

Embracing the Liminality of Common Spaces: A Proposal for an Analytical Framework to Interpret Temporary Uses

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Abstract

In the recent academic debate, common spaces have been conceptualised as threshold and liminal spaces where proximity acts as an enabler for people to co-manage local resources and reclaim the right to the city. Within this debate, temporary uses can be seen as a mechanism to co-create common spaces by testing solutions based on local needs assessment in a way to reconcile a multiplicity of stakeholders' values. Temporary uses can aggregate networks of stakeholders towards the transformation of abandoned real estate assets, contributing to the sharing of a duty of care. Even though they are time-bounded, temporary uses leave urban spaces on the threshold of transformation. They can generate social values for participants and communities; however, these values are hard to capture in traditional evaluation metrics and might be susceptible to co-option to increase market values over social values. This article aims to provide empirical evidence—based on a case study in Forlì, Italy—about the role of temporary uses as a device to aggregate communities and to negotiate a shared identity of the re-use intervention on real estate abandoned assets. We propose an interpretative analytical framework to understand the effects generated by temporary uses for the involved stakeholders, understanding how social values are co-created through temporary uses processes and distributed at the community level.

Keywords

analytical framework; co-management; common spaces; social value; temporary uses

1. Introduction

In an ever-changing world faced with grand societal challenges, participatory approaches to urban planning are crucial to counteract the exacerbation of inequalities and phenomena of gentrification and displacement

(Dell'Ovo et al., 2026; George et al., 2024). Cities must be capable of innovating governance models for urban spaces to usher participation (Bishop & Williams, 2012). New approaches to encourage civic participation are needed, and so are tools to evaluate their multi-dimensional effects (Assumma et al., 2021; Stanganelli et al., 2021). Temporary uses have been envisioned as an experimental and time-bound solution to urban voids, through innovative forms of urban governance and community participation (Chang & Gerrits, 2022).

Most European cities present two antithetic trajectories: the progressive dismissal of former industrial areas, perceived as urban voids, and the increase of real estate development that can lead to gentrification and displacement issues (George et al., 2024; Kip & Oevermann, 2022). At the intersection of these two, the rehabilitation and management of abandoned real estate assets represent a way to catalyse urban interventions to generate positive social values (Kip & Oevermann, 2022). The adaptive re-use of dismissed industrial heritage is an urban regeneration strategy that combines the preservation of historical and cultural value with environmental sustainability and economic revitalisation (Cossons, 2012; Kip & Oevermann, 2022). From an ecological perspective, preserving and repurposing existing structures requires significantly less embodied energy than demolition and reconstruction, reducing environmental impact (Burkhard et al., 2012). However, industrial sites often pose critical issues related to soil contamination that require costly remediation. Economically, the high initial costs of acquisition, conversion, and regulatory compliance provide significant barriers, especially for smaller towns (Russo & Linkon, 2009). The social dimension is perhaps the most critical aspect. While re-use can revitalise degraded neighbourhoods by reviving practices of solidarity and inclusion, it can also trigger gentrification processes that marginalise long-standing residents, making equitable planning strategies and authentic participatory processes that preserve local communities' decision-making power essential (Kip & Oevermann, 2022; Russo & Linkon, 2009). The main challenge lies in balancing these dimensions through transdisciplinary, context-based, and value-based approaches that respond to the specific characteristics of the territory and the communities' value systems.

Against this background, temporary uses offer a means to enable the transformation of such spaces by offering opportunities to collaboratively address local challenges while contributing to the characterisation of these spaces as spaces for discussion about the future of the city (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019; Harvey, 2012). These can be considered common spaces according to the definition provided by Stavrides (2015). In common spaces, proximity acts as an enabler for people to co-manage the space while addressing the relationship with material or immaterial local resources (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019).

Despite the relevance of temporary uses in transforming approaches to urban planning, their use is still scattered and highly dependent on municipal activism and local strategies (Lanzoni & Martínez, 2024). Academic literature has widely discussed the transformative capacity of temporary uses to promote community participation by increasing the horizontality of practices (Bishop & Williams, 2012; Lanzoni & Martínez, 2024), and their effect to catalyse and incubate social impact, by increasing the sense of belonging and social inclusion (Madanipour, 2018). Other authors have focused on the enabling or inhibiting conditions that influence the implementation of temporary uses and the kind of legacy that they leave in the territory (Chang & Gerrits, 2022; Martin et al., 2020). However, little attention has been paid to temporary uses as a mechanism to create urban threshold spaces. This article aims to answer the question of whether temporary uses allow the creation of threshold spaces, and under which conditions they can generate values for the communities and embed them in future urban regeneration trajectories. This article provides empirical evidence—based on the case of EXATR in Forlì, Italy—about the capacity of temporary uses to

generate and distribute social values while creating the identity of the re-use intervention. Building on the results from our research, we propose an analytical framework to interpret the depth of collaboration among local stakeholders and the effects generated by temporary uses, understanding how values co-created by participants in temporary uses are distributed at the community level. The analytical framework leverages the determinants identified in this case, providing guidance on how to assess the legacy of temporary uses.

2. Research Background

Temporary uses are understood as provisional appropriations of vacant urban spaces for a limited period of time, promoting co-production outside conventional market logics to enable the generation of societal outcomes (Bishop & Williams, 2012). Interventions as such are characterised by a high degree of adaptability, showing the potentials of new uses in response to societal needs (Bishop & Williams, 2012; Martin et al., 2020), catalysing urban transformation and community engagement through low-budget strategies (Bishop & Williams, 2012). However, temporary uses can also usher real estate interventions, by increasing market values and the appetite for investment by developers (Madanipour, 2018). This exacerbates the tension between redevelopment pressures and the re-appropriation of abandoned urban spaces, potentially promoting market dynamics against societal value.

The capacity of temporary uses to improve the quality of urban regeneration has been widely discussed in the literature. Scholars have focused on the capacity of temporary uses to promote the re-appropriation of economic, social, and cultural resources from the speculative efforts of the market (Chang & Gerrits, 2022; Rauleac, 2020). Further research explored the experimental capacity to temporally test different concepts for the reactivation of abandoned urban assets (Bishop & Williams, 2012), and to promote community engagement strategies in regeneration processes (Foster & Iaione, 2020). As such, temporary uses work as social incubators to develop local networks and participatory practices (Bishop & Williams, 2012; McArdle, 2020), or as a platform for neighbourhood-based dialogue to reconcile different positions of community members, creating shared solutions for urban development (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019; Madanipour, 2018).

Urban strategies based on temporality can enable liminality by counteracting the idea of pre-defined functions of regenerated spaces, placing the values of participants above market-driven needs (Stavrides, 2015). This is not automatically generated but depends on the capacity of participants to orchestrate such results and to avoid the capturing of the values co-created (Madanipour, 2018). Being able to embrace this liminality increases the capacity of interventions to promote an open discussion about the valorisation of assets without recurring to market-based strategies. Against the current development of urban research, temporary uses can promote a counter-hegemonic response towards the development of the city. However, no previous attempts aimed to develop an analytical framework taking into consideration both the process of organising communities and the co-creation of values through temporary uses.

2.1. Temporary Uses, Liminality, and Collaboration

Temporary uses often emerge in contexts of urban vacancy, where market-driven development is not able to address local needs (Bishop & Williams, 2012). They can activate resources towards adaptability and circularity in the management of abandoned urban spaces (Roversi et al., 2021), while contributing to the generation of non-market value acting against commodification of the city (Bishop & Williams, 2012). As such, temporary

uses enable collaborative processes, increasing the liminality of urban action and contributing to the creation of threshold spaces for civic activism (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019; Stavrides, 2015).

To be effective, interventions as such need to be supported by external actors—e.g., public administrations, the building owner, private developers interested in the area—and participants must be capable of not falling into the co-option trap whereby their work is used to justify future exploitation of urban resources for market-based transformation (Madanipour, 2018; Roversi et al., 2021). In this lies a balancing act of temporary uses in addressing the market dynamics and navigating different, and eventually conflicting, interests among local actors. Collaboration is key in order to mix stakeholders' logics and to address concerns about future re-privatisation of the urban spaces object of intervention.

Collaborative urban interventions rely on different factors that could facilitate or hinder the capacity of temporary uses to produce a positive social value for local communities, reclaiming the right to the city against market exploitation (Harvey, 2012; Madanipour, 2018). Defining them is crucial in the development of an analytical framework as the one we aim to introduce. At first, we find intrinsic factors that provide challenges or opportunities to implement strategies based on temporary uses (Chang & Gerrits, 2022; Martin et al., 2020). These can be addressed as context determinants regulating the framework in which temporary uses move (Bishop & Williams, 2012; Martin et al., 2020). Secondly, we have the resources of the stakeholders participating in temporary uses initiatives. These can be addressed as characteristics of the stakeholders that influence their way of sharing resources and lead to different collaborative mechanisms based on social capital and the capacity to represent the general interest over vested interests (Madanipour, 2018; McArdle, 2020).

The combination of these factors influences collaboration through temporary uses, activating different mechanisms towards the creation of stakeholders' networks (Foster & Iaione, 2020; Martin et al., 2020). These mechanisms are crucial levers for interaction among stakeholders, and they can be valued as process outcomes showing the potential of temporary uses to enable liminality, while addressing the identity of the intervention to prevent future co-option (Madanipour, 2018).

2.2. *The Legacy and Values of Temporary Uses*

It is not unrealistic that temporary uses can leave a legacy at the territorial level. They increase the physical quality of abandoned spaces by offering new public areas (Martin et al., 2020)—including gardens, urban beaches, squares, among others—as the case of Tempelhof Airport in Berlin. Started as temporary uses to increase the availability of green areas, the former airport became a new public space through combinations of civic activism, community mobilisation, and innovative institutional arrangements (Dubeaux & Cunningham-Sabot, 2016). Temporary uses also activate threshold spaces (Foster & Iaione, 2020; Stavrides, 2015)—e.g., civic and community centres, cultural hubs, among others—as it happened in Madiba in Rimini. Here, the combination of squatting and community-based urban development promoted the development of new forms of local welfare through the creation of common spaces, counteracting the market-based exploitation of urban regeneration projects (Rauleac, 2020). On the other side, temporary uses can lead to an increase of real estate market values, or they can trigger local economic development (Mazzarella & Remoy, 2024; Rossitti et al., 2023). While this could subtract values to the local community and activate re-privatisation processes (Madanipour, 2018), previous studies only identified an indirect contribution to

accelerate ongoing regeneration processes and to the increase of real estate market values (Rossitti et al., 2023).

Interventions employing temporary uses can leave an institutional legacy when the experimentation of collaborative governance models results in policy innovation or the adoption of new forms of partnerships for the city (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019). The creation of such legacies is strongly influenced by local regulatory frameworks promoting horizontal practices. In turn, when these are not present, the legacy of temporary uses can be captured by real estate developers that benefit from the improved market values by excluding local communities from decision-making processes (Chang & Gerrits, 2022).

These forms of legacy are felt differently across contexts, and they entail a differentiated recognition of social values by participants (Chang & Gerrits, 2022; Madanipour, 2018). Understanding the values co-created through temporary uses is a way to address the legacy of such interventions, moving beyond traditional evaluation models employed in urban regeneration projects (Cerreta & La Rocca, 2021). This allows for capturing the interconnections between the collaboration mechanisms and the effects they generate at the local level.

3. EXATR: A Common Space Enabled by Temporary Uses

In Italy, common formats of temporary uses include pop-up cultural spaces, creative hangars, temporary markets, and public art installations, serving as catalysts for social innovation and spatial justice (Cariello et al., 2021). Such interventions often intersect with tactical urbanism, emphasising low-cost, reversible intervention and community engagement by enabling proximity-based planning (Casprini et al., 2026; Rossitti et al., 2023)—although, as discussed above, interventions as such could usher real estate development if their legacy is not correctly addressed. Against this paradigm, we selected the case of EXATR in Forlì for two reasons: It can be considered a common space enabled by temporary uses (Stavrides, 2015); and it contributes to the understanding of the conditions under which temporary uses can contribute to generating social values and embed them in long-term projects.

EXATR is a hub that connects creative and cultural industries, arts, universities, and local enterprises. Today, it can be defined as a place for cultural production characterised by a social purpose of promoting culture and live performance as means for participation in urban regeneration. EXATR is a project that promotes the re-use of the former city's bus depot in Forlì, leveraging the power of human and cultural connections to address the issue of the abandonment and collaborative revitalisation of symbolic places. EXATR offers cultural connections between the past and the present of the depot and the territory, promoting a dialogue between communities, associations, artists, and the public administration. The bus depot, as shown in Figure 1, is located on the outskirts of the walled city in Forlì, at the hinge between a social housing neighbourhood and a former industrial area, recently redeveloped.

The depot remained unused for more than 10 years, until 2010, when it attracted the attention of Spazi Indecisi (SI) and Città di Ebla (CdE), two local associations. CdE—a theatre and performative arts association—was looking for a location to host the festival IperCorpo, while SI—a social innovation and urban regeneration collective—was mapping abandoned spaces in the Romagna sub-region as part of the project Cicli Indecisi (Undecisive Cycles). At the time, the owner of the depot was ATR—the local

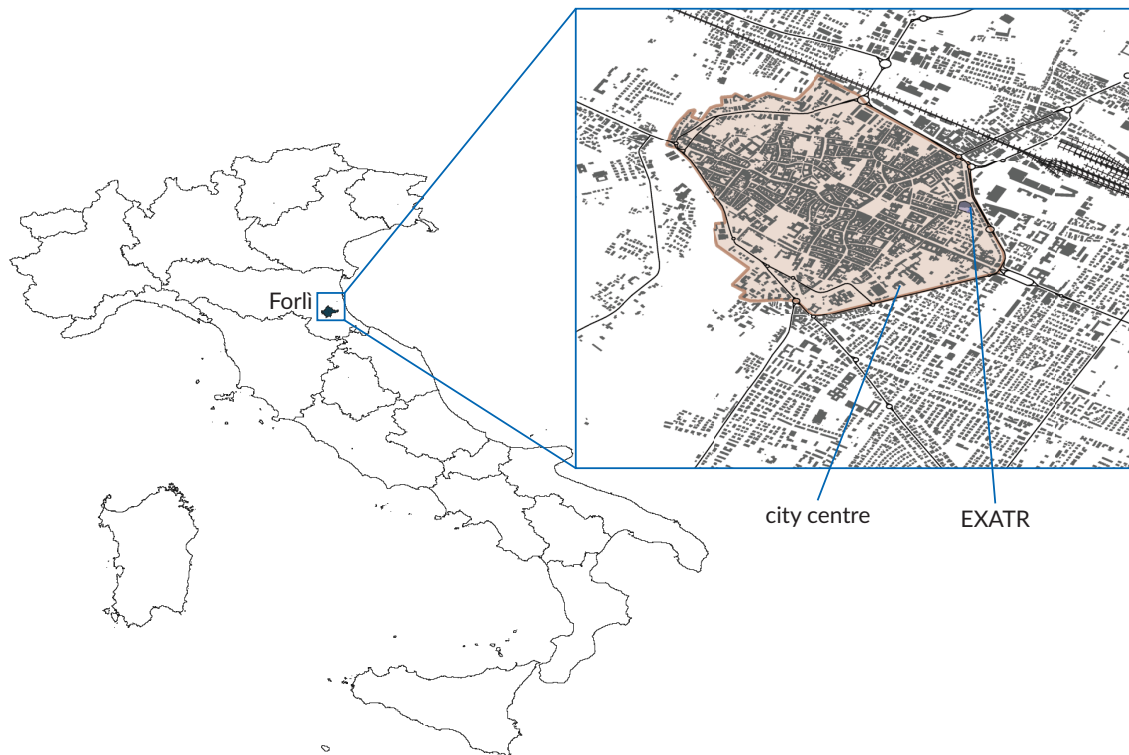


Figure 1. Location of EXATR in Forlì.

publicly-owned transport company—that closed the depot in via Ugo Bassi to open a larger one just outside the city. Following 10 years of abandonment, the depot was in a state of degradation, although still integral and safe to be used.

Each organisation individually approached ATR to ask for permission to use the space. Access to the depot was granted for 1 day per organisation in 2010. Following this initial experiment, CdE and SI recognised that only through collaboration could they achieve their individual objectives to reactivate the former bus depot. In 2011, as reported on EXATR's website (<https://exatr.it/storia>), the two organisations jointly signed a three-year temporary use agreement with ATR in order to experiment with different ways to implement their vision while promoting a discussion about the value of the depot for the neighbourhood and about how to promote open participation in cultural production and urban regeneration.

During these three years, CdE and SI built and strengthened their relationship, and developed a combined strategy for community participation in the co-production of activities and co-management of the depot. As a result, CdE involved SI in the 2011 edition of the festival IperCorpo to understand how to embody the identity of the festival in a culturally rich asset, while using it as a tool to attract new audiences. During these three years, the two associations co-created a series of events to collect memories about the ATR depot from former employees and community members, as well as several engagement workshops to develop ideas about how to re-use the depot, as reported on EXATR's website. This gave birth to *Inno al perdersi* (A call to get lost), a cultural program to celebrate the abandoned heritage of Romagna, promoting the idea that abandonment, such as use, is a temporary status that can be changed at any time.

Thanks to the experimentation brought by the temporary uses, SI and CdE reinforced their re-use strategy towards the transformation of the depot into a common spatial resource. In 2013, the two associations proposed to the municipality of Forlì a project to valorise the depot for cultural production, answering a bid from the Emilia Romagna region. At the same time, a consortium of local businesses presented an alternative project to be submitted to the same bid, proposing to transform the depot into a hub for start-ups and R&D activities. Given the positive results achieved by the temporary uses, the then mayor opted for the project developed by the two associations, considered to be the right way to innovate cultural practices and promote a discussion about the heritage value of the depot, offering “a vision and a platform to co-create a project,” as it emerged from the bid documents.

The project was approved, providing the two associations with funding to be invested in the renovation of the space, with an obligation to establish a temporary association (Associazione Temporanea di Scopo, ATS) with the municipality. This created a legal framework to formalise the relationship between the two associations, the municipality, and ATR as the owner of the depot. Thanks to this governance arrangement, the ownership of the depot passed to the municipality of Forlì, which granted it rent-free to the two associations with the obligation to sustain expenses related to management and ordinary maintenance of the building, as reported in the agreement. This represents a way to formalise the experimental governance structure of the temporary uses, ensuring that the depot can be used for social and cultural purposes in line with the general interest, limiting the possibility of lucrative interventions.

Unfortunately, in 2015, the depot was closed due to safety issues. This required a massive structural intervention exceeding the grant obtained through the regional fund. The depot opened again in 2017 with renewed enthusiasm. With the re-opening of the depot, SI and CdE created the living lab Linee di Rigenerazione (Regeneration Lines), using the metaphor of the buses connecting the city to understand how the new uses of the depot can connect different members of the local community and promote sharing of knowledge and practices to implement interventions in the neighbourhood. As of today, EXATR has become a reference point for the local culture and art scene, hosting several festivals that are co-created by SI and CdE with other local organisations, including MeettheDocs! and EXTRATERRESTRE, while being the home of IperCorpo, which reached its 21st edition in 2025.

The timeline in Figure 2 synthesises the main phases of the reactivation of the depot.

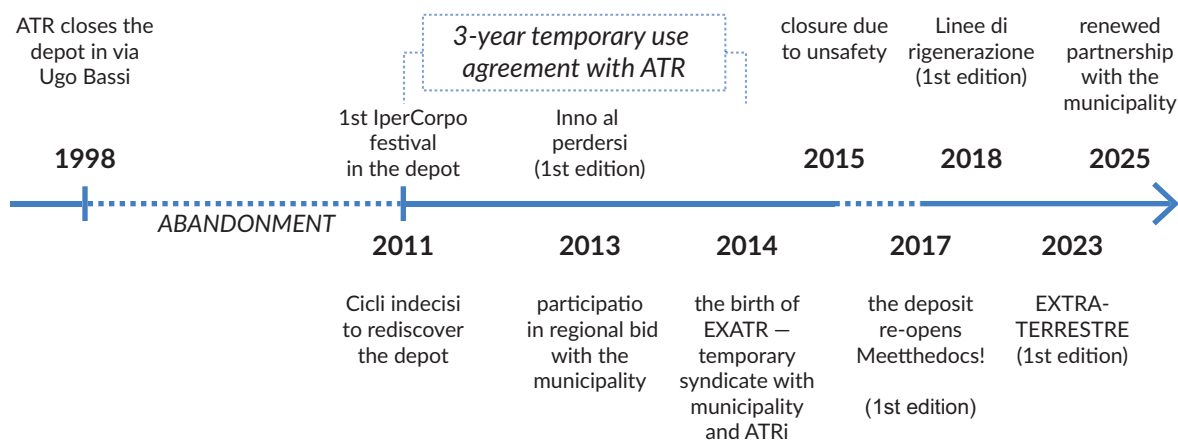


Figure 2. Timeline of interventions in EXATR.

4. Methods and Materials

Our research only refers to the period of the activation of the re-use intervention that led to the creation of EXATR and its implementation of different experimentations through temporary uses, while looking at the legacy it created for the neighbourhood. Focusing on this helped us to determine the different context conditions, collaborative mechanisms, and values created through temporary uses, in an attempt to define the conditions under which the temporary uses in EXATR contributed to the general interest. Given the characteristics of the case, and consistently with our objectives, we adopted a multi-disciplinary and multi-method approach. In a peculiar case such as this one, combining different methods empowered us to explore different temporal phases of the interventions and offered a way to gather information from multiple sources (Yin, 2014). Mixing historical interviews with document analysis and participant observations allowed us to develop an in-depth understanding of the components that allow temporary uses to generate positive societal outcomes at the local level. Furthermore, we strived to maximise the involvement of stakeholders as key informants as well as collaborators in the sense-making and validation phases of the research to increase acknowledgement of results (Leavy, 2017). A synthesis of the phases of the research is presented in Figure 3.

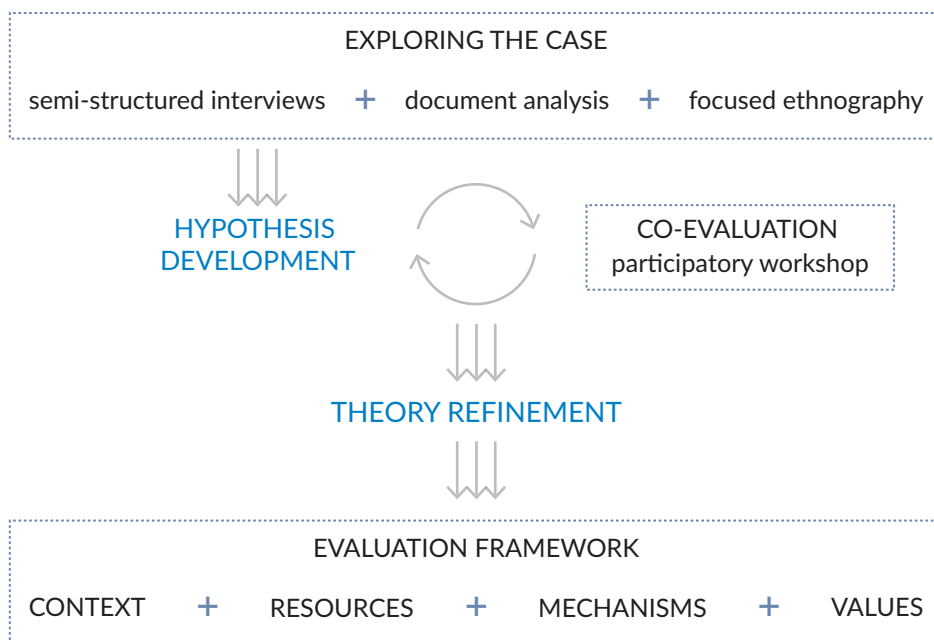


Figure 3. Research path and methods employed in the case study.

Throughout the different steps of the research, we involved different stakeholders in the data collection process in order to increase the number of perspectives on the implementation of temporary uses and their effects. The list of stakeholders involved is presented in Table 1, which synthesises their interests in the projects, their individual values, and the ways in which we engaged them in the research.

Table 1. List of stakeholders involved in temporary uses in EXATR and in the research process.

Stakeholder	Interests	Values	Engagement in research
Spazi Indecisi (SI)—Local association interested in participatory urban regeneration	Increase awareness about the value of abandoned spaces Contribute to the innovation of local service provision	Participation; inclusion; mutuality; collaboration; cultural and historical value of the building; entrepreneurship	Interviews Validation workshop
Città di Ebla (CdE)—Cultural association active in the field of theatre and live performance	Use the space to organise cultural festivals Promote a discussion about what to preserve and for whom	Participation; collaboration; creativity; cultural and historical value of the building; entrepreneurship	Interviews Validation workshop
Municipality of Forlì	Contribute to the well-being of citizens and to the vitality of the city	Social cohesion; inclusion; cultural value of the building	Interviews Validation workshop
Artists and creative industries professionals—Who use the space for the production of cultural contents	Create new cultural contents	Creativity; social engagement; cultural production; personal growth	Interviews Participant observations
Local community—Residents in the neighbourhoods that attend activities and events in EXATR	Increase access to cultural and social resources	Social inclusion; mutuality; personal growth	Participant observations
Cultural associations—That use the space for events	Gain access to the space	Creativity; personal growth; (partial) collaboration	—
Civil society organisations—Local formal and non-formal groups of citizens and students that use the space of EXATR	Gain access to the space	Participation; personal growth; social cohesion	—

At first, we conducted a series of 12 semi-structured interviews to explore the case and its characteristics (Yin, 2014). To ease the conversation, we let interviewees set their own narrative about the implementation of temporary uses. Then we followed with questions to explore the determinants that influenced decision-making in the re-use process (Yin, 2014). The diversity of stakeholders involved allowed us to customise interviews in a way that each informant only answered questions related to their direct experience (Leavy, 2017). In parallel, we analysed documents produced by the stakeholders involved in temporary uses—including reports, festival brochures, and other dissemination material—to better understand the typologies of activities implemented and the profile of participants (Leavy, 2017). Lastly, we decided to conduct a series of participant observations before and during festivals to understand whether some learnings of the temporary uses are still present in the management of EXATR (O'Reilly, 2012). This

allowed us to explore the legacy of temporary uses by observing how it is integrated in the design and implementation of festivals, while giving us the opportunity to speak with users (O'Reilly, 2012).

To perform our thematic analysis, we first coded the interviews according to determinants that influenced the temporary uses and those that contributed to generating outcomes for participants and non-participants (Gioia, 2021). As a second step, we clustered different determinants according to four categories used to build the analytical framework (Gioia, 2021): context, i.e., the given determinants offered by the context of intervention, such as regulatory frameworks and municipal practices; resources detained by the stakeholders that they share and deploy in the process; collaborative mechanisms among the different stakeholders involved; and values that are co-created through temporary uses. By triangulating these data with the information collected through document analysis and observations, we formulated a preliminary understanding of the conditions under which temporary uses are managed at the local level and leave a legacy. Later on, we presented our understanding of the case to the stakeholders that participated in the research, and, through a workshop, we collaboratively refined it (Leavy, 2017).

Based on the co-construction of theories, we formulated an analytical framework by clustering the different conditions according to the four categories presented above. We first described the characteristics of the case and how the different determinants acted in this specific case. Then, we developed potential alternative scenarios for each context, resource, and mechanism factors to understand if they lead to similar or alternative outcomes contributing to the co-production of values through temporary uses. These alternative scenarios that could lead to the generation of shared values through temporary uses have been included in the analytical framework, establishing causal connections between the different determinants and the values, providing guidance on how to operationalise it. Lastly, we defined a proxy for each value identified to be used as an indicator to verify whether a change occurred or not in the context.

5. Findings

EXATR presents an interesting approach towards temporary uses, allowing local stakeholders to re-discover a crucial infrastructure while contributing to pass its property from the original private owner to the municipality of Forlì. This activated a participatory valorisation process of the former depot, allowing the engagement of local associations and civil society in the co-production of activities and services. As such, EXATR can be considered a demonstrator of how culture-based processes can mitigate gentrification and displacement issues. Temporary uses allowed SI and CdE to assess the local needs and to propose experimental solutions to bridge the policy gaps. In doing so, EXATR gave back a fundamental infrastructure to the city while offering a new common space to the neighbourhood. Furthermore, it offers the space and a network to local artists that gained access to resources to create new products outside of the mainstream culture market. All this was possible due to the recurrence of three collaborative mechanisms that activated latent resources and contributed to the creation and sharing of values through temporary uses in line with the general interest.

The first collaborative mechanism that we observed is the co-production of social and cultural activities. Co-production stands at the core of the relationship between SI and CdE, which, as acknowledged in the interviews, created a space for collaboration based on mutuality and trust, enabled by the social and relational capital of the two organisations, where they identified a shared intentionality and a common purpose, moving beyond individual agency (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019; Harvey, 2012). In particular, the two

organisations promoted a re-use idea that went beyond the short-term horizon of the temporary use agreement. As reported during the interviews, they believed that temporary uses were necessary to promote a discussion about the preservation of the depot. In this process, they largely engage residents, civil society organisations, artists, and former ATR employees to re-discover and preserve the history of the depot, and to co-design new functions in response to local needs. As such, the temporary use agreement provided a framework to activate a community process for the re-use of an urban immovable asset, by increasing the relational value that the local community attach to it (Kip & Oevermann, 2022). The approach to co-production is also part of the legacy of the temporary uses, and it is still present in EXATR. In fact, festivals and cultural activities in EXATR are co-created by SI and CdE with other local cultural associations and civil society organisations, as observed throughout the research. The same holds true when dealing with social and cultural welfare services provided through EXATR that, as reported by SI, are co-created with civil society organisations and residents.

Secondly, the collaboration is based on the capacity of participating stakeholders to negotiate and adapt the purpose of their intervention according to evolving local needs and the general interest. In this case, proximity and the entrepreneurial mindset of both associations reinforced the mutual objectives and acted as an aggregator, as reported in the interviews, through a common purpose beyond the scope of individual objectives. This led to a progressive sharing of knowledge and practices in the design and management of the activities, as reported by members of the two associations, making the collaboration fundamental to ensure place identity (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019). Furthermore, both SI and CdE recognise that their relationship was strengthened by the fact that, in the absence of a political response to the abandonment of the depot and the degradation of the surrounding neighbourhood, collaborating was far more effective than competing for resources. This presents the case for a shared purpose that acts as a compass to promote the general interest through private-led activities, limiting the possibilities of vested interests taking over the values created through collective agency.

The third collaborative mechanism is based on the capacity to pre-distribute resources and values at the local level. According to SI and CdE, this reinforced their mutually agreed purpose and motivated them in the collaboration. The desire to give back to the community the abandoned depot and transform it into a place of cultural production and social innovation lay at the core of the temporary use agreement, as reported by SI. In this specific case, the activation of this mechanism, together with the associations' capacity to self-fund the activities, allowed them not to be co-opted by the owner of the building nor by the municipality, but it created an alternative means to valorise the abandoned bus depot (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019). This can be confirmed by the investment made by the municipality to legitimise the intervention in EXATR. As reported by a former municipal employee, the decision to support the initiative was based on the capacity of EXATR to co-create values for the local community, making the depot worth of being preserved from market-based exploitation and privatisation. The municipality recognises that "they [SI and CdE] offered us a vision and a platform to co-create a project for the entire neighbourhood," leading to the decision to foster this initiative.

The combination of these three mechanisms contributed to increasing the liminality of the space, promoting the recognition of the former ATR depot as a common space (Stavrides, 2015). The public ownership of the building allows access to the building to all interested parties, while the cultural and social activities implemented in EXATR increased its rivalry, requiring participants to organise themselves to use it. Furthermore, this process contributed to the co-production of social values that are shared by

the participating organisations, artists, the local communities, and the municipality. In the words of a CdE representative:

It was through hard work and demonstration [within the temporary use agreement] that we were already making a difference. We engaged the municipality in a dialogue that led to the development of a joint project for the preservation of the bus depot based on a tandem of cultural production and participatory urban regeneration. It was not easy, as this required a direct investment from us [SI and CdE].

This provides a hint that temporary uses can leave a legacy when valorised through shared governance models and the implementation of long-term public projects pursuing the general interest. In the case of EXATR, the values co-created through temporary uses are shared among the local community, who recognised how they felt empowered thanks to the engagement in the co-production of social and cultural activities, increasing the quality of life of residents, while fostering participation in economic, civic, and cultural life, as reported during the observations. All this contributed to the recognition of the depot as a community asset, as reported by CdE. Lastly, artists and creative professionals recognised that the temporary uses gave a unique opportunity to experiment with new forms of site-specific and participatory production, as reported in the interviews. The observations during the festivals confirmed the existence of this legacy of the temporary uses by offering opportunities to co-create with like-minded artists, cultural professionals, and the local community, and to present their art in an innovative and emancipated way, disentangled from the market.

The context in which the intervention took place is also highly relevant. EXATR is located in a low-income neighbourhood at the hinge between the historical centre and an area of recent regeneration. The scarcity of community spaces, the abundance of abandoned buildings, and the lack of resources for their re-use motivated the collaboration, as reported by SI. These elements influenced the way in which SI and CdE understood their mission and purpose in the temporary uses and how they used them as a platform to engage the local communities (Kip & Oevermann, 2022). In this light, temporary uses promoted a critical reflection about the legacy of the former ATR depot and how to interpret it as a resource for urban regeneration (Kip & Oevermann, 2022). Moreover, as reported by SI and CdE, at the time of the intervention, political response to localised socio-economic challenges was limited due to the municipality's involvement in other flagship projects. This presents an interesting case in which temporary uses can be used in a subsidiary way in the void left by the local government, without being co-opted by real estate actors (Madanipour, 2018). Lastly, the ownership of the building by ATR acted as an enabling factor for the two organisations to use the depot as a resource for the creation of social and cultural services. This, as presented above, was also fundamental in passing the property from the company to the municipality.

Based on the findings, we identified three main pathways that allowed temporary uses in EXATR to enable the creation of a common space while leaving a territorial legacy. These pathways were first hypothesised by the research team and then discussed with the involved stakeholders. The pathways are context-specific and enabled by a mix of resources needed to activate the three collaborative mechanisms towards the generation of social values. They can be synthesised as follows:

- In contexts characterised by scarcity of resources, the social capital of participants in temporary uses can promote the activation of social and cultural co-production patterns towards innovation and sharing of

practices. This increases personal knowledge and skills and the capacity of temporary uses to promote access to social and cultural resources.

- In contexts with an abundance of abandoned buildings and characterised by a limited political capacity to provide solutions, a pro-social intentionality and the entrepreneurial mindset of participants in temporary uses allows the promotion of a discussion about the purpose of the practice and the place, engaging communities to recognise the cultural and heritage value of places. This can generate a collective sense of agency to preserve practices and spaces beyond the timeline of temporary uses, while empowering local communities and increasing a sense of belonging and solidarity.
- In contexts of political inactivity, engaged civil society can contribute to the general interest through co-created and self-funded initiatives, transforming the common purpose into a pre-distribution mechanism to avoid co-option from external actors, while contributing to the legitimisation of the practice and to the sharing of knowledge and practices within the neighbourhood in which the building object of intervention is located. As part of the pre-distribution mechanism, temporary uses must be able to foster public or hybrid ownership of the space in which practices take place.

6. The Case for an Analytical Framework

The activation of the three pathways found in EXATR helps to address the liminality of temporary uses, allowing for better exploration of their role in creating common spaces. To operationalise the pathways, we developed an interpretative framework connecting empirical evidence from the study with the main determinants included in the framework. The analytical framework aims to provide guidance on interpreting the capacity of temporary uses to generate a legacy and to produce positive social values beyond their lifespan.

The framework can be applied following three steps. At first, an assessment of the consistency of the context conditions must be carried out. Secondly, collaborative mechanisms and the relevant resources connected to each of them can be assessed to understand how participants in temporary uses interact with each other and use the space. Lastly, value dimensions can be analysed according to the proxies provided. The analysis can be conducted through interviews or focus groups with participants. When all three agency pathways are correctly assessed, the case is expected to follow a similar pattern to EXATR. If one or more of the pathways are not verified, an evaluation of the external or internal factors that hindered results must be conducted to assess differences with the proposed agency pathways. Table 2 offers an operational interpretation of the analytical framework.

Table 2. Proposal for an analytical framework—operational guidance according to the three pathways.

Agency pathway 1. Co-production in temporary uses	
Context	Resources
C1. Scarcity of resources for cultural and social practices—limited public or philanthropic funding for cultural and social activities.	R1. Social capital of participants—individuals or organisations participating in temporary uses have a high social capital (i.e., widespread network).
Mechanisms	
M1. Social and cultural co-production—presence of social and cultural co-production activities within the scope of temporary uses.	

Table 2. (Cont.) Proposal for an analytical framework—operational guidance according to the three pathways.

<i>Values co-created by temporary uses</i>	<i>Proxies</i>
V1. Personal growth—knowledge and skills acquisition	Increased capacities to collaborate with other stakeholders and to organise local networks
V2. Access to social and cultural resources	Stakeholders can access the building, participate in, and contribute to activities
V3. Shared knowledge and practices	Stakeholders recognise mutual sharing of social and cultural participation practices
V4. Innovation in cultural production and social welfare services	New social and cultural welfare products are co-produced by participants in temporary uses
Agency pathway 2. Temporary uses as a heritage-making device	
<i>Context</i>	<i>Resources</i>
C2. Abundancy of abandoned buildings—presence of abandoned buildings with historical or symbolic value in the neighbourhood object of intervention.	R2. Entrepreneurial mindset—stakeholders involved are able to transform challenges into opportunities by offering responses to socio-economic needs.
C3. Political inactivity vs Municipal activism—two alternative conditions: contexts with no political promotion of community-based responses to socio-economic challenges, without aversion against grassroots initiatives; or contexts in which the municipality adopts a policy for collaboration with civil society in the care of spaces and provision of services.	R3. Interest in the space to provide pro-social or cultural activities (intentionality)—stakeholders recognise a pro-social intentionality in taking part in temporary uses.
Mechanisms	
M2. Negotiation of a purpose of temporary uses—involved stakeholders agree to a common purpose greater than individual objectives and envision a future beyond the time horizon of temporary uses.	
<i>Values co-created by temporary uses</i>	<i>Proxies</i>
V5. Collective agency	Stakeholders recognise an increased capacity to act as a network
V6. Solidarity	Presence of a mutuality network among participating stakeholders
V7. Empowerment	Stakeholders perceive they have more resources to participate in decision-making processes
V8. Cultural and heritage value of the building in relation to stakeholder expectations	Stakeholders attribute a cultural value to the building object of temporary uses
V9. Sense of community	Mutual recognition of values among stakeholders participating in temporary uses
Agency pathway 3. Pre-distribution through temporary uses	
<i>Context</i>	<i>Resources</i>
C3. Political inactivity vs Municipal activism—see above.	R4. Capacity to self-fund activities—participants in temporary uses have access to economic resources for the production of social and cultural activities, through fund-raising campaigns or the capacity to attract external funding (e.g., competitive bids).
C4. Engaged civil society—knowledge and connection with the context of intervention.	

Table 2. (Cont.) Proposal for an analytical framework—operational guidance according to the three pathways.

<i>Mechanisms</i>	
M3. Pre-distribution—participants in temporary uses are aware of how to anticipate sharing the outcomes and values created and agree to a model of distribution of benefits.	
<i>Values co-created by temporary uses</i>	<i>Proxies</i>
V3. Shared knowledge and practices	See above
V10. Localisation value	Temporary uses contribute to the generation of societal outcomes where they are more needed (e.g., marginal neighbourhood)
V11. Legitimisation of practices	Participants in temporary uses act according to the general interest of the community
V12. Public or hybrid ownership of the building	The building object of temporary uses is acquired by the municipality or by the community through a hybrid ownership model

7. Discussion and Conclusion

Our research promoted an in-depth case study of the conditions that enable common spaces through temporary uses, contributing to the academic discourse on their legacy. EXATR offered a significant case in this regard, leveraging on proximity and mutuality to increase the liminality of urban spaces (Stavrides, 2015), and empowering the civil society to co-produce activities and to co-manage a reclaimed urban asset (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019; Madanipour, 2018). As shown, in EXATR, temporary uses increased the capacity of participants to act collaboratively (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019; McArdle, 2020).

In this specific case, the temporality of the intervention in the initial phase promoted a discussion about how to re-use abandoned spaces and for whom to valorise them. This happened at the conjunction of three agency paths presented in Section 5. These agency paths have been built on the findings from EXATR, but they are not specific to it. In fact, they could be verified in other cases dealing with temporary uses. This confirms the idea of temporary uses as an enabler of collaboration among stakeholders with similar interests (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019), but it also points out the conditions needed for temporary uses to generate value for communities (Madanipour, 2018). This effect is more profound in cases in which stakeholders approach temporary uses with an entrepreneurial mindset—being able to create economic opportunities and not simply seeking funding (Chang & Gerrits, 2022)—and they present an interest in the space that is capable of conjugating social and cultural objectives. The activation of these collaborative mechanisms is conditioned by the resources available to the participating stakeholders that can increase or hinder the quality of collaboration, as well as by contextual factors. Among them, as we presented, the legal and the political ones are the ones that have a stronger influence on the way in which stakeholders collaborate and on how they negotiate the purpose to contribute to the general interest.

Thanks to the activation of the three mechanisms, temporary uses can find their identity and create a legacy at the neighbourhood level, without the risk of value capture (Madanipour, 2018). The combination of the three agency pathways allowed to reclaim the former ATR depot and to defend the spirit of the intervention from market exploitation (Chang & Gerrits, 2022; Martin et al., 2020). Additionally, this case showed the potential of temporary uses to engage communities in the recognition and attribution of heritage value to urban assets,

paving the way for their valorisation and co-management according to the social value generated for the community (Kip & Oevermann, 2022). EXATR hinted that temporary uses can bring together different kinds of users in co-production activities to satisfy local social needs, while enhancing access to cultural resources.

Building on the findings of our research, we proposed an evaluation framework to guide the interpretation of temporary uses and understand whether the same results achieved by EXATR are present in other contexts where similar mechanisms are activated by participating stakeholders. Our analytical framework can increase the quality of the analysis on temporary uses, allowing understanding of how to adapt collaborative practices to specific context characteristics and resources available to participating stakeholders, while also facilitating the identification of the values and outcomes that are co-created through temporary uses. In this light, the analytical framework acts as a compass to navigate dilemmas related to the activation of temporary uses, anticipating questions related to their long-term effects.

Our research is not free from limitations. Being based on a single case study limits the generalisation of results to contexts with different political, social, or economic conditions. The findings of the case study have been integrated into the analytical framework that can be applied to different temporary use practices presenting similar context-specific characteristics to assess their capacity to lead to the same outcomes. This can validate our understanding and expand the determinants to be considered in each agency pathway. Furthermore, relying on interviews and community narratives may overemphasise the positive aspects of collaboration, while underrepresenting the challenges that stakeholders might have faced. We tried to limit this second concern by giving a voice to stakeholders with different characteristics as described above.

Building on these considerations, we suggest conducting comparative studies across different cities and governance models to reinforce the formulation of the proposed analytical framework. This can help in identifying regularities and differences across different contexts. To conclude, our analytical framework has the potential to develop as a practice guideline, by integrating recommendations for practitioners, and as an evaluation approach by integrating clear and measurable indicators to assess the impact of temporary uses and their sustainability in space and time.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Data Availability

Data are available upon request.

LLMs Disclosure

Copilot was used to conduct a first thematic screening as part of the analysis.

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