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‘Urban activator’ – Participatory and Bottom-up Tool of Urban Change
Definition and Selected Examples
Subject Review
UDC 711.4-163:711.61
Fig. 1. Participatory urban intervention on devastated area in Marseilles for the needs of the European Capital of Culture ‘Yes we camp Marseilles 2013’.

Sl. 1. Participativna urbana intervencija u devastiranome području Marseillja za potrebe europske prijestolnice kulture ‘Yes we camp Marseilles 2013’.
The paper investigates participatory and bottom-up supported interventions for the revitalisation of degraded and abandoned urban areas with the help of the tool called urban activator. Based on selected examples, the approaches, actors and impacts of small architectural interventions in the process of activating and regenerating urban space will be presented.
INTRODUCTION

The paper examines the characteristics of the current, predominantly informal approach to spatial revitalisation and redevelopment, focusing on degraded and abandoned urban areas with the help of the tool called the urban activator. This approach is fundamentally different from the practices used in previous decades, which typically employed top-down principles to deciding upon and planning spatial interventions, on a notably large scale and without particular involvement and participation of the interested public. In contrast, bottom-up urban interventions and the participation of the interested public are emerging as a new type of local projects in times of the economic crisis, as contemporary, creative and efficient approaches to solving social, economic and related spatial issues are urgently needed.

In this respect, urban activators are regarded as smaller bottom-up architectural urban interventions that attempt to instigate a long-term process at a generally low cost and with smart, even provocative solutions, thus activating and revitalising degraded and abandoned urban spaces. Nowadays, urban environments are characterised by many underused spatial resources – abandoned industrial, commercial and residential buildings, urban vacant lots, unbridled courtyards and public facilities without financial support, which can be redeveloped into attractive, functional and lively spaces primarily through local initiatives and committed individuals. Space is, as quoted in the New Charter of Athens, “a critical natural resource, limited in supply, but with growing demands upon it”. Contextually, the usefulness and functionality of underused and already built areas within cities should be increased, while their social capacity should also be enhanced and strengthened by transforming these passive infrastructures into public assets.

Based on these premises, we postulate that the urban activator can be understood as a tool that can address the restructuring of space in a softer, more accessible manner, especially in harsh economic and social conditions. It is founded on small urban interventions with the help of public participation “providing citizens with opportunities to take part in decision or planning process”. The paper poses the thesis that the urban activator could become a general tool for examining the relevance and merits of spatial interventions even in times of prosperity.

DEFINITION

The urban activator can be defined as a small physical manifestation, i.e. an architectural intervention in the urban space, which stimulates development and is accompanied by the maximum possible social impact in terms of connecting people, enhancing the social fabric and appropriating the space. The process itself is aimed at participation, includes a wide scope of interested actors, promotes the articulation of problems and opportunities, monitors responses and acts cohesively and responsibly towards space and society.

In most cases, the urban activator is not a ready-made structure but is created within

1 The term ‘bottom-up’ first appeared in relation to its opposite ‘top-down’ in 1942 in a journal of economics. In an urban context, this approach has two key, complementary directions: first, a trend that encourages social, cooperative models of city organisation; second, a growing interest from government officials, academia, and the professional sector in resorting to digital, open-sourced data and models as key resources for understanding urban interactions. [http://www.bmwguggenheimlab.org/soourbantrends, 25.3.2014]

2 According to Glass (1979), participation can be defined as “providing citizens with opportunities to take part in decision or planning process”. According to Laurian, 2004, it is suggested that “desirable participation is one that enables citizens to shape planning decisions and outcomes while increasing their level of social and political empowerment”. [Mohammadi, 2010: 5]

3 Harvey, 2012

4 It is estimated that there are ca. 11 million empty properties in Europe, 3.4 m in Spain and a considerable 175,000 in Slovenia. [http://www.stat.si / http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/feb/23/europe-11m-empty-properties-enough-house-homeless-continent-twice / 25.2.2014]

5 New Charter of Athens, 2003: 1
the community; the creative and participatory approach before, during and after its development is essential. This forms the identity, affiliation and responsibility toward space and the community. In this way, urban space can be revitalised in terms of sustainability, since it establishes a two-way connection with its users. This social ecosystem is thus characterised by architectural interventions into space that generally carry little economic value, but have a much higher social value due to the process of participation and connecting actors based on their own engagement (Fig. 3). As argued by Huybrechts, participation as such is primarily about people but also about objects, since objects mediate communication between people. Therefore, what is crucial in the case of the urban activator besides the process itself is that a minimum physical intervention is applied as a significant element of the initiation, as a mediating element, as a facilitator of further change.

The urban activator as a technical or professional term is not generally established in the fields of architecture and urbanism but occasionally appears within these contexts. In illustration, the term was used in the description of the spatial intervention on the Grotekerkplein square in Rotterdam \(^{12}\), displaying the example of the discussed concept (Fig. 4). In the analysed phrase, the word ‘activator’ could be replaced by several synonyms, such as the mediator, the motivator, the initiator. The ‘urban catalyst’ carries similar meaning in the sense of catalysing urban change; it was used to name the “Urban Catalyst” \(^{13}\) office established in Berlin, which has implemented many projects and published publications on temporary spatial interventions with an emphasis on degraded and marginal urban sites. Moreover, parallel concepts are presented in The Temporary City \(^{14}\) and other publications (Temporary urban spaces: concepts for the use of city space, 2006; Urban Pioneers: Temporary use and urban developments in Berlin, 2007; Handmade urbanism: from community initiatives to participatory models, 2013) \(^{15}\), which highlight the significance of simple, bottom-up and temporary spatial design concepts as the most effective and fastest responses to changes and needs in today’s times in contrast to the glorification of permanence in urbanism. As argued by Bishop and Williams, “Instead some are beginning to experiment with looser planning and design frameworks, linked to phased packages of smaller, often temporary initiatives, designed to unlock the potentials of sites now, rather than in 10 years’ time”. \(^{16}\) Furthermore, they expose the new circumstances that are favourable to small participatory temporary projects such as a) political and economic uncertainty, b) vacancy (i.e. having a multitude of underused areas), c) the revolution in work (i.e. working at home), d) intensity in the use of space (i.e.
contemporary multi-use of space), e) counterculture and activism (i.e. inadequate supply of activities by the private real estate market), f) new technologies (i.e. use of smartphones, internet, GPS, etc.) and g) creative milieus (i.e. the creative sector is most susceptible to using and occupying marginal areas or vacant buildings).17

In the recent decade, the described circumstances have facilitated a significant rise in smaller bottom-up supported initiatives and related projects, which have established a much more spontaneous and democratic (partly even illegal) relationship towards spatial planning and use than was known until recently. Many of them have already proven their impact on contemporary urban development, such as raumlaborberlin (Germany), CityBee (Denmark), Social Spaces (Belgium), muf architecture/art (England), STEALTH, Plataforma 9.81 (Croatia), ProstorOz (Slovenia), Urban Catalyst (Germany), etc. (Fig. 5).18

The following section will present the theoretical background of the urban activator – the origins of the bottom-up model and participation practices in the planning literature.

**Informal Bottom-up Participation, the Theoretical Background**

**Neformalna bottom-up participacija, teorijska podloga**

The concept of the urban activator substantiates the approach of informal bottom-up activities through stakeholder participation; in a wider context, it paved its way as a new spatial planning trend in two waves, the first one commencing in the 1960s and the second one in the 1990s.19 In contrast to that, the conviction that public space affairs can only be solved formally by planning carried out exclusively by specialists, who possess expertise and experience, was still deeply rooted in the early 20th century. According to Tugwell, it was believed that ordinary minds are not capable of dealing with such complex issues and therefore cannot be involved in decision-making processes. "Planning therefore came to be seen as scientific endeavour where planners in their collective wisdom produced comprehensive plans and budgets, laid out as ‘rational’ design, and safeguarded from the self-serving meddling of the politicians".20

Within two decades after the WW2, the reaction towards industrial capitalism, injustice, exploitation, poverty, repression of minorities, etc., facilitated political movements in terms of “democratisation and co-determination”21 and what Friedman22 calls “social mobilisation”23; these movements contributed to establishing new ethical principles such as sustainable development, rapid growth of democracy and human rights, development concepts of civil society and present cultural reactions. Amongst other, they triggered a critical situation in urban planning, which was forced to change its approach "from the imperceptive and technocratic to participatory and democratic one".24

At the time, Jane Jacobs was also in search of alternative development and was among those who were criticising the expansions and construction of the modernist-based cities, arguing that large urban interventions, in particular the urban renewal, did not respect the needs of most city dwellers. In The Death and Life of Great American Cities (1961), a number of sociological concepts such as the ‘eyes of the street’ and the term ‘social capital’ were introduced. Though without using the term ‘bottom-up’, she advocated the very approach, namely the importance and role of active citizens for providing live and genuine urban spaces.25

Since the 1960s, according to Pal, planners began to listen more attentively to the voice of the people and public participation was given an official blessing in urban renewal and other public planning programmes as well as in legislation.26 The series of internationally important documents within the context of sustainability were among the forerunners that started including public participation in legislation, beginning with the National Environmental Policy Act [NEPA] adopted in 1969.27 The concept of sustainable development became inaugurated with Agenda 21 (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, 1992), which was crucial for addressing the importance of local authorities as the level closest to the people.28 The Aalborg Charter (The Charter of European Sustainable Cities and Towns Towards Sustainability, adopted in 1994) referred to participation as a cornerstone of the sustainability strategy; last but

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17 Bishop, Williams, 2014: 21-35
19 Pal, 2008; Mohammadi, 2010; Müller, Stotten, 2011
21 Müller, Stotten, 2011: 6
22 In his work Planning in the Public Domain (1987), John Friedman set the theoretical foundation to developing an understanding of the relationship between planners (seen as experts), the state (constituted of elective representatives of the people) and citizens themselves.
23 Pal, 2008: 15, orig.: Friedman, 1987
24 Mohammadi, 2010: 2
25 Jacobs, 1961
26 Pal, 2008: 15
27 While the National Environmental Policy Act is the environmental law of the United States, it is referred to as the modern day "environmental magna charta".
not least, the *Aarhus Convention* (adopted in 1998 and entering into force in 2001) exposed the importance of the access to information as well as the importance of public participation in decision-making processes. The above-mentioned agreements have established new standards regarding public participation in decision-making processes; above all, they have set a strong impulse for spreading the participatory approach also into not strictly environmental but spatial matters with the goal of ‘meeting the needs of all human beings’ and leading to better outcomes, when a broader spectrum of people concerned is included in the planning processes. In practice, the introduction of public participation in spatial planning processes still varies considerably; in some areas, it remains in its infancy (primarily southern and eastern European countries, including Slovenia and Croatia), while the practice of public participation is already well-established elsewhere (e.g. mid- and northern European countries, particularly Denmark, Switzerland, Austria).

In general, the participation itself can be differentiated between formal (constituted) and informal (unconstituted), whereas the latter can also be viewed as “a laboratory for participation, where new approaches and methods are often implemented”. On the other hand, participation can also be distinguished through the direction in which it is initiated, approached, offered or demanded – that is from the ‘top down’ or from the ‘bottom up’. Differences between these two are presented in Table I, whereas the subject of research, the urban activator, represents the bottom-up approach.

The theoretical backbone of the ‘bottom-up’ approach is based on ‘The theory of communicative action’ (1984) by the German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas. The theory referred to as ‘collaborative planning’ was developed as a response to imposing planning from the experts from top to down and has directly affected the change of the paradigm. The focus of planning had been oriented towards the ‘process’ and not towards the ‘outcome’ as typical for the top-down model dominant in the planning practice until the 1990s. The process is based on the “consensus with stakeholders and interest groups in planning through debate, negotiation and discourse”, whereas the role of the planner changed to “mostly mediating among stakeholders”. The Habermas *Theory of communicative action* emphasises the importance of the dialogue – which underlies the very essence of our humanity – the need to share, to communicate, to reach other human beings and touch them deeply. Although it is clear that hierarchical decision making by itself is no longer sufficient to resolve urban problems, it is important to understand that both approaches (top-down and bottom-up) have their own potentials and limits.

### REACTIVATING UNDERUSED URBAN SPACES

**PONOVNO AKTIVIRANJE NEISKORIŠTENIH URBANIH PROSTORA**

The main starting point of the urban activator presents detecting underused, downgraded and dysfunctional places in cities. In ‘Loose space’, the authors expose the multitude of public spaces that can be appropriated to meet their own needs and desires, as well as different possibilities for uses that were originally not intended for those locations. The list of public places where the concept can be applied is long, from leftover spaces within the cities such as unused grounds next to the rivers or areas next to infrastructural objects, to plots of closed-down factories, public places without content or distinct character, empty courtyards within housing units or even atypical places such as ‘Between-spaces’ that can be found around the canals of Amsterdam. Not only sociological issues but also economical aspects are forcing us to reuse and rearrange this surprisingly large scope of unused spaces in urban areas. As cited in one of the first books on temporary urbanism *Urban Pioneer*, “an empty property poses an economical dilemma to its owner; without constant maintenance the property no longer meets the market standards, while unpopulated it is exposed to vandalism and squatting. An empty property projects poor image on its surrounding, contributing to a general decline in market value in its area”. On the other hand, activating citizens and transforming them from passive consumers into active participants in decision-making processes and co-creators of urban space is an essential action.”

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28 Müller, Stotten, 2011: 6  
29 Müller, Stotten, 2011: 7  
30 Harris, 2002: 21  
31 Mohammadi, 2010: 2  
32 Friedman, 1987: 74  
33 Mohammadi, 2010: 2  
34 Frank, Stevens, 2005  
35 The project called ‘Tussen-ruimte’ or ‘Between-space’ initiated by several Dutch architectural offices mapped ‘between-spaces’ as open alleys, hidden courtyards and other unused spaces in the Amsterdam canal area as the first stage of their project. The project aimed at promotion and revitalisation of these unused and unusual places in collaboration with artists and architects. [http://tussen-ruimte.com](http://tussen-ruimte.com) (2.5.2014/)  
36 A considerable share of underused areas can be found in post-industrial cities, in cities in transition and those affected by the economic crisis.  
37 Overmeyer [ed.], 2007: 6
also significant. As noted by Zotes, "the aim is to activate urban public space by setting in motion certain aspects of the public, social, political, cultural, and economic spheres of the city, in order to generate or accelerate particular reactions in the users". Furthermore, Zotes notes that there is an urgent need to find new ways to reclaim public spaces and urban structures in order to challenge the limited and outdated uses for which they were originally intended, since cities are increasingly becoming more restrictive and exclusionary, not only in physical terms but also in terms of self-autonomy and spontaneous social manifestation.38

A good example of such activation is an intervention on a disused urban vacant lot between two residential buildings located in a densely populated part of Paris39, which has been facing pressing social issues. The urban intervention was developed as a model example of cross-sectoral cooperation between residents (as initiators), local organisations, experts in urban planning and the city authorities. Based on consultation and identifying wishes and needs through participatory events, workshops and temporary ‘installations’, an informal space aimed at activities and participation of the local community was created. The example of developing the courtyard and the structure separating the public space from the semi-public space shows that spaces with a rich identity, content and vitality can be created with a relatively low budget and high social engagement (Fig. 6). The Passage 56 project supports the idea that public space is not created merely as a result of the designed physical construction but is unceasingly developed as social, cultural and political production.40

It is essential to realise that in the future municipalities (and states) will have less resources for public programmes and thus also for the revitalisation of spaces, and that it will be necessary to engage various, not only formal actors so as to ensure positive changes in the urban space. We must be aware of the fact that in times of prosperity, economic growth and affluence the relationship towards space and spatial interventions is often different, generally more ambitious41 and wasteful both in terms of investments and the spatial scope (Fig. 9). On the contrary, approaches including a certain extent of activism, social engagement, etc., inevitably emerge and are developed in times of austerity and economic and social instability.42 They are based on solutions that should be closer to the actual needs and wishes of people, but also more affordable for individuals and society.

In previous decades, the bottom up approach of urban interventions was frequently despised due to harsh economic and social conditions, some European countries have even been faced with resistance to ambitious urban planning interventions typical for times of prosperity. The Spanish city of Burgos can be highlighted as an example where mass protests occurred at the beginning of 2014 during the presentation of an ambitious urban development plan for regenerating the avenue in the working district of Gamonal. People protested against the substantial investment of 8 million EUR for what they saw as a mostly cosmetic renovation of the area.43 People protested against the substantial investment of 8 million EUR for what they saw as a mostly cosmetic renovation of the area.43
Bottom-up actors

**Bottom-up sudionici**

As argued in *Handmade Urbanism*, "people across the globe are engaging in improving the urban environments they live in. Community-based initiatives indicate the ability of citizens to present solutions to challenges posed by everyday life, and use creativity to transform and multiply existing resources." Bottom-up planning pays special attention to the local communities as the main actors operating on a local level and fulfilling micro-agendas through direct action.

In general, various actors can initiate and be involved in the process of bottom-up urban activation (Table II) – from groups of residents, users of space, who join efforts in order to reach their common goal, to various associations, primarily from the field of culture, as well as wider civic initiatives, NGOs, residential cooperatives, progressive city district boards, etc. Different expert groups often act as initiators, especially those who are professionally more directly involved with space-related issues – e.g. various experimental architectural groups and associations, spatial sociologists, traffic planners (Fig. 7) as well as scientists from different academic institutions. Among those often taking a proactive role are also schools of architecture with their workshops (Fig. 8) and practical interventions into space (i.e. Life Projects). The latter form an important group of future experts who will obtain a different view on spatial planning with life experience and participation. In general, informal participation is participation that enables the contribution of groups that usually cannot formally take part in decision-making processes (such as migrants) or are not yet able to (such as children and teenagers; Fig. 10) and other interested groups or persons concerned (depending on the issue or problem).

Huybrechts argues that what is being called participation is often nothing more than simple interaction with participants. Participation is always about the relation between an individual and a wider system: a project, an organisation, or even the society as a whole. According to the literature, there are different ways of how an individual or a group of people can participate in a certain activity. This was originally presented with Arnstein’s *Ladder of participation*, which imposes 8 different stages (rungs) of involvement – from more formal ones, such as informing, consultation and placation, towards more active forms of participation, such as delegated power and leadership.

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44 The spatial intervention ‘Yes We Camp’ in Marseilles for the needs of the 2013 European Capital of Culture activated urban space for ‘camping’ on abandoned or underused areas in the former industrial district. “More than enlarging the accommodation offer, the Camping 2013 concept may be understood as a platform for different actors to meet and innovate. The project is a collective work in which anyone, from neighbours to urban professionals, can make propositions to enrich the campsite or give a hand in its realisation. This approach could be identified as collaborative crowdsourcing, volunteers putting their skills and ideas in common to make the project evolve.” [http://www.ifhp.org/ifhp-blog/yes-we-camp-marseille-2013].

45 “MI:ZA” – The association ‘Mariborsko interesno združenje arhitektov’ is an example of an urban development actor. They focus on soft activism with events called ‘Miza makes coffee’, thus sparking off debates on development and interventions in the urban space on problematic urban planning locations. At the same time, they operate as an activator in the discipline of architecture [http://www.mi-z.si/15.1.2014/]

46 Live Projects is a pioneering educational initiative run by the University of Sheffield School of Architecture in Great Britain, where students implement concrete projects in space in real time and with real budgets as workshop formats that give them a hands-on experience in the local community while at the same time the community can benefit from the ideas and actions of the students [http://www.liveprojects.org/15.2.2014/]

47 Huybrechts, 2014

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local groups</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Field of action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals, local residents, city district boards</td>
<td>Location-bound</td>
<td>Identifying issues and needs, establishing wishes, participating in the implementation/active involvement of locals through different socio-spatial interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest groups – different fields of interest, associations, NGOs, city district boards, users</td>
<td>Interest-bound</td>
<td>Identifying issues and needs, establishing wishes, participating, support, lobbying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional groups – architecture and urban design studios, schools, art groups, etc.</td>
<td>Profession-bound</td>
<td>Professional initiatives and support, identifying issues, expert designs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Fig. 9.** LEFT: PROTESTS IN THE GAMONAL DISTRICT IN THE SPANISH CITY OF BURGOS WHEN AN AMBITIOUS URBAN REGENERATION PLAN WAS ANNOUNCED. RIGHT: PROPOSAL FOR REDEVELOPING THE BOULEVARD IN THE GAMONAL DISTRICT.

**Fig. 10.** CHILDREN’S ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE CITY OF BURGOS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN URBAN MODEL.

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**Table II.** Various groups of bottom-up actors and their fields of action

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**TABL. II.** Različite grupe bottom-up sudionika i njihova područja djelovanja

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**PROSTOR**
The aim of the ‘Cantiere Barca’ workshop in modern suburbs of Torino — was to establish a space of communication, activity and discussion between the locals. Sl. 11. Cilj radionice Cantiere Barca, zajedno s Raumlaborberlin grupom, u projektu za moderna predgrađa Torina bio je uspostaviti prostor komunikacije, aktivnosti i diskusije između lokalnih stanovnika.

Fig. 11. The aim of the ‘Cantiere Barca’ workshop with Raumlaborberlin — a community project in modern suburbs of Torino — was to establish a space of communication, activity and discussion between the locals.

Fig. 12. Living Courtyards Initiative: reviving the courtyard and hallway with inhabitants and students of architecture at the Gosposka Street in Maribor.

Sl. 12. Living Courtyards Initiative — ozivljavanje dvorista i unutarnjih prolaza u Gosposkoj ulici u Mariboru uz pomoć stanovnika i studenata arhitekture.

Finally, Pal poses the question whether people can free themselves from the tutelage of the state and corporate power and become autonomous again as active citizens in households, local communities, and regions. Industrial capitalism has answered these questions in the negative. It has placed its trust in men of wealth and power, the formally educated, and the experts. The contemporary literature on planning theory, however, has come to recognise almost universally that the scientific mind — or the planner-as-expert, applied to practical affairs, cannot be trusted to itself. 'By serving corporate capital, it is caught up in the vortex of unlimited economic expansion. By serving the state, it works for the economy of destruction. Only by serving people directly, when people are organised to act collectively on their own behalf, will it contribute toward the project of an alternative development'.

**Conclusion**

**ZAKLJUČAK**

The discussed approach of addressing and solving spatial issues was not a subject of in-depth interest of architects and urban planners until recently, since it used to be deemed unprofessional or even marginal, but it has become increasingly relevant in times of tightening belts, as we have illustrated with the presentation of various examples of such spatial interventions and initiatives in Europe. However, the economic crisis was not the only reason for the appearance of such approach. In addition to the economic downturn, the ever growing dynamic changes in our environment in recent decades led to spatial planning and/or spatial development that could not solve problems and access people's needs anymore.

The approach presented in the paper and defined as the urban activator reveals many differences in comparison to traditional practices of urban development. The new approach is almost diametrically opposite in all relevant aspects when compared to the established top-down model of planning. It addresses a wide range of actors, is mostly bottom up initiated, but it also tries to connect across sectors. It is important in social terms as it attempts to activate and connect people, it embodies ecological principles, it promotes the hands-on approach to active involvement, it supports decision making by participants or users, it promotes flexible, creative,

51 Arnstein, 1969
52 Peterlin, 2014
53 Elden, 2009: 186
By analyzing and evaluating the presented approach, as well as having in mind the future perspective, several topics remained unelaborated, such as the success of such initiatives, the main challenges in implementing bottom-up participatory projects, and how they can become legitimate in the frame of representative democracy. It would also be interesting to propose the typologies of urban activators as bottom-up practices, which could be discussed in depth according to various perspectives, such as who initiates them, the people involved (profiles, the number of participants), ownership of the property or land and their state of degradation, benefits to the community, impact on the built environment, scope of resources, size of the area in question, organization of activities and the type of the approach (methods), and so on. Furthermore, based on the examples shortly presented in the paper, urban activators could also be structured in terms of self-organized communities without the support and participation of the public sector and self-organized communities with the support of the public sector.

In general, even nowadays, one would expect higher responsibility, professionalism, transparent actions, better understanding and provision of the public good, as well as better communication from the side of local authorities with regard to space-related issues. At the same time, one would expect that people would generally be more interested in the quality of their own living and working environment, more involved into active problem solving, more responsible as citizens. Therefore, the presented grassroots initiatives and examples of participatory cooperation set a positive impulse; however, the goal will be accomplished when both sides will responsibly act together.

The purpose of the paper was not to provide a detailed description of individual initiatives, but primary to highlight the importance of alternative approaches to creating better relations and conditions for the people living in the cities and using their (city’s and personal) unused potentials. Finally, it is important to understand the benefits of bottom-up participatory projects and link them to the creation of opportunities and the activation of social life at a very low cost. Changing the perspective of interventions into space can easily lead to open-ended possibilities.

[Translated by Mojca Trampus, MA]
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Fig. 7: http://mi.za.si/wp/?p=177
Fig. 8: http://liveproject-hulme.tumblr.com/
Fig. 9: left: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-25775122 right: http://urbanismopatasarriba.blogspot.com/
Fig. 10: http://ciudadadreaucidad.wordpress.com/2012/12/17/asc_os_burgos-crea-burgos/
Fig. 11: http://raumlabor.net/cantiere-barca
Fig. 12: Photo: author
Fig. 13: http://prostoroz.org/slo/index.php/projekts/francoski-vrt
Fig. 14: http://www.publicspace.org/en/works/f84-open-air-library

TABLE I. MÜLLER, STOTTEN, 2011
TABLE II. author
U clanku je predstavljen pristup odnosno alat za rješavanje prostornih problema degradiranih i napuštenih urbanih područja. U gradovima, pogotovo u doba ekonomske krize, sve više dolazi do izražaja prevelik broj izgrađenih, ali neiskorištenih prostora – od praznih stanova, zatvorenih trgovina do zanemarenih dvorišta i zapuštenih industrijskih područja, koji bi se mogli aktivirati, oživiti i ponovno koristiti. Neiskorišteni prostor ne samo da predstavlja gospodarsku štetu nego i negativno utječe na funkcioniranje širega urbanog tkiva, baca loše svjetlo na neposrednu okolicu, a nenaseljene čak i na funkcionalnost drugih. U tom kontekstu spominje kao važan epicentar takvih intervencija, oživljava i upozoravanja i stvaranja dijaloga.

U svijetu možemo u posljednjih nekoliko godina primijetiti sve veći broj urbanih intervencija koja se temelje na funkcioniranju lokalne zajednice, djeluju neiskorišteni i narušeni udruženje, kojim je postaje vidljiva i važna. Koncept urbanog aktivatora realizira pristup neformalne akcije, stimulirane od dolje prema gore, a u širem kontekstu novi smjerak u prostornom planiranju, koji se u dijelima postavlja u vijek prehrambenih, a u drugim od 1990.-ih do danas. Prvi je val obuhvaćao dedukcijalizaciju i mobilizaciju društva, a to je važnije uključivanje javnosti, s obzirom na mogućnosti razrada prostornih problemi na način podizanja svijećnosti, izazovanja i stvaranja dijaloga.


Kao da incijativa za oživljanje prostora proizlazi iz domene, npr. potencijalnih korisnika, od prostornog planiranja, sjedoljavanja i sudjelovanja korisnika, stanovnika itd., s obzirom na mogućnosti rješavanja prostornih problema degradiranih i napuštenih. Predstavljamo primjeri takvih intervencija koji bi se mogli opisati kao urbani aktivatori. U radu smo prikazali nekoliko primjera takvih intervencija koji se mogli opisati kao urbani aktivatori. Predstavljamo primjer oživljanja napuštenog i nezidanog prolaza u jednoj od pariskih četvrti, gdje je došlo do uzorane međusektorske suradnje među stanovnicima, lokalnim organizacijama, u kojima se društveno tkivo susjedstva formira prije, za vrijeme i nakon zaključka gradnje prostore za druženje. Dobar je primjer i uvežbanje za uključivanje javnosti, s obzirom na mogućnosti razrada prostornih problema na način podizanja svijećnosti, izazovanja i stvaranja dijaloga.