

PILOT EVALUATION REPORT - TREE COUNCIL AT HEGYVIDÉK: TRANSPARENCY AND ADVOCACY CREAT- ING CONDITIONS FOR BETTER GOVERNANCE

Summary reports on the main outcomes of pilot actions and the lessons learnt within, with an outlook to prospective follow-up actions and potential transfer of the results to other areas within the same FUA and beyond.

Authors: Ms Zsófia Hamza, Mr Attila Varga - Green Office at Hegyvidék; Ferenc Szigeti-Böröcz - Grants Europe Consulting

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1. Activities and outcomes

1.1 Brief summary

Despite the recognition, that UGSs are important in Hegyvidék, the first aim of the pilot was to have a tree replacement strategy in Hegyvidék for the renewal of tree alleys, combined with communication practices to be used while replacing trees (how to communicate “about trees”, their replacement and about climate change in connection with trees). Establishing a Tree Council at Hegyvidék seemed a visible and transparent platform and marketing tool to put the green-is-good concept high on the political agenda and sensitise both other governmental actors and local residents towards the challenges.

After the situation analysis it turned out the concept of the Tree Council does not really work due to several reasons (e.g. leaders did not want to create a new legal form, however it should not be necessarily a legal platform). At the same time a strong volume of interests has been formulated towards the work of the Green Office from other districts of Budapest. To tackle this, the Green Office created an open platform entitled as Közöld for other districts linked to not authority-related green issues. It turned to be so successful that direct exchange of some good practices among Budapest districts has been already started and the Municipality of Budapest has also reacted on this topic by involving districts to the elaboration of the green infrastructure strategy running now. Tackling territorial dimension of integrated urban development within the pilot this way correlates much better with multi-level governance.

On the other hand, the Green Office intended to launch a novel approach (at least in Budapest and Hungary) to replace trees: planting saplings instead of 2-3 year old trees bought in horticultural farms. This is more effective in many terms: they are much cheaper (they cost some EURs, while a previously nurtured 4-5 meter tall tree costs some hundreds of EURs), it is possible to use native species (e.g. oak tree), these young trees adjust to their environment so for example they are less harmful regarding installations in the ground; in couple of years they have the same size than the classic solution. On the other hand, saplings need more attention in the beginning that opens ways to engage local residents. Through piloting this novel method within the UGB, Hegyvidék is hopefully paving the way for a broader practice to be used in Budapest or even in Hungary. Due to weather conditions in late November 2018 planting had to be cancelled, and will be organised in early spring (depending on the weather).

1.2 Activities performed – What happened in you pilot action?

The pilot consisted of ten major steps (in line with the pilot concept). The following actions were finally implemented along these steps:

1. Situation analysis through interviews (how the recent cooperation works) & 2. internal meeting at the municipality to clarify and explain the Tree Council concept, to get commitment from colleagues and to prepare the first meeting

Through the creation of a new platform (the Tree Council) the municipality wanted to inject new vision (besides compulsory municipal tasks towards UGSs, there is a new role: advocacy), new role (communication along replacement of trees), stimulus (demonstration events) and power (strategy) to the existing cooperation of different organisations, and thus the Tree Council should boost both governmental cooperation and the municipality’s facilitative role within it.

Relevant colleagues from the Green Office discussed the above concept of the Tree Council with all relevant internal actors: vice-mayor, key colleagues (especially Mr László Torma), and related institutions. The result of the (long) discussions is that there is no need for an additional administrative body, and the “council” refers too much to a new administrative form. The idea on having a communication plan along the tree-replacement strategy is however strongly supported. At the same time a strong need was born at other district level municipalities in Budapest to discuss the green-is-good concept and awareness-raising opportunities apart from authority-related tasks. So the Tree Council sounds an interesting concept, but at Hegyvidék it should be more a platform than a legislative body, and it would be essential to link it with multi-level governance. This was the summary of the situation analysis leading to the establishment another platform fitting much better to multi-level governance and responding to local on a higher level.

3. Establishment of the Tree Council, explaining its role and signing a joint declaration

The Green Office as such is the first initiative in Hungary to tackle and coordinate residential green issues in general in a city apart from authority-related tasks. At the same time other district-level municipalities started to tackle the same issue (compost programme, bench-cutting programme, stewardship, projects, awareness-raising, etc.), but without a dedicated office and staff. The Green Office indeed got lots of interests from other district level municipalities.

Due to this expressed interest, it was the right moment to establish the KöZöld platform with other district level municipalities ('közöld' means 'inform!' in Hungarian, but 'zöld' separately means 'green' – so this is a play on words cannot be translated) instead of the Tree Council. 4 KöZöld meetings have been organised so far with great success (23 November, 2017; 8 February 2018; 29 March, 2018; 27 September 2018). In most of the cases 50% of Budapest districts participated. It is an open platform only facilitated but not controlled or owned by Hegyvidék and so far covered the following topics: environmental protection in general, tree cadastre, climate strategy, different legislations, maintenance of trees, SECAP, awareness-raising of residents, applications, residential programs like the compost or bench-cutting program and waste management. One of the most direct benefits of the platform is that exchange and learning has already started (e.g. the bench-tree programme was adapted in other districts as well) and that the municipality of Budapest capital has started to create a new strategy dedicated to the management of UGSs.

KöZöld is a platform for open discussion with the aim to convince other municipalities that it is time to deal with green issues besides the authority-related compulsory tasks. All districts are invited to each of the meetings, and it is not required to sign any joint declaration. It has a great appreciation among the districts and the preparatory work around the elaboration of Budapest's green infrastructure strategy also provides great synergies.

4. Capacity building 1. for municipal employees and 5. Capacity building for Tree Council members

First, to get to know the needs, a selected trainer made interviews both with decisions makers and senior staff at Municipality of Hegyvidék. According to these interviews it turned out that the most important topic along having the Green Office on board within the municipality is to crossing silos (municipal departments) since many different units are relevant when we talk about not authority-related green issues (city development office, communication, education, finances, development of public spaces and facilities, the gardening company).

Finally the 1-day capacity building seminar was held on 30 May with the participation of 30 people.

6. Development of a local strategy by the members of the Tree Council: ca. 5 year plan of the replacement of trees (where to put new ones, where to replace) and how to communicate the replacement process towards the public which is a completely new element within the existing cooperation

Municipality of Hegyvidék contracted the Szent István University – Faculty of Horticultural Science to create a strategy based on the local Construction Legislation which clearly determines the potential places to plant trees, but does not deal with suitable or potential species. The strategy in details sets what type of trees should be planted in all relevant spots (32 streets). The strategy is approved by the municipality.

The communication part (describing potential activities and models – more innovative and participative than the current ones – to communicate the reasons and method of replacing trees) has been prepared by an external expert, and it provides great tools to be piloted when saplings will be planted.

7. Selection of potential action areas through internal discussions and by channelling residents' opinions

According to the original aims, the municipality intended to involve Márvány street into the work of the Tree Council as action area. This is a street with heavy urban fabric without any trees (relatively narrow street with 4-5 floor houses, parking cars, busy traffic, and narrow walk side). The intention was to plant trees here in the frame of the pilot action and sensitise the public along this plantation in the form of a Local Action Team. The plan was to plant trees not in bins as often used in similar environment, but through getting space for trees between parking spots (the overall parking capacity should be decreased only with some percent). Unfortunately the planning process seemed very slow due to massive negative attitude towards reducing the number of car parking sites, thus the municipality had to find another solution.

This is why the Green Office contacted the [International Dendrological Foundation](#) in connection with the tree renewal programme running in the district. This organisation works just next to the district, in Budakeszi (in the FUA). After several discussions about the UGB project, pilot activities and the potentials of the district, the recommendation is to test plantation of saplings (very young trees) in Hegyvidék instead of using the standard solution, which is about planting 1-3 year old trees bought in horticulture farms. This is a very interesting and rather innovative initiative, because based on the experience of the above mentioned foundation planting saplings is more effective in many terms: they are much cheaper (they cost some EURs, while a previously nurtured 4-5 meter tall tree costs some hundreds of EURs), it is possible to use native species (e.g. oak tree), these young trees adjust to their environment so for example they are less harmful regarding installations in the ground and thus there is no need to get agreements with different service providers which usually takes time; in couple of years they have the same size than the classic solution. On the other hand saplings in the beginning need more attention which opens new ways of collaboration with residents (not to use the “empty” spot for litters or by dogs, etc.) . Through the UGB project Municipality of Hegyvidék intends to pave the way for this novel approach in Hungary by piloting it in 1-2 smaller streets at Hegyvidék. Similar actions have never been elaborated in Budapest. Due to weather conditions in late November 2018, the planting process has been postponed, the first possible date is early spring.

8. Piloting the establishment of one Local Action Team.

The only disadvantage of planting saplings in urban environment is that in the first year they are fragile: they can be easily damaged by lawnmowers or simply by dogs and children. This is why increased communication activities are needed, especially in cooperation with locals (this links up the two pilot projects in Hegyvidék). So the municipality intends to involve local residents through communication activities on the long run, and in one of the above streets the municipality tries to facilitate the establishment of a local action team protecting saplings and disseminating this approach.

9. Open demonstration events

The first demonstration event was not linked to saplings: on 24 November 2018, previously selected children from the district planted a tree in the frame of the famous [Plant for the Planet](#) global initiative. The local workshop was initiated by local residents and the municipality supported the event.

Linked to saplings, one demonstration event will be organised for sure in early spring time through the involvement of a local school. The aim is to form a local action team linked to saplings planted and implement together a local campaign by using one of the communication tools.

10. Finalisation of the strategy and evaluation

After piloting samplings the intention is to embed this approach in the tree renewal strategy.

1.3 Outcomes - What are the results?

We believe that the Tree Council is a good concept for advocating the importance of trees in urban environment and we offer this method to be further clarified (e.g. drafting an operational strategy by knowledge partners as recommendation). Municipality of Hegyvidék is very satisfied with the outcomes of the KÖZÖLD platform as it has concrete policy impact. After realising local needs coming from other district level municipalities, the establishment of the KÖZÖLD platform seems a very innovative step, able to generate serious impact on the level of Budapest regarding the dissemination of the “Urban Green Spaces as advocate of pro-environmental thinking” concept.

Similar to this, the establishment of the action area and team in Márvány utca seem a failure for the first sight, but basically it is an interesting learning method. It is also important to mention that piloting samplings and communicating the outcomes and benefits is a novel approach to be continued here at Hegyvidék.

Last, but not least, having a toolbox on how to communicate along tree replacement is a strong asset, clearly advisable for any other cities in the region.

As for indicators, the below list shows what pilot activities have been achieved in Hegyvidék in terms of numbers.

- number of meetings and participants: 4 Közöld meetings with ca. 60-80 participants altogether (15-20 per each meeting)
 - number of internal and external participants of the capacity building trainings: 30 colleagues
 - satisfaction with capacity building training: the most important benefit of the training is the increased attention towards organisation development within the municipality. Green Office is the first unit at the municipality that works mainly on project-basis. This generates lots of benefits, but conflicts too. But this type of operation is clearly needed for tackling the green-is-good concept. This recognition is a clear added-value of the capacity building.
 - Satisfaction with the strategy: the strategy was sent out to all relevant departments, however very few feedbacks have been shared. The strategy was officially approved. Its annex, the new Toolkit on communication tools is highly appreciated by the involved actors.
 - number of the communication tools identified and tested: Közöld is a local strategic partnership already created, while a local action team will be created along the sapling programme. The Communication Toolkit is a Urban Green Space Strategy.
 - number of trees renewed: N/A – we can answer this question in early spring 2019.
 - number of action plans elaborated (at least one is foreseen): The elaboration of the action plan is linked to the action team to be formed along the sapling programme.
- feedback from residents/government actors participating in the pilot collected: Közöld has become a very successful initiative, strongly supported by both the district level municipalities and the capital.

1.4 Evaluation – Are you satisfied with the results?

Hegyvidék prepared a strong and ambitious pilot concept answering the challenges properly. Despite the fact that the pilot concept has been slightly changed the pilot implementation as such is very successful, because now it answers the challenges better and more in line with multi-level governance. We are satisfied with the outcomes especially because both the Közöld initiative and the actions around samplings potentially pave the way for new policies not only at the municipality on the long run, but at other district level municipalities as well. From this aspect, the pilot is very successful.

Regarding stakeholders, outcomes are also better than originally expected. We could involve did not we made a core group consisting all relevant organisations (national park, NGOs dealing with environment protection).

By involving other district-level municipalities and exchanging ideas as well as good practices with them, by having a communication strategy along the tree renewal and finally by involving residents to communicate about the “Sampling Programme”, the pilot is quite successful at educating residents about the importance of trees and their role in mitigating the impacts of climate change and other related issues. By putting the ‘issue’ around trees into the window the Közöld Programme tackles not only the planting and management programme, but the potential communication activities along the renewal of trees too. During the pilot implementation phase, the Green Office identified different cooperation models, and the pilot at Hegyvidék actually created a new strategic partnership, and test at least one action team to maintain a public space.

Budget table

Costs description	Budget line (<i>external/ equipment/infrastructure</i>)	Status 1) <i>performance in progress/</i> 2) <i>performed but not paid/</i> 3) <i>performed and paid</i>	Final amount of the costs

Tree Renewal Strategy	external	performed and paid	3094,30 Euro +VAT
		Total costs:	3094,30 Euro +VAT

2. Follow-up actions

2.1 What about the future?

The pilot has just paved the way for future activities as follows:

- Tree replacement will be organised in the district in line with the newly approved strategy in the future. Whenever and wherever it is possible, this will be combined with a relevant, more targeted communication action with the aim not only informing residents, but also educating them. In addition to this, a special attention will be given to samplings based on testing them in an action area.
- Közöld has one goal: to stimulate discussion among districts in the capital

Municipality of Hegyvidék is a pioneer organisation with this topic in Hungary, thus the topic has great dissemination potentials.

2.2 Lessons learned to upgrade the draft models to “make them smart” – What can be transferred?

The most important knowledge we gained from the pilot implementation is that putting the issue of trees into the window (both in terms of dialogue with other governmental actors and citizens) through the establishment of a Tree Council is a strong approach cities can use in order to overcome barriers to pro-environmental behaviour. Although Hegyvidék finally found another way to stimulate this discussion, we recommend this approach to be disseminated on project level.

Over the last decades, in many parts of the world, people have shown a willingness to act environmentally. Although values and awareness are often acknowledged at societal level, those often do not translate into individual pro-environmental behaviour (people with pro-environmental behaviour in high-income countries consistently display higher energy footprints). *“Pro-environmental behaviour is conditioned by individual values, attitudes and norms. Much of the time these translate into action, but not always; this can be explained by the value-action gap. The challenge is to close this gap and foster sustained pro-environmental behaviour, which means new ‘good’ (i.e. pro-environmental) behaviour that does not revert back to old ‘bad’ (i.e. non-environmental) behaviour once the incentives for pro-environmental behaviour have changed or ceased”*. Urban design and urban intervention in our cities can encourage or discourage people to take environmentally friendly decisions, but cities as the most local forms of the government are the best positioned to start the above discussion.

A citizen-led Tree Council – working with public officials to improve the health of the trees through tree plantings, advocacy, education, management, and maintenance activities – is a great tool to highlight and foster pro-environmental behaviour, simply because ‘everyone likes to have a rest in a park’. Such a committee can:

- Advocate for better public tree management and for more public support for urban forestry;
- They may help complete an inventory, education campaign, planting program, or tree ordinance
- Bring in additional resources for trees and forests. Committees help apply for grants, solicit private donations, organize fundraisers, and advocate for larger budgets;
- Reduce Conflicts. Committees can help reduce potential conflicts by providing a forum for reviewing complaints, addressing safety issues, and supporting tree warden decisions;
- Help Raise Public Awareness. Citizen committees can be quite successful at educating residents about the importance of trees and at raising public awareness of the needs of trees and forests;

A Tree Council and proper communication tools (what Hegyvidék will do along the tree replacement strategy) can provide residents with data and feedback on the impacts of the activity of trees on urban areas, but also humans' impact on trees. Trees are great 'tools' to develop a pro-environmental sensibility through direct experience of the value of natural systems and the global consequences of unsustainable (urban) lifestyles. Trees are great assets to bring residents and governmental actors together to stimulate discussions to support, affirm and validate new behaviours into accepted norms.