The Improvisional City: Valuing urbanity beyond the chimera of permanence

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Abstract: So-called temporary uses of urban space, including 'pop ups' or meanwhile spaces, have recently attracted much attention by urban professionals as providing short-term 'solutions' to the 'problem' of vacancy. Yet the ways in which these urban innovations are conceived, studied and evaluated continue to reify a capitalist framework of development and conceptual understanding of the city that valorises exchange value and permanence. The result is that little empirical research exists about smaller projects that offer the city and its residents many non-monetary benefits. In this article, we argue that evaluating urban space according to the dichotomy of permanent or temporary land use is problematic: it misses the fluidity and multiple rhythms of how places are made and spaces experienced that are inherent to the regular life of any city. Rather than temporary use, we use the concept of 'interim space' to consider projects that may be responsive to local needs and available resources. Such initiatives often include 'non-visible' advantages which stem from use values, healthy place-making and creating shared spaces, offer alternative economies, and provide residents and guests with new ways of imagining their neighbourhood and city. To make our arguments, we analyse Granby Park, a 'pop up' park in north Dublin, initiated by the artistic collective Upstart that was open to the public in the summer of 2013, using qualitative research conducted before, during and after the official time the park was open. To begin a conversation about new frameworks of analysis that might capture the intricacies of interim urban spaces such as Granby Park, we conclude by offering a new concept, the 'improvisional city', to encourage more empirical research that takes seriously the many tangible and intangible benefits of these initiatives.

Keywords: temporary use, interim use, use value, improvisional city, pop up parks, Granby Park, Upstart, Dublin, Ireland

Introduction

An open-air cinema, library, music amphitheatre, cafe, trade school, artistic installations of recycled materials, and playground all existed in one park in central north Dublin from August-September 2013 (Figure 1). Known as Granby Park, it was the first Irish pop-up park of its kind and attracted a diverse group of visitors to a part of Dublin not known for its recreational parks and children's playgrounds. According to the artistic collective Upstart, which developed the

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park's concept and coordinated a volunteer network responsible for its day-to-day running, the park was to be 'a place of creativity, nature, imagination, play and beauty' that was free and open to everyone (Granby Park, 2013). Before and after the opening of the park, other not-so-visible and experimental local, volunteer and community-based projects contributed to and built upon the park's success (Kearns, 2013). Overall, the park was well received in the media and locally, but criticised by some scholars for using public funds and contributing to the city's neoliberal agenda (Bresnihan and Byrne, 2013), and by some artists for not working closely enough with the community (public discussion at Granby Park, 2013).

Figure 1: Launch of Granby Park, 23 August 2013. Photo: K. Till.

In recent years, 'pop-ups' such as Granby Park have appeared in various underutilised and so-called 'vacant' spaces in European and North American cities, and have been described by scholars and planners as a relatively new form of 'temporary urbanism'. Terms such as pop-up urbanism (Pop Up Urbanism, 2015), the post-it city (La Varra, 2005) and the temporary city (Bishop and Williams, 2012) have been used by scholars, policy-makers, planners and journalists to refer to individual and group initiatives that utilise empty or partially-empty buildings, unoccupied plots, rooftops, parking lots, and other supposedly 'vacant' urban spaces. More recently, some of these initiatives have obtained flexible short-term leases or permits from city planning authorities.

In this article, we argue that the language used by urban scholars and planners to describe 'temporary' initiatives has real impacts on policy and planning

decisions, and may suppress critical thinking about these projects. Because the word 'temporary' is defined by its opposition to 'permanence', such projects are defined by most planning and city authorities according to their short-term 'opportunities' only; that is, they are understood as a holding 'solution' until a 'real' development project is secured. We argue that without challenging the chimera of permanence – an illusion that contributes to the larger rhetoric of 'crisis' and 'recovery' – anachronistic understandings of the city and urban development will remain unchanged. At the same time, progressive and radical scholars critical of such planning discourses may too quickly dismiss such initiatives because they are considered to be apolitical, or are too limited, short-lived or slight to challenge neoliberalism. The result is that too many projects are lumped together and very few projects are analysed in detail. We argue that scholars should be more than 'critical' of these projects; for our research to matter, we must find new ways of documenting, representing and evaluating the effects and possibilities of these initiatives in ways that are not always 'visible' or monetarised. Indeed, without academic research about what can be learned about the city and urban life at multiple scales – which includes the recognition of how specific projects and places matter for different groups and may affect the spatial imaginaries of the city more generally –the very residents, communities, artists and activists that remain excluded from the 'permanent' neoliberal city may become further disempowered.

To begin a discussion about how artistic initiatives and creative practices may contribute to the lived geographies and spatial imaginaries of the city, in this article we examine Granby Park in Dublin to consider what might be learned from this initiative to enable scholars to develop understandings of the city that move beyond the temporary/permanent dichotomy. We ask, following Burke and Shear (2014, p.137), how have local residents, volunteers and artists turned 'their discontent with the status quo into alternative sets of values' and build 'the material, social, and cultural conditions that enable them to enact these values more effectively'? In the next section, we provide a critical overview of the literature about temporary urbanisms, drawing upon examples from Amsterdam, Berlin, Christchurch and Dublin. We then introduce the concept 'interim space' as an alternative to the category of 'temporary land use'. We discuss how thinking relationally about flows of urban time and space allows scholars to consider the distinct intersectionalities of the lived city, and the importance of use value and other forms of non-monetary exchange. We then analyse Granby Park with the goal of highlighting the benefits and legacies that emerged from this project to consider alternative forms of neighbourhood urban 'development'. We base our analysis on qualitative data resulting from ethnographic, participatory and voluntary research methods, conducted between 2012-2015.[1] We conclude by suggesting an

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1 Together with Gerry Kearns, we formed the Maynooth Geography research team and worked closely with Upstart team members. We attended, observed and took notes at Upstart planning meetings from June through September. Till and McArdle observed and took participant observation notes about the park at different times of the day and days of the week while it was open. We shared our fieldnotes on a shared 'Basecamp' database that was available to Upstart members and other

alternative understanding of urban life and the city – the 'improvisional city' – that pays attention to the multiple values, rhythms and spatialities of city life.

From Temporary Use …

An oft cited model of 'flexible' planning and urban development that incorporates temporary use is the NDSM Wharf project in Amsterdam (Bishop and Williams, 2012; Oswalt *et al.,* 2013; Overmeyer, 2007). The former nineteenth-century shipyard in northwest Amsterdam was once the site of the Dutch Dock and Shipbuilding Company. When it became bankrupt in the mid-1980s, it was considered a post-industrial derelict space by city authorities and soon became 'something of a haven for artists, squatters and skaters' (Amsterdamtips.co, n.d.). In the late 1990s-early 2000s, city authorities introduced a short-term lease for 'temporary users', implemented an economic plan, hosted a public competition, and began to redevelop the site (Oswalt *et al.,* 2013). The winning proposal drew upon the former Amsterdam squatter scene and the 'temporary' lease was extended to 2027 (ibid). Now the NDSM includes a stage, skate park, exhibitions, festivals, galleries, cafes, apartments, offices and theatre studios. The Wharf is marketed as 'one of Amsterdam's prime spaces for creativity and development', where artists, creative industries, students and businesses can develop a 'vital, cultural, economic and social environment' (Stealth.unlimited, n.d.); at the same time trendy bohemian hipsters can visit through a free ferry ride from the main train station (Amsterdamtips.co, n.d.). The NDSM is described as a large-scale 'experiment' in temporary use and is said to demonstrate how 'the strategic "infusion" of time-based programs and architecture' can work 'as a catalyst for urban development' (Stealth.unlimited, n.d.).

The NDSM model of 'temporary use in the residual urban areas' was documented by the 'Urban Catalyst' team, which was awarded a 2003 EU-funded research project to study successful projects in Amsterdam, Basel, Berlin, London, Rome and Zagreb. In addition to Urban Catalyst's models of 'open source' urbanism (Oswalt *et al.,* 2013; Overmeyer, 2007; see also Stevens and

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invited research participants. Till volunteered in the DubFast reconciliation youth project from July-September 2013. She observed, documented and participated in: the building of the park grounds and amphitheatre; reconciliation and artistic workshops; and the opening performance of DubFast at the launch. When the park was open, she also volunteered as a Park Assistant and Park Ranger, the latter of which meant coordinating volunteers for the day, and opening/closing the park. McArdle worked with the Upstart Community Engagement Team and attended a community meeting with a local Friends of the Elderly Group in the run up to the park's launch. She wrote and administered a hard copy visitor survey that was available during the first week of the park's opening, and an online volunteer survey three months after the close of the park. She received the support and input of Upstart members and volunteers, and Kearns and Till in writing, revising and conducting both surveys (see Note 6). The analysis of her primary data from surveys and observations, along with secondary research, was the basis of her MA thesis (McArdle, 2014). Kearns conducted research about the historical and current-day research of Dominick Street, and provided public walking tours through the Dublin Trade School (see Kearns, 2013, 2015).

Ambler, 2010), other temporary use projects have been documented in books such as Bishop and Williams' *Temporary City* (2012), Haydn and Temel's *Temporary Urban Spaces* (2006), and Schwarz and Rugare's *Pop Up City Urban Infill* (2009). These inventories include examples of architectural projects inside of buildings; parks and beaches; and local community initiatives, such as community gardens and urban farms, which are said to help city authorities realise their 'shrinking', 'sustainable' and/or 'resilient' city goals. Overall in this literature, temporary use is understood as *standing in* for the preferred (read permanent) option (Németh and Langhorst, 2014) or as a 'meanwhile use' where or when commercial letting is not viable (Bishop and Williams, 2012). Therefore, while the forms of temporary use may vary, according to Bishop and Williams (2012, p. 5), this 'more dynamic, flexible and adaptive urbanism' needs to be responsive to the '*intention* of the user, developer or planners that the use should be temporary'. They argue that the defining focus of these initiatives should not be on the nature of use, scale, or longevity of a project, or if rent is paid or not.

In general, we find that three facets of temporary use have been highlighted in this literature by urban professionals: the role of temporary users, the need to change existing planning codes and practices, and the need for flexible legal and financial structures. Firstly, the temporary users, often referred to as 'agents of revitalisation' in this literature, are described as preparing new grounds for innovative future urban development (Overmeyer, 2007). They are said to 'activate the time gap' between short-term and longer-term development; create dynamic economic microclimates that bypass moments of economic stagnation; bring in new users of the space; stimulate external initiatives; and change the 'image' and possible future uses of the area (Stealth.unlimited, n.d.). In other words, they prepare the ground for future 'real' development projects. Secondly, for temporary use to 'succeed', new approaches to planning are needed (Oswalt et al., 2013; Overmeyer, 2007). The NDSM, for example, is praised for its innovative strategic and flexible master plan. Developed in collaboration with the municipality of Amsterdam Noord (SDAN), local authorities are described as having adapted 'its function and position' during a long twenty-five year development process (Stealth.unlimited, n.d.). In contrast to the typically restrictive planning codes, zoning areas, and land-use models that otherwise disallow the possibilities of experimentation in underutilised and vacant urban spaces, creating planning codes to promote projects such as the NDSM are considered 'strategic', 'time-based programs' that result in longer-term economic urban development (ibid; see also: Oswalt *et al.,* 2013; Overmeyer, 2007). Thirdly, urban professionals not only argue for the need to change existing planning discourses and practices, but also argue that more flexible legal and financial structures are needed. To this end, a new set of mid-level, temporary-use managers (mostly non-profit charities but also some private firms) have emerged that connect potential users with owners of spaces and developers, and help negotiate the legal restrictions to temporary use. In Berlin, temporary land-use agencies (*Zwischennutzungagenteur*) include Coopolis (formerly government-funded) and GSW. In the UK and the Netherlands,

so-called 'meanwhile space' agencies have grown in number and variety, and include The Meanwhile Foundation (2015) in the UK, a charitable trust that acts as an intermediary between those who want to use spaces temporarily, such as community members, and property owners, who can potentially benefit from some use in their vacant property. At the same time, some of these charities emerged from community responses to urgent needs in the city, such as in Christchurch, NZ, which we mention below.

In general, these examples indicate that temporary use is a growing approach to 'flexible urbanisms' in planning, architecture and urban design literatures, and understood as providing 'solutions' to 'problems' of vacancy, resulting from economic and environmental change and distress. According to Harris and Nowicki (2015: n.p.), the 'normalisation of temporariness has begun to move into the public as well as private sectors'. Sometimes referred to as DIY urbanism (Iveson, 2013) or Tactical Urbanism (Mould, 2014), these 'pragmatic practices' facilitate 'access to, and alternative uses of, urban space' by locals and residents (Bresnihan and Byrne, 2015, p. 43). Some grassroots to mid-level groups are creating alternatives that challenge conservative planning discourses of neoliberalism. City councils and planning agencies in cities as diverse as Berlin, Christchurch and Dublin appear to emphasise the stop-gap, or short-term, character of these initiatives rather than create structures and contexts that *enable* grassroots and other groups to experiment, and thereby also contest,dominant urban imaginaries. We argue that one reason this is the case is because enabling flexible spaces for experimentation would mean changing existing planning ideologies and cultures.

For example, in Berlin – a city likened to a 'laboratory' for temporary use (Reyer, 2007), so called *Zwischennutzung*, or temporary use, is described as a 'delicate balancing act' (Colomb, 2007, p.143; also see below). Following reunification, and building upon a long-standing culture of alternative urbanisms, many community, housing and creative initiatives were set up in redundant spaces (train stations, apartments, cultural institutions) and in the spaces and buildings that once acted as walls or were between the walls dividing the city. Facing its worst financial crisis since World War II, including a $35 billion debt related to creating the New Berlin, a banking crisis, ineffective city marketing strategies, and the reduction of national support (Deutsche Welle, 2001; Hooper, 2001) – which was followed by the economic slow-down of 2008 – city authorities began to support these local initiatives. After conducting an inventory as part of its 'Rebuilding the East' programme, Studio Urban Catalyst was commissioned by the Berlin Senate Administration for Urban Development to record '100 different typologies of temporary use of vacant sites', create models that 'demonstrated the potential of temporary use for urban development', and develop 'guidelines for temporary users' (Urban Catalyst studio, n.d.; Overmeyer, 2007). The Berlin Senate's Department of Urban Development created (a now oversubscribed) 'Building Lot Management' division. After this initial period of success, and with a more recent rise in property values, Colomb (2012, p. 138) notes that 'interim spaces are [now] characterized by a tension between their actual use value (as

publicly accessible spaces for social, artistic, and cultural experimentation) and their potential commercial value'. Indeed, Berlin professionals associated with 'temporary urbanisms' have begun to question if these pioneering 'gap fillers' will remain only that; what happens when the state of economic uncertainty changes to a more desirable state of economic development or 'normalcy' (Misselwitz *et al.,* 2007)? There is also a tension between the grassroots history of temporary use in Berlin, and the way it has been co-opted by a neoliberal state (Colomb, 2012) and this tension puts pressure on what is often perceived to be an innovative model of what Till (2011) calls 'interim space' in Berlin, a concept we discuss below.

In Christchurch, NZ, numerous voluntary organisations emerged following the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes, including 'Gap Filler', 'Greening the Rubble' and 'Life in Vacant Spaces', that sought to bring back life to a devastated downtown and urban region and experiment with activities that might encourage people to interact again in public spaces. For example, Gap Filler, describes itself as a 'creative urban regeneration initiative' (Gap Filler, n.d.) and Greening the Rubble is a largely voluntary community project that creates temporary public parks and gardens on sites of demolished buildings (Greening the Rubble, n.d.). Gap Filler has since become a charity and trust, and its paid staff and volunteers collaborate with other citizen-based groups. In contrast, Life in Vacant Spaces now define themselves as 'site brokers for creative Christchurch' that inspire 'creative people, entrepreneurs and property owners' to 'activate the city's vacant sites with creative, intriguing and entrepreneurial transitional projects (Life in Vacant Spaces, n.d.). In response to the success of these initiatives, the City Council provided support for projects, which are self-described as experimental, adaptable, participatory and that 'create an enabling regulatory framework and incentives for property owners to be more community-minded with the use of their vacant sites and buildings' (Gap Filler, n.d.). However, these innovative responses to environmental change have recently come under threat of being co-opted into broader permanent urban plans for development by local and national authorities. As co-founder of Gap Filler and chair of the trust that governs it, Ryan Reynolds, states: 'we're into a new phase' (Harvie, 2015). Reynolds used the example of a new downtown festival, FESTA, that celebrates such projects. He mentioned that the creative bubble that existed following the environmental disaster has burst and is growing into a more 'mature response', as indicated by the fact that no FESTA festival is being held this year (although it may return in 2016). As evidence for this new phase, Reynolds also stated that Gap Filler is now becoming involved in the longer-term process of city-making. This understanding of temporary use as a transitional phase that makes way for more permanent development in a new recovery period is support by local authorities. Whereas the 2012 Christchurch Development Plan explicitly highlighted the Life in Vacant Spaces project as a good example of 'temporary use', in the entire plan, temporary uses were only mentioned ten times; when mentioned, initiatives were positioned as convenient short-term projects that merely activate downtown spaces before they are redeveloped. According to Christchurch and national authorities, the ideal future should be led by property

and economic developers, often foreign investors, rather than building upon the innovation and collaborations resulting from dynamic existing local initiatives.

In neoliberal Dublin, planning authorities have begun to turn to temporary uses as 'opportunities' to create more 'resilient' cities and to address the myriad of 'challenges' associated with the negative externalities of economic, social and technological instability at urban, national and international scales (TURAS, n.d.). Yet, and somewhat similarly to Christchurch, this appears to be the case only until there is economic 'recovery'. As such, they are not changing their urban entrepreneurial approach to development, one that is consistent with financialisation (Lawton and Punch, 2014; Kitchin *et al.,* 2012), privatisation (Mac Laran and Kelly, 2014), austerity (Hearne, 2013), deregulation (Kelly, 2014) and property management at the national and international scales. The result has been further rounds of dispossession for local residents and businesses, and a simultaneous increase in absentee landlords due to property speculation (Mac Laran and Kelly, 2014), rather than a critical re-evaluation of why previous development strategies have failed (compare Kearns, 2015). In such a context, as demonstrated by O'Mahoney and Rigney (2015) in this issue, even documenting vacancy has become a political act in Dublin: it highlights the existing tension in Dublin between what city authorities are claiming to do in order to support local initiatives and what they actually are doing to pursue their neoliberal agendas (compare O'Callaghan and Lawton, 2015), which is somewhat similar to the case of Berlin.

Despite the clear differences, for all three of these cities, once there are 'signs of recovery', planning and city authorities appear to be more reluctant to support certain kinds of temporary use in the private sector. This is because, as O'Callaghan *et al.,* (2014) argue, planners, urban designers, and policy-makers are heavily invested in finding short-term 'solutions' to solve what they perceive to be the larger 'problem' of vacant spaces (compare Kearns, 2015; O'Callaghan and Lawton, 2015). Indeed, the classification of 'temporary use' as a stop-gap solution to the supposed short-term problem of 'vacancy' relies upon problematic assumptions coming from so-called 'new public management' (Boston *et al.,* 1996; Barzeley, 2001) and 'creative cities' approaches (Colomb, 2012; O'Callaghan, 2010; O'Callaghan and Lawton, 2015; Mould, 2014). When the local state supports temporary use as a short-term circuit to further capital accumulation, it may simultaneously support the process of gentrification, which is believed to make land markets more palatable to international investors. An understanding of temporary use as a means to kick-start 'real' ('permanent') economic development ignores the regular and long-standing role that vacancy plays in capitalist cities (Moore-Cherry, 2015). In other words, when vacancy is generalised as a 'problem' for future investment potential, the wider structural urban dynamics that have caused the vacancy in the first place are not addressed (O'Callaghan and Lawton, 2015). At the same time, Harris and Nowicki (2015: n.p.) warn that as temporary approaches become normalised in the public sectors of housing and services (libraries, hospitals), the danger is that these 'solutions'

may become 'permanent'.

As these discussions indicate, 'temporary' solutions, when embedded in market mechanisms and public managerial approaches, are supported by international and local economic policies, such as financialisation, austerity and deregulation, and further entrench neoliberal ideals and uneven development at the local scale (ibid). We also argue below that the language of depicting and criticising these projects has real effects. Thus, while Bishop and Williams (2012) posit that, within a neoliberal context, temporary initiatives should be more easily accepted by cities and citizens, we agree with the Provisional University (2014) that see them as indicative of the 'new field of urban struggle' whereby activists and residents attempt to open up discussions about urban democracy.

... To Interim Space

Following Marcuse (2015), we argue that the language of crisis and recovery used by urban scholars and planners to describe urban processes have real impacts on policy and planning decisions. It can also suppress critical thinking and continue to reproduce uneven power relations. Negative concepts, such as 'crisis', are associated with terms such as 'temporary use' and 'vacancy', whereas positive terms such as 'recovery,' are associated with 'permanence' and 'development'. When associations are made between times and spaces (temporary/empty vs. permanent/full), and when cities are considered similar to firms, a particular spatial imaginary of the city is promoted. 'Seeing' landscapes as spaces of potential profit leads to a system of classifying sites and evaluating urban space as either 'good' or 'bad' according to a limited understanding of market-based development and the visual presence of buildings or certain kinds of activities – understandings that become exaggerated during a time of austerity through the rhetoric of 'crisis'. As a result, places that may have rich and complex histories become viewed as potential parcels of property for either temporary or permanent use, that is, as 'plots' that can be bought and sold, and zoned and rezoned. In this way, spaces classified as marginal or vacant are 'seen' (understood) as 'dead', as temporal aberrances, voids, wasted, or redundant (compare Colomb, 2012; Doron, 2000) that can be 'masked' by temporary uses.

This ideal of permanence during a time of crisis seems particularly anachronistic when one remembers that land markets are always in flux, a constant feature for cities, as the other articles in this special issue demonstrate for the case of Dublin. Furthermore, if economic boom periods produce more, not less, vacancy, as Kearns (2015), and O'Callaghan and Lawton (2015), argue, and when short-sighted and compartmentalised planning cultures contribute 'to the proliferation of urban vacant land in the first place' (Németh and Langhorst, 2014, p. 149), then, when measured even by their own internal logics, these discourses about temporary/permanent use are clearly flawed. The rhetoric of permanence further delegitimises so-called temporary uses empirically: initiatives are by and large only documented, evaluated or valorised according to levels of public spending, policy documents, income generated, or market-based categories. For example,

city authorities measure the 'success' or value of temporary use initiatives according to the profits resulting from a project during the time that it is open. Visitor numbers, associated with tourist incomes (hotel and other forms of spending), jobs created, imaging value, and the potential increase in commercial property value typically are measures used to quantify the worth of projects and justify any public expenditures. However, profit-margins based on cash flows for a limited time rely on very narrow understandings of the economy and value, as we discuss below. Indeed, the on-the-ground and experiential reality of places labelled as 'blighted', empty or vacant are often considered resources or are used in a variety of ways by residents and those that frequent these neighbourhoods and spaces (Fullilove, 2005; Mould, 2014; Till, 2011).

The PopUp Dublin Biennial is an example that illustrates how evaluating a project according to exchange value is as inconclusive as is the dichotomy between permanency and temporariness. In June 2012, the first PopUp Dublin Biennial staged international contemporary arts for Dublin, was graced with work by and a visit from Yoko Ono, and for eight days the many events and hundreds of visitors brought life to new, yet empty 10,000 square-foot office structures at an end LUAS tram station, 'The Point'. The PopUp Dublin Biennial transformed empty office spaces in northeast Dublin into three modern arts galleries with: outdoor performances, walks, a film series, music events, and public discussions. Following on the success of the first event, in 2014, the second PopUp Dublin Biennial was held in the 'slack spaces', or unused shops, of the Custom House Quay (CHQ) in the Dublin Docklands. It again attracted a range of visitors, some of whom might not have visited art galleries or spoken to artists about their work. Both events were realised through a volunteer network and, according to creator, producer and curator Maggie Magee (2015), used 'alternative spaces' 'to make contemporary art accessible to a general public', and to support art and artists in Ireland with an international show. Well-received in the media and by visitors, the Dublin Biennial was criticised by art critics for using public funds, charging submission fees, and not being a 'real' arts biennial (Long, 2014).

Based upon our preliminary research, we would argue that the Dublin Biennial was successful precisely for one of the reasons for which it was criticised: it wasn't a 'real' arts biennial (Ricks, 2014). Evaluating this project by 'typical' arts exhibition categories – associated with permanence, place marketing and exchange value – is problematic as such evaluative categories would not address the larger benefits this project offered guests and artists alike. Its location in an 'alternative' urban space rather than in a 'permanent' art gallery allowed curators, artists, residents, volunteers, and international visitors to engage in a more experimental and creative way to address and re-imagine the city and contemporary issues. A broader legacy has developed from the project by bringing art and artists 'out from the museum or gallery' (Magee, 2015), which is often controlled by an elite art community, into the city through a range of artistic forms that engages a general public. This key aim of the project was part of the decision to locate DB2014 at the CHQ, a main thoroughfare, so that people would be presented with art even if

they had not heard of the project. This type of social relation is 'invisible' yet is vital to the life of the city.

This brief example of the Dublin Biennial demonstrates what might be lost if the evaluative focus of so-called 'temporary' initiatives relies on 'permanence'. When progressive planners or scholars adopt the language associated with temporary use/vacancy/crisis vs. permanence/development/recovery, even if they are critical about these categories, they may unintentionally bring the weight of certain assumptions about economic relations, urban space, and place that reify the chimera of permanence as a positive value. At the same time, urban geographers and radical scholars may too quickly dismiss such initiatives as not being 'political', i.e. too limited, short-lived or cultural, to challenge neoliberalism (O'Callaghan and Lawton, 2015) or as taking away public funds (Bresnihan and Byrne, 2013). Without having first evaluated the range of benefits of these projects, retrospective criticisms that rely upon a scale dichotomy of the 'larger' political economy (solid/permanent/important) versus 'local' initiatives (cultural/ transitory/marginal) shift the scholarly attention away from the range, complexity and nuance of many urban innovations. In this logic, one is almost left with the rather bald 'choice' between being in support of the status-quo (i.e. neoliberalism) or being committed to an alternative political agenda that includes no market features at all. Here, we agree with Bresnihan and Byrne (2015: 48) that narrow leftist understandings of the category of 'political' tend to be associated with masculinist 'workplace struggles or more macro-level political issues'. A limited understanding of 'political' ignores feminist, postcolonial and other insights (we would add cultural and artistic), making it difficult to recognise 'the importance of transforming the dimension of subjectivity and everyday social relations' (ibid, p. 48).

Our point here is that for various reasons, the language of temporary/permanence used by urban professionals and critical scholars has resulted in far too few studies documenting the range of projects in detail from various perspectives, which means a significant loss to communities, urban users, visitors, artists, and scholars who are attempting to (re)make their cities more inclusive, healthy and accessible. To avoid the temporary/permanent dichotomy, we adopt Till's (2011) concept of *interim space* to analyse how urban initiatives evolve and exist in the fluid space-times of the city. In the conclusion, we introduce the concept of the *improvisional city*. We argue that the historically and culturally inspired concept of interim space better represents how creative initiatives 'make do' with what is available at hand; evaluates a range of non-market based 'values' and benefits; and highlights how new social groupings may form to share responsibility for place-caring and social sustainability (compare Balaka, 2013; Bresnihan and Byrne, 2015; Kearns, 2013, 2015; Mould, 2014; Till, 2011, 2012).

To begin with, the concept interim space attempts to reclaim the language and intent of the early uses of *Zwischennutzung* by post-reunification Berlin artists, activists and squatters; it refers to the ways in which they negotiated and created their city by asking local authorities if they could use spaces at a time that socialist

and social-welfare capitalist property markets, rent controls, leasing mechanisms, planning regulations, and other legal structures were being negotiated in the newly reunified city and country (Berlin artist, 2009; Balaka, 2013). Around fifteen years after reunification (roughly 2005-06), *Zwischennutzung* became associated with the planning language of land-use, or *bebauungsplanmäßige Nutzung*) and has been translated into English as 'temporary land use'. We argue that when *Zwischennutzung* was 'translated' into planning cultures and language, a more radical and open-ended concept became 'tamed'. Domesticating radical cultures in Berlin through planning discourses has a history. In Berlin, urban residents have occupied and reused a range of urban spaces to create ways to live cheaply, build communities, claim rights to the city, establish renters' rights, and make creative spaces for at least the past hundred to two-hundred years (Till, 2011; Vasudevan, 2015). However, town planners, government authorities and developers have historically considered alternative uses of urban space as an obstacle to so-called development (Colomb, 2012).

To explain how interim space attempts to undo this planning translation of *Zwischennutzung* and the associated culture of needing to do away with obstacles that stand in the way of property development, we explain our understanding of this concept in both the German and the English. The word '*Zwischennutzung*' itself is quite adaptable. Depending on the relationship and positioning it has with other words, '*Zwischen*' may mean different things. It is usually used as a preposition that means 'in between' or 'among'; it can also mean 'betwixt' and 'inside'. Depending on the verb it is used with, the word can indicate movement from one place to another or signify location. As a prefix, it means 'intermediate'; as a noun it means 'between'. When put together with '*Nutzung*', which can mean exploitation, usage, utilisation, or even use and enjoyment (the legal usage!), *Zwischen* becomes associated with transition and intermediacy, but also with the pleasurable uses associated with being 'in between' as well as possibly moving between places. In developing the concept of interim space, Till was inspired by these temporal-spatial nuances and by what she understands as an intentional playfulness by those who first coined the word *Zwischennutzung*. As the word began to be associated with planning usages following the success of ZWISCHEN PALAST NUTZUNG's (n.d.) innovative projects in 2004-2005,[2] she decided to create a concept that would keep the multiple meanings of the

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[2] ZWISCHEN PALAST NUTZUNG ran a series of projects in the shell and environs of The Palace of the Republic, the former GDR 'Parliament' and congress hall, and a centre for entertainment and good food at affordable prices. Located in the historic centre of the city, on what was once the historical City Palace, after reunification, the building was classified as having asbestos and needed to be torn down, despite the fact that other buildings with asbestos had been renovated in the former West. There began a long and controversial phase of dismantling the building, amidst protests and other actions. A rather conservative proposal to rebuild the Hohenzollern City Palace was promoted, which evolved to become the new 'Humboldt Forum'. In the midst of this the ZWISCHEN PALAST NUTZUNG initiative evolved. See: Ledanff (2003), Staiger (2009), Till (2005) and ZWISCHEN PALAST NUTZUNG (n.d.).

original by translating *Zwischen* into 'interim'. To distance her concept from the planning associations of 'land use', she chose to use the word 'space'. In doing so, she wanted to prevent these spaces and meanings of the word 'use' from becoming fixed and thereby losing their original conceptualisations as outlined above. Simultaneously, she wanted to question planning discourses, wherein land use is associated with property development, and instead evoke German philosopher Walter Benjamin's (1968, 1999) provocative explorations of *Zeitraum* (time-space) (see also Benjamin and Tiedemann, 1999).

The concept of interim space, we believe, captures the open-ended nature of urbanity. Historic, yet constantly evolving 'interim spaces' in the city, including squats, community gardens, alternative art galleries, lemonade stands, outdoor picnic areas, spaces to walk dogs, underground clubs, informal beaches, and places for young people to hang out, are at odds with rigid formal planning procedures and policies that assume a level of permanency that rarely exists in the city. Yet historically, town planners, government authorities and developers understood such uses as a negative part of the landscape, as an obstacle to development (Colomb, 2012). Whereas 'temporary use' assumes normative categories of 'real' development time and land use, 'interim space' emphasises the 'liquid modernities' (Bauman, 2000) associated with the multiple temporalities, and the relational qualities of spaces and places. Before turning to a discussion of Granby Park as an interim space, we describe four interrelated components of this concept, including use value, healthy place-making, non-commodified forms of exchange, and creating spaces to imagine the city differently.

Firstly, the concept of interim space acknowledges the significance of use value in everyday life. When Marx (1867) described use value in *Kapital: Volume I*, he referred to the consumption of objects that gave pleasure or had other usefulness. Beyond the practical utility of the material 'things' that may result from creating and using interim spaces (benches, cafes, alternative schools, amphitheatres, lawns, art installations, playgrounds, concerts, edible forests and walls, and so on), we also include values resulting from the pleasurable use of objects that are part of, and simultaneously create, interim spaces.

Secondly, making interim spaces has real social and personal emotional and health benefits. At the personal level, these may include: emotional and environmental health resulting from one's pleasure being in, experiencing, sensing and remembering particular aspects of interim spaces; creating and experimenting with new skills; and making positive memories that may reduce stress and build confidence. The social dynamics of interim spaces may include interacting with strangers and/or familiar people in new settings; intergenerational and cross-border exchanges; building networks and developing social and place-based capital; participating in alternative learning and living communities; and professional skills training associated with volunteerism. Finally, taking care of and making places enable people to care for each other, as well as creating sustainable urban ecologies and/or community development (Fullilove, 2013; Till, 2012).

Thirdly, and related to social networking above, we highlight the importance

of non-commodified forms of intrapersonal exchange, and 'making do' with the resources one has at hand. As Gibson-Graham (1996) and the Community Economies Collective (n.d.) have documented, most forms of exchange in capitalist societies are not fully commodified. Alternative market transactions include the sale of public goods, ethical 'fair trade' markets, local trading systems, alternative currencies, coops, barter, and informal markets; non-market transactions include household flows, gift giving, indigenous exchange, state allocations, gathering/gleaning, hunting, fishing, theft, and poaching. In other words, the economy is a diverse array of economic relations and practices that are constituted by and constitute each other, and are continuously in flux, including different forms of production, exchange, circulation, labour, ownership, surplus appropriation, social arrangement, institutions, and subjects. Simone (2010) uses the term 'cityness' to describe this diverse array of movement, encounter, exchange, reliance on informal and formal institutions, that people use to 'get by', particularly in cities of the Global South, and Bayat (2000) uses the term 'encroachment of the ordinary' to describe similar processes in Middle Eastern cities.

Fourthly, interim spaces create possibilities for residents and visitors to imagine and realise their city differently. As Pieterse (2008, p.9) argues, the everyday 'must be the touchstone of radical imaginings and interventions'. The use values, social capital investments, and urban place-making resulting from the experimental nature of interim spaces cannot be measured only for a limited moment in time or be bound to one absolute location only. Instead, to borrow from Burke and Shear (2014, p. 129), when interim spaces engender 'social and economic experimentation' that include 'new political alliances, new cultural narratives, and alternative social and socio-ecological relations', we must pay attention to how these new modes of being and becoming in the world result from relational and interconnected spatial-social relations that have different temporal rhythms and exist across boundaries.

With reference to some of the themes above, we use the example of Granby Park in the next section to consider how interim spaces contribute to the liveability of the city in ways that may not necessarily be visible, 'permanent', or generate 'worth' according to monetary exchange. We examine how interim spaces offer neighbourhoods, urban residents and visitors an experimental and varied range of possible values and benefits.

Granby Park as Interim Space[3]

Granby Park (GP) was Dublin's first full-scale pop up park, located northwest of Parnell Square in north central Dublin (Figure 2). The initiative for the park came from Upstart, a non-profit voluntary arts collective, that wanted to 'challenge how vacant sites can be used in our city. We wanted to offer people an experience and lastly we want to create something special for Dublin and its residents' (Upstart, n.d.). Although the park was officially open for one month in the summer of 2013, it

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[3] Unless otherwise cited, the information from this section comes from interviews of Upstart members and observations based upon fieldwork (see Notes 2 and 6).

took about two years of planning for the project to come to fruition. The park's free events and activities included: entertainment (movies, live music, performances, often located in the amphitheatre), visual art installations, a children's play area, public discussions, the 'Granby Grazer' pop up café, and the Dublin Trade School (Granby Park, n.d.). As a YouTube video described:

> For four weeks, the park became a place of creativity, nature, imagination, play and beauty for everyone. For anyone who was involved, Granby Park was more than a series of temporary structures and installations, it was a place of community, of free arts events, outdoor cinema & theatre performances, live music, educational activities (Granby Pop-Up Park, 2014).
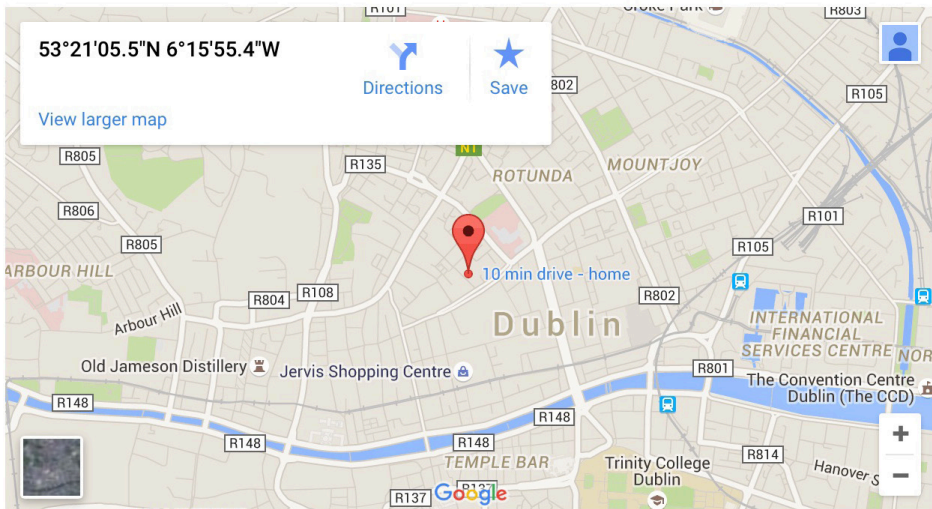
Granby Park Location

Figure 2: Map of Granby Park and Dominick Street Area, Dublin 1, from Upstart. ie webpage: http://upstart.ie.

The park was located on the former site of one of the Lower Dominick Street social housing buildings. It was removed in 2006 as part of a private-public partnership during the Celtic Tiger years. Although slated for mixed-use redevelopment, with the promise made to some families of being able to return to affordable housing units in the project, when the developer, McNamara Construction, became bankrupt in 2008, the project was put on hold indefinitely (the large block is still 'empty' as of late 2015). Upstart received a 'festival permit' from Dublin City Council (DCC) to host the pop-up park for one month; originally, they had hoped to secure a different plot in North Dublin to create a community garden, but were unsuccessful in gaining permission. In addition to granting the permit, DCC paid 15-17,000€ to 'civilise' (or clear) the land before the park was open, and offered an office for Upstart to use near the park. The main support the arts collective

received, however, was the donated time and resources from: local community groups and businesses, a large team of volunteers, artists, architects and Dublin residents. With a successful Fund-It campaign, along with other monetary and in-kind donations, including materials, expertise, time, plants, and foods, the park offered residents and visitors numerous free events and activities during the month it was open.

According to urban e-zine, *Le Cool* (2013), Upstart (and, we would add, locals and volunteers) replaced 'nothing with something' and created a 'tool for social change'. As a horizontally organised group, Upstart changes and grows according to the needs of each project; for GP, they used social networking from 20 core members, each of whom took responsibility for at least one aspect of the park, but who also worked with community partners, interns, volunteers, and researchers. Over 300 formal volunteers, and hundreds more informally helped to run the park (estimates are of about 1,000 total volunteers). While no precise total number for visitors exist, one source noted over 40,000 people came for the month.[4] These numbers reflect the vital and often unacknowledged role residents from different parts of the city, working with community members and the artistic collective, played in creating, maintaining and enjoying the park before, during and after the time of its opening to the public.

During the period that the park was open, a visitor could experience a different place each day because the different components of the park constantly changed, including gardens and green spaces, artistic installations with recycled materials, musical and performance events, play areas and programmes for children, hanging out spaces for adults and young people, the menu at the café, different kinds of workshops helped by community groups, and trade school projects (Figures 3 and 4). The evolving material setting was not an intentional design, but a practical result of the park being made and remade by artists, volunteers and locals; materials and donations emerged or became available at often unpredictable times and were offered spontaneously after someone experienced the park. In addition, as the word got out about the park, different people and groups signed up to use the park's amphitheatre or polytunnel space (if available); many people came by to eat their lunch at the park (there was no entrance fee and people could bring their own food and non-alcoholic beverages). Soon, tourist groups came by to visit the park. As a result, visitors were invited into a changing environment and often became interested in returning to explore the park anew. Sean Harrington (2015), the architect who designed the park's amphitheatre, noted that the park became the second-most visited tourist attraction in Ireland in 2013 *because of* its 'unfinished' nature.

Many benefits accrued for visitors who were not involved in making this healthy, green and child-friendly place in central north Dublin. Based upon a visitor survey[5] (McArdle, 2014), 80% of the 156 respondents felt that the park's

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4 Byrne (2013) noted that 40,000 people visited the park and up to 1,000 formal and informal volunteers worked in the park.

5 The visitor survey was done in two phases. First, the pilot visitor survey was personally administered

Figure 3: Play Area, Granby Park, 23 August 2013. Photo: K. Till.

Figure 4: Polytunnel & Library, Granby Park, 12 September 2013. Photo: K. Till.

by McArdle on 4 September 2013; based on the respondents and feedback from the research team, some questions were slightly revised. Second, the final version was available from 7-21 September at the Park's Information Desk for visitors to complete voluntarily on their own, or with the help of a Front Desk volunteer. 156 of these surveys were completed in total. In both phases, respondents were asked if they could be contacted again for a possible interview or further questions; from the pilot surveys, five people were willing to be contacted again and provided email addresses, and

atmosphere was very good or excellent, and many noted that it was unlike any urban space they knew or had experienced before. 40% of survey respondents made multiple visits to the park (of these 81% returned more than twice), and they returned regularly to visit the various areas of the park, all of which were often frequented. Some visitors were surprised by the park – they mentioned that this space surpassed their imagination, given its location so close to the retail hub of Henry Street and the Ilac Centre. Visitors had different ideas about what they liked best about the park: parents tended to mention the playground, music and artistic installations, whereas other adults commented that they enjoyed the experimental nature of the park in general. Young people stated that the park provided them with an outdoor space to hang out in on the North side of the city, as opposed to having to travel to places such as St Stephen's Green in South Dublin. In other words, people came for various reasons and used and benefitted from the space differently. A range of visitors and locals shared the same general space, and visitors commented very positively about the fact that it was free to enter and that anyone could use the park, and the benefits of an unusual mixing of people, who normally wouldn't necessarily share a space. Visitors also liked that the park was made from natural, donated and recycled materials.

   GP also provided volunteers with personal and career development and networking opportunities. Based upon an online survey of 51 volunteers conducted three months after the park's closure, many respondents commented that they made friends, met new people and made connections (McArdle, 2014), (Figure 5)[6]. 28% of those surveyed mentioned that they worked for more than a third of the entire time the park was open; of these, half worked over 20 days (14%). Volunteers commented positively on the social relations and skills they gained from the project. 57% of the volunteers surveyed were employed, and of these, one-third felt that the park had a positive impact on them in terms of career prospects, either through enhancing their resume, giving them professional

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sixty-seven were willing to do the same from the final survey, leading to three in-depth interviews with visitors. Both the pilot and final survey had eleven questions, of which five had room for detailed open-ended questions, including a final optional one with an open-ended comment box and optional section for asking for email addresses and optional demographic information. Eight questions were categorical and three were ranking questions. McArdle created summary statistics for each question and the optional question about demographics. The amount and detail provided for open-ended responses were surprising; open coding and a detailed analysis of codes provided the most significant findings (see McArdle, 2014).

[6] The volunteer survey was written and administered by an Upstart member, and was sent out to more than 300 volunteers three months after the close of the park; 51 responded. In addition to demographic questions, 28 questions were included in the survey, including 14 categorical, 2 ranked, and 12 open-ended questions. Kearns cleaned up and organised the data. McArdle created summary statistics and coded all open-ended responses. Again the latter had more depth and new findings than the more limited survey questions. An optional question was included at the end about being contacted for more information; based on the emails provided, 7 interviews were conducted by McArdle with volunteers. For more information regarding both surveys, see McArdle (2014).

Figure 5: Volunteers at Granby Park, 20 August 2013. Photo: K. Till.

experience, or helping them to improve their language skills. Of the 43% not currently in active employment for a number of reasons, over half of these felt they gained skills through volunteering in the park. 10% of the respondents said that volunteering at the park had helped them to gain employment, which is an incredible legacy for GP. While the majority of volunteers had volunteered before (80%), nearly all (98%) said they would volunteer in the future as a result of this positive experience. This may be attributed to the striking sense of communityand camaraderie amongst the volunteers we observed. But also many volunteers commented that they felt a sense of achievement by contributing to the park. Not one respondent felt that the experience was negative; half of the people surveyed said that the main reason they volunteered was because they believed in the goals of the park as communicated by Upstart.

Till noted in her experiences as either a volunteer Park Assistant or Park Ranger that not all volunteers turned up on time, or even at all, or stayed an entire shift. Nonetheless, there were always others who turned up and helped out. This mattered, as the park would not open unless enough volunteers were available for a given shift. Overall, volunteers were flexible, willing to work where help was needed, *extremely* friendly to guests and other volunteers, and a real joy to work with. Also, they were consistently thankful for the experience and free meal at the end of a shift. Volunteers who worked a lot at the park (and especially the Upstart extended team) were often exhausted after a day's work, but because of the very positive energy and feedback from guests at the park, and their sense of making a personal contribution to the park's success and to the community, it made the volunteer experience both memorable and empowering.

In addition to the positive experiences of visitors and volunteers, there were at least two unexpected legacy projects that have lasted beyond the formal time the park was open: the Trade School Dublin and DubFast. Accounts describing Granby Park based upon so-called temporary use (i.e. during the month of the park's opening), visitor numbers, or other market measurements only would miss even these obvious legacy projects of Granby Park, which remain healthy years after the pop-up phase of the project was 'officially' closed. Trade School Dublin (TSD) was created with the understanding that it would continue after the park closed; it now offers classes in the Dominick Street Community Centre and other venues (Trade School Dublin, 2015). Based upon a system of barter knowledge and learning through social exchange, TSD evolved from a global movement that started in New York in 2010 which has spread to over 50 cities (ibid). The basic idea is that a teacher volunteers to offer a class/skill and in return 'students' provide something in exchange that is cheap or free, such as a coffee, a list of places to go in Ireland, a map, or a good place to get a bike fixed. All participants mutually benefit and skills are exchanged. This 'alternative learning community' runs educational and skill-based classes that have been as diverse as learning how to paint with water colours, use Google Drive, or yarn bomb, or providing craft classes for children (ibid). The concept clearly embodies another way of valuing use and knowledge transfer, developing alternative economies, and providing a different space and set of social relations for people in the city. TSD was and still is extremely active, now two years after it launched.

Another legacy project was 'DubFast', a collaborative cross-border youth exchange and reconciliation project between Bradóg Regional Youth Service in North Dublin, and the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) Youth Service in Belfast, and curated by Upstart members. The project focused upon addressing issues that concerned both groups, in particular sectarianism and racism, by working together to build the park's amphitheatre and then creating an opening performance for the launch of the park. The theatre was designed using an ancient Irish aesthetic form of a circular enclosure that opened out, to reflect an open society. Yet the materials used were wooden which signified the pyres constructed in parts of Belfast for local celebrations of 12 July (Harrington, personal conversation with Till, August, 2013). The juxtaposition of the two traditions, and the building of a shared social space by the future generations of Belfast and Dublin provide a sense of the larger ambitions of this project. The planning for the youth-exchange happened a year in advance of the project and included grant writing, creating partnerships with youth services, finding artistic and reconciliation workshop leaders for the youth, and having a preliminary exchange and set of discussions with workshop leaders and youth. The formal week of the exchange took place a week before the launch of the park, when the young people from both cities, youth leaders, workshop leaders, and Upstart members stayed together at the Knockree Youth Hostel. During this intense period of exchange, reflection, and work, the youth visited the Glencree Peace and Reconciliation Centre, shared stories and aspirations, examined their personal

understandings of Irish history through reconciliation discussions, learned about slam poetry with an artist, and wrote their own poems and creative pieces. They then practised what poetry, writing, music and dance they wished to perform at the park's launch with the Abbey Theatre directors, gaining performance experience and confidence on that historic stage before the park's launch. DubFast performed the first show held at Granby Park on the very amphitheatre they helped to construct (Figure 6). At the end of the exchange, the youth wrote 'The DubFast Covenant', promising to continue working to promote peace and share what they learned with other young people. After the park's opening, many came back to visit the park with their friends and families, giving their own 'tours' of what they liked best about the place they helped create, and the group had an informal 'reunion' the final days the park was open.

Figure 6: DubFast launch Granby Park, 23 August 2015. Photo: K. Till.

DubFast did not end with the closing of the park. The following summer in 2014, Bradóg and NEELB successfully received a EU 'Youth in Action' grant to meet again at a leadership camp in Belfast. The exchange was run entirely by the youth organisation leaders and 'DubFast graduates', who introduced a new mixed group of young people to the use of creative methods that provided the youth with different means to discuss difficult issues, such as the harmful nature of racism in Dublin and sectarianism in Belfast. In sharing the lessons learned from their previous exchange, both generations of young people were empowered to bring a message of positive change to their respective communities. Following on from this, in 2015, a short exploratory collaborative community mapping project was piloted with Bradóg staff and a small group of youth, some of whom were involved in DubFast. A member of Upstart, the research team from Maynooth University Geography, and MA and PhD students from Maynooth Geography participated in this 'public engagement' project. According to one Bradóg staff

(personal correspondence with Till, 2015), with these projects, in particular as a result of DubFast and Upstart's mentoring, 'young people were left with a sense of pride and respect from their families and community for the work they did on Granby Park. This has opened up a sense of how their community is changing physically and how they can influence it. … By activating new projects, extended youth and research teams draw upon the advocacy and leadership of the graduates of the first project and the second exchange, who will share their experiences and mentor a new generation of participants'.

As the surveys, our observations, and legacy projects attest, the process of creating, experiencing and remembering GP was a different kind of community development that included a range of use values, created a healthy place that offered social and personal emotional and professional benefits, included non-monetary forms of exchange, and provided volunteers and visitors the opportunity to imagine a different sort of neighbourhood and city. Significantly, many visitors in the surveys noted these benefits. They specifically praised Upstart and the local community for demonstrating how a razed, empty space that had symbolised the destruction of a community could be activated and used in a positive, and entirely unexpected way. Numerous visitors positively commented about observing the community so actively involved and using the park, an observation that had changed their previously negative opinions of the place. Twenty months later, those positive aspects still resonate for some in the local neighbourhood. In a random survey of eight local businesses on Parnell Street conducted by MA Geography students at Maynooth University in April 2015, half of the respondents stated that the park was beneficial to the area and to the community in the long-term, noting that the park gave young people something to do, and more people on the street meant more businesses. In sum, they noted a more positive social behaviour in the area. In a random street survey of seven people on Henry Street, four had very positive memories of the park, two were unaware of the park, and one had negative-to-neutral memories (more muggers, but more Gardai). One stated that the park 'demonstrated that the creative use of materials worked', the park had 'brought different groups together', and that 'local youth projects gave us pride'.

Thus, not only was the unfinished material and aesthetic nature of the park innovative, we would argue that at least as significant was the creation of what Bresnihan and Byrne (2015) describe as a 'manifold commons', whereby physical spaces become socialised into a shared space with multiple uses and possibilities. Creating a commons resulted in the creation of objects (use value), personal development, social networking, enjoying being with strangers, and feeling as though one was contributing to making a healthy place in the city (Figure 7). Many commented that they liked that the park provided a space for people in the community to see each other and connect with one another in a public setting. Many commented that a strong community spirit was very visible in the park. For example, a regular feature of the park was after-school teas and picnics by parents (predominantly women) who enjoyed relaxing outside after work while

their children played in the park. Volunteers also remarked upon the positive community spirit, and how inspiring it was to change people's attitudes and perceptions of the local area. Both visitors and volunteers also valued what one visitor described as the 'cross-pollination' of different groups of people in the same space. Quotes from the volunteers included that they: enjoyed 'networking with people outside their own sphere of influence'; felt empowered that they 'can do something useful'; enjoyed meeting a 'cross-section of people and personalities' and one person 'was surprised by the number of fellow-volunteers I met who live in my neighbourhood, but whom I'd never met before'.

Figure 7: Creating a manifold commons: Granby Park as a convivial space in the city. Photo: K. Till.

By creating a convivial space for multiple uses, different social groups came into contact and were introduced to the diversity of other urban residents. People learned to interact with others beyond and within their immediate familial and social groups, and were welcomed and welcoming to strangers. The park allowed people to see the city in a way not based on monetary exchange and found that they had the right to re-imagine Dublin. Volunteers who lived around this area, for example, described the park as: 'a space within Dublin City Centre where people can just be'; a place that 'maximise[d] the use of abandoned and unloved spaces'; 'opening up new spaces in the city'. Others said that 'children need to see how transformations like this come about' and that all citizens needed 'to... play a role in the making of the city' and that the park provided 'a taste of what can happen in the city that is not commercially driven'. There were also many public discussions at the park and about the park during and after GP was open. While questions were raised about whether DCC would change as a result of this

experiment, based upon the findings of our research, we argue that the positive experiences and legacies of GP helped to begin the process of mending a torn part of the urban social fabric. This process of repair was experienced materially, through personal and social interactions, and through memory. People's everyday realities and relationships they had to the city and each other were transformed.

Beyond the Chimera of Permanence: The Improvisional City

Cities are built and rebuilt on the remnants of existing landscapes and structures in a process that is unpredictable and fluid. Vacancy and temporariness are permanent features of any city. If 'cities have been sites of incessant and most rapid change throughout their history' (Bauman, 2000, p. 3), a historical perspective about vacancy and underuse indicates the fact that empty spaces always exist in the city, as Kearns' article in this special issue clearly demonstrates. We have argued that understandings about temporary urbanism as either 'short-term' solutions for longer-term capital gain or as forms of neoliberal gentrification ultimately legitimise the rhetoric of temporary/permanent spaces. When initiatives are evaluated or valorised according to levels of public spending, policy documents, visitor numbers, income generated, or other market transaction categories only, much of the value of interim spaces remains undocumented. Instead, we have argued that alternative forms of evaluating such projects might allow scholars, residents, urban professionals, and others to learn how to think differently about the city.

While Iverson (2013, p. 955) suggests that 'the need for a new city...is just as urgent now as it was in Lefebvre's time', we agree with Marcuse (2015) that the first step is a new vocabulary and a new set of concepts to express the vitality and possibilities of the city. As an alternative, we proposed using the critical concept of 'interim space', rather than 'temporary land use', as the latter suggests that we must wait for the city to somehow become 'solid' again. In this article, we have called attention to how interim spaces such as Granby Park have different temporal and spatial rhythms than those associated with permanence and capital investment, including: a range of use values; making healthy places that are nurturing socially and personally; non-capitalist forms of exchange; and offering spaces for alternative urban imaginaries. As the Upstart coordinator of volunteers wrote in her 'thank you' note to all volunteers on the Granby Park webpage (dated October 7, 2013):

For me personally, Granby Park was never a 'pop-up' project. Nothing about it appeared suddenly and easily overnight and much of what made it exceptional was the way in which it has, and continues, to resonate. For anyone who was involved, Granby was more than a series of temporary structures and installations, it was also about a process – a process about which we are still learning and one that perhaps we don't yet have the right words for. … Out of vacancy, has come generosity and for me, a refreshed understanding of space, history and what it means to be here and to be socially engaged with challenge, disappointment and hope.

Such benefits – a process that resonates and offers a 'refreshed understanding of space, history and what it means to be here' – tend to fall off planner's land-use maps even as 'pop ups' are praised by city authorities as short-term initiatives. In contrast, we have sought to analyse Granby Park as an interim space and in doing so have avoided evaluation schemes that privilege the chimera of permanence. We have made more explicit what the not-so-visible and not-for-profit gains are for communities and the city more generally. Our research indicates the value of recognising different kinds of empirical data that result when attention is paid to projects before, during and after they are accessible to communities and the general public. Finally, our findings clearly acknowledge the right of residents to experiment with the type of city they wish to live in.

While we have highlighted the positive experiences that visitors and volunteers experienced in building and remembering Granby Park, and noted the existing legacies of the park today, we should note here that there were other goals not realised. Firstly, the legacies resulting from the park differed from the initial expectations of Upstart. Originally it was hoped that the park would inspire lots of smaller Granby Parks across the city, each of which would become 'a crack of new life within the Dublin Landscape' (Bishop, 2014). It was also proposed to create a 'Tool Kit', which would document the process of making the park and offer tips to other potential groups who wished to make a park in their neighbourhood. Two years later, this has not happened. Secondly, most of the Upstart team, and some of the volunteers, experienced an extreme degree of burnout after the closing of the park (which in part explains why a tool kit was not created). Indeed, it took about two years before the extended Granby Park group had a reunion meeting and Upstart members felt that they had recovered (based on anecdotal evidence). Thirdly, the interactions with a fuller range of community groups were shorter in duration and more limited than would have ideally been hoped for. This was, in part, because approval for the site was granted rather late, which meant that only a small amount of time remained to engage local residents and existing community groups. Also, Upstart members had no experience of this aspect of the project. As some community-engaged artists noted at public discussions, community participation would have been more ideal from the very outset of conceiving the project. However, given both the history and timeline of the project, which was initially planned as a community garden for a different part of North Dublin, this was not possible. Even if it were possible, we understand from anecdotal evidence, having spoken to some residents and different community leaders during our research, that this largely low-income and diverse neighbourhood (with additional immigrants arriving after 2008) may not have had the resources or cohesion to have been able to consider working collaboratively on a two-year project without some sort of additional funding. There was also some distrust toward DCC after the original urban renewal project stalled in 2008: displaced residents from the social housing that was demolished in 2006, as well as those still living in the area, had previously complained to DCC about the negative impacts of their failed urban development, but without success.

Upstart decided to go ahead with the project, despite a less than ideal situation, and doing their best to respect the history of the area and this particular site. The newly formed Upstart Community Engagement Group began by contacting existing youth and elderly social organisations, local businesses, and other community and cultural groups for their feedback, ideas and support. This group of young volunteers also knocked on doors to let local residents know more about the project and get additional suggestions. Doing so meant that they got to know many people individually and, after a relatively short period of time, Upstart volunteers found that people were incredibly generous to them. Indeed, Upstart members mentioned to us that while some residents were initially suspicious of the project, by the time the park opened, the local resident groups they had interacted with became very supportive of the park and felt a sense of pride about what they had accomplished together. Not surprisingly, many residents were ultimately disappointed that the park would only be kept open for a month. Many locals asked why Upstart could not convince DCC to keep the park open; the collective had already let them know that they would only be able to support a month of running the park, and that a discussion of longer-term needs had to come directly from the community itself. (At the end of 2015, the site in which Granby Park was located is still an empty plot. Some construction has begun toward the northern part of the area in preparation for an extension of the light rail (LUAS) line. According to DCC (2008), the previous plans for the area were no longer viable after the global financial crisis in 2008, which brought an end to public-private partnership (PPP) for the city (DCC, 2008). A taskforce was set up in 2010 to look at the 2008 plan (DCC, 2010); Dublin City Council announced in 2014 that it would spend €240 million on the construction of social housing over the next three years, with €45 million earmarked for the five failed PPP regeneration projects that collapsed in 2008, including Dominick Street (Kelly, 2014). However, even though the plan was lodged with *An Bord Pleanala* in 2010, at the time of writing this article, possible conflicts with the LUAS tram-line development has meant that these plans have been put on hold.

Despite the points mentioned above, we suggest that overall the park had more positive benefits and legacies. In particular, the experience of creating and using shared urban spaces, bringing together and training a volunteer force of over 300 people (some of whom were able to gain employment based upon their experience), and the formation of community-based initiatives such as the Trade School Dublin and DubFast and related youth projects, continue to have positive impacts in the neighbourhood, the city and in Ireland. Moreover, small reminders of the park still exist in people's memories, homes and local landscapes today. Plants that were donated for the park were given new homes in local community centres, schools and private homes. The steel metal fence that still surrounds the former park is painted with different shades of green, an accidental reminder of what once existed there (Upstart thought it had been donated paints that could be washed off, but this was not the case).

By way of conclusion, we propose that, based upon our study, scholars consider

the city as 'improvisional'. Drawing upon Fullilove's (2013) discussion of 'urban alchemy' and O'Callaghan's (2012) discussion of contrapuntal urbanisms, we understand the *improvisional city* as a concept that values how people imagine new social spaces in the city by 'making do' with the resources and materials at hand. Similar to a jazz band, the people involved in creating and developing interim spaces and projects may have a shared vision, but can go off on riffs, push the group to play more quickly or slowly, and, when new members are called on stage, leaders can pull back at times to let others perform and create new harmonies and possibilities. Different rhythms can coexist in the same acoustic space, and the emerging song creates an atmosphere that affects the musicians' and audiences' perceptions and embodied experiences. The idea of the improvisional city also highlights, to use Bresnihan and Byrne's words (2015, p. 48), the right of residents, artists and guests to create spaces 'within which we can reinvent the ownership, production and control of the urban' rather than remain frustrated 'with the difficulty of living a fulfilling life in Dublin'. Instead, we can learn from projects such as Granby Park about how we can work together to 'open up a crack and set ourselves the task of widening that crack so we can move and breathe more freely' (ibid).

Acknowledgments

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