

Temporary use of space: from grassroots to formalized instrument? How did the practice change and what does this mean for planning?

PhD-research Kobe Tilley (est. 2024 – 2027)

Over the past two decades, temporary use of space as a spatial practice has known a rise in initiatives and projects and following, a rise in attention by both diverse actors and scholars. From an initially grassroots practice, rising from various squatting movements, a diversity of actors became involved. Nowadays, temporary uses are organized by neighbours, non-profits, municipal governments, real estate developers or in context of commercial vacancy management. The starting point for the research is this changed practice and the question what it means for spatial planning. The main, current (February 2025), research question is formulated as follows: **How has the practice of temporary use in Flanders (BE) changed and what does this mean for the practice, actors and paradigms in spatial planning?**

- During the initiation phase of the research, the co-supervision of a research course within the Master in Urbanism and Spatial Planning (*'Advanced topic in governance and spatial planning'*) formed the occasion to investigate five cases of temporary use in different cities in Flanders and Brussels (*Archipel, Asiat-park, De Meubelfabriek, Hal 5 and Toestand*) together with the participating students. After the initial research phase, the students organized a successful discussion evening focused on four themes and different statements resulting from the case-comparison. Building on this initial exploration of the cases, additional research is conducted to examine temporary use practitioners' perspectives on 'temporality' and 'transformation'.
- In collaboration with the Ghent city administration (Team Temporary Use of the Unit for Policy Participation), the (sustainable) effects of past cases of temporary use are mapped. From a list of initiatives who received support through the city-fund for temporary uses, 10 cases were selected to investigate what temporality meant for the projects or the involved organisations, what resulted from the cases and in which ways the cases left a mark on people, (re)developments or the city.

Building on these first parts of the research, temporary uses will be further studied to explore the change of the practice in Flanders in terms of actor-involvement or spatial instrumentalization to, eventually, reflect on spatial planning in Flanders and how temporary use has or can change existing paradigms. As this research was highly iterative throughout its first year, emerging opportunities are still welcomed to change directions or present new perspectives.

February 19, 2025.