Milwaukee's Swing Park: Guerrilla Urbanism at the Intersection of Public Space, Community, and Urban Planning

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ABSTRACT Guerrilla urbanism involves citizen-led bottom-up unsanctioned temporary efforts. This kind of temporary urbanism may offer unique opportunities not possible through traditional planning approaches. This paper is a case study of the Swing Park in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA. It began as an effort to temporarily enliven an area at one end of a pedestrian walkway – the Marsupial Bridge – suspended under a viaduct across the Milwaukee River. What started as an illegal temporary installation of swings made of used tires was embraced physically and emotionally as part of the everyday life of the pedestrian bridge by the local community who wanted the swings to stay. The guerrilla urbanism group found itself in conflict with the City's Department of Public Works over concerns about safety and legal liability, aside from budgetary constraints on permanently upgrading and maintaining the swings. This paper conceptualizes the case study within a three-part framework of public space, community, and urban planning. It examines how the Swing Park has been seen to have both succeeded and failed, while problematizing it within the context of the interdisciplinary literature on temporary urbanism.

KEYWORDS temporary urbanism, guerrilla urbanism, public space, Swing Park, Milwaukee

Introduction

Guerrilla urbanism involves citizen-led bottom-up unsanctioned temporary efforts in urban space, which is used in sometimes unexpected ways, creating unanticipated activities and new meanings in cities (Hou 2020). This kind of temporary urbanism is increasingly recognized as offering unique opportunities not possible through traditional planning approaches. An example is when Rebar, an art and design studio, transformed a metered parking space in San Francisco in 2005 into a temporary parklet. The group fed the meter with coins for two hours and brought in a roll of grass, a potted tree, a bench, and signs welcoming people to the space. Passersby stopped to sit on the bench under the shade of the tree and feel the grass beneath their feet. In response to the tremendous interest from people who wanted to replicate what had been done, Rebar launched the first PARK(ing) Day in 2006. Since then, PARK(ing) Day has become an annual international event on the third Friday of September involving hundreds of inventive parklets on paid metered parking spaces. "The mission

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of PARK(ing) Day is to call attention to the need for more urban open space, to generate critical debate around how public space is created and allocated, and to improve the quality of urban human habitat … at least until the meter runs out!" (PARK(ing) Day 2023).

Another example of temporary urbanism is from Delft in the Netherlands in the 1960s, involving residents frustrated with the lack of response from their city government to complaints about traffic speeding through their neighborhood. One night, some residents took matters into their own hands, quite literally, and tore up portions of their street so that cars would be forced to slow down. With little disruption to everyday life, except for slower traffic, the city government chose to overlook what the residents had done, and the temporarily torn up road surface was replaced with permanent physical features like flower beds and bike racks. Advocates worked to gain formal acceptance for this "woonerf" (living street), and in 1976 regulations were adopted that incorporated the woonerf into national street design standards. Since then, the woonerf has become internationally accepted as a way to design streets to give priority not to cars, but to people to safely walk, play, and bicycle (Lydon and Garcia 2015).

Guerrilla urbanism of the kind that initiated PARK(ing) day and the woonerf also instigated the Swing Park in Milwaukee. The Swing Park began as a guerrilla urbanism effort by beintween, an architecture improvisation group. Under cover of darkness on 9 September 2012, they installed swings made of used tires and donated rope to temporarily enliven an area at one end of a pedestrian walkway – the Marsupial Bridge – suspended under the Holton Street viaduct across the Milwaukee River. But what started as an illegal temporary installation of swings was embraced physically and emotionally as part of the everyday life of the pedestrian bridge and neighborhood by the local community who wanted the swings to stay. So beintween found itself in conflict with the City's Department of Public Works (DPW) over concerns about safety and legal liability, aside from budgetary constraints on permanently upgrading and maintaining the swings. Then, after taking charge of the space, the DPW did not coordinate with beintween, the original architects, or even the Department of City Development.

While significant attention has been paid in the literature to learning from guerrilla urbanism success stories, like PARK(ing) Day and the woonerf, there has been more limited study of temporary urbanism efforts where the outcome received more mixed reviews. The Swing Park offers an opportunity to examine and learn from how the effort has been seen to have both succeeded and failed.

This case study investigates the Swing Park from its illegal temporary beginning, through strong community support to retain it, to the City of Milwaukee responding and making it a permanent legal city park. The case study was based on an exhaustive search of the news media, websites and blogs, and public websites and documents, as well as interviews with individuals involved with the Swing Park, including at beintween and the City of Milwaukee. The study received Institutional Review Board approval.

The next section of this paper is a review of the literature on temporary urbanism of relevance to the Swing Park and guerrilla urbanism, that informs the three-part conceptual framework for the paper of public space, community, and urban planning, and that is then used to examine the Swing Park temporary urbanism effort. Then a discussion of these

findings and some theoretical implications within the context of the reviewed literature and questions raised in that literature is followed by some concluding comments about how the Swing Park has been seen to have both succeeded and failed.

Temporary Urbanism and the Swing Park: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Literature Review

This section reviews the interdisciplinary literature on temporary urbanism in general, and guerrilla urbanism in particular, which is of relevance to the Swing Park in Milwaukee. It establishes the state of knowledge and the questions raised related to temporary urbanism efforts like the Swing Park, and forms the basis for conceptualizing this case study within a framework of public space, community, and urban planning.

A great deal of temporary urbanism has occurred on privately-owned vacant sites, and so much of the literature has tended to concentrate on this kind of real estate. Examples include pop-up shops in commercial properties that have been unoccupied for a while, and pop-up parks on land that lies vacant before redevelopment (Lang Ho 2010; Schwarz and Rugare 2009). With the focus of the owner usually on the exchange value rather than the use value, privately-owned sites are generally viewed as only temporarily vacant during, for example, a downturn in the property market. As such, a temporary use on privately-owned sites is often seen as a way to keep a site warm while the market is cool (Tonkiss 2013: 318).

Pagano (2013: 340) has argued that the persistence of a temporary use depends less on the initial legality of the temporary urbanism effort, and more on the nature of what was attempted in terms of its creativity and the character of the site and its potential to offer new uses for unused or underused urban space; and that the most successful temporary efforts may even be granted permanent legal status. Understandably, land owners can be quite concerned about the "People's Park" paradox that is associated with the risk of allowing a temporary use and then later facing a local community that has enjoyed the temporary space and may oppose redevelopment plans (Lang Ho 2010). A question that this raises in the literature is what happens when an intentionally temporary use becomes permanent?

Less attention has been paid to temporary urbanism on public land. The literature often focuses on popular top-down government-sanctioned temporary efforts. Examples include Times Square in New York where part of Broadway was closed to cars, and tables and chairs added to create a welcome space for pedestrians (Tierney 2016), and the riverbank of the Seine in Paris where sand is trucked in every summer to make temporary beaches as much needed recreational space (Kim 2015).

Even less attention has been paid to bottom-up unsanctioned guerrilla urbanism on public land. Examples include chair-bombing, first documented as a tactic in 2011 by a Brooklyn, New York, collective called DoTank who used upcycled materials, such as shipping pallets, to make Adirondack chairs for public spaces that lacked adequate seating (Ulam 2013); and unauthorized bike lanes created with temporary additions like traffic cones or spray-painted lines on road surfaces to separate bicycles and cars in an effort to make the streets safer for bicyclists. A question that this kind of guerrilla urbanism raises was captured

by Pagano (2013: 340): "Do we embrace trespass, vandalism, and a disregard for zoning and building codes whenever an activist or a group feels that an urban space could be put to better use – and if not, where do we draw the line?"

Yet proponents of temporary urbanism like Overmeyer (2007: 25) argue that temporary uses should become an accepted part of the conventional urban planning system. The argument is that this kind of urbanism could add a more bottom-up, flexible and open element to complement existing top-down large-scale master-planning (Bishop and Williams 2012; Groth and Corijn 2005: 503; Nemeth and Langhorst 2014; Oswalt et al. 2013). Certainly, a number of proponents of temporary urbanism, including Hou (2020: 117), believe that: "The growing acceptance of these practices … creates important openings in the rigid, formalized planning systems for greater flexibility and expedient change". A question raised, then, is how can temporary urbanism be more systematically included in contemporary urban planning? How do urban planners and planning regulations need to adjust, and "can the unplanned be planned, the informal formalized?" (Oswalt et al. 2013: 8).

In this connection, concerns have been raised that when temporary urbanism is incorporated into the conventional urban planning system and sanctioned by city governments, institutionalizing it may hurt more than it helps (Haydn and Temel 2006). Mould's (2014) paper on tactical urbanism raised concerns that many temporary urbanism efforts are being aligned with and coopted into the Creative City strategy and neoliberal policy agenda of some Western governments including the United States. Colomb (2012), for example, found that, while the shift to promoting Berlin as a "creative city" involved integrating temporary uses into mainstream urban planning, only certain types of temporary uses – not too radical or politicized – were valued and coopted.

Moreover, the institutionalization of some temporary urbanism efforts has raised concerns about their assimilation into the wider operation of capitalism and conventional urban planning, despite their beginning outside of and even in reaction against both (Hou 2010, 2020). Groth and Corijn (2005: 522) found that the institutionalization and cooptation of creativity risk negatively impacting the inherent quality of the temporary use itself. And Tonkiss (2013: 318) concluded that bottom-up temporary urbanism efforts "are routinely compromised, frequently co-opted, sometimes corrupted and often doomed". So a question raised is what are the consequences of the institutionalization of guerrilla urbanism efforts?

In addition, incorporating temporary urbanism into the urban planning system raises questions about how local residents, as opposed to planners and architects, typically conceive a space; rather than being concerned with planning questions of a formal nature in relation to what a space should look like, people are generally more concerned with questions of a structural nature in terms of what they would actually do in that space (Krasny 2006). So Nemeth and Langhorst (2014: 149) have argued that the opportunity to use leftover public space for different kinds of temporary activities can empower individuals and communities to assert their "right to the city" and enhance their civic participation and quality of life. Likewise, Crawford (2013: 154) concluded that the realization of temporary activities in leftover public spaces, so much more shaped by lived experience than urban planning regulations, raises important questions about the meaning of participation, citizenship, and democracy. Hou (2010: 15–16) even went so far as to argue that guerrilla urbanism

efforts serve as a "barometer of the democratic well-being and inclusiveness of our present society".

Certainly, some of the literature is quite optimistic about the potential of temporary urbanism, especially on private land where the temporary use is seen as a means to a permanent productive end (Bishop and Williams 2012; Greco 2012). And so a great deal of attention has been paid to the success stories (Haydn and Temel 2006; Oswalt et al. 2013; Schwarz and Rugare 2009). Yet concern has been raised about what happens when a temporary urbanism effort does not have a completely successful result, and what can be learned from failure (Green 2015). This question involves the very nature of temporary urbanism in terms of how it involves experimentation. As Jane Jacobs (1961: 6) recognized: "cities are an immense laboratory of trial and error, failure and success, in city building and city design". And as Arieff (2011: 3) has argued: "No single master plan can anticipate the evolving and varied needs of an increasingly diverse population or achieve the resiliency, responsiveness and flexibility that shorter-term, experimental endeavors can".

But facilitating experimentation requires the urban planning system to be flexible enough to allow more spontaneous bottom-up temporary land uses (Greco 2012; Groth and Corijn 2005; Zelinka and Johnson 2005). In this connection, Beekmans and de Boer (2014: 263) have argued that "spontaneity and temporality are important for ensuring the health of a city: temporary initiatives help to refresh an urban area, infusing it with an energy that may have been displaced or even evaporated altogether". So Pagano (2013: 389) has suggested that city governments should not fixate on land use regulations, and allow a little disorder so that individuals can try small temporary efforts that involve the kind of experimentation on which healthy cities thrive. Instead of adhering to inflexible master plans, city governments could allow some trial and error (Nemeth and Langhorst 2014); and even make some land available for this (Bishop and Williams 2012). "The goal is a do-it-yourself attitude, rather than waiting for planners…which can contribute to a city's development as 'bottom-up' planning instruments, as oppositional instruments to counter traditional urban planning from above" (Temel 2006: 58). And because experimentation usually involves a limited budget, people are more likely to risk failure, which may actually open up greater potential for successful possibilities (Haydn and Temel 2006). At the same time, concerns have been raised about the quality of temporary urbanism being compromised by limited budgets and short time frames.

Yet as Hou (2010: 15) has pointed out, although temporary urbanism efforts may appear small-scale and even insignificant, it is precisely because they do not need major investment or infrastructure that they can allow individuals and communities to contribute to changes in otherwise formal and regulated urban spaces. So although the temporary efforts can be informal and unexpected, they can impact the structure of and interactions in public spaces and create the potential for new relationships, activities, and meanings. For Douglas (2020: 207) this highlights the importance of individual temporary urbanism efforts, however insignificant, combining with multiple others over time; and although remaining to be convinced of the fundamentally transformational potential of temporary urbanism efforts, he believed that they can still make a significant difference "as personally or culturally meaningful actions in and of themselves, also symbolically as challenges to the status

quo that may cause others to stop and think, and perhaps even functionally as small steps in the direction of a better society, or at least better urban space". Yet Iveson (2013: 942) concluded that temporary efforts will not combine into a wider politics of the city or produce a new kind of city unless individuals and communities find ways to connect with each other across the wide variety of temporary urbanism efforts.

Conceptual Framework

In terms of a conceptual framework for this paper, Haydn's (2006: 67–69) three basic ideas provide a basis for a conceptualization where temporary urbanism in general, and the Swing Park in particular, fit at the intersection of public space, community, and urban planning.

First, with respect to public space, certainly there are defined public spaces like city parks throughout a city; and there are traditional views of what public spaces should be, such as the iconic National Mall in Washington, DC. Yet increasingly, the conceptualization of public space is that it is not a fixed entity. Borret (1999: 251), for example, has argued that public space "is no longer the expression of a harmonious consensus, but the enabling site of subcultures, of friction, of the simultaneity of heterogeneous opinions". Haydn (2006: 68) has argued that, within and across boundaries that can be physical and topographical, as well as political, administrative, and legal, but also social and emotional, public spaces can be constructed anew by individuals and communities on the basis of appropriation and negotiation. Hou (2010: 2) has argued that this can "challenge the conventional, codified notion of public and the making of space". Crawford (2013: 151) concluded that, in contrast to normative public spaces that reproduce the existing ideology, what she calls "everyday spaces" can help change the status quo. And without claiming to reflect the totality of public space, guerrilla urbanism efforts can demonstrate an alternative logic of public space while generating new uses and meanings.

Second, in terms of community, public spaces that are temporarily transformed by individuals and communities can offer new expressions of the collective realm in cities. Compared to conventional urban planning, temporary urbanism is more open and inclusive because it allows greater spontaneity and participation (Hou 2010). Iveson (2013: 945) has said of guerrilla urbanism efforts "that their participants are not content with lobbying for a better city sometime in the future, and they often refuse to wait for permission to do things differently". So the temporary use of leftover spaces is seen as a direct response to the perceived neglect of those public spaces and an attempt to enliven them reflecting the importance of the human experience of the community and the life of those spaces (Douglas 2014: 10–11; Hou 2020: 118; Till 2011: 106). "Such temporary uses are often greeted with delight by those who discover them. They provide novelty, surprise, and opportunities for fun and spontaneity. Such a response could be taken as evidence of latent demand for variety in public space, for a public bored with the predictable products of large-scale planned development" (Bishop and Williams 2012: 92).

Schwarz and Rugare (2009: 5) identified a type of temporary user, "young entrepreneurs and hatchers of schemes who use an urban niche as a springboard for the realization of an idea". Overmeyer (2007: 36) coined the term "space pioneers" for the people who discover

and reinvent a site through temporary urbanism, adapting their own efforts to the particular environment and using available resources at minimal cost through upcycling. Groth and Corijn's (2005: 522) study of three cases in Europe, however, found that the tension and conflict between community members and city governments that can be associated with some temporary urbanism efforts, especially unsanctioned ones, highlight the lack of effective democratic participation inherent in the traditional urban planning system. Yet temporary urbanism contains the essence of democracy, given that an imagined temporary space can create social knowledge that provides opportunities for enhanced community life through active participation by the initiators and users of the temporary space (Haydn 2006: 71).

Third, with regard to urban planning, city governments have traditionally been concerned with control rather than facilitation. Attempting to manage the uncertainty and open-endedness of urban change, however, can result in a lack of variety and identity, in contrast to the outcomes from the "continuous editing" of temporary users and uses (Bishop and Williams 2012: 19). Additionally, contemporary urban planning practices are based on the principle of supply and demand, or even supply alone. In contrast, temporary uses tend to be based primarily on demand; and so for urban planning, this requires moving more towards community members who can become participants in the planning of their neighborhood and city through their involvement in temporary uses. But it is necessary to acknowledge that this may not be easy and can involve negotiation, conflict, and even the cooptation of creativity by city governments. Yet in thinking about guerrilla urbanism operating at the intersection of this three-part conceptual framework (Haydn 2006), the focus would be on the potential created when a public space is enhanced and community strengthened as a valuable part of urban planning.

Temporary Urbanism and the Swing Park: Findings

This section examines the findings for the Swing Park using the three-part conceptual framework of public space, community, and urban planning, and in terms of how the nature of this temporary urbanism effort changed from being intentionally ephemeral, to more temporary, and then very permanent.

Public Space

In terms of public space, in 1998, Julilly Kohler, then president of the nearby Brady Street Business Improvement District (BID), envisioned a pedestrian and bicycle pathway – the Marsupial Bridge – suspended under the nearby Holton Street viaduct (Wener 2008). The viaduct was built in 1926 for electric streetcars, and cars and busses have used it since the streetcar lines were removed in the late 1950s (City of Milwaukee, Department of Public Works 2005). Julilly Kohler's idea was that a suspended pedestrian bridge would connect the neighborhoods on each side of the Milwaukee River and help rejuvenate the area. As she put it: "I'm really interested in all the things that help a city renew itself, and I've learned that it has to be done one neighborhood at a time" (quoted in Goodman 2014).

A public-private coalition was formed, spearheaded by the Brady Street BID, which included the mayor at the time, John Norquist, and the city planner, Peter Park (Bamberger 2014). In 2000, more than 25 community meetings were held to gather input on the bridge idea. In 2002, the project secured a federal grant of $2.7 million, plus $650,000 in matching City funds, and additional funding from several public and private organizations (Wener 2008).

LA DALLMAN Architects Inc. were commissioned to design the Marsupial Bridge (La and Dallman 2007). This suspended pedestrian bridge was designed to terminate at its east end in an urban plaza under the Holton Street viaduct on a tiny public space of 0.14 acre. The architects' goal for this urban plaza was to transform the unsafe area under the viaduct into a community gathering space, called the Media Garden, containing seating and an area for a screen or stage for film festivals, drama, music, and dance performances, and a variety of other community events (Picture 1). With limited natural light under the viaduct for plants, the Media Garden could not use conventional landscape design elements, and so the design comprised "light slabs" – internally-lit concrete bench lights – set in light colored crushed local stone, to provide bench seating during the day and create a lighted "moonscape" environment at night (La Dallman 2021).

Picture 1: Movie screening at the Media Garden in 2008 before the beintween swings. Photo courtesy of LA DALLMAN Architects, Inc.

After its completion in early 2006, the Marsupial Bridge was very well received, and used by the community to cross the river on foot and by bicycle. The Media Garden was enjoyed for bike-in movies, music and dance performances, and other community events. The project won a number of architectural design awards (La and Dallman 2007; Horne 2012).

But the Media Garden was negatively affected by the maintenance agreement between the DPW and the Brady Street BID. The DPW replaced the architects' overhead theatrical framing projectors with cheaper-to-install and maintain sodium vapor lights (Bamberger 2014). This changed the feel of the space from elegantly lit, bright, and appealing to dimly-lit, uninviting, and even a bit foreboding at night (Murphy 2014; Wener 2008). The concrete bench lights also became the target of graffiti that needed to be cleaned off frequently (Biesecker 2015; Murphy 2014; Sen 2017). It was this gloomy version of the Media Garden that would be forever changed after the local community embraced the tire swings that were suspended there under the Holton Street viaduct in an unsanctioned, and what was intended to be ephemeral, temporary urbanism installation to enliven the space.

Community

In terms of community, the Swing Park began as a guerrilla urbanism effort to very temporarily enliven the Media Garden for people in the area to enjoy. Keith Hayes of beintween shared his experiences related to the Swing Park in a face-to-face interview with the author. Hayes had graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's School of Architecture in 2012. A class he had taken with Grace La, a partner in LA DALLMAN Architects Inc., had helped inspire him to pursue his master's degree and adopt an iterative design approach involving projects that did not need to be permanent. In addition to his association with the architect, Hayes had formed a connection with the Media Garden as part of the bicycling community who used the space for bike-in movies and other gatherings.

In fall 2012, Hayes was attempting to secure funding for a project, the ARTery, a linear park through two former industrial neighborhoods in Milwaukee that would host community-based art installations, performances, and recreational activities; it included a plan to upcycle used tires into a permeable mesh surface along this former rail corridor (Faraj 2015). At the same time, as part of beintween, Hayes had the idea to use some of the tires in a pop-up park in the space of the Media Garden to give passersby an opportunity for playfulness. He posted on Craigslist for people to come to his home on 9 September at 6:00 p.m. and transport the tires, the hardware and ¾-inch hemp rope donated by Home Depot, to the Media Garden for 8:00 p.m. to install them as swings under cover of darkness.

In terms of its bottom-up ephemeral nature, Hayes admitted that it was an "under-thought-out operation" and that the participants expected to install only a few swings before the authorities arrived and told them to stop. But this group of about 20 people installed eight swings including classic tire swings, bucket swings, and a large bench swing (Picture 2). Even so, with regard to its temporary nature, Hayes did not expect the swings to be there for more than that weekend, especially because they were hung only with rope.

Picture 2: Panorama of the beintween temporary rope swings after they were installed in 2012. Photo courtesy of Willie Fields

When Hayes and some of his beintween group returned on Sunday to check on the swings, it was clear that people were enjoying them. That day too, Hayes first met Julilly Kohler, who was delighted by the swings and became a major supporter of what was increasingly called the Swing Park. As Bamberger (2014) reported: "People swarmed the place. Swings hypnotize kids and anyone else who needs a break from gravity. Have you ever seen a sad person on a swing?"

But the ropes were already beginning to show signs of wear and so Hayes and other members of beintween decided that they needed to take the swings down. But as they began to dismantle the swings, the people enjoying them said: "you're not taking those down are you?" So with regard to the increasingly less temporary nature of the swings, a member of beintween, Willie Fields, a retired contractor, took responsibility for the ongoing maintenance and upgrading of the swings, including replacing the ropes with steel cables, and then chains (Faraj 2015) (Picture 3).

Urban Planning

In terms of the urban planning system, the DPW learned about the swings shortly after they were installed in September 2012 (Reid 2014). Usually when unsanctioned changes are made to a public space like this, the DPW's reaction is not positive; DPW Commissioner Ghassan Korban's "first thought was to take the swings down immediately, but they had become an immediate sensation" (Faraj 2015). Alderman Nik Kovac, whose district included the Swing Park area, was reported as saying: "The initial response and overwhelming popularity of it kind of forced our hand" (Schumacher 2014).

The DPW's main concerns were safety, because the swings had not been installed using its stringent guidelines for playgrounds, and liability, because the swings were hung from public property. An initial inspection by the DPW determined that the swings that Willie Fields had upgraded were very sturdy. Later, however, concerns about safety led the DPW to remove most of the swings during the summer of 2013 (Faraj 2015). Unhappy with the DPW's action, Hayes said that he and beintween removed the remaining couple of swings in protest by early October 2013.

Picture 3: Community theatre in 2013 incorporating into the performance the beintween upgraded steel cable and chain swings. Photo courtesy of Willie Fields

In response to community outcry, a fundraising effort, Save Our Swings, led by a coalition of groups including beintween, NEWaukee, MKE BKE, and the Makerspace, was set up to raise money to install permanent swings (Snyder 2013). At the same time, there was political support for permanently replacing the swings, including from Alderman Kovac (Kovac 2015). It was reported that Alderman Kovac "leaned on the DPW to fix this political situation" (Bamberger 2014). Hayes said that he was approached and agreed to the City taking over the Swing Park; he was asked for a naming suggestion, but by then the Swing Park name had stuck. A resolution by Alderman Kovac was adopted by the City's Common Council in January 2014 to officially take over the Swing Park (Kovac 2015).

The DPW took charge of the space without coordinating with Hayes and beintween, the original architects, or even the Department of City Development (Murphy 2014; Schumacher 2014). The general consensus was that Korban, as the DPW Commissioner, found himself in a difficult situation with pressing safety and liability concerns combined with public outcry to replace the swings without delay. In an interview, he said that the project had been "thrown in his lap without a budget" (Baumberger 2014). So there were no City funds available to hire the original architects, who wanted to be involved, and no time after the swings were removed for the normal design and review process that might have ordinarily included the architects and public review of drawings or models of the planned changes to the Swing Park (Bamberger 2014).

While appreciating that the DPW's day-to-day focus on infrastructure more typically involves the maintenance of streets and sewers, and that there was no intention to destroy the integrity of LA DALLMAN Architects Inc.'s design, what happened next has been put

down to haste, miscommunication, and the use of the wrong equipment (Bamberger 2014). A DPW crew bulldozed many of the Media Garden concrete bench lights to make room for the replacement swings. They installed eleven swings, including four bucket swings and two baby swings, while making the Swing Park accessible for wheelchairs and adding a universally-accessible swing. The DPW also replaced the local crushed stone with what was intended to be a more user-friendly surface of shredded recycled tires (Murphy 2014).

The City held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Swing Park on 23 July 2014 (Schumacher 2014). Attendees included then-Mayor, Tom Barrett, Alderman Nik Kovac, the DPW Commissioner, Ghassan Korban, Julilly Kohler, and Jeremy Fojut of NEWaukee. The City invited beintween in order to recognize their efforts in creating the original swing park and the positive community response to it. Because of their strong connection to the space, Keith Hayes and Willie Fields attended. In his speech, Mayor Barrett, who had previously supported the Marsupial Bridge project as a Congressman, and whose daughters loved the swings, thanked Keith Hayes and beintween. He said that the Swing Park "celebrates the creativity and persistence of our citizens" and that "the people liked them and wanted them back. And the Department of Public Works responded" (Reid 2014) (Picture 4).

Picture 4: Children from the nearby Tamarack Waldorf School enjoying the DPW chain swings during a break from class on a chilly winter day at the Swing Park in 2023; photo taken with permission from their teacher. Photo courtesy of Linda McCarthy

Temporary Urbanism and the Swing Park: Discussion

This section discusses the findings and some theoretical implications within the context of the literature reviewed earlier in this paper and some of the questions raised that relate to the temporary urbanism at the Swing Park.

With regard to the question in the literature about what happens when an intentionally temporary use becomes permanent (Lang Ho 2010; Pagano 2013), more research is needed, including for deliberately ephemeral cases that undergo unanticipated permanent change. While the dichotomy between temporary and permanent has been acknowledged in the literature by a number of researchers (Andres and Yang 2020; Bishop and Williams 2012; Till 2011), most of the temporary urbanism literature focuses on temporary efforts that stay temporary. A theoretical implication from the Swing Park case is that it would be helpful to incorporate a more nuanced conceptualization of the interactions between time and urban space in terms of deepening our understanding of the very nature of "temporary".

With regard to the kind of experimentation associated with the initial guerrilla urbanism at the Swing Park that has been discussed in the literature (Arieff 2011; Green 2015), this type of intentionally temporary effort tends to be associated with a risk of failure as well as opportunities for success that not even Keith Hayes could have envisioned. This case study indicates that, although the process of replacing the temporary swings involved conflict and exclusion, strong community support was enough for the City of Milwaukee to make an illegal, temporary use on a public site legal and permanent, adding a much loved park to the City, even without pre-established urban planning and budgetary arrangements in place (Kovac 2015). A theoretical implication for thinking about temporary urbanism efforts on public land is the need to incorporate the fact that public space is not a fixed entity and static over time. For example, although the space remained public throughout the change from the Media Garden to the beintween swing installation to the establishment of the permanent Swing Park, this public space experienced changes in its users and uses from before to after the swings were installed.

In terms of the question in the literature about the consequences of the institutionalization of guerrilla urbanism efforts (Groth and Corijn 2005; Haydn and Temel 2006; Tonkiss 2013), the Swing Park fits with Colomb's (2012) findings for Berlin that only temporary uses that are not too radical or politicized tend to be coopted by city governments. The Swing Park guerilla urbanism effort was not intended as a revolutionary or politically extreme statement, and so what drove the City's response was the need to address the community outcry at losing something they had embraced and enjoyed. As such, Mould's (2014) concern, that many temporary urbanism efforts are being aligned with and coopted into the Creative City strategy and neoliberal policy agenda of some Western governments including the United States, does not fit with what happened at the Swing Park. The temporary swings were replaced by permanent ones by the DPW in response to community demand, and are an off-the-beaten-path hidden gem tucked under the viaduct, mostly known and enjoyed by local residents of all ages and backgrounds (Benjamin 2016; Kumer 2018). As such, a theoretical implication for thinking about temporary urbanism efforts is that variations among different local contexts and cases need to be incorporated into our conceptualizations.

However, the institutionalization of the Swing Park put beintween and the fundraising effort in conflict with the DPW. As reported in Bamberger (2014), Hayes was informed that he was not a park designer, and because the DPW was liable, it would take over responsibility for the space. So although the ribbon-cutting ceremony communicated a positive political outcome, ultimately, Hayes' initial conceptualization was coopted and subsumed into the formal planning system as something forever associated with him and beintween despite their being excluded and having no input whatsoever into the permanent version.

So, given that a great deal of attention has already been paid to the success stories, which are important to study (Haydn and Temel 2006; Oswalt et al. 2013; Schwarz and Rugare 2009), the literature would also benefit from having more attention paid to cases where the outcome has been more mixed. With regard to the theoretical implications: "Studying less than completely successful cases offers insights and lessons learned that the many success stories in the literature may not" (McCarthy 2020: 226).

In terms of the questions raised in the literature about how to include temporary urbanism more systematically in contemporary urban planning, how do urban planners and planning regulations need to adjust, and "can the unplanned be planned, the informal formalized?" (Oswalt et al. 2013: 8). The answer may be, with great difficulty, at least based on the evidence from the Swing Park. On the one hand, a positive spin came from Alderman Kovac (2015): "It's hard to plan for this kind of magic … The original swing park was an excellent example of the way a grassroots idea can capture a neighborhood's imagination". On the other hand, DPW Commissioner Korban felt that beintween had not gone through the correct channels (Bamberger 2014), and even Alderman Kovac (2015) admitted that: "The swing park belonged to everyone and no one, but someone had to take responsibility for safety in that space". And while the unplanned informal version was coopted by the City and planned and formalized, the end result involved significant damage to the Media Garden, and beintween and the original architects being excluded from participation in the planning of the permanent version of the Swing Park.

And while the Swing Park may be associated with some shift in thinking about temporary urbanism in Milwaukee, there has been no proactive change by the City to adapt its policies to encourage temporary uses. Moreover, it is not encouraging what the DPW Commissioner was reported as saying he learned from his involvement in the Swing Park: "You don't hang something from a viaduct without permission, that's not the proper way of doing things" (Bamberger 2014). So although there may be some greater awareness of the positives of temporary urbanism as a result of the Swing Park, such as community engagement, there likely remains limited room for maneuver for temporary urbanism efforts in Milwaukee; also given that many community members who use the Swing Park on a regular basis are only aware of the joyful experience they have there and are not even aware that it began as a temporary guerrilla urbanism effort in the first place. So in terms of Gerend's (2007: 27) hope that "a shift in thinking is likely, as more planners, residents, and businesses experience the excitement of attractive temporary uses", there remains a long way to go in this shift in Milwaukee based on evidence from the Swing Park.

As such, with regard to Tonkiss' (2013: 313–314) categorization of approaches to temporary urbanism by city governments, Milwaukee fits in the "permissive" category,

in which a city government does not necessarily seek to encourage temporary urbanism, but does not exclude these efforts either. This category is better than the "proscription" category, in which city governments endeavor to prohibit temporary urbanism altogether, but is not as promising as the "positive" category, in which city governments try to create the conditions for temporary urbanism to flourish. This "positive" category relates to Canelas and Baptista's (2021: 279) argument that guerrilla urbanism can best be supported by a counterpart, guerrilla governance, where local governments "prioritize creative, small-scale solutions, pooling resources and increasing coordination across public entities and community initiatives". As such, a theoretical implication from the Swing Park case is that there is a need to incorporate into our conceptualizations variations in the reasons why a city government or an individual government department may support temporary urbanism efforts or not; including uneven levels of supportiveness, such as by the Mayor and Alderman versus the DPW in the case of the Swing Park.

Yet in terms of the question raised in the literature about the potential for the informal and erratic nature of temporary urbanism to contribute to destabilizing the structure of and relationships in official public space and create the possibility for new interactions, meanings, and functions (Douglas 2020; Hou 2010), only quite limited progress in this direction may have been made by the Swing Park. And to the extent that this kind of change will occur only if guerrilla urbanists can find ways to connect with each other across the wide variety of temporary urbanism efforts via networking so that multiple individual efforts add up to bigger change (Holloway 2010; Iveson 2013), certainly Hayes and beintween continued to undertake temporary urbanism efforts that included collaboration, such as with community groups, the City of Milwaukee, and NEWaukee on the ARTery using Kickstarter funds.

Of relevance is the fact that some case studies of temporary urbanism efforts on privately-owned land have understandably juxtaposed the community and private developer as the two opposing sides because the community is concerned with the use value of the site versus the developer's concern for the site's exchange value (Lang Ho 2010). An insight for theorizing temporary urbanism efforts in public spaces like the Swing Park is that important differences of opinion may exist within, as well as between, stakeholder groups and that these need to be incorporated into analyses, including in this case, the different reaction of the DPW compared to that of elected politicians like the Mayor and local Alderman.

Finally, there is the question raised in the literature about guerrilla urbanism and whether it is acceptable to embrace trespass, vandalism, and a disregard for urban planning, and if so, where the line should be drawn. Some scholars like Pagano (2013: 340–341) have concluded that although guerrilla urbanism may initially involve an end-run around the democratic process, in general, these efforts can help identify and take action to address deficits in the democratic process, while strengthening communities and reinforcing democracy by involving citizens in contributing to change at the grassroots level. And in fact, the small temporary urbanism effort at the Swing Park resulted in community engagement and demand for a permanent version. So with regard to the Swing Park being a "barometer of the democratic well-being and inclusiveness of our present society" (Hou 2010: 15–16), the evidence indicates that, while the process to make the swings permanent could have been

much more collaborative and inclusive as well as less destructive, the embracing of the Swing Park by the community who wanted to keep it did not go unheard in terms of this temporary urbanism effort helping to empower individuals and the community to assert their "right to the city".

Concluding Comments

These concluding comments address how the Swing Park has been seen to have both succeeded and failed. On the one hand, in terms of success, from the perspective of the community and beintween, the original guerrilla urbanism installation of the swings in 2012 was completely positive. There was surprise and delight for adults as well as children who could go very high on the rope swings installed by beintween. And even after the DPW replaced the swings using heavy chains for safety, preventing the swings from going so high, they remain today a source of pure enjoyment for everyone who uses them. So although the process of replacing the swings by the City was fraught and exclusionary, as well as destructive, it also reflected the surprisingly successful community and government support for the swings, with the DPW coming up with the unbudgeted $26,000 needed to make the Swing Park permanent within a short time frame. The permanent version of the Swing Park, which is so beloved by the community, captures the unexpected nature of the community reaction that dictated a permanent outcome for something that beintween initially thought of as temporary, and that the City did not initially think of at all.

In addition to community members, many others like Julilly Kohler, and Jeremy Fojut of NEWaukee, view the Swing Park as a success. Likewise Alderman Nik Kovac (2015) reported that: "The swing park is a wonderful example of a neighborhood taking ownership in activating its every nook and cranny – the kind of urban pioneering that allows Milwaukee to continue to reinvent itself as a city". A number of commentators agreed, including Dave Reid (2014) of *Urban Milwaukee*, who reported on the ribbon-cutting ceremony, concluding that: "This is a sweet story of urban activism".

The Swing Park was nominated for a MANDI (Milwaukee Award for Neighborhood Development Innovation) award by the non-profit Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) in 2015, explaining: "After a local group, in a 'guerrilla act,' revived an underutilized public space under Holton Street viaduct by building a Swing Park, the City of Milwaukee responded by creating a permanent version of the popular park" (LISC 2015).

The initial guerrilla urbanism effort of adding swings to the Media Garden can perhaps be viewed as a small part of wider urban change through temporary urbanism. As Holloway (2010: 11) put it: "In this world in which radical change seems to be unthinkable, there are already a million experiments in radical change, in doing things in a quite different way". And, in fact, Keith Hayes said himself that he sees his ongoing temporary urbanism efforts, including his subsequent collaborative government-sanctioned temporary activities with the City of Milwaukee on the ARTery, as part of a larger process of beneficial urban change.

On the other hand, the original architects, some reporters, and the DPW maintained that beintween should not have transformed the space without prior approval (Bamberger 2014; Horne 2013; Faraj 2015; Murphy 2014; Schumacher 2014). In addition, one failure

in the process of replacing the temporary swings with permanent ones included the DPW bulldozing many of the Media Garden concrete bench lights and keeping the cheaper, less inviting lighting. As well as the original architects being excluded, it has been estimated that the value of what was bulldozed by the DPW was equivalent to about $250,000 (Bamberger 2014). In terms of the experience of the Swing Park after its reopening, the swings bring joy even if they do not go as high as they once did. The shredded recycled tires were a user-friendly surface that appeared to be in keeping with the upcycling of the tires used for the swings, but they were too dark for the space under the viaduct and bits of tire ended up being tracked throughout the neighboring area, creating a mess (Bamberger 2014). The DPW's solution of using sand instead has been a much better choice.

The DPW process to replace the temporary swings was also problematical because it excluded beintween from participation. And while Keith Hayes had originally intended to install the swings very temporarily and walk away, his vision was coopted by the City and he is now forever associated with the permanent version of the Swing Park, and the damage to the Media Garden, despite having no input whatsoever into either.

So what about another guerrilla urbanism effort by Keith Hayes and beintween? Hayes said that based on unofficial advice he was given by one City official, if beintween wanted to try something like this again, they should not ask for official permission from the City because the answer might have to be no. So as the saying goes, it's easier to ask for forgiveness than get permission!

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