Chapter 8
Temporary Uses as a Toolkit for Heritage-Led Sustainable Urban Development

Mariko Ikeda

Abstract This paper reconsiders the possibilities for heritage conservation through everyday practices found in temporary uses as relevant and cost-effective tools in a constantly transforming urban environment, contributing to a more sustainable urban development. For this aim, three of the author's previous case studies of temporary uses in the city of Berlin are reconsidered from the perspective of heritage conservation through everyday practices and citizen participation. Berlin, with its rapidly changing urban environment since 1989, has been an experimental hub for countless temporary uses in a short period of time and therefore provides useful insights into the viability of temporary uses for urban heritage conservation from a variety of perspectives. This paper shows that temporary uses, especially ones that develop into permanent businesses, help to protect buildings from decay, revitalize neglected urban areas, contribute to the realization of the SDGs, and provide affordable spaces for cultural and social activities.

Keywords Urban heritage · Temporary use · Everyday practices · Ruin · Gentrification · Berlin

8.1 Introduction

Our urban heritage is endangered by several factors. One of the dangers, the vacancy of historic buildings that are an important part of our urban heritage, can be the result of deindustrialization, redevelopment projects, failed businesses, real estate speculation, negligence, and, more recently, economic pressures resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. When these buildings are left vacant, they are at a

M. Ikeda (✉)
Faculty of Art and Design, University of Tsukuba, Tsukuba, Japan

Degree Program of Heritage Studies, Graduate School of Comprehensive Human Sciences, University of Tsukuba, Tsukuba, Japan
e-mail: marikoi@heritage.tsukuba.ac.jp

greatly increased risk of damage and decay. World Heritage Sites in urban areas are no exception from such developments. A look at the city of Edinburgh, with its Old and New Towns registered as World Heritage, shows that some historic buildings have been vacant for a long time (e.g., the Royal High School for 50 years) or have become vacant due to the recent economic situation in the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Jenners department store in 2021).

The best way to preserve these buildings is to use them. From a historical perspective, use and reuse were first and foremost responsible for preserving buildings in historic centres (Organization of World Heritage Cities et al., 2014, p. 53). English Heritage, which cares for over 400 historic sites in England, claims that the best way to protect buildings today is to keep them occupied, even if the use is on a temporary or partial basis (English Heritage, 2011). Such temporary uses, meaning the use of a building or a space for a limited time, have attracted the attention of urban planners and administrations over the last decades. This practice, also known as 'meanwhile use', is generally regarded as having advantages for both the tenants and the property owners. For the tenants, temporary use can be an attractive, low-cost way to experiment with a new business idea, start artistic and cultural activities, or set up non-profit projects. Centrally located properties can be rented for relatively low prices, and initial investment for these sites is often low due to the time-limited character of the venture (Oswalt et al., 2013). For property owners, including municipalities, temporary use of a site can contribute to the reduction of maintenance costs and to the preservation of a property's value through cultural activities. Activities on the property can also prevent damage caused by vandalism or disuse and can contribute to a positive image of the site, which can attract new investors (Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, 2007).

Berlin, the "capital of temporary uses" (Bodenschatz, 2011), is a showcase for the wide range and the dynamic nature of informal ways of preserving urban heritage. Many of Berlin's temporary uses provide valuable insight into the conflicts facing heritage in urban spaces and their solutions. This paper reconsiders three of the author's previously investigated case studies of temporary uses in Berlin from the perspective of heritage reuse and sustainable urban development. The paper specifically asks how these temporary uses contribute or have contributed to the preservation of neglected heritage in urban areas and how these temporary uses contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs) 8 (decent work and economic growth), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and 12 (responsible consumption and production) (UN, 2015).

The range of case studies is important in the context of urban World Heritage Sites but especially for historic cities because ownership is much more widely spread in such diffuse heritage properties compared to other World Heritage Sites. According to UNESCO, "in a heritage city […] the bulk of the historic buildings will be privately owned and many will be used for non-heritage purposes" (UNESCO et al., 2013, p. 14). This description is comparable to situation in Berlin, which is not a historic city in the World Heritage sense but has three World Heritage Sites and a large number of historic buildings.

8.2 Temporary Use, Heritage, and Sustainable Development

It can be argued that the idea of temporary use is, from the outset, a heritage-led sustainable way of development since it uses and reuses the available fabric. A study on 20 temporary uses in heritage buildings around the globe found that most of them were utilizing a former vacant structure that was in poor condition and that the changes made to the physical fabric were mainly positive and reversible (Tuohy Main, 2014). In other words, the temporary uses contributed to the maintenance of the buildings without making irreversible changes or damaging the fabric. Furthermore, Baum (2012, p. 30) notes that the reutilization of existing structures always encompasses an examination of their history, architecture, atmosphere, and context. This process can create a bond between the users and the property, fostering an identity related to the structure's history and its urban environment. Rellensmann (2010) sees, besides the prevention of decay and demolition through temporary uses, a sensitization of the users as well as visitors and investors to issues of heritage and preservation.

In a publication by the REFILL network (Refill, 2018, p. 12–13), a network of 10 European cities for the exploration of temporary uses, the political representatives of the participating cities conclude that temporary use has become a necessity to fight the social and environmental crisis. They note that the users "bring administrations in touch with active grassroots initiatives exploring new urban solutions." However, they also note that "it remains a challenge to adapt city governance into a form of decision-making that is less top-down and more based on co-creation with the people." This shows that although temporary use has become a more widely adopted tool for urban development over the last 20 years (at least in some European countries), there is still room for improvement in how temporary uses are implemented.

This is also mirrored by the disregard of temporary use as a possible long-term solution by official heritage bodies. English Heritage (2011, p. 9) notes that meanwhile uses "will allow prospective tenants to see the building in use and make it easier to attract long-term occupiers." According to Heritage Council Victoria (2013, p. 4), "temporary uses can be a good way to prevent deterioration until a long-term use is found." They mainly see temporary uses as a viable strategy for preventing further structural damage but not as a viable option for long-term heritage conservation itself, which would require "a more complex understanding of the site and its context" that can only be achieved by heritage professionals.

Literature specifically focused on the sustainability of temporary uses is very sparse. A study conducted in the Austrian city Graz suggests the reutilization of the many unused vacant buildings in the city through temporary uses to counter the ongoing loss of soil surface due to new constructions that can contribute to a higher risk of flooding, loss of soil functions, loss of biodiversity, and alteration of microclimates (Reitsamer, 2018).

Again, heritage bodies do not regard temporary uses as sustainable: temporary uses have the advantage of "increased prospect of a sustainable use – 'meanwhile'

uses can make the space more attractive and vibrant, and increase awareness of the property" (English Heritage, 2011, p. 9). However, Bennett (2017, p. 28) analyses the current situation of empty stores in the UK and concludes that "meanwhile" use is becoming more and more the norm for commercial leases and therefore asks, "What is actually wrong with a sequence of short-term adaptive uses?" He identifies "urban law and policy's ruinphobia" as the main problem, where only long-term commitment is seen as a successful way of utilizing stores in the UK's town centres. On the other hand, Sandler (2016, p. 24) has found that decay can also be seen as a way to represent the history of buildings and sites more truthfully than restoration. In this "counterpreservation", occupants of counterpreserved buildings have infused decay with positive associations of social inclusiveness, freedom, and creativity. Finally, Oswalt et al. (2013, p. 376) emphasize the bottom-up approach of temporary uses by noting that they represent an urban development without financial resources, based on the utilization of the city. This point relates to SDG 12, responsible consumption and production (UN, 2015).

8.3 Berlin as an Experimental City for a Heritage-Led Sustainable Urban Development

8.3.1 Temporary Use and Its Emergence in Berlin

Historic buildings have played a vital role in the urban transformation of the inner city of Berlin (Holm & Kuhn, 2011). In West Berlin in the 1970s to 1980s, citizen initiatives launched preservation activities with the goal to rescue historic buildings that were slated for demolition due to large-scale redevelopment plans based on the concept of a car-friendly city. Furthermore, the housing shortage in the 1970s led to "rehab squatting" (*Instandbesetzung*), in which vacant and dilapidated houses were occupied and immediately renovated by the squatters (Holm & Kuhn, 2011). Some of the preserved buildings from this time, such as the "Künstlerhaus Bethanien", are still used as cultural spaces today. One of the buildings of the vacant hospital complex Bethanien in the Kreuzberg district was squatted in December 1971 to establish a youth centre with integrated housing. In the following years, several art groups achieved a reutilization of the hospital's main building as a centre for the arts, while it became a property of the city of Berlin and was put under monument protection (*Denkmalschutz*).

Later, in the years after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, the inner city of Berlin and particularly the districts of former East Berlin were characterized by a high number of vacant lots and buildings. This situation gave a variety of users the opportunities to occupy the buildings and establish temporary uses in the often historic and derelict building stock. During the 1990s, new music clubs, art houses, galleries, bars, urban gardens, and alternative living spaces invigorated the vacant

buildings and lots (Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, 2007). Many of these projects were initiated by participants of Berlin's vibrant subcultures, which had emerged in both parts of Berlin during the division and came together after the reunification. These projects emphasize the importance of urban heritage for creative uses and can be seen as a development where, as described by urban sociologist Jane Jacobs (1961, p. 188), "new ideas are born in old buildings." On the other hand, these developments in Berlin also signify the importance of creative and temporary uses for the urban heritage, which will be further explored in the following case studies.

These case studies were conducted for some of the author's previous research between 2010 and 2014 and exemplify how temporary uses, especially artistic, cultural, and creative activities in urban areas, can contribute to the preservation of heritage in a sustainable way. They also clearly show where possible conflicts in this practice lie.

8.3.2 Case Study 1: Kunsthaus Tacheles: Ruin, Art House, Tourist Attraction

This case study investigated the art facility "Kunsthaus Tacheles" with a focus on its history as a cultural squat, its history as a building, its role as a free space, and its development into a tourist attraction in a rapidly transforming district in the city centre of Berlin (Ikeda, 2014). The Kunsthaus Tacheles was a cultural facility in the Mitte district of Berlin and housed ateliers for many national and international artists. Furthermore, it had exhibition rooms, a theatre, a cinema, a bar, a music club, and an open-air area that was used for art installations and exhibitions.

The building was opened in 1909 as one of Berlin's largest department stores at the time. It was damaged during the Second World War, but it was still usable. After the war, it was used as office space, travel agency, storage, professional school, and cinema, among other uses. At the beginning of the 1980s, the building was partially demolished to make way for a new street. However, a small part of the building remained and was slated for demolition in 1990. To stop the demolition, the artist initiative Tacheles, consisting of artists from East and West Berlin, squatted the building.

The users achieved the registration of the Tacheles building as a monument (*Baudenkmal*) after the building was surveyed and found to be in a good structural condition. In this process, the artists rediscovered the eventful history of the building, which was located in a quarter that had a vibrant Jewish culture before the Second World War. The New Synagogue, once Germany's largest and most magnificent synagogue, is only a few 100 m away. The property changed hands throughout the 1990s and 2000s, and it became an object for speculation and unrealized construction projects. After a long battle with the property owners, the last artists

left Tacheles in 2012, making way for a large-scale redevelopment project. In the future, the Tacheles building will be incorporated into the new development as a photography museum, which is supposed to keep the building's history, such as its war damage and the artist interventions, visible to the public (Hilburg, 2020).

In this case study, artists initially looking for an affordable place for their activities became the main actors behind the preservation of urban heritage and the rediscovery of its historical background as well as its opening up to the public. However, in the process of internal institutionalization and increased property speculation on the outside, the former temporary use faced problems of touristification and the loss of its original identity and authenticity. Furthermore, these problems became part of a greater process of gentrification in the surroundings of the reused property.

8.3.3   Case Study 2: Revitalization of Industrial Buildings for Music and Socio-Cultural Projects

This case study investigated three temporary uses in Berlin's Friedrichshain district in the years 2013 and 2014. The following three properties were investigated: A large former railway repair workshop, which was turned into a socio-cultural space with more than 30 different businesses, including concert halls, food stalls, and a theatre (RAW); a music club (Maria); and a sports and music location for young people (YAAM) (Ikeda, 2018).

The Friedrichshain district, particularly, a wide area along the Spree River, was heavily affected by deindustrialization after the fall of the Wall, which led to the closure of factories and railway properties. Another reason for vacant lots and buildings in this district was the construction boom of office buildings in other inner-city districts, such as Mitte, in the early 1990s. Because the inflated growth expectations for Berlin never materialized, a high number of development plans for new office spaces in Friedrichshain remained on hold for several years. This was a fortunate situation for informal users who were looking for an affordable space for temporary use in the inner city.

In the case of RAW, a single location is used by a multitude of individuals and organizations and offers a music school, a theatre, a circus, and night-time venues. Furthermore, through these activities, a closed and unused property in the inner city was made accessible to the public by local actors. In a similar way, the two smaller locations, YAAM and Maria, combine several uses in one location. During the day, YAAM facilitates sports activities, holds occasional market events, and provides food and drinks, and at night, it turns into a music club that generates the necessary revenues to finance its youth and cultural work. Maria, in addition to its main function as a music club and concert location, was used for theatre and other stage performances, art exhibitions, and as a recording studio. In addition, it was important for all three projects that they were located in spacious areas with an industrial

Fig. 8.1 Berghain, a world-famous techno club in a former power plant built in 1953, Berlin. (Note: Image by Mariko Ikeda, 2014, August 26)

character and few residential buildings because they held concerts and other activities that involved noise, which could have led to problems in a residential neighbourhood. Similar examples for temporary uses in vacant industrial buildings in Berlin that have become world-famous music clubs are Tresor and Berghain (Fig. 8.1).

8.3.4   Case Study 3: Economic Evaluation and Gentrification in a Residential Area Through Creative Industries

This case study analyzed the process of gentrification in the Reuter Quarter in the Berlin district of Neukölln in the years 2008–2014 (Ikeda, 2019). The Reuter Quarter is a densely populated residential quarter in the northern part of Neukölln with a substantial historic building stock dating from the early twentieth century. In the 2000s, the quarter was characterized by high unemployment, a high percentage of residents from foreign countries, and a high number of vacant stores and apartments.

Due to this situation, a so-called "Neighbourhood Management", a subordinate project of the national social urban program *Soziale Stadt* (social city), was launched in 2002 by the city government. The project aimed at improving the social environment through German language courses for foreign residents and street festivals to foster the formation of neighbouring communities. In addition to this, a district revitalization program commenced in coordination with a private organization in 2005. The Temporary Use Agency (TUA) was founded in 2005 by an architect and an urban planner. Their first project was to find tenants for some of the 130 vacant stores in Neukölln's Reuter Quarter. First, TUA recruited people who were looking for vacant spaces and supported the contractual negotiations with the owners, realizing 2-year rental contracts with no rent. These contracts had advantages for both sides: The tenants paid no rent but renovated the empty shops by themselves, and the property owners got a new user for the vacant shop who made the place more attractive and liveable, attracting customers, new tenants, and new residents to the area.

In the beginning, the applicants were primarily people related to art, handicrafts, or social projects. The purpose of the program was to encourage district improvement through matching supply and demand for the vacant stores. According to TUA, 56 contracts were formed, and more than 200 jobs were created in the Reuter Quarter between 2005 and 2007. TUA was partly financed by subsidies from Neighbourhood Management, but no subsidies were used for rents or investments for the spaces themselves. The goal was from the beginning to moderate rental agreements between real estate owners and tenants so that they are independent of subsidies. Most of the initial temporary users became permanent users with normal rental agreements after the 2-year contract had ended. The TUA was later renamed Coopolis and coordinated the temporary use of 150 vacant shops in four different neighbourhoods of the northern part of Neukölln. New fashion stores, sewing workshops, galleries, cafes, youth facilities, music clubs, and other venues changed the district's character, making it an attractive area for the creative industries and local initiatives.

8.4   Discussion of the Case Studies

The most important finding of these case studies is that temporary uses can become permanent fixtures and successful businesses that provide employment and a wide range of cultural and social services (SDGs 8 and 11). This was the case in all the analyzed temporary uses. Regardless of their success, case 1 (Tacheles) and case 2 (RAW) also show that as they grew into more mature organizations, the economic situation in the surrounding areas improved and attracted new investors, leading to conflicts with traditional ways of urban development. The artists of Tacheles had to make way for a large-scale redevelopment project. The users of RAW were more fortunate as they were incorporated into future development plans and acknowledged as important cultural and social projects. Furthermore, Tacheles and RAW

exemplify the findings of Baum (2012): The users have become involved in the history and the architecture of the used buildings and even more in the context of the buildings and their environment. In both cases, formerly closed spaces were made available to the public, and their histories were rediscovered and publicized, putting the temporary uses in relation to their surrounding areas and the local communities.

In the first two case studies, the users were actively protecting the utilized buildings from decay by carrying out maintenance and repair work and by greening and beautification activities in the surrounding areas. Therefore, the temporary uses contributed to the realization of SDGs 11 ("sustainable cities and communities") and 12 ("responsible consumption and production") (UN, 2015). Furthermore, by providing affordable spaces for cultural or social activities, work opportunities were created (SDG 8) and the attractiveness of communities was increased.

Moreover, the users themselves generated most of the funding for the repair of the buildings and the improvement of the infrastructure through income-generating events, such as concerts and public readings, selling products and services, or catering. In short, these places did not rely on funding from the local government and were self-sustained operations (SDG 12). Therefore, in addition to their obvious short-term advantages identified in previous studies, temporary uses cannot be ignored as a viable long-term alternative to conventional strategies of urban development and heritage conservation as they are functioning businesses.

Case study 2 also showed that temporary uses, despite their success, face various problems that can threaten their existence. There are ways for the city administration to support temporary uses in such times, for example, by acting as an intermediary in the negotiation process for a renewed rental agreement or by providing a publicly owned property in which the temporary use can continue to operate in the case of the termination of a rental agreement. Therefore, temporary rental agreements, which were often desired in the beginning, became a limiting and problematic factor when the businesses grew and sought to become permanent establishments. The case study also made clear that the administration of Berlin did not have a consistent strategy to integrate these and other temporary uses into their long-term urban planning processes, although temporary uses had been acknowledged by the administration as an important factor for the city as early as 2001 (Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, 2001) and pronounced as a tool for sustainable urban development in 2007 (Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, 2007). The main reason for this lack of consistent strategy was the conflict with the city's original plan for this area to become a newly built large-scale media and office quarter. In practice, the city administration was merely exploiting temporary uses to create a positive "creative" image in times of economic hardship. This finding echoes the difficult relationship between temporary uses and administrative bodies pointed out by Refill (2018).

Case study 3 showed that a temporary use agency is an effective tool for the revitalization of a problematic residential district with a high number of vacant spaces. It allowed local entrepreneurs to establish new businesses with minimal investment, strengthening the local community and economy (SDGs 8 and 11).

Moreover, letting artists, creative entrepreneurs, social projects, and other business operators use vacant spaces for a below-market rent for a limited time protected properties from decay and vandalism until the situation in the district was attractive enough for tenants who could afford usual market prices. This is a temporary use practice favoured by heritage bodies such as English Heritage. However, it was not always necessary to attract new tenants, as many of the temporary uses were successful themselves and therefore could afford increased rent prices after the initial contract ended. The study also showed that this kind of planned revitalization can be a contributing factor to gentrification, making a once undesired quarter attractive for more affluent residents and displacing the original population due to rising rents. In this case, the temporary uses did not ultimately lead to a sustainable community (SDG 11) but a rapidly transforming quarter.

8.5   Conclusion

This paper has shown how temporary uses have been discussed regarding heritage preservation and sustainable urban development. Several previously studied temporary uses in Berlin have then been reconsidered from this perspective. The discussion above clarified the positive aspects of temporary uses for the preservation of vacant historic buildings and highlighted the aspects contributing to the achievement of sustainable development goals 8, 11, and 12. Through temporary uses, vacant old buildings are rediscovered, reutilized, and protected by the users and the spatial and financial scale of conservational activities is often on a small scale. However, those spaces can become "lived spaces" (in the sense of Armand Frémont's *espace vécu*), which are spaces of everyday life and social interrelationships that the users themselves create and are open to the public.

Furthermore, the identified problems could provide guidance for finding better ways to implement temporary uses into sustainable urban development strategies in a post-growth era. Especially in the context of shrinking cities and tighter public budgets, temporary use can become a viable strategy for a less formal and less costly way of utilizing and protecting our urban heritage. Involving grassroots initiatives that carry out voluntary preservation activities offers an additional sustainable way of heritage preservation. The involvement of local communities in heritage protection also makes the users consider the history of their heritage and how it shapes their identities (Fig. 8.2).

Finally, in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the number of insolvent shops, bars, and restaurants due to lack of customers and mounting economic pressure is increasing, and we can expect to find our cities with numerous empty buildings in the near future. These spaces could benefit from temporary uses through opportunities for employment and community building, preserving the urban heritage, and increasing the resilience of communities.
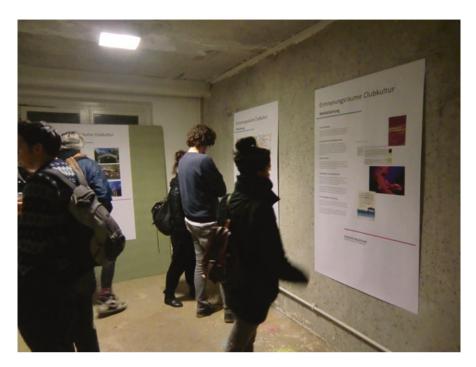
Fig. 8.2 New West, a temporary use project and civic museum themed around club culture in Berlin in an "ordinary building" built after 1970s, Berlin. (Note: Image by Mariko Ikeda, 2014, November 10)

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