

HOW TO UTILIZE PLACEMAKING FOR ACTIVE RECREATION APPROACH?

Policy Recommendations
for Grassroots Activists



Funded by:



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Coordinator:

BG BE ACTIVE

Official Partner of:



New European Bauhaus
beautiful | sustainable | together



Implementing Organisations:



ASOCIAȚIA JUDEȚEANĂ
"SPORTUL PENTRU TOȚI"
SUCEAVA

Expert partners:



placemaking
europe

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2	What is placemaking?
4	Gender and Inclusion
7	Climate and weather conditions
10	Human scale and mobility: Cars/Bikes/Pedestrians
13	Accessibility: Time, Locations, Options



Use this symbol to go back
to the table of contents

WHAT IS PLACEMAKING?

Placemaking definition: the process of building communities around a place; working with communities to build urban space into home-like places. *The term was coined by Project for Public Spaces (PPS) in New York City during the 1980s.*

Both an overarching idea and a hands-on approach for improving a neighbourhood, city, or region, **placemaking** inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. By strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximise shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.



© Wendelin Jacober on Pexels



With community-based participation at its centre, an effective placemaking process optimises the local community's assets, aspirations, and potential, and it results in the co-creation of high-quality public spaces that contribute to people's health, happiness, and wellbeing.

It is a crucial and deeply-valued process to motivate intimate connections between people and the places in which we live our lives. Placemaking shows people just how powerful their collective vision can be, that they can make a change, and importantly, that their identities can be represented in the environment around them democratically. It helps them to re-imagine everyday spaces, and to see anew the potential of parks, downtowns, waterfronts, plazas, neighbourhoods, streets, markets, campuses and public buildings.

WHY IS PLACEMAKING RELEVANT FOR GRASSROOTS SPORT ORGANISATIONS?

Placemaking is a new way of thinking about physical activity and grassroots sport facilities. Maybe we don't need expensive, fenced and specialised sport facilities to do our activities? Maybe we can deliver attractive activities close to citizens, and help co-create those public spaces to include activity-friendly areas that invite more people to be active? And even to optimise the small, yet impactful, spaces between buildings?

PLACEMAKING IS TRENDY!

Placemaking is a concept that is growing in importance all over the world². While it originated and took off from the Project for Public Spaces out of New York, USA in the 1980s, it is now creating a world-wide community³ and attracting more diverse professions along the way. Interestingly, while it is fundamentally deployed from the bottom up, it is also being applied as area-wide and city-wide strategies to address public health concerns, such as: obesity, safety, inclusion and climate action, across multiple contexts and cultures. Most recently, the large-scale "New European Bauhaus" initiative by the European Commission lends from key placemaking elements.

¹ Gehl J. (2010) "Cities for People", Island Press

² Laven, J., Bradley, A. and Polyak, L. (2019) "Placemaking in the European context. The movement is here to stay", The Journal of Public Space, 4(1), pp. 135-154. doi: <https://doi.org/10.32891/jps.v4i1.1159>.

³ For example, Placemaking Europe connects thousands of placemakers across Europe, and globally, PlacemakingX, connects multiple regional networks.

GENDER AND INCLUSION

THEMATIC PILLAR DEFINITION

Historically, gender has been shaped and normalised along binary lines (female, male) with enormous privilege and liberties granted that allow able-bodied white Cis-men to take up and use public space. Other identities have been forced out and excluded: especially trans, POC and non-normative bodies or cognitive abilities. While different gender identities are now recognised and legitimised, and more respect is sought for all individuals, hetero-normative masculine power structures prevail, especially in regards to sports and public space. Beyond gender, we also need to design much more inclusive places for different groups that access our public spaces much less frequently. Movement and safely taking space in your body, in whatever capacity that means for the individual, is a human right.



© Boogieland Foundation

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create participation possibilities for different target groups such as families, kids, youth, elderly people, people with special needs, immigrants, and consider different groups' time schedules and needs.
- Make sure to be inclusive for people with mental and physical disabilities, parents who may need childcare, people who may struggle with the local language and create a safe space for marginalised people.
- Think about digital and in-person participation possibilities to be truly inclusive.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- + **R1** Beyond gender, we must also consider inclusion for all types of identities and individuals, and especially consider the “hidden” groups who do not engage with sport at all.
- + **R2** Sense of safety is linked to gender identity. They need to feel safe to even begin. We must improve our culture and social norms of safety for those at risk.
- + **R3** Most sport fields are mono-functional and oriented towards traditional masculine hegemonic sports, i.e. football, basketball. They mostly support elite or professional players. Indoor spaces for sport are often intimidating for new users. We must widen our definition of what is sport, movement, activity and make the norms more open too. Similarly, we must also redefine competition in sports to be more inclusive and focus more on wellbeing, rather than competition.
- + **R4** Seek out innovative and sensitive styles of ‘sport’ that are not rooted in masculine hegemony, colonisation, or gender norms. For example, football is fraught with hyper-masculine norms, and further, numerous sports teams have – until recently – been represented by appropriating mascots.
- + **R5** We need to encourage more civic participation in the design and placemaking process.
- + **R6** Partner up with sports stakeholders on campaigns focusing on taking care of our community and protecting the local at-risk groups via practising sport.
- + **R7** Ask the community directly what they want and try out; choosing the most popular ideas. Use an Open Call to learn about their ideas, Sticker Democracy to vote, and Participatory Budget to fund the initiatives⁴.

⁴ More info can be found on: park.bgbeactive.org/park-research

CASE STUDIES	CASE STUDY 1: Boogieland Foundation, Netherlands Amsterdam – practice boxing in public space for free. boogieland.nl	CASE STUDY 2: Cycle Along, Netherlands This promotes bicycle use among women in Rotterdam, especially women with a bicultural background. Cycle Along stimulates women and their families to use bikes instead of cars or public transport. The programme not only empowers participants, but it enables them to live a healthier lifestyle and to extend their social and economic networks,” (excerpt from <i>Our City?</i> , chapter: “Moving people beyond A to B: promoting cycling on Rotterdam’s South Bank as a means for socio-economic development”).
STATISTIC	A study examining runners’ experiences found that 58% of women have been harassed while moving in public space compared to only 4% of the men in the sample. (Hamilton, M. (2017). ‘Running While Female’, Runner’s World. Your experience of physical activity in public space differs significantly based on your gender identity. Research shows that when a community is emotionally connected to a space – via including all users and identities in the design – they take care of it more (litter, graffiti, recreation) In our questionnaires, users report a stronger sense of belonging and identity attachment when using a space for active recreation and movement. (Bradley, 2020).	
WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?	Runner’s World Our City? (ebook) RefugeesWelcomeinParks	

THINK ABOUT

- + Who do you miss in your activities?
- + How can you help citizens to feel more safe and welcomed in general in their public spaces?
 - Further, how to make them feel welcome to use public space for movement and activity?
 - And across different work and caregiving schedules?
 - And across different concerns for harassment, sexism, racism, and/or ableism?
- + How can you connect and tap into the community to understand their behaviours and barriers to use their public space?

CLIMATE AND WEATHER CONDITIONS

THEMATIC PILLAR DEFINITION

Weather plays a fundamental role in making physical activity possible. Bad climatic conditions (natural disasters, air pollution) seriously inhibit physical activity. On the other hand, physical activity plays an important role in the resilience of the urban environment. Physical activity can contribute to the creation of nature-based solutions in cities, contributing to climate adaptation.



© Stijn Brakkee

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

- Include the design of public spaces for active recreation when making climate adaptation infrastructure.
- Consider skate parks on top of water dams, park facilities in connection to water reservoirs, linear green paths in dual use for pedestrianisation and heat island mitigation, etc.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- + **R1** It is necessary to improve the design of urban spaces to cope with heatwaves. Access to drinking fountains, shade, and shelter at all-sport spaces are cited as crucial to sustaining the space's use.
- + **R2** We need to increase the flexibility of programming. As weather patterns become more unpredictable, sports professionals and organisations may have to be increasingly creative with scheduling. The type of activities, dates and locations should be safely adapted to the weather conditions. Holding sports events at night was mentioned as an example, or even embracing the rain for innovative activities.
- + **R3** It is important to connect with stakeholders (the municipal team, the physical education teachers) as key actors who should be aware of the influence of weather conditions on sport and physical activity participation by designing weather appropriate sport areas and recreational programmes.

CASE STUDIES	CASE STUDY 1: ZOHO Rotterdam, Netherlands Basketball court/water reservoir in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, a region known for its high volume of rainfall, has multiplied infrastructure resources by combining a climate adaption to store excess water, while creating a high-quality public space for recreation and sport. A rain garden in ZOHO Rotterdam catches and retains rainfall, and the co-creation of this space by the neighbourhood has led to a leafy green parklette that children often hop and play through, as well as some playful adults.	CASE STUDY 2: Madrid Rio, Spain Prior to the restoration of the Madrid River's banks, the area was dominated by transportation infrastructure. Bypasses on both sides limited residents' access to the river and the thin green belt along it. The Rio Madrid project moved the bypass underground and created extensive recreational areas on the surface. The remarkably successful transformation has attracted millions of people with its 17 children's playgrounds, a beach zone with water jets, sports areas, bike lanes and a jogging trail.
STATISTIC	A water storage canal is also used as a recreational park for residents. "Biodiversity has reportedly increased by 30% in the park, with sightings of otters, egrets, and other wildlife," (Kaw et al. 2020). Problems like high blood pressure, breathing problems, and migraines are less common in areas with 90% greenery (Bos 2011). In a recent study in Turkey, the researchers found a significant mean temperature difference between concrete, soil, and grass surfaces in a city context. Specifically: 11.79°C between asphalt/concrete and grass surfaces (Yilmaz et al., 2008).	
WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?	Value of Placemaking	

THINK ABOUT:

- + Are there times of the year, or even the day, that are best for weather?
- + Do you identify any challenges that you want to tackle with climate strategies?
- + Are there different festivals or cultural celebrations throughout the year that you can collaborate with synergistically?

HUMAN SCALE AND MOBILITY: CARS/BIKES/ PEDESTRIANS

THEMATIC PILLAR DEFINITION

Mobility is the potential for movement and the ability to get from one place to another, using one or more modes of transport, to meet daily needs. Recently, more than ever, human-scale mobility is encouraged or desired by governments as a resiliency strategy, as it means being more active and healthier (for example, walking or cycling) and it also contributes less to pollution or traffic congestion, thereby seeking high quality of life and sustainable environments for the surrounding residents and users.



© Lala Azizli on Unsplash

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

- Develop and integrate a method of urban planning that prioritises the bicycle and the pedestrian from the outset. You should integrate community participation in all phases of the planning process, and for all types of urban spaces, in order to create the best starting point to position environmentally friendly travel models that the inhabitants will actually use and feel proud of.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- + **R1** Organise a one day per month [Open Streets Day](#) inviting residents to use the street for recreation with different activities and ban cars in the area.
- + **R2** Provide a low-cost bike sharing platform.
- + **R3** Physical infrastructure, such as separate bike lanes and safe pedestrian areas, is needed to make such changes possible.
- + **R4** Partner with schools and educational organisations. Infrastructure needs to be backed by educational programs on physical mobility in cities (more physical literacy about biking and safe walking mobility is needed).
- + **R5** Build a partnership between municipalities, NGOs and sport organisations. NGOs and communities truly know what they need what represents them. Municipalities and governmental bodies need to cross-collaborate to deliver better projects, infrastructure and funding.



© Open Streets Day

CASE STUDIES	CASE STUDY 1: Milan tactical bike lanes (Strade Aperte), Italy Milan city has in 2020 announced one of Europe's most ambitious mobility schemes, known as Strade Aperte (open roads). Strade Aperte sets out to create temporary and permanent cycle paths that can be created quickly and cost-effectively. Additionally, the scheme includes new and widened pavements, an expanded use of 30 kilometres per hour zones for cars as well as the creation of dedicated areas for pedestrians, cyclists and micromobility. An eight-kilometre-long segment of Corso Buenos Aires, one of the city's most important shopping streets, was the first to be transformed with the creation of a new cycle path and widening of pavements.	CASE STUDY 2: Open Arts foundation The Otets Paisiy Street project was launched in 2010 Under the motto "Parallel Urban Culture" with an extensive study of the history of the street and its dwellers, conducted in partnership with Paisiy Hilendarski University of Plovdiv and the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts in Plovdiv. In the following years the festival was repeated in 2019 the street become fully pedestrian and open to art, culture, performance and capacity building events. https://openarts.info/en/projects/cl/646-city-and-culture
STATISTIC	Pedestrianisation/ human scale movement generates 80% more in retail sales, (Leinberger and Alfonzo 2012). For every \$100 spent at locally owned businesses an additional \$45 to \$58 is contributed to the local economy, (Patel and Martin 2011 in Schnake-Mahl 2018). Fear of traffic was a common concern during qualitative research conducted on Rotterdammers use of public space for physical activity (Bradley, 2020).	
WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?	Let's heal our cities!	

THINK ABOUT:

- + What kind of "open streets" events exist in your community? How can you improve them?
- + What is the existing infrastructure in your community and how can you improve it?
- + Who are partners you can work with to enhance physical literacy on active mobility?

ACCESSIBILITY: TIME, LOCATIONS, OPTIONS

THEMATIC PILLAR DEFINITION

Accessibility, which we define as the capacity for people to have equal access to physical activity facilities and options, cannot be taken for granted. Some people are in a privileged position and it is easier for them (i.e. for straight, white men) to access activities or facilities without experiencing physical limitations, economic challenges, discrimination or harassment.



© Centre for Ageing Better on Unsplash

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

- For an effective implementation of placemaking, consider how public recreational spaces can be accessed more readily (and preferably through safe and active mobility), how programmes can be varied to different target groups, and how activities can be made available across different times of day, week and year, meeting citizens' needs and interests.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- + **R1** Sports and recreation facilities need to be easily reachable for all citizens. This can be achieved by ensuring that these places are well connected by public transport, and safe biking and walking routes.
- + **R2** Explore a potential of existing but enclosed facilities, such as schoolyards and sport parks, by opening them up to a wider range of users.
- + **R3** Making possible to practise sport in places where it was previously not practised or even prohibited. Remove signs such as: don't play ball, don't skateboard.
- + **R4** When planning new facilities, make them local rather than large multi-facilities out of the city. Living close to facilities dramatically increases the likelihood of local residents using them
- + **R5** Residents should be involved in the process of programming and creating spaces for physical activity. They should be asked what place, price, time and type of activity would be suitable for them. The policy should focus primarily on the local population rather than tourists, as these are often the focus of private operators.
- + **R6** Create inclusive spaces tailored to the needs of residents. Ensure a healthy and safe environment for practising physical activity. Organise tested and successful activities: Zumba for women, tai-chi and aerobics for elderly.
- + **R7** Increase the affordability of sports activities by introducing annual subscriptions or discounts for residents.
- + **R8** Find partners and allies of your idea – municipalities and sport organisations are the key initiators. Involve institutions such as schools and senior homes to increase the societal impact. Local companies or sports brands can provide financial support.



CASE STUDIES	CASE STUDY 1: Estonoesunsolar, Spain The name of this experimental “urban acupuncture” project can be translated as “this is not empty land.” In Zaragoza, Spain, the project has transformed many of the city’s empty lots into a network of usable public spaces – plazas, children’s playgrounds and community gardens. Initiated successfully by two local architects, it was then taken forward by the city council. The function of each site was determined through a series of meetings with various stakeholders. Estonoesunsolar has led to an increase in the number of public facilities in the city centre and addressed a number of social and urban issues, positively influencing the relationship between citizens and the city administration and increasing the sense of ownership.	CASE STUDY 2: The concept behind GAME BOX was to transform an underutilised space on campus into an accessible and attractive youth-led space where students can meet and socialise together in a healthy and safe pop-up space. Street sports and placemaking go beyond traditional sports activities or sports venues that might be off-putting for some, instead, they bring something extra to the table – a creative and open urban atmosphere with great appeal to young people coming from different social backgrounds and interests. Located in a central area at one of the leading colleges in Malta, the innovative space and vibrant colours stand out from the grey concrete background and create an inviting feeling. Whilst the booming thuds of skateboards echoing like distant thunder across the campus create a dynamic soundscape which attracts young people, making them feel creative and energetic! As a result, the project shows The GAME Box concept proves that when the right space is created, young people are willing to challenge the status quo and get creative and active.
STATISTIC	Streets with more than 90% sidewalk connectivity have a significant positive impact on social cohesion, (Wilkerson et al. 2011). 80% of informal contact between neighbours happens at the front door, (van Ulden, Heussen & van der Ham 2015)	
WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?	PARK toolbox	

THINK ABOUT:

- + How do public and active transportation to the venues with activities work in your city and how can you improve it?
- + Are citizens and NGOs in your city involved in the process of programming and creating spaces for physical activity?
- + Does your city provide healthy and safe environments for practising physical activity?
- + What is really the appropriate timing of activities for citizens in your city?

CONTACTS:

BG Be Active Association Bulgaria
www.bgbeactive.org
beactive@bgbeactive.org

DISCLAIMER:

This project has been funded with support
from the European Commission.



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union