

Urban Resilience in the Suburbs _

Urban Acupuncture

Boštjan Bugarič¹

1 Faculty of Architecture, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, bostjanbbugaric@gmail.com

ABSTRACT **Investor urbanism advocates the privatisation of public space, which results in unification of amenities, detachment of dwellers, lack of urbanity, escalation of vandalism, and marginalisation of community. Urban acupuncture, as an implemented tool for community recuperation, provides an alternative to investor urbanism by motivating marginalised dwellers to take part in the process of place-making. A case study, the implementation of a project called CULBURB in six Central European cities, is described in depth to provide insight into the urban situation in the suburbs.**

KEYWORDS urban acupuncture, urban resistance, community building, built environment and communication, place-making, investor urbanism

1 Introduction

Public spaces in the suburbs of Central European cities bear witness to a lack of activities. The public capacity to participate in public life is low. While the prominent central parts of the city are experiencing gentrification processes, the suburbs are home to an increase in vandalism and crime. The lack of communication among stakeholders in an urban environment can result in disconnection between the suburbs and the city centre. Thus, the marginalised suburban neighbourhoods are becoming abandoned, vandalised, and neglected due to lack of programme. Neglect leads to unmitigated urban sprawl. Smith (2002) argues that gentrification has become a global urban strategy, influencing local urban environments around the world. The speed and the scale of gentrification in large cities have increased enormously as these cities are faced with an influx of global capital concentrated in their urban centres.

Urban acupuncture is a small-scale practice in micro urban environments, intended to encourage residents to take part in the creation of their local public space. It is a strategy for approaching urban renewal or development projects that address the needs of local stakeholders. It puts an emphasis on place-making and creating shared commons that will be accessible to people inhabiting the area's immediate surroundings. Urban acupuncture promotes community building where dwellers take common ownership of public space to express and reinforce their local identity. Within the context of this strategy, urbanists conduct research to include local residents' perspectives in the planning process and then carry out targeted actions to change public space and improve the quality of life (Bugarič, 2017).

Acupuncture urbanism engages urban actions with a situational approach to engage dwellers in the creation of their part of the city. Gruber (2012) defines acupuncture urbanism as the one that identifies neuralgic points for focused interventions on the basis of an inductive reading and physiological understanding of an urban milieu. According to Gruber (2012) urban plans must be implemented in a bottom-up incremental manner through constant feedback and re-adjustments. The predisposition of acupuncture urbanism draws from the Situationist's theories of the *Right to the City* and Jane Jacobs' self-organising behaviour of cities, which she recognises as problem of organised complexity, and from a more contemporary theory of the in-between city or *die Zwischenstadt* by Thomas Sieverts.

Jane Jacobs' anthropocentric concept of city development is a critique of modernist urban planning policy from the 1950s, deemed responsible for the decline of city neighbourhoods in the U.S.A. Going against the modernist planning dogma dominating the era, Jacobs (1992) proposes a newfound appreciation for organic urban vibrancy. In the book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jacobs states how streets are the most vital organ and therefore the most important public spaces of the city. According to Jacobs (1992), a city can only be interesting if its streets are interesting. Mixed uses can help better diversity in the

city as it creates conditions for spontaneous development. Today, cities in U.S.A. are dealing with the growth of suburbs due to the formation of the mortgage market in the mid-thirties, which was established to promote housing construction in the suburbs.

The second important movement organised by social revolutionaries such as Guy Debord, Constant Nieuwenhuys, Henri Lefebvre and others, was called the Situationist International (SI). In Europe, intellectuals, artists, and theorists joined international organisations between 1957 and 1972. The movement derived from Marxism, Dada, and Surrealism movements, which represented a modern critique of mid-20th century advanced capitalism. One of the most important texts of the movement is *The Society of the Spectacle* by Guy Debord. The main observation about space by Debord (1958) is that contemporary architecture and urbanism are nothing less than the logic of alienation and reification written in stone, the capitalist refashioning of space into its own décor. For Debord (1956), *Dérive* represents experimental behaviour linked to urban society; it is a technique of an unplanned walk through various urban environments where dwellers communicate their everyday relation and let themselves be drawn by the attractions and the encounters they find on their way. Constant, in his 1960s essay *Unitary Urbanism*, observes how the architect deals with a change of profession as the preoccupation with formality makes contemporary architecture extremely boring (McDonough, 2009). The new concern of the architect must be the effect that architecture has on its inhabitants. The case of Constantin's New Babylon "envisaged a space where people were free to engage in creative work, shaping the world in accordance with their desires." (McDonough, 2009, p. 17). The idea, condensed into a slogan "*Right to the City*" was first proposed by Henri Lefebvre in his book *Le Droit à la ville* (1968). Lefebvre (1996) summarises the idea as a "demand...(for) a transformed and renewed access to urban life". David Harvey (2008, p. 23) described the right to the city as something that "is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights." The more recent *Digital Right to the City* involves the virtual city and its digital information.

The last interpretation of the *In-between City* or *die Zwischenstadt* (*in German*) learns from processes of city transformation and introduces new terms. The definition of the *In-between City* includes all settlements, which are barely separated by countryside; this settlement form is car dependent and lacks urban-ness. Sieverts' (2003) prediction for future city life states that half of the world's population will live in the in-between cities, which would reach 10 million inhabitants, and even up to 30 million in some cases. Sieverts (2003) defines new relations between centre and periphery and introduces the post-Keynesian urbanised landscape. The results of the emergence of *In-between City* include, according to Sieverts (2003), food production in an urban farming

ecology, as well as the recuperation of water. Urbanised landscape highlights important issues connected to urban ecosystem research that suggest how cities must integrate into the surrounding landscape. Ripl and Hildmann (1997) stress that the procurement of drinking water should, in the medium-term, be redirected from the utilisation of groundwater to the use of surface water and a lower degree of wastage. According to Ripl and Hildmann (1997), the exploitation of wastewater should, be similar to that of rural settlement areas; in order to reduce the heat absorption of the city, as much vegetation as possible should be planted on rooftops, facades, and around buildings. Furthermore, rainwater should not be drained away, but used for cultivation.

If urbanisation takes place in an economic and political context that is inherently opposed to planning, Sieverts (2003) points out at which level to intervene. According to Sieverts (2003), suburbia in the *In-between City* behaves as the aggregate product of uncoordinated singular decisions. It is equipped with limited means and power, as the essential parameters of control, and is left undetermined with respect to individual interests. Without synergies between individual interests, we have to deal with marginality, lack of facilities, degradation of space, and a high level of vandalism in suburban neighbourhoods.

2 Centre Versus Suburbia: Active and Passive Public Space

Urban centre is “a place in which everything important can be found and from which all mayor developments start” (Sieverts, 2003, p. 25). There are few program relations between centre and suburbia; centre is the carrier of city identity while suburbia merely services the centre. The processes shaping these two entities are different as well, the centre is more affected by gentrification and touristification, so its primal identity becomes blurred by global trademarks, while suburbia develops mixed networks of non-places lacking public programme. Through the evaluation of parameters that define public space it is possible to define both. On one hand, the centre develops overdesigned public spaces, which do not allow spontaneity. Urban design is defined by programme appropriated to the users from higher social classes; they are monitored by different systems of control (CCTV, cameras, police) due to constant fear of diversity. On the other hand, the public space in suburbia lacks programme, it is vandalised, vacant, and has no future perspective to offer to the dwellers.

Both cases can lead to disconnection between dwellers and public space, which can be used as an opportunity for place-making, a method of neighbourhood, city, or region improvement, where dwellers collectively reinvent public spaces as the centre of their community. Place-making creates a boundary between people and places. In a collaborative process, a public space can be shaped in a way that maximises its shared value. Not in a sense of promotion of urban design, its products or its authors, but rather through establishing patterns useful for

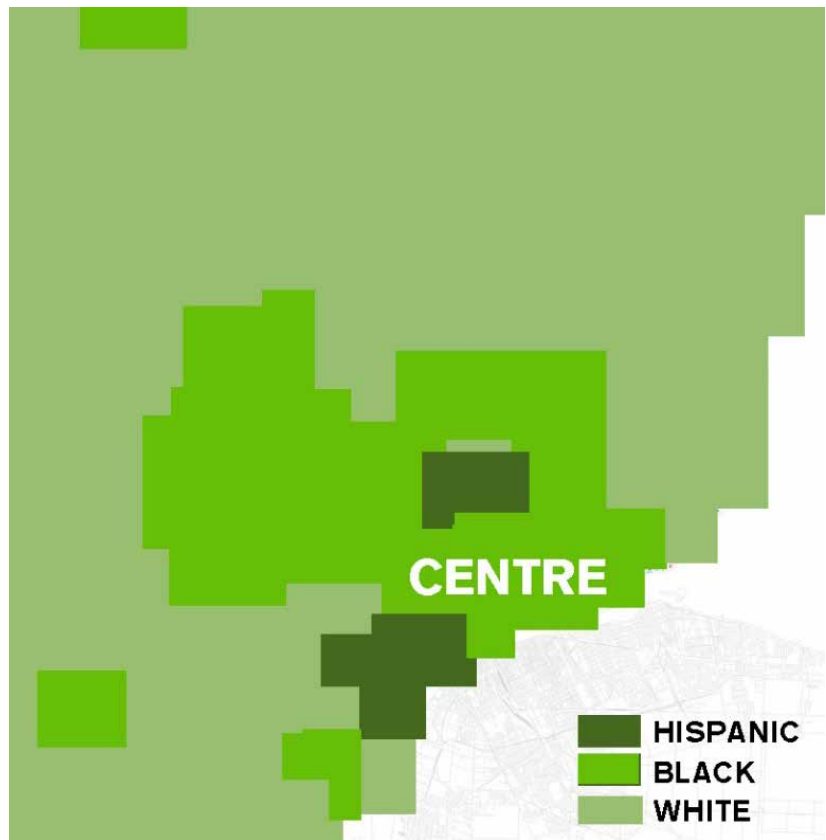


FIG. 2.1 Vacant public space lacking communications with dwellers in Ljubljana's suburb Zalog (Photograph by Domen Grögl, 2013)

the creation of spatial, cultural, and social identities that define a place. Projects that prioritise place-making should be implemented by incorporating community-based participation so that they result in the emergence of high quality public spaces that contribute to a better quality of life (Bugarič, 2017).

Growing disconnection between users and public space creates perfect conditions for the development of investor urbanism, where developers dictate the programme and design of public space. Investor urbanism forms spatial developments in which investors and/or politicians make decisions about a city's further development without giving residents or other community representatives the possibility to provide their input. This process creates racial, economical, and sexual or gender segregation amongst the dwellers of the neighbourhood.

FIG. 2.2 Detroit exhibits strong racial segregation: the city centre became a ghetto, housing former workers after the devastation of the car industry while the higher classes have moved to the suburbs (Fischer, 2017) (Image by Bugarcic, 2017).



The urban places of the 21st century will be represented by public spaces between the virtual and physical world, where people will meet and talk either online or offline. Merrifield (2014) is convinced that this will erase the difference between public and private space and bring a new definition of space: passive or active. The active places will encourage active meetings of users while the passive ones will be reconciled with their inert character. This is the future of the global city, the development of two opposite features. Sassen (2017) argues the thesis that the global city plays on a strategic frontier zone and thus empowers those who lack power, the disadvantaged, outsiders, and minorities who are discriminated against, i.e. the modest middle class. "The disadvantaged and excluded can gain presence in such cities in a way they cannot in neat, homogenous provincial cities. In the global city, they become present to power and to each other, which may include learning to negotiate their multiple differences. They can hack power and they can hack their differences of origin, religion, phenotype." (Sassen, 2017). Such organisation develops communities, which, connected by similar interests, start to impact on the physical as well virtual city development.

3 Neighbourhood Communities

Neighbourhood is a social community, a spatial unit within a larger city, town, suburb, or rural area with face-to-face interaction among members. Schuck and Rosenbaum (2006) define it spatially as a specific geographical area and functionally as a set of social networks where residents seek to realise common values, socialise, and maintain effective social control. Mumford (1954) referred to the existence of neighbourhoods wherever human beings congregate in permanent family dwellings. So, what is a neighbourhood in a global city? It shares the diversity in local identity and the needs for global survival in the time of ecological disasters, climate, and economic change. The primal idea of the neighbourhood involves three parameters: natural micro-climatic, socially cohesive, and economically independent. According to these, different typologies of city infrastructure can be developed, which function as a framework for the sustainable community of the 21st century. There are three basic points that shall be reconsidered when we create a new community system infrastructure: development of green areas, distribution of water, and migration flows. There is no sense in differentiating between central and suburban neighbourhoods, but rather in defining those that will contribute to the ecological self-sufficient use of space, goods, and relationships. As deregulation, privatisation, and new fiscal and monetary policies on governments take effect in the corporate sector of global cities, Sassen (2017) is convinced that “in this sense, then, the corporates hacked the city because that making of new instruments was a way of constructing the equivalent of the old military “fort” of the historic frontier: the corporate zone in our cities is a protected, private space. And corporate actors have been doing this since the late 1980s in city after city, worldwide, to ensure they have a global operational space that suits their interests.” Hacking the global city means, in a way, to create a frontier zone in which power can no longer have access. This zone is created by a strong sense of community.

3.1 Green Areas

After the Second World War, a process of modernisation drastically changed the structure of the city through the process of rebuilding the destroyed infrastructure and constructing new housing typologies. The new neighbourhoods become a space where many people emigrated from rural areas, thus creating a need to build new houses, which affected the green areas. The necessity of building new housing greatly reduced the surfaces of green areas, which is one of the main reasons for microclimatic changes in cities, as the micro-climate used to play a role in water circulation. It is important to embrace a more sustainable type of urbanisation, which will help to regenerate the former microclimatic situation within cities.

3.2 Water Distribution

According to the UNESCO Report (2016), megacities face the threat of climate change affecting their water-related needs. By 2030, over a billion people will live in approximately 100 very large cities and 60 % of the world's population will live in urban areas, so sustainable water management is particularly important (UNESCO Report, 2016). The cities will be exposed to extreme risks in terms of negative impacts of climate change on water and sanitation infrastructure and services. At the Habitat III conference in Quito a publication "Water, Megacities and Global Change" was launched, and which describes 15 emblematic megacities: Beijing, Buenos Aires, Chicago, Ho Chi Minh City, Istanbul, Lagos, London, Los Angeles, Manila, Mexico City, Mumbai, New York, Paris, Seoul and Tokyo, their unique circumstances and how they are addressing shared water governance challenges (UNESCO Report, 2016). These cities have often failed to develop their urban services, including those relating to access to water, sanitation, and rainwater drainage. The demand for drinking water is a challenge for several megacities, most notably for Mumbai, where the distribution system is almost non-existent in slums, which, according to the UNESCO Report (2016), host 56% of the city's population.

Water should be a constitutional right, not regulated by monopolistic companies but supplied equally to all users. Slovenia has, for example, made drinking water a public good, a good that cannot be privatised and is primarily used sustainably for the care of the population and animals. Only once these are taken care of can it be used for the economic needs of Slovenia, and finally for export, if the supply of drinking water permits it. Article 70a of the Slovenian Constitution gives everyone the right to drinking water and the water resources are a public good under government management. This is a fully demonstrated case of the right to water.

3.3 Migration Flows

Migration flows have already changed the structure of the world and political, economic, and social migrations are shaping the cities of tomorrow. One of the possible future causes of migration will be the lack of water and basic food supply. Europe is already facing the challenge of different migration flows; many newcomers are coming in search of asylum, fleeing from wars or trying to satisfy some of their basic needs. The cities shall implement new ways of food production and water recuperation as people continue to emigrate from rural areas. At present, more than half of the world's population is living in cities. In the future, the proportional prevalence of cities over rural areas will further increase. The city will therefore need to become a site for the development of more sustainable ways of eating, living, and moving. It should become climate-friendly with the goal of preserving natural resources. The voids or empty spaces in the city shall be used as green areas, which will increase biological diversity and contribute

FIG. 3.1 Prinzessinnengärten is a pilot project that started in 2009 on wasteland at Moritzplatz in Berlin Kreuzberg. It represents an urban place of learning, where users can learn about organic food production, biodiversity and climate protection. The photo shows Die Laube in the garden (Photograph by Boštjan Bugarič, 2017).



to a better micro-climate. Simultaneously, a sense of community shall be developed through the exchange of competencies and knowledge. In accordance with the New Urban Agenda of Habitat III (2017), it is important to embrace more appropriate policies and assist governments in addressing challenges through national and local development policy frameworks. The New Urban Agenda of Habitat III (2017) is to promote the adaption of national urban planning and planned city extensions to climate change, as well as to increase biological, social, and cultural diversity in city neighbourhoods with new ways of living together. The integration of equity into the developmental agenda creates an environment for social justice, ensures access to the public sphere, extends opportunities, and increases the scope of shared commons (New Urban Agenda of Habitat III, 2017).

4 **Communication Process**

As defined in Habitat III, one of the changes shall start at the neighbourhood level, with the challenge of how to attain a sense of community awareness among the dwellers that in turn will get involved in the communication processes. The first step starts with the so-called small actions and “do it together” urbanism. Basic small actions like planting trees, collecting water, and including the individual in community life, lead towards the creation of a better environment on a small scale within the city. Sicking (2017) explains that (pre-)conditions of sustainable spaces include safety, diversity, and inclusion; there is no sustainability in places where people feel unsafe - and safety comes with the social coherence in which people watch over each other. Mono-functional areas are unsustainable, and only diversity of

functionality can lead to the development of places where people like to live. This can be achieved by including local dwellers in the renovation of their neighbourhood; through the process, they also get to know one another and regain contact with their own environment. Sicking (2017) notes that people, once they are proud of their neighbourhood, start to take care of it. This starts with the participation of inhabitants in the renovation of their built environment and the establishment of new modes of communication.

Implementation of urban acupuncture is based on temporary action, which gains continuity through the process of participatory design. In the context of neighbourhood recuperation, an urban acupuncture treatment for suburban neighbourhoods will be introduced here. Bugarič (2017) defines urban acupuncture as an implementation of a small-scale action in public space, where dwellers are encouraged to take part in the co-creation of new amenities. This was the topic of the project Cultural Acupuncture Treatment for Suburbs (acronym CULBURB), which was implemented by the Centre for Central European Architecture (CCEA) in Prague and co-organised by local partners in six participant Central European cities: Slovenia - Ljubljana/ Zalog, Czech Republic - Prague/ Psary, Austria - Vienna/ Sandleiter, Slovakia - Bratislava/ Rusovce, Hungary - Budapest/ Delegyhaza, and Poland - Warsaw/ Ursus. The project ran from 2010 to 2013 and was funded by Culture Programme – Education and Culture.

4.1 Suburban Locations

European suburbia develops in borderless landscapes on the outskirts of historical city centres. "Around Central European capital cities there are traditional villages already filled up with factory workers since the second half of the 19th century; these communities were usually annexed to the cities during the 20th century, sometimes evenly urbanized to form sub-centers of the cities, but sometimes still keeping the form of an interior suburb, with much poorer infrastructures than interior parts of the urban areas. This first wave of suburbanization occurred as an effect of the industrialization, arriving late to Central Europe. The same process lead to the formation of the first upper-class suburbs, where aristocrats and richer layers of the society escaped from the centres affected by noise, pollution and the more and more visible working class. All these first suburban areas – originally characterized by mono-functional living environments never seen before – today form part of the cities themselves" (Kádár, 2012). To be more concrete, let us take a look at six different contemporary European suburban sites and their main characteristics.

In close proximity to the city border of Prague lies Psáry. This area is strongly influenced by the massive immigration of the middle class to new large houses in the countryside. The area is, therefore, mono-functional, with a high-density of housing estates and a lack of services that can afford a high quality of living. The public housing neighbourhood, Sandleiter in Vienna, is located at the north-western

edge of Ottakring. Sixty thousand apartments were built in this biggest housing complex between 1919 and 1934. By 1990, 80% of dwellers were 70 years old or older. With an influx of immigrants to Sandleiten, the dwellers no longer felt safe. A village called Délegyháza lies beyond the southern edge of Budapest. The area of 300 hectares has many natural lakes, which have been a site of recreation and development of leisure tourism since the early 1980s. The original working class population of the old village has found itself cohabiting with people moving to the area after retirement. Bratislava's non-urbanised zone, Rusovce, is separated from the city centre and represents an example of suburbanisation. A real estate boom created an urban sprawl in all directions around Bratislava where fields were turned into building sites. The proximity of people from different ethnic backgrounds has created an increase in nationalism. Ursus is situated in the western part of the densely built-up area of the Warsaw conurbation. A process of urbanisation, whereby the old individual houses in the area were replaced with new standardised structures, accompanied the industrial development of the area; after the end of the Second World War, Ursus became the world's leading site in the production of tractors, with production peaking in the 1970s (Urban Acupuncture in the suburbs – CULBURB, 2013). Today, it is marked by a growing unemployment rate, a rapidly aging population, and environmental threats (Urban Acupuncture in the suburbs – CULBURB, 2013).

Zalog is located at the eastern edge of Ljubljana. In the Yugoslavian era, the area experienced intensive immigration from various parts of Yugoslavia, which produced a local generation with a very diverse mix of cultural backgrounds (Urban Acupuncture in the suburbs – CULBURB, 2013). It is still not an area with a predominantly Slovenian population, and it has proven difficult to integrate local youngsters into their city, as they have developed their own urban identity (Džokić, Neelen, & Bugarič, 2011).

4.2 Urban Acupuncture

Urban acupuncture creates points of engagement of dwellers within a local community. Small actions in micro-urban environments create diversity in the programme of public spaces and foster interactions between inhabitants, which in turn have an impact on community life (CULBURB, 2013). Gruber (2012) talks about urban acupuncture as a set of actions "based on an inductive reading and physiological understanding of an urban milieu. It identifies neuralgic points for focused interventions that promise to add-up to more than the mere sum of their parts. (...) Only then might urban plans be implemented also bottom-up and incrementally through constant feed-back and re-adjustments." Before starting any urban acupuncture action, it is important to carry out research about the residents' needs and the kind of programme that should be developed. The implementation of a suitable programme is the basis of place-making. Only continued feedback loops that allow readjustment enable the building of trust within the community, which strengthens the impact of the process at each location.

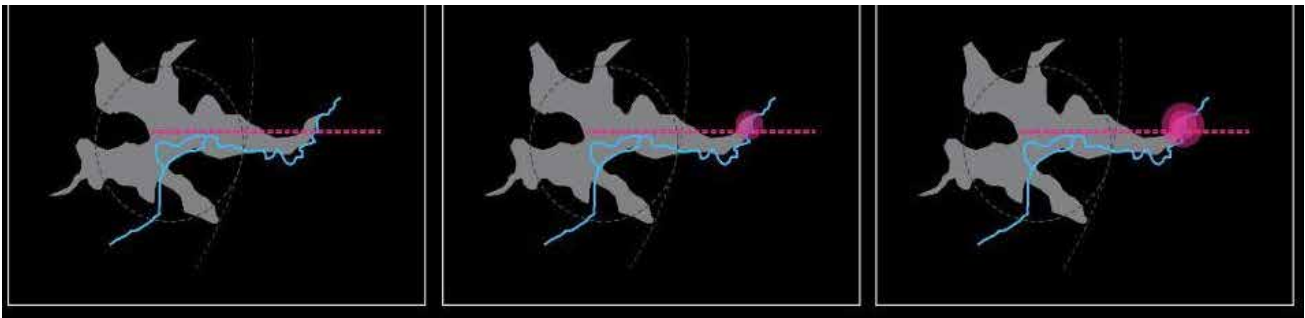


FIG. 4.1 From Zalog to city centre of Ljubljana drives a regular six minutes train (Source KUD C3).

Actions set up using minimal means create interaction between inhabitants and have an impact on community life. The process of implementing urban acupuncture is structured in three phases: research, urban content observation and action planning. The method can only create notable results after long-term implementation (Bugarič, 2017).

Phase one – research involves all parties into the process of creating amenity and collaborating with local stakeholders to build general trust. In **phase two - urban content observation**, dwellers are involved in communication with experts through social media, which helps to design amenities according to the needs of local community, which are identified by means of observing the target group. **Phase three - action planning** is the implementation of urban acupuncture on location, through collaboration of actors in the process of place-making. Neglected or vandalised space thus becomes a neuralgic point of community recuperation.

LOCATION	PUBLIC SPACE	PARAMETER	IMPACT/USERS
Slovenia Ljubljana, Zalog	- vandalised space - lack of interactions - growing nationalism	Physical	Creation of a new meeting point for the neighbourhood
Czech Republic Prague, Psary	- suburban housing - lack of interactions	Physical Social	Development of new relationships in the neighbourhood
Austria Vienna, Sandleiter	- lack of interaction - growing xenophobia - ageing population	Social	Recuperation of community: newcomers – elderly dwellers
Slovakia Bratislava, Rusovce	- urban sprawl - growing nationalism	Physical Social	Discovering, creating new amenities for the dwellers
Hungary Budapest, Delegyhaza	- touristification - lack of diversity	Physical	Creation of the relationship between nature and the city
Poland Warsaw, Ursus	- high unemployment rate - ageing population - environmental threats	Physical	Redefinition of the amenities for the urbanised area

TABLE 4.1 Comparative analysis of several sites of urban acupuncture projects according to parameters and impact

The presentation of all implemented acupuncture actions is available at www.culburb.eu, and the synthesis of their influence on public space is presented in Table 4.1, where we can observe how different parameters support the recuperation of the community and revitalisation of public space.

4.3 Urban Acupuncture Implementation in Ljubljana

The urban acupuncture process in Ljubljana took place in the suburb of Zalog. A non-governmental society, KUD C3, was the coordinator responsible for associating youngsters' perception of space with stakeholders' interest during a long-term process. These efforts resulted in the renovation of the playground, which became a new meeting point for the neighbourhood. The implementation of the project started in April 2010 and finished in June 2013. KUD C3 coordinated the activities of institutions and stakeholders, including the Municipality of Ljubljana, the local church in Zalog, the local community of Polje, the primary school, the kindergarten, the retirement home, and the Youth Centre Čamac.

The youngsters from the Youth Centre Čamac - Zalog got the opportunity to communicate their needs in relation to their direct environment. The goal was to actively involve them in shaping the environment according to their needs to overcome their usual passive critical attitude towards public projects and exploit their often-undervalued creative potential. The project focused on possible changes in Zalog that could be made without large financial investments. Reconstructing the vandalised playground in Zalog represented a possibility for a common project, directly self-initiated by the local youth and concerning the reconstruction of their immediate environment. This location had been a favourite meeting place for the young but came with a long-standing problem of vandalised benches and housing illegal activities, no available drinking water and no adequate lighting, which could help to stop vandalism and drug dealing.

The manual "*This place exists only while we are here*", published in collaboration with STEALTH.unlimited, Džokić et al. (2011), presents research on actions from Ljubljana's neighbourhoods, Šiška, Bežigrad, and Zalog, and highlights the problems of Ljubljana's youth and their perception of public space. In particular, Ljubljana's suburbs are characterised by a relatively large population of second-generation immigrants, descendants of newcomers from other parts of Yugoslavia. In Zalog, these second-generation immigrants were born into mixed marriages or are children of immigrants from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

4.3.1 Research of Built Environment - Phase One

KUD C3 collaborated with the Youth Centre Čamac as research partner. By working together, the collaborators defined the location and content of renovation in Zalog. Together with the city municipality of Ljubljana and the Zalog primary school, a process of building trust had begun. Research results were presented by Džokić et al. (2011), and at events in several public spaces in Ljubljana in collaboration of institutions like the Modern Gallery Ljubljana, ŠKUC Gallery and the Zalog primary school. These events brought the local population together with architects, artists, designers, sociologists, cultural anthropologists, writers, and curators. They were encouraged to start active participation in the shaping of the environment they live in through lectures, discussions, art interventions, exhibitions, and participation in workshops.



A



B



C

FIG. 4.2 A+B+C: Place-making in the suburb of Zalog in Ljubljana (Photo: Domen Grögl, 2013)

4.3.2 Urban Content Observation - Phase Two

Youngsters communicated with experts through social media channels (mostly Facebook). In this way, the suitable content for public space was defined according to the needs expressed by the target group. The most important time for the introduction of this phase was the first year of project implementation. KUD C3 created connections between the Youth Centre in Zalog and potential partners, while holding weekly meetings with different stakeholders and observing the needs of focus groups over a long period. There were approximately 100 youngsters involved in the project, and around 700 other people from the Zalog neighbourhood, present when the project was presented in other institutions and cities, among them the Parsons New School for Design in New York, the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade, the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Ljubljana, the Deutsche Architektur Zentrum in Berlin, the Architekturzentrum in Vienna, the Academy of Design (Slovenia), and Soho in Ottakring (Austria).

This phase included the feedback from social media, weekly interviews, and hanging out at the playground performing a study of the behaviour of youth gathering there. The distribution of the conclusions drawing from these observations was carried out via social media channels and at live conferences and different platforms designed to involve as many individuals from the local community as possible and reach the largest possible audience.

4.3.3 Action Plan for Urban Acupuncture - Phase Three

The main focus in Zalog was devoted to the playground called Plata, which had become a place used by drug dealers. This place was transformed into a community meeting spot over the course of five years when the urban acupuncture strategy was implemented and the playground was outfitted with lights, new benches and water fountains. In addition to young people, the space attracted elderly residents and mothers with kids, all of whom played a role in the making of what was once a vandalised area into a community gathering space. This phase was executed between 2011 and 2015. Five artist residency programs were carried out in the Zalog neighbourhood in coordination with KUD C3 and were described by Bugarič (2017); they will be presented below.



FIG. 4.3 *Down by the Water* urban acupuncture; building a new water fountain (Photograph by Domen Grögl, 2013)



FIG. 4.4 *Design Your City* urban acupuncture with the architect Daniel Diaz Vidaurri from Mexico City and DJ Borka (Photograph by Domen Grögl, 2012)



FIG. 4.5 *Conversation* urban acupuncture was carried out by artists Yane Calovski and Hristina Ivanoska from Macedonia, developed with the creative participation of designer and researcher Anette Lundebj from London (Photograph by Domen Grögl, 2013).

The first acupuncture intervention, entitled *Down by the Water*, was designed as a cooperative act between youngsters and experts. The project involved reusing old materials in the renovation of the vandalised playground; it gave the youth a greater sense of responsibility for their environment. The young people's attitudes have, in this way, turned from those characteristic of a consumer society to those marking a society with a higher awareness of spatial, ethical, and ecological aspects of their environment. The experience was focused on the topic of water recuperation and was carried out in 2011-12 through a collaboration between the KUD C3 expert team and the young people from the Youth Centre Čamac.

The second acupuncture intervention was organised in December 2012 in collaboration with the architect Daniel Diaz Vidaurri. His approach was a workshop *Design Your City*, in which he encouraged the youth to design their ideal city, illustrating the way they perceive public space and the way they would like to break the social and physical barriers to link up with the areas in the city they do not usually use (*Urban Acupuncture in the suburbs – CULBURB*, 2013). *Conversation*, the third acupuncture intervention, engaged citizens in a dialogue about their personal and collective expectations concerning public space via a collective performance entitled *Stone Soup*, based on an old folk story. The performance was a participatory way to draw out the youth's opinions about public space. The acupuncture intervention was realised in March 2012 and mostly involved the children from the Zalog primary school.



FIG. 4.6 *The Meeting Stripe* urban acupuncture with designers Nina Mršnik and Vahagn Matossian Gehlhaar (Photograph by Domen Grögl, 2013)



FIG. 4.7 *Womenspace* was created by Tanja Maljevac, Tina Cotič, and Ida Hiršfenfelder (Photograph by Domen Grögl, 2013).

The *Meeting Stripe* acupuncture intervention, executed between November 2012 and June 2013, was at a patch of grass next to the playground in Zalog. A meeting place was designed for local youngsters, who were also partners in the creation process, and they, in turn, become proud owners, who take good care of their new meeting spot. During workshops, they took formal decisions when encouraged to talk about what is needed in the area, constructed models, and made good choices. The intervention featured collaboration with local artisans and businesses, in order to source the necessary materials, and show the young people how they can initiate the processes and source the materials themselves at some later point.

The fifth acupuncture intervention, *Womenspace*, took place between January and April 2013 in various public spaces in Zalog. Within this series of workshops and interventions, the team explored the relationship between women and public spaces in Zalog. Women of different ages and backgrounds talked about how they are involved with public space, how they experience it, and what accommodations they need and wish to install there. The collection of their thoughts in the form of stories, drawings, and mental maps can be used to move forward when working on the improvement of public space for women (Urban Acupuncture in the suburbs – CULBURB, 2013).

The final review of the results of the CULBURB urban acupuncture strategies were presented and evaluated at the Forum Acupuncture Conference in Ljubljana in April 2013. Each of the local coordinators and authors from the six cities involved presented five implemented urban acupuncture actions.

5 Results

An analysis was performed that compared the research approaches used in three suburban locations: Psary, Sandleiter, and Rusovce, with those used in Zalog. The process of urban acupuncture implementation was compared in terms of continuity of the process and strategies for revitalising public space, which include trust building among dwellers, horizontal stakeholder’s collaboration, community involvement in the planning process, and development of intergenerational communication. Results are presented in Table 5.1.

	PSARY	SANTLEITER	RUSOVCE	ZALOG
Research Process	Conducted during the same period, producing the basis for urban acupuncture.			
Duration of the process	During project implementation	Lack of communication	During project implementation	Continuation after project implementation
Parameters for revitalisation of public spaces				
1. trust building	1. YES	1. NO	1. NO	1. YES
2. horizontal stakeholder’s collaboration	2. YES	2. YES	2. YES	2. NO
3. community involvement	3. YES	3. NO	3. YES	3. YES
4. intragenerational communication	4. NO	4. YES	4. NO	4. YES

TABLE 5.1 Locations and revitalization/ recuperation parameters

The research performed in all four locations followed a similar methodology. It was conducted in the same time period, and produced similar research structures and comparable bases for implementing urban acupuncture. The continuity of the process strongly increases positive effects, like the gradual build-up of dwellers’ trust and the identification of proper amenity for public space. Though some clearly visible progress was made in Zalog, the horizontal stakeholder’s collaboration was not achieved as planned, so the process of urban acupuncture partly failed its purpose. This is demonstrated in the fact that the community centre in Zalog was demolished. The new building only houses commercial use on the ground floor, while public facility is set up on the first floor with no direct access to public space. The Youth Centre was moved to another location to make room for new shopping infrastructure. Fig. 5.1 shows the oversized building that does not satisfy the needs of local community.

The Youth Centre Čamac is now situated in the old library building. Performing place-making in the new location of Čamac, an urban amenity observation with students of Faculty of Architecture, University of Ljubljana, was carried out between February and April 2017. “Creative and experiential learning and work help us to build values, skills and knowledge with everyday work and social experiences” (Fikfak, 2013, p. 265). The needs of youth were communicated via new communication tools. Observing the communication of youth in Ljubljana, we discovered that they only raise their voice using social media. This is a channel that gives them a sense of safety.



FIG. 5.1 The new building in Zalog combines commercial and public amenities in an oversized format and has no communication with public space (Photograph by Domen Grögl, 2017).

The basis for the place-making was developed on the grounds of research during the process of urban acupuncture applied within the CULBURB project in the period from 2011 to 2013. Table 5.2 presents the most important results of the impact that urban acupuncture in Zalog exerted upon public space, development of communication, and involvement of the local population.

URBAN ACUPUNCTURE	COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT	IMPACT ON PUBLIC SPACE	INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL RESIDENTS
Down by the Water	Excellent: connection between Youth Centre and municipality, primary school, retirement home and local stakeholders	Excellent: reconstruction of the Plata playground	Youth 11-25 years Elderly 60-70 years (possibility of intragenerational connections)
Design Your City	Very Good: connection between Youth Centre and municipality, collaboration of international institutions	Very Good: identification of dangerous spaces and spaces related to neighbourhood identity	Youth 15-20 years
Conversations	Very Good: connection between Youth Centre and primary school	Good: educational impact	Children 8-11 years
The Meeting Stripe	Excellent: connection between Youth Centre, primary school and local stakeholders-craftsmen	Excellent: identification of the meeting point for dwellers	Teenagers 11-18 years
Womenspace	Excellent: connection between Youth Centre and local activists	Excellent: identification of safe spaces for women in the neighbourhood	Women 10-60 years

TABLE 5.2 Place-making - implementation analysis of the CULBURB project in Zalog from 2011 to 2013

6 Conclusions

The neoliberal capital flow strongly influences the spatial development of neighbourhoods in post-transition Eastern European countries. Investor urbanism represents a form of spatial development in which investors and politicians make decisions about urban development without the involvement of the city's population and experts. This results in a lack of diversity of facilities, and development of the one-way communication of interests of the political elite and capital investors, i.e. the developers. It is not possible to fight investor urbanism

directly, but rather from the bottom up, starting from creating better communication within a particular local community and thus creating a self-sufficient micro-urbanism. Civil society organisations need to amplify community voices, lobby against investor urbanism, and counteract some of its destructive effects. Without an alternative to investor urbanism, urban space stays under the control of gentrification policies, as Florida (2003) first observed in *The Rise of the Creative Class*. His basic idea is that attracting creative people to the city will strengthen its economic performance, but as Riegler (2013, p. 3) notes, gentrification is just a sugar-coated term like urban renewal, urban regeneration, etc. Policy makers can hide behind Florida's (2003) theory and promote an urban environment composed of neighbourhoods, which favour the young, urban, creative elite while completely ignoring the needs of the current residents. In response, Florida, in his recent interview (Chamberlain, 2017), opens a new chapter addressing the new urban crisis of the growth of poverty in the suburbs. The reason behind the new crisis lies in the fact that people who move to the suburbs today are those who are less advantaged and have been pushed out of the city centre. This increases spatial inequality and, with that, a decline of the middle class in city neighbourhoods. The nature and dynamics of urban sprawl in Central Europe (Couch, Petschel-Held, & Leontidu, 2007) takes on different dimensions: infrastructure-related sprawl can be seen around Athens; sprawl in the post-socialist cities, such as Warsaw and Ljubljana; sprawl based on the development of second homes in Austria. "Some qualities of these undefined, transitional landscapes should be discovered, and reformulated to give a new sense of place to these often non-places. The traditional urban planning policies will not work here. The efforts to tie these areas to the cities are too big and expensive to be feasible." (Kádár, 2012).

Using urban acupuncture, which focuses on small-scale projects in the city, makes it possible to connect investments in public space with the residents of neglected areas. This can give rise to resilience projects based on community needs and active participation of dwellers. The open public space of the playground in Zalog is an example *par excellence* how these kinds of interventions can change a neglected space into a main meeting point for a neighbourhood. The case of the Youth Centre Čamac, displaced to another location because of investor urbanism, shows how the interest of capital took precedence over the interests of residents. This happened after the conclusion of the urban acupuncture process, when investor urbanism took over planning in Zalog. The Strategy of Urban Acupuncture should always be part of place-making in locations where investor urbanism takes control over an urban space, depriving its residents of their own right to the city.

Acknowledgements

The project was financed by the Education and Culture DG - Culture Programme with the support of the European Commission, the International Visegrad Fund, the European Cultural Foundation, the Ministry of Culture of Czech Republic, the Ministry of Culture of Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland, the Municipality of Ljubljana, the Municipality of Prague, the Municipality of Warsaw, the Municipality of Bratislava, the Municipality of Budapest, the Municipality of Vienna, Gallery MC New York, UNAM Mexico City, the Austrian Culture Forum, Kiberpipa Ljubljana, and MSUM+ Modern Gallery in Ljubljana.

References

- Bugarič, B. (2017). Urban Acupuncture Treatment for Suburbs; Communication Tools for Youth in Ljubljana, *Urbani Izziv*, Ljubljana (in review).
- Chamberlain, L. (2017, April 25). Richard Florida and the New Urban Crisis. The Common Edge Podcast. Retrieved from <http://commonedge.org/the-common-edge-podcast-richard-florida-and-the-new-urban-crisis/>
- Constant (1960). Unitary Urbanism, published in McDonough (2009). *The Situationists and the City*. London: Veros.
- Couch, C., Petschel-Held, G., Leontidu, L., (2007). *Urban Sprawl in Europe: Landscape, Land-Use Change and Policy*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Debord, G. (1958). *Definitions*. *Situationist International Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/theses.html>
- Debord, G. (1956). *Theory of the Derive*. *Situationist International Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/theory.html>
- Džokić, A., Neelen, M. & Bugarič, B. (2011). *This Place Exists Only While We Are Here*. Public City by STEALTH.unlimited and KUD C3 with Moderna galerija. Ljubljana. Rotterdam.
- Fikfak, A. (2013). Quality of architectural education at the Faculty of Architecture University of Ljubljana. *Journal of architecture and urbanism*, 37; 257-267
- Fischer, E. (2017, September 22). *Through bankruptcy and boom what's really happening in Detroit*. Retrieved from <http://www.archdaily.com/643893/through-bankruptcy-and-boom-what-s-really-happening-in-detroit/5582f8a6e58ece09c2000012-through-bankruptcy-and-boom-what-s-really-happening-in-detroit-photo>
- Florida, R. (2003). *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life*. New York: Taschenbuch.
- Gruber, S. (2012, April 12). *Three Theorems of Acupuncture Urbanism: Strategies for the Suburbs*. Transcript of keynote presentation at the Architekturzentrum Wien on 2 March 2012, Retrieved from: <http://www.culburb.eu/research/three-theorems-of-acupuncture-urbanism-strategies-for-the-suburbs/>
- New Urban Agenda of Habitat III (2017). Retrieved from <http://habitat3.org/>
- Harvey, D. (2008). The right to the city. *New Left Review* II (53): 23-40.
- Jacobs, J. (1992). *The death and life of great American cities*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Kádár, B. (2012, July 22). *Suburban Realities; Thoughts on the Socio-physical Development of Central European Suburban Landscapes*. Retrieved from <http://www.culburb.eu/research/suburban-realities-thoughts-on-the-socio-physical-development-of-central-european-suburban-landscapes-/>
- Lefebvre, H. (1996). The right to the city, in Kofman, E., Lebas, E. Eds, *Writings on cities*. p. 158. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Wiley-Blackwell.
- McDonough ed. (2009). *The Situationists and the City*. London: Verso.
- Merrifield, A. (2014). *The New Urban Question*. London: Pluto Press.
- Mumford, L. (1954). The Neighborhood and the Neighborhood Unit. *Town Planning Review* 24: 256-270.
- Riegler, J. (2013, July 22). *Competitiveness VS. Social Balance: Gentrification as Urban Policy in Cases in Budapest and Vienna*. Retrieved from <http://www.culburb.eu/soubory/research/j-riegler-gentr-as-urban-policy.pdf>
- Ripl, W. & Hildmann, C. (1997). Ecosystems and thermodynamics necessity in O. Fränze, F. Müller & W. Schröder Eds, *Manual for Environmental Science*, Landsberg.
- Sassen, S. (2017, September 10). Can Cities Help Us Hack Formal Power Systems? Retrieved from <https://urbannext.net/can-cities-help-us-hack-formal-power-systems/>
- Sicking, C. (2017, September 24). Magnitude and Murder. Retrieved from <http://www.ecolutie.nl/magnitude-murder/>

- Sieverts, T. (2003). *Cities Without Cities: an Interpretation of the Zwischenstadt*. London, New York: Spon Press.
- Smith, N. (2002). New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy. *Antipode* 34, 3; 427-450.
- Schuck, A. & Rosenbaum, D. (2006). *Promoting Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods: What Research Tells Us about Intervention*. Washington D.C: The Aspen Institute.
- UNESCO Report from UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization: Emblematic megacities address the threats of climate change to their water-related needs. Water, Megacities and Global Change. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002454/245419e.pdf>
- Urban Acupuncture in the suburbs – CULBURB (2013, Maj 12). Case studies, Centre for Central European Architecture Prague. Retrieved from <http://www.cuburb.eu/>

