

The role of durational art strategies in urban regeneration in Budapest

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Abstract

The presented strategy reflects on the theme of sustainable urban regeneration, focusing on the importance of the role of public spaces in creating liveable cities. The theoretical background of the strategy deals with the changes taking place in the fields of public art and urban rehabilitation methodologies. The parallel drawn between the evolvement of the two fields leads to the introduction of a method which integrates public art interventions into the process of urban rehabilitation. Public art interventions become platforms that enable people to take an active role in creating and forming their future, and enable future landscape/public space design elements to become more site-specific and unique.

Keywords

durational strategy; temporality; participatory citizenship; local identity; embedded design; urban regeneration; temporary art intervention

Introduction

If we understand social relations and the affective bond of people and location as an essential component of place, a specific task for designing the particular would be to activate those relations over time. This paper is the outcome of theoretical and on-site research to examine how public art and creative strategies help urban rehabilitation initiatives in developing more creative public spaces that enhance social activities in order to help reconstruct social and environmental relations and to set a foundation for participatory design. It is argued that durational art strategies, implemented as part of urban rehabilitation, are able to create platforms for communication that will help increase the social aspects of rehabilitation, while constant feedback allows the rehabilitation process itself to be more flexible.

The aim of the case study is to present how durational art strategies can be implemented as an organic part of urban rehabilitation. The case study entitled 'The chain of public art interventions developed on the site of the Palotanegyed', devised from the method introduced in the theoretical research, was developed previously by Dominika Tihanyi, as part of a doctoral study at the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design. The realized project aims to underpin the hypothesis that, by creating a series of art projects (that act as acupuncture points) in a specific city part both the site and the people living there can be activated during the process of urban rehabilitation in order to have a richer understanding of the place itself and help changes become more deeply rooted. The 12 interconnected interventions, developed over the duration of 4 years, were strongly connected in their set-up, with the shared aim of an ongoing rehabilitation of the run down, but slowly up-and-coming, neighbourhood. The actions initiated by Dominika Tihanyi were mostly realized with the support and partial funding of Rév8 Zrt., the rehabilitation office of the 8th district of Budapest. Some of the interventions were realized under the aegis of Placcc Festival, a yearly public art festival in Budapest, while others were developed in cooperation with the Technical University with the involvement of architecture students, along with landscape architects from the office Újirány Landscape Architects. Through playfulness, the realized interventions aimed to create the possibility for development of new social connections in a social setting where networking is hard to develop. The actions worked as communicational surfaces through which to devise local knowledge that could be incorporated into future plans and designs of the rehabilitation, in order to help public space design become more anthropocentric and site responsive.

The first part of the paper gives the theoretical background of the case study. It draws on the fact that public space design plays an ever-important role in urban rehabilitation. Public spaces have become the fulcrum of urban processes that aim to create liveable cities. Yet, in the 21st century, homogeneity has characterized our cities and public spaces, as globalized design attitudes manifest in standardized and prefabricated design elements that overwrite site-specific reflections in landscape and public space design. In parallel to this phenomenon, the uniqueness of a place is becoming more highly valued, evoking more responsive design attitudes that take into consideration local demands and values and draw on the particularities of a certain space defined at a neighbourhood level. It proposes that a parallel can be drawn between the changing roles of urban development or rehabilitation, urban design and public art in the social context of creating liveable cities. Though most regeneration projects incorporate various forms of public art projects in their process, it is argued that they are only supplementary elements of the regeneration project. Thus, there is debate over the reasons and means of implementation of public art interventions in the process of urban rehabilitation. Durational approaches are introduced as creative art strategies that help in reconstructing social relations and help the process of place-making, where 'the durational is conceived of as an accumulation of interconnected artistic commissions which respond to a site with an identity under construction' (O'Neill and Doherty, 2011, p.141). As the design of public spaces is usually developed in the last phase of the rehabilitation process which results in a shortage of time for deep engagement, a durational strategy, called cultural action planning, is introduced to allow the actual design process to be lengthened

in order to emphasise experimental research work (through a set of ephemeral, temporal interventions) at the beginning of the process (pre-rehabilitation phase). This promotes the development of 'time and space' within the early stage of the rehabilitation, ensuring an abundance of creative process where the developed arena of cognition and dialogue between architects/artists, residents and space makes it possible to truly understand and become part of a place, resulting in well-founded and well-defined uses and meanings of space for future design phases.

Theoretical background: connections between public art and regeneration strategies concerning social sustainability and cultural transformation

Durational approach as working method – art, architecture and landscape architecture as a social-public/civic art form

Changes in the role of public artworks have been clearly identified since the 1960s, as written about in detail by Kwon (2004, pp. 56-137), when a new form of socially engaged public art began to arise. Prevalent by the 1980s, this new genre of public art sees social-cultural aspects come to the forefront, as opposed to the traditional roles of representation and self-expression. As Kester (2004, p.8) writes, the social context of these works can be summed up in their aim to enhance social communication, open discussion and 'provoke dialogue'. As opposed to creating objects, these projects are more performative and process-based in approach and engage people in the process of creation, 'where conversation becomes an integral part of the artwork itself' (Kester 2004, p.8). As Bourriaud (1998, pp.12-16) describes it, contemporary art creates experimental, perceptive, critical and participatory models. It takes an active part in social process and community building, hence playing an active role in the reintegration of the self in society (Miles, 1997, p.162-172.).

By the turn of the 21st century, socially engaged public art as an act of the 'reconstruction of everyday life' that helps the 'rediscovery of joy in city living' (Miles, 1997, p.18) becomes apparent in the urban context, and the importance of this phenomenon is also recognized by architects, landscape architects, and artists. In the past decade, it has become common to see mixed groups of artists and architects develop interventions that aim to substantiate design through enabling the development of local knowledge, and understanding local values and needs to help formulate and model ideas for possible future activities by engaging local residents in the actions. If we look at works of artists such as Jeanne van Heeswijk's project entitled 'The Blue House' we will see that very similar durational methods are put into practice simultaneously, albeit in different surroundings, but based on a curated sequence of art projects in order to help locals inhabit their public spaces. Other works of architecture practices established since the new millennium like Raumlabor Berlin or Karo Architekten (among many others) also show that the revival of urban spaces is largely seen through the involvement of local citizens and the construction of communities. Theoretical works of Nicolas Bourriaud, Paul O'Neill and Claire Doherty, or architects such as Stan Allen, note that opposed to creating something 'new'—in the modernist sense—these practices teach us the importance of 'learning to inhabit the world again' (Bourriaud, 1998, pp.12-16).

The above thoughts can be traced back to Martin Heidegger's discussion on inhabitation, as he points out that 'dwelling is the basic character of Being', and 'the fundamental character of dwelling is sparing and preserving'. Following this idea, to 'inhabit a space' is a continuous and time consuming act and as such, the greatest value of durational art strategies can be seen in their overall durational approach—the time spent in one space—where architects, artists, and locals take part in the process as civilians, through which they become active participants in the process. Through a durational process, inhabitation, or actual place-making, can be achieved by 'paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution, which is much more than just promoting a better urban design' ('What is Placemaking?', para. 1), in reference to place as a series of socially formed spaces, 'which is performed and practised in everyday life as an evolving identity that emerges and re-emerges over time' as put by Cresswell (2004. p.39).

Continuous artistic/architectural presence provides time and space to explore locality and to learn about a place and its dwellers, thus creating the opportunity for people to become part of a long-term process. From the urban aspect, it can be said that projects that advocate social process by creating cultural activities can be effective tools in place-making, creating 'meanings, uses and forms for the city' as defined by Deutsch (1996, p.56). As Hopkins (2005, p.29) puts it, in this case the artist's role shifts from self-expression to the expression of the collective identity, whereby the artist actually becomes the 'interpreter of a community'. O'Neill and Doherty (2011, p.47) propose that this new approach be conceived as 'civic art', one that helps the growth of participatory citizenship to allow people to take action in their lives. This greatly contributes to changing and developing future perspectives of a community and gives rise to participatory design whereby local networks develop, helping the conception of socially inclusive spaces. As O'Neill and Doherty (2011, p.7) note, ownership of such projects as a whole becomes shared, as opposed to clearly attributed ownerships of commissioned artistic or architectural interventions.

Paradigm shift in urban rehabilitation – the role of public art in urban regeneration

Since the 19th century, the question of how the modern city is altering relations amongst people has remained timely. This question led to the rise of new alternative theories in the past decade that have laid the foundation for new urban strategies, emphasizing that sustainable development cannot be managed without the participation and knowledge of local citizens, as articulated in the Rio Charter: 'Think global, act local'. New solutions try to integrate cultural, economic and social development in the course of rehabilitation by dealing with everything as one system, evoking regeneration and guaranteeing long-term changes and sustainability (Hopkins, 2005, p.30). Consequently, by the beginning of the 21st century, a paradigm shift could be seen in the re-conception of urbanism, when cities started to be conceived of as a set of complex systems that add up to an organic whole (Waldheim, 2006, pp. 37-43). In urban development and rehabilitation a long-term strategic approach and interconnected economical-ecological-social thinking is advocated, where social and cultural aspects are taken into consideration, and which is deeply connected with the creation of 'good' public spaces that are responsive, meaningful and democratic, as defined by Carr et al. (1992, pp.19-20). It is recognized that the renewal of public spaces affects cities in both the social and economic sense; thus, like a century ago, public space is again perceived as a constellation of social relations. Hence public spaces act as arenas of 'local community revitalization and participatory local democracy', thereby becoming catalysts of urban renewal to be seen as the fulcrum of 'social well-being of inhabitants' (Carmona, Magalhaes, and Hammond, 2008, p.65).

As rehabilitation processes aim to take into account not only the physical but the non-physical dimensions of social exclusion, it is quite evident that public art and culture have become vehicles to integrate the social

and the physical dimensions of rehabilitation, and in this sense can be referred to as urban regeneration. As Tornaghi discusses (2007, pp.1-6), examples of cultural regeneration show that using public art and culture as a catalyst for change can produce stunning achievements in terms of neighbourhood branding and economic development. At the same time, this does not necessarily mean that actual place making has been achieved, and the development of sustainable communities can only be achieved through the process of place making. In this process, the role of art projects is vital in connecting the rehabilitation process and the regeneration site itself to the given community. As both Tornaghi (2007, pp.1-32) and Finkelpearl (2001, pp. 3-45) argue, though most regeneration projects incorporate various forms of public art projects within their process, they are only supplementary elements of the regeneration project, just like the design of public spaces, and in many cases don't produce meaningful cultural regeneration, nor appropriate landscape design.

This problem is remedied by means of the method introduced below, which aims to prove that public art projects can be understood as essential place-making tools that create platforms to enhance communication and social activity, while also reflecting on locality in a sensitive way. It is argued that the idea of integrating an 'interconnected chain of public artworks' within the process of regeneration, as also argued for by Tornaghi (2007, pp.1-32), creates an opportunity for art and culture to truly contribute to place-making, reflexive design, environmental quality, education, job creation, cultural participation and civic engagement. The case study attempts to justify this argument further.

Pre-rehabilitation as a durational art strategy

Pre-rehabilitation as a long-term art strategy aims to illustrate that, opposed to developing unattached public art interventions in different parts of the city, it is more beneficial to create a chain of interconnected public art actions in a specific site that, on the whole, act as acupuncture points that activate that specific part of the city over an extended time period. The flexibility of the process or method allows new thoughts and design ideas to arise through the testing of artworks (generating temporary uses and design elements) on site, which could then be incorporated into the long-term regeneration program and future design (Fig. 1).

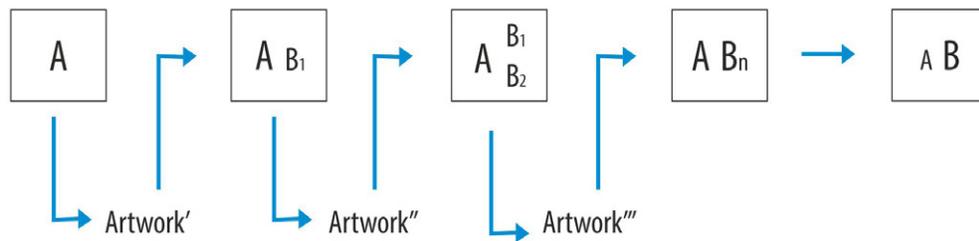


FIGURE 1 The diagram of constant feedback. The method of cultural action planning gives the possibility for live testing of ideas on site from the beginning - through the testing of artworks (generating temporary uses and design elements), enabling a dynamic process that can change, adapt and improve as it goes along. Through constant feedback, the strategy creates time and space for inner renewal that rehabilitation processes alone cannot possess. (Image by Dominika Tihanyi, 2005)

Therefore, it allows for a more dynamic regeneration process that is, over time, able to change and adapt to local needs and demands, thereby helping the development of new common goals and allowing local identity to arise. Through constant feedback, the strategy creates time and space for inner renewal that rehabilitation processes alone cannot possess. The essence of the strategy lies in its durational approach: to be present in one well defined place over a long period of time.

The innovation of the idea can be seen in the development of interconnected temporal interventions that constantly activate a specific site for a long duration. The playful, low cost, temporal interventions and public art projects help create time and space for discussion and learning through interaction. Through the rise of dialogue, people will also become an active, integral part of the regeneration process, which will initiate meaningful engagement between people and space, and improve the social aspects of the rehabilitation process. The interventions enable experimental research work to be done in order to have a better understanding of the place itself, and allow the incorporation of local knowledge and values into future designs, which are important factors in creating socially inclusive, deep rooted and responsive plans and design.

Cultural action planning

Cultural action planning is the method that provides a framework for the strategic concept of pre-rehabilitation. The method of 'cultural action planning' helps in rendering cultural interventions systematically in the process of urban rehabilitation, and provides a framework for the systematic build-up and detailed phasing of public artworks and cultural events during the regeneration process to help the democratization of urban landscape/public space design. Cultural action planning is a learning process through which future possibilities and cultural values can be mapped, discussed and integrated into everyday life. As an organic part of the rehabilitation process, it has a great impact on the futures of communities in helping new common goals to develop and in creating a culturally richer and socially embedded environment.

The cultural action plan should be introduced into the process of regeneration in order to achieve sustainable cultural transformation as an integral part of the redevelopment. The action plan should be constructed by the action planning team, who should form a separate office and be commissioned by the authorities or the rehabilitation office, ideally consisting of architects, landscape architects, artists, sociologists and community developers. The action planning team's principal task is to deliver a framework document for implementing a series of works in relation to the regeneration, as well as generating temporary uses and possible design elements for the future that will initiate a meaningful engagement between people and space. In order for such an 'art brief' to be created, the artist should engage with the aims of the regeneration project, as well as the history, local people and personal stories and myths of the place in order for the project to be specific to its context at all levels. The action plan itself should be developed prior to and alongside the regeneration project. It is a continuously developing entity, through which one project can inspire the next. This gives the possibility for live testing of ideas on site from the beginning, enabling a dynamic process that can change, adapt and improve as it goes along. The cultural action planning team shall work together with the physical regeneration team to construct civic spaces that mediate in relationships between different people, and between people and place.

Case study – Palotanegyed, Budapest

As an experiment to put the above stated theoretical ideas into practice - during the period of 2008-2012 - a chain of public art interventions were developed on the site of the Palotanegyed (Palace Quarter) in

Budapest. Since the rehabilitation programme of the Palace Quarter (run by Rév8 Zrt. the office in charge of the rehabilitation operation) had already started in 2007, the 12 realized public art projects scattered throughout the area were developed in parallel to the rehabilitation program and with a strong connection to the social, economic and environmental aims of the rehabilitation (Figs. 2-3). The case study attempts to exemplify that 'durational art strategies', implemented as part of urban regeneration processes, are able to create platforms to enhance communication and enable the undertaking of research work to improve local and social aspects of rehabilitation.

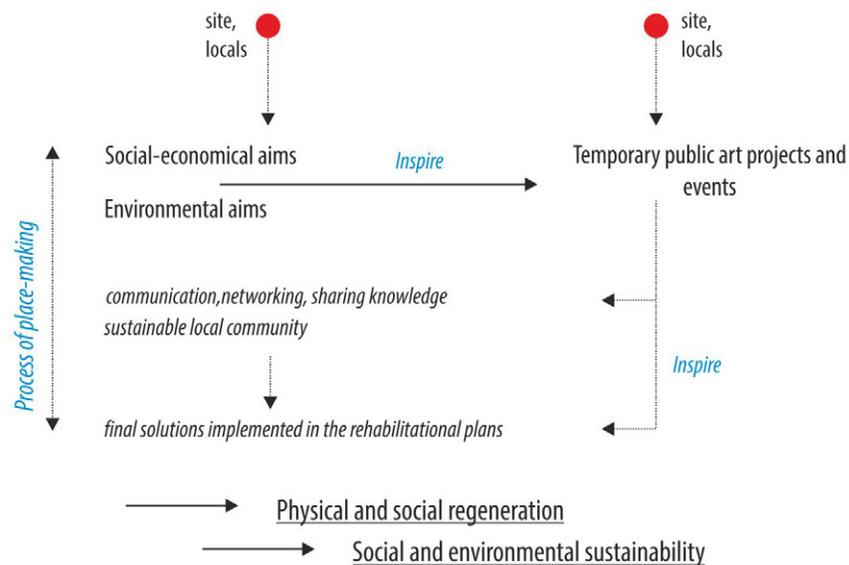


FIGURE 2 The theory of the durational approach. The action plan itself should be developed prior to and alongside the regeneration project. It is a continuously developing entity, through which one project can inspire the next to help the process of place making. Since the rehabilitation programme of the Palace Quarter (run by Rév8 Zrt. the office in charge of the rehabilitation operation) had already started in 2007, the 12 realized interventions were developed in parallel to the rehabilitation program and with a strong connection to the social, economic and environmental aims of the rehabilitation, to set ground for social and environmental sustainability. (Image by Dominika Tihanyi, 2008)

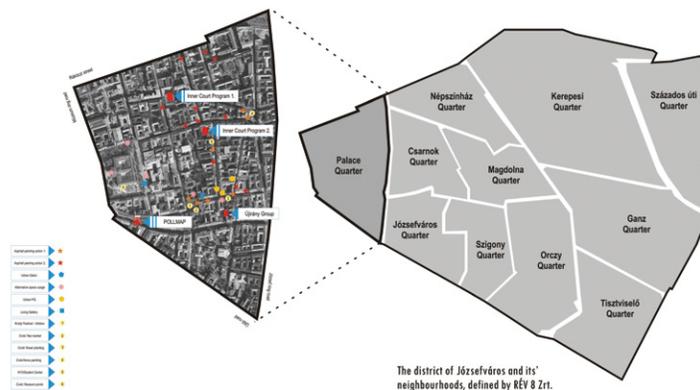


FIGURE 3 Interventions developed on the site of Palotanegyed (Palace Quarter). The essence of the strategy lies in its durational approach: to be present in one well defined place over a long period of time. In the case of Palotanegyed (which is one of the 13 quarters of Józsefváros) the 12 realized public art projects scattered throughout the area were to constantly activate the site and the people living there for the duration of 4 years to help the social aspects of the rehabilitation to arise. (Image by Dominika Tihanyi, 2010)



FIGURE 4 The central position of Palotanegyed (Palace Quarter). Palotanegyed (Palace Quarter) is situated in the inner city of Budapest, within the densely built 8th district, Józsefváros. (Image by Dominika Tihanyi, 2012)

Rehabilitation program of Palotanegyed

Palotanegyed (Palace Quarter) is situated in the inner city of Budapest, within the densely built 8th district, Józsefváros (Fig. 4), a district that faces the biggest socio-economic problems in Budapest. Among the 13 quarters of Józsefváros, Palotanegyed is historically the most prestigious area of the district. The main infiltration of the area goes back to the late 1900s when the historical inner city of Budapest was developed. The name Palotanegyed refers to the palaces built by the aristocracy of later times. Although slow changes have occurred since the 2000s (hip bars and lunchrooms putting out tables on the streets, as can be seen in Fig. 5), it was due to the lack of development in the previous decades that the state of the buildings and the built environment still did not meet the expectations of the inner city of Budapest, and hence the overall regeneration of the area was inevitable.

Duality can be seen in the social aspect of the area, as young newcomers move to run-down inner city areas, mixing with elderly locals. Public research shows that although income position and employment ratio doesn't meet inner city standards, the ratio of intellectuals has risen to higher standards. Economic activity is also below standard, due to factors of demography and social polarization. Inner Józsefváros is traditionally an area of handicraft and retail. In general, structural changes of the past 20 years in the service industries have demolished the economic position of these enterprises. Thanks to strong tradition and the closeness of the inner city, Palotanegyed is a quarter that is quite rich in such enterprises. The aim of the rehabilitation program is to generate inner city functions in the area, in strong connection to local cultural heritage, to help local inhabitants restore their buildings and to reimagine and reinvent their public spaces (Fig. 6). By creating a strong civic and cultural life, it aims to expose itself as a cultural heritage site generating quality environment, education, job creation, cultural participation and civic engagement for locals, as opposed to causing gentrification (Alföldi, Tibor, 2007, pp.7-88).



a



a



b



b



c



c

FIGURE 5 The slowly up-and-coming neighbourhood of Palotanegyed (Palace Quarter). Although slow changes have occurred since the 2000s (hip bars and lunchrooms putting out tables on the streets), it was due to the lack of development in the previous decades that the state of the buildings and the built environment still did not meet the expectations of the inner city of Budapest, and hence the overall regeneration of the area was inevitable. (Photographs by Zsolt Zsuffa, 2012)

FIGURE 6 Renewal of streets in Palotanegyed (Palace Quarter). The aim of the rehabilitation program was to generate inner city functions in the area, in strong connection to local cultural heritage, to help local inhabitants restore their buildings and to reimagine and reinvent their public spaces. As the first step of this process the worn asphalt of streets has been replaced with new paving elements, giving a new structure to the streets, reducing parking space to provide place for trees and amenities. (Photographs by Zsolt Zsuffa, 2012)

The chain of interventions developed on the site of the Palace Quarter within the Cultural Action Plan of the quarter

In the case of the rehabilitation of Palotanegyed (Palace Quarter), the method of cultural action planning was put into practice with the cooperation of Rév8 Zrt. and Újirány Group (Fig. 7). It aimed to set ground for social and environmental sustainability, enhancing social activity by integrating cultural activities and public art projects into the rehabilitation program. The realized temporary interventions were to reflect the aims of the rehabilitation, the cultural heritage and the potential of the area, and inspired the renewal of inner courtyards as community spaces (Fig. 8). They were also tools for modelling alternative space usage to draw attention to the communal role of public spaces. The projects tried to activate both public spaces (streets and squares) and semi-public spaces (inner courtyards) in order to reach out to as many people as possible, to enhance inhabitants' feeling of ownership of not only their flats but also their semi-public and public spaces (Fig. 9).

ACTION PLAN: FRAMEWORK OF ACTIONS FOR PALOTANEGYED (PALACE-QUARTER) 2008-2012					
Aim: social-economical, cultural and environmental sustainability through creating communicational platforms					
Micro projects	Macro projects				
public art projects and events set in privately owned spaces	chain of temporary public art interventions developed on the streets and squares of Palotanegyed				
Inner Courtyard Program	Hard elements			Soft elements	
	temporary public art projects, modeling future physical elements characteristic to Palotanegyed			temporary events that model future events that create tradition	
<p>The aim of the program is to transform the inner courts of houses into community places. The people living in the buildings are involved in the act from the planning phase up to the executional part of the renovation creating the sense of belonging.</p> <p><i>Social and environmental aims: to generate communication between dwellers, and to create a place where the micro community can interact</i></p> <p>Palaces Project - Flag project</p> <p>The aim of the project is to create a unique, unified flag element for the palaces on site so they become visual. Dwellers take part in the program to look up information of the palace</p> <p>- Open Gates Festival</p> <p>in their open courtyards, dwellers present the gathered history of their palaces</p> <p><i>Social and environmental aims: to generate communication between dwellers, and to create a place where the micro community can interact to share local knowledge</i></p>	Temporary public art projects	Social-economical aims	Environmental aims	Local events	Aims
	<p>Asphalt paintings (marking the site of rehabilitation)</p> <p>A. pattern: 1. reflecting on damages on asphalt 2. marking out entrances of Palaces 3. marking out entrances of shops</p> <p>B. quotations on future pedestrian streets</p> <p>C. who was...? reflecting the names of streets</p> <p>Personal Stories Project (story boards of history local shops and cafes)</p> <p>Mirror Project (mirror installations, reflecting local values)</p> <p>Interactive Mapping Project (orthofoto placed in open space, playful form of public research)</p> <p>Design workshop Workshop for thinking of local image creating site-specific urban design elements, that make the place more homely</p> <p>Info box Project</p> <p>Cultural Center Project</p> <p>Wifi spots Project</p>	<p><i>to generate communication between locals, local shopkeepers, authorities; to draw attention to the environment</i></p> <p><i>to generate and sustain communication between locals, between locals and outsiders, and draw attention to the environment</i></p>	<p><i>to experiment in finding possible ways to visualize how local values and needs can be implemented through design eg. paving elements, seatings, information system... or even finding new elements... like the mirror poles</i></p> <p><i>to create spaces where information can be obtained, and places where community members can interact with each other</i></p>	<p>Open Mall Project (market like sales of shops, on Saturdays)</p> <p>Thematic markets (cheese market, antique market, wine market, bio market on Sundays)</p> <p>Flow market program (recycling goods of local people to collect money for environmental issues)</p> <p>Leisure and cultural programs (open space yoga, Jazz concerts, theater programs - in collaboration with nearby institutions, like: Italian Cultural Center, Chamber for Architecture, Jazz Center, University of Health-care, University of Theater, and Schools)</p> <p>Milk program (revives traditional milk carrying-out service)</p> <p>Story Telling Program - (Stories of Palotanegyed, told by elderly to the young at Cafes, in collaboration with Café owners)</p> <p>Civil actions (tree planting, flower planting actions, organization of local street festivals, etc.)</p> <p>Art Festivals (Pedestrian Festival, public art-street art festivals)</p> <p>Tour guides in Palotanegyed (guided tours, that light on local heritage)</p>	<p><i>to enhance communication between locals, to enhance social-cultural awareness, environmental awareness, to promote locality/local culture, to promote open space usage</i></p>

FIGURE 7 The cultural action plan of Palotanegyed (Palace Quarter). Cultural action planning helps in rendering cultural interventions systematically in the process of urban rehabilitation, and provides a framework for the systematic build-up and detailed phasing of public artworks and cultural events during the regeneration process. The cultural action plan itself is a framework document for implementing a series of works in relation to the regeneration, as well as generating temporary uses and possible design elements for the future that will initiate a meaningful engagement between people and space. (Image by Dominika Tihanyi, 2008)

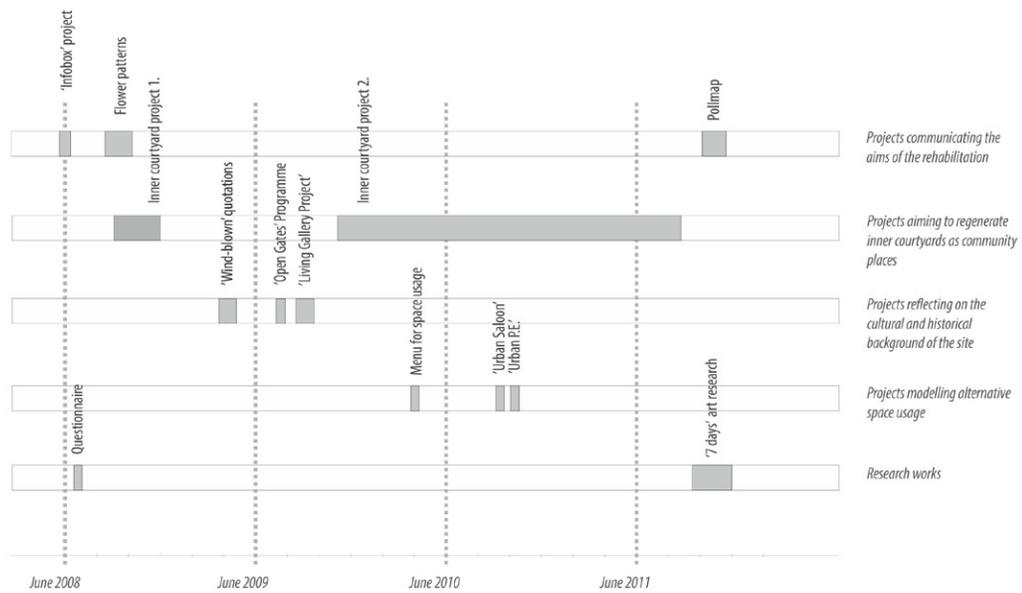


FIGURE 8 Correlation of realized projects. The 12 interconnected interventions, developed over the duration of 4 years, were strongly connected in their set-up. The temporary projects were to reflect the aims of the rehabilitation, the cultural heritage and the potential of the area, and inspired the renewal of inner courtyards as community spaces. They were also tools for modelling alternative space usage to draw attention to the communal role of public spaces. (Image by Dominika Tihanyi, 2012)

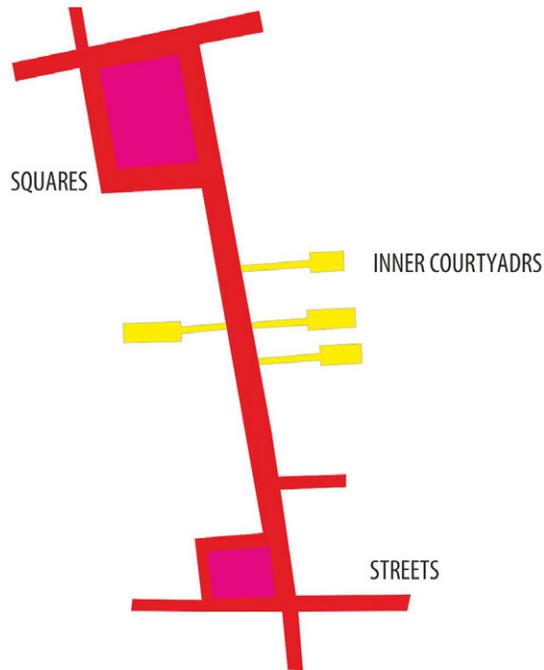


FIGURE 9 Actions were developed in both public and semi-public spaces. The projects tried to activate both public spaces (streets and squares) and semi-public spaces (inner courtyards) in order to reach out to as many people as possible, to enhance inhabitants' feeling of ownership of not only their flats but also their semi-public and public spaces (Image by Dominika Tihanyi, 2008)

The first projects realized tried to help communicate the aims of the rehabilitation and tried to poll people's opinion about the rehabilitation. The two-day temporary 'rehabilitation office' created at Lumen Coffee House and the patterns that marked out the rehabilitation site acted as informational surfaces so people could learn in the actual space where the changes would take place. 'Pollmap', an interactive orthophoto game, was later developed and installed in a busy square of Palace Quarter and was a playful mode in gauging the opinions of the people regarding which parts of the neighbourhood they most/least liked and which parts they would prefer to be rehabilitated (Figs. 10-12).

Actions such as the 'Wind-blown' quotations and the 'Living Gallery Project' tried to reflect the cultural and historical background of the site. Quotations of the well-known Hungarian writer, Gyula Krúdy that were contextually connected to Pest, were painted randomly on the surface of the asphalt. This aimed to draw attention to the streets bearing names of famous writers and poets. The project tried to imply that coffee houses as reading rooms and antique bookstores could be important elements in giving a unique identity to the area. The 'Living Gallery Project' involved local shopkeepers in exploring and exposing their shops' individual stories and myths, to be presented on small tablets next to each shop's entrance. Reading the 21 brief narratives, the story of the street comes alive: how it evolved from an old 'carpenters street' into an important cultural scene of the 1990s (Figs. 13-14).

Within the projects aiming to regenerate inner courtyards as community places, two programmes were realized. In the 'Open Gates' programme two inner courtyards were temporarily opened to the public for a day when inhabitants organized an event in which presentations, exhibitions and discussions helped the visitors to learn about the building's history, the people living in it, and their efforts to sustain the heritage site in which they live. The 'Inner Courtyard Project' aimed to permanently transform inner courtyards of houses into community places with the active participation of the residents. During the programme, two inner courtyards were renewed. In both cases, a central communal element was created where inhabitants can now meet each other and organize events (Figs. 15-16).

In order to activate streets and squares, 'Urban Saloon' and 'Urban P.E.', realized as part of the Placc Festival, modelled alternative space usages for the duration of one week. 'Urban Saloon' created a place for contemplation as sun chairs were placed on an empty square in the Palace Quarter to create a space in the city where one can spend time freely, without the compulsory need to spend money. As a counterpart, 'Urban P.E.' allowed people to exercise for free in the streets of Palotanegyed with the help of exercise bars fixed to the facades of houses (Figs. 17-18).

Project summary

For a few years these interventions, along with the actions and events organized by the Civils of Palotanegyed, transformed the site of the Palotanegyed into a unique, ever-evolving interactive gallery in order to create a lively neighbourhood. The playful interventions, partly realized within the framework of the rehabilitation, and partly as guerrilla acts, tried to build bridges between the locals and the authorities while also enhancing communication between fellow inhabitants in order to develop a stable network of citizens who could take an active role in creating and sustaining their community and their environment. Overall, the work attempts to set a positive example in showing that socially engaged public art interventions are able to create arenas of meeting and discussion in public space that have an impact on reviving local communities through the reconstruction of communal/public spirit. It tries to underpin the belief that re/constructed urban situations that encourage people to meet in public space can be of help in creating a more open, inclusive and cooperative society that takes an active part in forming its environment and future.



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d



b



b



c



c

FIGURE 10 Infobox project. As the kick-off project, a two-day temporary 'rehabilitation office' was created at Lumen Coffee House during the first Krúdy Festival organized by the Civils of Palotanegyed. In the 'office' visitors could learn about the aims of the rehabilitation, leave notes with their opinions, learn about and fill out a questionnaire which aimed to poll the interest in the Inner Courtyard Program. // Concept: Dominika Tihanyi // Realization: Dominika Tihanyi (Újirány Group) and Tamás Tibor (Rév 8 Zrt.) // Funding: Rév 8 Zrt. (Cost: 30 Euro) // (Images by Dominika Tihanyi, 2008)

FIGURE 11 Asphalt painting project to mark out the rehabilitation site. A well-known pattern –which used to cover many walls of Budapest –was painted on the asphalt surfaces of the streets that were going to be renewed. The project also promoted the new name of the quarter, 'Palotanegyed', as it was integrated into the paintings. The pattern tried to draw attention to the use of unique paving design in the future that could be typical of the quarter. // Concept: Dominika Tihanyi // Realization: Dominika Tihanyi, Tamás Tibor, Béla Gál and Áron Vass-Eysen // Funding: Rév 8 Zrt. (Cost: 90 Euro) // (Images by: Gergely László, 2008)



b



b



c

FIGURE 14 'Living Gallery' Project. Local shopkeepers of Krúdy Gyula Street were involved in a project that focused on finding out and exposing their shops' individual stories and myths. The collected stories were presented in Hungarian and English on little tablets that can still be found next to each shop's entrance. Reading the 21 brief narratives the story of the street comes alive and we are taken back in time to the era when the street was an old 'carpenters street' and later an important cultural scene of the 1990's. // Concept: Dominika Tihanyi // Realization: Dominika Tihanyi, Levente G. Molnár, locals // Funding: Újirány Group (Cost: 300Euro) // (Image by Árpád Kovács, 2009)



b



b



c

FIGURE 15 'Open Gates' Program. This intervention was realized on the occasion of the Cultural Heritage Days. The gates of two buildings, formerly palaces owned by aristocratic families, were opened to the public. In both cases, inhabitants organized the event where presentations, exhibitions as well as discussions helped the visitors to learn about the building's history, the people living in it, and about their efforts to sustain the heritage site they live in. The projects showed how much locals appreciate their cultural heritage within the neighbourhood and highlighted how open they are to sharing their passion with others. // Concept & main organizers: Judit Györi, László Perényi, Dominika Tihanyi, Tamás Tibor // Realization: locals, Judit Györi, László Perényi, Dominika Tihanyi, Tamás Tibor // No funding // (Images by László Perényi, 2009)



a



a



b



b



c



c

FIGURE 16 Inner Courtyard Program. This project aimed to transform inner courtyards of houses into community places with the active participation of the residents. During the programme – set within the Budapest Downtown of Europe Programme – two inner courtyards were renewed. In both cases, a central communal element was created where inhabitants can now meet each other and organize events. For example, a seating element that can be a sofa or a stage or individual seats and in the other case a dining area under a pergola for barbequing with a sandbox for kids. The project was to be continued with one new courtyard being renewed each year. The new courtyards were to be opened up each year on the cultural heritage days so others could get an insight to the planned changes and to be able to meet fellow neighbours. As more and more buildings were to be opened up at this event, it could possibly become a local festival that would play an especially important role in the rise of local identity. // Concept: locals, DominikaTihanyi, GyörgyAlföldi, TamásTibor // Realization: locals, DominikaTihanyi, TamásTibor // Funding: Rév 8 Zrt. (Cost: 3000 Euro) // (Figure 16.a,b Image by K.Z., 2008; Figure 16.c by Judit Figuli, 2010)

FIGURE 17 'Urban Saloon'. Realized within Placc Festival, sun chairs were placed on an empty square in the Palace Quarter. The aim of the project was to create a space in the city where one can spend time freely without the compulsory need to spend money. The temporary project also drew attention to the fundamental problem of Pollack Mihály Square, where no seating can be found and therefore the square is only used for crossing through. The project exemplified that big changes can be brought about in public space usage through a very simple idea. By creating sitting places we were able to develop small saloons during the afternoons where locals felt welcome. // Concept: Dominika Tihanyi // Curator: Katalin Erdődi // Realization: Dominika Tihanyi, Katalin Erdődi // Funding: Placc Festival (Costs: 90 Euro) // (Figure 17a Image by Tamás Zakota, 2010; Figure 17b, c by Dominika Tihanyi, 2010)



d



b



c

FIGURE 18 'Urban P.E.' This project also realized within Placc Festival, allowed people to exercise for free in the streets of Palotanegyed with the help of exercise bars fixed to the facades of houses. The aim of the project was to draw attention to the fact that such exercise can prevent spinal problems from developing. It is known that among Palotanegyed's inhabitants there is a high percentage of intellectuals who spend most of their time sitting, which is a leading cause of spinal problems today. It is also an element which (if realized for good) could give a very unique and specific identity to the place. // Concept: Dominika Tihanyi // Curator: Katalin Erdődi // Realization: Dominika Tihanyi, Katalin Erdődi, Zsolt Zsuffa // Sponsored by: Királyhegyi Sport (Cost: 250 Euro) // (Images by Dominika Tihanyi, 2010)



d



b



c

FIGURE 19 'Palace Quarter NOW'. a) Finally, as a sign of trust, we were commissioned by the 8th district to edit the magazine called 'Palace Quarter NOW' that deals with the past, present, and future of the area. All articles were written by members of the local civil group that emerged parallel to the actions and rehabilitation process. This cooperation proved that the realized projects were able to create platforms for informal meetings where a good set of people actually did get to know each other better and formed an active community that was eager to help changes arise in their neighbourhood. // Concept & realization: Civils of Palotanegyed, D. Tihanyi, L.G. Molnár // Funding: mRév 8 Zrt. // a) (Image by D. Tihanyi, 2012) // b) and c) The Community-based reinvention of Teleki Square // (Images by T. Vermes, 2013)

Results and conclusions

The presented work is an experimental one that initially had no support and that had to prove its value as it went along. It was an idea that was supported by the lead architect of the rehabilitation office, as he understood that the intention of activating locals and the site was to help the rehabilitation itself. The idea of actualizing the chain of actions came just in time, as the rehabilitation of the area (that also aimed to activate the site culturally) had just started. It was also around this time that the civil group, Civils of Palotanegyed, was starting to form. This junction enabled very positive cooperation between the actors, as everyone who was engaged in some way was eager to make the best out of the given opportunity. This is one of the reasons it is difficult to measure the success of the project. Furthermore, as no analysis was done, only empirical learning can help identify what impact it had on the authorities, on the outcome of the rehabilitation and on the inhabitants.

- 1 It is difficult for the mayor and authorities to deal with open-ended approaches. If the positive outcome of a project is not justified in the form of plans, it is very hard to get support for it, and in this case, we never knew what project would come next. It was also very hard to make officials understand why we were actually doing the actions, as the reasoning of creating benefit for the future was quite a vague one. It is also quite evident that no official would approve of a project that sought to paint the asphalt of streets, an act that, at the very least, would be considered vandalism. In this vein, most actions were realized without the permission of the local government, but with the silent approval of the rehabilitation office. A promising outcome came after the projects were realized, when positive feedback came from the authorities and the mayor himself. As a sign of trust and recognition, Újirány Landscape Architects together with the Civils of Palota Quarter were commissioned by the 8th district to create the magazine called 'Palacenegyed NOW' that deals with the past, present, and future of the area Palotanegyed (Fig. 19). Furthermore, the practice itself has been commissioned for the community-based reinvention of Teleki Square in an adjacent quarter.
- 2 Concerning the impact the project had on the design process of the rehabilitation, it reached little success as the temporal interventions were developed in parallel to the rehabilitation programme, lagging behind the construction plans. Hence the design ideas evoked by the actions could only be partially realized, including those (e.g. tablets telling stories of certain houses) that could be applied in addition to the rehabilitation, which unfortunately consisted mostly of road construction works (Fig. 6). From this point of view, it is important to state that the 'cultural action plan' should be developed at a very early stage of a regeneration process.
- 3 The biggest impact of the actions can be seen in the activation of the local inhabitants and activists/artists, who were largely inspired by the project. To this day, all participants try to continue to create more and more site-specific actions and events/cultural programs similar to the ones developed by this project. This proves that the realized projects were successful in creating platforms for informal meetings where a wide range of people actually did get to know each other better and formed an active community that is still eager to help changes happen in their neighbourhood. Having been present for almost a decade on this specific site, it can be said that, through continuous long-term presence, the people who took part in the actions have truly become an organic part of the life of the place, and inspire change authentically. Landscape architects of Újirány, artists from Lumen, and local inhabitants of Palotanegyed all took part in the process as civilians and, as such, have become active participants of the process of creating a socially and culturally enriched and embedded place (Fig. 20).



FIGURE 20 Citizens of Palotanegyed in action organizing a flow market and a flower planting weekend // (Images by Citizens of Palotanegyed, 2011).

Overall, the project gives positive feedback on the value of incorporating creative art strategies in the process of rehabilitation, to help formulate and test ideas for possible future activities through engaging local residents in the actions that create informal spaces of thinking and learning through fun, which enables the spending of quality social time in public space. It underpins the idea that it is beneficial to take the time to get to know a place better, while also showing it as a very slow process that needs continuous involvement. By understanding good urban design and art as 'the manifestation of the collective cultural, historical and philosophical identity of a community', as John Hopkins (2005, p.30) puts it, this multidisciplinary practice helps in (re)constructing the identity of a place, building upon the existing knowledge of the community and enabling inhabitants to engage meaningfully with the given space and its inhabitants to have a better understanding of their environment. Consequently, as opposed to merely creating a new urban design, paying attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place ('What is Placemaking?', para 1) will result in a thorough understanding of a particular place, and urban changes (including urban design) will 'become part of, form and reflect identity' as discussed by Carr et al. (1992, pp.19-20) and will truly support the ongoing evolution of a place.

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