

# TEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE AND ITS FORMS

Kolimárová Simona - Schleicher Alexander

**SIMONA KOLIMÁROVÁ, ING. ARCH.**

Faculty of Architecture and Design  
Slovak University of Technology in  
Bratislava  
Institute of Architecture of Public  
Buildings, Námestie Slobody 19,  
812 45 Bratislava  
Slovakia

simona.kolimarova@stuba.sk

ORCID ID: 0009-0004-6045-2436

Simona Kolimárová is doctoral student at Faculty of architecture and design STU with dissertation thesis Phenomenon of ephemeral architecture. Her research focuses on a phenomenon of time in architecture, ephemeral architecture and its impact on public spaces and landscape. She was a member of the team of Project of Universal Design – project raising awareness among professionals and the public about the rights of people with disabilities, accessibility and universal design.

**ALEXANDER SCHLEICHER, DOC. ING. ARCH., PHD.**

Faculty of Architecture and Design  
Slovak University of Technology in  
Bratislava  
Institute of Architecture of Public  
Buildings, Námestie Slobody 19,  
812 45 Bratislava  
Slovakia

alexander.schleicher@stuba.sk

ORCID ID: 0009-0007-1463-7562

Alexander Schleicher is a university lecturer and architect. At the Faculty of Architecture of Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava he lectures on public buildings, especially focused on museums and museum related facilities. He also guides student studio-works focused mostly on design of public buildings. He was the member of the team of Project of Universal Design – project raising awareness among professionals and the public about the rights of people with disabilities, accessibility and universal design.

**ABSTRACT:** Temporary architecture is one of the tendencies in contemporary architectural practice, which can not only replace currently missing amenities or test new solutions in urban locations but can also serve as an attractor for visitors. These changes in thinking about the design of architectural and artistic objects can be seen in the increasing implementation of such objects and their associated additional programming in the environment.

The paper presents a comparison of several selected realizations of temporary architecture realized in recent years in different conditions on the territory of Slovakia. Despite the exceptional nature of the objects, which results from the frequent attempt of architectural experimentation, it is possible to create a comparison that presents contexts and analogies - based on their spatial specifics, relation to time, or content. The basic questions that the article seeks to answer are - what impact have these realisations had and can these solutions be implemented as an attractor on a periodic basis in urban structures or landscapes?

**KEYWORDS:** architecture; temporality; ephemerality; catalysator; attractor; public space; cultural landscape; art installation; pavilion; Slovakia

## INTRODUCTION

Temporary architecture represents an alternative approach to designing spaces. In the past, objects of temporary architecture served several functions - for example, we can mention nomadic dwellings; gradually, the first objects of architectural festivities began to appear - temporary, occasional buildings, such as funeral architecture (as castrum doloris on the occasion of the burial of prominent persons), or construction of triumphal arches on the occasion of important historical moments. Still, utilitarian objects, such as those of military camps and facilities, can also be observed. [1,2]

In recent years, we can also observe designs in which temporary architecture is used not only as an element to meet crisis needs or temporarily lacking functions but can also be used as an element of presentation (e.g. technological advancement or presentation of an institution, brand) or as an attractor in an urban or landscape environment. Objects of temporary architecture can often be considered as catalysts implemented with the aim of drawing public attention to an important event or an interesting environment. The current increase in the emergence of such architectural elements is a response to stable urban structures, social, societal and technological changes, improved economic conditions, the pursuit of ever greater cultural stimulation and accelerated lifestyles - the desire for ever new experiences in contemporary society.

The article focuses on the presentation of the realizations of temporary architecture since 2014 (i.e. for the last decade) in Slovakia. Based on this summarization, it then highlights the specifics of Slovak temporary architecture, the context in which it arises and the various implications it brings.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Objects of temporary architecture are time-limited structures of which the value is not defined by its permanence and unchangeability. Temporary architecture affects collective memory, it has the power to stabilize a moment in time based on a specific construction process, a structure, or its remaining fragments. The permanence of these concepts, thus, can mostly be observed in the cultural level, in the level of sustainability of public life, the possibility of an unusual use of the urban context or in the interest for contemporary architecture and art.

Temporary architecture sometimes oscillates between object, street furniture and art installation - its physical, spatial boundaries can sometimes be considered

unclear. Either way, the power of experience - of tying architecture, to a specific moment in time, even the possibility of tying it to a specific event, provides architecture with a unique power and momentum. As Temel [3] discusses, temporary occupation should not only be seen as a substitute for adequate reality; such architecture also carries within it the ambition to contribute a new quality to the environment.

European cities with a relatively stabilized urban structure and an existing network of civic amenities in their further development, out of their reluctance to stagnate, or as a reminder of any neglect or lack of function in the environment, bring temporary objects and installations as an attractor and as a catalyst of space. Thus, they do not focus their development only on permanent environments - public space becomes the substance of social life and the selected spaces should be able to respond to informal, impromptu situations. The character of a space can therefore be defined by the events that take place in that space. The Swiss architect and architectural theorist Bernard Tschumi states that human life is transformed into the experience of events organized by architecture [4], in the form of the implementation of new building elements, often, since these are important spaces in the city fabric, temporary architectural elements.

This approach is also in accordance with the European Union's new initiative, the New European Bauhaus, which presents its three pillars of sustainability, inclusiveness and beauty. As an important aspect of further development, it presents not only the ecological but also the social sustainability of the environment and the emphasis on the cultivation of public spaces and social understanding and dialogue. This initiative, thus, provides one of the first institutionalized incentives also for a prompt and flexible revitalization of public spaces and landscapes, promoting bottom-up initiatives, which may in time also translate into local thinking, policies and the functioning of local governments.

## SLOVAK CONTEXT – RECOGNISABILITY

On the basis of statistical research conducted by the National Centre of Culture and Further Education, we can conclude that the accessibility of culture in Slovakia decreases as the size of the settlement decreases. Also, up to 60-80% of respondents stated that they would participate in cultural events more often if they were more easily accessible to them - location and quality of the offer have a strong influence on people's participation in cultural activities and overcome the influence of the time and financial possibilities of the population. [5]

Also Mária Beňačková Rišková in the Strategy of Culture and Creative Industry of the Slovak Republic 2030 assesses that, we can observe a clear departure from rigid institutionalisation of culture and cultural industry, as existing public institutions often fail to reflect changes adequately and rapidly and become inflexible, outdated and partly irrelevant in a changing context. [6] We can observe the emergence of new independent cultural centres, which are brought together in the Anténa network<sup>1</sup>. Temporary architecture can be a catalyst for bringing contemporary culture and architecture closer to the inhabitants in different regions of Slovakia.

Despite the above, currently in Slovakia we can still observe objects of temporary architecture mostly as smaller bottom-up designs or objects of festival or event architecture. It can be stated that temporary architecture in Slovakia is not sufficiently reflected in the periodicals or on online platforms such as the Register of the Slovak Chamber of Architects, Archinfo or the Register of the Modern Architecture Artworks<sup>2</sup>.

In 2022, the Slovak collective Milk published a city-making handbook Meanwhile city: How temporary interventions create welcoming places with a strong identity, which, in the form of interviews with various actors, shows the possibilities of activating as yet unused or

abandoned places. The handbook presents several examples of temporary tactical urbanism and examples of activating spaces by placing temporary architecture in foreign countries. This publication offers practical experiences, best practices and inspiration for city leaders, urban professionals and private developers who seek to effectively use temporary interventions to communicate with the public, shape the identity of cities and build active communities in their surroundings; however, it also fails to present Slovak examples and case studies [7].

Although we can observe the emergence of temporary architecture objects, they are only gradually given a space and becoming the subject of professional and public dialogue.

## SLOVAK CONTEXT – IMPLEMENTED TEMPORARY DESIGNS

In the following article we summarize the projects built in Slovakia since 2014, which do not fulfil a commercial or purely utilitarian function but also bring cultural or social value to the environment. Presented are only structures that could be visited, reflected on the basis of publications, or their presentations on the online platforms of individual organisations and authors.<sup>3</sup>

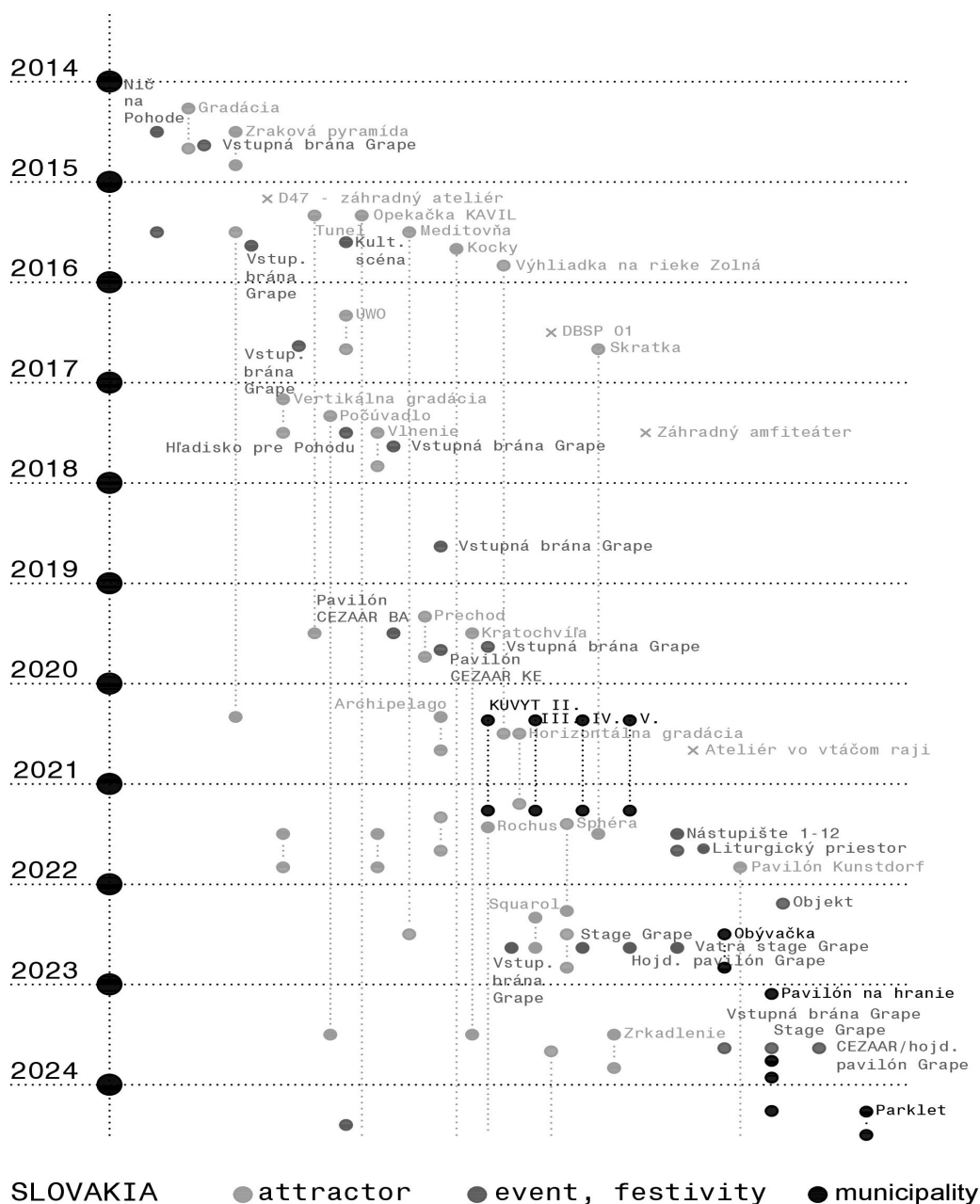
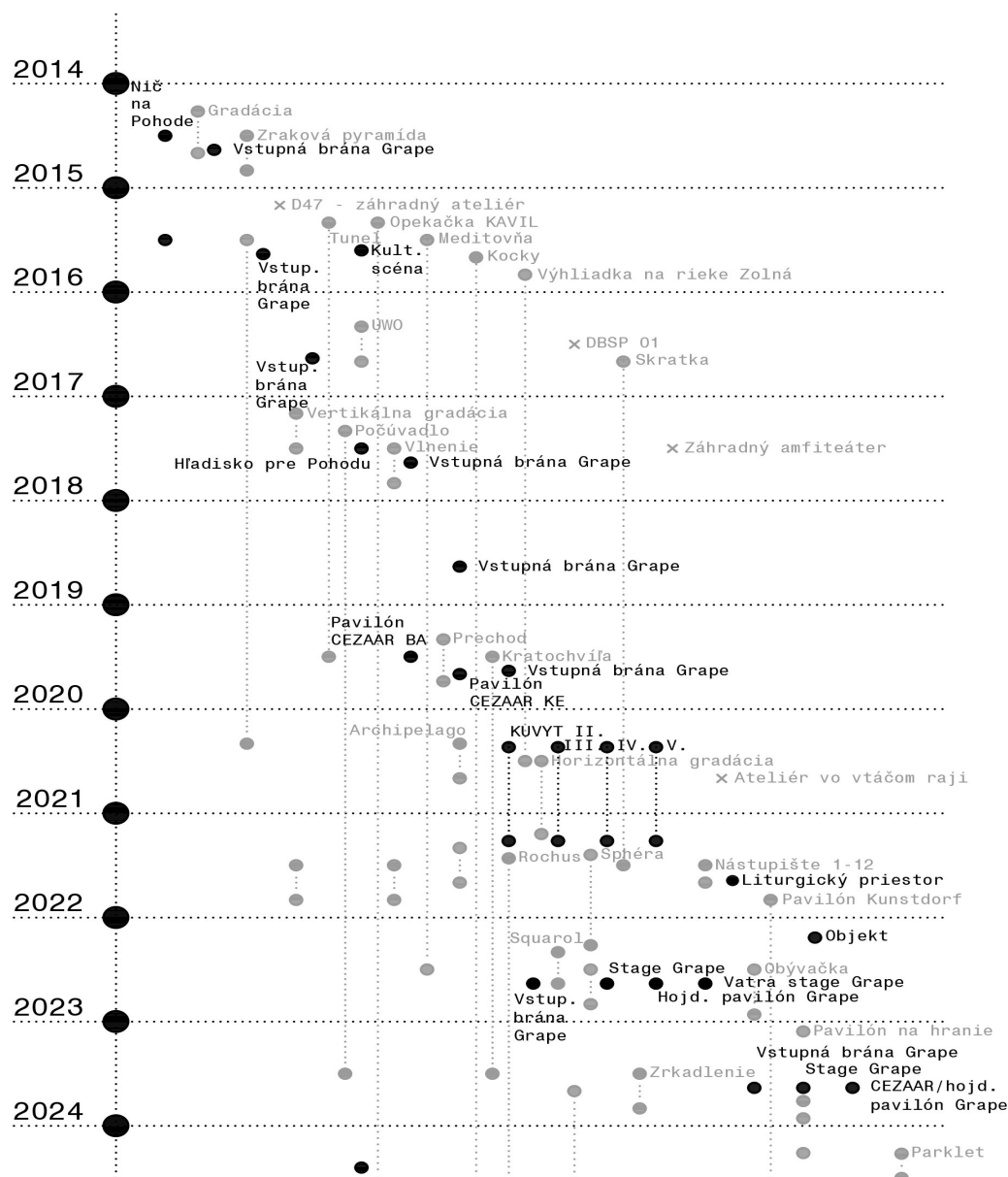


Fig. 1.: Diagram of the duration and reason for the implementation of temporary structures in Slovakia since 2014. (Source: Simona Kolimárová)

<sup>1</sup> Anténa is a network of cultural centres and organisations working in the field of professional independent contemporary art and culture in Slovakia. Their main goal is to spread culture, not to make a profit.

<sup>2</sup> The Register of the Slovak Chamber of Architects at the time of the completion of the research records only less than 1% of the temporary structure from the total number of registered projects. The Register of Modern Architecture at the time of completion of the research does not register even one work of temporary architecture. Also, the Archinfo portal does not offer a category of temporary buildings, even though several such works are presented on the portal in the exterior category. We can therefore conclude that the categorization of temporary buildings is probably not so relevant for visitors or even the editors; rather, observers reflect on such works at the time of their creation, regardless of their temporality. [12,13,14]



## SLOVAKIA - materiality ● wood ● metal

Fig. 2.: Diagram presenting the materiality of temporary structures in Slovakia since 2014. (Source: Simona Kolimárová)

Of the more than 50 works that were considered, it was possible to identify three categories of their emergence; from each category of structures that were analysed, two are briefly presented as being representative of the different approaches that can be drawn from them:

- structures implemented as attractors in the cultural landscape,
- structures implemented (on the occasion of an event) in an urban environment,
- structures implemented on the occasion of festivals.

### MAIN TYPES OF DESIGN APPROACHES

#### Attractor

"...to show a manifesto of the absolute complexity of the territory...I like the idea of discrete, tactical actions against the cumbersome "totality" of the zoning plan. I believe that even the largest territories can be extraordinarily transformed just through small, laconic interventions. I strive for precision, articulation, arrangement - architecture - so that suddenly an already existing place can be rediscovered, disrupted, awakened and brought into the present."

Georges Descombes [8]

Of the analysed structures, as many as half are located in the greenery, in cultural landscapes. We can state that these structures are characterized by a smaller scale, the absence of extensive backgrounds, their wooden construction, and the fact that they were realized by the authors' team, often as part of various workshops, which are intended to bring the authors and students closer to the building experience and bringing them closer to the skill of working with the material. These structures highlight exceptional places in the landscape, clearly responding to their context.

#### Meditation Room [9,10]

- location: Dúbravica, Slovensko
- author: Young.s architekti
- designed: 2012
- duration: left in the site until complete disintegration
- materials used: wood

The Meditation Room was designed during the Landscape Revisited workshop by the authors themselves. This structure was created as a space for contemplation and meditation. Although the structure is not vertical it acts as a lookout point with a view of the surrounding landscape, which is above the local cowshed

<sup>3</sup> Several podiums are presented in the diagram - however, the research is limited only to those objects that did not serve only a utilitarian function, but by their spatial arrangement aspired to bring additional architectural value to the space.

<sup>4</sup> It is likely that several undocumented structures were built within the time-frame, which can be considered a limit of the presented research.



and the inhabitants used to never go there.

One wall of the structure was made to be a musical instrument by a local violinist, the rest of the object was made of wood. Despite the fact that it no longer fulfils its full function since 2022, the structure is kept in the environment until today, since it is not a threat to the residents.



Fig. 3.: Temporary intervention Meditation room in the landscape above the village of Dúbravica, 2024. (Source: Simona Kolimárová)

#### Shortcut [9,10]

- location: Dúbravica, Slovensko
- author: Matej Rosmáň
- designed: 2016
- duration: Removed for safety reasons in 2021
- materials used: wood

In 2016, the object Shortcut - A ladder to the sky was installed on the hill among the villages of Dubravica, Oravce and Poniky as a counterpoint to the UNIMO lookout tower on the opposite hill. The structure was visited by hundreds of people during the pandemic and became a local attraction.

The Shortcut was made of wood by the artist Matej Rosmáň. It was a viewpoint for one person, as a maximally minimalist idea in the design of viewpoints. The Shortcut was placed on the same site where the Three Villages Lookout had been installed before. After the de-installation of the Shortcut, which disappeared overnight in 2021, the DBSP 01 - Dúbravica Beekkeeper's Space Programme by the author Oto Hudec was installed on the identical site almost two years later. The location of three structures in the landscape at an identical place with the same material base, with different life spans - resulting partly from coincidence, partly from the interference of visitors, makes one of the many hills in the area a location frequented by tourists not only from the surrounding area.



Fig. 4.: Temporary intervention Shortcut in the landscape above the village Dúbravica - deinstallation (Source: Matej Rosmáň)

#### Event Architecture

From the sample of analysed projects, it can be concluded that the structures built on the occasion of the event are characterised by a simple, lightweight construction, with the important aspect in their design being that they should be easy to dismantle and rebuild on a different site. Also, the resulting architectural form of the structure should be applicable in different

contexts without compromising their architectural quality.

#### Objekt

- location: Bratislava, Slovensko
- author: Kristína Boháčová
- designed: 2022
- duration: for a week in which the performance took place
- materials used: welded metal

A circular building with a diameter of eight metres, consisting of several parts. One of the most important aspects was the simple assembly and disassembly of the object, resulting from the basic requirement of its temporary nature, mobility and variability during use. The red colour was chosen as a clear signal of a new element in the environment that, despite its small scale and short duration, wanted to make an immediate impact.

The Object has hosted three performances in different locations and has always been dismantled after the performance and stored in the author's studio indefinitely.



Fig. 5.: Temporary structure Object hosting a performance, 2022 (Source: Kristína Boháčová)

#### Living Room [11]

- location: Revúca, Slovensko
- author: ateliér Haus
- designed: 2022
- duration: during the City of Culture 2022
- materials used: welded metal

The structure of Living Room was intended to serve as a community space for the organisation of cultural and artistic programmes of the City of Culture, Revúca in 2022. It was a landmark structure, and an architectural and urban design intervention designed to bring a new perspective on the use of public space in the city of Revúca to all residents, both during cultural events and during the everyday life of the city.

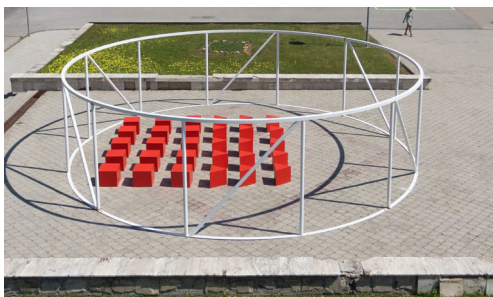


Fig. 6.: Temporary structure Living room. (Source: studio Haus)

#### Festival Architecture

The festival buildings in Slovak conditions are designed in a very technicist way without unnecessary lavish elements. The main determinant of their design is their

low financial demand and zero impact on the environment.

#### Entrance gate to the Grape Festival [12]

- location: Trenčín, Slovensko
- author: Martin Skoček
- designed: 2022; 2023
- duration: during the time of the festival
- materials used: scaffolding

The entrance gate of the Grape festival is an object that might not have been created, but the author thought it appropriate to create a proper articulated entrance with a work of art as a gesture of welcome to visitors. The artistic and architectural aspect of the whole festival site and its individual buildings is considered very important, as the authors believe it to be attractive to the younger generation, as shown by the reach of these structures on social media afterwards.

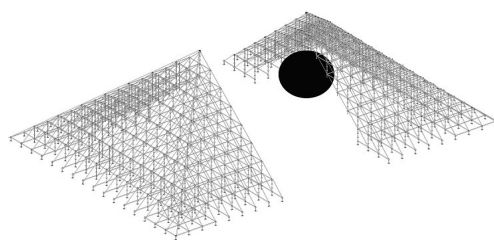


Fig. 7.: Temporary building of the entrance gate to the Grape festival. (Source: Archinfo)

#### The Swing Pavilion [12]

- location: Trenčín, Slovensko
- author: Martin Skoček
- designed: 2022; 2023
- duration: during the time of the festival
- materials used: scaffolding

The Swing Pavilion is a square plan building for informal seating and passing the time at the festival. The structure of the building is also made of scaffolding poles.

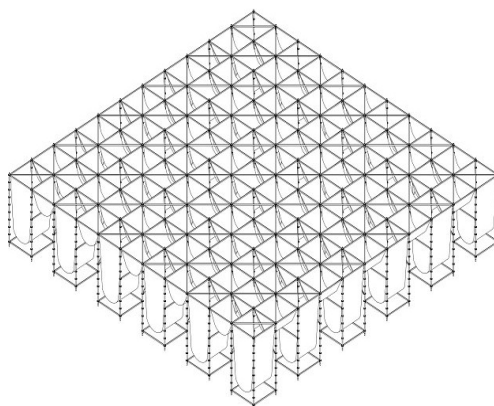


Fig. 8.: Temporary building of the Swing Pavilion at the Grape Festival. (Source: Archinfo)

## CONCLUSION

Research focusing on the Slovak environment may have a limit of a low number of built structures, which does not allow room for generalization of the findings, nevertheless, we have considered it representative to demonstrate the specifics of the use of such objects in Slovakia.

We can state that the design and implementation of such objects is almost exclusively initiated by profes-

sionals – architects and artists who want to address and engage with the public with their structures or to create a space for leisure in connection with contemporary architecture or visual arts.

So far, we have observed very little temporary structures initiated by municipalities, which is probably due to the lack of awareness of the institutions about the possibilities and benefits, inflexible planning processes and underfunding of the municipalities themselves, as well as the cultural sector. Local governments do not encourage the creation of temporary structures, they concentrate their possibilities on the renovation and development of permanent public spaces.

We can also state that most of the structures created as an attractor in the landscape have a much longer duration and are used until their degradation, when they are finally dismantled for safety reasons, in contrast to urban and event structures, which are always in the environment only for a well-defined short period of time. Therefore, we can state that in Slovakia, temporary structures without a clearly defined time frame are clearly dominating at the time of writing.

Structures built on the occasion of events and festivals are very easy to assemble and disassemble, leaving no trace in the environment. The larger scale objects were constructed entirely from scaffolding poles, which, once dismantled, serve their primary purpose again.

We can assess that the impact of the above-mentioned structures on the public space has been positive; the works located in the cultural landscape became frequent stops for tourists and locals alike. In several locations in Slovakia, it has been shown that the periodic implementation of artworks or temporary structures in the landscape provides an opportunity not only to make the area more attractive, but also to create a viable local cultural centre within the area.

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