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MoTAEditions

CCEA's Negrelli Viaduct

Location
Prague

Year
2012 - 2018

Artists
MOBA

Producer
CCEA

Website
<http://viadukt kreativni.cz>

The Negrelli Viaduct – Opportunity for a Creative Prague was a project led by the architects of CCEA MOBA. Initiated in 2012, it included a series of activities and small subprojects aimed at improving the quality of public space surrounding the 19th century Negrelli Viaduct. The viaduct is located on the border of Prague's historical centre and the district of Karlin. It is one of the most important technical constructions in the Czech Republic and the second oldest bridge in Prague. With a length of one kilometre, until 1920 it was also the longest stone bridge in Europe.

The project started when SŽDC (Railway Infrastructure Administration), the renovation investor, presented its plan to reconstruct the bridge. The planned reconstruction primarily focused on the technical aspects, such as the railway tracks, and did not consider the possibility of the revitalisation or the use of the spaces under the structure. This neglected environment was being used as unofficial parking lots, a drug dealer zone, opportune public toilets, a junkyard, etc.

In response to the renovation plans, CCEA MOBA's negotiations with the public sectors (the representatives of the Capital City of Prague, Prague 8 city district, SŽDC) have resulted in several interventions on site during the course of four years. The large-scale 'Summer Under the Viaduct' intervention in 2016 created the most impact. This programme tested the impact of involving the inhabitants in the use of the arches and communicated the new possibilities for their use. The 'under the bridge' public space has become a popular destination, not only for the local inhabitants and people that work nearby but also for tourists. Areas were created not only for relaxation but also for sports, music, theatre shows and other events. The programme was a result of direct input from the inhabitants of Prague. In parallel, CCEA MOBA presented its vision, which aims at permanently transforming the

spaces under the arches of the bridge – in the form of bistros, craft workshops, art galleries and studios – and therefore supporting minor productions and creativity, which is the basis of the DNA of the district of Karlín.

Thanks to the ‘Summer Under the Viaduct’, an agreement between the public sphere and the local inhabitants regarding the reuse of the spaces under the viaduct has been reached. Transformation of the viaduct has therefore progressed to the further stages of preparation, in co-operation with the Capital City of Prague council, SŽDC and the Institute of Planning and Development (IPR), with the planned end for the reconstruction envisaged in 2021.

SŽDC started the renovation in August 2017. In October 2017 the City Municipality of Prague 8 accepted the study proposed by CCEA MOBA for new activities under the viaduct and new public spaces along the structure. The negotiations with the representatives of the Capital City of Prague about financing and the next stages of the project are still underway and CCEA MOBA believes negotiations regarding the next phases of the project will be completed before the end of the year (2018).

The project proves that an architect, as well as a citizen who is passionate about the surroundings, is capable of

initiating such a reconstruction on a scale of one kilometre. The Negrelli Viaduct – Opportunity for a Creative Prague is a quest for a path where creative activity can contribute to an improvement in the cityscape.

Specific interventions of the long-term project initiated by CCEA MOBA could only be realised thanks to the generosity of our partners: Consortium for Karlín, Vodafone Czech Republic Foundation, Programme of Czech-Swiss Co-operation, Capital City of Prague, Municipal District of Prague 8, and the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic.

Infrastructure and Community

BY IGOR KOVAČEVIĆ

Permanent pressure on the main players in towns to negotiate with inhabitants and create common solutions brings more democracy to current European cities. Those experiences start to become standard procedures in the new developments undertaken by cities where community topics are not just a mechanism to assert development but also a guarantee of the future qualities of life in the newly developed parts of cities. Even looking at business models of development focusing on housing projects financed by private investors, it can be seen that the involvement of existing communities in neighbourhoods is more or less a rule for successful housing projects. Meanwhile, investments in office buildings by private investors and developers are almost never led with this in mind: The debate is more focused on political representatives and institutions issuing permits to the community. When investigating the reasons why projects other than housing are less discussed in public, one such reason could be the type of clients of housing projects, the potential buyers of flats, who are an unhomogeneous group with a lot of different interests, while buyers or tenants of the retail and office spaces are bigger companies with higher capital, whose integration into the new neighbourhood is led by aspects other than local community interest. Of course, all companies will oppose this with their internal policies on how much they bring to a community, but if we try to locate where companies and retail outlets are concentrated, it will become clear that it is in the mono-functional neighbourhoods of office buildings or shopping centres.

A similar attitude can be observed in public investments into infrastructure in Central Europe. Office developers are using the same argument: we are creating new jobs, so in order to be as effective as possible we can ill afford to lose time with community work in the preparation phase of big infrastructural projects. Developers would likely argue that because this is infrastructure, there is no time to communicate, they need to be fast and effective etc. This is the reason why infrastructural projects are developed with a lack of focus on the community.

In response to this problem, the Centre for Central European Architecture (CCEA) initiated and led a community involvement programme that independently connected and organised different interest groups in the project that was to become a complete revitalisation of the Negrelli Viaduct.

The project started in 2012 when, while working on the Prague Magistrala, a multi-year project of CCEA, the centre learned from the media that a new railway connection between Prague city centre and the airport will be developed using the current rail network. This huge infrastructural project also included reconstruction of the Negrelli Viaduct, the second oldest bridge in Prague, prepared with the Heritage Department of Prague. The project to repair and reinforce this unique technical monument focused on the rails and everything that was happening on the viaduct itself. However, on looking more closely, CCEA realised that the investment of a few million euros did not even include a new project for lighting for the areas under the viaduct.

In order to start a public debate about such a big investment, whilst not opposing it, and a future project which is important for the City of Prague, during autumn 2013 CCEA organised a three-day event call 'Line Galleries' where 10 Prague galleries were invited to exhibit art work under the viaduct, which, at that time, offered poor conditions for exhibitions. It was a one-off installation of the future possible qualities following reconstruction of the viaduct. For three days Prague's galleries, curators, artists and, most importantly, Karlin's inhabitants, gathered in the district of the city where the viaduct is located. People living next to the dangerous and crime-ridden place were confronted with the new qualities of the viaduct which could be realised through its reconstruction. With huge media coverage of the initiative that followed, the Railway Infrastructure Administration (SŽDC) also changed its opinion, and from the negative position it had at the beginning of the project, it understood that improving the area around the viaduct will also help to sustain its investment. The event was visited by thousands of inhabitants and, for the first time in the 21st century, the viaduct became a connecting point rather than a bridge dividing the historical and industrial parts of the city. In the following two years, CCEA organised a series of round-tables with stakeholders. The meetings with officials of City Hall and the SŽDC that followed led to a decision to unite all the possible areas under the viaduct under the administration of the City of Prague.

In 2015 CCEA organised a second public discussion with inhabitants of the area in order to start a conversation on what the arches should look like and what should be proposed in terms of programming. The conclusions



ATMOSPHERE OF THE VIADUCT BEFORE CCEA INTERVENTIONS



SUMMER UNDER VIADUCT – PLAYGROUND. PHOTO BY ARTYKEL CREATIVE FORM, LUKAŠ CETERA, 2016

from the discussion were then presented to officials of Prague's municipality, its districts, various land owners, and officials of the other related structures.

One of the main aspects of working with communities is not to promise what cannot be delivered. Supported by the local community, CCEA took the next steps to organise official meetings where, for the first time, all stakeholders and important players were invited. The event, organised as a symposium, took place at the premises of an insurance company located next to the viaduct. It was the first meeting between all the concerned organisations and it resulted in the set-up of a new more operational mode for communication between the various entities, as well as helped to increase the future quality of the public space and life following reconstruction of the viaduct in the Karlin neighbourhood. The aim of the symposium was to create a prerequisite for initiating a creative incubator in the areas below the viaduct. All the participants agreed on the revitalisation of the neglected area.

Following this agreement, CCEA began to develop an event. In 2016, which was to be the last event before actual reconstruction started in 2017, CCEA prepared the next example of future life under and around the viaduct through the organisation of a three-month event, which again focused on the community living around the viaduct and in the Karlin district.

The neglected environment, used as uncoordinated parking lots, was transformed into a space for relaxing and spending free time. A beach volleyball court and a multifunctional terrain for dance, yoga and aerobics emerged. Under the viaduct's vaults, ping-pong tables, outdoor fitness facilities, equipment for gymnastics, a basketball hoop, a trampoline and chess tables were installed. An integral part of the project was the creative programme, which included competitions, classes, concerts and open-air film screenings.

Around 60 organisations and a whole range of individuals participated in the project. Control of the area took place informally through the many activities created by the inhabitants themselves, thus lowering the levels of crime. Around 5,000 people visited the revamped areas during summer and more than 1,200 people signed the petition for the revitalisation of the area under the viaduct. Those three months showed that the public area under the viaduct works very well and that it was actively used by inhabitants.

Due to the success of the project highlighting the potential of this public space, the Mayor of the City of Prague, Adriana Krnáčová, requested that the project be continued until the beginning of the reconstruction, which SZDC started in summer 2017. The 'Summer Under the Viaduct' project has managed to reverse the intended use of the space as parking lots in the forthcoming plans for parking lots in Prague 8.

Following the successful event and with the support of the local community, in co-operation with the City of Prague, the CCEA MOBA studio created an architectural study. It was the first comprehensive

study of the public spaces around the Negrelli Viaduct and their future use as a new creative incubator in the heart of the city. The main focus of the study was to create a sufficient platform for an active public space. Today, most of the surrounding buildings are in the hands of private owners and therefore it is not possible to expect that their ground floors could be used for the revitalisation of the street level. For this reason, the Negrelli Viaduct will be crucial in initiating an improvement of the parterre in this forgotten part of the city. In order to make the initial potential functional, CCEA carried out analyses of the street, traffic, cycling and pedestrian networks in the area. Detailed analyses of the daily use during the various activities over a three-year period were also incorporated into the study. These pilot projects verified the potential of each space under the viaduct, which spans over a length of 642 metres. Of the viaduct's 74 arches, 44 were defined for reuse. The spaces were grouped into six units, each of which is different for the specific parts of the public space - the Viaduct Park, around the Former Barrack's, Negrelli Square, the Karlín Gate, and the Jerusalem Island. In the long term, it is expected that the Florenc bus station will follow most developed cities by going through major modifications so as to increase its effectivity. By transforming and reorganising the areas and surroundings of the Negrelli Viaduct, CCEA has created a catalyst for interaction not only for Karlín's residents but also for the other inhabitants of Prague. By installing cafés, bistros, galleries, workshops, shops and studios in the spaces below the vaults, a living urban character has been created with adjacent public spaces, with front gardens, small pieces of urban furniture and vegetation. The architectural study was approved in 2017 by Prague 8 District where the viaduct is located, and CCEA is now developing plans for the transparent NGO management, which will ensure creative activities continue under the Negrelli Viaduct in the long term.

Nevertheless, the activities described above would never have happened without the support and positive responses of the people living around the viaduct. CCEA now has a huge responsibility to execute the project as it was agreed by community, politicians and hopefully by SŽDC, which has begun to invest in the reconstruction. The current status of the area is a huge building site in the middle of the city centre.



SUMMER UNDER VIADUCT – FREE TIME INSTEAD OF ILLEGAL PARKING. PHOTO BY ARTYKEL CREATIVE FORM, LUKAŠ CETERA, 2016



SUMMER UNDER VIADUCT – SPACES FOR KIDS. PHOTO BY ARTYKEL CREATIVE FORM, LUKAŠ CETERA, 2016

Project timeline

2012

2012 SŽDC PROJECT

SŽDC, the owner of the viaduct, announced in 2012 that it is planning to start reconstruction of the Negrelli viaduct. The thorough renovation project, financed by the Ministry of Infrastructure, did not originally consider the use of the space below the arches, because the primary reason for reconstruction was the technical state of the rail tracks.

2013

19. - 21. 9. 2013 LINE GALLERIES

The first intervention initiated by CCEA MOBA under the arches of the Negrelli viaduct took place. This project gathered Prague's galleries, curators, artists and inhabitants of the district of Karlin. The cleaned spaces under the arches, free from illegal parking lots, opened up an opportunity for the hosting of concerts, projects, bars, children workshops and theatre, dance and culinary performances. The aim was to highlight the potential of the Negrelli viaduct and to offer possibilities for how to integrate it into city life.

2014

2014 Property change between SŽDC, ČD and MHMP

The Line Galleries project, which attracted considerable media attention, resulted in meetings between the initiators (CCEA MOBA) and officials of the MHMP (Prague City Council), SŽDC (Railway Infrastructure Administration) and ČD (Czech Railways), which led to the decision to unite all the land under the viaduct under the administration of Prague City Council.

Winter Semester 2014/2015 CO-OPERATION WITH THE FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE TU BERLIN

During the 2014/2015 winter semester, twelve students worked on the 'Mutating Infrastructure' research project, which focused on the transformation of the Negrelli viaduct. The work was supervised by the Institute for Sustainable Planning and Urbanism CHORA City & Energy, TU Berlin.

2015

14. 1. 2015 DISCUSSION WITH THE NEIGHBORS

CCEA MOBA organised a meeting with neighbours of the Negrelli viaduct in order for an open discussion about the future possible activities under the arches of the viaduct and about the potential of public space around the structure. There was mutual agreement to offer these specific small-scale units under the arches (60-80 m²) to creative citizens.

15. 1. 2015 SYMPOSIUM VIADUCT METAMORPHOSES IN EUROPEAN CITIES

A symposium was organised by CCEA MOBA in co-operation with the Consortium for Karlin. It gathered the main parties of the Negrelli viaduct reconstruction around one table. It was the first meeting between all stakeholders, and it succeeded in setting up an operational mode for communication between the various entities. All the participants agreed to offer the space under the viaduct for different creative activities and to revitalise the surroundings with the planned reconstruction.

16. - 17. 5. 2015 OPEN HOUSE PRAGUE

Within the international organisation of Open House Prague, one of the arches of the Negrelli viaduct was opened to the public. The former city paper waste collection was changed by CCEA MOBA into a small ephemeral exhibition space showing the past, present and future of the viaduct.

2016**June - September 2016**
SUMMER UNDER THE VIADUCT

The main aim was to test the potential of the public space along the viaduct. The neglected space was transformed into areas for leisure and relaxation. A beach volleyball court and a multifunctional platform for dance, yoga and aerobics have emerged. Under the viaduct's vaults, ping-pong tables, outdoor fitness facilities, equipment for gymnastics, a basketball hoop, a trampoline and chess boards were installed. Around 60 organisations and a whole range of individuals have participated in the project. The space is controlled informally by the many activities created by the inhabitants themselves and has thus led to a reduction in the levels of crime. Around 5,000 people visited the altered spaces during summer and more than 1,200 people have signed a petition for the revitalisation of the space under the viaduct. Due to the success of the project highlighting the potential of this public space, the Mayor of the City of Prague, Adriana Krnáčová, has requested that the programme continued until the beginning of the reconstruction, which SŽDC had planned for summer 2017.

2016
STUDY TRIP TO ZÜRICH

The study trip, planned in co-operation with CCEA MOBA's Swiss partner, presented the latest European transformation of Zurich's IM viaduct to Prague's political representatives.

2016
SYMPOSIUM NEGRELLI VIADUCT – AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A CREATIVE CITY

CCEA MOBA organised the second symposium in order to present the most renowned European projects for the transformation of viaducts (Paris, Zürich, Vienna). Viduc des Artes (Paris) was presented by representatives of the managing company of the project. The IM viaduct (Zürich) and Gürtel (Vienna) were presented by the architects of the transformations. Last but not least, CCEA MOBA introduced the architectural and urban study of the Negrelli viaduct at the symposium. The event was supported by Adriana Krnáčová, the Mayor of Prague.

2016
ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN DESIGN STUDY

The architectural study designed by the MOBA studio, in co-operation with the City of Prague, is the first comprehensive study of the public spaces around the Negrelli viaduct with plans for the new use of its arches, and its future as a new creative incubator in the heart of the city. By transforming and reorganising the spaces along the Negrelli viaduct, CCEA MOBA will create a catalyst for interaction, not only for neighbours of the district of Karlín, but also with the other inhabitants of Prague. The study presents various uses for the arches and the corresponding spaces, designed to support habitable spaces.

2017**2017**
RECONSTRUCTION OF NEGRELLI VIADUCT

Reconstruction of the viaduct structure and rail tracks, managed by SŽDC, has been running since August 2017. The viaduct is intended to be the major connection between the airport and Prague city center. The SŽDC reconstruction project focusses on technical improvements of the structure, and reconstruction should be completed by 2021.

In August 2017, Municipality of Prague 8 district accepted the MOBA studio study for revitalization along the viaduct and new use of viaduct arches. Now the documents are getting prepared for Capital City of Prague City council, where the project for creative incubator should be finally officially accepted.



A
Poloch Quartet
my gang

SUMMER UNDER VIADUCT –
WEEKLY DANCE
UNDER THE VIADUCT.
PHOTO BY ARTYKEL
CREATIVE FORM,
LUKAŠ CETERA, 2016

“The ‘Summer Under the Viaduct’ changed everything.”

An interview with Štěpán Holub

Štěpán Holub has lived in Karlín since 2006 and has been there with his wife Barbora since 2013. They both work in Karlín; Štěpán as an attorney at Holubová attorneys, Barbora at the Artlingua translation agency, and she also co-operates with the ‘We Plant Trees’ organisation. They have two young children called Albert and Emilia.

BY YVETTE VAŠOURKOVÁ

You live with your children in the centre of Prague, not far from the Negrelli viaduct, which is now undergoing a complex reconstruction. We met thanks to the unsupervised area surrounding the viaduct, where we are involved in the transformation of the space under the arches. What does the viaduct mean to you and what was your experience of it prior to the reconstruction?

I began to think about the viaduct after talking to a neighbour who lived one floor above us. He lived in the same apartment in Za Poříčskou bránou street for his entire life. The Negrelli viaduct and our streets are indeed in Prague 8 in Karlín, but he previously said that everything up to the viaduct was considered by most people as ‘downtown’, or Prague 1. He warned me that the houses up to the viaduct were built in a luxurious style, a floor or two higher than those behind the viaduct. Everything changed in the 1970s with the construction of the Magistrála motorway that separated Karlín from the city centre. However, unfortunately, the viaduct attracted our attention

in a different way. There was a huge parking lot beneath it, and all that space for the cars offered a slice of heaven for people who needed it in any way, including for illegal activities. So, luckily for you, you have discovered the viaduct ‘after the smoke’. From today’s point of view, it is absurd to remember the fact that two years ago under the viaduct, a self-appointed guard chose to operate a parking lot, even though he had no permission at all to lease it or anything similar.

It is clear that after the repairs are completed, the viaduct will be completely different. If everything goes to plan, the space around the viaduct will become very popular.

Many people and locals could not imagine that the space underneath the viaduct could turn into a place where people would want to come. That’s why we chose to challenge ourselves with the four-month ‘Summer Under the Viaduct’ test project. What did you think of this project?

Yes, ‘Summer Under the Viaduct’ changed everything. All of a sudden, everybody realised that the

small space around the viaduct began to serve as a leisure area. There were people of all ages walking around beneath the viaduct. Our neighbours, whom we would never have expected to see, regularly played ping-pong there, and we too have spent a lot of time under the viaduct. The fact that the unpleasant stench has gone has definitely made it more pleasant for people to spend time down there.... Seriously, the project has completely changed our view on what to do with the viaduct after the reconstruction. Nowadays, thanks to the 3D renders that have been published and thanks to the ‘Summer Under the Viaduct’ project, citizens can easily visualise all the creative shops that could open under the glazed arches. The project recorded significantly stronger approval ratings than the initial reason for the renovation - the new fast rail link to the airport. The bridge was repaired mainly for these trains. Isn’t it strange?

If we implement the proposed continuation of the project and start the reconstruction under the viaduct, there will be bistros, shops, studios and small workshops. This will have a major impact on the area surrounding the viaduct, which will mean that a certain degree of gentrification will likely be unavoidable. The new form of the viaduct will transform the local economy, and the price of rent and property will rise accordingly. How do you feel about such changes in your neighbourhood?

Karlín has already changed a lot. Property prices have increased and instead of the old venues there are now vegetarian bistros and fair-trade coffee places. I remember that when we moved our law firm to Karlín, we were a little worried about how clients would perceive the fact that we were moving into a ‘dirty’ neighbourhood, an area which a ‘decent’ person would rather avoid. And now, this autumn, Time Out magazine ranked Karlín among the top 50 ‘coolest’ neighbourhoods in the world! Sure, once the reconstruction is completed, the arches will be glazed and all the services will be created underneath the viaduct, it will be even more trendy here. Perhaps we will go from being in the top 50 to the top 10 in the world. It can be assumed that the prices will jump even further and other things will likely also change. Karlín may well compete with Prague 1, but it would be a totally absurd idea to

prevent positive changes and improvements in the environment with the fear that it might be too good. After all, there is nothing preventing us from moving away if something no longer suits us.

You are actively interested in the environment where you live. How do you think the residents themselves can influence and improve their surroundings? Where are their limits?

I realised that I could change something like any other ordinary citizen when I announced to the Technical Administration of Communications that there was a hole in the pavement in front of our house. I simply filled out a form on their website and asked for it to be fixed, and within a week the hole had been repaired. So I did the same thing with another hole, and it also disappeared. Then I wrote three emails to the Traffic Enterprises, asking if they could overlay a scorched wall in the Florenc metro station, and they did exactly that. So, I started talking to citizens and encouraging people to get more involved in general. I began writing suggestions to politicians and I realised that the power of a positively thinking individual is unreal. The limit is, I think, just laziness, comfort and pessimism.

Does age play a role in taking interest in your surroundings - are young people more involved than the older generations?

In principle, no matter how old you are, you can change something in your neighbourhood. But I think young people are more sanguine and are no longer burdened by the past regime. They are much more optimistic and believe that things can change in life, as well as in their neighbourhood. These people also ask and communicate more easily. Elderly people, I think, are more likely to expect any suggestions for improvement to be seen as an inadmissible criticism, but of course this is not a rule.

What is the inspiration for the inhabitants to gain interest in the quality of their surroundings?

I think the best motivation for everyone is the knowledge that they can change something; for me, it has been fixing the holes in the street. Sometimes you need to write three emails instead of one. People also change the way they perceive their

surroundings. They are no longer just simply looking around, instead, people are suddenly thinking about what needs to be improved and, at the same time, they are wondering how they could help make that change happen. I am currently trying to set up a crossing over the busy Rohan riverbank street to reach the Vltava river directly on foot. I have written about five emails and nothing has happened yet. I recognise that this is a bigger challenge, and it will take longer, but it will certainly happen, I'm sure. That is why I took the opportunity to be interviewed; perhaps someone will read it, and it will help to get ideas like this one recognised. And if not, thanks to my activities, the right person who can influence that change could learn about it.

What changes have you already made in your area and the city?

A couple of repair works in our street and the new mural in Florenc metro station, which I previously mentioned. Otherwise, I think we haven't done anything revolutionary. On Rohan Island, following the model of the 'Man who planted the trees', we planted many chestnuts and acorns, and we will see if they grow there. I just want to help the world with good projects for the local surroundings, sometimes by legal counsel, and sometimes by doing little things. Probably the most obvious success was that, as an attorney at the Auto*mat, a Prague association, I have abolished measures which introduced a ban on using the cycling routes that cross the historical centre of Prague, of which I'm really proud. It is good to start from small things.



SUMMER UNDER VIADUCT – NO ACTING. PHOTO BY ARTYKEL CREATIVE FORM, LUKAŠ CETERA, 2016



SUMMER UNDER VIADUCT –
MORNING PREPARATIONS.
PHOTO BY ARTYKEL CREATIVE
FORM, LUKAŠ CETERA, 2016

How to improve the quality of public spaces

The 'Negrelli Viaduct', organised by CCEA, is a long-term project that acts as an idea incubator, merging urbanism, architecture and art. The project was initiated together with partners from public and private sectors and was successful because, since the outset, it included local residents in the activities and planning.

1.

Open discussions

A) Discuss renovation plans with developers:

When SŽDC (the Railway Infrastructure Administration), the owner of the viaduct, announced its plans for renovation of the viaduct, CCEA pointed out that they had neglected the space under the viaduct. CCEA started discussions with the developer and over time managed to include the space under the viaduct in the larger renovation project.

B) Open public discussions:

After agreeing on the importance of including the space under the viaduct in the renovation process, the City of Prague, SŽDC and CCEA worked together to open a public discussion about the current state of the space and plans for the future. This included public discussions with people living around the viaduct, artistic interventions to promote the potential of the viaduct as a public space, and a symposium where all important parties sat around one table for the first time. The results were better than expected. After artist interventions, SŽDC announced that it could support a new usage of the space under the viaduct. Following the symposium, the Heritage Department of the City of Prague also gave the green light to the idea.

C) Open discussions with neighbours:

Last but not least, invite the local community to the discussion. We cannot stress this enough: your project cannot work if you don't have the neighbours on your side from the beginning. CCEA invited neighbours to an interactive public discussion, where all the parties presented their ideas about the future of the locality and the public space under the viaduct. The conclusions from the public discussion were used for setting the grounds for the project.

2.

Research and look beyond your local environment

It is important to know the history of the public space and its surroundings that you are planning to improve. After researching the public space in question, look further and find examples of good practice in similar settings elsewhere. CCEA organised two symposiums which brought together the authors and managers of the most successful viaduct renovation projects. Connecting with organisations that already have similar experience is crucial for surmounting some of the initial struggles and becoming aware of some of the troubles that may lie ahead.

3.

Small steps

Start by testing your ideas with small-scale actions in the public space. Before organising the 'Summer under the Viaduct' festival, CCEA organised several smaller events under the viaduct. These smaller events had an immediate impact and showed which direction to take. Don't forget to invite local initiatives, NGOs, organisers and artists to collaborate in organising the event, and be sure to send your ideas to the Ministry of Transport or your government, and always write to the person you find on a public contact list. Never send generic letters. Think in a big scale, but act in small steps. Always say what you do not want to happen in the future with the project. For CCEA, it was about avoiding gentrification. In order to do so we declared that the project should not be a profitable business model but rather an NGO project. To prove that we founded a civic association called Viadukt.

Media

Always think about the media and try to focus on different formats for different events: for youngsters use Facebook, while to attract older people, contact national TV and try to develop co-operation with them by giving them unique material. When we wanted to celebrate the history of a place, we didn't use academic media but rather one of the biggest newspaper companies, which, by coincidence, was just 500m from the viaduct.

How to communicate?

Create a sentence which will be repeated every time, never change it. Our sentence was "We want to create a creative incubator under the viaduct". Then create a sub-sentence for each partner. For SŽDC it means having somebody to take care of the nicely reconstructed bridge, for the Prague 8 district it means not needing to spend money for cleaning the space, and for the City of Prague that means creating a new citizen-oriented project.

How much will it cost?

This is one of the very important questions that should never be underestimated. Do the calculations as accurately as you can. If you have a specific request from the owners or developers, calculate specific budgets.

Who will pay for that?

We always use plurality. Everybody sitting around the table will benefit and everybody should pay.

What should be done if something is not going according to plan?

Do not change the plan but try to push it another time. If it does not work, wait and push it again. This way you will make it clear that you have a plan. Do not modify your plan with every new piece of information.

How to make it work

Talk about your project in all different formats, meetings, in the public space, wherever and whenever you present your organisation... After a year or two everybody will identify the project with your organisation.

