



A PLACE TO BE THE PLAY/ACT PLACEMAKING HANDBOOK

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This handbook is the result of the work carried out by the students of the PLAY/ACT project

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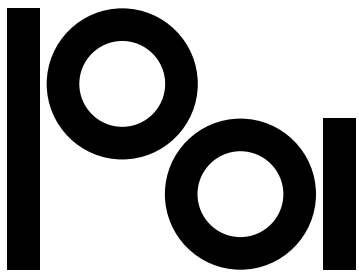
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INTRODUCTION

• THE HANDBOOK

This handbook is one of the final results of the Erasmus+ project PLAY/ACT: Placemaking as Youth Activism, coordinated by ARTERIA_LAB (University of Évora) with the following partners Materahub (Matera, Italy), KÉK (Budapest, Hungary), University of Extremadura and Junta de Extremadura (Badajoz - Mérida, Spain) and Community Impact (Lisbon, Portugal). The Handbook may be of interest to:

- 01** Professors in higher education seeking to implement project-based learning courses either on facing urban challenges or associated with other issues.
- 02** Organisations seeking to design Erasmus+ projects associated with urban challenges.
- 03** Citizens or organisations interested in placemaking processes.

The handbook is not intended to be a manual on placemaking as it does not provide an in-depth review of the literature, or a compilation of practices and methodologies used in this context. Our aim is to share a critical analysis of the path we followed throughout the life of the PLAY/ACT project and its main results and show the plurality of critical perspectives on placemaking in the most diverse contexts, whether rural or urban, central or peripheral, formal or informal, with a greater relevance to the work carried out by the PLAY/ACT's students and local teams.

In the introduction, we briefly outline what placemaking is and provide a presentation of how PLAY/ACT is organised and, in particular, the lifelong learning course created as part of the project.

We then present the placemaking projects conducted at the local level by students from Évora, Mérida, Matera and Budapest.

We then present the methodologies used to evaluate the impact of the project and provide a summary of the main results.

In the conclusion, we provide a summary of what we learnt.

Finally, there is a compilation of articles that share case studies, theoretical views, critical reflections and methodologies related to placemaking processes. These articles are the result of contributions from trainers who conducted the Learning, Training and Teaching Activities as well as authors who presented communications during the project's Final Conference "A Place to Be", held in Évora and Casa Branca, Portugal, on 14 and 15 March 2024. We are very grateful to the authors.

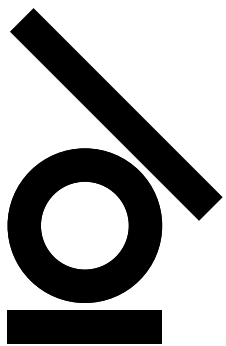
We recommend reading this Handbook in addition to the document “A Place to Be: PLAY/ACT’s Placemaking Toolkit”, which briefly describes some of the methodologies applied during the project. Both documents can be found at erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects.

➔ www.playact.eu



• A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO PLACEMAKING

What is Placemaking?



Placemaking refers to collaborative processes that are aimed at creating community-powered public spaces in order to maximise shared value and increase communities' sense of belonging.

The concept of placemaking emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, defining urban planning actions that, despite being essentially focused on infrastructure and following a top-down logic, were led by urban planners and politicians who wanted to put urbanism back at the centre of the democratic process, while recognising the value of public spaces for communities (Perrault et al., 2020).^[i]

Today, the concept of Placemaking applies to urban design and planning processes that **focus on people rather than infrastructures**, capitalising on communities' potential, resources and ideas to create urban environments that respond to their desires and needs. Quality public spaces are not defined by their design, but by the uses and values that communities assign to them and prioritise people's well-being and happiness.^[ii] Placemaking should also take into account the non-human beings we co-exist with, thereby contributing to ecological balance. Thus, placemaking processes involve particular attention being devoted to the **physical, cultural, social, ecological and even spiritual identities** that define a particular place.

Placemaking processes are **democratic** by nature and follow the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion, addressing systemic barriers and ensuring that everyone has equal access to the outcomes and benefits of the process.^[iii] They should contribute to the upholding of human rights, minimise social problems and encourage the inclusion of the most vulnerable groups, thereby inspiring communities to make the world a better place.

Another important concept associated with placemaking is that of **temporality**. People conducting placemaking processes should recognise the transformative and transformable nature of communities and, consequently, the spaces they envision and build (Perrault et al., 2020).

Placemaking is ^[iv]

- Community-driven
- Visionary
- Function before form
- Adaptable
- Inclusive
- Focused on creating destinations
- Context-specific
- Dynamic
- Trans-disciplinary
- Transformative
- Flexible
- Collaborative
- Sociable

Placemaking is not

- Top-down
- Reactionary
- Design-driven
- A blanket solution or quick fix
- Exclusionary
- Car-centric
- One-size-fits-all
- Static
- Discipline-driven
- One-dimensional
- Dependent on regulatory controls
- A cost/benefit analysis
- Project-focused

The concept of placemaking is sometimes confused with that of **tactical urbanism**, but they are not the same. Tactical urbanism means that the use of public space is complex and dynamic and that places can be enhanced through simple and short-term improvements that can be tested and improved over time (Community Planning Division, 2021). Thus, tactical urbanism is a design approach to urbanism that can be extremely useful for placemaking. However, tactical urbanism does not necessarily imply the collaborative and relational component associated with communities inherent in placemaking.



Portuguese PLAY/ACT students presenting one of the project's outcomes to the community. The poster says, "What would make your city happier?".

When a space becomes a place

|oi *"A space becomes a place when there is a reason to go there."* ^[v]

The concepts of space and place are highly relevant in the fields of human geography and urbanism: however, they have different meanings. The concept of **space** is something abstract with no real value or meaning. 'Space' can be defined as "a location which has no social connections for a human being".^[vi] **'Place'**, on the other hand, can be defined as a space rich in meaning, resulting from the experience of social interaction.^[vii] The term 'placemaking' demonstrates the intention to transform a space into a place with purpose and meaning.

Placemaking processes are usually conducted in the **public space**, which may be defined as space that is publicly owned and which, in theory, is open and accessible to everyone in the community without restriction. This does not mean that there are no rules for using public spaces, and these are usually set by the public entities that manage such spaces.

Public space serves as an interface between home, work and the range of services and other entities which make up a city. It is the public space that enables us to move between the different domains in our lives. Often, the public space may be an extension of these domains, for example when people set up tables in the street for a dinner party with friends, play football in the park, or do work at a street café. As individuals we do not set the rules for using the public space, which involves a constant process of negotiation with other actors. The public space can thus be understood as a facilitator for democratic governance (Brandão, 2019).^[viii]

However, the public space is more than the space which exists between private territories; it is "the core of the social space, the space of co-presence and the defining element of our society as a whole" (Brandão, 2019, 13). Nuno Portas (2012) defines the public space as the "space between, space that separates and connects, of contact, of connection between people and places" (Brandão, 2019, 22), which relates to Stavros Stavrides' concept of "threshold spatiality", "a spatiality of passages which connect while separating and separate while connecting" (Stavrides, 2016, 5).^[ix] The public space is both a place of permanence and a place of transience, not only spatially but also temporally, since it is in the public space that we feel most grounded in the present, but it is also through the public space that social changes become evident, implying that it adapts to new interpretations, values and experiences over time (Brandão, 2019).

What makes a great place?

Public Space Service System – PSSS – is an integrated assessment methodology for the public space whose interpretation involves four basic factors of urbanity (Brandão 2018, 9)^[x]:

System: How does this public space relate to other spaces?

Service: How does this public space serve users and what does it offer them?

Actors: Which actors use this public space and what are their needs?

Value: What kinds of value are offered by this public space?

The public space should provide essential services to the community: a number of factors (social, economic, leisure, political, associated with mobility, etc.) that are valued and enjoyed collectively. In addition to the service value of the public space, it also has a symbolic, cultural, social and environmental value that depends not only on the physical characteristics of the space, but above all on how it is interpreted and perceived by the local community. This means that "the enhancement of public space can involve both physical intervention in the space and the transformation of ways of looking at it" (Brandão, 2019, 15).

The complexity of evaluating the public space also depends on the multiplicity of actors who inhabit and use it and the complex relationships established among them and with the place itself, resulting in multiple perceptions of value. Clashes of views may result in conflict and consequently a loss of value. Understanding and overcoming points of conflict requires a reflective and collaborative practice (Brandão, 2019) based on a process of constant negotiation.

Despite the complexity of the question "What makes a great place?", there are methodologies that help assess the quality of a public space. The Project for Public Spaces (PPS) uses the **Power of 10+** approach^[xi], which assumes that a great place is one where you can find at least 10 things to do and therefore there are 10 good reasons to be there.

After evaluating thousands of public spaces around the world, as part of the PPS project four common characteristics of great spaces were **identified**¹:

¹ The Place Diagram is a scheme developed by the PPS that enables the assessment of the quality of a space based on certain metrics and viewpoints. The diagram is available at www.pps.org.

Accessibility and connections → the level of accessibility of a place may be determined by its physical and visual connections with neighbouring spaces and the level of ease of getting there, staying there and getting across it – for anyone, regardless of their physical ability.

Comfort and image → the comfort of a space means whether there is a place to sit and relax in and whether it is easy to walk around, as well as a sense of well-being, safety and cleanliness; comfort is also associated with aesthetic, spiritual and symbolic aspects.

Uses and activities → the diverse range of services and experiences offered by the place.

Sociability → perhaps the most difficult quality to achieve; a place that promotes sociability is one that welcomes people, fostering a sense of belonging to the place and the local community.

It should be noted that many of these characteristics are subjective and will be evaluated differently by contrasting groups of people. This is the case not only with the aesthetic and symbolic aspects of a place but also with the sense of well-being and safety, and also accessibility (Perrault et al., 2020). It is also important to make a distinction between the identity and the image of a place: while the **identity of a place** is defined by the feelings that the people who live there have towards it based on their memories, biographies and relationships, the **image of a place** usually refers to the perception of it by outsiders. These two aspects may conflict so placemaking processes should strive to alleviate this conflict, always starting with the identity of the place (Perrault et al., 2020).

Various authors use different frameworks in the assessment of the quality of a place, although in essence these value the same aspects. Perrault et al., for example, state that a good place is tolerant, generous and robust; safe, playful and lovable; flexible, inclusive and accessible; social; democratic and community-based (Perrault et al., 2020, 44). However, such frameworks are still too focused on the interests of people and ignore the needs and agency of non-human beings and the material world in general. A quality space is also one that promotes biodiversity, where different species can thrive, and also one that for example preserves natural watercourses untouched and allows water to infiltrate into the soil.

Thus, placemaking should follow a holistic and transdisciplinary approach that may involve fields as diverse as agriculture, ecology, sociology, the arts, design, economics, mobility, energy or health and sport.

The benefits of a great place

Quality public spaces, particularly community-powered ones, bring numerous advantages to society. The Project for Public Spaces identifies the benefits of quality public spaces in six areas: health; well-being, comfort and safety; accessibility; a sense of community; social interaction; and the local economy. As mentioned above, this framework focuses mainly on the benefits accruing to society, but it should be noted that quality public spaces should also have a positive impact on ecosystems and the environment.² [xii]

Placemaking actions are particularly relevant nowadays, when:

- 01 There is a growing tendency for people to move to large cities with a dense urban fabric. This migratory trend brings numerous challenges for large metropolises, such as: mobility; lack of contact between people and the natural environment; discontinuity between the spaces where people live, work and socialise; and tensions resulting from the heterogeneity of the social mosaic. These challenges can be addressed through placemaking. At the same time, placemaking processes are relevant to rural environments where the same migratory trend contributes to the desertification of villages and social isolation. When applied consistently and sustainably, placemaking actions can help to reverse this tendency, attracting people to rural areas and contributing to promoting quality of life in these places.
- 02 Modern fast-paced lifestyles are overly dependent on consumption, thus contributing to the environmental crisis and climate change. Placemaking can foster the creation of more sustainable and resilient cities and towns, replacing paradigms of consumption with sharing approaches, breaking down barriers between cultural and natural systems, and promoting coexistence between humans and more-than-humans, thereby creating richer and more diverse urban ecosystems.
- 03 We are experiencing a weakening of the social fabric of some cities as a result of tourist and financial pressures, which has resulted in a housing crisis unprecedented in recent decades. Placemaking practices associated with co-living can contribute to replacing the model of the city as a consumer good by one in which the city is a relational space, allowing us to work across silos and anticipating migration resulting in the gentrification of spaces (Perrault et al. 2020).

² For further information see "Place Capital: The Shared Wealth that Drives Thriving Communities" (<https://www.pps.org/article/place-capital-the-shared-wealth-that-drives-thriving-communities>)

- 04 We are witnessing a climate of increasing polarisation, with the rise of xenophobic, racist and discriminatory movements that undermine human rights. Placemaking practices contribute to social cohesion by creating meeting spaces with equal access for everyone, regardless of their physical ability, ethnicity, age, social class, origin, etc., and by promoting intersectoral negotiation practices that contribute to peaceful coexistence between different groups.
- 05 The generalised addiction to social networks and digital experiences has distanced us from the public space, isolating individuals in information bubbles. Placemaking aims to restore public space as a social meeting venue, promoting collective experiences.

Placemaking methodology

Placemaking can take many different forms, depending on the needs and objectives of communities and the resources and skills available to them. Placemaking projects may include art installations, the creation of street furniture, changes to traffic systems, the creation of a community green space, and the holding of community events such as concerts, cinema, markets, festivals, etc.³

However, none of these activities necessarily constitutes a placemaking project if it is not carried out with the involvement of and for the benefit of the target communities and does not have a lasting impact on the way people relate to each other and to the place. Placemaking is not so much about what you do, but why you do it and how you do it.

POI *"The placemaking methodologies consist of tools to study urban life and how people experience urban environments, as well as guidelines on how to create attractive public places by putting the emphasis on experimental approaches."* (Perrault et al. 2020, 8)

Slightly different methodologies may be adopted by those seeking to carry out placemaking processes and there is no guaranteed formula for success. Such processes should always be open, bottom-up, collaborative and iterative. As part of the Project for Public Spaces, 11 fundamental principles of placemaking were set out:^[xiii]

- 01 The community is the expert
- 02 Create a place, not a design
- 03 You can't do it alone

³ For further information <https://placemaking-europe.eu/what-is-placemaking/>

- 04 You can see a lot just by observing
- 05 Have a vision
- 06 Start with the petunias, i.e. start with baby steps⁴
- 07 Triangulate (think about things in relation to each other and not on their own)
- 08 They always say, "It can't be done" (don't give up when facing challenges)
- 09 Form supports function, so aesthetics are important, but functionality is paramount
- 10 Money is not the most important issue: use local community resources as far as possible
- 11 The placemaking process is never complete

As part of the Project for Public Spaces a 5-step methodology for placemaking processes was set out:^[xiv]

- 01 **Defining the place and the stakeholders:** stakeholders are all the individuals, organisations and groups that are involved with the place, and this may include: residents and their friends; businesses; cultural, religious and educational organisations; artists; local community groups; public bodies; etc.
- 02 **Evaluating the space and identifying issues:** the aim is to learn all about the place and the challenges faced by the local communities as well as people's wants and needs.
- 03 **Developing a vision for the place:** a collaborative process involving stakeholders enables a vision for the space to be developed and thus a concept for the project and an action plan to be produced.
- 04 **Carrying out short-term experiments:** small-scale solutions are tested, ideally quickly and cheaply, so that failure does not jeopardise the implementation of the project; following the evaluation of the results, changes to the project and the action plan may be required to be made through iterative processes.
- 05 **Conducting ongoing re-evaluation and making long-term improvements:** the placemaking process is never complete; results must be continually evaluated and improvements made in order to achieve the long-term vision for the place.

This specific methodology for placemaking follows the basic principles of **Design Thinking**, which is a design approach which can be applied to any challenge and is characterised by a focus on the needs and desires of users. This is a non-linear methodology that redefines the challenge throughout the process and tests for possible improved solutions through iterative prototyping processes.

⁴ For more information see "Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper" (<https://www.pps.org/article/lighter-quicker-cheaper>)

Applying the Design Thinking approach to Placemaking, we have⁵:



Governance for places

A placemaking project should have a lasting impact on communities, so it is extremely important to consider the question of the long-term management of the project. Ideally, a community-led place should be self-managed by the communities themselves, a process known as **place collaboration** (Perrault, et al., 2020). To achieve this, rather than an organisational paradigm involving silos, bridges must be created between people, institutions and the natural world, ensuring the consideration of and mediation between the interests of all stakeholders (of a public, private, community and ecological nature). This is an important part of the placemaking process and may be carried out

⁵ The Resources section of The PLAY/ACT Placemaking Toolkit provides some references containing tools typically used in Design Thinking.

by specific individuals or organisations “that strike a balance between democratic and participatory governance on the one hand, and effective management and stewardship on the other” (Perrault et al., 2020, 74) while seeking to strike a balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches, which is not easy⁶.

In *The Placemaking in the Nordics Handbook*, the following challenges and lessons learned for multiple-stakeholder place collaboration processes are identified (Perrault et al, 2020, 74):

- 01 The lack of a clear mandate from a specific organisation
- 02 Difficulty in monitoring place collaboration
- 03 The different goals and agendas of stakeholders
- 04 The different ways stakeholders communicate and do things
- 05 Place collaboration is time consuming
- 06 It is difficult for stakeholders to act independently of their base organisations
- 07 The best approach is to build trust and legitimacy through achieving quick wins

Public spaces are seen as **commons**, but it is important to understand what this means. These spaces are owned by public authorities and usually governed and managed by them, so they are often common property more than a common resource which may be used by all. The concept of **urban commons** refers to the common resources of a city that are managed by a group of users that share a set of values, are bound by protocols, and recognise certain norms. The process of participatory management of urban commons not for profit but for the common benefit of society is called **commoning** and this is what distinguishes urban commons from public goods and consumer goods (Dellenbaugh-Losse, 2020)^[xvi]. Commoning is a relational process that encourages the creation of “coalition[s] of differences that resist fragmentation and emphasise kinship and interdependence” (Urban Commons Research Collective, 2022, 22)^[xvii], as opposed to processes of categorisation and fragmentation known as “othering”.

Regardless of the mode of governance, it is often advantageous to define more formal forms of collaboration, not least because, depending on the legal framework of each country, public institutions may find it difficult to support individuals or groups in civil society that do not enjoy recognised status. Formalising such status means that management processes are less vulnerable and easier, creating a sense of ownership among stakeholders, assigning responsibilities and creating opportunities for co-financing (Perrault et al., 2020)⁷.

⁶ The Erasmus+ RegenerAction project seeks to define a professional profile for Urban Community Builders who fulfil the role of building place collaboration (<https://regenerationproject.eu/>).

⁷ For further information on different management and governance models, see *The Placemaking in the Nordics Handbook* (Perrault et al, 2020) and for further information on Urban Commons see *The Urban Commons Cookbook* (Dellenbaugh-Losse, 2020).

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PLAY/ACT PROJECT

This chapter provides a summary of the projects conducted on the ground as part of the PLAY/ACT project. Projects were carried out by students from the four countries, mentored by partners' teams. The project was conducted over the three-semester period from September 2022 to June 2024, one of three project stages being carried out in each semester: 1) research; 2) ideation; and 3) implementation.

• THE PLAY/ACT TRAINING COURSE

PLAY/ACT - **Placemaking as Youth Activism** is an Erasmus+ project led by _ARTERIA_ LAB - University of Évora (Portugal) and carried out jointly with the following partners: the University of Extremadura (Spain), Dirección General de Universidad, Consejería de Educación, Ciencia y Formación Profesional de la Junta de Extremadura (Spain), Materahub (Italy), KÉK - Hungarian Centre for Contemporary Architecture (Hungary) and Community Impact (Portugal). The University of Basilicata (Italy) is also an associate partner. The objectives of this two-and-a-half-year project were:

- 01** To develop the competencies of university students for conducting placemaking projects.
- 02** To test a model for the creation of a transdisciplinary course in Placemaking.
- 03** To carry out and develop prototypes for placemaking projects in Évora, Mérida, Matera and Budapest.

A lifelong learning course was created jointly by the universities of Évora, Extremadura and Basilicata, for which students from the three institutions were eligible to apply. Although the project was implemented in Hungary without being formally affiliated with a higher education body, students in Hungary were able to enrol on the course at any of the three partner universities. The aim was for the make-up of student teams to be as transdisciplinary as possible, while universities were able to determine what scientific fields and academic entry qualifications to accept, the latter ranging from undergraduate to PhD study level⁸.

The lifelong learning course in Placemaking was worth a total of 14 ECTS and followed a project-based learning methodology. Over the three semesters of the course, students applied the knowledge and skills they had acquired to carry out a local placemaking project.

Each project was conducted in three stages, one of which in each semester of the course:

Stage 1.

Research - Students selected the site for intervention and gathered as much information as possible about the place, the communities that use and inhabit it, the resources available and the stakeholders who could contribute to the implementation of the project. This stage was marked by initial approaches made to the local community and an attempt to establish a relationship with individuals and groups. At the

⁸ Follow the [link](#) to see the PLAY/ACT students call

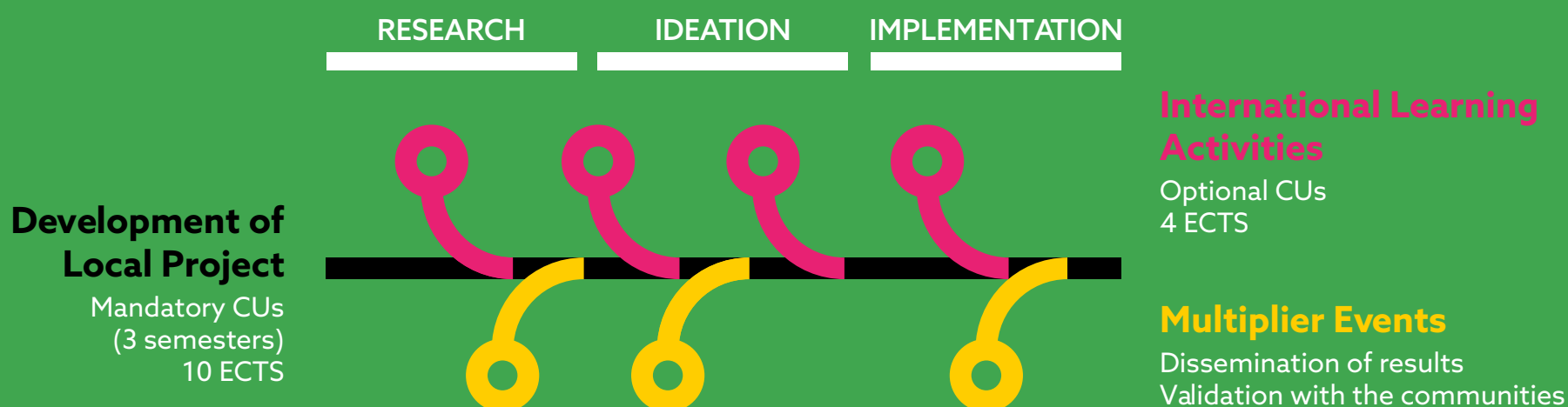
end of the research stage, students identified the challenge they sought to address in subsequent stages.

Stage 2.

Ideation – Students sought possible solutions to meet the challenge identified in the previous stage, together with members of the target communities, in response to their needs and wants. The solutions to be adopted were required to take into account environmental, cultural, social and economic sustainability, and human rights issues. At the end of the semester, the students selected and validated jointly with the local communities the ideas to be implemented in the final stage.

Stage 3.

Implementation - Students were required to develop a prototype for action and tested their ideas, which involved making contacts and conducting negotiations with local stakeholders, including residents, non-profit organisations, businesses and public bodies. There were no constraints on the type of project which could be conducted.



The three stages of the local project (Research, Ideation, Implementation) were worth **compulsory curricular units** (CUs) of the course and there was continuous mentoring by technical staff, teachers and researchers from the partner institutions.

International Learning, Training and Teaching Activities (LTTs), characteristic of an Erasmus+ KA2 project, were also included in the course curricular programme. These were 2-to-5-day intensive training programmes on a range of topics, as **optional curricular units**, and it was compulsory for students to take part in at least two of them. Students taking part in LTTs passed on the knowledge and skills they had acquired to the other members of the team and applied them by carrying out their local project.

Summary of Learning, Training and Teaching activities (LLTs)

Semester	Name of LTT	Organiser/ location	Content
1 st	Mapping and Engagement	University of Évora — Évora — Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aesthetic dimension of cartography • Finding place-attached meaning • Mapping affordances, behaviours, emotions and needs • Sensitive reading of a place • Considering more-than-humans • Diagonal thinking • Design innovation processes
2 nd	Empowerment in Placemaking	MateraHub — Matera — Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative project canvas • Community development and civic engagement • Entrepreneurial and negotiation skills • Funding opportunities • Placemaking and Human Rights • Communication and pitching an idea • Case studies of placemaking projects
	Experience Design	KÉK — Budapest — Hungary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of placemaking projects • Gamification and placemaking • Sensing the city • Urban development case studies • Participation for social change • Prototyping
3 rd	Communication and video narratives	University of Extremadura — Badajoz Mérida Cáceres — Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills and emotional management for public speaking • Digital storytelling and transmedia narrative • Video creation from photographic images • Stop-motion and time lapse • Creation of content for social networks • Case studies of placemaking projects

In an Erasmus+ KA2 project, **Multiplier Events** (ME) are stages in the project when the results are disseminated to external communities. In the context of PLAY/ACT, MEs were also opportunities for students to establish contact with local residents and stakeholders. Rather than simply presenting the methodologies developed, students applied them to the relevant contexts in order to obtain information, stimulate ideas and encourage contributions from communities. Thus, MEs were the main activities carried out by students during each semester. In total, 13 MEs were held during the life of the project, 12 local events and one international event.

Summary of Multiplier Events (ME)

Semester	Scale/ Location	Location	Objectives
1 st	Local	Évora Mérida Matera Budapest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using methodologies for gathering information about the place and the local community • Identifying partners and gatekeepers • Establishing relationships with local individuals and groups • Defining the challenge together jointly with the communitysses
2 nd			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using methodologies to generate and co-design possible solutions to the challenges identified, together with the local community • Presenting ideas to stakeholders involved
3 rd			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing, testing and evaluating ideas at a public event • Presenting the results of the project to the local community
End of project	International	Évora	'A Place to Be' – International Conference on Placemaking: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing case studies and research results on placemaking, urban regeneration and civic participation • Sharing the results of PLAY/ACT • Visiting a regeneration project in a rural environment: Estação Cooperativa de Casa Branca

• ÉVORA, PORTUGAL

Project team

Students were selected from among applications received following an open call targeted at undergraduate and master's degree students at the University of Évora from a number of chosen scientific fields. A letter of motivation from candidates and their availability to take part in the project were determining factors. The team was made up of six students from the disciplines of architecture (Pedro Retzke, undergraduate student), landscape architecture (Leonor Almeida and Pablo Nuño Navarro, master's degree students), design (Pedro Seiça, master's degree student), visual arts and multimedia (Bruna Oliveira, undergraduate student), and sociology (Gabriela Romão, undergraduate student).

The place

Location: Largo do Chão das Covas, Évora, Portugal

➔ [maps](#)

Évora is a historic medium-sized city with a population of about 50,000 in the Alentejo region of interior southern Portugal. It is the best example of Portuguese architecture from the Renaissance period leading to it being awarded UNESCO World Heritage status in 1986. This has led to some conflict between needs for heritage preservation and urban innovation in the old city centre. As one of the largest mediaeval walled cities in Portugal, Évora faces a range of challenges associated with the physical, social and cultural accessibility issues linked to the surrounding city walls, which constitute both a physically and symbolic boundary.

The group of students selected Largo do Chão das Covas square and its immediate surroundings as target of study. The square is located in the Historic Centre of the city, the first references to the space dating back to the 14th century. The name of the square refers to the medieval tradition of storing wheat in underground pits ("chão das covas" means ground with pits).

In the past, a variety of shops and spaces for socialising, such as traditional taverns, attracted many people to the Largo do Chão das Covas, a hub for social interaction. In particular, the square was the venue of one of the city's biggest markets from 1949 to 1970. The dynamics of the square have changed over time, with the disappearance of the shops, taverns and market, but, as we found during the research stage, the memory of these is very much alive among older people. In recent decades, with the closing of businesses and changes in social habits, the square has lost much of its importance and most of the time it is a place full of cars but empty of people.



Largo do Chão das Covas square in the old city centre of Évora.
© Miguel Machado



Former market in Largo do Chão das Covas square (1949 to 1960). Photograph: David Freitas.
© Évora Municipality Photographic Archive.

Despite having no connection with the square, the students chose it as the focus of their study hoping that the presence of a range of different organisations in the neighbourhood, such as the Parish Council, a community arts centre, a kindergarten, some traditional shops and other businesses would provide a gateway for the establishment of relations with the local community and enable a sustainable project with a lasting impact to be carried out.

The challenge

The following insights emerged as a result of the research stage:

- 01** There is a feeling of nostalgia among older residents as regards the shops, social life and bustling square of the past.
- 02** Younger feel little connection with the square.
- 03** During the COVID-19 pandemic, a chair mysteriously appeared in the square and is still used by residents as a focal point for the exchange of goods.
- 04** During the pandemic the square was used as a space for physical workouts by a local personal fitness centre.
- 05** A group of residents and friends who often meet in the square envision it as a potential stage for art installations and performances.



A chair mysteriously appeared in the square and is used by residents as a focal point for the exchange of goods. The chair is frequently replaced, equally mysteriously.

Based on these insights, students identified three challenges:

- 01** How to revive the bustling square with its shops of the past.
- 02** How to dynamise the social life of the square by making it a cultural hub.
- 03** How to promote the practice of physical exercise in the city centre.



— October 2022



— November 2022



— December 2022



The placemaking process

RESEARCH STAGE

October 2022

In an exploratory exercise of wandering around (in French, *flâneur*) students traversed parts of the city centre, photographing, recording and sharing their sensory and emotional experiences of the places they visited, after which, potential areas for intervention were assessed on the basis of their diversity, the presence of users and their potential for transformation.

October 2022

After analysing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of a number of different places, Chão das Covas square was selected as the study site. Several visits were made to the square, including a sensitive reading, which consists of recording subjective perceptions of the space, its materialities and environments and the emotions and sensations it arouses.

November 2022

The neighbourhood was mapped in accordance with the following categories: key players and gatekeepers; existing infrastructures; heritage and artistic manifestations; social and cultural practices; biodiversity of the local area.

Partnerships were established with public and private organisations that were crucial for the implementation of the project and establishing contacts in the community.

December 2022

Establishing contacts with the community began with the distribution of greetings cards in Largo do Chão das Covas neighbourhood.



— April 2023



— April 2023



— April 2023



February 2023

A first meeting with the community was held with the aim of sharing memories about Largo do Chão das Covas and learning about the experiences of its users. Despite our efforts at communication, the event was poorly attended. It included a tour of the neighbourhood led by a local historian as a guide, and a peddy-paper activity for groups of children around the square.

IDEATION STAGE

April 2023

In April three meetings were held with community groups from the local neighbourhood. During the Playing in the City session, the behaviour of a group of children from a local kindergarten was monitored using GPS as they played in the square, first with nothing to play with and then with some everyday objects to play with. At the end of the day, the children were asked to imagine what they would like to do in the square.

April 2023

At an event entitled Working Out in the City we teamed up with Boutique de Treinos, a local fitness centre, and invited the local neighbourhood community to join us in a personalised training session using only the square's urban infrastructures. At the end of the session, an ideation session was held on how to make the space more suitable for doing physical exercise.

April 2023

An event called Trade and Culture in the City brought together residents and local agents in the field of culture and the arts. Taking as a starting point the idea of a community market, proposed by PLAY/ACT students, participants at the meeting shared suggestions for promoting solidarity and a collaborative spirit among neighbourhood residents through the medium of art and culture.

May 2023

The PLAY/ACT local project was presented at the ELIA Academy, an International Meeting of Higher Art Schools hosted by the University of Évora. The session, presented by two students associated with the project, sought to reflect on the positive aspects and difficulties experienced so far in implementing a community-based transdisciplinary project in an educational context.

— June 2023

June 2023

A series of regular meetings with friends in the neighbourhood was initiated in order to obtain feedback on each stage of the process. In accordance with the existing dynamics of the group, the meetings took place in the square during shared meals. At the first meeting, we presented two ideas resulting from the ideation process: a community fair and a training plan for the square.

IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

— September 2023

September 2023

The square became our favourite venue for validating our ideas with the community and stakeholders. Students presented some project results to local residents and the idea for holding a community market in the square. A report with recommendations deriving from the results of the research and ideation stages was sent to Évora City Council.

— October 2023

October 2023

The development of an outdoor training circuit in the square was initiated jointly with the local fitness centre.

"The square became our favourite venue for validating our ideas with the community and stakeholders"





— February 2024



— March 2024



January 2024

Work on organising the local community market started. Among many other activities, video and audio testimonies were collected from residents, former residents and other users of the square. The aim was to create a personal local profile, reviving past and present experiences and providing a stage for the expression of desires for the future of the neighbourhood. The result was a short documentary film screened during the community market.

February 2024

Further preparations for the community market were made, making use, wherever possible, of digital fabrication and rapid prototyping equipment from _ARTERIA_ LAB's maker space. Students' engagement in the process enabled them to learn some valuable new skills. To reduce the environmental impact of the project materials such as paper, cardboard and plastic were recycled.

March 2024

The students organised the Feira da Cadeira (Fair of the Chair), a local community market, at which artworks, crafts and second-hand items were sold, and there was also a cultural programme. The market was inspired by the series of chairs used by local residents for the exchange of goods. These chairs symbolise the solidary relationship between residents and reflect the way they used to gather in the Largo do Chão das Covas, the focal point in the life of the neighbourhood.

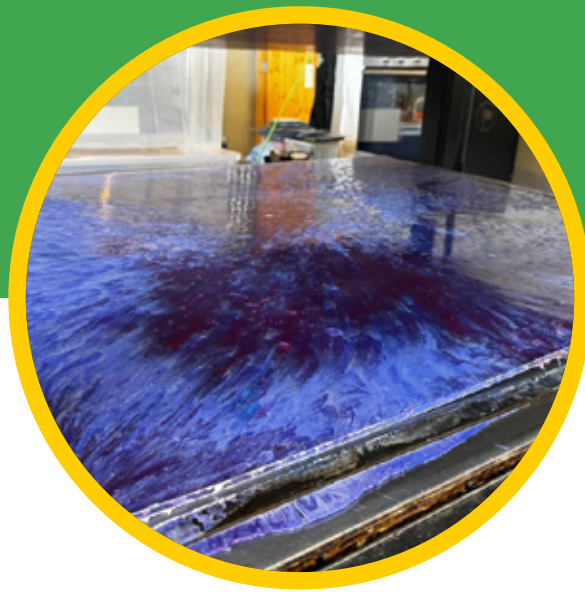
Results

The main results of the local community project were:

01 An outdoor training programme

The training programme was developed jointly with Boutique de Treinos, a personalised fitness centre located in the neighbourhood. The programme was designed specifically for Largo do Chão das Covas using only the square's urban infrastructure and consisted

📷 *Production of prototypes of fitness exercise instructions made from recycled plastic*



of 12 training points, each with four different levels. The training videos were filmed and will be made available online, while the prototype of the instructions was produced in _ARTERIA_LAB's maker space using recycled plastic. At the time of writing, students were waiting for authorisation of the city council allowing the project to continue.

02 A visual representation of the community's wishes

Architect Bruno Pinto da Cruz produced an original illustration with an impression of the community's wishes and desires resulting from the research and ideation processes. It was presented at the Feira da Cadeira and served as the basis for developing activities and games for the community. The intention was to display it in a large format in a public place near the square but the city council didn't open up to this due to the potential impact on the historic area.



An imaginative illustration of Largo do Chão das Covas portraying the wishes of the local community. Author: Bruno Pinto da Cruz.



Local residents playing a game based on the illustration during the Feira da Cadeira.

03 Feira da Cadeira

The Feira da Cadeira was a community market held in Largo do Chão das Covas on 16 March, the main aim of which was to revive the traditional commercial dynamics of the square for a day and turn it into a space for socialising through cultural activities. The fair was organised jointly with various partners, especially Évora Municipality which made the square into a pedestrian zone, imposing a temporary ban on parking, and provided equipment and technical and logistical support.

A call for those interested in selling arts and crafts and second-hand goods was issued and 105 applications were received for stands at the fair. In the event, 76 people took part as sellers, far more than initially expected.

The fair also featured a diverse cultural programme aimed at a range of target audiences, resulting from the partnerships forged as part of the project.

Programme:

3pm - 9pm

Community Market

3pm - 8pm

"Follies for the Largo
Chão das Covas"

Exhibition

3pm - 6pm

Engraving the square

Engraving workshop

3pm - 7pm

Children in the square

Kid's Zone

3pm - 6pm

Project Fiel

Responsible pet adoption

3.30pm - 4.30pm

Malangatana

Community art workshop

3.30pm - 4.30pm

Casa do Montado

Ecology workshop

4pm - 5pm

At the table we understand each
other

Évora European Capital of Culture

5pm - 6pm

Vozes ao Largo

Traditional Alentejo choral group

6pm - 8.30pm

Mrs Lover washed ashore

DJ set

9pm - 10pm

Concert by Daniel Catarino

The fair was also an opportunity to showcase project work in progress and the results of the Placemaking training course.



Although it was not possible to estimate the number of fair-goers, the square was full of people throughout the afternoon and evening and the atmosphere was festive.



Impact and future

Following the event, a questionnaire was sent to vendors and fair-goers with the aim of assessing its impact. The main results are summarised below:

- 01** 94% of vendors and 82% of fair-goers thought that the fair helped to revive the commercial dynamics of the square for a day.
- 02** 91% of vendors and 95% of fair-goers thought that the fair helped make the square a place for socialising.
- 03** According to respondents, the main feelings associated with the fair were "joy", "a sense of community" and "sharing". All feedback was positive, except for two comments, one of which referred to a lack of community involvement.
- 04** All the vendors and 95% of fair-goers expressed the view that the event should be repeated regularly. The former showed an interest in taking part in future editions, even if they had to pay a fee, which enabled a budget estimate to be made with regard to possible future editions.
- 05** All the residents of the neighbourhood expressed the view that the positive aspects of the fair outweighed the disturbance caused by its holding.

Based on the results of this evaluation and our experience during the event, we believe that the Feira da Cadeira was a success and showed that it is possible to test new ways of using the public space. Residents' joy at seeing the revival of the square's vibrancy and liveliness was evident. However, the outlook for the continuation of the project is not very encouraging. Residents had tried to hold a community market in the past but were unsuccessful due to difficulties for residents not formally organised in groups in dealing with public bodies. In an attempt to mediate in relations between the municipality and residents, we asked the latter if they would be interested in formalising their membership of a group in order to provide a boost for projects like this, but they showed no interest in doing this. On the other hand, we believe that the informal way in which they organise things is the essence of the group and any formal structure would detract from this. Although public bodies such as the city council and the parish council supported the event and viewed the results as very positive, they showed no interest in continuing with the project, which would also subvert its community-based nature. In conclusion, we feel that in Portugal there is still a lack of co-governance and public participation mechanisms that enable local people who are not organised into formal groups to participate more actively in activities aimed at dynamising urban places, especially if this involves access to public space and resources and support from public bodies.

• MÉRIDA, SPAIN

Project team

A call for applications was targeted at all undergraduate and PhD students at the University of Extremadura. The selection of candidates was based on their availability to participate in the project. The selected students were Sara Peligros, Rocío Asensio, Óscar García, María José Martín, José Antonio Parejo and Carlos Arribas, studying in a range of fields such as journalism, communications, education, medicine and engineering.

The place

Location: El Economato, Mérida, Spain

➔ [map](#)

“El Economato Youth Leisure Centre” is the headquarters of the Mérida City Council Youth Department and the main leisure and training centre for young people in the city. It is a dynamic unit that offers a wide range of opportunities to young people in Mérida with a range of passtime, artistic, educational and leisure activities. It is targeted at young people over the age of 10 who come to the unit, carry out their chosen activities autonomously, and then leave without adult intervention.

The name of the space is derived from the fact that in the past it was El Economato (a centre based on a cooperative system or sponsored by businesses where groups of people, especially workers, could buy goods more cheaply than in shops), an organisation for national rail workers.

Despite the efforts of the local authority to promote the unit, it is not used by young people as much as might be expected.



*El Economato, the focus of study
selected by the Spanish team.*



Following research carried out by the students in the city of Mérida and several meetings held with representatives of other spaces that were considered as candidates for the focus of the project, El Economato was selected due to its location, background and potential for placemaking.

The challenge

Following several sessions held in the local community, the students identified the following challenge: How could the level of socialisation of young people in Mérida between the ages of 12 and 22 years be improved?

As a consequence, the specific objectives of the project were defined as follows:

- 01** To help transform patterns of use of El Economato through the implementation of strategies and tools in the specific field of communication.
- 02** To promote the integration and development of key concepts and attitudes among young people associated with the responsible use of online social networks.
- 03** To promote the co-creation of outreach content for virtual social networks in collaborative ways.
- 04** To develop the communicative and creative skills of the target group.
- 05** To promote face-to-face social interaction at El Economato and foster the building of relationships between users.

- 06** To promote peer-to-peer learning, turning members of the target group into active agents that replicate actions in their wider relations with people.

In seeking to achieve these objectives, the aim was to take full advantage of the potential of El Economato as a meeting point for youth in Merida. This is a centre with an excellent location and a wide range of facilities whose goal is to provide a main focus for healthy leisure activities for young people in the city. The placemaking project involved a research stage in which a range of methodologies were developed and implemented by the team, enabling the community to realise a shared vision and its members' needs and ideas about the potential for the development of the space to be expressed. Communications were used as a vehicle, and social networks as a key tool for attracting young people to the centre, using the virtual aspect of communications to generate a face-to-face community, whose members' critical skills were developed as well as their competencies in the creation of high-quality digital content.

— October 2022



— November 2022



The placemaking process

October 2022

The first face-to-face meeting was held in Mérida with University and Junta de Extremadura staff in order to learn about the environment of the city and select the focus of study. It involved visits to El Economato and Factoría Joven, the latter being an exemplary placemaking project that, through an innovative design and an inclusive approach, has succeeded in creating a space where young people can get together and develop, thus positively impacting both the local community and the urban environment.

November 2022

After several such meetings and visits, a number of different places were evaluated, and a map of actors drawn up, a crucial tool for taking the decision on which space to select. In the event, El Economato was selected based on its background, location and the facilities it offered.

At this stage, as part of their training process, with its active methodology, the students had their first experience of working with the tools that they would later use with the community.

November / December 2022

The first step in working with El Economato was learning about the range of target groups that could be reached. During two months a series of introductory online training sessions were held by a number of university teachers from UEx in the field of education (methodology) and technicians from Cultura Emprendedora Universidad from Dirección General de Universidad - Junta de Extremadura, to raise awareness of methodologies for fostering the active participation of citizens in placemaking processes. In addition, a methodological transfer session was held for the sharing of learning experiences and results.

January 2023

Several events and workshops were held with different community groups whose common theme was the identification of needs and the co-creation of solutions through collaborative methodologies. These experiences helped in the process of defining the objective and the issue to be addressed. They also served for the collecting and testing of a number of ideas on different activities that could be implemented at El Economato as a solution for meeting the challenge.

January 2023

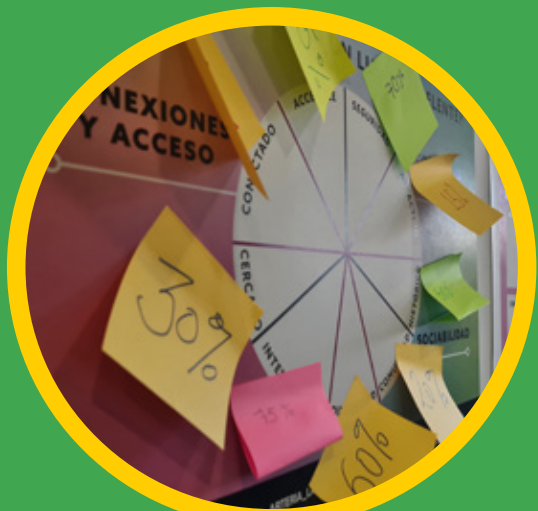
The aim of the first Multiplier Event was to establish a dialogue with citizens in order to enable the Extremadura partners, the university and the Regional Government of Extremadura, to design a leisure space in accordance with the proposals and needs they had expressed. The event was attended by representatives of Santa Eulalia Secondary School and members of a number of associations: La Enredadera, Alianza por la Solidaridad, Fablab Merida, and EsMéRARTE. Through various talks and activities, such as the construction of panels for drawing and writing portraying the range of facilities offered by the centre, the students gathered impressions and feedback about the place and



— January 2023



— January 2023





— October 2023



— February 2024



— March 2024



the potential for the use of its facilities, as well as its surroundings. The data gathered enabled the team to develop a vision for the building.

June 2023

The second Multiplier Event involved the active participation of community representatives and other local stakeholders, who joined the students in activities focussing on exploring and defining the present and future challenges and opportunities associated with the community spaces. This ideation session involved participants working on possible solutions to the challenge identified by the students.

October 2023

Finally, at the third multiplier event, specific strategies were implemented for gathering valuable information from the Merida community stakeholder group. A joint activity was carried out involving local school-children and vocational education students, using creative dynamics to test and develop proposals for the improvement of common spaces. This included the presentation of projects, prototyping activities and an exhibition of ideas, all with the aim of enriching and developing the solutions proposed.

February 2024

A training programme was tested for the generation of a prototype based on a social networking workshop as a means for promoting socialisation among young people.

The solution was tested through two prototypes: the "shooting corner" space was designed, equipped with resources and organised, and its operations were planned; at the same time, the physical infrastructure was built, using the digital fabrication resources of Smart Open Lab, an open fablab space of UEx.

March 2024

A real-time simulation of one of the proposed activities was carried out by the team to address the placemaking challenge, that is, implementing the "shooting corner" prototype, presented at the conference "A Place to Be" held at the end of the project.



Results

A fundamental difference between this and other projects is that although the team was multidisciplinary there was a strong communications component. To some extent, our project has demonstrated that, in relation to the concept of placemaking, communication is a critical component for ensuring that a project is able to be conducted effectively, adapt to changing circumstances, and successfully achieve its objectives. Without good communication, even the best-planned project may encounter great difficulty in the coordination of efforts, the implementation of processes, the creation of conditions enabling such implementation, and so on. Similarly, external communications are also of critical importance. Today, in the age of information and communications technologies and social media, these represent a significant advance for society, and we must use them as efficiently and responsibly as possible. This is key to carrying out any project. Young people spend many hours of the day on their smartphones and other devices and that is why we students decided to focus the project on social media.

Similarly, this project has proven to be highly innovative because in Mérida it is not common to find this type of activities for young people, while other initiatives are usually associated with physical activity, as is the case of the projects carried out by the Factoría Joven, which fail to address the interests of a large number of young people.

This is why an audiovisual unit has been set up in Mérida at El Economato, to work towards achieving the project objective, and a training programme has been developed which may be offered in the future at the centre. At the same time, a university training initiative that combines placemaking and communications has been tested, something that is unusual with experiences like this.

Impact and future

One of the most positive impacts of the project has been on people from Extremadura who have taken part. In the local region the concept of placemaking is now a reality: it is more widely known about, and some people have had the opportunity to try it. Both teachers and staff have been provided with practical training in placemaking, developing skills and gaining knowledge in the field, and this means we are well positioned to act as agents for positive change in the co-creation of more people-friendly, inclusive and sustainable public spaces. One of the objectives of placemaking is to make such spaces accessible and enjoyable for all, regardless of age, gender, origin or ability. The training we have received in this field has sensitised us to and empowered us in community participation, ensuring that such projects are truly useful and relevant. Placemaking strives for the adaptation of spaces to the specific needs and desires of the community. It also fosters creativity and has provided us with the opportunity to develop multidisciplinary skills.

At meetings with local authority representatives, they demonstrated their approval of the project. This is an exciting initiative providing young people with the opportunity for developing digital competencies and basic interpersonal skills and it is also a great opportunity for any organisation for children and young people to receive funding or support. They drew attention to the fact that the placemaking initiative has managed to boost the involvement of girls and women in the activities carried out at El Economato, thus having a very powerful and positive impact on the profile of users. In addition, they offered ideas and information on the different ways we could continue with the project if we decide to do so (for example, creating an association or cooperative, and how to present a better written letter of intent to young people's organisations, the city council, and other bodies, with a view to obtaining funding).



• MATERA, ITALY

Project team

Students were selected from among applications received following an open call for candidates targeted at Architecture undergraduate students at the University of Basilicata. A letter of motivation from candidates and their availability to take part in the project were determining factors. The team was made up of seven students Carlo Picerno, Flora Baldassarra, Irene Caramella, Marisa Divella, Martina Pisani, Rosella Paladino and Nuncio Patimisco.

The place

Location: Belvedere, Serra Venerdi, Matera, Italy

➔ [maps](#)

The place selected, Belvedere, is located in the district of Serra Venerdi. It has a number of urban parks and spaces for children, and a striking view of the landscape of Matera. It is a relaxing place, providing an escape from the hectic life of the city, enabling us to slow down and reflect on life in natural surroundings. Today this space is used by an urban regeneration association called Noi Ortadini.

Serra Venerdi was the first neighbourhood that was created following the depopulation of the ancient Rioni Sassi, with the entire city of Matera becoming a living laboratory: the commission for the study of the city and rural area of Matera was set up, promoted by UNRRA-CASAS and established by Adriano Olivetti, President of the National Institute of Urban Planning, and sociologist Friedrich G. Friedmann, who invited experts in various disciplines and prestigious exponents of Italian urbanism to take part by designing and creating neighbourhoods that reflect as best as possible models of the social life of the Sassi. The district Serra Venerdi was designed by the architect Luigi Piccinato, who also drew up the municipal master plan for the city.

The intervention site chosen by the PLAY/ACT Italian group fell within the Serra Venerdi neighbourhood and specifically targeted the green space that houses the bel-



"The full moon fills our beds; mules walk with gentle iron shoes and dogs growl on bones. You can hear the donkey in the cellar, its shivers, its scraping. In another cellar, my mother has been sleeping for sixty years." **Rocco Scotellaro**

vedere, in Vico Gioberti, which looks out on the Bradanic landscape. The potential of the site contributed greatly to the choice of this place along with the remarkable landscape and the desire to recover the lost identity of the place.

The choice of intervention area follows the identification of centralities within the neighbourhood, in order to identify the most frequented areas and those in need of intervention. On the basis of this analysis, it emerged that the liveliest and most frequented places by residents are the market area near Largo Francesco Saverio Nitti, the market area of Viale Europa, and the bar called That's Amore.

Regarding lived experiences, the market takes place only on Wednesdays with about 13 vendors participating each week, predominantly selling fruit and vegetables, with a minority selling other foods such as fish, dairy products and eggs. In the Serra Venerdì district, the market is not only located in Largo Francesco Saverio Nitti but also a short distance away, along Viale Europa, where another market differs from the former in terms of the types of items sold. Here, the focus is on general merchandise and clothing rather than food. Despite this, it does not deviate entirely from the analysed design concept.

The areas in need of intervention are the Giardini Venerdì area, where the mural depicting the "A" of Apache is located, and the area covered by Noi Ortadini. These are two areas where social redevelopment projects have been implemented, unfortunately without the desired effects being achieved.

The verses of Rocco Scotellaro, a poet and politician born in Tricarico (MT), immediately heighten the awareness of the group of students as to the living conditions in the ancient cave houses inhabited by the Materans who lived in the Sasi districts.



The challenge

The choice of the intervention area was determined after careful analysis that took into account key factors, including community involvement and understanding. We sought to adopt a participatory and inclusive approach to ensure the longevity of placemaking actions and improve the quality of spaces for all residents.

The decision to focus on the shared space used by “us residents” was motivated by the desire to actively include users and promote the long-term sustainability of the project. Furthermore, the area was identified as a currently unused panoramic location that offers opportunities for enhancement as a green meeting space for the local community.

Through discussions with residents, it emerged that the area had been discriminated against in the past, when Serra Venerdi residents were stigmatised as “Apaches”. Therefore, the goal of the placemaking intervention is to eliminate these forms of discrimination and requalify the place to promote inclusion and social cohesion. Thanks to detailed analysis and the active participation of all stakeholders involved, we are confident that the project will have a positive and lasting impact on the neighbourhood, creating an environment where people can live and thrive together.

— October 2022



The placemaking process

October 2022

The group, inspired by the concept of the *flanêur*, embarked on a sensory journey through Serra Venerdi neighbourhood, observing urban life and the flow of time. They walked with a keen and curious eye, gathering significant details that conveyed sensations, emotions and ideas. The survey results highlighted a series of elements reflecting both the sensuality and emotions of the neighbourhood, such as the perception of isolation, lack of care, scents, and colours, belonging and wonder, and the sense of alienation and



— February 2023



— March 2023



abandonment. The ensuing ideas proposed concrete solutions to enhance the social life and community of the neighbourhood, such as organising social gatherings and events to bring the community together and raise awareness among citizens about the importance of caring for their environment. In this way, the group managed to combine the *flanêur* attitude with concrete action and reflection, transforming contemplative observation into an opportunity.

February 2023

In order to conduct the project in a coherent and organised manner, a SWOT analysis was carried out, comparing the results with those of the citizens. The analysis revealed that the neighbourhood has potential but there are also some critical issues. Among the strengths of the neighbourhood are numerous green spaces, the presence of services, and a strong sense of community, while the weaknesses of the neighbourhood include abandoned buildings, social exclusion, an ageing population, a lack of green infrastructure, and poor maintenance of public areas. Therefore, it will be essential to implement strategic interventions in order to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the neighbourhood and counter the threats that could hinder its development.

March 2023

The second activity was the first Multiplier Event, aimed at disseminating the placemaking project among the local population. During the event, an activity called "Atlas of Emotions" was organised, with the aim of describing the neighbourhood through the participants' emotions. This served as one of the starting points for the project design, seeking an understanding of the needs of both residents and non-residents through the use of post-it notes and stickers.

June 2023

The latest placemaking event was aimed at stimulating an indirect dialogue between citizens and the project, using a basic cube-shaped paper module to create a sense of ongoing change. The cube was passed round among participants for them to imagine and identify



OI " (...) the event helped raise awareness about urban design".

the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal. As a result of the neighbourhood analysis, the main problem was identified as the difficulty in taking advantage of opportunities, and the event helped raise awareness about urban design.

Results

The idea for the project stems from the necessity to rejuvenate the previously identified area through placemaking actions. In this regard, it was essential to ask questions: "What do the inhabitants of the neighbourhood require?", "How could shared spaces be improved?", "What can be easily utilised?", "How should one act in order to respect the environment?". Subsequently, appropriate assessments were made regarding the form and materials to be used.

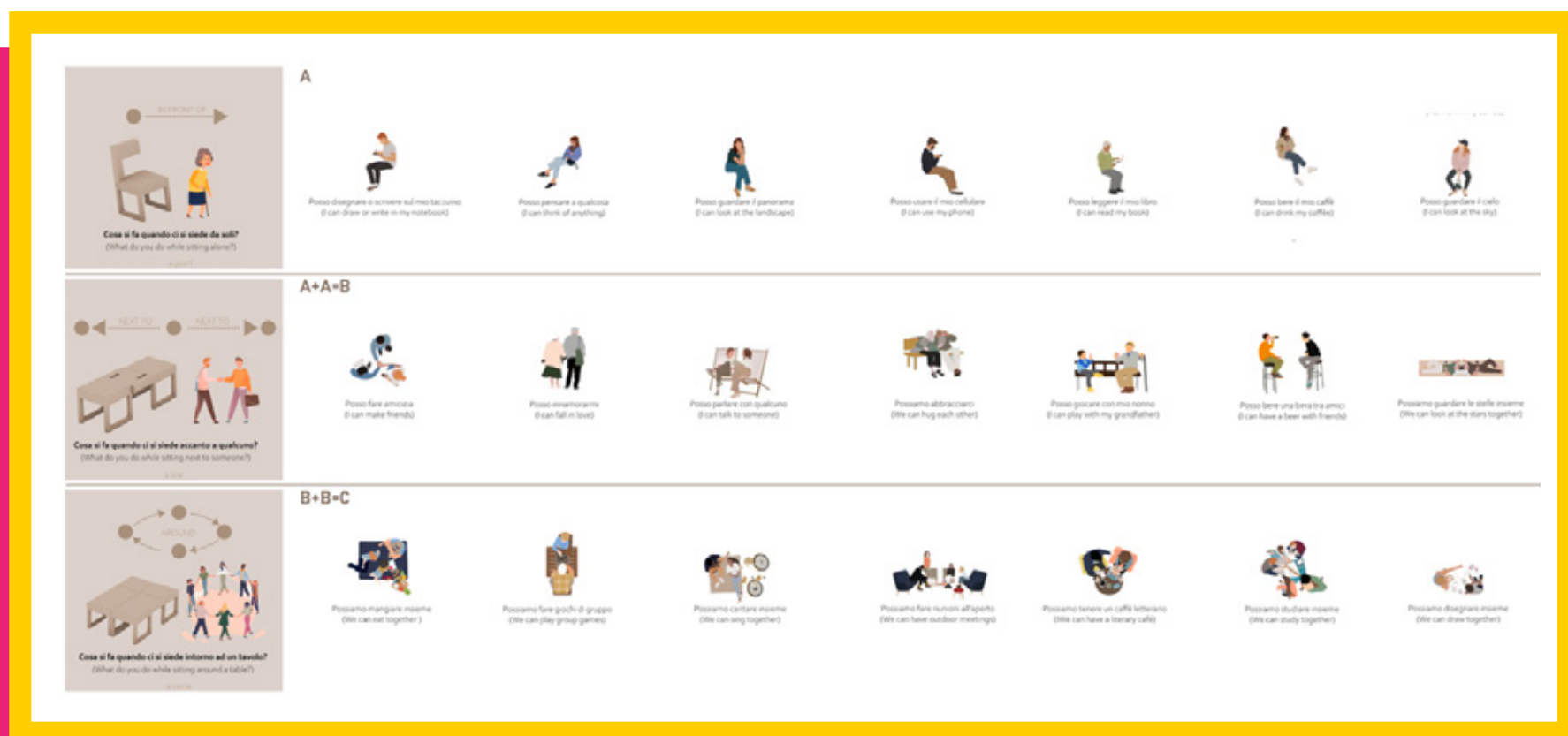
Why Wood?

Discussions ensued regarding the material to be employed in relation to criteria to be followed: it must be sustainable, use recycled materials, and it must integrate well into the context. Therefore, the conclusion was reached that the most suitable material was wood. Starting with a solid cube, subtraction and addition operations were carried out as illustrated below:



The project idea is called "A-stare", where A stands for "Apache" (the nickname with which inhabitants of the neighbourhood identified themselves) and "a stare" is an expression used in Matera to mean: "take a break", being on your own or shared chat and spending time together. Our project represents an element that can be declined in different functions: a seat, benches, and a table with seats. We observed that most neighbourhood residents are not inclined to make new friends or create new connections. The goal is to generate a process of change in them through our intervention.

- 01** We designed a plan for changes, and we aimed at producing a change in their attitude:
- 02** First "in front of us" (self-consciousness and contemplation of nature that surrounds us) = **CHAIR**
- 03** Then "next to us" (observation of nature in front of us and dialogue with people next to us) = **BENCH**
- 04** Finally, "around us" (sense of community, board games, social lunches, discussions on problems and solutions) = **TABLE**



Prototyping laboratory activities

The phase of using CAD tools was crucial for the project, as it allowed us to visualise and understand how the elements should be assembled to ensure the desired functionality. In addition to traditional 2D drawings, such as plans, elevations, and standard sections, a three-dimensional model of seats and the transformations they

would undergo to become benches and tables was created. This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of assembly dynamics and facilitated the resolution of any technical issues before the actual production phase. In essence, the use of CAD optimised the design process, improving efficiency and minimising the risk of error during project implementation.

The use of CAD tools paved the way for a valuable collaboration with the SYSKACK team, a group of talented young individuals founded by Giuseppe Porsia in Grassano, specialising in experimentation and production through 3D printing. This partnership proved extremely advantageous, as their expertise and experience in the field of 3D printing made a significant contribution to the realisation of our prototype.

The SYSKACK team welcomed us into their studio and showed great professionalism and dedication, demonstrating not only competence in their field but also enthusiasm for collaborating and sharing their knowledge. Their ability to translate our CAD designs and models into physical prototypes through 3D printing allowed us to achieve concreteness and tangibility for our vision.

During the prototyping process, the SYSKACK team showed remarkable attention to detail and a constant commitment to ensuring the quality and accuracy of the final result. Their flexibility and ability to adapt to our needs made the collaboration extremely smooth and productive. Furthermore, the collaboration with the SYSKACK team went beyond mere prototype production, involving a mutual exchange of ideas and feedback, thus contributing to further improving the design and functionality of our project.

In sum, the partnership with the SYSKACK team was a key element in our prototype development journey, allowing us to transform our concepts into tangible reality through the application of 3D printing technology while benefiting from their expertise and professionalism. We are grateful for their valuable contribution and look forward to continuing to collaborate with them in the future.



Impact and future

One of the main impacts of the project was undoubtedly the development of soft skills among the participants. Students gained a solid knowledge of mapping and community engagement by organising events both in the target neighbourhood chosen for the project and within the university itself. As regards the latter, during a public event, they presented the results of their project A-stare.

In addition to this, the project stimulated a proactive approach in students, prompting them to propose and collaborate with the university to carry out placemaking interventions in some of the unused spaces on the university campus, particularly in green areas. The goal was to transform these spaces into more attractive, inclusive and accessible places, thus promoting a greater sense of belonging to the university community and contributing to the enhancement of the area.

The project had a significant impact on both the local community and the university. On the one hand, it enabled students to develop practical skills in civic engagement and participatory planning, helping to strengthen the link between the university and the local area. On the other hand, it offered residents of the target neighbourhood the opportunity to actively participate in the redevelopment of their environment, fostering a greater sense of community and social cohesion.

In addition, student-initiated placemaking initiatives helped make the university campus a more lively and dynamic place, fostering interaction between students and faculty and promoting a more stimulating and engaging learning environment.

The project was notable for the originality of its approach and the students' commitment to finding innovative solutions to local problems. The combination of participatory mapping activities, event organisation, and public space design enabled the creation of a unique training course that actively involved students in all phases of the project.

In particular, placemaking initiatives provided an opportunity for students to experience first-hand the potential of participatory design and contribute to the creation of more sustainable and inclusive places.



"placemaking initiatives provided an opportunity for students to experience first-hand the potential of participatory design"

• BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

Project team

The team in Budapest was formed through an open call, searching for young entrepreneurs and university students eager to take action independently and learn about community building and placemaking outside a classroom setting. The open call was a big success, with more than double the applications for the six available places on the programme. Ultimately, an interdisciplinary team was assembled, consisting of:

Anita Heiner → Architecture student

Ilona Erzsébet Tóbiás → Global Challenges for Sustainability graduate

Anett Tomoko Molnár → Psychology student

Virág Garamvölgyi → Contemporary Art Theory graduate

Adrienn Simon → Regional and Environmental Economic Studies graduate

Eszter Boróka Zalányi → Architecture student

The place

Location: Kelenföld City Centre, Budapest, Hungary

→ [maps](#)

The Kelenföld City Centre building, dating from the 1970s, features a lot of concrete and metal structures. Though currently in a run-down condition, it was once a bustling half-open shopping mall and city centre with shops, markets, and its own cinema. The building is located near a recently renovated busy park, right above Budapest's newest metro line, surrounded by a housing estate from the same period.

The students chose this place based on their connections to the area and its architectural style, with each member having a personal connection to the location. Some of them lived close to the building, visited it frequently for shopping, went to the nearby park or used it as a transit thoroughfare in their everyday lives. For the two Architecture student participants, a year of their university course focused on this area of Budapest.



The challenge

The main challenge for the place is the divisive opinions about the future of the building, similarly with other late modernist structures in Hungary. The national governance narrative prioritises much older historical buildings for preservation, and local governments struggle to fund maintenance or renovation of these buildings. The city planned to sell the Kelenföld City Centre for demolition and redevelopment, which faced a huge backlash from the community, leading to a change prohibition law on the building. The city council explained that the new law would provide an opportunity for reviewing their plans and come up with an alternative solution: either new regulations providing for a much smaller building density in the case of demolition or a solution for sustainable renovation. However, in practice, this situation has made maintenance impossible, causing the building to deteriorate further.

The identified challenges are:

- 01 Preserving the identity and community connected to the place.
- 02 Utilising the building temporarily during the change prohibition phase.
- 03 Helping the building's operator reconnect with the local community and neighbourhood.
- 04 Enabling local residents to express their ideas and wishes for the building's future.

— October to November
2022



— December 2022



The placemaking process

October to November 2022

The programme began with an opening lecture on placemaking methodologies and a seminar by the Contemporary Architecture Centre to present their role as experts in the field. Workshops included flâneur and city sensing methodologies. Students were provided with materials and by the end of autumn individual students were required to present an idea for the site of the planned placemaking activities in Budapest. From among the six sites presented, the students unanimously chose Kelenföld City Centre for their placemaking experiments based on their fondness for the building and the challenges they had identified. By the end of November, the team mapped out the most important local stakeholders and prepared for the first on-site event. Prior to this they had very little to non-existent contact with the local community, and information was gathered through online research (local Facebook groups, online magazines, etc.) so low-entry threshold tasks were prepared for the event.

December 2022

The first public on-site event featured three tools to map the neighbourhood and gather the locals' insights:

- 01** a 2-metre-wide map of the place was created using the "pollmap" methodology to find out which spaces were most frequently and least frequently visited – this led to many conversations with the locals, and it proved such a popular means of self-expression that it was used every time a public event was held;
- 02** an interactive timeline of local history covering the whole neighbourhood: this was used first at this event, it was printed out, and locals could add their own stories;
- 03** and a "wishing wall" for gathering ideas.



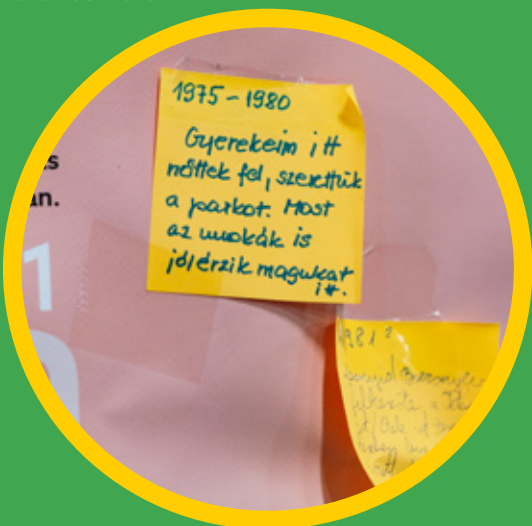
— May 2023



— June to August 2023



— September to November 2023



January to March 2023

The team gathered ideas based on the data collected in the first event, identified challenges to be addressed, and developed prototypes for solutions. Over several workshops the team narrowed down the number of the ideas and began working on the next public event, including a photo competition and exhibition, and the first outdoor movie club event. For this multiplier event international students joined the Hungarian team and together they also participated in a furniture building workshop within the Hungarian LTT to enhance the experience of the first on-site movie club

May 2023

The first Kelenföld City Centre May Day festival included a photo competition, featuring over a hundred photos, an urban walk on the topic of local history, led by the students, and a night-time movie screening, leading to the idea of a semi-regular movie club, following locals' account of the original cinema which operated in the building but was closed down years ago.

June to August 2023

The main "There is a place ... Kelenföld Movie Club" project was aimed at organising three movie nights, each connected to questions about the future of the place and community.

September to November 2023

Thematic film clubs included workshops for the local community with the goal of generating new ideas about how the City Centre can be used in a more inclusive way.

Results

The topic of the first film club was climate awareness and green public spaces. At the workshop participants made flowerpots that were placed in frequently visited places around the building. In order to engage the interests of the youngest children in the neighbourhood a cartoon movie WALL-E was selected for screening.

At the second session of the movie club, the aim was to showcase the hidden beauty of the City Centre, inspired by the different methodologies the students had learned to enable them to experience the city, so the workshop combined walking, dancing and exercising in the Kelenföld City Centre and experiencing the built environment in a new way. The movie featured music and movement. At this stage, the students realised that the movie club had a number of regular patrons: elderly people who lived close by.

For the final film club, the students decided to collect everything they had learned during the workshops and international learning activities and organised a whole-day placemaking festival. The festival programme included:

- the photo exhibition from the beginning of the year was held for the day;
- a special guest conducted interactive installation workshop based on the city sensing methodology;
- a workbook was devised for kids to explore the building and find out about the its history and architecture;



- during the morning, the unused roof terrace was turned into a yoga studio and a community yoga class was held;
- a concrete painting workshop enabling locals to reclaim the space;
- the last movie club screening was an iconic Hungarian movie focusing on neighbours and how a community can be built from scratch and how residents can create a better neighbourhood;
- a community dinner, including all-comers (local shop owners, families and even the homeless) as an opportunity to eat together and share stories about the place.

The photo exhibition was displayed three times on-site during the project, on the first occasion for a month, and was also lent to the Budapest100 city festival. The photo collection and locals' stories are available online and frequently searched, including by researchers who seek to understand more about the complexity of the place. The kids' workbook will be updated to include some questions that remain unanswered and is earmarked for wider distribution both online and offline for local children, providing them with a guide for exploring the building. The students compiled their knowledge into a booklet with the community timeline, portraying the essence of the building regardless of its future, which was highly anticipated by the building's current owner who plans to use it as the basis for future decision-making.

Impact and future

Following the PLAY/ACT training course, three students from the Hungarian team became interns at the KÉK - Contemporary Architecture Centre, the Hungarian partners on the programme, continuing their work in community building and placemaking projects. All six students maintain a close relationship with KÉK and the three other students act as volunteers on an occasional basis. The future of the Kelenföld City Centre remains uncertain, but the Hungarian partner has built a strong relationship with the building's operator, paving the way for future collaborations on placemaking projects in Budapest. They have already worked together during the Budapest100 city festival. The operator also runs many market halls across Budapest so the KÉK has gained a valuable new partner for future placemaking projects in Budapest.

PLACEMAKING AND EVALUATION: THE PLAY/ACT PROJECT

This chapter analyses the evaluation strategy implemented as part of the PLAY/ACT project and the methodologies and techniques used. Firstly, the objectives of PLAY/ACT will be identified. Then the project's evaluation strategy will be presented, along with examples from an EU-funded project. Finally, the techniques used will be methodologically set out, along with how, in practice, they are applied across a range of different target groups.

• OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

The PLAY/ACT project, inspired by the New European Bauhaus, was created around two main theoretical principles, from which two overall objectives emerge:

- 01 Placemaking processes:** the goal is to create awareness among young people as to the fact that they are active agents of citizenship and urban and social transformation, and to empower them to seek solutions to community problems by using placemaking tools, through dialogue with communities and local stakeholders, while taking into account cultural, social and environmental aspects.
- 02 Transdisciplinary curricula:** the project aims to develop and test a cross-curriculum framework for bachelor's and master's degree students involving shared knowledge, skills and experiences, enabling students and teachers to develop placemaking solutions to real problems faced by the local community.

• PLAY/ACT EVALUATION STRATEGY

In order to evaluate the project's impact on target audiences, the consortium outlined a logical framework for analysis, which contributed to the creation of the project's evaluation strategy.

The expected outcomes of the PLAY/ACT project are:

- 01** An increase in the interest of participants from rural areas, especially higher education students on bachelor's and master's degree courses, in continuing to contribute to the fields of architecture, urbanism, entrepreneurship, civic activism and local politics through the placemaking approach.
- 02** An increase in the autonomy and propensity of students to use their initiative in the development of placemaking projects, empowering them as agents for change at the local level.
- 03** Greater openness to intercultural dialogue and the increased civic participation of students.
- 04** The development of the skills of making public presentations, design thinking and entrepreneurship.

In general terms, three major indicators are used to assess the success of the project and its impact on academia, organisations and the community:

- 01** The interest of the universities involved in the project in implementing similar community-centred cross-disciplinary projects in future years.
- 02** The development of new projects or the submission of applications for projects by all or some of the PLAY/ACT partners.
- 03** The interest of the community and local stakeholders in implementing the placemaking projects conducted in the four cities as part of PLAY/ACT.

To measure the success and impact of the project, the consortium approaches four types of stakeholders: (1) Students; (2) Staff; (3) Gatekeepers; and (4) the Community. A range of techniques are used in accordance with the target audience, including questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups.

These techniques are commonly used in the evaluation of placemaking projects. For instance, other EU-funded placemaking projects, such as the A-Place project, implemented by a consortium of 9 entities and led by the School of Architecture La Salle, Barcelona, used similar assessment tools to evaluate its impact: semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussions, and questionnaire-based surveys (Rapanta & Madrazo, 2020)^[1].

• EVALUATION TECHNIQUES AND METHODOLOGIES

The evaluation methods used in this project are qualitative. Although a qualitative approach may be adopted alongside a quantitative approach, in this case, the project consortium is not conducting any type of quantitative evaluation.

Qualitative evaluation may be more subjective than quantitative evaluation, but it produces results that allow for an in-depth analysis of the subject and a broader understanding of the outputs and outcomes of the project. This is a more people-centred approach to evaluating the impact of a project, although it is more difficult to conduct and more prone to bias.

In the field of qualitative evaluation, there are three types of techniques: (1) techniques based on observation; (2) techniques based on dialogue; and (3) document analysis. For this project, the consortium adopted techniques based on dialogue, centred on the perspectives of participants: questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups.

Questionnaires

In order to evaluate this project, one tool of the adopted was questionnaires, which are a practical way of evaluating the perspective of learners in an anonymous way, by guaranteeing the anonymity of responses and avoiding bias in the results.

There are three types of questionnaire: those with only open-ended questions, which enable the collection of mostly qualitative information; those with only close-ended questions, for the collection of mostly quantitative data, with limited-answer options; and those with mixed question types, for the collection of a combination of types of data.

The benefits of the questionnaire are that it is an uniformised tool that allows for a range of questions to be asked and a broad set of answers to be obtained; it provides a quick way of collecting data and is relatively easy to analyse; it may be more objective and representative. But using questionnaires brings some challenges. A long questionnaire with direct questions may produce superficial responses whose interpretation is less than satisfactory and thus in-depth analysis may be limited.

Also, the representativeness of the sample might be invalidated if there is a low rate of response. Moreover, a questionnaire is a one-size-fits-all solution, which does not address the specific contexts and dynamics of the process (Batista et al., 2021)^[iii].

The consortium conducted questionnaires with **students** who took part in this project, using online surveys to gather both quantitative and qualitative data; these are mixed questionnaires with both open-ended and (mostly) close-ended questions. An online application was used to encourage engagement by students and thereby ensure a high level of response.



Students
during LTT

These questionnaire-based surveys were conducted following the Learning, Teaching and Training (LTT) activities during which students presented their projects and acquired knowledge about design thinking, the legal framework as regards public spaces, youth entrepreneurship, and pro-active approaches. The aim is to evaluate how useful these encounters are for evaluating possible processes of change as regards students' placemaking projects. Participants' views as regards their level of satisfaction with the process, the suitability of activities for their needs, their expectations, and the relevance of activities are all assessed anonymously.

Interviews

The consortium also conducted interviews as part of the project evaluation process. This is a commonly-used method of qualitative evaluation, since it is effective in the reporting of experiences, perspectives and narratives, and involves the use of accessible language.

An interview is regarded as a form of social interaction and constitutes a dialogue with the aim of collecting subjective data such as feelings, values and knowledge. An individual interview provides a subjective perspective on the topic in question. Individual perspectives can then be aggregated to provide a collective vision of the topic.

The interview is often used in combination with the questionnaire: interviews offer a more subjective approach to inquiry through open-ended and unstructured questions, while questionnaires usually involve a mostly predefined and closed line of questioning. Interviews are more accessible and adaptable and allow for verbal and non-verbal means of expression to be recorded, thus enriching the process (Batista et al., 2017)^[iii].



*Project partners
during the
Transnational
Meetings.*

There are three types of interviews (Alsaawi, 2014)^[iv]:

- 01 Structured interviews:** these are pre-planned and effective in maintaining the focus on the target topic, making it easier to compare interviews. The structured interview is a direct type of interview but does not allow for flexibility and in-depth analysis.
- 02 Unstructured interviews:** here, there is a great deal of flexibility and improvisation, and the form taken might resemble a conversation, in which relatively few questions are asked, and it is the interviewee who dictates the extent and in-depth nature of the dialogue. This makes it richer, but it can be difficult to manage the large amount of data that results from an unstructured interview.
- 03 Semi-structured interviews:** this is the most common way of conducting interviews; questions are devised in advance, but the interviewer provides the interviewee with the freedom to elaborate on their responses through the use of open-ended questions. Moreover, there are individual interviews and group interviews: the former is preferable when the consortium is evaluating delicate issues or contexts and in the field of academic research; the latter is mostly used in market research.

The selection of interviews as an evaluation method has some advantages: besides the opportunity to capture a unique vision, they allow for direct reciprocal interaction that brings flexibility and adaptability in terms of duration and content. Nonetheless, interviewing individuals is a complex and challenging process: some issues might be the lack of motivation of interviewees in responding to the interviewer's questions, the pressure they feel when asked direct questions, and the possible subjective approach or bias of the interviewer; plus, interviews require a lot more preparation and time for the gathering and processing of data (Batista et al., 2017).

The PLAY/ACT project employed interviews with **staff from the partner organisations** involved. The consortium used individual semi-structured interviews that were



conducted online. At least one person from each organisation was interviewed. The purpose of these interviews is to find out whether staff members have developed new skills in the field of placemaking and project management and whether they have forged new relationships for cooperation with partners.

Moreover, the consortium also used interviews with **gatekeepers and communities**, interviewing gatekeepers as representatives of the communities involved; the former are trustworthy agents that represent the interests and needs of the community they are associated with. The objective is to assess whether relations between the community and students were strengthened, whether the needs of communities were addressed and whether project outcomes were relevant to them.

Focus groups

A focus group is a group for interaction aimed at collecting data about a specific topic determined by those who facilitate the focus group discussion. The facilitator is meant to create a safe environment and encourage participants to share their views, experiences and feelings.

This technique has several advantages: it is a low-cost solution that provides quick results and allows the facilitator to explore issues and topics in a flexible way, while analysing the interaction among participants. However, focus groups have some disadvantages: there might be bias from the facilitator (as with interviews), and one or two individuals may dominate the discussion; also, the information gathered may be difficult to analyse due to its complexity; interventions should not be taken out of context (United States Agency for International Development [USAID], 2011)^[v].

The consortium conducted focus groups with the **students** involved in the project. Focus groups can provide a better understanding of students' thoughts and feelings about the project, and their perception of to what extent their competencies were developed, as well as promoting good relations between the students. With the aim of achieving more interesting dynamics and conclusions, the consortium selected a number of students from different countries for each focus group; this cross-cultural approach helps to provide an understanding of the differences and similarities between students' experiences.

• MAIN RESULTS

In practice, all the above-mentioned techniques were used except focus groups due to the lack of availability for participation by students. Feedback was gathered from

students through online surveys and informal methods, with 13 students responding. Students were also surveyed after each Learning, Teaching and Training (LTT) activity. Five semi-structured interviews were conducted with staff from partner organisations (four individual interviews and one group interview), and with gatekeepers, who (in part) represented the community; four gatekeepers were interviewed (two from Portugal, one from Italy, and one from Spain).



Students presenting the results of the local projects during the conference *A Place to Be*

The conclusions drawn following the analysis of the results gathered through the use of these techniques showed that staff gained significant new skills in project management, communications, urban design, and EU funding. They also developed better community engagement techniques and improved their soft skills. Mentoring students enhanced staff leadership capabilities and fostered a collaborative team dynamic. The project also promoted future collaboration and strengthened ties with local stakeholders and communities, encouraging critical thinking about the impact of project outcomes on society.

Interviews with gatekeepers showed that, at least in Portugal, the project was highly relevant, successfully mobilising residents and reviving the local identity. The community's organisational potential was demonstrated, though sustaining such initiatives requires the commitment and continuous involvement of residents. As far as Spain is concerned, the project addressed youth leisure needs in Mérida and effectively engaged with the community. However, there were challenges in terms of maintaining student-community relations over the long-term. The Italian project inspired community interest but faced practical challenges in terms of implementation. The overall impact emphasised the importance of tailored approaches to urban revitalisation and sustained community engagement.

On the whole, students found the project enriching, enhancing their cooperation skills, providing a boost for academic learning, and improving their level of civic engagement. They found the practical workshops, international experience, and the emphasis on community interaction to be particularly valuable. Suggestions for improvement included more stakeholder engagement, better coordination, and increased opportunities for participation. Particularly positive aspects included the presentation of project prototypes and participation in international workshops, which broadened their perspectives and social skills.



Overall, staff, gatekeepers, and students all felt they experienced significant growth and positive outcomes, despite some challenges in maintaining long-term involvement and practical implementation. The project underscored the value of tailored approaches to urban revitalisation and the necessity of ongoing community participation. By promoting collaboration among diverse stakeholders and providing enhanced practical learning opportunities, the project laid a solid foundation for future initiatives aimed at creating vibrant and sustainable urban spaces.

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CONCLUSIONS

● **PLAY/ACT PROJECT: SOME CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Within the scope of projects like PLAY/ACT, it is essential that teams and partners should be able to reflect together on methodologies and processes and share a critical vision. As this is a project funded by the ERASMUS+ Program, it was understood that a focus on the training component and the sharing of knowledge and practices in mobility contexts was crucial. As far as possible, we strove to ensure that the training programme was adapted to enable intervention at the local level in each city, while seeking to apply some of the shared knowledge and methodologies, and also to develop other relational and communication skills. Throughout the process, local teams raised concerns and shared questions they had, which, at each stage, we sought to answer and document. In this chapter, we would like to share some of these critical reflections.

The placemaking process, as already mentioned in the presentation of the PLAY/CT training course, was made up of three stages: Research, Ideation and Implementation. In the Research stage we started to develop and implement some methodologies for approaching, contacting and relating to local communities. This was probably one of the most demanding challenges of the project.

The difficulty encountered in captivating the interest of people in local communities and motivating them to get involved and participate actively and regularly in this type of initiative is due to several factors, some of which derive from the particular context of this project, while others are global in nature and related to a broader set of issues:

Short-term projects

Projects of this nature last around 24 months, which is adequate for the development of training programmes and their pilot implementation but often not long enough for effective relations of proximity to be sufficiently developed with local communities through participatory processes. Although the Erasmus+ Programme allows for a great deal of flexibility in managing the project timetable, the fact that we still had to meet deadlines and adjust dynamics with communities to the training course calendar meant that, in certain cases, we had to move on to the next phase of the project without relationships with communities having been properly consolidated.

Another factor that could jeopardise relations with communities is the fact that such projects have a defined timeframe, with no clear prospect for continuation after the end of the funding period, despite all the efforts made by project teams to achieve

this end. The temporality of projects brings with it the risk of extractivist and opportunistic practices in relation to target communities, with actions serving to achieve project objectives rather than meet the needs of local people themselves. This aspect must be constantly monitored and evaluated by teams in order to ensure that actions are carried out for the right reasons.

Time and availability

When it comes to participatory processes, such as those aimed at placemaking, the time needed to initiate and nurture deep relationships with local communities does not always match the pace of the progress of projects or blend with the frenetic pace of contemporary life. This was one of the most valuable learnings in the context of this project: dedication to building relationships, gaining trust and mobilising the community involves a long-term process and requires a willingness to present oneself in an unpretentious and generous manner. In addition, the difficulties encountered in reaching a consensus at crucial moments of collective interaction were tremendous, not only with members of local communities, but also within local teams. The coherent development of such projects requires a high level of dedication on the part of team members to the project over the entire duration.

An outsider's view

This project's main objective was to train university students in placemaking processes through project-based learning methodologies, which justifies the model implemented. However, it is important to take into account the fact that, in most cases, the groups of students (and project staff) did not have a previous close relationship with the places of study or their communities, which often made team members feel like strangers and visitors. This aspect, in a way, contradicts the spirit of placemaking, in which projects should arise out of the will of communities and develop on the basis of local resources. Despite the efforts made to carry out the project in keeping with the spirit of placemaking, we must recognise that, in the last analysis, it was successful rather as providing an opportunity to test new ways of training students than as a placemaking project per se, with a profound and lasting impact on target communities.

Sense of community and commitment

The fragmentation of communities, as a result of the reduced time people spend together and the increase in forms of socialising through digital media is manifested in the weakening of interpersonal relationships in local neighbourhoods. One way of addressing this is to seek out groups of people in these communities who organise collective practices for the common good, enabling the project to help extend groups and establish relationships with relevant stakeholders. It is wrong to assume that a project of this nature has the capacity to create communities. Rather, such projects should contribute to the empowerment of already existing ones.

Scepticism

All the factors mentioned above may lead to a feeling of mistrust and scepticism on the part of local communities in terms of welcoming short-term projects that are presented as transformative, but which prove lacking in terms of ongoing commitment and a consequent impact, leaving the community with the vague feeling of having been exploited. Thus, this project sought to generate and validate all ideas and possibilities originating with the local communities, involve them as much as possible in decision-making processes and encourage opportunities in which people could coexist freely without specific tasks or obligations, allowing relationships to develop naturally and the hope is that they will thrive with the development of future projects. The relationships forged with stakeholders and local agents and organisations were crucial in encouraging the continuation of some projects in the future.

Bottom-up processes and the autonomy of communities

Placemaking is a practice of co-designing urban, common and shared spaces whose ideas emerge from the needs and aspirations of local communities, in a bottom-up

direction. However, one of the challenges we identified throughout this process was the difficulty encountered by local communities, even when organised on the basis of informal groups, in intervening and carrying out autonomous actions with a view to transforming public spaces, especially if this implies gaining access to the financial or logistical resources of public bodies. Some means for overcoming this are the formal setting up of associations or groups of residents and the establishment of partnerships with organisations already existing in the local neighbourhood or city. These bottom-up processes thus aim to encourage the greater involvement of communities in decision-making, increased civic participation and a stronger sense of belonging. For this to be achieved, it is important that placemaking projects also involve the establishment of co-governance models that allow communities to manage projects autonomously and sustainably after the implementation phase, otherwise the impact of the project in the medium or long term may be compromised.

● PLACEMAKING GLOBAL CHALLENGES

All these questions and challenges are not exclusive to the present project reflected on but rather they are common to many of those that involve a participatory dimension.

Throughout the 1960s, not only in placemaking but in a wide range of disciplines and fields of work, participatory methodologies began to be applied, and the value of the sharing of creation, production and decision-making processes was increasingly recognised. In recent years, in the arts, the production of scientific knowledge, and even the field of political activism, we have seen the emergence of a trend termed as the participatory turn.

Participation was a concept that promoted processes of social and political emancipation, empowerment, but also iteration and interaction between people and their surroundings:

“Among the best-known practices of citizen participation are participatory budgeting, citizen councils, public consultations, etc. However, these experiences are sometimes far from the original 1960s’ radical conception of participatory democracy, which had a transformative dimension and aimed to overcome unequal relationships between the state and society and emancipate and empower citizens in their daily lives.” (Bherer et al., 2019)^[1]

However, today, it is pertinent to review the concept and its practices, impacts and methodologies. The concept of participation has been progressively appropriated by an entire system in which the practice is regarded as being associated with the idea of consumption, with the expectation that all platforms should promote interaction and a feeling of participation, which is often in reality inconsequential or stimulated within an eminently individual framework. This also raises the issue of the way in which place-

making practices are still linked to a capitalist and human-centred agenda.

Regarding these issues, it is interesting to refer to what Francesco Careri says about the concept of **participation** and other more subversive alternatives:

"Participation - A hackneyed word to be avoided. The term conceals traps and many ambiguities. It is often used in a demagogic way, in particular by architects, urban planners and politicians who have corrupted its meaning in order to nurture their own project, but also by socialists and anthropologists who have made a profession of it. They claim that the Other must take part in a participatory project in order to defend what remains of his threatened freedom. The great fashion for participatory came into being with the neo-liberal age, before which people talked about democracy." (Careri, 2016, 11)^[ii]

Instead of participation, Francesco Careri defends the implementation of the concept of **taking care**:

"Taking care - If we set out with the desire to be involved in action and intervene in a civic way, be it in art or in architecture, and be it in material or immaterial ways, the first thing to do is to choose the right place. A methodology for stopping, and for taking part in a process, starts with the quest for a place where we may be sure that things will endure after our departure, and stopping precisely where the ground is fertile. If one walks with seeds, one must plant with the Other, precisely where he will be able to water them. The Elsewhere is only accessible where the Other will take care of the works installed with him." (Careri, 2016, 11).

This idea of taking care implies availability for and commitment to places and their communities over the long term, and also a commitment to the future, which to some extent goes against the logic of short-term projects with pre-defined tangible results, which are usually too strongly project- and human-centred and whose impact on larger ecosystems is not taken into consideration. In this context, it is essential that caring efforts prioritise both present and future needs, aiming at producing a positive outcome in the long term. This includes transforming public spaces into urban commons in order to promote democratic and equitable co-governance models, as well as preparing places and their communities for withstanding the climate and social crisis and mitigating their impacts.

In the last analysis, we believe that, despite all the ways in which placemaking can be criticised and all the challenges it faces, it constructively stimulates the appeal for **small-scale utopias** (or, as Kevin Kelly proposes: optimistic, achievable and cumulative protopias)^[iii], encouraging the development of micropolitics and the growing glocal awareness of all these processes. According to Augusto Aires do Nascimento:

"Although inhabited, the place is never definitively concluded: before being inhabited, it is an object of desire, but once inhabited, it becomes the object of never-ending transformation. Due to depredatory invasion, the new history is driven to consider the era of Anthropocene must fight against the destructive habits in order to find responsible ecotopia for the planet, able to embrace an environment friendly culture." (2017, 7)^[iv]

That said, the PLAY/ACT project concludes with a feeling of optimism among the students and project partners that it is possible to build a better and fairer society by focusing on interpersonal relationships rather than consumption, in a context in which nature is regarded as an ally rather than a consumer good. And one of the privileged spaces for testing new forms of social relationships and organisation is the public space, which, as we retreat into the digital world, has progressively lost its function as a meeting point that enables common experiences among people and with the natural world.

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ARTICLES

TEMPORARY PLACES: EVENTS AND PROSPECTS

Keywords: temporary uses; social challenges

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This presentation is structured into three sections. The first section focuses on forms and contexts of temporary uses of space. The second section is about the participants in the process and their perspective and expectations. The third part touches on the promises and pitfalls of the processes of temporary use of space.

There are many forms and a diversity of contexts of the temporary construction and use of space, which include both indoor and outdoor spaces. Outdoor spaces include street food stalls, street markets, street performances, public art installations, temporary parks, urban beaches, guerrilla gardens, short term events, and different forms of installations. The indoor spaces include short tenancies of space, temporary housing, temporary offices, and temporary shops. These temporary uses are emerging partly in response to the proliferation of empty spaces. Spaces become empty, and their uses become temporary, when people move, by choice or by force; when places change; or when perspectives change. The examples are urban voids, such as public open spaces; neglected places, when the speed of change is such that it leaves some places on the margins, neglected, and creating a patchwork development in which some spaces are empty, and in need of attention. The spaces that are the result of waves of expansion and contraction of urban development, revealing a mismatch between supply and demand, which is one of the major forms of emptiness of space. In a period of economic expansion, there are too many demands for too few spaces; as a result new spaces are created to respond to the demand or to stimulate demand. But with a wave of economic decline, there are too many spaces and too few activities. The production of space is also a driving force in economic development, and it can lead to speculative overproduction and excess in supply.

The empty spaces can also be a result of disruptions that cause behavioural change, such as the growth of digital technologies that have facilitated working from home, and different patterns of use of spaces, in which some spaces now are under-used and there is an excess of office, space, or retail, or leisure space. The major disruption can also be like the pandemic, which transformed the use of space and caused different forms of behaviour. A combination of the digital transformation that has unfolded for several decades, the economic crisis of 2007-8, and the pandemic of 2020-21, together has caused a range of empty spaces, especially in cities where there was a heavy reliance on retail, leisure, and office work. Another way that empty spaces are created is through a mismatch between the visions and energies of often younger people who engage with the place, see the needs, but believe that the existing spaces are not satisfying those needs. So, they consider that the existing space has been badly used or underused, and they look at it with a new perspective that sees it as a space of opportunity and action.

The temporary use and construction of space is part of urban development processes. We need to look at it as an ongoing process in which the temporary use is a moment in that temporality. There are phases before, during, and after the temporary interventions. The temporary interventions are not detached moments of action, but always an integral

part of a process, in which there are longer-term, more established structures, which influence the outcome of the process. So, the questions that need asking are about who is involved, in what context, in what form, for what purpose, and with what outcome. Participants in the process play different roles in the production, regulation, and use of space. They also have different roles, with different abilities and resources. They have different and sometimes conflicting perspectives, values, and interests, but they are not entirely separate from each other, and may even overlap in some respects.

This leads to the second section of the presentation, which is about participants and their perspectives and expectations. I have identified six groups of participants. They are (1) owners and developers, (2) public agencies, (3) renters, (4) visitors, (5) artists and activists, and (6) livelihood operators and the homeless. The group of owners and developers are one of the most powerful in the process. They usually expect temporary uses to fill the gaps that are left in the market. They hope that temporary use prepares the ground and fills the temporal gap when the markets are not so buoyant. This would enable the owners and developers to mobilize their assets while they are waiting for the conditions to improve. They also make temporary use for branding and marketing. Temporary uses can stimulate the market towards certain directions, they can change the image of an area for a product, and they can improve the public relations of the land and property owners and the developers. Therefore, for the owners and developers in the urban development process, temporariness offers flexibility in spatial production.

For the public agencies, these spaces are the spaces of possibility. For them, temporariness becomes a medium of regeneration. Public agencies increasingly think and behave like private companies, thinking of how to use these empty spaces as their assets; they animate these spaces as a source of revenue, partly to compensate for their dwindling budgets. The third group are the renters for whom the empty spaces and temporary uses may offer some new opportunities. For this group, temporariness provides access to space, probably at a lower cost, even if for a short period of time. For the fourth group, the visitors and tourists, these spaces are spaces of pleasure and possible interaction with others. The temporary space for them is the source of experiencing novelty. As urban tourists, they go to see new places for the pleasure of a new experience, doing new things.

For the artists and activists, these spaces provide the opportunity for action, experimentation, and hope. For them the temporary space is the space of exploring alternatives. Some think about how to use the spaces that are now becoming available as an opportunity for the community. Others use these spaces for experimental purposes like testing ideas and challenging conventions. For many, these are the spaces of participation and collective action, environmental improvement, self-expression, and linking political and aesthetic actions.

The final group are the livelihood operators and the homeless, for whom the public open space is the space of survival, and temporariness reflects their extreme vulnerability. For the livelihood operators, the urban space is the space of informal economy, the space of earning a living by street vending. The homeless only survive by inhabiting the public space on the most temporary and insecure conditions. Ultimately, for these vulnerable groups, temporariness is a permanent condition, because they have no place of their own for working and living.

The final part of the presentation is about the promises and pitfalls of the temporary construction and use of space. The promise of temporary use is that it offers the possibility of

questioning, experimenting, and innovating, as shown in the case of artists and activists, and in the processes of community engagement and participation. In the process of urban development, temporary use of space offers flexibility to some, but it also shows the precariousness of the situation for people who do not have access to resources, as they need and welcome these possibilities. However, the associated pitfall is that temporariness seems to consolidate their insecurity and precarity, while paving the way for gentrification and displacement. Therefore, temporary construction and use of space may lie somewhere between long-term visions and pragmatic short steps, between a critique of power and new liberal deregulation, between freedom from constraints and becoming part of the game, between free experimentation and co-option in the market, between community service and paving the way for gentrification. This means that there is always a need to be aware of the potential tensions and nuances and to maintain a critical perspective of dynamic multiplicity, which analyses the temporary construction and use of space as part of longer-term processes and at the intersection of multiple and multidimensional perspectives.

LIVING IN THE CITY: AN INTERVENTIONAL EDUCATION APPROACH

Keywords: higher education; youth; capacity building

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BACKGROUND TO URBAN LIFE & PLACEMAKING

Students of the BA Leisure & Events Management course at Breda University have the opportunity to specialise in one of six different tracks in their second and third years of study.

The two-year specialization 'Urban Life & Placemaking' (UL&P) was developed to harness the power of events and other leisure activities to help students develop and enrich cities, making them liveable and loveable.

The aim of the specialization is engaging students in co-creation and participatory approaches in designing events and social interventions in the city. In the context of placemaking, we focus on the software and the orgware, letting our built environment colleagues work on the hardware.

BACKGROUND TO LIVING IN THE CITY

The specialization has a strong international focus, learning from examples abroad and exposing students to the experiences of people with very different backgrounds. As part of their studies, students move to a different European city with a group of three to five of their peers for 20 weeks (30 ECTs).

Here they participate in work/voluntary experience, addressing a local societal issue through an interventional approach, and exploring the city through a range of 'Urban Scope' themes, culminating in an exhibition of their findings. They are mentored online, using the experience we gained during the COVID pandemic.

Over the past two years, students have moved to Porto, Seville, Turin, Leipzig and Bilbao. This unique approach brings with it a range of unique challenges and opportunities.

STRUCTURE OF LIVING IN THE CITY

The students take part in 3 programme elements:

Social Intervention Project (10 ECTs)

This is a guided intensive project where students start in the first ten weeks by highlighting a local societal issue and the local stakeholders currently working on this issue. The first part of the programme involves mapping the issue and connecting with interest groups to build their own capacity. They look at the issue on a global and local scale, becoming somewhat expert in it.

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They then present their findings in a hybrid conference that we organize on campus in Breda. The students join from their cities and present alongside experts in different fields, before a live and online audience.

In the second 10 weeks, the students take this research and, together with their local partners, develop an intervention to try to create real impact in the city.

In the past there have been a number of outcomes, from confronting activities relating to women's feeling of safety in Turin, Italy, to starting the first tentative steps of community building in a physically and socially divided neighbourhood of Porto, Portugal.

Some interventions almost went unnoticed, yet they had a measurable impact. In Leipzig, Germany, one group installed outdoor pantries for locals to safely display their unwanted goods that were too good to throw away. This small action noticeably but quietly cleared up the streets of old vacuum cleaners, toys and clothes.

Urban scope (5 ects)

While actively working in the city, the students also explore it with a more academic lens. In the previous year of their study at UL&P, they had a course called Urban Scope, in which they zoomed in on themes such as gentrification, inclusivity, playfulness, mobility and temporality, amongst others.

They do this with field trips to different Dutch and Belgian cities, visiting local partners and understanding how they are working in one of the themes.

When living in the city, the students take what they learned in the previous year and apply it to their new home city. They produce a poster exhibition, aimed at locals, where they show the visitors about their city through the lens of these Urban Scope themes.

Being event design students, we have high expectations of these exhibitions, and the students haven't disappointed. In Turin, the old advertising boards of the Corsa Farini tram route were repurposed for the exhibition. In Leipzig, a play on the practice of posting concert posters on building site hoardings led visitors on a tour around the city to experience the themes and the local venues.

A more traditional exhibition took place at Deusto University in Bilbao, where students presented to Bilbao Metropoli 30 and other local civic stakeholders.

Professional Experience (15 ECTs)

Students have a desire for some professional experience, especially something they can share on a resume. Here too, we want to offer them a unique experience.

Students have 2 choices:

1. A 'traditional' internship at an organization, for which they are normally able to apply for Erasmus+ funding.
2. A special programme where they get out into the city, volunteer or work, and study training courses of their choice.

In the special programme we refer to the students as 'freelancers'. They still need to find an organization to take them on and allow them to work in a voluntary position, but in doing so, they are free of the Erasmus+ red tape and can work for social, rather than commercial organizations.

We also expect the students to study 100 hours in courses that relate to their varied interests, such as from online providers like EdX or Coursera. They could of course study at a local night-school or college, where they will gain valuable experience, again, free from the strict requirements of the university.

Finally, freelancers choose a range of 'challenges' from a list, with the aim of pushing themselves to try new and potentially uncomfortable things. Some of the challenges include:

1. Bake a cake/pie and give it to your neighbours.
2. Visit a local hairdresser to discover some local 'stories'. Take a photo with the hairdresser and share one of the stories.
3. Spend 2 hours cleaning the city. Take a photo of you cleaning the city and a photo of the funniest thing you found.
4. Join a local pub quiz night. Take a photo of your team at the pub. If you win, this counts for 2x challenges.
5. 108. Visit the source of the river that runs through the city. Make a map of the river, your route for getting there and photo of you at the source.
6. 109. Create an urban myth and publish it via Youtube/Vimeo-Make up a plausible lie about the city, somewhat based on its history. Present it as fact in a 3-minute video using 'evidence'.
7. Visit the (local) rival city and write a report on the differences & similarities. Make a 3-minute video travelog talking about the differences & similarities, but why your city is ultimately better. Post this to Youtube/Vimeo
8. Grow vegetables in a public urban setting-Guerilla gardening. Show photos of the location, your vegetables growing and then the final results

OUTCOMES & STUDENT EXPERIENCES

Our main take-away from this methodology has been that if you challenge students to try something difficult but rewarding and trust them to shape their own educational process, they will learn so much more than you could have taught them yourselves. If you and the students are open to taking risks, making mistakes and moving on, you will all learn more about yourselves and the world around you.

When students go out and try ideas in real life, they understand just how difficult it is to achieve their goals, which gives them a renewed respect for all of the amazing work that local stakeholders are doing and succeeding in.

The growth of the students has been unmatched and exceeded the expectations of the supervisors. We were naive to some of the challenges in the first edition of this programme, but we were blessed with pioneering and brave students. They (rightly) complained about all the things we hadn't foreseen while they were living in the city, but when they returned, they were more confident, self-reliant and pushed themselves harder to achieve their goals.

The students gain important cultural insights into their cities, acting as locals, rather than visitors and focusing on living, not just working in the new cities. Importantly they see different forms of life. Often these students come from small villages and towns and find themselves in much larger, but still 'second tier' European cities. They are sometimes exposed to societal issues that are much more prominent than back home, and they understand what it is to be an outsider in a culture, giving them an important insight into the experience of newcomers in their own countries.

FUTURE

Our next edition will take place together with students from other urban-themed programmes. We hope to expand this methodology, as we feel it is applicable to a number of interdisciplinary studies and will work together with local partners across Europe to give the students a softer landing and to go into depth with the local societal issues from the moment they arrive.

PROTOTYPING AS A KEY TOOL IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF A PLACEMAKING PROJECT

Keywords: prototyping; methodologies; capacity building

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The Placemaking movement is intrinsic to social activism, as both seek the transformation and empowerment of communities, making it aware of its needs and the gains that can be achieved by working together with an inclusive approach.

In this case, university students from different disciplines go through a training process in which they acquire the necessary competences to design a project of these characteristics while at the same time putting into practice and spreading it to the local population to make them aware of the potential of their public space, and how this space can be put at the service of their vital individual and social growth, if they work actively and jointly to do so.

Several skills come into play in the implementation of a complex action such as this, some more explicitly than others depending on the stage of development, but creativity, empathy, communication and teamwork are central and transversal skills that can be found along the way.

With hindsight, the prototyping tool has been shown to be a fundamental piece, a catalyst, to encourage the motivation of the participating groups, while at the same time enabling the work and development of these key skills.

This article aims to show how prototyping has boosted the competence of both the students and the community and stakeholders who participated in the process, encouraging active participation and real involvement in each phase, seeking to transform the chosen space in order to meet the demands of the identified target.

We can say that prototyping is testing the product or idea before its development or definitive implementation. In this context of Placemaking, it allows the idea to take shape, making it more real and feasible and making it able to identify possible barriers or drawbacks that are easy to modify, as it is in test mode. The progress made with this tool encourages the feeling of achievement and the internal locus of control, which boosts the participation of citizens who realise that they can contribute to the improvement of their environment, making it a space for everyone.

PROTOTYPING OPENS THE DOOR TO CREATIVITY

There are different ways of prototyping, depending on the objective or the product/service to be prototyped.

In the development of a Placemaking project, with a diversity of participant profiles and dynamic activities happening in different spaces, three accessible types of methodologies

and resources have been chosen. Group exercises and a playful atmosphere allows participants to reach a state of "Flow" in which everyone can and wants to give the best of themselves. These have been: (1) the creation of a poster in an initial state of a possible idea; (2) 3D construction with Lego® blocks (replaceable by cardboard, clay, wooden sticks...) and; (3) a brief speech.

Keeping in mind that we are working in "test mode", encouraging the group to think beyond the usual, reduces the fear of failure or the embarrassment of not finding the ideal solution, and increases risk-taking and the willingness to explore and research, which provides the breeding ground for the most innovative proposals to emerge.

Giving form to ideas, through a drawing, a construction or a phrase, involves a creative exercise through which the actors feel capable and proud of their ability to generate and give form to these ideas.

MORE AND BETTER AS A TEAM

When working collaboratively on design and prototyping, communication and conflict management skills come spontaneously, and to accomplish the task participants must communicate effectively, engage with each other's ideas and be assertive in resolving conflicts. This teamwork increases the sense of belonging and responsibility towards the shared project.

COMMUNICATING: SHAPING IDEAS

Prototypes are made to tell about an idea, a project, what we want to create or change. This prototype becomes a vehicle for communication, helping to convey what was once a vague and imprecise idea. Prototypes facilitate understanding and feedback by the parties involved, allowing for adjustment and refinement of the proposed solutions, which contributes to building relationships of trust and commitment that are essential in a process that pursues social activism.

In conclusion, prototyping has emerged as a tool that has provided great value to the process, fostering an environment that allows the expression and development of key skills in the motivation and empowerment of the community that wants to lead the transformation of their space and take it to a more inclusive and sustainable level.

THE IMAGINARY CITY – A VISION FOR LARGO DO CHÃO DAS COVAS

Keywords: isometric projection; visual representation; imaginary city

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The illustration showing Largo do Chão das Covas, a collaborative project with PLAY/ACT and _ARTERIA_LAB – University of Évora, shares a common theme with other illustrations produced by Isomatic (<https://isomatic.bigcartel.com>), an illustration project launched several years ago, with the goal of creating imaginary cities. These illustrations weave imaginative stories into urban landscapes, and the aim is to spark awareness and curiosity in those who encounter these drawings, inviting them to delve deeper into and gain a richer understanding of their own city.

Through these illustrations, the goal is to craft an optimistic and joyful vision, based on notable and sometimes obsolete neighbourhoods/public spaces. While these images are not intended to replicate reality, they manage to encapsulate the essential spirit of these locations.

Largo do Chão das Covas, a prominent void within the densely woven urban fabric of Évora, serves as a poignant example of the decline in public spaces within our cities over recent decades. In the not-so-distant past, this area thrived with human activity, a market, shops, workshops, children at play, an inclusive hub of social tension and interaction open to all.

Nowadays the area is occasionally used by people sitting in the sun, socialising, and taking part in various activities such as theatre group rehearsals and music lessons. A group of neighbours often gathers for drinks and celebrations, while children play in the square. Nonetheless, Largo Chão das Covas is still essentially a passing-through place occupied mainly by cars.

A mysterious and ever-changing chair beneath a tree has become a central point of intrigue. Nobody knows who places the chair there, adding a sense of mystery and wonder to the scene. This has become one of the central focuses in the illustration.

The PLAY/ACT project highlights the potential for the transformation of Largo Chão das Covas, demonstrating that this doesn't need a significant financial investment, rather it is dependent on ideas and willingness based on its inhabitants' aspirations for the place. These aspirations are not solely rooted in past memories but also encompass the desires and hopes of the community for the future, and the potential for creating new memories.

The quality of a public space which is compatible with the needs of its inhabitants is the driving force behind its successful transformation.

The illustration of Largo do Chão das Covas represents a summary of those collective memories and aspirations. It converts the area into a vibrant, chaotic playground awash with an array of colours and imaginative figures. It transports us to a fantasy world populated by whimsical characters, weird and wonderful creatures, and at times, events that



defy logic, the same way as a child would imagine it. The principle here is to achieve city densification through intensity and diversity, a city upon a city. A dense pole of attraction and concentration through layering of social activities and different cultural backgrounds - order and disorder coexisting side by side. We want people to use the public space by choice rather than on a casual or occasional basis.

This intentional and voluntary use of public spaces promotes a sense of community and inclusivity.

The drawing process - Isometric projection as a medium through which to explore urban landscapes

Much like other works centred on the imaginary city, the Largo do Chão das Covas illustration is represented by an isometric view. The creative process starts with an intricately detailed and true-to-life line drawing of the area, using Google Street View and photographs as a basis. This initial phase is of utmost importance, ensuring that every window, door, or balcony is faithfully represented.

Once the architectural drawing achieves a high level of realism, the process involves populating it with objects, nature, people and animals, portraying the urban scenario in different colours and shapes. These places are playful and flooded with colour, small paradises inhabited by dinosaurs and other wild animals, evoking a touch of Sailor Moon's whimsy.

Isometric views are an essential tool for harnessing project aims. The axonometric or isometric projection offers a unique advantage in that it presents space without limits. In contrast to a perspective view, where objects tend to diminish in scale as they recede into the distance, the isometric projection allows everything to be represented with the same scale and relevance across the entire drawing. This unique characteristic allows for the creation of an endless image, effectively transforming it into a blank canvas where one can envision narratives that might come to life within these spaces.

THE IMAGINARY CITY AND ITS FIGURES

In these illustrations, figures like dinosaurs, sculptures or exotic trees, occasionally replace the real people that belong to these urban landscapes. The figures are somehow an exploration of the imaginary of the city. They live in almost a parallel existence with each other, making the represented space more dramatic. Although it is an exercise to fantasise the city, this fantasy is in fact reality.

The dinosaurs, in particular, play a significant role in this make-believe world. These pre-historic creatures seamlessly integrate into this realm because they no longer exist in the contemporary world. They represent fantasy, standing in stark contrast to the potential darkness and heaviness of some of these places. As a result, they contribute to the formation of new connections and relationships within the cityscape.

The pictorial imagining of existing or non-existing but yet realistic urban landscapes allow formal idealities to be re-embodied in an animated magical or fantastic landscape. The drawings are like children's colouring books. At first they only contain lines that can be filled with colour and figures. These figures take part in fictional stories, ideas, and new forms.

The power of the architectural imagination allows us to visualize new possibilities for our cities. It lets us experience and explore how creative thought turns the mundane into a magical experience. The fantasy can be a critique of modern-day cities and helps us to seek new visions, shaping new forms and spaces into exciting future possibilities, emotional landscapes, new paradigms, a space of creation and reception.

APEADEIRO DAS NAMORADEIRAS: A DESIGN-BUILD PROJECT IN RURAL PORTUGAL

Keywords: co-design; outdoors furniture: tactical urbanism

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This design-build project was initiated by the freshly formed collective called Knu.ko, consisting of Christine Gärtner, Mia Hemmerling, Lea Hartmann, Paula Weil und Timothy Kölle, supported by +friends Nici, Miri and Dieter. We met through the studies of architecture in Linz/Austria, to be more specific BASEhabitat, a master program that specializes in socially responsible and ecological sustainable ways of building, with many material courses and a big hands-on focus.

In the winter of 2022/2023 four of us spent our integrated building practice in Casa Branca, Portugal, partly renovating one building of the area, that is to be developed by the Estação Cooperativa. We fully experienced the daily life with ups & downs on the construction site, learning how to build with little resources and natural material, as well as in a group full of students. We got to know the neighbours, the region, the cooperative and the landscape. Coming back to our theoretical studies for the next semester we still felt the bond and did further investigations, analysis and finally developed a master plan scenario with the knowledge we had gained living in Cassa Branca. Funded by Culture Moves Europe we were able to pick up this connection in the following year and start our first self-lead project.

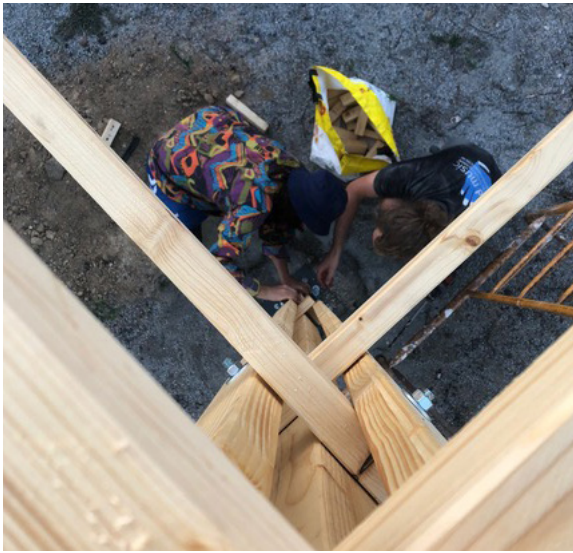
We came to the conclusion that we wanted to create a space that strengthens the visible and lived connection between the cooperative and the village. We recognized a need for a roof structure as a central outdoor information and meeting point, that gives shelter from the rain and shade from the sun.

We saw the potential space already being used for communal meetings and gatherings and thought it was a great location for a common leisure meeting space, which is connected to several points of interest within the village, to realise this vision.

We started the project with big reuse ambition, but recognised fast that the funded time frame did not allow us to spend the necessary time on collecting materials, so we decided to use locally available materials that made it possible to build everything in about one month.

The use of threaded metal rods & screwed pillars onto the foundation makes it possible to disassemble or replace the whole structure, as it was also supposed to be temporary. We crafted as much as we could, starting by welding the metal shoes from scratch while the rest of the group was digging the holes for the foundation.

We used the available measurement of wood and split them into the needed sizes. We used corrugated iron sheets for the roof, which can be repurposed anytime, and cork boards for the information field.



During our project we faced some challenges with big time learning effects. We learned that dreams come true but it's hard work to keep the design and values from the start in balance with the resources and reality; there is a long preparation phase needed for participatory building processes; in order to have a more relaxed & conscious construction site there needs to be more precise time tables and realistic calculations and however good you think your communication is, there will probably always be a chance for improving it.

We are very happy with the result and so are all parties. And although we can't call the building of the main structure a fully participatory process in building and planning, as we expected it to be, it was participatory in the sense of collecting opinions and staying open for tips and input during the process on site, by being present in the village, connecting and keep on inviting.

Later we co-hosted two workshops, creating outdoor furniture to equip the space with seating elements, while teaching the participants the use of crafting tools and machines. The structure is supposed to be the start, a communal bread oven which has been previously planned and is to be built next to the structure by the cooperative and we hope for many more projects adding to it.

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Design-build: Knu.ko and friends
Partners: Estação Cooperativa

PLACEMAKING AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Keywords: human rights; social challenges; public policies

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INTRODUCTION

Placemaking is the process of revitalising and regenerating urban spaces in order to promote development. However, authors such as Sweeney et al. (2018) criticise that some placemaking initiatives focus excessively on architectural beautification and regeneration, neglecting considerations of economic or ethnic inequality. We argue in this article that such a perspective diverges from a sound placemaking theory, which should also include humanitarian and social concerns; these can be materialised in human rights indicators.

1. THE RELEVANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS INDICATORS

Human rights indicators can help to identify social problems in the areas where the placemaking project is to be developed, so that urban regeneration can address a previously identified social need. We therefore argue that human rights can be integrated into placemaking processes in two different ways:

1. A direct form, obtained by explicitly identifying a human rights problem and designing a placemaking project that objectively responds to the concerns identified a priori; or,
2. An indirect form, obtained by improving the quality of life that the placemaking process makes possible for the population living in the area worked on, for example, in terms of stimulating the local economy, cultural diversity and civic involvement.

There are good practice examples of placemaking projects that have been created as a way of helping communities that have faced, for example, periods of post-natural disaster, emphasising the fundamental role of the victims' needs and interests in the process (Brand et al., 2019). In this regard, and according to Brand et al. (2019), after the earthquakes in Christchurch, New Zealand, between 2010 and 2011, several community-led initiatives were set up, in a way that enabled citizens to put forward their needs in the process of rebuilding the city. Such a post-crisis placemaking process took place between the emergency response period and the architectural recovery period (Forte & Paola, 2019).

So how can we consider human rights when developing placemaking projects? It is important to note that when regenerating urban spaces, placemaking can function as a way to: (1) identify and advocate for human rights that are not fulfilled; (2) minimise social issues or conflicts between different actors; or (3) contribute to the inclusion of vulnerable audiences. The three conditions mentioned above can be considered jointly or disjointly.

We can list a few steps to follow when conceptualising a placemaking project:

1. Identify a social problem or human rights issue, e.g. alienation of youth, discrimination of a specific target group, isolation of elderly people.

2. Choose a human rights indicator to provide authority and objectivity to your problem through statistics or documentary analysis, e.g. rate of youth unemployment.
3. Explain how your human rights issue relates to the International and European public policies, e.g. European Training Strategy for Youth Work.
4. Delineate exploratory causes and correlate them with the placemaking improvement that you would like to attain, e.g. lack of civic engagement initiatives leading to the creation of a local youth NGO.

The first step is to identify a human rights issue. To do this, we can use informal or formal research methods. Informal methods can be based on media analysis, or dialogues with local community representatives; formal methods cover the use of qualitative or quantitative data collection methods, such as questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. Once we have identified the problem, we must contextualise it according to an a priori human rights indicator, which makes it possible to give the issue greater authority.

Firstly, it is important to define what we mean by a human rights indicator. An indicator can be considered as a human rights indicator if it can be related to human rights norms and standards, addresses and reflects human rights principles and concerns, and is used to assess and monitor the promotion and implementation of human rights.

According to the United Nations (2012), a human rights indicator is a piece of information that indicates the state or level of an object, event or activity. It can be classified as a quantitative indicator, being the case of indexes or percentages (e.g., proportion of literate population) or a qualitative one, expressed in categories or classes (e.g., a ratified versus a non ratified treaty). Also, a distinction is made between objective and judgement-based indicators. While the former is based on observable and verifiable objects, facts or events, the latter is established on a perception or an opinion, meaning a subjective judgement (United Nations, 2012).

Then, for a placemaking project to effectively address a social issue, apart from using human right indicators, it must influence policy decisions and actions, or political agendas. Therefore, a placemaking project should include, not only the specific human rights issues that it intends to help solve, but also the political agenda related to such problems.

2. EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC POLICIES

A political agenda is a list of issues, policies and priorities that a political party, group or individual seeks to promote or address. It is essentially a set of goals or objectives that shape political narratives and actions. The political agenda can be seen as a roadmap for achieving certain political outcomes, such as passing laws, implementing policies, or winning elections.

Nowadays, political agendas and actions are no longer defined exclusively at a national level. The European Union has an inevitable influence on the definition of policies, leading to a process of policy transfer from the EU level to the national level. Policy transfer is a process in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in a political setting (e.g., EU level) is used in the development of these matters in an-

other political setting (e.g., country level). It is therefore important to be aware of EU strategies and priorities. Some examples of European Union Policies and Strategies are the EU's Regional Policy, the EU Strategy on Victims' Rights, the European Green Deal or the New Pact on Migration and Asylum.

In this sense, when young people try to reach public authorities and external, they should know how to write effective political recommendations, by (1) identifying the issue; (2) defining the target audience; (3) developing a clear and concise message; (4) highlighting the benefits; (5) providing supporting evidence; (6) using visuals and stories; and (7) calling to action. This process needs to go hand in hand with various awareness campaigns.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, placemaking practices often ignore social aspects, but what we defend here is that they can be an opportunity to address social and community needs, through the integration of human rights indicators. An effective political recommendation on placemaking can influence political agendas and actions while advocating for human rights. When regenerating urban spaces, this approach contributes to the creation of equitable and inclusive spaces that prioritise the well-being of individuals.

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BEYOND THE BLUEPRINT: EXPLORING THE PRESENCE AND ABSENCE OF BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS AS CATALYSTS FOR URBAN PLACEMAKING

Keywords: policy mobilities; business improvement districts; comparative urbanism; urban governance

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INTRODUCTION

It is the summer of 2023. The centre of Blackpool, England, seems thriving. Its seaside attractions, amusement parks and, of course, its iconic tower have long been popular tourist destinations, with millions of visitors flocking to the town each year. As a visitor to this seaside resort, you will likely come across uniformed individuals equipped with two-way radios who are removing graffiti from the murals and litter from the sidewalks. No less likely is that you see these same individuals now running around trying to catch a shop-lifter or greeting a group of tourists while helping them to navigate the town centre and its businesses. Clearly not public police officers, these are the 'ambassadors' representing the local Business Improvement District (BID). They blur the lines between public service and private management and aim to ensure the existence of a pleasant atmosphere for businesses, workers and, of course, visitors.

This is just one of the most visible facets of BIDs. While there is no single definition in the literature, a BID is a geographical-bounded business-led public-private partnership within a town or city where local businesses democratically decide to pay a levy or assessment that is then re-invested in programmes aimed at improving the business climate of the shopping district (Harvey, 1989). Although these programmes include a wide variety of services and activities, BIDs tend to focus their mundane operations on numerous placemaking services that benefit the area as a whole. These often include public space cleaning, maintenance and improvements, consumer marketing and economic development and, as the earlier vignette illustrates, security and safety programmes (Silva & Cachinho, 2021; Ward & Cook, 2017).

Over the last few decades, BIDs and their operational "successes" in turning once dilapidated, unsafe and declining shopping districts into thriving and profitable places that attract both consumers and businesses alike have become widely legitimated and promoted among planners, local governments and business communities around the globe. Unsurprisingly, BIDs have been showcased and described in trans-urban policymaking circuits as a 'best practice' in reactivating places experiencing symptoms of decline (Silva & Cachinho, 2021). While adopted and transformative narratives have been widely discussed, sites and situations where BIDs as placemaking entities were rejected or de-activated have been considerably left out of the discussion (McCann & Ward, 2015; Temenos & Lauer-mann, 2020). Building upon a growing body of geographical literature, termed urban policy mobilities studies, this chapter diverges from conventional narratives on policy mobilities by spotlighting 'off-the-map' sites and situations where BIDs and their placemaking endeavours have not gained traction (Robinson, 2015). In so doing, I argue that conducting relational comparisons between sites and situations where policies are present or ab-

sent is essential for uncovering the local factors that influence the adoption, rejection and de-activation of BIDs as urban placemaking entities.

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS AND URBAN PLACEMAKING

The vignette with which I opened this chapter is quite illustrative of how BIDs have increasingly embraced a range of placemaking approaches to enhance and reinvent how the town and city centres are governed and experienced. Urban placemaking can be conceptualized as a set of symbolic and material activities aimed at enhancing the 'coolness' of urban areas, their 'business climate' and 'quality of place' in hopes of animating public and private spaces and improving their vitality and viability (Masuda & Bookman, 2018; Ward, 2007). As one might expect, BIDs and their placemaking programmes are unlikely to be innocent. Indeed, they have become (if they ever were) less so. Over the last decades, the emergence of BIDs as urban placemaking catalysts has been closely intertwined with the emergence of austerity urbanism, an approach characterized by government austerity measures and the devolution of responsibilities, including in the governance of urban places, from the state to local actors, such as business communities (Davidson & Ward, 2014; Peck, 2016). Put simply, in the face of shrinking public budgets and reduced government resources for urban revitalisation and investment, BIDs have increasingly stepped in to provide additional services and promotional initiatives in urban shopping districts.

While not every BID focuses on the same urban placemaking programmes, every BID is involved in the day-to-day management of the public spaces of shopping districts to a different extent. Through their mundane and government-like placemaking programmes, BIDs aim to create a "distinctive stamp on the appearance of the public spaces, facilities, and properties" by enhancing the "appearance, safety, and convenience of downtown areas for businesses, residents, and visitors alike" (Briffault, 1999, 395). The rationale behind such strategic and operational remits draws upon seminal works such as Newman's "Defensible Space" (1972) and Wilson and Kelling's "Broken Windows" (1982) theories. While the former suggests that a properly designed urban environment can increase the 'coolness' and attractiveness of a given area, the latter advocates that signs of decay and neglect tend to spring up antisocial behaviour and crime which ultimately affect how urban places and particularly shopping districts are used, perceived and experienced (Ward, 2007).



Blackpool Town Centre BID Street Rangers approaching a street beggar.

Shedding light on such remits, numerous studies have well captured and documented the role of BIDs and their associated programmes in the rolling-out of urban placemaking and revitalisation efforts. Writing about the range of placemaking programmes that BIDs tend to focus on, Silva and Cachinho (2021) found that 'clean, green and safe' (e.g., removing litter and graffiti, installing CCTV systems and hiring local ambassadors), public space maintenance and improvements (e.g., introducing street lighting and furniture or floral displays), consumer marketing (e.g., events, promotions and

welcoming services) and lobbying/business support services are heralded by their proponents as important tactics, sometimes through revanchist practices, in creating distinctive and inviting public spaces and, hence, the profitability within shopping districts boundaries (see also Bookman & Woolford, 2013; Han et al., 2017; Kudla, 2023; Lippert & Sleiman, 2012; Margier, 2023)

It should be noted, however, that these and other placemaking services are typically only implemented and delivered in areas where BIDs are democratically established through a ballot process. In other words, if a BID is not created or fails to be renewed, then the placemaking initiatives may not be sustained or implemented in that area. In the next section, I explore the local circumstances that elucidate the 'absence' of certain BIDs and their placemaking services in 'off-the-map' town centres in England. In doing so, I aim to move away from a prevalent trend of 'presentism' and 'successism' (McCann & Ward, 2015; Temenos & Lauermann, 2020) that has dominated the intellectual debates on urban policy mobilities and placemaking and provide a more nuanced understanding of the contextual factors that play a crucial role in shaping the adoption or de-activation of such policies.

HIDDEN HURDLES: UNDERSTANDING BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS' CHALLENGES IN DRIVING URBAN PLACEMAKING

Contemporary urban policies are not isolated artifacts that move across places. While they are often interconnected with various actors, institutions and contexts, policies should be tailored to fit into the unique contexts in which they arrive at. BIDs are, of course, no exception. The successful territorialisation of placemaking policies, such as BIDs, relies on a delicate interplay of factors that shape collaboration and partnership working between the public and private sectors at the local level. Three of them are worth briefly outlining here. First is the idea of institutional expertise. In locales where public and private entities have a tradition of working together towards common goals, the formation of BIDs as public-private placemaking entities tends to be smoother and more readily accepted. Unsurprisingly, this collaborative ethos fosters the making of a local environment conducive to the establishment and sustained operation of BIDs. Of course, not all towns and city centres have the institutional expertise to successfully instigate public-private partnerships and ultimately their transformative and long-lasting consequences in terms of urban vitality and viability. This does not mean, however, that sites and situations of policy failure and absence are static or absolute categories in contemporary policymaking. Often sites and situations of 'failure' and 'absence' open up fertile grounds to successfully reinvent policy futures. For instance, in contexts of institutional thinness, the need to catalyse collaboration and partnership becomes paramount. Overcoming barriers of apathy or dependency on the public sector among local businesses is essential to garnering support for BIDs and engaging local stakeholders in wider placemaking efforts.

Secondly, and echoing many other place-based policies, place leadership should be seen as a driving force for change, characterized by the ability to mobilize energy and resources collaboratively. The case of the BIDs as placemaking entities is illustrative. Evidence suggests that their territorial introduction depends on the presence of strong place leadership from both the business community and local government. Leaders' individual traits influence how they engage in place leadership. Charismatic and trusted figures, such as business leaders and community activists, often excel in bringing people together. Similarly, the authority and position held within the local government also play a significant

role in facilitating leadership, serving as a platform for convening stakeholders. Business leaders who champion the formation of BIDs, alongside motivated Council place leaders, can drive the establishment of these entities and provide the necessary impetus for their ongoing operation. Their commitment and vision are instrumental in galvanizing support and mobilizing resources for placemaking initiatives.

Third, and finally, nurturing a profound sense of belonging within the community seems to stand as an indispensable element for ensuring the longevity of BIDs and their placemaking endeavours. When business occupiers develop a deep emotional connection to their environment and perceive a shared ownership of public spaces, they are far more inclined to engage actively in and lend support to placemaking initiatives. Simultaneously, this sense of belonging cultivates a collaborative ethos and encourages a collective commitment to enhancing urban environments. This can translate into tangible actions such as participating in local events and initiatives that facilitate effective collaboration and partnership working among stakeholders and, of course, voting for and contributing financially to placemaking initiatives such as BIDs. For instance, evidence suggests that independent retailers typically exhibit a deeper sense of place compared to larger chain stores and, thus, are keener to contribute to the vitality and viability of their shopping district through initiatives like BIDs.

CONCLUSION

Through the example of Business Improvement Districts as urban placemaking policies, this chapter has made the case that thinking beyond conventional instances of 'success' and 'presence' can provoke and enrich our conceptualizations and understandings of urban policymaking processes within the field of urban policy mobilities. In bringing different singularities or cases into relational conversation, this chapter has shed light on the intricate local circumstances that influence the adoption, rejection and de-activation of BIDs as placemaking entities in 'off-the-map' contexts.

In drawing this paper to a close, it is useful to make three points. The first is to emphasise the interrelated and co-produced nature of 'success/failure' and 'presence/absence' in urban policymaking processes. One does not make sense without the other. For instance, the presence of BIDs as placemaking entities in certain urban areas may highlight the absence of comparable initiatives in others. Such an ontological approach to urban policymaking processes seems to offer a more nuanced understanding of the intricate ways through which policies arrive, or struggle to arrive, at different contexts.

A second, and related, point underscores the importance of acknowledging that sites and situations of 'absence' and 'failure' can catalyse generative outcomes across different, and often multiple, spatial and temporal dimensions. By examining why certain policies fail to materialize or are not adopted in particular contexts, researchers can uncover underlying structural barriers, power geometries and stakeholder interests that may explain why some policies move or do not move at all. In other words, when existing policies or initiatives prove ineffective or are unable to address symptoms of urban decline, local stakeholders may be motivated to either explore new policy ideas from elsewhere and reinvent policy repertoires rather than abandon them. For example, a failed attempt to territorialise a BID in a particular shopping district may eventually prompt stakeholders to reconsider their approach and collaborate more effectively in future placemaking efforts. Similarly,

the absence of certain policies in one town or city centre may inspire policymakers and other stakeholders in other jurisdictions to explore alternative approaches that have proven successful elsewhere.

The third and final point is that further engagement between policy mobilities and placemaking studies stands as a promising and productive avenue for enriching our understanding of urban politics and governance. By integrating these two fields, researchers and practitioners can explore how placemaking initiatives are transferred, translated and implemented in specific contexts. This approach allows for a more comprehensive analysis of how particular placemaking initiatives are socially and politically constructed as 'transferable' and how a range of contextual socio-political, cultural and economic factors mediate the (un)making of such initiatives elsewhere.

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ARKOPOLIS: A FREE SPACE IN ELEFSINA, AN ARK OF ETERNAL YOUTH AND CULTURE, OPEN TO ALL, WITHOUT EXCLUSION

Keywords: European Capital of Culture; culture; youth; parks

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2023 Eleusis, Eleusis/Elefsina, Greece

In February 2023, Elefsina welcomed the Belgian collective Timecircuit, and with them the longest pilgrimage in the 3,500 years of the city's history. The members of the Belgian collective set off from Antwerp on 27 May 2022, and travelled 3,000 km on foot in nine months, crossing all of Europe, towing the **Landship**, a construction made by recycled materials, which moves only by human power. Their long journey was an exercise in being "on the road" and a vivid commentary on the 21st century of recession, climate change and the unmitigated consumption of natural resources. At the same time, it was an action of encouragement, strength, hope and participation of all European citizens, and a valuable contribution to the Opening Ceremony of 2023 Eleusis European Capital of Culture.



Arriving in Elefsina, Timecircuit started the construction of **The Ark**. Within a few months, and with the contribution of the youth group **Cultterra**, they created a cultural and recreational space in an abandoned area at the heart of the city, which was named **ARKOPOLIS**. This new cultural park includes architectural & sculptural structures but also the only Skatepark in the region, built after four years of effort by the city's youth, and with an exclusive donation from the Onassis Foundation.

Through the close collaboration of Cultterra and TimeCircuit, the space has been ever since enriched and systematically

activated as a place of meeting, collaboration, inclusion and free creation, through cultural and social programmes. It is a free space, an "Ark of youth and culture", open to all without exclusion and bias. It brings together communities of all ages, hosts and strengthens new ideas from every community who wishes to activate the park.

A space that is constantly evolving dynamically, proving that culture is not a commodity for a few but an integral part of Elefsina.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - WHY & HOW

Elefsina, one of the European Capitals of Culture of 2023, is a small city of 30.000 inhabitants located 21 km west of Athens. It is a city of significant archaeological and historical interest - the city of the Elefsinian Mysteries and birthplace of Aeschylus - that thanks to its natural port and strategic location, was transformed from the 19th century onwards into the largest industrial centre in Greece. The signs of industrialisation are prominent

on the body of the city, so one overall goal of the European Capital of Culture programme was to improve the quality of life of the citizens and through that the public perception towards the city. Further than that, it has been rendered crucial to create the conditions that will keep young people in the city, because in the past decades most of the youth have chosen to leave after high school.



This whole ARKOPOLIS project was the Flagship Project of the artistic programme of Eleusis 2023 European Capital of Culture in the Theme of "ENVIRONMENT" (Mystery 99 THE ARK). It is located right in the city centre, between the main road and one of the most emblematic factories -TITAN Cement factory- that is now only partially functioning as a logistics hub for industry.

The main purpose of the project was to **shed light on a previously abandoned area right in the city centre**, at the same time as **answering to a long-standing ex-**

pressed need of the young people in the city for a space where they could gather, create and practice Skate, that will be attractive for groups within or from afar the city, and will function as a "legacy" project outliving the duration of the ECoC project.

UNLIKELY COLLABORATION BREAKTHROUGH!

The outcome was a result of the collaboration of Eleusis 2023 European Capital of Culture, who initiated it and contracted the TimeCircus to implement the artistic project, and also did the overall Project management and liaising with the rest of the partners; the Municipality of Elefsina that was the owner of the plot, the Cultterra group of youngsters and the Skater Community of the city, who brought in the need for the creation of a skatepark and systematically collaborated with all the above stakeholders in order to fine-tune the design, and the Onassis Foundation that was the exclusive sponsor of the Skate Park, and carried out the Skate park's certification.

Of course the process didn't lack obstacles, from serious delays in the collaboration with the Municipality in terms of granting building permits, and providing the necessary pre-construction groundwork or facilities, or funding delays from the ECoC itself because of public procurement processes, to containing the dogs that live in a neighbouring dog shelter, and dealing with several groups of people that were disrespectful towards public property, it has been a constant struggle.

However, the ARKOPOLIS is now a new, public space in the heart of Elefsina, which has already rendered the city more inclusive, by giving space to previously excluded communities through culture: the first groups to have benefited are the **city's youth (15-30)** and specific groups like the **skate community**. Moreover, ever since the first events that have taken place in the ARKOPOLIS there has been an intense **participation of ethnic communities** that have been living and working in the city for decades but never had their fair



share of public participation/ public gatherings. Examples of those communities are the Albanian and Pakistani community, who already consider the ARKOPOLIS their park and plan some of their meetings there (in alignment with SDG 11).

It is also a place for getting in touch with nature: in an area lacking green spaces that has been severely "hit" by climate change - during the last 5 years the city has experienced one big flood and three wildfires - ARKOPOLIS has offered a green

space for friendly encounters and family time (in alignment with SDG 13). Moreover, it has contributed to strengthening a core team of youngsters who are now ready to take over and run the place as an open-air sports and cultural centre. Lastly, it would not be an exaggeration to say that it is the first time in Greece that a space has been created applying such a combination of participatory processes, and as a collaboration between public-private sector and civil society.

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MAPPING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOURS TO CREATE CHILD-FRIENDLY PLACES

Keywords: mobility; methodologies; research; youth; playing

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Placemaking, “the participatory act of imagining and creating places with other people” (Derr et al., 2018, p.2), involves the active observation of, listening to, and questioning of people about their lived experiences in their communities. When it comes to young people, observing how they move, explore, use, and interact in their environments is crucially important for reinventing child-friendly community environments. Such a participatory approach may involve multi-methods, such as Global positioning system (GPS) loggers, activity diaries, drawings, annotated maps, Google Earth-enabled and go-along interviews.

While activity diaries and go-along interviews address the subjective experience within community places, GPS loggers enable the objective mapping of people’s movement in space. In particular, GPS loggers record spatial data (either in the form of polar or cartesian coordinates) for each second the unit is in use; these spatial coordinates not only enable the places where people spend more time, more or less time alone, or are more or less distant from others to be mapped, but also enable the speed of movements (speed=displacement over time) to be calculated, and therefore the levels of physical activity to be inferred. Other metrics can be derived, such as the synchronisation between people and spatial exploration.

Such mapping may be highly informative in placemaking, as it helps us to understand how the different properties of the environment (kind of pavement, inclination, objects, distance between objects, area, shade, and so on) afford different kinds of opportunities for actions/behaviours (Gibson, 1979; Heft, 1988; Kyttä, 2002). For example, while an open paved area may afford running (more physical activity and more spatial exploration) for a preschooler, an open grassy area may afford tumbling and rolling (less spatial exploration). However, the perception of affordances depends not only on the characteristics of the environment but also on the characteristics of the individual (Gibson, 1979; Heft, 1988; Kyttä, 2002). For example, a bench may be perceived by a toddler as an object to crawl beneath, by an older child as an object to balance on, by an adolescent as an object to parkour jumps from, and by an adult as a place to sit and rest.

In the context of the PLAY/ACT project, we aimed to analyse preschool-aged children’s behaviours in Largo do Chão das Covas, an open square in the city of Évora near the city wall, and to understand how these behaviours would change after adding new elements — loose parts — to the square. Loose Parts Theory was initially presented by Simon Nicholson (1972) a British architect, who argued in favour of the importance of children having access to everyday portable materials and equipment, called loose parts (for example, boxes, tubes, tyres and ropes), that can be moved around, designed and redesigned, and tinkered and experimented with, enabling children to discover new things, create and dis-

Figure 1. Map of the first 2 minutes in the square

Figure 2. Map of the first 2 minutes after adding loose to the square.



cover concepts. As loose parts are not made specifically for children to play with, they stimulate them to think, discover, and create new ways and possibilities. According to Nicholson:

"In any environment, both the degree of inventiveness and creativity, and the possibility of discovery, are directly proportional to the number and kinds of variables in it."

Thus, playing with loose parts creates infinitely more opportunities for creative engagement than static materials and environments (Nicholson, 1972).

To understand children's behaviours in Largo do Chão das Covas (both in its usual state and when loose parts were added), we invited a group of preschoolers from a kindergarten in the neighbourhood to play in the square. A day before the arranged play date, the preschool teacher talked to the group about the play activity and told them that they would be using GPS loggers, as we were interested in their movements in the square. When we arrived at the kindergarten, the children were very curious about the GPSs and eager to feel them in their hands. After presenting the activity, we gave them time to explore the devices and

ask questions. Then, we dressed them in t-shirts with a small pocket between the shoulder blades for the loggers. After walking to Largo do Chão das Covas we let them freely explore the square for the first 10 minutes (Figure 1). As expected, they ran around the wide central paved area, freely exploring the space. It was interesting to note that children quickly noticed the white markings on the pavement and started doing races along the lines, spending more of their time in this space.

After 10 minutes of free exploration, we put some loose parts in the square and again let the children freely explore (Figure 2). As expected, they were attracted to this space and started exploring the materials, finding new meanings and possibilities. Unlike traditional toys, which often have a specific or limited function, loose parts were not designed to be played with, thus stimulating children to think, discover, and invent new ways and possibilities. For example, a rope can be used to jump over, to play catch-my-tail, pretend to tie up a thief, make a spider's web, or pull a heavy object (Figure 3). Indeed, research shows that this form of play promotes creativity and problem-solving skills (Casey & Robertson, 2016; Daly & Beloglovsky, 2015). Besides this, loose parts play affords children pretend and constructive play opportunities, which usually are less engaged in outdoors (Bundy et al., 2017; Gibson et al., 2017). The mapping data shows that children spent more time in

Figure 3. Children engaged in loose parts play.



the loose parts area. They were also less physically active. On the other hand, they engaged more in constructive and pretend play than physical play. Nevertheless, it is important to note that after the first 5 minutes, children started occupying other spatial areas, distant from the loose parts play area, integrating the loose parts with the usual elements of the square (white lines, benches, grass), therefore adding more creativity to their play. At the end of the activity both the children and their teachers expressed an interest in taking the loose parts back to the kindergarten in order to play with and investigate them further there.

A few days after the activity, children were asked for their ideas about the Largo do

Chão das Covas. It was interesting to note their desire to include the square in their everyday lives. In particular, children shared their willingness to perform preschool activities (drawing, gymnastics, painting) in the square, suggesting their desire to bring the kindergarten to community places. They also shared their desire to discover the square by night (camp there, stargaze and look for constellations). Besides this, the children shared their idea of transforming the paved area into a green park. Also, the teacher shared that one of the reasons for the recent decrease of the visits to the squares in the neighbourhood was the transformation of the earthen pavements into asphalt or stone pavements. Altogether, this is in line with the mapping data, which revealed that, after the stage of exploration, the children were attracted to the places where they could find natural elements, such as trees, earth and grass.

In this project, we focused on how the Largo do Chão das Covas elements afforded different behaviours/actions. Understanding the environmental affordances that appeal to children and are perceived as being supportive of their interests (Gibon, 1979; Kyttä, 2002), can help identify features and conditions that can make environments more child- and

youth-friendly. However, it is not enough to perceive affordances in the neighbourhood; a child must also be given the freedom and opportunity to move independently in the neighbourhood (Kyttä, 2002). Despite the proximity to the kindergarten, the children rarely went to the Largo do Chão das Covas, either with their teacher or their parents. Although we did not analyse adults' perspectives, we hypothesise that the road around the square creates a critical barrier to its use and value as a child-friendly place. Possibly, this square could be assumed as a coexistence

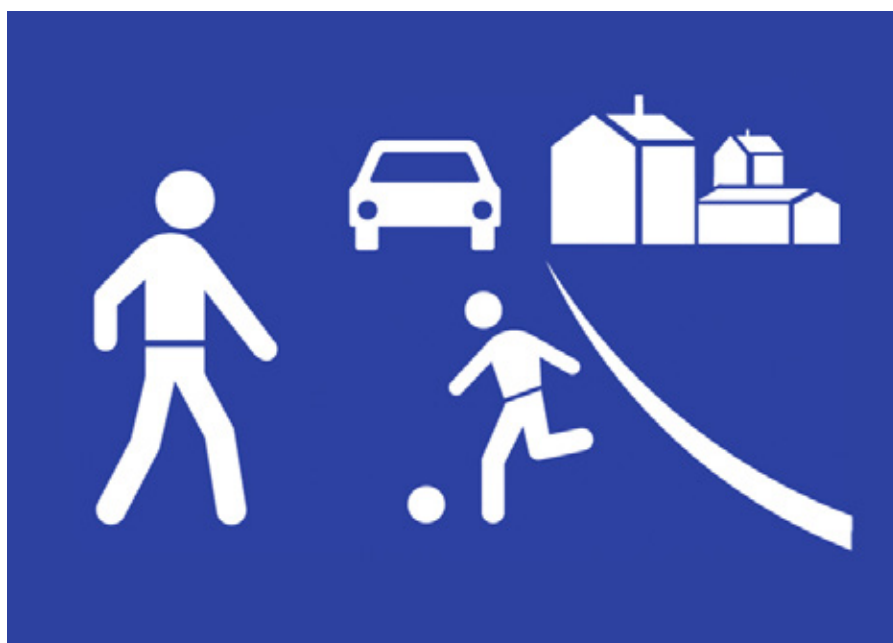


Figure 4. Coexistence Zone sign.

zone. Adding a coexistence zone sign (Figure 4) could help to raise the awareness of and call attention to motorists and promote a greater sense of safety and of belonging for pedestrians, facilitating harmonious coexistence. Indeed, the ideal child-friendly environment is one where children are considered and have a high degree of freedom to explore their community, providing safe, welcoming, and diverse settings for their preferred activities.

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PLACE-DISSONANCE. ADDRESSING CONTEMPORARY URBAN DESIGN PRACTICES IN SMALL MEDIUM-SIZED CITIES.

Keywords: urban design; temporary uses; participatory practices

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A relevant set of contemporary urban design practices, such as placemaking, temporary urbanism or participatory practices, present novel perspectives on how public spaces are conceived, managed and experienced. These approaches, which include tactic, low-cost, small-scale actions, bottom-up initiatives and different types of community participation, respond to claims for more flexible, open and inclusive ways of making and designing spaces in contrast to the rigidity of formal planning schemes and developments. They also present potential for questioning established practices, experimenting and innovating, or addressing transition or emergencies. (Andres & Zhang, 2020; Madanipour, 2017). Many of the experiences have initially been developed by the initiative of artists, architects, urban designers or local associations and collectives, but the adoption of these practices has spread among city agents, such as municipalities and planning authorities, or even private actors, that recognise its relevance and usefulness. Accordingly, projects with these approaches can be found across all territorial contexts, from large to small cities or even rural areas, with various scales and lengths.

While these concepts and spatial design practices, which Rendell (2006) named as critical admitting its discursive meaning, tend to respond to specific challenges and resources, their meaning and value are highly contextual and open to multiple interpretations. In this sense, their dissemination across spatial contexts and the opening to other agents (with their motivations), blurring lines between experts and non-experts, adds complexity. In this scenario, these new urban practices face a greater vulnerability and the risk of becoming mistrusted, as seen in their linkages to gentrification or displacement processes (Keidar, et al., 2023).

Recognising their growing interest and mismatches, we discuss some examples of mainstreaming these practices outside large cities and metropolitan areas in four small and medium-sized cities in Portugal, attending to how they are conceived and implemented in public space.¹ Are they addressing the local urban problems with innovative perspectives? How do the different actors and agents perceive them? What are the issues behind their implementation?

THOUGHTS ON PLACEMAKING IN FOUR SMALL, MEDIUM-SIZED CITIES IN PORTUGAL

"The external world mediated through human subjective experience." Lucy Lippard quotes Denis Cosgrove to define place.

Both territorially and culturally, the network of small and medium-sized cities plays a vital role in the organisation of the Portuguese urban system, dominated by the two main metropolitan areas (Lisboa and Porto). An overview of planned cultural events per municipality between 2015 and 2021 in urban public spaces juxtaposed with the maps of Ferrão's Por-

tugal Archipelago, reveals a similar “two-speed” Portugal (Duxbury, 2020; Ferrão, 2017). In the 1990s and 2000s, attention was put on cities and integrated urban development policies (Cavaco et al., 2020), with several initiatives targeting medium-sized cities, including land-use planning development, urban and environmental requalification initiatives and later integrated urban developments, with mixed and uneven results throughout the country. However, despite the myriad of tools and instruments in recent decades, cities and place-based development have lost strength in the policy agenda, unable to respond to the numerous emerging urban challenges (demographic ageing and urban shrinkage, touristification and gentrification, territorial and social cohesion, among others).

Within this context, Leiria, Covilhã, Ponta Delgada and Évora showcase different “positions” in the territorial system regarding geography, socio-economic dynamics and their particular urban morphology. Even though the pursuit of placemaking initiatives signals a wish to reconnect place and urban development, recognising each city's unique context, needs, and opportunities, the evidence of local dissonances, i.e., inconsistencies or contrasts between the needs, intended results, and outcomes, suggests the need for a closer reading. This brief sample of examples from each city outlines some of those dissonances, questioning their understanding and sometimes acritical implementation.

C1 Leiria is a medium-sized coastal city between Portugal's two major metropolitan areas, with a relevant socio-economic dynamism. Its dispersed morphology is the product of loosely planned industrialisation and urbanisation along the major communication axis into a patchwork of land uses and spatial patterns. The city benefited from a significant urban regeneration initiative along the River Lis, cited as one of the best examples of the Polis programme at the national level. Despite this consistent track record on public space investment, some local stakeholders consider Leiria's urban and cultural policies a boat adrift, seeing public space as dispersed and disorientated. In recently renovated and central spaces, temporary structures and events frequently occupy public space without anticipation or prior consultation. Despite the complaints about the excess of architectural barriers, the political decision-makers have few proposals for the public space other than to make room for all requests. The result is a refusal of free/empty space and exposure to the perjuries of the processes of eventification and commodification of public space.

An independent artistic network, which could boost these new urban practices, emerges in Leiria almost as a reflection of the urban and economic dispersion that defines its geography. Autonomous artistic structures emerge scattered throughout the territory, operating between vacant private spaces in rural fields and disused industrial structures. Still, they admit to facing difficulties in dialogue with local planners.

C2 Situated on the eastern slopes of the Serra da Estrela, the highest mountain in mainland Portugal, Covilhã is traditionally recognised for its wool production and manufacturing. However, with the breakdown of industries, it faces, like many inland areas, continuous depopulation towards other larger cities. The city centre is falling into neglect, and the university's presence does not seem capable of driving the urban transformation. When asked why the city's current state exists, some local agents point to conservatism and distance between the local decision-makers and the inhabitants.

In this context, several local cultural structures explore forms of urban (inter)action in new and different exhibition spaces within the city. Urban art festivals, independent film cy-

cles, and theatre and dance companies converge in the idea of a locally engaged artistic practice dealing with existing urban and landscape challenges (linked to Serra da Estrela's proximity). However, not all recognise the potential to explore these initiatives as new urban practices. Urban planners and managers only acknowledge them as tourism and place-branding actions and not as relevant cultural projects, even less as urban regeneration enablers.

This mismatch between the views, values and interests of agents is reflected directly in an increased risk of failure of new practices that emerge there temporarily, as well as indirectly in the exhaustion of local groups that are not considered and involved in urban regeneration or transformation processes through their urban projects, becoming processes of exclusion.

C3 Located on the island of São Miguel, in the Azores archipelago, Ponta Delgada is the most populous city in the archipelago. Between the sea and the fire, Ponta Delgada grows on a sea-facing slope based on an orthogonal grid. This relationship between sea and land has come under pressure from car traffic (extending to the whole island) and the increase of air connections to the rest of the world with relative ease. Since 2015, low-cost flights have opened up to a much more significant tourist influx and global immediacy, changing the commercial, social, cultural and urban dynamics. In this context, on the one hand, artistic agents have been betting on the island's potential, geography, culture and landscape as an engine for exploring and experimenting with new creative communities and events, often translating into events in urban public spaces open to the global public. On the other hand, urban planners and decision-makers face contemporary challenges, such as the pedestrianisation of the historic centre in the face of the constraints caused by cars. So, using tactical urbanism could be an opportunity to trigger a transformation process and build commitments between the players involved. However, the City Council's initiative, developed within its view on placemaking, consisted of merely placing foreign-looking structures along the centre, cutting off car access to part of the downtown, and imposing its top-down view.

The different (mis)understandings and enforcement of these practices affect the potential of tactical or temporary urbanism, now turned into "urbanness", and the quality of the public space itself.

C4 The last case in point was Évora, a concentrated city whose historic centre is a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1986 and with a fundamental role in Alentejo's regional dynamics. Évora's historic centre is renowned for its dense urban fabric and is recognised as a "museum city". In common parlance, Évora is the city within the walls, although a new city expands radially beyond this limit.

If Leiria, Covilhã and Ponta Delgada showcase different approaches to placemaking, Évora, on the other way, is refraining from them. In an opposite perspective from Leiria, Évora suffers from the effect of conservatism and patrimonialisation of the urban centre. Heritage protection and defence in favour of preserving the urban fabric quickly becomes the domain of property protection, not allowing the emergence of bottom-up dynamics as in any other part of the city. This represents a loss of opportunity and openness to the emergence of new urban, social and cultural dynamics responding to new demands and urban lifestyles. The long-lasting nature of this phenomenon also seems to affect the areas around the protected area, outside the walls, with programming and intervention in public spaces left to the municipality.

Despite this, Évora now faces a unique opportunity to open up and explore new forms of action in public spaces with the development of the European Capital of Culture project for 2027. Some local players seem more favourable than others, but the opportunities will undoubtedly be there.

FINAL REMARKS

With the above-cited examples, our intention is not to discredit these types of practices or discourage their use but rather to point out that their widespread adoption by more players faces challenges related to different understandings and motivations for their pursuit. In some cases, they serve different agents and motivations (either social, cultural, or political) as a mechanism for implementing a specific vision of space rather than building it in an open-ended manner, a place. Thus, they risk becoming dissonant and mistrustful among people, as the focus on the process may be replaced by the focus on the product.

A careful examination of the implications and interests that drive these initiatives is needed to understand how these urban practices may or may not be tools for developing and making place. For the agents implied, this means accepting the “temporality and contingency of spatial production, because in being alert to the coming wants and needs of others, one has to project visions and solutions onto an uncertain future” (Awan, Schneider, & Till, 2011).

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TOWARDS THE POETICS OF SLOW PLACE

Keywords: curation; cultural programming; art; European Capital of Culture

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When Hans-Ulrich Obrist defines the curator as the one who creates free spaces and not the one who occupies existing spaces, he not only addresses the most fundamental challenge of curatorial practice, but also introduces into it the horizon with which artistic practice dialogues. Indeed, curating and its dialogues with art and artists are necessarily inscribed in the texture of the living, in the interstices of the political, in the very fabric of everyday life, addressing non-existent places and bringing them "to be". And in doing so, they are an effective strategy of placemaking.

CITY STRATEGIES

Placemaking has been a widely used strategy for renewing urban environments and redesigning community life for several decades. As an urban strategy, it teaches urban planners, social scientists and architects to respond to public policies aimed at developing participatory places and neighbourhood quality of life. Contemporary agendas of environmental and economic justice, social inclusion and creative agency are at the heart of placemaking policy.

Largely applied in cities all over the world (from Paris to Mumbai, Cape Town or Rio de Janeiro), placemaking strategies are not necessarily big-city oriented. In fact, their scope, even within large cities, is small-scale: a neighbourhood clustering art venues, an empty urban space becoming a temporary local market, a street transformed into a pedestrian zone (see Madanipour, 2005; Sen & Silverman, 2014). Tourism growth and destination branding are in many cases expected outcomes of placemaking policies, with the well-known consequences of gentrification and increased cost of living.

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

Arts and artistic activities are often included as part of the strategy. Music that enlivens a square or venues for community arts are usually included by cultural programmers and policy makers. As artistic venues, the squares and streets of our cities can act as temporary stages, bringing together people with a broad sense of political and community participation. The recent pandemic years have made this sense much more effective, as people were (and still are) to be mobilised for meetings and all other forms of community building after the lockdown. Temporary places would bring together at least temporary communities to share their views on this or that issue, or to communicate their efforts towards activist protests and struggles for change in their lives, in their cities. Public art, open-air installations, playful architecture and performing arts in public spaces have been the basis of a series of interventions and challenges to bring cities closer to citizens and artists' concerns and battlefields, in a variety of bright, challenging and often critical proposals that the history of contemporary art can't forget, dismiss or discontinue.

In fact, artists are, by their very nature, the bearers of critical energy to the cities and the citizens. Or, to put it another way, artists see their function closer to critical and political

intervention than as part of the hegemonic possibilities of the commodity. Contemporary thinkers such as Jacques Rancière or Chantal Mouffe put this agonistic model, which is pursued by a variety of artistic practices, on a political and philosophical footing. Mouffe even stresses the fact that the artists working «outside traditional institutions» must «oppose the program of the total social mobilization of capitalism» (Mouffe, 2013: 87), that is, from her perspective, the way public space is so often market-driven. It comes to mind Dave Beech, Andy Hewitt and Mel Jordan's project «The Aesthetic Function of Public Art is to Codify Social Distinctions as Natural Ones», a series with a profoundly critical impact, presented as a vinyl banner at the 2005 Venice Biennale¹.

URBAN AND / OR RURAL

While most of the theoretical and practical approaches refer to urban environments, perspectives and needs, I'd like to emphasise here the need and possibilities of critical place-making strategies for rural context development. On the one hand, rural culture and economy are a growing factor in tourism, so it is worth exploring the potential challenges and benefits for local communities through artistic placemaking projects. For example, Dutch artist Renzo Martens' Institute for Human Activities is developing a project in Lusanga, a rural town in the Democratic Republic of Congo, that radicalises these possibilities. He installed a White Cube facility to curate contemporary art exhibitions and to bring in investment: «[...] it is time for the people of Lusanga to reverse the process [of colonial exploitation] and use their territory to generate a new economic system with more socially inclusive and ecological purposes and practises» (Regli, 2019: 51).

On the other hand, we have to consider the impact of different environments on creative strategies. For instance, the scale changes enormously when you see a sculpture on a corner in a city versus in a wide field in a rural village. The artistic issues are very different, and there are even opportunities to change the creative language. Let me give you an example.

During Festival Escrita na Paisagem [Writing in the Landscape] 2004, I invited a British company, rotozaza, to create a peace performance to be presented on the outskirts of Monsaraz Castle. The performance, Punta2, used an agricultural field as a theatrical stage, but in a very different way, where the physical effort, the length and the duration of the actions depended very much on the real space and not on theatrical conventions. The performance was also intended to end at sunset, so that the audience would be confronted

with the slow passage of «real» time, and since the action was not really the focus of the work, audience would engage with the landscape and perhaps be distracted by the sunset.

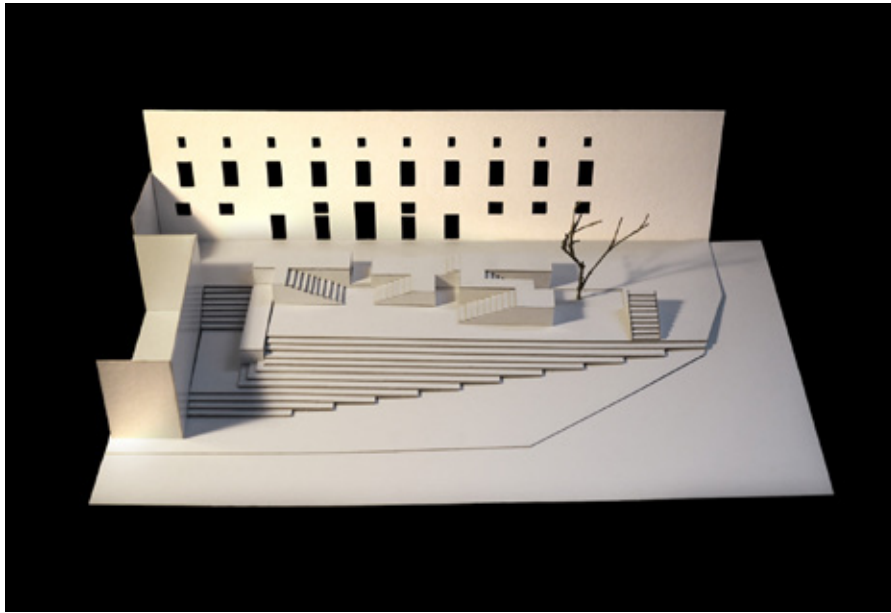


Figure 1 - Rotozaza, Punta2, July 2004 © Escrita na Paisagem Archive

IN THE LABYRINTH OF THE CITY

As Artistic Director of FEA2, I worked with award-winning architect João Mendes Ribeiro on a project of participatory architecture and placemaking for Évora European Capital of Culture 2027. Inspired by the modernist theatre design of Appia

Figure 2. Labyrinth of the city, project image © João Mendes Ribeiro



and Craig, João Mendes Ribeiro chose cork, a locally abundant material, to give rhythm and form to the Labyrinth, which can have 5 scales that vary according to the location. Designed to circulate through the municipalities of the Alentejo between 2024 and 2027, it will combine rural and urban contexts, assuming an ephemeral presence in each place.

As a mobile architectural device, it is meant to create spaces, not occupy existing ones. To welcome people and find

their voices. The Labyrinth is meant to be a stage to address an audience, but also an autonomous place that generates space and difference just by being there. That's how it works, that's how it generates (invents) places to be, and possibly the city to be (democratic and culturally open), with its voices. Their voices, our voices. Accessing the programme, I'm reminded of the writings of the Jamaican poet Mutabaruka and his call for an effective poetic action that could guide us in the reflection on the mission of the Labyrinth. Here is an extract from Dis poem:

Dis poem is still not written
 Dis poem has no poet
 Dis poem is just a part of the story
 His-story her-story our-story the story still untold
 Dis poem is now ringin talkin irritatin
 Makin u want to stop it
 But dis poem will not stop
 Dis poem is long cannot be short
 Dis poem shall be called boring stupid senseless
 Dis poem is watchin u tryin to make sense from dis poem
 Dis poem is messin up your brains
 Makin u want to stop listenin to dis poem
 But u shall not stop listenin to dis poem
 U need to know what will be said next in dis poem
 Dis poem shall disappoint u
 Because
 Dis poem is to be continued in your mind in your mind
 In your mind your mind

(Mutabaruka (Allan Hope), **Dis poem**)

My suggestion is to replace the word poem with the word place, if possible, and to follow the example of an inspiring and challenging programme of placemaking.

In 1972, the philosopher Eduardo Lourenço wrote an important book about Portuguese life, *Labyrinth of Nostalgia* [Labirinto da saudade]. The title of the project is a tribute to his book, which highlights the relationship between culture, literature and identity, our history and our understanding of our cultural formations.

By bringing the two authors together in an exciting and unexpected dialogue, it turns out that the labyrinth may find its way out of dis-place. A slow movement along the lines of the territory.

My suggestion is to replace the word poem with the word place, if possible, and to follow the example of an inspiring and challenging programme of placemaking.

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STREET EXPERIMENTS DURING PANDEMIC TO TRANSFORM URBAN MOBILITY AND PUBLIC SPACE - KIT A NOSSA RUA IN AVEIRO

Keywords: low-cost interventions; social challenges; temporary uses; youth; playing; participatory practices

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STREET EXPERIMENTS DURING PANDEMIC

Experimentation to transform public spaces emerged during the pandemic in response to the need to offer quick and cheap solutions to emerging problems, namely through promoting active urban mobility through pop-up cycle paths, developing citizen collaborative projects to promote the use of public space by children, offering new parklets and terraces to allow safe rest and implementing temporary programs using public space for businesses to remain open (Stevens and Dovey, 2022).

Micro interventions in public space can be an effective way to make streets safer and more attractive for pedestrians. These interventions can be done through low-cost, efficient, and quick actions, involving communities, valuing available resources and strengthening socialization and neighbourly relations fostering an answer to micro-urban problems that can generate collective learning and be replicated in other contexts (Lydon et al 2011). These tactical and temporary interventions allow the testing of concepts and models with the future users of public spaces, and to measure the impact of alternatives, providing information for future permanent solutions and, ultimately, reducing risks.

In some cases, these experiments encounter fierce resistance and fear of the risks involved, including moving too fast, acting too independently, or being too top-down. Criticisms also arise to tactical action with an «anti-state and anti-planning rhetoric» (Brenner, 2017) or the risk of a «deregulation and reduction of investment in the production of urban space decisions by dispersed groups interventions without urban dimension» (Kogan, 2016). Therefore, it is essential to make a concerted effort to involve citizens and stakeholders in this process, enabling them to contribute to solutions and aiding decision-makers in identifying the most appropriate actions (Isidoro, 2017).

KIT A NOSSA RUA IN AVEIRO

The Kit a Nossa Rua is an example of a street experiment to test possible alternatives to urban mobility and the use of public space in the city of Aveiro. Developed during the pandemic under the Participatory Budget promoted by the Municipality, the kit consisted of a set of portable benches, tables, plant pots, sound equipment, design materials, various children's games, and an electric bike with a trailer to carry them. The set was made available so that citizens could request it. The goal was to temporarily close streets to car traffic and streamline recreational and social activities, open to all who wanted to participate, previously agreed upon in meetings with residents and local merchants.

Figure 1. Kit A Nossa Rua at the Cândido dos Reis Street in Aveiro



A participatory process was developed involving several local organizations, mainly Projeto Rua Verde and Ciclaveiro, a community association located in the area and a cycling activist group, and Vizinhos de Aveiro, a neighbourhood organization. The methodology invited citizens who intended to carry out an initiative in their neighborhood to request the Kit and to launch a call to residents, shop owners and other stakeholders. The date of the event was decided collectively after listening to the interested parties, in a

process mediated by the municipality. A communication effort was needed to invite participants to the event.

Two initiatives were carried out on a Saturday afternoon in two different streets (Cândido dos Reis and Bernardo Torres streets). During the events, children played alongside their families and friends, showcasing how this initiative has successfully united multiple generations and provided a shared space for play. Additionally, friends and family members from the neighbourhood, city, and beyond congregated there, fostering socialization and community bonding. The Kit's purpose is not only to facilitate new ways of using public space but also to strengthen the sense of belonging and community among the residents of Aveiro.

A questionnaire was carried out among the participants. It showed that they were mainly residents (73%), women (86,7%), age 31-45 (60%). They came specially with friends and family (80%), walking (53%) and by bike (20%) and stayed there playing for more than 2 hours (73%). The overall evaluation was excellent (60%) and good (40%).

Looking at the analysis of the street where the event was developed, they see it as a place to drive (93%), not a space for social interaction (53%), but all of them would like to socialize in the public space. They feel that an initiative like Kit A Nossa Rua could help, and they might ask for it in the future (60%).

The initiative generated a strong impact creating opportunities for public spaces appropriation beyond mere recreation; reinforcing a sense of community and belonging while highlighting the lack of nearby quality public spaces; mobilizing children and families, fostering intergenerational connections around a playful public; engaging citizens, friends, and relatives from other neighbourhoods who took the time to socialize; emphasizing that parks, gardens, and playgrounds, while important, may not fulfil this cohesive function due to their inherent nature and location.

Street experiments like Kit A Nossa Rua pose some challenges, mainly the need of a strong political commitment, technical mediation between several stakeholders and civic involvement. But they can offer a tool to open new urban imagination horizons, to foster a sense of public space as a shared asset for citizenship and to efficiently testing solutions in different contexts, with significant potential impact before their full implementation.

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EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES THROUGH CO-DESIGN: A CASE STUDY AT CASA SAN VINCENZO, BRESCIA

Keywords: higher education; capacity building; self-construction: co-design

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AIMS

The idea of an initiative in collaboration with stakeholders and a self-construction practice that was agreed upon and situated within the economic, social, and dynamic context in which the workshop was developed, found its counterpart in the accommodation facilities of Casa San Vincenzo, in Brescia. The summer school was organized by the University of Pavia in collaboration with the University of Brescia. In addition to the self-construction practice, the workshop was an opportunity for exchange with students from partner universities of the Erasmus + KA2 project "SArPe," coming from Istanbul, Malaga, and Delft.

The aim of the paper is to showcase a co-design and self-construction process developed within a vulnerable community in Brescia. The process stands out for its innovation in involving multiple international universities, rather than engaging associations and stakeholders already involved in the area.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The workshop process followed a logic of situatedness (Rendell, 2011), taking place in a specific location and at a set time. Students were immersed in reality, engaging in a participatory process with the community members of Brescia. The initiative was born with the intention of placing the studio outside (Sara, 2018), demonstrating how the practice of architecture is intrinsically linked to society, place, community (Rendell 2020), and the territory in which it unfolds. The role of architects merges with existing roles on-site (Sara 2018), aiming to create a diverse working group that fulfils all requests and expectations, thus facilitating a codesign process.

The codesign process should therefore serve as a pretext to create a connection between the architectural curricula and the outside world (Rendell 2020). Development occurs through engagement between learners, educators, and stakeholders of the structure, fostering a complex and intricate dialogue that has been established.

METHODOLOGY

The summer school is rooted in the principles of co-design, self-construction, and active participation of the residents of a reception facility, Casa San Vincenzo in Brescia, where users with psychological, physical, and migrant vulnerabilities are accommodated. Students interacted with these stakeholders, seeking to understand and address their needs. Starting from these principles, the summer school is part of a research project in which teaching is taken outside the university classroom, bringing together numerous students from across Europe and stakeholders with specific needs to engage with. For this reason, the summer school was designed to take place directly on the area to be

developed, in close collaboration with the inhabitants of the structure, and with projects accepted and developed with them.

The summer school lasted for five days also to allow the development of a relationship and trust among stakeholders.

PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

The workshop took place at the Case San Vincenzo facility in Brescia, Northern Italy. The facility has an outdoor garden area, common laboratory spaces, dining rooms, a first floor with accommodation rooms, and a second floor with semi-independent apartments. The workshop aimed to: a) promote civic engagement through common goods architecture; b) transform architectural co-design learning; exchange knowledge and learn together with stakeholders.

To develop a linear, non-authoritarian, and horizontal process among the various actors, a preliminary visit was made in July followed by the workshop phase in September.

A first step in the development of this workshop was the site visit to the facility, two months before the summer school, by professors from the University of Pavia and Brescia. During this initial visit, some educators met the facility coordinators and, and during the tour, we introduced ourselves to the residents for a first approach.

The workshop was structured over 5 days in person: the first day for familiarization with the space and users, the second for co-design in groups of 4 each with a reference stakeholder and a garden area, the third and fourth for self-construction, and the fifth for exhibition. Self-construction involved the realization of wooden furnishings predefined by the university professors, but as we will see, the situation was later reversed by the students. The community offers its users numerous activities and workshops to pursue within the facility, to cultivate their passions and find work opportunities, including tailoring, wood-working, cooking, reading, and gardening. The only common gathering time is lunch and dinner, the former of which was shared with the stakeholders by us, the summer school participants, defining one of the most important moments for discussion and exchange to understand the needs of the place and the expectations of the reference community.

The transposition of a university classroom, composed of professors and students, directly to the project site allowed for a closer relationship both among academics and with stakeholders.

The self-construction phase was entirely supervised throughout the five days by an external carpenter, paid by the organizers to ensure safety and success of the process. Additionally, each student was provided with a manual on working with materials and a safety kit including gloves, eye masks, etc.

The co-design and self-construction phase was the longest of the workshop, as it occurred in close direct contact with stakeholders and because in its "Improvisation", it underwent numerous changes during the work. Each group focused on a garden area and autonomously defined what to build, often contradicting previous organizational impositions that dictated fixed modules and predefined equipment to be built. The provided materials included pieces of wood, water containers, plastic poles, and outdoor bulbs, but



the inventiveness of the students and the participation of some residents allowed for the use of other waste materials, such as pallets, truck tires, nets, to rethink different objects with multiple uses.

A final exhibition phase took place on the last day of the workshop, where all the projects were presented to the facility coordinators and educators, the representative of the municipality of Brescia, in the presence of all residents and the entire academic community.

The four works presented were: Group 1: Rack for showcasing tailoring works, suggested by Alexandra, a lady collaborating in the tailoring workshop. Group 2: Seating and flowerpots to support a tent for shielding guests from the sun. Group 3: Seating, game tables, and a flowerpot. Group 4: Playground for the children hosted in the facility and an outdoor classroom which were highly successful, establishing the importance of interpersonal relationships in the design phase.

CONCLUSION

Architects build for someone, and engaging with the users of the project allowed for the development of processes that are situated and geared towards the community. This highlighted how the initial methodology, where the provision to be realized was predetermined, is not an effective tool, but is completely overturned when the needs of the community are listened to directly and genuinely. The desire to establish a process that connects the architectural curriculum with the external world has resulted in an advantage in the development of skills, providing practical skills for self-construction as well as in defining communication with the relevant community.

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NOTICING THE COMMON INVISIBLE(S): ECOLOGIES OF PLACEMAKING

Keywords: nature; more than humans

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The concept of nature is often determined as a “*system of objects from which we draw information, and not like an animal, a living immensity, a singular abundance of particular beings*”ⁱ. This way of telling nature has effect on the way one pays attention to the singular abundance of particular beings. It arouses curiosity and puts in inhabit a world of beings, not separated from

The importance of the and many other subjects than humans) has been placed mechanical basis. We know this is a matter of fact, not a *care*.ⁱⁱⁱ

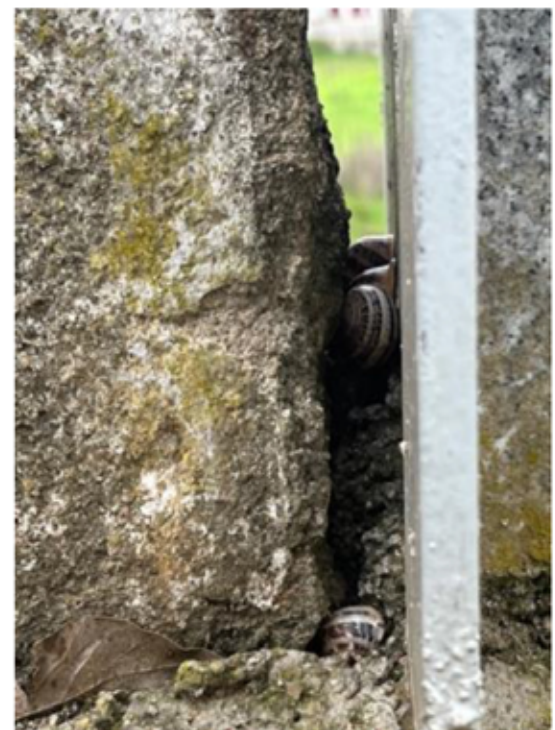


motion the awareness that we differentiated abundance of human lives.

relationship between humans belonging to other species (other mostly at the functional and that we depend on nature, but *matter of concern*ⁱⁱ or a *matter of*



We live, in general, without intimate bonds with other than humans, in the paradigm of the exceptionalism of human life and the consequent misappropriation of a common space. We are deaf and blind in relation to many other living beings, excluding them from our homes, schools, cities...



We have become depleted and living in a state of impoverishment that we impose to others without realising what an opportunity it is to live in extended communities with many other beings; to breath with clovers, learn with snails, conspire with beetles.

Even without knowing we live in multispecies large communities, even in a very urban neighbourhood.

We cohabit with billions of other subjects other than humans, beings to whom we are intimately connected, which we do not see but from whom we receive so much...

They can be found everywhere,
Under our feet
In the top of our heads
In a street corner.

They conspire to live with humans
Most of humans don't see them
or don't appreciate their presence!
But they don't give up
to cohabite with us.

Ruderal plants are one of these
They are great and beautiful
they exhale and produce oxygen,
food for others...
they produce everywhere;
in small cracks,
in rough walls,
in surprising interstices.

They want to take part of our lives,
to life and dye with us.

It is urgent to develop the art of
multispecies world and care for it is
attention to the "things of the
greatest intent of education, in that it should nourish recognition and love for this multispecies world we
live in, so that with it we continue *worlding*^{vi}.

Noticing requires that we dedicate ourselves to narratives that situate nature in an ecocentric, dynamic
and sympoetic time and place. This sympoetic^{vii} approach means doing-with, which takes us back to the
complex, dynamic, situated, with the company of many; very many that we need to notice and honour.

Noticing
is to be aware,
to see or become conscious of something or someone.
Noticing in Portuguese language
Is also "**Dar fé**"¹ – bear witness
Noticing
is bringing something or someone to existence.



amazing subjects
producers;
green biomass,



living in which noticing the
at the centre^{iv}. Cultivating
world"^v is probably the

¹ Vernacular expression used particularly in Alentejo region.

Noticing requires active and rigorous deepening a sense of wonder small brick under our feet to the deep blue of the sky, to let ourselves be called by by some being.

Noticing requires the use of sensual and to experience phenomena as to feel the joy of with all the body.

Placemaking as “the creating places with others”^{viii}

that needs also to include others than humans. This inclusion requires the ability to see them, to conspire with them in unexpected collaborations and that begins and always continues with noticing.

That was a challenge presented in the PLAY/ACT workshop conducted in Évora University in November 2022; students were challenged to “notice other than humans” in the Art School outdoors. Each participant was given just 15 minutes to make a drift and encounter other beings that co-habited with them every day of their academic life, without knowing. These encounters were registered through photography or drawing.



observation, and curiosity for the world; from the

some phenomenon,

emotional awareness full as possible encountering...

participatory act of imagining and may be seen as a way of worlding



The results were then shared and viewed by all: so many different subjects other than humans appeared! It was amazing how they have brought existence to so many beings. Eyes and ears opened wider, and the curiosity was established.

The comments raised revealed that participants started to be aware of the multispecies communities we live with and that was a great achievement.

Later, some participants’ testimonies let us think that maybe something has changed in their worldview with such a simple task:

“I remember that over the next few days I paid special attention to ruderal plants and the likely and unlikely places where they chose to live.”

L. Landscape Architecture student

“It was very interesting to realize and see a space from my everyday life, the Colégio dos Leões, from a different perspective. I had never walked around the university looking for more than human beings. At a glance, you only notice a simple concrete floor, but with a closer look, you can see green creatures and small animals in the joints and cracks of the material.”

P. Architecture student

Noticing we must!

Placemaking with more than humans we must!



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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VIDEO STORYTELLING AS PLACEMAKING INSPIRATION FOR THE COMMUNITY: THE PLAY/ACT PROJECT

Keywords: higher education; capacity building; communication; storytelling

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The New European Bauhaus initiative and placemaking share a common aim: the improvement and sustainable design of public spaces and urban environments. Both seek to address contemporary challenges, promoting solutions that combine aesthetics, functionality, and sustainability in order to create more livable and vibrant places.

Within this framework, the PLAY/ACT project was launched with a dual objective: to put forward a proposal for transdisciplinary curricula for bachelor's and master's degrees, and to develop placemaking processes with students from four European countries: Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Hungary.

The 17 students engaged on the program have carried out their own placemaking projects in four cities: Évora (Largo do Chão das Covas), Mérida (The Economato), Matera (Serra Venerdì) and Budapest (Kelenföld City Center). The results were presented at an international conference entitled "A Place to Be", which took place in Évora on March 14th-15th, 2024.

THE PLAY/ACT TRAINING PROCESS

One of the specific objectives of the PLAY/ACT Project is to increase the interest of young people in architecture, urbanism, civic activism, entrepreneurship and local policy, through placemaking. Young people often have innovative and creative ideas, and the project helps them to develop their concepts, providing a framework and a strategy, including objectives, means, actions, schedules, partners, a budget, results, and a suitable communication plan, which includes video narrative techniques, or video storytelling, a subject that is highlighted in this article.

The students involved learned to organize and lead projects and communicate effectively. Architecture students at the University of Basilicata were able to get the neighborhood of Serra Venerdì, specifically the 'Belvedere' area, engaged in the regeneration process of spaces; in Budapest, the Kelenföld City Center hosted many events of social interest for the community; the first edition of the Feira da Cadeira, a community market held in Largo do Chão das Covas in Évora, attracted the local population to gather in the square and exchange or sell personal belongings and second-hand items, as well as works of art and craft, take part in community art and collective singing workshops, and dance to music played by a local DJ and musician; in Mérida, the Economato Placemaking involved young people between the ages of 12 and 22 in carrying out different entertainment activities for young people, and setting up a coworking space or creative center where young people can work on projects, collaborate and share ideas.

Thus, the PLAY/ACT program has offered students a comprehensive training program providing the necessary communication skills and knowledge to enable them to carry out placemaking projects, empowering them as agents of local change by enhancing their

entrepreneurial mindset. The latest training took place at the Economato in Mérida on October 23rd-27th, 2023, focusing on video storytelling as a powerful communication tool. The use of video to tell a story creates engaging and persuasive content that captures the viewer's interest through a compelling narrative.

HOW ARE VIDEO STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES PART OF PLACEMAKING COMPETENCIES?

Integrating personal stories into the video narrative, whether they are those of residents, businesspeople or young people involved in the project, can humanize the experience and highlight how the project directly affects people, thus showing how the revitalization of a public space positively affects people and can mobilize the local community to participate and support the project.

Furthermore, video storytelling can be used to promote events and activities in the revitalized public space. It is a prime means of communication which serves to encourage the community to participate in activities held and is easily shared on digital platforms and social media. Thus a wide audience can be reached, including those not directly involved in the local area, generating outside interest and support.

To be effective, video storytelling must convey a clear and concise message with the following information: the purpose of the project, the benefits to the community, and how people can get involved – all in an easily understandable format. A combination of visual, auditory and narrative elements communicates information effectively. This is why the training process held in Mérida within the framework of PLAY/ACT tackled important competencies such as:

1. Oral communication and the practice of the elevator pitch
2. The basic principles of journalism drafting
3. Writing a script and storyline
4. Using stop-motion and time-lapse techniques
5. Learning different techniques for creating video from photographs
6. Recording video tutorials, screencasts, and the presentation of products and ideas.

PLAY/ACT students have learned to appreciate the power of video storytelling as an effective tool for communicating with, inspiring and mobilizing the community as part of placemaking projects, helping to foster a sense of ownership of and connection with enhanced public spaces. Indeed, showing how transformation is achieved can inspire and motivate the community.

URBAN GAMIFICATION AND PUBLICITY: APPLYING GAMIFIED TOOLS FOR COMMON URBAN CHALLENGES

Keywords: gamification; methodologies; participatory practices

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Solving common urban problems is only possible by establishing a common language and platform where alternatives can be developed by jointly perceiving different needs and interests, while strengthening our individual resources and capacities. Gamification provides a common platform for the 21st century as its universal language and impact on basic human drivers helps bridge differences in real-life tasks across cultures, ages, needs, interests, opportunities and abilities, facilitating the recognition of challenges and encouraging collective thinking and action. Urban gamification is a technique for using gamified tools in public participatory processes in the field of urban planning, which can make learning, cognition, dialogue and design processes more accessible, inclusive, engaging and transparent.

In recent decades, the urban systems of the world have undergone numerous changes, including social and technological upheavals and crises. Planning processes are strongly influenced by the rapid transformation of urban populations, with the result that communities are either disintegrating or not being formed. In these 'ad hoc' societies, there is growing isolation and a noticeable distance between individuals or small groups and decision-makers. Current urban planning and decision-making tools struggle to keep pace with these fast-changing processes and have difficulty in recognising emerging socio-economic-cultural capacity differences and constantly changing expectations. Current planning tools and methodologies are slow to respond to these changes and do not provide the right context for informed decisions. Without meaningful dialogue, the old methods will fail to meet expectations. Although digital technology is capable of handling large amounts of data quickly, platforms have not yet been developed that are not just for urban marketing, but rather for real social value, reflecting the needs of urban stakeholders – residents, users, NGOs, economic operators, and others.

In this era of technological and social change and with a lack of dialogue in decision-making, there is a need to develop toolkits that attempt to increase dialogue among actors. To ensure meaningful stakeholder involvement in urban processes, it is necessary to establish common platforms, enabling the development of shared knowledge, values, and ide-



as for the future of the community. **In order to highlight common urban challenges, it is important to involve the widest possible range of actors, to empower small communities and to encourage ordinary people to take action.** Supportive methods, events, and tools are necessary to empower non-expert users to contribute to urban processes and help them provide the information needed for planning and to reveal their personal needs and wants, thus enabling learning about their preferences and identities. Because of the intrinsically engaging nature of games, gamification can provide a common platform for tackling intercultural problems in the 21st century, thus increasing the effectiveness of social dialogue and facilitating the creation of pathways leading to social sustainability. **Enriching the toolkit of placemaking and public participatory planning events by means of gamification helps us to reach, involve and engage non-experts, thus opening up new horizons and depths for research on urban futures and for urban planning in a meaningful way.** Integrated gamified tools will help to engage different social groups, explore their relationship with their neighbourhoods and allow for the development of multi-variable scenarios based on local experiences and needs.

PUBLICITY is an urban gamified tool that allows participants to roleplay as urban characters outside their comfort zone, and through their own ideas for intervention they can plan the steps towards achieving their shared urban vision. The tool supports urban actors in creating a shared vision, enables them to break out of their habitual thinking patterns, and has a mindset-shaping effect.

The idea for the development of PUBLICITY was based on the lack of techniques and tools in participatory urban planning and the under-representation of certain age groups (including high school students and young adults). It is primarily a warm-up activity developed for targeted consultation events, but it can be used universally to enable discussion of situations of different scales and motivations: it is suitable for launching urbanistic or architectural planning (at the scale of the city, neighbourhood, public space, and building), it can be embedded in other design-related workshops requiring collaborative thinking (e.g. conferences, thematic festivals, exhibition openings, book launches) and it can be integrated in educational settings (from primary school to post-graduate education). It works for both real planning projects and simulated tasks, as well as other socially demanding wayfinding processes involving placemaking, user-friendly public spaces, the inclusive city or identity search.

During the PUBLICITY workshops, both in real and simulated settings, a key role is assigned to sensitising players to the varying interests, values and perspectives of different urban actors, and essential elements are visioning, the articulation of related interventions, mutual support and joint engagement. It introduces lay participants to real-life professional workflows, where they can creatively shape the motivations of the different stakeholders in city leadership and gain play-based insights into the context of devising strategies and future planning. The tool helps create the cohesion and interaction necessary for discussion among participants by providing equal opportunities for individuals to express their opinions in a more informal atmosphere. It creates a common platform for different age groups, values, mindsets, needs and priorities to work collaboratively.

A complete PUBLICITY gameplay lasts about three hours, is led by a facilitator or game master and consists of 10 rounds:

1. Introduction
2. Shared visioning
3. Discussion of roles
4. Identification of priority stakeholders
5. Character building
6. Character introduction
7. Presentation and prioritisation of interventions
8. Supporting round
9. Scenario building
10. Closing round.

The character game can be played with different durations to suit specific projects and events, as game time can be reduced by specifying rounds in advance or by skipping certain stages.

At KÉK PLAY/ACT's week-long workshop in Budapest, the university students addressed the location and problems of the Kelenföld City Centre in the 11th district. After a presentation on urban gamification on 27 April 2023, the international team started to brainstorm about their location through the Publicity character game. Students from Italy, Portugal, Spain and Hungary played Publicity with a complete gameplay, where they had to find possible solutions to the key question: **"How can the City Centre of Kelenföld be more user-friendly?"** To achieve this, the students first created a shared vision of a user-friendly city centre in Kelenföld, by using association cards. Afterwards, the various roles within the city were discussed by using the game elements, collecting the different users, operators, stakeholders, institutions, authorities, decision-makers and economic actors, as well as their roles and responsibilities. The students had to select the 10 most important stakeholders from the list gathered together, based on whose actions they considered essential to the realisation of their shared vision. From this point onwards, they had to act as their given key characters, building up their characteristics and life circumstances, then suggesting interventions to achieve their future goal. Interventions could be software or hardware ideas that the character has access to or influence through their role, character traits or life path. The participants then introduced themselves according to their character and then shared their intervention ideas with the others, with whom they discussed each of the options they had proposed. Afterwards, the ideas were promoted by each others and the ranking of the most supported ideas was established. In the final part of the game, players arranged their strategy on a timeline to achieve their common goal. Participants in the PLAY/ACT Publicity workshop were most supportive of the character of the local patriot who would have implemented responsible neighbourhood community building. The second most supported idea was for the development of an inclusive urban community planning game, led by the head of people with reduced mobility association. The mayor, the director of the cultural centre and family representatives were also identified as key activists in the development of a user-friendly Kelenföld City Centre.

The main impact of the Publicity workshop was that it created a common platform to learn about the different urban systems of people from different countries, to discuss the possibilities and competences of urban actors and to structure a common urban challenge in a more tangible way. The workshop helped students from different cultural backgrounds and perspectives to brainstorm towards a common goal, and through role-playing they were able to put themselves in perspectives different from their own, thereby becoming more sensitive to a more complex understanding of an urban problem.

CULTURAL AND CREATIVE ENTERPRISES AS CATALYSTS FOR URBAN REGENERATION

Keywords: urban regeneration; cultural and creative industries; community engagement; co-governance

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INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary urban landscape, cultural and creative enterprises have emerged as pivotal players in the regeneration of cities, revitalizing communities and fostering sustainable development. This article explores the multifaceted roles that these enterprises play, focusing on community engagement, co-governance models, and the integration of green and entrepreneurial skills.

NEW EUROPEAN BAUHAUS

The New European Bauhaus emphasizes a participatory process in urban regeneration, placing communities at the forefront of decision-making. Through multi-level engagement, stakeholders at the local, regional, and national level collaborate on addressing diverse perspectives and ensuring inclusivity in urban development.

Adopting a transdisciplinary approach, the initiative integrates various fields such as architecture, design, technology, and social sciences to create holistic solutions for sustainable urban regeneration. This approach fosters innovation and creativity by breaking down traditional silos and encouraging cross-disciplinary collaboration. In essence, the New European Bauhaus envisions a dynamic and inclusive urban renewal process that not only enhances physical spaces but also nurtures vibrant and resilient communities.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Cultural and creative enterprises are inherently connected to the communities they inhabit. Their success often hinges on the active engagement and support of local residents. By collaborating with communities, these enterprises not only tap into diverse perspectives but also contribute to the preservation of local identity. This symbiotic relationship fosters a sense of belonging and ownership, key elements in the regeneration process.

Community engagement goes beyond mere participation; it involves empowering local residents to actively contribute to decision-making processes. Through workshops, public forums, and collaborative projects, cultural enterprises create spaces for dialogue, encouraging the exchange of ideas that can shape the direction of urban regeneration initiatives. In this context, Materahub is conducting a Horizon Europe project called DROP (www.materahub.com/drop), aiming at actively involving citizens in the regeneration of social housing neighborhoods through the action of creative and cultural experts, acting as a catalyst for change and (social and cultural) innovation.

Materahub has also been able, through the PLAY/ACT Erasmus + project (playact.eu), to create a synergy with Basilicata University and local NGOs working on the regeneration of city spaces through culture – above all, Noi Ortadini.

CO-GOVERNANCE MODELS

The traditional top-down approach to urban governance is evolving, with cultural and creative enterprises leading the way in experimenting with co-governance models. These models emphasize collaborative decision-making, involving both public and private stakeholders, as well as local communities.

As part of these innovative approaches, cultural enterprises act as mediators between diverse interests, ensuring that the regeneration process is inclusive and representative. Co-governance models not only democratize decision-making but also enhance the resilience and sustainability of urban development initiatives.

GREEN AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS

As cities grapple with environmental challenges, integrating green practices into urban regeneration becomes imperative. Cultural and creative enterprises are increasingly adopting sustainable practices, not only as a response to ecological concerns but also as a strategic choice for long-term viability.

Entrepreneurial skills are essential for the success of cultural enterprises. The ability to navigate economic challenges, secure funding, and develop innovative business models contributes to their sustainability. By incorporating green practices into their operations, these enterprises not only reduce their environmental impact but also align with the growing demand for eco-conscious initiatives.

In these areas, Materahub is involved in key projects funded by the EC like the blueprint for CCIs Cyanotypes (www.cyanotypes.website) and the newly funded GreenCCircle, exploring the needs of CCIs for green skills and how they can support the green transition of other economic sectors and that of society as a whole.

With regard to the connection between these new skills and regeneration, the Regeneration Erasmus + project (regenerationproject.eu) is working on designing a new profile that will embed new green and digital skills for the animation of local communities.

CONCLUSION

In the tapestry of urban regeneration, cultural and creative enterprises stand out as catalysts for positive change. Through community engagement, co-governance models, and the integration of green and entrepreneurial skills, these enterprises not only contribute to the revitalization of cities but also shape a more inclusive and sustainable urban future. Recognizing their pivotal role is essential for fostering vibrant, resilient, and interconnected communities in the ever-evolving urban landscape.

FROM RESISTANCE TO CURIOSITY - FOSTERING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INTER-GENERATIONAL BRIDGES THROUGH SHARED PLAY

Keywords: inter-generational; neighborhood; youth; playing; co-creation

➔ Pedro Reis

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"It takes a village to raise a child."

You might recognize this popular saying that holds the idea that to raise a child it takes a whole village. The sense that a healthy human comes from a community committed to the upbringing of one of their own.

Most people take the meaning of village here as a large group of people, within our family and friends, but if we take a more literal understanding and change village with neighborhood, how true is this nowadays?

There's this other saying, also a learning from African culture, that says:

"A child that is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth."

So long as we fail to cater for the needs of our children, as a community, we are contributing to the increase of marginalization. Giving up on the relationships that keep us safe, healthy, and human. When we exclude, ignore, or carelessly tolerate them we might get unwanted and unforeseen outcomes.

If you didn't take care of me, why should I care for anyone's wellbeing, or even my own? Why should I care for this place? I don't belong here.

Our villages, our cities, our neighborhoods don't serve us very well anymore and they work especially bad for our children and youth. There's all these striking examples around us.

For example in Iceland where over 40% of the kids were struggling with alcohol abuse until the government decided to invest in a recreational program, creating thousands of activity spaces in the cities and heavily incentivizing with subsidies and regulation, including curfews. And even more appalling, the parents getting coaching to learn to enjoy spending time with their children.

I lived in Finland and there's this phenomenon that I call 'spitting circles' where teenagers gather in the streets, sharing alcohol and spitting on the ground. Not having anywhere else to go or anything better to do.

A place to call their own.

In the neighborhood where I live now there's this corner where kids get together to drink and smoke, play loud music and always leave the place trashed.

This is their place.

Just a few weeks after we moved in, someone put a trash dumpster on fire. We learned afterwards that there were a few kids doing it as a game all over the city.

They were literally burning the city.

Last year we had this kid showing up, he was struggling with psychological distress but was curious about us, who we were and what we did. After him being harassed by a few people in the street we welcomed him into our space and invited him to participate in what we were doing and he became a great addition to the team.

Sadly, after a few months, he decided to take his life.

We often blame someone or a group for the things we don't like but we rarely blame the decisions we made that created those things in the first place. How did we get here? How these places where we live became not very livable.

We need to change this!

Here I want to share with you what we are learning with one of our projects involving re-generating the community sense of a neighborhood and the relationships between us and the space itself. And also one specific experiment where we use shared play to transform resistance into curiosity within a neighborhood.

We initiated the **RUA+** project as a placemaking experiment to demonstrate the power of cultivating citizen agency for the co-creation of welcoming, sustainable neighborhoods. And how can we cultivate citizen agency? The resolve to interact and contribute to something that we perceive as ours, and out of our hands. — Our public spaces.

Designing for Designing with Designing within

Design is an important part of our making process and gives us the tools to think and to create within uncertainty. A way to get to the rightest somewhere without knowing where we're going yet. But most importantly is a collaboration process that evolves with us, from user to human-centered to considering all life.

Our approach puts us inside the things we are designing and aware of everything that surrounds us. Noticing and experiencing the process of change as it happens.

In our projects we don't act as mere observers, we are part of what we design.

"It takes a child to raise a neighborhood."

Being involved in this way means that everyone around us is involved, including our families, as this is for them too. And one of our success stories within this project is having our children as core participants. Considering their intrinsic capacities to create relationships and motivate more people to participate.

For us it's hard to make a case for certain qualities of the public space when there's no children around. So here's some of the ways they can contribute if we allow them in the design of our streets.

Showing how spaces can be used

Children don't have the same restricted sense of space, so they challenge dimensions, directions, signage, positions, and everything that we often take as design constraints.

Bringing creativity to the making

Everyone who has included a child in a brainstorm knows how optimistic and surprising their proposals can be.

Participating in decision making

Involving them in this often exclusive process, besides developing their sense of responsibility and ownership, changes the culture and behavior of the group.

Motivating conversations about hope and the future

Narratives, moods and demeanours change when children are around. They stimulate more optimistic views of the world and mindfulness of the tone.

Handling chores or assignments uncommon for kids

Nothing is a better incentive for people to take tasks they wouldn't normally do if they see a kid doing it.

Forming close relationships through regular interaction

They are exquisite networkers as they go from person to person disregarding social disparities.

Creating movement and sound, energy, joy, and laughter

Children breathe life into our communities, fostering a lively and enriching environment for all.

Showing that play can happen anywhere

They don't need fancy playgrounds. A box, a tennis ball, and a piece of unimpeded road can make for a great playing field.



Restoring a culture of protection and care

Adults become more attentive and thoughtful if they create strong relationships with the children in their neighborhood.

Reviving the nostalgia of the village

The remarkable culmination of all this is the regenerative effect of evoking the memory of those that once used their streets as living places.

Agency arises from willingness, and willingness entails hope.

This is what inspired André, a film student and skateboarding champion, who found in the Sant'ana neighborhood the support to organize a Skate video festival. He wanted to show that it was possible to bring such an event to smaller places and out of the big urban areas.

We saw the event as a potential for interaction with a group that is often marginalized and an opportunity to create relationships with residents with contrasting ways of using the streets.

Challenging prejudice with skateboarding and care.

Together we designed a day that transformed the neighborhood into a stage for an uncharacteristic event, with skate ramps in the playground, a DJ taking over parking space, urban art showcasing in the local club, a pizza restaurant set beside the community oven, and the square serving as a makeshift theater for the grand screening of the videos made by the contestants.

Our unsuspecting neighbors gained a newfound respect for these artists, athletes, dwellers, who are typically disenfranchised, as they became hosts and guests in their own streets.

The festival gave another win to the neighborhood, with a local kid taking first prize in the video contest. And for André, a well deserved spot in one of the main national skateboarding magazines with his event.

And remember the 'corner group' that I mentioned in the beginning? They joined us in the preparation of the event and enjoyed themselves, for once being the main actors in this space that is now a little more theirs.

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WALKING AND FEARING THE CITY. EXPLORING FEELINGS OF (IN)SECURITY USING A WORKOUT APP

Keywords: research; mobility; methodologies; safety

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READY

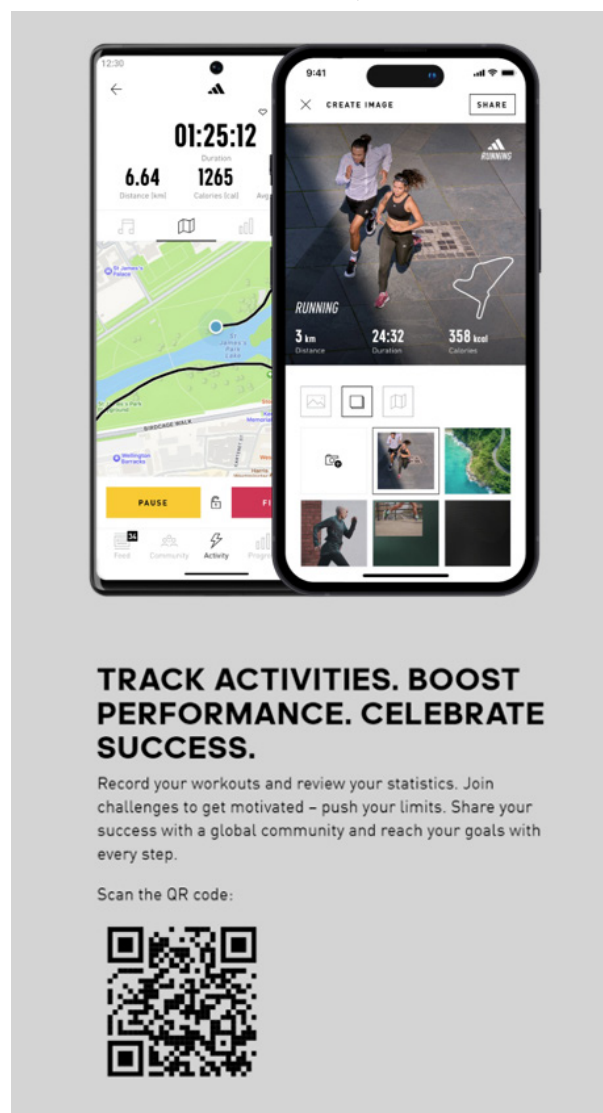
The smartphone is commonly used by many people around the world in their daily lives, and especially by the current generation of higher education students. Having grown up with digital technology and have spent their entire lives surrounded by it, nowadays students extend and complexify the label of “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001) beyond those born in the final decades of the twentieth century.

The use of social mobile devices (SMD), especially smartphones and related apps, intersects with various aspects of students' everyday life, including education and learning activities, consumption and leisure activities, health, and wellbeing. At the same time, SMD have been gradually introduced into activities related to teaching and research for social scientists (Raento, Oulasvirta, & Eagle, 2009). Over recent years, diverse experiences have shown the use of SMD as emerging tools for qualitative research in education, in the field of ethnography, interviewing, and design-based research (Beddall-Hill, Jabbar & Al Shehri, 2011). These experiences have helped to throw light on several angles and perspectives on the issue, including “the good, the bad, and the ugly” (Garcia, Welford, & Smith, 2016).

This paper showcases the findings of an exploratory study involving the use of smartphones and apps to creatively investigate feelings of (in)security in the urban environment in which students live and study. The exercise was conducted within the scope of the course entitled 'Laboratory of Qualitative Analysis' (LabQual) [SOC2413L] taken by undergraduate sociology students at the University of Évora (Portugal) in the spring semester of the 2020/21 academic year. It follows on from broader developments towards a sociology of the mobile phone (Geser, 2004) and comes in the wake of previous initiatives in which the first author of this paper, in her work as a teacher, invited students to make use of the smartphone and “to take this object into fieldwork (instead of avoiding it)” (Costa, 2019, 154).

Deeply affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, LabQual students were challenged to use a sociological lens through which to undertake a qualitative study aimed at gaining an understanding of the everyday experience of people affected by fear and related feelings. The study of fear from a sociological perspective is not new, having already been extensively explored. Among others, Zygmunt Bauman's work is particularly well known, even among non-sociologists: interestingly, the author examines experiences of fear associated with the risk society, individualism and the consumption of spaces and emotions (Bauman, 2006).

Figure 1. Advertisement for the Runtastic app.
Source: Runtastic GmbH, available at <https://www.runtastic.com/en>



Students were encouraged to use sociological imagination (Mills, 1959) and creative research methods (Kara, 2015; Holmes, 2020), including the mobility and sensory dimensions in the design and creation of the exercises. Accordingly, Group A1, consisting of Ana, David, Marco and Maria, asked participants to use Runtastic, a free app produced by Adidas©. The adidas running app includes the following features: voice coaches, GPS tracking, a leaderboard, running stats, challenges, and training plans, enabling people to easily keep track of their workouts and examine statistics on running, walking, hiking and cycling (Figure 1).

STEADY

A qualitative exploratory study was conducted to gauge the feelings of (in)security among undergraduate students as they conducted their daily walking routes between the António Gedeão Hall of Residence and the University of Évora main city campus. This route is approximately 2.1 km long and takes about half an hour to walk (Figure 2).

Data were collected using diverse applications installed on students' smartphones enabling them to take text notes and make audio, photo, and video recordings. Participants in the study were invited to use Runtastic to record their daily journeys between the António Gedeão Hall of Residence and the University of Évora, either during the day or at night, alone or accompanied. They were asked to stop at certain places along the route at which they experienced feelings of insecurity and take photos of them. Subsequently, the data was shared with the researchers and later analyzed using the following qualitative data analysis procedures: intra- and inter-case qualitative content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2019).

When asked to describe their daily routes, students' voices enabled manifest and latent perceptions of fear to be detected. These voices were illustrated in photos and the routes followed were recorded by the app (Figure 3).

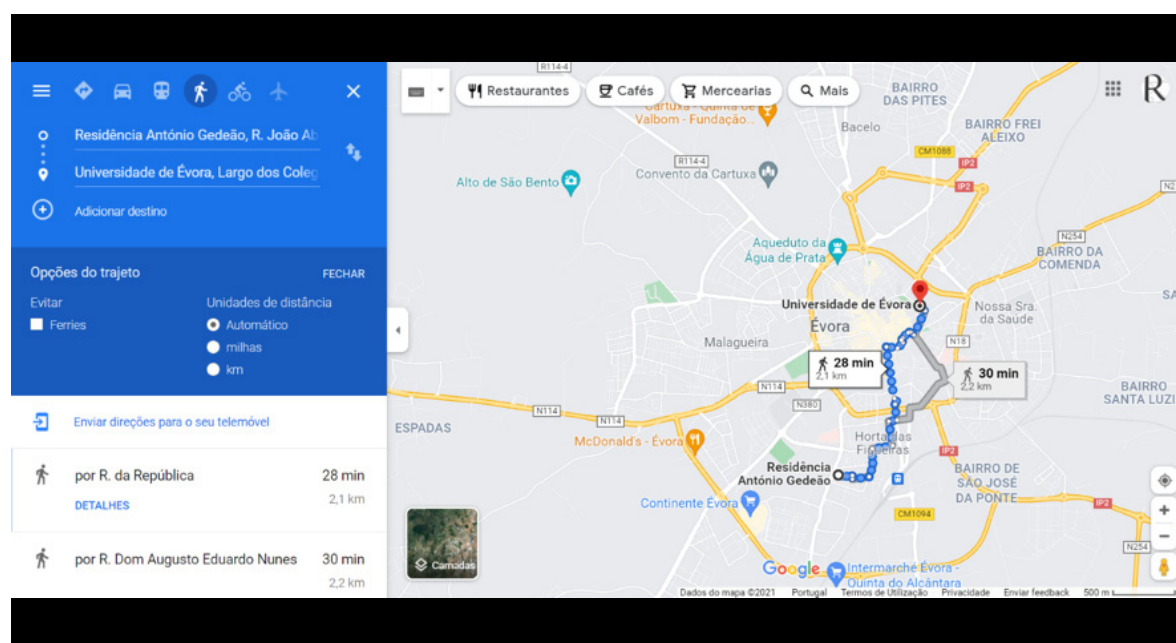


Figure 2. Walking route between the António Gedeão Hall of Residence and the University of Évora.
Source: Own elaboration using Google Maps website.

The narratives collected indicate the different contexts which were perceived by participants as being more or less safe. For instance, one of the students stated that "[...] if it had been night-time, we wouldn't have gone there [Rossio de S. Brás]" when referring to a particular area of the

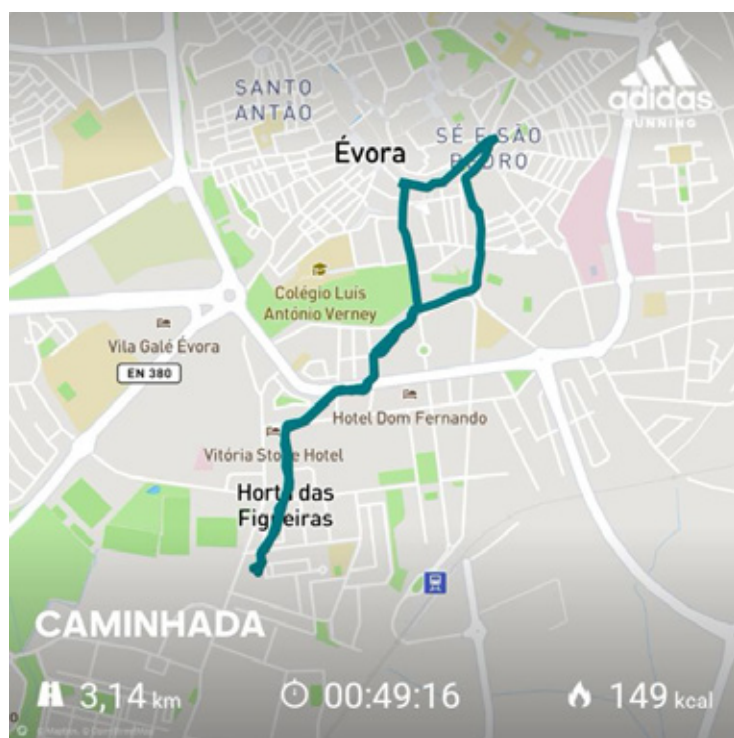


Figure 3. Runtastic snapshots of the round-trip walking routes between the António Gedeão Hall of Residence and the University of Évora. Source: Captions by GA1 participants (June/2021).

city. Another student stated that *"If I hadn't been accompanied, I very likely wouldn't have taken this route on foot at night."*

Figure 3 visually depicts noteworthy differences between round-trip routes. On Route 1 (left), as she was walking alone, the student chose to walk along a "busier avenue", while on the way back, as she was with a friend, she took at different route to the hall of residence taking a "side street which was not so busy" in order to see her friend home. Overall, this route was rated as "unsafe", despite the fact that the student was with a friend. As she said: "despite there being two of us, we are both young women, and [...] groups of women or mixed groups are harassed more often than groups of men." On Route 2 (right), the round trip is different, taking in quite a busy road, the first picture showing a journey alone and the second one showing a journey made by two people.

GO!

Using a workout app was assessed as being particularly heuristic in the process of studying the feelings of (in)security in the city experienced by undergraduate students. The facility for recording the route, making notes about and taking photos of certain sensitive points, and the opportunity for dialogue between researchers and participants regarding the routes recorded was a key feature of support for the interpretation of the results.

Several conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, an analysis of the apparently insignificant daily walking routes followed by young undergraduate students reveals diverse experiences of fear, insecurity and danger perceived as "stress", "anxiety", "nervousness", "discomfort", "impatience", "concern", etc. Secondly, perceptions of (in)security, which are socially constructed from classic oppositions such as night—day; dark—light; silence—noise; large—small; open—closed; wide—narrow; closing—opening spaces; static—movement of both people and traffic are (de)constructed in the face of social contexts and variables (for example, being alone/accompanied; being a man/woman). Third, perceived (in)security is inseparable from the experience of (in)security outlined, described using words such as "avoid", "choose", "change", "speed up", "run" and "trust". Finally, understanding the perception of urban (in) security requires creative observation in order to reveal the multilayered experiences of the relations between the self and the city, that is, with others and the surrounding space.

While the use of SMD cannot be done without observing ethical considerations (ISA, 2001), using SMD is as important as it is inspirational for teaching, learning and research activities. There is definitely no other limit than creativity. Ready? Steady? Go!

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FINDING PLACE ATTACHED MEANING: EXPLORING LAYERS OF MEANING IN FAMILIAR PLACES

Keywords: meaning; memory; methodologies; visual representations

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Memory is paramount in our lives. The capacity of humans for retaining information about our daily life and later recalling it, sometimes many years later, is a process whose understanding is beyond the scope of this paper. While it is acknowledged that over time, as we age, we may observe the past and assign it different meanings to those associated with specific elements or actions, it is also believed that the experience of space with others is a powerful tool for preserving shared memories. In the placemaking process, memory may be questioned in order to obtain information on past values, identity, and cultural and social issues that only the experience of a particular space may enable an understanding of how these spaces facilitated peoples' needs and aspirations, both for them as individuals, and for their community as a whole.

The workshop conducted at Évora University in November 2022 with PLAY/ACT students (teachers also being invited to participate), challenged participants to "draw their secondary school". Each participant was given just five minutes to produce a drawing with any tool they liked on an A4 piece of paper and provide no further information. Considering that young adults in higher education had left their secondary education environments less than five years previously, PLAY/ACT project students were regarded as suitable participants as their life experience was considered to be recent and therefore relevant to the study. The participants were from different countries (Italy, Portugal, Hungary and Spain) and had different academic experiences (in the fields of architecture, journalism, psychology, landscape architecture, fine arts and multimedia).

Yes, this was a task that raised unexpected questions in the mind of each participant. What did it mean to draw "my secondary school"? Does that mean the building? Or a classroom? Or the cafeteria? Or the playground? Or does it mean the place where I secretly hid with my buddies Mary and John to talk about things we did not want others to know about? Or the place where I first kissed Michael? Or does it mean the playing field where I spent most of my free time between classes playing basketball? Or the place where I challenged my closest friends to a running race? Or does it mean my special place under a shady tree on hot summer days? Or the bench from which I looked out across the river and wondered "why is this happening to me"? Or the space where I felt safe and secure? Or the stairs I used to sit on and play the guitar with my friends?

The finished drawings were spread out on a table and viewed by all: so many different ways of remembering in 25 perceptions of "my secondary school". We were all immensely interested in each others' response to the challenge: one aim achieved! Our comments revealed what fun it was to engage in such a simple task and showed our surprise at seeing how many of us had chosen the same elements to express the experienced perceptions

THE CHALLENGE

The drawings were full of relevant information for placemaking. The analysis that follows is spontaneous, having been conducted immediately after the task, on observing the drawings and being informed by diverse previous experiences conducted with a range of other students, ranging from kindergarten children to young adults in higher education. The aim of the talk that followed, in which participants were asked to contribute, was to establish a set of coherent strategies to be used in response to the task by a group of people with diverse experiences of secondary school, with different time decalage from its original use. The talk revealed a sense of belonging to and pride in the place, and enabled the establishment of what I term "layers of meanings", which I argue are most relevant when aiming at identifying place attachment. This activity did not allow for analysis to be extended any further, such as revealing reasons or justifications for different outputs, for example.

An initial examination revealed two types of participants, which I term "the sceptical" and "the engaged". The former, comprising a smaller group, drew abstract lines, as if they sought to keep the meaning of their drawing to themselves, focusing on the emotional (?) or physical (?) links between spaces (Figure 1).

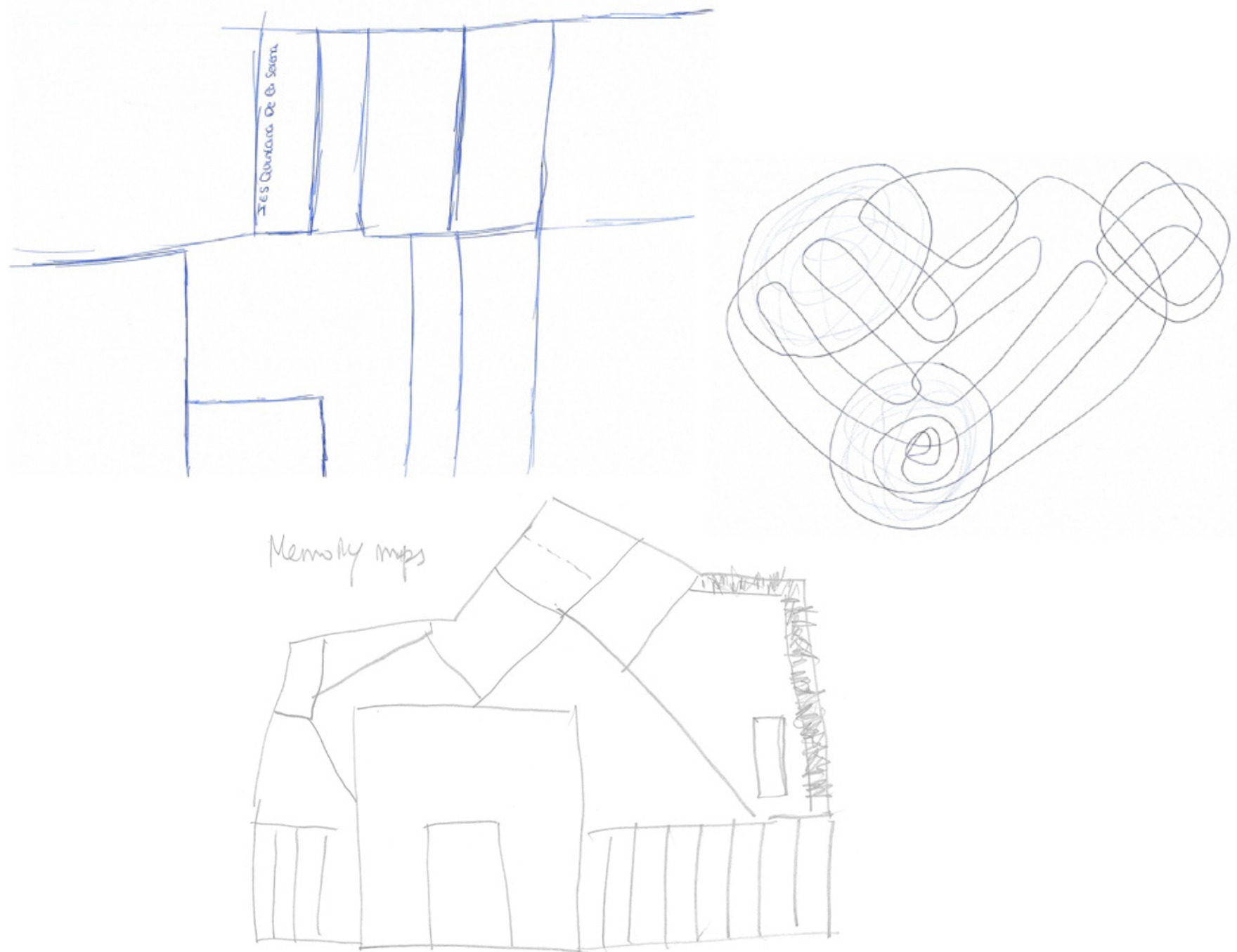


Figure 1. Abstract representations.



Figure 2. Main façade and the public realm image of education.

The drawings of the latter group were more relevant for the aim of this study, bringing up issues that identify and characterise a particular space such as scale and its human occupation, and the form and volume of the main façade with the windows and the main entrance (Figure 2), the type of boundary structure surrounding the campus, sports amenities, benches and trees in the outdoor space of the campus, etc.

Another layer of information is that the perception of the school space seems to be better drawn if the participant adopts a bird's-eye or aerial view of the whole campus, a strategy employed by the memory to capture the whole rather than specific features (Figure 3).



Figure. 3 Aerial views and the different architectural types of secondary school facilities.

Regarding the drawing of the main façade, another meaning arises, that of the public image of education, enhanced by the drawing of the boundary marker (fence or wall), as the establisher of the frontier between the "world of education" and the "real world outside". Furthermore, considering a brief architectural analysis, differences of culture and period may be found in the different types of secondary school facilities drawn, for example those which design complies with diverse concepts of surveillance or reflect the adaptation of school grounds to different learning requirements. Some drawings show a late-19th century northern European building with several floors, a roof with chimneys, looking out on a street, with the playground inside the built precinct and not open to the public street. In contrast, there are other representations of schools that portray a campus occupying the whole built precinct, providing a significant area in terms of outdoor space for the students to use freely, while establishing the fence or wall as the boundary between the educational space and the public space, as mentioned above. However, what is common to most drawings is the representation of the human figure: not just one but several. Interestingly, this does not align with most responses provided in several other contexts and thus may indicate a particular sensibility demonstrated by PLAY/ACT students as regards the importance of people in spaces, which is the main requirement, I would argue, for a space to become a place. This represents a great achievement after only two months since the start of the course.

To sum up, by asking university-level students to remember and record in a drawing their secondary school, their outputs revealed that the word "school" was interpreted not just as an educational facility but also as a community of people who shared similar experiences of education in different physical spaces, the memory of which is very vivid. Even though diverse physical environments were portrayed, common views were revealed, not just literally by observing the facility from an aerial perspective, but also in terms of the sharing of retained meanings drawn from the memory of each individual. Thus, this brief paper aims to contribute to a better understanding of placemaking, highlighting the importance of memory and attachment to the physical structures of a space which have an impact on the people who actually use it and find in shared meanings links for building a strong community.

THE TREE TEMPLE - A PLAYFUL PLACEMAKING INITIATIVE BASED ON A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH ON BOTANICAL ARCHITECTURE

Keywords: living architecture; gamification; ontological design; sustainability; nature

➔ Stephanie Geihs

"It is essential now, as the prospect of planetary catastrophe comes ever closer, that those nonhuman voices be restored to our stories". (Amitav Ghosh)

[WHY?]

The term 'connection' implies at least two sides that together bring forth the state or process of connecting each other – it speaks of mutuality. The desire to connect as a subject requires the recognition of subjectivity in the counterpart. In this vein, disconnection from nature is essentially linked to the de-subjectification (or objectification) of more-than-human life, that characterises the instrumental perspective, the dominant perspective of modern culture. As Charles Eisenstein puts it:

"Science (as we have known it) renders us alone in an alien universe. At the same time, it crowns us as its lords and masters, for if sentience and purpose inhere in us alone, there is nothing stopping us from engineering the world as we see fit. There is no desire to listen for, no larger process to participate in, no consciousness to respect." (Eisenstein, 2013)

The unsustainability crisis of planetary scale teaches us about the far-reaching dysfunctionality of this systematic neglect of other desires to listen for, larger processes to participate in and consciousnesses to respect. The fundamental objective of The Tree Temple, developed as a final project in the Design for Sustainability programme at the University of Lisbon in 2023, is to generate a context, which inspires us to collectively, playfully and creatively explore practical ways to reconnect to the subjective dimensions of nature and to reintegrate as interwoven participants into the more-than-human web-of-life of the Earth.

[HOW?]

Starting from an ontological design approach (Escobar, 2018; Winograd & Flores, 2008), we propose a method of change for this cultural learning process based on the practice theory (Reckwitz, 2002): "Cultivation". Cultivation here designates a social process, that restructures what we encounter as 'real' and 'valid' through collective explorations and habituations of practices according to certain intentions. Let's take a simple example to illustrate this technique:

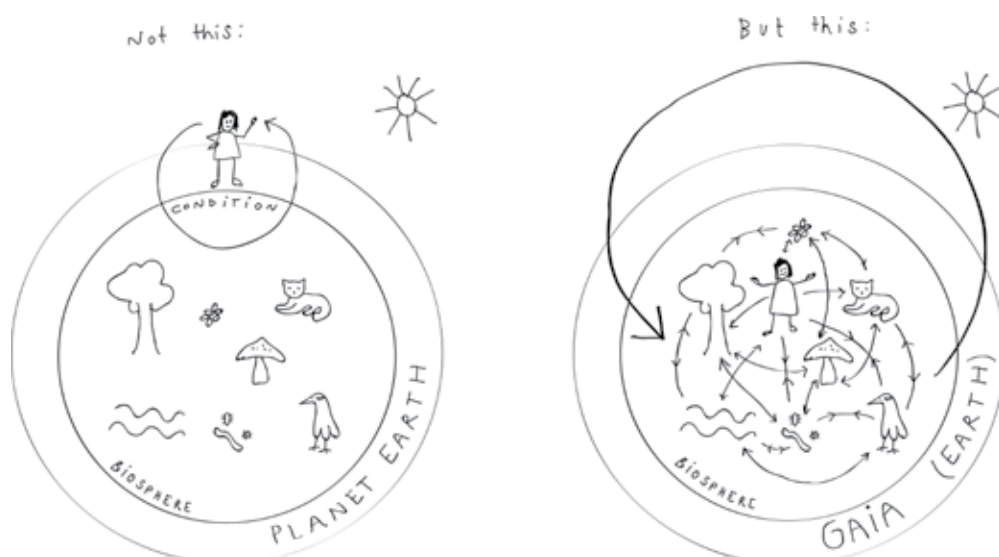


Figure 1. Not this, but this. © Stephanie Geihs

Is it possible to speak with trees?
– From a practice theory point

of view, all we can say is, that we don't commonly do it in our modern culture. We don't have the concept of 'speaking with trees' here, so we don't know its practical meaning. We don't know how to move, what perceptions, what mental or emotional states, what knowledge, what objects are involved to make sense of it. Moreover, we are lacking a common idea why one should do it. Now, if an individual comes along and says she speaks with trees, she would probably be called a little weird... but if we decide to explore this concept together in practice over time, we might find a shared meaning and value.¹

Speaking of trees – plants and particularly trees play a special role for tracing our instrumentalist worldview on the one hand, but also for tracing cultural traditions of more appreciative relations on the other: Plants are really the life creators and sustainers of this planet, as primary producers they turn abiotic elements (light, air, water and earth) into living bodies (!), on which most life directly or indirectly feeds. Despite this and many other essential superpowers, we are used to view plants as mere resources, a lower form of life, not quite part of the realm of consciousness, agency and ethics (Marder, 2013). But most Cultures do have rich histories in ontologically, spiritually and socially relating to trees. They were seen as sacred, as a medium to the spiritual dimensions, an embodiment of creation, cosmic order and life itself, standing for eternal life, life force, wisdom, fertility and relationship (Coder, 2011; Cusack, 2011; Hacken, 2022; 'The Worship of Trees', 1897). Moreover, their presence throughout the times has been an important feature in communal life and public space – defining places of orientation and meaning, rituals, fests or just casual interaction, play and rest in pleasant micro-climates (Cusack, 2011; Ludwig, 2012). While in nowadays urban landscapes, green public spaces with trees still count among the most valuable places for social life, this positive participation in place-making, social cohesion and well-being (Kingsley et al., 2019; Peters et al., 2010; Wan et al., 2021) is usually not consciously perceived nor attributed to the trees as actors. Current plant sciences, however, are beginning to observe the subjective dimension of plants – using categories such as language, sentience, memory, social structures and behaviour (Baluska, 2018; Gagliano, 2014; Wohlleben et al., 2016).

While all these reasons speak in favour of involving trees in the intended cultivation process, the method of tree shaping – an ancient tradition of gradually shaping and grafting growing tree samplings into self-bearing structures such as living buildings (botanical architecture) or design objects and sculptures (Arborsculpture) – appears to have a significant effect on its practitioners. Pooktre (Cook & Northey, 2011) for example reports, that "(t)he closer you study trees, the more you will realise just how dynamic they really are." Ferdinand Ludwig (Ludwig, 2012) attests, that "(b)otanical buildings serve the experience of the power and vitality of trees as the largest and most impressive living creatures on earth." And Richard Reams (Reams, 2022) describes: "A lot of this process is a give and take. It's a long, slow conversation between you and the tree. You say something – tree says something back."

Tree shaping is a slow, potentially decade-long, process and requires continuous (but not necessarily work-intensive) care and attention. While this can generally be seen as a disadvantage, it could also become an advantage, if it is successfully linked to a co-creative place-making process, where it might keep the place active and interesting in its ongoing becoming.

As an appropriate context for such a participatory approach on tree shaping, we think of an urban environment, where the instrumental perspective and alienation from nature

is perpetuated the most, using public space as a vehicle for social change and social cohesion on a neighbourhood scale. The Tree Temple could also be used as an educational initiative for school gardens.

[WHAT?] - [CONCEPT]

The Tree Temple is a long-term creative place-and-community-making process based on a participatory approach on botanical architecture. As an initiative framework plus corresponding realisation tool (board game) it can be seeded in various public urban spaces or institutions such as schools, leading to different expressions.

In its place-making dimension it is about collectively designing and raising a community garden including the prominent feature of living tree structures, forming a patchworked memorial of past contributions through generational passings. This implies a learning-by-doing process regarding local ecology, tree lore and tree agency among the participants. It involves the development of familiarity and dialogue with the trees via habit-uated shared responsibilities such as care-taking routines, shaping procedures, potential harvest, and so forth.

In its community-making dimension The Tree Temple is about developing the "temple" as a culturally meaningful and vivid place. This includes for example the negotiation of shared values and visions for the place, the development of cultural rituals and events around the gardening tasks, inviting social, cultural and knowledge exchange.

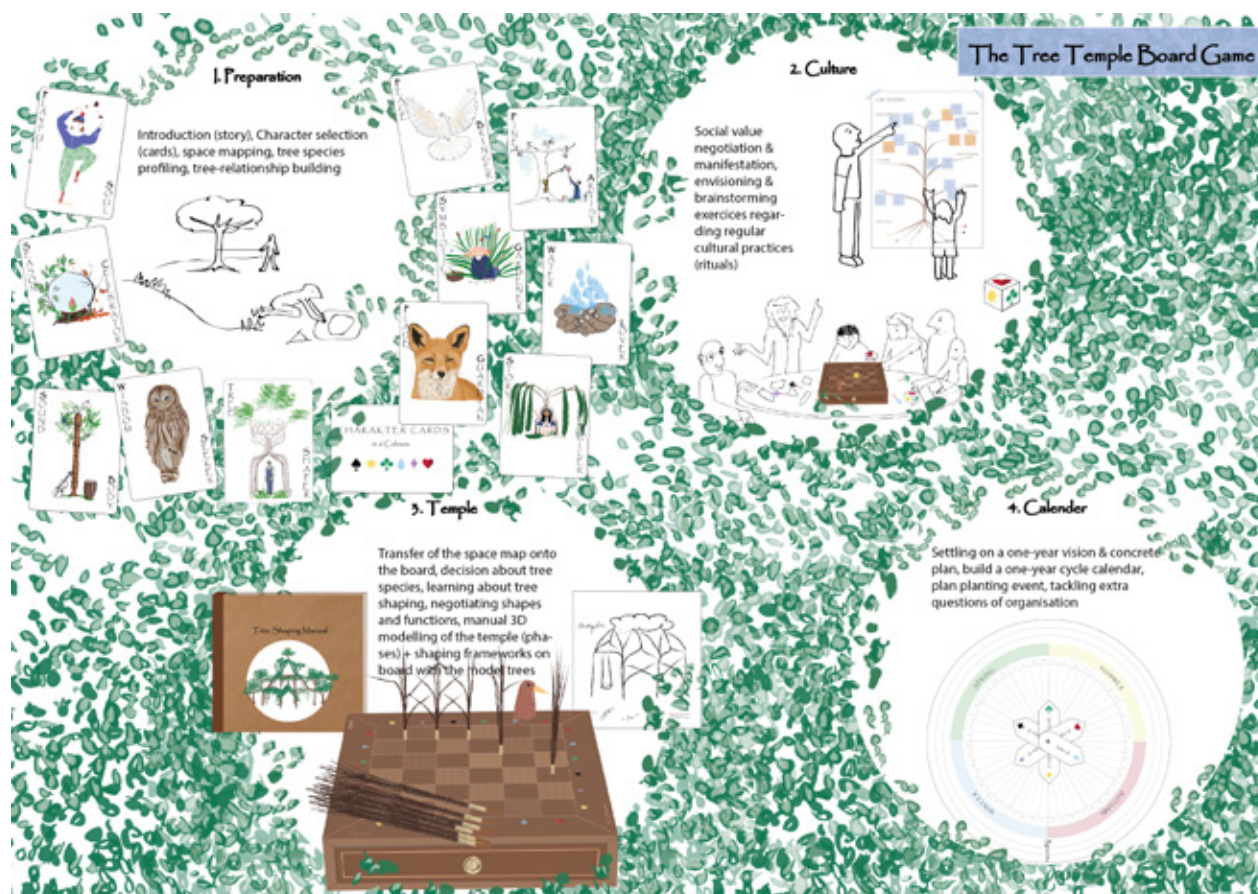


Figure 2. The Tree Temple board game, process overview. © Stephanie Geihs

[WHAT?] - [REALISATION]

The concept is translated into The Tree Temple board game as the main tool to organise the co-creative process, that consists in communally learning, envisioning, negotiating, modelling and planning. It is structured in four phases – preparation, culture, temple and calendar – that lead up to a planting and inauguration event.

PILOT IMPLEMENTATION IN CASA BRANCA (ESCOURAL)

With the support of the "Culture Moves Europe" programme (EU & Goethe Institut), I currently have the opportunity to test the concept and game in the small village of Casa Branca (Escoural, Portugal) during two months of spring 2024. Here I am partnering with

Figure 3. Process in Casa Branca (Escoural). © Stephanie Geihs and group



Estação Cooperativa, an organisation that – based on a long-term contract with the Portuguese government – works on revitalising a large, abandoned area of the village.

Casa Branca is an interesting context for a first implementation of The Tree Temple: on the one hand because it offers a lot of freedom to experiment, on the other hand because the project has the potential

to strengthen communal relations between the residents of the village, the members of the cooperative as well as the short-term artistic residents, by developing into a shared and passed on object of care and creation.

[PROCESS]

After a short phase of inquiries and conversations in the neighbourhood, we have formed a core group of 11 “players” that by now has gone through the preparation and culture phase. During this process, we have already encountered several challenges:

How to deal with the discrepancy of providing a specific idea to be realised co-creatively, but not asking the ground-zero question of what this place and its inhabitants initially desire for their public space? The Tree Temple is a relatively predetermined offering, the realisation of which is based on the commitment and corresponding initiative of the participants. In order to activate this aspect more strongly, the game needs some recalibrations in terms of flexibility to the energetic flow of the group, interactivity, group management and the interweaving of hands-on with reflexive tasks. It should also include more specific strategies for building peripheral participation.

The expectation, that the project could connect the various groups active in Casa Branca in caring for and using the place, is a long-term perspective, impossible to be instantly fulfilled. The objective is to install conditions for it, tangible as well as intangible, links between people and plants, trusting in the trees to favour the place with their ability to nourish networks of relationships.

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