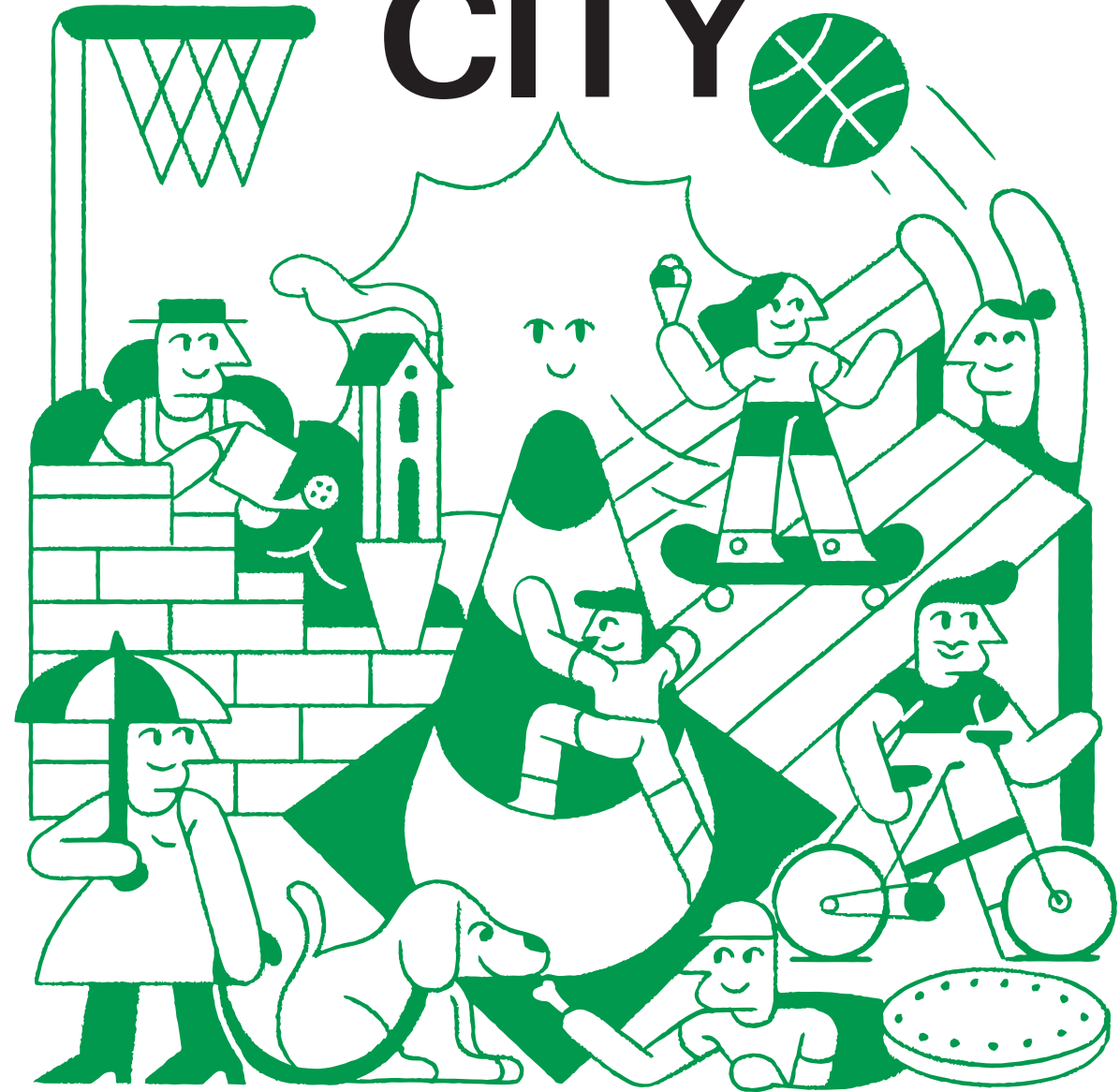


# MEANWHILE CITY



How temporary interventions  
create welcoming places with  
a strong identity

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This publication offers actionable lessons, best practices and inspiration for city leaders, urban practitioners and private developers, who aim to effectively use temporary interventions to communicate with the public, shape the identity of places and build active communities around them.

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# MAKE SPACE FOR GREAT STORIES

Foreword by

Martin Jenča



A group of activists, including Milk founder Martin Jenča, who came together to revive the Old Market Hall in Bratislava.

Too many places in our cities are unused, neglected and fenced off. In Bratislava's historic centre, that was the case with the Old Market Hall. Built in 1908 and owned by the city, it was closed for years. When I got the chance to be a part of an interdisciplinary group of city enthusiasts who wanted to bring it back to life, I didn't hesitate for a second. Alongside the experts on markets, food, waste, events, law, architecture, energy, finance and culture, I was responsible for communication. I had to figure out how to convince the local authorities to approve our plans, how to get the public excited about them and how to set the expectations just right when nothing was certain yet. There was one thing we all agreed on at the beginning — we wanted to create a place where people meet. This shared goal became the basis of our communication strategy and visual identity.

It was clear that the Old Market Hall needed repairs before it could open to the public, but keeping it closed was exactly what we were fighting against. This is where temporary use showed us its true power. It let us bring life to the place, communicate our intentions and ambitions with people, and help us figure out what works so well it should become a permanent part of the place. And, most importantly for my role in the project, the temporary activities allowed us to talk about the value we were already bringing — and avoid vague promises of something that may or may not come true. People's experiences gave substance to our

narrative and made the Old Market Hall a favourite place to come back to, even before the repair works were finished.

Closing off a place until it is finished is, frankly, counterproductive. It makes people walk by a fence for months, if not years. And even if that fence mentions the hopes for the area's future, what it really communicates is — don't come here, there is nothing for you, just noise, dust and disruption. By the time a communications agency is usually involved, the place has been successfully erased from people's mental maps. No marketing campaign can make a place great, but it can let people know about a great place. We believe that a multidisciplinary communication team should be involved right from the start. Let designers, writers, artists and event curators help you make space for great stories. These real, lived stories will make your space great in return. How? In this report, we've collected some of the world's best examples and distilled 10 important tips for making a win-win meanwhile use. And if you don't feel like reading, you can always just talk to us.



# HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

This book is for everyone who enjoys visiting and creating good places. It is here to change your perspective on the untapped potential of your city and give you useful tips on how temporary interventions can bring life to and create a new identity for neglected places. As you flick through, you will find articles on what makes meanwhile use so valuable, various approaches in our case studies, a wide range of examples, and interviews with different actors in the process of temporary urbanism. Feel free to read what catches your attention and inspires you in any order. Have an open mind, read between the lines, take what you like, copy, remix, make unusual combinations and invent completely new things that make sense for your special places. Just don't put this guide on your shelf. It belongs on the table, where you can return to it again and again and again.



# WHAT ARE MEANWHILE PROJECTS?

Temporary interventions can be an effective way to activate spaces, trial different programmes and engage people in the process of creating welcoming places. Whether as part of large-scale regeneration projects, as a strategy to bring more life and human scale into the city, or to test and expand a city’s green mobility network, they can be a useful tactical tool in creating places with a recognisable identity.

**Who initiates meanwhile projects and why?**  
Successful meanwhile projects are often a result of a collaborative effort of several ‘actors’ in the city — citizens, city authorities, private investors, designers, consumer brands or cultural institutions. The initiator of the project needs to develop good communication from the start of the project to push ahead with their vision — often improving the idea by engaging others in the process. The table below summarises some of the reasons these different actors get involved in meanwhile initiatives, and what the key benefits are for them.

CITY AUTHORITIES	DEVELOPERS AND INVESTORS	CITIZENS AND COMMUNITIES
To engage citizens in urban change proposals	To engage citizens in urban change proposals	Protest and campaigning
Test uses and ideas before committing major capital	Test uses and ideas before committing major capital	Personal and group celebration and memorials
Low-cost ‘quick wins’ in addressing pressing social or environmental issues	Low-cost activation of underused assets including buildings and land	Low-cost ‘quick wins’ in addressing pressing social or environmental issues
Providing space or facilities required by local people	Activation of places to bring footfall	Community self-help
Civic celebrations, memorials, etc.	Changing perceptions	Community building by active and engaged citizens

Creating an identity for a place

# WHAT WE MEAN, WHEN WE SAY...

## Meanwhile

Meanwhile is a term used to describe temporary and flexible uses within empty buildings or on land that is awaiting development. Our report includes a wide range of case studies, from temporary bridge closures lasting a few weeks through to temporary occupation of public buildings lasting several years. Their commonality is in addressing urban challenges through meanwhile solutions, opening up opportunities for experimentation, testing and in some cases looser regulatory frameworks, which enable quicker implementation.

According to Centre for London's report,<sup>1</sup> meanwhile is a “loose designation for activities that occupy empty space, while waiting for another activity on site”. The report further points out that meanwhile uses “can be as diverse as permanent uses: London has pop-up shops, bars, allotments, art galleries, football pitches; as well as housing or workspace on a meanwhile basis.”

<sup>1</sup> Bosetti, N., Colthorpe, T. (2019) 'Meanwhile, in London: Making use of London's empty spaces' [Online].

## Placemaking

Placemaking is a process that facilitates the connection and relationship between people and a place, and strengthens the identity of a street, neighbourhood or city quarter. The origins of the placemaking movement go back to New York City in the 1960s, when the American activist and urbanist Jane Jacobs promoted the idea of citizens taking ownership of the streets through active participation in a vibrant public life<sup>2</sup> based on the idea that “a strong sense of place can influence the physical, social, emotional, and ecological health of individuals and communities everywhere”.<sup>3</sup>

Jane Jacobs at a press conference in New York City as chairman of the community to save the West Village, 1961.



<sup>2</sup> Jacobs, J. (1961) *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Random House: New York.  
<sup>3</sup> Project for Public Spaces [Online]. Available at: <https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking>.

# MEANWHILE USE MAKES CITIES RESILIENT AND LIVELY



Southwark Lido animated an empty site on Union Street in London during the summer of 2008. Created by EXYZT and Sara Muzio, it was one of a series of meanwhile interventions curated by The Architecture Foundation.

A city is a continuously evolving organism, a dynamic model where change is constant. Formed of various interconnected and inter-dependable parts, it adapts and transforms in response to changing conditions and different pressures. Temporary interventions are an integral part of the daily ritual of the city — the active layer, which propels, redirects or focuses people's movements and activities.

The agile nature of meanwhile uses is also an important part of resilience in cities — enhancing their ability to adapt, recover or spring back when hit by unexpected events. During the global financial crisis in 2008, many developments were stalled due to the economic downturn. Architects, cultural activists and urban practitioners explored self-initiated projects on abandoned sites. Empty public buildings were repurposed as affordable workspaces, and struggling shopping streets and town centres bolstered retail with temporary and seasonal street markets, impromptu events and pop-ups. Focused on local and artisan products, they reflected the changing consumer behaviours and ethical concerns about the sources of food and consumer goods. For example, the Southbank Centre in London has brought to life its 1960s concrete architecture through graphics, wayfinding and a series of pop-up uses and interventions that revealed a series of hidden roof gardens and vacant undercrofts.

The COVID-19 pandemic uncovered vast inequalities in housing, access to public space and local services — particularly in densely populated cities. Temporary trials helped advance ideas such as the 15-minute city concept<sup>4</sup> of compact, walkable, mixed-use neighbourhoods championed by the mayor of Paris. More temporary cycle paths sprang up with accelerated improvements to public spaces, fuelled by the requirements for social distancing. In London, for instance, the city has built 100 km of temporary cycle paths during the pandemic — at twice the speed compared to the previous period.<sup>5</sup>

The younger generations harbour growing concerns about safety, social equality and environmental sustainability.<sup>6</sup> City leaders and the carbon-intensive building industry have been called to radically rethink the old models and improve quality of life and wellbeing in cities. Whether in the context of high street regeneration, sustainable urban mobility, the existential pressures of climate emergency or growing mental health crises, meanwhile projects can foster young people’s agency to express their identity and help shape more inclusive communities. Green mobility initiatives have been particularly well served by temporary interventions as cities across the world strive to reverse the 20th-century planning centred

around dependence on private cars. For instance, Pearl Street Plaza in New York City — a transformation of a road junction with car parking into a pedestrian square in 2007 — became the first of 60 plazas installed city-wide by the New York City Department of Transportation — and required only paint and space in the first temporary trial, which triggered the long-term shift.<sup>7</sup>

Once considered as experimental and niche solutions and activities by a handful of activists, artists and architects, the range of projects we studied for this publication show that meanwhile uses became an integral part of successful placemaking. They help cities think more entrepreneurially about the ways to achieve long-term visions, to use meanwhile trials for testing ideas, build support for large-scale regeneration projects or encourage more active citizen participation. Importantly, as public-sector finances are under increasing pressure, temporary interventions offer inexpensive solutions that not only address immediate problems but also help build political support and scalability for sustainable agendas in the long run. In the best examples, users become the greatest ambassadors for the activity or place itself. Meanwhile projects engage people directly through activities, rather than empty slogans about what the future will look like.

4 Willsher, K. (2020) ‘Paris mayor unveils ‘15-minute city’ plan in re-election campaign’ The Guardian [Online].  
5 Mayor of London (2021) ‘Record-breaking growth in London’s cycle network continues’ [Online].

6 (2022) ‘Striving for balance, advocating for change’ The Deloitte Global 2022 Gen Z & Millennial Survey [Online].  
7 Sadik-Khan, J., Solomonow, S. (2017) Street Fight. Reprint edition. New York City: Penguin Books.

# EXPERT INTERVIEWS

JAN  
KATTEIN  
MARTYN  
EVANS  
ROZÁLIE  
KAŠPAROVÁ

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SOLELY BY MARKETING OBJECTIVES**

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# MEANWHILE PROJECTS SHOULD NOT BE DRIVEN SOLELY BY MARKETING OBJECTIVES

Interview with

Jan Kattein

Jan Kattein Architects specialise in sustainable and collaborative temporary urbanism. We spoke to Jan Kattein about his experience of how meanwhile projects empower local communities, improve the relationships between the developer and local authorities, and accelerate important changes.

What first attracted you to meanwhile projects or how did you start working on them?

Before I started working in architecture I worked in theatre design, which is temporary by its very nature. The great thing about temporary projects is that once they finish, there is space for something new. They also give you the opportunity to be experimental and to try out really rather radical, new ways of doing things. Skip Garden, for example, was a self-built student project. I don't think that would have been possible as a permanent project. I also really like how quick meanwhile projects are. Their delivery is something that needs to happen with expediency, otherwise you're eating significantly into the lifecycle of the project. It galvanises communities and professional teams to be really focused on delivering a project. I like to design through making — some people call it the 'action research' approach to city making. Meanwhile projects allow you to

try and fail and tweak and fix and adapt and adjust. You can't just build them and hope that people will come. It's about having an open design process because the sooner these projects can provide a civic benefit, the better. Ultimately, the delivery process becomes part of the experiment.

What are the long-term advantages of meanwhile projects for local councils and developers?

Anybody who builds housing or mixed use, for example, is interested in a coherent community that likes to live with each other. They are also interested in a community that might be active and engaged in shaping and maintaining the spaces around the places that they built. They also probably are interested in a community that's got skills and a vision, and is educated. These are all benefits that make a good place and a good town. Meanwhile projects can certainly advance these objectives.

Who is usually your client? Is it councils or developers? Or is it half and half?

We mostly work for the public sector, because, I suppose, they are slightly further ahead in their thinking and objectives than the developers. With a meanwhile project, we can quite often tick quite a few of their boxes that aren't just about providing a space, they are about wellbeing, community cohesion, economic development, greening, and supporting community organisations. So for a local authority, it's a no-brainer to work with us on these sorts of projects because they are delivering a huge number of objectives across departments. A lot of developers are starting

to also develop objectives that go across sectors because they're interested in the wellbeing of their communities and those also come to us.

How common would you say these projects are?

They are becoming an integral part of the process. Still, they are sometimes misunderstood by the private sector. There are different types of meanwhile projects. Meanwhile projects that are purely driven by marketing objectives are challenging to make work because the objectives shine through. It's no problem to have some marketing objectives when embarking on a project, but if that's your exclusive objective, then you set yourself up to fail. You have to have the ambition to deliver more and to deliver for people. A marketing team is unlikely to deliver on some of the more civic objectives of these projects. And I think that sometimes is where the challenge lies for the private sector, which is starting to get involved in these sorts of projects. If a marketing team runs a project, it turns into a marketing suite that just happens to be temporary — and marketing suites tend to be temporary in any case. So you know, you've got to integrate the spatial concept and the operational concept and make sure that the two of them deliver the civic objectives that are at the heart of these sorts of projects.

## THE SOONER THESE PROJECTS CAN PROVIDE A CIVIC BENEFIT, THE BETTER.



Why do you think some developers are still hesitant to incorporate meanwhile uses into their projects?

I think that to do this sort of project, you need to understand and endorse its purpose

fully. If it's only seen through the channel of communication and marketing, a lot of clients don't really see why they should invest that much money in a campaign. I mean, meanwhile projects are not particularly expensive, but there's sometimes this view that because they're temporary, they should be a lot cheaper than permanent projects. Well, they aren't. First of all, they still have to comply with the same rules and regulations as permanent projects. And second, they need programming that needs to be paid for in one way or another. I think they're very good value for money in terms of the stories that they provide. But you do need to invest in that. The developer needs to appreciate the manifold benefits that these projects bring. They need to see beyond marketing and realise that by delivering social value they increase their reputation as a company, that they improve their chances of getting planning permission, that it will improve their future capacity to work in partnership with the public sector. Once you realise all these things, it suddenly becomes incredibly cheap to do meanwhile projects.

People often dislike changes. Are temporary projects also a way for the developer to build a relationship with them?

Yes, meanwhile projects establish a forum for dialogue and discussion. But they are not a means by which anybody pursuing a legacy development can get away with no dialogue or discussion. Our Ebury Edge project, which we delivered recently for Westminster Council, is a good example. Westminster had on three occasions tried to get residents on board to redevelop an estate that was



needing significant works and the buildings were beyond repair. On previous occasions, the council had committed to rehouse everybody. But nonetheless, residents were very reluctant to agree because they said: "We don't really want to be on a construction site for ten years. We understand the regeneration benefits, but there's very little benefit for us if half of our life as a family is impacted by the works." So the council came to us and said, "What can we come up with that will address this?" And our Ebury Edge project provided the exact answer. The concept was developed with the residents and it's really interesting how that tipped the balance — all residents voted in favour of the estate redevelopment after we realised some of the regeneration benefits for them in advance of the redevelopment happening. So yes, it does matter. It still requires you to genuinely engage and consult with residents, but it proves that as a local authority or as a developer, you've really got their concerns at heart. And it also proves that you're willing to deliver things that people would like to see. In a way, developing a project is also about capturing a narrative about the desires and aspirations of communities and a narrative about how we use and govern public spaces. Our clients need a design, but also a really carefully conceived justification why that design is happening, who wants it, why they want it and how it benefits those that are affected by it.

How do you find and engage the local community?

There isn't a really easy answer because it's different for every place. First of all,

who's the community? Some projects are on sites that don't yet have an established resident community because they're just being evolved and developed. In that case, you might want to attract and engage surrounding communities. On other sites you've got a really, really engaged local resident community that's very passionate about their environment and has an opinion and wants to shape that environment. Leveraging existing networks is a really good way of engagement, whether they're business improvement districts, residents associations, community interest groups, or forums. There are people around almost everywhere who have access to contact files, newsletters, distribution lists or established social media networks.

At the outset of each project, we put together an engagement plan that looks at who we engage, what are the means to engage with them, what the objectives of engagement are, and what are the particular outcomes that we're hoping to attain by engaging communities. It is very important to have an open mind and be prepared to have a bespoke approach depending on the local circumstances.

Do you also work with communication agencies?  
There is a lot of communication that has to happen within the community.

Absolutely. In terms of community engagement, we're putting real effort and emphasis on having a direct dialogue and being heavily involved in shaping what the dialogue is, but a communication agency can

be really helpful in establishing the dialogue in the first place, inviting people to it and facilitating it. They have also been really helpful at extending and expanding the dialogue beyond the neighbourhood. Lots of our clients' objectives include that their site or development becomes a destination or an established place that differentiates itself beyond site boundaries. It is mutually beneficial — by working with us, they have a much more compelling story to tell that involves genuine people.

Do you consider the legacy of meanwhile projects as you create them?

Designing the legacy alongside a temporary project is incredibly important. It's not so much of a concern when you do a permanent project because its afterlife is 50 or 100 years away, but if you do a meanwhile project, you've got to think very carefully about what benefit is left after the project is gone.

How do you plan for legacy?

There are four ways we can build a legacy. First of all, we think about educational benefits — how we can inspire and teach young people, or anybody really, with parts of our projects. Hopefully, they can learn some skills that stay with them for life. Second, inventive and inspirational design is really important. A design solution that simply satisfies a purpose is unlikely to leave a legacy that goes beyond the project's life. All our clients have great design aspirations, and I totally agree with them. It's not an added extra, it's the left, right and centre of the project. A third thing that leaves a legacy

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is the operational concept. If a meanwhile project can encourage cultural activity, support businesses, and galvanise communities to work together for greater coherence, then that's the legacy which one hopes and aspires to maintain after the project is dismantled. For small businesses, that might mean working very closely with the developer on how small businesses could move into the permanent development or these projects can establish formal collaborations between charities, communities and existing organisations that outlast the development, too. And finally, environmental issues are really, really, really key. It's no longer acceptable to just build something that's scrapped after a limited period of time. So we have to think very hard about what we do with every single component after our project is dismantled and taken away. What is great about this is that we can be super inventive and hopefully provide inspiration and knowledge that can be applied to permanent projects, too. Ideally, you move off site and you leave skills behind, you leave inspiration behind, and you leave no trace at all on the environment.

How do you make short-term projects environmentally friendly?

For example by using generic components. We've done a couple of projects recently where the structural system largely relies on scaffolding. It is ideal, because scaffolding never gets outdated. Once the building is taken down, the scaffolding becomes scaffolding. We've also done a series of small prefabricated buildings that will be

Ebury Edge, a temporary terrace of affordable workspaces, a café and a community centre, by Jan Kattein Architects.



disassembled and relocated to the next site. Another solution would be to design very permanent elements that can find a home in the permanent development, too, so you can justify using high-quality materials and designing for longevity.

If there is a developer who would be interested in meanwhile use of their land, how should they start?

The first thing is to do a feasibility study, which often helps to define the brief. We look at site constraints and opportunities, timescale, and budget. We put those down as parameters and then decide on what shape or form the project might take. We spend quite a lot of time thinking about who would be the right sort of organisation to operate this. Is it going to have a cultural focus? Is it going to have a community focus? Is it going to have a business and economic focus or an environmental focus? And then you need to put the time in to find the right people to design and run the project for you afterwards.

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# IF THE FINDINGS FROM MEANWHILE USE DO NOT INFORM THE PERMANENT DEVELOPMENT, IT IS A WASTED OPPORTUNITY

Interview with

Martyn Evans

U+I are property developers specialising in thoughtful regeneration. We spoke to their Creative Director, Martyn Evans, about the value of meanwhile projects from the developer's perspective.

In your view, what is the point of meanwhile projects?

I think that there is an awful lot of bad, pointless practice and an awful lot of good practice. For me, as a developer who often partners with the public sector, I have a really clear view on what it's for. It is to enable and make development more successful in the place where it is being developed.

Development takes a long time, particularly regenerative development that is on land that is bad and contributing nothing to the community where it sits. It takes a long time to design, to bid, to get planning, and then to even start building. From the first phone call that says "Are you interested in this bit of land?", it might take four years until there is a spade in the ground digging a hole. For about four or five years, it looks like nothing is happening. Of course, an awful lot is happening. All of the most crucial stuff on the development is happening at that time. All of the thinking about what needs to be there, how it's going to happen, what it's going to look

like, the design work, master planning, the planning, all of the politics and the market research, and the consultation, and community engagement, all of those things are happening very busily all through that time. And then you've got this enormous asset of the land that's got a fence around it and a chain on the gate that nobody can come to or have any engagement with. I think that's madness. And therefore, what we like to do is rather than lock places up and keep them closed to people, is to open the gates and let people know. Of course, if you let people in, you've got to engage with them, with purpose.

Is there a common purpose across the meanwhile projects you work on?

For me, the purpose is threefold. It's about engagement — how are you able to engage with the people who will come and use it when it's finished? It's about market research — about understanding what you might do on that site in the long term and using the meanwhile period as a testbed or an experiment or as a testing of concepts. And then third, it's about changing perceptions of that place. Because typically, those places are miserable, dead, dirty, filthy, hostile and difficult, and they need to be open, clean, peaceful, usable, friendly, happy and engaging. And that's a big shift. So how do you use the land in the short term to help that shift?

Do you have an example you could share?

For instance Mayfield, with 24 acres of land in central Manchester, right next to



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OVER THE YEARS  
THAT WE ARE  
PROPERTY  
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THE ABILITY TO  
INVEST.**

the main train station. It is extraordinary that the amount of land has been derelict and hidden for 50 years. The place has been called Mayfield for hundreds of years. When we started, it had a reputation for being a place where you go to buy sex or drugs, where good-thinking people should be in fear of their safety, and the people selling sexual services or drugs are in danger. It was not a happy place. Children should stay away. When we have finished our work, that needs to be the complete opposite. If we're going to sell a single flat or sell a single desk in an office building, we need to make people think of that place as a happy, lovely place, not as a miserable, dangerous place. So we have opened up a part of that site for a nightclub with a capacity of 10,000 people and a huge food and drink operation called Escape to Freight Island. Two years on, we have recently welcomed the millionth paying customer. Now, Mayfield is a place in Manchester where you go to have fun, eat food with your friends, dance, and have a great time. It has changed the perception hugely. We've had a million people through that site. So as a public consultation exercise, the opportunity has been immense. But also we know that a million people want to come to that part of Manchester to engage in that kind of activity and they are prepared to pay for it. So when it comes to food, drink and leisure, why would we imagine doing anything else in the longer term other than what has already been successful? So this project has delivered really easily on all of those three things that I've

mentioned — changing perception, experimentation and market research. All of those three things only work if it's done right and done well.

Do you collaborate with operators on the delivery?

Yes. We've learned over the years that we are property developers, not meanwhile use deliverers. We don't have the skills or the expertise or patience, but what we do have is the need and the ability to invest. We always work with expert partners to deliver that activity for us. At Mayfield, we have very little to do with the day-to-day operation of that business. It's run by a team of very experienced entertainment and food and drink operators who have got lots of experience of working in other places and in Manchester particularly.

Was the vision and the strategy coming from you?

Yes, but the vision and the strategy was, effectively, a brief. It said we need something on this site that will bring a million people in two years, that will deliver us market research and that will change the perception of the place. Now you tell us what that is. And they came to us and said it's this.

It is interesting that there were one million paying customers, because usually, the meanwhile use comes out of a marketing budget and it creates social value or awareness for the brand, but it doesn't necessarily make money.

But why couldn't it do both? You know, our project does both: makes money and delivers on all of those things. If you see meanwhile as a marketing exercise,

## IF YOU SEE MEANWHILE AS A MARKETING EXERCISE, YOU'RE BEING LAZY.

Why is that distinction important?



you're being lazy. That's where it goes wrong. It becomes too self-referential and too interested in itself, rather than delivering very clear objectives for the project. It should be a tool for communication and consultation, and a tool for perception change. I agree that both of those things belong on a marketing budget, but experimentation is more of a future viability issue.

Because in my experience, what tends to happen is that there are meanwhile activities managed and funded by the marketing department and they are therefore not seen by the development teams as fundamental to the operation. They become pretty accessories and not fundamental pillars of development activity. Think of it this way: our large schemes often have many phases over a number of years. I always get the team here to agree that the meanwhile use is phase one and that phase two, which they think is phase one of the "real development", is phase two. If they start to think about it in that way, then they see it as an integral part of the development. So when you are deciding what your meanwhile activity is, you are required to show how it facilitates phase two. It does not just sit on its own. If the findings from meanwhile use do not inform the permanent development, it is just a nice favour to the people who run it, a little CSR exercise, a bit of charitable giving. I think it is a wasted opportunity.





Meanwhile use at Mayfield in Manchester, a regeneration project by U+I reviving a former industrial heartland into a modern innovation quarter.

Have you ever had any issues with getting planning permission when it comes to meanwhile use?

The answer to all of your questions about problems is simple: if you show how the meanwhile use improves, facilitates, reduces risk on a long-term project, it will sail through funding, planning, delivery. If it is seen as a marketing exercise, it's subject to a different assessment process. I only want our meanwhile use to prove that it's making the development easier. If you sit down in front of the planners and say, we would like to do this crazy thing, it will

engage better with a million people, it will reduce the risk of the development and it will make it a better place that makes people happier to be there. How is any planner going to argue with any of that?

# BY IMPLEMENTING QUICK TEMPORARY CHANGES, WE SHOW PEOPLE THAT WE REALLY MEAN IT

Interview with

Rozálie Kašparová

The Prague Institute of Planning and Development (IPR) is in charge of developing the concept behind the city's architecture, urbanism, development and planning. We spoke to their architect and urban designer Rozálie Kašparová about fighting a rigid system with temporary interventions and using diligently collected data to build a case for scaling up.

How do meanwhile projects help you reach your goals at the IPR Office of Public Space?

Our aim is to redesign and revitalise streets, squares, parks and the spaces in between. But it takes a really long time — after ten years, we have only been able to implement two or three projects. The projects look natural and easy once they are done and people walk by, but you can't really see how much work is behind it. Even the smallest changes take so much effort and time. Time is money and in our case, that is public money. So for the past three years, we have really tried to implement some temporary changes in every project to push the slow and very rigid system. We want to show people that we really mean to invest

in this part of the city, that we have a professional opinion about it and that we are eager to work with them. It can be exhibits, installations, or temporary changes within the long-term projects. We are deliberate about doing something as soon as we can. For example, we launched a big outdoor exhibition at Rohanský ostrov in the middle of the pandemic, in spring 2021. It was one of the very few places to experience in-person culture and education in the city when everything was closed, highlighting the importance of public spaces.

We also use temporary projects for participation. When you change a place, you bring new people in and influence the behaviour of the ones already there. You make people stop at a spot where they would not otherwise stop. You can use this time for starting dialogues, gathering or giving information. We make sure people can learn about the project even if no architects, urbanists or sociologists are speaking to them at the moment. Besides our goals, we make sure the meanwhile projects are flexible enough so the locals can adapt them and use them in different or unexpected ways.

In your experience, how do people in Prague view the public space?

I think many people still have the mindset that if a space is public, it means it is no one's. Unless you create a relationship with a space, you don't care how it looks or functions. You don't care if it's dirty, or what kind of people are there. It is about explaining the history and identity of the space to

**WE MAKE SURE  
THE MEANWHILE  
PROJECTS ARE  
FLEXIBLE ENOUGH  
SO THE LOCALS  
CAN ADAPT THEM  
AND USE THEM  
IN DIFFERENT OR  
UNEXPECTED WAYS.**



people. Because if we want to redesign the future, it's crucial to understand where the space comes from. That's something that we need to change and I think it is changing a bit. People realise you can build a community in your neighbourhood. One of the biggest aims of IPR in general is to be the mediator of the discussion. Even if we manage to create great public space that people like to use, in the end that doesn't matter that much if it doesn't teach the society, and the decision-makers (politicians, authorities, etc.), about why we designed what we designed. There are so many essential topics we need to understand in order to sustain high quality of life — inclusivity, climate change, biodiversity, circularity...

People react to changes. Even if we know we chose the best approach and did everything we could, there are going to be people with different opinions.

Could you give us an example?

In Praha Vinohrady, there is a very beautiful square with a fountain in the middle that has been used as a roundabout and a car park. There was some private outdoor seating, but only on the small pavements by the restaurants. We cut the traffic from two sides, so people could not drive through it, and we put some tables and small bushes there. It was super successful. When we were evaluating the project, we saw that some evenings it was completely full, no free chair left. It is an all-residential neighbourhood with apartment buildings, so

people came down to drink wine or beer and just chill. And during the day, kids used it as a playground on the way from school. We were really happy to see how people naturally used the space in a new way. After a few weeks, we let people fill in a form for us if they would like it to stay this way, if they would like a semi-change, or if they would want to go back to the roundabout with no space for pedestrians. And 45% wanted the roundabout back. In the end it's still successful, more than half wanted the change, but it was hard for me to understand. It was so obvious that people use it!

Why do you think some people were still against it?

I guess many people still don't spend that much time in public spaces. They just take their car, go to work, go from work back to home and read a book, or go for a beer in a pub or restaurant. And on the weekends, they go away from the city to spend time in the nature. People are more likely to park their car right in front of their house if they don't use the space in any other way. It is also our job as architects to create new possibilities for people to use public spaces, meet and get to know each other. Do you know your neighbours? And the people who live in your district? Parents are afraid to let their kids outside unsupervised, even though everyone can be reached on their phone. I think it is the lack of community.

Is it especially difficult to make changes when it influences traffic organisation?

When it comes to the transportation system, it's always about how much political

**WE HAD SOLID  
DATA TO CONFIRM  
THAT THE  
PROJECT WAS  
SUCCESSFUL AND  
THAT THE MONEY  
PUT INTO IT WAS  
WELL SPENT.  
SINCE THEN WE  
HAD NO PROBLEM  
CONTINUING THE  
PROJECT.**

power you have. You need the politicians to be the initiators or be on your side. You can close a street, change or limit the traffic for a one-day event, that's fine. Even the very conservative politicians and the administration of the city hall will give you the approvals. But if it's longer than that, even if it's only a few weeks, it is a tough battle to fight. It can take half a year to get the permission for a temporary project. The people in charge often don't want to go through with it because it's a complication that doesn't give them that much of a credit. Or it can create a small, but loud, backlash that would not happen if they don't do anything. It is interesting that even in Copenhagen, considered the Mecca of public space, they still fight over parking spaces. They still have the same discussions we have here, even if they have them on a different level. But it is evolving. In Prague we have different discussions now than we did ten years ago. I can see the mindset change and that is a sign we are doing something right.

How do you evaluate your projects?

For five years, I was leading the project called Prague chairs and tables, inspired by Bryant Park in New York City. After the pilot season, we evaluated it very thoroughly using Jan Gehl's methods. We counted the people, how long they sit there, what is their perceived gender and age, whether they were eating, working, relaxing, etc. We had solid data to confirm that the project was successful and that the money put into it was well spent. Since then we had no problem continuing the project. It costs





Temporary pedestrianisation of a square in Vinohrady district in Prague.

about 2.5 million Czech Crowns per year, which is, in the budget of Prague, a very small amount of money for influencing so many places. Since then, about 90 locations in Prague have been improved just by using temporary furniture. We also added armchairs to some parks, and a few years ago we started to push the project a little bit further by creating temporary changes in public spaces that weren't suitable for pedestrians at the time, such as car parks, big crossroads and roundabouts, like the project in Vinohrady. Some of the changes were in place for two months, some have been there for three years. You can download the reports from our website.

Does the city of Prague, as the local authority, help different organisations and clients implement temporary projects?

The legislation is prepared quite well for it here, but it can be very complicated to navigate your way through all the steps and approvals. So an organisation called Kreativní Praha (Creative Prague) made a methodology on how to get approvals for temporary projects in each district of Prague. Kreativní Praha was originally part of IPR, but IPR focuses more on metropolitan planning and systemic revitalisation of public spaces, so they created a separate organisation that has more executive power and means. They are also trying to enhance the community and cultural engagement in the public space in general.

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## **10 KEY STEPS FOR ESTABLISHING A SUCCESSFUL MEANWHILE USE**

p. 52

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## **3 WAYS LOCAL AUTHORITIES CAN SUPPORT MEANWHILE PROJECTS**

p. 62

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# **HOW TO**

# **CREATE A SUCCESSFUL WIN-WIN MEANWHILE PROJECT**

# 10 KEY STEPS FOR ESTABLISHING A SUCCESSFUL MEANWHILE USE

From our research, we have distilled ten key steps for establishing a successful meanwhile use and three simple ways local authorities can support these initiatives.

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## 1. START WITH A SHARED GOAL

Even before the planning of specific meanwhile uses begins, make sure the intentions and objectives are aligned and clearly verbalised within the team. This common purpose then offers something to drive the planning and ensures that all decisions lead to the desired outcome.

For an example of this point, see: Nová Cvernovka, Bieno, Luchtsingel Bridge



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## 2. FIND PARTNERS, HAVE AN OPEN MIND AND BE READY TO EXPERIMENT

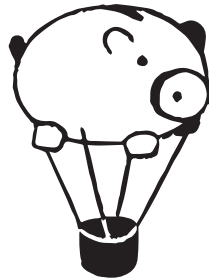
The temporary nature of meanwhile projects opens up unique opportunities, as it makes the stakeholders more willing to execute bold changes. It also makes it the perfect ground for inviting creative partners for collaboration, experimenting, trying things out and testing which possible future uses people like. As meanwhile projects engage a variety of communities, they can be very dynamic and sometimes unpredictable. This is the opportunity to have an open mind, take risks, see what happens and adjust your project accordingly.

For an example of this point, see: Times Square, Skip Garden (King's Cross), Sadni si!

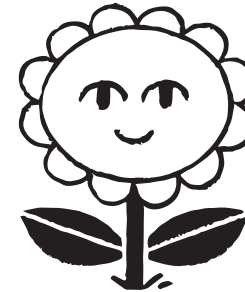
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### 3. MAKE THE MEANWHILE USE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND RING-FENCE YOUR BUDGET

Meanwhile projects should not be considered just as a CSR or marketing tool, but as a fundamental stage of the project. Meanwhile use needs reliable funding to be successfully implemented. Commitment to invest in meanwhile use at the outset leads to long-term benefits far outreaching the financial investment, such as engaged communities, strong identity of the place, or a good relationship with the local authorities.



For an example of this point, see: King's Cross, Aspern Seestadt, Sayer Street



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### 4. CONSIDER THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Addressing the climate emergency needs to be an integral part of any current city transformation. Whether temporary or permanent, architecture needs to carefully consider its use of resources and impact. Built-in flexibility and adaptability allows places to react to behavioural changes triggered by economic, environmental or public health crises. As citizens demand responsible use of Earth's resources, temporary projects come under additional scrutiny about the materials used and their life beyond the project duration. Even if they don't have an explicit climate goal, more and more meanwhile projects opt for modular structures intended to be disassembled and easily reused in the future. Successful projects embed sustainability at every step of the planning, implementation and operation, not as an additional extra, but as part of the core values of the organisation or team driving the project.

For an example of this point, see: Prinzessinnengarten, New Public Hydrant, Manifesto Market



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## 5. GET TO KNOW, ENGAGE AND INCORPORATE THE LOCAL CONTEXT AND COMMUNITIES

Meanwhile projects may be temporary, but they interact with the urban grain, culture and history of the place. Understanding the history of the place and treating it with respect is crucial when addressing the present situation and creating future narratives. It creates valuable continuity and informs a stronger and more authentic identity of a project. In return, that allows for wider reach and fosters a sense of mental ownership and care over the project within the local community. Discovering the often hidden narratives of places requires careful observation, listening and exploration. Opting for simple construction techniques that don't require specialist skills can also encourage active citizen participation and co-creation.



For an example of this point, see: Grätzloase, Folly for a Flyover, Spacebuster, Frihamnen sauna

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## 6. BUILD TRUST WITH LOCAL CITIZENS, BUSINESSES AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

It is important that all parties involved in temporary projects can extract value from them, rather than some groups being exploited for the benefit of others. This is particularly relevant in cities where meanwhile uses could be hijacked as a vehicle to accelerate gentrification.



Being mindful of the different motivations, requirements, financial means and goals of each stakeholder in the process helps to build trust and reach a win-win consensus. Transparency, managing expectations and engaging people at the right time are crucial. Consulting people too late can harbour frustration and break trust between parties, which is hard to rebuild. The trust and support of local citizens, businesses and authorities makes all aspects of the realisation and operation of the meanwhile use smoother.

For an example of this point, see: Stará tržnica (Old Market Hall), Peckham Levels, Szabihíd



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## 7. DIVERSIFY YOUR SOLUTIONS

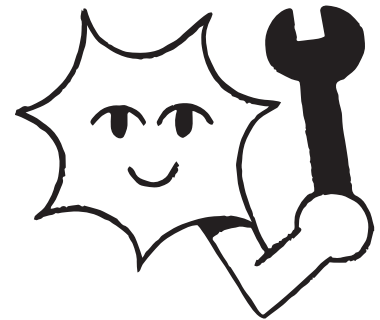
While many interventions can have universal appeal, it is important to provide diversity and variety by addressing the needs of specific groups. For instance, a ‘no questions asked’ approach can create an inviting space for people who otherwise would not feel safe to participate, and engaging children in shaping their city helps to raise a new engaged generation that influences the behaviour of their parents in the process.

For an example of this point, see: Equal Playgrounds, De Wasserij, The Garden Library, V7\_underground

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## 8. DON'T FORGET ABOUT DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS

Real estate clients might have the vision and strategy to embrace meanwhile uses as an integral part of their projects, but they are not best equipped to implement them and manage their day-to-day operation. Appointing the right design team, communication agency and operators, as well as a dedicated contact person on the developer's side, will ensure the meanwhile projects won't get sidelined as the focus shifts to the complexity of a masterplan delivery. When it comes to projects within or adjacent to a building site, creating a schedule that minimises dust and noise disruptions to the meanwhile use and educating the assisting operators and community groups with appropriate health and safety checks are crucial.



For an example of this point, see: Aspern Seestadt, Szabihíd, Sayer Street

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## 9. MAKE SURE TO COMMUNICATE YOUR VALUES AND ACTIVITIES

Storytelling is a powerful tool for contextualising interventions and weaving them into people's mental map, and a strong visual identity helps to enhance the overall impact and reach of a project. Commissioning creative agencies early on helps to formulate the narrative of the place as well as identify who it is for, and how to reach that target audience. Having



a strategy and a plan on how to capture, promote and communicate the project is a key part of its success. On top of drawing an audience to the project, successful communication campaigns can also help to attract funding.

For an example of this point, see: Stories of the Aare, Vnímání (Perception), Luchtsingel Bridge, Pigalle Basketball Courts



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## 10. START SMALL AND USE YOUR FINDINGS TO SCALE UP

Starting small can go hand in hand with ambitious targets. Putting targets into figures and monitoring progress is important in the evaluation process and helps showcase the project's impact. The gathered data and testimonials help to identify next steps as well as build a case that makes it easier to gain interest and support for scaling up. On top of that, data can also be used as a tool of transparent communication — evidence to support your marketing claims that attract tenants, residents and visitors to a place.

For an example of this point, see: Times Square, Barcelona Superblocks, Hackney School Streets

# 3 WAYS LOCAL AUTHORITIES CAN SUPPORT MEANWHILE PROJECTS

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## 1. OFFER AVAILABLE PLACES AND SERVICES

Local authorities manage many assets and services. As a form of support, they can lend them to the meanwhile project initiators for symbolic prices, whether that means cheaper rent, cleaning and security services or police escort.

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## 2. ACTIVELY SUPPORT INITIATORS AND MAKE THE BUREAUCRACY EASIER

Many temporary interventions require various permits from the city authorities. The local authorities can actively support meanwhile activation by minimising the time and energy their initiators need to invest in bureaucracy. For instance, this could be done by inviting people to join city-led meanwhile programmes or by allocating resources within their planning and transport departments to advise on meanwhile project applications.

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## 3. SHARE THE LOCAL CONTEXT AND COMMUNITY CONTACTS

Whether it is access to experts, local historical records or the ability to contact active community groups, local authorities often have a variety of information that can be a helpful start in establishing a successful meanwhile use.

# HOW IT'S DONE

The four case studies in this chapter represent a cross-section of private investor and city-led projects. In each of them, meanwhile strategies were used for activating places and repurposing existing infrastructure to create long-term positive impact on the place and community.

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## GRÄTZLOASE, VIENNA

p. 66

A city-led initiative engaging residents in shaping their neighbourhoods, improving public spaces and strengthening community ties

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## KING'S CROSS, LONDON

p. 72

A private-led masterplan for an inner-city brownfield site with a long-term commitment to public spaces and their activation

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## ASPERN SEESTADT, VIENNA

p. 80

A new quarter on the outskirts of the city realised as a private-public partnership building a new community

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## BARCELONA SUPERBLOCKS

p. 88

A city-led strategy transforming road infrastructure to create car-free city blocks to improve climate and people's wellbeing

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# HOW TO ENGAGE CITIZENS IN SHAPING THEIR NEIGHBOURHOOD

## GRÄTZLOASE VIENNA

Since 2015, the city of Vienna has given residents organisational and financial support to realise ideas that activate public spaces and create more opportunities for people to socialise and spend time outdoors.



### Empowering citizens of all ages

Grätzloase supports two kinds of resident initiatives. While 'Junges Grätzl' focuses on giving agency to children and young people to use and shape Vienna's open spaces, 'Green Parklets' creates new meeting places for and by the citizens, adding greenery and improving the microclimate.

### Keeping interventions close to home

So how does it work? Citizens can submit ideas for improvement of public or semi-public spaces using an online form. A jury selects ideas according to submission criteria, such as that the projects need to be inclusive and cannot be commercial. The programme funds up to €4,000 per idea and provides the initiators professional support with planning permissions. Individuals or groups putting ideas forward need to live or



work near their proposed intervention, so they can be stewards of the parklets and take care of the communal environment. Thanks to the close collaboration between the coordination team and project groups, the very rare cases of disturbances or antisocial behaviour occurring in or around the temporary interventions are being addressed very promptly.

**WHAT'S MOST AMAZING ABOUT GRÄTZLOASE IS THAT IT EMPOWERS CITIZENS TO ACTUALLY REALISE THEIR IDEAS. IT CAN BE DONE QUICKLY AND PEOPLE CAN ENJOY THE SPACE IMMEDIATELY.**

Eva Braxenthaler, Grätzloase Programme Coordinator, LA21 Wien

### The future is Super

The parklets are usually dismantled and put into storage for the winter. However, as the COVID-19 pandemic increased the demand for outdoor socialising throughout the winter months, some of them were left in use over the whole year. This has also opened up a discussion about the possibility to make them permanent in the future. In Meidling, one



of the city districts where Grätzloase is very active, citizens are lobbying to realise a 'Super Grätzl' inspired by the Superblocks initiative in Barcelona.







## Who runs it?

Grätzloase is centrally coordinated by a small team as part of the ‘Lokale Agenda 21 Wien’ (LA21), Vienna’s sustainable urban planning agenda. Besides the Grätzloase programme, LA21 also co-finances a professional cooperation between dedicated citizens, district representatives and city administration for a sustainable district development, currently active in 12 out of 23 districts.

GRÄTZLOASE IN NUMBERS:	Up to €4,000 per activation idea	Started in 2015 and secured
	More than 500 projects supported so far	public funding till the end of 2023



# HOW TO CREATE AN IDENTITY FOR A NEW PLACE IN THE HEART OF A METROPOLIS

## KING'S CROSS

The largest mixed-use development in London for more than 150 years created a welcoming car-free space in a previously neglected central location



### Clear values as a guiding principle

King's Cross is a mixed-use urban quarter built on former railway land by the St Pancras station in London, which has been in development for almost 20 years. A variety of meanwhile uses helped the developer, Argent, turn the abandoned site into a people-centric base for an arts university, shops, restaurants, offices and homes, with more than 40% of the area designated as open space. Anthea Harries, Asset Management Director at Argent, pointed out that the developer's role as a custodian of the estate required them to take a long-term view. At the outset of the masterplanning process, Argent created



‘Principles of a Human City’, a project vision that set out the overarching values that guided the relationships and collaborations with a multitude of stakeholders. Safeguarding a part of the marketing budget for meanwhile activation right at the outset was key for creating a sense of place and bringing community together — and it paid dividends in the long run.

**A variety of activities for different communities**

Among the most influential meanwhile uses at King’s Cross is a Construction Skills Centre established on site in 2004

as part of the council’s planning obligation requirement. This developer-funded training for local people has since provided more than 5,000 people with construction-related skills and qualifications. Alex Bushell from Camden Council’s planning



**YOU CAN’T BE ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE. WE FOCUS ON PROVIDING A VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES AND EVALUATE THE SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAMME ACROSS THE WHOLE YEAR.**

Anthea Harries, Asset Management Director, Argent

team notes that the social value achievement of the Construction Skills Centre has prompted the council to include this requirement in all major developments in the borough.

Another King’s Cross meanwhile project, The Skip Garden, attracted an unprecedented amount of world-wide press. The movable vegetable garden run by the charity Global Generation travelled across different locations on the site and engaged more than 4,500 local children, young people and their families. Thanks to its popularity, it has become a key part of the King’s Cross story and has earned its permanent location on the estate. The local children



also appreciated Play KX, a free play initiative organised by the Assemble collective, which has been recognised by the International Play Association for its contribution to the Rights of the Child to Play during the pandemic. The initiative funded by Argent as part of the King’s Cross project later evolved into an independent project called Assemble Play, which you can read about on page 122.

**EVERY TIME THE SKIP GARDEN WAS MOVING, THE COMMUNITY CAME TOGETHER TO HELP.**

Jan Kattein, the architect involved in Skip Garden











Of Soil and Water:  
King's Cross Pond Club was  
also a much-loved part of the  
landscape from 2015–2016.  
A welcoming art installation  
in the form of a natural swim-  
ming pond and a small sauna

aimed to make people think about the relationship between  
nature and the urban environment.

### Collecting data to evaluate success

The success of the various meanwhile projects and cultural  
events has been evaluated every year and an annual sustain-  
ability report by an external consultant analyses the social  
and environmental impact of the development. These reports  
provide evidence showing that the success of urban projects  
depends not only

on high-quality  
architecture and  
public spaces but  
also on the quality  
of engaging com-  
munities in forming  
relationships with  
the place and one  
another. It also  
communicates to

residents, businesses and visitors how the estate manage-  
ment delivers on their sustainability goals and what actions  
are planned for the future.

**THE CONSTRUCTION  
SKILLS CENTRE HAS  
BEEN A BIG SUCCESS.  
THE COUNCIL HAS SINCE  
REQUIRED EACH MAJOR  
DEVELOPMENT TO FUND  
TRAINING FOR LOCAL  
PEOPLE.**

Alex Bushell, East Area Manager, Camden Council

**WE WERE CONSCIOUS  
ABOUT HAVING A POINT  
OF DIFFERENCE—ALL  
MEANWHILE USES,  
ART AND CULTURE  
INTERVENTIONS HERE  
HAVE A “KING’S CROSS”  
UNIQUENESS TO THEM.**

Anthea Harries, Asset Management Director, Argent



### KING'S CROSS IN NUMBERS:

£3 billion investment  
27 ha of redeveloped land

395,000 m<sup>2</sup> new office space  
1,700+ new homes

50 new buildings  
20 restored buildings

King's Cross



# HOW TO BUILD AN IDENTITY FOR A NEW CITY QUARTER

## ASPERN SEESTADT



A new home for 25,000 people built on a brownfield, Aspern Seestadt creates its identity as Vienna's new city quarter from scratch

### **Building a new city quarter**

Aspern Seestadt is a public-private development with a plan to house 25,000 residents and create 20,000 workplaces, which makes it one of the largest urban developments in Europe. This city within a city is built on a former airfield in Vienna's Donaustadt, a rural area with a low population density. The close collaboration between the city and a private investor is key for infrastructural changes that such a major project needs, including two new subway stations built between 2010 and 2013 to connect Aspern Seestadt with the centre of Vienna.

Intended as a key part of the place's identity, an artificial lake named Asperner See has been built between 2010 and 2015. The lake is now a popular leisure destination where people swim, relax and enjoy bars along the shores.

### **Planning temporary uses from the very beginning**

We spoke to Cornelia Bredt, the Head of Marketing at the developer, Wien 3420 AG. She explained that temporary-use projects are an activity of the marketing team and were planned from the very start. The vision came from her predecessor Josef Lueger, whose practice often combines urban planning, branding and communication. More than 40 temporary projects have

already taken place at Seestadt. Their focus has varied from urban gardening (community garden Seestadtgarten, 2011 — now), through art (Notgalerie in an abandoned church, 2017–2020) to sports (BMX track, 2016 — now).

**IF YOU WANT TO REALLY ESTABLISH TEMPORARY-USE PROJECTS, YOU NEED LONG-TERM FUNDING. AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, FROM A CERTAIN STAGE, THE PROJECTS SHOULD NOT BELONG TO THE DEVELOPER BUT TO LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS.**

Cornelia Bredt, Head of Marketing, Wien 3420 AG

### **Letting people see the works**

One of the most significant temporary uses of the site is Flederhaus. This 5-level wooden house-shaped observatory filled with 32 hammocks previously found its home at Vienna's Museumsquartier. "The idea was very simple, to have a place where you can hang out and enjoy the beautiful

views of Vienna," notes Josef Saller, one of the designers from the architectural office heri & salli. The observatory helped the newly moved-in residents to observe the emerging city quarter from two different locations over its ten-year stay on the site. Various cultural programmes took place here, including art exhibition Urban Biodiversity in 2021, and a collaboration with the Vienna Biennale 2019.

### **Bringing culture in the first phase**

Another example of temporary use is FABRIK. Built in the first phase of the development in 2012, the plywood structure works as an event pavilion for up to 175 people. Lectures, musical performances and exhibitions took place here, programmed by the Agency for Culture and Urbanity, art: phalanx.









**Bringing large scale to human scale**

When asked about the common obstacles that come with temporary projects, Cornelia Bredt stresses how important it is to have a good structure in place, including a masterplan for temporary uses and an allocated budget. For developments that often take many years, this allows smoother continuity even with personnel changes in the team. Managing temporary projects is a complex and often complicated mission, but provides a crucial layer towards building a relationship with the place, providing human scale in a project for tens of thousands of people.



**ASPERN SEESTADT  
IN NUMBERS:**

The development started in 2007 and is planned to be finished around 2030  
Total investments amount to approximately 5 billion euros  
Vienna is one of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas in Europe — its population grew by 9.7% from 2004 to 2014

The site is developed by Wien 3420 Aspern Development AG, a joint venture consisting of 73.4% private capital of GELUP GmbH and 26.6% public capital of BIG, a company that manages Austrian publicly owned real estate.



# HOW THE JOINT EFFORT OF BOTTOM-UP AND TOP-DOWN INITIATIVES CREATES WELCOMING PLACES

## BARCELONA SUPERBLOCKS & BICIBÚS

Citizen- and council-led initiatives meet in Europe's densest district to put people over cars and create safer neighbourhoods for all residents



### It takes a village

Every Friday, a citizen-led initiative called Bicibús leads bike convoys to make commuting to school safe, healthy and environmentally friendly across Barcelona. Regular rides take place in half of the ten city districts, including the Eixample district, with very busy car traffic and a very high population density of 36,000 people/km<sup>2</sup>. To make sure that drivers won't



pressure or endanger the cyclists, the “bike bus” initiative collaborates with the city council and has successfully negotiated a local police car to follow the bike convoy. How did it

**BEFORE THE TRANSFORMATION, SOME 13,000 VEHICLES WENT THROUGH THE GREATEST GREEN STREET IN SANT ANTONI DAILY. THE TRANSFORMATION TOOK 82% OF THE CARS AWAY. THE SUPER INTERESTING FACT IS THAT IN THE NEXT STREET, THE TRAFFIC INCREASED ONLY BY 22%.**

all start? In June 2021, a few families inspired by other bike bus initiatives in Spain started a Telegram group chat and their initiative caught on.

Daniel Alsina, Coordinator of Superblocks Technical Office,  
Barcelona City Council



**Every third street to be pedestrianised**

Barcelona city council had similar objectives in mind when they created a very detailed plan for radically transforming their busy, car-filled streets. With the ultimate goal of pedestrianising every third street in Barcelona, the Superblock strategy started in the Eixample district. Smaller scale pilots, testing and temporary use played a crucial role.

**Testing the idea with ambitious pilots**

In 2018, a pilot was realised in Eixample’s Sant Antoni, one of the most car-congested and traffic-filled parts of Barcelona. 23,709 m² car-free and easily walkable public

space was created as Leku



**FOR NOW, IT’S GREAT TO HAVE OUR BIKE BUS. BUT THIS IS NOT THE FINAL GOAL. WHAT WE ARE DEMANDING FROM THE CITY COUNCIL IS TO HAVE A SAFE AND INCLUSIVE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE BIKES, SO KIDS CAN DECIDE IF THEY WANT TO RIDE IN A GROUP OR NOT.**

Rosa Suriñach, Co-founder of Bicibús Eixample, Barcelona Studio, which won the urban design competition, turned the chamfer corners of the blocks into plazas. Filled with vegetation and urban furniture, the plazas became a place where all residents can relax — the kids play football while the elderly play chess.







**Involving the local businesses**

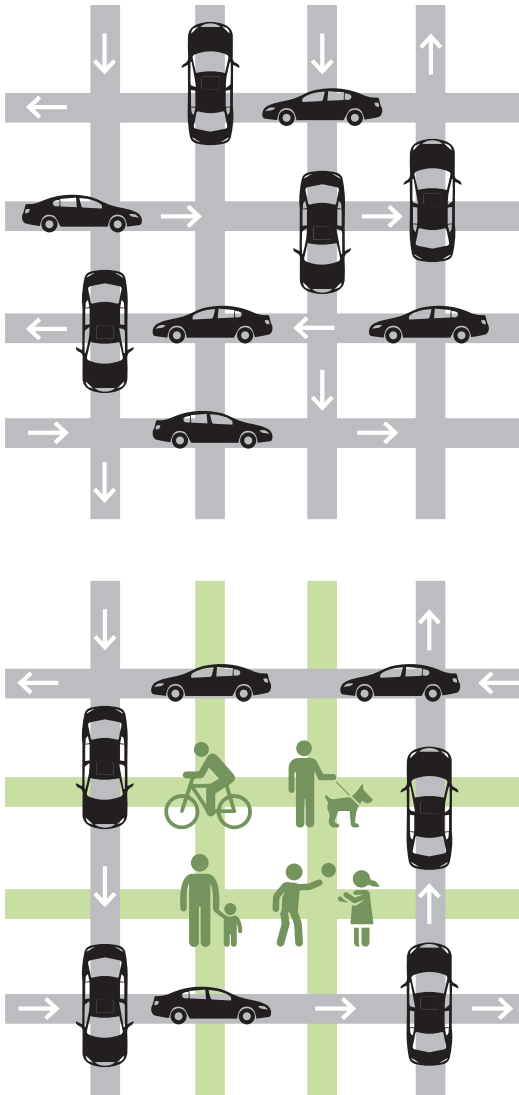
In 2020, the Superblocks Technical Office was created on behalf of the Chief Architect of Barcelona. Daniel Alsina, who coordinates this office, also highlights the open design strategy behind the project. Alsina’s team approaches all the business owners on the affected streets and talks about changes they would like to see. The testing and pilots have shown that footfall increases as the welcoming, newly pedestrianised streets bring more customers. After the successful pilot in Sant Antoni, the transformation continues in multiple parts of the city.



**SUPERBLOCKS & BICIBÚS  
IN NUMBERS:**

33 km of streets have  
already been pedestrianised  
In 2030, the Eixample  
Superblocks should be  
finalised

21 new public plazas with  
vegetation were created  
16.500 m² of San Antoni was  
redesigned by Leku Studio





# THE MANY FACES OF MEANWHILE

This chapter showcases some of the best examples of meanwhile activation opportunities across a range of themes:

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# GROWING COMMUNITIES



The quality of our relationships, social ties and even informal day-to-day encounters impacts our mental and physical health. Our built environment is a key factor in enabling these social ties to develop, and public spaces are important conduits for collective activities. The interventions in this chapter foster a sense of belonging, as well as responsibility for our environment and one another.



## A TRAVELLING INFLATABLE COMMUNITY HUB SPACEBUSTER

A metal box entrance connects to a bubble-like dome that adjusts to its surroundings as it inflates and creates a versatile community space. This mobile sculpture has travelled across the world to bring life to different neglected and overlooked locations. Inspired by the Trojan horse, the Berlin-based architecture practice Raumlabor created Spacebuster (previously known as Küchenmonument or Kitchen Monument) to enable people to actively co-create a new identity for the various locations peeking from behind its translucent plastic walls. It has brought people together in various European cities as a communal kitchen, ballroom or live music venue, while a later

collaboration with Storefront for Art and Architecture hosted a variety of events, discussions and gatherings in New York.

Location: Various cities across Europe and the USA

Design team: Raumlabor

Client: Raumlabor initiative, delivered in collaboration with various cultural institutions and festivals



## REVIVING RESIDENTIAL COURTYARDS

### BIENO



From neglected communal courtyards to active community gardens and calm oases away from the traffic noise. Prague-based organisation Bieno brings residents together and connects them with landscape architects and environmentalists who help them make the best of their shared space. It also runs an educational website with a thorough step-by-step methodology and useful tips on everything from ownership questions to inviting neighbours to get involved. Since 2016, Bieno

helped with the renewal of 65 courtyards, financed by national and international grants, private supporters and the residents themselves.

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Location: Prague, Czech Republic

Design team: Bieno in collaboration with various specialists

Client: Bieno initiative delivered for residents and housing cooperatives

## A COMMUNITY GARDEN AS A SHARED KNOWLEDGE HUB

### PRINZESSINNENGARTEN



A 6,000 m<sup>2</sup> inner-city site by Moritzplatz had been a wasteland for more than half a century when two friends turned it into a community garden in 2009. The garden has evolved into a shared space where citizens of different ages and backgrounds spend time together growing, harvesting and preserving vegetables, keeping bees, producing seeds, constructing worm composters and learning from each other. Their transportable raised beds allow for organic farming on land that is either paved or contaminated. Weekly flea markets and a café hosting events and selling the produce supported income generation and self-sufficiency of the project. After ten years in Kreuzberg, the garden moved to Neukölln and continues on its mission to support the shared knowledge concept.

---

Location: Berlin, Germany

Design team: Nomadisch Grün (Nomadic Green) with local residents

Client: Initiated by Nomadisch Grün (Nomadic Green)

# MARKETS AND RETAIL



While many town centres have struggled to adapt in the face of the rise of the retail mall and online shopping, seasonal and temporary street markets have bloomed across cities worldwide, becoming once again hubs for social interaction and exchange. Here are some examples of such well-designed adaptable spaces with a carefully managed and imaginatively curated programme.





# CREATING A LIVELY STREET ALONG A BUILDING SITE

## SAYER STREET

A narrow strip of land alongside the Elephant Park master-plan in south London has been transformed into a temporary retail space and immersive linear park bursting with life. Activating a destination before the project completion, the temporary folly at Sayer Street provided additional outdoor dining space during the pandemic for food establishments across the street. Once the development is completed, the structure will be re-configured and set up on the next regeneration site in East London. Sayer Street is just one of the meanwhile projects on Elephant Park, managed by Lendlease’s in-house Place team.



“Meanwhile projects don’t fit the usual mould. They are more like theatre production — you need to be agile, flexible and creative.”  
Kristy Lansdown  
Project Director, Lendlease

Location: London, United Kingdom  
Design team: Jan Kattein Architects + BD  
Landscape Architects  
Client: Lendlease



# FOOD POP-UP HUB FOR DIGITAL NATIVES

## MANIFESTO

Manifesto is a meanwhile food destination that describes itself as a reversible ‘mini world’. It uses modular container-like structures arranged on an elevated platform, inspired by container city concepts around the world. Catering to the generation of digital natives and changing trends in food culture, Manifesto is fully cashless and when you order a delivery from several stalls, it automatically bundles it together, reducing delivery miles and fees, while also gathering data to evaluate and improve its environmental impact. In collaboration with street furniture

partners and product designers, Manifesto creates a meanwhile use package attractive for private landowners whose empty city plots await future development. With the ambition to occupy sites for longer periods (up to five years), it will be interesting to see how Manifesto embeds itself within the local context and informs future development, in addition to being a destination.

Location: Prague, Czech Republic, expanding to Berlin, Germany in 2022  
Design team: Chybik + Kristof (Prague locations Anděl and Smichov), Sara Gomes (Berlin)  
Client: Initiative of Martin Barry, Manifesto Market

# LOCAL ACTIVISTS BRING A DILAPIDATED MARKET HALL BACK TO LIFE

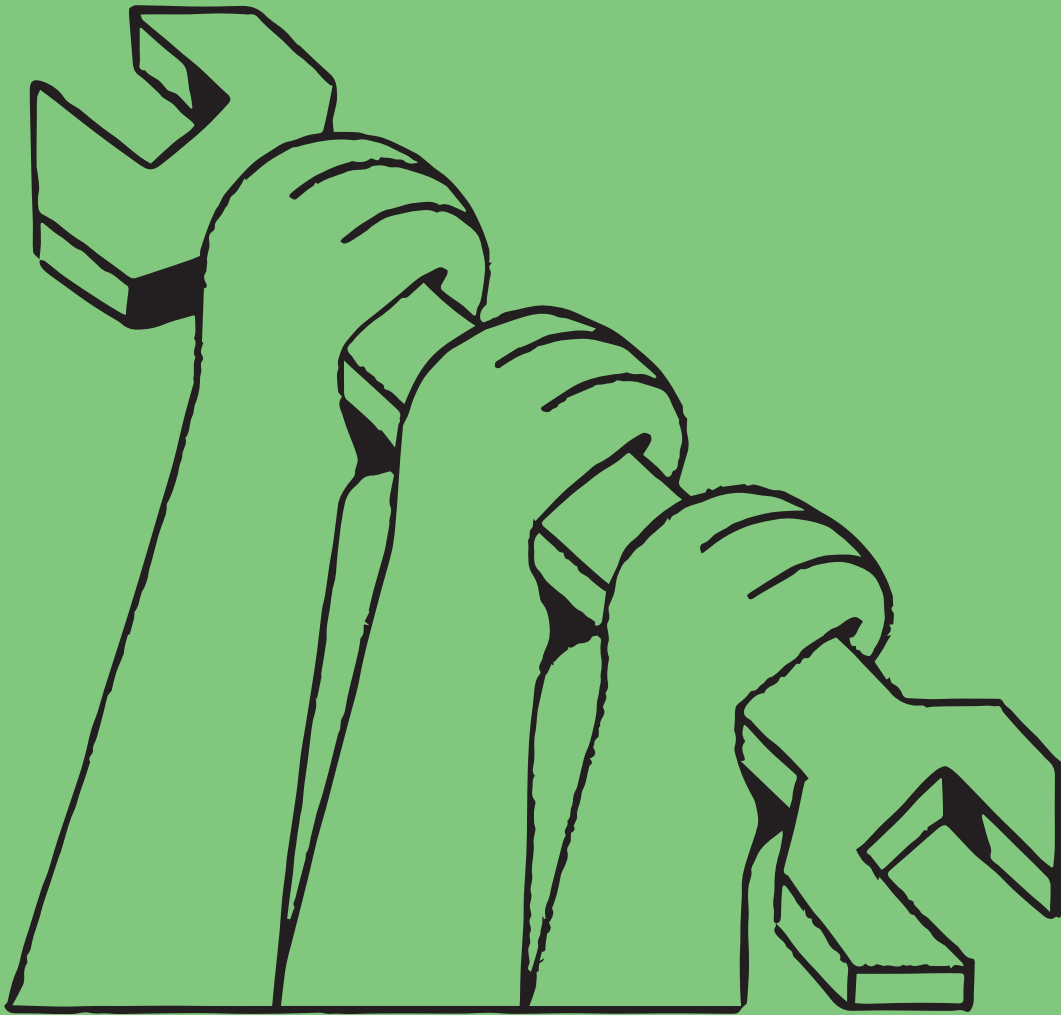
## STARÁ TRŽNICA (OLD MARKET HALL)

Stará tržnica, literally “Old Market Hall” in English, is a technical monument in Bratislava built in 1910 that used to host 600 sellers. The site, in the heart of the city, was left abandoned in 2008. It was a group of locals, 11 professionals from diverse fields, who created an alliance with the aim to reopen the place. One of them was Milk’s founder Martin Jenča — you can read more about it in the foreword. What started as a monthly event turned into a Saturday market that sells fresh local vegetables, dairy and books. The market hall now organises regular street food pop-ups, is rented out as an event space, and offers free interactive installations every summer. With its own large-scale composter and plans to turn its roof into a green space, it is actively working on reaching its sustainability goals. Since the building is owned by the city, the Alliance of Old Market Hall made a deal to rent it for one euro per year with an obligation to invest 120,000 euros per year in the building. Together with the city leadership, the team behind the Old Market Hall continues to improve the public spaces around the market hall with various meanwhile projects.



Location: Bratislava, Slovakia  
Design team: Aliancia Stará tržnica (Alliance Old Market Hall)  
Client: Aliancia Stará tržnica (Alliance Old Market Hall), citizen initiative

# MAKER SPACES



Once buildings lose original function, creative professionals are often the first ones to give them new life. This creates a win-win situation — makers get an affordable studio space and in turn, help to activate abandoned neighbourhoods and restore disused buildings in various states of disrepair. These examples across Europe show three different approaches to transforming unused buildings into studio spaces.

## TURNING A DISUSED MULTI-STOREY CARPARK INTO MAKER STUDIOS

### PECKHAM LEVELS

When Southwark Council ran a competition for affordable temporary creative workspaces within the car park in south London in 2015, its seven levels were dark and open to the elements, with frequent reports of anti-social behaviour. Since 2007, the rooftop of the building has already been activated as an experimental civic space hosting live performances, music, dance, opera and readings thanks to Bold Tendencies, a not-for-profit organisation, welcoming more than 2.5 million people in 15 summer seasons. Since the retrofitting, Peckham Levels houses 50 studios, 70 co-working spaces and specialist facilities including creative studios, shared workshops, co-working, kiln rooms and 3D printing, complemented by communal areas, a free event space, a children's play area, a music venue, a gallery, bars, restaurants, a cafe and yoga studios. Peckham Levels is a joint venture between Really Local Group — a team of socially minded creators, makers and entrepreneurs — and Southwark Council, which own and maintain the Peckham town centre multi storey car park as an asset of community value.

Location: London

Design team: Turner Works

Client: Make Shift, Really Local Group, Southwark Council







## RE-PURPOSING A DISUSED LAUNDRY BUILDING INTO A CREATIVE FASHION HUB

### DE WASSERIJ



Many cultural workers and makers lack affordable studio space in big cities, where renting is often influenced by vacant buildings and market speculation. SKAR, an organisation founded in 1987, manages workspace for the creative sector and acts as a mediator between the city and the artists. SKAR rents 600 studios in more than 40 buildings, most of them owned by Rotterdam's municipality, some of them owned by SKAR. To match the high demand on their waiting list (around 700 tenants are renting the studios while 750 are on the waiting list), SKAR collaborates

with the city on strategies on how to provide more studio spaces. In collaboration with Stipo, Vanschagen Architects and Stad2, they turned a disused hospital laundry into a fashion hub called De Wasserij, providing space for a group of 50 tenants including fashion designers, fashion agents and tailors, running workshops, events and pop-up exhibitions.

Location: Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Design team: Vanschagen Architects, Studio De Ronners

Client: SKAR initiative delivered in collaboration with Stad2 and STIPO



## NEW HOME FOR DISPLACED CREATIVE MAKERS

### NOVÁ CVERNOVKA

When forced to move their studios from the building of a disused thread factory as it was being redeveloped, a group of about 100 artists formed an alliance and negotiated a 25-year contract for a neglected county council building to move to. With the help of fundraising and loans backed by the artists' own homes, Nová Cvernovka has become an inclusive and innovative creative centre with 132 creative studios, small retail and gastro businesses, a public library and a community garden. It also offers a wide range of cultural and educational events all year round.

Location: Bratislava, Slovakia

Design team: Nadácia Cvernovka (Cvernovka Foundation)

Client: Initiated and run by Nadácia Cvernovka (Cvernovka Foundation)

# ART AND CULTURE



Art can enhance or reshape a story of a place and challenge our traditional perceptions. These examples show how art helps to engage different audiences and gives people the reason to come together in places where they otherwise wouldn't gather.





## TRANSFORMING ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE INTO A CULTURE HUB

### FOLLY FOR A FLYOVER

Folly for a Flyover transformed a fenced-off undercroft of the A12 motorway in Hackney Wick into a public outdoor waterside cinema, café and performance space that bring the community together in a forgotten, disused corner of the city. Designed as a giant construction kit, people of any skill level could get involved — it engaged 200 volunteers with the project through design, construction and programming and 40,000 local residents, artists and visitors from across London during 9 weeks of its duration. By day, the Folly hosted events, boat trips and a café serving a cup of tea for 50p, as part of its aim for inclusivity; at night, audiences watched screenings accompanied by a live score. At the end of the summer, the curtain walls of the Folly were used to make new play and planting facilities for a local primary school. The site was identified by muf, and together with Assemble studio they identified the owner among a web of public authorities and pitched the idea to Create London, an arts and culture commissioning organisation, with which they secured grant funding. The Folly was designed and curated by Assemble in collaboration with the Barbican Centre. The area remains as an accessible public space where kids skate and gather, which Assemble hail as one of the positive long-term achievements of the project.

Location: London, UK

Design team: Assemble, muf

Client: Initiated by the design team, delivered in collaboration with Create London

## A TEMPORARY INTERACTIVE LANDMARK

### THE REDBALL PROJECT

It started in 2001 as a commissioned temporary artwork that artist Kurt Perschke installed under an unassuming bridge in St. Louis, Missouri. Since then, the 4.6-metre-tall red ball toured the world and has been installed in more than 35 cities. For Perschke, who tries to visit every city one year before the installation to observe the place by walking and cycling, it's crucial to connect with local festivals or cultural programmes that sponsor the artwork. The RedBall is installed in one city for one to three weeks and moves every day to another spot. This allows people to notice their daily surroundings more, interact with it or even jump on it, as kids love to do.

Location: Cities around the world

Design team: Artist Kurt Perschke

Client: First commissioned by Arts in Transit, later by festivals, public art programmes, national grants, art institutions, or private individuals





## POINTING OUT AN OVERLOOKED ICON VNÍMÁNÍ (PERCEPTION)

The often overlooked icon of the city — a baroque Samson's Fountain — was rediscovered thanks to an installation by the Czech architect Jan Šépka in 2016. 36,000 people visited the hidden fountain during the 25-day intervention, which consisted of a timber structure wrap-around and a narrow path leading to the monument through the local House of Art. With such minimal recontextualisation, Šépka underlined the importance of the historical monument that can become unnoticed when seen every day.

Location: České Budějovice, Czech Republic

Design team: Šépka Architects

Client: Dům umění České Budějovice (House of Art České Budějovice)



## TURNING A BRIDGE INTO A STAGE SZABIHÍD

When the Szabihíd bridge closed due to renovation in 2016, it sparked the idea for a series of public events on the bridge. Scaled up into an annual summer festival during which the bridge is closed off for motor traffic, it quickly became an iconic event,

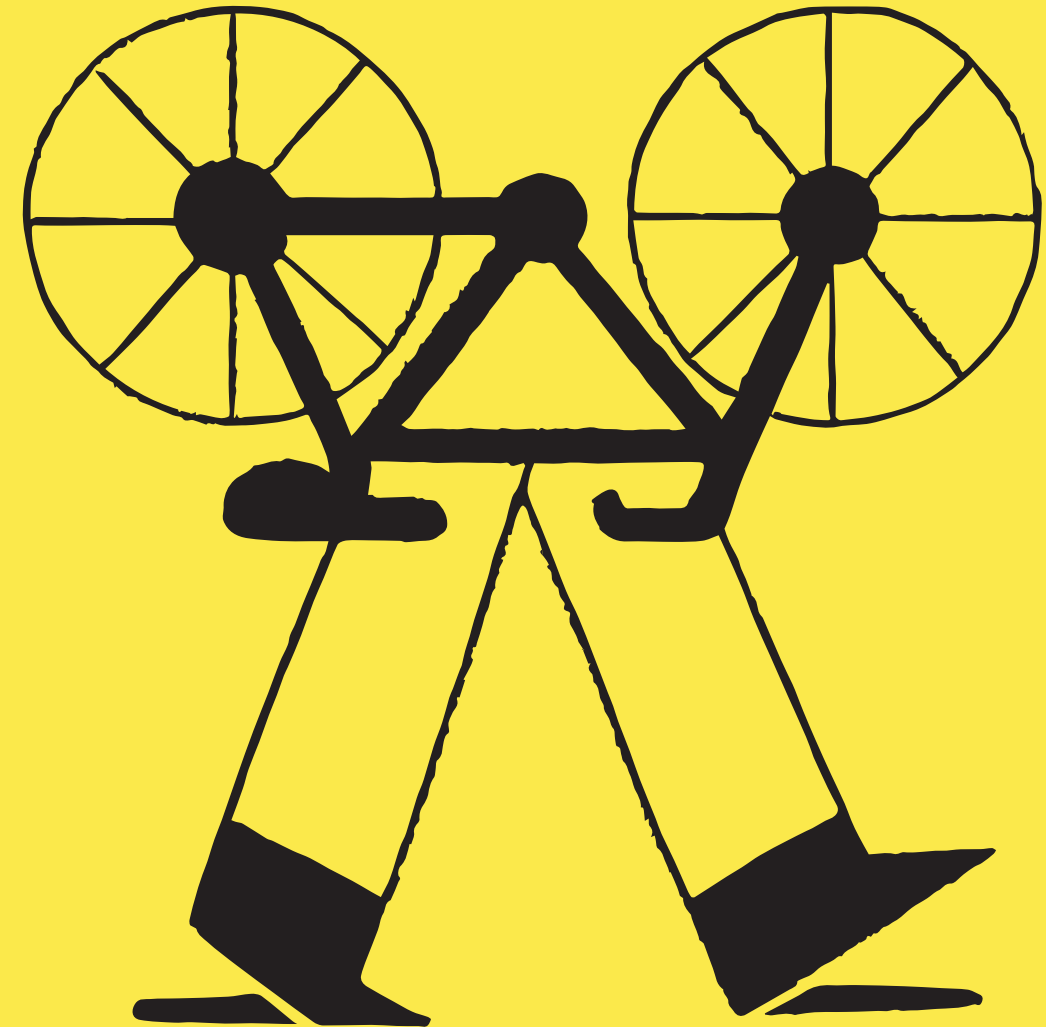
engaging an unusually wide audience. Local residents are involved in planning of the programme, which is coordinated and managed by Valyo, a citizens' initiative whose goal is to reactivate the Danube riverfront. Budapest Municipality helped with discounted public space usage fee, cleaning and security supervision. Additional funds were obtained from sponsors and the popularity of the temporary events has sparked a debate about a permanent pedestrian bridge as part of a wider strategy for the city's future.

Location: Budapest, Hungary

Design team: Valyo, citizens' initiative

Client: Initiative of Valyo, delivered with support from the city and sponsors

# WALKING AND CYCLING



Cities are slowly moving away from cars and temporary interventions are key enablers of these transformations. Here are some examples of how freeing up spaces for people of all ages and abilities to walk and cycle in cities creates more attractive places and helps both people and the planet to flourish.





## CROWDFUNDING A TEMPORARY BRIDGE LUCHTSINGEL BRIDGE

Luchtsingel Bridge is a great example of collaboration between local initiative, the city and its residents. The 400-metre bright yellow bridge connects three previously disconnected parts of Rotterdam near its central train station. It was designed by local studio ZUS (Zones Urbaines Sensibles), which won the city's open call for projects that could improve local quality of life. The bridge was finished in 2015 as the first public infrastructure in the

world financed by crowdfunding — the campaign (called I make Rotterdam) gained the support of more than 10,000 people. The backers, who could contribute as little as 25 euros, received a personal message engraved on one of the 17,000 yellow planks. After the project was successfully completed, Luchtsingel Bridge was given to the municipality along with 700,000 euros for maintenance, eventual future alterations or demolition.



Location: Rotterdam, the Netherlands  
Design team: ZUS (Zones Urbaines Sensibles)  
Client: Initiated by ZUS during the International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam, delivered in collaboration with Stadsinitiatief Rotterdam



## GETTING MORE CHILDREN TO WALK AND CYCLE TO SCHOOL

### HACKNEY SCHOOL STREETS

At peak times, children face an increased risk of being fatally struck by a vehicle as one in four cars on the road in the UK are generated by the school run. Hackney Council's School Streets programme transforms

roads outside schools into a temporary Pedestrian and Cycle Zone during school drop-off and pick-up times. The first pilot, realised between 2017 and 2019, included five schools, all of which are now permanent. Since then, the initiative has expanded to more than 40 schools across the borough. The main aim of the scheme is to make walking and cycling to school a safe and easy option while tackling congestion and improving air quality at the school gates.

Location: London, UK  
Design team: Hackney Council in collaboration with local schools  
Client: Hackney Council

## PEDESTRIANISING A MAJOR ROAD JUNCTION TIMES SQUARE

More than 330,000 people move through Times Square every day. There is a scene in the movie *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006) where Andy (Anne Hathaway) rushes through the streets in between busy car traffic near Times Square while managing the schedule for her cruel boss (Meryl Streep). Since then, the area has gone through a giant transformation. Following guidelines and strategies for a new public realm and successful temporary pedestrianisation trials led by the city's transport commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan, the intersection was permanently pedestrianised. The initial trial involved paint and 376 beach chairs, which were occupied within minutes. During the trials, the design team observed that people "just sit anywhere that they can find" and that the project "was less about adding things, and more about taking things away". Data collected on traffic in the surrounding streets also proved that there was no negative impact, in fact, traffic was slightly faster following the remodelling.



Location: New York City, USA  
Design team: Snøhetta (permanent project), Gehl (temporary trials)  
Client: NYC Department of Transportation & NYC Department of Design and Construction



# REDISCOVERING WATER IN CITIES



With the accelerating climate crisis, making water accessible to all is crucial to climate resilience and improving citizens' quality of life, whether that is by providing free drinking water in public spaces or by rediscovering local waterfronts. The transformations in this chapter show that with design thinking and good communication strategy, adverse weather can be a creative opportunity, rather than a barrier to making places more livable and adaptable to climate change.

## PROMOTING A CITY THROUGH ACTIVATING ITS RIVER

### STORIES OF THE AARE

Even though the weather in Switzerland promises just a few warm months in a year, the people of Bern swim in the cold river all year round — some even commute to work with their clothes packed in waterproof bags. An important centre for this activity is Marzilibad, a free entry outdoor swimming pool that dates to 1782. With showers, wheelchair accessible entrances, lockers and green lawn grass for relaxation, it creates a safe zone for swimmers that was visited by almost 550,000 people in the summer of 2021. The city is promoting safe river swimming through their campaign Aare you safe? and invites residents as well as visitors to enjoy the river through a communication campaign, Stories of the Aare, which helps to build the city's brand. By showcasing stories of people from all walks of life and their relationship to the river, Bern promotes itself not only to local residents but also as a destination for visitors.



Location: Bern, Switzerland  
Design team: Bern municipality  
Client: Bern municipality





## LIDO CULTURE FOR A NORTHERN CLIMATE COPENHAGEN HARBOUR BATHS

With the decline of industry in harbours and the water clean enough to swim in, the phenomenon of urban lidos has spread as many cities rediscover their riverfronts. In Copenhagen, the Harbour Baths have been particularly successful in drawing people in to dwell, be active and have fun in and around the water. The first temporary harbour bath opened in 2002 at Islands Brygge and it was later relocated to Fisketorvet as a floating structure. Today, the city has 4 permanent harbour baths supporting Copenhagen's "Blue Plan" to enhance water sports, recreation areas, promenades and playgrounds along the 42-kilometre stretch of wharf space.

Location: Copenhagen, Denmark  
Design team: JDS + BIG (Islands Brygge bath)  
Client: City of Copenhagen



## COOLING DOWN WITH GOOD-QUALITY TAP WATER

### NEW PUBLIC HYDRANT

New York City is one of few major cities with water of good enough quality to not require filtration, yet many people still prefer to purchase water in plastic bottles. The New Public Hydrant is a series of plumbing 'hacks' encouraging people to rediscover the city's water quality. The intervention was realised as part of the Water Futures research programme, which asked designers to identify new ways of delivering and providing access to clean drinking water in cities. The programme was run by A/D/O, a creative hub in Brooklyn launched by the MINI car brand to empower the design community to improve urban life.



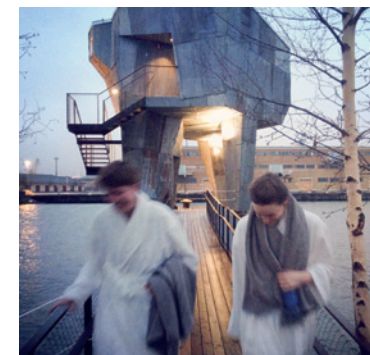
Location: New York, USA  
Design team: Agency-Agency and Chris Woebken  
Client: A/D/O by MINI

## A FREE SAUNA MARKS THE START OF REGENERATION

### FRIHAMNEN PORT SAUNA

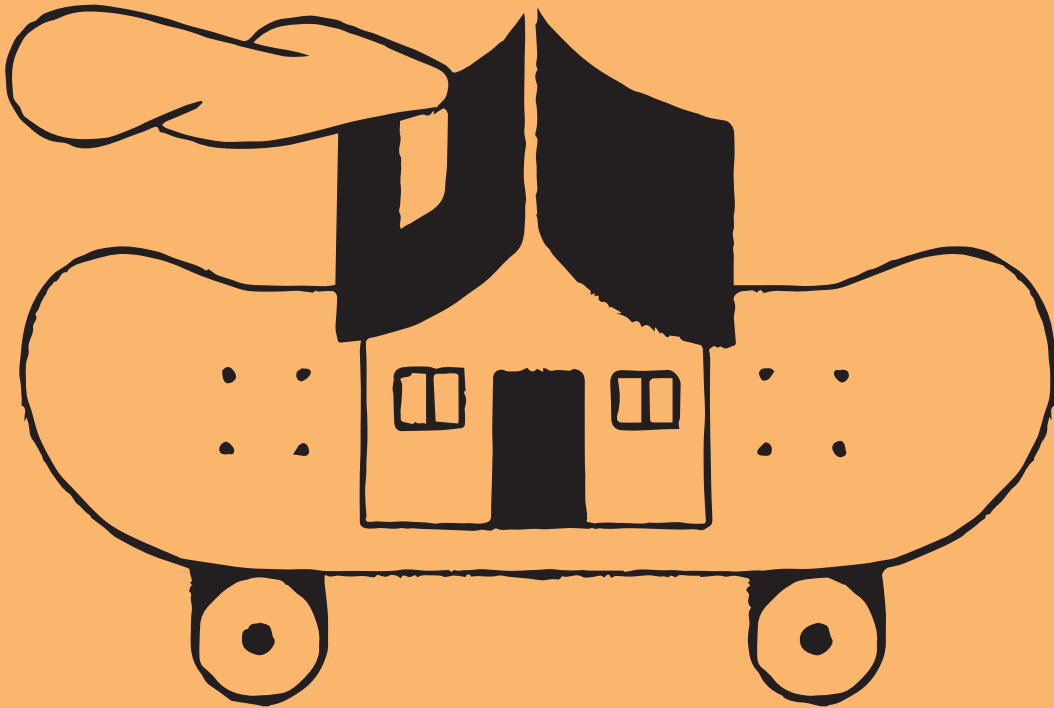
The sauna in Frihamnen opens the hectic port area, where almost 30% of Sweden's foreign trade passes through, to people as a free leisure space. As a part of a RiverCity Gothenburg plan, the municipality is set to transform Frihamnen into a residential area with socially mixed housing, accessible public transport and new workplaces. Studio Raumlabor, the Berlin-based architecture collective behind the project, wanted to build on the tradition of public baths and saunas to create "a place where there is no competition, consumption or spectacle". One can rest here in the sauna, watch the sunset and then jump into the shower made from recycled glass bottles. The sauna has placed the port on the map for local citizens, transforming it into one of the most popular areas in the city.

Location: Gothenburg, Sweden  
Design team: Raumlabor  
Client: Älvstranden Utveckling AB (municipal real estate company)





# ACTIVE SPACES FOR YOUNG CITIZENS



Young people are central to the development of cohesive communities and the importance for children to be independently mobile and have the opportunities to play or simply ‘hang out’ without being harassed are paramount. Studies show that Millennials and Gen Z harbour growing concerns about safety, social equality and environmental sustainability, and lack a sense of belonging and ownership within the city. Creating engaging public spaces for them is part of the solution. These interventions show that initiative can come from various places, including sports brands, architects, advertising agencies, as well as city authorities.

## TURNING UNDERPASSES INTO A SPORTS PARK

### V7\_UNDERGROUND



A set of neglected underpasses at one of the busiest traffic hubs in Prague used to be highly unpopular before they were turned into a 24/7 spot for sports. With smart use of mostly paint and lights, a place where people did not feel safe was quickly and inexpensively transformed into a beloved place to meet, skateboard, play basketball and boulder. Its wider area is also expecting transformative new additions: a new philharmonic will be built according to a design by Bjarke Ingels Group and a new housing district with 11,000 residential units will transform a nearby brownfield. V7\_underground was created in close collaboration between the municipality district of Prague 7, city activators group Re\_place and skateboarding-focused architectural office U/U.

Location: Prague, Czech Republic

Design team: Re\_place, U/U studio, Maxo Simko

Client: Municipality district of Prague 7

## BALANCING GENDER EQUALITY IN SCHOOL PLAYGROUNDS

### EQUAL PLAYGROUNDS

“More than 75% of school playgrounds are football-centric. Because of this, most girls are limited to playing in the corners of the playground,” states a video by Equal Saare, a Barcelona-based studio of architects and urban planners that applies feminist perspective in their practice. With the support of Catalan branch



of Ogilvy and in collaboration with Alfred Mata school, they created Equal Playgrounds, a campaign that shares their research and opens the topic of sensibility towards gender inclusion to the public. Their findings were summed up in a manual called Inclusive School Playgrounds, which shows the methodology of rethinking and redesigning playgrounds around schools. Even tiny changes can have a huge impact. Since 2016, Equal Saare has transformed 9 school playgrounds, held workshops and trials at more than 20 schools, and collaborated with Barcelona and Bordeaux municipality on recreating the city's playgrounds.

---

Location: First online, then implemented at schools in Barcelona  
Design team: Equal Saare  
Client: Initiated by Equal Saare delivered in collaboration with Ogilvy and Alfred Mata school

## A FREE PLAY INITIATIVE WITH SOCIAL INCLUSION AT HEART

### ASSEMBLE PLAY



What initially started as a temporary programme at King's Cross (Play KX) developed by a small team from Assemble collective turned into Assemble Play — an initiative based on the belief that play should always be free for all children and the more children can play in their early years, the happier and more equipped for life they will be. Created with local partners and organisations in various locations across London, the events are always child-led and curated by playworkers with the aim to stimulate the children's creativ-

ity and "behaviour that is freely chosen, personally directed, and intrinsically motivated".

"It is a method of bringing children's culture into public space, giving children presence and reason to remain in public space, and creating social opportunities for adults around that."

Amica Dall, Founding member of Assemble

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Location: London, UK  
Design team: Assemble Play  
Client: Initiative of Assemble Play, delivered in collaboration with local residents, municipalities and cultural organisations

## CELEBRATING SPORTS IN A SAFE AND ENGAGING SPACE

### PIGALLE BASKETBALL COURT

A colourful basketball court in a gap site between Parisian apartments is a collaboration between clothing and footwear brands Pigalle and Nike. The court on Rue Duperré was first renovated in 2009 to celebrate the arrival of the official Pigalle store. The brands have since supported a series of safe community spaces for youth doubling as event venues. The 2019 iteration, a 600 square metre space in Beijing, was built from 45,000 pairs of recycled sneakers. It was strategically designed for the use and safety of all, but female athletes and residents in particular.



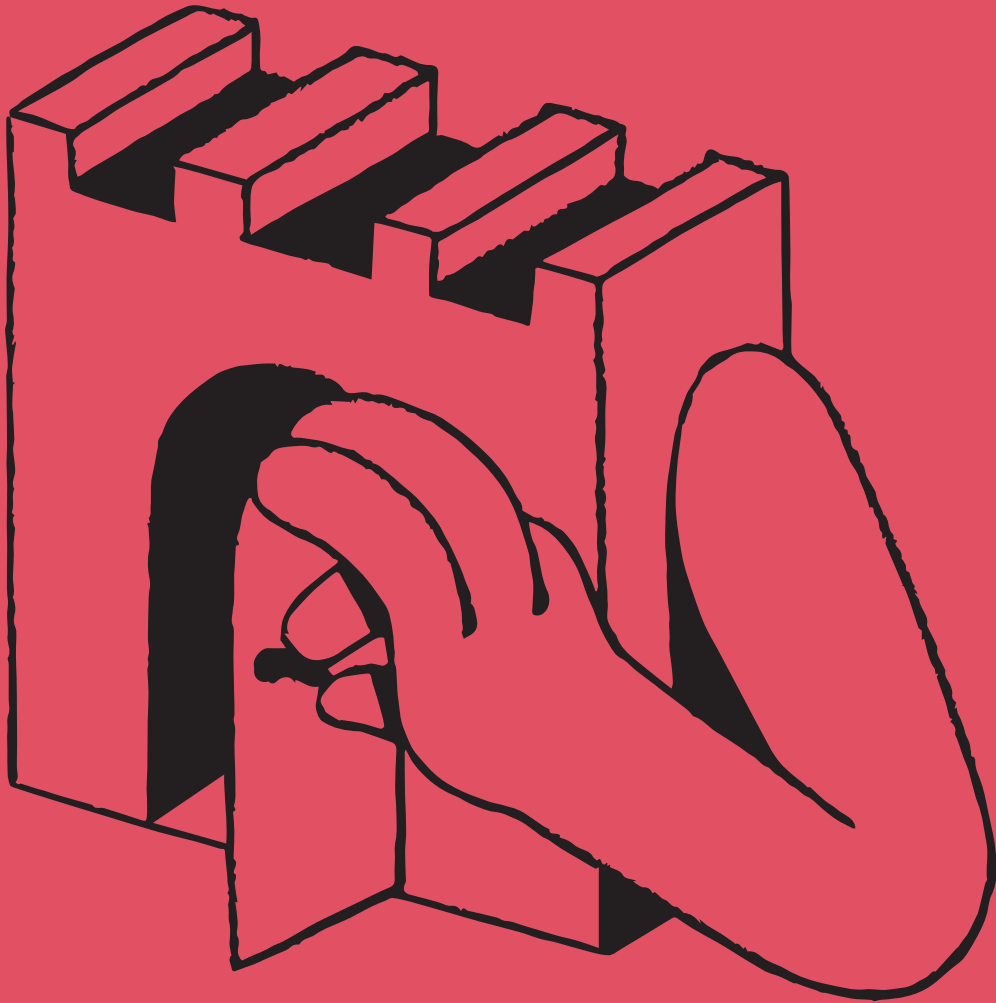
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Location: Paris, France followed by cities across the globe  
Design team: Ill-Studio (Paris Duperré location)  
Client: Initiative of Stéphane Ashpool, Pigalle and Nike





# WELCOMING SPACES



With urban migration on the rise and the expectation of climate refugees, cities need to be prepared to integrate new people into existing social circles. Providing free ways to engage with the city and friendly ways to interact with its citizens is an important step in the right direction.

## INVITING PEOPLE TO LINGER SADNI SI! (SIT DOWN!)

In 2019, the city programme by the Metropolitan Institute in Bratislava started placing red tables and chairs in public spaces across the city. In the first year, 300 chairs were installed in more than 20 locations. People can rearrange the furniture according to their needs, turning the place into an extended living room. Importantly, the chairs are free to use, without the necessity to buy anything. Close collaboration between the city and local actors is essential. Local libraries, cultural organisations, shops or ice-cream parlours take care of the street furniture daily. The pioneer project that inspired cities such as Bratislava and Prague emerged in the 1990s in New York City when Andrew Manshel, an attorney turned urban planner inspired by the urbanist and sociologist William H. Whyte, installed 2,000 moveable green bistro chairs in Manhattan's Bryant Park.



Location: Bratislava, Slovakia

Design team: Metropolitný inštitút Bratislavy (Metropolitan Institute of Bratislava)

Client: Metropolitný inštitút Bratislavy (Metropolitan Institute of Bratislava)





## A LIBRARY WITH NO WALLS, DOORS OR QUESTIONS THE GARDEN LIBRARY

Located in Lewinsky Park, the Garden Library operates as a meeting point for refugees, migrant workers and local communities. Founded in 2009 by the non-profit ARTEAM and the municipality's information centre for foreign communities, Mesila, it creates a free and safe space where the love for books is shared. Feeling safe is very important, so a "no questions asked" approach is in place when it comes to incoming visitors. The library stores 3,500 books in 16 languages, both for kids and adults. It also hosts classes about small business management, photography, languages or computer repair.

Location: Tel Aviv, Israel  
Design team: Yoav Meiri Architects  
Client: Initiated by ARTEAM in collaboration with Mesila

## BREAKING BARRIERS THROUGH PLAY CHESS UNLIMITED

In summer 2015, when many Syrians were escaping the war, Kineke Mulder went to the central station to connect with the refugees through the game of chess. Her initiative, called Chess Unlimited, brings chess into city squares, plazas, libraries, cafés and galleries. In 2019 alone, 1,800 people attended her events and played at least once. Kineke uses chess as an activity that connects people across language barriers, age, gender, sexual orientation, cultural background, or chess ranking. Chess Unlimited is a great example of how an activity led by only one person can change the city's social atmosphere.



Location: Vienna, Austria  
Design team: Kineke Mulder  
Client: Initiative of Kineke Mulder, delivered with the support of local residents and organisations



















# HOW WE MEASURED VALUE

In his 6 Ideas for Creating Successful Meanwhile Spaces, Carl Turner, a London-based architect and expert on meanwhile projects, points out that rather than making money, temporary uses “create ‘value’ by lifting an area and attracting long term investment”.<sup>8</sup> In our search for meanwhile uses and temporary projects, we have focused on the long-term benefits, whether in improving urban areas, or changing behaviour patterns leading to social, economic or environmental improvements.

Working as a small team of researchers, we gathered an initial long list of interventions from around the world, applying a set of loose criteria in the final selection process. Each of the case studies needed to demonstrate the following:

## **Engagement**

The project has reached and engaged a critical mass of people.

## **Spatial transformation**

It is a spatial project or will lead to a spatial transformation in the city.

## **Experimentation**

The project innovates or pushes boundaries in some area, e.g. in its environmental approach, in how it is funded, in how it is communicated, in how it engages people, etc.

<sup>8</sup> Turner, C. (2022) ‘6 Ideas for Creating Successful Meanwhile Space’ [Online].

**Applicability**

Can the project serve as inspiration to city leaders and clients beyond its local context.

**Value**

A long-term value was generated by the project for the client / the community / the neighbourhood / the city, with focus on value for all (win-win scenarios).

From the long-listed case studies we picked four, each representing a different implementation model, to show how temporary interventions can be a powerful tool for both city leaders as well as privately led projects. We studied these in more detail and undertook qualitative interviews with the clients, operators and users of these meanwhile projects. The list of people we interviewed and consulted when researching for this publication can be found in the Acknowledgements.

The rest of the case studies were organised around eight different themes to show the varied applicability of meanwhile interventions across different geographies, contexts and target groups.

We have invited a sounding board of critics involved in meanwhile projects either as clients, as city authority or as designers — to provide feedback and a rounded perspective on our findings.



# SO YOU'VE READ THIS GUIDE. WHAT NOW?

For a start, look at unused places as opportunities. Opportunities to create a new identity for a place, to change the perception of it, to put it on the map, and in people's minds. Then identify the other opportunities around you. Besides a place, it can be a project, a team or even a specific person. Don't try to do everything by yourself or within your team. Find good partners who are as passionate about your project, plus have the right skills to push it forward. Involve designers and communication specialists right at the beginning, even before you know how it will all turn out. Collaborate widely and wildly! Meanwhile use is not a task for the marketing department, it is much more than that.

If you liked what you've read, lend the guide to your friends and colleagues and get in touch with us!

If you didn't, give it to your competitors and tell us why.

If you want more, you know where to find us.

Talk to you soon,  
[hey@milk.sk](mailto:hey@milk.sk)

# ABOUT MILK: MAKING GOOD THINGS VISIBLE

Milk is an international collective of visual artists, visual storytellers and communication specialists. We work with CEOs, CMOs and project leaders as their communication, strategic and design partners.

Our multidisciplinary Places team includes communication strategists, designers, architects, visual storytellers, placemakers, and visual artists. We're helping real-estate developers, city officials, institutional leaders and entrepreneurs with public and private living spaces entrusted to their care. We build narrative and visual identities of real-estate projects, activate public spaces through design interventions and cultural programmes, and engage citizens with the neighbourhoods, districts and cities they are part of.



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A/D/O BY MINI  
A creative incubator in Brooklyn, New York City (closed in 2020)

ALIANCIA STARÁ TRŽNICA  
A citizen association established to revive the Old Market Hall in Bratislava as a civic and cultural hub

ARGENT  
A UK-based regeneration real estate developer

ARTEAM  
An interdisciplinary art team NGO behind The Garden Library project in Tel Aviv, Israel

ARTS IN TRANSIT  
A nonprofit organisation that facilitates public art programmes and community engagement projects on the Metro Transit system in the St. Louis, Missouri region

ASSEMBLE  
A London-based multi-disciplinary collective working across architecture, design and art

BARBICAN CENTRE  
A performing arts centre in the Barbican Estate of the City of London

BARCELONA SUPERBLOCKS  
A city-led programme in Barcelona reclaiming streets from cars and turning them into pedestrian-first zones

BICIBÚS EIXAMPLE  
A citizens initiative for children to ride safely on bicycles to schools in Barcelona’s Eixample district

BIENO  
A nonprofit organisation helping residents revitalise residential courtyards and gardens

CHESS UNLIMITED  
A citizen-initiated chess-playing activity happening across the city of Vienna with a focus on social inclusion

CONSTRUCTION SKILLS CENTRE  
A temporary hub on the King’s Cross masterplan site in London offering training, apprenticeships and employment advice and opportunities

COPENHAGEN HARBOUR BATHS  
A system of recreational bathing facilities along the waterfront of Copenhagen, Denmark

CREATE LONDON  
An organisation commissioning art and architecture in the public realm

DE WASSERIJ  
An incubator for innovative fashion in Rotterdam

DOT (NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION)  
Provides for the safe, efficient and environmentally responsible movement of people and goods in the City of New York

ELEPHANT PARK  
A mixed-use development in the Elephant and Castle area of south London, which will provide 3,000 new homes, job opportunities and amenities

EQUAL PLAYGROUNDS  
A campaign and interventions by Equal Saree addressing football centrism at school playgrounds, aiming to provide a more diverse and inclusive play environment for boys and girls

EQUAL SAREE  
A Barcelona-based architecture and urbanism practice with a feminist perspective and a transdisciplinary approach

FLEDERHAUS  
A temporary installation in various locations in Vienna where visitors can find a new home designed by architecture studio heri & salli

GEHL  
A global leader in people-centered urban design with offices in Copenhagen, New York and San Francisco

GLOBAL GENERATION  
A London-based educational charity working with local children and young people, businesses, residents and families

GRÄTZLOASE  
A City of Vienna programme supporting resident-led initiatives in public spaces

HACKNEY SCHOOL STREETS  
A borough-led scheme that restricts vehicle access to nearby streets at pinch points during the school day

I MAKE ROTTERDAM  
A campaign during the 5<sup>th</sup> International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam in 2011, which sought support for a temporary bridge project (Luchtsingel Bridge)

JAN KATTEIN ARCHITECTS  
A London-based architecture practice embracing an open, interactive design process

KURT PERSCHKE  
An American artist and entrepreneur behind the Red Ball project

LENLEASE UK  
Real estate and investment group with core expertise in shaping cities

LOKALE AGENDA 21 WIEN  
A City of Vienna programme responsible for the promotion of citizen participation and central coordination point for the agenda processes within the districts and for the Grätzloase programme

MANIFESTO  
A temporary food hub brand established in Prague

METROPOLITAN INSTITUTE OF BRATISLAVA  
A City of Bratislava think tank dedicated to architecture, participation and strategic planning

MUF ARCHITECTURE/ART  
A London-based practice whose work is a collaboration between art and architecture

NADÁCIA CVERNOVKA  
A foundation that runs the cultural and creative centre Nová Cvernovka in Bratislava

NEW PUBLIC HYDRANT  
A series of plumbing fixtures turning New York’s public hydrants into drinking water, developed in response to a brief from the Water Futures research programme organised by Brooklyn creative space A/D/O

NOMADISCH GRÜN  
A Berlin-based non-profit organisation behind the Prinzessinnengarten community garden initiative.

OF SOIL AND WATER  
A temporary art installation in the form of a natural swimming pond at King’s Cross, London

PECKHAM LEVELS  
A temporary creative hub housed in a six-storey parking garage in south London providing studio space to more than 100 local and independent businesses

PIGALLE DUPERRÉ  
A basketball court in a gap site in Paris designed by Stéphane Ashpool in collaboration with various designers, as part of his fashion brand

PLAY KX  
A free-to-access play project based near King’s Cross London run by Assemble Play



<b>PRINZESSINNENGARTEN</b> Berlin's best-known urban gardening project originally located at Moritzplatz in Kreuzberg district	<b>STORIES OF THE AARE</b> A City of Bern campaign promoting swimming in the River Aare through a series of enthralling video portraits	<b>15-MINUTE CITY</b> An urban concept in which most daily necessities can be reached by walking or cycling, popularised by Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo and inspired by French-Colombian scientist Carlos Moreno
<b>RAUMLABOR</b> A Berlin-based architecture collective transforming urban landscape through temporary 'urban prototypes'	<b>SZABIHÍD</b> A free seasonal cultural festival on Szabihíd bridge in Budapest during which the bridge is fully pedestrianised	
<b>REALLY LOCAL GROUP</b> An organisation creating and restoring cultural infrastructure through the regeneration of the UK's high streets	<b>THE KITCHEN MONUMENT</b> A mobile inflatable structure equipped with a kitchen designed and developed by Raumlabor collective	
<b>RE_PLACE</b> A creative consultancy in Prague activating urban spaces through music, sports and art	<b>TURNER WORKS</b> A London-based architecture practice imagining, designing, making and running innovative projects	
<b>RIVERCITY GOTHENBURG</b> Urban regeneration project for Gothenburg's industrial harbour	<b>U/U</b> Architecture studio based in Prague	
<b>SKAR</b> A nonprofit organisation managing affordable workspaces in publicly owned buildings in Rotterdam	<b>VALYO GROUP</b> A citizens' initiative involved in activating the riverbanks of the Danube in Budapest	
<b>SKIP GARDEN</b> A movable community garden in skips, started at King's Cross in 2009, run by the charity Global Generation	<b>V7_UNDERGROUND</b> Transformation of neglected underpasses at the Vltavská intersection in Prague into a sports and leisure park	
<b>SNØHETTA</b> An architecture, landscapes, interiors, product design and graphic design studio with offices across the world	<b>WATER FUTURES</b> A research programme organised by Brooklyn creative space A/D/O backed by the MINI car brand	
<b>SOUTHBANK CENTRE</b> A complex of artistic venues in London on the South Bank of the River Thames	<b>WIEN 3420 AG</b> A public-private joint venture partnership delivering the Aspern Seestadt development in Vienna	
<b>SPACEBUSTER</b> A mobile, inflatable structure for community gathering designed and developed by Raumlabor collective	<b>ZUS ZONES URBAINES SENSIBLES</b> A Rotterdam-based design and research practice in architecture, urbanism and landscape design	

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This publication of actionable lessons, best practices and inspiration was put together by a team of designers, researchers and editors led by the architect Petra Marko at Milk.

City leaders, urban practitioners and private developers can harness the power of meanwhile to communicate with the public, shape the identity of places and build active communities around them.

Read this book if you want to:

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- create an identity for a new or an emerging place
- change the public's perception of a place
- engage and support local communities
- test whether your plans have real potential
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