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Meanwhile in Malmö

Exploring temporary urbanism

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ABSTRACT

Temporary urbanism has emerged as a prominent field in urban planning and research, encompassing a wide range of terms such as meanwhile use, tactical urbanism, and DIY. Despite its growing relevance as a more sustainable and flexible approach to traditional planning, the concept remains ambiguous. Several scholars describe the field of temporary urbanism as disorganized, confusing, and difficult to define. This study examines how temporary urbanism is conceptualised and applied in practice, with a particular focus on how underlying power relations shape its outcomes. It is based on a comparative case study of two ongoing projects in Malmö: Färjetterminalen in Nyhamnen and Backa Kåken in Kirseberg. Adopting a qualitative research approach, the study combines semi-structured interviews and document analysis to explore how temporary use is framed, structured, and governed by different actors. The analysis is informed by critical urban theory, drawing primarily on Lefebvre's perspective of the production of space and the right to the city. Findings demonstrate that temporariness is not the defining feature of temporary urbanism. Instead, important aspects are ownership, control over development, and the capacity to transform temporary use into lasting spatial rights. While Färjetterminalen represents a municipally driven, strategic use of temporariness to facilitate long-term development, Backa Kåken exemplifies a bottom-up initiative seeking to challenge existing ownership structures and retain value locally. The study shows that temporary urbanism can serve both as a tool for urban development and as a means of contesting dominant planning practices. However, it also highlights that temporary interventions are not inherently sustainable and inclusive, but depend on the institutional and economic conditions in which they are embedded. Temporary use is not even inherently time-limited, but is often intended to result in long-term change.

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Although this marks the end of my university years and the beginning of my professional career, I hope to carry forward the same curiosity and eagerness to learn that has guided me during my studies.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fuller', is positioned in the lower right area of the page.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The first chapter presents a background of temporary urbanism, including a problem statement. The overall purpose of the study is expressed in the aim, followed by the research questions. Finally, this chapter includes a reading guide, presenting each chapter and a short description of their content.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Until recent decades, urban planning has been greatly concerned with durability and permanence. However, temporary urbanism is not a new phenomenon, it has always been a part of the urban fabric. From a Lefebvrian perspective, this reflects the notion that space is not fixed, but socially produced through ongoing practices and relations, where temporary and permanent elements coexist and continuously reshape one another (Lefebvre 1974:73-85). Examples range from nomadic dwellings to prefabricated homes, refugee camps, and housing made from shipping containers. Throughout history, cities have also constructed temporary structures for large events such as the Olympic Games and Expos (Bishop & Williams, 2012:3-7). In addition to these more formal examples, temporary activities have long occupied gaps in the urban fabric, such as vacant lots used for storage or car parking, which contribute significantly to the urban economy (ibid:17). In recent decades, temporary urbanism has emerged as an increasingly prominent field within urban planning and research. It has expanded to encompass a wide range of terms and practices, such as meanwhile use, tactical urbanism, and informal or DIY interventions. Such forms of creative experimentation can open up to alternative forms of participation in urban development, and provide citizens with the possibility to exercise their right to the city (Lefebvre, 1996:151-152).

Exploring the literature on temporary urbanism, numerous and understandings of temporariness in connection to the built environment are revealed. Different projects with a wide range of characteristics can all be categorized under the umbrella of temporary urbanism, despite following completely different frameworks and reflecting opposing politics. Andres & Zhang (2020:v) confirm this, stating that there are complex and diverse features of temporary urbanism, contributing to a disorganized understanding of the term. Dovey and Stevens (2023) agree, meaning that the field is difficult to define due to the

various terms associated with it (Dovey & Stevens 2023:17-18). This confusion risks compromising the transparency of projects, blurring lines between bottom-up initiatives on the one hand, and top-down initiatives on the other hand, resulting in unclear motives behind temporary use.

1.2 AIM

The purpose of this study is to explore the concept of temporary use by comparing two ongoing projects in Malmö, Backa Kåken in Kirseberg and Färjeterminalen in Nyhamnen, and relating the findings to literature concerning temporary urbanism. The main goal is to explore how the umbrella term “temporary urbanism” can house projects of vastly different character, and to gain an understanding of how different forms of ownership, control, and participation shape temporary use. The study will not concern the design of temporary establishments or any form of analysis regarding positive and negative benefits of their implementation, but rather focus on how and why different actors and their underlying intentions shape the way temporary projects are framed. Ultimately, the study seeks to enhance transparency around temporary urban practices by distinguishing between different rationalities of temporary urbanism.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions are formulated to guide this inquiry and structure the comparative analysis.

1. How do differences in ownership, control, and actor intentions shape temporary use?
2. How do temporary urban projects in Malmö reflect different ways of producing space and exercising the right to the city?

1.4 READING GUIDE

The thesis begins with an introduction (Chapter 1), outlining the background, aim, and research questions. Chapter 2 presents the conceptual framework that informs the methodology and analysis. This is followed by Chapter 3, which outlines the theoretical framework forming the basis for the analysis and discussion. Chapter 4 describes the methodology, explaining the methodological approach and research design, including the use of semi-structured interviews and document analysis, as well as case selection and

ethical considerations. Chapter 5 presents the empirical analysis, providing detailed accounts of the two cases, Färjeterminalen in Nyhamnen and Backa Kåken in Kirseberg. In this chapter, the cases are compared to each other and the empirical findings are interpreted through the theoretical lens. Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by summarizing the main insights from the empirical analysis. Finally, Chapter 7 includes some comments based on empirical findings, followed by a reference list, figure list and an appendix of the interview guide.

2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The second chapter presents the conceptual framework upon which the empirical research and analysis is based. It serves as a research overview, and introduces key terms in the field of temporary urbanism. Furthermore, it introduces legislative conditions for temporary urbanism in a Swedish context. Since the aim of the study is to unravel overlapping understandings of temporary use, the conceptual framework critically engages with central contributions in order to clarify concepts relevant for interpreting the empirical cases. It draws primarily from "The Temporary City" (2012) by Bishop & Williams, two town planners with decades of experience within the field. The book explores the fundamental role of time in shaping urban environments and introduces different forms of temporary, interim, and meanwhile uses of urban space. It is complemented by contemporary and fundamental works in the field, offering nuance to Bishop and Williams' more descriptive approach.

Temporary urbanism is the phenomenon of adapting and transforming spaces for a limited period, allowing areas to be reshaped in response to current needs, and influencing the surrounding social and economic environment (Andres & Zhang, 2020:2). This is a more flexible alternative to formal masterplanning that requires more resources, and an approach that has been highlighted by developers and landowners in the face of rapid changes and turbulent economy (Bishop & Williams, 2012:3). In the rise of political and financial uncertainty, temporary urbanism provides an arena for flexible experimentation. Here, civil society and businesses come forward as key actors, since they tend to be more responsive than city authorities (Ibid, p. 23). That being said, masterplanning is still an important technique where actors come together to generate value for an area through long-term plans for its physical, social, or financial development (ibid:179-180). Temporary use in the context of masterplanning concerns collaboration with the users of spaces, and can be a measure to reach a general agreement regarding the goals and anticipated results of a masterplan. However, citizen involvement can be difficult to apply in masterplanning because of its large scale and abstract nature, whereas temporary projects tend to be easier to grasp and are therefore an appropriate place to start when trying to engage citizens in more long-term development. Temporary activities can be included in masterplanning as drivers of change, and reflect a more initiating approach from city authorities, where the actors involved play a greater role in the planning process (ibid:185-187). This being said, temporary activities are suitable both as an independent

practice, and as part of more long-term strategies (ibid:215). Though, it is important to note that flexible projects have their challenges, like delays and uncertainty (Ferreri, 2015:186). Despite potential obstacles, experimentation among city authorities could be an important shift to better adapt to contemporary and future change. However, there are also political incentives for city authorities to promote temporary use since it can be implemented as a quick fix for underused spaces (Bishop & Williams, 2012:35). The term is more common in a British or European context, focusing on timeframes and shifting patterns of activity, as well as interim or meanwhile uses of space (Dovey & Stevens, 2023:19). While traditional masterplanning can be a useful technique in making long-term plans, its lack of flexibility may result in large financial and resource losses in the case of failure, as well as discontent among citizens. A failed masterplan might be the result of the master plan becoming outdated during, or even before, its implementation due to the long process of developing and approving the masterplan. Based on this argument, Bishop & Williams (2012:182) suggest that masterplanning should focus on looser visions, and remain flexible to change during the long implementation phase. While this definition of temporary urbanism provides a useful point of departure, it tends to present temporary urbanism in a positive light, generally overlooking the underlying political and economic dynamics that shape how and why temporary use is implemented, as well as potential challenges.

As for temporary use, there are two dominating understandings. On the one hand, there is time-limited interim or meanwhile use meant to fill a temporary gap, and on the other hand more tactical use where temporary interventions are used to push long-term change (Dovey & Stevens, 2023:141). While this distinction is analytically useful, the boundary between these understandings is blurred in practice, where temporary use may simultaneously serve both short-term gap-filling and long-term strategic purposes. All three terms regard interventions encompassed by the concept of temporary urbanism (Dovey & Stevens, 2016:19), but meanwhile or interim use specifically refers to a use of space that fills the gap between more long-term strategies (Dovey & Stevens, 2023:1). Some criticism is raised against meanwhile or interim use since they are often centered around community, while the long-term strategies that replace them tend to prioritize profit (Ferreri, 2015:185). It is unclear what conditions encourage temporary use, but one important driver is economic or structural crisis since it often creates an abundance of vacant property and a need for flexible strategies. As for location, temporary activities often gravitate toward the outskirts of

central areas, where there is available space with unclear ownership (Bishop & Williams, 2012:214). Bishop & Williams (2012:5) highlight the different characteristics of temporary uses. They can be formal or informal, spontaneous, and even illegal. They can be initiated as a strategy to leverage urban growth, or as a strategy to mitigate shrinkage. They can also differ in timeframe and motives. Even the term temporary itself can be understood differently. Temporary uses can also be seen as activist and countercultural movements, critiquing the prevalent systems or norms, and promoting alternative uses of space, taking the shape of tactical DIY-urbanism. These types of temporary uses tend to focus around non-commercial community activities operating parallel to the mainstream property market. (ibid, pp. 30-32) Thus, temporary use can be a manifestation of community activism, often initiated as small-scale temporary efforts by a group of people, but may grow into long-term and larger scale projects (ibid:147). In contrast, temporary uses can also be highly commodified and centered around consumption, like markets and pop-up shops or restaurants. This reflects a broader trend of consumerism, and is one of the more common forms of contemporary temporary use (ibid:67). The ambiguous character of this topic calls for a research approach moving beyond practical or physical aspects of temporary projects, shifting focus to the intentions and goals behind them (ibid:5). An overarching approach to urban planning is placemaking, under which temporary use is a tool. It is concerned with the involvement of citizens in the development of their area, and is often framed as low-scale. The knowledge about shared open spaces, gathered through placemaking, informs the planning and maintenance of public spaces (Smaniotto Costa, et al., 2023:1). It is a community-driven process that empowers local people to shape and improve their public spaces. Instead of relying solely on top-down designs, it draws on the knowledge of those who live and work in a place (Kitzes, 2010). Placemaking can also be discussed as place-making, reflecting a less rigid framework and referring more generally to the community-driven planning and production of places (Bishop & Williams, 2012:187).

While temporary use is an alternative approach to traditional planning policy, the practice remains within the frame of formal planning. Temporary use can also be informal and spontaneous, like having a picnic or taking a shortcut. It can also manifest through nature reclaiming space or through DIY urbanism. Often, it is the use of so-called interstices, unplanned in-between spaces that can occur as a result of discontinuous plans. It can be phrased as a counterattack to top-down planning where interstitial spaces are used

temporarily, without concern for larger organizational issues like economy and politics. However, the issue itself is political since it reflects tension between city authorities, capitalist organizations, and citizens in minorities (Brighenti, 2016:xvi-xxii). Wikström (2017) speaks of informal urban development, forces beyond traditional planning that affect the built environment. Informal activity can, on the one hand, be ephemeral and exploit the time factor. On the other hand, they can be more enduring and benefit from slow-paced decision-making, as well as authorities' tendency to look away for reasons of convenience. However, these initiatives can all be categorized as forms of temporary use. The essence of informal urban development is beyond the material dimension. It focuses on citizens' role in the development of their city, and how people claim space (Wikström, 2017). Like tactical urbanism presented below, temporary use does not particularly concern scale or initiation, but more so the purpose of the intervention.

The definition of temporary urbanism shares some similarities with the term tactical urbanism, which is a method of building and activating neighborhoods through short-term, low-cost interventions and policies that can easily be expanded or adapted (Lydon & Garcia, 2015:2). It can be applied by citizens to protest conventional planning policy, by city government or other organizations as a tool to engage the public, or in early implementation to test different solutions before long-term investment (ibid:12). Thus, tactical interventions can aid citizens in reclaiming and redesign public space. It can also be a useful strategy for developers or the government to collect ideas and opinions, and to quickly implement changes in the built environment (ibid:3-4). Ferreri (2025:188) critiques the entire idealization of quick solutions, and calls for an approach moving beyond the ideal of continuous change and towards a focus on long-term organization (Ferreri, 2015:188). It has emerged in reaction to traditional formal urban planning, and explores alternative approaches to urban development that are more resilient and flexible. That being said, tactical urbanism does not provide solutions applicable in all contexts, but encourages intentional responses to local conditions. This approach is used for both redevelopment of existing areas, or development of new ones (Lydon & Garcia, 2015:3-4). Oftentimes, underused public spaces and vacant lots are targeted by the tactical urbanism movement, and become arenas for tactile proposals for change (ibid:6). Bishop & Williams (2012:25) confirms that temporary users usually select vacant sites with little attraction to property investors. The term is more common in North America and mainly focuses on community-driven responses to social

needs that are insufficiently addressed by government or market forces (Dovey & Stevens, 2023:19). Here, a tension can be detected between large and small scale projects, as well as top-down or bottom-up initiation. Technically, all temporary projects seeking to address a local issue could be categorized as tactical, regardless of scale or initiator. Here, the focus lies on the motive and purpose of the temporary intervention, rather than physical or structural aspects. A temporary urbanism movement very much concerned with scale and initiator is the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) urbanism, which refers to small-scale actions by citizens modifying public space through quick and low-cost interventions. It includes practices like guerrilla art, pop-ups, and other informal efforts that blend activism, art, design, and hands-on problem-solving (Lydon & Garcia, 2015:6-8). This can be considered a tactical intervention, so long as the DIY element addresses current social needs. Furthermore, interventions under tactical urbanism are legal, whereas DIY urbanism can include illegal interventions (ibid:8). Masterplanning can also be tactical, by shifting strategies to jump on opportunities and adjusting to changing needs. In times of limited resources, it is especially important for urban planners to act tactically or collaborate with tacticians in order to achieve the goals expressed in the masterplan (Bishop & Williams, 2012:182-183).

As previously mentioned by Bishop & Williams (2012:23-25), vacant space is a condition for temporary urbanism. The economic rationale has shifted from the city centre to more peripheral areas, leaving gaps in the urban fabric. Another main concern is shrinkage due to increasingly self-sufficient suburbs, industrial decline or demographic change. Even technological advances and increasing multi-use of space compresses land-use together, causing a decreased demand of space. Vacant spaces, as a result of these processes, may persist due to disadvantageous market forces or even physical aspects such as size and contamination (ibid:24-27). It is the skewed relationship between the flexibility of the economy and the rigidity of real estate that causes sites to be abandoned. However, temporary use can mitigate the consequences of these market forces, as it allows land to be used more freely and creatively because it is not tied to the restrictive commitments of permanent construction (Temel, 2006; Bishop & Williams, 2012:25). This perspective highlights the economic drivers of temporary use, but does not adequately consider the political production of vacancy and how slow political processes may result in vacancy awaiting new plans.

Legislation in the field of building and planning highly prioritizes safety and public health, making it difficult to build flexible and temporary structures. According to Bishop & Williams (2012:14), “planning acts as a gatekeeper of land value by allowing development. It also inevitably acts as a brake on change and experimentation.” However, under the Swedish Planning and Building Act (PBL), temporary building permits exist to allow construction or alterations that are intended to exist only for a limited period. Such permits can be granted for any measure normally requiring a building permit, for example new construction, extensions, changes of use, façade alterations, or installations, and may be issued both within and outside detailed development plans. A temporary permit is valid for up to ten years and can be extended in increments of up to five years, with a maximum total duration of fifteen years. When the permit expires, the structure must be removed and the site restored unless a permanent permit has been granted. Though, importantly, temporary permits cannot be used to bypass planning regulations for developments that are permanent in character or conflict with the intended land use in the detailed plan (Boverket, 2025). Planning legislation and leasing policies regarding temporary use reveal a tension between the discourse of flexibility associated with temporary urbanism and the regulatory framework that often constrain its implementation in practice. Another practical facilitator of temporary use is temporary leases, carried out by property owners to temporary users. A preferable structure is a temporary-use association renting a venue from the property owner, and in turn opening it up for temporary use by other associations or businesses. Despite little capital return, temporary use can improve safety and monitoring of their empty venues, as well as attract commercial uses and help develop a sense of place. Here again, temporary use can have conflicting meanings, as the phenomenon is increasingly becoming a permanent aspect of thinking in the property industry (Bishop & Williams, 2012:40-43). Ferreri (2025:188) confirms this, and claims that while some temporary projects can be perceived as temporary, the pattern of temporary projects reflect a permanent practice (Ferreri 2025, p. 188).

A main critique and a possible consequence of temporary use is gentrification, especially in regards to culture-related initiatives. Bishop & Williams (2012:164) express it as colonisation triggering both social and physical change, attracting businesses and centering the area around consumption. In turn, rents increase, pushing out low-profit activities and attracting established companies and institutions. Jacobs (1961:242-243) argues that it is this

multi-use and diversity that both contribute to the success of an area, but ultimately leads to its downfall. She calls it the self-destruction of diversity, where areas successful due to their diversity are subject to a competition for space where the most profitable form of use will multiply and eradicate the diversity that made the area successful in the first place. Another criticism raised by Ferreri (2015:184) is that temporary activities lack means to generate urban growth, and are more focused around creating an illusion of constant development. She critiques the celebration of temporary use as experimental and creative, and claims that this is just another form of neoliberal planning policy (Ferreri, 2015:184). Critique is also raised against temporary solutions as short-term and insignificant in relation to more long-term or permanent solutions (Bishop & Williams, 2012:11-14). Ferreri (2025:185) even argues that temporary urbanism fails to address the cause of an issue, for example vacancy and lack of spaces for non-commercial activities, and rather addresses the symptom of the issue (Ferreri, 2015:185). However, what people fail to recognize is the ever-changing character of cities, as dynamic entities reflecting their shifting social, economic, and political context (Bishop & Williams, 2012:11-14). This dichotomy of space being fixed and temporary activity being dynamic is inaccurate and does not acknowledge space as a process (Ferreri, 2015:187-188). Truth is that cities shift continuously with periods of growth and stagnation. Even though entire cities are seldom abandoned, their gradual transformation contributes to a layered fabric, often including both historical and modern, as well as more or less permanent, structures. These long-term structures co-exist with contemporary ones, and are more or less embedded in the modern urban fabric. However, the permanent aspects of the physical urban fabric do not necessarily reflect an unchanging fabric of urban life. For example buildings and squares, despite their more long-term physical features, are venues for temporary activity (Bishop & Williams, 2012:11-19).

Taken together, these perspectives illustrate that temporary urbanism is not a coherent concept, but rather a field of overlapping and sometimes contradictory understandings. This study builds on this ambiguity by focusing on how different interpretations of temporary use are mobilized in practice. Making clear the distinctions between different approaches to temporary urbanism and their general aims guides the analysis, and enables a categorization of each case. Especially significant for this purpose is the differentiation between meanwhile or interim use as short-term, gap-filling strategies, and temporary use

as a more tactical approach aimed at influencing long-term urban development. The framework further emphasizes that temporary urbanism can take both formal and informal forms, ranging from municipally led initiatives to grassroots and DIY interventions, each reflecting different underlying motives and power relations. Additionally, the critiques of temporary use as masking neoliberal planning approaches and driving gentrification processes are important to note, since temporary urbanism is seldom described in a neutral or critical manner, but presented as an innovative and resource-effective approach to urban planning.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The third chapter discusses theories on the production and politics of urban space, defining the theoretical scope of the analysis and serving as an analytical lens. Further, the theoretical framework informs the methodological approach and the comparative case study design, the selection of cases, and the use of semi-structured interviews and document analysis. It is anchored in critical urban theory, highlighting the social construction of space and how power dynamics shape its production. The theoretical framework draws primarily on the philosopher Henri Lefebvre's "The Production of Space" (1974) and "The Right to the City" (1996), which establish central concepts within critical urban theory. This foundation is complemented by additional works that engage directly with, and develop, Lefebvre's ideas. In particular, the theoretical framework emphasizes questions of ownership, control, and participation in the production of urban space, which are central to understanding temporary urbanism.

Lefebvre argues that space is socially produced (Lefebvre, 1974:73), and that space itself is not a single thing, but consists of social relationships. He claims that relations within social space become increasingly harder to decipher as dwellings evolve into cities (ibid:82-83). The production of space is not a process of an object being turned into a product, neither is it a collection of places. It is both the product of, and the precondition for, social superstructures, meaning laws, culture and ideology in Marxist terms (ibid:85). In his reading of Lefebvre's Right to the city, Harvey confirms this claim, stating that people individually and collectively produce the city through their actions and engagements, and that in turn, the city makes the people (Harvey, 2003:939). For example, the demand and shaping of space by the state highlights space as a pre-existing condition but also how space is shaped by social structures. In this argument, Lefebvre also brings forth the idea that social space is inseparable from its relationship to property ownership and industrial or agricultural production, meaning that the control and exploitation of space are inherent factors in its production (Lefebvre, 1974:85). While Lefebvre's work provides a framework for understanding space as socially produced, it is also highly abstract. His theories do not provide explanations of specific empirical situations, but require interpretation to be applied in practice, and are therefore grounded and refined through the empirical cases later on. Harvey extends Lefebvre's argument, stating that scarcity is a requirement for the market to function, and that if it does not exist naturally it must be socially constructed. For example,

private property can restrict access to land, housing and resources, meaning that people can be excluded even if there is enough land or housing to go around. The purpose of such restriction would be to increase profit by creating scarcity. This concept is apparent in other aspects of the city, and is one reason for the growing urban inequality (Harvey, 2003:940-941). Harvey's interpretation brings a sharper focus on inequality and capitalist dynamics, but tends to emphasize structural constraints while potentially undermining the agency of local actors. In conclusion, space is both physical and conceptual, as well as a commodity and a productive force (Lefebvre, 1974:85).

The polyvalence of space is something brought up in other writings by Lefebvre, for example when discussing symbolism and meanings of the city. Space is multidimensional and multileveled, and there are several different categories of meanings embedded in the urban environment. Most relevant is the writing of the city, i.e. the layout of the built environment and the spatial and temporal codes that shape urban life. This notion underlines the idea that the built environment prescribes behavior and sends messages regarding where you may go at what time, and what you may do. Through things like signs, pathways and barriers, schedules, and graffiti, this spatial language encourages certain habits. This is the planned dimension, whereas the utterance of the city reflects the lived experience. It entails the actual activities taking place in the streets, squares, and voids, and represents the way people occupy space (Lefebvre, 1996:115). This dichotomy is especially useful for analyzing temporary urbanism, where there is a tension between planned interventions and lived practices. However, it may be difficult to differentiate space writing and space utterance in practice, given that top-down frameworks and societal norms affect possibilities for temporary use and how we occupy space. Harvey also describes the city as a place of confusion and conflict, claiming that tensions often result in both destruction and creation. He means that the city remains resilient through constant transformation, and that the destruction of some spaces gives room for creation of new ones, so-called creative destruction (Harvey, 2003:939). The ever-changing and self-transforming system of the city contributes to a layered urban history. All cities experience ascent, apogee, and decline, and remains of old structures are recycled (Lefebvre, 1996:107). Madanipour describes this process as a gradual change, where components are built, demolished, and renewed step-by-step (Madanipour, 2025:131). This cyclical process is reflected in destructurations and restructurations, making urban transformations visible in the built environment. Despite

this constant re-writing of the city, built forms and spatial arrangements are often perceived as eternal and immovable. In contrast to other processes, like global transformations and social relations, the built environment might appear permanent but will eventually change. The term quasi-permanent is used to describe this phenomenon (Lefebvre, 1996:107). Madanipour claims that the fast pace of urban transformation challenges the authenticity of places, and that there is a need to rethink connections between past and present, viewing these connections as multiple and shifting (Madanipour, 2025:133). The understanding of space as a process is central to this study, as it aligns with the social constructivist ontological approach. It also emphasizes that understandings of space and places are subjective and heavily reliant on personal experiences and social dynamics. Different aspects of the built environment are exposed or concealed depending on the eye of the beholder.

The shifting nature of urban space also calls for more flexible ways of understanding and planning the city. Lefebvre suggests a transductive approach, different from induction and deduction, that focuses on constructing a new possible form by relating a real issue to a conceptual framework, and going back and forth to identify possibilities based on reality. Thus it is neither a fantasy, nor a mere description of reality, it is a dynamic where theory and reality continually shape each other. He also claims that everyone is utopian, and recommends thinking of utopia as experimental. This means testing ideas on the ground and studying their consequences. By doing this, the idea of utopia turns into a hypothesis that can be tested. These approaches to planning play an important role in preventing planners or architects from creating closed, self-justifying systems (Lefebvre, 1996:151-152). This experimental approach resonates with practices of temporary urbanism, where temporary interventions can be used to test possibilities in real-world settings. However, not all forms of temporary use aligns with this ideal, as the conceptual framework explains.

The right for people to influence and participate in decisions, and to appropriate space, is implied in the right to the city (Lefebvre, 1996:173-174). Further, social forces are essential in realizing urban strategies and overcoming segregation. Reconstructing centrality, giving access to urban life and participation in decision-making, is mainly a social task. Therefore, Lefebvre calls for an urban reform not confined to what is possible within institutional

frames and, in this, encourages an innovative and imaginative approach in rethinking urban life and how people inhabit space and time. The requirements for such a strategy is that it combines immediate and intermediate actions, as well as long-term visions (ibid:154-155). Madanipour argues that long-term visions are essential in creating public spaces that bring forth communities, and that areas that are quickly imagined and built disrupt the connection between generations. He also extends his argument about the importance of public space and continuity by questioning by and for whom public space is designed (Madanipour, 2025:131-133). Gray (2018:323) confirms and extends Lefebvre's statement by stating that the right to the city is about collective social power, rather than communities being recognized by powerful institutions. He means that communities being invited to participate is merely an extension of state control, and a way for the state to organize communal production. The real exercise of the right to the city is communal organization where the state is demanded to pay (Gray, 2018:323). Harvey also calls for a different right to the city dependent on social power and the mobilization of communities to create change. This argument is based on a right to the city exceeding mere access to urban space (Harvey, 2003:939-941), and the notion of the city opening up to citizens as a living, evolving creation (Lefebvre, 1996:117).

In conclusion, these theoretical concepts are selected as critical lenses for understanding temporary urbanism, not as a neutral or purely temporal phenomenon, but as a part of broader struggles over spatial production and power. While the theoretical framework guides the analysis, the empirical cases, in turn, contribute to refining and concretizing these concepts by situating them in practice. This reflects an iterative relationship between theory and empirics, similar to how space is understood as both a result of, and a condition for, social dynamics. In this study, the notion of the right to the city is used analytically to distinguish between different forms of participation. Rather than assuming that all forms of involvement represent empowerment, this study critically reflects on how participation may be structured in different ways across the cases. Gray's distinction between participation and communal organization is especially significant, providing a clear separation between redistribution and reproduction of power structures. When discussing temporariness, Harvey's argument of the city being ever-changing becomes especially significant, along with Lefebvre's argument that even parts of the built environment that appear permanent will eventually change. Regarding temporary urbanism, Lefebvre's notion of experimental

urbanism, and his suggestion of a transductive approach, is relevant in relation to the way in which the cases implement temporary uses.

4 METHODOLOGY

The fourth chapter outlines the methodological choices that guide the study and explains how the research was designed, conducted, and interpreted. It begins by presenting the qualitative and interpretivist approach underpinning the thesis, followed by a description of the comparative case study design and the methods used for data collection. The chapter then details the criteria for case selection, before addressing the researcher's positionality and ethical considerations. This chapter is mainly based on Key Methods in Geography (2023) by Clifford et al., including an overview of qualitative methods for studies in human geography. In addition to this, it draws on selected literature that specifically addresses the chosen methods, to deepen the methodological understanding.

4.1 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The qualitative approach in this thesis is based on a social constructivist ontology. It assumes that reality is produced through interactions and interpretations, rather than existing as an objective entity (Benton & Craib, 2023:4, 278). Correspondingly, the epistemological position is interpretivist, emphasizing the subjective character of knowledge, and the central role of experiences and social dynamics in how individuals make sense of their environment (ibid:9, 280). Interpretivist research understands each source as positioned, and sees that representations have their unique context and motives (Clifford, et al., 2023:631). Qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews and document analysis were therefore chosen because they enable a nuanced understanding of the context-dependent perspectives that shape the cases examined in this thesis. This is particularly relevant to this study, as the research questions focus on how temporary urbanism is understood and shaped by different actors and contexts, rather than measuring predefined variables. This qualitative approach also aligns with an interpretative perspective, aiming to understand meanings behind a phenomenon rather than seeking universal and applicable laws. Finally, in shaping the structure of the thesis as well as developing the research questions, an exploratory approach was employed. Rather than assuming a fixed understanding of what temporary use entails, the research seeks to uncover how and why temporary projects differ from one another across contexts. An exploratory approach allows the research design to remain flexible and responsive to new insights that emerge throughout the process.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employs a comparative case study research design. In line with Flyvbjerg's (1988:1) understanding of case study methodology, the study aims to examine real-life phenomena as comprehensively as possible, thus a qualitative approach to chosen methods has been applied. The case study design is appropriate because it allows for examining the interplay between definitions, practices, actors, and local conditions in a holistic way, as an abstract phenomenon is applied in a concrete context (Flyvbjerg, 1988:1). Case study methodology is suitable for in-depth research, looking into a phenomenon in different settings using multiple methods of collecting data. The study is concerned with investigating the cases in their respective environments rather than in a laboratory (Clifford, et al., 2023:625-626). Furthermore, the study adopts an evolving understanding of cases, drawing on recent discussions of "casing". Rather than seeing cases as pre-given units, this perspective acknowledges that cases are actively constructed by the researcher. This approach to case studies respects the fluid boundaries between the phenomenon and its setting, especially relevant when comparing a phenomenon through several cases with differing contexts (Parreira do Amaral, 2022:44).

A mixed methods approach was adopted in the research design, including qualitative methods. This approach involves an inductive design where patterns, themes, and concepts emerge through engagement with the material, as well as a holistic view of phenomena as interconnected with their contexts. Finally, it involves analyzing the data through a case study, identifying and comparing patterns, framings, and realities (Patton, 2002:248). All this, to achieve triangulation, deepening the understanding of a phenomenon by testing consistency across different kinds of data or inquiries (ibid:93, 247). Triangulation is a key feature in case studies, bringing together data on the same phenomenon collected by different methods. The point of triangulation for case studies, from an interpretivist position, is to increase the understanding of a phenomenon (Clifford, et al., 2023:631). The research process followed a systematic work plan, inspired by Flyvbjerg (1988:9-18). The first step, data collection, included doing interviews, document analysis and taking fieldnotes. This wide assortment of information was then processed, resulting in a more tangible case journal. The case journal is still extensive, but does not include redundant or

unnecessary information. It was based on this case journal that the final case descriptions and analysis was written (Flyvbjerg, 1988:9-18).

4.2.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The comparative case study design involves semi-structured interviews, delving deep into experiences of people involved in temporary projects, whether they are municipal workers, members of associations, or other relevant actors. Such interviews are stated by Flyvbjerg (1988:10) as an especially important method in case studies. The semi-structure ensures that findings from different cases are somewhat comparable, but that there is some flexibility to adjust questions and follow-up questions based on emerging topics. It provides insight into complex phenomena, however it does not offer directions toward a singular truth (Clifford, et al., 2023:171-178). This is optimal for the purpose of this study, since it seeks to understand temporary urbanism through an exploratory approach rather than finding a definitive result. It provides insight into perspectives, intentions, and interpretations of actors involved in the projects, which are key to understanding how temporary urbanism is framed and shaped in practice.

Some interviews were conducted in person, while others were carried out online via video call, depending on the participants' availability and preferences. Despite the different formats, the same interview guide (see appendix) was used throughout, ensuring consistency in the data collected. The selection of interview participants was mainly limited by availability. The ambition was to interview several people involved in each project, preferably from different organizations. In reality, it was difficult to get a hold of willing participants. I relied on the snowball effect, where a few participants recommend others, thus the sample grows progressively. However, this method was not entirely successful, since the majority of people contacted did not respond. I also attended a conference where I knew there would be people present relevant for this study, and approached them in person to ask for an interview, which proved successful.

Informants in case 1 (Färjetterminalen, Nyhamnen):

- Informant 1 (Greenarea Investigator at the Environment Department of Malmö municipality)

Topic: The urban forest that has been implemented near Färjeterminalen, as well as perspectives on how the municipality works with temporary use.

- Informant 2 (Overall Coordinator of Nyhamnen at Property and Streets Department of Malmö municipality)

Topic: The framing and implementation of Färjeterminalen, as well as perspectives on how the municipality works with temporary use.

- Informant 3 (Project manager for Nyhamnen at Property and Streets Department of Malmö municipality)

Topic: General information about the development of Nyhamnen, and the role of Färjeterminalen in this development.

Informants in case 2 (Backa Kåken, Kirseberg):

- Informant 4 (Treasurer on the Backa kåken association board)

Topic: General information about the organization and their aims, goals, and frames. Perspectives on temporary use in general and how the organization approaches structural difficulties.

- Informant 5 (Member of the Backa kåken association board)

Topic: The structure and history of the organization, as well as its context in Kirseberg. Complementing information about the organization's approach to, and framing of, temporary use.

Complementary interviews:

- Informant 6 (Urban Planner at AFRY; Co-founder and Director of Placemaking Sweden)

Topic: Discussion about placemaking and temporary use in general. Although the findings did not end up in the empirical analysis, it provided me with valuable insights and perspectives I brought with me while writing.

- Informant 7 (Head of Department of Public Environment at Property and Streets Department of Malmö municipality) and

- Informant 8 (Urban Development Coordinator at Property and Streets Department of Malmö municipality)

Topic: Introduction to a possible future temporary project in Malmö. Although this case was dropped, the interview provided insights into how the municipality works with temporary use. The interview included both Informant 7 and 8.

While interviews provide valuable perspectives and insights into the cases, it is important to acknowledge potential biases among informants. A possible outcome is that informants describe and discuss their project in a positive light, twisting or even excluding information that might affect the readers' perceptions of the organization or project negatively. Interviewing municipal workers, it is also necessary to acknowledge that they work within a political organization, and might therefore shape their responses accordingly. Biases could be mitigated by including interviews with other actors that have been involved in the same project. In this case, that was not possible since only a few people responded among those I contacted. The aforementioned snowball effect led me to other informants which caused all informants in each case to be from the same organization. Instead, biases were mitigated by me remaining reflexive and critical throughout the process of interviewing and analyzing.

4.2.2 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Document analysis was a key method in the case study, looking into policy- and planning documents describing the selected cases. Given the mixed method approach, the study of documents is complementary to other forms of empirical data collection (Hammond & Wellington, 2021:65). It complements the interviews, providing fundamental information about each case and insight into formal framings of temporary projects. For Färjeterminalen, I looked into the detailed master plan (FÖP) for Nyhamnen, as well as a culture analysis and a project description of the transition lab (Omställningslabbet) at Färjeterminalen. For the Kirseberg case, the main source of information was the association Backa Kåken's website and journal articles, as well as a report by the Municipal Housing Company of Malmö (MKB) that concluded a series of workshops with the municipality and Backa Kåken, evaluating potential future developments of the prison buildings. A podcast episode by Backa Kåken was also included in the analysis. According to Patton (2002:4), a wide range of documents can be used in a document analysis, both official reports and publications, but also personal notes. These are considered qualitative data, along with interviews and

observations (Patton, 2002:4). Documents can also be held in different formats, such as text, images, videos and audio-recordings. This being said, it is important to acknowledge that any document is up for interpretation, and that these documents should be treated critically. The document analysis involved both gaining both a literal and an interpretive understanding, identifying both stated aims and concepts, as well as analyzing contextual and implied meanings (Hammond & Wellington, 2021:65-66). The main point was to gain context to each text, looking into historical context and relevant planning documents (Clifford, et al., 2023:633). Since Färjeterminalen is municipality-led and the Backa Kåken is community-led, the volume and type of available material vary between the two cases. Backa Kåken is more reliant on interviews and alternative sources than the Färjeterminalen case, where there are more official documents. However, there is no value applied to the type of documents analyzed for the different cases. Text can come in many forms, both as formal as official documents and literature, and as informal as street-art and logos. Different texts provide insight into different aspects of reality and everyday life, and shall be regarded with the same diligence (Clifford, et al., 2023:248). As a researcher, I engaged in continuous careful reflection during the process of collecting and processing data from documents, thus the process of analysis was initiated early (ibid:633-635).

As previously mentioned, a critical approach was adopted when reading documents. It is in the interest of both organizations to appear in a positive light. Important to note is also that the municipality is a political organization that may phrase documents in certain ways to gain political support for their ideas. Since Backa Kåken is aiming to purchase the building and is dependent on other actors to do so, their website might exclude potential challenges or obstacles in their organization. This was mitigated by doing complementary interviews asking direct questions about challenges and motives.

4.3 CASE SELECTION

The selection of cases for this thesis was guided by both theoretical relevance and practical considerations, ensuring that the chosen projects offer meaningful insights into the research questions. Since the aim is to explore the broader phenomenon of temporary use, it is preferable to choose more than one case (Clifford, et al., 2023:628), but given the limited timeframe the amount was limited to two cases. One practical criterion was that the projects be located in Malmö, ensuring proximity while still allowing for a broad range of

possible study objects. Another criterion was that the projects are framed as temporary, and occupy a neglected or left-behind space. When narrowing down the number of cases, the selection focused on identifying projects that differed in scale, intention, driving actors, and other key factors. This variation was important in order to enable comparison. Since the goal of this thesis is not to analyze the outcomes of temporary interventions, but rather the intentions behind, the final criterion was that the projects are ongoing. This provides insights into motivations, expectations and strategies, before outcomes become fixed or the aims retrospectively rephrased. In contrast, analyzing completed projects can obscure the uncertainties, competing priorities, and internal debates that shaped the project at earlier stages.

4.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Given that this study is critical and comparative, as well as heavily dependent on interviews, ensuring transparency for participants was of utmost importance. The identified potential risks for participants were primarily risks to their professional life. This was mitigated by anonymizing informants, and respecting their wills to keep certain statements or information off the record and excluded from the study. Furthermore, participants were immediately informed about the purpose, theme, and structure of the study. They were asked to sign a consent form, clarifying that interviews would be audio-recorded and that data would be stored digitally on a OneDrive connected to the researcher's Lund University student account. They were also made aware that they were entitled to withdraw their consent any time before, during, or after the interview. In some cases where participants were not able to sign the form beforehand, a verbal agreement was made, and the form was signed in retrospect.

Given the active role of the researcher in collecting and presenting knowledge, it is important to acknowledge the researcher's position and how it affects their interpretations (Clifford, et al. 2023, p. 638). My academic and personal background inevitably shapes how I approach this research and how I interpret the findings. I am currently involved in a partnership with the consultancy firm AFRY in Malmö. Their role has been advisory rather than directive, and the academic independence of the project has been maintained throughout. My position also influences how I am perceived by the actors I come in contact with. As a non-professional and non-decisionmaker, I may be approached with an

openness in conversation that influences the extent of my findings. Although it may also result in actors not taking my research seriously, and a lower willingness to participate. At the same time, it is necessary to acknowledge that being associated with AFRY could facilitate access to certain networks while potentially limiting openness in others. Throughout the research process, I was attentive to these dynamics and aimed to maintain transparency about my role in the field, as well as the purpose of the study.

5 EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the empirical analysis of two case studies of temporary urbanism in Malmö: Färjetterminalen in Nyhamnen, and Backa Kåken in Kirseberg. The chapter begins with the context of each case, outlining their background, actors, and development processes. Contexts are described with the conceptual framework in mind, serving not only as a description but as a part of the analysis. This is followed by an interpretation of the cases through the theoretical framework, with a particular focus on how temporary urbanism is framed and shaped by different forms of ownership, control, and participation. Finally, by comparing the two cases, the chapter highlights similarities and differences in how temporary use operates in practice, and how it relates to broader processes of spatial production and the right to the city.



Figure 5.1. A map of Malmö pointing out the locations of Nyhamnen and Kirseberg. By Frida Westberg.

5.1 CASE ONE: FÄRJETERMINALEN, NYHAMNEN



Figure 5.2 A collage of Nyhamnen and the temporary use of Färjeterminalen. By Frida Westberg.

5.1.1 CONTEXT

In 2014, it was decided that the City Planning Board (Stadsbyggnadsnämnden) was to develop a detailed master plan (FÖP) of Nyhamnen, describing the future long-term development of the area. After several consultations and exhibitions, the final proposed plan was adopted by the Municipal Council (Kommunalförbundet) in 2019. Nyhamnen is Malmö's next major inner-city expansion area, transforming former port and industrial land into a dense, mixed-use, waterfront district. The vision is to extend the urban core through developing a dense, green, and mixed-use area. Sustainability is a key-word, aiming at both social, environmental, and economic issues. The identity will build on Nyhamnen's history as a port, and an oceanside center for food-culture. However, the FÖP states that Nyhamnen's identity will grow gradually over time, through an inclusive and innovative development process. In a social context, this will make space for citizens to claim spaces and shape them as they see fit, while at the same time fostering a respectful social environment (Malmö stad, 2019:2-7). Initiatives from citizens are not only welcomed, but stated as a vital part in creating livable environments (ibid:20). But in order for this to

happen, the municipality will need to move away from established practices and conventional methods, and shift focus to cross-sectoral collaboration (ibid:7). Since the adoption of the FÖP in 2019, the planning approach in Nyhamnen has shifted and the FÖP has been partly revised. The approach has shifted from a relatively liberal stance toward demolition and redevelopment to a strategy that prioritizes reuse and preservation of existing buildings and structures (Informant 3, personal communication, 1 April 2026, hereafter referred to as Informant 3, 2026).

The FÖP states that the development of Nyhamnen will be a long process, spanning several decades. The initial phase will therefore be important for citizens' early familiarization with the area. The FÖP mentions "meanwhile use" as a temporary activation of vacant space and venues. The goal is to attract visitors through events and activities centered around culture. It is also an opportunity for small businesses with scarce resources to establish themselves in the area during its construction (Malmö stad, 2019:8-9). Temporary interventions are not only mentioned in a social context, but also in connection to commercial activity. It is important that existing venues are utilized as offices, in the expectation of permanent office buildings, so that Nyhamnen establishes itself as a diverse and attractive business hub in the Öresund region (ibid:28). Existing buildings will, both temporarily and permanently, be used as youth centres, or by associations or cultural institutions. The idea is to strengthen the existing associations and cultural life so they can act as a catalyst for growth (ibid:38). An important aspect of the temporary use in Nyhamnen is the relationship between the municipality and property owners, since the strategy is dependent on property owners providing temporary leases. Another important aspect of the development process is collaboration and flexibility that allows for creative experimentation (Ibid, pp.8-9). The FÖP mentions this as an important strategy to create conditions to integrate the area in the urban core, and to establish Nyhamnen's new identity (ibid:53).

One guideline recommended based on the culture analysis was that the municipality should lead the development through internally led initiatives and by including the target vision in the organization-wide strategy. It was also recommended that the project should include a wide range of actors in the development, mobilised around existing culture clusters in the area. Temporary use was identified as an important factor in promoting local culture, and it

was recommended that the area should be a platform where empty spaces can be temporarily housed by culture actors in need of a venue. Property owners showed especially large interest in implementing temporary uses of vacant space, but along with a clear strategic, more long-term, plan in order to increase predictability (White Arkitekter & Rodeo Arkitekter, 2024:1). The ferry terminal (Färjeterminalen) is an especially prominent space for temporary use in Nyhamnen. In 2023, the development of the Färjeterminalen began through an initiative called “Power of Places” connected to the municipal initiative “Malmö in the making”, in collaboration with ArkDes (the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design). Nyhamnen was explored by a team of architects and artists that did inventory of the area and developed potential ways forward in managing its development. The team pointed out the post-industrial character of Färjeterminalen as an interesting space for future development. They saw the potential in the existing infrastructure, buildings, and natural features. One team member noticed the good condition of the area, comparing it to their hometown where equivalent areas would be emptied and drained of its reusable materials. The team efforts resulted in a couple of proposals and prototypes intended for temporary use, making use of existing qualities and materials (ibid:38).

The “Power of Places” projects resulted in the initiation of a geographically based transition-lab (Omställningslabb) by Färjeterminalen, bringing together Malmö municipality, RISE research institute, local property owners, and the LFM30 sustainability network. Färjeterminalen was identified as a suitable spot since Malmö stad owns both the building and the surrounding land, and since the area lacked exploitation plans for the near future (Informant 1, personal communication, 26 March 2026, hereafter referred to as Informant 1, 2026). There were already established actors and users of Färjeterminalen. The area was previously rented by Medborgarskolan that, for a long time, activated the area and attracted users. However, early plans for a new road threatened the preservation of Färjeterminalen and consequently forced Medborgarskolan to relocate, as the organization believed it would be difficult to stay (White Arkitekter & Rodeo Arkitekter, 2024:39). But when the structure of the area was revised and the main road moved, a practical and strategic gap occurred where the building stood unused as a favorable object for meanwhile use, and a temporary building permit of 10 years was established. The permit encompasses three categories of use: cultural production, sustainable business, and urban development. This meanwhile use is highlighted as an important part in making Nyhamnen relevant and accessible, as well as

establishing a relationship between the area and the rest of Malmö (Informant 2, personal communication, 9 April 2026, hereafter referred to as Informant 2, 2026). Another key point is testing functions in full scale and letting findings inform long-term development. This is especially important to understand the function of the temporary use of Färjeterminalen, as a process of adjustments and lessons for permanent development, rather than a truly temporary and short-lived pop-up (Informant 3, 2026). There is an awareness of the criticism of temporary use as being short-term and as a strategy aimed at increasing property values, only to later be replaced with permanent development (Informant 1, 2026). It is important to communicate to the public that the temporary use has a long-term purpose, otherwise it can be considered a waste of public engagement. The municipality is currently working on forming a youth council to activate and collect opinions from the local youth, as a means to engage different social groups (Informant 2, 2026). The concept of placemaking was expressed relevant in this context, and highlights the risk of these types of projects where temporary architecture is erected until the initial plans are implemented (White Arkitekter & Rodeo Arkitekter, 2024:39). In Nyhamnen, the lab and incoming opinions have actual potential to influence the development of the area since many detailed development plans are still being developed and extensive construction is years away. Both the building and its surrounding outdoor area develop within a 10 year time frame. However, they are governed by different long-term intentions. Because of the temporary building permit, the building is formally time-limited and its future is uncertain, but with a likelihood to be preserved. In contrast, the surrounding outdoor area is planned with the explicit intention that it will continue to develop into a permanent public space in the long term (Informant 2, 2026). There is then possibility to move the temporary activity to other parts of Nyhamnen awaiting plans (Informant 3, 2026). However, there are several other temporary initiatives by Malmö municipality that are also framed as meanwhile use but do not entail a permanent reshaping. For example summer streets and squares that aim to change the use of public places seasonally (Informant 7, personal communication, 27 February 2026, hereafter referred to as Informant 7, 2026).

The structure of the lab is described as rather opportunistic and project-driven, where projects do not always relate to each other or a long-term development strategy (Informant 1, 2026). A central method in the lab is the use of “innovation relays” consisting of time-limited and goal-driven processes, where different actors collaborate intensively to

solve specific challenges. The overarching goal is to demonstrate how an existing urban area can be reshaped into a model for circular reconstruction and sustainable mobility, while also developing new forms of collaboration and long-term institutional learning. The results are intended to influence not only the future of Nyhamnen but also provide transferable methods, policies, and models for other cities in Sweden and internationally (Formas n.d., p.1). One part of the lab is an urban forest, testing ways to work with climate adaptation and nature-based solutions. It is operated by the Environment Department (Miljöförvaltningen) of Malmö municipality but relies on external financing. As previously mentioned, the lab is meant to generate knowledge on methods, and the urban forest is no exception. It is both used to understand the local needs and conditions for green areas in Nyhamnen, and to test methods to plant greenery on top of hardened surfaces (Informant 1, 2026). Other temporary prototypes implemented so far include an amphitheatre and some outdoor furniture. These temporary structures were built in collaboration with local associations like Malmö förskönings och planteringsförening and Malmö Väv. It is mainly when activating, and sometimes constructing, a space that civil society can be invited as an operative actor. The bottom floor of the building is a temporary office and venue for Malmö municipality as a part of the lab, and the other parts are planned to open up for businesses and associations working with film and food production. The idea is to bring back the cultural life that was previously displaced due to the FÖP, and to generate a sustainable economy where rental incomes are somewhat in line with the cost to maintain and develop the building. Since the municipality has limited prior experience with this type of leasing arrangement, the lab also involves a significant learning process (Informant 2, 2026). Internal discussions within the municipality have highlighted concerns that the temporary activities primarily cater to culturally oriented groups. This has raised questions about the risk of the area becoming socially exclusive, underscoring the need for a broader range of activities (Informant 3, 2026). Another challenge in working experimentally within the municipality is how to identify and communicate potential value to politicians. One main value is the possibility to provide citizens with a physical point of departure for dialogue, enabling easier collection of thoughts while temporarily improving the site (Informant 7, 2026). It can also be a way for planners to gain access to perspectives that are not always adequately addressed through their traditional tools (Informant 8, personal communication, 27 February 2026, hereafter referred to as Informant 8, 2026). Addressing temporary use more broadly, there are also concerns within the municipality that shop owners and citizens

might not claim public spaces as intended. That a temporary intervention may be inaugurated, for temporary activity to then revert to ordinary use (Informant 8, 2026). Pioneering municipal planning policy can also result in both content and discontent, as well as misinterpretations (Informant 2, 2026). Oftentimes, people who are initially negatively oriented, shift their opinion when the municipality shows that they are flexible to citizens' needs and wants. It can also be a question of attitude, where people warm up to certain ideas after some time (Informant 7, 2026).

At the same time that Färjeterminalen is expressed as a place for creative innovation, the temporary projects are greatly dependent on external funds (Informant 1, 2026). This is a condition for actualizing the lab, given that municipal funds for these types of projects are limited. But it also brings some structural uncertainty and political contradictions. After all, the municipality generally focuses on exploitation rather than experimentation. There is also little political incentive to put in resources to develop an area like Nyhamnen, since it is considered an exclusive area developing in line with a limited category of people. At the same time, there is a widespread political will to preserve the area's historical meanings and structures, and the lab at Färjeterminalen could be considered a part in this (Informant 2, 2026). There are also political incentives to test solutions before making large scale investments, to make sure that the result will be appreciated among citizens (Informant 1, 2026). Another challenge has been the physical state of the area, given that it has not been taken care of for a long time. Extensive safety precautions have been taken since the area has been closed off and not adjusted for public use, for example securing the quays and removing physical barriers like fencing. This is an initial investment needed to prepare for the meanwhile use (Informant 2, 2026). Running an operation like this also requires additional costs for practical measures like maintenance and security (Informant 3, 2026). One important condition for temporary use is, paradoxically enough, time. While the individual temporary structure may be quickly implemented, it takes time to try, adjust and learn from the prototypes (Informant 2, 2026).

5.1.2 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The transition lab in Nyhamnen is a manifestation of temporary urbanism. This case is an example of temporary use that is embedded in municipal strategic planning, and serves as a strategy to mitigate tedious development timelines. Given the 10 year temporary building

permit and the uncertain future of the area, the lab is explicitly framed as “meanwhile use” of Färjeterminalen and the surrounding area. However, the justification for this initiative is that it enables testing, and serves as an early activation of Nyhamnen. It somewhat aligns with the idea of tactical urbanism, since it involves catalyzing long-term change through short-term testing, and utilizing underused space. Although it lacks the low-cost and low-effort aspect, since it involves large investments from both the municipality and the private sector. The DIY-aspects are severely limited since civil society is involved mainly as a collaborator, and not a driver of change. The activities being held at Färjeterminalen are also curated by the municipality, and any alternative activation requires permittance. Färjeterminalen is more of a place-making initiative, given its more socially selective character. There is an internal issue regarding this social selectiveness and cultural elitism, potential drivers of gentrification. Land prices are also a major concern in terms of gentrification, maybe not because of the transition lab itself, but more so the pre-given conditions of the area.

Regarding connections to broader theoretical points, Färjeterminalen reflects a production of space through top-down planning documents (the FÖP). The project institutionalizes temporary use, and demonstrates a view of space as managed and programmed. This institutionalized space-programming shapes the extent and character of public participation, inviting the public to engage within the set frame. This, in contrast to bottom-up activation and DIY-initiatives where the public has control over the development. As previously mentioned, the municipality controls access to the area via permits, temporarily suspending scarcity. This is a way to defer market logic, leaving vacant spaces amidst extensive urban development, rather than dismantling it. This is also a way of using time as a planning resource, giving space for experimentation. The transition lab aligns with the notion of experimental utopia, formalizing experimentation to come up with both local and scalable solutions. In Nyhamnen, temporary use is a way to increase flexibility within otherwise rigid masterplanning. Given the municipality’s traditional focus on exploitation rather than experimentation, this may symbolize a planning reform looking towards a more transductive planning approach. Here immediate, intermediate, and long-term visions coexist, implying different stages of testing, input gathering, and adjusting.

5.2 CASE TWO: BACKA KÅKEN, KIRSEBERG



Figure 5.3. A collage of the prison buildings and the temporary use led by Backa Kåken. By Frida Westberg.

5.2.1 CONTEXT

In 2017, the Municipal Housing Company of Malmö (MKB) purchased the prison buildings in Kirseberg after the prison closed down in 2015 due to outdated standards. MKB intended to renovate the buildings and turn them into housing (Backakaken, n.d.a), but in 2025 they decided to put the buildings up for sale. The vision of building 250 new apartments turned out to be unattainable, partially due to increased construction costs and increased rents, which would have led to housing prices far beyond what most people could reasonably afford (Sydsvenskan, 2025a). The economy is a force that can cause buildings like these to stand unused for over ten years, in a city undergoing such an aggressive development period. There is therefore a need to look into alternative economies that can foster a more inclusive urban development (Informant 4, personal communication, 5 March 2026, hereafter referred to as Informant 4, 2026).

One of the intended buyers is the non-profit association Backa Kåken, initiated by a local group of people and organisations. Since 2023, they have driven the initiative of communal ownership and development of the old prison buildings, seeing visions of shared spaces for cultural and social activity. Backa Kåken wants to co-develop the space together with local authorities, organisations, and residents, into a shared creativity hub (Backakaken, n.d.b). A central objective is to collectively purchase the property and develop it through a mix of

cultural, social, and commercial activities. The proposal was presented at a conference during “Malmö in the making” in 2023. At the same time, it is emphasized that the project is not solely a cultural initiative, but rather a broader attempt to create a more inclusive economic and urban development model. The initiative emerged from a frustration over the deteriorating building standing unused while the market did not consider it viable to develop. The group behind Backa Kåken has roots in activism and seeks to explore alternative approaches to urban development, with a focus on democratized ownership and ensuring that the values created remain within the local community (Informant 4, 2026). It is a non-profit association with hundreds of members, complemented by a recently initiated real estate company. The organization is relatively flat, meaning that work is done in working groups, and decisions made based on member meetings and consensus rather than a strict hierarchy (Informant 5, personal communication, 30 March 2026, hereafter referred to as Informant 5, 2026).

In 2024, when the association was officially formed, MKB granted them temporary access to a building on the prison quarters where they could test different activities. During the brief year they had access to the building, they arranged meetings and workshops about the future development of the prison and the Kirseberg area. They also initiated collaboration with Malarki (Malmö Arkitekturkooperativ), making a pilot study regarding how the prison area could be developed in the future. In 2025, their contract ended and they moved out from the prison area, only to move in again later during the same year. They invite people and organizations to occupy their venues, as a way to explore what activities could be housed in the prison in the future (Backakaken, n.d.b). The long-term idea is to open up the buildings and create a co-working space and a meeting place for locals. The temporary use, and prototyping of this idea, in Direktörsvillan is a method to explore possible results. Early in this process, it is important for Backa Kåken that the people renting working spaces in Direktörsvillan are interested in the broader process and want to contribute to knowledge and capacity-building. Today, there are around 15-20 associations using the venues in the building. But Backa Kåken does not only invite people in, they go out themselves and meet local residents, establishing relationships in the area and contributing to other local initiatives like neighborhood walkthroughs (Informant 4, 2026). This “interim use” is expressed as an important opportunity to try out working methods, build a network, and engage local communities. It works as a prototype where different

associations, workshops, and events can take place. This both contributes to activating the area and the unused building, and to build knowledge that can be brought into future permanent solutions. At the same time the temporary use of Direktörsvillan fills a strategic function, as it shows that the association is a serious actor capable of managing the building. One important aspect in this is to anchor the initiative in the area, and to build relationships with local residents (Informant 5, 2026). The long-term goal is not to have the building being a space of fleeting activity, but to build long-term relationships and attract tenants who want to establish themselves more permanently, and to combine this with more flexible venues and meetingplaces (Informant 4, 2026). Since MKB announced that the property was up for sale, the Technical Committee (Tekniska nämnden) of Malmö municipality has expressed interest in buying it and renting it out to creative businesses (Backakaken, n.d.b). They mention Backa Kåken as an interesting initiative they could rent it out to, but Backa Kåken is reserving judgement for now since their goal is still to buy the property themselves (Sydsvenskan, 2025b). This changes the situation, since negotiations would take place with political decision-makers rather than with market actors. These processes involve different points of departure and different economic and social approaches. But with limited resources, Backa Kåken has to adapt to these changed circumstances, and assess in what ways and to what extent they may be able to develop the prison in a more inclusive way. Informant 4 expressed personal criticism of temporary use, as it tends to drive gentrification processes by increasing attractiveness resulting in higher rents, and ultimately the displacement of the actors who initiated the temporary use. The issue is about people no longer being able to remain in their neighbourhoods, not being able to take over their family home where they grew up, or afford commercial rents. However, if the property is collectively owned and value is created, that value can instead be redistributed back to local activities or to the neighbourhood. Backa Kåken sees no meaning in obtaining a temporary building permit and activating the space for 10-15 years, if that does not turn into a purchase and a permanent building permit. At the same time, it can be a strategic move to utilize unused space (Informant 4, 2026), and a method to discuss the future of the area with residents. But it is emphasized that the temporary presence should not become an end in itself, but instead lead towards something more permanent. Otherwise, there is a risk that the work carried out will be lost or that the initiative will be sidelined when more long-term decisions are made (Informant 5, 2026). This critique also reflects a broader concern that temporary interventions are sometimes

implemented without a clear long-term process or follow-up, reducing them to isolated activities rather than integrated development strategies. This being said, there are some contrasting wills within the organization, and it is described as a fragmented group of people, with different approaches to temporary use. A main point is that no economic profit is made, and that the value created should never leave the area. Instead, it should benefit the city or the local area, as well as the people who work in and run the initiative. For this reason, it is crucial for Backa Kåken that the temporary building permit can transition into a permanent one, and that the association is given the opportunity to purchase the property. Operating under a temporary building permit is described as a limitation, since it does not allow for long-term investments in the property. Instead, permanent establishment is seen as a prerequisite for ensuring that the value created through the temporary use can be sustained over time and reinvested in the area. However, Backa Kåken shows humility towards the fact that they are somewhat dependent on MKB and Malmö municipality in order to achieve their goals, given their limited resources and lower hierarchical position compared to larger corporations and the municipality (Informant 4, 2026). It is important for Backa Kåken to align with the reality of the municipal planning monopoly, and stay engaged in the formal planning process of the area in order to foster a successful temporary use and achieve their long-term goal of permanent use (Informant 5, 2026)

One of the association's founders highlights the notion of active citizenship, an alternative to mere consumption of the city. It points at a more cooperative approach, where citizens co-produce the city, and are planned with instead of planned for. Backa Kåken wants to find a way forward, together with other citizens, to turn the old prison into a palace, from being a burden to a valuable resource. This initiative has not emerged in a vacuum, but is rooted in a local spirit of Do-It-Yourself where locals have come together to protect and develop their area. From protesting urban renewal by renovating buildings that risked demolition in the 1970's, to Backa Kåken trying to take over the prison buildings that have stood empty for over a decade (Backa Kåken, 2025). The initiative seeks to anchor the project locally. Through participation in local events, collaborations with community organizations, and dialogue with residents, ideas and needs are gathered from citizens in Kirseberg. This is crucial in ensuring that the project is not something imposed from the outside, but rather an initiative that emerges from the specific conditions and capacities of the place itself (Informant 5, 2026). The initiative also reflects a political perspective

regarding the role of individuals in the city, and the importance of Backa kåken having low thresholds to ensure inclusivity (Informant 4, 2026). A main point is that everyone should have the right to contribute and affect the shaping of their area or city, regardless of relevant knowledge and social-economical position. One aspect of this is the possibility of solidary rents, where organizations with more money pay a higher rent, allowing for others to pay less in rent. This initiative is possible if Backa Kåken secures ownership over the prison buildings, since this decreases the municipal control, in comparison to if Backa Kåken rented the buildings from Malmö municipality (Informant 5, 2026).

Researcher Johan Pries spoke as a guest on the Backa Kåken podcast, highlighting that there is a top-down dimension of bottom-up projects, since initiatives exist in an institutional climate and a cultural context, shaped by laws and norms. Thus, there is a tension between bottom-up initiatives and top-down frameworks (Backa Kåken, 2025). However, Backa Kåken does not work completely against the wind, since Malmö municipality is generally liberal towards alternative urban planning methods, like legal graffiti walls and other community-centered initiatives (Informant 5, 2026). This tension can be detected in the legal ambiguity regarding the main building of the prison, since it is not protected by the culture-mark (K-märke), but is considered a historically significant building which means that there is some responsibility to preserve it. This, in contrast to the traditional real estate development where there generally is a more liberal approach to demolition and building new. The current condition of the prison buildings is somewhat satisfactory, but not suitable for residential use. The walls are thick, the windows are small, and there is little natural light, which conflicts with the requirements and criteria for residents. Backa Kåken is an association, which allows the project to operate under different conditions than municipal development and traditional property development. As an association, it can rely on lower labour costs, voluntary work, and alternative forms of collaboration. This makes it possible to carry out renovation work at a slower pace and adapt the process over time. In contrast, municipal actors and conventional property developers are bound by the Public Procurement Act (lagen om offentlig upphandling), which requires formal procurement procedures and the use of market-based contractors. Backa Kåken estimates that renovation can be carried out at a lower cost and over a longer time horizon, allowing tenants to move in before the renovation is finished (Informant 4,

2026). Backa Kåken seeks to use the unique structure of the prison as an asset, rather than to build it away (Informant 5, 2026).

A workshop series was conducted by MKB in collaboration with Malmö stad and Backa Kåken, aimed at developing suggested future uses. Important factors were to increase attractiveness and to preserve historical values. It was also important that the suggested uses would somehow involve local residents and civil society (MKB, n.d.:4). Further, a business model was developed, centered around long-term sustainability, cost efficiency, at the same time ensuring an open and accessible building. A part in ensuring an accessible building while increasing cost efficiency is temporary use, or meanwhile use, while the area awaits a new detailed development plan. For MKB, the owner of the building, it was important that only short contracts without security of tenure were to be signed to temporary tenants. In discussing ideas for future permanent development, MKB suggested an open and flexible approach, while Malmö municipality suggested a slimmer approach to ensure that the prioritized values are not lost. The capability of Backa Kåken to buy and develop the prison was deemed adequate in terms of achieving set goals. It was also assessed to have positive effects on property value in the area, and to be in line with Malmö municipality's overarching goals of increased safety and inclusivity. MKB was deemed somewhat capable of achieving the goals, however not on their own. Because of their business plan, MKB would have a difficult time ensuring low housing rents and open businesses, thus their chances of achieving positive effects on property values and contributing to the goals of Malmö municipality are dependent on finding appropriate tenants. Regarding the permanent plan of the area, Malmö municipality has limited capability of being the key tenant in the future, and is dependent on future owners and tenants to achieve their goals of increased security and accessibility. Their main concern is to preserve the character of the building while opening it up for outward reaching activity (MKB, n.d.: 7-11). Regarding temporary use, the workshops concluded that there might be buildings that could open up as a way to prototype potential use. This would also contribute to developing a certain local culture to help build capacity for the more permanent use. This would also serve as a way to prevent negative effects of vacancy, for example the continuous service cost of 1 million SEK per year. It would be a method of taking action before having all answers, and to create the conditions for such activity in the long term (MKB, n.d.:28-29). It could contribute to inform solutions and develop an understanding of

local needs (MKB, n.d.:42). However, the municipality demands that the temporary use be concluded as a final decision on the permanent use of the buildings. Another challenge is that there must be preparations before temporary use can take place, such as securing ventilation, heat, and emergency exits (MKB, n.d.:28-29). Informant 4 commented on the workshops, meaning that they were primarily speculative and that the important outcome was the relationships built between Backa Kåken, the municipality, and MKB, rather than the conclusions about the future of the prison buildings (Informant 4, 2026).

5.2.2 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

In the case of Backa Kåken, temporary use is approached carefully, and with skepticism. Here, temporary use is accepted only as a step toward permanence, and seen as an insufficient step if it does not contribute to final ownership of the buildings. It is explicitly framed as “interim use”, but manifests more as temporary use with ambitions to be permanent. The initiative risks wasting local engagement if the goal of purchasing the buildings falls through. Regardless, the temporary use is tactical since it occupies underused space in an attempt to generate long-term change through low-cost activation. At the same time, it attempts to demonstrate the association’s capability of developing and managing the buildings permanently. Furthermore, the tactical use aims at prototyping an alternative ownership structure, promoting a collective ownership and governance model. Backa Kåken also reflects a strong DIY ethos, as an informal organization powered by voluntary labor and rooted in a local activist tradition. Regarding gentrification, there is a strong will to work against such a process, where collective ownership and bottom-up principles are counter-strategies. However, it is still identified as a possible outcome if the initiative would be established permanently.

Backa Kåken produces space through a perspective of collective action, where use-value is prioritized over exchange-value, given that the initiative is not driven by profit. Here, the right to the city is exercised as rights to join the association and contribute directly to its development through collective decision-making. This redistributes the power in urban development by moving away from access and limited participation, to inviting people into the organization. Although Backa Kåken’s use of Direktörsvillan is currently a temporary initiative, their long-term ambitions are central to their purpose. Backa Kåken views vacancy as a political choice, and as a result of insufficient market forces. They aim to decommodify

space, and use collective ownership as resistance to scarcity. The current prototyping is aimed at building knowledge that remains situated in its specific geographic context, and there is no expressed ambition to scale findings to other areas.

5.3 CROSS-CASE DISCUSSION

When analyzed in relation to each other, the cases support Bishop & Williams', Andres & Chang, and Dovey & Stevens' claim that temporary urbanism is inherently ambiguous. They reveal differing motives, ownership structures, and participation models. While both cases could be described as tactical, they operate in distinct ways. Färjeterminalen employs temporary use in an instrumental and technocratic way, without challenging current ownership and governance structures, whereas Backa Kåken focuses around transforming social structures. The cases also distinguish between temporary use that is aimed at producing value (Färjeterminalen), and temporary use that aims at capturing and redistributing value (Backa Kåken). This comparison addresses Ferreri's claim that temporary urbanism can mask neoliberal development instead of disrupting it. Continuing on this note, increased property value is a concern in both cases. Backa Kåken was assessed to potentially have this effect in the long-term, while property prices in Nyhamnen might increase due to extensive preparations, like safety-measures and decontamination of the ground, rather than the temporary use itself. Backa Kåken explicitly mentions it as an unwanted effect and even criticizes other forms of temporary use for their potential to drive gentrification. Malmö municipality is aware that Nyhamnen is likely to develop some of the highest land prices in the city, and expresses a desire not to further contribute to this. Despite these intentions, gentrification remains a possible outcome in both cases, depending how their intentions translate into reality.

When read together, the cases suggest that temporary use is not primarily about scope and timeframes, but about who has the power to control development, how value is retained in existing built structures, and whether spatial production reproduces or redistributes power. It is not implemented mainly to temporarily activate unused space, but to give the public an opportunity to contribute to the development. The two cases reflect different interpretations of the right to the city. In Färjeterminalen, participation is invited by the municipality, allowing citizens and associations to engage in the development process. Backa Kåken, however, enables active participation in decision-making, more in line with Gray's argument

that the right to the city is not about communities being recognized and invited into municipal projects but about communal organization driving change. It also exemplifies Lefebvre's idea that space is socially produced rather than a neutral container awaiting optimal economic use. Despite Färjeterminalen being an alternative approach, it still operates within formal frames and can be understood as space writing, i.e. shaping behaviour through a spatial language. The municipality generates public participation by inviting citizens to contribute, and encourages innovation and clustering by inviting certain businesses to rent affordable venues. In contrast, Backa Kåken is more a manifestation of space utterance, i.e. of how people occupy space, in the sense that they emerged from an already present spirit of DIY and existing wants from citizens. Still, they operate within a formal frame, since the building is pending sale and under evaluation for future use. Both cases can be discussed in relation to by and for whom public places are designed, where Backa Kåken makes an explicit point to plan with rather than plan for, while Malmö municipality remains within the top-down framework but incorporates some aspects of public participation.

Comparison between the cases reveals several shared characteristics, like the utilization of unused buildings, and both initiatives being framed by temporary contracts. In both cases, the initiatives are explicitly framed as interim, or meanwhile, use but ultimately have a quest for permanence. They both aim to activate areas while providing affordable venues for local organizations. Another common characteristic is that the cases are more or less controlled by a top-down framework. Even though Backa Kåken originates as a bottom-up initiative, they are still dependent on MKB for temporary contracts and potential purchase. They are also dependent on Malmö stad because of the municipal planning monopoly. Ownership of land and buildings seem to be a central factor, deciding what is possible in terms of temporary use, and what shape it takes. Malmö stad owns Färjeterminalen, which means they have control over the future of the building. The same can not be said for Backa Kåken, where the future of the buildings lies in the hands of MKB. This confirms Lefebvre's claim that control of space is inseparable from property relations. Both buildings have stood empty because of political or economically produced scarcity. The Nyhamnen FÖP from 2019 displaced previous users of Färjeterminalen, while the former prison in Kirseberg is empty because its conversion is deemed unprofitable by the market. These vacancies do not appear out of thin air, they are produced through political and market forces. The

temporary use of these buildings is an example of how urban history is layered, of how new functions are assigned to old buildings as the conditions and needs shift. In Färjeterminalen, creative experimentation is used as a tool to form a new identity in the area, and to generate transferable knowledge. Backa Kåken, by contrast, uses it to preserve an existing DIY culture, and to retain created values in the local area. This reflects two different approaches to handling and driving urban transformation.

As previously mentioned, long-term visions are central to both initiatives, particularly in terms of translating public engagement into lasting outcomes. However, both cases are structurally fragmented. The lab in Färjeterminalen is described as a collection of projects varying connections to long-term strategies. Backa Kåken is fragmented because of their reliance on temporary leases and the uncertainty surrounding the potential purchase of the building. Despite their temporary framing, neither initiative is truly intended to remain temporary. A clear aspiration towards permanence is evident in both cases. In Färjeterminalen, permanence is asserted through using temporary testing to come up with a permanent plan, as well as producing transferable knowledge. Similarly, Backa Kåken aims to gain permanent control over the prison buildings, and to turn knowledge produced from prototyping into long-term strategies. But what if these initiatives were to remain temporary? From analyzing these cases, it is clear that the majority of the value produced through temporary use relies on anchoring in the long-term, and that it is seen as a waste of public engagement if temporary use were to be truly temporary. If Backa Kåken were to fail purchasing the buildings, it is possible that all resources and effort that has gone into the initiative would vaporize, or at least decrease due to the displacement of the association. In that sense, Malmö municipality is not as vulnerable to the risks of temporary use, since one goal of Färjeterminalen is to produce transferable knowledge, if the initiative were to remain temporary, some of the value produced would remain. However, despite temporary use being understood as a way to redistribute power to citizens, the risks of temporary use are more vulnerable to the participating individuals and organizations. It is their valuable time and resources, as less resourceful individuals or organizations, that have gone into something that would then cease to exist. Thus, the top-down framework is not contested, it is reproduced.

It is difficult to discuss temporary use, since it implies that there is such a thing as permanence in the built environment. In reality, cities are in a constant state of transformation where both short-term and long-term processes coexist and overlap. From this perspective, the projects described as temporary are better understood in relation to different time scales rather than strictly opposing permanence. Aligned with the notion of social production of space, it is a part of the already existing, continuous process of space being reshaped through social, economic, and political forces. What we call permanent is in actuality only relatively stable over time, and built structures that appear fixed are still part of ongoing change, quasi-permanence in Lefebvrian terms. Temporary uses are not exceptions to this, it is a part of the same process. In this sense, temporary urbanism may not represent an exception to how cities function, but rather draws from the underlying shifting dynamic of urban space. Temporary versus permanent can therefore be considered a conceptual distinction, reflecting intentions and frames rather than a fixed quality of the space being developed.

6 CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, where empirical findings are related to the conceptual and theoretical frameworks, these conclusions address the research questions presented in the introduction of this thesis. To clarify, the questions I aim to answer are how differences in ownership, control, and actor intentions shape temporary use, as well as how temporary urban projects in Malmö reflect different ways of producing space and exercising the right to the city.

While both cases operate under the umbrella of temporary urbanism, the comparison reveals that temporary use is primarily about time. Instead, key features are ownership, control over transition, and the capacity to convert temporary use into lasting spatial rights. This suggests that temporary use is less about time itself and more about challenging who has the power to shape space. In this sense, temporary interventions are embedded in broader struggles over the production of urban space, where access and control are unevenly distributed. “Temporary” therefore serves as a conceptual construct that is part of a continuous process of transformation. and thus, does not represent an exception to broader urban development. The comparison further demonstrates that temporary interventions are not inherently sustainable, democratic, or even temporary. It does not redistribute power by default, but is shaped by existing power relations and ownership conditions. Temporary interventions can even reproduce existing power structures, rather than challenging them. A key point in this is the uneven distribution of risk, where citizens or non-profits are more vulnerable to changes or blocks in the development than public actors. Paradoxically, while interventions are framed as temporary, they are often oriented toward achieving permanence, revealing a tension between short-term practices and long-term ambitions. The experimentation and prototyping may be explicitly temporary, but they are often intended to result in long-term change. Therefore, temporary urbanism should be understood as a process of shaping future space, rather than simply a short-term use.

The comparison reveals two overarching political and strategic functions of temporary use. It both operates as a tool to drive development through testing, and as a means to contest delayed or blocked development plans. In the case of Färjetterminalen, temporary use also fills the function of providing an arena for citizen participation and the collection of public opinion. Other functions include early activation and identity-building in Nyhamnen as an

area undergoing evaluation and plans for development. For Backa Kåken, other main functions include prototyping alternative ownership models and challenging market logic. Despite diverse functions and the framing of temporary use as flexible and inclusive, its outcomes are shaped by the institutional, economic, and political conditions in which it is embedded. The drivers of temporary use, such as vacancy and delayed development, are also politically and economically produced. Top-down frameworks, in particular, may limit flexibility and constrain the scope of participation. A key distinction is the one between invited participation, where the power remains within the initiator's hands, and collective power, where decision-making power is distributed between participants. Ownership also emerged as an important factor determining possible use. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that interstitial space is often structurally difficult, requiring initial investments before temporary use can take place. Accessibility and safety concerns must be addressed prior to activation in order to ensure equal access to participation. Another structural challenge is organizational fragmentation that, whether in regards to politics, ownership or financing, risks limiting the long-term transformation capacity of temporary projects.

This study points to several avenues for further research. Future studies could examine temporary uses over time, from their initiation to their potential transition into more permanent forms. The temporal aspect of research can highlight shifts and changes following experimentation, and may contribute to a more nuanced description and analysis of the temporary uses. Researching temporary urbanism as an ongoing process could uncover effects that might follow temporary use such as changes in property value, gentrification, and shifts in attitude and politics.

7 COMMENTS

To conclude this thesis, a few short final thoughts and recommendations for initiators or participants in temporary projects are presented. These are mainly based on findings from interviews and are only loosely connected to the conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

First of all, transparency has emerged as a primary concern regarding temporary projects. It is important for initiators to be clear about the frames of the project in order to not disappoint participants. Informants highlighted that it is important to have a long-term vision, despite the project itself being temporary, and that it otherwise would be a waste of public engagement. This could be especially important since such disappointments could compromise the trust among citizens for the initiating organization. Furthermore, in order to be transparent in the communication outwards, the internal communication is fundamental. Informants have mentioned the ambiguity of temporary use, and expressed a need for investigating the different forms of temporary use and developing a common language.

Secondly, it is important to note that temporary use, from an initiator perspective, must consider structural difficulties regarding the site in question. As previously discussed, ensuring safe accessibility is a fundamental requirement for a more democratic and open form of temporary use. This can involve considerable preparations, which can pose limitations for actors with limited resources, or actors aiming to make profit. At the risk of sounding somewhat blunt, there are often underlying reasons why certain places are unused or left behind. These conditions, whether physical, economic, or regulatory, do not disappear simply because a site is temporarily activated. Perhaps such spaces are not always the most viable or flexible options for temporary use. That said, these initial investments may become meaningful if temporary use is linked to long-term visions, where the knowledge and experience generated through temporary use can inform more permanent forms of development of interstitial spaces.

This leads me to my final suggestion. Temporary urban use should not be approached as finite, but as a part of a broader strategy with opportunities to address questions of alternative ownership and control. In order for temporary uses to be meaningful and move beyond symbolic short-term activation, they need to coexist with more long-term visions. It is important that the value generated is retained and translated into long-term use. Like

several informants expressed, it would otherwise be a waste of public engagement. Without a clear pathway from temporary to long-term, temporary use risks resulting in a loss of resources, engagement, and local commitment. Temporary urbanism should not only activate space, but be an opportunity to challenge and negotiate existing structures of power and control over urban development.

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FIGURES

Figure 5.1 A map of Malmö pointing out the locations of Nyhamnen and Kirseberg. By Frida Westberg. (p. 28)

Figure 5.2: A collage of Nyhamnen and the temporary use of Färjeterminalen. By Frida Westberg. (p. 29)

Figure 5.3: A collage of the prison buildings and the temporary use led by Backa Kåken. By Frida Westberg. (p. 36)

APPENDIX

Interview guide

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore the concept of temporary use by comparing ongoing projects in Malmö, and relating the findings to literature concerning temporariness in the built environment. The aim is to understand how different temporary projects can reflect different agendas, and how this shapes the structure of the project itself.

Interviews with people engaged in temporary projects contribute with important insights into motives behind temporary initiatives, information that might be skewed or excluded from planning documents. Regarding non-municipality led initiatives, interviews are crucial for gathering information about the case, since there seldom is any planning documents behind.

General information:

Duration: ≈60 mins

Structure: Semi-structured with questions and follow-up questions but flexible and open to spontaneous restructuring.

Consent: Participation is voluntary and the participant has the right to withdraw at any time. A consent form is to be signed by the participant before the interview. The form should state what personal information will be gathered and to what purpose, along with information about how data will be stored. The participant should be informed that the interview will be audio recorded.

Background questions:

- Please tell me about yourself and your role here at [organisation].
- Can you tell me more about [organisation]?
- What type of organisation is it?
- How is it financed?
- How is it governed?

Topic 1: Introducing the project

- Can you give a brief introduction to the project?
- What is the cause for this initiative and what is the overall aim?
- What local struggles does the project address?
- What is the scope, in terms of space and time restrictions?
- Is there a specific target group?
- Does the project include any form of citizen involvement?

Topic 2: Preconditions

- How does this project build on the history and preconditions of the area, and Malmö as a whole?
- How does the project address local strengths and weaknesses?
- Does the project make use of existing local communities and social resources?

Topic 3: Temporary urbanism

- What temporary aspects are there in the project?
- Are there any permanent aspects?
- What are the strengths and opportunities in working with temporary use?
- What are the weaknesses and threats?