

SOCIAL PATHWAYS  
A COMMUNITY  
ENGAGEMENT  
METHODOLOGY FOR  
THE ADAPTATION  
OF PUBLIC  
GREEN SPACES

PROJECT HANDBOOK



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# SOCIAL PATHWAYS A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT METHODOLOGY FOR THE ADAPTATION OF PUBLIC GREEN SPACES PROJECT HANDBOOK

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# INTRODUCTION

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

This handbook is one of the outcomes of the SPACES project developed and implemented locally by Kırkayak Kültür in Gaziantep, Turkey and Marca-ADL in Montemor-o-Novo, Portugal. Kırkayak Kültür and Marca-ADL are two civil society organizations dedicated to fostering inclusive, sustainable, and resilient communities. While Kırkayak Kültür focuses on social cohesion through art, culture, and human rights advocacy, Marca-ADL works to promote the social and economic development of rural regions through cooperation and citizen participation. United by shared values of equality, dialogue, and community empowerment, we have come together to create this handbook as a resource for building stronger, more connected societies.

Kırkayak Kültür is dedicated to fostering social cohesion through art, culture, and dialogue. Rooted in the concept of "living together," we create inclusive spaces where diverse communities can connect, share, and engage. Our work prioritizes a rights-based approach, promoting equality, human rights, and democratic values. Through cultural and artistic initiatives, we aim to break down barriers, empower disadvantaged groups, and encourage meaningful interactions that challenge prejudice and discrimination.

Marca-ADL is a local development association and NGO for Environment committed to the social and economic development of rural regions, particularly in Montemor-o-Novo. By fostering cooperation, sustainability, and citizen participation, we work to create inclusive and resilient communities. Our approach is rooted in integrity, transparency, and respect for human rights, ensuring equal opportunities and non-discrimination. Through collaboration and network-building, we seek innovative solutions to both local and global challenges, striving to improve the quality of life for all.

Through THE:PLACE program, we had the opportunity to collaborate on SPACES: Social Pathways: A Community Engagement Methodology for the adaptation of public green spaces, that brings our shared values of inclusion, dialogue, and community engagement to life.



## THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROJECT

The primary objective of this project is to implement inclusive and sustainable placemaking practices in two urban areas of Mediterranean regions, namely Gaziantep, Turkey and Montemor-o-Novo, Portugal, with the aim of strengthening social cohesion among diverse local communities through creating and transforming green spaces.

By implementing this project, we seek to create environments that facilitate meaningful social interactions, ultimately fostering a sense of attachment, mutual trust, and belonging among community members. This will be achieved through the development and enhancement of resilient urban green spaces, ensuring their accessibility and usability for collective participation. The key focus of this project is twofold, first, addressing social exclusion, particularly among vulnerable groups, including migrants, the elderly, and young people and secondly, the nature-based solutions we implement carry a mark to tackle existing climate change-related problems or tackle climate change directly.

Our project, specifically, aims to address the following a Sustainable development goals: **10 - Reduce inequalities**, as we aim to adapt and create spaces that are inclusive and allow for social cohesion; **11 - Sustainable cities and communities**, as these spaces will be conceived having sustainability at their core and reason to exist; and **13 - Climate action**, as these spaces will be green spaces that will also tackle situations such as high temperatures, water shortage, loss of air quality, or biodiversity loss.



Figure 1. Sustainable Development Goals Source: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals#icons>.

## WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook serves as a practical implementation guide for stakeholders involved in urban placemaking for environmental resilience and social cohesion. Designed to support the adaptation and/or creation of inclusive and sustainable spaces, particularly in the Mediterranean region, this resource offers a brief introduction to urban green spaces, environmental and climate resilience, and ways to engage communities in the placemaking process.

This handbook offers brief information on how to look at urban spaces through a climate and social cohesion critical eye, how to select an implementation site, foster a sense of community among participants, and create a sense of belonging by highlighting inclusive and participatory design practices. It also provides guidance on working with diverse groups, particularly in contexts involving migrants and locals or intergenerational groups, such as young and elderly participants. These insights and recommendations are drawn from two case studies conducted within the project and from written sources of previously completed/ongoing green-placemaking projects. In our implementation, we tailored their practices according to the social and physical realities of our localities.

Furthermore, the handbook aims to raise awareness among local authorities, organizations, and communities about the crucial role of urban green spaces in promoting both environmental and social resilience. By emphasizing the significance of urban green spaces for environmental sustainability and community well-being, this resource seeks to inspire policy and practice changes at both local and regional levels. Through its structured approach and best-practice recommendations, it serves as a key tool for ensuring the long-term impact and replicability of the project's methodology.

# WHAT ARE URBAN GREEN SPACES?

## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON URBAN GREEN PLANNING

Urban green space initiatives began in the 19th century as a response to the social and environmental challenges of the Industrial Revolution. The detachment of cities from nature led to projects aimed at improving societal well-being and moral values. Parks were shaped by cultural meanings, power dynamics, and economic factors, serving as tools for social control and enhancing property values. In the 19th century, they also reflected middle-class values and provided safe spaces for families and women. By the early 20th century, parks and gardens were designed to promote physical renewal, uplift moral standards, and provide educational benefits. In the Modernist era, green spaces became essential to urban design, and the Postmodernist period shifted focus to viewing cities as sustainable systems within a larger context, integrating both urban and non-urban spaces.

Urban greening has been driven by motivations like ecological concerns, social reform, economic benefits, and local identity. Systemic perspectives, participatory processes, and sustainability have guided green space planning. The concept of green infrastructure emerged as an alternative to fragmented urban development, creating interconnected networks of green areas that support natural processes and improve quality of life. Nature-based solutions (NBS) have also gained prominence, offering resource-efficient and adaptive methods for urban challenges.

### HISTORY OF URBAN GREEN PLANNING

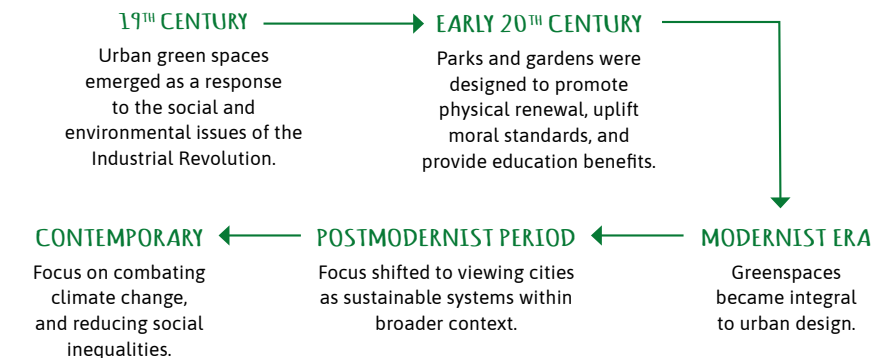


Figure 2. History of Urban Green Planning.



Contemporary urban greening efforts focus on combating climate change, improving air quality, managing water, supporting biodiversity, and reducing social inequalities. This historical perspective underscores the multifaceted role of urban green spaces, highlighting their social, environmental, and economic value as integral components of sustainable urban living.

## DEFINITIONS AND TYPES OF URBAN GREEN SPACES

Urban green spaces are essential components of cities, offering a wide range of environmental, social, and health benefits. These spaces are typically defined as plots of land covered with vegetation that separate or surround areas of intense residential or industrial use, and are dedicated to recreational or park purposes. They play a crucial role in promoting the well-being of urban residents and improving the overall quality of life in densely populated areas.

Urban green spaces include various types of areas such as parks, gardens, green roofs, urban farms, landscapes around buildings, and street trees. These spaces provide significant benefits for both people and the environment. They support physical and mental health by offering opportunities for outdoor activities, relaxation, and recreation. Additionally, they provide important habitats for wildlife, including birds and pollinators, contributing to biodiversity within urban areas. Urban green spaces also help reduce air, water, and noise pollution, and are vital in addressing the challenges of climate change by mitigating flooding, droughts, and heatwaves.

Furthermore, urban green spaces can encompass land covered with vegetation regardless of its size or function, and may also feature small water bodies, like ponds or streams, which are often referred to as “blue spaces.” These spaces contribute to both environmental sustainability and human well-being, making them a key part of resilient and healthy cities.

### TYPES OF URBAN GREEN SPACES



Figure 3. Types of Urban Green Spaces.

## THE ROLE AND BENEFITS OF GREEN SPACES IN URBAN AREAS

Urban green spaces play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life in cities both for humans and non-human animals. These spaces not only provide aesthetic and recreational value but also offer multiple environmental, social, economic, and health benefits. **We will briefly mention here their environmental, health-related, social and economic benefits in addition to how they contribute to the sustainability of the cities.**

### Environmental Benefits

Urban green spaces (blue spaces too) contribute significantly to environmental health. They improve air quality by absorbing pollutants, providing cleaner air for urban populations. Trees and shrubs also reduce noise pollution by devouring the noise around and deflecting it, decreasing the density of sound there, helping to create a more peaceful urban environment. Additionally, these areas mitigate the urban heat island effect by cooling the surrounding areas through plant transpiration and shade, lowering energy consumption and cooling costs. They play a vital role in regulating water, soaking up rainwater, reducing surface runoff, and minimizing flood risks. Green spaces also provide habitats for a wide range of plant and animal species, promoting biodiversity and preserving ecological balance in urban environments.

Urban green spaces are crucial for climate change mitigation and adaptation. By regulating temperatures and absorbing greenhouse gases, they help cities become more resilient to the effects of extreme weather events, such as heatwaves, heavy rainfall, or flooding. These areas also contribute to sustainability by offering nature-based solutions for urban challenges, improving the urban environment while addressing the growing demand for clean air, recreational areas, and aesthetic landscapes.

### Health Benefits

Access to green spaces provides numerous health benefits, promoting both physical and mental well-being. They reduce stress, improve mood, and help prevent health issues such as obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes by encouraging physical activity. Green spaces foster psychological relaxation, providing peaceful environments where people can unwind and rejuvenate. Studies have shown that individuals living near green spaces experience better overall health and well-being, making these areas essential to urban public health.

## Social Benefits

Urban green spaces play an essential role in social cohesion by creating places for interaction, gatherings, and recreation. These spaces strengthen communities, promote inclusivity, and provide opportunities for social engagement, fostering a sense of belonging among residents. By offering areas where people can socialize and connect with others, green spaces help build a strong, supportive community, contributing to the overall social fabric of cities.

## Economic Benefits

Green spaces also have significant economic value. They boost property values by making surrounding areas more attractive to potential buyers and renters. Therefore, an equitable urban distribution of green spaces can reduce urban inequalities. Additionally, these spaces reduce energy costs through natural cooling and provide opportunities for urban gardening, which can help reduce food costs for residents. Green spaces also contribute to local economies by supporting tourism and recreational activities, providing an additional source of income for the community.

## Sustainability

Incorporating urban green spaces into urban planning plays a crucial role in ensuring the long-term sustainability of cities. By integrating natural processes into urban environments, these spaces contribute to ecological harmony while addressing the challenges of urbanization. They offer solutions to various urban problems, such as pollution, climate change, and the loss of biodiversity, helping cities become more sustainable, livable, and resilient.

Urban green spaces are essential for the health, well-being, and sustainability of cities. They provide multiple benefits, ranging from environmental protection and biodiversity conservation to improving quality of life and fostering social cohesion. Prioritizing green spaces in urban planning is crucial for creating cities that are not only more beautiful and functional but also more resilient to the challenges posed by urbanization and climate change.



Figure 4. Benefits of Green Spaces in Urban Areas.

# WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF URBAN GREEN SPACES IN CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE?

Weather is the state of the atmosphere in a particular space and time (sunny, cloudy, rainy, etc.), while climate is the average of weather patterns over a long period of time. The personal experience of weather events has impacts on the attitudes of people towards climate change. People that experience more frequently extreme weather events, translate this experience into the realization of the local effects of global climate change.

Human activities, mainly greenhouse gas emissions, are unequivocally responsible for the rapid increase in average global temperature. In the past decade, 2011-2020, average temperature was 1,1°C above the pre-industrial level. We are likely to end this decade with average temperature reaching the 2°C above pre-industrial level.

*The World Meteorological Organization confirmed that 2024 was the warmest year on record, registering an average temperature of 1,55°C above pre-industrial level.*

The Mediterranean region is recognized as a climate change hotspot, warming around 20% faster than the global average. These changes threaten this biodiversity hotspot, which includes plant and animal species, exclusive of this region, as well as human populations, particularly in urban coastal areas.

## PROBABILITY OF OCCURRENCE

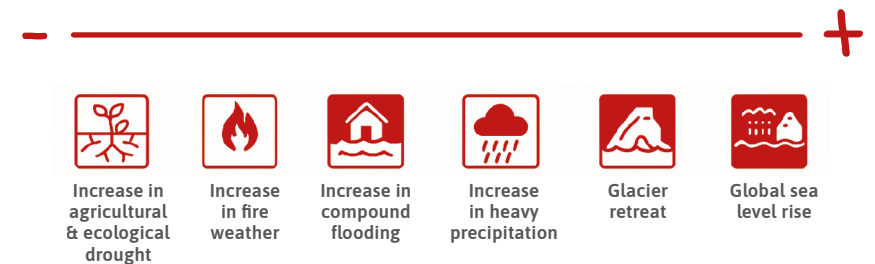


Figure 5. Foreseen Changes in Physical Climate conditions.

## NEGATIVE IMPACTS

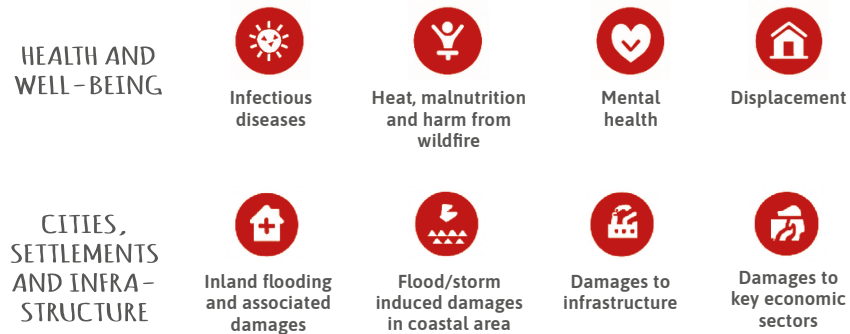


Figure 6. Foreseen climate change impacts.

However, the region’s varied landscapes, steep environmental gradients, and rich ecological history offer potential for adaptation and resilience strategies. Nature-based solutions, including the restoration of green spaces, sustainable land management, and the protection of biodiversity, are crucial in reducing impacts and enhancing the adaptive capacity of both human and natural systems.

Since most of the human population lives in cities, with a foreseen target of 70% by 2050, it is particularly important that cities can develop solutions in order to maintain communities’ well-being. The relationship between the urban environment and climate change is established in two interconnected dimensions. On the one hand, the urban environment contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions, therefore fuelling climate change. On the other hand, in urban areas climate change impacts can be very severe, as these areas often have little resilience and are densely populated, particularly by increasing frequency of heat waves, flooding events and days with low air quality. Most of the urban materials (concrete, asphalt, etc.) absorb and retain heat, increasing the impact of climate change.

### Climate adaptation

Definitions: **actions** that lead to **changes** in social behaviours, infrastructures, ecosystems which lead to **minimize the negative impacts of climate change**. In other words, the city makes changes in order to suffer as little as possible with extreme climate events.

Example: **increasing** the green areas in a city, particularly by increasing the **number of trees**, will increase pavements shadowing (asphalt for example), **decreasing** the **retained heat** and people **exposure to direct sunlight**.

### Climate resilience

Definitions: is the **capacity** of a system / community to **maintain** its functions / activities **despite the impacts** of climate change. In other words, the city keeps functioning despite extreme climate events. Climate adaptation actions are essential to increase cities climate resilience.

Example (using the same example as above): **despite heat waves**, people **use normally the outdoor space** with relative comfort, since urban biodiversity will provide shade and temperature and humidity regulation.

The Urban green infrastructure arises as a fundamental part of cities climate adaptation and improved resilience. The green infrastructure can be seen as the network of interconnected green areas (gardens, parks, greenbelts, and ecological corridors) designed and implemented using a nature-based solution perspective, i.e. implementing green areas that mimic natural ecosystems functioning, and therefore provide crucial environmental services such as: carbon sequestration, temperature regulation, water / storm water / groundwater management, and biodiversity conservation.

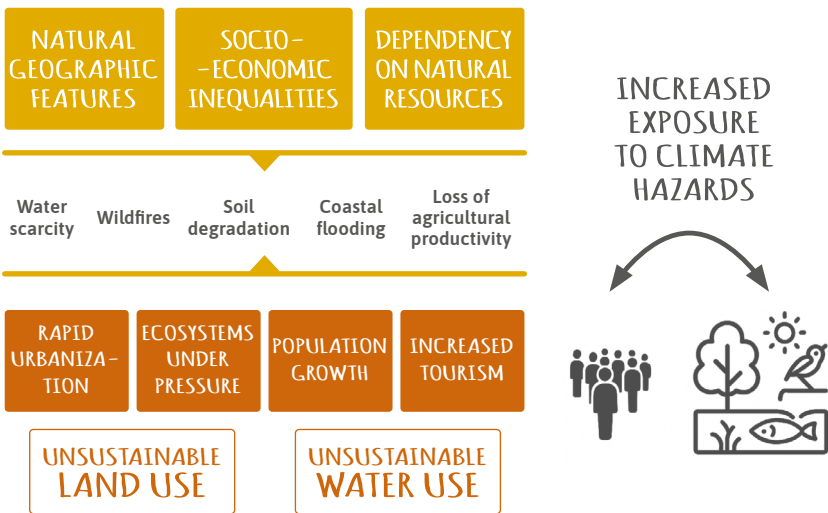


Figure 7. Climate vulnerability in the Mediterranean Region. In yellow regional features, in orange interconnected challenges related to climate change.

A very important outcome of urban green areas development is also social and health positive impacts, as it was addressed in the previous chapter.

On the negative side, the perception of the importance of urban green areas in communities' well-being and positive economic results can also lead to a green gentrification process, unintentionally new forms of environmental and social injustice produced by urban greening initiatives. There are cases of direct displacement of long-term residents, since the urban planning and politics define new green areas in the place of residence of low-income and racially marginalized communities, or indirect displacement by exchange values of real estate, often imprisoned in a logic of competitive urbanism and city (re)branding that attracts investors and therefore increases properties value.



Figure 8. The image illustrates two major urban environmental challenges. Left: The urban heat island effect, where buildings and paved surfaces absorb and radiate heat, causing significantly higher temperatures in city areas compared to surrounding rural regions. Right: Urban flooding, resulting from intense rainfall and excessive soil sealing, such as surfaces with concrete and asphalt, which limits natural water absorption and increases runoff, leading to water accumulation and flood events.

It is important that green urban planning is integrated in Housing Policies, such as social housing, to ensure equal rights to these infrastructures and their benefits. Participatory processes are also essential to promote awareness and collective stewardship while providing equitable access to recreational areas, which is particularly crucial for marginalized and vulnerable urban populations.

It is also important to remember that a cohesive community not only responds more effectively to challenges like climate change or rapid growth, but also plays a vital role in building long-term sustainable solutions.



## ENGAGING COMMUNITIES PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES

Regarding inclusion and participation in placemaking projects we need to think about what impact the change will have and for whom. Analysing who are the current users of a space or for whom it is inaccessible is the most important step for inclusion. So we don't want to disrupt an existing order - unless someone is being deliberately denied access and use - or make a well-used public space useless by intervening.

When determining the area to be transformed in the city, we should take into account that each area has its own characteristics. Some areas of the city, such as squares, central business districts, large urban parks and tourist areas, are frequented by everyone. They could be regulated and maintained more frequently by local authorities. They are relatively more difficult to intervene in. On the other side, the places outside such areas, which we can call neighbourhood spaces, are often used by the people who live there. In particular, these are the areas that directly affect the resilience of the neighbourhood. It is important that such neighbourhood-scale spaces are shaped by the neighbourhood.

Urban spaces are not static, they are subject to constant change due to economic, social and demographic factors. Urbanization history showed us that, all around the world, as modernity progresses and urbanization accelerates, peoples' sovereignty over urban fabric diminish. The economical value of land becomes a priority for decision-makers. Green parts in cities can be demolished when they are made available for development projects. Therefore, to maintain a space functioning can be a challenging task. Even Intervention to space may bring adverse effects unintentionally as mentioned above, may exacerbate existing inequalities or generate new ones. Consequently, a constant defense of public spaces, which involves negotiations among different actors of shared space, is required. This is only possible by advocating the right to use all together with the residents around the green spaces.

To tackle issues as such, in this chapter we recommend some guidelines to increase the cooperation between different stakeholders in the city. In this way, we can both create, recreate and maintain public green spaces. When public lay claims to a space, it is more difficult for local governments to abolish it.

## WHAT MAKES A PLACEMAKING PRACTICE INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY?

A placemaking practice is made inclusive by involving individuals who use or may potentially use a space in the processes of information sharing, discussion, decision-making, and intervention from the very beginning. Furthermore, securing the support of other stakeholders in the city, particularly local governments and civil society organizations, is essential for the success and sustainability of placemaking practices.

Friedmann underlines that "Making places is everyone's job" while there is no one solution that fits all. The author emphasizes here—drawing on examples from China, Japan, and Canada—that successful placemaking practices can demonstrate contextual differences at the neighbourhood and national levels. What they all have in common, referring to Lefebvre's notion of "production of space" and space being a "social product", is that they incorporated both civil and administrative participation. These practices are carried out by autonomous and independent entities, such as neighbourhood groups and civil initiatives, with the support of local or central governments (especially with significant financial and bureaucratic support). In placemaking ventures, civil society organizations can serve as a "missing link" in areas with low levels of citizen participation between them and administrations. That is, civil initiatives can commence and facilitate relationships between local governments and citizens.

This section of the handbook will discuss three important dimensions of ensuring participation in the practice of creating a green space. These are accessibility and comfort, cultural inclusivity, and governance. Although each of the arrangements we propose here are vital to increase participation, each of them may require both time and financial resources to implement. For this reason, our recommendation is to prioritize the needs of the community with whom you will be practicing placemaking. Depending on the type of green-placemaking activity, preliminary investigation of the space and the community is a good point of start. Spreading the remaining regulations over a period of time and announcing it, or convincing people that they are on your agenda, may prevent a decrease in participation in the short term.

## QUICK TIPS FOR ACCESSIBILITY AND COMFORT

1. Open to all species, ages, abilities, mind and bodies
2. Create comfort zones such as resting areas and quiet zones
3. Ensure step-free access
4. Install tactile elements like textured surfaces and sensory plants
5. Use large, high-contrast fonts and symbols in different languages
6. Offer raised beds and accessible gardening plots
7. Involve diverse users in the design process
8. Avoid distracting and striking colours and sounds for the comfort of neurodiverse people

To ensure accessibility to the space, the diverse ages and abilities of all participants must be considered. Features that facilitate access for individuals with varying ages and physical abilities, such as older adults, children, people with disabilities, and pregnant individuals, should be included. These may consist of ramps, seating areas, and accessible pathways to support safe mobility. Essential amenities like restrooms, baby care facilities, and access to drinking water while working on the spot should be taken into account. Signage and visual cues should be clear and easily understandable for all readers and non-readers to guide people in the area.

In green placemaking practices, there are specific accessibility and comfort considerations that must be taken into account. In activities involving soil work, it is particularly important to ensure appropriate working heights and suitable tools for individuals with different abilities. For example, raised garden beds enable people who use wheelchairs or have difficulty bending and standing up to participate in gardening activities. Similarly, having tables and seating at various heights is essential to accommodate adults, children, and individuals with different physical abilities, allowing them to work and rest comfortably. Additionally, outdoor work areas may present challenges that hinder movement. When working on soil surfaces, measures should be taken to facilitate different modes of mobility and to minimize potential hazards also.

Perceptible information is vital for navigating space. They should be clear and understandable for all types of readers/viewers/listeners. It is important that the texts used in the field are at least in a minimum number of languages from which no one is excluded. Writing in all languages, whenever possible, increases inclusivity of and trust in space. For adults and children who cannot read in any language,

audio directions or signage using visuals could be a good solution. Illustrations will also help where multiple reading languages are not possible. There should be tactile elements for the visually impaired, both on the ground and on structures. Also, keeping in mind that visually impaired people experience green spaces by primarily hearing, touching and smelling, sensory plants stimulating different senses can enrich the time spent and make the space interesting.

However, the balance of sensory inputs are required. Factors such as noise, lighting, and crowds can be challenging for neurodiverse individuals. Therefore, quiet areas with minimal stimuli could be a part of space design. Careful consideration should be given to avoiding bright lights and colorful LEDs, or existing lighting should be adaptable to reduce intensity. Flexibility should be provided to accommodate the diverse ways in which neurodiverse individuals rest, focus, and participate. “The Six Feelings Framework” of the American Planning Association for designing spaces should be taken into consideration for people with autism.

## QUICK TIPS FOR CULTURAL INCLUSIVITY

1. Respect all identities
2. Clear area from hostile visuals and objects
3. Culturally appropriate within universal ethical principles
4. Promote living-together with cultural differences
5. Engage hard-to-reach communities
6. Communicative openness

While the accessibility requirements are taken care of, another priority should be given to making the space culturally hospitable. People who attend workshops or use the space regularly should feel welcomed, safe and well-respected in order to develop belonging. There is no one solution fit all in designing inclusive spaces. The “prescriptive” methods should be avoided when they are taken for granted without critical thinking. The key to making a place inclusive is to listen to the community genuinely and critical observation of space. Success in two dimensions is crucial to make a place more welcoming. The first is the human dimension, i.e. those involved in placemaking need to be respectful of each other. The second dimension is design. If the structures and objects used in the practice of placemaking do not look aggressive and culturally appropriate, people will feel more comfortable.

A public space speaks about itself through the elements it contains which means that it is the mirror of diversity it contains or potentially can contain. Public spaces should not only reflect the values and symbols of groups that are numerically large or politically dominant. Using culturally meaningful and appropriate elements in the space can attract and inspire trust in people. According to Zhou, in a public space, “everyone should feel welcomed, included and not discriminated against by their gender, age, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, cultural background, socioeconomic status and/or personal values”. Using national flags, religious symbols, gender discriminative words and images are offensive items. National flags, religious symbols, artistic works referring to historical events, words or images that reproduce gender roles may unknowingly create hostile associations. At the same time, the basic design elements of the space may make participants feel uncomfortable. Thinking of society as a monolithic, homogeneous group can lead to such hostile designs in general.

Cultural sensitivity plays a fundamental role in understanding and respecting different identities, traditions and ways of life. It is essential for inter-communal harmony and for individuals’ sense of belonging. However, a delicate balance must be struck when this sensitivity conflicts with universal ethical principles such as human rights, equality, non-violence and non-discrimination. No cultural practice or belief can be used as justification for actions that undermine basic human dignity, harm individuals or violate their fundamental rights. It is therefore essential to embrace cultural differences while at the same time upholding the fundamental ethical values and rights of all human beings. This balance can be achieved through open dialogue, mutual learning and common human values between different cultures, thereby preserving local identities and creating a basis for interaction based on justice and respect at the global level.

In cities there are systemic barriers to access to certain places. When we use the term hard-to-reach populations, we are referring to groups of people where their participation in the urban activities and services are constrained structurally. Engagement with the hard-to-reach populations requires overcoming a variety of barriers. Our social life and economic activities may adversely affect our engagement in the community. Therefore, initially, we make sure that the population we want to reach should be aware of the ongoing placemaking project. They should be transparently informed about the intervention in a language they can understand, preferably in their family language, free of technical jargon. Additionally, when providing information, the phenomenon of digital divide should be kept in mind, not everyone has access to the internet or technology.

Another major obstacle encountered in the participation process is that individuals have unequal conditions in terms of the time and financial resources they

can allocate to the project. Due to busy working hours, family responsibilities, transportation costs or limited budgets, it may not be possible for many people to participate in traditional engagement meetings or long-term volunteering activities. This creates the risk that the project will only reflect the voices of a certain segment of the population. To overcome this barrier, maximum flexibility in placemaking practices should be adopted, recognizing that participation is not limited to physical presence. All kinds of contributions should be valued and encouraged, such as participating in short surveys to give opinions, providing feedback through digital platforms, sharing local knowledge and experiences, supporting small-scale events, or simply taking ownership of the space using the results of the project. Diversifying the channels of participation and valuing different levels of engagement will ensure that the project is much more inclusive, responsive to diverse needs and truly reflective of the community. Valuing even the smallest support from participants will help ensure that the space is owned, sustained and defended by the same people.

## QUICK TIPS FOR COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

1. Community self-governance
2. Support from but limited involvement of other stakeholders
3. Experts in community
4. Equal decision-making, just responsibility
5. Transparent governance

Community self-governance in green placemaking highlights the natural right and capacity of local people to shape and manage their own living spaces. This was how Henri Lefebvre envisioned the right to the city. His approach goes beyond the simple use of and access to urban spaces and promotes decision-making by community members who will directly use and sustain the space, rather than by centralized authorities. By enabling the community to define its own priorities, manage resources, and take initiative at every stage of the project, the created green spaces reflect the true needs and aspirations of the community, fostering a strong sense of ownership. This is a cornerstone of collaborative governance, as the deepest collaboration occurs when authority is transferred to the local level.

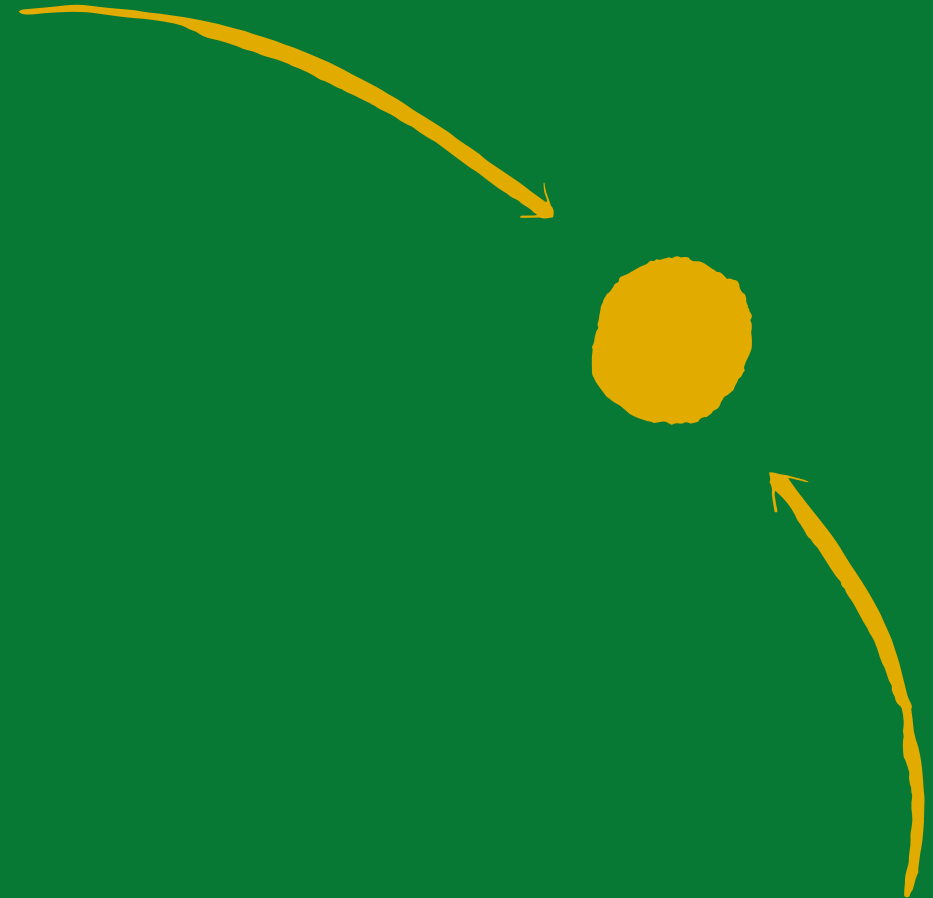
While community-based green placemaking efforts are highly valuable, they often require external support. CSOs and local governments can provide critical assistance such as financial resources, technical expertise, legal advice, logistical support, and networking opportunities. Collaborating with these entities

brings the additional capacity needed to turn the community's vision into reality. It is crucial, however, that this support is integrated in a way that strengthens and facilitates the community's self-governance processes rather than imposing top-down solutions. This pursuit of multi-faceted support reflects the collaborative governance principle of diverse actors coming together to work towards a shared goal.

Every community harbours a rich pool of "expertise" drawn from the unique knowledge, skills, and experiences of its members. Elders knowledgeable about local ecology, artisans skilled in traditional building techniques, experienced community organizers, and passionate volunteers in specific fields are among these invaluable experts. Identifying these individuals and personally inviting them into the process, while making them feel valued, enhances both the quality of the project and its connection with the community. This approach represents a collaborative understanding that acknowledges expertise not only among external professionals, but often most profoundly among the users and residents of the place itself.

A fundamental principle of collaborative governance is that project-related decisions should be made as equally as possible among all stakeholders. Everyone's voice should be heard, their opinions considered, and a common consensus sought. However, this process of equal decision-making also requires the fair distribution of responsibilities. Tasks related to project execution, maintenance, and sustainability should be shared among participants in a balanced manner, aligned with their capacities, interests, and roles within the project. This balance ensures the sustainability of collaboration and the effectiveness of participation.

Co-governance means that stakeholders share common responsibility and authority not just during specific phases, but throughout every step of the green place-making process—from the initial needs assessment and planning, to implementation, maintenance, programming, and evaluation. It is a dynamic process where the community, local authorities, CSOs, and other relevant stakeholders remain in continuous communication, share information, and make decisions together. Co-governance at every stage ensures that the project remains vibrant, adapts to changing needs, and achieves long-term success. This inclusive and ongoing model of collaboration enables green spaces to become not just physical environments, but living examples of social interaction and governance in action.



# METHODOLOGY AND IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

Developing a methodology for a participatory and community driven intervention on a green public space requires having several steps and aspects in consideration, from the identification of the context and selection of the space to intervene in; approaching, involving and working with the local and migrant communities; to designing the intervention and intervening on the space.

## MAIN PHASES OF THE PROCESS



Figure 9. The 4 Main Phases of the Implementation Process.

### PHASE 1 – CONTEXT IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION OF THE INTERVENTION SITE

The first step on this methodological road is the **identification of the socio-economic context** one is going to address with the future intervention. In other words, one will need to define the motive for intervention, and what concrete problems in the communities it will aim to solve, either in terms of environmental concerns or in terms of tackling social problems and providing safe and comfortable public spaces for the community. For that, there will be two possible ways one can go with. One way is what we can call a “**top-down**” **approach**, where one has the challenges of the community defined and needs a place that, with a proper intervention, can answer to the problematics of the context. Another way is a more “**bottom-up**” **approach**, where one has already identified a place in need of intervention – or with potential to benefit the community – and must understand what that space can solve for the community. When initiating an intervention project, one must evaluate which of the approaches is better for the intervention context, considering not only the pros and cons of each method, but also the reality of their context.

Either way one decides – or needs – to go, it will be necessary to have a broad knowledge of the region one is operating in and to **identify and choose the proper location to intervene in**. To know the several possibilities of green places that may be **abandoned, underutilized, in need of intervention or that could benefit the community**, and that have potential in terms of **proximity to other relevant sites**, such as neighborhoods, schools, or services, and also that could become a **safe place to gather communities**, including vulnerable groups.

A broad knowledge of the region will be also required to **identify and analyze the key stakeholders<sup>1</sup> in the community**. To help identify all these stakeholders, try **mapping them** in a table, for example, pointing out their probable relevance for the project, and then contact and reach them, to get a better **understanding of the possibilities and challenges**.

Having that in mind, the next concern is the **ownership of the green space**. Being it public, or privately owned or managed, one can only do anything on any space with the proper consent of its owner or manager. For that, **contacts and meetings need to be established** with the local authorities and the owners (when private) and those responsible for maintaining the space. The main goal with these meetings is not only to obtain permission to intervene in the space, but also to have those in charge of the space **on board with the project** and aligned with the goals of the project, so it is possible to guarantee that the idea behind the intervention endures, the green space is maintained and can persist sustainably beyond the intervention phase.

### MAIN STEPS FOR PHASE 1

1. Identify intervention’s socio-economic context – grasp possibilities and challenges
2. Identify abandoned/unused, underutilized or potential green spaces that could benefit the community
3. Assess site characteristics (proximity, safety, accessibility)
4. Identify and contact entities responsible for the green space
5. Identify and approach other key stakeholders

1. To clarify concepts, we will refer as **stakeholders** the entities, groups or individuals in the local communities, who have interest on the location site and/or are impacted by the project; and as **participants** the specific stakeholders who have participated directly on the project activities.

## PHASE 2 — BRINGING THE COMMUNITY(IES) ON BOARD

The next step is maybe the most important and complex of the whole process. One wants the intervention on the green space to be **participatory and community driven**, and for the space to become a cluster for **social cohesion and environmental resilience and sustainability**. And for that, we will need to engage with the local communities and have them also on board with the project.

Getting people involved in the several phases of the intervention can be difficult, more so considering the aim for different and diverse groups, such as local inhabitants, young people, elderly people, and migrants. One should start by conceiving and **defining communication strategies** aimed at these different publics, creating a **communication plan that is adapted to each stakeholder** and that as in account that what works better for some groups, may not work for others.

Another way to engage with these several groups and get them to participate is to go back to **all the possible and relevant stakeholders**, from the institutional decision makers already approached in the previous phase, to the ones that can support the involvement of the communities and support the intervention, such as residents associations, local schools, nursing homes, NGOs that work specifically with people in contexts of exclusion, and other relevant entities that may be nearby. Start meeting with each of them and **establish partnerships** where it will be defined how each of them can contribute to the process.

After that is settled, it is also important to start to **draw attention to the space and raise awareness to it**. This can be done in several ways, from creating flyers and posters to help spread the message, going door to door in the neighborhood surrounding the location, to more creative approaches, such as putting temporary installations in the location or organizing pop-up activities with groups there. This will **draw curiosity** to what may be happening and help get even more people involved, more so if the location is usually underused or in need of intervention.

### MAIN STEPS FOR PHASE 2

1. Define communication strategies for different publics/groups, including vulnerable groups
2. Establish the necessary partnerships for community engagement
3. Raise awareness about the green space with effective communication methods
4. Engage each relevant stakeholder and participant group with target-specific methods/activities

Deciding which activities to have, and if they are joint or separate activities (or both) with these different groups, during the several stages of the process, needs to be **handled with care and sensibility**, and despite one of the final goals being to promote social cohesion, we cannot force it nor fake it, so, the idiosyncrasies of each of these groups need to be **respected, addressed, and accounted for** during the whole process.

The most important aspects to have into account during this phase are not only to have these groups collaborate in some way, but mainly for them to **feel integrated, heard, and part of the decision and intervention processes**, so they can also feel responsible for the green space and that **the space itself is part of their community**.

## PHASE 3 — PREPARING FOR THE INTERVENTION: EXPLORING AND CO-THINKING

Although it can be considered that preparing for the intervention is already a part of the intervention itself, we think it is important to highlight this phase of the process due to its relevance for the process as a whole.

The main goal of this phase is to have the participants **thinking and reflecting** about the space and location of the intervention and have them start to come up with **possible intervention proposals**. It is possible to do it in several ways that can complement each other. It is possible to start with **surveys** to users of the space, people living in the surrounding neighborhoods and other inhabitants of the city or town where the space is located. These surveys should include questions about the **perception** people have of the space, the **feelings** they have about it, what they **think one can do in it**, and what they **think could be improved in it**. The idea is that the surveys can be a **starting point** for assessing the space and allow for a **broader view and insights** on what the community thinks about it. A version of the questionnaire we used in this project can be found in the **annex section** of this handbook.

Besides the surveys, a must do is to **bring the community to the space and explore it with them**. To have them get to know the space better, experiencing and sensing it, so they can live it and ultimately be in a better position to assess it. This exploration can be done on a more **playful way**, by organizing, on the location and with the community, activities such as picnics, sports, encounters, mini fairs or cultural events. However, and to avoid losing the purpose of it all, it is important to complement these activities with a more directed approach to the intended goals of space exploration, by having the participants of these activities contribute to the needed **reflection about the space**. This can be achieved through specific and planned **space exploration methods**.

There are several useful placemaking methods available<sup>2</sup>, but also methods to promote coexistence and social cohesion<sup>3</sup>, that allow for insights from the participants, that make them aware that they exist in a specific space as citizens, that they are users of that space, and therefore that **they have a say in its planning**. It is possible to use those different methods as tools in this exploration phase, combine them with each other and with other activities. However, some of these methods end up working better with some audiences than others, and the intention of this project is to reach a **broader audience** transversely, both young and old, both local and migrant, which calls for a more **reachable, interactive and playful approach**.

To achieve this, the SPACES project drew inspiration from the aforementioned methods and also from gamification and enjoyable user interfaces theories to develop a **Game for the Exploration of Green Spaces**<sup>4</sup>. This card game tries to address **9 dimensions** related to places, and specifically green spaces: **Access and Accessibility; Uses and Appropriation; Diversity and Inclusion; Maintenance; Safety and Comfort; Design and Aesthetics; Community; Sensations and Feelings; and Biodiversity**, through 19 numbered cards with **questions or challenges** that participants must complete while exploring green spaces. The final goal of the game is, after completing all the challenges, having the participants **discuss in a group the answers** to them and **reflect about the green space** in which they find themselves, its positive and negative aspects, and above all **its potential**.

### MAIN STEPS FOR PHASE 3

1. Encourage reflection about the green space and relevance for community
2. Facilitate on-site exploration with communities – combine playful activities with space exploration methods/games
3. Collect insights: surveys and organized group discussions
4. Analyze and synthesize collected data
5. Identify list of possible actions / interventions

2. The *Place Performance Evaluation* from the *Project for Public Spaces*, the *Spaceshaper* from *CABE Space*, and the *Urban Walks* from the *Exchange for Equal Public Spaces Project* are good examples of placemaking methods one can use.

3. Such as the *Play 2 Gather Project*.

4. The complete card game is available on: <https://marca-adl.pt/> and <https://www.kirkayak.org>

Having all these options to explore the space, the idea will be to **combine these different activities and methods**, and execute as many sessions as reasonably possible, with different groups or different combinations of groups and in different periods of the day, so it is possible to **collect richer and broader insights and reflections**.

After accomplishing all these steps, one will hopefully have a good amount of information and data about the community's feelings, hopes, and suggestions about the location of the intervention. It will be needed then to **compile and process** this data and prepare a **list of the possible actions and interventions** that resulted from the data retrieved.

### PHASE 4 – DESIGNING AND INTERVENING ON THE SPACE WITH THE COMMUNITY(IES)

For the next and final phase, it will be necessary to share and **return the list of possibilities in terms of actions and of interventions** to all the stakeholders and participants involved, so the intervention can finally be designed and happen.

One does this by going back to **meet with everyone involved**. In all meetings of this phase, there is something that must be addressed and dealt with heads-on, and that is to **manage expectations**, not only budget wise, but also in terms of legal regulations and of physical limitations of the green space itself. Until this phase, it was encouraged for everyone to freely explore and reflect on the spaces' possibilities and potential, but those expectations will need now to be **grounded** on the reality that the budget is finite and, most of the time, very limited. Also, that some ideas may be difficult to execute due to specific regulations on public spaces and safety issues, or that the physical location will not be able to bear them. For those reasons, the solutions that may be found for the intervention will always be linked to the capacity for creative solutions that will allow **to do more with less**.

The **first informative meeting** of the set of meetings to have in this phase should be with the **owners and managers** of the space. In order to not only inform them of how the population feels and what they would like to do in the location, but also to guarantee that they agree with the possible ideas and are on the same page as the rest of the participants. If they don't, one should be prepared to **negotiate where to compromise** without losing the initial goal of the intervention and maintain it grounded.

Then, one should **meet with the several participants** in various sessions (as much as needed) to design the intervention based on all the information gathered and budget limitations. This process should be community led with the support of the project team only to guide them and **maintain the focus on the intervention goals**.

When the intervention is finally designed, it's time **to plan the final budget and validate it back** with the main stakeholders and all the participants. Then, one should **list and acquire** what will be needed in terms of materials and equipment and organize the activities for the intervention itself.

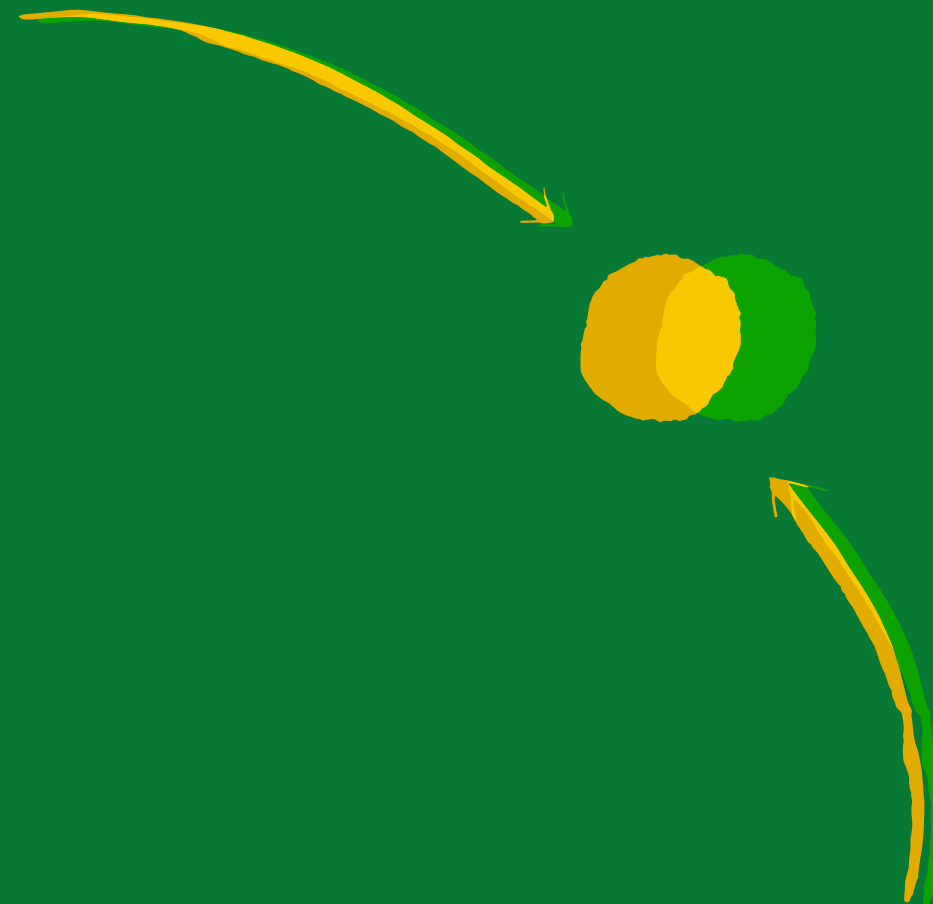
Now will be the best time to join, as much as possible, the different groups of the community together and distribute the several roles and responsibilities for the intervention and having them **working together**. Also, depending on the scope of the intervention and the schedules of availability for the different groups of participants from the community, it should be decided if it is possible to do it in one go or divide it in several intervention activities.

By the end of the intervention, events that can **reunite the whole community**, and celebrate what was achieved, should be held at the intervened location. Again, these events should be decided and organized by the participants of the community, as it was said before, so they can feel integrated, heard, and part of the whole process, and above all, that the space itself feels like part of **their community and daily lives**.

#### MAIN STEPS FOR PHASE 4

1. Share findings and list of possible actions with stakeholders and all other participants
2. Co-design the intervention, manage expectations for space and legal limitations
3. Plan budget and validate it with stakeholders and all other participants
4. Co-organize implementation and space intervention
5. Host community events at the site

A summarized methodological grid, with the several phases, their main objectives, steps and activities, and possible tools and methods, can be found in the **annex section** of this handbook.



## OUR EXPERIENCE

For both Kırkayak Kültür and Marca-ADL, the experience we gained through our collaboration in the THE:PLACE program revealed the power and transformative potential of community-based placemaking practices. Each of our organizations had the opportunity to collaborate and learn from each other in the development of the intervention methodology, and also the opportunity to intervene, along with our respective local communities, in two green spaces with the goal of addressing climate resilience and promoting social cohesion.

During the project preparation phase, Kırkayak Kültür and Marca-ADL held meetings with civil society organizations, local governments, and affiliated municipal units that work on related issues both locally and nationally. These meetings contributed to the development of the project to be implemented.

### A GREENHOUSE FOR FOOD PRODUCTION KIRKAYAK KÜLTÜR, GAZIANTEP, TÜRKİYE

Gaziantep is located in the transition zone of Mediterranean and continental climates. Different effects of this climate can be seen in different parts of the region. The city is a place of intense urbanization and growth processes in Turkey. Known for its industrialization, the city attracts migration from the region and the countryside, and in the last 10 years, as a border city, it has hosted around 400,000 refugees. Both rapid population growth and urbanization in response to this population growth continue to have a negative impact on the city. In addition, the potential impacts of global climate change on the Mediterranean basin have already started to affect the city and more negative scenarios are being drawn for the city in the future. Finally, the February 6, 2023 earthquake had a catastrophic impact on the city and its region. The destructiveness of the earthquake was not limited to the moment of its occurrence, but continues to affect the city's air, biodiversity and the surrounding agricultural areas. In the light of all this information, the idea of creating an urban-community garden in Gaziantep came to life. In more ways than one, the garden could meet very different needs. As an educational space, it could both generate knowledge about sustainable agricultural production practices in peace with other species and have the potential to awaken new thoughts on food security. In addition to this, the garden could also contribute as a cooling and relaxation area to the effect of the increasing heat of the city in the spring and summer months in recent years, and could be a place that could raise awareness about climate change. Last, but not least, the garden and the work in the garden could have the potential to be a tool, a place and an opportunity for the different cultural and ethnic groups of the city to produce and socialize together.

For the aforementioned purpose, Kırkayak Kültür established a partnership with the Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality. A series of meetings were held with the responsible officials at the municipality to present the project and to identify potential implementation sites within the city center. The Gaziantep Botanical Garden, located in the city center, was selected as the project site due to its accessibility for everyone, as well as the safety and sustainability it could offer for the implementation. The Gaziantep Botanical Garden was established in 2009 on an area of 17,000 m<sup>2</sup>. Its main objective is to create and develop a living collection of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants from the flora of the world, Turkey, and Gaziantep. The botanical garden was designed as an educational center, offering programs for primary, middle, and high school students. It is also one of the most frequently visited places in Gaziantep by both locals and tourists. For all these reasons, the visibility of our project increased significantly, sparking public curiosity and interest.

After the implementation site was selected, ideas were exchanged with municipal representatives on what kind of intervention could be carried out. Considering the municipality's request to install a greenhouse and the potential for a long-lasting and year-round application, it was jointly decided that establishing a greenhouse would be the most effective option for the project.

A greenhouse was built in a 30 m<sup>2</sup> area next to the "Kitchen Garden," which was originally used for storing seedlings in the Botanical Garden—a meaningful coincidence, as this name also relates to Kırkayak Kültür's kitchen program. The aim was to raise plants in the greenhouse and, once they reached the seedling stage, transfer them to the Kitchen Garden area for further growth.

After the spatial preparations were completed, Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality and Kırkayak Kültür decided to implement a structured training module alongside the social cohesion objectives of the project. The aim was to ensure that participants could apply what they learned even beyond the scope of the greenhouse project.

Following an open call, the first meeting with volunteer participants was held. Kırkayak Kültür's open calls usually attracted Syrian participants as well, but it is believed that recent developments in Syria at the time affected participation rates, and therefore, no Syrian volunteers were involved in this specific project.

At the meeting, individuals from diverse backgrounds, including various professions, retirees, and students, were present. The goals and objectives of the project, as well as the planned activities, were shared with the participants. The training modules offered by the Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality were introduced, and the participants decided to proceed with the "Medicinal and Aromatic



Plants” module. The group collectively agreed on the days and times for the implementation. Participants shared their reasons for joining the project, their expectations, and ideas for how the project could be improved. They also requested technical visits to see the municipality’s related activities and production sites. To facilitate communication and announcements, a WhatsApp group was created, including Kırkayak Kültür, Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality representatives, and project participants. This communication channel is used not only for announcements, information sharing, and activities related to green spaces, but it has also become a space where group members share job postings relevant to their fields and announcements about cultural and artistic events in the city.

Participants were introduced to local plants and seasonal varieties suitable for the chosen module and the time of year, and they decided which ones to plant. Additionally, some participants brought seeds they already had to contribute to the planting.

Participants were actively involved throughout the entire process, from seed planting to product harvesting. They collaboratively implemented environmentally friendly solutions to issues that arose during the implementation phase (such as flooding in the greenhouse and ant infestations) and took part in decision-making processes. Volunteers also took on responsibilities such as watering the seeds in the greenhouse and sharing updates on their condition with other participants.

Throughout the entire project process and afterward, participants established collective collaboration within the scope of our social cohesion goals with people they had never met before and who came from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Similarly, they developed a sense of belonging to the Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality’s Botanical Garden, making it a part of their daily lives. So much so that even after the project ended, both the municipality and the participants expressed a desire to continue participating in the activities carried out by Kırkayak Kültür and to ensure the sustainability of the project.

A harmonious working environment was also established between Kırkayak Kültür and Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, with joint participation in decision-making processes, a mutually supportive structure for each other’s activities, and planning for potential future collaborations.

## NEW COMMON AREAS IN PUBLIC GARDEN MARCA-ADL, MONTEMOR-O-NOVO, PORTUGAL

In Marca-ADL’s case, we started from having identified previously a public green space in Montemor-o-Novo, Quinta da Nora’s garden, that was in a near abandoned state, and for that reason, was underused and in great need of better maintenance. This space had also potential to benefit the local communities, being located near the local schools and with a neighborhood growing around it.

Montemor-o-Novo’s Municipality is the entity responsible for this green space, having the local Parish in charge of its maintenance. Both local authorities were very invested from the start with the project’s idea, recognizing that the green space needed rehabilitation, and showed total cooperation not only to approve and collaborate with the project but also to invest in recovering structures of the garden in the future, such as its trails and paths.

Following the green light from the local authorities, we then started the process to try and involve the local communities in the project and understand their feelings towards the garden and their thoughts of what could be done with it. We reached out to the schools nearby, other NGO’s that work with kids from contexts of exclusion, and the residents’ association from the neighborhood close to the green space. Having difficulty getting an answer from the latter entity, we decided to get participation and opinions from the residents through surveys about the garden, applied by going door to door and to people walking through the garden. With the other entities we started, at the same time, to raise awareness to the garden, by putting colorful ribbons temporarily on different structures of the garden, organizing picnics and sports games there, and spreading posters with questions such as “*What is happening in Quinta da Nora’s Garden?*”. Later on, we started to combine these activities with proper space exploration activities, such as the card game developed during the project, to also get insights about the green space from the groups of participants.

With all the information gathered from both the surveys and the group discussions of the exploration activities, it was possible for us to present and discuss possibilities for interventions and activities on the garden, to the Municipality and also to the participants in order to materialize what would actually be done.

Having feedback from the Municipality regarding what was allowed in terms of public regulation, we conducted several sessions with the participants, and they determined that we would focus on two areas of the garden: 1). whitewash the old tank, well and waterwheel; 2). and plant climbing plants to create more shadow and add more inviting picnic tables on an unfinished structure already



existing in the garden. Since the climbing plants will take some time to grow and give the intended extra shadow, it was also decided to put a temporary shadow structure in the meantime. The physical intervention was divided into several days, according to the availability of the materials, and the participants were able to take part in it, by whitewashing, planting and helping put the tables themselves on the garden.

However, since the goal of this project was also to promote social cohesion, the participants discussed and planned activities and actions on the garden. Specifically, they agreed on organizing a small volleyball competition, and also an afternoon of traditional games, bringing elderly people from the nursing home and kids from the schools together, resulting in an intergenerational playful moment.

Overall, we think the experience was very fruitful, and the goals were achieved. The local communities came together, and took charge, not only of the decision process, but also of the intervention itself. And that helped to give new life and bring attention to the garden from local authorities and the school, from residents and participants, promoting feelings of responsibility and belonging for this green public space.



## CONCLUSION

This project aimed to explore and test a participatory methodology to support community driven interventions in green spaces, with the goals of enhancing environmental resilience and strengthening social cohesion. Developed and applied by two partner organizations – Kırkayak Kültür based in Türkiye and Marca-ADL in Portugal – the SPACES methodology was implemented in two very different contexts, but with a shared commitment to inclusive, place transformation.

### SHARED PROCESS, DIVERSE OUTCOMES

The participatory approach allowed both partners to respond to local priorities while following a structured yet adaptable methodology. In Türkiye, the intervention took place in a botanical garden, where the community identified the creation of a greenhouse for food production as their main goal. This choice reflected both environmental concerns, such as local food sustainability and climate resilience, and social priorities, such as education and community empowerment.

In Portugal, the intervention focused on a public green space that had potential but lacked infrastructure for shared use. Through the participatory process, the community co-designed a new shared area for leisure and social interaction. Their choices emphasized the importance of common, accessible spaces for collective wellbeing and everyday use.

While the settings and outcomes were different, both interventions highlighted the importance of working collaboratively with local communities to unlock the potential of urban green spaces. The methodology proved effective in promoting dialogue, trust-building, and a sense of ownership over the intervention process.

## KEY LEARNINGS

Several insights emerged from this process:

### CONTEXT MATTERS

Although the methodology provided a common framework, its flexibility allowed each partner to tailor it to local realities, cultures, and spatial dynamics.

### EARLY ENGAGEMENT IS CRUCIAL

In both contexts, early identification and involvement of key stakeholders, including space managers, were essential to ensure the feasibility and sustainability of the intervention.

### PARTICIPATION TAKES TIME

Building genuine participation required time, sensitivity, and attention to group dynamics. Informal moments and playful activities helped foster deeper engagement.

### COLLECTIVE CREATIVITY FLOURISHES WITH THE RIGHT TOOLS

Co-design sessions and exploration activities enabled participants to articulate ideas that might otherwise remain unspoken.

## LOOKING FORWARD

This project demonstrated that participatory methodologies can be powerful tools for regenerating urban green spaces, not only in terms of physical transformation but also in fostering community resilience and place attachment. The process created opportunities for learning, sharing, and connecting across different social groups.

As urban challenges become increasingly complex, we believe this methodology can offer inspiration for future actions, whether led by institutions, grassroots groups, or collaborative networks. By centering communities and embracing co-creation, we can continue to shape inclusive and sustainable urban landscapes, one space at a time.

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# ANNEXES

## QUESTIONNAIRE

### THE STATE OF PUBLIC GREEN SPACES

This questionnaire is being developed by Marca ADL and Kirkayak Kültür within the scope of the SPACES project, a project that aims to reactivate and promote inclusive and sustainable public spaces in the Mediterranean area that promote social cohesion and the well-being of populations.

Please answer the following questions about the green space located on \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Q.1. HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE THIS GREEN SPACE?

1.Never	2.Rarely	3.Frequently

#### Q.2. DO YOU THINK THAT PEOPLE WHO DON'T LIVE IN THE SURROUNDINGS OF THIS GREEN SPACE, USE THIS SPACE?

No one	Almost no one	Some people	A lot of people	Everyone

#### Q.3. HOW DO YOU USUALLY USE THIS GREEN SPACE? (circle the numbers relating to the answers)

I don't use it	1
Leisure	2
Sports	3
Accessibility and access/passage	4
Access to water	5
Social interaction/conviviality	6
Walk the dog	7
Picnic	8
Other? WHICH _____	9

#### Q.4. HOW DOES THE COMMUNITY USUALLY USE THIS SPACE?

It doesn't use it	1
Leisure	2
Sports	3
Accessibility and access/passage	4
Access to water	5
Social interaction/conviviality	6
Walk the dog	7
Picnic	8
Other? WHICH _____	9

#### Q.5. INDICATE WHAT FEELINGS YOU ASSOCIATE WITH THIS GREEN SPACE.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### Q.6. WHO DO YOU THINK IS MOST LIKELY TO USE THE SPACE?

Choose four options:

1	Children
2	Young people
3	Elderly
4	Families
5	People with animals
6	Immigrants
7	People with disabilities
8	Tourists
9	Others: Who? _____

#### Q.7. DO YOU CONSIDER THIS GREEN SPACE TO BE ACCESSIBLE TO EVERYONE? (location, circulation conditions, or others)

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Q.7.1. If you answered no, please BRIEFLY explain why:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Q.8. TO WHAT EXTENT THE SPACE:**

	Not at all	A little	Very
Q.8.1. Is clean and cared for?			
Q.8.2. Is safe?			
Q.8.3. Is comfortable?			
Q.8.4. Is well conceived/designed from the user's point of view?			

**Q.9. WHAT ACTIVITIES COULD BE CARRIED OUT IN THIS SPACE, CONSIDERING ITS POTENTIAL?**

You can choose more than one option:

1	To stroll
2	Have a picnic
3	Cultural events
4	Taking the dog for a walk
5	Socializing
6	Popular festivals
7	Practice physical activity/sports
8	Other. Specify: _____

**Q.10. INDICATE WHAT YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT THIS SPACE.**

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**Q.11. WHAT COULD BE CHANGED IN THIS SPACE?**

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**Q.12. WHAT TYPE(S) OF FUNCTIONALITIES/FUNCTIONS SHOULD THIS SPACE FAVOUR IN THE FUTURE? (answer up to 4 options)**

Quality of water, air and soil	1
Biodiversity and contact with nature	2
Leisure that promotes conviviality and social interaction	3
Tranquillity and promotion of physical and psychological health	4
Shadows and protection from winds	5
Resources for the population: fruit, wild fruits and aromatic plants	6

Minimize the risk of flooding and soil erosion	7
Species of the region and environmental information/education	8
Others: Specify: _____	9

**Q.13. WHAT EQUIPMENT/ELEMENTS WOULD BE IMPORTANT TO EXIST OR IMPROVE IN THIS SPACE?**

Choose only 5, indicating the order of preference.

Pathways	Sports equipment	Recreational equipment	Information panels/signage about natural elements
Lake	Fruits to pick	Benches	Tables
More shadows	More vegetation	Other: Which? _____	

**Q.14. TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:**

	I don't agree	I partially agree	I agree	I totally agree
Q.14.1. I think it is important to involve the community in reflecting on the green spaces of their cities.				
Q.14.2. I am willing to participate in actions that aim to enhance this particular green space				

If you would like to participate or have information about future activities that will be organized to enhance this green space, leave your personal and contact details below:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number /or e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Q.15. Gender:** F \_\_\_ M \_\_\_ O \_\_\_

**Q.16. Age group:** 15-24; 25-49; 50-64; 65 and more (circle the group)

**Q.17. What is your nationality?**

Portuguese \_\_\_\_\_

Turkish \_\_\_\_\_

Other: (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Q.18. I live in the surroundings of this green space:** Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

## SPACES / METHODOLOGICAL GRID

PHASE	OBJECTIVES	TOOLS / METHODS	STEPS / ACTIVITIES
1. Context ID and Site Selection	Understand the intervention context and define a feasible, meaningful and potentially sustainable location that can truly contribute to a more cohesive community	Context analysis Stakeholder mapping Field observation Informal interviews Formal meetings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify intervention's socio-economic context, including social problems to tackle – grasp possibilities and challenges</li> <li>2. Identify abandoned/unused, underutilized or potential green spaces that could benefit the community</li> <li>3. Assess site characteristics (proximity, safety, accessibility)</li> <li>4. Identify and contact entities responsible for the green space</li> <li>5. Identify and approach other key stakeholders</li> </ol>
2. Approach and Involve Communities	Ensure community sustainable engagement and inclusive participation	Communication plan adapted to each stakeholder Community outreach Partnership building Awareness campaigns Inclusive facilitation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Define communication strategies for different publics/groups, including vulnerable groups</li> <li>2. Establish the necessary partnerships for community engagement</li> <li>3. Raise awareness about the green space with effective communication methods</li> <li>4. Engage each relevant stakeholder and participant group with target-specific methods/activities</li> </ol>
3. Exploring and Co-Thinking	Build shared understanding and generate collective knowledge	Participatory workshops Exploratory walks Co-creation games Surveys Discussion circles	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage reflection about the green space and relevance for community</li> <li>2. Facilitate on-site exploration with communities – combine playful activities with space exploration methods/games</li> <li>3. Collect insights: surveys and organized group discussions</li> <li>4. Analyze and synthesize collected data</li> <li>5. Identify list of possible actions / interventions</li> </ol>
4. Co-Design and Intervention	Co-create meaningful and feasible transformation of the space	Co-design sessions Negotiation meetings Collaborative planning Community events	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Share findings and list of possible actions with stakeholders and all other participants</li> <li>2. Co-design the intervention, manage expectations for space and legal limitations</li> <li>3. Plan budget and validate it with stakeholders and all other participants</li> <li>4. Co-organize implementation and space intervention</li> <li>5. Host community events at the site</li> </ol>



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