

ZAGREB FOR ME – PROJECT OF URBAN REVITALISATION OF PUBLIC SPACES IN THE CITY OF ZAGREB



akupunktura
grada

Af



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GRAD
ZAGREB

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In collaboration with **the City of Zagreb** and the Department of Urban Planning, Spatial Planning and Landscape Architecture of **the Faculty of Architecture** of the University of Zagreb, **the Zagreb Society of Architects (DAZ)** launched the project of urban revitalisation of public spaces in the City of Zagreb through the implementation of interventions in public space throughout the entire City. The interventions are small- to medium-scale in scope with their investment value ranging between 10 and 20 million HRK. The expected effect of such a distributed approach is an improvement of the overall image of the City, and an improvement of the quality of urban life in the segments of housing, recreation, leisure and social cohesion. The project has been carried out since 2015.

The idea of a systematic revitalisation of public space attempts to answer this question exactly. A series of interventions in the City's public space – interventions in the sense of designing, planning and upgrading a number of carefully selected locations with relatively small budgets, interventions which are feasible and achievable – are an integral part of this project.

The project envisages the almost simultaneous interventions in at least seventeen locations in the City. The project aims to initiate collaboration between the City, its citizens, institutions and programmes, to encourage dialogue and an exchange of ideas, to advance processes and open businesses. The project looks to revitalise already existing places, meeting places, places of the City, places where events and happenings take place in an innovative way, to revive them, to bring them back to life and to reintroduce them to the lives of citizens.

With this project and its implementation, the City of Zagreb and its citizens are given modern urban spaces that we all recognise and love in all European and world capitals. The project changes the image of the City at all levels. There are manifold new value-added benefits for both the City and its citizens: **social development is achieved through participation in decision-making, through cohesion, innovation and a professional approach.** The project seeks to make people aware of the City as their home, and improve their relationship to not only public but also private space. Through this project, the City promotes itself and becomes attractive to live, study and work in, to visit and do business in. The project's economic effects on SMEs are positive in a multiple way during both the stage of implementation and indirectly through social development concentrically and through the City polycentrically.

The first phase of the project, locations study, has been carried out successfully. The selection of locations and the intensity of the interventions are carried out with the active participation of the public, thus ensuring the acceptance and feasibility of this widely comprehensive project with the aim of involving as many citizens as possible in this process, as well as professional bodies, organisations and city administrative bodies.

The second phase of the project – study of the locations – focuses the chosen locations one by one. Once the location is selected and the scope of the interventions and budgets defined, preparation of the study will be conducted and the general expert programme of the project will be drafted, as well as urban planning and architectural competition documents finalised for each individual location. For most of the selected locations programmes will be developed, which are also planned to be tested against public opinion, thus looking to ensure citizen participation in decision-making and the expression of real needs as a contribution to quality programme preparation and as laying the groundwork for these locations.

LOCATIONS SELECTION METHODOLOGY

Public spaces in the city

The habits and aspirations of the inhabitants of the City, their patterns of behaviour, growth in living standards and technical support to today's demands of life have been changing from day to day, all of which defines the conditions for the creation of a new architectural framework in which the public sphere is manifested. The City has been undergoing change, and with this change its public spaces have also transformed. Perception of public space has also been altered. Public life as a traditional determinant of city life has also undergone transformation given that once highly inclusive stereotypes of use related to private spaces have gotten out "onto the street". What once could not take place or was not allowed to take place in public spaces is what has been happening today, and the rituals of everyday life have moved from enclaves intended for explicitly defined uses (entertainment, cafes, bars and restaurants sector, culture and sport) to a universally accessible spatial framework of public use. The boundary between the private and the public has been disappearing.

Public spaces have today moved away from the academic definition defining the concepts of 'square' or 'street'. New types of public spaces and new forms of public space utilisation have emerged, spaces which are expected to also satisfy the needs of sporadic events that evade the control of city planners and the design solutions of architects. Socialisation (unobtrusive and free) is an imperative in considerations of the purpose and role of public space in contemporary society, space in which all the social strata of the population meet and where the full democratic freedoms of assembly and association are enjoyed.

Public spaces have their own content, their own utility value, which is often heterogeneous and with features of functional indefiniteness. The commercial and public spheres overlap. Both citizens and service providers who operate along the edge of public space have an interest in entering public space. The way in which public space is utilised may dominate, thus marking it as such, but this function should never be a single one or exclusive. The many ways of public space utilisation manifest themselves simultaneously or alternate in daily, weekly or seasonal cycles. The seasonality of public space utilisation today has increasingly been disappearing, and the cyclical differences in the life of urban space related to the alternation between working and non-working days or between summer and winter have vanished. Being situated at the crossroads of different climatic features, Zagreb has, in this regard, inherited both the Mediterranean and the continental patterns of public space utilisation.

The Zagreb For Me Project seeks to detect the potentials of space which could compensate for the lack of public facilities at the local level. Spaces are often tucked away "somewhere in between", on pedestrian or bicycle pathways, but without adequate equipment and urban features.

The programming of public space for certain activities in open areas is limited in scope. During implementation, the programme scope is determined by the overlap of different zones which are defined by individual urban parameters from the group of general status (social) determinants of public space and functional determinants which define the use of walkable surfaces and its surroundings, including traffic and movement. The perceptual-design determinants of space are also a significant component of the image of public space.

Through small interventions which can happen in parallel with large-scale planning ideas, the Zagreb For Me Project wishes to both develop the culture of public assembly and to encourage research of its applicative potentials with experts and professionals. At the same time – owing to the uniqueness of the programme, the unrepeatability of its appearance and content – a shifting towards these emerging hot spots in the City will be encouraged.

STUDY OF THE PUBLIC SPACE LOCATIONS

The Study of Locations of Public Space consists of a City Acupuncture research, an urban planning study and location redesign proposals.

A. CITY ACUPUNCTURE RESEARCH

Initially conducted at neighbourhood level and below, the City Acupuncture seeks to positively affect the quality of urban life through precisely designed and positioned small interventions. The three basic principles underlying this methodology are interdisciplinarity, small-scale interventions and participation. The Zagreb For Me Project was inspired by the basic principles of the City Acupuncture and its results thus far, with the desire to apply the methodology of the City Acupuncture to the entire City as a whole. However, owing to the change which occurred in scale, i.e., from neighbourhood to city level, small interventions in the space of neighbourhoods have become small revitalisations of the City's public space.

It is with this in mind that the need to involve an urban planning study at the stage of detecting the locations and their programming, as well as the need to introduce the procedures/institutions of urban planning and architectural competition, has become a necessity. While urban planners provide an expert view of the City and its public space, the role of the City Acupuncture in the Zagreb For Me Project is to ensure the continued presence of public opinion in the project: from informing the public about the participatory methodology, through identifying the locations and the needs of the population, up to the precise programming of each location.

Study of the locations

Within the first phase of the Zagreb For Me Project – study of the locations – City Acupuncture conducted an interdisciplinary public opinion research, during which data on public spaces in Zagreb whose revitalisation and/or upgrading would significantly improve the quality of life was collected and evaluated. The research was carried out by architects Kristina Careva, PhD, and Rene Lisac, PhD, anthropologist Tomislav Pletanac, PhD, and sociologist Jana Šarinić, PhD, with the help of a number of associates and students of architecture, sociology and of the Academy of Fine Arts. The research was conducted in the period between 16th of February and 30th of April 2015 in four stages: 1) preparation and informing the public about the project, 2) collection of data on public space, 3) data structuring, and 4) result evaluation and interpretation.



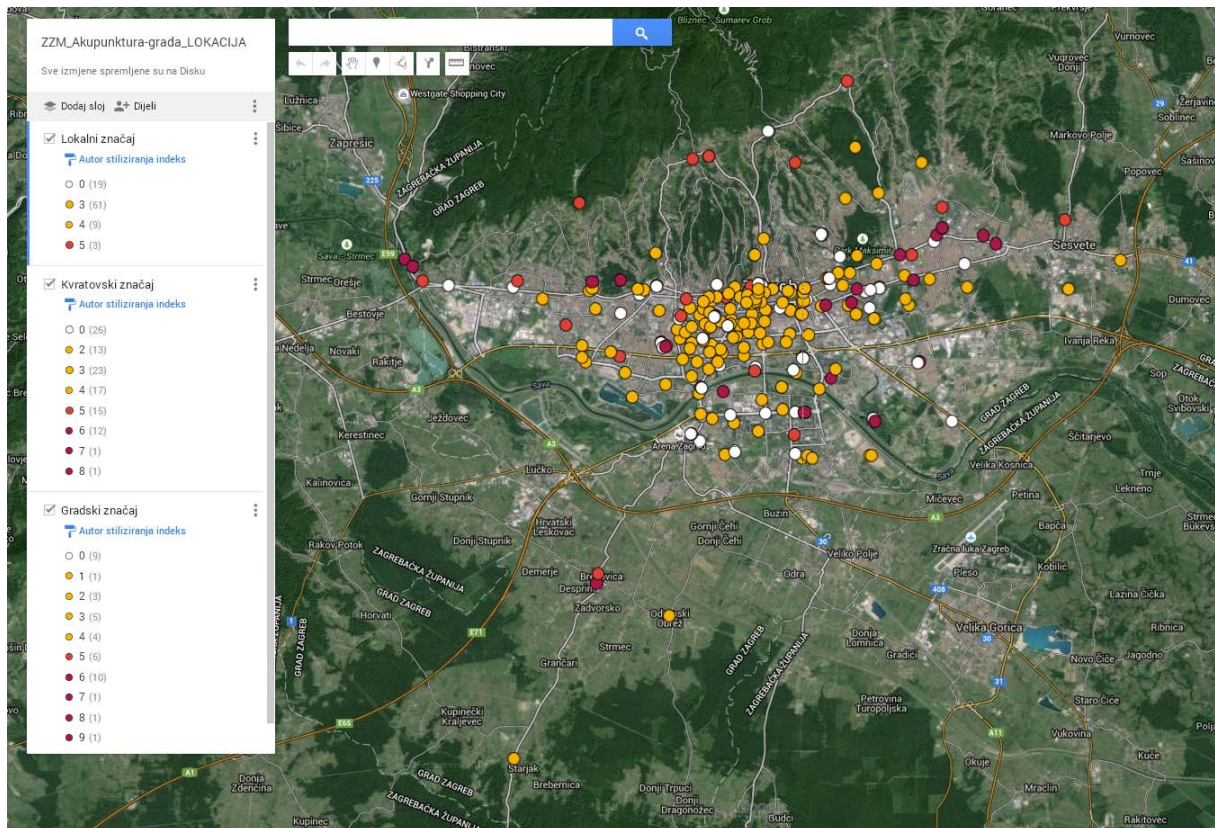
Result evaluation and interpretation

Using the method of the City Acupuncture research and the “bottom-up” approach, the result of the said public opinion research was a series of information and insights which describe the needs in the public space of Zagreb, and this from the perspective of its citizens, associations and City District Councils. More specifically, having encompassed a wide range and a large number of research participants, the research analysed the

public space of the City across its entire territory in a quality way. The general needs of the people of Zagreb can be boiled down to a preference for a higher quality planning, and servicing and maintenance of: 1) **sports and recreational zones** (bicycle pathways, children’s playgrounds, running tracks, roller-skating tracks, hiking trails, street-workout, additional facilities for children, the youth and senior citizens), 2) **the City’s green spaces** (parks, community gardens, tree-lined avenues, flower beds, etc.), 3) **space for socialising and assembly** (the equipping of space for the cohesion of citizens, neighbourhood squares, etc.), 4) **public order and traffic** (dog parks, cafe terraces, street lighting, facades, urban mobility, etc.).

211 registered locations were evaluated according to several criteria which emerged through the City Acupuncture research itself, the purpose of which was shortlisting locations most needed by the citizens of Zagreb. The primary criterion was based on the idea of empowering and strengthening locations of urban importance and away from the city centre, with a view to encouraging the **decentralisation** of the highly congested city centre and creating, in the mental picture of citizens, spatial landmarks other than the already maximally exploited ones in the very city centre. The purpose of applying secondary criteria was to **evaluate the strength of participatory samples** or, more specifically, to evaluate the extent to which the expressed needs have matured and developed into public actions with regard to a particular location, as well as to **evaluate quantitatively** the number of the same and/or different sources drawing attention to the location.

City Acupuncture concluded its part of research with a total of 51 locations indexed with the largest number of points. The locations were evenly distributed throughout the entire area of the City, and represent public spaces where the different categories of citizens’ needs can be met: socialising at neighbourhood squares or parks, children’s playgrounds, recreation, cyclist and pedestrian traffic, pets, traffic junction planning, natural and cultural heritage, and the like.



B. URBAN PLANNING STUDY

An Urban Planning Study was conducted in parallel with the City Acupuncture research. It was conducted by a group of researchers of the Department of Urban Planning, Spatial Planning and Landscape Architecture of the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Zagreb. The research group consisted of eight urban planners-architects: Assoc. Prof. Krunoslav Šmit (project leader and coordinator), Ass. Prof. Sanja Gašparović, Prof. Jesenko Horvat, Ass. Prof. Vedran Ivanković, Prof. Tihomir Jukić, Assoc. Prof. Damir Krajnik, Assoc. Prof. Ivan Mlinar and senior assistant Lea Petrović Krajnik.

A scientific expert study was conducted, which identified the problems and proposed ways of improving public space, with the City having been considered comprehensively from the perspective of urban planning.

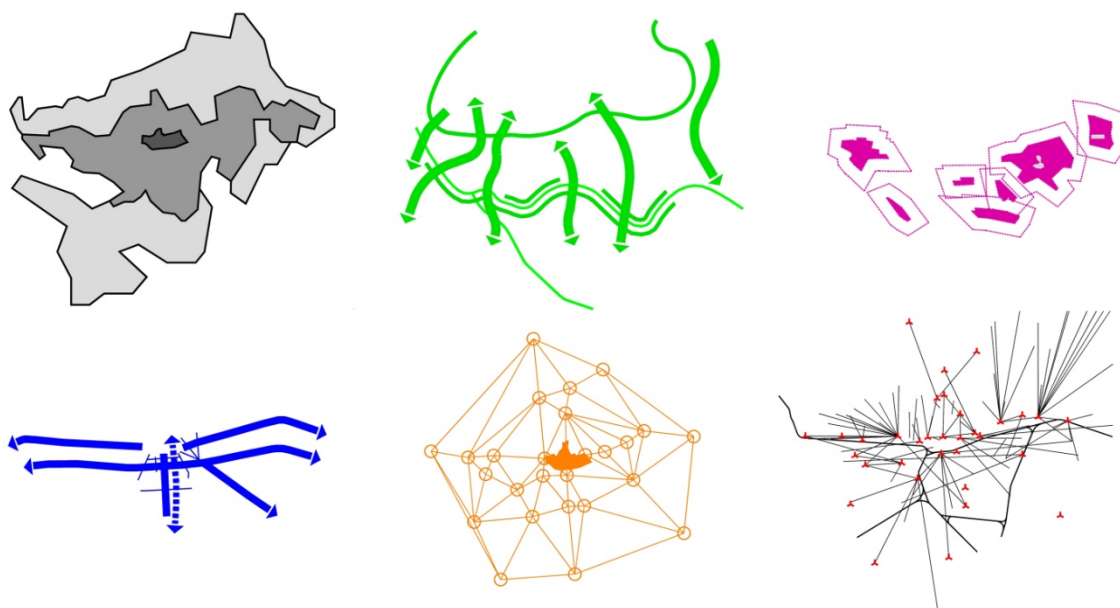
By using the methods of scientific research and the profession, the aim of the study was to identify locations to be redesigned which can boost the revitalisation of urban public spaces in the City of Zagreb. The urban planning study focused on the potentials of space, while the City Acupuncture research focused on the needs of citizens.

The method used in the research studies public space by moving from the City as a whole to the individual and the local. The method is based on an understanding of the genesis of the development of the City – on an understanding of what was in the past, on defining what is now, and on recognising the spatial potentials along initiating proposals for what might be in the future.

The research process consisted of four steps: Step 1 – **Collection and systematisation of information about the City important from the urban planning point of view**, which included an analysis of spatial planning documents (City Master Plan and City Spatial Development Plan), as well as an analysis of urban development projects which have explored the possibilities of the spatial organisation of the City and the system of public spaces in Zagreb. Step 2 – **Theme-related analysis of public space**, which defined and analysed urban themes important for understanding the features of the City and for planning the development of the City. Theme-related analyses were conducted: of developed urban structures – residential areas, green areas, commercial areas, development areas, urban centres and public city transport. Step 3 – **Identification of thematically significant locations of public space**, in which the thematic significance was determined on the basis of criteria set in the research. Locations which contain the key elements of the observed theme of public space have greater thematic significance. The analysis resulted in the identification of 84 thematically significant locations of public space. Step 4 – **Identification of locations of public space important from the urban planning point of view**, in which the urban importance was determined on the basis of criteria set in the research. Locations which include several different elements identified during thematic analyses of the public space of the City have greater urban importance. The analysis resulted in the identification of three groups of public space. Group A consists of locations which bring together three or more themes of importance for the City (18 locations), group B consists of locations which bring together two themes of importance for the City (35 locations), while group C consists of locations which contain one theme of importance for the City (31 locations).

The research results point to the multi-layered importance of urban public space. **Developed urban structures – residential areas.** The features of a developed urban structure indicate that residential areas may be viewed as a base within which urban public space appears in forms that have the potential to raise the quality of housing for a large number of citizens. **Green areas.** The features of the natural and green areas of the City represent a green frame of sorts created by Zagreb's Mount Medvednica to the north, the centrally positioned Sava River, as well as by natural forest areas along the southern outskirts of the City. Green areas have the potential which arises from the possibility of connecting and grouping the same in addition to creating an additional alternative network of the City's communication routes. **Commercial areas** mostly comprise large specialised urban areas intended for commercial and production activities. There is a need to increase the flow

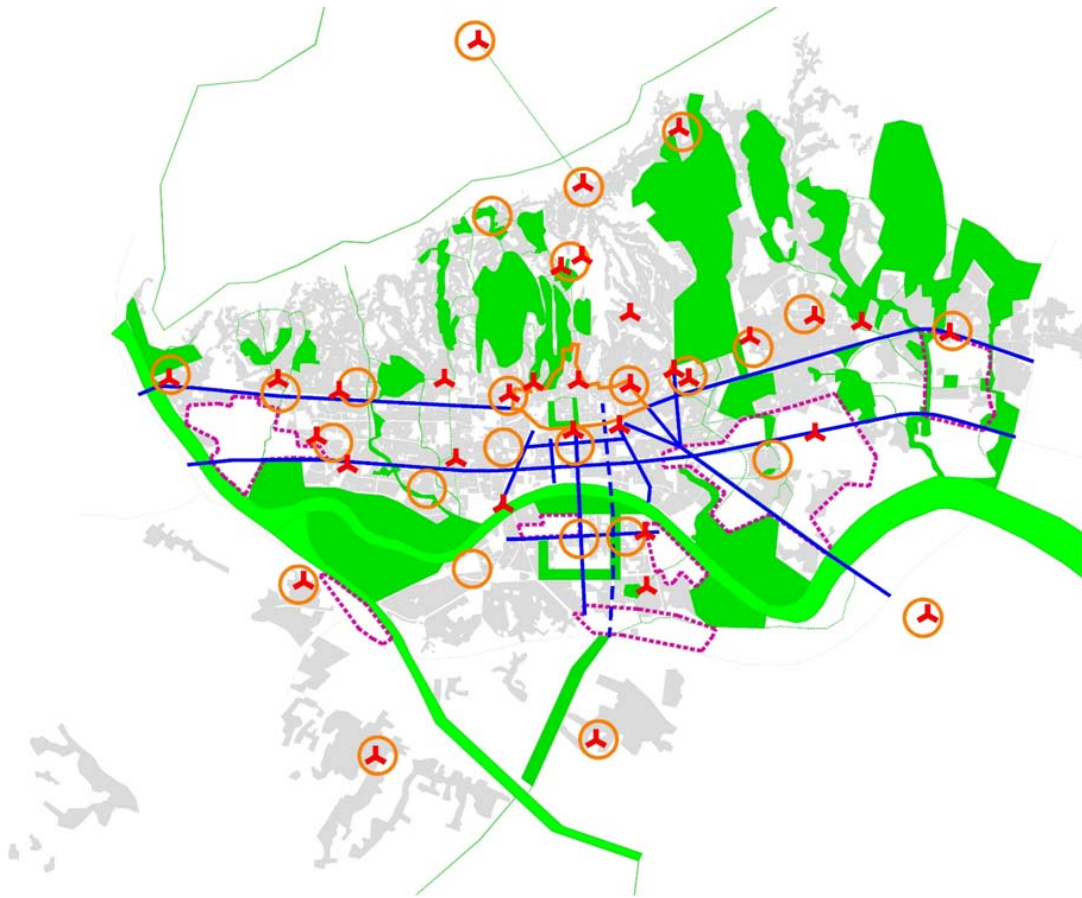
of public communication through these areas with a view to connecting parts of the City cut off by them. There is also a need to articulate their impact on residential areas located within or next to such commercial areas. **Development areas** are observed as directions of the expansion of the City which are continuously developing or as directions of the development of the City which have been defined as achievable ideas in urban planning in the long-term. Improvement of urban public space along the development areas can harmonise the significance that these areas have in the City with their current functional, design-related and environmental features. **Urban centres.** The network of urban centres has systematically been developed in the City, which creates places around which different urban content is organised. It is precisely these places which are recognised as locations where organised public space can generate added value shaped through an upgrading of basic city functions. **Public city transport.** The transport system of the City is made up of a complex multi-layered network of relations within which the public city transport is a significant component of the integration of the City into a shared spatial functional whole. The road junctions of the public city transport system support a high level of circulation of citizens, which points to the importance of the need to carefully design the forms of multiply used urban public space.



Based on the results of the conducted urban planning study, four conclusions about the features of urban public space in the City of Zagreb can be singled out.

1. Urban public space in the City of Zagreb is disorganised at both city level and local community level, and is, in certain areas, derelict and neglected. Redesigning small fragmented spaces in local neighbourhoods can be an imperative and an activity which will significantly boost the revitalisation of the City as a whole. The study results reveal that there is a significantly higher number of locations and places which are in need of intervention in the sense of redesigning urban public space.
2. The features of the public space of the City of Zagreb are varied, diverse and multi-layered. Redesigning it can, at the same time, induce the resolution of the City's many problems, and can help to open new issues which will refresh and enrich the modern features of the City and raise its citizens' standard of living.
3. The City of Zagreb has the potential for creating new types of public space. In addition to squares and parks, there is a much wider range of forms of urban public space which can highlight the City's landscape framework, its urban areas, pedestrian pathways, promenades along streams and other insufficiently established forms of publicly used urban locations.
4. The public spaces of the City of Zagreb are marked by – the recognisable framework of the hills of Mount Medvednica and the Sava River, the barriers of railway tracks and major traffic routes, the

potentials of urban interventions of importance for the City, such as the City's central axis and the so-called Green Horseshoe of New Zagreb, important road junctions of the public city transport system with a high frequency of citizen circulation, as well as the neglected parts of insufficiently highlighted urban features, such as Kozari Putovi or Brezovica.



C. LOCATION REDESIGN PROPOSALS

Once the City Acupuncture research and the Urban Planning Study were completed, there followed location redesign proposals. The research groups were integrated into a single, joint multi-disciplinary working group with a view to synthesising the results of both studies.

The purpose of the synthesis was to identify and propose those locations which are important from the standpoint of citizens and their needs, as well as from the standpoint of urban planning and the potentials of urban space.

The method used was based on detecting overlapping data, which resulted in identifying the locations to be proposed for redesign. At each of the proposed locations, the potentials of urban public space for addressing the needs of citizens were highlighted.

The method of work consisted of three steps. Step 1 – **Integration and synthesis of the results of the City Acupuncture research and the Urban Planning Study**. On the same thematic map, the top-rated locations in the City Acupuncture research (indices 5-9) and the top-rated locations in the Urban Planning Study (groups A-B) were shown. Step 2 – **Identification of those locations which were recognised as significant in both studies**. Once the identification criteria were set, the highest ranked locations were singled out. The analysis resulted in the identification of 33 locations which were to be proposed for redesign. Step 3 – **Description of locations proposed for redesign**. Each location was described including an indicated theme, with the position of the

location and its areal scope and limits defined, and with the urban and sociological significance of each location underscored.

The study of locations of public space resulted in the singling out of 33 locations which were proposed for redesign. The locations proposed can be classified into five spatially and thematically defined groups, each of which embraces between 5 and 10 locations.

