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TEMPORARY USE • DYNAMICS FOR LIFE

DEVELOPING TEMPORARY USE AS A (NORMAL) SERVICE



European Union
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*Bricolage Plantage in Findorff in Bremen (Germany).
Photo by ZZZ.*

*Cover Picture:
Wedderbrück second hand furniture shop, Bremen (Germany).
Photo by ZZZ.*

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DEVELOPING TEMPORARY USE AS A (NORMAL) SERVICE...

By François Jégou, *Strategic Design Scenarios*

Closed shops, empty upper floors, ghost streets, dead neighbourhood, etc. building vacancy is connected with negative dynamics and vicious circles in the evolution of the urban fabric. A structural vacancy of 8-10% – due to time lags for real estate business; renovation periods; renting turnover; etc. – is acknowledged as normal in a city. Temporary use practice opens a range of benefits – accommodating bottom-up initiatives; balancing social mix; experimenting with urban planning; etc. – and tends to turn vacancy from a pain in the neck to an asset for city dynamics. And it is frequent to hear city administrations complaining for the ending of the vacant building stock in particular of large industrial heritage near the city centre. Temporary use is a new “normal” in cities. Vacant urban spaces are not anymore considered as an anomaly. And as such temporary use is likely to develop as a form of public service with incentives and rules. This fourth issue of the RE-FILL thematic magazine focuses on the way cities can stimulate the diffusion of the temporary use practice while keeping its innovation and experimental character, mainstreaming it without flattering its dynamic.

Looking at temporary use as a service and not anymore as a challenge calls for a conceptual shift for public administrations in order to provide a service that was not provided before. It raises a series of questions: does such a service make sense as a public service? How can it be fair and transparent? What is its value creation model? How can we make it sustainable on the long run? What are the necessary supports, platform, capacity building, subsidies etc.?

DIALOGUE AND SUPPORT

In the first article How to connect with tempo-



rary users?, Emma Tytgadt from the city administration of Ghent (Belgium) is looking through the various experiences of the cities of Riga (Latvia), Poznan (Poland), Ghent and Bremen (Germany) what the key features of a support service for temporary use are. Her overview confirms in particular



that financial subsidies are always welcome but not the only expected support. They work more as a pretext to formalise a relationship between the city administration and the temporary users, to raise awareness among civil servants on this emerging practice and to stimulate interaction between both sides. Beyond seeds or starter

money, key ingredients to develop a good support service are a unique contact point at the city administration; a “godmother or godfather” coaching projects on the long run; a temporary use legal toolbox – with contract templates; insurances guidelines, licences tips, etc. – and the involvement of a larger range of stakeholders including experienced temporary users and citizens from the neighbourhood.



*REFILL preparation phase city visits in Ghent (Belgium).
Photo by Ariana Tabaku and Emma Tytgadt.*

TEMPORARY USE AS A NEW NORMAL

The systematization and diffusion of temporary use call for a consolidation of support services into the creation of a form of temporary use public service. 3 examples are proposed.

Mārcis Rubenis presents the roadmap of Free Riga NGO from answering to a pressing need of finding space for artistic projects during the Riga Culture Capital year to forming a House guardian service for owners of vacant property. Maija Bergström and Jenni Niemiahö focus on the case of the Helsinki Central Library and especially the way the design of the online reservation platform is an inspiring example of “multiple use” or intensification of use that helps Making better use of public spaces.

Oliver Hasemann and Daniel Schnier describe the pathway in Bremen to the creation of the ZwischenZeitZentrale, a temporary use agency Waking up snoring spaces and opening front doors and windows of opportunity for temporary use and urban inclusion.

TEMPORARY USERS AS SERVICE PROVIDERS

A last section of this thematic magazine is an attempt to extend the idea of temporary use services questioning the way temporary users could consider themselves as providing a service. This idea is turning upside-down the service provided by public administration for temporary user. It represents also a conceptual shift for project initiators to pass from passive consumers of a service to providers of a service benefiting both to property owners and cities as a whole. It raises a series of questions: how can temporary users develop a service offer? How can they federate a group of users? How can they

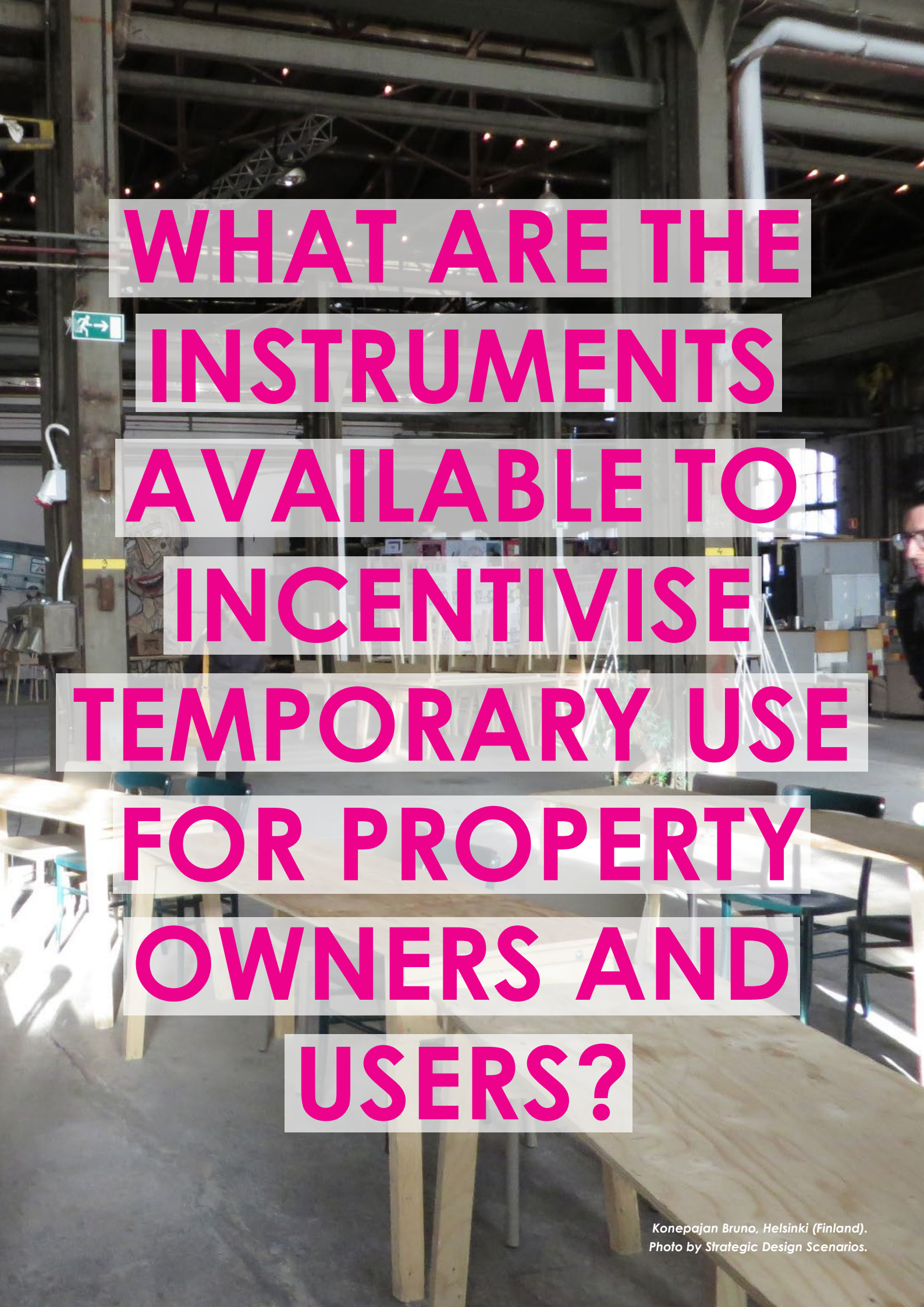
ensure the commercialisation and diffusion of this service?

Irina Mikelsons from the municipality of Riga and Marcis Rubenis from the Free Riga NGO are investigating on the one hand the value of temporary use for municipality: helping the creation of social services and supporting social initiatives; offering a planning experimentation tool for more successful development of public spaces; maintaining and revitalizing degraded streets and neighbourhoods; etc. On the other hand, they look at value of temporary use for property owners whether private or public: temporary use performs a physical maintenance services; it reduces costs and adds to the value

of property; it provides image benefits for large corporations; etc.

Bringing these 2 key ideas together: city administration developing a service for temporary use and temporary users presenting themselves as a service for cities and property owners suggest a collaborative value creation model: city administrations don't behave only as mediator between economically weak temporary users and owners expectation on the real estate market. They are all stakeholders collaborating to create a constellation of value in the city.





WHAT ARE THE INSTRUMENTS AVAILABLE TO INCENTIVISE TEMPORARY USE FOR PROPERTY OWNERS AND USERS?

*Konepajan Bruno, Helsinki (Finland).
Photo by Strategic Design Scenarios.*

HOW TO CONNECT WITH TEMPORARY USERS?

By Emma Tytgadt, City of Ghent (Belgium)

Starting a temporary user project generates a big organisation of getting things done. Initiators of temporary projects struggle with the necessary regulations, licences, security standards, etc. They also need to make the building or property ready and safe, and at the same time have their activities up and running...

Before that, you need to get information and connection with the administration, and that is the experience of Riga (Latvia). Some instruments of the cities of Bremen (Germany), Poznan (Poland) and Ghent (Belgium) support this start-up phase.

In Ghent and Bremen, the support (the Fund of Temporary use and the funding of the ZZZ) delivers a financial push towards the

initiatives. In Poznan, the instrument reimburses financial costs of the temporary project. Initiators of temporary use projects in Ghent confess that this financial support at the start of their project is very helpful. But even more, they benefit from having a contact point within the administration. This contact point within the municipality is important and makes it possible to organise regulations, licences, security standards, etc. to get started. In

Ghent, a temporary user pointed out: “since we get supported by the Fund, everything has been easier”.

Riga, Poznan, Bremen, and Ghent embrace temporary use.

Having an instrument to support of temporary use is important because it secures a connection between the administration and the initiators of temporary use. The new initiative becomes visible and connected with the city. The city recognizes the initiative and is willing to support it in different ways (financial support, intermediating role, etc.).

The Memorandum of Riga¹ is an example in that way, because it is a contract between the City property department and Free Riga (a NGO supporting temporary use).

Marcis Rubenis from the NGO “Free Riga” states that since the Memorandum was signed in 2014, they have been on speaking terms with the Property department of the city of Riga. It was a crucial step in creating a legal framework of cooperation and consultation process: the Memorandum started regular information exchange between the property department and Free Riga and in that way has proven to be a successful way to foster new cooperation and to stimulate temporary use in Riga. In addition, with the signature of the Memorandum contract, the Property de-

Starting a temporary user project generates a big organisation of getting things done.





*ZZZ giving a financial push towards temporary initiatives, Bremen (Germany).
Photo by KUKOON Kulturkombinat offene Neustadt.*

partment recognises Free Riga as a valuable organisation is dealing with the promotion of creative and social temporary use of vacant buildings. The Memorandum cooperation contract presents the common aim of the City of Riga and Free Riga: “to promote civic participation in improving the quality of urban environment by using buildings for creative and social initiatives while improving the condition of these buildings”. It prescribes both parties to cooperate in exchange of information and consultation.

The main impact of this Memorandum is to have enabled Free Riga to gain access to information on the ownership of specific buildings (i.e. Free Riga has gained information on owners of more than 70 vacant buildings.)

The Memorandum is an important factor in strengthening credibility of temporary use as an asset of maintenance and revitalisation of vacant property², it helps when Free Riga is in contact with the owners.

In Poznan, a programme called “Open Zone of Culture Preferential Rent Programme”³ was set up in 2016 in the deprived area of St Lazarus District.

This programme is co-created by a coalition of local initiatives, the Lazarz District council and the urban regeneration department

Regular information exchange between the property department and Free Riga fostered new cooperation and stimulated temporary use in Riga.



*Property department of Riga signs the Memorandum Free Riga, Riga (Latvia).
Photo by Memorandum Free Riga.*



and gives preferential rent for social and cultural initiatives that are open for the local citizens. The preferential tenant does not pay rent for a minimum of 3 to a maximum 5 years. The programme launched an open call, which has found 43 initiators in 10 different locations. The Programming group consisting of members of local initiatives, the Lazarz District council and the Urban Regeneration department selected 10 initiatives. The programme is a pilot programme, but there are signals of other district councils who would be interested in the replication of this pilot programme in other areas.

In Bremen and in Ghent, both instruments support temporary users with a financial push. In Bremen, the funding of the ZZZ (ZwischenZeitZentrale)⁴ started in 2009 and helped 40 projects in the beginning to establish a kind of infrastructure, to apply in other funding or to get permissions and insurances for their projects. Everyone can apply for this funding and will have an interview with the ZZZ agency. It is mostly used by the users of ZZZ projects who more than anything else ask for funding for their cultural and social activities.

The cross-sectorial steering group of Bremen has the final decision. The budget of the sponsoring is between 500 € and 3 000 €.

In Ghent, the fund of Temporary use started in 2014 and is helping to get the project started. It gives a financial push for investments in security, infrastructure, etc. It is a relatively simple application process.

A dedicated single contact point playing an intermediating role in the support of the start-up of temporary initiatives has proven to be crucial.



Applicants fill in a template which they find on the website of Ghent⁵ and initiators have an interview with a cross-sectorial jury. It is the jury who decides on the budget. The overall budget of the sponsoring each year is 300 000€ and initiatives get between 6000 € and 20 000 €. The jury consists of members of different departments (Social, Environmental, Urban development, Urban planning, Cultural, Youth, and the Policy participation department). To have an integrated instrument of support of temporary use is important.

As in Ghent and in Bremen, the intake and the decision making process happens in a cross-sectorial steering group. The consequence is that different departments connect with the project and support it.

IN A NUSTHELL

A dedicated single contact point (it could be an agency or one city department) playing an intermediating role in the support of the start-up of temporary initiatives has proven to be crucial. Because of the complex organisation of starting a temporary use project, one department or one person who assists in getting all li-

cences needed, in mediating and solving problems, in connecting with other departments for support, in engaging both the political and official level, is needed.

To accompany temporary users in the best possible way, the support should be combined with counselling during the whole length of the project. This could involve as in Ghent the appointment of a godfather or a godmother. A civil servant that is assigned as a contact point to a temporary initiative will put his/her available expertise and network at the disposal of the initiative.

¹ The Property Department of Riga signed a contract of collaboration with the NGO Free Riga in 2014.

² See article “Free Riga”: roadmap from “Please give us space” to house guardian service for owners of vacant property” in this issue.

³ www.poznan.pl/mim/s8a/otwarta-strefa-kultury-lazarz,p,1025,32513,33192.html

⁴ See article “Waking up snoring spaces” in this issue.

⁵ www.stad.gent/samenleven-welzijn-gezondheid/producten/subsidie-tijdelijke-invulling-van-publieke-ruimte-en-leegstaande-gebouwen

Insights for cities

1.

To have a single contact of support (it could be an agency or one city department) is very helpful towards temporary initiatives to start their initiative.

2.

To offer a legal framework toolbox (insurance, licences, contracts, etc.) or a guideline for starting-up of temporary use is a very helpful tool.

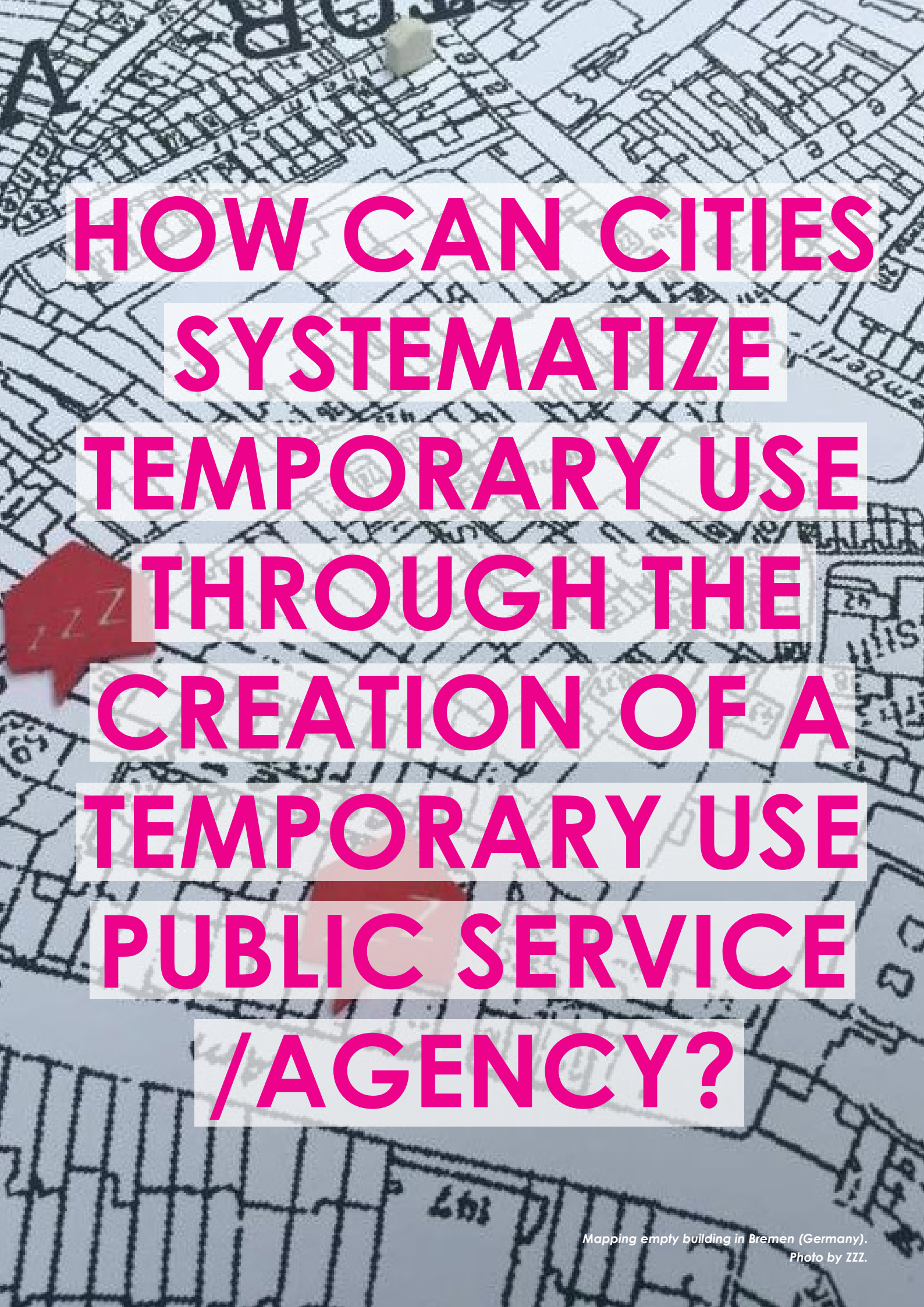
3.

To design together (initiatives and Government) the rules of support towards initiatives is a longer and more difficult process, but it has more sustainable results.

4.

To have a policy of Trial and error in your city, it is crucial to create a comfort zone towards temporary use initiatives where they are supported to experiment.





HOW CAN CITIES SYSTEMATIZE TEMPORARY USE THROUGH THE CREATION OF A TEMPORARY USE PUBLIC SERVICE / AGENCY?

*Mapping empty building in Bremen (Germany).
Photo by ZZZ.*

Waking up snoring spaces

The ZZZ is opening front-doors and windows of opportunity for temporary use and urban inclusion

By Oliver Hasemann & Daniel Schnier, ZZZ (Germany)

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

The ZZZ – ZwischenZeitZentrale Bremen is a temporary use agency working in the city of Bremen (Germany). It is financed by three City departments (Economy, Construction and Finances) and implemented by a private office (the AAA). The aim of the ZZZ is to strengthen the task of temporary use as a tool for revitalizing vacant areas, to provide small businesses and initiatives with spaces and to reduce running costs of public vacancy. The solution of an intermediate organisation which is working with a steering group of the different departments has been proven over seven years and can be a case study for other cities.

CONTEXT

The city of Bremen is situated in the North-West of Germany. It is part of the Functional Urban Area Bremen-Oldenburg on the shore of the North Sea and along the river Weser. Bremen faces great challenges of economic, social and spatial significance. Bremen has the highest debt per person of all German federal states. Unemployment appears to have stagnated at a level above the German average since 1990 at around 10% right now². While Bremen has increased

the provision of high technology jobs of the economic spectrum, there is a decline of jobs for less-skilled people. The social inequalities generated by high unemployment lead to deprived areas with a concentration of social welfare dependency. One of the most pressing problems within the city is the provision of adequate housing for the refugees arriving in Bremen as well as their spatial and social inclusion into the city.

STORY OF TEMPORARY USE IN BREMEN

When in 1996 the last ship yard closed, the history of ship building and harbour activities in Bremen came after decades of decline nearly to an end. Large areas of abandoned industrial sites clustered along the river Weser and were waiting for a new use. Throughout these years, the idea and the money for re-developing this site as industrial production spaces already existed. It took years until housing and offices became a realistic alternative in the old harbour area. This development found its peak with the lighthouse project “Space

“Temporary uses are opening opportunities for new ideas, to exchange and bring new life to the city and the neighbourhood”¹

Park”³ - a leisure park around space industry and science-fiction with a shopping complex on an old shipyard - which went bankrupt just half a year after its grand opening. Nevertheless, the development of the old harbour area (Überseestadt)⁴ was still directed by a master plan and large private investment without opening it for small scale development.

However, within the development of this big area, the question popped up of what could be done with the immense brownfields in that area left by the railway and the old storage buildings, abandoned by its initial use. Influenced by developments in Berlin⁵, the Senator of economy, responsible for the old harbour area, ordered a survey about the effects of temporary use projects. This survey⁶ was done by a planning office, BPW Baumgart Partner, that also made a survey for the Federal ministry about the effects of temporary use and surveyed sever-



al case studies all over Germany. As a conclusion they proposed to install a temporary use agency, which would care as an intermediate body between the stakeholders in the vacant spaces in the old harbour area. This agency, Landlotsen, was then implemented in 2007 and ran by BPW Baumgart Partner. Running over two years, the Landlotsen had to deal with local artists, initiatives and entrepreneurs, who were already existing in Bremen, and supported several projects in the Überseestadt. Based on this experience, the municipality decided in 2009 to make a call for a Temporary use agency for the whole territory of Bremen as a pilot project of a Federal programme, Nationale Stadtentwicklungspolitik, which was funded by 50% of the Federal Ministry of Construction, Traffic and City development and by 50% of the Senators of Economy, Construction and Finances in Bremen. To this call not only BPW applied but as well the small local office AAA with the concept of the ZZZ, which had been busy over the last three years in organising temporary use projects in the area of the Überseestadt but as well on other sites in Bremen. Getting the job for the temporary use agency, this was the starting point of the ZZZ.

Compared to the Landlotsen, the way the ZZZ was working was much more oriented towards users' needs and the ZZZ was more strongly involved in doing temporary use projects by itself. The work of the ZZZ consisted in being a moderator between the users, the owners and the administration. The ZZZ developed proposals for vacant sites mentioned by the steering group of the ZZZ and helped to

sharpen proposals done by interested users. The ZZZ as well prospected on empty sites, made inspections of abandoned buildings and gave advice about temporary solutions to enable infrastructures again. Together with the City Department of Construction, the ZZZ also worked on fitting temporary use projects in the existing regulations and gave financial support to projects and helped in getting co-funding from sponsors and other funds. Being responsible for the documentation of the project towards the Federal ministry, the ZZZ had to write several progress reports and to organise two conferences. Being a project of three⁷ different departments, the ZZZ had to fulfil very different aims and needs concerning the areas and the types of temporary use. To coordinate these different tasks, the steering group with colleagues from the departments meeting every 5-6 weeks was a perfect forum to coordinate all activities and solve all prob-

lems coming up over the years. This steering group also decided about the use of the existing project funding (around 100 000€ over three years) while the ZZZ was giving purposes on the projects which could be funded. In addition, there was an advisory board of the ZZZ, consisting of members of relating institutions (architects chamber, house owners association), supporting the ZZZ and giving useful advice.

Over the first three years, 2009 – 2012, the ZZZ initiated a wide array of different temporary use projects, being a case study for the different possibilities of temporary use. There were numerous short-term uses for exhibitions, artwork camps, cultural festivals and pop-up shops. Together with partners in neighbourhoods with bad social indicators, the ZZZ organised festivals on brownfields for a period of four weeks. For these projects, several institutions were involved and a cultural programme or-



The ZZZ Team 2015: Sarah Oßwald, Oliver Hasemann, Daniel Schnier and Anne Angeneendt. Photo by Cathrin Eisenstein.



ganised to promote those areas over the whole city but especially to open this spaces for the local inhabitants. The ZZZ then also initiated long term uses like the Plantage 9 , which was in the beginning completed rented by the ZZZ and then subleased to nearly 30 users and went after one year of official temporary use to a regular contract with the owner of the building.

In the following four years from 2012 to 2016, the ZZZ continued in being a partner for many users seeking for space. As now well established, the ZZZ was stronger involved in finding solutions for city areas which needed some extra help beside the „regular“ tools of the city. As an example, the ZZZ clustered several temporary use projects in the neighbourhood of Hemelingen in the east of Bremen . Building a network of local institutions helped here to connect the project to the neighbourhood while the users of the projects came from all over the city and needed to be attracted to Hemelingen. During these four years, the number of private owners working with the ZZZ grew significantly while in the first years most of the vacancy was private property. For

the following four years of the ZZZ the social and urban inclusion of refugees, of neighbours and the connection to long term projects will be the challenge.

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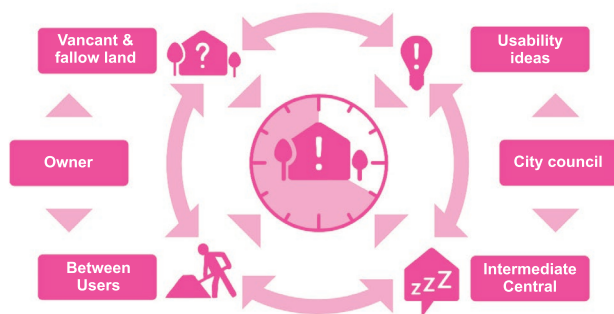
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**Functional diagram, 2016, Bremen (Germany).
Scheme by ZZZ.**





*The office of the ZZZ in the former customs clearance Hansator 2012, Bremen (Germany).
Photo by ZZZ.*

the connection to long term projects will be the challenge. With the federal funding coming to an end in 2012, the city of Bremen decided to continue the project for another 4 years until 2016 and in 2016 four additional four years (Fully by the different Ressorts of Bremen: 1 - Senator Construction, 2 - Senator of Economy, 3 - Senator of finance (2012-2016) the same Ressorts). This is relating to the success the ZZZ had over the years and the backup within administration and policy. In the thinking especially in terms of creative industries it's hardly to image that there will be

no ZZZ. The ZZZ is the first address for nearly everybody in this field who is looking for a space for its atelier, craftspace, exhibitions, training facilities, concerts and cultural events. Economic players like the board of economic growth or the association of small and middle size entrepreneurs became close partners in the field of part time start-ups. Temporary use right now is present in Bremen and gets self-organised.

LESSON LEARNT SO FAR

The assignment of a private office as a mediator between administration,

owners and office was important to translate the different needs of these players. Therefore it was important to choose an office that is personally involved in the temporary use topic and got a network in the creative class that is needed to get enough power for successful temporary use projects over the city. The steering group with members of the involved departments was crucial to promote the project in the administration but as well to make the projects run. One important thing for the success of the ZZZ is the great media presence¹¹. This gave marvellous feedback for the involved

politicians and members of administration and for temporary use at all. And the projects are all very interesting for the media (online media as well as print media).

IN A NUTSHELL

The ZZZ is well established in Bremen. It helped over the past years to experiment with over 100 projects in vacant spaces in Bremen and gave opportunities to the users for their first steps. Over the topic of temporary use many people got access to discussions about city development and participation possibilities. Within the city the ZZZ is right now the pioneer in developing ideas for vacant areas and is asked to engage especially in

the most problematic areas. With strong partners the city is creating here laboratories for new urban types of cooperation. Nevertheless there is the danger of an intermediate body like the ZZZ, that is not internalised in the cities administration and progress, which had been made over the last years may got lost with the end of the support of the ZZZ.

¹ Weser Report, local newspaper about the ZZZ, 25.07.2010, <http://www.zzz-bremen.de/assets/Presse/WeserReport25072010.pdf>

² Germany average: 6,0% in May 2016

³ www.commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Space_Center_Bremen

⁴ www.ueberseestadt-bremen.de/en/start_ueberseestadt

⁵ s. Urban Pioneers 2007, Jovis Verlag

⁶ Zwischennutzungen und Nischen im Städtebau als Beitrag für eine nachhaltige Siedlungsentwicklung, Baumgart Partner 2006, Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung

⁷ As there were three subdepartments of construction involved, it was more like 5 partners

⁸ www.aller-ort.de; www.circleline.blogger.de

⁹ www.plantage9.wordpress.com/

¹⁰ www.aaa-bremen.de/assets/FINAL-REPORT-TUTUR-final.pdf pages 33-45

¹¹ www.zzz-bremen.de/presse/

Insights for cities

- 1 | Whatever tool a city is choosing to support temporary use, it has to fit to the local situation and to match the existing capabilities.
- 2 | Cities need to engage persons to deal with temporary use that have an understanding of what are the needs of the users, why they are working the way they do and why they sometimes can't understand public administrations behaviour.
- 3 | To hire an intermediate organisation is perfect but it is not a must, there is a lot of knowledge within the administration.
- 4 | Without the will to support temporary use with the administration and the policy every other effort are senseless.
- 5 | The cities have to appreciate the effects of temporary use.



“FREE RIGA”

Roadmap from “please give us space” to
house guardian service for owners of vacant property

By Marcis Rubenis, Free Riga (Latvia)

*“How come there are so many empty buildings
when so many cultural initiatives cannot find any affordable space?”
One of the initiators of “Free Riga”*

“Free Riga” is a coalition of culture and city-related activists and NGOs in Riga (Latvia). It recognized the potential of using city’s free, unused spaces for culture and arts and in its development and growth had to learn to organize temporary use projects as a service to the owners and the city. Although this story is set in Riga with its specific context and particularities, it reflects parts of difficulties, insights and lessons that NGO, culture or arts based collectives would face in organizing temporary use projects in any city. Eventually, “Free Riga” has emerged as an intermediary between owners of the empty spaces and prospective users of vacancy aiming to establish recognition and the much needed credibility for temporary use as a new, yet not known instrument dealing with vacancy. Through story of how this collective grew from loose association into an broker type of NGO we can see 6 more or less universal “ingredients” for developing temporary use as a service, especially one that is based on achieving wider social benefit and revitalisation of the vacancy.

Shortly before 2008, Riga was the fastest growing capital of European Union with booming property development market and ever-optimistic

large-scale development plans envisaged for the many old industrial, harbour and inner city areas. Hundreds of often shabby-looking buildings were sold for ever increasing prices and waiting for their reconstruction. Although it was then and still is now a shrinking city due to urban sprawl and emigration (around 700 000 population within the city borders and 1.15 million in the agglomeration), Riga clearly has the spirit of the Baltic metropolis. Not surprisingly, as this spirit comes from history of industrial powerhouse of the Czarist Russian Empire in the turn of 19th and 20th century. This spirit is still there in the streets and in the richness of its historical heritage – the Historic Centre of Riga has been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List and is remarkable with Art Nouveau architecture, as well as wooden heritage areas. The crisis of 2008 has halted much of the crediting and made any development projects unviable. Subsequently, many hundreds of buildings with now-theoretical devel-

opment visions have been left empty, unheated and not decently looked after.

The paradox of many initiatives looking for space while there is obviously large numbers of vacant buildings was making cultural sector frustrated

In the crisis of the late 2000s, one sector in Riga was still booming and looking for space – culture. This sector had already started some successful ad-hoc temporary use projects already in 2005. However, these successes had been local and unknown to most of the property owners.

The paradox of many initiatives looking for space while there is obviously large numbers of vacant buildings was making cultural sector frustrated, especially as Riga was preparing to become European Capital of Culture 2014. “How comes that nearly every 5th building in the city centre is vacant or abandoned, but there is no space for the many cultural, arts and social initiatives? How to open these





FREE RIGA

spaces?” were the questions formulated by 10-12 well known arts, culture and city organisers in 2013 – among them Latvian Centre for Contemporary Arts, arts centre “Totaldobže”, Kaņepes Culture centre, coworking space “DarbaVieta” and other activists. They all had organised activities or founded some of the early temporary use projects of Riga, thus they saw both the potential and the problem of vacancy. That was the birth moment of “Free Riga”.

The first ingredient was to gain widespread recognition of vacancy as a problem and measure the demand for creative, social and artistic temporary use. The initial activity of this group in September 2013 was to launch arts campaign with 5000 yellow “Occupy Me” stickers to mark the empty buildings¹. Being provocative and noticeable, it gained instant popularity and put the issue of vacancy in Riga both in hands of ordinary people, as well as in the media and institutional spotlight. Seeing the interest and positive responses that “Occupy Me” campaign had stirred up, the collective came up with and inspiring and more friendly name of “Free Riga” to invite people to look for ways how to free the empty spaces from their captivity. Many culture events and action were organized with many people contributing. Additionally, the group set up a web form inviting prospective users of empty buildings to apply with their ideas, receiving around 200 submissions in short period of time. There was the need for space and many creative people ready to do repairs and inhabit the spaces with creative activities. The initial events and networking showed that there is in fact huge public interest in doing something with the vacant buildings and there is also interest from larger institutions. However, a pragmatic model of action, except for culture asking for empty buildings, was still missing. The second ingredient was the dis-

covery of the temporary use model. In the turn of 2013 and 2014, the initiators of “Free Riga” met a person from Leipzig who told the story about NGO “HausHalten²” and their “Guardian Houses” initiative³. The NGO was formed by architects in early 2000s when Leipzig was facing huge property market crisis and depopulation, not unlike to Riga. HausHalten had saved around 20-30 historical buildings from decay by mediating between owners and forming groups of creative people who helped to renovate and maintain the buildings in exchange for on average 5-8 year temporary use contracts. It introduced the group to the concept of temporary use as a viable service for private property owners where owner gets preservation and revitalisation of the building, while people get space for their creativity with mainly their work and maintenance of the building as a payment. After understanding that their work can be a service, “Free Riga” approached the first private owners who were interested to find help in bringing life into their empty properties. In 2014-2015, the first three temporary use projects were set up.

However, asking and getting properties for free still felt a bit unconvincing, something like “please give us space” feels

The third ingredient turned out to be cooperation with municipality and discovering stronger value proposition in form of tax reductions. Yes, “Free Riga” had found some friendly owners who somehow saw culture driven temporary use as a tool to solve their problems. However, asking and getting properties for free still felt a bit unconvincing, something

like “please give us space” feels. Contact and conversations with the Property Department of Riga City Council helped to find two important answers for a better value proposition to the owners. Firstly, the Department highlighted the need for “Free Riga” to apply for and acquire the status of “public benefit NGO” as this status is a precondition for closer cooperation with Municipality and possibility to use municipal properties for free of charge. Even more interestingly, “Free Riga” discovered that the Municipal law is already granting 90% of property tax reductions for the properties that are used by NGOs with public benefit status and are hosting public benefit activities. 90% of the property tax reduction was a discovery of a real, feasible benefit to the owners as the property tax for a five-floor residential building in the city centre can amount to 10 000 – 20 000 € a year! Secondly, during the talks with the Department, the possible role of “Free Riga” to organize light renovations of buildings emerged, thus helping owners of technically safe, but visually degraded property to improve its condition and in that way to avoid increased property tax rate. Increased

property tax rate had been introduced by the Municipality in 2013, as the main response to the crisis of hundreds of privately owned degraded buildings left without care even right

in the city centre. The increased rate had turned out to be an effective “stick” approach to get properties either to be reconstructed or demolished. The role of “Free Riga” emerged as a possible supplementary “carrot” approach to stimulate revitalisation of vacant and degraded property. These ideas helped to formulate a clear value proposition to the owners:





open your vacant property for public benefit activities and thus gain property tax reduction, as well as maintenance and light renovation of the building to avoid increased property tax rate. As fixing the property takes time and effort and is a precondition for the property to be used and to gain tax reductions, “Free Riga” could now calculate and ask owners for some minimum contract length so that the investment is worth it. The fourth ingredient is developing temporary use as a social enterprise

providing house guardian services. In the experience of “Free Riga”, owners could see culture as contributing value to their property, but generally don’t trust culture initiatives and are unwilling to commit to organizing and controlling them. What’s more so, owners need to feel safe about the condition of their property and are motivated with tax reductions, which both are ensured if NGO “Free Riga” as social benefit status organization is the contract signatory and thus also takes up the ultimate responsibility

for the property. From the organizational perspective, it meant that “Free Riga” had to come up with a self-sustainable financing model. Eventually, “Free Riga” defined itself as a social business with the aim to reanimate vacant buildings and provide low cost space for social, artistic and cultural activities. Temporary users become members of their house project and a part of “Free Riga” organization, paying little membership fee while pledging to contribute 3 hours a week of their time for social projects of the





*Kaspars Lielgalvis, founder of Totaldobe Arts Center in VEF factory concert hall, Riga (Latvia).
Photo by Kaspars Garda.*

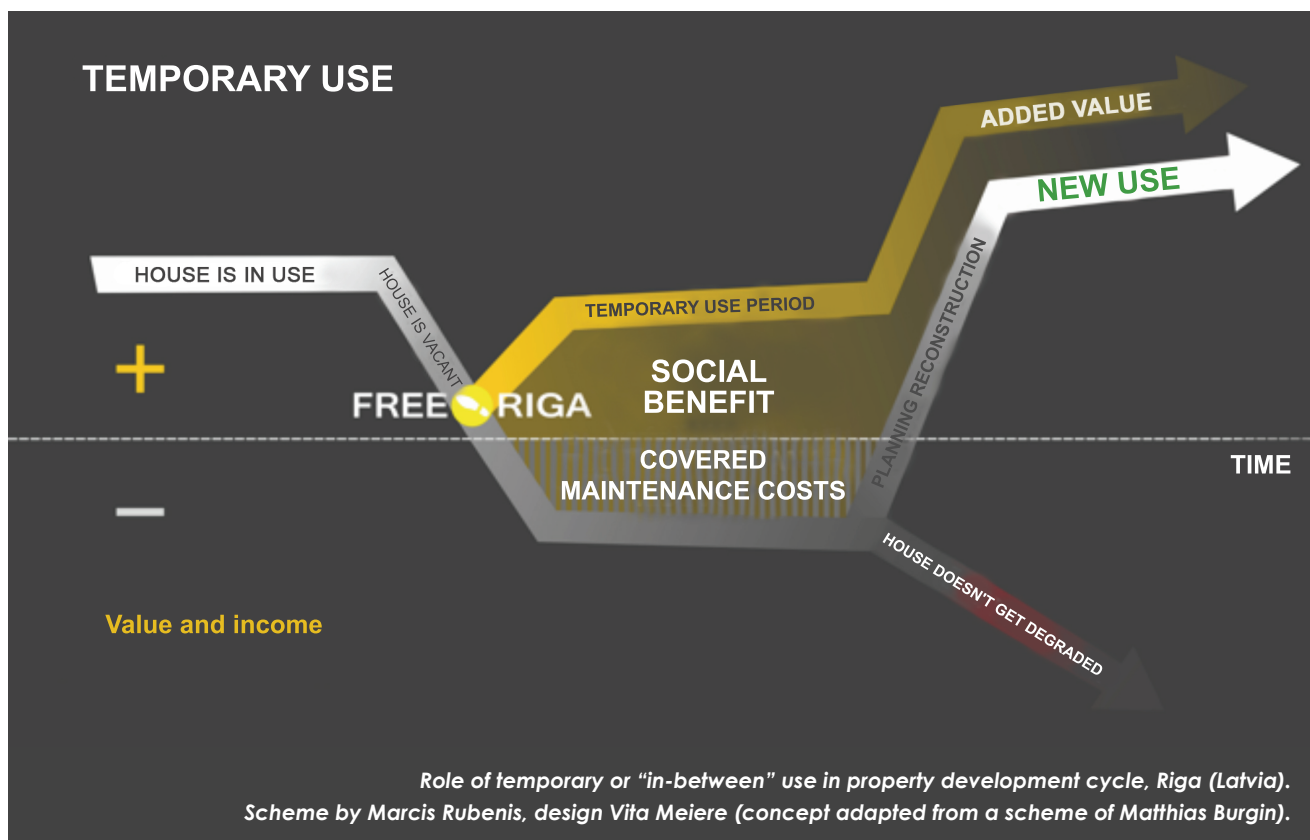
house (like running free workshops, organizing events or otherwise animating the neighborhood). This “3 hours” organizing principle was adapted from a similar organization in Amsterdam, The Bookstore Project⁴. This social business approach lets “Free Riga” to have a paid house manager responsible to the owner for every house, to constantly search for new houses and to building support activities to the house projects, while also ensuring constant work hours from the temporary users in creating

social benefit activities. From the owner’s perspective there are less worries about the maintenance of the building and management of multitude of its users as “Free Riga” is responsible to the owner, looks after for its members as subcontractors and insures the building. In this respect “Free Riga” borrowed its profile from commercial house guardian agencies like “Camelot” and “Ad Hoc Property Management”. Now “Free Riga” offers owners not culture, but carefully selected and trustworthy house guard-

ians who also organize public benefit activities. This consideration defined the visual language of “Free Riga” as a service – offering to organize house guardian services from the moment the buildings is vacant till it finds its new use.

“Free Riga” had cracked the formula for house guardian services based on public benefit activities that made it interesting to the owners and opened perspective of easily acquiring tens of empty buildings for temporary use.





That lead to the next challenge and the fifth ingredient - how to get public benefit activities organized without considerable administrative burden? In other words, how to establish or curate a community of users for each house that would not only work on their individual projects, but would also be self motivated to engage with each other, take responsibilities for the house in earnest and organize social projects? How to avoid "Free Riga" having to invest a lot of time in coordinating every house to have social and solidarity activities, which would make opening houses lengthy and heavy on administration? Out of discussions with fellow organizers and facilitators from Basel and Berlin two principles emerged - transparency and trust. Transparency - in the open call for initiatives of every house project "Free Riga" clearly states the expectations/criteria that every house community should fulfill, like how many social projects from the house are expected, how many hours each initiative or person should contribute etc. Trust - creating a framework in the form of a multi-day workshop process and stepping back to allow community to self organize,

self-select teams of users that formulate their proposals that answer the criteria set for the house project. These principles were tested in opening a new residency house for social projects and turned out to be a good solution. It allowed clearly setting conditions for the prospective residents, while leaving the space for them to work together, take responsibilities, create self-motivation and come up with good residency project proposals.

The sixth and last ingredient is the development of a cooperative platform, instead of centralized, vertical organization. There are hundreds of empty buildings in Riga that need house guardian services. But organizing selection of house guardians and supporting public benefit activities in every house is a considerable task for centrally integrated organization. "Free Riga" sees its development in pioneering social benefit based temporary use projects in Riga and establishing a good image and name for temporary use as house guardian service, and then supporting an association of house guardians with the accumulated legal and accounting solutions, experiences and resources

- in that way supporting more people who can initiate, organize and oversee new temporary use projects in name of "Free Riga" and by using its public benefit status. Such decentralisation is the most likely way forward to ensure that more and more vacant houses can be opened for new social, creative and artistic initiatives.

Any city, which is shrinking and thus experiencing vacancy can look for ways to offer temporary use as a house guardian service. Not all cities will be able to reproduce the tax regime that gives direct financial benefit to the owners, however, all houses need to be looked after, heated, cared for and used to stay safe. Commercial house maintenance costs money to owners. House guardian model might be the way how cultural activities can see themselves as offering a service, in exchange for getting to use spaces just by covering communal payments and providing their work, while not paying rent.

¹ See article "Why mapping emptiness" in REFILL magazine #1

² www.haushalten.org/

³ "Waechterhaueser" in German

⁴ www.bookstoreproject.nl/



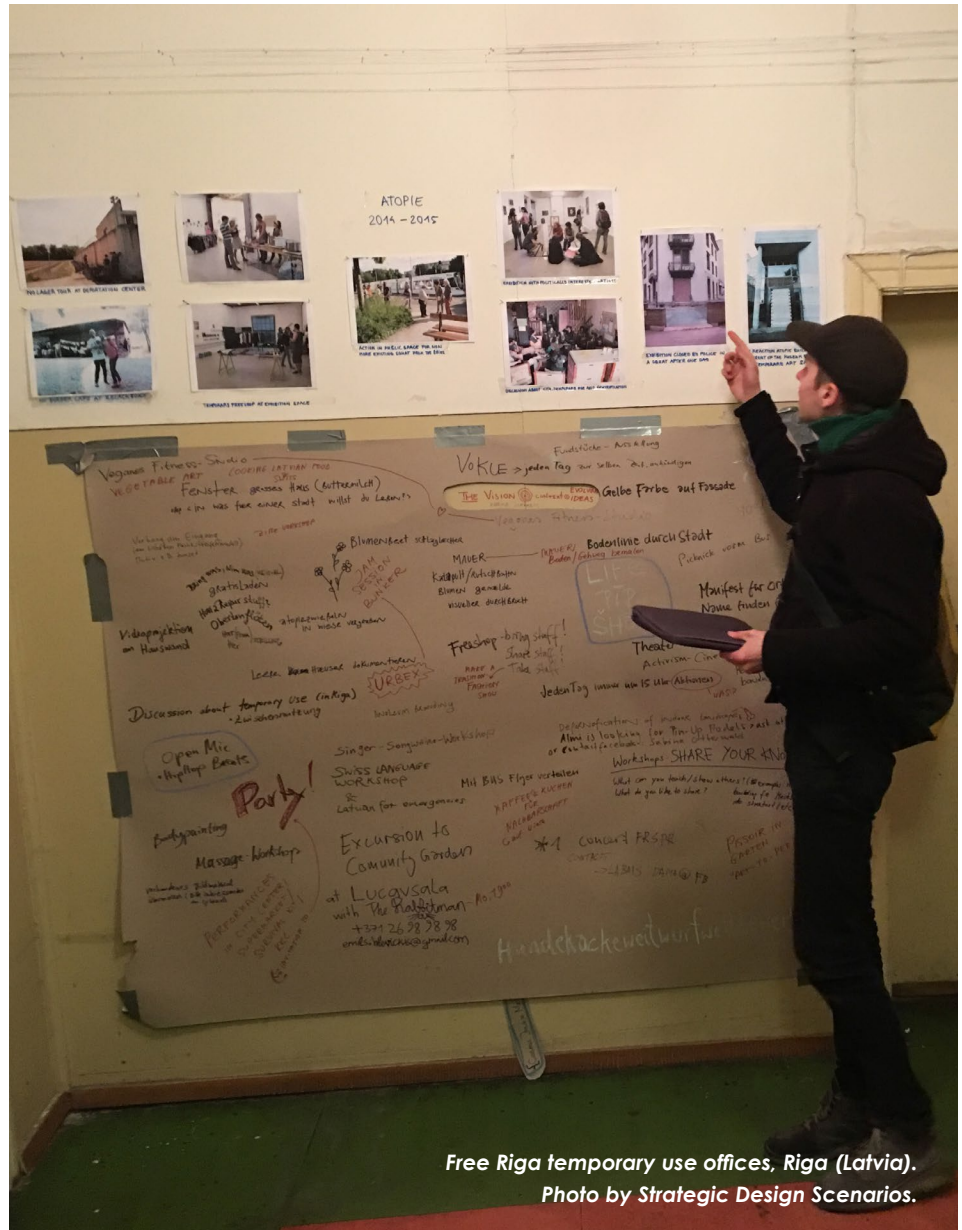
Insights for cities

1. Cities should see temporary use as a service for owners of vacancy where the owner gets preservation and revitalisation of the building, while temporary users get space for their creativity with mainly their work and maintenance of the building as a payment.

2. Cities should consider setting up or supporting temporary use agency that partners with the owners of vacancy and provides them with support and with other guarantees that they need to engage in temporary use. Owners could see culture and social benefit based temporary use as contributing value to their property, but are most likely unwilling to commit to organizing temporary use, controlling the users and ensuring safety of the building during temporary use period.

3. As there are numerous learnings and challenges that are common in setting up a temporary use project, temporary use agency can be an instrument accumulating shared experiences and solutions for dealing with legal, construction, safety, organizational and other issues and act as a consultant for individual temporary use projects.

4. It is possible for NGOs or a social enterprise to develop privately based temporary use agency that serves both for providing new social services and revitalisation of the neighborhoods, as well as performs as a house guardian services for the owners of vacancy.



Free Riga temporary use offices, Riga (Latvia).
Photo by Strategic Design Scenarios.

5. Cities should consider setting up property tax regime in form of tax reductions for socially beneficial use or vacancy. This can support creation of privately based temporary use agency and stimulate introduction of socially beneficial house guardian services turning vacancy from liability into an asset.



Making better use of public spaces

The Helsinki Central Library

By Maija Bergström & Jenni Niemiahö, Forum Virium Helsinki (Finland)



*Libraries provide the city residents with information to support their decision-making in everyday life, Helsinki (Finland).
Photo by Helsinki Central Library.*

OPENING PUBLIC SPACES

In Helsinki, Finland, the city has started several projects that aim at making better use of the city-owned spaces (in and outdoor), and is developing for example new ways for multi-use of schools. In the future it means that all the open public spaces available for external and temporary uses could be found in a same harmonized database and the view for availability is transparent throughout the whole city.

There is a strong political support towards citizen engagement, opening up city services, fostering of innovative business models and uptake of innovative digital solutions by the public sector.

Several city departments are endorsing the usage of public spaces, such as the departments of culture, youth and the library network. Together they represent the majority of public spaces in the city. Their interest lies with the uptake of innovative approaches for increasing the usage

of public spaces and promoting national level legislation in accordance.

Here we take a look at the ways that the Helsinki City Library¹ and especially the Helsinki Central Library Project are approaching the intensification of the use of public space. The use of public spaces like libraries and schools can be intensified by making them suitable for several different functions. These kind of public spaces tend to be empty for several hours during evenings and weekends. They might have high quality assets like music rooms or kitchens that could host several kinds of activities and that could be opened for a wider public. The opening hours can be extended by letting new users use the space for new purposes or by opening it for independent users for free or with a small fee.

Another way for intensifying the use of spaces is to make sure that the spaces serve their purposes well, and will not stay underused because of their non-functionality.



The empty buildings in Helsinki area are typically empty office buildings. They would be needed for other kind of uses, but when changing the way that the space is used, the fit between the space and the functions should be looked at carefully.

The empty buildings in Helsinki area are typically empty office buildings. They would be needed for other kind of uses, but when changing the way that the space is used, the fit between the space and the functions should be looked at carefully.

These lessons and the methods that are used can be expanded towards more traditional cases of temporary use. The understanding of different users of spaces – or noticing who is not using the space – can help with giving a better focus for the activities that the temporary users provide.

LIBRARIES IN THE FOREFRONT OF USER-CENTERED DESIGN

Effective use of spaces starts from understanding the needs of the user of spaces. Helsinki City Library has during the recent years profiled themselves to the forefront of user friendly public services. The use of spaces would benefit if seen as an asset served for the citizens as a service.

A new Central Library is planned to the city center of Helsinki. Opening in the end of 2018 the Central Library represents the new faces of an urban library: “It will be easy to come to the Central Library, as a beloved house of education, to concentrate, learn and work. It will be made into the city residents’ own house where culture can be created individually or with others. This digitally intelligent library will provide the city residents with information to support their decision-making in everyday life. Learning, competence sharing and opening of contents are supported by means of different technologies.”, as the project is described on their website.

The Central library will be three-floor high and each floor has its own function. The Central Library will offer several non-commercial spaces

for a wide variety of functions. The spaces are planned to be flexible and easy to adapt to different needs that might appear in the future. All the functions have been piloted in different libraries during past years and best practices are taken to be a part of the Central library services, for example 3D printers, sewing machines, e-papers and many more.

UNDERSTANDING THE USER

As said, the design process for planning the Central Library 2018 started several years ago. Helsinki Central Library Project utilizes a diverse range of service design methods and citizen engagement to identify the needs that different users of the future library would have. The project is a nice example of user-friendly approach that works as a model for other space related projects. A similar approach could be used when designing new, temporary uses for buildings, spaces and places.

A typology of different users was developed based on previous research and reports, and the spaces will be designed to host all of them. Four different functions for using the library were identified:

- Borrowers, readers, those looking for information and contents
- Workers, users of the spaces and gadgets
- People who engage and spend time
- People looking for help to run errands

When the needs that different users have are fully understood, the functions for the space can be designed to meet all of them. For example for users who don’t want to spend much time and don’t want to interact with anyone there are self-serving desks on the first floor, in contrary to users who want to spend time and interact or work, there are space to do that on the second floor, in contrary to traditional library functions with silence which you can find on the third floor.

IN A NUSTHELL

New ways for intensifying the use of public spaces are experimented in Helsinki.

The libraries have a general aim to support the (self-)education and capability building of the citizens. Their role has widened to cover more general resource sharing function in the city. In the smallest scale the libraries has worked as a place to pick up shared goods, and in a larger scale the library ICT services have contributed by building a resource sharing database (Respa²).

By making a good use of citizen engagement and user-centered design methods the Helsinki Central Library is designing multi-functional spaces to serve many needs of different users. By using user-centered design methods, better functions that bring new users to the spaces can be designed to different spaces.



User-centered design methods could help identifying the need of the local communities and find better matching projects that would provide what is needed.

With the use of new technologies such as smart locking and advanced space reservation systems the availability of public spaces can be extended. New users could use the spaces for new purposes or they could be opened for independent users. The key for intensifying the use of spaces is to make sure that the spaces serve their purposes well, and will not stay underused because of their non-functionality.

Libraries experimentation with user-centered methods shows a new, more open way of developing the services and the use of spaces together with the citizens – and as such, it works as a model for an open approach for governance.

¹ www.keskustakirjasto.fi/en/

² See article “Open data for temporary use” in issue #1

Insights for cities

1

Who will meet the needs of the users? The effect and value of services that are provided, depend on their meaning and relevance for the user, and this is why service design provides important tools for planning. When designing the spaces and services, the city departments gain a lot of understanding on the needs of the users, but they cannot provide all the things that the users wish for. This information could be shared with the temporary users, as by meeting some of these need they could become even more relevant and strategic partners for the city.

2

Work with the users – starting from now. The relevant user groups should be involved with the development of services from the start. As designing policies, strategies and services for the temporary users, a similar typology of their aims and needs could be developed.



3

Tools that help with intensification help with temporary uses, too. Similar methods and tools that help intensify the use of spaces can be applied to more traditional temporary uses. The examples of self-service use could help design more effective ways for short time usage of different spaces.

4

Lead the change. Train and support your staff to use design thinking and understand the needs of different users groups.



A large crowd of people is gathered outdoors in what appears to be a parking lot or a public area. In the background, several cars are parked, including a blue van and a white car. There are trees with green foliage. The crowd consists of people of various ages and backgrounds. In the foreground, a man with white hair and glasses is looking down at a clipboard. Another person is holding a camera. The overall atmosphere suggests a public event or a gathering.

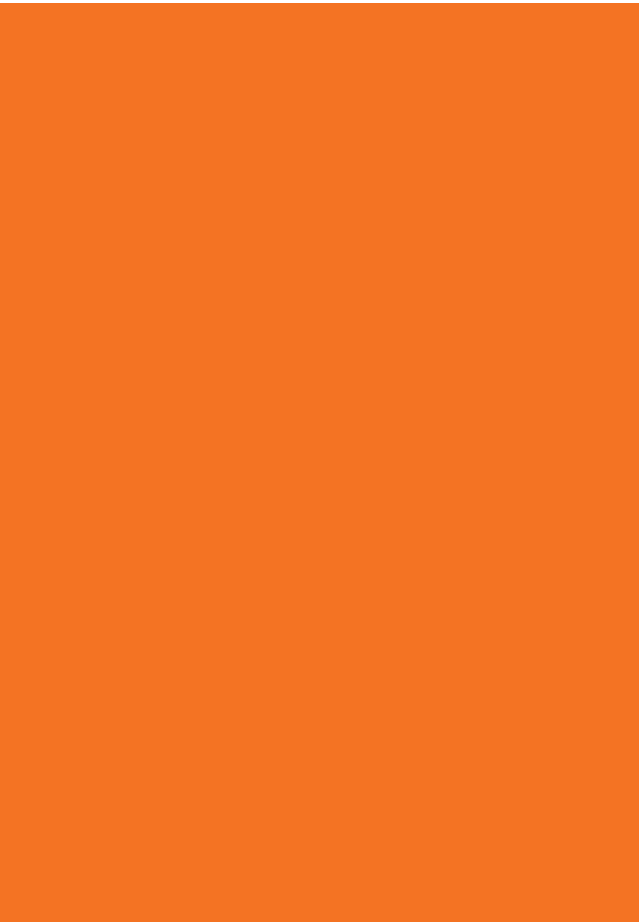
HOW CAN TEMPORARY USERS SEE AND MARKET THEMSELVES AS A FORM OF SERVICE?

Speicher Woltmershausen, Bremen (Germany).
Photo by ZZZ.



PROVIDING TEMPORARY USE SERVICES

*By Marcis Rubenis, Free Riga (Latvia) and
Irina Milelsone, City of Riga (Latvia)*



WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

An artist trying to find a cheap studio space and entering into limited time contract, which offers space nearly for free.

The space is not in the best condition and perhaps the artist risks to be thrown out with 30 day-notice because better terms cannot be asked for such a bargain. This image of an artist and, one may argue, opportunistic temporary use, is nothing new. However, is there something more to temporary use than just pure chance of exploiting underutilized resource for cheap? Is there something that makes temporary use a real service that could be adopted widely, not just in ad-hoc cases? What kind of value and for whom does it offer and how to preserve it, instead exploiting for short periods of time? To design or to support temporary use as a policy instrument, your city must identify and understand the value for various stakeholders that temporary use creates in your context. The REFILL city partners cities are showing some directions by identifying gains of temporary use for different stakeholders.

VALUE OF TEMPORARY USE FOR MUNICIPALITY

Friedrich Hayek, one of the most influential economists of 20th century, has defined an inevitable problems that any central authority is facing in pursuing rational economical planning – lack of local knowledge. Those are the citizens themselves, not municipality who are often best equipped with information, insights, skills and initiatives that are necessary to develop appropriate social services for their street, neighborhood or the whole city. However, although possessing these valuable assets, grassroots initiatives are by definition mostly volunteer-based and lack space and other resources to implement their ideas. As a response, municipalities of many of the REFILL city partners are promoting access to temporary use space in exchange for getting experimentation and development of new social services that wouldn't be possible by grassroots initiatives or municipality alone. Temporary use can offer municipality services like measuring community needs, planning, prototyping, co-creating new social services, maintaining and revitalizing degraded streets and neighborhoods, as well as coaching development of new initiatives.



ZAKLAD makerspace , Poznan (Poland).
Photo by Puro hotel.

TEMPORARY USE FOR CREATING SOCIAL SERVICES AND SUPPORTING SOCIAL INITIATIVES

Temporary use projects are often successful in prototyping services that respond to community needs, as well as adapt to the ever changing trends in technology, work-organization and society quicker than municipality can. Additionally, temporary use for municipality is a way to pool public and private resources in order to create social services, which is particularly acute need in the context of the current economical crisis and shrinking public budgets. For example, ZAKLAD maker space¹ in Poznan (Poland) has demonstrated that it is not only serving its community, but also prototyping broader social services in fields of entrepreneurship support, education and re-training. ZAKLAD is a NGO-based initiative that was set up in a privately owned abandoned polygraphy complex on a temporary use contract. It has been providing shared, low-cost workspace, shared tools and knowledge exchange for so called “makers” – hobbyists, as well as self-employed who need access to various technical, often expensive tools and need to collaborate to reduce their costs. In this way, ZAKLAD has been addressing emerging trend of “democratization of manufacturing” when availability of

3D printers, CNC machines and computer programmes is putting means of production in hands of more and more people, as well as shifting more people into self-employment. Recognizing the contribution of ZAKLAD as a public service, municipality has offered it permanent space in municipal property. Another example is that of Bremen municipality (Germany) which supported temporary use agency “ZZZ-Bremen” is highlighting the platform that temporary use possibilities are creating to gain access and to couch citizens’ initiatives, thus performing services of training and entrepreneurship support².

Temporary use projects are often successful in prototyping services that respond to community needs, as well as adapt to the ever changing trends in technology, work-organization and society quicker than municipality can.



Helsinki (Finland) has engaged with squatters to create affordable housing for youth. Oranssi community³ started as a squatting movement in Helsinki, Finland, in the turn of 1980's and 1990's.

The community aimed at finding a space for young people's free cultural activities and at creating affordable housing. Through squatting, the negotiations with local authorities could be started, and Oranssi got to renovate several empty buildings to be turned into communal and affordable housing for youth.

Ghent (Belgium) recognized the contribution of temporary use as a way to cheaply and quickly test and prototype social services and initiatives. Through its temporary use fund Ghent is systematically offering small grants to temporary use initiatives, while inviting them to provide experience and organizing capacity to address community needs that municipality couldn't do alone. Such grants, mostly spent on adapting the buildings to comply with safety regulations, have helped Ghent to support various successful initiatives, like volunteer based psychotherapy centre, community sports, culture and arts spaces.

However, are temporary initiatives really performing services that people need? To better serve inhabitants, Amersfoort municipality (Netherlands) is asking temporary use initiatives to survey their surrounding community and get feedback as a condition and criteria for receiving a grant. In this way municipality is outsourcing measurement of community needs to temporary use initiatives. Similarly, the Ghent Fund for Temporary use is requiring a steering committee to be set up for every city supported project, which includes inhabitants overseeing the project.

TEMPORARY USE AS A PLANNING TOOL FOR MORE SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC SPACES

The City of Ghent turned to temporary use in planning and co-creating lively and engaging public spaces. For example, the municipality bought a bankrupt workshop area in a densely populated neighborhood of Ledeberg to plan and develop a green, public meeting place for local people. During the planning process city opened the area to inhabitants' temporary use initiatives. Open cafeteria and neighborhood initiative meetings, peasants market, theater training for youth from social risk background, community school and dance lessons for toddlers are among initiatives that operate there while the new public space is planned. The City sees it as an opportunity to reimagine and co-create a public space with direct participation of local inhabitants, engaging them into the planning of the area. This makes the public space in-making to be more

successful by creating demand for this site already before its development. The City has supported Standaertsite⁴ initiatives with a 20 000 € grant, which is not much compared to the ultimate building costs of the project. Similarly, temporary use has been adopted as a planning tool in case of Ile de Nantes⁵, municipality owned, 337 hectares, 5 kilometers long island developed by a publicly owned agency SAMOA.

The city of Ghent in Belgium recognized the contribution of temporary use as a way to cheaply and quickly test and prototype social services and initiatives.



TEMPORARY USE FOR MAINTAINING AND REVITALIZING DEGRADED STREETS AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Supporting temporary use can be an efficient tool for municipality in assisting redevelopment of abandoned, hard to develop areas and reinvigorating run down neighborhoods. Hlubina, a huge abandoned coal mining and iron production industrial site in Ostrava (Czech Republic), a valuable industrial heritage site right next to the city centre, was standing empty for years with owner not seeing any opportunities to develop it. The area was first brought to life by temporary use with a series of cultural events organized by NGO “Provoz Hlubina” in 2010⁶. After the first successes, both the owner and the Ostrava municipality recognized the potential to expand the activities that temporary use had brought to the area. The Municipality helped Hlubina to apply for support of EU Regional

operational programme in renovating the area. Currently, the 6 renovated buildings of Provoz host artists’ residences, supports creation of artworks, hosts creative professionals in 17 studios and rents 3 large halls of the complex for events. Provoz intends to develop more projects such as Art & Crafts Incubator and a beach to complete the requalification of the place into a cultural district. In this way temporary user can trigger for further development, becoming co-developers and transitioning into permanent use.

Lazarz district in Poznan is an area with considerable rates of vacancy and signs of physical degradation. As the regeneration of the city centre, in both social and infrastructural aspects, is one of the priorities for the Poznan, the municipality decided to start cooperating with neighborhood initiative group “Open Zone for Culture⁷”, which is seeking to foster creative use of vacant space, renew neglected space and create accessible culture. One emblematic example of this cooperation is Perfex, an abandoned cafe, municipal property, which used to be one of the hearts of Lazarz district and now with help of temporary use agreement has been turned into informal cultural centre organizing performance, exhibition, concerts, open computer festival, coffee place aiming at mixed audience including local population and amateurs of culture and art. The initiators of Perfex have not only opened access to space, but also renovated it performing service of “soft maintenance”. In general, cooperation with “Open Zone for Culture” has resulted in more art and cultural initiatives able to offer workshops, courses, artistic activities for all ages from kids to adults or seniors. It has generated a positive social atmosphere in the neighbourhood: “our Kreuzberg” says Marcin Kostaszuk, director of the Department of Culture. From the example of Ostrava and Poznan, cultural NGOs can be clearly profiled as facilitators of revitalization of degraded areas that municipality should partner with.

Temporary use can serve as a tool to revitalize inactive commercial and shopping areas. In Athens, municipality called on temporary users to revitalize so-called “Gallery of Merchants”, a vacant shopping passage in the city centre of Athens. For the past few years its shops were closed and the arcade was abandoned as a direct consequence of the crisis. As part of project “Traces of Commerce⁸”, the municipality acted as a broker between owners and initiatives. In order to occupy shops users had to organize events (open to the public) as a form paying back the rent. A fab lab, a hat designer, fanzine editors, graphic designers and others were hosted for periods of 8 months in the vacant shops, showcasing their activities, and organizing



Location of Standaertsite, next public space in Ghent (Belgium).
Screenshot on Google Maps.





Traces of Commerce, Athens (Greece).
Photo by Traces of Commerce.



workshops, speed-dating, concerts and talks, open to the public, which attracted many visitors. The owners of the nearby shops, cafes and bars also claimed that they were affected as well in a very positive way. Similarly, the Ghent municipality stimulated a dying shopping street to be revived by arts exhibitions in the empty shop windows, which drew considerable attention and foot traffic to the street. Property owners, in contrast to municipality are more interested in direct economical benefits that temporary use is offering.

As vacant buildings are not generating income, owners often face hardship in affording to maintain them, thus degradation sets in.

TEMPORARY USE AS PHYSICAL MAINTENANCE SERVICES

Without some kind of maintenance and security, vacant buildings crumble and lose their value due to looting, vandalism and influence of weather conditions, especially in countries with considerable seasonal climate differences.

As vacant buildings are not generating income, owners often face hardship in affording to maintain them, thus degradation sets in. This is especially true in times of crisis and property market uncertainty when large stocks of property can be waiting for the next growth period, risking to irreversibly lose their value. In this situation, temporary use can serve as a maintenance service where users take up the role of house guardians preserving or even improving the condition of property in exchange for using it for low rent or even without rent.

Such was the case of an abandoned musical school building in Riga, which in early 2010s was facing bleak future. Its owner, a student fraternity didn't have resources to invest into reconstruction of the house and the condition of the building meant that it couldn't be used and therefore would not be heated too. For a wooden building in the climate of Baltics it means fast deterioration due to dampness, mold and decay. The initiators of "Kaņepes Cultural centre" negotiated 10 years use contract of this around 600 m² building in exchange for pledging to invest 140 000 € in its renovation. Eventually owners not only got preservation of the building that they were initially look-



ing for, but also increase in its value as the cultural centre has become one of the most popular creative hotspots in Riga.

Similarly, arts based NGO was performing initial maintenance and renovation service of Fabrica de Pensule⁹, factory area in Cluj (Romania) which was getting in a bad condition and having no prospective development options. Here, the temporary use with the owner was set up more as a traditional rent agreement, with no guaranteed length of the contract to recognize NGO's possible investments into the building. After the first successful 2 years of activities, the initiators got funding for renovation of the interior of the building from the Norwegian-Romanian grant, further increasing the value, usability and attractiveness of the building. Afterwards, the owner was open to continue cooperation as he saw the obvious increase in the attractiveness and value of his property. However, regardless of these benefits brought to the owner, NGO is still facing temporary use contract with short eviction notice time and no compensation in case of eviction. This demonstrates the necessity to recognize the value of temporary use already in contract negotiation in order to develop more fair and sustainable relationship between the parties.

The lessons on temporary use as a maintenance service can be drawn also from the fact that in countries like Great Britain and Netherlands temporary use is widespreadly organized as a commercial house guardian service. Agencies like "Camelot"¹⁰ and "Ad-Hoc Property Management"¹¹ are offering owners squatting and vandalism prevention, as well as maintenance costs reduction, while opening the vacant properties for live-in house guardians. House guardians benefit from low cost accommodation, while facing agreement without the usual renter's protection, for example, short, two weeks to one month eviction notice time and additional house guardian tasks and limitations.

TEMPORARY USE FOR REDUCING COSTS, ADDING VALUE AND CO-DEVELOPING PROPERTY

Temporary use not only performs physical maintenance, but also can turn out to reduce costs and lead to increased attractiveness and value of the vacant property. Bringing new life to and increasing the attractiveness of planned residential development area was the owner's motivation to seek temporary use in Zunda area, an abandoned tractor factory hangar and surrounding territory planned to be raised and replaced with new residential develop-

ments in Riga. A neighboring factory area had been demolished already some years ago, still standing empty and unattractive, waiting for the right development idea. The owner of Zunda decided to leave the factory hangar in place and open it to temporary culture and outdoor activities that are bringing young people into the area and making it well known. Additionally, the owner receives reduction in the property tax from Riga City Council worth a few thousand euros a year, as the property is used by public benefit status NGO, and gains reduction in physical maintenance costs of the territory, as temporary users have obligation to perform a row of maintenance tasks.

Temporary use can also serve the owner with brokering and real estate services in cases of large abandoned buildings that no one company or initiative can rent and revive. In such situations, initial temporary user can act as a broker in exchange for preferential or no-rent agreement, attracting and curating more users to the building. Such brokering saves the owner the effort of acquiring and dealing with large numbers of renters, which is especially attractive when the traditional commercial renting promises low financial return. Such role was performed by Totaldobže Arts Centre in organizing creative and artistic events as well as artists residency and studios in up to 3000 m² of abandoned VEF factory buildings in Riga.

Another way temporary use can increase attractiveness and value of place is through story telling. Temporary use often produces exciting and successful initiatives, like "PUP – pop up pallets"¹² in Amersfoort that are becoming showcase story not only for their product and mission, but also for the place. Another example of vivid story-telling is Stadtteil Oper¹³, concerts by Bremen Philharmonic orchestra organized in most unusual location - in place of two demolished skyscraper buildings in Bremen. In this way temporary use is performing service of place making and communication.

As demonstrated by the case of "Provoz Hlubina" in Ostrava through temporary use owners can gain a co-developer for abandoned areas that are hard to develop, like large industrial sites. It enables owners to find the most appropriate functions for the space even before it is being developed and invested into, reducing the risk of making wrong choices. This has been a benefit of temporary use that also Bremen city has highlighted in finding the best uses for municipal property.

An additional benefit for owners engaging with temporary use is knowledge exchange on property development. Temporary use, especially when organized by an agency, is a platform pooling together various practices



and ideas for unconventional property development. From the experience of “Free Riga”, NGO based temporary use agency in Riga, owners are interested in learning about such opportunities.

TEMPORARY USE CAN PROVIDE IMAGE BENEFITS FOR LARGE CORPORATIONS

An interesting perspective on temporary use is its value for PR and corporate social responsibility purposes. These pathways that could address large international corporations and banks, the types of owners that are the hardest to reach and convince to engage in temporary use with other aforementioned arguments. For example, networking initiative Matchpoint¹⁴ in Amersfoort is organizing breakfast for business people with pitching temporary use initiatives. It facilitates corporations in sponsoring grassroots initiatives, including supporting them with opening vacant spaces for temporary use.

From the experience of REFILL cities, temporary use is performing certain services and can be marketed as such. Municipality can apply temporary use in prototyping, planning and delivering social services and public spaces, as well as revitalizing streets and neighborhoods. Identifying and acknowledging these benefits can help municipality adopt temporary use as a municipal policy instrument and pool more resources in creation of more efficient and necessary social services.

Identifying and acknowledging benefits to private owners can lead to more fair and sustainable temporary use agreements. Temporary use provides maintenance, cost reduction and increasing the attractiveness and value of the property. From the municipality’s perspective, understanding these benefits can inform city on ways how to stimulate temporary use in private property and preserve its benefits for longer time.

Insights for cities

1. Cities should see temporary use as a normal service that can provide unique combination of maintenance, experimentation, social service development, revitalization and other benefits that transforms vacancy from liability into asset like no other use model.
2. Cities should identify for whom temporary use has the strongest value proposition – for municipality in form of societal benefits or for private owners in form of economical benefits for the property. Determining proportions of privately and publicly owned vacant space and the reasons of vacancy is essential to assess this.
3. Municipalities should recognize grass roots initiatives as providers of local knowledge and expertise to create social services that achieve the goals of municipality. Municipalities can support temporary use projects to measure community needs, prototype and co-create new social services that more closely reflect the dynamic needs of the society, maintain and revitalize socially and physically degraded areas, as well as to increase efficiency part of property or public space development and planning.
4. For private owners temporary use can be positioned as physical maintenance service ensuring safety and preventing degradation of property, as a cost reduction of maintaining vacant property, as an instrument to stimulate revitalization and subsequent value increase of the property, as well as way to attract co-developers of the property or build public image.

¹ www.zaklad.info/

² See article “Waking up snoring spaces” in this issue.

³ www.oranssi.net/english

⁴ www.refillthecity.wordpress.com/2016/03/04/standaertsite-a-public-park-developed-by-temporary-use-and-inhabitant-initiatives/

⁵ www.iledenantes.com/en/

⁶ www.provoz.net/

⁷ www.facebook.com/otwarta.strefa/?fref=ts

⁸ www.facebook.com/Traces-of-Commerce

⁹ www.fabricadepensule.ro/en/

¹⁰ www.uk.cameloteurope.com

¹¹ www.adhocproperty.co.uk

¹² www.popuppallets.nl/

¹³ www.stadtteilooper-bremen.de/

¹⁴ www.matchpointamersfoort.nl

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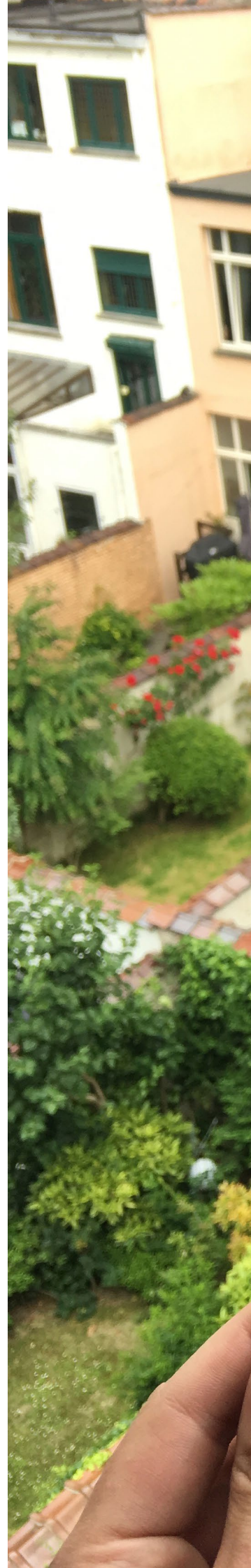
Check out the issue #5 of the
REFILL MAGAZINE!

By Marcelline Bonneau, Strategic Design Scenarios

How can initiatives hosted through temporary use solutions foresee the way they are likely to transform beyond the temporary period and secure their benefits and assets? This is the core of this penultimate issue of the REFILL magazines! Can it take the form of more transparency between stakeholders to prevent disagreement after the temporary use period? In Amersfoort (Netherlands), there is a clear temporary period set in a former library which became a pop-up bike repair shop. In Helsinki (Finland) there was a hidden agenda for temporary users at the Lapinlahti Hospital cultural centre. In Nantes (France), le Karting is an example of temporary contracts.

Or can temporary use initiatives integrate their transition, transformation or transposition after temporary period? In Athens (Greece), a few initiatives have come together on that: the Athens Development Agency, the Traces of Commerce and the synAthina Kypsil Market. In Nantes (France), Les Halles were renovated while keeping space for temporary use. In Ostrava (Czech Republic), a value creation model integrates temporary use at VIVA Ostrava.

As you can see both have actually been experimented in the REFILL partner cities. Do you want to know more about these? Check out the issue #5 of the REFILL magazine!



REFILL MAGAZINE #5

June 2017

The cover of Refill Magazine #5 features a nighttime photograph of a city street. In the background, several multi-story apartment buildings are lit up, with many windows glowing. In the foreground, a dark-colored car is parked, and a group of people are gathered around it, some sitting on the ground. The overall scene suggests a vibrant, temporary urban gathering.

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