

UDC: 711.585:711.582.7(497.4Koper)  
doi:10.5379/urbani-izziv-en-2024-35-02-06

Received: 3 September 2024  
Accepted: 2 December 2024

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## The unutilized potential of temporary use of space: A case study of Avtomatik Delovišče, Koper

Degraded, underutilized, or abandoned spaces are a formidable challenge and an unused opportunity for many contemporary cities. In such cases, temporary use of space has proved to be an efficient spatial practice, allowing the best use of spatial resources of a particular place and time. During the last two decades, temporary use of space has become the subject of much debate and unambiguous praise in academic circles, primarily validated as a socially progressive, economical, and flexible spatial practice that may initiate an innovative, new, and inclusive culture of urban life. It is considered a catalyst for change that, using experimental solutions, can relatively quickly revive degraded spaces while at the same time preserving their individual, historical, and environmental qualities. This article verifies theoretical approaches to the temporary use of space with the results of a participatory case study of Avtomatik Delovišče in the Slovenian city of Koper.

The study focuses on the effects of the spatial practice applied in the urban environment and, consequentially, its potential role in urban regeneration. With the help of a multiple case study of temporary uses in various cities in Slovenia, the main goal is to determine the extent to which alternative, experimental, and temporary spatial interventions can contribute to increased urban diversity, community involvement, creativity, innovation, and local identity. Furthermore, the article examines the ways in which temporary use is perceived and accepted by the residents, professional community, and official representatives of the City Municipality of Koper.

**Keywords:** temporary use of space, degraded urban areas, sustainable urban development, regeneration, social cohesion, cultural capital, Koper, Slovenia

## 1 Introduction and background

In the twenty-first century, temporary use of space has gained increased attention from academic circles and politics, as well as the general public, rising to prominence as a frequently used spatial practice in many European cities (Stevens & Dovey, 2023). The potential contribution of temporary use of space to European urban development has been the subject of a large number of books, studies, and articles, among them Haydn and Temel (2006), SFS (2007), Bishop and Williams (2012), Colomb (2012), Andres (2013), Oswalt et al. (2013), Lydon and Garcia (2015), Madanipour (2017a), and Stevens and Dovey (2023). This article focuses on authors that are important in the Slovenian context.

For some time, the concept of the temporary use of space in Slovenia has been present in various spatial phenomena; for instance, in gardening, informal stands, and parking spaces. However, new applications of the concept, focused on urban revitalization, have multiplied and become established mainly during the last decade (e.g., Mreža za prostor, 2018; Šifkovič Vrbica et al., 2014; Šifkovič Vrbica, 2015; Jurman & Lovšin, 2021). It is important to note the relative lack of research literature dealing with temporary use of space from the perspective of urban regeneration in the Slovenian context (exceptions being Kurnik & Beznec, 2009; Uršič, 2011; Cvejič et al., 2015; Pignar, 2015; Vilfan, 2015; Cotič & Lah, 2016; Cotič, 2023; Gatouillat & Nikšič, 2023). Many more contributions deal with participation in spatial planning in Slovenia, in which temporary use is regarded as merely one of the potential participatory spatial practices contributing to urban regeneration (Cerar, 2015; Uršič, 2021).

Recently, a number of important practical cases of temporary space use in Slovenia have been formed under the auspices of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), particularly cultural and artistic societies whose activities are directed in various ways toward sustainable spatial planning. Current practices include Participativna Ljubljanska Avtonomna Cona (PLAC, Ljubljana), GT22 (Maribor), and the recently established AKC Nama (Škofja Loka). Concluded cases of practices that have left their mark on space in various ways, primarily in the form of sociocultural and sustainable impacts, include Onkraj Gradbišča (Ljubljana), Kreativna Cona Šiška (Ljubljana), Tobačna Tovarna (Ljubljana), Avtonomna Tovarna Rog (Ljubljana), Carinarnica (Nova Gorica), Ustvarjalna Platforma INDE (Koper), and Avtomatik Delovišče (Koper). It is evident from the above that the hub of such practices was Ljubljana, with other Slovenian cities trailing behind.

The spatial practice of temporary use has turned into a new urban trend in European cities for several reasons. They include the recent economic crisis and the concomitant stress on reuse and recycling strategies, as well as limited resources, concerns for the preservation of architectural heritage, growing awareness of the importance of sustainable development, and the increasing importance of participation in spatial planning (UEL, 2019, 2020; Galdini, 2020; Uršič, 2023; HEI-TRANSFORM, 2024). Technological changes and increasing insecurity in the labour market both promote creativity, new cultural trends, social innovations, and a number of flexible and transitional spatial practices, and they stimulate multidisciplinary reflection on possible tools for urban spatial planning. Practices of temporary use, or temporary urbanism, are an alternative method of urban planning, aimed at activating spaces in need of transformation, which in turn leads to socioeconomic changes in the environment (Blumner, 2006; Andres & Kraftl, 2021). Temporary urbanism is defined as the temporary nature of urban planning, with the emphasis on two key concepts: time and temporality (Madanipour, 2017b). Temporality reflects modern conceptions of time and societal fragmentation, along with the need for experimentation and innovation. Temporary urbanism acknowledges multidimensional interactions and the need for adaptability and responsiveness to ever-changing urban rhythms (Andres & Kraftl, 2021). It includes temporary, primarily informal, and especially bottom-up-directed practices performed by public, private, and civil society stakeholders (Henneberry, 2017; Madanipour, 2017b). Their primarily collective character helps pave the way for social innovations and solidifies social cohesion and environmental values (Simões Aelbrecht, 2022). Simultaneously, they can support economic activities and encourage the valorization of cultural heritage, while acting as a counterweight to rigid formal spatial planning (see, e.g., HEI-TRANSFORM, 2024). In light of the failure of traditional developmental strategies, according to De Smet (2013), practices of temporary use of space allow for an experimental and playful search for solutions, as well as a very definite one. According to Lehtovuori and Ruoppila (2012: 30), temporary uses possess the “capacity and goal to explore further potentials of places they are located” in. “Hence, they form a category between momentary events and permanent (re)development.” Earlier studies also indicate the efficiency of temporary users’ interventions in urban regeneration because they are not focused solely on space and its physical renovation or transformation but on human beings and the social aspect of spatial production itself (Klaft, 2014; Marra et al., 2016). The human and social aspects are precisely the key characteristics of this spatial practice.

The above discussion provides the theoretical context for the study of the role and significance of temporary use in urban regeneration in the case of Avtomatik Delovišče (hereinafter,

Delovišče). Various qualitative research methods are employed to verify the spatial effects of this small-scale, experimental, and temporary intervention. A comparative multiple case study of temporary uses in certain other Slovenian cities is used to determine whether such interventions can contribute to increased urban diversity, creativity, innovativeness, local identity, and integration of the local community into spatial planning. Furthermore, this article explores public and specialist attitudes toward temporary use and the systemic, or institutional, possibility of its incorporation into spatial planning for the City Municipality of Koper. The article concludes with recommendations for systemic regulation of this kind of urban regeneration, allowing for at least partially institutionalized temporary use to become part of the urban planning and developmental strategies of the local community and the municipality.

## 2 Effects of temporary use of space

This article focuses on extraordinary temporary uses rather than ordinary temporary uses of space. Ordinary temporary uses are commercial spatial practices frequently employed by public or private owners using profit-oriented, temporary solutions, such as charging parking fees in empty, unregulated urban areas or renting out plots for advertising billboards, for purely financial gain (Martin et al., 2019). This article discusses the key effects of extraordinary temporary uses as products of bottom-up community initiatives extending beyond economic interests and developing urban forms that, in comparison to formal urban planning and its top-down approach, are better adapted to local urban communities.

### 2.1 Spatial and environmental effects

Studies of temporary uses already implemented show the following physical manifestations of the spatial and environmental effects of such practices: they decrease, slow down, or even stop the physical degradation of the area and establish the conditions for resumption of activities with minimal restoration efforts, leading to redefinition of the degraded urban area (DUA) or to new functional, primarily flexible, innovative, and creative uses (Bishop & Williams, 2012; Colomb, 2012; Madanipour, 2017a). In this way, the DUA acquires new use and symbolic value (Galdini & De Nardis, 2023). Introduction of temporary uses improves the quality of the living environment and establishes a new place identity. Once concluded, temporary uses may be divided into two categories according to their physical effects on space (Cotič, 2023): those with no permanent physical changes to existing areas and construction (e.g., pop-up stores) and those causing long-term changes to existing areas and construction, which may include adaptation

or removal of existing structures, restructuring of areas, changes in the microtopography of the area, or construction of new structures of a different scope (e.g., LX Factory in Lisbon or Onkraj Gradbišča in Ljubljana).

### 2.2 Economic effects

In most cases, temporary use is economically efficient for both the owner and the temporary user. From the owner's point of view, temporary use of the property is almost always economically beneficial because it preserves its assets, lowers maintenance costs, and prevents vandalism. In this way, the owner avoids additional costs of insurance and prevention of illegal use (i.e., occupation) of space while benefiting from lower taxes on empty property (Bishop & Williams, 2012; Colomb, 2012; Šifkovič Vrbica, 2015). In addition, the value of the property is preserved, or, in the case of property with no market value, it may even increase on account of the introduction of temporary content, while the property improves its profile and attracts more potential users (SfS, 2007: 37; Bishop & Williams, 2012: 43).

Temporary use is advantageous to temporary users because it offers access to space at low prices and thus provides an opportunity for testing and developing their own ideas in practice (Haydn & Temel, 2006; Bishop & Williams, 2012; Andres, 2013; Oswalt et al., 2013; Németh & Langhorst, 2014). The spatial practice under discussion is often accompanied by new forms of economies, such as the economy of collaborative commons, solidarity economy, or gift economy, whose impact on the location may attract new collectives and creative individuals. Temporary uses can be commercially or non-commercially oriented. Non-commercial and non-market-oriented temporary uses may attract commercial profit-oriented spatial uses (Bishop & Williams, 2012). The property owner may, for instance, lease part of an empty building for low or nonprofit rent for non-commercial purposes (e.g., a studio or a gallery), while another part, insofar as the building allows, is temporarily leased for commercial purposes (e.g., a coffee shop or other shops) for higher rent, thus simultaneously catering to the needs of visitors (Bishop & Williams, 2012). As pointed out by Colomb (2012: 136), some temporary uses are commercially oriented from the outset and are implemented as part of either a formal or grey economy, whereas others are nonprofit and carried out without the exchange of money.

### 2.3 Sociocultural and sustainable effects

In principle, temporary uses deliver fast and tangible results and thus encourage communities to pursue shared goals centred on local needs instead of outside interests or programmes.

For the duration of the temporary use, users' activities may produce various social and cultural-artistic content, which is an important element of intangible urban cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). At the forefront are activities primarily informed by innovative and alternative spatial practices of civil society, which are typically performed outside governmental control and are directed toward the "public good" in space, as opposed to practices driven by individual interests, which are mainly directed toward profitability and commodification of space (Madanipour, 2017a).

Studies of temporary uses of space already implemented demonstrate their potential long-term contribution to improving the quality of urban daily life and thus promoting sustainable urban development, despite their temporary, or short-term, nature (Križnik, 2015, 2018; UEL, 2019, 2020). They are characterized by a participative approach to planning, implementation, and governance (Cerar, 2015; Peterlin, 2015). Temporary uses may encourage the development of intensive and diverse social ties, enriching residents' daily lives and strengthening social capital as a vital source of the developmental potential of local communities. These factors contribute to the formation of active, inclusive, and safe "sustainable communities" characterized by social aspects of sustainability (ODPM, 2005). Other attributes typical of sustainable communities, indicated by researchers, include the sense of community in a healthy and safe environment (Burton & Mitchell, 2006), social contacts, and a stable community of residents with a sense of belonging to the place they live. At the forefront are therefore those collective and shared aspects of daily life that strengthen the social cohesiveness of an area. In addition to temporary uses, they encourage heterogeneity through concentration of different sociocultural groups, roles, information, events, and encounters. In this way, they promote creativity, urban experimentation, and a number of opportunities for the expression of various individual and collective needs, in contrast to closed, standardized, and socially uniform urban areas (Uršič, 2011: 8). Such activities, in marked contrast to alienated and time-consuming spatial planning, demonstrate that it is possible to change the city for the better (Peterlin, 2015: 6).

It follows that, with their contribution to the social, cultural, and economic diversity and influence on local production and consumption, temporary users and their activities may both enrich the cultural attractions of the city and help regenerate DUAs (Uršič, 2011; Madanipour, 2017b; UEL, 2019; UEL, 2020). Madanipour (2017b) points out that temporary users, applying their embodied and cultural capital, can significantly contribute to the economic value of a DUA and, as a consequence, help change the perception of the affected area and speed up its development. However, the implicit danger of

this approach is that creative non-commercial temporary uses attract commercial spatial uses and open the door not only to DUA regeneration but also to possible abuse. Creative regeneration of an area, prompted by temporary users, and the consequential increase of its value and appeal can result in urban gentrification, with non-commercial activities of temporary users being squeezed out (Uršič, 2011; Colomb, 2012; Tardiveau & Mallo, 2014; Cerar, 2015; Madanipour, 2017b). No cases of systematic abuse of temporary use as a means of increasing property values have been recorded in Slovenia so far, which of course does not mean such incentives will not come into play in the future. It is then safe to assume that the above processes ultimately depend on the urban environment in which the temporary use is implemented, the type of temporary use, the effectiveness and popularity of the temporary content, and the initiator of the temporary use (Jurman & Lovšin, 2021; Cotič, 2023).

#### **2.4 Risks and negative effects of temporary use of space: commodification, gentrification, and touristification**

Temporary use can be understood in contradictory ways. On the one hand, it can offer new opportunities to creative entrepreneurs, civil initiatives, and local activities. On the other hand, it can become an instrument of metamorphosis used by trademarked companies and corporations to establish new market niches and attract new consumers (Ferreri, 2016; Madanipour, 2017b; UEL, 2019, 2020). Imitation and exploitation of urban culture change the meaning of temporary use, turning it into a much-desired social trend (Colomb, 2012: 144; Madanipour, 2017b). This shift from need to choice has a direct influence on temporary users, who can unwittingly become actors involved in commodification, gentrification, and touristification. Colomb (2012) uses the case of Berlin to illustrate how intentional integration of temporary uses, initiated by policymakers and real estate investors, puts pressure on temporary users, endangers their existence, and destroys the spontaneous and experimental nature of their practices. The consequences of such actions are commodification, metamorphosis, ousting, and disappearance of alternative and non-commercial temporary uses, leading to intensive conflicts. Such processes negatively affect many grassroots venues intended for culture, art, and entertainment. Because temporary uses revitalize DUAs, they contribute to the increase in value of these areas and trigger commodification, gentrification, and touristification. While acknowledging the utility of temporary uses in the formation of good market conditions or the creation of new content, the responsible authorities usually ignore the fact that temporary users necessarily need their support to continue their activities. Simultaneously, due to the globalization of the



**Table 1:** Interviewees, their functions, and representative roles in Koper.

Interviewee	Function	Role
IN1	Public employee, Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, Piran	Institutional
IN2	Public employee, Office of Spatial Development and Real Estate, Koper	Institutional
IN3	Landscape architect and temporary user of Delovišče	Expert
IN4	Architect and bureau chief, Koper	Expert
IN5	Professional advisor, Pina Cultural and Educational Society	NGO
IN6	Member of Independent Riviera Radio and initiator of Inde Creative Platform	NGO
IN7	Representative of the local community Koper Center	Institutional

gentrification trend and the intensification of renovation and regeneration of urban centres, creative individuals and groups are faced with a decreasing likelihood of finding low-cost urban spaces in which they can experiment and develop their content.

Temporary use is thus a flexible form of spatial production, offering different opportunities to different stakeholders: circumvention of the image of urban decay to public authorities, low-cost access to space to creative individuals, maximized use of property to owners, and gentrification to real estate companies (Madanipour, 2017b). Adopting a brilliant cultural trend, the humanitarian façade promotes and normalizes precarity and squeezes out those that must move on once the short-lived opportunity is finished. As such, temporary use is part of broader urban processes, with multifaceted economic, social, and cultural consequences for assorted stakeholders.

### 3 Methodology

Various possibilities of temporary use were verified by an analysis of primary data based on the participative case study of Delovišče (participant observation) and structured and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders on site. Primary data were compared with an analysis of secondary data from a multiple case study of temporary space uses in other Slovenian cities. The research explored the effects initiated in space by the temporary use of space, its reception by residents and the professional community, and the relationship established by the City Municipality of Koper. The entire study is grounded in research carried out between 2017 and 2022.

Participant observation was conducted for the duration of the temporary use by Delovišče in the Tomos Tower Block from November 2019 to March 2020 as part of events organized by the C3 Cultural and Artistic Society. Various observational strategies allowed for interchangeable roles of researchers as both outside and in-group observers; that is, as active co-

tiators and co-operators of the spatial practices established in the development of temporary spaces. In this way, Delovišče became an experimental environment, interlinking both theory and practice.

These results were complemented by unstructured interviews conducted between November 2019 and March 2020 with individuals that, in one form or another, were involved in the temporary use of space in the Tomos Tower Block; that is, initiators and temporary users. The interviews took the form of open-ended conversations, with questions formulated in real time to determine the interviewees' estimation of the spatial practice and its role in Koper.

In addition, semi-structured interviews were used to determine the opinions of the stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in spatial issues in Koper. The first author selected seven interviewees by purposive sampling, based on specific criteria: two experts (IN3, IN4), three representatives of institutions (IN1, IN2, and IN7), and two representatives of NGOs (IN5, IN6; see Table 1). All interviews were conducted in May and June 2022. The questions were directed toward comprehensive research on the concept of temporary use and its importance for the regeneration of DUAs in Koper. The purpose of the interviews was to determine the interviewees' assessment of temporary use, its role in preventing the degradation of DUAs, and the key factors obstructing its implementation.

The multiple case study method was used in addition to the participative case study to better understand the functioning of temporary use of space. Three different cases of temporary use in Slovenia were selected, varying in location, type of temporary use, temporary content, time component, and ownership. Each case was analysed according to the context of spatial implementation, the initiative incentive, and the effects prompted in its surroundings. Data were obtained through field observation and narrative interviews involving key initiators of the spatial practices. The interviews were conducted

between 2017 and 2022. Primary data were complemented with secondary sources.

## 4 Participative case study: Temporary use of space in Delovišče

### 4.1 Main characteristics of the temporary use of space in Delovišče

Delovišče is the first example of a formal extraordinary temporary use of space on the Slovenian Riviera, formed as a communal creative experiment (Cotič, 2023) and in operation from November 2019 to March 2020 on the ground floor of the Tomos Tower Block at Nazor Square (*Nazorjev trg*) 5, in the historical urban centre of Koper. The Tomos Tower Block was built in 1958 as part of the Belveder neighbourhood development plan, designed in 1956–1957 by the architect and urban planner Edo Mihevc. The apartment block for Tomos factory workers from other republics of Yugoslavia immediately became “the dominating feature of the Belveder neighbourhood and the main motif of the visual identity of the new-old city” (Čebtron Lipovec, 2019: 256). For this reason, the description and analysis of effects prompted by Delovišče must be extended to the wider area of the Belveder neighbourhood; that is, to Nazor Square and Museum Square (*Muzejski trg*; Figure 1). For many years, both the Tomos Tower Block and Museum Square were functionally and physically completely left to deteriorate. The last residents moved out of the Tomos Tower Block in 2015, and it was purchased by a private investor in 2018 and renovated. Most of Museum Square was covered by an abandoned and overgrown archaeological site and a temporary parking space. In 2022, the area was renovated as a new city park, and an underground garage was built. Nazor Square, once a social hub, has been inappropriately used for parking for decades, depriving the local residents of an open public space and lowering the quality of life. Near the Tomos Tower Block is the Tutto ex Gavardo Palace, which has been left to decay since 2000 and is thus a further contributing factor to the social and visual degradation of the Tomos Tower Block’s surroundings as well as a sense of insecurity for the local population.

After the renovation of the tower block (Figure 2), C3, in search of areas suitable for temporary use of space since 2017, suggested establishing temporary use in the premises on its ground floor, which was accepted by the private investor. The goal of C3 was to create a communal autonomous creative space for the integration of various stakeholders with various orientations and skills, including nonprofit organizations, creative individuals, and the local population (Cotič, 2023). The

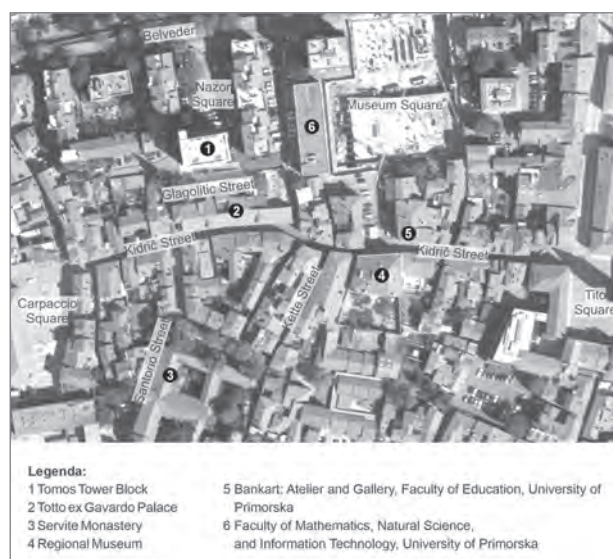


Figure 1: Location of the Tomos Tower Block (source: satellite image, GIS browser, MOK Koper).



Figure 2: View of the renovated Tomos Tower Block from the courtyard of the Tutto ex Gavardo Palace (photo: Tina Cotič).

private investor saw an opportunity in temporary use in the Tomos Tower Block to promote and revive the long-neglected and degraded Belveder residential neighbourhood. In this way, for a short period of time, the investor surrendered the property to public use and as a result allowed the local community and other stakeholders to participate in spatial planning. In addition, the decision encouraged flexible production of space and permitted urban experimentation supported by alternative and innovative spatial practices. C3 and the private investor concluded a six-month lease agreement on temporary use. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this came to an end two months before the agreed deadline.

C3 developed the concept and the rules for temporary use and invited like-minded individuals to explore their visions under



Figure 3: Delovišče was the first communal working space in the City Municipality of Koper, integrating socializing, creativity, development, and education (photo: Tina Cotič).



Figure 4: Exhibition *Koper: Imaginary* (photo: Tina Cotič).

the auspices of Independent Riviera Radio (Sln. *Neodvisni obalni radio*) to participate in creating the temporary content. The investor offered to lease the ground-floor premises free of charge, and the users obtained funds for implementing the programme through various public tenders. The users furnished and maintained the premises and paid the operating costs.

Delovišče thus became the first communal use space in the City Municipality of Koper, integrating socializing, creativity, development, and education (Figure 3; Pavlović, 2020). Through guided events, it connected local and non-local stakeholders from various areas of the creative sector, which made it possible to plan shared projects, develop new skills, and transfer knowledge. The content was aimed at developing individuals, innovations, ideas, products, and new living practices. The activities, centred on creating new local policies and integrating them into the city and the wider region, were based on trust, participation, self-management, experimentation, and self-initiative. With its activities lasting just under six months, Delovišče held several public events on topical issues, including discussions on the urban challenges of contemporary planning, architecture, landscaping, design, and creative and media productions (Figure 4; Bratož Gornik, 2021).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Delovišče halted its live activities in March 2020. In June, the lease contract for temporary use in the Tomos Tower Block expired. Although the investor was aware of Delovišče's contribution to the site and wanted to see the building's ground floor premises continue to function as a public space, the economic aspect of its man-





Figure 5: Kiosk K76: Koper's urban content generator (photo: Tina Cotič).

agement prevailed. The investor first offered the collective a new lease with the option to buy, but the collective was unable to gather the financial resources necessary and was forced to abandon the premises. The collective thus turned to the municipality, filing a request to obtain data on empty municipal premises in the hope of being able to continue its activities in one of those spaces. It turned out that the municipality did not hold any such records and had never put temporary use into practice, despite its inclusion in the Spatial Planning Act (Sln. *Zakon o urejanju prostora*, ZUreP-3, Ur. l. RS, no. 199/2021) since 2018. The collective thus made its own inventory of empty municipal premises suitable for the input of temporary use, prepared possible reactivation scenarios, and presented them to the municipal property department. It received a prompt answer that the municipality was uninterested in either free-of-charge or temporary use because it preferred to lease property at market prices.

Having failed to acquire a space in which to continue the activities formerly held at the Tomos Tower Block, the Delovišče collective remains active and continues to pursue its goals. The programme it has devised is active as an independent, self-sustained model, no longer tied to a single location. Instead, the temporary use is on the move and active in several locations in Koper, such as Mala Loža, the Libertas warehouse, and, until recently, the K67 kiosk (Figure 5) on Ukmar Square (*Ukmarjev trg*; Avtomatik Delovišče, 2021).

#### 4.2 Evaluation of the effects of Delovišče's temporary use of space

Evaluation of the effects of Delovišče's temporary use of space in the Tomos Tower Block shows that even a small experimental temporary spatial intervention can help revitalize a DUA. Field observation has shown that the spatial practice under discussion encouraged participation in spatial planning and contributed to the urban diversity of Koper, its local identity, creativity, and innovation. The temporary intervention did not contribute any physical changes to the space or to the surrounding area of the Belveder neighbourhood (Cotič, 2023). For its duration, the temporary use revived this neglected area to a certain degree, but it was too short-lived to result in any more substantial physical changes in the neighbourhood. After Delovišče's lease contract expired, a hostel was built in the area. Nazor Square is still a parking area, Museum Square was renovated about a year after the end of the temporary use, and the Tutto ex Gavardo Palace is undergoing extensive restoration. Part of the Belveder neighbourhood thus remains blighted and degraded.

Although Delovišče did not result in any substantial physical change, its activities introduced many positive sociocultural and sustainable effects to the area that are still present in the municipality. As it turned out, temporary use can be understood as a "social phenomenon", according to a member of the professional community (IN5): "Temporary use is always conditional on content, regardless of the space it takes place in. It is content that builds the space and community. It is the community that does not degrade and that keeps a space alive."



**Table 2:** Onkraj Gradbišča.

Case	Onkraj gradbišča, Ljubljana
Description of temporary use	The first publicly declared community urban garden, established in 2010 by the Obrat cultural and artistic society at the dormant building site inside the Tabor neighbourhood in the centre of Ljubljana. Obrat signed a contract each year on free temporary use with the City Municipality of Ljubljana. The project was self-financed through user contributions. It was based on personal engagement, participation, self-initiative, self-organization, and collective decision-making. A coordination board and fundamental rules on shared use of space were established.
Initiative incentive	The project was launched by Obrat as part of the Mladi Levi festival, organized by Zavod Bunker. Its goal was to emphasize the importance of gardening and urban greening as well as to support the revitalization of empty urban spaces with emphasis on creating social urban spaces for non-commercial uses.
Users	At first Obrat and Zavod Bunker, and then only Obrat, neighbourhood residents, and other interested individuals.
DUA regeneration	Reactivating and regenerating the area, changing its function and spatial structure, and returning the area to everyday use with a clearly defined content and new identity created in cooperation with the local community. Improving food security and quality of neighbourhood living, and strengthening urban social and environmental sustainability.
Results	The project was wound up in 2022. The municipality rejected the suggestion put forward by the temporary users, Obrat and Mreža za Prostor, to preserve the area as a public park. The city administration, however, accepted the alternative suggestion and designated the location for the construction of affordable apartment buildings by the municipal Public Building Fund. The modus operandi established in the project has been partially preserved and can be seen in other temporary projects in Ljubljana, such as Krater.

IN7 is of a similar opinion. In his view, temporary use is a spatial practice that allows active community participation in spatial planning and permits a certain degree of autonomy and creativity in content creation. All interviewees see temporary use as a successful tool that can assist both the physical and substantive revitalization of an area.

The activities of the temporary users of Delovišče drew attention to the importance of the urban area and highlighted its developmental potentials. For a short time, they managed to open the area and introduce it to the public and various social groups, making it more heterogeneous. The temporary users helped “raise the level of cultural dialogue on spatial planning”, strengthened “its ability to mediate between the city administration, experts, and the local community”, and underlined the potential of urban creative industries (Bugarič, 2020: 73).

The Delovišče collective is continuing its activities even after the termination of temporary use in the Tomos Tower Block. In addition to holding various events at various locations in the municipality, its current activities include Urbana Kavarna, which holds informal urban planning consultations on the development and design of municipal spatial policies; the online platform Zbirnik, which focuses on spatial issues in the Riviera area; and the monthly column Prostorska Frka, which discusses a range of spatial and architectural issues. The collective thus continues to pursue its long-term goal: on the one hand, recognition of its activities as a model for bringing together

and connecting the local population and creative individuals, local entrepreneurs, young and old, experienced individuals, and beginners; and, on the other hand, cooperation with the municipality and other public and private institutions, regardless of the location of its activities (Cotič, 2023).

### 4.3 Analysis and identification of shared elements of temporary uses of space in the Slovenian context

This multiple case study involves the following three cases of temporary use of space in Slovenia: the project Onkraj Gradbišča and Kreativna Cona Šiška (KCŠ) in Ljubljana, and GT22 in Maribor. A synoptic analysis was carried out for each of the cases, including a description of the temporary use, the initiative incentive, the temporary users, and the DUA regeneration and its tangible results. This section analyses and identifies the shared elements in these practices and their complex role in DUA regeneration.

The results of the comparative analysis show that all of the above cases of temporary use, including Delovišče, have a common mechanism or principle of operation (see Figure 6), with certain similar effects stimulated in the immediate environment. All the temporary uses discussed above were either initiated by NGOs or in cooperation with them. The key incentive for establishing the practice was the lack of financially viable premises for carrying out their activities, which was also

**Table 3:** KCŠ.

Case	Kreativna cona Šiška, Ljubljana
Description of temporary use	Kreativna Cona Šiška (KCŠ) was a creative centre and cooperative space, established in 2011 in an old condemned house in Spodnja Šiška, Ljubljana. Rompom Collective and the owner signed a low-rent lease contract, subject to regular renewal. The users paid the rent and operating costs, and they furnished and maintained the building. The community-created programme focused on member empowerment through new skills and knowledge, better implementation of projects, and improved promotion and marketing of products and ideas.
Initiative incentive	Rompom Collective was looking for a space to work, form connections, and create new business and work opportunities.
Users	NGOs (Rompom Collective, Muslauf Cycling Society, Teater Ponoreli, and others) and individuals (young artists from various fields).
DUA regeneration	Reactivating, rehabilitating, and reorganizing the building and establishing basic infrastructure with minimum resources, in accordance with the DIY principle and users' needs. The introduction of coworking encouraged the development of both coworking culture in Slovenia and new economies, such as the economy of collaborative commons, solidarity economy, and gift economy, thus reinforcing urban social and cultural capital.
Results	KCŠ introduced the pop-up concept (Pop-Up Dom) to Slovenia and contributed to the establishment of the Poligon creative centre, which part of the KCŠ community moved to after NLB Leasing acquired the building in 2017 and the temporary users were forced to leave. In 2019, the building in Spodnja Šiška was demolished, and Poligon terminated its activities in the former Tobačna factory.

**Table 4:** GT22.

Case	GT22, Maribor
Description of temporary use	GT22 is "an inter(trans)disciplinary laboratory" for art, culture, urban sports, and urban life. It was founded in 2013 in an abandoned warehouse factory building and nightclub in the city centre at the initiative of the building's owner and the foundation Fundacija Sonda. A five-year free lease contract for temporary use was initially concluded between the owner and Fundacija Sonda, followed by a nonprofit rent contract. Fundacija Sonda, as the manager and user of the premises, covers insurance, operating costs, and property taxes, as well as maintenance. GT22 users form a self-organized community, create the programme, and help maintain the place as well as pay for the operating costs.
Initiative incentive	The building's owner offered his property for temporary use as a patron in exchange for rich cultural and artistic development. Economic motives: the owners also considered the temporary use of space an opportunity to help revitalize and maintain their property.
Users	NGOs (Fundacija Sonda, Mišnica GT22 photography platform, and others), bands, artists-in-residence, and creative individuals.
DUA regeneration	Through joint effort, volunteer work, recycled materials, personal contributions, and municipal and state support, the temporary users refurbished and reactivated the building and its immediate surroundings, equipped it with a new function and identity, and returned it to everyday use. The project and associated activities encouraged urban, creative, and social solidarity practices and thus left a lasting imprint on Maribor, contributing to its urban vitality and connecting it to the international environment.
Results	The project passed from temporary to permanent use of space, leading to the establishment of a formal creative arena in the city and to new models of cultural and artistic education, research, and production.

confirmed by most interviewees in the semi-structured interviews. For example, IN6 claims that no municipal authority so far has tackled the problem. According to him, the hindrance lies in the lack of understanding of the NGO sector on the part of the municipal property department.

Similar DUA regeneration was present in all cases. The temporary users resorted to recycling, minimal readapting, and the

innovative use of space to reactivate the DUA and establish the conditions suitable for their activities. In this way, the area obtained higher utilization value, and the quality of the local environment was improved. The temporary users gave the place a new identity, increased the symbolic value of space, and, through their alternative spatial practices, countered the existing patterns of spatial planning. In addition, they introduced a range of sociocultural and sustainable effects into space, which

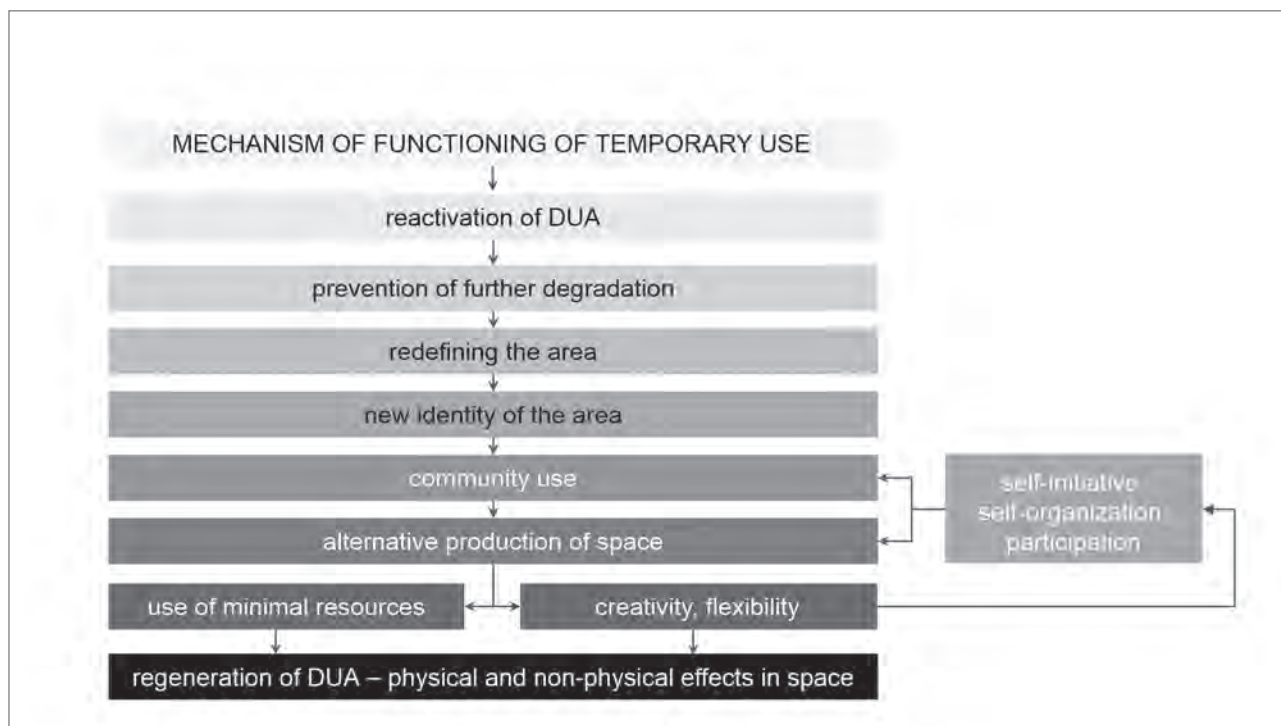


Figure 6: Common characteristics of temporary use of space activities (illustration: Tina Cotič).

were – and, in the case of GT22, still are – evident in cultural, artistic, social, and educational events and projects, as well as in the development of original programmes and services. Their activities encouraged social interaction, contributed to heterogeneity (in the sense of the concentration of various sociocultural roles, individuals, encounters, information, and events), allowed active community participation and organization, and encouraged creative activity and experimentation. All of the above added to the social and cultural capital of the local community. Two of the temporary uses (KCŠ and GT22) produced economic effects as well. The temporary uses provided new business and work opportunities to creative individuals and nonprofit organizations and allowed them to implement new, marketable ideas.

Key results of the temporary projects discussed are still visible, mainly in the formation of complex social networks and the development of social innovations and new models of governance. It is evident from the above cases that temporary uses can primarily contribute to the creative regeneration of DUAs, whereas their influence on stakeholder spatial planning is often very limited, especially timewise, as demonstrated by the case of Delovišče. The case of GT22, which passed from temporary to permanent use, is rather exceptional in this regard. Once Onkraj Gradbišča and KCŠ wound up their activities, the spa-

tial effects produced by the temporary use evaporated, and they left no permanent changes in the existing areas and structures. Although the project Onkraj Gradbišča became part of the local environment, improving food security and quality of life in the neighbourhood, its activities were brought to an end after twelve years in 2022. The area of the former community garden will become an apartment building construction site for the municipal Public Building Fund. Trees and plants were dug up by the temporary users and replanted in other locations in the city. The fate of Onkraj Gradbišča is an example of failure on the part of the municipality to support a successfully functioning community garden, formalize and extend the collaboration to existing and new urban gardens and community practices, and thus contribute to the empowerment of local communities beyond mere formalities (Križnik & Cerar, 2021).

None of the temporary uses under discussion, Delovišče included, resulted in any negative effects in the location where they took place (such as touristification, commodification, or gentrification). In fact, the building owners used the spatial practice to prevent the degradation of their property – and thus enhance its value and appeal – but it turned out to be a “win-win” solution in all the cases discussed because in large measure it also helped the temporary users reach their own goals.



## 5 Conclusion

This research has shown that the temporary use of space is not only a transitional solution for DUAs but can serve as a tool for dynamic and adaptable transformation of urban environments while meeting both community needs and sustainability objectives. This spatial practice facilitates spontaneous adaptation of the urban space to its users and provides opportunities for innovative and participatory solutions, often unsupported by traditional approaches to urban planning. The analysis of the effects of temporary uses in various Slovenian cities, including Koper's Delovišče, has shown the key effects of such practices to be more of a sociocultural and sustainable nature, as opposed to physical changes in the space itself. Based on the material analysed, the main effects of temporary uses may be described as follows:

- The roles of the residents change from passive recipients of services into active participants and initiators of collective action invoking their right to the city (see the participant observation and unstructured and semi-structured interviews).
- New models of urban governance are encouraged that are adaptable, strategic, cooperative, and based on coordination of institutional and spatial specificities (see the multiple case studies).
- A different view of urban planning allows it to be considered a tool of support for sustainable transformation, based not only on material sources but also on encouragement of equality, social justice, and higher quality of life (see the case of Delovišče).

The analysis has also shown that temporary use allows DUAs to assume new functions and become identifiable as an important factor of community cohesion. This involves not only renovation of space but its reintegration into the social and urban fabric. Changes caused by temporary spatial interventions can become a part of broader urban regeneration strategies.

Despite its various positive effects, temporary use remains a rare spatial practice in Slovenia. Even the legal recognition of temporary use of space has not led to any progress in practice. Although it is now possible to change the land use of a certain space for the purposes of temporary use via site verification, the procedure remains problematic and expensive. The procedure should be simplified to inspire more trust in this spatial practice on the part of building owners.

The City Municipality of Koper has so far demonstrated a more or less commercial proclivity, and, regarding the introduction of temporary use, it has shown very little interest or sufficient flexibility. In this regard, further study is needed to

establish support mechanisms to ease the implementation of this practice for the long-term benefits of the city and its urban planning sector. Because this research is limited to Koper, its conclusions should not be generalized. Temporary use of space opens important research areas, extending beyond spatial planning. It offers opportunities for an in-depth understanding of social and cultural effects, the formation of new models of governance, and the integration of these practices into broader strategies of sustainable urban development. In the future, it would be reasonable to investigate how to improve the legislative and regulatory framework, increase the support of local authorities, and develop comprehensive policies that would recognize the temporary use of space as an important element of urban regeneration in Slovenia and elsewhere.

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## Acknowledgments

This article was written as part of the HEI-TRANSFORM project funded by the Slovenian Research Agency (project code: J7-4641).

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