

S. H. I. F. T. Saving Historic Identity for Future Times

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Abstract: Importance of building awareness and dialogue about the following issues through proposed methods and actions:

- respect and value the past to create the meaningful future
- preserve and upgrade cultural heritage with utmost care and within the context
- initiate dialogue concerning revitalization and contemporary development within the realm of 12 specific regions of Slovenia
- use existing city fabric and respectfully renovate historic structures along with sensible contemporary design for successful further development of towns, villages and regions
- initiate historic preservation committees comprised of local residents along with historic preservation and other interdisciplinary professionals
- include and engage residents into shaping of their own environment through participatory actions with the help of artistic interventions and green initiatives (*people are residents instead of consumers*)
- initiate dialogue among residents, local administration and competent interdisciplinary professionals forming a platform for further actions
- instigate ecosystems widely
- promote use of public transportation
- consider and respect EU standards

Key words: revitalization, urban regeneration, social urbanism, sustainability, participatory urbanism through artistic interventions and green initiative, urban design

Z.A.S.U.K.

Zavestno v arhitekturi in smiselni urbanizaciji krajev

Povzetek: Osveščanje o pomembnosti vrednotenja, spoštovanja in varovanja kulturne dediščine in njenega smiselnega nadgrajevanja ter nujnost razmišljanja o naslednjem:

- da bi ustvarjali bodočnost moramo spoštovati preteklost
- primerna prenova, nadgrajevanje in vmeščanje primernih vsebin ter primernih obnovitvenih posegov v kontekstu
- nujnost dialoga o vprašanih sodobnih posegov v kontekstu specifičnega prostora glede na 12 različnih regij (sozvočno s prostorom)
- kako z novimi vsebinami in sodobnimi posegi nadaljevati uspešen razvoj mest oz. somestij in celotnih regij in smiselno nadgrajevati v kontekstu zgodovinskih mestnih in vaških jeder
- vzpostavitev lokalnih akcijskih planov na ravni sosesk s sodelovanjem strokovnjakov s področja varovanja kulturne dediščine
- vključiti prebivalce v oblikovanje svojega lastnega okolja preko participatornih umetniških in okoljskih akcij (ko ljudje niso le potrošniki ampak ponovno postanejo prebivalci)
- pomembnost aktiviranja vseh udeležencev kot uporabnikov prostora in pomembnost usklajevanja medsebojnih interesov
- vzpostaviti dialog med prebivalci, lokalno upravo in kompetentnimi strokovnjaki s področja oblikovanja prostora z namenom oblikovanja skupne platforme za nadaljnje delovanje
- nujnost vzpostavljanja ekosistemov
- nujnost vzpostavitve integriranega sistema javnega potniškega prometa
- nujnost upoštevanja EU zakonodaje in normativov ter minimalnih standardov kakovostne prenove

Ključne besede: revitalizacija, urbana regeneracija, trajnostni razvoj, participatorni urbanizem preko umetniških intervencij in zelene iniciative, oblikovanje mesta

Cultural heritage, architecture, contemporary art and green initiative are coming together stitching the social and city fabric while creating seamless group interactions and supporting social awareness through *Social Urbanism*

Introduction:

In the course of last decades, participatory planning became an important factor of change in planning processes all over the world. Rapid changes in the economic, political and social orders of cities have increased tensions between different actors and interests demanding new methods in urban design practices. Increasing strength of civil society and the access to information has forced city governments to become more responsive to citizen demands.

In urban context of today, participatory planning emerged as a response to new situations, challenging technocratic practices of the past promoting more inclusive and democratic decision-making processes: **grassroots** - from the bottom up.

Participatory urban upgrading projects turned out to be the best practices in degraded neighborhoods generating development of new public spaces and social programs that are closely related to the needs of local communities. Through this process significant social and institutional outcomes are visible, **especially in terms of community building, social capital and institutional capacity.**

Participatory Planning in Urban Upgrading Projects and short insight into theories of participatory planning

Participatory or collaborative planning emerged as a response to the failure that planning institutions had when coping with rapid changes in western cities during the second half of the 20th replacing the technical rationality behind hierarchical and bureaucratic planning processes, creating more inclusive and democratic decision making practices (Healy, 1996; Forester, 1999; Innes and Booher, 2003). In all of these scenarios, **participants** (inhabitants, stakeholders, planners, politicians, etc.) have to find ways to understand and learn from the opinions and interest of those that are part of the process.

Critics of participatory planning theories have argued that this approach is too optimistic, idealistic and its principles are hard to implement in real life, although there is no denial of the fact that **involving different actors** within the planning process has the **potential of achieving more just and sustainable results** than the technocratic approaches of the past.

Participation in the urban upgrading context

Public participation is highly supported and recommended by the international donor agencies as a key factor in the upgrading of informal and deprived neighborhoods (World Bank, 2001; UN Millenium Project, 2005). Participation in the context of urban upgrading is ideally understood as “*a process in which people, and specially disadvantaged people, influence resource allocation and the planning and implementation of policies and programs, and are involved at different levels and degrees of intensity in the identification, timing, planning, design, implementation, evaluation, and post-implementation stage of development projects*” (Imparato and Ruster, *Slum Upgrading and Participatio: Lessons from Latin America*, 2003, p. 4)

Unlike what many might think, **implementing a participatory process does not depend only on the degree of organization and the characteristics of the community** (Imparato and Ruster, 2003). In fact, Hamdi and Goethert (Action Planning for Cities, 1997) argue that people living in deprived neighborhoods are more eager to participate than others which can influence political and planning decision through other means. **What is needed is the support of external actors (public or private agencies)** in terms of funding, organization and provision of technical assistance required during the participation process to **get greater involvement and achieve a better synergy** within the participation process (Imparato and Ruster, 2003). **There is the risk that public engagement may happen only under conditions of extreme provocation (Maribor, Slovenia - 2012).** But the process can be manipulated or guided towards certain topics or outcomes that are within the interests of certain groups. **When designing a participatory process there is the need of critical reflection on these issues, so that the process' legitimacy is not undermined.**

Coordinated actions of different agencies and the involvement of the community can create faster and more visible results in the area, three main components of the process should be:

- **a physical component**, based on new public spaces and facilities
- **a social component**, based on the participation of the community
- **an institutional component**, coordinating the implementation of existing social programs and fostering collaboration among institutions.

The team involved should be comprised of an interdisciplinary group of professionals (planners, architects, social workers and environmental engineers), managing, coordinating and supporting different actors, institutions and projects to guarantee efficiency and responsibility of the process and the outcomes. Some of the members should be located directly in the area of intervention so closer contact with the community in case of doubts, can happen.

An example of such project, Local Action Plan (LAP) in Milwaukee, USA, shows how participatory processes can contribute to the physical and social improvement of a deprived neighborhood

Data collection was done through **interviews, analysis of documents, field visits and observations**. **Interviews** were conducted with members of the local community, community leaders, municipal authorities and professionals that were part of the project. **Document analysis** was used to complement the interviews, identifying the discussed issues and the achieved outcomes, field visits have been conducted in order to confirm the impact and sustainability of the project's physical improvements including social programs and activities. **Document analysis** became a part of the official document of the project.

There were five stages of the plan: **diagnosis, planning, design, construction and activation or maintenance**. The participatory process was designed so that the community would be involved in different ways through activities while **community building** was emerging. Through **diagnosis** several public hearings were conducted where principles and methodology were introduced to the community and people expressed all complaints of previous processes – an essential step in order to have a fresh start based on some level of trust. The public hearings were also used to **identify the main actors of the area such as community based organizations and representatives** in order to involve them in the process. There was no master plan at that moment in place yet.



Figure 1 - Area of intervention



Figure 2 - Since the area of intervention was large, the plan was divided into 5 smaller areas

Given the large size of the area of intervention it is difficult to determine if all actors and interests were heard. The whole area was divided into **5 smaller areas** based on specific characteristics of neighborhoods. If large groups are involved in a session there is the risk that people will feel nervous of expressing their ideas, leading to the possibility that more powerful side can be imposed over less powerful, questioning the validity of “local knowledge” - it is better to create groups and areas based on similar aspects or problems. When people feel that they are among others that share same situation they feel more represented by the group and the process thus creating **Community of Action**.



Figure 4 - Workshops with community members



Figure 4 b - Some thoughts by community members

The ideas of the community were used as a base for the design and the final decisions were based on the feasibility of the proposal. Once there was an agreement on the programs, use and design of the project, the final result was shown to the community. This was done via brochures and public hearings. Since there was a high level of unemployment in the neighborhoods, some of the labor force used in the construction of the projects came from people living in the area, many new jobs were developed, and some of the tasks were given to the community.



Figure 5 – Photos of social events through arts and green initiatives



Figure 6 - Public Spaces - Before and after



Figure 6a – Job development strategy produced several results

Outcomes beyond the physical improvements:

The Community Committees of the LAP project created the arena for some community leaders to collaborate and become more visible and active in their neighbourhoods. **This allowed the formation of new leaders that became more active in the development of the area as well as key contacts with the municipality and significant outcomes such as community building and social capital were achieved** thanks to the participatory process: an arena where the community can get together and where trust and relations between its inhabitants can be strengthened was fomented. Local community groups, such as art, youth or cultural ones along with small family business found the space where they could be more visible and active.

The process has also contributed to the better functioning of public spaces and public facilities that are highly used by children and adults. This has created in the inhabitants a sense of pride and belonging that did not exist before. In addition to this, the rest of the city started to see the neighbourhood as an important part of the city, moving away from the stigmatization of the past. The area has also become a tourist attraction.

Strengthening the community and its local groups can become significant in the long run since they can engage in their own development activities, it is important to mention that the changes of the built environment in the areas where the projects were constructed have created a significant new image for the neighbourhoods and has encouraged people living nearby to improve their houses and in some cases open small stores and business.

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It is a good strategy to combine general assemblies with smaller representative groups in order to make the process more effective, the Community Committee should represent the variety of vested interests, especially the most vulnerable groups (women, the elderly, children, ethnic minorities, etc.) which are the ones affected more severely by the conditions present in deprived neighbourhoods

Lessons learned - Governance through dialogue:

It is crucial that urban upgrading projects are supported by a strong political will committed addressing complex problems present in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Not doing so creations of social problems that may result in negative effects for the whole city can occur. *Social Urbanism* strategy serves as a way to challenge the

traditional “sector” organization of the municipality that focuses on the delivery of specific and unrelated functions (public services and infrastructure, economic development, education, health, culture, etc.).

The participation process stipulates services and programs closer to the needs of people and involvement of the local community in the development process. It also creates change in the negative attitude that the communities can have towards the administration. The change in attitude can be achieved with constant efforts to communicate the progress of the process and report how resources are managed, enhancing the transparency and accountability of the administration. **Apathy and distrust can be replaced by new relations of partnership and collaboration.**

Conclusion:

The combination of tangible, high visible, high quality upgraded built environment, plus intangible, social/institutional activities and programs can also be seen as a strategic approach for creating results.

ANALYZE AND STRATEGIZE IN SLOVENIA:



Figure 7 – Map of Slovenia with 12 Regions

Cities are regarded as important catalysts for social inclusion, intercultural dialogue and exchange, along with economic development. Only by understanding the needs of their residents and providing them with a high quality of life, can cities appeal to the “creative classes” and prosper by fostering greater social cohesion. In Slovenia there are numerous possibilities and untapped potentials within the given realm of existing conditions: along with unused existing building stock there are many organizations, associations and creative individuals, with the potential to contribute to the well-being of communities.

Visible signs of architectural, cultural and ecological neglect of urban and rural areas are rampant, along with “cultural and social erosion” of historic towns and villages. In order to remedy both phenomena, an unusual method of healing is introduced: arts and green initiative become catalysts for regeneration.

Identity of Places as “Placemaking” and Added Value:

Historic places are reflection of its place and time acting as place markers in all human settlements, becoming memorable moments in time being captured in picture postcards and in family photo albums.

Places with strong historic identity along with places for public art give communities a stronger **sense of place and identity**. In terms of what our towns look like, it is becoming extremely important having a particular community

identity, especially in a world where everyplace tends to look like everyplace else. Thinking about our specific and unique towns we can identify ourselves with places like: Piran, Ptuj, Bled, Otočec, Hrastovlje, etc., they are **our Slovenian icons, where the spirit of our cultural milieu and our own identity are captured**, they are unique and representative. **It is our duty to preserve and meaningfully upgrade** them and create places where people want to live and want to visit. It has been witnessed that successful revitalization of historic places can be an essential element when a municipality wishes to progress economically.

Public Art as Catalyst for Regeneration:



Figure 8 – Public art intervention in Ljubljana by ProstoRož architects



Figure 9 – Socially aware sculpture installation made by students at the Art Academy in Slovenia, “The Waiting...”

This socially aware installation as a strong political statement was presented for the first time in Ljubljana at the House of the European Union as a reaction to the “Year of Social Exclusion and Equal Opportunity”



Figure 10 –Good examples of art installations/interventions portraying examples of anomalies

Cities with an active and dynamic cultural scene are more attractive to individuals and business. Public art can be a key factor in establishing a unique and culturally active place, it can create civic icons, but it also can transform our playgrounds, train stations, traffic circles, hospitals, and airports into more vibrant expressions of human imagination. By building and reinforcing community culture, **public art can act as a catalyst for community regeneration**. It can be permanent, large, or it can be very subtle, short lived and ephemeral.

Public art adds value to towns: cultural, social, and economic, presenting a unique part of our history and evolving culture. It mirrors our society, adds meaning to our environment, it enables people to experience art in daily life outside of museums or other cultural institutions and **providing a connection between past, present and future, among disciplines and ideas while being freely open to the viewers**. It can engage social interaction and builds awareness. Much of our newly built environment lacks the resonance of history or reflection of civic ownership, which makes residents proud of where they live. Carefully conceived public art installations within specific environments, rich with connections to our history and the nature help make places of meaning. **Art can celebrate the qualities that make one place different from another**. The best of public art can challenge, delight, educate, illuminate, it creates a sense of civic vitality in the cities, towns and communities we inhabit and visit.

The Artist as Contributor to Cultural Value:

Creative vision is indispensable within the civic decision process while aesthetic benefits of works of art in public places can also inspire creativity in others, ideally bringing the means of problem-solving to a more imaginative result. Artists without doubt bring their personal and unique insight into the built environment, creating a tremendous aesthetic potential that can challenge beliefs and inspire community values. Public art activates the imagination and encourages people to pay attention and perceive more deeply the environment they occupy. It stimulates learning and thought about society, about our interconnected lives, and about the social sphere as a whole.



Figure 10 – Artist at work during the Sculpture Art Colony in Makole, Slovenia

Collaboration as Social Value:

Creation of art for public space is a sociable act, stirring up collaboration with others and the work can echo throughout the community, encouraging a sense of shared ownership and collective affiliation. The inclusion of artists' thinking, creative input, aesthetic contribution in the public realm engage ways of working in the built environment that are different from the approaches of practitioners of other disciplines because their concerns are different. For public art to stay relevant and thrive, we need to actively shape its future and make the case for the value and relevance. These challenges fall into two complementary and straightforward questions: concepts of what to do and how to do it.



Figure 11 – Example of a well conceived playground in Ljubljana, designed by ProstoRož architects



Figure 11a – Example of a well conceived playground in Ljubljana, designed by ProstoRož architects

How to do it? WorkTogether and Strategize

There will always be different points of view, but these are strengths and not weaknesses in a field that requires so much collaboration. Artists and administrators tackle, debate, organize, support, undertake, create, and revise documents and services of benefit to the neighborhood. Forthcoming are: mentoring programs, regional networks, webinars, and other resources for administrators, artists, and community leaders.



What to do? Partnerships, Opportunities, Creative Collaboration and Education:

Historically, public art partnerships have been catalysts for revenue and urban regeneration. Partnerships can include private developers or funders, museums and galleries, educational institutions, transportation systems or private industry. Interdisciplinary opportunities can blur boundaries among visual and performative art, design and technology.

Every public art project is an interactive process involving artists, architects, administrators, design professionals, community residents, civic leaders, funding agencies, and construction teams. The challenge of this communal process is to support artists' creative involvement through cooperation, and to create opportunities for artists to engage in the issues of our time.



Figure 12 – Program “Protect Respect Preserve” for elementary schools, conceived by Milena Antonić, Protection of Cultural Heritage in Slovenia (ZVKDS)

We know that learning happens when we ask questions, and public art prompts vital and primary questions about our environment and ourselves and public art can encourage learning opportunities, from didactic to aesthetic.

Primary goals of the Initiative S.H.I.F.T. are the importance of raising awareness and dialogue about the following issues:

- Respect and value the past in order to create meaningful future
- Engage effective and meaningful citizen involvement by local and all prospective residents and stakeholders to initiate a unified platform for planning process
- Build on efforts that are currently underway in other communities with the emphasis on historic preservation and cultural heritage (cultural tourism, apiculture, itd.)
- Preserve and upgrade cultural heritage with utmost care and within context
- Stress the importance of public transportation creating a public transformation
- Stress the importance of ecosystems
- Promote practices to reduce or eliminate the future loss of existing hisotiric building stock and property resulting from hazards: natural and man-made
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- Respect and consideration of EU standards

Methods and Actions:

- Initiate dialogue concerning revitalization and contemporary development within the realm of 12 specific regions of Slovenia
- Initiate historic preservation committees comprised of local residents and historic reservation as well as other interdisciplinary professionals
- Enhance the historic character and regenerate with the help of artistic interventions and green initiative
- Include and engage residents into shaping of their own environment through participatory urbanism, when people will become residents again instead of consumers
- Initiate dialogue among residents, local administration, interdisciplinary professionals forming a platform for further actions

- Use existing city fabric and respectfully renovate historic structures along with sensible contemporary design for successful development of towns, villages and regions
 - Connect competent professionals, users and other stakeholders
 - Create dynamic community-based action-oriented plans that can be updated as conditions change and new projects or programs are identified and can achieve visible and tangible results within reach
 - Promote sustainable growth management practices and repopulation strategies in urban and rural historic cores
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Community building is a field of practices directed toward the creation or enhancement of community within a regional area such as a neighborhood – Community of Geography, or with a common interest – Community of Interest. A wide variety of practices can be utilized for community building, ranging from simple events like potlucks and small book clubs, to larger-scale efforts such as mass festivals and building construction projects that involve local participants rather than outside contractors.

Social capital is the product of social interactions with the potential to contribute to the social, civic or economic well-being of a community-of-common-purpose. The nature of the social capital depends on various qualitative dimensions of the interactions in which it is produced, such as the quality of the internal-external interactions, the historicity, futuricity, reciprocity, trust and the shared values and norms. (Falk and Kilpatrick, 2000: What is Social Capital? A Study of Interaction in a Rural Community. Sociologia Ruralis, 40, 1, 87-110.)

An example of a possible speaker series to start a necessary dialogue about city's future:

Maribor Economic Development hosts the “Fabric of the City” speaker series