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ID 1628 | URBAN REGENERATION PROCESS AS AN ASSET TO RISE ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP: THE HUMAN CITIES EXPERIENCE WITH USING PHOTOSTORIES AS A TRIGGER

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ABSTRACT: While the rapidly developing world is facing a rapid urban growth, these processes have been in a fullswing much earlier in the s. c. western world. Many of the western cities thus face a need for a redevelopmentand regeneration of the already aged-up urban quarters constructed in the periods of their fast growth. Typicalexamples are the modernist urban neighbourhoods built in the decades after WWII which offered newstandards of living when constructed, but need renewal and up-gradings to cope with the needs andexpectations of contemporary urban population that is much more individualised in its life-styles. The paperputs light on the new approach to participatory urban regeneration process that is developed around revealingresidents' perceptions of their living environments through crowdsourced analytical photography and attacheddescriptions. The approach was developed in Ljubljana, Slovenia, as an experimentation programme of theEuropean Human Cities project running from 2014-2018 in eleven European countries. The project aims toencourage and enable civil society across Europe to actively contribute to urban regeneration of livingenvironments in participatory way.

1 INTRODUCTION

Many European cities that grew very quickly after the second world war face a big need for urbanregeneration nowadays. This does not apply only to some historic parts of the cities or the abandoned industrialareas, but more and more also to the large housing estates that were built to accommodate new working forcein the times of post-war redevelopment of the cities in 1950-1970 period. In many parts of Europe these areasare in a big need for the improvement of the rise of material standard of living in order to be competitive andin line with the expectations of the contemporary urban dwellers. It seems that the advancement of technicalsolutions and development of smart technologies successfully addresses these issues.

However, as an urban anthropologist Lisa Redfield Peattie (1998) argued, for our happiness creativeactivity, empathy and other values of community are of equal or even bigger importance than material standardof living. Her knowledge is created through numerous peace actions about urban planning that seeks socialchange by including all interests and groups in the planning processes. This reminds of the importance tounderstand the community's experience with its living environments. In order to do so, revealing people'sperceptions of their living environments is essential (Sarason, 1974 and 1986, Chavis and Pretty, 1999).This can be partly addressed by research of the shared values that residents of urban environmentshave in common. Knowing these values is important for setting up common visions for the future of localenvironments. Once the collective values of a local community are identified they can backbone the bottomupaction plans of community improvements with the active participation and involvement of the inhabitants.Shared visions for future developments are especially important in the field of urban public spacesas these are the common spaces aimed to address the needs of people of all walks of life. The new approachesto participatory redesign of public space are in the focus of a European project Human Cities that is runningunder Creative Europe program in eleven cities from 2014 to 2018. Its main aim is to test new approaches tourban regeneration by participatory improvements. Project partners are

proposing and testing new tools to make participation in urban regeneration operational through public space (re)design.

One of the project teams is based in Ljubljana, the mid-sized city of about 280.000 inhabitants with a number of aged-up large scale housing estates that need comprehensive approach to urban renewal (City of Ljubljana, 2014; RRA LUR, 2013). The team is experimenting with the new approaches to reveal inhabitants' values in relation to their living environments. As one's perception of space is a subject to a constant change, revealing the values of the users of urban space proves to be a theoretical and practical challenge (Walter, 1988, Thwaites and Simkins, 2007). The following topics are highlighted in the research:

- How to reveal the common values of the local community related to their living environments?
- Shall established methodologies (interviewing, perceptual mapping, cognitive mapping, etc.) be upgraded/combined with new technologies and social networking media? What is the general usefulness and real value of information technologies and crowd sourcing in revealing people's attitudes towards their living environments?
- How to track changes in the value systems and how to integrate them in the urban regeneration process? What kind of urban design solutions are robust enough to stand the changing nature of value systems over time?
- Is a more and more atomized society an appropriate playground for linking the design of living environment to the value systems of its users? Does a growing individualization mean that the common denominators will get harder and harder to be identified?

These complex issues have been addressed in the Human Cities project in different ways. This paper will focus on one single approach that aims to develop an innovative tool based on the usage of the new technologies and applications in our daily lives. It is based on the new forms of communication used in contemporary society where photography and short texts play an important role. The next chapter dips into some selected theoretical approaches in this field.

2 THE IMAGE AND ITS CAPTION – THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Photography is composed of images and descriptions which form semiotic codes. This forms a multimodal message where images and captions are in an interaction and develop their relation to form a sign. The interpretation of a sign depends on both the creator and the reader of a sign and is strongly culturally conditioned (Barthes, 1977, Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). The goal of visual communication is not only the communication of the message but also the exchange of the meaning. Mitchell (2009) argues that the act of reading does not only refer to the reading of text, but also of everything that surrounds us, including the signs and phenomenon, therefore the receiver of the message can be called the reader.

When the image and the word meet in the multimodal message, the reading approach is different compared to the classical reading. The reader has to set up the meaning. This process depends on reader's experiences and knowledge, trust into the source of the message and the influence of social environment. Eco (1979) introduced a term »ideal reader« to stress that the reader is the one that concludes the process of passing (in this case artist's) message to the others – the reader is called ideal as he/she is awakened and aware of existence of numerous interpretations of the image.

The image and the word are included in a dynamic process, and represent two different ways of visual communication - non-verbal and verbal. A combination of both represents one of the most powerful communication strategies (Kress, 2004, Lester, 2006). The image is an effective way to transfer knowledge and information. The image attracts the eye of the reader and arouses his curiosity (Nikšič, 2008). Muhovič (1998) points out that the images facilitate the flow between empiricism and theory and increase flexibility when operating with the experience. Using imagery encourages the reader to think and communicate, and makes him motivated to take a different view. The advantage and communicative power of the image is in the fact that one can use it on a small area to display a large amount of information that would, if expressed in words, require much more space. The images show data at several levels, from a wide view to the fine detail. To decode the meaning of the image does not require knowledge of writing and understanding of language as it applies to the text, but requires knowledge of visual language and symbolism. The image can easily be detected, while decoding is less straightforward as it can lead to different interpretations, which is especially true for the images without captions.

Therefore, the image is often accompanied by the text in the form of captions. The reasons for this are varied. It could be that the image is very ambiguous and vague so its contents can not be clearly defined. The word can more accurately and clearly explain the content of the image. Captions are essential if we want to make the reader clearly understand the message. Sometimes it is enough to decode the image by a couple of words only, but even if few they are indispensable.

This intimate relationship between the image and the text was intensively explored by Barthes (1977) who argues that we rarely see the image without a caption, even if it is only for the subtitle that denotes very basic information such as time and location. For Barthes the importance of the image is always associated with text and depending on it as images on themselves are too polysemic and too open to different interpretations. In his opinion, we need words that determine the image of a definitive meaning. The text accompanying an image can assist in narrowing the wide spectrum of possible interpretations. To explore the city's image, it is important to note the work of Kevin Lynch too. His urban analytics contributed a methodological innovation that brings the senses a step closer in the understanding and enjoyment of a city. Lynch (1960) has pointed out that the view of the city, no matter how uneventful the city itself might be, represents a special pleasure. The dynamic parts of the city, especially its users, are just as important as are the built structures of the city. Lynch also believed in the ability and the power of the users of urban space to participate in shaping their living environments. He believed that perceptual studies can support and enrich the design of urban space.

3 REVEALING SHARED VALUES OF LOCAL RESIDENTS THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY AND ADJOINING TEXT

To go beyond planning practices in the urban territories, the Human Cities partner cities are specifically enhancing unplanned activities within a frame of 13 shared values that have been identified by the project consortium as relevant. Table 1 lists them and indicates the definitions of these s.c. Human Cities Shared Values (HCSV) as they were revealed through the review of more than 170 civil initiatives reclaiming public spaces across Europe (see the Human Cities web archive for more information: <http://humancities.eu/casestudies/>).

Shared Value	Description
Empathy	The ability to understand and share the feelings of others, despite different backgrounds and life experiences. Empathy creates a bond between individuals that ends up becoming part of their shared identity.
Wellbeing	A state of feeling healthy and happy. It is a contribution to society through knowledge, culture, design, music, ecology, healthy food or the renovation of public spaces. The main goal of wellbeing is to improve living conditions so that people can achieve better physical and mental health.
Sustainability	Sustainability is about meeting the needs of today's population without compromising those of future generations. It includes environmental, social and economic aspects.
Intimacy	The possibility of feeling a sense of closeness with people, objects or places.
Conviviality	Live together, share ideas, activities, discussions... Create a common spirit, a sense of belonging, around which people can gather and find joy.
Mobility	The capacity to make citizens leave their private spaces and join the public one.
Accessibility	Being open to everyone and easily reachable. It has both geographic and social meaning.
Imagination	Mentally creating images, ideas, concepts, and the like. Imagination is the main provider of solutions to our daily problems, and of dreams for the society to come.
Leisure	Free time, away from the demands of work or duty, when one can rest, take ease, and enjoy hobbies or sports.
Aesthetics	A visual attribute aiming at beauty, creativity and innovation, which provides an identity to a place.
Sensoriality	The mobilisation of a person's senses, whether hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling or touching.
Solidarity	Solidarity is a unity of people sharing the same interests in order to help each other.
Respect	Respect is showing due regard to people's lives, opinions, wishes and rights. It implies there are no barriers or stereotypes that come between us.

Table 1 - Human Cities Shared Values

The relevancy and interpretations of these values from the side of the inhabitants were investigated through different activities and tools. One of them is newly developed tool called Photostory of our neighbourhood. In a broader sense this is a photo contest in a form of a participatory on-line album of photos and their captions which offers an insight into today's state of the art of living environments as seen and interpreted by the inhabitants themselves. The album is created by residents and visitors of urban neighbourhoods themselves and aims to reveal the neighbourhoods and their life through the eyes of all of us who live or occasionally spend time there. The tool has three main missions:

1. it invites residents to start observing and thinking of their local environments, their assets and problems, and thus become more conscious of the characteristics of the living space they inhabit
2. it reveals peoples' perceptions and interpretations of living environments to urban planners who often lack this layer of information and thus do not include it in regeneration strategies
3. in a long term, it aims to evoke inhabitants' readiness to take an active role in one or another form in participatory urban regeneration processes which take place in their living environments.

It is largely based on the public contribution of combined graphical materials and their captions. Any registered visitor to the web page can submit up to 10 photos with captions. After uploading the image and its caption to the web portal the author must also link it to the Human Cities shared values that seem appropriate to the image and its caption, as well as classify it into one of the pre-defined categories.

The categories were set up by the project team to remind the residents of some important aspects of common life in urban environments. They were described in a form of lead questions to awake one's thinking of the important aspects of life in an urban neighbourhood as shown in Figure 1.

Most pleasant place in my neighbourhood
We usually spend a major part of our time in our neighbourhood, therefore its arrangements importantly influence the quality of our life. Which are the spaces in the neighbourhood that I like, I find interesting and like to spend time in? What makes them pleasant? Activities and people that spend time there, street furniture, presence of natural elements, maybe the light and colours or details on surrounding buildings? Try to show the places of your neighbourhood that you find pleasant, and explain what makes them attractive, through the photo and its subtitle.
Professions in my neighbourhood
Good neighbourhoods are not merely sleeping spaces, but places where different activities and programs take place which cater the inhabitants of the neighbourhood and the city. The baker at the end of the street, the shop-seller in a local shop, the driver of a bus stopping in the neighbourhood, the local greens care-taker etc. are only few more visible professions which importantly contribute to the quality of life in a neighbourhood.
At the same time, there are many other professions which are more hidden to our eyes – people with different skills, abilities and knowledge. Present their activities through a photo and its subtitle.
My neighbour
Fast rhythm of life and new ways of communication supported by new communication technologies are changing and often weaken the contacts between people living in the same space. With the help of a photography and its subtitle catch moments showing that social beings inhabit neighbourhoods that despite changed ways of life still gather, support and help each other. Street play, chatting on a bench in a local park or ringing neighbour's door when running out of flour when baking biscuits are examples of activities that join people in a neighbourhood. Photos with subtitles in this category shall show that in vivid neighbourhoods

reside people, who make neighbours and not complete strangers to each other.
Borders of my neighbourhood
Until where reaches my neighbourhood? What is its border and what defines it? Is it physically, functionally or symbolically defined? Borders may sometimes be clear and exact, sometimes blurred and fluid. Getting to know the borders is welcome for someone to be able to overreach them. Or strengthen the distinctive identity of space within. Present the borders of your neighbourhood with a help of photography and its subtitle.
Shared values in my neighbourhood
Which are the shared values among inhabitants of my neighbourhood? Which ideals unite us as a community? How are they reflected in space? And can they be a basis for common action of inhabitants in the endeavours to improve the living conditions in a neighbourhood? The values are an immaterial category, nevertheless often reflected in the physical, real environment. In this category, we are collecting the photos which will show the state of the art of the neighbourhoods reflecting the values of their inhabitants.

Table 2: Five categories of Photostory of our neighbourhood.

Photostory is »written« by the residents themselves and thus reveals their own notions of their living environments, as well as their personal values in relation to these environments. This allows an insight into the values that are shared among local residents. These shared values can become an important step stone in preparing shared visions of urban regeneration and future development of local environments which would be adopted by residents and thus more likely implemented with their active participation and contribution.

The next chapter reports the results of the first launch of the Photostory of our neighbourhood in 2016, it mainly focuses on the shared values that were exposed during the contest. It explains how this kind of storytelling can be used in rising active citizenship in urban regeneration processes.

4 THE RESULTS OF FIRST LAUNCH OF PHOTOSTORY

The Photostory of our neighbourhood was launched in autumn 2016 and promoted via newschannels of UIRS and affiliated partners, Museum of architecture and design (MAO) and local civil initiative Skupaj na ploščad! among others. It was a parallel activity to an exhibition held at MAO which presented the legacy of neighbourhoods built in socialist times. This exhibition represented a good momentum and opportunity to encourage the inhabitants to rethink the questions of planning, maintenance and quality of living in urban neighbourhoods.

The activity was organised as a competition. The main prize was the exhibition of the winning photos and their captions at the travelling Human Cities exhibition as well as print in a form of a postcard. To select the winners, the international jury was set up, which selected 5 winning photos in each category, so 25 altogether.

There were 172 entries received to the call (see some examples in Figures 1 -5). As 10 of them were submitted without all relevant information (caption or attached shared values), 162 entries were taken into account and analysed.

The analyses were approached from two different angles:

1. The most/least often indicated shared values no matter its position on the first, second or third place
2. The most/least often indicated shared values within the range (within the values that were named on the first place, second place etc.)

These analyses were done for all the materials that were submitted to the call. To compare the participants' and jury's point of view, the same analyses were then done once more for the 25 winning images and their captions.

The most often mentioned value (taking into account any ranking – first, second or third place) was wellbeing (60x) followed by leisure (48x) and then aesthetics (44x), conviviality (43x) and imagination (42x). The ranking of other categories was as follows: empathy (36x), intimacy (33x), sensoriality (33x), sustainability (32x), respect (30x), accessibility (25x), mobility (20x) and solidarity (10x).

When we look at the number of recalls within each of the five competition categories, the results are a bit different.

In the category Most pleasant place in my neighbourhood wellbeing (27x) and leisure (23x) were indicated most often, followed by aesthetics and sustainability (23x). The least often indicated values were mobility (1x), solidarity (2x) and accessibility (4x). In the category Professions in my neighbourhood, the most often indicated shared values were sustainability (9x), conviviality (8x) and respect (8x), while intimacy was indicated most rarely (2x). In the category My neighbour none of the shared values is standing out, they have all been indicated more or less for the same number of times. Solidarity was the only shared value that did not get any vote. In the category Borders of my neighbourhood two most often indicated shared values were aesthetics (18x) and sensoriality (17x). Solidarity was again the least often mentioned value (1x). While in the category Shared values leisure (15x) and wellbeing (12x) were indicated most often, and the least often aesthetics (1x), sensoriality (2x) and solidarity (4x).

When taking into account the importance of each value to the participant (first, second or third place on the list of three values that describe the submitted photo best), it gets clear that in all categories well-being is the strongest one (53x), followed by empathy (35x) and sustainability (25x). Four shared values have never been indicated as most important ones (never named at the first place): leisure, respect, sensoriality and solidarity). The values most often named at the second place are conviviality (27x), aesthetics (18x) and imagination (17x). While at the third-place leisure (36x), respect (30x) and sensoriality (26x).

To make a comparison we did the same analyses for the 25 winning photos chosen by a jury. The strongest value (taking into account any ranking – first, second or third place) was conviviality (13x), followed by leisure (9x), while solidarity ended up last (1x).

Once more, when we look at the number of recalls within each of the five competition categories, the results are a bit different.

In the category Most pleasant place in my neighbourhood most often accessibility, intimacy, conviviality and leisure were indicated (all of them 3x). In the category Professions in my neighbourhood, the most often indicated shared values were wellbeing, conviviality and respect (all of them 3x). In the category My neighbour mobility is stepping out (6x). In the category Borders of my neighbourhood the most often indicated shared values were wellbeing (3x), followed by intimacy, sustainability, accessibility and imagination (2x). While in the category Shared values conviviality was most often (4x).

When taking into account the importance of each value to the participant (first, second or third place on the list of three values that describe the submitted photo best), the jury's results differ from the participants'.

In all categories wellbeing is the strongest one (9x), followed by sustainability and conviviality (5x). The value most often named at the second place is conviviality (8x), while at the third-place leisure (7x). These two values (most often named at the second and third place) coincide with the original indications from the participants.



Figure 1 – Photo submitted to category The nicest place of my neighbourhood by Urška Podgrajšek: In a small corner at the edge of the neighbourhood there is a secret place, where the whole community gathers, from mothers with babies to competitive youths, and grandmothers who observe their growing grandchildren with an unseen pride. (attached shared values: conviviality, imagination, leisure)



Figure 2 - Photo submitted to category Professions in my neighbourhood by Lea Piškur: A small centre for the elderly was opened in our neighbourhood not so long ago, meant for socializing, exercise and other activities. The lady in the photo has just been sweeping autumn leaves in front of the entrance. (attached shared values: wellbeing, leisure, respect)



Figure 3 - Photo submitted to category My neighbour by Maruša Račić: Balcony tales, 2015 (attached shared values: conviviality, imagination, aesthetics)



Figure 4 – Photo submitted to category Borders of my neighbourhood by Tisa Neža Herlec: The border of my city is the horizon, when I exceed this - the sky becomes the limit. (attached shared values: wellbeing, accessibility, imagination)



Figure 5 - Photo submitted to category Shared values of my neighbourhood by Tisa Neža Herlec: With my childhood friend, we are but shadows, just memories in the neighbourhood where we were growing up. We return sometimes and recall our memories. (attached shared values: conviviality, imagination, leisure)

5. PHOTOSTORY AS A TOOL TO ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION IN URBAN REGENERATION

The urban renewal process has to be undertaken in a participatory way nowadays, therefore theregeneration strategies shall be built around the values shared by local inhabitants and different stakeholders, such as NGOs, and local businesses. There is a need to reflect on the distinctive social and cultural values expressed in public space, resulting in the finding that place attachments and identification with places are differently experienced and encountered by individuals. The main obstacle is being the neoliberal drift that, by spreading individual and strictly private interests, is excluding instances of more vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

The good response to the call Photostory of our neighbourhood within Human Cities experimentation indicates that residents are ready to contribute to the urban regeneration processes in new, previously not seen ways. The approach following the new social media repertoire of sharing graphic materials and short textual descriptions seems an approach that residents can embrace. Urban planning professions shall build on such good examples and develop new well-structured tools to encourage truly participatory involvement of local residents and their notions in regeneration processes. Such tools must not stay at the level of commonly spread social media practices, but shall be adjusted to the numerous and specific demands in the complex process of urban regeneration within planning system. At the same time they have to stay simple and straightforward to use in order not to discourage the potential users.

One question that stays open is the integration of data gathered in these new innovative ways into the existing planning procedures. As the cities are getting more dynamic, the traditional master plans are getting less appropriate to manage the (re)urbanisation processes and must be upgraded with new tools. However, even if some new tools and approaches are already existing, their integration in the official planning procedures is lagging behind and this issue must be addressed more thoroughly in the future.

The Human Cities experiment with a Photostory also shows how subjective the spatial perception is and how it changes through times and reflects the spirit of the current social reality. The 2016 experiment revealed that values such as well-being, leisure, aesthetics and conviviality are currently the ones that are most strongly shared among local residents, while some others, such as e. g. solidarity, that were much stressed in the previous socio-economic framework of socialism, are much lower on the ranking lists. These results remind the professionals that they shall not assume they can guess residents' notions about their living environments in any sense.

The Photostory also opened a number of completely new perspectives of positive aspects of living in suburban neighbourhoods even if they are rather aged up. These new perspectives of the neighbourhoods cannot only help strengthening their identity and rise self-esteem of the residents, but also represent new opportunities to develop new niches in the local economy, e. g. in tourist sector by spreading the tourists' flows from central attractions to more hidden ones that would not be recognised without the expertise of local residents. This approach represents a new window of opportunities for less attractive areas in the cities that are usually losing in the global race for getting attention of potential visitors and investors.

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within the contest in autumn 2016. Special thanks go to Lucile Fauviaux and Héloïse Gautier, international trainees at Urban Planning institute of the Republic of Slovenia, for their great collaboration in preparing this paper. This paper was partly made possible with the support of Trans-Domain COST Action TD1408 Interdisciplinarity in research programming and funding cycles (INTREPID).

ID 1698 | VALUE ADDED AS A TOOL IN PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO URBAN REHABILITATION PROJECTS. A CASE STUDY IN YEREVAN

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

In the conditions of ever growing urbanization and continuous societal transformations as well as the increasing prominence of the sustainability agenda the issue of urban quality is subject to prior consideration worldwide (Brenner and Schmid, 2015). As acknowledged by Healey (1997), it is difficult to avoid the impact of economic restructuring on the landscape and social and economic life of many cities which were used to grow within certain economic structure and also supported by the state. In many post-socialist countries the issue is even more pressing due to existing urban decay as a result of major institutional transformations, economic crisis and political discrepancies. In particular, the collapse of the socialist system in these countries was followed by a number of economic, social and legal reforms, due to which the land and property ownership in most of the countries has been transferred from public to private sector. However, in most cases the state transferred to private hands not only the ownership to the property but also the problems related to the quality of that property as well as the responsibility for its further maintenance. The issue has a specific importance with regard to multi-unit housing since the latter occupies the largest share of urban fabric in many countries worldwide, and in majority of post-socialist countries in particular.

If considering that the most fundamental idea of sustainable development determined in the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) Report is “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987), yet, building deterioration will inevitably result in higher economic loss, more environmental waste and poorer social living conditions, in other words in decrease of urban quality.

Alterman (2010) claims that the issue regarding sustainable legal-financial mechanisms to ensure the long-term maintenance of condominium buildings has received very limited attention so far. She points out several factors that make multi-owned tower buildings particularly vulnerable to deterioration and decreased property values, e.g. that they are more complex and therefore create higher maintenance costs and less possibilities of structural modifications, which causes a greater risk for a diminished relative value and faster deterioration, that large investments are needed for large scale repair, upgrading and renovation, and that because the costs are not consistent over time makes it more difficult to find a mechanism for financing the long-term maintenance.

In many former socialist countries uncertainty in private and common ownership parts within residential urban space as well as imperfect management schemes resulted in gradual depreciation of common parts of apartment buildings and surrounding land, which has led to decline of urban quality.

Armenia presents certain specificity with this regard. Major transformations in the country took place mainly from the late 1980s and beginning of 1990s associated with the collapse of the soviet planned system and commence of movement towards capitalism.