



COMMUNITY ART INITIATIVES AS A FORM OF PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH: THE CASE OF STREET MOSAIC WORKSHOP

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The paper examines the potential of community art projects as a participatory research method and as a tool for neighbourhood regeneration. A thematisation of everyday micro-processes, which takes place in contemporary urban studies, involves the question about the research tactics, sensitive for urban details and micro-processes, bodily and emotional experiences, the experience of togetherness and the emerging networks of trust and mutual help. By recognising a sensitivity, flexibility and productivity of various art forms used as the research tactics and for the articulation of findings, the urban researchers enrich their toolbox with an “arts-based approach” as an integrated part of participatory action research. This paper explores a case of a community art initiative, developed in the wooden neighbourhood of Snipiskes (Šnipiškės, in Lithuanian) by the residents and a Vilnius-based interdisciplinary group “Laimikis.lt”, which has been working as researchers and art-activists in the neighbourhood since 2012. The community art initiative “Street Mosaic Workshop” works both as an informal communication platform and as an artistic micro-tool for revitalisation of the neighbourhood.

Keywords: participatory arts-based research, community art, neighbourhood regeneration, public spaces.

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Introduction: micro-urbanism and participatory approach

The spatial turn in the humanities and social sciences has not only turned spatial relations into an object of theoretical concern; it actualised space as a form of thinking. The question of how to turn space into an instrument of thinking entails a transformation of the research optics and the role of the researcher. It brings a series of methodological questions, which encourage exploring the limits of traditional research

methods. A spatial research itself is a critical spatial practice¹ and the researcher is already involved in the urban processes. Thereby the spatial turn encourages the re-examination of the position of the researcher and provides a shift in the research optics.

By recognizing a “strong relationship between urban public space, civic culture and political formation” (Amin 2008: 5), urban researchers start re-examining the interconnections between human and non-human actors, social behaviour and material culture (Amin 2008; Tonkiss 2013). This research focus brings into the consideration of the researchers the very micro-level processes of everyday urban life: routine scenarios performed by citizens in urban spaces, everyday interactions with urban elements, a wide range of “light touch forms of sociality” (Thrift 2005). Elsewhere I define this research optics as a micro-optics (or micro-urbanism), which derives from the phenomenology of perception and the everyday theory, and which are quite close to “micro-sociology” approach, developed by Harold Garfinkel, Erving Goffman and Anthony Giddens (Lavrinec 2011a, 2011b).

A thematisation of everyday micro-processes, which shape urban space and are embedded in it, involves the question about the research tactics and language of description (originating from the phenomenological background), sensitive for urban details and micro-processes, bodily and emotional experiences (Lavrinec 2002). It is not by chance, that urban researchers recognise the role of sensory metaphors in urban studies as instrumental for capturing “the transitivity and rhythm of urban life” (Amin, Thrift 2002). The flexibility of metaphors is also helpful in defining the position of the researcher toward the examined phenomena of urban life, as the research itself is a form of participation in urban life and one of many everyday spatial practices. A researcher’s self-awareness of the way he or she is involved into the everyday processes, encourages exploring the alternative ways of structuring the research process and articulating the outcomes, including such formats as maps, drawings, sound-installations and other artistic forms a researcher expands his / her research toolbox². The idea, that a research process can integrate flexible creative methods (and that the findings can be articulated not only in the form of traditional academic text), brings an interdisciplinary debate on the role of “arts-based research” to the field of urban studies and the reconceptualisation of the role of the urban researcher.

The aim of this paper is to examine the potential of community art projects as a form of participatory research and as a tool in neighbourhood regeneration. In

¹ Jane Rendell (2006), who explores the art interventions in public space as a form of active social critics, proposes the notion of critical spatial practice. This notion is based on the concept of “spatial practices”, developed by Michel de Certeau (1984), who formulated a thesis on the basis of the phenomenology of perception, which was crucial for emerging micro-urbanism, that “space is a practiced place“ and is “actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within in” (de Certeau 1984: 117).

² Discussing the inclusion of artistic forms into the urban studies, I would like to refer to Douglas Harper’s thesis, that “there is no reason studies cannot be done with paintings, cartoons, public displays such as graffiti or advertising billboards or virtually any visual image” (Harper 2002: 13), whereas the dominating form of visualisation in social sciences remains photography. The implementation of artistic methods in urban studies continues the same critical trajectory, in which traditional research methods and articulation forms are re-examined.

this paper, I will draw on the experience of Vilnius-based interdisciplinary group “Laimikis.lt”, which has been working on the cultural development of underused public urban spaces since 2007, and has been working on cultural regeneration in the wooden neighbourhood of Šnipiškės (Vilnius) since 2012. The mission of the group is “to promote participatory urban planning by developing site-specific creative communities’ initiatives in underused public spaces” (Laimikis.lt). The group presents itself as “an interdisciplinary platform for urban research, public and community art initiatives, non-formal learning, and activism” (*Ibid*). Thereby the orientation toward the convergence of the research and art is an essential characteristic of the activities of this group. Being a member of the group and being actively involved into the process of cultural regeneration of the wooden neighbourhood of Šnipiškės, I will refer to the data, which was collected during the art-and-research activities in the neighbourhood. It is interesting to note, that the emergence of non-formal active groups or small non-governmental organizations, which combine research and creative activities in their work, seems to be an institutional effect of the same process of convergence of art and research approaches. Small research and creative units are more flexible in their activities and they react efficiently to the challenges comparing to huge bureaucratic structures. Thus it is exactly small groups of enthusiasts coming from different fields, which turn into laboratories for developing research tactics, sensible to the changing urban situation.

Participatory arts-based research: developing space for co-action

By recognising that the process of the research of the neighbourhood is a (critical) spatial practice, and the presence of the researcher in the neighbourhood may have a mobilising impact on the neighbourhood by encouraging its residents to articulate and discuss various aspects of their everyday lives, the researchers enrich their toolbox by developing the participatory research tactics. The participatory approach is rooted in the idea of a convergence of theory and practice, reflection and action, which brings the idea to break traditional academic formats, which are “closed” to the wide range of everyday actors. The idea of co-research is essential for participatory approach: the knowledge is produced together with the various stakeholders (local residents, but also local service-providers, representatives of local elderates, activists and invited artists) as co-researchers and co-actors³. A co-produced knowledge “tackles issues relevant to people belonging to a community of place, interest or identity” (Durham 2011), though the experience of “Laimikis.lt” group working in the neighbourhoods demonstrates, that in some cases the sense of community itself is rather a result of

³ Co-researchers can be involved into the research on the different levels, for example, Durham Community Research Team (2011) distinguished between four degrees of community participation in research: “1. Community-controlled and -managed research, no professional researchers involved. 2. Community-controlled with professional researchers managed by and working for the community. 3. Co-production – equal partnership between professional researchers and community members. 4. Controlled by professional researchers but with greater or lesser degrees of community partnership” (Durham 2011).

the participatory research, than a pre-existing condition⁴. Moreover, the actualisation and re-examination of the social interconnections is inevitable topic of participatory research (it is one of the reasons, why some researchers propose to pay a special attention to a “safe space”⁵).

Being embedded in the particularly place with its issues and potential, the process of co-research itself is an awareness-rising action. It implies a critical distance toward everyday processes: “The participatory research process enables co-researchers to step back cognitively from familiar routines, forms of interaction, and power relationships in order to fundamentally question and rethink established interpretations of situations and strategies” (Bergold, Thomas 2012). This reflexive position provides a ground for further social actions, as participatory approach is “community oriented”, and a sense of social justice is an integral part of the research process. It is recognised that the strength of participatory (action) approach “lies in its focus on generating solutions to practical problems and its ability to empower practitioners, by getting them to engage with research and the subsequent development or implementation activities” (Koshy *et al.* 2011: 2).

The participatory research is connected to a radical shift in understanding, who is the addressee of the research: it is no longer an academic community, but rather people of the neighbourhood and other stakeholders, which are involved into the neighbourhood processes. This position leads to the above-mentioned question about the language and forms of presenting the outcomes of the research, and comes out from the researcher’s involvement in the practical / artistic activities⁶. As Bergold and Thomas notice, “the convergence of the perspective of science and practice does not come simply by deciding to conduct participatory research” (Bergold, Thomas 2012).

I propose to consider the arts-based approach as an essential part of participatory research, as “arts” is the answer to the question of how to encourage participation of the residents in the research processes. The “arts-based approach” in qualitative

⁴ I concur with the sceptical approach toward the non-reflexive use of the notion of “community” (Creed 2006; Amin 2008). It is also noticeable, that in post-soviet region the notion of “community” has become an element of the official strategic urban discourse, which is developed by the municipalities and urban planners and which is partly shaped by the discourse of EU foundations. In their turn, the members of local elderates alongside with activists, who are directly included in all kind of processes in the neighbourhoods, are inclined to use the notion of “residents” or “local networks”, if they adopt the notion of “community” for representational purposes, as a part of official discourse. The pragmatics of this notion demonstrate that “community” has become rather a rhetorical figure, which lacks a content and specification. It creates a paradoxical situation, in which the “representation of community” is used as an instrument of control over the residents of the neighbourhood. As Sharon Zukin puts it, “whoever controls public space sets the ‘program’ for representing society” (Zukin 1998).

⁵ As Jarg Bergold and Stefan Thomas point out, “In order to facilitate sufficient openness, a ‘safe space’ is needed, in which the participants can be confident that their utterances will not be used against them, and that they will not suffer any disadvantages if they express critical or dissenting opinions. It is not a question of creating a conflict-free space, but rather of ensuring that the conflicts that are revealed can be jointly discussed; that they can either be solved or, at least, accepted as different positions; and that a certain level of conflict tolerance is achieved” (Bergold, Thomas 2012).

⁶ It is typical, that the developers of participatory arts-based approach began as artists (for example, see McNiff 2008: 29–30).

research derives from the recognition that creative forms can serve as sensitive tools to explore the everyday processes⁷. It is defined as “the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the art, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people that they involve in their studies” (McNiff 2008: 29). A similar process of recognition that the images and a process of visualisation (a photography) can serve not only for illustrative purposes, but also as a research tool, took place in anthropology and sociology as a part of *visual turn* in social sciences and humanities. However, the use of a wide range of creative forms as research tools oversteps the borders of the visual realm and includes all kinds of performative art practices into the process of the research.

“Arts-based research” is an interdisciplinary tool, which can be used by both the artists and the representatives of various fields of studies (media studies, visual studies, urban studies, etc.) alongside with the community workers and residents of the neighbourhood. The notion of arts-based research refers rather to a form of the research, than to its “author” (i.e. it is not necessarily an artist who conducts an arts-based research). Summarising “Laimikis.lt” experience in revitalising public spaces by developing interactive art objects (see Lavrinec 2011b), it is a communication function of art, an ability to arrange a space for a mutual dialogue and creative interpretations which make art-based approach valuable for urban research.

An interactive art object in the public space provides a pretext for conversations and in some cases for cooperation between strangers. If the intervention encourages playful interactions and brings joy to the participants, while the participation is not obligatory, the place of the intervention will be attended repeatedly and more actively. By providing the conditions for enjoying the stay in the place and the company of accidental passers-by, art intervention launches sustainable connection to the place. In many cases interactive objects or repetitive creative action serve as an axis for emerging citizens’ network.

One of the examples of how art intervention works as a communication space is “Street Komoda” (Fig. 1), an urban furniture, designed by the participants of my workshop in “Lost’n’found objects and places for sharing” in collaboration with the invited street artists. It was installed close to one of the most crowded streets in Vilnius, providing passers-by with the possibility to leave and find all kinds of small items in “Komoda’s” drawers. After finding the “Komoda” by chance, some citizens returned to it with small items for sharing. The action of leaving and taking an item is a form of indirect communication, which started building a network of users of the “Komoda”. Just in a couple of weeks, there was quite a big group of returning users, who started developing direct interaction and making contacts.

⁷ A symmetrical idea of art as ethnographic research emerges (which, according to Hal Foster, is connected to the phenomenological turn in arts). In the paper “The Artist as Ethnographer?” Foster (1996) claims anthropology to be “a lingua franca in artistic practice and critical discourse” (Foster 1996: 182) and examines a parallel between ethnographic investigation and site-specific art.



Figs 1a, 1b. “Street Komoda” is an urban furniture, designed for sharing, which accumulated a network of its users in a couple of weeks

The essential part of this art intervention is participation of passers-by, who form a network of users of the object and the place and keep the object “alive”, taking a part in the development of the project. Thus despite the concept of this object belongs to the group of authors, as an interactive street art intervention “Komoda” is very close to a community art. This kind of the art objects become a community setting, and the main principle of their functioning is a non-verbal dialogue with the passers-by who become potential co-authors of the whole project.

By creating a pretext for a playful interaction, art interventions initiate “light touch sociality” or “partially engaged, partially disengaged modes of social interaction” (Thrift 2005). As Nigel Thrift noted, while developing the concept of “light touch sociality”, its forms “can be counted as attempts to privilege a little more expectation of involvement which do not, however, try to go over the affective top <...>. These are attempts to foster the expectation of civility which do not try to set their hopes too high” (Thrift 2005). As a research tool, art objects and creative actions in public space actualise a micro-level of sociality and make the dynamics of everyday contacts visible. For example, “Street Komoda” was constructed both as a result of a pilot research on the transforming relations with lost items in the cities, and as a critical laboratory for the pilot research on how urban network of mutual help and trust emerge and function. But above all, this art intervention was designed as a place for exchange and for unexpected discoveries, joy and feeling of togetherness.

Public space and local networking: Šnipiškės neighbourhood

Arts-based approach as a form of participatory research in the neighbourhoods is especially instrumental in seeking to reach diverse groups living in the area. In traditional qualitative research the researcher initiates separate communication situations, which are connected solely by the figure of the researcher and the interpretation developed by the researcher. On the contrary, participatory arts-based approach is oriented toward creating of a sustainable communication situation, which would be developed

by its participants. Actually, participatory arts-based approach is network-oriented, as networking is a condition for the research and usually a result of it.

For Ash Amin and Thrift a notion of network thematises cities as “sites for staging certain kind of proximity”⁸ (Amin, Thrift 2002: 63). This interconnection between a type of social relations (neighbouring) and a developed public space is implied. One of the pre-conditions for the cooperation between the residents might be a shared public space. In the structure of the wooden neighbourhood of Šnipiškės with its peculiar configuration of the private and public plots and private houses (see more Aglinskas 2014), and ownership issues, there is a lack of public spaces. With two to five families sharing a wooden house and its inner yards, the only site for communication with neighbours from the houses nearby was the street as a transition area (invitation to the home place is another way to hold a conversation in the neighbourhood). It might be a lack of public spaces and a lack of tradition of public gatherings, which prevented residents of the wooden houses from public discussing of the shared problems. The neighbourhood faces an increasing redevelopment pressure, accompanied with residents’ uncertainty about the nearest future. While the uncertainty of the residents remains inarticulate in public discourse, in media the neighborhood has been regularly stigmatised as criminal district, the dwellers of which are pictured as not interested in progress and greedy (as they do not sell their private plots). At the same time the recreational potential of the neighborhood, which is located closely to the city center, is tremendous, and the wooden architecture of the late 19th – the beginning of 20th century alongside with the preserved structure of everyday life is unique.

The identification and the development of the places, which could serve as a space for gatherings and meetings, were among the priority goals when “Laimikis.lt” started approaching the neighbourhood. After identifying a potential place for further development, a series of neighbourhood events took place on the field, which little by little became a symbolically appropriated place and became present on the “mental map” of the residents and the guests of the neighbourhood⁹. After that, the residents chose an alternative name for the nameless place (Fig. 2). Besides the developing of actual place in the neighbourhood, turning it into public space for gatherings and discussions, there are the alternative tactics of place-making (turning a meaningless transitive places into a meaningful site) which are based on community art initiatives.

⁸ Even a wide-spread modernist metaphor of a “city as a machine” is interpreted by Thrift and Amin though the networking, as a “mechanosphere”, a set of constantly evolving systems or networks, machinic assemblages, which intermix categories like biological, technical, social, economic, and so on with the boundaries of meaning and practice between the categories always shifting” (Amin, Thrift 2002: 78). As notes the use of this metaphor “point to how cities are built through the organising all sorts of materials and tools” (Latham 2008: 219). In his turn, Richard Sennett, who develops a trilogy, the axis of which is the question of “how people shape personal effort, social relation and physical environment” (starting from his book *The Craftsman*, moving to *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation*, and planning the book on the cities) connects productive form of cooperation to the skills, *technē* (Sennett 2013: 6).

⁹ It corresponds to the idea of Fran Tonkiss, who, drawing upon the notion of “infrastructure of everyday lives” (Gilroy, Booth 1999), notes that this infrastructure “rigged up around and through mundane exchanges and informal support structure. It mediates between the uncertainties of public provision and the exclusions of private resource” (Tonkiss 2013: 153).

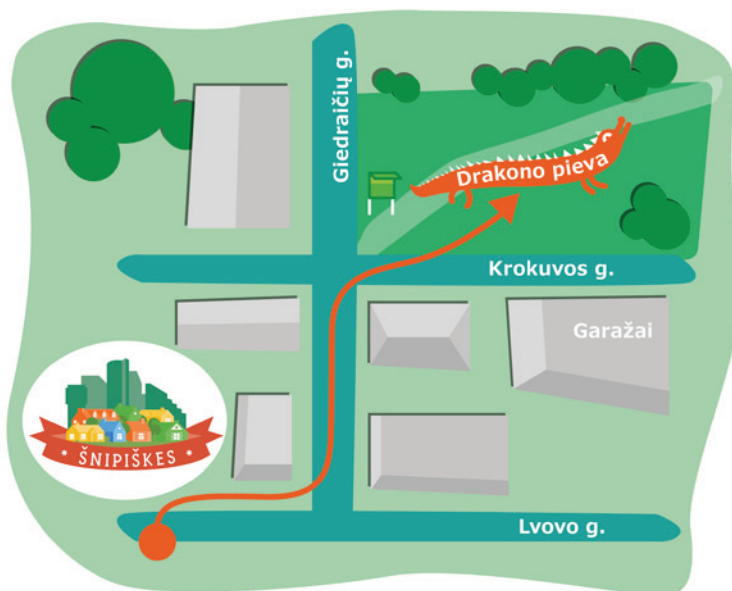


Fig. 2. “Dragon’s field” was one of the alternative names for the anonymous field (municipality’s plot), which was turned into periodical place for gatherings. A detail of Šnipiškės map with a Dragon field, used for flyers, announcing gatherings and events.

Street Mosaic Workshop in Šnipiškės: developing a space for mutual trust

Street Mosaic Workshop initiative was launched by “Laimikis.lt” group in the wooden neighbourhood of Šnipiškės (Vilnius) in 2013. The wooden Šnipiškės neighbourhood was well-known in 17th and 18th centuries for ceramic workshops. Nowadays, the district, where the neighbourhood is located, is known for its small local services (workshops). The idea to start decorating utility poles and facades in the Šnipiškės neighbourhood with ceramic mosaics refers to the history of the district (Fig. 3). As a long-term project, street mosaic workshop has a twofold aim: to develop a communication tool for reaching neighbourhood residents and arrange an informal mobile “space” for meetings, and to create points of attraction in the neighbourhood (a mosaic route), inviting guests of the district to have a walk through the neighbourhood and establish personal contact with it.



Fig. 3. One of the utility poles, decorated during the Street Mosaic Workshop. A fragment of “Street Mosaic Route” in Šnipiškės, Vilnius

Several times a week “Laimikis.lt” members spent a couple of hours decorating utility poles with ceramic mosaics, making the presence in the neighbourhood visible. Every passer-by was invited to join, also a *Facebook* group, dedicated to this neighbourhood, was used for inviting. A link between online and offline activities helped to widen the residents’ network¹⁰. The activity of *Facebook* group “Šnipiškėčiai” (residents of Šnipiškės, in Lithuanian), attracted residents who did not take part in creative actions directly, yet became a part of the regeneration processes in the neighbourhood.

Repetitive actions in public space provide a possibility of publicly-shared emotional and bodily experience and establish momentary citizen solidarities. While art interventions reinterpret spatial structures using the potential of the place <...>. Creative actions reinterpret routine scenarios that embedded in various types of urban space (Lavrinec, Zaporozhets 2013, see more Lavrinec 2011a, 2011b). The involvement of the residents into the creative process was possible on different levels: it could be a direct participation in creating mosaics, or commentaries, or donation of ceramic tiles (Figs 4a, 4b). In a week after the initiative started, a woman, who lived near the place, gave a key to her garage to the team members, where she kept a collection of colourful tiles, which she collected all her life, as she felt a passion for ceramics. In two weeks an owner of bicycles repair shop in Šnipiškės invited the participants of the Mosaic workshop to decorate a façade of his shop, while the residents of the house where the shop was situated were quite enthusiastic about the Street Mosaic Workshop, and some of them joined the workshop. The geography of the initiative expanded as well as the network of participants.

During all the process, which took place in summertime and in the early autumn (due to the weather conditions in Lithuania), Street Mosaic Workshop served as a place for collecting stories of the neighbourhood, as the residents started bringing documents and sharing their stories while taking part in the workshop as participants or observers. A collective creative action on the streets created a space, where residents could come and enjoy the company of each other, the creative process, share their stories and demonstrate family artefacts. This ritual brought “Laimikis.lt” team to a discussion about the forms of storytelling in the neighbourhoods and the alternative formats, which can be used for communicating the local knowledge and local history, and making it visible (audible, touchable) for the residents and for the outside viewers.

¹⁰ An example of how the network works could be a communicational situation, which took part in Šnipiškės. A stranger approached me in the late evening on my way back and said: “You’ve searched for the explanation of Shanghai name. *Google* for a criminal vocabulary “Fenya” (in Russian *Феня*), Shanghai means ‘a slum, squatter settlement in suburban part of the city’. Just check for ‘Fenya’”. After that, he just turned and went away. Shanghai is an unofficial toponym of the wooden part of Šnipiškės neighbourhood, and the question about the roots of this alternative name of the neighbourhood pursues the researchers of this neighbourhood.



Figs 4a, 4b. A format of Street Mosaic Workshop is open: everyone can join. While the most enthusiastic participants of Street Mosaic Workshop were youngsters and children, who took part in the creation of the mosaics, the elderly supported the initiative by donating tiles, commenting and inviting to decorate their houses. Illustration by Tomas Umbrasas

Because of the active involvement of Šnipiškės residents, Street Mosaic Workshop has turned into a sustainable community art initiative and still has a lot of space to be developed. As a mobile open-air platform for residents meetings, which moves from one utility-pole to another, then to a bicycle shop, and other poles, it works productively as a tool for developing a network of mutual help and trust.

By creating points of attraction in the neighbourhood this community art initiative not only brings local residents together, but also helps to reconfigure the negative image of the neighbourhood, which in the case of Šnipiškės has been formed by mass media for many years. By taking an active part in decorating electric poles and facades, residents developed a local net of trust and mutual help. As a result, the neighbourhood started attracting attention of media. Also, it started attracting citizens, tourists, and visiting community leaders, and brought us to the further step of regeneration of the wooden neighbourhood, which lays just next to the expanding skyscrapers area.

Community art projects also serve as a tool for non-formal learning: during the common activities participants learn from each other and develop new skills (for example, in photography, in communication, in design, in ethnographic research, etc.) during the research period. As Sennett points out, cooperation is a craft (Sennett 2013: x), it is connected to some physical co-being and co-acting and to some skills. The networking itself is a valuable result of participatory research activities, but the craft (creative co-action) is an essential part of the networking process. This processes of re-designing the surfaces in the neighbourhood, is a twofold action of symbolical ap-

appropriation of the space and a materialisation of the networking in the neighbourhood. In her study “City by Design” Tonkiss discusses the ability of design (in the most broad sense) to “refer to social practices and processes that shape spatial forms, relationships and outcomes in intentional as well as in less intended ways” (Tonkiss 2013: 5). According to her, “city design captures a range of activities and interventions that shape urban environments, construct and respond to urban problems, and integrate social, spatial and material forms in the city” (Tonkiss 2013: 5). In the case of Street Mosaic Workshop a notion of design can be applied only on a very micro-scale, but it brought a visible change not only to the surfaces of the neighbourhood, but also to a structure of neighbourhood social net.

A physical presence of the researcher in the neighbourhood, which is declared through collaborative actions and creative initiatives, arranges a space for non-formal trustworthy interaction with the residents, who start sharing their stories of living in the neighbourhood more intensively than in formal “interviewer-respondents” situation. This experience brings new responsibilities and perspectives into the stage. A dynamics of the development of the residents’ network, which emerges around the initiatives in the neighbourhood, demonstrates an impending shift from the tactical level of actions in the neighbourhood to the strategic level of planning changes in long-term perspective and on a bigger scale. It presupposes a dialogue with the municipality, urban planners and various stakeholders, but also raises the question of the development of urban discourse, shared by the different actors¹¹.

Conclusions

As a form of participatory arts-based research, community art projects are stimulus for emerging neighbourhood networks. Periodical creative collaborative actions in urban space serve as a platform for non-formal communication between local residents, between residents and other citizens, between residents and researchers. As a method of participatory research, community art initiatives are instrumental in providing the conditions for productive interactions between residents. On the base of Street Mosaic Workshop’s activities, a local growing network of mutual trust and help emerged.

By providing conditions for periodical co-being and co-action in the neighbourhood places, creative initiatives encourage active collaboration between residents (on different levels) and constitute public spaces. Repetitious collective art-activities as a form of symbolic appropriation of neighbourhood locations establish an emotional relation with these places, which encourages a development of responsibility for the neighbourhood space outside the private yards.

¹¹ Marcelo Lopes de Souza, who investigated the potential of social urban movements to turn into “critical urban planning” agents, argues, that the more social movements “use the ‘local knowledge’ (knowledge of the space, of people’s needs and ‘language’) in terms of planning by means of combining it with the technical knowledge produced by the state apparatus and universities (in order both to criticize some aspects of this knowledge and to ‘recycle’ and use some other ones), the more *strategic* can be the way they think and act” (Souza 2007: 330).

By developing open formats for creative co-actions, participatory arts-based approach provides researchers with an effective tool for informal communication. Seeking to reach various groups of residents and provide a possibility for continuous discussions, a hybrid presence in the neighbourhood, based on combining offline and online communication (for example, creative activities in the neighbourhood with the communication via *Facebook* group), is effective.

By creating new points of attraction in the neighbourhood, community art projects serve as a tool for de-stigmatisation of the place. All kinds of pretexts for positive media buzz about the neighbourhood are helpful in deconstructing stereotyped image of the neighbourhood. Also, seeking to deconstruct a stigmatised image of the neighbourhood, the attraction of the visitors to the neighbourhood is very important (it is articulated by local residents), as it provides the conditions for non-stereotyped perception of neighbourhood's life.

Competing interests

This paper is written on the base of the materials of the arts-based participatory research, initiated by the interdisciplinary urban research and community art group "Laimikis.lt" in the wooden neighbourhood of Snipiskes in 2012-2014. The author of the paper is a member of this research team and a co-founder of the internet archive <http://laimikis.lt>, where the materials of the arts-based research are placed.

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BENDRUOMENINIO MENO INICIATYVOS KAIP DALYVAUJAMOJO TYRIMO FORMA: GATVĖS MOZAIKOS DIRBTUVIŲ ATVEJIS

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje analizuojamas bendruomeninio meno projektų potencialas, organizuojant dalyvaujamojo meninio tyrimą ir regeneruojant viešąsias kaimynijų erdves. Šiuolaikinėse miesto studijose įvykęs kasdienių procesų tematizavimas įtraukia klausimą apie tyrimo taktikas, jautrias urbanistiniams mikroprocesams ir aplinkos detalėms, taip pat kūniškai bei emocinei patirčiai, bendrabūvio (angl. *togetherness*) patirčiai ir besiformuojantiems socialiniams ryšiams (pvz., pasitikėjimo tinklams). Atpažindami įvairių meno formų jautrumą minėtųjų miesto gyvenimo aspektų atžvilgiu ir efektyvumą, organizuojant tyrimo lauką bei lankstumą, formuluojant tyrimų rezultatus, miesto tyrinėtojai praplečia savo metodų diapazoną. Šiame straipsnyje susitelkiama ties „meniniu tyrimu“ (angl. *arts-based research*), kaip integralia „dalyvaujamojo tyrimo“ (angl. *participatory research*) dalimi. Bendruomeniniai meno projektai šiame straipsnyje pasitelkiami kaip šio tyrimo forma, taip pat atskleidžiamas jų poveikis kaimynijos regeneracijai. Kaip atvejis analizuojama „Gatvės mozaikos dirbtuvių“ iniciatyva, kurią nuo 2012 m. Šnipiškių medinėje kaimynijoje vysto skirtingo amžiaus vietos gyventojai kartu su kūrybine miesto tyrimų ir meninių intervencijų grupe „Laimikis.lt“. Atskleidžiama, kad bendruomeninė meno iniciatyva tarnauja ir kaip neformalios komunikacijos platforma, ir kaip meninis kaimynijos studijų bei gaivinimo įrankis.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: meninis tyrimas, bendruomeninis menas, dalyvaujamas tyrimas, miesto studijos, kaimynijos vystymas, viešosios erdvės.

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