/ WORKSHOP REPORT: PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES FOR TOWN-CENTRE REVITALIZATION POLICIES /







Assignment Conceptional design and delivery of a workshop on the topic

of participatory processes for town centre revitalization

policies

Commissioned by Association of Urban Municipalities of Slovenia

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INTRODUCTION

On Thursday, December 7, 2023, IPoP - Institute for Spatial Policies delivered a workshop on "Participatory processes for town center revitalization policies" for the Association of Urban Municipalities of Slovenia (ZMOS).

The event was held as part of the "Active Cities for EU" project, which is co-financed by the EU Program for Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV). The goal of the project is to promote the involvement of the public in decision-making at the local level and the transfer of good practices between partners. In addition to ZMOS, the Municipality of Kallithea from Greece as a leading partner, the Hungarian National Association of Local Authorities (TOOSZ), the National Federation of District Councils of Romania and the Municipality of Xativa from Spain participate in the consortium.

The workshop was held at MSUM - Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

The main purpose of the workshop was to stress the importance of public involvement and cooperation with stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of policies for the revitalization and management of city centres.



PART I

Aidan Cerar and Pavlina Japelj from IPoP made a quick introduction with the how, why, and when of public participation. They presented the process and the three most frequently used methods of public participation:

- Public debate,
- Focus groups,
- Street interviews.

This was followed by a review of small urban actions and good practices of town-centre revitalization policies and participatory approaches:

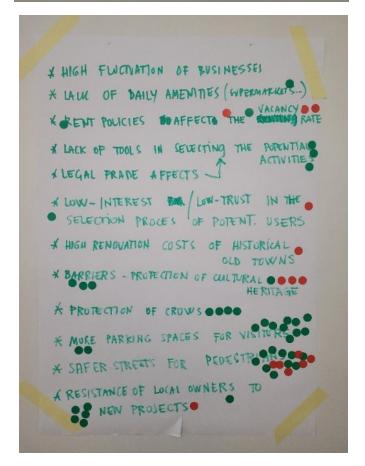
- a) Mobility: Pedestrians first (Open Street / Škofja Loka, SI, Tactical interventions / Playful testing of potential spatial measures)
- b) Vacancy: Vacant spaces and temporary use (Living Room Pr' Golitu, Idrija, SI, Kreative Räume Wien Public service for vacancy activation and interim use / Vienna, AT)
- c) Economy: Town Centre Management (Kje je prostor? / Slovenj Gradec, SI, Echt Graz Network and Branding / Graz, AT)

To conclude the first part of the event the two moderators held a discussion about the challenges of participants' respective cities. The identified challenges were written on a big poster and each participant then marked with stickers the ones they as the most relevant/important. The challenges with the most stickers served as starting points/subtopics for the second part of the workshop.

The presentation can be found in attachment at the end of this document.



CHALLENGES in your cities * SHOPPING LENTRES ARE TOO WOSE TO THE CITY CENTRE * EXPENSIVE PARKING *NO COLLABORATION AMONG LOCAL BUSINES OWNERS . *QUESTION OF THE ROLE OF THE NGOS. . * NO RESPONSIBILTY OF BUSINESS OWNERS ON TOWARDS PUBLIC MATTERS LACK OF * RESILLIANCE TO CLINATE CHANGE (HEAT ISLANDS ...) * FEAR OF POTENTIAL GENTRIFICATION ... * DECAY OF THE COMMERCE IN THE DLD TOWN * GROUND-FLOOK SHOPS TRANSFORMED TO . APARTMENTS . * THE STRUCTURE OF AMNETIES HE STRUCIONE OF AMNETIES DOESN'T ATTRACT PEOPLE (BANKS, POSTO)



PART II

In this second part of the event a practical workshop using the world café method took place.

The World Cafe methodology is based on the belief that 'we are wiser together' and that the future can be shaped 'through conversations that matter'. It is a method that is best used for: gathering collective intelligence on experiences or ideas around an issue. generating new ideas.

The four main points of the World café on *How to revitalize a town–centre* were:

- 1. Quality of life in the historic urban areas: pedestrianization, traffic, parking
- 2. Economy, vacancies, and tourism: services, amenities, networks
- 3. Communication; participation. centre marketing/branding
- 4. Culture and events in public space

SUMMARIES OF INDIVIDUAL THEMATIC GROUPS OF THE WORLD CAFFÉ

QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE HISTORICAL URBAN CENTRES

Debate in the group was focused on the topics that emerged as important for participants in the previous session. These were mainly issues of 1) facilitating efficient mobility and parking, 2) securing safe streets for pedestrians and 3) ensuring resilience to climate change related challenges, mainly heat and excessive precipitation. Although it was acknowledged that these are not the only important aspects of quality of life in historical urban centers, the group decided to stick to them, as they covered most pressing issues.

a) Facilitating efficient mobility and parking

First, parking was seen as part of the wider mobility challenges and not as an issue in itself. Efficient mobility cannot be based on car mobility, as cars take up too much space, especially in historical urban centres. It was thus suggested that towns and cities should strengthen public transport, as this will help urban centres become more attractive. Efficient access of urban centres with affordable public transport goes hand in hand with using walking for daily errands and in this way making also shops and other services in the city centres more attractive.



While parking was seen as necessary to some extent for residents of city centres, it was proposed to keep parking facilities outside of the core areas and limit the availability of parking to minimum, maximum to 1 car per household. Also, parking facilities should be placed underground, when possible, to free public space for people and other activities. Strong regulation and enforcement of parking related rules is needed.

Several challenges were identified as well. One was the fact that many town centres are located on hilltops, making them less attractive for cycling and walking, especially for elderly people who are often prevalent in city centers. One proposed solution were free (electric) shuttle buses, circulating around city centers and offering on demand mobility service.

b) Securing safe streets for pedestrians

Related to safe streets for pedestrians, one of the typical measures is closing specific streets or wider areas in the city centers for motorized traffic. It was emphasized, that this can often be very challenging, when the streets in the city centres are full of traffic and closing one street is seen in public as a measure, which would make traffic issues even worse. As a solution, it was proposed to improve communication and participation on the one hand, and on the other it was proposed to start with small steps. One attractive small street with no specific traffic function or temporary closures (e.g. during weekends) can serve as good case studies, which can then be scaled.

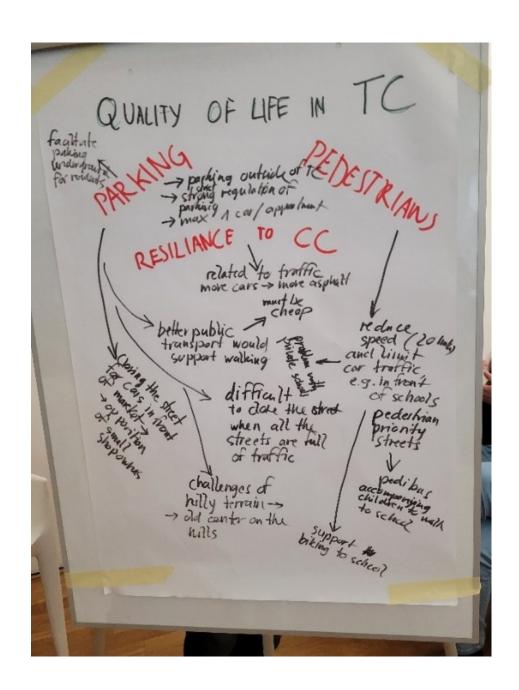
Another very useful measure mentioned was reducing the speed limit in the whole historical urban center to 20 km/h, make streets pedestrian priority and limit car traffic. This can attract more pedestrians to the historical urban centres and consequently also make shops and other services more profitable.

One very useful measure mentioned was related also to schools. First, car traffic can be limited in the vicinity of schools permanently or during morning and afternoon hours, when children go to school. Second, pedibus/walking bus can be introduced to support active travel of children to school. Pedibus is a service, usually organized by schools or local communities, which accompanies children to school in organized groups following a fixed route and timetable. Children are enjoying the walk with their peers in the company of adults and at the same time contribute to a more attractive neighborhood and a cleaner environment. Also, biking to schools can be supported by schools and municipalities in various ways.

c) Ensuring resilience to climate change related challenges

There was little debate in the group about specific challenges related to climate change adaptation. These include mostly adapting cities to rising temperatures and more extreme weather events, such as strong storms and flash floods. It was mentioned though, that adapting to climate change is strongly linked to reducing dependency on cars. Less car traffic would mean less paved surfaces, which are one of the main sources of heat island effects and problems with urban floods.





2. ECONOMY, VACANCIES, AND TOURISM: SERVICES, AMENITIES, NETWORKS

In this subgroup, we discussed issues related to vacant spaces in historic urban areas, their connection to the town's economy, and the potential of local businesses to revitalize towns. It became evident that partners are facing very different challenges concerning the local economy, vacancy, and tourism in their respective cities.

Partners from Greece and Spain mentioned having minimal problems with vacant spaces but struggle more with store overcrowding and limited space for new activities, public spaces, green areas, and development projects to address housing shortages.

On the other hand, partners from Hungary, Romania, and some smaller municipalities in Slovenia (excl. Ljubljana) reported issues with vacancy and significant fluctuations in ground-level programs. Our discussions predominantly focused on vacancy, as it was a dominant issue among partners, as indicated in the introductory discussion.

Key problems identified included the decline of commerce and amenities in TCs, the presence of malls on town outskirts that often win over consumer's attentions, and a lack of interest or involvement from store owners.

a) Offer of the old town centre

Partners mentioned they would like to have more control over the type of stores/activities in the city centre. They wish for more diverse offer - a mix of gastronomical, leisure, boutique, and tourist-oriented shops. Municipalities could play a role in directing this, particularly if they own the buildings and could select businesses/projects through open calls. However, in some municipalities, this is challenging due to privately owned land and buildings and profit-driven owners in old towns, which leaves the municipalities with little maneuver space. Additionally, in some cities, municipal authorization is required for new businesses in the town center, which prolongs the process of introducing new establishments.

There was some discrepancy in the ideas among the partners: some wished for a more specialized, boutique offer, while others preferred multinational store chains.

Spanish and Hungarian partners mentioned the closure of main shopping streets during festivities to bring life to the TCs and attract people. Collaboration with youth centers and shop owners, extending businesses to the streets, was mentioned as a successful practice.

Generally, most of the partners agreed that subsidizing rents to promote the rental of the stores/spaces in the TCs is one of the key measures. Another measure to address the challenge of vacant spaces is the implementation of a property tax. This would discourage owners from keeping buildings empty for extended periods.



b) Building restoration

One burning issue concerning old town centers (TCs) is the protection of cultural heritage. Revitalizing any historic building in these areas is entangled in complex bureaucracy and incurs very high costs. This situation renders it unattractive for owners to initiate renovation processes and discourages potential buyers from investing in these properties. Moreover, these buildings often present limited usage opportunities.

c) Addressing tourisitfication

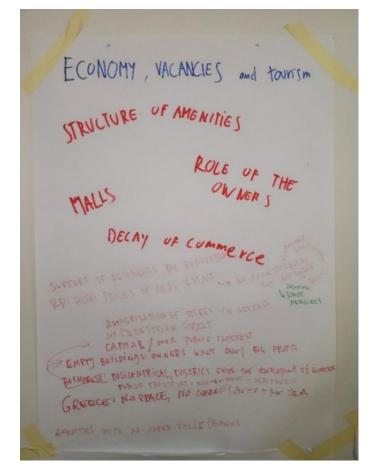
Participants emphasized the need for national-level measures to restrict short-term tourism, which negatively impacts the lives of inhabitants and the ambiance of town centers.

Most participants agreed that prioritizing the quality of life for inhabitants should be the primary goal, with tourism as a secondary. The Municipality of Koper, for example, is already taking steps to improve the quality of life for inhabitants affected by port sounds by providing yearly subventions for apartment repairs.

Another way to communicate with inhabitants and local business owners was seen in the role of the TC managers. Some towns have already introduced city managers responsible for the collective branding of town center stores and cultural institutions. These managers facilitate collaboration among business owners, e.g. deciding on common opening times, delivery schedules, and events to revitalize city centers. Additionally, they communicate about the ongoing activities with the inhabitants of the TC. They reported that this measure has proved to be successful so far.



ECONOMY, VACANCIES, TOURISH OLD SHOP OWNERS NOT COMPETITY NO SPECIALIZED OFFER OPENING TIMES - NOTHANDELLAND AMENINES THAT DON'T BRING PEOPLE TO NO OFFER - BARS, CAFES, ... HULTINATIONAL STORES NO STORES LJ VI. SLOVENIAN TOWNS CITY MARKETING / CITY HANAGER - LI BELINTELES, OPENING TIMES, EVENES STORES ARE ADAPTED FOR YOURISTS CULTURAL HERITAGE PROPECTION - LINING USAGE bossy + Foster the people to INVEST + GOOD PORTION OF STORES IN PUBLIC OWNERWIP + PER TYLWAM | BARS + (ir) MORE ATTECHNE FOR THE MINUTE FRONTY - NO POSSIBILITY FOR INCOMENCY TAX. PROPERTY TAX HAS OURVIEW



Balance between SUPLY DEMAND SHORT-TERM TOURISM (1-day) INHADITANTS PREFER MALLS BUILDINGS IN TO THE PRIVATIZED E-COMMERCE THREATHENING STORES MAIN STREET TRADE FAIR, YOUTH-ASSOCIATION EVENTS Ly Unied for cons any suday of festive buys SPMN F GENTRIFICATION TURISTIFICATION IS A RISK. DI MOSE WITH CONSERUM MOTORIS

3. COMMUNICATION; PARTICIPATION. CENTRE MARKETING/BRANDING

The discussion stared with general points, that it is important to cooperate with stakeholders because, if they protest severely, that could eventually block the project implementation.

Four segments of potential usually stakeholders were identified. Inhabitants of TC (town centre), business sector (shops, bars...), public institutions and visitors. Additionally, NGO's and their potential were mentioned – potential of helping municipalities in communication and participation process', but in some countries the cooperation between municipalities and NGO's is legally limited.

It was said that cooperation with public institutions is often the biggest challenge as they aren't interested in broader cooperations of town revitalization, because that is not part of their general agenda and strategic plans.

It makes sense to give extra attention to restaurants. Firstly, their organized joint activities have quite some potentials in revitalization of squares. Festival of restaurants for example. Secondly, their activities changed because of the pandemics. Restaurants are visited less, and they do more delivery, which means the drive more through the town center, even pedestrian areas. That might disturb pedestrians.

Among social groups youth was mentioned as most difficult to communicate to. They seem uninterested. However, it was mentioned by a younger member, that does communication activities for a municipality, that some social media tools might help, TikTok for example, but the communication needs to be very direct and straight. It was said that 5 seconds is the attention span of youngsters nowadays. Generally online communication, participation is considered as good as it supplies more people with an opportunity of participation, than physical meetings, debates, etc. Questionnaires, crowdsourcing of proposals and Zoom debates have all been mentioned as efficient. However, in person meetings have also been mentioned as still relevant, particularly with the decision makers; mayors have open hours, they visit associations relevant for town center revitalization (related to business), particular town center amenities managers etc.... Focus groups have also been mentioned as something that respective municipalities regularly do and works well in terms of town center revitalization.

As a media that delivers messages to the largest group of people classic radio and Facebook have been mentioned. Gamification campaigns have also been mentioned as an efficient manner of involving inhabitants in the town management related matters.



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COMMUNICATION

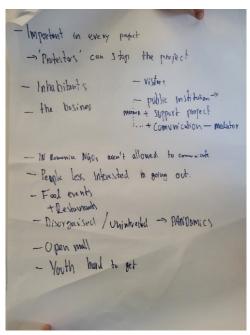
PARTICIPATION

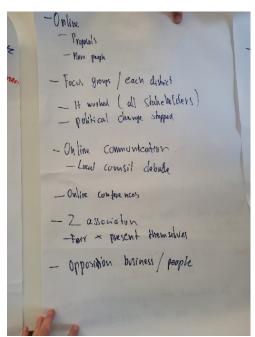
COLLABORATION WITH Bussiness owns,

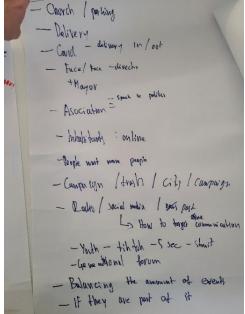
Resistance
to new
frequents

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Ngo
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4. CULTURE AND EVENTS IN PUBLIC SPACE

In this group we tried to briefly touch on four aspects of culture and events in public space: the type of events or the content of the events, the involvement of the public in the planning of activities, the negative and positive aspects, and what should be done to make our proposals/ideas come true.

The proposals regarding the type of events could be classified into 4 categories: events related to food and drink (festival of wine, beer, burgers, garlic, etc.), events related to art (cinema, theater, music, visual arts, etc.), events related to children and youth (school festival, children's festival, etc.), events related to mobility (European Mobility Week).

Most participants would invite residents of city centers to plan and implement activities in the field of culture and events. They emphasized that the way of communication with residents, the way of inclusion, the use of ICT, etc., are all very important in participatory processes.

Regarding negative aspects or impacts, the interlocutors most often mentioned: the possibility of conflict between different groups of residents, problems with unsatisfactory public transport and insufficient parking for event visitors, insufficient accommodation capacity, problems with too much waste and inadequate cleaning services, noise, destroyed/damaged parks and other green areas, insufficient involvement of local residents, insufficient connection to the city center itself, too many events concentrated on one day or one season (e.g. Fridays or summer) and not enough events on other days or in other seasons (Monday to Thursday, autumn, winter, in the spring).

Regarding the positive aspects, the interlocutors agreed that: culture and events would bring additional income to the city center, the possibility of new and additional investments, a richer city life, more tourism and more cultural tourism, a more developed economy, more support for local companies/services.

As the basic conditions for the establishment of rich cultural offers in city centres, the participants recognize: good management by local governments and a good overview of supply and demand of events, the creation of basic recommendations or guidelines for event organizers, an information point for organizers that would provide all necessary information in one place, provision of good infrastructure by the city, improved public transport.



TOWN CHITTE REVITALIZATION AND EVENTS not a problem SEB-BY-STEP, test period (see how local inh. react) for Protection heritage flea monthst branding (FOOD) E of music festivals · ETM goodic festital MORE Visibility of nomun in culture & events . Ay as manager programme should be great throughouted grax (not just a tem days/year) => Mg/kt event role of townom in every (also attract townists) ex: wine festival, beestest BACANCE MUST TOO FEW · children (culture as education) · the events would be happy that the city custre is not . Evenmer care graphy should talk with (old) inhabitants for free there festion · Free theathe once different features of the city could per week from discus ONUNE + face to face yount carrenal festivals

while communication (attractive, single, order thursdall.) give local inhabitants discount for local phops 2 for being apparating including Fet (the OR codes with info ...)

(=) conflict between different groups different authorities note woulderate transport (justic, parting) (new residents) . TOO MANY EVENTS at the same time gentrage conflict between potential place packs into about events at one gentrage conflict between potential place place.

Public chaving survival (interior or place)

Rivage erganizers not connected different entities to the local environment (NGOS, public private partients)

Thomas (city only as stage) + income · development of new buildings more active public like more enhanced city warket (tax income) townism + cultural townism profit for local slups/ more developed economy motivation for NGO WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE? If there would be purch-back LOS STACE, MORE street for positicians we would invite juryle to (increased comm.) · whe comm. public-private partnership stations quidelines (for sustainability, to include local services, son stop shop with all the tools for organized good infrastructure from the city would reminist the · butter public transportation

/ PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES FOR TOWN-CENTRE REVITALIZATION POLICIES /

Aidan Cerar, Pavlina Japelj, Karina Sirk, Marko Peterlin / IPoP – Institute for spatial policies

Združenje mestnih občin Slovenije (ZMOS), MSUM, 7. december 2023







/ OUR TOPICS AND TOOLS /

Supporting communities towards sustainable urban development.



PROGRAMS / PARTNERSHIPS / NETWORKS / COALITIONS

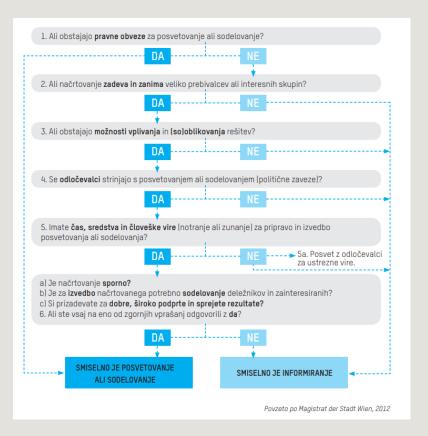


THE HOW, WHY, AND WHEN OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION /



/ SHOULD WE CONSULT THE PEOPLE? /

- Do we need to? Legal requirements.
- Does it interest people?
- Can they influence the plan / project / measure?
- Do we have a political backup?
- Do we have time, money and staff?
- Is the plan controversial?





/ THE USUAL METHODS /

- Public debate.
- Focus groups.
- Street surveys.



/ PUBLIC DEBATE /

- Works good with small or large group of attendees.
- Highlights the main challenges and risks.
- Enables you to explain plans.
- People hear each other. More or less.





/ THE RISKS OF PUBLIC DEBATE /

- Only the usual suspects attend.
- Might be off topic.
- The loudest gets in the news.



/TIPS AND TRICKS /

- Note down main points.
- Start in the front / back.
- Prioritize.





/ FOCUS GROUP /

- Efficient way of gathering data and opinion fast.
 - 6 8 attendees.
 - Group interview.
 - Up to 90'.
 - Can be repeated during the process.





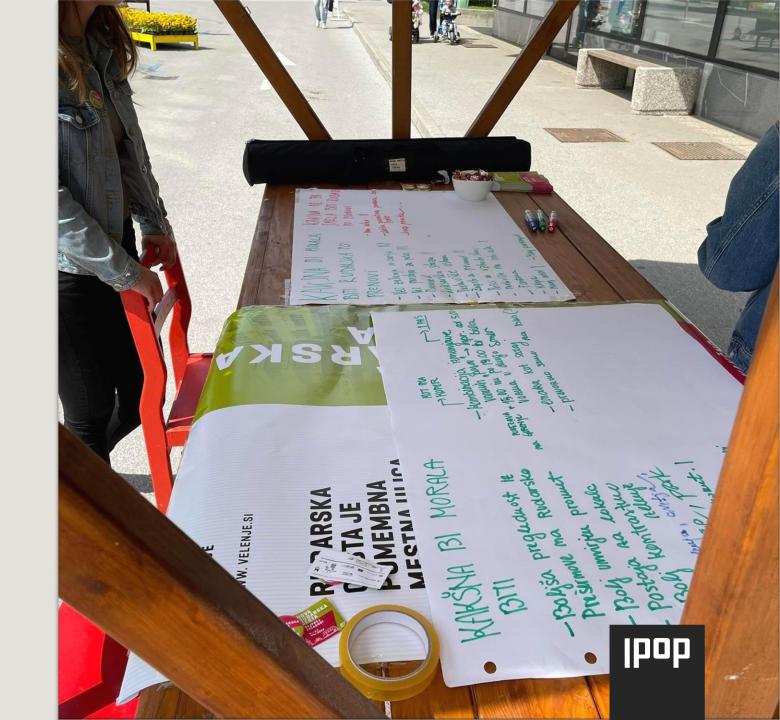
/ FOCUS GROUP /

- Invited experts.
 - RSVP.
- Pay attention to the hierarchy level of attendees.
 - Decision makers and experts don't mix well.



/ STREET INTERVIEWS /

- Brief interaction
- Few questions
- Beyond usual suspects.



/ STREET INTERVIEWS /

- Go where the people are.
- Use simple questionnaires.
- Write down notes, so that people can see what other people said.





/ PEOPLE JUST NEED A BIT OF HELP AND THEY WILL DO IT BY THEMSELVES /







/ GOOD PRACTICES OF TOWN-CENTRE REVITALIZATION POLICIES AND PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES /









/ MOBILITY / PEDESTRIANS FIRST





/LACK OF PLACES /

City centre given to cars.





/ CAN CITY CENTRE COMPETE WITH MALLS? /

No. They should do the opposite and provide walkability.





OPEN STREETS FOR PEOPLE /

Tactical temporal measure.

Aim:

- Testing.
- Diminishing political risk.
- Measuring impact.

We select a street, that is about to be reconstructed.





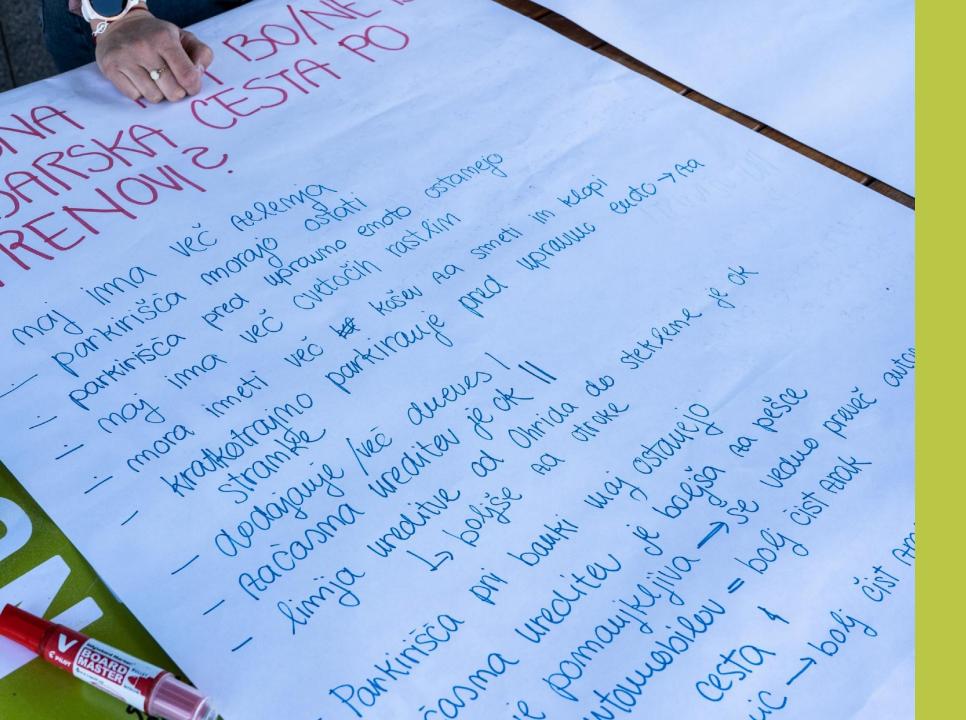
/ PLACE-MAKING /

We provide programme.

Just the right amount.

We cofinance it.





/ Data /

Modal split.
Traffic flows.





/TACTICAL INTERVENTIONS /

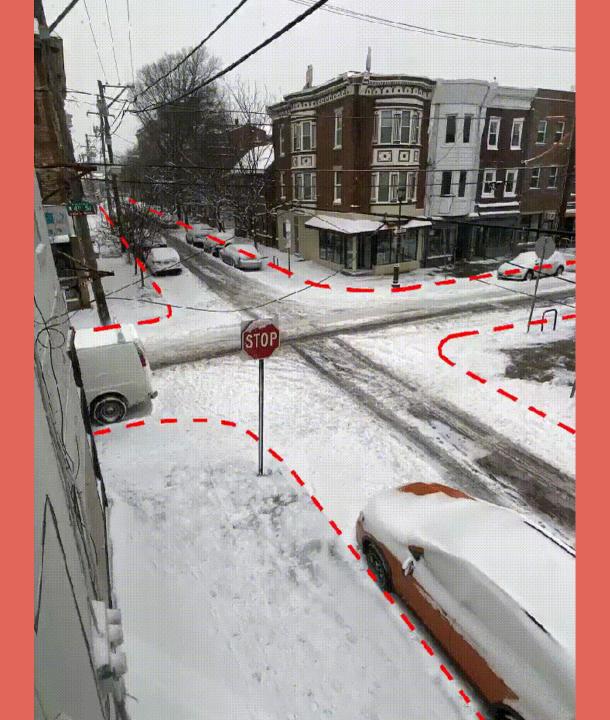
PLAYFUL TESTING OF POTENTIAL SPATIAL MEASURES

/SMALL-SCALE,
TEMPORARY
INTERVENTION /

/ QUICK,
LOW-COST
SOLUTIONS /

/ MORE SPACE FOR PEOPLE /

/SNECKDOWN/



/ MORE SPACE FOR EXPERIMENTATION /







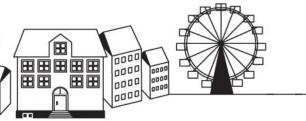


/ MAKE IT PARTICIPATORY /









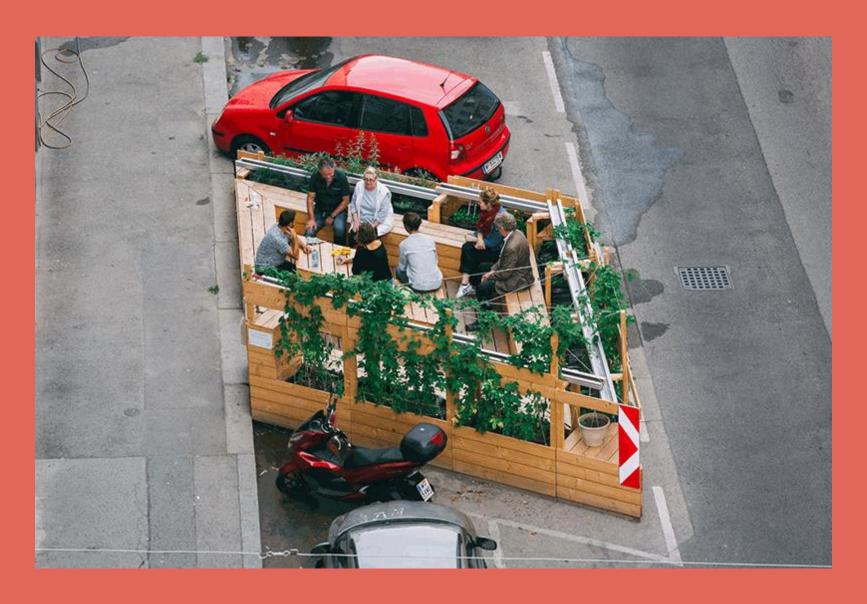
WIR VERWANDELN DEN FREIRAUM!

INFO CONTACT PRESS





/ GRÄTZLOASE, VIENNA /





/ LET PEOPLE WORK TOGETHER/









/ ENHANCE THE STREETS /

/ BENEFITS /

- TRAFFIC CALMING,
- ADRESSING THE SHORTAGE OF GREEN SPACES,
- MITIGATION OF URBAN HEAT ISLAND EFFECT,
- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT,
- ENHANCE (PERCEPTION OF) SAFETY.
- LURING PEOPLE TO THE PUBLIC SPACE.



/ VACANCY /

VACANT SPACES AND TEMPORARY USE

/TRANSFORMING VACANCY FOR AND WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY /

/TOWNS' LIVING ROOMS, SLOVENIA /





/ CREATIVE CONCEPTS FOR UNUSED SPACES /

/ TEMPORARY USE OF VACANT LOTS AND BUILDINGS /



/ VIENNA /











CONNECTING LANDLORDS AND POTENTIAL TENANTS

- AGENCY FOR TEMPORARY USE
- MATCHMAKING & BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER
- ENCOURAGING RENT
- SUBSIDIZING RENTS
- INTRODUCE VACANCY TAX



/ SLOVENJ GRADEC, SLOVENIA /







/ECONOMY/

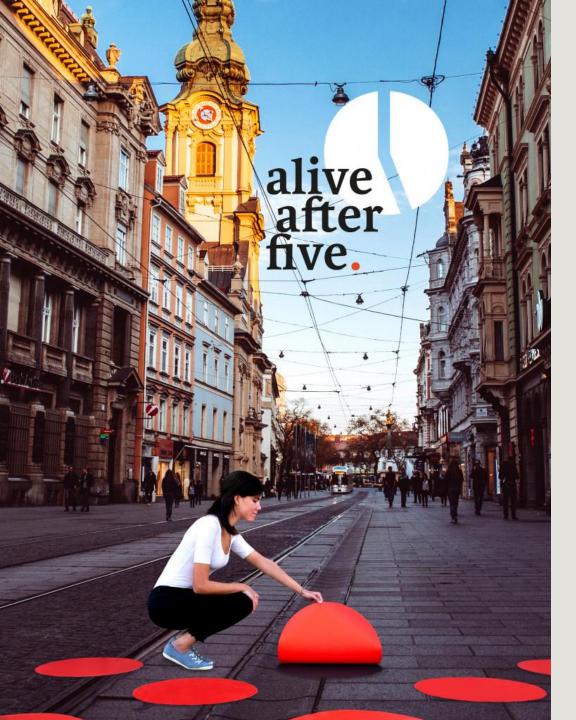
TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT

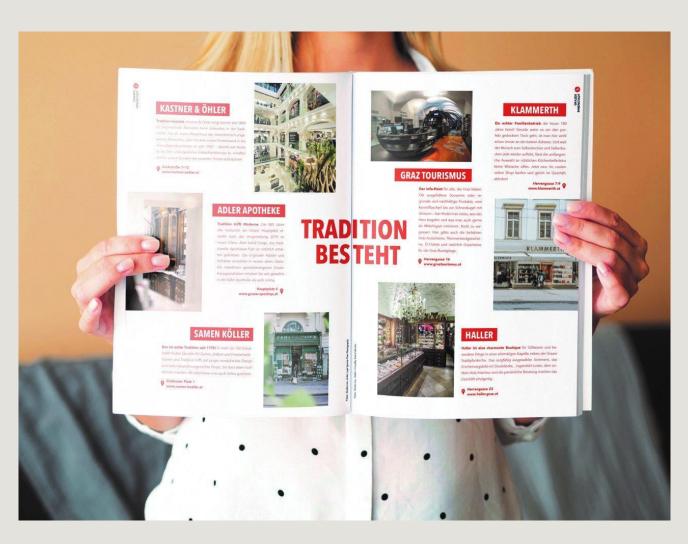
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/ SUPPORTING LOCAL ECONOMY /
/ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT /
/ RETAIL AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT /
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/ MARKETING AND EVENTS /

/ ECHT GRAZ /

LOCAL BUSINESSES UNITED







/EXCHANGE & DISSCUSION /

Highlight and explain one challenge that hinders the revitalization of *your* town center.



/ WORLD CAFÉ: HOW TO REVITALIZE A TOWN-CENTRE /

TOPIC 1:

TOPIC 2:

TOPIC 3:

TOPIC 4:

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- o ipopinstitute

