

SMALL-SCALE INVASIVE INTERVENTIONS AS IMPULSES FOR THE REACTIVATION OF FORGOTTEN URBAN SPACES

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Abstract

The term "invasive", which the presented research introduces in connection with urban interventions, is perceived mostly negatively by experts and the general public. Especially if a non-native species has an adverse impact on the native territory. This is not quite the case if such short-term invasive interventions appear within urban structures. Then they are notably important and valuable for the city. Many times, they stimulate the activation of communities, warn, increase interest in the site and turn passers-by into observers and later into users. The most important is that the short-term interventions work as social experiments, where passers-by are interacting with the installation, each of them reacts differently and at least force themselves to think about the specific space. The presented article focuses on small-scale interventions that have been displaced or introduced into the environment of forgotten dysfunctional spaces. To places where limited or regulated development is recognised or where the implementation of characteristic urban elements is impossible and a liveable public space with public activities does not usually arise here. The contribution illustrates the possible forms of invasive interventions on the example of concrete realisations from practice. Based on available methods verified in practice through qualitative and quantitative parameters, the article also focuses on evaluation and comparison of such interventions verified and adopted by users, where the result is a set of successful stories.

Key words

interventions, activation, recreation, host structure, small-scale architecture

Introduction

We think of public space as a set of several entities that are sometimes vague, unspoken, and difficult to grasp (Čibík et al., 2022). They can be full or empty. We are also sensitive to what is happening to the space at the city level and, consequently, to the impact of the outcome of nonconceptual decisions on the landscape, as the cultural cradle of our nation (Prochnow & Čibík, 2022). Today's image of the city consists of the basic framework of public spaces (streets, squares, parks, waterfronts) together with a wide range of other, often underutilised public and semi-public spaces, as well as long-term unused areas, so-called lost places (Žolobaničová, 2022). Forgotten or lost places of the city are a barrier to the civilised world and in the urban structure they perform as public spaces without the presence of the public. They are marginalised empty boxes without care left to their fate. To ensure increased attention to such places and thus prevent ignoring their current state, it is necessary to think about alternative functions. Positively recognise the potential and pay attention to a constructive approach when looking for their new temporary use (Fornal-Pienak & Biľušová, 2022). Small-scale invasive short-term interventions are the opposite of ignoring the problem or perceiving only obstacles to potential solutions. Despite the semantic meaning of the word invasive, for the purposes of this research, the term invasive interventions will not refer to events that result in the liquidation, reduction, or removal of urban matter, but on the contrary, its creation – formation of urban spaces, activities or impulses stimulating their beginning (Dlesk, 2016).

Materials and methods

Research in its initial stages introduces analytical methods for evaluating invasive interventions from Dlesk (2016), which enable their comprehensive evaluation. The evaluation also uses scientific and research comparative methods, so there may be a possible comparison of the evaluated interventions. The proposed comparative method must be able to deal with a fundamental complication. Based on the highly variable nature, urban interventions, urban activities, and urban spaces in general, cannot be comprehensively described by observing only their formal appearance. It happens not infrequently that two urban interventions included in the working database, both of a similar formal expression, arising based on very similar motivation of their initiators, in their variable environment will behave differently in a certain sense - for example, by a different degree of intensity of their expression, i.e., by

a different degree of activation of its "host" structure by the public activity of its users. To evaluate and compare urban invasive interventions, the research applies three partial sub-methods:

Sub-method 1, visual register of intervention features (direct observation method)

Sub-method 2, assessment of intervention parameters (schemes and diagrams)

Sub-method 3, verbal description of non-comparative and specific characteristics of interventions

The resulting selection of evaluated parameters, considering the above assumptions, is aimed at monitoring the following qualitative and quantitative parameters of urban invasive interventions:

Quantitative parameters:

- size
- duration
- intensity of expression

Qualitative parameters:

- material nature
- space modification
- property nature
- initiator
- reversibility
- authorisation

Each of the parameters can take on different values in the real conditions of urban intervention, simplified, e.g. in the size parameter, the intervention can be an element, or a set of elements, or a system of elements (structure); within the evaluation of the intensity of the expression, the intervention may have a negligible, supportive or essential intensity; in the duration parameter, the intervention can be temporary or permanent; according to the material nature, the intervention can be structural or non-structural, and so on.

Results

The results present examples of the application of the invasive intervention evaluation method, as well as two specific interventions verified and adopted by users, where the result is a set of successful stories. The first of them is a small-scale wooden installation, which was given the working name "greenhouse". It was installed in the city market in the regional city of Nitra (Slovakia). The market is undergoing a restoration project and this installation was the first impulse and attention to the qualities of this national cultural monument. The intervention is an example of good practice connecting a private partner who cares about environmental issues and the work of local authors in collaboration with students, while the result is a functional object in a public space with a social impact (Fig.1).



Fig. 1: Technical details of the structure and a photo from the opening day

The intention of the installation is to leave it for the care of passers-by. The public greenhouse is a symbol of what is happening to our planet right now. Its placement in the public space is intentional – it will depend on the care of all of us, just like our planet. Since the installation consists of four smaller modules, it can also be temporarily placed in other places in the city. The modules are also

multifunctional and can also serve as an atypical space for relaxation or smaller cultural events, discussions, and lectures.

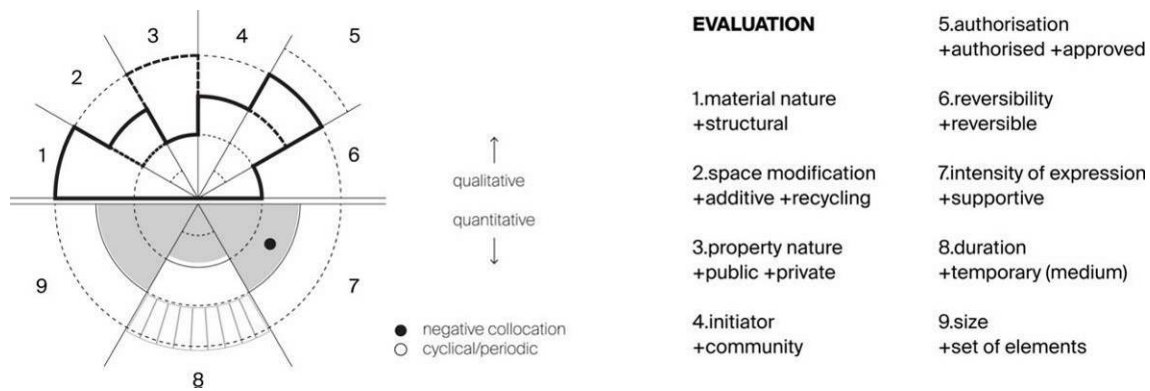


Fig. 2: Evaluation of the intervention through analytical methods developed by Dlesk (2016)

The second intervention called Mathereal (Fig. 3, Fig. 4) was a performance by the young artist Jakub Užovič, who is primarily inclined towards performance art. He works with intermedial overlaps of sculpture, object installations, performance, music, and sound elements, while trying to create a certain relationship between the performer, himself, and the object. The intervention was repeated cyclically in several public spaces to find out what the boundaries are between theatre and performance. By working with passers-by as spectators, he draws attention not only to the performance itself, but also to the space in which the intervention and the recipients are currently located.

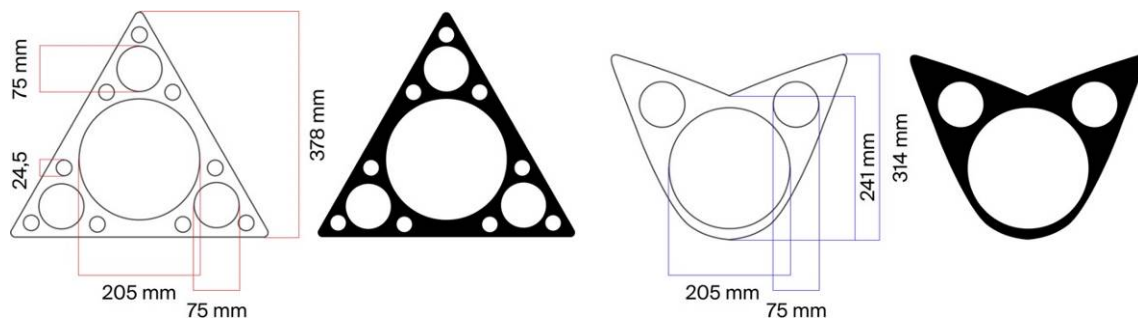


Fig. 3: Technical details of the construction of the object, which served as the basis for the artist's performance (Užovič, 2022).

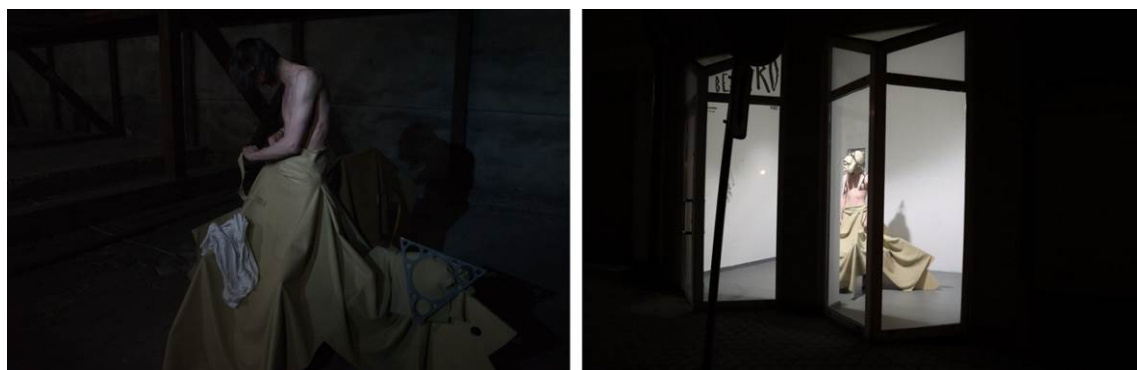


Fig. 4: Illustration of the performance called Mathereal (Užovič, 2022)

The installation element itself, the object, is also a medium, a mediator of the statement, which is also part of the scenic or installation space. There is a certain interactivity of the objects with the live body of the performer. They become unity at certain moments. The visual composition of the "image" itself has a strong sculptural basis, which is related to Jakub Užovič's bachelor's studies - storage and precision of sculptural thinking and its construction in the realisation of the performance space.

příspěvku je i aplikace v praxi ověřené a volně dostupné metodiky hodnocení invazních zásahů, která následuje logickou posloupnost kroků podél koncepční linie stanovené dlouhodobým víceúrovňovým výzkumem bílých míst. Výsledná městská struktura by měla být schopna nabídnout poměrně pestrou škálu různorodých aktivit. V závěru článku odkrývá příklady úspěšných realizací, které přinášejí do zapomenutých míst nový impuls a funkci do doby kdy se naplní dlouhodobý záměr jejich kompletní rekonstrukce.

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