

BUDAPEST100 - WEEKEND OF OPEN HOUSES

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

The project owner of Budapest100 is the Hungarian Contemporary Architecture Center, that is an independent and open cultural center and professional organization, that wishes to advance the education, recognition and development of architecture in the widest professional and non-professional environment. In the first 10 years of its operation it has organized nearly 500 events with more than 400.000 people visiting them. It is an integral part of its functioning to do research and consulting for local governments and the for-profit sector.

MISSION

The mission of Budapest100 is complex: firstly, it wills to reform the urban community co-existence, secondly, to change the relationship between the residents and the city, and thirdly to help the crowds to become more responsible citizens. Isolation is a not a new social problem, but in our opinion in this area there has not been many initiatives that have such an experience-based process in focus. It is the strength of our event that even in some cases it is stretching the limits of the intimate sphere, but it creates a demand to share and value transfer. The easiest way of social mobilization is to create emotional engagement. With the festival we are willing to create a platform that gives a chance to the stories and values behind closed doors to be seen and to start dialogues. Budapest100 has highlighted the possibilities, the clean, cleverly organized, friendly city, that is willing to form its future consciously, involving the residents, conscious about its values.

STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

Throughout Europe there are similar initiatives, but with a much lower social impact. The examples thought of as good practices are only concentrating on the built environment, lets the audience enter a building and they tell them the most important data. Budapest100 adds the factors of community-building and creating value.

Even though its organizational structure is gradual, but there is no declared hierarchical relationship between the actors. Our structure is transparent, we use open communication. The preparation of the event, the involvement of the volunteers, the fundamental building and urban historic research is done by a 6-persons team. The project leader, the coordinator of volunteers and the research leader has the role to make the phases of work and the whole process work. The volunteers work together with a team leader in smaller teams, who helps them with the research processes, the involvement of the residents, and realize their own ideas for programs. The volunteers meet every 2 weeks, they are chosen by filling out an online form. In 2017, it is the first time when we organize team-building trainings for the volunteers, where we model the situations that might come up throughout the organization process, we give them information about the event and the theme, and make them function as a team. After that phase, the volunteers go to the houses, deliver letters to the mailboxes, and start conversations with the locals.

The compilation of the volunteers is very mixed, in terms of age and professions; the group contains university students, high school students, retired people, architects, employees of companies, artists. Budapest100 is a platform for transgenerational meetings. Our volunteers have a big freedom to realize their creative ideas, however, they have to take the responsibility coming with this freedom. They work to reach a common goal, but they do it for themselves. The addressed residents are invited to a Resident meeting, where we present them the structure of Budapest100 and what it means exactly to join the program.

The involved residents and the volunteers joined to the houses are realizing programs together alongside

the principles articulated by the center team of Budapest100. These are culture development, information transfer, preservation of values and community cooperation. Based on all these our base programs are the following: house history and city history walks; community picnic; memoirs of the elderly (personal stories); exhibitions; theatrical and music programs; interactive city questionnaires.

Above the programs realized in houses (both apartment blocks and institutions) we organize workshops and discussions to mostly the professional audiences and decision makers about the questions of urban planning and new approach city planning. These events are realized separately, with specific professional mentors, by the leading team. We closely cooperate with architects, landscape architects, art historians and sociologists. However we pay attention to the residents and make sure they are getting involved in these discussions, so they have the space to tell their own opinion and ideas, and we also make sure that every professional team dealing with social problems have a chance to appear at these events.

The prime moment of the organizational process is the Budapest100 weekend, that will be realized 22-23 April this year with the theme of Quay-side. After the festival, we organize evaluation meetings both for the residents and the volunteers.

Our principal is that we do not provide financial aid to realizing the programs and for the buildings, but we help the volunteers and the residents with infrastructural and relationship capital. The engagement rate is very high despite of the financial conditions.

RESULTS

In the past 6 years, Budapest100 has opened the gates of 50-60 houses and institutions. Year by year we work together with 100-150 volunteers, our attendance data has reached 20.000 people.

In terms of involved residents, encouraging them to self-organization is a great result. Based on their feedback, the weekends were full of experiences and lessons learned. Many of them have highlighted that they would have never had thought that so many people would be interested in their lives or their neighbourhood. In an indirect way we offered them the feeling of uniqueness and importance. Also, we made them take a glance into the situation where the neighbourhood is cooperating and acts towards a common goal, and make their voices heard. Additionally we gave them access to knowledge that helps them getting closer to their own stories, their building and through that their cities, making them feel responsible. It is a lot more concrete success that many apartment blocks started repeating community action in a self-organizing way after Budapest100, meaning renovations and smaller architectural interferences or organizing a yard picnic or a concert. Our volunteers gain professional knowledge on one hand, and also they can become a member of a community, and they are more willing to act and trust that they are able to work creatively for a good cause by themselves. In the professional aspect, they are given project management and research knowledge, and they are also encouraged to be proactive. We also think of the increase of audience as a success, and also that on a professional level, the acceptance of the program has become better, and even local government actors has become aware of the potential in the festival to create value, and they are supporting us on the level of principles.

Besides, we are happy about our following results:

In 2014, the jury of Volunteering Hungary - Centre of Social Innovation has chosen Budapest100 the volunteering program of the year.

In 2013, the Guardian has chosen the festival as one of the most interesting programs of the Continent. Budapest100 also got one of the prizes in "The most beautiful city feast" section at the grant by Lebedinge Stadt Stiftung, Hamburg.

PARTNERS, but are not limited

In the list of our partners, both non-governmental organizations and the institutes of the public sector are represented: Budapest City Archives, Metropolitan Ervin Szabó Library, Gallery of Józsefváros, Budapestlike, Town Protection Association for Budapest, Civilians for the Palace Quartier Association, Hosszúlépés (Long Step), Imagine Budapest, Budapest Film Zrt., local governments of the districts.

We have active relations with universities in Budapest, with a special attention to architect education and art history, architecture history specializations.

We have succeeded in building media cooperations with WeLoveBudapest, Urbanista blog, Magyar Narancs (prestige Hungarian press) and the Tilos Radio, among others.

The list of our supporters and volunteers is available on our website: www.budapest100.hu

Our major supporters are the National Cultural Fund, the National Talent Program and City of Budapest.

MEDIA APPEARANCES

Due to the thematic change of 2016, the more and more press pays attention to Budapest100. Some of them advertised the festival, but also addressed the buildings to join, and also they reported about the city-level questions that came up throughout the professional discussions. In 2016, Budapest100 appeared in radio and television interviews, press and online articles more than 50 times, video-and photo-documentations.

Link list of press appearances: http://budapest100.hu/sajto/megjelenesek_2016

Synopsis video about Budapest100 in 2016:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=99mLqcrMgRI&feature=youtu.be>

EXPANDING THE LIMITS

It is our future task to expand our limits, meaning both professional limits and borders of the country. We would like to try our method in different context as well, this is why we would like to start the program in other Hungarian cities, and find civilian relations, partners there. Besides we are planning to address the cities of the surrounding countries, hopefully to create a festival with similar methods, adapted to the local needed. Based on this motivation, we have got in contact with Timisoara and Bratislava, with whom we are negotiating about the chances of implementing the festival and the possibilities to cooperate.