities revealed that Bristol and Liverpool were the only second tier cities with specific policy provisions for temporary uses on vacant sites, Policy BCAP12 in Bristol (BCC, 2015) and Policy CC 13 in Liverpool (LCC, 2016). Alongside this, multiple accounts on the core cities highlight the pronounced disparity between the cities of Bristol and Liverpool in particular, with Bristol the “star performing city” of the eight (Champion and Townsend, 2011: 1552) and Liverpool the poorest performer (Parkinson, 2016). The combination provided the research with two cities with long histories as major ports, but with divergent economic histories over successive decades and contrasting economic and social characteristics.

Against this backdrop, we provide a critical examination of the reuse of land on a temporary basis as part of two urban regeneration programmes, Bristol’s Temple Quarter and Liverpool’s Creative Quarter. Policy documentation showed that both areas were the subject of regeneration efforts between 2000 and 2015, Bristol’s Temple Quarter since 2011 and Liverpool’s Creative Quarter since the early 2000s (BCC, 2014; LCC, 2005, 2008). Alongside this, the two locations represented contrasting approaches toward temporary development. In Bristol’s Temple Quarter, regeneration efforts have tried purposely to promote temporary use, using it to stabilise local land markets and actuate wider property-led revival. By comparison, in Liverpool’s Creative Quarter, policy actors have employed a more passive approach, attempting to capitalise upon organically rooted ‘meanwhile’ developments and linking them to a wider regeneration strategy.

Exploring what Healey (1991: 97) terms the ‘development industry’ in these case study areas, the research involved 28 semi-structured interviews undertaken with key policy actors, community stakeholders, developers and land owners. The resulting analysis illustrates how temporary use can engender opportunity for creativity and innovation as part of the regeneration/development process. But it also demonstrates how what Peck (2012) calls ‘risk-shifting’ rationalities in the development industry can mean that economic, social and political costs accrue inordinately to temporary users. The subsequent sections examine how the opportunities and risks associated with ‘ordinary’ and ‘extraordinary’ temporary uses were experienced and negotiated by actors operating within the Bristol Temple Quarter and Liverpool Creative Quarter regeneration programmes.

**Bristol’s Temple Quarter**

Initial regeneration efforts in Bristol’s Temple Quarter in the 1990s, based on the flagship development of Temple Quay, faltered because of conflict between the city’s former Urban Development Corporation and the local authority (Deas et al, 2000). However, as Boddy (2007) notes, subsequent private sector investment in residential units, student accommodation, high profile office space, leisure and retail functions meant that by the mid-2000s the regeneration of Temple Quays had started to gather
momentum. These initial waterfront developments attracted further developer interest and provided a favourable context for further rounds of regeneration (Raco et al, 2008).

The potential associated with development of this type was something that local policy actors were keen to harness. To that end, in 2011 an enlarged and rebadged Temple Quarter was designated an Enterprise Zone, offering more than 240,000m² of commercial, residential, retail and leisure space. The emphasis was on attracting investment linked to four key sectors: hi-tech, creative and digital, low carbon and professional services (BCC, 2014; HM Government, 2017). In delivering this highly ambitious programme, a new strategic partnership was established, comprising Bristol City Council, Network Rail, the main landholder the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), and West of England Local Enterprise Partnership together with its inward investment promotional body, Invest Bristol and Bath.

Deteriorating macro-economic circumstances presented an immediate challenge to the new partnership. Private sector demand for land slowed in the aftermath of the financial crises of 2007-08 and the subsequent recessions, necessitating a rethink of the approach to regeneration, including how best to find effective short-term use for redundant land (Tonkiss, 2013). The solution from 2012 was to try to promote ‘innovative’, ‘creative’ and high-profile temporary uses on vacant sites in order to improve the image of the Temple Quarter, raise awareness of its regeneration programme and thereby stimulate demand for long-term development. Although there were efforts to promote ‘ordinary’ functional, everyday uses such as surface car parking as a short-term solution, over time the emphasis on more ambitious ‘extraordinary’ forms of temporary use began to grow. These included the Severn Project (polytunnels on the site of a former diesel depot), Grow Bristol (an urban farm accommodated in converted lorries), Box Works (office space in reused shipping containers), the Creative Common (a space for arts and creative events) and Yurt Lush (a café and restaurant in a yurt) (Figures 1 and 2).

Part of the rationale for the shift in emphasis from ordinary to extraordinary temporary uses was a pragmatic desire to manage the surge of applications for car parks, control their overall impact on transport and traffic, and minimise what some argued was their unnecessary visual intrusion (Figure 2b) (BCC, 2015). But part of the changing perspective on temporary use was also attributable to a desire to aid broader efforts to implant a positive image of the area’s regeneration potential in the minds of developers: ‘it is about branding’, as one interviewee commented (Interview A, local authority regeneration project manager).

To encourage more high-profile and innovative temporary uses of brownfield land, the local planning and regeneration policy framework underwent amendment. A series of Local Development Orders was initiated from 2012 as a means of encouraging creative temporary uses on strategically important, publicly owned land (BCC, 2014, 2015, 2016). Alongside these, the HCA and Bristol City Council began
formally to recognise the importance of innovative temporary developments via a central area planning policy (Policy BCAP 12: Vacant sites and temporary uses). The Bristol Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone (BTQEZ) Spatial Framework (BCC, 2015) was also important in recognising the catalytic potential for high-profile temporary use to impact on regeneration more broadly.

By 2016, however, the local planning authority stance on temporary use had changed again. Interview data suggest that policy actors had become more concerned about the escalating financial and administrative costs associated with intervention to promote innovative and high-profile temporary uses. This was reinforced by ongoing reductions in central government funding of local authorities, with the effect that Bristol City Council had increasing political difficulty in justifying expenditure to enable high-profile development on sites for which viable alternative temporary uses (such as car parking) already existed. One interviewee estimated the cost to the public sector of enabling high-profile temporary uses on two sites as between ‘£200,000 and £300,000’ (Interview C, local regeneration agency officer). Moreover, the principal role of the Enterprise Zone was to deliver stable growth and permanent development, further undermining the case for spending scarce public resources to support developments which, while representing important and visible landmarks, were never intended to be anything other than short-lived. As one interviewee argued:

I don’t think we have the time to protect [temporary user] interests beyond saying there’s this site, it’s yours for a period at a certain price.

(Interview D, national regeneration agency officer)

Ultimately, then, most public sector interviewees viewed temporary use as a means rather than an end: as a way of facilitating permanent strategic development. Yet while the level of financial support for temporary uses was reduced, and although the emphasis moved again to temporary development as short-term stopgap in response to localised land surpluses, some policy actors continued to view time-limited development in more strategic terms. Some were keen to go so far as to establish a temporary use strategy (Interview C, local regeneration agency officer). Interview data show increasing alertness to the longer-term legacy of temporary development, especially some of the landmark projects that had emerged. Some public sector interviewees measured the success of temporary uses based narrowly on the permanent developments they might inspire in future (Interview C, local regeneration agency officer; Interview D, national regeneration agency officer). For others, however, appreciation of the impacts of short-term development meant that temporary uses might have to be relocated across the Temple Quarter. This was not only because of their popularity among users, but also because of the effectiveness of temporary use as a regeneration tool: as ‘a vehicle that you move around the Enterprise Zone’ (Interview B, local authority officer). Indeed, the value of temporary use as a means of promoting wider regeneration was such that some interviewees were more sanguine about the costs incurred in relocation, whether in the form of £30,000 to fund the logistically challenging transfer of a soil membrane or the less demanding task of moving shipping containers (see Figures 1c and 1d).
In general, public policy actors viewed temporary use as a critical element of strategy for Temple Quarter, even if views were divided about the extent to which limited funds should be concentrated on high-profile flagship developments as an alternative to ‘letting the market decide’ and utilising everyday temporary uses such as car parking as a means of restoring market equilibrium. Views among private sector interviewees, by contrast, were more mixed. Although there was recognition of the value of a more proactive role by the public sector in respect of temporary use, there was nervousness among some long established developers, some of whom recalled one of the earliest landmark temporary use projects in the area in 2012, a big top tent in the Creative Common hosting the Invisible Circus group. While this was a highly visible temporary use, some developers complained during interviews that its impact was to tarnish the image of Temple Quarter as a potential destination for investment. Although some recent entrants to the local property market argued that ‘mindsets have changed’ and a more supportive stance regarding temporary uses like the big top tent was emerging, in general apprehension prevailed among longer-standing developers (Interview E, private developer).

These divided views among developers about the value of policy intervention in support of temporary use reflects the degree of difficulty faced in constructing viable public-private regeneration partnerships. A particular problem faced by local policy actors in relation to private sector engagement has been the view among some developers that temporary uses have been ‘downmarket’, their presence ‘cheapening’ the aesthetic of the Temple Quarter (Interview E, private developer; Interview F, property agent). Allowing short-term users to occupy sites for too long, it was argued, risked undermining the wider image of the area and its attractiveness to potential developers. Temporary uses, it was contended, could play a useful interim role, but ought not to endure because of the consequences for long-term land market functionality:

> Commercial developers […] don’t want to tie the site up with a temporary use for two years. They are thinking, oh we could do a deal next year, next week, next month…

(Interview E, private developer).

Despite these reservations, some developers, nevertheless, saw value in temporary use as a ‘fun risk’ (Interview E, private developer). There was enthusiasm in particular for innovative or unusual temporary uses that would help raise the area’s profile and enhance its attractiveness to developers. But many developers were frustrated by this approach. Restrictions on surface car parking, they argued, were undermining the area’s appeal to developers and end-users. The apparent preoccupation of policy actors with faddish temporary uses was at the expense of the day-to-day functionality of the area, some interviewees argued. Public sector actors, it was claimed, were insufficiently appreciative of the risks involved in allowing temporary uses to develop. The rhetoric accompanying Temple Quarter stressed the importance of public-private partnership and emphasised the contribution of temporary use to the area’s renewed dynamism. However, the more prosaic view among some of the developers canvassed was that while short-term land-use had a useful makeshift role to play, if not managed carefully it could frustrate the resumption of a fully operational land and property market.
A third category of actor – temporary users – offered different perspectives. Most recognised their role in the branding and marketing of the Temple Quarter, but also welcomed the opportunity the regeneration initiative afforded them to showcase their own business. However, whereas both public policy actors and developers viewed them, for the most part, as transient entities, temporary users themselves sought a degree of permanence. Bristol City Council and the HCA, they complained, had failed to recognise each temporary user as a start-up business with aspirations to longevity. Temporary users were unanimous in their recognition for the support given by one or both the city council and HCA during the initial stages of their project, such as assisting with planning permission and groundwork costs. However, this support was said to be short lived and once on site very little care or attention was provided. Some in retrospect felt they had been unfairly cajoled as part of regeneration schemes into high risk, complex temporary use projects that were unlikely to be anything other than transitory:

There’s sometimes a real lack of common sense and reasonable behaviour. So they think they’re being helpful […] but in terms of support there’s a sort of gap where they can’t seem to think reasonably about what’s actually going on.

(Interview G, temporary user).

Temporary users in essence sought security, whereas Bristol City Council and the HCA envisaged short-term uses as a flexible tool to help smooth fluctuations in the demand for land and thereby help to achieve wider regeneration goals more rapidly and coherently than if left to market forces. But as an embittered user noted in reference to her 15 to 20 employees, ‘if you go under, all of those people lose their jobs’ (Interview H, temporary user). The suggestion by policy makers that temporary users should be flexible and willing to relocate to occupy unused land was seen as hopelessly unrealistic given the likely impact on the commercial viability of new ventures. Yurt Lush, for example, moved between two plots of land, but according to interviewee testimony, sacrificed their profitability in doing so. For others, like polytunnel grower the Severn Project, interview responses suggest the perceived threat of relocation eventually led to their relocation from Temple Quarter to secure a longer lease elsewhere, reportedly at significant financial cost. These examples are illustrative of the ways in which active and passive forms of regeneration management shifted risk onto temporary users. This provoked considerable tension between temporary users, private sector developers and policy actors, undermining the regeneration objective of promoting short-term development as an innovative element of strategy for the Temple Quarter.

**Liverpool’s Creative Quarter**

Whereas Temple Quay comprised brash office and residential development on previously developed land, Liverpool’s RopeWalks regeneration unfolded in a historic area of architectural quality and distinct character which required careful stewardship (Couch and Dennemann, 2000). Its 29ha footprint included the Duke Street Conservation Area, the lower Duke Street and Henry Street Townscape Heritage Initiative as well as a portion of the Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City World Heritage Site (LCC, 2005;
Heritage Lottery Fund, 2017; LCC, 2009). The goal for the area was to apply an approach to regeneration based on sensitive but innovative adaption of heritage assets, working towards the creation of a cultural quarter (LCC, 2005; Montgomery, 2003; Pratt, 2009).

The Creative Quarter comprised two distinct areas, the Ropewalks and the Baltic Triangle. Unlike Temple Quay, the regeneration of RopeWalks was intended to be inclusive and participative. Development was delivered as part of what purported to be a multi-stakeholder cross-sector collaborative process, administered by a new regeneration organisation, the RopeWalks Partnership (Evans and Jones, 2008). During its five year tenure (1997-2002), the RopeWalks Partnership oversaw a £110m investment programme centred on existing business, cultural creative industries and the night-time economy (Couch, 2008; Urban Splash, 2017). By the mid-2000s, the Partnership had helped to revitalise the area and cement the image of the RopeWalks as a distinctive and diverse quarter of the city (Lee, 2009). The majority of its businesses were drawn from the creative sector, helping the area carve its role as a centre for the night-time economy (LCC, 2004; Academy of Urbanism, 2017). In 2005, a formal planning framework, the RopeWalks SPD, was created to ensure future development would adhere to the area’s new identity (LCC, 2005).

The second half of the 2000s saw the regeneration of the RopeWalks begin to decelerate as policymaker attention turned to the completion of the nearby flagship central retail development, Liverpool One, and as preparations began for Liverpool’s year as European Capital of Culture in 2008 (Daramola-Martin, 2009; O’Brien, 2011). Left behind, however, were a number of more intractable unused sites (LCC, 2016). But while temporary use became integral to Bristol’s reorientation of strategy for the Temple Quarter as the development climate worsened in the late 2000s, using land on a temporary basis featured less prominently as a formal part of the RopeWalks regeneration agenda.

Situated 100m to the southwest of Liverpool’s RopeWalks and separated by a former council estate is the Baltic Triangle, the other part of Liverpool’s Creative Quarter. The challenge here was in some respects distinct. While the Baltic Triangle retained much of its maritime architecture, it lacked the historic character of the adjacent RopeWalks and continued to accommodate a significant volume of light industry and warehousing (LCC, 2008; Liverpool Vison, 2012; LCC, 2016). Unlike the comprehensive rebranding of the RopeWalks as a cultural-creative quarter, the Baltic Triangle lacked a discrete identity until as late as 2012. Instead, its reinvention coincided with the launch of the Housing Market Renewal initiative in 2003, which prioritised private sector redevelopment of what was deemed unpopular, obsolete stock in inner urban areas in an attempt to stem the long-term process of suburbanisation and attract new residents, especially skilled workers. By 2004, as development pressures radiated outwards from the city centre, parts of the Baltic Triangle area faced increasing demand from developers wishing to build residential apartments (Couch et al, 2009; LCC, 2004).

The changing function of the Baltic Triangle was recognised in 2008 in the adopted Unitary Development Plan, which reclassified the area as mixed use rather than primarily industrial. At the same time, the city
council partnered with Liverpool Vision, the city’s Urban Regeneration Company, to create a planning framework for the area. As in the RopeWalks, the Baltic Triangle planning framework aimed to ensure that development proposals were brought forward in a co-ordinated way (LCC, 2008). However, it was not until 2010 and the establishment of the Baltic Triangle Community Interest Company (CIC) that the area began to emerge as Liverpool’s digital tech and creative cluster (Baltic Creative, 2017). By 2016, the Baltic Triangle accommodated over 350 creative and digital businesses (Liverpool Vision, 2012; Tech Nation, 2017). Its digital-tech branding was formally endorsed by the city council’s draft Local Plan, with the Baltic Triangle and the RopeWalks jointly defined as Liverpool’s Creative Quarter (LCC, 2016).

In contrast to Bristol, temporary use did not feature as a formal part of any of the planning and regeneration policy frameworks or strategies launched for the RopeWalks or the Baltic Triangle over the period from 2008-16. Indeed, it was not until the advent of Policy CC13 (Vacant Sites and Temporary Uses) in 2016 that Liverpool City Council adopted a formal temporary use policy (LCC, 2016). Interviews with regeneration and planning policy actors in Liverpool suggest that the lack of emphasis on temporary use was partly a reflection of the absence of publicly owned land in the Creative Quarter. Unlike Bristol, the view was that this meant that active encouragement for temporary uses would have been contingent on the receptiveness of sometimes risk averse landowners and developers. But interviewees also argued that the lack of any conscious effort to promote temporary use was simply a reflection of the approach to regeneration that predominated in the city at the time. The concept of temporary use, one interviewee attested, had ‘only become more popular in recent times’ (Interview I, local authority officer). While the same interviewee commented that there was acceptance that ‘meanwhile uses are a good way of stimulating […] regeneration activity’, regeneration policy actors at the time were content to continue with a passive strategy in which surface car parking would fill whatever interstices emerged during the development cycle.

This is in marked contrast to the position in Bristol. Leading regeneration policy actors in Liverpool eschewed the more directive approach to temporary use evident at times as part of the Temple Quarter strategy. Instead, the view was that while temporary use could fulfil an expedient role in times of rapid land and property market change, it was not something that should be pursued with any vigour. The notion of temporary use as a vital element of broadly based regeneration did not feature, reflecting a more laissez faire approach that allowed development to take shape organically, but which was unperturbed about whether temporary uses materialised. This meant that in contrast to the Temple Quarter, developers in the Creative Quarter were under no pressure from policy actors to fashion striking or innovative temporary uses that could help catalyse broader regeneration. Where temporary uses did emerge, they tended to be situated mostly in small buildings or on constrained and difficult to develop sites. Whereas Bristol possessed large publicly owned land holdings suitable for landmark temporary development, Liverpool’s regeneration actors had to work in a context of fragmented landholdings and relatively high levels of dereliction, reflecting the area’s industrial past (Couch, 2008).
The combination of the indifference towards (or unawareness of) the concept of temporary use on the part of regeneration policy-makers, and the challenging land ownership patterns arising from the area’s industrial legacy, meant that relatively few short-term land-uses emerged, other than car parking. But there were some notable exceptions, and their experiences reveal a more nuanced position regarding policy actors’ attempts to engage temporary users. The case of Kazimier Garden (Figures 3 and 4a) – a popular outdoor performance space – suggests that although the regeneration strategy for the Creative Quarter did not actively promote temporary use, there was nevertheless a sensitivity to the needs of short-term users that was not always evident in Bristol. When Kazimier Garden was served with an enforcement notice in 2012, the city council was quick to reassure the organisation that ‘we’re not there to quash it’, but were instead keen to ‘make the most out of it’ (Interview J, arts organisation). Council advice, the same interviewee explained, was that the organisation ‘cover the bases and put in a retrospective planning application’ to secure their status. When threatened again in 2016 by a proposed £43m redevelopment of the adjacent Wolstenholme Square (Figure 4b), the city council’s urban design officer requested clarification about how the development would benefit surrounding land uses, including Kazimier Garden (Gee, 2015). In other words, the city council sought reassurance about the repercussions of a high-profile £43m redevelopment for a temporary user with a lease expiring in only 11 months.

Reflecting its popularity and the support given to it by regeneration actors, Kazimier Garden was able to maintain a presence in the area. Indeed, by 2017 it had become a recognised symbol of the RopeWalks. Supported by business groups, resident groups and affiliate organisations, it came to be viewed as a ‘real asset to the community’ (Interview K, local community organisation), inspiring similar organisations such as Constellations and the Botanical Garden (both located in the Baltic Triangle) (Figure 4c, 4d).

The supportive outlook of regeneration and planning policy actors regarding temporary users like Kazimier Garden was reflected in a general absence of the tension with landowners and developers apparent in Bristol. Interviewee responses suggested that landowners in the Creative Quarter in some instances viewed temporary use in a positive light. Frenson Ltd – a major landowner in the RopeWalks in the period from the late 1990s to the mid-2000s – leased over twenty of their sites to temporary uses. Attracting landmark temporary uses has also been a core aspiration of developers like Elliot Group and Hope Street Properties. For some private sector interviewees, temporary use was ‘a good idea…It’s good PR, isn’t it?’ (Interview L, local developer). For some, temporary use also brought with it tax advantages. Others viewed temporary use, on the surface at least, in more strategic than opportunistic terms. One developer, discussing the experience of Kazimier Garden, professed to be ‘genuinely saddened’ to lose some short-term tenants, but saw temporary use as playing an important role in kick-
starting future development activity (Interview M, local developer). Even where temporary use had been confined to car parking, developers argued that this was for reasons of convenience and that they would be amenable to more innovative short-term uses, should the demand arise.

What was striking about the Creative Quarter regeneration was that, unlike Temple Quarter, hostility to what were deemed ‘unacceptable temporary uses’ was rarely evident. When developer aspirations for long-term uses appeared vulnerable to delay because of the presence of existing temporary uses, there was often a sense of pragmatism and a willingness to compromise that was not always obvious in Bristol. One example of this arrived in 2014 when a high-profile landmark temporary use in the form of Kazimier Garden was used by the developer, Hope Street Properties, as an anchor for an adjacent housing development. The developer’s stance, interviewees argued, was that the popularity and profile of Kazimier Garden would help secure permission for the associated development of housing. In effect, this meant that the developer saw the relationship with the temporary user as one of necessary cooperation rather than subjugation, as one developer explained:

If we’d have tried to come up with the redevelopment without Kazimier Gardens, I think there’d be burning torches and pitchforks on the streets after us.

(Interview M, local developer)

Whereas corporate land agents feared a successful temporary use blocking future development in the economically buoyant Temple Quarter, in Liverpool, by contrast, different actors were relaxed about the prospect of temporary uses like Kazimier Garden acquiring a degree of permanence, and often sought to harness this rather than impede it. As one temporary user put it, “that little temporary thing that was never meant to stay[,] …[now] it’s the only thing that’s staying’ (Interview N, temporary user).

The pragmatic outlook of developers was ascribed by some interviewees to relatively weak levels of demand for land but equally to the local roots of many of the developers in the Creative Quarter. Whereas the more buoyant demand for land in Temple Quarter derived from national and international capital, the local origins of many developers in the Creative Quarter was said by some interviewees to explain the more harmonious relationship between existing temporary users and regeneration policy actors. As one developer put it, ‘we’re a smallish family organisation, we can make decisions ourselves, we’ve got no one breathing over our shoulders’ (Interview M, local developer).

In addition to the local or regional roots of many of the developers, another factor explaining the general absence of rancour in the relationships between actors involved in the Creative Quarter regeneration was the critical brokerage role played by some organisations. Between 2000 and 2010, for example, The Art Organisation (TAO) developed an intermediary role in the RopeWalks, facilitating links between temporary users and the then dominant developer, Frenson Ltd. TAO’s key contribution was as interlocutor, operating as a non-profit organisation with the aim of bridging the cultural and commercial divide between creative users and private sector owners and developers. By the end of its tenure in
2010, TAO had assumed formal responsibility for temporary use in Liverpool’s RopeWalks, fulfilling a remit similar to that of London’s Meanwhile Use CIC.

TAO’s facilitative role was seen by some interviewees as helping to foster a productive and mutually beneficial relationship between developers and temporary users, in contrast to the parasitic one said to apply more commonly elsewhere. But a number of interviewees disputed this, arguing that apparently compliant interactions between development actors masked what were sometimes more ambiguous relationships. One landowner explained this by recalling his interaction with a temporary user:

[I said] ‘look, you’re getting this building for a peppercorn rent, £1 a year, you’re taking full responsibility for the building, we’re insuring the building for you to be in there, that’s what peppercorn rent is. You have to leave basically when we say you’re out, and we always used to say a month’s notice would be nice’.

(Interview O, local landowner).

This more critical perspective was reinforced by concern about the inequitable distribution of risk. Some interviewees contended that TAO’s practice of negotiating with temporary users while promoting permanent development in the same spaces in effect transferred risk from developers and owners to short-term users. Developers could continue to pursue high yielding investments while temporary users ensured that sites remained occupied, visible and generating some form of immediate income. Ultimately, however, there was limited security available to temporary users, many of whom were said to feel a profound sense of vulnerability about the prospect of their displacement if and when permanent development materialised.

The experience of the Creative Quarter shows how perceptions of temporary use changed, in a context in which it did not feature initially but came to constitute a recognised element of the regeneration strategy. What is especially striking is that this turnaround was largely extemporaneous, evolving incrementally over time. The lack of a rigid development prospectus, a facilitative but hands-off public sector and a locally-based private sector more receptive to innovation in the context of weak local economy gave rise to a series of short-term projects that came to be seen as critical to wider regeneration efforts. Yet even set against the backdrop of these largely positive experiences, there was an undercurrent of concern about how passive, organic approaches to temporary use, and/or the emergent forms of active management of the kind embodied by TAO’s facilitative role, serve to protect the position of landowners and developers while limiting the scope for temporary users to secure any longer-term benefits from regeneration.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated how the shape and form of the local development process were critical to the ways in which temporary use evolved as part of regeneration programmes in Bristol and Liverpool (see also Madanipour, 2017 or Moore-Cherry and McCarthy, 2016). The analysis revealed how
regeneration actor outlooks on temporary land use varied over time as institutional agendas shifted and urban economic circumstances changed. In Bristol, there was ambivalence among policy actors with regard to temporary use, at times championing landmark limited-life developments but on other occasions expressing misgivings about the obstructive impact on permanent development. The ambiguities implicit in the dual role of the city council and the HCA as policy-maker and developer for publicly owned land explain this compromised and often conflicting standpoint on temporary use. In a competitive landscape of diminishing returns on investment, the private sector sparred with Bristol City Council and the HCA over the perceived threat some short-term land-uses posed to corporate development aspirations. This applied in particular to high-profile temporary developments, the purpose of which was to help raise awareness about the wider regeneration programme and thereby excite longer-term developer interest. Yet it was precisely those landmark or ‘extraordinary’ temporary uses that provoked the greatest unease among developers, creating a tension from the beginning of the regeneration programme that undermined subsequent attempts to build meaningful cross-sector partnership.

Bristol City Council and the HCA also struggled, in various instances, to accommodate the needs of temporary users. The role of short-term users was viewed by policy officers as one of helping to burnish the Temple Quarter brand, an objective that blinded regeneration actors to the longer-term ambitions of temporary users. Understanding of immediate risk and future prospects for temporary users was poorly developed. Expectations on the part of regeneration strategists, particularly in the early years of the regeneration initiative, about the commercial viability of temporary uses proved to be overly optimistic. Even when temporary uses did achieve commercial viability in the short time available to them, they were regarded by regeneration policy actors in effect as mobile marketing instruments that could simply be relocated to make way for more lucrative development once their immediate function had been fulfilled. While some temporary users sought to resist this strategy, they ran up against a powerful market logic infusing regeneration strategy, which perceived them as a blockage to permanent development.

In the case of Liverpool, regeneration policy actors were found to have eschewed the directive approach to temporary use evident as a (disputed) part of the Temple Quarter strategy. Instead, encouragement for temporary use had a more expedient rationale, intended mainly as a counter-cyclical measure to ameliorate land and property market instability. While the consensus was that this was an effective tactic that helped regeneration to continue, it also left some temporary users exposed to the vicissitudes of the market, protected only by rhetorical reassurances from policy actors.

A conclusion in this respect from both case studies is therefore that temporary users bear a disproportionate share of the potential risks associated with development, often without commensurate reward. This may apply in particular in generally more buoyant urban economic contexts, like Bristol’s, where interview responses suggested that developers are in a stronger position to override the wishes of other actors in the development process, and temporary users in particular (see also Colomb, 2012, 2017). The uneven way in which risk is distributed suggests that existing accounts of the prefigurative
potential for meanwhile land-use to contribute to regeneration strategy underestimate the extent to which more powerful actors are able to exert leverage over others. While there was empirical evidence from interview data in Bristol about temporary users being displaced in this way, even in the less fraught context of Liverpool there was a clear sense of vulnerability among interviewees that they might at some point be uprooted should land and property market conditions improve.

Nonetheless, while the research findings give a clear indication of the actual (in Bristol) and perceived (in Liverpool) susceptibility of temporary users to market-driven change, the ways in which and the effectiveness with which risk was managed also differed in the two case study areas. In Liverpool, although temporary users clearly occupied a subordinate position relative to conventional developers, risk was less inequitably distributed. This was a reflection of a more acquiescent local environment in which regeneration actors and temporary users were able to work for the most part productively alongside conventional developers. The result was temporary uses emanating from the ground-breaking efforts by community-based entrepreneurs and small-scale local developers, rather than resulting from interventions by publicly-funded regeneration bodies. Successful and high-profile temporary developments, rather than hampering longer-term development, served to facilitate it by increasing the profile of the area, contributing to the Creative Quarter identity and stimulating the demand for land.

Yet while the research found clear evidence of contrasting approaches to the management of temporary use as part of regeneration strategy, short-term land users were ultimately left in a precarious position. In both cities, temporary use was valorised primarily from an economic perspective that viewed the role of policy intervention, including the selective use of temporary development, as a short-term one of restoring normal market functionality as rapidly as possible. Reflecting this market-oriented philosophy, in both cities – but especially in Bristol – there was evidence of the deployment of mobile temporary use as a means to incentivise development by filling voids on difficult to develop land, rather than as means of encouraging new innovative or progressive land uses. The tactics adopted in both cities in this sense were a reflection of the highly constrained political and fiscal environment in which policy is framed, resulting in forms of intervention that accord to what Peck (2014: 398) terms “…pragmatic imitation rather than path-altering innovation”.

These findings, in both case study areas, indicate that recognising the locally specific and multidimensional nature of development processes and appreciating the complexities of the interrelationships between the actors involved are important when trying to understand the role and function of temporary use. As Madanipour (2017) argues, there is a need to appreciate the different ways in which temporary use is perceived, and strategies to manage it are performed, by a range of actors operating in different urban economic and political contexts (see also Moore-Cherry and McCarthy, 2016 and Henneberry, 2017). The evidence presented in this paper reveals that while superficially the principle of meanwhile use as a solution to localised land market dysfunctionality is one to which a range of actors can readily commit, the sometimes contradictory and capricious standpoints
of different actors, and the palpable tensions between them, necessitate a deeper understanding of the variable logics that underpin the adoption of particular temporary solutions in specific places and times.

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Figure 1: Temple Quarter, Bristol: site boundaries of temporary use cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'Extraordinary' temporary uses</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>'Ordinary' temporary uses</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Former diesel depot site: The Severn Project</td>
<td>Urban agriculture/growing in polytunnels.</td>
<td>5) Plot 3 Temple Quay</td>
<td>Surface car park on site of former railway depot/goods yard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Former pest control depot site: Grow Bristol</td>
<td>Urban farm in repurposed lorry bodies.</td>
<td>6) Plot 6 Temple Quay</td>
<td>Surface car park on site of former railway siding/engine shed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Plot 6 Temple Quay: Box Works</td>
<td>Shipping container office development.</td>
<td>7) Bank Place Temple Way</td>
<td>Surface car park on site of former office block.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Plot 3 Temple Quay: Creative Common/Yurt Lush</td>
<td>Café, bar and restaurant in a yurt.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1. ‘Extraordinary’ temporary uses refer to deliberately high-profile landmark and/or creative or innovative developments.
2. ‘Ordinary’ temporary uses refer to interim developments such as surface car parks, which typically occupy redundant land for indeterminate periods pending site development on a more permanent basis.

Source: authors
Figure 2: Temporary uses in Bristol's Temple Quarter

2a: Yurt Lush within Creative Common, Plot 3 Temple Quay (BCC)

2b: Surface Car Parking, Box Works and Yurt Lush, Plot 6 Temple Quay

2c: The Severn Project, Former Diesel Depot Site (BCC)

2d: Box Works, Plot 6 Temple Quay

Source: Authors & Bristol City Council
**Figure 3: Creative Quarter, Liverpool: site boundaries of temporary use cases in RopeWalks and Baltic Triangle**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Extraordinary’ temporary uses</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>‘Ordinary’ temporary uses</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) 52 Seel Street: The Art Organisation</td>
<td>Painted artwork and installation on external façade.</td>
<td>5) CCP Car Park</td>
<td>Car park within former warehouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) CCP Car Park: The Art Organisation</td>
<td>Artists workshops, studios and monthly art market.</td>
<td>6) 64-74 Seel Street</td>
<td>Surface car park on site of former terraced street (64-74).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) 28 Seel Street: Kazimier Garden</td>
<td>Outdoor garden bar and restaurant including external performance space.</td>
<td>7) One Park Lane</td>
<td>Surface car park on site of former office block.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) New Bird Street: The Botanic Garden</td>
<td>Outdoor garden bar with external performance space.</td>
<td>8) 84-94 Norfolk Street</td>
<td>Surface car park on site of former warehousing/light industry.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:**
1. For definitions of ‘extraordinary’ and ‘ordinary’ temporary uses, see Figure 1.

**Source:** authors
Figure 4: Temporary uses in Liverpool’s Creative Quarter

4a: Kazimier Garden, RopeWalks

4b: Kazimier Garden in Context of Wolstenholme Square Development

4c: The Botanical Garden, Baltic Triangle

4d: Constellations, Baltic Triangle

Source: authors