



COME2ART: Introducing a collaborative scheme between artists & community members fostering life skills development and resilience through creative placemaking

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Erasmus + project, Partnerships for Creativity



“A life skills curriculum through arts
in the context of creative placemaking”



Module 5

Let's make public art: introducing creative placemaking as a tool for creating a resilient community

Introduction

According to the [American Planning Association](#), creative placemaking is a process where community members, artists, arts and culture organizations, community developers, and other stakeholders use arts and cultural strategies as tools to implement community-led change. Creative placemaking is also described as a new way of engaging creative people and activities to address social and economic issues in communities. Using public space as a canvas of artistic expression, building partnerships across local sectors, addressing community issues and challenges and aiming on economic, physical and social change, are the key notions of creative placemaking. Community challenges are highlighted in an inclusive manner, where involved stakeholders gather, decide and take action on local issues from public health and local historic memory to housing and culture infrastructure. Through these processes, community can strengthen its bonds, new relationships among civil society organizations can be developed and citizens can acquire important life skills making them more resilient in times of crisis.

This module aims to introduce the learners into the specific characteristics of creative placemaking by exploring recent relevant theory and bibliography, as well as by sharing best practices.

This module is composed of 2 units. The first unit will provide the theoretical background of Creative Placemaking and its evolution over the last decades. The second unit will provide some best practices of creative placemaking projects around Europe. These best practices will act as an inspiration for relative projects

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that are meant to be implemented in the local communities of Come2art project, as well as, in any other initiative that aims to the same goal.

Unit 5.1: Creative Placemaking: Theoretical Background/ Familiarization with key notions

In this unit we will clarify and deepen into the concept of creative placemaking, we will go through its evolution the last decades and refer to its main characteristics.

This unit includes:

- Public Space
- Making art in public space
- The importance of community engagement
- Examining community resilience
- Understanding the relationship of public creative intervention and community social change

Unit 5.2: Best practices of creative placemaking

This unit covers best practices of creative placemaking projects that COME2ART partners, and not only, have already implemented in their communities. The learners will familiarize about processes needed, challenges and risks when it comes to design and implement such projects.

The main learning objectives of this Module are:

- Understanding of the notion of creative placemaking
- Description of case studies where placemaking projects implemented and had a remarkable social impact
- Co-creative design and implementation of creative placemaking projects





Assessment

The level of achievement of the learning objectives will be assessed through:

- Analysis of assignments' results
- Questionnaire
- Essay
- Group conversation
- 1 to 1 interview with artist-educator
- Evaluation of creative outputs resulting from the learning process

Assessment exercise

Based on these elements that can be used to analyse the perception of complex urban environments, there has been developed the sense of mental maps, which are diagrammatic maps that one can either draw on a blank paper, or they can occur from verbal interviews concerning one's sense of the image of the city.

It is recommended to the trainees, to draw a mental map of an area, that could either be the area of the training, one that they have agreed to implement a project in or another district familiar to them, including not only the 5 elements of the city as set by Kevin Lynch but also personal observations that address issues of multi-sensory experiences, such as smells, soundscapes, observations concerning the colour and textures of a given area, but also emotional aspects of experiencing public space, such as the feeling of safety, uneasiness or anxiety that can be expressed when passing by a certain place.

These observations, collectively but also individually can help to better and more fully understand the essence of a place or the genius loci, as defined by Christian Norberg-Schulz. This type of analysis helps to shed light to the fact that place incorporates physical dimensions, social relations, symbolic meanings, and subjective human experiences (Schofield & Szymanski,2011).





Lastly, all individual maps can be summarized in a collective map where trainees get to draw conclusions about the place, find similarities and differences between their perception of space and experience.



Unit 5.1: Creative Placemaking: Theoretical Background/ Familiarization with key notions

Introduction

In this unit, learners shall familiarize with the notion of creative placemaking. Public space and making art in public space, are the two aspects which firstly will be examined. The Intervention Framework which

has been developed in the earlier stage of the project, will be used as main resource of knowledge. Learners will realize the role of art in social cohesion, they will become aware of the importance of the community engagement

as well as methods to reach out the interested target groups. The most important objective is for them to realize that creative placemaking projects don't have art in their core goal. The goal is the empowerment of the active citizenship which leads to a more resilient community. Art and creative activities are the tools, the means to achieve that.

Learning Outcomes :

Upon completion of this unit, the learners will be able to:

- Understand the notion of public space
- Identify the main characteristics of creative placemaking project
- Familiarize with the evolution of the concept of creative placemaking
- Realize the importance of community engagement in creative placemaking projects
- Understand the relationship of public creative intervention and community social change



5.1.1 Public City Space

Throughout history, public spaces keep evolving through urban and social transformations. If we ponder upon the evolution of the image of cities across the world, but more specifically in Europe, the once organic and non-planned city of the Middle- Ages has transformed itself through Renaissance urban planning theories and design, into a curated geometrical ensemble. The emersion of new cityscapes due to the industrialisation of the means of production, lead in many cases to a chaotic and non- sanitary urban environment. As a result, many theories and plans had been developed in the end of the 19th century regarding the ideal city and its geometrical but also social and economic components. The rationalisation of public space peaks through the modernist urban planning transformations (Urban Renewal projects), although this purely functionalist design of urban environments has led to the alienation of sensory and personal experiences in the modern city (Kohn, 2004). To add to the aforementioned unwelcoming public spaces that the modern city has to offer, the privatisation of shared spaces within the limits of the city further deprives its citizens of viable and equitable opportunities to experience common spaces. Time after time it has been proven that large scale urban planning projects tend to lose the scope of their initial goals and objectives.

Only in the last few decades has urban planning turned towards a Bottom-up design approach where different stakeholders of the urbanscape play an active role in the definition of public space. Participatory design projects tend to be better received by the users of the space, due to the fact that representatives from different groups come together to analyse, discuss and finally transform a public space or even urban environment in a larger scale.

When we think of the city and more specifically public space, most tend to

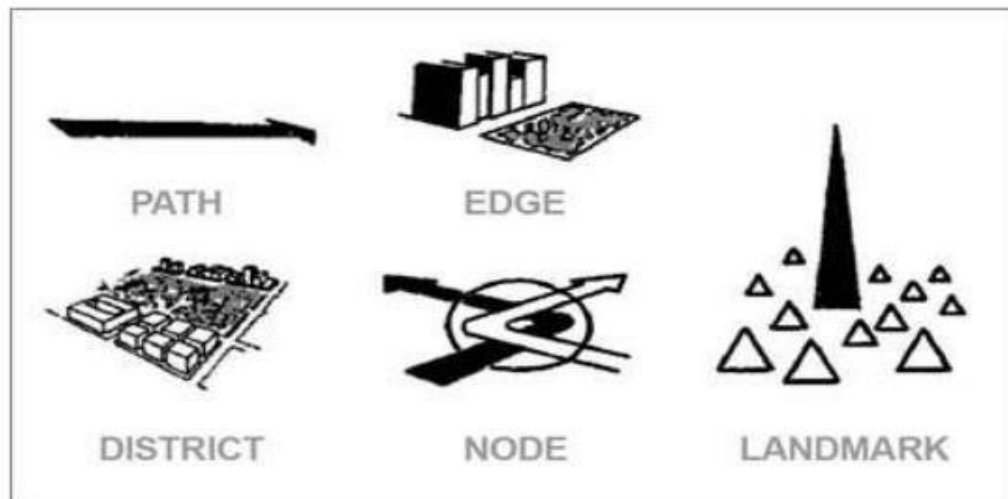
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visualise a square or a pedestrian area. But, city space can be analysed to 5 key components. Kevin Lynch in his pivotal book for the perception of the city and how it is experienced by its inhabitants, he states that the elements of the urban environment come down to:

1. paths, as in sidewalks, routes, roads etc,
2. edges, in other words the boundaries between two considered discrete areas,
3. districts, where some common characteristics can be observed such as the uses (commercial, residential, industrial etc), the time of the day that crowds can be found there or other mental divisions that one can think of and constitute a separate area with a distinct character
4. nodes, where certain activities can take place in a high density. They essentially constitute focus points where there is a high concentration of some characteristic
5. landmarks, in other words, physical elements that can vary in scale or points of reference that one can use to orientate, to set as meeting place or simple observe as they walk through the city.



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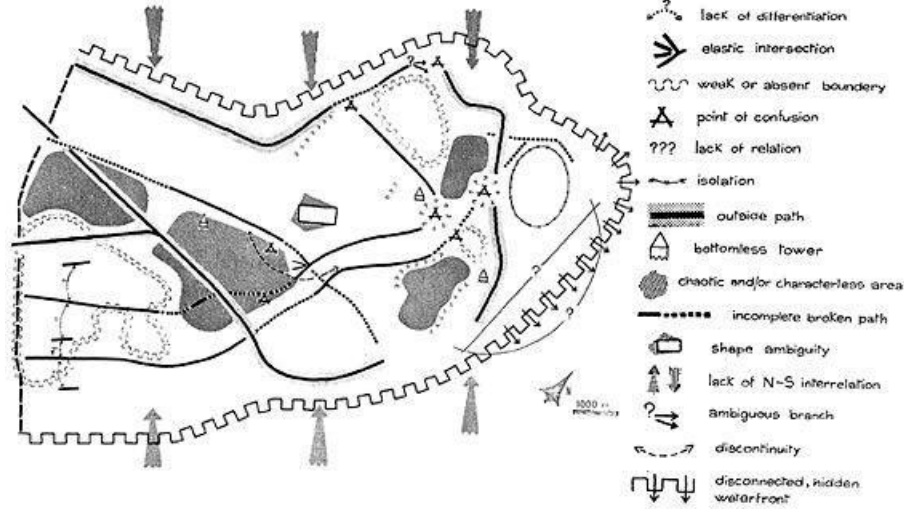
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Based on these elements that can be used to analyse the perception of complex urban environments, there has been developed the notion of mental maps, which are diagrammatic maps that one can either draw on a blank paper, or they can occur from verbal interviews concerning one's sense of the image of the city. It is recommended to the trainees, to draw a mental map of an area, that could either be the area of the training, one that they have agreed to implement a project in or another district familiar to them, including not only the 5 elements of the city as set by Kevin Lynch but also personal observations that address issues of multi-sensory experiences, such as smells, soundscapes, observations concerning the colour and textures of a given area, but also emotional aspects of experiencing public space, such as the feeling of safety, uneasiness or anxiety that can be expressed when passing by a certain place. These observations, collectively but also individually can help to understand the essence of a place or the genius loci, as defined better and more fully by Christian Norberg-Schulz. This type of analysis helps to shed light to the fact that place incorporates physical dimensions, social relations, symbolic meanings, and subjective human experiences (Schofield & Szymanski,2011).



FIG. 8. *Problems of the Boston image*



History of placemaking

As early as the 1960s, critics of urban space such as Jane Jacobs and William H. Whyte underlined the obscure elements of modernist American cities that came as a result of zoning, automotive development, broad suburban areas and general gentrified/tentacular development of city space.

Both Jacobs and Whyte advocate lively neighbourhoods and welcoming shared spaces that meet the needs of their inhabitants. These radical new ideas concerning public spaces came as a response to broad urban renewal projects, that cleared out slum areas of inner-city space, in favour of new businesses or luxury residential areas.

In 1975, Fred Kent alongside Kathy Madden, founded the Project for Placemaking initiative, where small interventions in the public space of New behaviour concerning common spaces.





Figure 1 Jane Jacobs

The term Placemaking was popularized around the 1990s and what it conveys has evolved a lot since then.

Placemaking in the 21st century

Current urban spaces and cityscapes are under rapid transformation due to the emersion of new technologies. Phenomena such as alienation and urban gentrification, have gradually led to an everchanging urban scenery. Placemaking comes as an immediate and spontaneous response to the aforementioned problems of city life. Different types of placemaking arose in recent years to tackle varied community needs. Creative placemaking consists of a process where stakeholders from public, private and non-profit sectors, as well as community members transform the character of a neighbourhood. A place transcends its geometrical features and takes into account the social, economic and cultural dimensions of a space. The various nuances and layers of a place can determine its character and the people that engage in it. The transformations that can occur through placemaking transcend the physical



aspect and can often have a profound impact on community engagement and resilience. Types of creative placemaking include but are not limited to murals, urban furniture, sculptures, transit facilities. Four general goals have been set for creative placemaking projects to be considered successful by the NEA. These projects should strengthen and improve the local community of artists and art organisations, should increase community attachment, improve quality of life but also invigorate local economies. Some indicators of successful creative placemaking project from the experience that has been gathered from projects implemented globally is when the community engages in them and when it is based upon unique elements of a given place. Place-making implies that places are not products of deliberate intervention such as spatial planning, but should involve active and ongoing participation of communities.

Therefore places cannot be designed from the outside (e.g. by experts) (Friedman, 2007). The essence of placemaking as a practice can be found in the 11 principles that are set by the Project for Placemaking organization.

1. More specifically, in this type of project implementation, the community is the expert, and its opinion should be regarded as the most valuable of the partners involved.
2. The project is about creating a place, not just implementing a design, meaning that part of the success lies in the process and the community engagement.
3. Placemaking is not something that can be done just by one person or one stakeholder, the need of different partners is essential to the project's success.
4. The task at hand might seem overwhelming at times, but it can all be achieved with good coordination and planning.
5. The ultimate goal is to develop a vision for public space and the

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- meaning the place can convey.
6. The project other than making a statement or raising awareness for a shared issue, it should have
 7. On a more practical note, the elements of a single placemaking project should be triangulated. In other words, new uses or parts of the project should be in proximity to each other making it easier for the community to interact with them.
 8. The idea is also to start small and build up after smaller scale projects, meaning that there should be some trial and error testing period, where groups try out short term or less ambitious ideas and evaluate the outcomes as they go.
 9. The funding aspect should not be set as the most important factor for the project's outcome, resorting to creativity and ingenuity to compensate for a low budget.
 10. Lastly, the project is never truly finished and should be managed after it is implemented to ensure the longevity of the actions taken.

Placemaking is a practice that creates meaning from the site-specific elements found in a place. This process can be initiated or driven by the local history of a place/city, but also from the opportunities, strengths and weaknesses it currently portrays. In order to understand the site that is agreed upon for the implementation of the project, the individuals in the group are encouraged to analyse the place using the format of a S.W.O.T diagram, pinpointing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, that a given public space or area displays. In this way, alongside with the mental maps that the trainees have been previously tasked with, the group can strategically draw safe conclusions and observations concerning an area based on their own experiences and criteria.



In the past, there have been creative placemaking projects based on collective mental mapping and the subjective observations these diagrams carry. For instance, visual artist Ivana Sidzimovska, implemented a placemaking project based on 11 mental maps of the famous neighbourhood of Kreuzberg in Berlin.

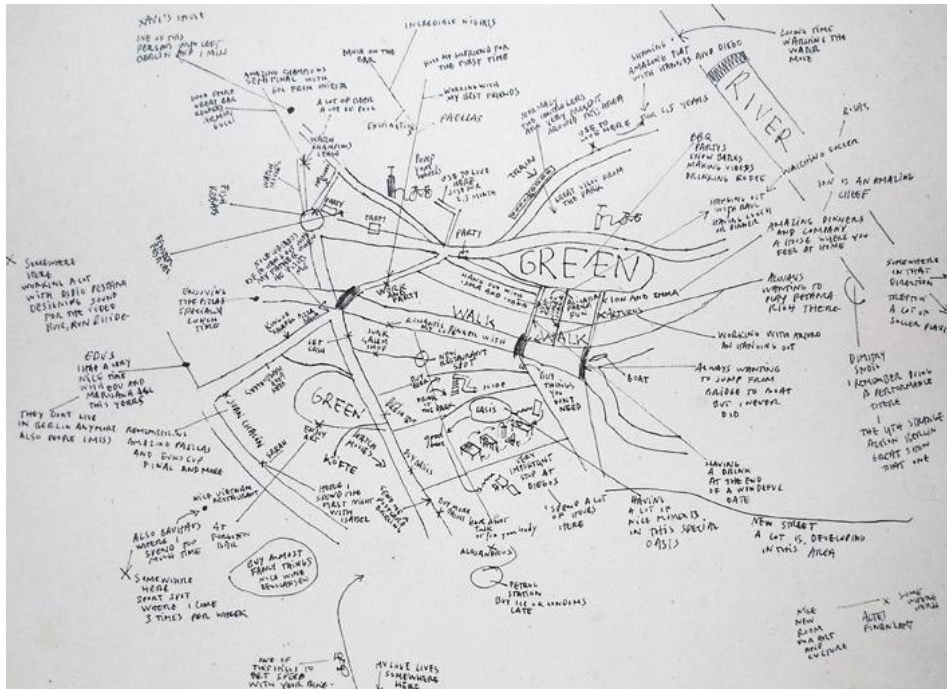


Figure 2 New York: Merrell Publishers, 210

Lastly, when a group has the intention to implement a creative placemaking project, it is recommended that amongst other methods, certain questions are asked to determine the character of the place and its qualities.



Cited below are some of the questions as expressed by Fleming in his book concerning Placemaking.

1. Does the space have a complexity that allows it to be enjoyed by a variety of users?
2. Can an elderly person sit in a sunny spot in the space and feel safe?
3. Is one free to move about the space without feeling intimidated by others?
4. Does the space support a different palette of colours appropriate to the cityscape?
5. Is there a clear sense of direction across the space to popular destinations?
6. Do the design elements across the space relate to the human figure?
7. Does the human figure create a sense of dimension in the space?
8. Can you hear site-specific sounds in the space: the rustle of leaves, the thud of horseshoes, the tickle of water, or the sound of a band?
9. Can a small child find sources of amusement in the space? Are there design clues that can help a lost child find its way out of the space?
10. Are there narrative elements that connect the different parts of the space?
11. Does the space allow the user to enjoy its intimate details?





Sources:

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Unit 5.2: Best practices of creative placemaking projects

Introduction

This unit covers best practices of creative placemaking projects that COME2ART partners, and not only, have already implemented in their communities. The learners will familiarize about processes needed, challenges and risks when it comes to design and implement such projects. Multimedia contents depicting the most relevant initiatives that the Come2Art partners have realized will be complemented by a select list of international creative placemaking projects that offer inputs and insights on how to launch a collaborative scheme to engage communities in art making.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this unit, the learners will be able to:

- Better understand the challenges and risks when it comes to creative placemaking projects
- Get inspired for relative projects at their own community
- Understand the wide range of topics that such projects refer to
- Understand the social impact that such projects can have on the local community



Best practices

A select list of international creative placemaking projects to offer inputs and insights on how to launch a collaborative scheme to engage communities in art making.

Title	The Road Home
Artist	Swoon
Year	2017
Place	Philadelphia, USA
Description	<p>The Road Home is a multi-disciplinary project that merges arts therapy, public art, and community advocacy to heal the traumatic roots of addiction in the Kensington neighborhood of Philadelphia. The Road Home wants to address the widespread community impact of opioid addiction and draws on creative tools to change the cultural stigma that prevents people in addiction from accessing the support they need.</p> <p>The project had three main components. The first was a series of daily art therapy workshops, with activities including storytelling, song circles, and drawing exercises, at the Kensington Storefront community center. The second outcome was a public mural, Healing Begins With Connection, located on Kensington Avenue directly across from Prevention Point, a center that provides social and medical services to people experiencing homelessness and addiction.</p>



Points for reflection	The community engagement work brought affirmation into the daily lives of the people at Kensington Storefront, both through their face-to-face interactions with project collaborators, and in the landscape around them. Through designing a response that makes an impact on the individual, the community, and the public policy levels.
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Title	<i>Hiroshima Projection</i>
Artist	Krzysztof Wodiczko
Year	1999
Place	Hiroshima, Japan
Description	<p>The projection took place on August 7–8, 1999, the 54th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. The background was formed by the Atomic Bomb Dome, the only building located close to the epicenter of the explosion that wasn't completely destroyed. On the embankment of the river Motoyasu at the foot of the Dome's ruin, today known as the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, the artist projected magnified images</p> <p>of the hands of the explosion's victims, while their recorded testimonies were played back through loudspeakers. The images of the gesticulating or sometimes motionless hands were reflected in the surface of the river, in which thousands died, jumping into the irradiated water in the hope of soothing pain caused by burns. The images of hands were accompanied by recorded testimonies of the traumatic experiences of a</p>



	dozen or so victims of the explosion as well as their children and grandchildren. Among them were also testimonies concerning the tragedy, seldom mentioned in Japan, of Korean slave workers killed by the A-bomb. The 39-minute projection included a total of fifteen testimonies.
Points for reflection	<p>Wodiczko started working on this projection with the assumption of reanimating the A-Bomb Dome monument with the voices and gestures of present-day Hiroshima inhabitants from various generations: those who survived the bombing; their children, who may still remember; their grandchildren and great-grandchildren.</p> <p>All those generations somehow connect through this projection, in terms of the way the bombing is important and the way the meaning of that bombing connects with their present experiences.</p>
Title	VIGIL
Artist	Jenny Holzer
Year	2019
Place	New York, USA
Description	<p>The light projection VIGIL addressed the issue of gun violence in America, with texts by poets, survivors, and citizens.</p> <p>With the three-night installations that took place in October 2019, Holzer illuminated the iconic buildings at Rockefeller Center with first-hand accounts, poems, and responses by Americans who have experienced the everyday reality of gun violence. In this large-scale work, each voice was magnified in</p>



	<p>scrolling letters of light over the buildings' facades. Both stark and kind, the work served as a vigil for victims of gun violence and an acknowledgment of the regularity with which these incidents occur. Holzer included selected texts from collections of poetry and stories regarding gun violence and poems by teens growing up in a nation affected by shootings in their communities and schools.</p> <p>The project aimed to center the voices of those directly affected by gun violence, shifting away from using faceless statistics to emphasize the human toll. The first-person accounts serve both as an acknowledgment of communities impacted by gun violence and an invitation for dialogue around the prevalence of this issue in the United States.</p>
<p>Points for reflection</p>	<p>Projected onto one of the most iconic landmarks in New York City, VIGIL speaks to the massive impact gun violence has not only on individuals but the very fabric of communities and cities. The text encroaches on the facades and windows of these buildings, surrounding the viewer and enveloping the city in messages of light.</p> <p>Through the project, the city itself is transformed.</p> <p>The scrolling words of the projections demand that the audience reads them, with a strategy that denies passive engagement.</p>



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Organisation	Melting Pro
Year	2019
Place	Roma, Italy
Description	<p>Where there was a gray building over 22 meters tall that no one noticed, now stands a fascinating wall work created by Tellas, an internationally renowned street artist, in collaboration with 15 young creatives put together by the SPACE Tor Pignattara project.</p> <p>The artists, with the careful guidance of the project partners, explored and experienced the neighborhood for about a month producing <i>Herbarium</i>, an impressive and strongly identifiable site-specific work inspired by "the" and "from" the neighborhood's many and diverse communities.</p> <p><i>Herbarium</i> embodies a very powerful symbolic value and produces an esthetic effect in both artistic and landscape terms. It is the product of collective work, made by the collaboration of several artistic sensibilities, of different keys of interpretation of a composite territory, in which multiple and diverse communities coexist with their own culture, their own faith, art, with their cuisine. In this context, <i>Herbarium</i> is a work that does not impose itself because it is structured in concert with the territory through deep dialogue with its communities.</p>



<p>Points for reflecti on</p>	<p><i>Herbarium</i> was born from people's stories collected by the artists: restaurateurs, merchants and ordinary citizens from the different ethnic groups that populate the neighborhood, described to the street artists their culinary traditions, talked about the spices and herbs that are indispensable to elaborate traditional dishes and that therefore were "transplanted" in the neighborhood in order to have them available when needed and to bring to Rome a little bit of the air of home.</p>
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