Safeguarding of Interim Urban Space: A Review of Practitioner Knowledge

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This report synthesizes current practitioner knowledge on urban safety in transitional or interim urban spaces—sites often characterized by temporary use, fragmented governance and regulatory ambiguity. Developed as part of the research project Safeguarding Urban Interim Spaces (2025–2027), the report examines how institutions across global, national and local levels define, govern and implement safety in flexible urban settings. It focuses on actors and frameworks most relevant to European and Swiss contexts, including supranational organizations (UN-Habitat, OSCE, EFUS), national networks (DEFUS, FFSU, SACN, NNSC, SSV), and innovation platforms (IcARUS, REFILL, ZORA, C40).

The review reveals a fragmented yet evolving field. Institutions vary in how they define urban safety—from crime prevention and surveillance to broader frameworks of spatial justice, resilience and co-production. While some offer structured tools (e.g. safety audits, risk profiling), others operate through pilot projects or advisory frameworks. Notably, only a limited number of institutions explicitly address transitional urban conditions. Where they do, tools are often indirect—emphasizing stakeholder engagement, participatory governance or informal oversight rather than direct regulation.

Across all levels, a normative body of practitioner knowledge is emerging—promoting values like inclusion, adaptability and shared responsibility. Yet major gaps remain. Implementation depends heavily on local champions and funding cycles. Evaluation is inconsistent and responsibilities in temporary contexts are rarely formalized. Legal uncertainty and institutional silos continue to limit adoption in dynamic urban areas.

The report concludes that safeguarding safety in interim spaces requires clearer role allocation, robust tools and long-term integration into planning systems. It provides an empirical foundation for cities seeking to govern safety under conditions of spatial fluidity and regulatory fragmentation.

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1. Introduction: Security Challenges in Intermediary Urban Spaces

Intermediary urban spaces often emerge in temporarily unoccupied areas. These include vacant lots, former industrial sites and properties awaiting redevelopment. In recent years, cities have come to see their potential—not only for cultural and social engagement, but also as tools of adaptive urban planning. Managed well, such spaces can host creative uses, foster community presence and reactivate underused parts of the city (Tonkiss, 2013; Oswalt 2013, Dovey, 2014).

Yet, as their presence grows, so do concerns around safety. The temporary status of these environments frequently leads to unclear governance, leaving responsibility for security poorly defined. Issues such as vandalism, squatting and unauthorized access may arise, especially where oversight is limited. Security challenges often stem from fragmented responsibilities among owners, users and public authorities, as documented in Swiss and international cases (Bürgin, n.d.; Bürgin 2010). While presented as inclusive, these projects can actually displace local communities, enforce precarious participation and normalize inequality through short-term, experimental planning strategies (Ferreri, 2021).

At the same time, temporary urban uses can strengthen public safety by creating visibility, encouraging informal surveillance and generating social trust. Unlike long-established urban areas, which rely on embedded infrastructure and stable planning routines, intermediary spaces may require more flexible governance approaches. Their transient and improvised character can both enable and complicate security efforts. As Madanipour (2018) notes, temporality is both a chance and a constraint—it opens space for experimentation but also exposes new challenges in control, vulnerability and the legitimacy of redevelopment processes.

Despite growing attention to temporary urbanism, the security dimension remains underexplored in both academic and practitioner contexts. What exactly distinguishes the safety needs of intermediary spaces from those of formalized urban areas? What strategies are available to mitigate risks and who provides them? This report forms part of a larger research project embedded in the public administration of the Canton of Basel-Stadt, financed by Fondation Botnar. Running from 2025 to 2027, the project includes not only this review of practitioner knowledge on urban safety in transitional spaces, but also in-depth empirical case study work in Switzerland and beyond. It aims to identify actionable strategies to ensure that temporary urban uses are safe, inclusive and oriented toward the common good. The report partially responds to those questions by reviewing practitioner knowledge on urban safety in transitional contexts.

Specifically, it draws from institutional reports, operational toolkits and policy documents developed by global, national and local actors. The goal is not to evaluate specific projects, but to map the state of practitioner knowledge: what guidance is available, what frameworks exist and how are these applied to temporary or flexible urban spaces? The mapping presented here is selective and deliberately focused on institutional frameworks relevant to the project's scope. It prioritizes actors and networks operating in Europe, Switzerland and other Western contexts. Organizations and institutional strategies in other regions—particularly Latin America and Asia—are not covered at this stage, although they may offer valuable insights for future comparative work. While the accompanying academic literature review focuses on theoretical debates and scholarly findings, this report complements it by looking at the policy side. It does so with the assumption that an international and inter-scalar body of practitioner knowledge is emerging—one that seeks to define what good urban security governance is. These frameworks are not merely technical; they are shaped by underlying normative assumptions about safety, inclusion and the role of the city. This makes it all the more important to understand what kinds of principles, values and strategies are being promoted across scales. The report brings together insights from UN agencies, European and national networks and local governance initiatives, including Swiss examples, to trace how safety is governed across scales.

The chapters that follow first map the institutional landscape of urban security, from international organizations to municipal practice. They then identify key governance tools, assess gaps and tensions in application and synthesize practical insights for cities engaging with temporary urbanism. In doing so, the report aims to support more deliberate, context-aware approaches to security in spaces that are often overlooked by traditional planning.

2. Institutional Landscape and Key Contributions

Urban security is no longer solely the domain of police departments or emergency services. Across Europe and globally, a growing number of institutions—ranging from UN agencies to national networks and experimental city platforms—are shaping how security is conceptualized, governed and implemented. These actors differ not only in scale and mandate, but also in how they define insecurity, what tools they develop and how their work addresses the security-related challenges of the urban, which includes intermediary urban spaces.

This chapter provides a structured mapping of key institutions involved in urban safety governance, with a specific focus on their relevance for temporary and transitional spaces. It groups actors into three overlapping domains: supranational

frameworks, which offer normative principles and strategic visions, national and regional networks, which translate these visions into operational tools, governance mechanisms and legal templates, such as innovation platforms and local design labs, which test adaptive safety strategies on the ground, often in partnership with municipalities and communities. The goal is to understand how these bodies shape practitioner knowledge, what types of interventions they promote and to what extent their tools have the potential to be applied to the informal, dynamic and often under-regulated settings that define intermediary urbanism. By distinguishing between levels of governance, thematic focus and tool orientation, this mapping lays the groundwork for a more critical interpretation in the following analytical chapter (3.).

2.1 Supranational Urban Security Networks: UN-Habitat, OSCE & EFUS

Urban safety has gained visibility in international policy agendas, with supranational organizations offering strategic frameworks that influence national and local governance. While these institutions rarely provide directly implementable tools, they shape how cities conceptualize safety and structure their approaches to urban risks. This section reviews three key actors: UN-Habitat, the OSCE and the European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS). UN-Habitat has positioned urban safety as a fundamental component of sustainable development. Its System-Wide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements (2019) promote multi-level governance and participatory planning, emphasizing prevention, spatial design and community engagement. Developed as a normative framework for UN agencies and local governments, the document outlines principles such as inclusion, risk reduction and co-production of safety. It is grounded in a rights-based, preventive philosophy that views safety as integral to sustainable urban development. While it does not directly address intermediary or temporary spaces, its emphasis on adaptable, inclusive and place-based strategies makes it relevant for contexts where formal governance is limited and spatial uses are fluid. These principles align with broader UN development goals and advocate for inclusive safety frameworks rather than enforcement-driven models. Earlier work such as the extensive "Enhancing Urban Safety and Security Report" (2007) identified three persistent challenges in cities—crime and violence, tenure insecurity and environmental hazards.

These risks are frequently concentrated in transitional or intermediary spaces, where institutional presence is limited and oversight is fragmented. UN-Habitat recommends planning-based solutions, rights-based governance and inclusive urban design as tools to mitigate such vulnerabilities. While the report does not frame

these spaces explicitly as intermediary, its focus on spatial marginality and fragmented governance offers a conceptual bridge—though its recommendations operate largely at a macro-policy level and are only partially grounded in empirics, limiting their direct applicability to specific, temporary or informally evolving contexts. Likewise normative, a more recent reference, the "UN Resolution on Safer Cities and Human Settlements" (2023), articulates five guiding principles: local leadership, vertical coordination, co-governance, design for rights-based urban safety and ethical digital innovation. These principles mean to inform long-term planning and infrastructure decisions, though operational guidance remains limited. The "Safer Cities Programme", launched in 1996, translated these principles into municipal pilot projects. Initiatives included community policing, lighting upgrades, mixed-use zoning and youth engagement. While not focused explicitly on intermediary spaces, the program encouraged cities to link safety with urban transformation agendas, which may have some relevance for the application in transitional contexts where formal plans are not yet in place (UN-Habitat, n.d.; 2007; 2019; 2023).

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has historically concentrated on national and regional conflict prevention, but has expanded its agenda to include urban settings. The 2017 Security Days Conference on Inclusive and Sustainable Cities reflected a growing recognition of cities as governance actors. However, OSCE's contribution remains mostly discursive. Its publications emphasize inclusivity, coordination and trust-building but do not offer transferable safety tools or implementation templates. As such, its relevance to intermediary urban areas lies primarily in promoting normative alignment across borders rather than operational capacity (OSCE, 2017).

The European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS) supports cities and regions across Europe by connecting local actors with European institutions and fostering shared frameworks for urban safety. As coordinator of the Urban Agenda Partnership on Security in Public Spaces, EFUS has helped shape policy recommendations that emphasize participation, prevention and multi-level collaboration. Its Security, Democracy and Cities manifesto—first published in 2017 and revised in 2021—advocates a co-production model for urban safety that prioritizes prevention over enforcement and links security to inclusive public space design, anti-discrimination policies and community-oriented policing (EFUS, 2021a–e). EFUS promotes trust building between residents, law enforcement and planners, and encourages community-based practices such as public safety audits and joint diagnostics. It supports knowledge transfer through pilot projects, thematic working groups and training sessions. However, many of its resources are only shared within member networks and operational tools are often embedded in local projects or peer exchange formats, which require contextual adaptation.

Supranational frameworks provide initial orientation for cities dealing with safety challenges, especially in under regulated or transitional contexts. Their emphasis on prevention, inclusion and co-production aligns conceptually with the flexible and participatory governance often needed in intermediary spaces. In addition, they tend to approach urban security through holistic lenses, linking it to themes such as resilience, social cohesion and spatial justice. However, the implementation gap remains a limiting factor. Guidelines from actors such as UN-Habitat and EFUS frequently outline overarching principles without providing detailed strategies for operationalization in fragmented governance settings or within temporary urban uses. Moreover, access to resources and institutional commitment often constitute prerequisites for uptake, which can restrict applicability—particularly in smaller municipalities or among informal actors. These limitations highlight the importance of national and local networks, which are examined in the next section.

2.2 National Urban Security Networks: DEFUS, FFSU, SACN, NNSC, SSV

National urban security networks often align with supranational frameworks but primarily develop context-specific tools and practices rooted in local governance realities. They operate at the intersection of formal governance, administrative capacity and locally embedded safety needs. This section examines how different national and regional actors—working within diverse political and legal environments—address urban safety, and considers the extent to which their approaches may be applicable to transitional or intermediary urban spaces.

The German-European Forum for Urban Security (DEFUS), as EFUS's national chapter, has developed tools that support municipalities in implementing preventive safety strategies. A central instrument is the DEFUS-Monitor, a standardized yet flexible methodology that combines surveys, neighborhood walks and participatory diagnostics to identify perceived vulnerabilities in public space (DEFUS, 2016). It allows cities to tailor interventions based on localized concerns while maintaining a degree of comparability across sites. Its relevance for intermediary spaces lies in its modular structure, which can be applied in areas where formal infrastructure is limited or where spatial conditions are rapidly changing. However, the tool's reliance on subjective perceptions may also reinforce dominant fears or obscure systemic exclusions if not interpreted critically. DEFUS complements its instruments with peer learning events and collaborative platforms, facilitating the transfer of practice between municipalities.

The German Congress on Crime Prevention (Deutscher Präventionstag, DPT) also plays a role in national-level knowledge exchange. Although not focused exclusively on urban safety, it provides a platform for municipalities, researchers and

civil society to share practical strategies. Its annual congresses and publications occasionally address temporary use contexts or neighborhood-level interventions, making it a supplementary source of practitioner knowledge.

The French Forum for Urban Security (FFSU) emphasizes the integration of safety into formal administrative structures. Its promotion of Contrats Locaux de Sécurité et de Prévention de la Délinquance (CLSPD) enables structured cooperation among police, local authorities, social services and civil society. The FFSU supplements these frameworks with legal guidance, diagnostics and training, embedding safety concerns within recognized planning routines (FFSU, n.d.). This formalization may offer lessons for intermediary spaces where temporary uses intersect with regulatory ambiguity. However, the model assumes a degree of institutional capacity and continuity that may not be available in more fluid governance settings.

In South Africa, the South African Cities Network (SACN) addresses high levels of urban violence through strategic guidance and policy coordination. Rather than offering discrete tools, SACN provides planning frameworks, longitudinal data, and practice-oriented resources to clarify responsibilities and support long-term institutional capacity (SACN, n.d.; SACN, 2024). Its approach is grounded in evidence-based governance and supports the integration of safety into broader urban development goals. Particular emphasis is placed on cross-sector collaboration and adaptive planning in contexts where informal settlements, infrastructure deficits, or service gaps challenge conventional safety models. This makes SACN's work partially relevant for transitional urban spaces, where flexible coordination and shared responsibility are often needed. While its guidance is practice-oriented, it primarily operates at a higher strategic level and requires local adaptation for implementation.

In the United States, urban safety governance is less centralized. The National Network for Safe Communities (NNSC), based at John Jay College, exemplifies a practice-oriented approach. Its Group Violence Intervention (GVI) model focuses on place-based strategies developed in collaboration with communities, law enforcement and service providers (NNSC, 2016; 2017). These interventions are typically applied in vulnerable micro-locations, with flexible responses tailored to changing local dynamics. NNSC's approach is grounded in implementation experience rather than standardized replication, which may make it adaptable for intermediary spaces that lack formal oversight or require agile coordination.

In Switzerland, the Swiss Cities Association (SSV) and EBP have developed the report Sichere Schweizer Städte 2025, based on work with 33 cities. It presents a strategic framework for urban safety built around cross-sectoral integration, scenario planning and coordinated risk profiling (Schweizerischer Städteverband &

EBP, 2013). It addresses both physical infrastructure and social conditions, highlighting risks such as youth-related violence, vandalism and perceived disorder. While the report includes methodological templates for municipal self-assessment, its emphasis lies on high-level planning coherence rather than detailed implementation. The framework is conceptually transferable but assumes consistent administrative engagement.

Together, these national frameworks show how urban safety is framed and operationalized within different governance settings. Structured tools like the DEFUS Monitor or SSV risk profiles rely on stable institutional contexts, long-term coordination and formal planning processes. In contrast, networks like NNSC or SACN operate in more fragmented environments, emphasizing flexibility, local adaptation and informal collaboration. For intermediary urban spaces—where planning is often improvised, regulatory clarity may be lacking and user groups shift frequently—both models present challenges. Structured approaches may be too rigid, while adaptive ones may lack durability or evaluability.

2.3 Innovation Platforms: Icarus, REFILL, C40, ZORA

Beyond supranational guidelines and national safety networks, a third group of actors operates at the interface of practice, experimentation and policy transfer. These innovation platforms—emerging from EU projects, research consortia, climate governance networks or design collectives—are characterized by flexibility, co-productive orientation and localized implementation. This section examines four platforms—IcARUS, REFILL, C40 and ZORA—that develop, test and disseminate tools to address urban insecurity, particularly in transitional or temporary contexts. Their work illustrates how security governance is being reshaped through iterative design, tactical interventions and participatory planning. Compared to national or supranational actors, these platforms engage more directly with implementation, offering more adaptable and grounded methods such as context-sensitive instruments. While each platform follows a different pathway, they all aim to translate principles into practice through adaptive tools such as co-creation methodologies, legal frameworks or diagnostic systems.

The EU-funded IcARUS project (Innovative Approaches to Urban Security), coordinated by EFUS since 2020, brings together six European cities—Lisbon, Nice, Riga, Rotterdam, Stuttgart and Turin—to apply existing knowledge on urban safety in practical contexts. IcARUS promotes cross-sector learning, co-production and context-sensitive adaptation. Its focus is explicitly operational: In Rotterdam, interventions in a transitional industrial area combined spatial redesign with social outreach; in Stuttgart, youth participation informed a local safety partnership targeting public space (IcARUS, n.d.-a). These tools are co-developed with municipal staff,

civil society and law enforcement. The project's "Inventory of Practices", an open-access digital platform, compiles these examples, allowing cities to benchmark, adapt and transfer interventions across contexts (IcARUS, n.d.-b). The emphasis is on usability, iterative learning and collaborative development.

Another practitioner platform, the C40 Cities network, although primarily focused on climate governance, indirectly supports urban safety through its emphasis on activating underused public spaces. Its Tactical Urbanism Toolkit (2020) and 2021 Knowledge Hub guide on temporary use outline how short-term interventions—such as pop-up parks, mobile markets or community hubs—can improve social cohesion and enhance perceived safety (C40 Cities, 2020; 2021). The toolkit explicitly frames tactical urbanism as a tool for addressing both real and perceived safety issues. It furthermore provides a phased implementation process that includes planning, design, monitoring and ongoing management. The strategy emphasizes context-sensitive design, inclusive engagement and iterative adaptation. While framed within a resilience agenda, these actions might be relevant for situational crime prevention principles by increasing informal surveillance and public visibility. The resources highlight the enabling role of municipalities, particularly in zoning flexibility, casting cities as adaptive governance actors. Although C40 does not offer a dedicated security framework, its toolkits function as operational guides that intersect with safety agendas in temporary and evolving public spaces. The Knowledge Hub also serves as a curated entry point to broader networks and partner initiatives, including municipal programs such as Vancouver's tactical urbanism strategies, which may offer more grounded examples and implementation pathways. While not all referenced materials are produced by C40 itself, the platform facilitates cross-referencing and adaptation by cities seeking practical guidance.

The REFILL network, part of the URBACT III programme (2015–2018), brought together cities experimenting with the temporary use of vacant properties. Led by Ghent and including Bremen, Riga, Helsinki and Nantes, REFILL explored how temporary uses could be embedded in official planning systems. Its central contribution was to shift the perception of such uses from informal exceptions to structured governance strategies. The network provided legal and administrative support for municipalities seeking to integrate temporary projects while retaining flexibility and oversight (URBACT, 2018). By framing temporary use as a governance instrument for spatial transitions, REFILL contributed to expanding the planning toolkit for cities working in uncertain or interim conditions. The associated URBACT Toolbox reinforces this approach by offering cities a suite of practical resources—including planning templates, stakeholder engagement tools, legal guidance and video tutorials—to support participatory and phased urban interventions. While not focused on security per se, several tools, such as the stakeholder eco-

system map or coherence checklist, promote inclusive design and informal oversight, which may indirectly contribute to safer intermediary urban environments (URBACT, n.d.).

The Zentrum öffentlicher Raum (ZORA) contributes a Swiss perspective grounded in localized planning cultures and participatory design. Rather than operating as a broad network, ZORA focuses on neighborhood-scale interventions that prioritize community involvement in safety-related planning. Its 2008 publication on public participation presents specific engagement methods for involving residents in shaping their environment, positioning this participation as central to legitimate and effective urban safety (ZORA, 2008). The Spaceshaper-toolkit, co-developed with the UK's Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), offers a framework for evaluating public space quality through workshops, spatial analysis and user surveys (ZORA, 2009). Although access to the official toolkit is now limited, it continues to be applied in Swiss and German cities. In its 2011 report "Open Space: An Asset Without a Champion?" ZORA addresses a recurring challenge in intermediary spaces: unclear mandates and fragmented responsibilities. The report advocates collaborative governance involving public authorities, civil society and private actors to secure long-term stewardship of open space (ZORA, 2011). Compared to platforms like DEFUS or EFUS, ZORA is less concerned with crime prevention and more focused on the social, procedural and spatial dimensions of safety. Its participatory methods are especially suited to under regulated or transitional sites where formal oversight is minimal or absent.

Together, these innovation platforms broaden the practical and conceptual approaches available for managing safety in transitional urban environments. IcARUS focuses on applying existing safety knowledge through co-designed interventions with municipal staff, law enforcement and community groups, producing an open-access inventory of practices. C40 promotes tactical urbanism as a means to enhance perceived safety through short-term, participatory spatial interventions. REFILL reframes temporary use as a legitimate component of planning systems and offers tools—via the URBACT Toolbox—that support inclusive design, stakeholder engagement and iterative project development. ZORA, in turn, contributes grounded methods for participatory planning and spatial evaluation, emphasizing the social and procedural dimensions of safety in under regulated spaces. Despite differing origins and institutional scales, these platforms share an emphasis on pilot-based learning, stakeholder involvement and context-sensitive implementation. However, their broader applicability depends on the extent to which such practices can be integrated into formal planning routines—particularly in cities where governance responsibilities are unclear, planning capacities are limited or spatial transitions remain contested.

3. Analysis of Practitioner Networks

Building on the institutional mapping developed in Chapter 2, this chapter provides a structured comparison of how selected practitioner organizations conceptualize and address urban safety, particularly in transitional and intermediary contexts. The table below synthesizes findings from sixteen institutions analytical dimensions, including definitions of security, types of insecurity addressed, accessibility of outputs, empirical grounding and relevance for temporary urban uses. This comparative overview highlights patterns and gaps across different scales and governance settings.

Institution	Traction/ Policy Integration	Types of Security Recognized	Accessibility	Spatial Focus	Evidence Type	General Security Recommendations	Relevance for Temporary Urban Use	Source
UN-Habitat– SaferCities Programme	Integrated into UN-Habitat's urban policy toolkit; used in city safety audits and global guidelines.	Social, spatial	Public	General urban public spaces – not specific	Multi-site implementation experience, supplemented by policy reviews and stakeholder-based participatory assessments. Grounded in practice, with some case documentation.	Advocates holistic, human-centered safety policies anchored in inclusive governance, urban planning and data use.	Temporary urban uses can benefit from participatory safety audits, design interventions (e.g., lighting, accessibility) and governance tools fostering community ownership.	https://unhabitat.org
UN-Habitat– Enhancing Urban Safety and Security Report	Cited in UN global frameworks; influences national-level safety and disaster policies.	Crime, spatial	Public	Urban areas in general – focus on crime and insecurity; not space-type specific.	Synthesis of global-level policy research, with empirical references from secondary sources and UN databases. Conceptual with selected illustrations.	Identifies crime, tenure insecurity and disasters as core risks; promotes prevention via urban design and social inclusion.	Temporary uses can mitigate local risk through responsive design, inclusive governance and linkages to broader resilience planning.	https://unhabitat.org
Her City Toolbox (UN-Habitat)	Used in youth-centered planning by cities; adapted in local participatory projects.	Gendered, youth-related	Public	Urban youth-centered public spaces – general, but with participatory design focus; implicit suitability	Practice-based, co-developed tools rooted in youth-led participatory design workshops. Includes field-tested	Focuses on gender-responsive, youth-inclusive urban planning with practical safety	Temporary spaces can apply Her City's methods (e.g., walkshops, mapping tools) to address gendered safety concerns and improve inclusivity.	https://un-habitat.org/her-city-toolbox

				for transitional sites.	toolkits, but limited formal evaluation.	tools and participatory design methods.		
Building Urban Safety Through Slum Upgrading (UN-Habitat)	Adopted in informal settlement upgrading programmes by local governments; informs tenure and safety strategies.	Social, spatial	Public	Informal Settlements – explicitly focused: temporary/low income/informal settlements	Draws from empirical case studies and field programs in informal settlements. Emphasizes community-led processes and iterative planning.	Promotes upgrading informal settlements via planning, tenure security and resident engagement to reduce insecurity.	Principles of community-led improvement and informal spatial governance can inform safety practices in low-cost, temporary uses.	https://unhabitat.org
European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS)	Advises on EU-level urban safety policy; EFUS manifestos are used in municipal planning across Europe.	Social, spatial	Mixed (Members)	Urban public spaces – general	Combines policy advocacy with evidence from pilot projects and city-level audits. Some peer-reviewed publications but largely experiential and normative.	Promotes co-produced safety strategies emphasizing prevention, inclusion and democratic governance.	Temporary uses can serve as testbeds for participatory co-design and community-based safety approaches in flexible urban environments.	https://www.efus.eu
ICARUS Project (EU)	Implemented through city pilots; cities involved adapt tools in real-world policy planning.	Social, spatial	Mixed	Transitional, underused and reconfigurable public spaces- explicitly addressed through pilots	Empirical pilot studies across multiple European cities, emphasizing design-led co-production. Outputs are project-specific and operational in nature.	Applies design-thinking and co-production to develop innovative urban safety tools, supported by a repository of European case studies.	ICARUS tools (e.g., youth-led design labs, digital safety apps) offer scalable and adaptable practices for managing security in flexible, time-bound urban settings.	https://www.icarus-innovation.eu
Forum Français pour la	Integrated into French law via CLSPD; tools embedded in municipal	Social, spatial	Mixed	Urban neighborhoods and municipal areas – general focus with	Based on municipal implementation practices,	Supports formalized local safety contracts	Temporary uses can be institutionalized within local prevention frameworks through structured	https://www.ffsu.org

Sécurité Urbaine (FFSU)	contracts and safety councils.			structured contractual integration; not type specific	supported by operational tools and policy training materials. Little systematic data but practice-grounded.	(CLSPD), providing implementation tools, training and legal support to municipalities.	contracts and governance mechanisms.	
DEFUS (Deutsches Forum für Urbane Sicherheit)	DEFUS tools used by local German municipalities; aligned with prevention council mandates.	Social, spatial	Mixed	Municipal public spaces-general urban areas with participatory overlays	Uses structured monitoring tools (e.g. DEFUS-Monitor), local survey data, and community workshops. Empirical but limited to practitioner-driven evaluation.	Provides operational tools (e.g., DEFUS-Monitor) to measure subjective safety and support co-developed safety interventions.	DEFUS tools (surveys, walks, workshops) can be adapted to assess and improve safety in temporary or transitional urban spaces.	https://www.defus.de
NNSC (US National Network for Safe Communities)	Integrated into U.S. municipal safety strategies; influences police-community intervention protocols.	Crime, Violence	Mixed	High-risk, neglected micro locations. Specific mention of transitional/insecure spaces.	Strong evidence-based orientation, supported by academic evaluation of violence reduction programs. Includes peer-reviewed studies and implementation data.	Evidence-based strategies focused on reducing violence and building trust between communities and law enforcement: Deterrence, community engagement	NNSC's place-based violence prevention strategies—targeting neglected or high-risk micro-locations—are relevant to transitional spaces with weak formal governance.	https://nnscommunities.org
SACN (South African Cities Network)	Used in South African city strategies; linked with urban development frameworks and municipal planning.	Social, spatial, institutional	Mixed	Urban areas with institutional gaps – informal settlements and structurally vulnerable urban zones; explicit.	Relies on national urban indicators, city reports, and longitudinal assessments. Mix of empirical monitoring and policy synthesis.	Integrated urban safety strategies, cross-sectoral collaboration. City-level safety governance through longitudinal urban safety indicators, policy integration	Highlights risks and opportunities in institutionally under-anchored spaces, including informal settlements and transitional areas	https://www.sacities.net

					and administrative coordination. Emphasizes institutional capacity-building, collaborative service delivery.			
Deutscher Präventionstag	Outputs inform best practice dissemination; used in prevention planning and municipal conferences.	Social, spatial	Mixed	General urban settings – examples from diverse cities; space-type not specified.	Functions as a dissemination and practice-sharing platform. Evidence type is mostly anecdotal and practitioner-derived, though occasionally systematized in reports.	Disseminates crime prevention best practices across German-speaking cities, focusing on spatial and social methods.	Lessons from pilot projects and evidence-based approaches can inform planning and activation of safe temporary uses.	www.praeventionstag.de
Schweizerischer Städteverband (SSV)	Referenced in city-level policy frameworks; used in training and inter-municipal coordination.	Social, spatial	Public	Urban public spaces in Swiss cities – structured but not always space-type specific; mentions temporary uses.	Outputs are based on cross-city planning scenarios and strategic policy documents, underpinned by expert consultation rather than hard empirical evaluation.	Emphasizes integrated, cross-sectoral safety strategies, scenario planning and coordinated risk analysis across 33 Swiss cities.	Temporary uses benefit from risk assessments and integrated safety planning frameworks; pop-up uses can strengthen safety networks if coordinated with prevention and urban planning actors.	https://www.staedteverband.ch
C40 Cities / C40 Knowledge Hub	Knowledge Hub informs planning policies; cities use C40 resources to adapt temporary use frameworks.	Social, spatial	Public	Neglected and underused public spaces – explicitly focuses on activation: intermediary applicability clear.	Combines practice-driven case studies with strategy documents aimed at city administrations. Evidence often illust-	Promotes temporary use as a strategy for climate resilience and inclusive public space activation. Emphasizes	Temporary uses are seen as tools to activate underused or neglected areas, increasing perceived safety, social cohesion and informal surveillance. Tactical urbanism be-	https://www.c40.org

						rative, not systematically evaluated.	municipal enabling frameworks, community partnerships and experimental urbanism.	comes a pathway to enhance both climate resilience and public security.	
REFILL (URBACT III)	Insights included in URBACT and local planning reforms; influenced Ghent's urban strategy.	Social, spatial	Public	Vacant urban spaces and buildings – explicitly targeted; central to the network's purpose.	Qualitative findings from inter-city exchange and local experiments. Includes governance insights but lacks standardized metrics or robust evaluation.	Promoted temporary use as a formal governance strategy to enhance flexibility, innovation and civic participation in urban development. Through the URBACT Toolbox, provided practical tools—such as planning templates and stakeholder mapping instruments	Demonstrated how temporary use can be institutionalized in city planning frameworks, enabling the revitalization of vacant spaces and indirectly improving social cohesion and perceived safety.	https://urbact.eu/networks/refill
Zentrum Öffentlicher Raum (ZORA)	Adopted by Swiss municipalities in site evaluations; embedded in participatory planning formats.	Social, spatial	Public	Transitional, underregulated and evolving public spaces – specifically addressed; participatory in focus	Emphasizes qualitative assessments and participatory audits. Tools are community-driven, but documentation of results is fragmented.	Promotes participatory design, local stewardship and multi-actor governance for public space safety. Provides tools for assessing quality and use through collaborative, user-involved methods.	Tools like Spaceshaper help assess safety, accessibility and inclusivity in temporary or intermediary spaces. Participatory methods strengthen social cohesion and perceived safety in underregulated or experimental uses.	https://www.zora-cep.ch

Institution	Traction/ Policy Integration	Types of Security Recognized	Accessibility	Spatial Focus	Evidence Type	General Security Recommendations	Relevance for Temporary Urban Use	Source
Kanton Basel-Stadt	Findings applied in Basel's urban redevelopment; tools feed into planning instruments.	Social, spatial	Public	Municipal transitional areas and temporary uses – explicitly included in governance and planning processes.	Draws on municipal planning frameworks and stakeholder processes. Empirical only in terms of local application; limited public evaluation available.	Provides a governance model balancing planning, enforcement, maintenance and stakeholder participation across diverse urban zones.	Temporary uses (e.g., nightlife zones, transitional developments) must embed negotiated safety standards and stakeholder involvement to maintain legitimacy.	Kanton Basel-Stadt & EBP Schweiz AG. (2018). Sicherheit öffentlicher Räume.
UN-Habitat – Safer Cities Programme	Integrated into UN-Habitat's urban policy toolkit; used in city safety audits and global guidelines.	Social, spatial	Public	General urban public spaces – not specific	Multi-site implementation experience, supplemented by policy reviews and stakeholder-based participatory assessments. Grounded in practice, with some case documentation.	Advocates holistic, human-centered safety policies anchored in inclusive governance, urban planning and data use.	Temporary urban uses can benefit from participatory safety audits, design interventions (e.g., lighting, accessibility) and governance tools fostering community ownership.	https://unhabitat.org
UN-Habitat – Enhancing Urban Safety and Security Report	Cited in UN global frameworks; influences national-level safety and disaster policies.	Crime, spatial	Public	Urban areas in general – focus on crime and insecurity; not space-type specific.	Synthesis of global-level policy research, with empirical references from secondary sources and UN databases. Conceptual with selected illustrations.	Identifies crime, tenure insecurity and disasters as core risks; promotes prevention via urban design and social inclusion.	Temporary uses can mitigate local risk through responsive design, inclusive governance and linkages to broader resilience planning.	https://unhabitat.org

4. Synthesis and Outlook

This report has reviewed how institutions at global, national and local levels define and address security in intermediary urban spaces. While a growing number of actors engage with temporary and transitional urbanism, their approaches vary substantially in scope, implementation depth and evidence base. These differences are shaped by scale, mandate and institutional capacity, resulting in a fragmented but evolving landscape of practitioner knowledge.

Institutions differ markedly in how they conceptualize urban safety. Some adopt narrow definitions centered on crime prevention, surveillance or physical security infrastructure. Others apply broader framings that include social cohesion, spatial quality or environmental resilience. These conceptual divergences align partly with institutional scale. Supranational actors—such as UN-Habitat, EFUS or the OSCE—tend to promote strategic visions, participatory governance and rights-based design, but rarely provide detailed tools for implementation. National and municipal networks—including EFUS, DEFUS and FFSU—are more likely to produce operational instruments such as safety audits, legal templates or planning models tailored to local needs. Even within these categories, however, approaches range from highly structured frameworks to exploratory or pilot-based efforts.

The types of insecurity addressed by institutions are similarly uneven. While nearly all acknowledge social risks—such as exclusion, mistrust or neighborhood conflict—technical and environmental hazards receive less systematic attention. Issues like lighting, fire safety, access and infrastructure degradation are occasionally mentioned but rarely form a consistent focus. Climate-related and natural hazards feature more prominently in institutions linking temporary use to resilience agendas, such as C40 Cities or parts of UN-Habitat. In intermediary urban contexts, where risks often overlap and evolve quickly, these gaps in coverage may limit the effectiveness of institutional responses.

Institutional traction in policy-making represents another point of divergence. Some actors maintain direct ties to municipalities and embed their tools within formal governance cycles. DEFUS's safety monitor, FFSU's local security contracts and EFUS's co-production frameworks illustrate how institutions can shape practice through recurring partnerships and structured engagement. Others remain advisory or conceptual, with outputs limited to strategic documents or isolated pilots. Where partnerships exist, they are often reliant on temporary funding streams, local champions or external consultants rather than being embedded in municipal routines. As a result, implementation varies widely across contexts and is often difficult to sustain beyond the initial phase.

Knowledge production across the reviewed institutions also lacks consistency. A small number offer open-access platforms, structured toolkits or comparative assessments. Others circulate internal guidance or synthesize findings without disclosing source data or evaluation methods. Empirical grounding is often anecdotal, drawing on field experience or feedback from practitioners. Only a few organizations engage in formal evaluation or impact measurement. Where it exists, assessment tends to be qualitative, based on participatory processes or self-reporting. Comparative benchmarking, longitudinal studies or transparent indicators are largely absent. This reduces the ability to compare interventions or adapt them to new contexts, particularly in transitional settings where risks and user dynamics shift over time.

Participation is widely promoted, but operationalized in uneven ways. Some institutions offer clear engagement mechanisms—such as co-design workshops, participatory audits or mapping tools—while others refer to community involvement in general terms. Structured inclusion of youth, vulnerable groups or informal users remains limited and participation often depends on local facilitators or project-specific momentum. In intermediary spaces—where user groups are transient, mandates are unclear and formal institutions may be weak—this dependence on ad hoc engagement undermines long-term continuity. The absence of sustained participatory governance may be problematic in transitional environments, where oversight and ownership might be subject to change over time.

Only a limited number of institutions explicitly address temporary or transitional urban uses. REFILL reframes temporary use as a planning strategy and, through the URBACT Toolbox, provides tools that indirectly support safer processes—for instance through stakeholder engagement, participatory governance and informal oversight mechanisms. ZORA has developed tools for under regulated or evolving sites, such as participatory spatial audits and co-design workshops, with a focus on social cohesion and co-produced governance. The Canton of Basel-Stadt offers one of the few cases where interim uses are embedded within formal safety standards and managed through inter-agency coordination. Even in these cases, links to broader zoning frameworks, specific documentation or long-term urban development remain underdeveloped. Most frameworks treat temporary uses as exceptions or pilot opportunities, rather than integrating them into comprehensive urban safety strategies.

Despite these limitations, the comparative review reveals important points of convergence. Nearly all actors emphasize prevention, local ownership and the importance of multi-actor governance. Participatory tools and community-based interventions are widely endorsed, even if implementation is inconsistent. Several institutions recognize the potential of intermediary spaces as platforms for testing new forms of security governance, urban design or collaborative stewardship. While systematic evidence remains scarce, practical lessons can be drawn from

localized successes—such as youth-led co-design labs, informal surveillance in activated spaces or hybrid safety planning models involving municipalities and users.

At the same time, persistent gaps remain. Institutional frameworks often fail to address the specific challenges of transitional phases, including handover, termination or changes in user configuration. Responsibility for safety is frequently fragmented across agencies, owners and users, with few templates for role allocation or coordination in temporary contexts. Legal ambiguity and capacity constraints continue to limit uptake, especially in settings where governance is already stretched. Participation remains selective, evaluation rare and cross-institutional learning not well documented.

In sum, this review reveals a fragmented but gradually converging field of practice. Institutions differ in how they define and manage urban safety, some recognize the strategic relevance of intermediary spaces and the need for adaptive, inclusive and transferable approaches. This convergence suggests that an international and inter-scalar body of knowledge on urban safety is taking shape. However, it is highly normative in character—shaped by assumptions about inclusion, visibility, co-production and governance legitimacy. Rather than offering neutral tools, many institutions embed values and political preferences in their frameworks. This raises the need for critical engagement with both the content and the framing of such practitioner knowledge. A core challenge lies in aligning normative principles with practical tools and in bridging the gap between pilot projects and durable implementation. Addressing this gap requires more robust evaluation, clearer frameworks for shared responsibility and stronger support for cities seeking to manage security in dynamic or uncertain environments.

It should be reiterated, that this review offers a selective mapping, centered on actors and frameworks most relevant to the Swiss and European context of the project. While many urban safety strategies exist in other regions, especially in Latin America and Asia, these are not addressed here and should be explored in future extensions of this work.

However, the insights collected here offer a starting point for such efforts. By identifying current resources, highlighting effective practices and pointing to structural limitations, this report aims to support practitioners and policymakers in developing more deliberate and context-aware safety strategies for transitional urban spaces.

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