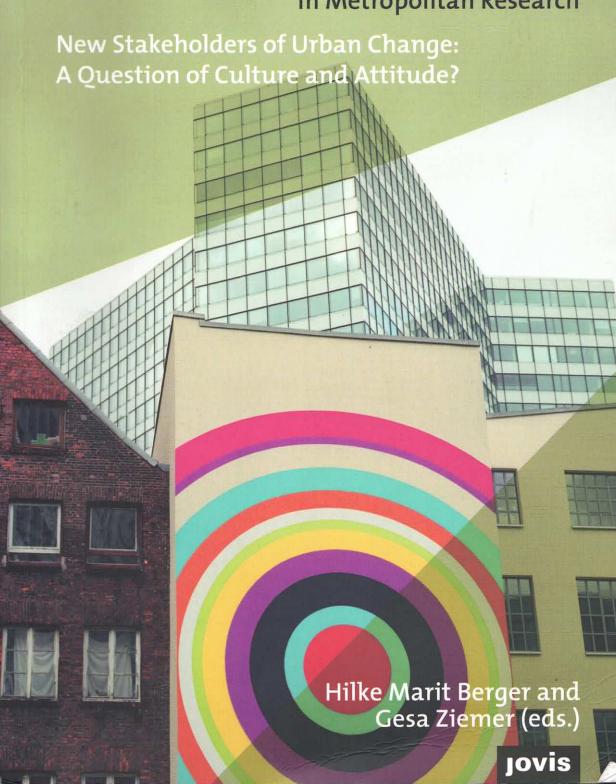
Perspectives in Metropolitan Research



Renegotiating Art and Civic Engagement: The Festival *7hoch2* as a Hands-On Platform for Co-Creating Urban Life

Sandra Chatterjee/Siglinde Lang

"7hoch2 is not a typical festival or cultural project. It aims to initiate processes at the intersection of art, cultural participation, and the concrete concerns of citizens, to generate impulses for (modes of) participatory urban development."

How can people's desires to actively shape their immediate and everyday surroundings be articulated? How can such civil potential be transformed into impulse(s) for urban development? How far can artistic processes contribute to converting urban spaces into arenas of cultural negotiation and civic action? Questions such as these were starting points for <code>7hoch2—Festival für zivile Auftragskunst</code>, which tried to explore new kinds of intersections and relationships between citizens(hip), artistic practices, and civil engagement. By creating a discursive and hands-on platform

where concrete civil concerns and artistic practices meet in shared and dialogic processes, the initiative aimed to generate impulses for locally specific transformations and activate the city space as a living environment.

We understand citizens—in this case the people living in a particular urban space—as experts, who can contribute specific knowledges to shaping their urban living environments. Often, they know exactly where there are deficits, where change is necessary, where there is unexplored potential and what kind of renewal they want to see in and for "their" cities or neighborhoods. However, incentives to become active and the necessary tools to intervene in their immediate environments are frequently lacking.

Thoch2 was intended to provide a public platform to explore civic potential for urban processes of transformation and aimed to multiply academic, civic, and artistic expertise. Based on our notions of and questions about citizenship, art making, and modes of participation, we designed a process in which photographs of places exhibiting a potential for change were submitted by people living in Salzburg. Seven places were selected to be temporarily transformed through artistic interventions. In collaborative constellations consisting of an artist, engaged citizens inspired to participate by their local, thematic, or artistic interests and—if possible—the person who submitted the photograph(s) of a chosen place, artistic approaches in response to the submitted impulses of change were developed and realized.

Conceptual starting points: urban, cultural and artistic citizenship 7hoch2 was inspired by recent debates on citizenship in the con-

text of cultural and artistic co-production alongside our theoretical and practical pursuits.²

Expanding upon Marshall's concept of citizenship,³ the notion of cultural citizenship articulates cultural practices as civil rights and as means for citizens to partake in society's symbolic resources (Klaus and Lünenborg 2004): cultural citizenship emphasizes culture as dynamic and negotiable, "the status of culture as discursively constructed" (Delanty 2002, p. 64) and highlights the potential effects of civic participation on power relationships. Thus, cultural citizenship is defined as a discursive process that comprises "a set of strategies and practices to invoke processes of empowerment in order to subversively listen and to speak up in the public sphere" (Klaus and Lünenborg 2012, p. 201) and, as Leehyun Lim emphasizes, "locates the substantial meaning of citizenship in the

1 '7hoch2//Festival für zivile Auftragskunst' was one of ten projects awarded
core funding by Zukunftslabor Salzburg
20.16 ("Starke Unterstützung für innovative Ideen aus Salzburg." Zukunftslabor Salzburg. Accessed May 20, 2017.
https://zukunftslabor-salzburg2016.
at/). It was conducted between October
2016 and May 2017. 7hoch2 literally
means 72. i.e. seven to the power of two.
Festival für zivile Auftragskunst roughly
translates as 'festival for art commissioned by the public (civil society).' For
the remainder of the article we will be
using the German short title 7hoch2.

- 2 The festival was initiated and curated by the authors who have both been straddling theory and practice in their work, Sandra primarily in terms of artistic (choreographic) practice and scholarship, and Siglinde in terms of participatory arts management, curation, and scholarship.
- 3 Marshall sees citizenship as a set of civic demands in the context of legal, political, and social rights (Marshall 1965/1992).
- 4 According to Klaus and Lünenborg's understanding of cultural citizenship (Klaus and Lünenborg 2012, p. 208) these rights as practices are: Right to information (as access to, but also transparency of, data, facts, information, in order to arrive at a collaborative decision-making base); Right to experience (as space in which diverse ways of living and identity concepts are or can be expressed); Right to knowledge (as introduction of prior knowledge and claims to competence, necessary for making independent interpretations); and Right to participation (as an active and open forum for the expression of opinion and interpretations) (see also Lang 2017, p. 141).

everyday practices of sharing space and forming and exchanging ideas" (Lim 2010, p. 221, quoted in Klaus and Lünenborg 2012, p. 202).

Within the concept of urban citizenship, ensuring legal, political, social, and cultural rights requires a "reconsider[ation of] the city as the arena of citizenship" in the context of national and transnational constellations (Holston 1999, p. 3). Urban citizenship deals with the question of how cities can become multivocal stages (or arenas) for democratic processes of empowerment that enable people to claim their rights as citizens. Particularly in local urban contexts, the right to participate in urban life includes not only rights of co-determination, but also the right to actively co-create and shape one's immediate environment. Thus, the main question is, how can cities become stages on which current civic claims can be articulated and evoked?

The notion of artistic citizenship provides an approach to this question from the perspective of art and processes of art making. Artistic citizenship is concerned with the arts in relation to the world/the public—as an "effective medium of citizenship [italics in original]" and as "a common resource from which we, as citizens, can draw."5 Building on an understanding of art in its social and ethical dimensions (as opposed to understanding the arts as autonomous) the editors of the Oxford anthology Artistic Citizenship propose that the arts "should be viewed, studied, and practiced as forms of ethically guided citizenship... because they are potent transformative social forces" (Elliott et al. 2016, p. 6). They emphasize the "ethical responsibilities" (ibid. p. 13) inherent in artistic praxis⁶ (as opposed to practice), in terms of confronting (local, national, or global) problems and challenges (ibid.). One of the questions the editors raise in the anthology, which directly relates to 7hoch2 is: "How might artistic citizens engage the general public in artistic projects designed to serve diverse public, social, cultural, and political interests?" (ibid. p. 15).

From theory to practice: re-thinking relationships between artists and publics

The co-creation of a person's immediate urban environment and living space—as explored in 7hoch2—can be seen as connecting civic concerns and the intersection between artistic, cultural, and urban citizenship. In this context, citizens require both access to arts and processes of cultural production, as well as tools and incentives that enable them to contribute to artistic and cultural processes through their competencies and knowledges (Lang 2015, pp. 64–65).

- 5 "Artistic engagement and citizenship." AMA culture hive. Accessed May 20, 2017. http://www.culturehive.co.uk/resources/artistic-engagement-and-citizenship/
- 6 Artistic praxis, or "praxial art" critically reflects and responds to social, cultural, and political contexts (Elliott et al. 2016, p. 7).

But what can a multivocal stage for civic interests in co-creating urban life look like, in particular in the context of artistic citizenship? How can art become a common resource as a medium of citizenship? How can—thereby—new relationships between the arts and publics be initiated? What does artistic co-creation in the context of cultural/urban and artistic citizenship mean and entail?

7 Ibid. Footnote 5

In line with the apt critiques of Nicolas Bourriaud's understanding of "Relational Art" or "Relational aesthetics" articulated by various authors (Bishop 2004, Ranciere 2010, Kester 2011), re-thinking the meaning of the role of the artist in processes of collaborative artistic production remains a core question in current debates on art, politics, and society. In particular, in community or participatory art, as well as in engagements with artistic citizenship, the artist's responsibilities and scopes for decision-making are foregrounded over the traditional question of the artist's autonomy. Instead, he or she is subject to ongoing processes of (self-)criticism as well as being involved in the search for new settings in the relationship between the artist and the public.

Our approach to this current and often academic discourse was pragmatic and experimental—with a hint of humor: let's define the role of the artist as a supplier to civil society! Let's give concrete interests of citizens a platform where artists can be commissioned to work on civic impulses for spatial changes! Let's transform neglected, hidden, and urban unattended places into local and small stages that facilitate collaborative encounters via artistic processes!

Inspired by various existing festivals⁸ in numerous cities that want to render urban potential for change public and tangible through civic participation, *7hoch2* tried to turn things around by having the impulse for the artistic processes be the actual interests of citizens of Salzburg. With the concept "Civic Commissions of Art" we therefore intended to rethink and to re-interpret the notions of "participation," "public," and "art"—in theory and practice. Particularly participatory practices of artistic interventions often run the risk of and are critiqued for only enabling the social relations that are already inherent in the work of art—and thereby prescribed by the intention of the artist as author (Bishop 2004, Kester 2011).

Through the complex process of "civic commissions of art," 7hoch2 aimed to test the structural conditionalities and the

8 Compare e.g. 100 interventions in one day in Montreal, Bogota, Toronto.

nature of existing relations and conditions of (cultural, urban, and artistic) citizenship. The festival also wanted to (playfully) contribute to the continuous debate about the social functions of the arts in relation to political and cultural processes.

Civic commissions: connecting everyday experiences of urban spaces and artistic practice

Salzburg, famous for its historic baroque oldtown—a UNESCO World Heritage Site in immediate proximity of the scenic land-scape of Salzkammergut—with a population of about 150,0009 draws approximately 1.6 million tourists annually (particularly in summer during the famous Salzburger Festspiele). Salzburg is simply beautiful. Nevertheless, apart from the well-preserved oldtown, they do exist: hidden or written-off nooks and crannies, annoying dead ends, and unexplored or faded retreats. Such places are perceived primarily by those people who encounter them routinely and in everyday life—on the way home from work, on the way to the store, or when looking out of one's window. Those places frequently evoke a desire for change, often hidden, but sometimes evoking anger or resignation.

Activating and drawing on these direct connections to every-day experiences of one's urban environment was a starting point of the operative concept of *7hoch2*. Through the call for photographs of places in the city, which harbor a potential for change, we tried to activate those connections and invite citizens to explore the act of commissioning artistic interventions. In the curatorial process, the following questions emerged: how can the submitted photo and its impulse for action be translated artistically? What kinds of scenarios for the future become imaginable? How can the place, which was submitted, be transformed into a space of action that enables a negotiation of its current status quo? What kinds of dialogs about the place, the city and change, about alternatives in perception and possibilities of usage are generated?

In order to (practically) negotiate these questions in collaborative artistic processes, we drew on an approach to art-making developed by the Austrian collective *Wochenklausur*, that for almost twenty-five years "has been developing small, but concrete proposals for reducing socio-political shortcomings and implements those proposals, [understanding art] no longer... as a formal act, but as social intervention." For a seven-day retreat ('Klausurtage'), seven commissions were selected for co-creations by local art-

- 9 "Bevölkerung." Salzburg in Zahlen. Accessed May 20, 2017. https:// www.stadt-salzburg.at/internet/ bildung_kultur/salzburg_in_zahlen/ bevoelkerung_321402/bevoelkerungszahlen_1_1_2017_451071.htm.
- 10 "Neuerscheinung: Der Tourismus im 2016." Salzburg in Zahlen. Accessed May 20, 2017. https:// www.stadt-salzburg.at/internet/ bildung_kultur/salzburg_in_zahlen/neuerscheinung_der_tourismus_im_jahr_201_452222.htm.

- 11 "Wochenklausur." Wochenklausur. Accessed May 20, 2017. www.wochenklausur.at.
- 12 Wochenklausur can be translated as week(long)-enclave (the collective actually works in retreats lasting nine weeks). Inspired by this format, the festival is designed to last one week—five days of artistic retreat and two days of presentation.

makers and so called 'Bürgerinnenteams' (citizen teams).¹³ In conversations and in diverse workshop settings, seven artistic interventions in and for the city of Salzburg were developed and implemented collaboratively.

Circular processes: negotiating challenges through artistic, official, and public dialogs

In fall 2016, we circulated the call to citizens of Salzburg to submit photographs of places and illustrate their potential for change as short impulses for action in 140 characters on an online platform. Here though the call was distributed widely by our associated cooperation partners, is via social media, if and covered in the local print media multiple times, it picked up slowly. In time, however, a discussion about the festival could be initiated and by the time the call ended in mid-January 2017, more than 40 submissions were uploaded from different parts of Salzburg.

It is noteworthy that—against our intentions—aspects of external improvement or beautification was a particularly important issue for several submissions and in the media coverage and therefore became an aspect of the emerging dialogs throughout the entire process. In February 2017, the curatorial team chose ten submissions based on a set of selection criteria, which were proposed to and discussed with the artists in a workshop. Choosing a favorite place and impulse for action for each artist (plus one alternative choice) turned out to be a smooth and uncomplicated process.

However, the process of obtaining the necessary permissions for the site-specific artistic interventions became a factor that decisively shaped the development of the interventions and also—in some way—regulated the parameters of the artistic-civic collaborations. To apply for the permissions in public and semi-public, but also private or commercial, properties, we had to submit concrete artistic concepts that detailed the use of materials, use of space, number of participants (including spectators) and a sketch of the program sequence early on. In other words, to ensure that the interventions could be implemented, the concepts had to be fixed by the artists in terms of a number of external details, before the citizen teams could be formed. The initial idea, therefore, to develop the artistic concept collaboratively on-site during the 'Klausurtage' could only be realized rudimentarily.

Intense engagements and one-on-one or small group dialogs—without intentionally pushing for them to fulfil a conceptual

"Bürger*innenteams"—teams moderated by the artist and composed of citizens, i.e. people living in Salzburg who are interested in co-creating the artistic projects and are not professional artists.

- 14 "Festival für zivile Auftragskunst." 7hochz. Accessed May 20, 2017. www.7hochz.net.
- 15 Our cooperation partners were numerous cultural institutions in Salzburg that supported us with infrastructure (use of space, equipment, knowledge sharing), as well as distribution of our calls to their networks.
- 16 "Ja, ich möchte Salzburg mitgestalten." 7hoch2 Facebook Page. Accessed May 20, 2017. https:// www.facebook.com/7hoch2/.
- 17 Selection criteria were: 1) the specific location of the submitted impulse for action (does it open up alternative and multi-layered possibilities of action?); 2) feasibility of the place (e.g. is the place publicly accessible?); 3) is the shortcoming/potential for change of the place clearly described? 4) location in the city (diversity of locations and topographic quality); 5) finally, we also took into account considerations of the artists.





Figure 1: Hands-on activities during the 'Klausurtage': Workshops, discussions, and site-specific exercises, © Festival 7hoch2



need—became crucial working modes of the festival process at multiple levels, for example, dialogs between the curatorial team and the artists to clarify the parameters for permissions, as well as, e.g. between artists, the festival team, and owners in charge of privately-owned public places. We were pleasantly surprised how open most of the selected submitters were to (critically) dialoguing and engaging with the artists and the artistic concepts, as well as the artistic interventions.

As a result, in some cases the parameters of the artistic interventions were concretized in these dialogs between submitter and artist, in others, the relationship between the submitter's impulse for action and the artist's concept was negotiated. Some of the submitters were actively present and articulated their impulses during the festival kick-off, retreat, and presentations. Ideas and approaches for outreach to local groups and individuals who might be interested in collaborating on specific projects were developed by the festival team in dialog with the artists. Via postcards, our associate cooperation partners, as well as the personal networks of the festival team and the artists, the invitations to take part in the citizen teams were distributed widely. However, the process of forming citizen teams turned out to be a very time-intensive as well as communicative challenge during the later phase of the project. Personal interaction and face-to-face invitations are central to motivating participation in a process that demands, not only time, but the willingness to experience something new and unpredictable. Although a number of individuals participated in the 'Klausurtage' we found that reaching out to more different groups of citizens would have required far more time and resources.

The 'results': collaborative process-oriented artistic interventions emerging from civic impulses

The festival began with a kick-off event on the first evening of the festival week (Monday, April 24, 2017). After the kick-off, the seven citizen teams (varying from three up to approximately eighteen

people) worked with the seven artists during the 'Klausurtage' (April 25–28, 2017) to elaborate, refine, and realize the artistic concepts developed earlier by the artists (in the course of the permission process).

The teams discussed the initial artistic concepts, partially adopted and concretized them, and also intensively reviewed and talked about the submitted places and their potential. Some of these conversations were instigated by specific (cognitive) exercises, others emerged incidentally during hands-on sessions and handicraft activities. In the workshops, materials and artistic practices were explored and the artistic interventions finalized and prepared.

All of the seven artistic interventions were then presented during the event days ('Aktionstage') on the following weekend (April 29-30, 2017): 1) an impulse submitted along with a photograph that articulated the "hope for an aesthetic intervention" at a public well in the oldtown was realized by the visual artist Stefan Heizinger and his citizen team as an artistic co-creation: huge mobile figures and shapes made of plywood were created and composed as a temporary and participatory installation to re-think and negotiate the monumental and phallic character of the submitted public well. 2) The team of choreographer Cornelia Böhnisch explored the question "What makes a tourist attraction?" around a power-and-heat supply station, which is an underrated architectural feature right by the picturesque River Salzach, overshadowed by the baroque oldtown. Responding to the impulse to "design the open area in front of the heating plant," the open space was transformed into a set designed to re-look at the place and the power plant through new eyes and multiple gazes: citizens of Salzburg, along with tourists and passers-by were invited to explore new perspectives, prompted by associations with or suggestions of how to approach the place and the building written on colored glasses (alternatively filled with blue and red colored gels). In addition to multiple different ways of seeing the submitted open area and the building and its surroundings, different ways of reading a poem by Salzburg-born expressionist Georg Trakl—which is permanently installed on the site, engraved on a stone plate and gives a glimpse into its the heating plant's past as a slaughter house—were proposed. 3) Several submissions criticized that fact that Hanuschplatz, one of the most central places in Salzburg, which must be crossed to enter the historic oldtown from the train station, gives a "bad impression to tourists." Visual artist Romana Hagyo's way of addressing this impulse for action was to highlight a quasi-invisible quality of the place: being able to spend time and hang out there without being required to consume something. Together with her team, she artistically translated this quality of the place into 'making place' in the form of deck chairs that were embroidered with textual associations and motives in workshops. Thereby, she invited the team, as well as the passers-by, to hang out and engage with the place, as well as with the embroidered texts and pictures, and, by doing so, grapple with the theme of claiming space in a central area of town without being required to consume anything. 4) Claudia, who submitted a picture of the passageways leading to the garage Mönchsberggarage inside the city mountain is not really inviting." The space's uninviting quality was transformed into an invitation by visual artist Elisabeth Schmirl and her team to co-create and enter a web of visibilities by leaving behind short, associative, and sometimes absurd messages and temporarily materializing (chalk) traces. The passage way was transformed into a space of visibilities through a temporary accumulation of relationships, footprints, routes, and messages. 5) Submitter Vanita dreamt of "Salzburg's longest gallery" in a tunnel leading to the airport on the outskirts of the city. Choreographer Julia Schwarzbach and her team ventured into a cognitive experiment that treated the approx. 400m-long tunnel tube as an internally created dream gallery, rather than an exhibition space. In intense processes of engaging in introspection, inner listening, and contemplation, the non-place was activated and one's own perceptions of things that often go unnoticed were honed: what kinds of vibrations, associations, motions and thoughts does this strip of land that connects the city of Salzburg and an area called Himmelreich¹⁸ and its architectural and material specificities evoke in us and our bodies? The 'inner images' produced through these (cognitive) processes alongside with 'artworks' and pictures found inside the tunnel (such as insects sitting on the wall, tire marks, chewing gum stuck to the ground) were given a (momentary) form of articulation and were traced through artistic engagement. 6) A mode of temporarily beautifying a place was proposed by Christopher Woschitz, alias ChrisCross: a huge housing area in Itzling, a peripheral part of town, was transformed aesthetically by becoming a lively platform for fun, music, movement, and dance—adding the beauty of extra quality of life. During the retreat, Funk, Soul, Blues, Breakbeats and Hip Hop were played and people staying in the housing area danced together and learned dance techniques in Hip Hop workshops, culminating in a small but entertaining 'battle' on the Saturday evening on the event weekend. 7) Veronika called her submission a "historic place," the border between Salzburg and the neighboring German municipality Freilassing, which "provides material for many kind of discourses." Theater artist Dorit Ehlers and her team captured some of these discourses and explored them poetically and associatively in/as theatrical moments. The border was transferred virtually into the center of town: at centrally located landmarks that stand for transitions, transgression, or bridging, spontaneous associations of the border were cap-

tured and collected from passers-by. Individual words taken from

Mönchsberg, criticized the fact that "for many visitors to the city, it

18 Himmelreich translates as 'heavenly realm.' these utterances were written on banners and recombined as (physical) poetry. This `border-poetry´ that emerged from this process was carried in a 6km-long city walk from the center of town towards the border between Salzburg and the German town Freilassing and made visible at the border (see figure 2).

A central experience: dialogs as constitutive formats of re-negotiating the relationship between art and publics

Organizing, managing, and curating the festival challenged us to maintain the conceptual questions and theoretical intentions that were fundamental to the idea behind the festival. An early challenge we were confronted with—as mentioned above—was the slippage between highlighting potential for change, the meaning of aesthetics and looking for 'beautification.' Interestingly, the aspect of 'beautification' was foregrounded not only in numerous submissions, but was also highlighted by various media outlets in their coverage throughout the festival and thereby communicated to a wider public. At the same time, beautification was (for us)—obviously—in no way part of the programmatic intention behind the festival. This raised questions about how to address this issue in terms of the selection criteria for the submissions (what is the relationship between realizing curatorial intentions and responding to civic concerns that may contradict our intentions?), mediating dialogs between the artists and their concepts and the submitters and their expectations, as well as rethinking future communication strategies to the press. However, the aspect of 'beautification' lost its (public) significance during the festival in response to the actual artistic interventions and debates which highlighted alternative approaches to beauty or encouraged a change of one's relationship to or view of a given place, rather than the place itself, during the retreat and the event days.19

Overall, the role of the festival team as facilitators, moderators and initiators of dialogs at multiple levels became increasingly central: dialogs with the artists in the concept development phase; with people who have the power to give or deny permissions; with submitters and artists to mediate between intentions; and with (potential) participants in the citizen teams. Motivating participation, too, required direct outreach via dialog, addressing citizens with appropriate offers that are accessible—demanding infinite time resources and (wo)manpower.

However, resources were very limited in this project. In fact, the course of the project was defined by the fact that it was low-bud-

19 This shift of emphasis was further supported by social media postings and press interviews during the event weekend.

From Dialog to Doing



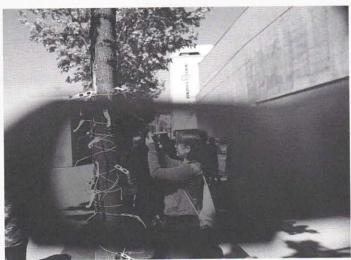


Figure 2: Pictures of the collaborative interventions based on the concepts of the artists: top row Romana Hagyo, Christopher Woschitz alias ChrisCross, middle row Cornelia Böhnisch, Julia Schwarzbach, Elisabeth Schmir, bottom row Stefan Heitzinger, Dorit Ehlers. © Festival 7hoch2 and Johannes Pichler











From Dialog to Doing

get, which affected (personal) resources, public relations, the scope of the interventions and the common challenges concerning motivation, distribution of tasks, and the frustration of not being able to realize the project's full potential. On the flip-side, the lack of money also had a positive impact on the mode of communication that developed: personal appreciation, support, and mutual respect—particularly between the festival team and the artists, but also with the submitters, participants, and cooperation partners—often replaced missing monetary appreciation. An appreciative communication and supportive attitude underpinned the whole project, which constituted unknown territory for the artists who (courageously) agreed to take on civic commissions.

In the end, one key question remains: did the concept of *Thoch2* and its realization work? Was it possible for art to become a 'common resource' through the multi-layered processes of participation, civic commission, and collaborative, artistically-mediated realization? It did and it could—but as a process, rather than a product or result. In the case of *Thoch2* it was/is the ongoing and challenging dialogs that shape and define the scope and potential of art as a common resource. The invitation to submit places and thus the playful proposition and translation of urban citizenship as cultural and artistic co-creation of one's own living environment and the engagement with those places, their owners, and the people who submitted them provided a tool for intervention and dialogs, as well as new impulses and an additional dimension to artistic processes via the (urban) space.

In particular, the process of submitting the places added the dimension of everyday spatial practices into the participatory artistic processes, leading to questions such as: 'what does it mean to change and to pause and remain in a place, which one usually passes in a hurry?' How does that change our ideas about and perceptions of the place, the city, and ourselves in the city?²¹

It seems simple, but *7hoch2* confirmed to us that it is necessary to engage in art as process rather than product: it was the 'ping-pong' settings between individuals and small groups; the exchanges that lead to publicly speaking up in and about urban places;²² the debates and ongoing negotiations about urban change, the constitution and meaning of 'beauty', as well as about (alternate) perceptions of our everyday environment, engagements with and actions in everyday places. Above all, it was

20 Ibid. Footnote 5.

- 21 This connects back to Leehyun
 Lim who "locates the substantial meaning of citizenship in the
 everyday practices of sharing space
 and forming and exchanging ideas"
 (Lim 2010, p. 221, quoted in Klaus
 and Lünenborg 2012, p. 202).
- 22 Compare Klaus and Lünenborg 2012, p. 201

and is the willingness and openness of everyone involved to communicate and experiment that in the end renewed the relationships between art and civic engagement.

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