

Creative works in  
small and remote  
places: European  
best practices  
exploration

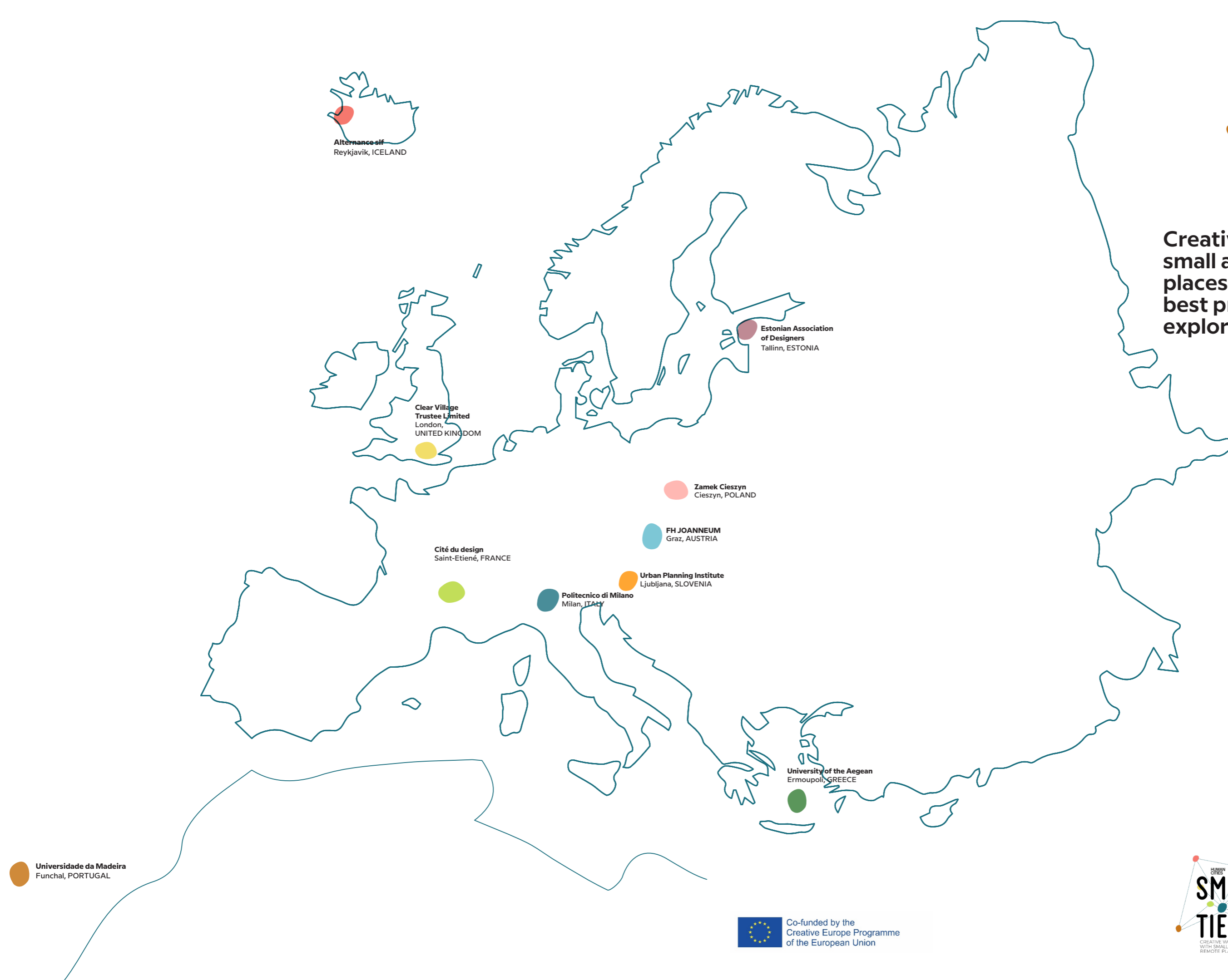


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# Creative works in small and remote places: European best practices exploration



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# Introduction

## **Co-creation of public spaces in remote places: The review of creative practices to inspire further**

By Matej Nikšič, Nina Goršič  
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This publication explores the co-creation of public space in the populated remote places of Europe. The variety of initiatives, actors, and their activities are presented from various parts of the continent – from Austria, Estonia, France, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom. All of them have some distinctive characteristics in common – they address the participatory improvements of public spaces in which the residents and the local communities play an important role, while at the same time the actors from the creative sector are fully involved too. Special attention is given to the innovative approaches that manage to put the variety of actors into a greater co-operation to jointly reach the final goal through the improvements of the public spaces – i.e. the stronger communities, the better local life, environments, and ideally improved economic prospects of the remote places.

It seems that the times for such exploration could not be more fortuitous. After two years of challenges raised by the global pandemics, the ways we live our lives have been challenged and have changed. Not only have the remote places been rediscovered as the places of one's living, working, and leisure time activities, but their assets have also been re-evaluated through the new lenses. Despite the not foreseen challenges that the distant working and learning techniques brought to our social and working practices, the physical allocation from the urban nodes to the more remote places started to be a more often considered option by many. This opens many new questions about living in remote places, and their communities as well as their public realm.

The publication has two main parts. Its core is the condensed description of the 50 selected case studies that were recognized as examples of good practices in the participatory and creative provision of public space in remote places. Five selected practices per each of the ten contributing countries were analyzed based on the common analytical template (see the Appendix for the whole data set). Each case is described in the format of an A3 one-pager where the basic information is given in a written and graphical form. Each description starts with the overview information about the case, presents the characteristics of the geographical space where the activities took place and illustrates how and by whom the activities started and how they evolved. Special attention is paid to the ways the local community and creative sector were involved, as well as to the various kinds of improvements that were achieved in either social, physical, economic, or any other aspects relevant for the prosperity of the remote place. The presentation of each case study is strongly supported by the graphical materials that were carefully chosen in order to deliberately capture the setting and nature of the activities going on.

Based on the experiences, insights, and lessons learnt from the review of the best practices each partnering country contributed an article to summarise the main messages from its own cases. They are presented in the first part of this publication. The focal themes of these reflective articles were left open to the authors in order to provide the most relevant insights into the creation of public spaces in remote places in their countries. They address diverse themes, from the levers to establish the social networks overseeing the possible futures, the importance of time given to the projects to develop and mature, to the new forms of democratic decision making at a local level and the issues of "measuring" the impact of creative approaches in the co-creation of the remote public spaces.

There are some general observations that can be made based on the overview of the contents provided from across Europe. Firstly, the remote places most often lack the institutionally provided capacities for the improvements of public spaces that are normally at the disposal to any bigger urban settlement. At the same time it is clear that the communities of remote places are no less enthusiastic about improving their public spaces when the opportunities appear. In this sense, and as many presented practices show, the importance of the creative sector is considerable as it offers the support and often compensates for the capacity shortcomings and other local deficiencies.

Secondly, the presented cases once more reflect the great diversity and richness of the European socio-cultural and material contexts. One of them that needs to be mentioned is the notion of remoteness which largely differs in the selected case studies and may be attributed to the (low) population density, geographical barriers or allocation, the lack of good transportation links, difficulties in accessing facilities, social specifics or divisions, economic inferiority, as well as different subjective criteria.

And third general observation we would like to stress in this editorial introduction is the innovativeness that shines from the presented case studies. The actors have wisely identified and used the inner (local) and outer (from elsewhere) potentials and capacities to develop the activities and achieve the changes for better material or immaterial improvements of public spaces. It was the understanding of the local context and the ability to embed the available resources from elsewhere that make each practice unique and innovative at the same time.

In order to fully understand the phenomena of the participatory and creative provision of public spaces in remote places, future knowledge must derive from the theoretical explorations, empirical evidence, and reflective practice. This publication is, we believe, good inspiration for any like-minded readers that see the potential and opportunities in the co-creation of local public spaces in creative ways. As good practices show none of the presented cases can be directly and fully replicated in other and always different contexts – but they can always be a good source of encouragement for one's own endeavors in their specific conditions! We wish you an inspiring reading and hope it will initiate many new innovative and creative initiatives in the future!

*Finally, a big thank you to all the partners of the Smoties project and local actors who contributed to this publication, as only together we could create such an extensive overview of the existing practices! We believe it will open new perspectives on many potentials in remote areas, smaller places, and their surrounding natural environments, or in the virtual spaces, which are not yet used to develop common endeavors to build a community that will be more humane, socially inclusive, more locally embedded and at the same time more resilient while less exploitative to the nature and the environmental resources.*

## About SMOTIES - Creative works with small and remote places

By Davide Fassi  
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This publication is one of the outputs of “SMOTIES - Creative works with small and remote places”, a four- year co-funded project by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.

Started in 2020, the SMOTIES project belongs to the Human Cities network involving, since 2006, design, art and architecture universities, centres and consultancies. Spanning all Europe, it acts as a platform of interdisciplinary exchange, examining the livability of public spaces by using par-ticipatory design as an approach to supply systems of process and innovation.

With “SMOTIES - Creative works with small and remote places” project, the Human Cities plat-form applies its approach to 10 small European places which are depopulated, relationally remote, and depositories of a material and immaterial culture that risks being undervalued, not consolidated, not handed down, and hence lost. These small and remote places benefit by the design of cultural and creative innovations within public spaces and in collaboration with local stakeholders thanks to the 10 project partners, that we defined “nodes of creativity”: this definition includes public institutions, design centres, creative agencies, national associations, research centres, located in 10 European cities. They work with the small and remote places as interlocutors, activators, and supporters of creative works to be anchored in public spaces through

a shared methodology that will guarantee a process of engaging local communities for audience development, transnational mobility of creative professionals, masterclasses and training for capacity building purposes and an evaluation of the impact in order to generate a long-term legacy in the involved contexts.

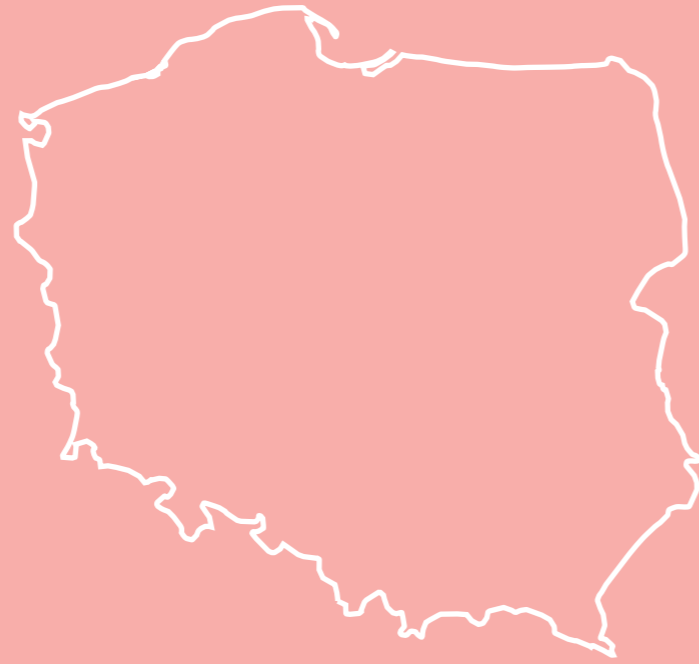
The partners are 10 nodes of creativity including public institutions, design centres, creative agencies, national associations, research centres located in 10 European cities that have been chosen for the particularity of position, cultural uniqueness, development potential, and consoli-dated role in their creative sector: Design Department - Politecnico di Milano (Milan, Italy), Cité du Design (Saint-Etienne, France), Clear Village (London, UK), FH Joanneum, University of Applied Sciences (Graz, Austria), Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (Ljubljana, Slovenia), Estonian Association of Designers (Tallinn, Estonia), University of the Aegean (Ermoupoli, Syros, Greece), Zamek Cieszyn (Cieszyn, Poland), University of Madeira (Funchal, Madeira, Portugal), Alternance SLF (Reykjavik, Iceland).

This publication “Creative works in small and remote places: European best practices explora-tion” is the result of in-depth research conducted by the network of the 10 European partners that, over the first year of the SMOTIES project, have been exploring and analysing 50 different cultural and creative initiatives that have happened or are still happening in small and remote places around Europe.

The research aimed at understanding and interpreting the state of the art and the strategic streams regarding the cultural and creative sector and at inspiring local partner institutions in the development of the creative works in their the small and remote places.

BB

Articles



## Zamek Cieszyn Design Centre

Zamek means 'castle' — and it is a unique castle with its function as a design centre. Castles symbolize stability and memory, whereas design embodies modernity and change. Could anything be more self-contradictory? And yet, Zamek has existed for 17 years now, in a small town on the Polish-Czech border, promoting good design and showing how to make good use of it. Zamek cooperates with companies, NGOs, and public institutions — wherever innovative thinking is in demand. It supports any activity that can improve the quality of life, also backing social innovators, who design solutions for elderly people and persons with disabilities. What is more, Zamek helps companies to adapt to ongoing changes and we accompany young people making the first steps on their career paths. By organising courses with experts it teaches how to use design thinking in practice. Zamek constantly searches for new areas of development in the fields of traditional handicraft techniques and natural materials.

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# Do you live in the best place on Earth?

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Translation: **Martyna Szczepaniak-Woźnikowska**

Location: **Poland**

Until recently, many social scientists claimed that in 2050, up to 75% of the world population would be living in cities. Based on the directions of migration flows, it seemed rather certain that was going to happen. After all, cities – especially big cities – offer much more opportunities than small towns and villages.

And yet, the bizarre year 2020 and the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to lockdowns in numerous places on Earth, proved these forecasts wrong. Big cities are no longer as attractive as they were barely two or three years ago. People started turning in the opposite direction – this might not be a widespread trend yet, but there are quite a lot of people moving to less populated areas. In 2020, in Poland, the largest number of building permits for single-family homes was issued as compared to the past decade; the prices of property and land soared. In the times of the pandemic, many people locked in cities seek refuge in distant and wild places, where they find escape in nature. Non-urban areas seem safer. With remote work and education as well as online shopping and services, living in a small town becomes a feasible alternative.

However, this way of living is not available for everyone. What is more, for the time being, it is hard to say whether the changes brought by the pandemic will become large-scale and the retreat from big cities (which is particularly a middle-class phenomenon) will be more extensive. Will such people turn into a new creative power and an inspiration for small town communities? These questions have yet to be answered. Just like another question: is the strive for safety – which encourages most people to move from cities to towns and villages – enough to make people stay in a new place for longer? It is quite likely that a majority of inhabitants of smaller localities will still consider moving to bigger cities in the future. Nevertheless, some of them will keep to their small hometowns far from large centres. Are they bound to live worse lives? There are no ready-made answers to this. You might find some inspiration, though, in the five Polish towns that we have examined.

**“Some of them will keep to their small hometowns far from large centres. Are they bound to live worse lives?”**



The Hidden Town project / Sejny ©Wiesław Szumiński, Barbara Karolina Kotowska, Bożena Szroeder, Michał Moniuszko

## Bridging the gaps with patience

“You live in the best place on Earth” – the younger generations keep hearing this sentence, repeated by an activist from Fundacja Pogranicze (The Borderland Foundation) in Sejny, a town near the border between Poland and Lithuania. How to make the youth believe these words? For example, by making sure they have an opportunity to learn as much as possible about the place they live in. For 30 years now, the Foundation has focused on local history, discovering and reminiscing the past. The Foundation is located in a symbolic spot: a former yeshiva (a Jewish school) and synagogue, although Jewish history is not their only field of interest. Sejny is now home to about 5,000 people: for ages, Poles, Jews, Lithuanians, Russians, and Belarussians co-existed there. In a place like this – the borderland – bridging the gaps between people of different denominations, nationalities, and cultures is no easy feat.

And it never ends. With every new generation, the history must be patiently rediscovered. Ukryte Miasto (Hidden Town) is one of the latest projects by Pogranicze. Its implementation was disturbed by the pandemic in 2020. As part of the project, young people were to meet the oldest residents of Sejny to hear their stories about the town as they remembered it from the years gone by. Owing to the restrictions, the form of the meetings changed and many conversations took place via phone or online. Even so, the stories were told: personal testimonies, tales, and anecdotes. They were then used for creating a unique subjective map of the town, presenting important people and places from the past. The young participants listened to their grandparents’ and great-grandparents’ stories as well, adding their special places to the map, which made the result even more personal. An installation representing the town was created, where each cubicle resembling a miniature flat was a visual reinterpretation of a story.

Thanks to the project, young inhabitants of the town were able to see Sejny and its history through the eyes of their close ones. It served as a great opportunity to build cross-generational relationships. All the activities organised by the Foundation are based on the belief that bridges are better than walls. Bridging the gaps is a task that requires time, patience, and courage to dig into history ceaselessly, asking difficult questions – and there are many such questions, if one lives in the borderland. Learning about the past is not a goal in itself – it is supposed to help people understand the place they live in. This way, teenagers become adults who know where they come from and what their roots are. They have something to build their future on – no matter if they stay in their hometown or move elsewhere. If by understanding their town, some of them fall in love with local history, they might not all leave.

## Experimenting makes sense

Żywa Ulica (Livable Street) is a popular urban experiment in Poland, in which local people are involved in the transformation of their neighbourhood. The experiment makes it possible to test ideas and try out solutions. For instance, a street may be temporarily closed to car traffic. The residents of a given place have an opportunity to personally check whether they like the change and to consider all the possible outcomes.

In 2019, an experiment like this was run in Biała Piska. It was the first small town to do so; previously, the experiment was conducted only in bigger cities. Biała Piska is located in the north-east of Poland, with a population of 2,000 people. In the central part of the town, there is a medium-sized shop and a car park, which was closed to cars for one day. The experiment took place in September, during the European Mobility Week. The area turned into a playground with street games, a café, a dancefloor, a poetry salon, and a photo booth, where everyone could take a funny picture as a keepsake.

That could have been all – just a nice day enjoyed by a local community. However, there was a continuation. The Livable Street project, initially planned as a one-off experiment, was repeated in 2021 (in 2020, it was



Livable Street in Biała Piska ©Biała Piska commune office



cancelled due to the pandemic). During the first edition, the town inhabitants took part in a survey, where they expressed what they would like to change in their neighbourhood, sharing their own ideas. Some of these ideas were then actually implemented, also thanks to the support of a special fund for local initiatives. The money was not big, but it was enough to fund small-scale interventions in public space. What mattered most, though, was the fact that the residents of the town had an opportunity to speak up, share their opinions in the survey, and indicate what initiatives they care about. As a result, the people of Biała Piska created a special leisure and recreation zone by the local pond; they planted greenery in one of the town's housing estates; and they constructed a bookcrossing cabinet in another neighbourhood. The changes reached as far as nearby villages. In one of them, the residents set up a greenhouse; in another – a mural, an outdoor chess zone, and a memorial square; and in the third one, they renovated a pitch with the help of US soldiers stationed in the area as part of NATO operations. In the past two years, five clubs of local women have been established, full of the entrepreneurial spirit. Their members combine their hobbies with ideas aimed at increasing the budgets of the organisations. The women's club from a village which is known in the region for its ecological herbal teas began to sell them at fairs and markets. Another women's club offers cakes, wax candles, Christmas ornaments, and floral decorations.

Can we say that the urban experiment of the Livable Street worked out? Was it worthwhile? The inhabitants of Biała Piska did enjoy the idea of spending time together at the central car park, but the area is not likely to be transformed this way permanently by decision-makers. Nonetheless, the experiment provoked certain positive side effects – it motivated people to become more active, as they felt that they could really change something in their neighbourhood. And it seems like they have not said their final word yet.

## Exercises in imagination

Olga Tokarczuk, the famous Polish writer and Nobel Prize laureate, said that Stacja Wolimierz (Wolimierz Station) “managed to blur the boundaries between artists and so-called ordinary people, between the central and the provincial, between high-brow art and art that brings joy and a sense of community, so necessary in everyday life”. In the 1990s, the village of Pobiedna in south-west Poland was visited by a group of artists from the Klinika Lalek (Doll Clinic) theatre. Thanks to them, the village became a catalyst of various art activities. Their flagship event is the summer festival that attract thousands of visitors from Poland and other countries. The festivals are organised in cooperation with hundreds of volunteers, who probably would never have set foot in this place had it not been for Stacja Wolimierz. And yet, for the past 30 years, a village inhabited by slightly more than 1,100 people has been visited and revisited by amateurs of alternative theatre and music and slow life adherents. The artists managed to save the buildings of the former train station from demolition – the station became their headquarters and it gave its name to the organisation. The renovation took some time, just like the process of winning the trust of the local community. Eventually, the local folklore band began to perform regularly at the festivals and a new tradition was introduced during the summer events, carried out in cooperation with other participants – the construction of natural playgrounds, which children can use for the following months.

The summer festivals are spectacular but what matters just as much – or perhaps even more so – is the day-to-day work of the activists. Thanks to art, they build a sense of community among the local people. Ecology is a crucial area of activity for them: Stacja Wolimierz initiates debates and holds workshops for schoolchildren, aimed at raising their



Wolimierz station/Pobiedna ©Agnieszka Prymon

awareness concerning their town and region. The artists and the village residents have become jointly involved in a number of environmental campaigns and happenings, e.g. to protect old trees. The unconventional character of these actions attracts the attention of decision-makers and the media. The local community's care for their village is also visible in simple gestures, such as clean-up events. Art is a tool that helps break down barriers, provoke positive excitement, and talk about difficult issues.



This is the moment Chełmek would certainly be a different place had it not been for Tomáš Baťa. In the 1930s, the Czech entrepreneur built a shoe factory in this little village. The town grew alongside the factory – it was the embodiment of Baťa's bold vision. The population increased from 1,500 to 10,000. Chełmek was more than a blooming industrial centre – the factory workers were meant to have good living conditions there. For them, a settlement of brick houses was erected. The buildings had a simple form and were surrounded by greenery. Leisure and recreation facilities were also taken care of – the factory workers had access to a tennis court, for instance, as tennis was a sport for masses rather than for elites. The ambitious plans were thwarted by World War II. Barely seventeen houses for workers were built of the five hundred planned. However, the factory remained the focal point of Chełmek for many years to come. In its heyday, i.e. in the 1970s, more than 7,000 people were employed in the factory; 20 years later, the times of transformation in Poland marked the beginning of the end of the factory. It was closed in 2003. Nowadays, there is an industrial and economic zone in its area, with nearly a hundred companies. Still, when the factory founded by the Bata Shoe Company closed down, an important chapter in the history of Chełmek came to an end. For many years, the residents of the town lived with a sense of loss. Only recently, history and architecture enthusiasts supported by the local cultural centre have succeeded in reviving the memory of the factory. The right time had to come to make this possible. The inhabitants of the town started talking about their past – they share their memories, collect mementoes. They began to appreciate the unique history of their own, which is often visited

by fans of modernist architecture and industrial tourism. The credit for this popularity goes to the above-mentioned group of activists supported by the local cultural centre. They have already managed to implement numerous projects, in which art is used for discovering history. One of the projects was Chełmek Fabryka (Chełmek Factory): a series of art events, workshops, and concerts inspired by Baťa and his legacy. The events took place in the area of the former factory, workers' settlement, and train station, where a small museum of the Bata factory in Chełmek is about to be opened. The project had another objective as well: drawing people's attention to the value of the town's natural features. Some of the activities were connected with the Przemsza river, which crosses the town. The activists mean not only to learn the history of the factory and share this knowledge but also to demonstrate the great value of the river and the green areas of the town. Chełmek is a good example of a certain mundane truth: some processes need time and for ideas to bloom, the right moment must come.



Chełmek Factory project ©Paweł Waliłgóra



Grójec Free School ©Agnieszka Mocarska

## In search of alternative paths

The children at Wolna Szkoła Grójec (Grójec Free School) learn how to take care of the environment and build their social competences; how to develop their interests and enhance their self-esteem. They learn through experience – they spend a lot of time outdoors rather than sitting in classrooms like in a traditional school. The Grójec school is focused on community-building to encourage pupils to pursue their dreams, contribute to their neighbourhood in a positive way, and become the voice of change. The forest surroundings of the town are great for organising a variety of outdoor activities, camps, workshops, expeditions, and field games. They are attended by both the town inhabitants and visitors. These alternative forms of leisure are aimed at environmentally-conscious education of children and adults. Moreover, they foster relationship-building and the development of the local community.

Grójec, a town located 45 km south of Warsaw, has a population of almost 20,000 people. The initiative was launched by Fundacja Tropy Przyrody (Nature Trail Foundation). In 2013, the Foundation organised a workshop as part of the first edition of Earth Day in Grójec. From then on, people have been gathering annually at concerts, performances, and fairs. They began to organise their own activities focusing on environmental protection. The group of people who cared about their nearest environment and ecological education of children grew bigger and bigger. As a result, a private school was established, followed by a pre-school. The students learn more than typical subjects such as English, Polish, maths, natural science, history, and art. Above all, the school is a place where they learn responsibility, problem-solving, social justice, and mutual relations.

Alternative forms of education are not common in small towns. However, the school in Grójec attracts even people from the outside – several families from Warsaw have actually moved to send their kids there. Perhaps the examples are scarce, but year by year, the number of people interested in non-formal education is growing, also due to the generally poor condition of the education system and the deteriorating quality of education at public schools. Alternative schools, like the one in Grójec, may serve as an important argument for living in small communities. Especially if they are aware of the significance of children's education – it is children that will change the future of their local communities, or perhaps of the whole world.



## University of the Aegean

### Department of Product and Systems Design Engineering

The focus of the **Department of Product and Systems Design Engineering** is on the integrated design of modern and emerging products, systems, and services. It is part of the **Polytechnic School of the University of the Aegean**, based on the island of Syros. It is the only department of Design Engineering in Greece. The department is a pioneer academic unit in Greek higher education in the field of Design Engineering.

Its educational operation began in the year 2000 and is aligned to the most modern practices and programs of study offered by international accredited institutions in the field of design of products and systems.

At the same time, the department produces high level research results that enjoy wide recognition from the international scientific community. This leading-edge research is referenced and incorporated into the educational material of the various scientific and technological courses offered, so that student teaching is always up to date with the latest advances in the field.





# Creative communities in action: ecosystems of social innovation in remote places

Authors: **Kyproula Bartzoka, Helen Charoupia, Spyros Bofylatos**

Location: **Greece**

Small and remote places rely immensely on their local communities, without which they slowly wither, becoming socially and culturally desolate. Exploring the ways a place can grow resilient when faced with adversity, we discover an amalgam of distributed design, whole systems thinking and the emergence of creative communities. When we begin to design within the embedded networks of a place, a heightened understanding of data collected across space and time is required. Within the framework of Human Cities' SMOTIES, the University of the Aegean collected and analysed five case studies that represent the best practises in the field of social innovation in the context of creative works in the public space. This article picks out a couple of them in order to distil and analyse the lessons that can be learned from them:

- the first case study describes a festival organised within the ecosystem of Syros Island. The initiative is contextualised within the place it was created for and interpreted in terms of how it has managed to sustain itself while producing creative works in the public space of the island.

- the second case study describes the network of cooperatives in Tzoumerka. A fabrication laboratory, a participatory research collective and a farm, create a constellation of organisations with outstanding results when it comes to sustainable living and designing in a remote place.

To contextualise the case studies presented, as well as explain why they are of interest within the Human Cities Smoties context, one needs to analyse the impact creative communities and their works can have in remote places. Encompassing themes of participation and community resilience, the selected case studies underline local initiatives within remote places. The role of creative communities in the context of remote places, is critical as they consist of people who can put together their individual design capacity to propose new desirable futures for the remote place and appropriate practises.

Social innovation has a significant role for creative communities, as it encourages participation by building on tools and methods of service design, to co-create services towards a more sustainable future. One of the biggest challenges these communities face is the need to increase their resilience against the collapse of their traditional support structures. There are three aspects that seem helpful in achieving the resilience:

- persistence (the ability to withstand shocks or unexpected events),
- transformability (the ability to move from crisis to innovation), and
- adaptability (the ability to enact change).

By applying resilience thinking and biomimetic design methods in the context of a systemic perspective, these ecosystems of creative communities can be enabled and strengthened and can better achieve their goals. The increase of the diffuse design capacity of a creative community leads to increased resilience of the systems.

A way to face this challenge can be to turn to nature for inspiration and guidance. There are several "tools" connected to nature that offer interesting approaches on finding ways to increase the resilience of these communities. Biomimicry is a framework that designs solutions inspired by biological systems. It is an approach to problem solving which has emerged through the integration of design with other disciplines, such as biology and engineering, and which attempts to translate biological mechanisms into components of socio-technical systems. Biomimicry offers the tools for identifying patterns and mechanisms in the natural world that have evolved to increase the resilience of a system. Biomimicry can be used to inform the design of creative communities that aim to be more resilient.

Another interesting direction for increasing community resilience, in the context of social innovation, is provided by permaculture. In contrast to monoculture, where only one type of value is the goal of the system, permaculture provides a systemic view that is focused on fostering virtuous cycles and cooperation between different symbiotic systems. Permaculture can be utilised to increase systemic resilience when designing social innovators with creative communities.

By looking at creative communities in relation to the ecosystem they are embedded in, focusing on their interdependencies and virtuous cycles, a polyculture of social innovation can emerge in a specific space. Increasing the diffuse design capacity within this given territory can be a valid exit strategy for professional designers.

## Culture and community intertwined at Ermoupolis, Syros

Stray Art Festival is a street art celebration that has taken place in the island of Syros for the past five years. After a brief description of the remote city where the festival is taking place, this case study presents the creative works enacted with the guidance and facilitation of the team that organises it.

The remote place in focus is the city of Ermoupolis. What characterises it as remote is, first and foremost, the fact that it is enveloped by the

Aegean Sea. This deems the city dependent upon the transporting of goods by boat, especially in the precarious weather conditions of winter. When it comes to cultural events, they are abundant in the tourist season (starting late May and ending beginning of September), but wane as autumn rolls in and the island recedes to slower rhythms. Therefore an imbalance is created, albeit experienced less intensely compared to more remote islands of the Aegean. On the one hand, there are the calm and slow autumnal and winter months where the population of the island is primarily occupied with work or study. On the other hand, there are the vibrant and busy spring and summer months where there is a spike in visitors that stimulate the economy all the while cumbering the environment and depleting resources. Motivated by this situation, a lot of the inhabitants and institutions of the island are trying to promote alternative tourism, that doesn't include events in the summer months, diffusing the intensity of the tourist season.

Inspired by the movement of alternative tourism and aided by their design studies background, a handful of people decided to create a street art festival that would happen in late September, postponing the end of summer. During the second iteration of the event, Stray Art Festival 2018, the externally neglected buildings of the Sports Center of Ermoupolis were adorned with murals, while offering guests three days of music, art, performances and food. The team's initial goal was to organize a festival away from urban centers, re-introducing different neighborhoods of the island while giving their public spaces new life. This encompassed their attempt to strengthen the idea that there can be other corners of Syros (and by extension Greece) that can appropriate and integrate Street Art Culture.

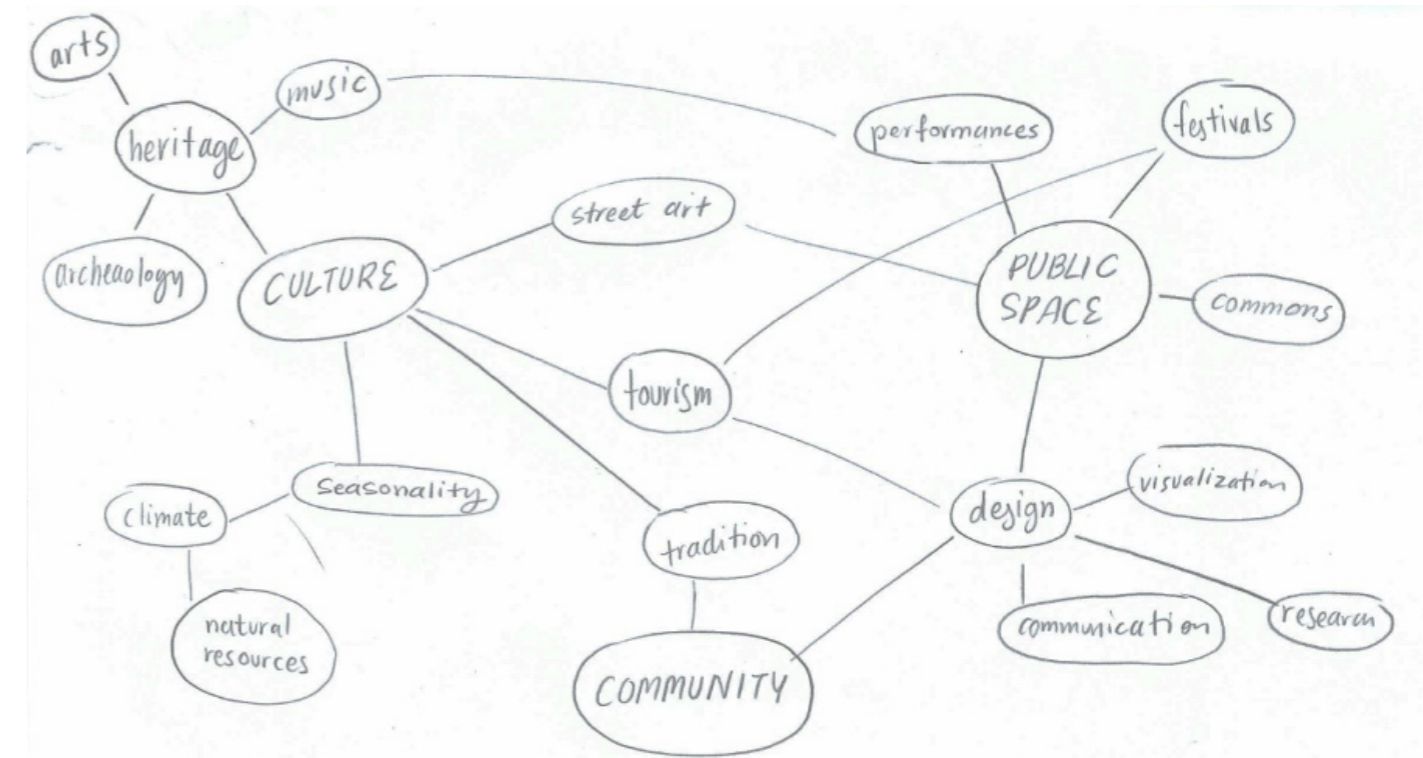


Diagram 1: A mind map of the system of Ermoupolis

Taking all of the above into consideration, the case of Stray Art Festival sheds light to how an initiative can become an important part of the remote place it was organised in. Firstly, the people facilitating the festival's activities are embedded in the culture of the island, living and breathing in the fluctuating rhythms of its city. This gives them the opportunity to understand deeply how the locals could react to the creative works, which plays a part in their design process. Furthermore, the physical outputs of the festival - murals on walls in public spaces, remain well after the three-day celebration has run its course. This demonstrates a long-term thinking that goes beyond the usual activities of similar cultural happenings, leaving a legacy to the locals, while symbolically representing the cultural exchange that took place over the duration of the event. Finally, the activities that are organised are of a wide range, engaging young and old people, of different backgrounds and tastes. The musicians that are invited include traditional folk music players, rock bands, DJ's and everything in between. This amalgam of stimuli brings together people who would not otherwise interact.

A portion of the works done at Stray Art Festival 2018  
©Andromachi Boliou







Kaletzi Village ©Tzoumakers  
 – photo by Nicolas Garnier,  
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This case study describes a collection of different communities with various interests but connected through exchange of products, culture, and creativity with a wider scope to enable the flourishing of the area of Tzoumerka. Tzoumerka is a collection of villages in the north of Greece in the region of Epirus. The network of two villages Demati and Kalentzi as well as their connection to the closest city, Ioannina, is of a special interest. Each of these places has its own creative community, physical environment, and traditions. What brings them together is a common goal - revitalizing Epirus, through art, tech, and agriculture. Three inspiring initiatives are drawing on art, tradition, and open-source technologies to shape a better future in the rugged mountains of Epirus.

Both villages have low population, are far from cities and their citizens have a difficulty in accessing daily-life-support facilities as there are no good transportation links to the cities. In general, the population is aged with low income, the unemployment is high which causes economic inferiority. When the tourists leave, most of Tzoumerka's villages are virtually empty. During the summer, because of tourism, public spaces are more "alive" and well organized. Of course, the physical environment and green pools of leisure surrounding the villages are more than enough, and are open to the public at any time. This encompassed their attempt to strengthen the idea that there can be other corners of Syros (and

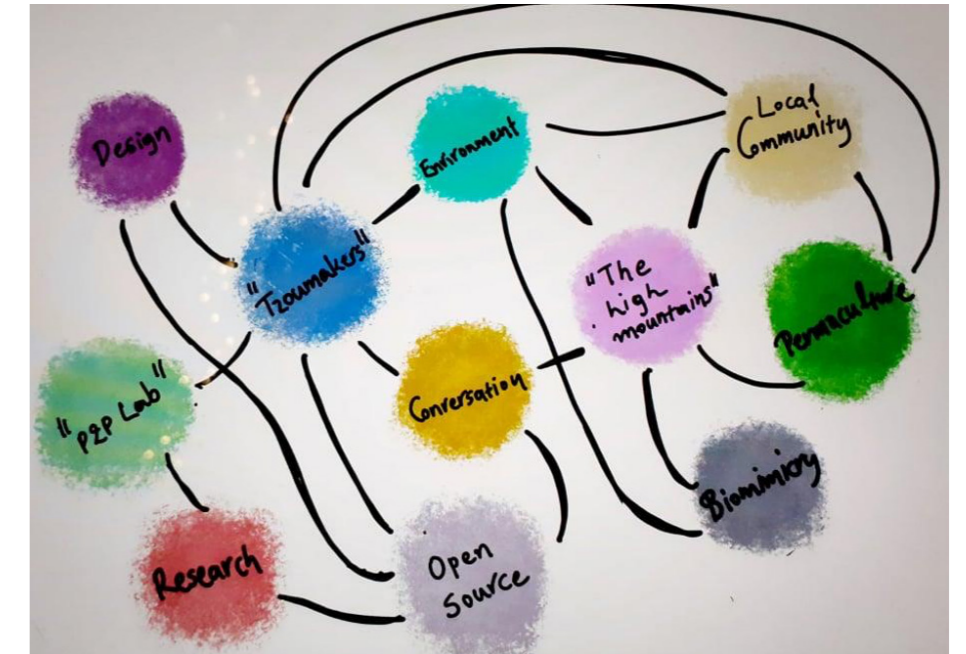
by extension Greece) that can appropriate and integrate Street Art Culture.

Regarding the creative spaces in Demati there are the "High mountains" a social cooperative founded in 2015 by people who live and produce in the mountainous areas. Members of the cooperative are farmers, food processors, livestock farmers, beekeepers, but also carpenters, artists, makers, and scientists. "High mountains" give the opportunity to visitors to customize a tour to see and learn about the lands, history and culture, projects, productions, and live for a while like them. Their vision is to boost economy and production, revive mountainous societies, protect the environment, and reclaim space and abandoned properties. The creative public space in Kalentzi is called "Tzoumakers" which is an



Working together in "Tzoumakers" space  
 ©Tzoumakers – photo by  
 Nicolas Garnier, Creative  
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open lab for communities to cooperatively design and manufacture tools for small-scale agricultural production. Their vision is to create such sites in both villages and cities where citizens may seize technology into their own hands. These sites may be supported by municipalities and/or by multi-stakeholder cooperatives. The main and common characteristic of the spaces with creative works is their effort to revive the areas' tradition of craft and making things by hand; recovering lost skills, giving people reasons to stay, work and



A mind map of the system of Tzoumerka

create; and injecting new energy into rural life. Therefore, one of the most important elements of the physical environment is the intense presence of nature and rural life. Creativity, products, and constructions use natural goods, support the physical environment and most of all are inspired by nature. Regarding "Tzoumakers" the infrastructure of the building supports the operation of the maker space, so it is used by creative people. Also, in the case of "The high mountains," there are fields that are cultivated to produce crops, and this is usually a space where the community of "Tzoumakers" goes to observe the building of farming tools and other constructions useful for agriculture. On the other hand, the people from "The high mountains" often visit the space of "Tzoumakers" to acquire a scientific approach and knowledge. This exchange of knowledge is one of the most important aspects of this case study. In addition, the natural environment plays a crucial role as it provides the creative spaces with valuable materials and offers inspiration for creation.

A final note on the importance of these initiatives is the interconnected nature of social innovation. An important contribution in preparation of this article was provided by the OpenP2P lab, the organisation that supports the 'tzoumakers' space and a fab lab in Ioannina that is working to found the 'Koinergia' cooperative. Koinergia aims to become the collaborative energy community of Epirus. Without the existing ecosystem of the Don Quixotes who left the city to create resilient communities that regenerate remote places, this would be impossible. The cascade of good that these romantics bring is the thing that makes the work undertaken through SMOTIES meaningful and hopeful.

## Conclusion

The Greek case studies show there are lessons learnt in the context of social innovation, biomimicry and permaculture. They show how creative communities across remote places can increase the resilience of the systems they belong to through diffused design capacity. In the case from Ermoupolis, the creators of the festival are embedded in the local community, using service design for social innovation. Their exit strategy is facilitated by their embeddedness, since the locals recognise themselves and the place in the creative works, which motivates them to take care of them in the long term. In the second case study, as well, the exchange of knowledge that happens within the community of makers, farmers, artists and researchers is strengthening the diffuse capacity of the people on a systems level. When it comes to biomimicry, in both case studies nature provides the framework based on which the communities connect. Resembling an ecosystem, the interdependencies between the actors as well as redundancies among them protect the community from external perturbations, increasing its resilience. The contribution of the notion of permaculture becomes visible when considering an ecosystem, social or biological, as not being the sum of its parts but the number of connections between its nodes. The use of appropriate technological means to reduce remoteness is highly valuable, especially in the second case study where the importance of ICT for bridging the gap between the distant villages is underlined. If we are looking to create and regenerate these derelict remote places we need to focus on the enabling infrastructure that supports the people in supporting each other, as well as attracting more and diverse types of initiatives that can create even more connections. Reviving areas of tradition and cultural interest, while creating participatory design opportunities in small and remote places can have a significant impact for generations to come.

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The mission of the **University of Madeira** is to be a university of international level, achieving excellence through education, research and service to its regional, national and international communities.

Considering that a vital aspect of the mission of a university is the transmission of knowledge, research is crucial for the quality of the teaching/learning process. Thus, a university can only ensure the pursuit of knowledge by promoting fundamental and applied scientific and cultural research, enhancing its ability to establish strategic partnerships with other universities.

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# Creative works in remote places, 5 Portuguese case studies

Authors: Susana Gonzaga, Elisa Bertolotti, Sara Patricia Abreu

Location: Madeira University, Funchal, Portugal

This article reflects on how creativity has been a key element in the social, economic and environmental development of small and remote places in Portugal. The five case studies presented show how art and design have generated new synergies among small communities in the peripheral areas of the country such as the two archipelagos of Madeira and Azores, as well as the southwest coast of mainland Portugal. Artists, educators, designers, environmental activists have come together to establish nonprofit associations that throughout the years have helped to engage the local communities into the emerging cultural endeavor of their village. These associations have contributed to an increase of the local economy, a continuing appreciation for local traditions and know-how, therefore supporting the local creative community.

Acting on the countryside and peripheral regions of the country, the sustainability and preservation of the landscape and natural environment became an important aspect in the case studies.

## Introduction and methodology

Located in the westernmost part of the Iberian Peninsula, Portugal is one of the oldest countries in Europe, having been constituted in the 12th century. Besides the mainland, it also includes the archipelagos of Madeira and Azores, located in the North Atlantic Ocean.

Its geographical location has always determined a strong connection to the sea, which has always influenced its culture and even its demographic distribution. Since the mid-1960s, there has been an accentuated migration of populations from the interior to the large coastal cities, leaving the interior deserted and impoverished. The same situation occurs in both archipelagos.

In the last 15 years or so, we have been witnessing, all over the territory, a series of remarkable initiatives that aim to counteract this movement, creating from several remote places of the country several activities that promote culture, economy and local development, with great success. Given the number of cases and the geographical dimension, the best practices could only be pointed out by defining the selection criteria:

- geographical location (the chosen cases shall demonstrate the diversity of the regions and represent the country as a whole),
- local valorisation (in terms of ecological, social and economic sustainability),
- art and design as agents of change.

In line with the aims of the Smoties project - and in order to establish the criteria for the selection of the best practices connected with the economic, social, creative and natural development of small and remote villages and communities in Portugal - a group of definitions was established to ground a set of theoretical principles and practices that could help analyse the creative works within the remote places.

The Smoties project glossary was adapted, keeping in mind concepts such as remote places, public spaces, material and immaterial culture and local network for the global analysis. When breaking down each case study, criteria such as population density, geographical barrier/allocation, public transportation, accessibility, social specifics and economical scenery were also considered.

In addition to the previously mentioned criteria, the existence of nodes of creativity in these remote places was taken into account. These nodes could be defined and found in the work made by the public sector, associations, activists and/or any other actors who may have had a particular position or cultural uniqueness that positively influenced the cultural, economic, social and sustainable scenario of each location.

The chosen case studies co-relate between themselves through three main pillars: nature, art and local culture. Therefore 1 case study comes from the mainland of Portugal, 3 cases from Madeira Island and 1 from Azores. All have three main characteristics in common:

- the remoteness (and consequent risk of being undervalued and eventually forgotten),
- the predominance of nature in the territory (and its use as a resource for the creative works),
- the creative interventions that involved not only the artists but the local communities, improved the quality of life of the inhabitants and paved the way for valorization of such places.



## Portuguese case studies

### Porta 33, Funchal; Madeira Island

In Funchal, right in the middle of the city, is the art gallery Porta33, house for the non-profit Association Quebra Costas, Contemporary Art Center, founded in 1989, whose main goal is to produce and promote contemporary art and work with the scholar community. A Luz Que Há (The Light That



Exhibition "A Luz Que Há"; Porta 33 Funchal. Credits © porta33



Workshop "A Luz que Há". Porta 33 Funchal © porta33

Exists) was the title of an exhibition that took place in Porta33 in 2018. This exhibition was the result of a series of drawing workshops led by a local artist, Luísa Spinola, addressed to a younger public. This project used drawing as a mean of empowerment for

one's knowledge of the self and the world, transforming the children and young teenagers in the protagonists of a learning-by-drawing process. The exhibit demonstrated how an art gallery can be an open space for everybody in the local community: parents, grandparents, teachers and friends visited the exhibition to see their children's work, while discovering Porta33 as more than a place for artists. Furthermore, this project inspired the association to host more regular drawing activities to support children and teens in their growth, bringing in and networking the local community with the creative community.

**Porta 33** is an example of an internationally recognized contemporary art gallery that opens its doors to a series of workshops for children, teenagers and adults. These activities have been proposed not sporadically, but with an annual program. A Luz Que Há, the aforementioned event, ended with an exhibition in the same gallery, generating a strong interest and desire for more similar creative exercises. The request was not ignored: the workshop activities continued, both with the same artists and with new local and invited artists. This happened both in the historic site of Porta 33 in Funchal and in the new location under construction in Porto Santo, where the workshop experiences have become part of the founding work in order to involve the local community and to attract creatives to the small island of the Madeira archipelago. These workshops create a larger community than the usual audience of an art gallery and contribute to exposing children, teenagers and families to different experiences such as conferences, screenings and exhibitions that coexist in the same space.

### Teatro Metaphora, Câmara de Lobos, Madeira Island

A little further west on the south coast is Câmara de Lobos, where Teatro Metaphora (TM) develops cultural activities for the benefit of the local community. Based on non-formal education principles, TM's objectives involve the development of social and personal competences of children, youth and adults, while promoting equal opportunities, inclusion, active citizenship and participation. The group organizes local and international projects, training courses, conferences, seminars, lectures and other educational activities. Teatro Metaphora is based mainly on the work of local and international volunteers cooperating with the local community. A consolidated group of around 60 volunteers participate and collaborate permanently and around 100 more contribute sporadically to the activities.

The following paragraphs present the study of the several interventions that TM has organized since 2016, in which art, public space and environmental education were combined.

Câmara de Lobos is mainly a fisherman village, known because of its relation to Winston Churchill. In the past years is begging to attract more visitors for its upcoming and more frequent cultural interventions, specially done by TM. The streets of the village center are often used as a set to exhibit their performative art installations. After organizing several workshops in which materials recovered from local activities are recycled, the artists and community create the thematic installations that are set on the local streets. Teatro Metaphora illustrates perfectly how an interdisciplinary approach can enrich culturally a small community and the low income population that lives nearby.

The development of **Teatro Metaphora's** projects do not have external intervention from a procedural, methodological and artistic point of view. If one of TM's missions is to foster cultural exchange between youth from Madeira and the rest of the world, through a series of international cooperation projects, for this type of urban projects the heart, mind and practice are totally local. The different artistic experiences have made the urban fabric of the small fishing town of Madeira more colorful and beautiful, and over time have contributed to a new attractiveness of an area that was in need of rehabilitation.



The streets of Câmara do Lobos- Madeira Island, with one example of the urban interventions of Teatro Metaphora. © Teatro Metáfora



### Quinta Pedagógica dos Prazeres, Prazeres, Madeira Island

The third case in Madeira is in the village of Prazeres and its named Quinta Pedagógica dos Prazeres. The Prazeres Pedagogical Farm, founded on 1st October 2000, is a project of education, socio-cultural evolution and development of the rural environment. It aims to stimulate the local economy combating the decreasing number of population. It's also an educational space where local and endemic species are protected as well as local traditions and culture. It is widely recognized by inhabitants and public administration as a place of public interest. The project seeks to preserve the endemic plants and local recipes. For that purpose they produce and sell Handmade and natural

products, based on tradition and local identity, but with an innovative character, made by the local community. Their products are cider, cider vinegars, liqueurs, jams, dehydrated products, and infusions, their quality is widely recognised by consumers and national and international entities. The project includes also a farm with animals, and gardens of orchards, herbs and a small botanical garden, the naturalist Father Manuel de Nóbrega herbarium/museum center, and an art gallery called Galeria dos Prazeres.

At the **Quinta Pedagógica dos Prazeres** it is a matter of a coexistence of activities: sustainable agriculture, production of some food products, the house of the tea, the herbarium of the ancient priest-biologist take place in parallel with the activity of the art gallery. The **Gallery of Prazeres** over time has been entrusted to various local curators and has been supported by a series of local volunteers. It has hosted exhibitions of international and local artists, some artistic residencies, guided tours for schools, a series of screenings for the community, as well as a few small experimental art festivals. The gallery has always functioned as a contemporary art gallery, without necessarily trying to put at the center issues such as participatory and public art. Slowly, through various activities, it has contributed to the circulation of a different audience in the small rural village in harmony with local community.

Entrance of the Quinta Pedagógica dos Prazeres in Madeira.  
© Susana Gonzaga



### Walk&Talk, Ponta Delgada, Azores

In the archipelago of Azores, in the São Miguel island there is an Arts Festival called **Walk&Talk**, organized by the cultural association Anda&Fala. Since its beginning in 2011, it has contributed to transform the islands into a laboratory for contemporary and transdisciplinary artistic creation. Through experimental projects in a permanent dialogue with the territory, the culture and the local community, Walk&Talk has promoted a favorable environment for sharing and co-creation. The project focuses on the involvement of local communities, migrants and visitors to incorporate a number of artistic disciplines, including dance, performance, theater, architecture, design, cinema and music. One of the specific projects is called "**Casa do Quarteirão**". It was a project developed within Walk&Talk 2016 and it was born out of the community that lives and works in the neighborhood (Quarteirão) in Ponta Delgada (São Miguel Island - Azores Islands), reclaiming a physical space for convivial and collaborative use. Orizzontale (Italian Architecture Collective based in Rome) designed a wooden installation in the core center of the neighborhood, while NO-ROCKET used painted tiles (in Portuguese, "Trilha") and mirrors to create an installation that invited people to reflect on the hidden meaning of the blurry borders of the neighborhood and the system behind it.

Walk&Talk 2018  
Révéler, Campoaz  
© Filipa Couto / Walk&Talk



**Walk&Talk's** case is a good example of a participatory experience. The annual festival acts as an enabler of creation through a series of workshops and activities, in a permanent dialogue with the surroundings, carrying-out the need to give new life to that transit area. The project involved the local community in the fieldwork and participatory design initiatives, using the festival not only as a bridge between the requests of local associations and the invited creatives, but also as a means to value and preserve the craftsmanship present in the area. In this case study, Art served as a tool to propose scenarios, gatherings and participatory actions, as well as food for thoughts for the experiences that continued to unfold later in the Quarteirão area of São Miguel.



## Rota Vicentina, Odemira, Portugal

On the mainland, in the southwest coastline of Alentejo there's the Rota Vicentina – an Association for the promotion of Nature Tourism on the Alentejo and Vicentine coast. Since 2013, this is the entity responsible for managing, integrating, boosting, developing and promoting the 750 km of trails and the tourist offer in this Natural Reserve. It aims to become a defining feature of the region, enabling its enjoyment through walking or cycling, and contributing unequivocally to the sustainability of the rural world, by boosting economic activity, stimulating existing activities and services, maintaining and strengthening local traditions and cultures, encouraging the creation of new businesses and promoting the destination outside peak seasons. This non-profit association is supported by one of the most important networks of public and private partners in Portugal, who, united in a joint initiative in the interests of tourism and the sustainable development of the region, are determined to preserve the Southwest Alentejo and everything that makes it so special. With a network of more than 200 associates, Rota Vicentina is not only about paths, but involves local accommodation, small rural hotels, restaurants, tourism animation companies, transports, local commerce and national and international tour operators. These companies provide all kinds of services so that tourists can fully enjoy the region and contribute to the sustainability of the project and maintenance of the trails. It is important to focus on the involvement of the communities and on the strong voluntary component that the maintenance of this network requires. The network of local partners and entities with responsibility in the region, allows Rota Vicentina Association to follow the day-by-day needs as well as in keeping a strategic reflection about the region's development. Since 2012 and on, all these paths have been traced, mapped and upgraded, creating a network of routes through nature, remote towns and even some private properties, bringing together all those wanderers that dared to explore different cultures with the communities that otherwise

might be "forgotten". This project stands out due to the sustainable and responsible way that the organization found to value the local culture, the communities inhabitant in these remote areas and bring them together with everyone that dares to get to know them face to face in the most peculiar spots.



Hikers talking with local farmers, in one of the Rota Vicentina paths. © RotaVicentina

## The case studies according to SMOTIES' remote places analysis

Figure 7 illustrates the relations between the locations of the 5 case studies and their remoteness characteristics in terms of the location and the character of the places. Two of the cases are located in city centers (Madeiran Porta 33 and Teatro Metáfora), but can still be considered as remote due to the geo-position on an island and the amount of population, comparing to the main cities in the mainland of Portugal. One case that stands between an urban character and open landscape is the case of Walk&Talk - this Art festival takes place in the natural paths outside Ponta Delgada, the capital of island of São Miguel island in the Azores. The remaining two cases refer to examples that take place in small and rural villages - The Rota Vicentina represents a network of small local business along the natural path of the Natural Reserve of Costa Vicentina in the mainland of Portugal.

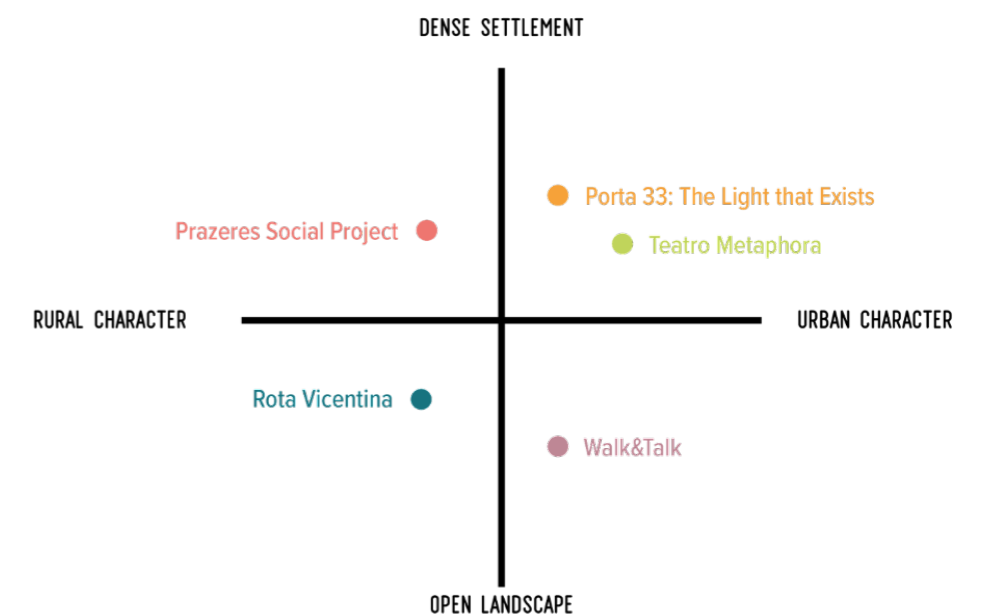
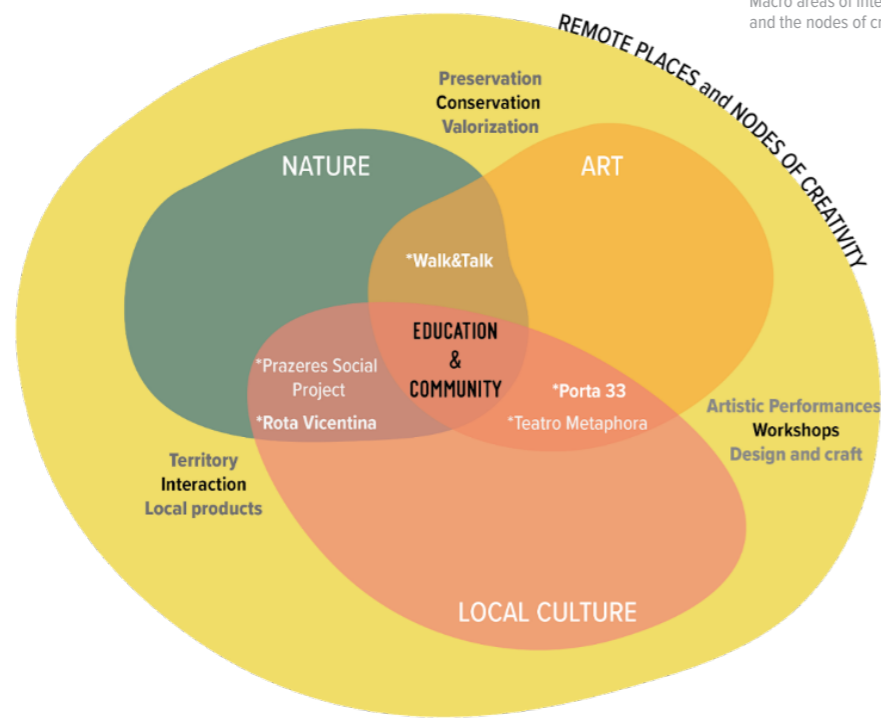


Diagram on the level of remoteness of each case study.

Macro areas of intervention from the remote places analysis and the nodes of creativity.



### Education and Community as the linking actor on establishing creativity and local development

The main diverging aspects as well as their common background regarding the areas of intervention were of special interest when selecting and analyzing the above-described case studies. It was important to establish the map of the thematic macro areas and position each case study on it in accordance with its main characteristics. The figure nº 8 illustrates those macro themes.

All cases taken into consideration have the presence of art and local culture, declined in common in different ways:

- their relation with nature, art and local culture;
- the activities made related with the presentation of the heritage, conservation of the natural ecosystems and valorization of the natural and immaterial patrimony; and
- the direct work with the territory, the valorization of local products, and interaction between the inhabitants, tourists and foreign communities.

In the cases of Porta 33 and Teatro Metaphora, art acts as a facilitator of moments of creation, be it in

the form of artistic performances, workshops or communion with the local craftsmanship. Similarly to Prazeres Social Project, Rota Vicentina takes a great effort in exploring and giving value to its territory. Rota Vicentina comes out as an effort from the organization to enhance a variety of remote locations along the southwest of Portugal. The objective is paying attention to the local communities, their traditions, their values, who they are, while empowering the local community to self-sustain economically, socially and culturally. One of the greatest aspects of this project and the one that has guaranteed the success of it is that the association Rota Viventina generates a big network and synergies between the network and the maintenance of the trails as well as the structure that can motivate tourist to go there. Educational approaches and linking the different communities along a project, help to develop small and remote places with a sense of responsibility and with a considerable amount of success impacting a cultural, social and economic layer of the place. These approaches lead to a more sustainable result, as the projects go along the years increasing in competence and impact within and outside the community, involving not only the community but other people as well.

All of the 5 case studies show how a remote place can be restored through the commitment of the local communities and through a hard effort of evolving people through art and nature preservation. The research of each case study brought to light how the material and immaterial culture and local network of a place is as an important asset as the willingness and initiative made in such an effort of valorization, improvement and to overcome each place's handicaps (low population density, geographic barriers, scarce public transportation and poor accessibility, social specifics or economic difficulties). The creative and entrepreneur community play a central role in creating the opportunity for participatory practices that involve the locals in order to improve their quality of life. Adding to that, helping such communities to continue the work once the creatives have parted - is likewise essential.

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# The good decision

## Two examples from Austrian practice

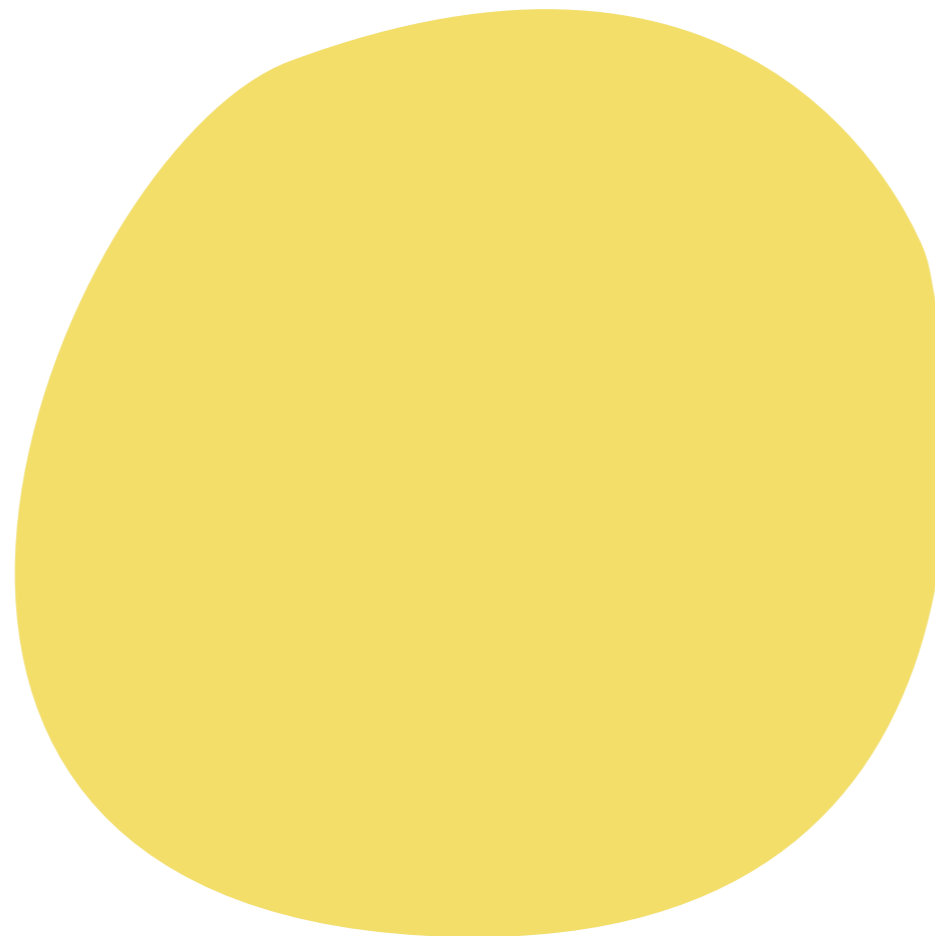
Authors: Erika Thümmel and Anke Strittmatter

Location: Austria

A small association tries to revitalise a neighbourhood, organises events with the residents and the operators of small shops, asks for and develops suggestions for improving the quality of life. Committed citizens discuss, think, and dedicate part of their free time to the project and then notes lie in a drawer and nothing happens. The association does not have the opportunity to intervene in the city's traffic planning, in the management of green spaces or the furnishing of public spaces, and proposals that have been discussed for a long time go up in smoke and are forgotten. This is what happened in the Jakomini district in Graz, but probably also in many other places. The citizens are left with frustration and the question: what did I get myself involved for? In the case of the redesign of the traffic dominated and chaotic Griesplatz in Graz, such participation processes were initiated again and again over 15 years, but nothing was implemented. Frustration turned into massive anger. Was that an employment project to channel the energy of dissatisfied citizens? Do you also know of such examples?

In researching best practice examples for the SMOTIES project, Austrian team were able to observe a better and more successful approach in the small Upper Styrian community of Stanz, which is presented in the first part of this article. In the second part, a completely new form of voting, "Systemic Konsensing (SK)", which has won several awards, is presented, as it is used very successfully in Munderfing in Upper Austria. The method of Systemic Konsensing is so far only known in the German-speaking countries and it would be desirable if it could be disseminated beyond these countries.

**"The citizens are left with frustration and the question: what did I get myself involved for?"**



### Example Stanz in Upper Styria

#### Breaking down political party lines

An essential aspect that led to the successful implementation of the projects was to break down party boundaries, since, at least in Austria, the phenomenon of mutual blocking of ideas of the respective opposition party often dominates. In firmly established traditional party landscapes, beyond reason and the interests of the citizens, many things are not implemented only because the protagonists are driven by the desire not to grant the competing party any success.

This can be circumvented by means of a citizens' initiative and active citizen participation, and a new dynamic and climate of change can be created. In the case of Stanz, the incumbent mayor emerged from a citizens' initiative against the amalgamation of the municipality. The independent mayor, Fritz Pichler, who was nominated by the Citizens' List and is now in his second term of office, could not be counted as belonging to any camp, and this made it possible to work together across the traditional party lines of the Social Democrats and the Conservatives. As soon as the first representatives of the traditional parties agreed to his projects, the others joined in, and he was able to implement it with a large majority in the municipal council. Mayor Fritz Pichler saw it as a logical success, "when a local councillor from the Social Democrats volunteered to drive the new e-taxis, I knew that we had won. The resentment between the parties had dissolved in favour of the village."<sup>1</sup>

#### Working groups and setting priorities

In order to act in a solution-oriented manner as a citizens' initiative, the most important topics were framed and working groups were established. In total, a group of about 80 committed citizens in the village with 1855 inhabitants (as of 1.1.2020) were involved, with the inner circle of activists comprising 13 people. In a first phase, five topics were agreed upon (missing centre, bathing pond, culture, quality of life and energy) and working groups were formed. It was essential to focus on these few topics and to implement individual milestones that are actually feasible. "This created a sense of achievement and was able to pull people from behind the stove," Fritz Pichler remarked.

Economical use of everyone's time was essential for success. This means small group sizes, clear focal points, and adherence to the principle of "one thing after another". This showed that it is possible to help shape one's own environment. It is a process of change that started 8 years ago (2013) and is still on-going. The success keeps the group alive.

In order to devote working time to solving essential problems, the mayor explained that he does not go to every event and if he does, he does not drink alcohol there. "If something takes too long, people break away." This is because the difficulties of balancing work and family life must be taken into account, especially if you want to keep good contributors in the participatory processes over a longer period of time and prevent them from dropping out after a short time. But too great a pace of change also overwhelms many, and so small but continuous steps have proven successful. But a tight organisation is also necessary to make it all work out.

To free up energy, it was important to make the municipal administration leaner and, for example, not to fill positions that became vacant due to retirements and to implement radical digitalisation measures. But perhaps the most important aspect was the increased cooperation within the community and the awareness of many citizens that they themselves are responsible for shaping their environment. However, communication in the community is also necessary on an informal level, and to make room for this, space for exchange with and among customers was deliberately created in the newly designed local supplier.

<sup>1</sup>Much of the information comes from an extensive interview the authors conducted with Mayor Fritz Pichler on May 3rd, 2021.

### Involving specialists

A wise approach was to involve one external specialist in each of the working groups. They were selected based on their professional competence as well as on their personal ties to the region and their social competence in dealing with groups. It turned out that these people also invested their heart and soul and their knowledge led to feasible proposals. The horizon was broadened, and it was ensured that high-quality and forward-looking concepts emerged. In the knowledge of the importance of design, external experts in this field with a personal connection to the place were involved in questions of local development in Stanz from the very beginning. For example, the mother of the architect Werner Nussmüller comes from the village and the sociologist Rainer Rosegger, who was consulted, has family ties to the region. The external communication of the project was designed by the graphic designer Manfred Derler.

### Feasible goals

Self-confidently, the citizens' initiative thus advertised with the slogan "Our record - EVERYTHING that was promised has been implemented! ... down to the last full stop" in the election campaign after the first legislative period (2015-2020). Some of the bigger projects were: Malburg pond secured by long-term lease, flood protection implemented, new local supplier Trixi's Dorfmarkt opened, new housing for young and old in the village centre established as well as citizens' projects such as a Kost-Nix shop (Costs Nothing Shop), an e-taxi service, the village workshop and the "Bankerl-express" (low-threshold carsharing service) from Kindberg to Birkfeld supported. Furthermore, the following is listed: "Municipal office renovated, afternoon care for our children introduced, planning for Internet broadband expansion completed - implementation in 2021 and planning for an "Energy Community Stanz" approved by the Research Promotion Fund in the amount of € 720,000.00".<sup>2</sup>

### Pulling together

A self-confident model municipality for rural areas, a high quality of living and a good basis for a lively village community - these are the goals that the municipality of Stanz

has set for itself until 2025. Every citizen is invited to get involved in the future development of their community. By finding common goals, it is possible to create sustainable projects in the municipality that are designed and implemented at the community level. All plans, decisions and actions are characterised by a strong "we-feeling". "The personal commitment of each individual creates a high level of personal responsibility and pride in what has been achieved."<sup>3</sup>

### New forms of democracy

In the context of the premiere of the film "Reitet das Dorf!" (Safe the Village!) by Teresa Distelberger, the municipality of Stanz invited to a conference entitled "Village of the Future as a Global Impulse-Giver" on 11 February 2020, the managing director of the "European Forum Alpbach", Philippe Narval, who has been dealing with questions of the renewal of representative democracy for many years, mentioned three concrete examples of how citizen participation concepts bring about great changes. "We have to look past the dogma 'It doesn't depend on me', because that is simply not true," as he pointed out, using the example of a Vorarlberg kindergarten teacher who set up the first democratic kindergarten. "Democracy has to evolve and be rethought. We have to make democracy tangible from childhood," said Narval, who advocates creating places where people can develop ideas and think freely. Regarding citizen participation in Stanz, he was particularly impressed by the strong focus on volunteering: "The feeling of being part of something is very strong here."<sup>4</sup>

### Agenda 21 in Styria

The activities in Stanz are part of the participation process Local Agenda 21 in the Province of Styria, which explores the possibilities of cooperation between political leaders in the municipalities and the citizens. With their strategies for active citizen participation, Styrian municipalities play a pioneering role in Austria. Thanks to the professional support and the tried and tested process, the participants reach their common goal more quickly. Alexandra Kulmer and Johanna Reinbrecht from "Landentwicklung

Steiermark" (Styria Rural Development) say: "Experience has shown that the best ideas usually come from those affected themselves, i.e. from the population."<sup>5</sup> And further: "Citizen participation is one of the central issues for the future of municipalities. The citizens work out goals together and participate in the implementation of the projects. Every contribution is a valuable part of the whole and only in this way common goals and implementation projects can emerge".

Among the Agenda 21 communities in Styria, there are besides the spatial planning and citizen participation in Stanz, for example, the children's community council and youth council in Krieglach "Young citizens plan with the big ones" and the revitalisation of the centre of Mautern by its inhabitants. Sandra Höbel, Managing Director of Landentwicklung Steiermark: "The participation process of the present and the future is compact and solution-oriented".<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Much of the information comes from an extensive interview the authors conducted with Mayor Fritz Pichler on May 3rd, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> <https://fuerdienstanz.at/unsere-bilanz-alles-was-versprochen-wurde-ist-umgesetzt/> (14.12.2021)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.stanz.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/images/Amtliche\\_Mitteilungen/61er/61\\_02\\_online.pdf](http://www.stanz.at/fileadmin/user_upload/images/Amtliche_Mitteilungen/61er/61_02_online.pdf) (14.12.2021)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.meinbezirk.at/muerztal/c-lokales/dorf-der-zukunft-als-globaler-impulsgeber\\_a3920910](https://www.meinbezirk.at/muerztal/c-lokales/dorf-der-zukunft-als-globaler-impulsgeber_a3920910), Redaktion Bernhard Hofbauer, (15.12.2021)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.stanz.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/images/Amtliche\\_Mitteilungen/61er/61\\_02\\_online.pdf](http://www.stanz.at/fileadmin/user_upload/images/Amtliche_Mitteilungen/61er/61_02_online.pdf), authors: Alexandra Kulmer, Johanna Reinbrecht, Landentwicklung Steiermark, (15.12.2021)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.stanz.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/images/Amtliche\\_Mitteilungen/61er/61\\_02\\_online.pdf](http://www.stanz.at/fileadmin/user_upload/images/Amtliche_Mitteilungen/61er/61_02_online.pdf)



**“The SK principle is respect for fellow human beings cast in a procedure.”  
Dr. Erich Visotschni**

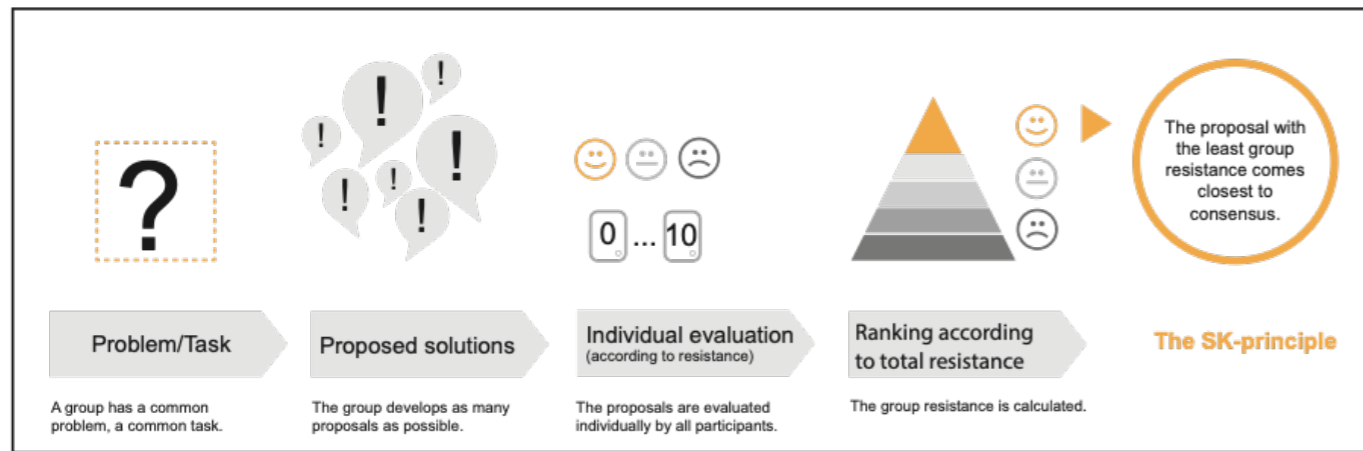


Fig. 1: The principle of Systemic Konsensing

### The Munderfing Citizen Participation Model

The “Munderfing Citizen Participation Model” seems to be particularly interesting in regard to involving citizens in the decision-making process of municipalities. The Upper Austrian municipality of Munderfing<sup>7</sup> is the first municipality in the world to have made the principle of “Systemic Konsensing”<sup>8</sup> an integral part of its municipal policy.<sup>9</sup> Before we go into more detail on this citizen participation model, however, the SK principle with its main features should be presented in a simple form.

#### Systemic Konsensing

The SK principle is not based on conventional democratic voting, which is based on majorities and ultimately also leads to winners and losers. It is a method of decision-making in groups that seek the closest possible approach to consensus. Consensus exists in a group when no one has serious objections or fundamentally rejects the decision.

Systemic Konsensing is a new culture of togetherness that is based on respecting a NO and

using it as a creative potential. It can be used in private, professional, and political contexts.

“The SK principle is respect for fellow human beings cast in a procedure.”  
Dr. Erich Visotschnig - Inventor of the SK Principle

Basically, Systemic Konsensing is about determining how much resistance the participants have to a particular decision. Here is a simple example: Assumed a group of researchers and designers want to vote on where in Europe the next Transnational Meeting should take place. In a conventional vote, alliances might be forged, and a traditional democratic vote might produce a result that some would be very happy with, and others might be very unhappy with.

Systemic Konsensing is different: Ideally, the vote should take place without any discussion, otherwise existing and already entrenched opinions might be deepened again. Each participant in the vote receives a piece of paper on which all the venues are written. Each person or institution should now assign a so-called resistance value to the locations in the form of 0 to 10 resistance votes (V-votes). 0

V-votes mean: I have no resistance to this venue. 10 V-votes mean: This place is unacceptable to me.

Each participant should therefore make a personal ranking of all the locations and enter them in the list with the corresponding points. The results are then compiled in an overall list. (Fig. 2 shows the result of this imaginary vote).

Participants of the vote	1	2	3	4	R-votes	Rank
ROME	0	2	4	3	9	1
LONDON	5	0	8	5	18	3
VIENNA	7	4	0	6	17	2
PARIS	3	7	8	0	18	3
R-votes = Resistance votes						

Fig. 2: Voting list

So, the least resistance in this case is to a Transnational Meeting in Rome. According to the developers of this method, it is important that all participants are aware of the concerns and resistance of the whole group and take these into account in order to be able to look for better solutions if necessary.

It can happen, for example, that a place is ranked first, but overall resistance is high. This is why the developers work with the concept of “standardised resistance”. Experience has shown that a viable decision can be made when this value lies between 0 and 5 points. It is determined by dividing all V-votes by the number of people. In our example, this would be 9 V-votes for Rome divided by 4 persons/institutions, which results in 2.25 votes of resistance. This is a value that lies within the acceptable range and therefore does not require an alternative proposal for a location.

In general, experience with the SK method has shown that finding solutions that generate little or no resistance from all participants have a strong conflict-solving effect.

<sup>7</sup> The municipality of Munderfing is an “Agenda 2021” municipality and is one of the 12 “Austrian places of the future”. Cf. <https://www.zukunftsorte.at/>, Austria Wirtschaftsservice, Vienna (15.12.21)

<sup>8</sup> The SK principle was developed by Erich Visotschnig, an Austrian mathematician and physicist, together with Siegfried Schrotta, a specialist in systems analysis.

<sup>9</sup> Dominik Berger, BK-Business Konsens (editor), Das Munderfing Bürgerbeteiligungsmodell, Graz, 2019. [https://www.munderfing.at/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Agenda21\\_Projekt\\_Abschlussbericht\\_Das-Munderfing-Modell.pdf](https://www.munderfing.at/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Agenda21_Projekt_Abschlussbericht_Das-Munderfing-Modell.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Institute for Systemic Consensus - ISYKONSENS International OG. (Publisher): The SK Principle and the Good Decision. Graz. [www.sk-prinzip.eu/sk-prinzip](http://www.sk-prinzip.eu/sk-prinzip) (15.12.21)

## The use of Systemic Konsensing in Munderfing

Since the 1990s, the municipality of Munderfing has been intensively engaged with the possibilities of citizen participation and has stipulated in the Agenda 21 future profile of the municipality that the citizen participation model should also be developed with the participation of the citizens.

The process of developing a model tailored to Munderfing was led by Dominik Berger, Managing Director of BK-Business Konsens.<sup>12</sup> The "decision-making working group" consisted of 30 volunteer citizens of the municipality, including the mayor and the head of office. In several workshops, this group dealt with the topic of group decision-making in general and the method of SK in particular. The whole process ran over a period of one and a half years.

In the process, concrete tasks in the village were worked out as examples. These included a project dealing with the traffic calming of a road and another dealing with railway crossings.

The following principles and values have been applied here:

**"Systemic Konsensing creates the prerequisite for a new political culture of cooperative interaction, in which collective intelligence is activated. The "WE" feeling of the community representatives and the citizens is strengthened, individuality and diversity are used as a resource for successful cooperation. This new form of decision-making can support the municipality of Munderfing in its development towards a liveable, conflict-capable community life."**<sup>11</sup>

"voluntariness; equality; respect for the wishes and the NOs of citizens; consideration of the existing legal framework and the municipal code; joint decision-making by the citizens concerned; iterative procedure: wishing and dreaming, planning, acting, reflecting, and learning as a cycle; separation between process and content level; involving citizens also at the process and procedure level; linking practice and theory, learning to participate in real cases; and learning together at both levels, process and content - understanding citizen participation as a collective learning process".<sup>13</sup>

Without going into more detail on the concrete contents and process steps, it should be noted here that the chosen approach has proven successful and the decision-making working group has adopted the procedure developed as the "Munderfing Citizen Participation Model V1.0".<sup>14</sup>

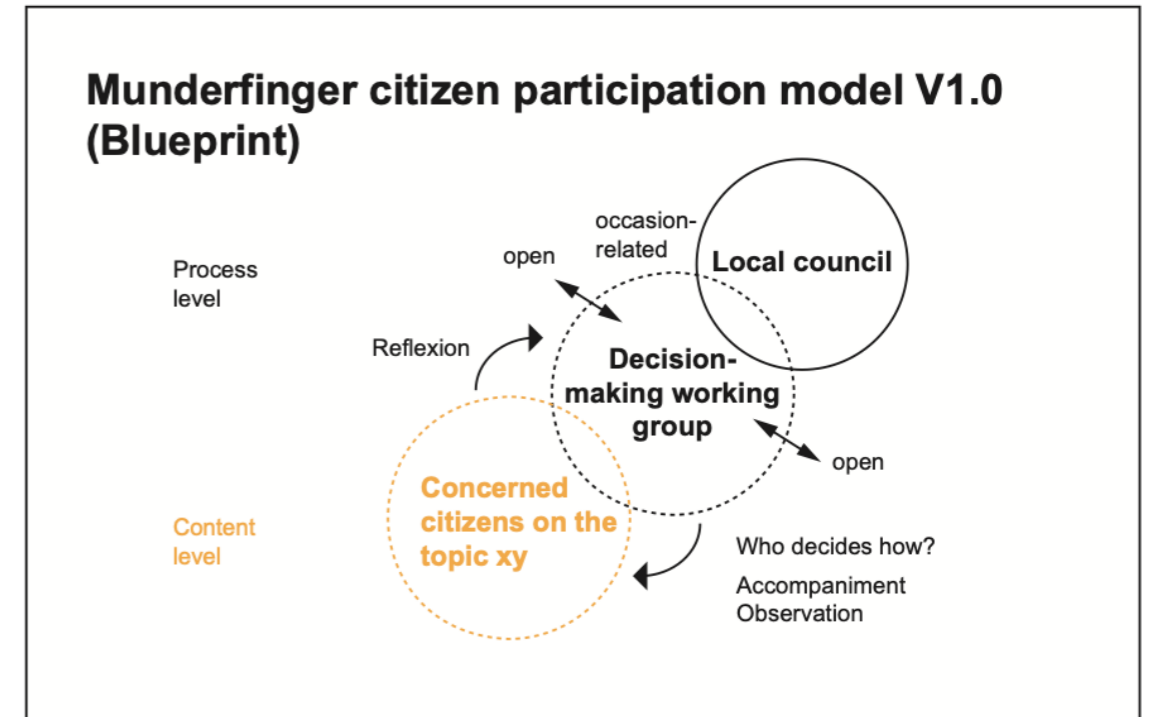


Fig. 3: Blueprint of the Munderfing citizen participation model V1.0

Further workshops followed, which dealt in particular with how this model can be adapted so that individual citizens can also bring their concerns to the municipality and have them discussed in the municipal council, because so far it was always the municipal council that brought current issues to the decision-making working group.

How can a procedure now look like, in which every citizen can raise his or her concerns and yet the WG decision-making is not summoned because of every little thing? The procedure provides for a kind of threshold at which the relevance of the request can be checked.

"Citizens of Munderfingen can now raise their concerns as follows: Citizens with concerns and ideas for change must win over two active councillors for their topic so that they convene the decision-making working group. No majority is required. Party affiliation is also irrelevant. If two councillors are of the opinion that the issue is suitable for citizen participation and that the effort of the decision-making working group is justified, the working group is convened. The working group decides on the procedure for the issue, as shown in the model."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Gemeinde Munderfing (publisher): Bürgerbeteiligung. <https://www.munderfing.at/kundenservice/wahlen-und-buergerbeteiligung/buergerbeteiligung/> (15.12.21)

<sup>12</sup> The inventor of the SK principle, Dr. Erich Visotschnig, also belongs to this company. In order to disseminate SK in a quality manner, authorised SK training institutes train people in SK. An optional SK certification process has been developed in recent years. This information comes from telephone conversations with Dominik Berger of BK-Business Konsens in November 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Dominik Berger, BK-Business Konsens (editor), Das Munderfing Bürgerbeteiligungsmodell, Graz, 2019. [https://www.munderfing.at/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Agenda21\\_Projekt\\_Abschlussbericht\\_Das-Munderfing-Modell.pdf](https://www.munderfing.at/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Agenda21_Projekt_Abschlussbericht_Das-Munderfing-Modell.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Gemeinde Munderfing (publisher): Bürgerbeteiligung. <https://www.munderfing.at/kundenservice/wahlen-und-buergerbeteiligung/buergerbeteiligung/> (15.12.21)

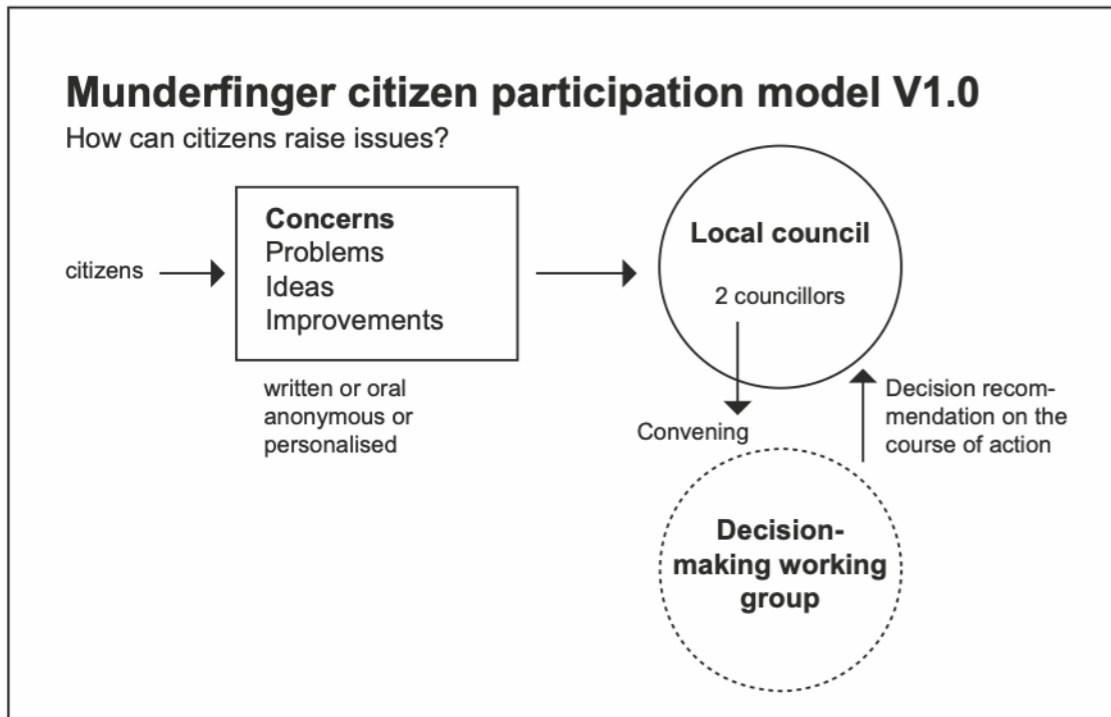


Fig. 4: Munderfinger citizen participation model V1.0

The Munderfingen model has been implemented in its current form since April 2019. Citizens can submit their concerns orally or in writing to the municipal council. An online form has also been set up on the municipality's webpage for submitting the concern. It is also possible to hand in signature lists directly to the municipal councillors or to drop them (also anonymously) in an ideas/concerns box.

The decision-making working group is still active but has now been reduced in size and consists of 10 people, including one representative from each of the political parties. The reasons for this are not known to the authors, but it happened in the context of the inauguration of a new mayor. Since 2019, only one request has been submitted by a citizen, but the decision-making working group continues to take up virulent topics on its own initiative and discusses which topics are suitable to be used in committees or the like by means of citizen participation procedures.

Whereas in the past decades in many municipalities in Austria citizen participation processes were often viewed with scepticism and attributed to the left-wing political

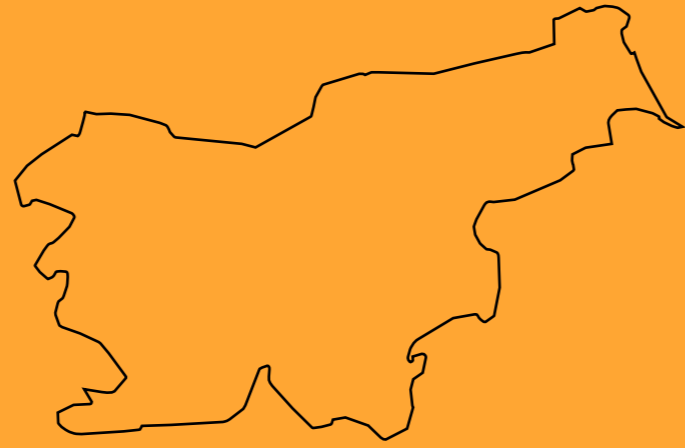
spectrum, this has changed significantly in recent years. The positive experiences of many municipalities - also or especially over a longer period of time - have shown that the problems and issues dealt with in this way have often led to successful projects supported by a large majority of citizens.

Figure 1: The Principle of Systemic Konsensing. Own visualisation based on the German drawing from [www.acceptable.at](http://www.acceptable.at)

Figure 2: Voting list. Own visualisation. The figure is based on a similar example from the book: *Systemisches Konsensieren. Der Schlüssel zum gemeinsamen Erfolg* by Georg Paulus, Siefried Schrotta and Erich Visotschnig. P.17 Danke-Verlag, Holzkirchen, 2020.

Figure 3: Blueprint Munderfinger citizen participation model V1.0. Own visualisation based on the German drawing by DI Dominik Berger-BK-Business Konsens OG

Figure 4: Munderfinger citizen participation model V1.0. Own visualisation based on the German drawing by DI Dominik Berger-BK-Business Konsens OG



## Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia

**The Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (UIRS)** is the central Slovenian research organisation in the field of spatial planning and design and related disciplines. Founded in 1955, UIRS was transformed into a public research institute in 1993, a status which continues to apply to date. Its basic activities are research, education, publishing and policy advising. It also operates a public library with an extensive literature stock and a large collection of other references in the field of spatial planning.

The UIRS performs basic and applied research projects at international, national, regional and local levels, addressing various issues and processes of the urban and spatial development of Slovenia and the wider area. Research activities also include the advancement of methodological and practical solutions for the development of urban areas, as well as planning of settlements and the countryside.

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# (Un)intruding acquaintances

Authors: Matej Nikšič,  
Nina Goršič, Gurvan Seite

Location: Slovenia

## Urban and rural intertwined

According to the scholarly findings, the wish of an average Slovenian is to live in a detached house at a distance from the others but somehow close to a node of an activity. When describing the prevailing living-style desires of the Slovenians, the urban sociologist have coined a term *proti-urbanost*, which translates into anti-urbanity and has more to do with the way of living than the spatial characteristics that would condition it. Even if the spatio-social relations in Slovenia seem to be changing fast and the cities remain the most vibrant places, there seems to be a sense of glorification of the living outside the urban centres, somewhere close to the nature where not too many other people would bother one's privacy and peace. This notion has grown bigger during the covid restrictions according to some reports (Breznik et al, 2021). The term *proti-urbanost* thus describes the general attitude of an average citizen that is aware of all the assets that urban living brings, but at the same time dislikes all the negative sides of urban living such as noise, pollution and crowdedness and therefore prizes countryside over the urban environments.

At the same time the clear distinction between the urban and the countryside is vanishing in Slovenia. The reasons for this can at least partly be found in the polycentric spatial development model of the country (SPRS, 2004), and even more in the fast development of the transportation and communication infrastructures that nowadays connect the national territories better than ever. This allows the inhabitants to exploit the advantages and possibilities offered by the nearby towns and cities while living in the remote areas. Consequently this means that the self-identification of the people living outside the urban nodes is not necessarily linked to the characteristics of their residency-location anymore – while living at the countryside they may feel the belonging to the nearby city or town too, and vice versa.



A group of volunteers maintaining the Village Garden in Smlednik (Urška Sešek, initiator of the project, in the center)  
©Janez Strojjan

This may all sound contradictory, but describes the urban-rural relation within the Slovenian context well. There are no clear borders between the urban and the rural in the functional terms anymore, as well as not between the central and the remote. The goods, knowledge, habits, customs, inter-personal relations etc. that historically typically belonged to either urban or rural territories, can nowadays be found in both places – e.g. highly innovative enterprises can be allocated in some remote however easily accessible areas; similarly the once fresh and locally grown vegetables can easily be part of the everyday in the urban centres. These spatio-functional connection seem to be a prevailing pattern nowadays.

## Creative practices in participatory public space (re)invention in remote places – with a touch from the outside and a flavour of the local tradition and heritage

When Smoties Ljubljana searched for the good practices of the participatory and creative (re)invention of public places in remote spaces of Slovenia, a special attention was given to the aspect of how the good practices have evolved. It turned out that no matter how distant or how close the remote place with an interesting practice was to the nearest urban node, there always were rather clear tights of the remote place to the bigger node. The connection was most often based on the personal relationships between the actors and the places as well as between the actors themselves. The aim of this article is to review the three case studies to illustrate these relations, namely to highlight how strongly they are embedded into the local environment, but at the same time tightly interlinked with bigger settlements and their actors that helped to bring the public spaces of the remote areas to a higher level.

Smlednik is a village in the vicinity of Ljubljana of less than 600 inhabitants. When asked, the inhabitants of Smlednik have the self-impression of being remote while at the same time just next to the capital city. Indeed, they lack public transports links to Ljubljana and encounter difficulties in accessing daily-life-support facilities, but at the same time they are never too far away from the city. The settlement had only few public spaces, all of them poorly developed. This was one of the reasons for the Society of Oral History to launch a project of a community garden. One of the main initiators was Urška Sešek, who spent her childhood in Smlednik but nowadays lives in Ljubljana. The garden was built in honour of the 900th anniversary of the first mention of Smlednik and aimed to contribute to the enhancement of the distinctive historical village core by participation of the locals. In spatial terms the garden is designed in terraces because it allows for better use of space, but also because it respects the topography of the settlement. If the first visible function of the garden is to grow local herb and plant varieties to preserve them, it also serves educational and social purposes. It is a new place to connect locals, to preserve and share old knowledge on gardening. The main yearly event is "flancanje", where visitors exchange seedlings, prepare an exhibition of herbs and discuss about gardening. The garden was built by locals and volunteers with the support of local societies and the municipality of Medvode, but it attracts visitors from a much wider area, including the nearby urban centres in the Central and Alpine regions of Slovenia.

Not far from Smlednik is the settlement of Žlebe. Although located also in the vicinity of Ljubljana, Žlebe is less accessible as it is located in the Polhov Gradec Hills, a distinctively hilly landscape. Cut from the public transportation one can hardly move around the stretched village without a vehicle. Moreover, the village does not have neither a village centre nor a proper public space, except maybe the St. Margaret church and its courtyard. It is this place of the church that Zvonka Simčič, a contemporary artist, decided to address to give more dynamism to the village and to create a place for gathering. She did so by bringing contemporary art and invited locals to participate in the process. Zvonka in a way connects Žlebe to the wider world too – even if she used to live in the sexton's house next to St. Margaret's church with her family when she was young, she is an outcomer with her art-activities as she left the village to perform her art elsewhere. However, seeing her childhood place perishing, she decided to use what she discovered and learned in the broader world to revitalise the place. It is with a sense of



Founders and conceptual authors of the House on the Hill Zvonka T Simčič and Franc Cegnar at the opening of the exhibition House on the Hill 2020  
©Zavod CC



indebtedness that she decided to bring contemporary art to the local church and its vicinity and thus also take care of the cultural heritage of the village.

In the Karst region, next to the Italian border and the city of Trieste, lies Rodik, a village of 350 inhabitants with regionally distinctive low density. Rodik has a train station with few trains stopping per day, good road infrastructures with the A1 motorway passing nearby, there is also a community centre. But people of Rodik feel at least partly remote because of the absence of a school as well as the open landscapes that surround them and have a typical rural character. Nevertheless, as Rodik is located in a highly touristic area of the Karst region, it benefits from the tourism which is based both on natural and cultural heritage. The initiative to improve its public spaces came from the outside from the nearby regional urban centre of Koper, where the ethnologist of a local origin (from the nearby village) Katja Hrobat Virloget from the University of Primorska proposed to create a project around the narrative tradition and mythical landscape shared by the locals. The base for the Rodik Mythical Park was the book of local oral

Katja Hrobat Virloget's twenty-year long research on Rodik's mythical landscape made the realisation of Mythical Park possible and brought her to become Rodičanka – a resident of Rodik  
© Samuel Virloget Hrobat



Jasna Majda Peršolja contributed in the field of collecting and preserving folk tradition of the old tales  
©Petra Meziniec/Primorske novice



tradition written by Jasna Majda Peršolja, archaeological and her ethnological research. Project was developed in cooperation between the residents of Rodik and the experts from the outside with the goal to preserve and transmit the legends of the region to the locals and the visitors. Made of two circular trails starting and ending in the village centre and running through the surrounding forests and grasslands, the two trails are nowadays the main public path in the area that attracts both locals and tourists. The distinctive feature of both paths are the stone sculptures that were made by young sculptors and give shape to the local legends along the paths.

In each of the three cases a "local outsider" can be found. This is a person that is deeply linked with the remote place either through the personal history or the professional interest strongly rooted in the remote place. All these projects would not have flourished without this movement of the main initiators coming back and forth, their link with the outside world but at the same time also a profound insight into the local place and its community. These actors were enough legitimate to take contact with locals and activate the local network, while at the same time had the connections to bring inspiration, energy and not least the funds from the outside. It is not a coincidence that all these settlements lie next to a city, local outsiders took profit of it to learn new things but then returned to do the favour to their original rural place that was important in their previous personal or professional paths. Their journeys show once more the rather strong interconnection and interdependence between the rural and the urban in the Slovenian context. In the case of Rodik an internationally well-networked institution and its expert, who is at the same time coming from the local area, saw an opportunity for the place, and by linking the rich heritage and local knowledge of the place to the internationally available funds managed to change the local public space for better. In Žlebe, the contacts of Zvonka with artists all around Slovenia and Europe gave her material to feed her artistic programme through various exhibitions, which were however tightly embedded into the

local place. This would not be possible if she was not native to the place, according to her own observation people of the hilly hinterlands were rather reluctant to the art in a remote place from the beginning and her tactful, step by step approach that took into account all the specifics of the character of locals brought her to the success. It is after hard work and long conversations that progressively the locals started to look at the exhibition with interest and decided to join and contribute. Similarly Urška's experience in Smednik shows that her "view from the distance", while at the same time knowing the local circumstances very well, helped her organise the whole process of setting up a new central public space of the village in a form of the participatory maintained village garden.



House on the Hill 2019 in Sexton's House next to the Church of St. Marjeta  
Nest: community creation under the leadership of Mateja Kavčič  
©Zavod CCC

All these cases are also linked through the importance they gave to cultural heritage. It seems that the cultural heritage, tangible or intangible, as the above illustrated cases show, is one of the base-stones that attracts the local outsiders to trigger the process in the remote place. Rodik Mythic Park relies on the legends and stories carried through time by the inhabitants of the village and the region. Smednik garden preserves and promotes old native plant varieties and old gardening techniques. While in Žlebe the exhibition takes place in the church which dominates the whole settlement and is a reminder of the past times. At the same time the importance given to the cultural heritage and the will to preserve it might have been one of the main factors that made the locals participating in the projects. Firstly, because it brings memories that can then bring ideas of action. Secondly, because cultural heritage is common to every local, more or less, and it surpasses present quarrels. Thus, it can gather different people around the same project. Finally, because it involves what is often seen as a common belonging, locals feel an interest in modelling the project to avoid any transformation of their heritage that would displease them. It seems this anchor in the local heritage is also a safe place for the new ideas from outside to land in the remote place – it helps diminish the fear among the locals that they will be dispossessed from their local traditions if some new, not foreseen ideas arrive. This is well illustrated by the case of Žlebe where Zvonka and her team of artists had to convince the locals to lend her the church for the exhibitions - she had to call on history and argue that artists already came in this place in the past to ornament the church. Again, embedding the new art into the pre-existing context of the cultural heritage of the village made the locals less suspicious and slowly embrace the whole process and take part in it.



## Looking into the future and the open questions

Nevertheless, once the project successfully starts, the question of its perpetuation and long-term sustainability appears. Who will oversee its continuity? Is a continuity in such projects needed or can they simply be a one-time or short period happening? Should such actions be institutionalised, or should they rather stay spontaneous? What does the relation between the local and the coming-from-outside mean in terms of sustaining the good practices in a longer period – can rural places be empowered to the level when the “help” from outside will not be needed anymore? The contemporary exhibitions in Žlebe currently strongly rely on Zvonka in many regards – especially in terms of the contents as well as the financing. If the project has been a success until now due to Zvonka’s presence, keeping the artistic activities alive demand a change as Zvonka is not eternal. The question of how to find someone or a group of people to take over the project is still pending.

On the opposite side, Rodik Mythical Park managed to become a highly institutionalised project that now involves very different types of organisations: from universities to tourism associations, a business incubator, municipal structures and the European Union programmes. It is due to this diversity of actors that the project had to get institutionalised in order to be functional and manageable. Thanks to this rather advanced framework the Mythical Park seems to have a clearer future. Nevertheless, in case of a shortage of funds by the municipality, the project could regress.

The village garden in Smlednik started thanks to the enthusiasm of a local outsider and the wider group of people with interest in the local history. Even if there is no institution that is namely responsible for the garden, the high number of proactive actors make it thrive on, which rises the expectations that the project will persist through time. If one actor stops taking an active part, the project should not be threatened due to the wide-spread network of active residents co-creating the village garden. At the same time, the diversity of participants and their high number increase the possibility of new ideas emerging, ideas that would permit the garden project to thrive despite any new obstacles. This also means that the initial push that came from the outside got very good resonance within the local community and by including the new local sources made the project sustainable in a long term.

Miza: Last dinner. The installation was designed by Mojca Senegačnik and Zvonka T Simčič for the exhibition House on the Hill 2021  
©Zavod CCC



The instalment of stone sculpture in Rodik ©Mitski park; photo by Jan Antonac, VŠŠ Sežana

## Discussion and conclusion

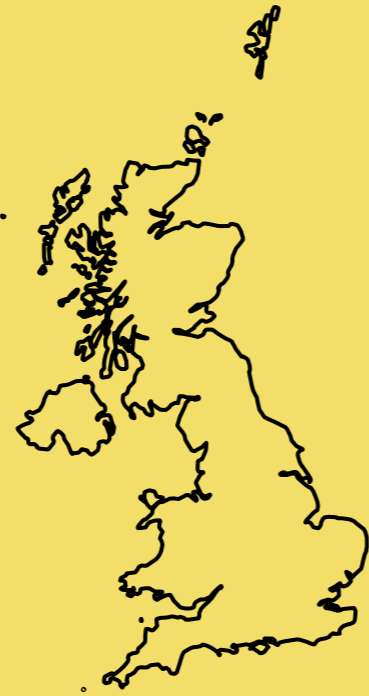
To conclude, these three different projects have been highly successful thanks to both the outside and the inside factors. The so called local outsiders made the bond between the locals and the outside world. This enabled to get new ideas and funds from urban areas or distant institutions, while respecting the locals’ customs and social order as well as traditions and heritage – by doing so the presented cases managed to take the advantage of the urban and rural intertwinedness at its best. The projects strongly relying on the cultural heritage and personal bonds to the place may appear to be more likely legitimate in the eyes of local, no matter of how far the initial idea or the initiator comes from. In a longer term such approaches may also result in a diminishing anti-urbanity sentiment mentioned at the beginning of this article – the ideas and resources spread from the urban centres to the remote places may not be bad at all even in the eyes of the most traditional village residents at the end of the day if passed on in a proper way.

Breznik, J. et al (2021) Delo na domu v drugem valu epidemije covid-19 <Work from home in the second wave of the epidemic of covid-19>. Ljubljana: FGG.

Hočevar, M. (2013) Protiurbanost kot način življenja <Anti-urbanity as a way of life>. Ljubljana: FDV.

SPRS (2004) Spatial Development Strategy of Slovenia, accessed online on 3rd of February 2000: [https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MOP/Publikacije/sprs\\_eng.pdf](https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MOP/Publikacije/sprs_eng.pdf)





## Clear Village Trustee Limited

**Clear Village** is a London-based charity which helps communities build a better future through creative regeneration. We work together with landlords, municipalities and community groups to identify local challenges, build on existing assets, bring in external expertise as needed, and co-create solutions with local residents and other stakeholders. Since no two communities are the same, our projects are varied too. Our recent work includes running a co-working space in central London focused on supporting the local community; creating a series of online hackathons to develop circular approaches for the built environment; transforming a neglected walled garden on the fringes of London into a community food growing hub; and helping to establish a centre for agricultural technology in Malawi. What unites all our projects is our focus on empowering local communities and igniting resilience from within.

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# Participatory techniques and intangible outputs in rural Wales

Author: Josie King, Kristine Luke

Location: United Kingdom

The chosen case studies from the UK are highly community-led projects employing a wide range of participatory techniques. In each, the project instigators find ways to take a step back as the work becomes self-driven, creating longevity and sustainability. In each, the project's legacy is not necessarily about leaving a landmark or piece of urban design behind, but creating long lasting networks between people that can change individuals' relationships to a place.

This article looks at commonalities across the case studies that highlight potential challenges one might face when working with remote communities. The interviewees with the actors of the presented case studies pointed out the perceived power imbalances in relation to the roles of insider and outsider, urban and remote. They have also raised the problems that can occur when a project is viewed through a lens of tangible impacts and processes when it in fact champions intangible ones.

We will be looking at the community-driven, long term, process-based values and intangible impacts inherent in an ex-coal mine turned astronaut training camp, a pandemic-era digital network for imagining small scale utopias, and a waste wool collective operating out of an ex-schoolhouse. All of these projects take place in rural Wales, UK.

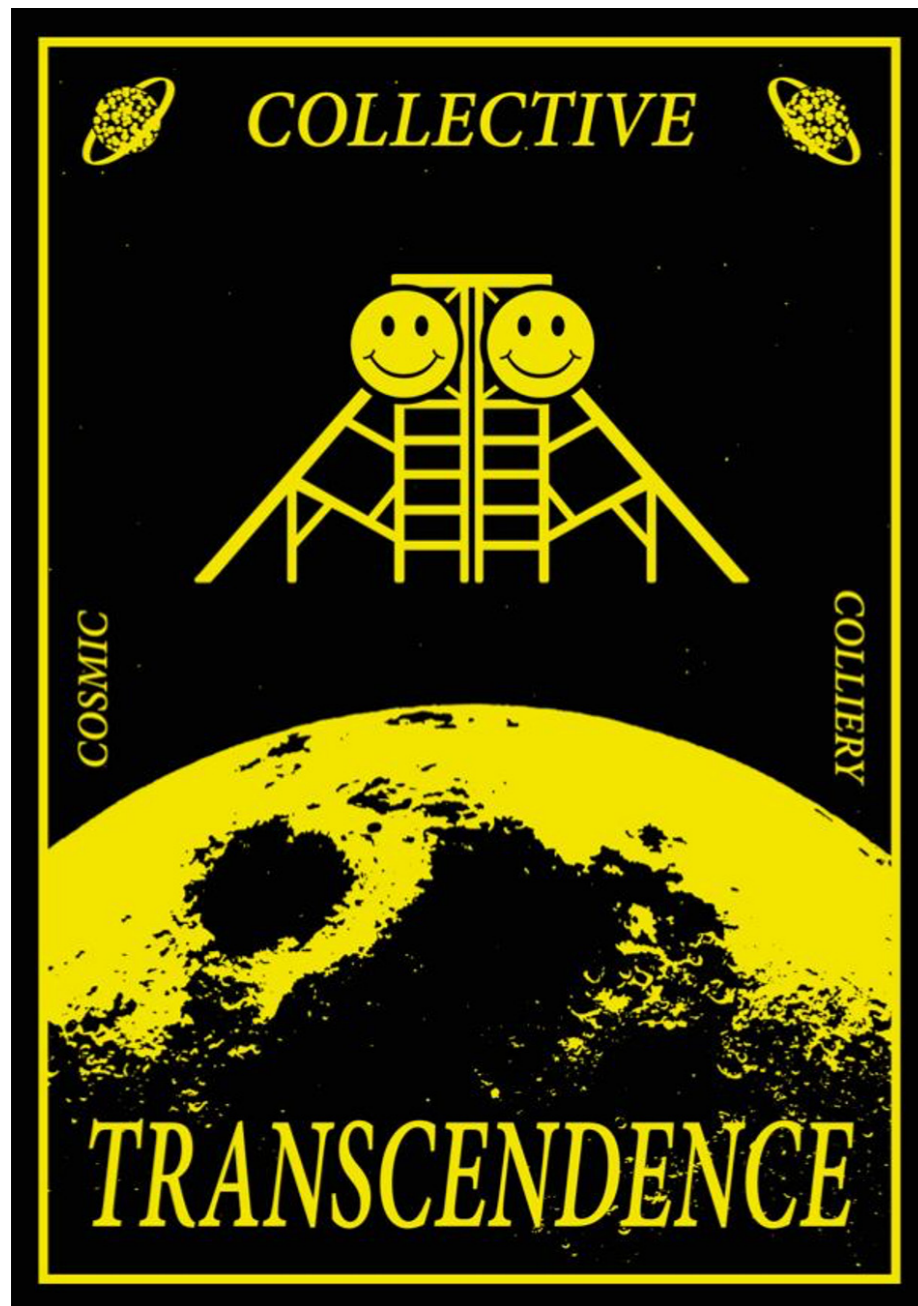
**"...creating long lasting networks between people that can change individuals' relationships to a place."**

## Cosmic Colliery

**THE PROJECT** The Cosmic Colliery project is located in the Penallta Colliery which closed in 1992 becoming abandoned like many coal mines across Wales. The aim of the creative work was to use the mine once more to bring the community together, by imagining it as an astronaut training camp. To alter the perception that young people held for both themselves and their own futures, encouraging them to "think big" by imagining different possibilities for the area and how they are perceived.

Cosmic Colliery, initiated by designer Hefin Jones, was an experiment in using speculative design to alter the attitudes of a remote place. The project's aim was to create an astronaut training centre in an abandoned coal mine in the Rhymney Valley, South Wales. Although fictional, the training centre was the tangible vehicle for the intangible goal of creating community networks and changing the way that individuals in this town considered their own futures. As one of the locals said in the film documenting the process, 'We have forgotten how to think big'.

Cosmic Colliery is an exemplary use of participatory techniques. In just a few months the individuals involved took ownership of the project, working together to achieve this unattainable goal in the name of dreaming for the sake of dreaming. The process methodology was highly co-creative; decisions were made using a journey approach, informed by individuals who became a part of the project organically. Often a relationship with one individual led to a connection with another; this expanded the network around the project and created opportunities to incorporate more community assets. For example, when Jones asked for a zero gravity haircut in a local salon, or went on a pub crawl, or wandered around a place and engaged with different spaces, individuals were slowly introduced to the project and felt they could take leadership and incorporate their own ideas and interests. Another example of this is the 'rave' inside the old colliery. In forming a close relationship with the colliery's owner, Jones discovered that he used to DJ acid house in south London, and had a keen interest in the extra-terrestrial. This unexpected development led to a spontaneous DJ performance in the abandoned colliery. Although this intervention was not connected to the main goal of creating a discussion around making the abandoned mine into a space station, it was key to the relationship with the property owner, who from that point onwards took a keen interest in steering the project.



Penallta Colliery Acid House Festival poster  
©Hefin Jones

In this speculative project a majority of the impacts were intangible, but that did not mean they were left undocumented. One example of an intangible impact was the physical mapping of the network of people connected through the project, which stretched across South Wales. Another was the numerous participants who gained agency and ownership over the project. Examples of this were wide ranging - one of the final interventions was led almost entirely by people Jones had met along the 'journey'. They came together to lead their own open forum about the future of the community, during which Jones removed himself completely, changing his role from designer-instigator to observer.

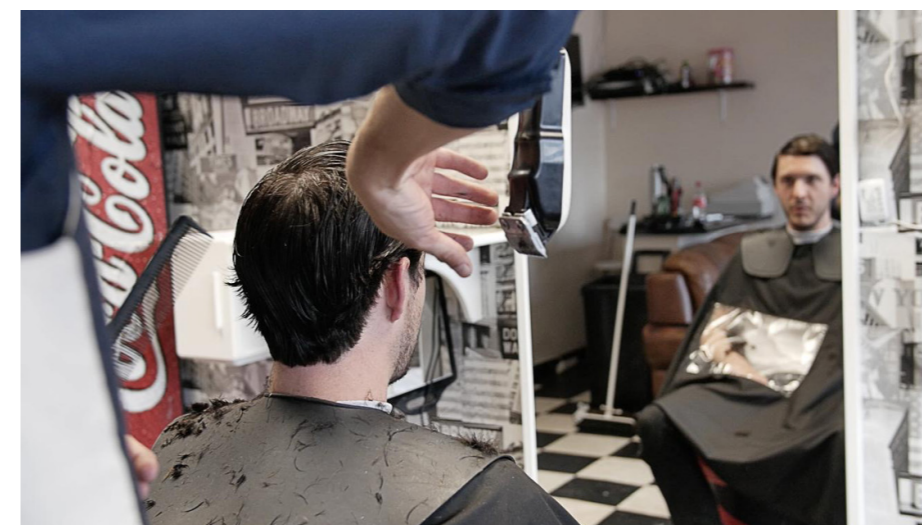
The main issue faced by this project was measuring impact, partly because the project took place over a short period, was supported by the design museum as a residency project and was carried out by an individual. Furthermore, no impact measurement was required from stakeholders, nor was there time allotted for it. However, if there had been allocated time and impetus for such measurement, one of the most pressing questions would have been how to record the long term impact of encouraging individuals to start to dream bigger, or to foster connections.

Map by Lee Reynolds  
©Hefin Jones



Cosmic Colliery's most poignant lessons are not taken from the spatial intervention itself, as this was merely speculative. They are, rather, in the spontaneous co-created interventions that led to unexpected project developments and created more meaningful experiences for participants. They came from the way the designer moved through the community, connecting individuals and gradually relinquishing control. We can gain more from learning about the process of building and nurturing relationships in rural spaces in this project than we can from its physical outputs. There needs to be a way in which we can record these intangible impacts and uphold them as equal and vital aspects of our own rural projects' successes.

Film still, Cosmic Colliery documentary film  
Filmmaker - Liboni Munnings  
©Hefin Jones





## Utopias Bach

Utopias Bach (UB) defines itself as 'experiments that explore ideas for the future, constructed/presented/framed in a small scale (physically, or as a microcosm), that in some way might help us imagine the world a better place for humans and more-than-humans of all kinds, especially those who are most badly affected by the current state of the world or its transition.'

Started during lockdown 2020, this project uses the notion of Utopia to tackle the uncertainties now facing us. It is easy to become overwhelmed thinking about Utopia in the wider sense, so instead this work focuses on creating micro utopias that celebrate noticing the little things that make life better for all. The project is formed by anyone who wishes to take part, and explores new methods of digital collaboration. It has no geographical centre but most of it takes place in Wales - it is located wherever the participants and activities are happening.

UB is an open, flexible, non-hierarchical group based on trust, sharing, and a commitment to the arts as a supporter of wellbeing. The project was initiated in the middle of the pandemic, so its participatory approach had to adapt to this, with in-person and online participation happening on equal terms. It consists of artists, writers, researchers, therapists, and the non-human.

The nature of its 'impacts' is very broad. It is mostly community arts-based and ranging from physical artworks to workshops to discussions to festivals. One key intangible impact is the use of Utopias Bach as a conceptual framing device for the activities and people it connects. Under this umbrella, dialogues, events and artworks that do not operate according to neoliberal notions of scale, visibility, circulation and quantification are highlighted and brought into focus.

One example of a UB project is Merched y Tir, translating to 'Women and Land', which explores the relationships

between these two concepts. The form of this Utopias Bach experiment is a series of migrational meetings, each hosted by a different individual in a different space to focus on a new line of inquiry. The form of this kind of intervention resists definition and is not tied to a specific process or output. This allows it to be adaptive to constantly changing circumstances and contexts. More importantly it also gives space for further idea creation, allowing the work to expand just like that strawberry plant.

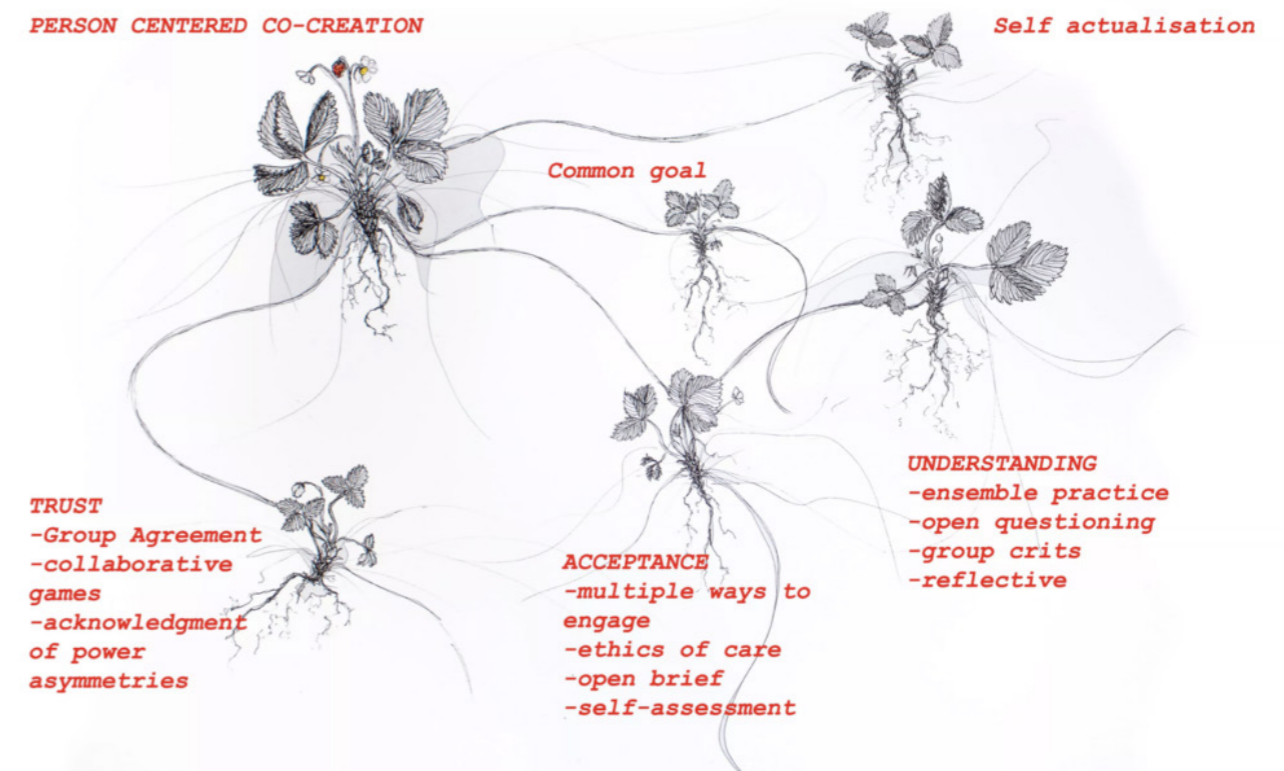
**"We have come to think of Utopias Bach like a strawberry plant, with the core partnership and Collaboratory nurturing offshoot plantlets until they are strong enough to live independently (or that gently wither away), while 'seeding' ideas further afield."**

**"We seek questions rather than answers, or at least we will avoid rigid conclusions."**

UB eagerly awaits the end of marketised and transactional modes of human interaction, carrying out projects according to success versus failure, or a 'beginning and end' dichotomy. UB also behaves like something from a quantum physics experiment - when you try to measure it, its nature is changed by the act of measuring. Furthermore, the constraints brought about by the nature of our interview questions, positioning us as the 'experts' from 'urban centres', created an uncomfortable power dynamic. So it is not surprising then, that when we asked UB interviewees questions based on the SMOTIES case study framework, we often did not get straightforward answers, but were instead met with further questions: What if small communities in rural locations weren't automatically labelled 'remote'? Why does the definition of remote inherently mean few people and lots of 'nature'? Who is the insider and who is the outsider in participatory projects? What if there weren't only human participants? What if projects did not have an end? What if they valued intangible over tangible outcomes? Were not measured in terms of impact or success and in fact deliberately resisted measurement?

Is a project's aversion to definition and constantly adapting nature one that we should consider an issue, or is the issue in fact with the way that we measure? Does a project need to be entirely visible and legible to an external 'public'? The co-created nature of the work, as with Cosmic Colierry, means that its 'impacts' are unable to be predefined or planned. However, UB's non-hierarchical and inclusive participatory techniques are exemplary. If UB purposefully evades the categories of impact measurement we normally think of for remote participatory projects, yet it's still achieving many of the aims that other SMOTIES case studies are, then is it not worth considering the implications of this for how we assess the impact of SMOTIES interventions?

©Utopias Bach - Lisa Hudson







### **Gwlangollen & Pentredwr Community Hub**

Gwlangollen is an ongoing project exploring ways to repurpose waste wool produced by North Wales sheep farmers. It was born out of a strong relationship between Gwlangollen, a wool workshop, and a community hub in Pentredwr. The project's main activities are doing outreach work with struggling local farmers, alongside a vibrant community craft and activity programme. They have created a social space for farmers to meet, share their challenges, concerns, expertise, and collaboratively find alternative income streams from waste wool so that their survival is not solely dependent on the tourist industry. This project is driven by necessity, by genuine relationships between different actors with different interests (sheep farmers, craftspeople, community hub groups), and by the energy of particular individuals, whose enthusiasm

keeps the momentum of the project going.

The interview with Gwlangollen leads and the Women in Agriculture wool weaving group (initiated by Gwlangollen) revealed that the key participatory techniques used in this project are only possible because of trust, relationships, and hyper local knowledge accumulated over decades - of the history, language, and socio-economic particularities of the community of Pentredwr. The team has a deep understanding of the needs of sheep farmers, from the diversification of income streams due to the falling price of wool and government agricultural subsidies (ie. setting up glamping pods in their fields), to widespread cases of isolation and depression amongst farmers as their families move away to find better paying jobs. They also understand the importance of trust and relationships: for the renovation of the schoolhouse into the community hub (where most of the activity happens), the project leads, both of whom have lived locally for decades, were able to enlist the help of those who had even moved away from the area. This was because of their strong connections to the school and memories of attending as young children. Gwlangollen also delivers the project bilingually, in Welsh and English, which creates another connection with the project participants, through a shared understanding of the importance of preserving this major aspect of Welsh identity.



Wool event at Ysgol Pentredwr © Ema Howe for Pentredwr and District Community Association

The solutions offered by the Gwlangollen project work so well because they are born out of long term and intimate knowledge of this community. The project has many tangible impacts, from waste wool products to the creation of jobs, but it is the intangible ones that are the most contingent on individual people's 'intangible' qualities.

Familiarity and solidarity are the backbone of the project. There was no designer, artist, or instigator 'brought in' from the 'outside' as such - it came about through slowly developing relationships between people who all live locally, and from challenges identified by them. Actually the part-takers estimate that a strength of the project was that it initially had no 'outside' support or help whatsoever. They also felt that the common Smoties case study format failed to capture the most valuable aspects of the project, and they resisted answering questions about whether the project had any 'failures', as they did not want to judge the project on these terms. For recording their own impact, they are keen to use methods of capturing and recording that don't feel, as they put it, like a 'bureaucratic exercise.'

These intangible qualities of the project - trust, relationships, and local knowledge, also mean that it has anticipated and dealt with challenges, namely engaging with groups with little free time and the uncertainties around adequate long term funding. However, these have been met with the project's strengths, which are the community's enthusiasm and drive to address a need that the community had identified themselves, and the conviction that the project would continue even without funding, just on a different scale.



## Conclusion

Whilst all three case studies employ a range of participatory techniques in different ways, one thing they have in common is co-created practices. In using co-creation the individuals' stake in the work increases, which leads to sustained and in-depth participation. One issue we face as designers and socially engaged artists is how to sustain a project after we leave a place, and there are no more funds available. This often requires individuals from the community involved in the project to volunteer their time. Co-creation may provide a route to sustainability, allowing the designer to slowly take a step back, and for participants to increasingly steer the project. Yet co-creation also means surrendering control as a designer to the people you meet, allowing a project to be led by the individuals with whom you are developing relationships. It means letting go of your vision and what you believe is best.

It can be argued that co-creative projects create barriers to more traditional impact measurement and process methodologies, which often require the interventions and parameters to be pre-defined. It can also be argued that co-creation can inhibit decision making, a sort of 'death by committee' that can be avoided when other parties are not involved in steering the work. However, we believe it is possible to be able to create short, medium and long term project impact goals that allow for the flexibility and spontaneity of co-creation. We should push ourselves to use a broader understanding of social design methodologies when we assess the impacts of highly co-creative and participatory case studies, as well as our own projects. It is these kinds of intangible impacts that account for a project's hidden, under-acknowledged strengths.

Of course there are many frameworks for measuring wellbeing, happiness, even creativity, and these could be applied to a diverse range of case studies to achieve a set of

data that frames even intangible impacts according to consistent standards. However, the challenges we met when trying to interview for these case studies, and then representing their responses according to a standardised framework based on quantification, raised questions and possibilities beyond choosing the correct framework. These challenges suggested that perhaps a more nuanced flexibility and responsiveness is required for our encounters with, and re-telling the stories of, the people involved in these case studies, and their radicality, mutual aid, experimentation, affect, and other subtle shifts. This responsiveness would furthermore support the complexity and interdisciplinarity of the SMOTIES project, and the communities with whom we engage.

Geocache Bach, Treborth ©Utopias Bach - Lindsey Colbourne







## Politecnico di Milano Department of Design

Founded in 1863, **Politecnico di Milano** is regarded as a leading research and educational institution worldwide, offering innovative programs at all levels within its schools of Engineering, Architecture and Design. Today it is worldwide among the top 10 in the QS ranking by Subject in Arts & Design. Its **Design Department** was founded as the first Italian Department for Research in Design. It promotes the significance of design as a key element of research and education, able to act within the various processes of production of tangible and intangible goods, focusing on the central role of individuals, communities, and society as a whole, and with a leader role in the interplay between industrial settings, public and private sectors, public administrations and universities.

The research team involved in the **Human Cities** project is part of the **Polimi DESIS Lab** within the international **DESIS Network – Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability**, a group of researchers adopting a strategic and systemic approach to design, with a specific focus on design for services and design activism.

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# The wisdom of time

Authors: **Annalinda De Rosa, Paola Russo, Manuel Maria Ruas Costa**

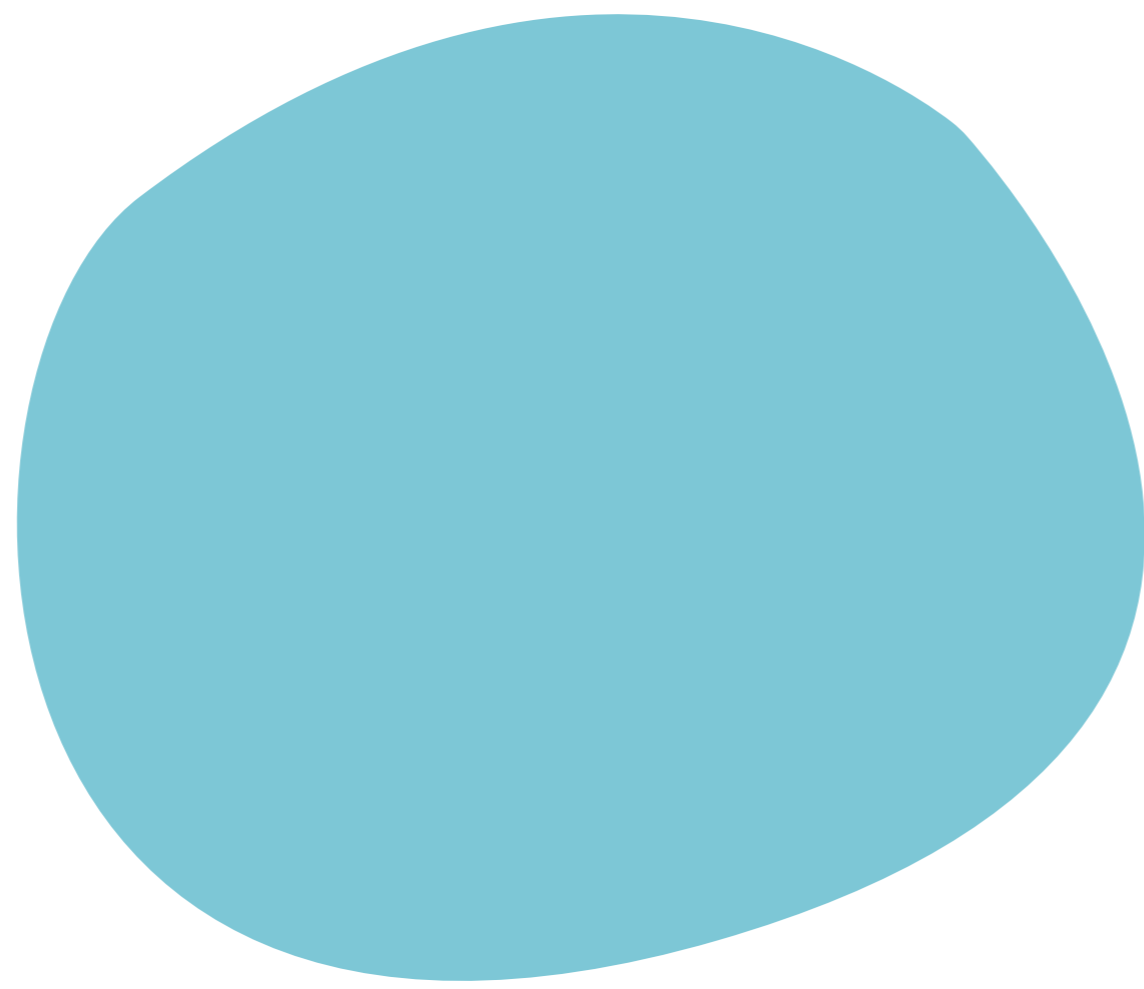
Location: **Italy**

What does it mean to look for innovation processes through culture and creativity in European small and remote places? The five Italian best practices selected and presented, spanning northern and southern Italy, provide a fundamental finding: a design-driven process must take into consideration the strong social fabric and the ancestral knowledge embedded in these territories to enter in dialogue with the local communities, to engage them towards a transformative and inclusive regeneration of their tangible and intangible heritage. A long temporal commitment is needed, and it requires hope, determination, and a very clear vision about what can possibly be built together. It is, therefore, necessary to envisage experimental actions with a long-term perspective: in fact, the acknowledgment of the relationship between cultural production and participation, and between wellbeing, social cohesion, and innovation must include the importance of local traditions and of its human heritage to co-create new narratives to address new visions. To grow this sense of purpose in a community and keep it alive, genuine connections have to be established. Involving communities in projects and initiatives, honouring their stories and their desires, engaging them through co-creation tools that enable their expression of imagination, and their view of the world are timeless ways of bonding and co-creating that may lead to a true meaning that will only grow stronger through time.

In this article, the Polimi team explores these insights under a transversal lens of interpretation, a fundamental concept in all Italian best practices: the wisdom of time.

The Italian five best practices presented are Forno Vagabondo (northern Italy), Arte all'Arte (central Italy), Foghiles, and A Cielo Aperto (southern Italy), and The Big Bench Community project (spreading the country).

**“ A long temporal commitment is needed, and it requires hope, determination, and a very clear vision about what can possibly be built together. ”**



What do we mean by time, a word that can have so many facets and interpretations?

In our research, the concept of Time has emerged in all five Best Practices selected as a fundamental and transversal element.

In particular, we found it declined with three different meanings:

- Time as a symbol of a community's ancestral knowledge that is worth to be preserved and narrated, as well as valued against the contemporary transformation of suburban environments;
- Time as the period needed to get in contact with a community, to be welcomed and acknowledged by it, in order to establish long-term interactions with the territory;
- Time as the small and remote places' "slow pace" that needs to be respected and preserved.

In this sense, time as historical and cultural progression has generated the sense of belonging and the relational values that make a community out of a group of people; a community that embodies this wisdom continuously alive through its local traditions, memories, and human heritage.

The five case studies are illustrated below, showing how these concepts support and unfold in the different case studies through these three interpretations.

In most of the explored projects, we have noticed that in small and remote places the greatest heritage lays in the ancestral knowledge of the locals, in their witness presence as inhabitants of places. Small towns guard treasures, precious traditions, rituals from the old times, specific craft techniques. Unfortunately, small and remote towns' material and immaterial culture often risks being undervalued, not consolidated, not handed down, and hence lost.

In reversing this process of loss, creative people may play a crucial role. In the five Italian best practices, in fact, creatives have acted as triggers, supporting locals in recognizing and differently valuing their heritage, and have worked as enablers to foster their immaterial culture and to turn it towards a long-term perspective.

The project "Arte all'Arte" (Ed. Art to Art), with the artwork by Anthony Gormley "Fai spazio, Prendi posto" (Ed. Making Space, Taking Place), embodies this side of the concept of Time. "Arte all'Arte" is a public art project taking place in 1996-2006 in Tuscany. It revolves around the idea of creating, through the work of artists, a new balance between the city and the countryside: whereas in the past cities were like islands within the countryside, now it is the other way around. The expanding city is, in fact, turning remote areas into deserts. The project is long and rich in contents, but we found of particular interest the artwork by Gormley "Fai spazio, Prendi posto", which took place in the town of Poggibonsi in 2004, during the 9th edition of "Arte all'Arte" project. Gormley's chose Poggibonsi as the site for his ambitious project because, in contrast to the charming, picturesque character of the other towns where creative works of Arte all'Arte took place, Poggibonsi had an anonymous character that appealed and stimulated him, as if it was seeking a new sense of pride and identity. Poggibonsi is a town where tourists pass through on their way to San Gimignano, and that went through a continuous process of construction and reconstruction from the Middle Ages till now.

Gormley's project consisted of the production and installation of seven iron sculptures produced from body casts of volunteers recruited to have plaster moulds taken off their bodies and then cast in iron. The seven iron sculptures have been placed in seven different spots in Poggibonsi, representing familiar places of present times and forgotten places of the past. They ranged from squares, parks, railways, and supermarkets. Also, the artist has worked on the creation of a map of collective memories as a complementary part of his project. Ethnographic research has been conducted by asking inhabitants which memories they instinctively associate with specific places of their town. The resulting map was displayed in a tourist information centre together with historical pictures of the town and with photos of the sculptures' manufacturing process. According to Gormley, "the role of the statues is to serve as a catalyst





One of the sculptures of Antony Gormley in Shopping center Valdelsa (Poggibonsi, Tuscany), realized as part of the artwork "Fai Spazio, Prendi posto" within the project "Arte all'Arte".  
©Associazione Arte Continua - Ela Bialkowska

for unacknowledged thoughts and feelings, coordinated to reconsider the collective condition of the town". Gormley has related his project to psychogeography: the study of how physical surroundings have an impact on human emotions and behaviours. The core concept of "Fai spazio, Prendi posto" is to enable local inhabitants to express themselves within the fabric of the town.

This artwork is a great example of how cultural heritage can be valued thanks to close collaboration among creative people and locals, and then translated through the language of arts.

When getting in contact with a community, it is fundamental to take the right amount of time to access its strong social fabric and work constructively with them to establish a long-term and impactful commitment. Coming into a small community from the outside, trying to bring innovation and co-creation processes, might not be the easiest thing to do because of the complex ancestral conflicts or social internal dynamics that may lay behind and that are invisible to external observers. This is the reason why a certain amount of time is needed for external creative people to enter a community and to be acknowledged by locals and then be able to start processes of

collaboration and social innovation. This is also accompanied and fostered by the presence of local activists who work as a fundamental link between creative people and the local community of small and remote places.

A great example supporting this concept is "A Cielo Aperto" (Ed. "Open-air") case study. This public art project, curated by the artistic duo Bianco-Valente and Pasquale Campanella, started in 2008 within the cultural association Vincenzo De Luca in the town of Latronico (Basilicata region), with the idea of realizing a widespread open-air museum, where various permanent works could dialogue with the natural environment through shared and participated processes. Every year, one or two artists are invited to Latronico for an artistic residency to design their interventions by involving local inhabitants in the process. This project, after more than 10 years, is still ongoing with a stronger impact year after year. Pasquale Campanella said in an interview that, after initial incomprehension about the scope of the initiative, local inhabitants became familiar with the approach and contributors of "A Cielo Aperto", understanding that they could be primarily bearers of culture and that this was not only limited to big cities. They discovered that

they had a dense and strong cultural heritage made up of interesting aspects. From that point on, the perception of the locals changed, and new cultural associations were founded in the town. Artists and curators got closer and closer to locals, listening to their stories and building artworks together: this demonstrated how much a long-term and personal commitment is needed to start co-creating new visions and to capitalize on this process. In fact, the commitment of a few people with ties to the village, such as Pasquale Campanella and Bianco-Valente, acted as catalysts in the development of projects. They were able to act as bridges, giving the involved artists a sense of familiarity with the place and the relational fabric. Their presence helped to bring out the potential of Latronico, which was then exploited by the artists thanks to their strong sense of community.



The inauguration of the flag of Latronico (Basilicata), co-designed by Eugenio Tibaldi and Latronico's inhabitants as part of the workshop "Una bandiera per Latronico", within the project "A Cielo Aperto".  
©Associazione Culturale Vincenzo de Luca - Pasquale Campanella

"Forno vagabondo" (Ed. "Wanderer Oven") best practice also underlines the importance of long-term commitment. It is an itinerant social oven that, since April 2020, has travelled through Alta Vallagarina (Trentino-Alto Adige region) on an electric cargo bike. Stopping in public spaces of small villages, the oven becomes a meeting and experimentation point for the local community, thanks to sequential and collective activities linked to bread production. The aim of the project is to convey issues related to environmental education, through a simple and familiar practice such as making bread together. In the interview with Flora Mammana, one of the project's designers, she stated that the initiative was very well welcomed by the small communities of Alta Vallagarina, also thanks to the strong and active network of participating local associations. For this reason, despite the complexity of the current situation ("Forno vagabondo" was designed and started right before the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic), the designers were able to activate further collaborations and encourage the community. However, the team noticed that, mostly due to the short amount of time they had to carry on the project live, they were not able to be more inclusive in terms of cultural diversity. To access the different cultural layers of a community,



a longer commitment is needed to build trust.

Long-term commitment has a lot to do with the impact that these projects can generate in small and remote places. Creative collaborative processes can have an incredibly positive effect over time if they are built and carried on respecting and cherishing these territories and the needs of the locals.

To examine in depth this aspect, a good case study is the "Big Bench Community Project" (BBCP), a non-profit initiative - promoted by the American designers Chris and Catherine Bangle - that replicates typical park benches all over Italy and abroad, but in an out of scale dimension. As demonstrated by the Big Bench placed in 2009 in the town of Clavesana, Piedmont region, an artistic installation with such a great resonance can actually support local enterprises, tourism, and craftsmanship. How does the initiative work? The designers freely provides the bench builders with designs and instructions, only requiring the bench to be placed in a scenic location, on public open land, aimed at becoming part of a collective experience for locals and tourists. BBCP has managed to improve the local economy of the places where a new Big Bench is installed, drawing attention and increasing the number of visitors from local and non-local communities. Moreover, local craftsmen got and continue getting involved in the construction of these Giant Benches, which grow in number month after month.

The BBCP also somehow strengthened the sense of pride and belonging of the community, increasing the engagement of craftsmen and locals and enhancing the sense of community. Furthermore, it offered ordinary active citizens a simple and feasible possibility to provide a public service for their community - as an occasion to "give back to the community with pride".

The last but not least concept of time that emerged as a fil rouge from the Italian five case studies is the most intangible but probably the most precious and transversal one: Time as the small and remote places' "slow pace" that needs to be



A bread-making workshop in Villa Lagarina (Trentino Alto Adige) organized within the project "Forno Vagabondo".  
©Julia Wagner

respected and preserved.

The best example among our cases supporting this aspect of Time is "Foghiles", which started in 2018 in Semestene (Sardinia). It promotes and organizes opportunities for meeting and experimentation in the rural area through constant research, reflection, and practice on the organic relationship between the human being and its surroundings. Foghiles means "fireplaces" in the local dialect. In the past and still today, meetings around the fire represent the occasions for knowledge transmission through tales and experiences. Directly connected with the territorial context of Semestene, a tiny town of 120 inhabitants, the meetings have been aimed to reinterpret places and traditional knowledge, moving "beyond the museification" of rural life and the empowerment of countryside collective celebration. The events all follow the agrarian calendar over solstices, equinoxes, and several punctual occurrences

during the year, and they relate to the local practices and the creation of new rituals, following the seasonal rhythm. During every event, young volunteers and participants temporarily become part of the community, in a context where time is marked by the tolling of bells and space is shaped by scenarios of learning and conviviality.

Foghiles' project aims to extend and enhance the life of the little Village of Semestene bringing in active people eager to organize convivial events as occasions to imagine the future of a place together. Working on such a small territory and community allowed the Foghiles team to concretely acknowledge the social complexity of the village being part of it. Antonio Vincenzo Sotgiu, one of the project designers and native of Semestene, showed that this is possible. Initially, Foghiles aimed at reaching its scope by becoming a big festival, collecting a lot of people from Sardinia and abroad for ten days. This didn't happen for different reasons. However, they realized afterward that this "failure" became an opportunity: bringing in Semestene a large crowd would have disrupted the pace and altered the intimate network they were able to create. For example, the team engaged the community to the events through physical postcards and posters, that turned to be important touchpoints to value the importance of an invitation in person. In fact, during the interview, Antonio showed us a picture of a small altar in a private home in Semestene. In the photo, it is possible to see the Foghiles invitation postcard together with the holy cards that elderly people usually preserve in their homes. This same old woman, once she had received the agenda of Foghiles festival from Antonio, used to call him every day to check if they were respecting the schedule. She also participated in providing food to the participants of the events, together with her neighbour. This is a sweet anecdote to represent a kind of complementary impact that was not foreseen but that was reached also thanks to the respect of local traditions and rhythms that the Foghiles team demonstrated to Semestene inhabitants, where intergenerational gatherings also work as cohesion builders.

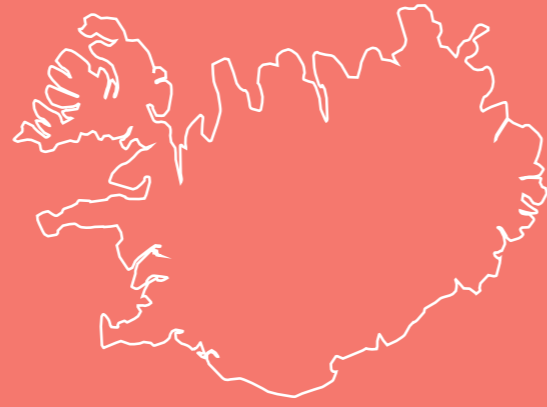


The preparation of the fire for the "Celebration of the Place", a practice carried out in Semestene (Sardinia) as one of the events within the project "Foghiles".  
©Associazione Culturale Po.PS. Rurbana

## Conclusion

Based on these observations, are small and remote places hopeless and all destined to become lost forgotten deserts? Absolutely not. They are steady living museums, patiently guarding human and natural treasures, hidden portals to new possible realities that can be co-created. This valuable impact could be achieved through the activation of a virtuous engine of human and social relations thanks to a knowledge sharing with the ecosystem of local actors that goes beyond mere information and data but rather towards stories and a sense of care of local identity. In this way, brand-new interactions between inhabitants of small and remote places and creatives, whether they are part of the community or newcomers, could meet the scope of creating new narratives and addressing new visions for these valuable but sometimes hidden territorial identities. Creatives could detect those hidden potentialities and materialize them into unexpected and participated cultural ideas and solutions to become futures narratives for the territory. Small and remote places are, in conclusion, wise heritage keepers quietly waiting for renewed attention to re-flourish, to be lived at their own pace, not ours. They are wisely inviting all of us to come back and slow down again.





## Alternance Architecture and Urban Planning

**Alternance Architecture and Urban Planning** was created in 1999 and is based in Reykjavik. The scope of action covers practice and applied research. Regarding practice, Alternance field is very large in the project size way, which goes from urban planning to furniture events. Quality wise we essentially work on very challenging projects that ask for a lot of creativity. Alternance is currently developing "Hovering trails" – paths made out of aluminium that are especially made for the sensible natural reserves of Iceland.

Regarding applied research, **Alternance** is developing a project called **MAPS – multidisciplinary assessment of a public space**. It's a methodology intended to assess the quality of public space and to provide recommendations for the public authorities to improve them. This methodology is developed by a multidisciplinary team specialised in urban planning: a historian, an architect, a social psychologist, and a planner. It's a multidisciplinary methodology combining social sciences, architecture and planning that consider the environmental and social aspects of public space. Alternance joined **SMOTIES** and the European team of **Human Cities** with the **MAPS** project.

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# Feeling in control of the public good promotes creative works in remote places

Authors: Marjolein E. Overtoom, Astrid Lelarge

Location: Iceland

The exploration of creative works in Icelandic remote places offers food for thought in many ways. This leads to an examination of the notion of remoteness, how public spaces can be sometimes transformed with very small creative works (nature and size of creative works), the crucial role played by non-experts in the success of projects in small remote places, and therefore the delicate role experts and public authorities can play in the different phases of creative works.

Urbanisation only started from the end of the 18th century, which means that all cities and towns, even rural towns, are relatively recent. The capital, Reykjavik, is by far the largest place. The characteristic of Icelandic urbanisation in the 20th century lies in the scope of the metropolisation phenomenon which geographer Anna Karlsdóttir likens to those experienced by some urban settlements situated in peripheral, sparsely population regions of the globe, in particular the Arctic<sup>1</sup>. In 1902, Reykjavik had a population of 6.667 inhabitants, i.e., ca. 8.5% of the population of the island; in 1950, the 56.251 inhabitants of the city constituted ca. 39% of the overall population; in 2020, the population of the metropolis (Capital Region also called Greater Reykjavik) stood at 233.034 inhabitants, i.e., around 63-64% of the total population (364.134). The only two "alternative urban" municipalities, Reykjanesbær and Akureyri, had only 19.421 and 19.025 inhabitants at that time. Another interesting feature of Icelandic urbanisation is the small size of most of the ninety-five localities listed by Statistics Iceland in 2020. Of the sixty-three "urban" localities having at least 200 inhabitants, only 3 had more than 10.000 inhabitants, 2 localities numbered between 5.000 and 9.999, 9 numbered between 2.000 and 4.999, and 49 localities had fewer than 2.000 but more than 199 inhabitants. Finally, thirty-two rural localities had a population of between 50 and 199 inhabitants<sup>2</sup>.

Iceland is a small country, situated on an island on the edge of the Arctic Circle. This has two major consequences, namely that the country as a whole can already be considered remote, and that Icelanders have a special relationship with water.

Because of the geography of the island, practically all Icelanders live close to the coast, and if further inland, often close to a river or other type of lower lying water. Going from one end of the island to the other side requires one to drive around the country, following the coastline. Apart from private car transport, there are some long-distance buses going between places once a day on average, and there are planes and ferries. In winter, roads may be closed due to severe wind and snow, which means that not all villages along the coastline are always accessible. Therefore, living in those villages requires both independence and cooperation. The proximity to the sea made fishing for trade and livelihood the main resource for many villages, sometimes this developed further into the main industry. When different parts of the country became better connected by road in the last century, the fishing industry sometimes relocated for scale benefits, meaning that some towns lost their main industries and many associated jobs.

The centre of the country consists of uninhabitable highlands, parts of it covered by glaciers and volcanoes. The volcanic activity of the island means access to hot water springs which are used for heating buildings, producing electricity, growing crops, and bathing. Without the geothermal activity, living conditions would be quite harsh. This might be one of the reasons that most public spaces, such as hot pods and pools, are designed around geothermal sources. In Iceland, these spaces are not just public spaces that are accessible to everyone, but also the places to meet people. Other types of public spaces are often of poor quality. There are multiple explanations possible, of which we will highlight two: First, the climatic conditions are quite harsh making outside public spaces unattractive to be in for longer periods of time. Second, urbanisation only started about 200 years ago and the developing towns focussed on other things. Nonetheless, it is apparent now that there is a need for good public space design, also in the smaller and more remote towns and settlements in Iceland.

**Let us now** describe five remote places and their environmental opportunities in more detail, highlighting how public spaces in these towns have been created or appropriated.



## Five examples following the ring road

Travelling clockwise around the country, **Akranes** is the first town (app. 7.600 inhabitants) you come across after leaving Reykjavik. The specific place of interest is a stretch of sandy beach and is used for recreation. Even though Iceland is an island, most parts of the coast are not suitable for bathing or have an accessible beach. In Akranes, this part of the beach (Langisandur) is sandy and relatively sheltered. Additionally, there is geothermal activity which heats up the otherwise very cold water. Through the years, this part of the beach has become the place for more and more activities. These include sports, play, bathing, healing, and socialising, and more facilities have been built to accommodate this. The environmental characteristics set this piece of land apart from the rest, fulfilling a need from the residents to recreate and connect with the natural environment through bathing. Because more people started using it, it became more interesting to invest in the area and build more facilities. In turn, this attracted more people, and so the cycle continues.

Continuing clockwise, the next place of interest is **Drangsnæs**, located in the West Fjords. With a shrinking population that counted just over 70 inhabitants in 2021, this is the smallest place of the case studies. After leaving the main ring road, it is still a 20km drive to get to the village. There is no public transport, and the closest village (with slightly more than 300 inhabitants) is 32km by road, and people must go there for shopping, health services, sports, and music. Most jobs in the village are related to the fishing industry. In the late 90 's geothermal water was found by accident, just on the side of the road leading into the village. Empty fish tanks were placed close to it so they could be used as hot tubs. Since then, two changing booths, toilets, and a shower were installed, and the baths were updated and decorated with artwork in the 2000 's. The place has become more known, and there are now visitors from outside the village using the baths.

Being such a small village, the inhabitants need to take on



©Birgir Þ Jóhannsson

different roles within the village to keep everything going. Consequently, it is easy to find someone who can influence and assist with town planning, to make something happen. An accidental find required some creative thinking and using what was there to make that find into something for people to use. Because it worked, more people started using it, in turn making new investments worthwhile. The story is similar to that of Langisandur, except that the scale of the town and the project is smaller in Drangsnæs. Nonetheless, the same principles seem to be at work, indicating that good things can happen in settlements of different sizes.



The next case study is in **Seydisfjörður**, a place in the East of the country, where cruise ships can dock and the ferry to Denmark sails regularly from the harbour. With a population just under 700, it is significantly bigger than the previous example. However, the main access road to the town goes over a mountain, and it can be difficult in winter to get in or out of the town, thus making the town inaccessible for parts of the year. Tourists from the cruise ships spend some hours in the town before sailing to a new destination. One small street in the centre caters to these tourists, with old houses that are used as cafés, restaurants, and shops on both sides, and it leads up to a small old wooden church. The street is closed off for car traffic and has pavement made from local stone. In 2016 the organisers of the local gay pride decided to liven up part of the route of the parade and painted the street in rainbow colours. Since then, the street has been repainted annually to have the colours on the street permanently because people like the way it looks, and they want to support the LGBTQ community in remote places.

An initiative by a local which was thought of as temporary turned out to be permanent and became a popular image for visiting tourists. Again, the small size of the community made it easier to contact the people necessary to get permission to paint the street and to find volunteers to help with painting. The tourists visiting help maintain the shops and restaurants on the street and increase the visibility of the message. Again, a small initiative grows into something bigger, which is reinforced by the number of people visiting.

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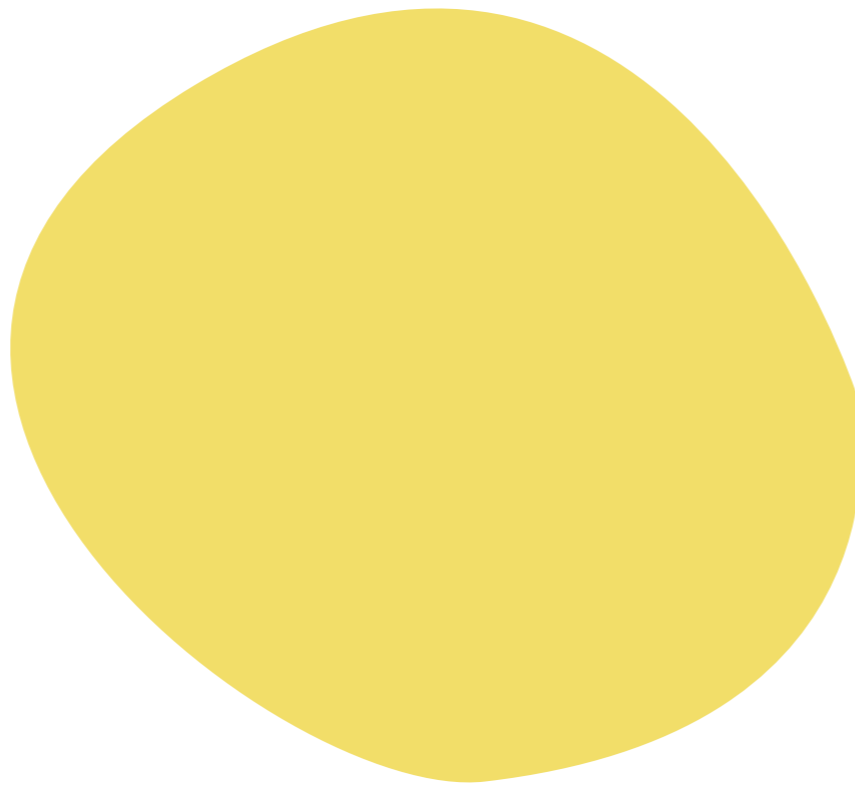


The next stop going clockwise around the country is **Djúpivogur**, with just under 400 inhabitants, also in the East of the country. The town is close to the ring road, but the closest next town is still 60km away, and towns with more facilities are in either direction after a 1.5-hour drive. Roads can be closed due to severe weather, both in summer and winter. The majority of jobs are related to fishing and aquaculture. A concrete slab in the town centre was used as a parking lot, where there used to be a gas station and car wash. The town did not really have a main square for people to sit and meet others, and thus a meeting was held, led by an expert, to ask residents for ideas. Part of the parking lot is now closed off from car traffic and provides space to sit and enjoy the view over the bay.

This change is more recent than the previous case studies, but it seems to follow the same structure; a small change in public space is made, which then is used by locals and tourists, increasing the attraction for other people too. Having more people use the space, makes it more interesting to invest in the space, and so on.

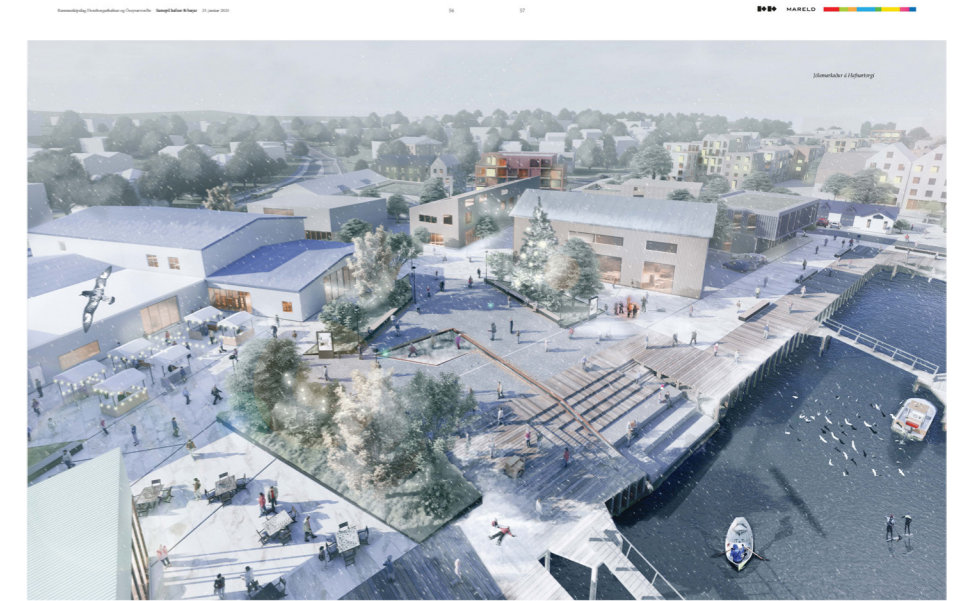


Djúpivogur  
©Páll Jakob Lindal



Hafnarfjörður draft project  
©Orri Steinarsson founder of JVST

The last case study completes the tour in Greater Reykjavík, in **Hafnarfjörður**. This used to be a separate town but has grown together in an urban area with Reykjavík and other suburbs. It has about 30.000 inhabitants, which means it is considerably larger than the other case studies. The old centre has gone through some planned changes, but they have unfortunately not proved to be working well in providing the town with its own identity after becoming part of the bigger metropolitan area. The previous changes to the centre were large and mostly initiated by politicians, not by the inhabitants. Now a new project is planned, designed by JVST architects, partly involving the inhabitants and with lessons learned from the previous changes. The plan still has to be built though, and time will tell if this project will be successful at improving the identity of the old centre.



## Re-using and improving together as main drivers for change

The first feature standing out is that the objects and places were re-used. In Drangsnæs, Djúpivogur, and Seyðisfjörður, new opportunities arose because the town changed through time. This change may have been due to a declining population, changing main industry, or finding new resources, but the essence is that there was a change. Something from that change was part of the creative process, and an opportunity was seen to realise the idea; a geothermal spring was discovered and there were empty fish tanks available, a nice even platform with a view close to the centre was unused, or a central pedestrian area could be made centre stage for an event.

The creativity necessary for the projects to be realised, originated from a need and an object or a place that could help fulfil that need. Each of these projects became a success because the person(s) acted on that creativity and did so in public space. The small scale of the towns may have provided more creative freedom and better opportunities to realise something because connections to other people are closer: A person might feel more confident in pursuing realising an idea because he or she has a more positive perception of what can be done and how to get there. In the case of Hafnarfjörður, which is more densely populated, there might be too many people involved in decisions on the built environment for residents to realise their ideas on public space. If the population reaches a certain threshold, different methods are necessary to realise changes initiated by residents. This might make the process longer, more complicated, and with slimmer chances of success, which in turn inhibits creative behaviour from residents.



Feeling in control is an important part of predicting behaviour<sup>1</sup>, and people in smaller places might feel more in control of adjusting public spaces than people in larger places. Consequently, the ideas people have to re-use or re-purpose objects and places could be acted upon more in smaller places. This leaves the opportunity to learn from small remote places and empower residents in larger towns to realise more of their ideas in public spaces.

The second feature that stands out from our cases is that the creative initiatives grew after they were first realised. In the Drangsnæs case, where first a fish tank was installed as a hot pot, this was done with the idea that bathing in a hotpot is public good. As such, inhabitants of the town made sure it was maintained and freely accessible for everyone. In turn, to keep it there, everyone is willing to contribute, exactly because everyone can benefit from it.

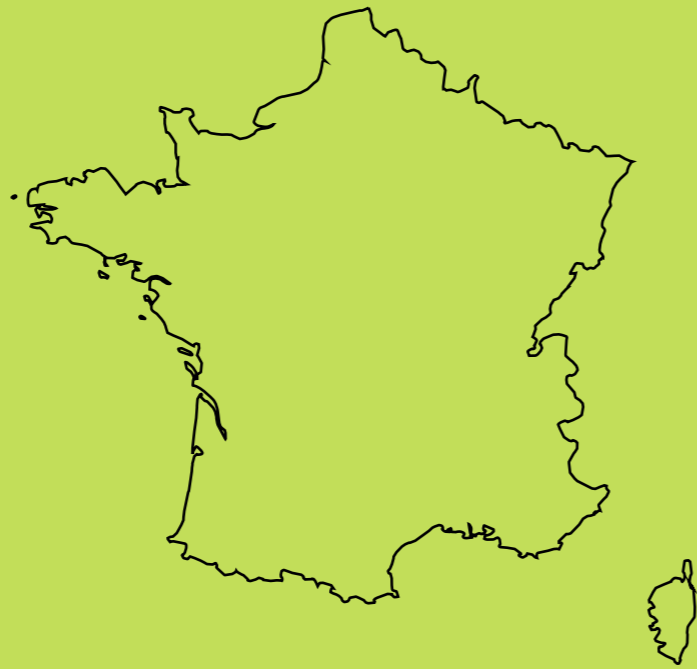
In the other cases too, for a longer or shorter period, there was a simple start which in some way grew; made more permanent (Seyðisfjörður), expanded and developed with more functions (Akranes beach and Drangsnæs), or improved functionally (Djúpivogur). Concerning Hafnarfjörður, the improvement is in including the residents in the project development. The participation in itself could be considered the idea that grew into realisation. The reason the creative initiatives became something is because the value of the idea for the residents was worthwhile; it gave something to everyone without expecting anything but acceptance in return.

## Creating longer-lasting creative works in remote places in Iceland

Recent urbanisation, climatic and geographic characteristics, and a changing work society have provided opportunities in Iceland to improve the design of public spaces in remote places. Most importantly however, the changes and remoteness sparked the initiatives from residents of those remote places to realise their ideas for improving their direct living environment. The small size of a town makes residents feel more in control, which stimulates the realisation of ideas. Being a resident in a small town, it is more likely that you know who to contact to make a change, and the process would likely be less complex than in a bigger town. Additionally, it is easier to imagine how the idea of the change would be perceived and received by the other residents, which in turn makes it easier to decide if and how to realise it. However, without the original intention of making a change for the public good, the change would not last long. It is necessary for other people in the community to see and enjoy the benefits of the change, so they in turn will try to keep and improve it.

<sup>1</sup>Karlsdóttir A. (2013). Aftermath of growth in Reykjavik Capital region – land use and values inherent in Icelandic urbanization. In: Hansen K. G., Rasmussen O. R., Weber R., Proceedings from the First International Conference on Urbanisation in the Arctic (Conference, 28-30 August 2012, Llimmarfik, Nuuk, Greenland), Stockholm.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Iceland (2022), Localities by size class 2001-2022, year 2020. [https://px.hagstofa.is/pxen/pxweb/en/lbuar/lbuar\\_mannfjoldi\\_2\\_byggdir\\_Byggdaskjarnar/MAN030103.px/table/tableViewLayout1?rxid=53d40287-d016-4b60-84a8-61685dedbbd7](https://px.hagstofa.is/pxen/pxweb/en/lbuar/lbuar_mannfjoldi_2_byggdir_Byggdaskjarnar/MAN030103.px/table/tableViewLayout1?rxid=53d40287-d016-4b60-84a8-61685dedbbd7)



## Cité du design

### Ecole Supérieure d'Art et de Design

#### **Cité du design of Saint-Étienne**

is a platform for research, higher education, economic development and promotion of art and design, supported by the city of Saint-Étienne, the metropolitan government (Saint-Étienne Métropole), the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region, the State (Ministry of Culture) and private partners. Since 2010 the Cité du design has formed a single institution with the Saint-Étienne Higher School of Art and Design.

Led by the **Cité du design**, Saint-Étienne and its agglomeration are relying on design as a driving force for the development of the territory. Saint-Étienne was designated in 2010 as a UNESCO creative city of design.

Every two years, **Cité du design** organises the **Biennale Internationale Design Saint-Etienne**. Since 1998, designers from all over the world, French and international design enthusiasts, as well as the public of the Saint-Étienne Métropole get together to discover emblematic examples of design production and innovation. The chosen themes, openness to the world and access to creative works characterize the Biennale, recognized by all experts.

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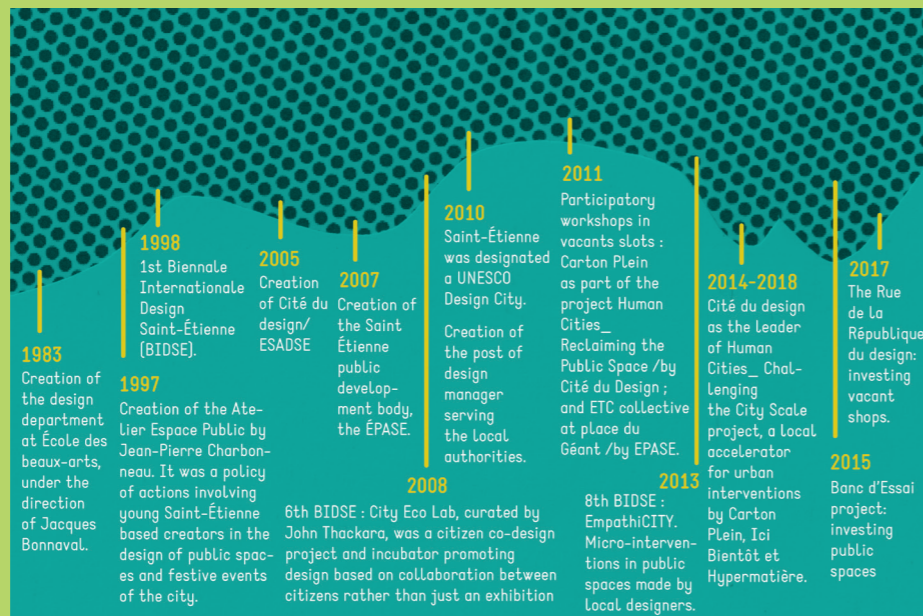


# Reverberations

Authors: **Juliana Gotilla, Josyane Franc and Nathalie Arnould**

Location: **France**

Saint-Étienne Métropole is one of France's 22 Métropoles, or metropolitan districts, and has a population of 400,000. The centre of this territory is the city of Saint-Étienne, which has been profoundly transformed in the last 30 years. Its redevelopment began in 1989 with the École des Beaux-Arts, which was followed in 1998 by the Biennale Internationale Design Saint-Étienne and in 2005 by the Cité du design, to disseminate the culture of design across an entire district. The expertise of the Cité du design, a public institution created in 2005, has become a driving force, and since Saint-Étienne gained UNESCO Creative City of Design status in 2010, it has become a node of creativity which attracts designers and partners, both local and international.

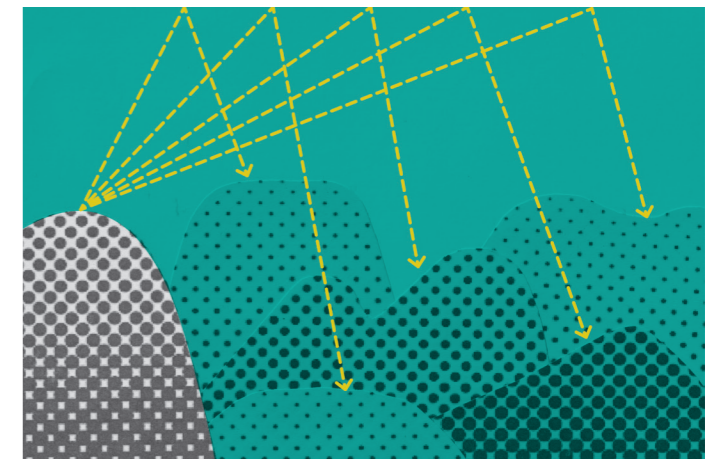


A series of experimental and participatory design projects organised in the Saint-Étienne urban area, many of them "bottom up" initiatives, have become part of the City's DNA. Marginal projects at the outset, they have nevertheless become very important vectors of social innovation, and the designers' work has been recognised and rewarded internationally.

In order to recognise and give this practice an official status, a post of design manager was created in 2011 based at the Cité du design. The aim was to integrate design into the projects implemented by the local authorities, the city of Saint-Étienne and Saint-Étienne Métropole and to develop the practice of commissioning work from designers. Additionally, in February 2014 a new law (the Lamy Law) came in, which imposed public consultation for all urban development projects.

Highlights of the development of design for social innovation in Saint-Étienne ©Juliana Gotilla/ Cité du Design

The culture of design has gradually permeated the local landscape and a form of practice open to the contributions of different actors has developed in Saint-Étienne over the last 10 years. Very often with an underlying commitment to improving the living environment for local inhabitants, creatives soak up the context of the places where they are working and go out of their way to meet the people. The interviews, the co-design workshops and the co-manufacturing sessions - these are just some of the ways designers take the time and make the spaces to work in different ways, upturning the classic methods, integrating a sensitive approach based on benevolent listening. The aim is to take account, in their process of creation, of everyone's expectations and knowledge. By tapping into their imaginations as well, they are also able to access a local repertoire and reference base that is on a more emotional/subjective level.



Reverberations. The influence of Saint-Étienne actions around the Métropole ©Juliana Gotilla/ Cité du Design

Although the implementation of projects carrying through this ambition may be a little slow in getting going in the urban territory, its reverberations around the Métropole are well worthy to be noted. Medium-sized towns, small towns and villages have been keen to open up to experimentation that helps to move their public policies forward.

The selected case studies are a good illustration of the interesting results that have come out of the synergy between municipalities hungry for innovation (drawn in by their desire to improve their appeal to outsiders as well as the quality of life of their inhabitants) and humble designers who have decided to work "elsewhere" with the aim of putting something previously unseen into practice. From this observation of what is happening, many questions arise.

- Is the management of these so-called remote municipalities, more flexible, so that it facilitates experimentation?
- Is the urgency of innovating in a more "rural" setting felt or experienced more strongly?
- Does the wish to co-build and keep a trace of the immaterial pull people together more strongly in towns and villages that are further out than in dense urban centres?

## Designers' work and social dynamics

Depending on the setting of each commission, the designers (working independently or as part of multidisciplinary teams) have been able, each in their own way, to put into place some finely tailored projects, with a close eye on the local social dynamics. Furniture linked to the landscape, hiking milestones, emotional mapping, urban signs and scenography etc. are examples of the creative works that come out of innovative, participatory processes, which materialise through different temporalities and media, bearing witness to material and immaterial forms of culture. The impacts of each of these actions thus go beyond the tangible aspect of the realisation, the processes involved being just as important as the final project (or the deliverables). More open commissions give rise to sensitive, engaged creations. The designers appreciate this setting, experiencing it as a breath of fresh air. Out of a

desire to go further in trying to understand these projects as well as the profile of each designer, a series of case studies and their specificities are presented here under and organised in reverse chronological order (from the most recent to the oldest ones).

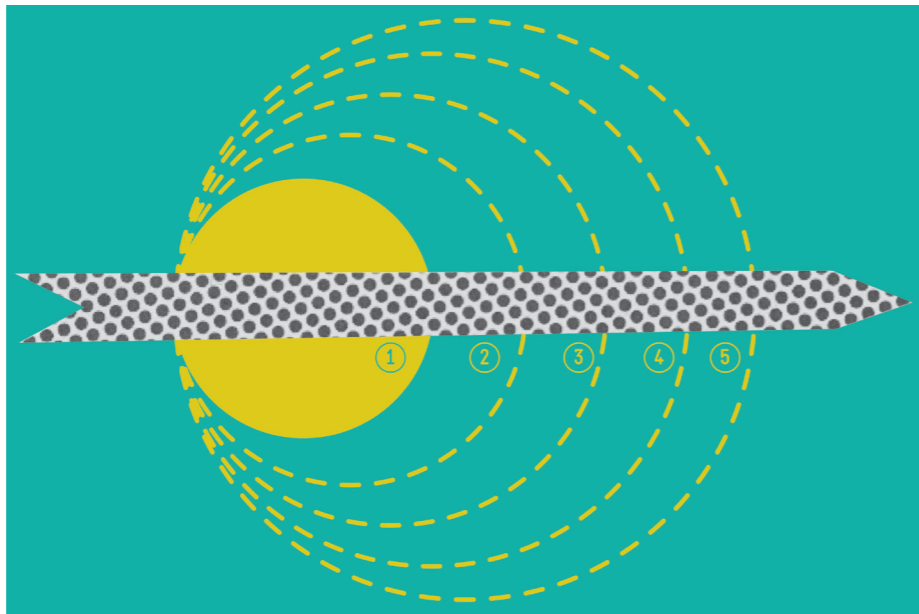
### 2021, Sainte-Croix-en-Jarez CHEMIN DES ROCHES À CIEUX/ STONES OF THE HEAVENS TRAIL

Based in Paris, designer Isabelle Daëron is used to working on the projects in both urban and more rural environments, with connections to the landscape. She answered a call for a designer's residency launched by the Culture department of Saint Etienne Métropole\* (SEM) whose theme was "Living at the Chartreuse de Sainte-Croix en Jarez", with a view to developing the tourist appeal of the old monastery site.

During her residency, her work was organised with some time spent researching the history of the Carthusian monks, the Chartreux, who were here until the Revolution, but also a period where she met with farmers, trades and craftspeople, restaurateurs, local elected officials, facilitators, municipal workers, etc., who live now in this village with 480 inhabitants.

Through an exploration of the notion of the "spacinement", which was a weekly walk practised by the Chartreux — the designer has imagined a pathway punctuated by poetic and sensory installations that dialogue with the past and present of Sainte-Croix en Jarez. On an hour's walk around the Chartreuse, the route highlights viewpoints of the ancient monastery and dialogues with the natural flows of the environment: the wind, the light, the water, and its inhabitants, the plants and animals that populate its landscape.

The in-situ installations are intended to be ephemeral and will be in place for a few months. Some of them are immersive, others invite you to interact, such as in front of the Jurieux chapel, where lithophone (a musical instrument made of stone) invites visitors to ring the stones. The route becomes a place of crossings



The designer's creative process.  
1. Immersion ; 2. Benevolent listening/exchange with inhabitants; 3. Local census: Actors/ know-how/ materials ; 4. Co-creation / Collective Prototyping; 5. Local and institutional validations.  
©Juliana Gotilla/ Cité du Design

and chance encounters between inhabitants and tourists around a sensitive and natural heritage and a shared history.

This intervention has brought back to the table an old plan to work on remembrance of the Chartreuse, a desire within the Municipality to go further in the register of the immaterial heritage kept alive orally by the villagers. The designer was asked to take part, this time with a team of sociologists to delve into the story and try to formalise in some way, with a publication or an exhibition or something else.

### 2021, Génilac FRONTAGE, REVELER LE VEGETAL/FRONTAGE, REVEALING PLANTS

A designer and architect, Sara de.Gouy is based in Lyon. She has an inter-disciplinary practice, working on the design of collective spaces, either public or private, and often in urban settings.

At the initiative of Saint-Étienne Métropole and the municipality of Génilac, and under a scheme called "Multi-local community facilities" (ECM), a public contract was put out for the development of the historic centre of this small country town. Sara was selected with a team of architects and landscapers (Zeppelin Architectes and Seitt, a landscaping consultancy) to conduct a design project in conjunction with the landscaping project and to reflect on solutions for a very "mineral" - i.e. not very green - public space consisting of narrow streets with no pavements

The landscaping project offered a reorganisation of the street: pedestrian areas for journeys on foot round the town and to facilitate access to the small shops in the town centre in a pleasant way; a strip 20 to 40 cm deep for a frontage design in front of the houses, consisting of thin metal structures to support plants in pots or climbing plants.

The workshop phase and the ensuing collective implementation project helped to forge and strengthen ties between the residents of the street, who live here, but often work elsewhere and sometimes barely ever bump into their neighbours. The project regenerated the entrances to the houses, created landmarks on people's everyday journeys, embellished the street and became a source of pride for the town.

The inhabitants played an active part in the transformation of their living environment, whilst re-appropriating the public space adjacent to their homes. Their involvement and that of the town's green spaces department led to the creation of a co-management charter for the greened spaces, which is essential to ensure planting and the long-term care of the plants.

### 2020, Dunières LOCAL PEOPLE TELL THE STORY OF THE TOWN OF DUNIÈRES

The Atelier Captain Ludd is a collective of designers and urban planners based in Saint-Étienne. With a method that combines socio-spatial strategies and graphics, the team's work is very anchored in Saint-Étienne, especially in the densely knit city centre neighbourhoods.

Following a project conducted with the Coop/roch team on revitalising an old neighbourhood of Saint-Etienne, a few of its members (NOVAE, ADHOC, IEM) decided to get together again and this time put in a bid for a public contract under the auspices of the Department of Haute-Loire. The study mission on creating a town plan ("Guide Plan") with the aim of revitalising the centre of the country town of Dunières really appealed to the team, who were curious to see what it would look like working outside the inner metropolitan area.



Remote places : Landscape, local life, and projects  
©Juliana Gotilla/ Cité du Design

Against this background, the team proposed a sensitive and participatory approach in parallel with a plan to harvest objective data. During the Urban Diagnosis phase, a sensitivity mapping of the territory was drawn up based on 2 simple requests ("mark your favourite place" and "tell us about a memory you have"). The challenge was to identify and situate the immaterial heritage of the town linked to people's memories, to the purely emotional attachment that shapes imaginations and constructs a narrative of the town.



Through this work it has been possible to discover information that is not necessarily verbalised at public consultation meetings for urban development projects. The information included on the map has revealed a history and vernacular heritage of Dunières, a cultural and human potential that fed into and enriched the orientations of the town plan project that was completed and delivered in autumn 2020.

### 2020, Saint-Genest-Malifaux and Bourg-Argental RENOVATION OF SHOP FRONTS

Typotopy is an association of graphic designers, architects and film makers based in Saint-Étienne. Well-known in Saint-Étienne for their multiple interventions in the city centre, the team answered a call for tenders for a design consultancy mission for the Mont du Pilat community of municipalities run by Cité Services. The challenge was to upgrade the urban landscape by giving the shop fronts in two small country towns, Saint-Genest-Malifaux et Bourg-Argental, a quality makeover.

The creation of an urban scenography is not limited to a 2D treatment of the façades, but rather proposes a genuine interaction with the public space with the installation of a range of multi-purpose street furniture: vegetable tubs, orientation table, outdoor café tables, etc. This project is still in its early stages. The consultancy mission was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, but the proposals that came out of it have not yet been implemented. Nevertheless, the study has allowed the local actors to realise the visual importance of shop signs and fronts, and how they contribute to the quality of the living environment for local people in their town.

### 2014, Unieux LE BANC À PALABRES/THE AGORA BENCH

The designer Sara de.Gouy (who is also working on the Frontage project in Génilac presented earlier) was part of the urban project management team (with Big bang paysage, Bureau 205 and Studio by Night) working on the

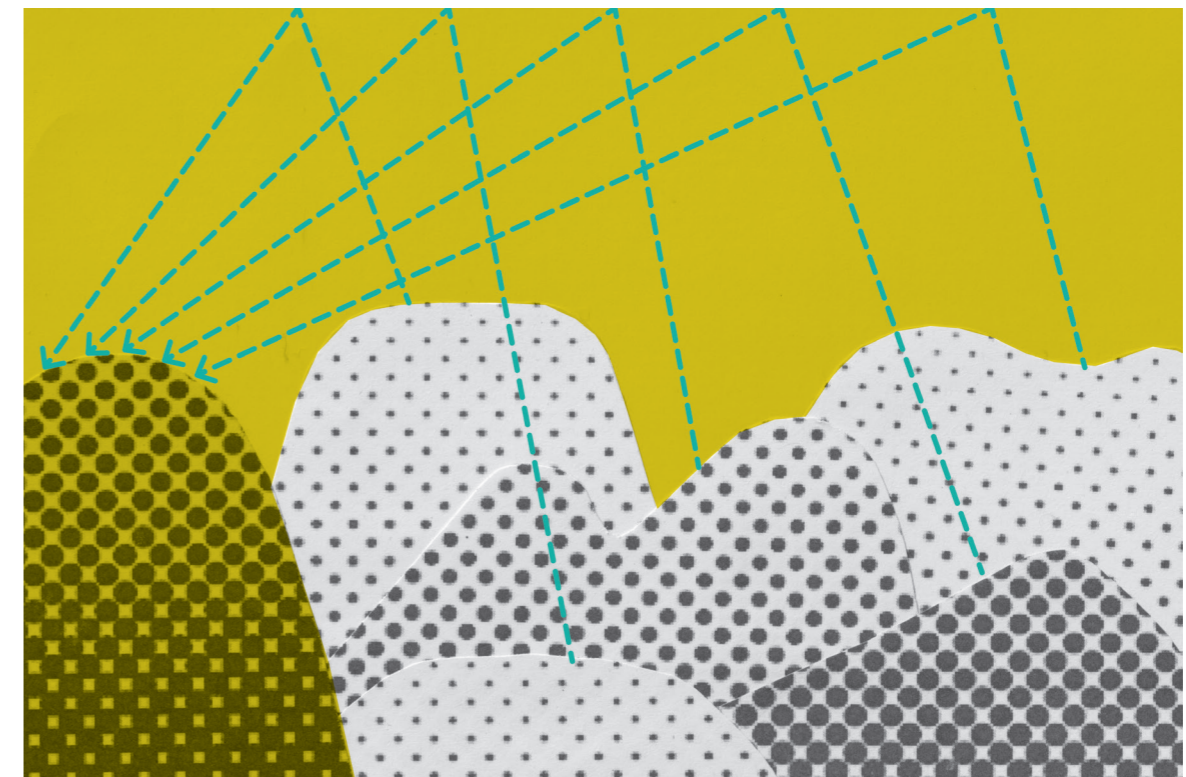
creation of a new park in Unieux. This is public contract put out by SEM, also benefiting from the ECM scheme. The commission that was formalised was for the creation of an "identity element" in the new park. In this context, a monumental circular bench (measuring nine metres across) was created and the red colour was chosen after a number of meetings with young people. The bench also encircles a fine tree, a sculptural Catalpa whose dense foliage provides shade.

Suitable for all types of users thanks to its seats at different heights - less than 30 cm for the little ones and a standard height of 45 cm - and the different postural possibilities it offers, the bench serves as a catalyst for multigenerational encounters. It also offers a 360° opening onto the entire park. Depending on where you sit, the scenery you can see is different: meadow, playground, petanque courts, so many options to choose as the mood takes you. The agora bench has now been in place for a number of years. It has been well appropriated by inhabitants, especially children, who also use it when playing (sliding).

**"Could this be the turning point in the evolution of the practice of the designer and public policies allowing the construction of truly collective public spaces? "**

### Conclusion

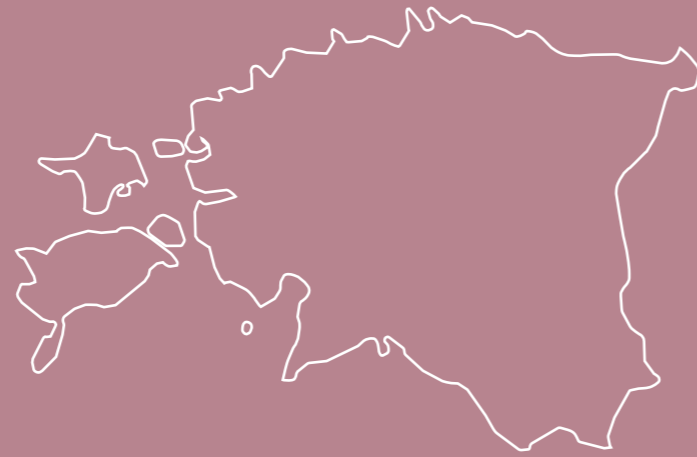
The five case studies around Saint-Etienne bear witness to a policy of public commissions and a practice of design that are proactively innovative. Designers who have been used to working in urban environments are taking advantage of the Saint-Étienne Reverberations and putting in tenders for projects out of the main cities. With great enthusiasm and a willingness to get involved on the part of municipal teams, they are succeeding in developing some exemplary missions and demonstrating the positive externalities of this new way of doing things.



Reverse reverbs. The successful practices in remote places are now serving as a benchmark to encourage innovative projects in denser urban environments.  
©Juliana Gotilla/ Cité du Design

Relevant and rewarding, these actions are now serving as "demonstrators". They are (again) swelling the ranks of successful practices, serving as benchmarks to encourage and support the setting up of equally ambitious actions in denser urban environments.

Could this be the turning point in the evolution of the practice of the designer and public policies allowing the construction of truly collective public spaces?



## Estonian Association of Designers

**The Estonian Association of Designers (EAD)** is a non-profit organisation governed by public law and representing 160 designers. EAD activities are focused on raising the society's awareness of the efficiency of design and developing user-friendly environments, organising competitions, seminars, workshops, and exhibitions. It collaborates in projects focused on issues like inclusive design, health care design, human cities, and design management.

The main design event of the year is the **International Tallinn Design Festival (DISAINIÖÖ)** which has received the European quality label EFFE. From 2006 EAD gives out the **Estonian Design Award BRUNO**. For promoting Estonian design abroad EAD has received an award from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For helping to introduce local makers EAD has established an **Estonian Design House** (2010). Estonian design has been exhibited in Scandinavia, Baltics, Central-Europe, UK, China, Russia, USA, Japan, etc.

On the initiative of the EAD a joint project was launched to develop and implement design policy. EAD has participated in European design policy projects. It is a member of BEDA, EIDD Design For All Europe and WDO, and has initiated projects dedicated to relaxing in wilderness and in the city like the Tallinn For All project, which received the DME Europe Award.

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# How remote is remote?

Author: Karl Joonas Alamaa

Location: Estonia

Estonia is larger than the Netherlands or Denmark, but there are many times fewer people here, only 31 people per Km<sup>2</sup>. This poses a kind of question for all residents, including city dwellers, "how remote is remote?". What does it mean to be far away and isolated in a country that is already more reminiscent of a community than a country? In this respect, it is similar to most of small and sparsely populated counties. All the more so in places like Estonia, there is a great deal of weight in creative citizens' grassroots initiatives so that life does not disappear and young people do not leave. Unfortunately, these are few of the biggest problems that illustrate the examples of Estonia. Finding an answer to how to make life valuable for young people in their home village is a question that needs a special attitude and consistency. And definitely an old house, because what has become clear from our case studies is that one special and inclusive community requires an old house where stories will be born. A little coincidence just, but that's the way it is. However, storytelling and communication are vital to maintaining vitality in small places. Universal perhaps even, but in remote places where there are few people there is a need for those who would say "let's do something together". Involvement is necessary not only in small places, but in the form of microuniverses in remote places, it is good to understand the importance of human society and the functioning of human relations more broadly.

You're going to a lonely island, what are the three things you would take with you? At the first moment I might be in trouble, because as a descendant of a late capitalist society, I am used to the mindset of those who own the most items by their death are the winners. But the island of Aegna offers the opposite, maybe not even three items are needed? An island that is officially part of the country's capital, Tallinn and the municipality Kesklinn, which literally means it is the city center.

**"...storytelling and communication are vital to maintaining vitality in small places."**

Venerable Thitañāna and Venerable Thitamedha in front of ETS, Aegna.  
©Kirke Tatar



However, Aegna is far from the city and especially from the fast-paced city center. In contrast, there is complete peace and quiet. The island is covered with thick ancient forest, which is traversed by good and walkable trails. The drive to the island takes about an hour and it takes about a couple of hours to criss-cross the whole island on foot, so the island is an ideal place to get away from the city buzz.

In 2014, the psychologist and therapist Dr. Andrus Kahn became the first Theravada monk in Estonian history. He was ordained as Venerable Thitañāna. Estonian Theravada Sangha was established on 01.07.2014, by Venerable Thitañāna and Venerable Dr. Piyaratana Walmoruwe (Sri Lanka). Originally the organization was called Buddhavacana and was renamed to the Estonian Theravada Sangha on 07.06.2016. Their aim was to create a meditation center in Aegna, which is an ideal place for peace and self-development. Kahn's story is special in a way, having studied both medicine and psychotherapy, and having had a successful career with the latter, he felt that it was not quite enough to achieve contentment in life. Due to surprises and life's twists and turns, he finally got back to university and this time studying buddhology. He came back to his homeland with the goal of promoting Buddhism and meditation practices in Estonia. Thanks to a donation from an influential Buddhist monk, he was able to establish the center by purchasing a house in the very poor condition at that time, on the secluded island of Aegna. Ironically, the house was built for soldiers, and it was also at the disposal of the soldiers guarding the border throughout the Soviet occupation, but twenty years later there are people in the same house who do not fight but make peace. The goal of the Estonian Theravada Sangha is not only to improve the life of Aegna, their goal is broader and not related to worldly and temporal issues, but to increase people's self-awareness. All of their activities are based on donations from both Buddhist organizations in Asia and locals who go there to meditate. Gradually, without doing direct and loud advertising, various people have found their way to Aegna with the aim of stepping away from the usual path and finding time to develop themselves and their minds. Despite the fact that their activities are not connected to the economy at all, their activities are important for the tourism of the small island, giving jobs to sailors and even a local pop-up kiosk. There are currently two monks at the development center. Thanks to donors and constant work, the center can now operate all year round. In the past, however, the monks were forced to move temporarily back to Thailand during the winter because it was simply not possible to live in the building during the winter. However, there are not only supporters to their activities - only two permanent residents lived on the island before them, who unfortunately are not so open to change and have not participated in the community activities like maintaining the local road network. The island still has many obstacles, creating normality which is true to the island but makes living there difficult. For example, there is no first aid or grocery store on the island, which means that it is necessary to go to the mainland to solve every household issue. However, due to their role, monks are forbidden to own practically anything, including the food they eat. It must be donated or purchased for the donated money. Construction supplies for the renovation of the house need to be brought from the mainland. The water supply of the building is based on spring water. However, according to them, their activities will last as long as there are donors. When the donations end, they go back to Asia to the temple, but it seems that their activity is becoming more and more popular and more people are finding their way there to both retreats and contemplation camps, the latter being organized for young people. Right now, they want to develop the center, create basic amenities and, if possible, hire a few people to deal with both visitors and household. Among the major goals is the establishment of a Buddhist temple in Estonia, to translate Pāi Tipinaka into Estonian language, to reconstruct the house in Aegna and establish an WDS Aegna International Meditation Center and to build up an International Buddhist Dhamma-Vinaya Institute in Estonia. However, once they have achieved their goals, they plan to hand over the center to the next experts, who will take the center forward, keep the island small and help people to develop their minds. The ultimate goal of the current monks is to return to Thailand.



Ave Vita! is an NGO that is a community house that values culture, where several members of the community come together to spend time and make culture together. For decades, Ave Alavainu has invested her energy in enriching cultural life and making local young people spend their time meaningfully, especially the street youth. Her work, which could also be considered a life's work, is probably at the end purely due to Ave Alavainu's own high age and declining health, which no longer allows her to organize events as actively as she used to. Nevertheless, her contribution as a promoter of cultural life is almost irreplaceable in the context of Hiiumaa. A writer by profession and charismatic in nature, Alavainu received an old courthouse, an Art Nouveau wooden villa, which, like the monks' building, has been in constant repair. Young people who could not do anything after school in their time became her heartache. They didn't want to go home, they didn't have hobbies, so they ended up in the streets in gangs. There are also not many opportunities and choices in a small remote settlement to satisfy everyone's interests and get an idea of one's own interests through a variety of hobbies. There just aren't various possibilities around. In general, in Hiiumaa, Kärđla, the options available are at a high quality, but there are not many. Ave Alavainu's wish was to do something with these young people, to make their time a more meaningful. Poetry and theater evenings were held regularly at Ave's, garden parties were organized, which attracted hundreds of people. Cultural activities flourished in this house. Otherwise, the doors of the house were always open to young people, but due to the COVID-19 situation and the age of the housewife, it is now much quieter. Ave Alavainu also constantly invited well-known cultural figures from all over Estonia to Hiiumaa and also held professional poetry and literature competitions, where several professionals from different parts of Estonia came to participate. Thanks to her work, Ave can also be considered the center of Kärđla's cultural life. Many of the young people Ave worked with turned from the streets and got a decent life, while some did not do so well, some of whom were imprisoned later in life.

Unfortunately, Ave Vita! does not seem to have a long future ahead.

Close to Hiiumaa, on the other side of the water, in mainland Estonia, in Pärnu County, Lindi village is a particularly active village society that stands out from other village societies. Lindi Külaselts is a non-profit association founded in 2003 to contribute with its organizational and material resources to the preservation of the village of Lindi, the support of economic, social and cultural development, and the protection of the interests and needs of the villagers. The village society brings together people from the village and surrounding small settlements who want to contribute. In 2019, with the help of the Civil Society Endowment, Lindi Village Society started its self-analysis in order to further increase the sense of community and quality of life in the future.

The first step was the project "Preparation of an action plan for the development leap of the Lindi Village Society", during which several activities were carried out with an external expert Evelyn Eichhorst.



People of Lindi during cleaning up day.  
©Taavi Tamberg

Several different methods were used for the self-analysis of the village society (McKinsey analysis, mapping of previous activities, meetings), based on which the project team got a very good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the village society. Various methods were also used to study the needs of the target group, such as online surveys and face-to-face meetings, which allowed the project team to receive input from many different target groups. The participation and interest in the meetings was very high. A summary or analysis was made of each project activity, which allowed the information to be clearly seen and used to fulfill the purpose of the project. Subsequently, a project has been undertaken to develop a comprehensive funding model for the partnership and to develop communication channels that would promote the exchange of information between businesses, residents and visitors. The regular activities of the society include workshops and various joint activities, like spring harvestings or outdoor social activities during the summer and wintertime. The building in which it operates is, in fact, an old primary school that is of symbolic and close-to-heart to many locals. Today, a village society operates there, and it also has the function of a community center, where various hobby groups run. There is also a local café and even a small hotel. The passion and great inclusiveness of the village society have shown the success of these projects, activities and the unifying power of the community. The village society, being an NGO, stands at Pärnu City Council for the needs and interests of the villagers. After the administrative reform, the village of Lindi was merged with the city of Pärnu, despite the fact that the village is actually kilometers away from the city. The city of Pärnu has therefore become one of the largest in Europe. The aim of the reform was to reduce the effects of marginalization and to consolidate management structures into larger units. Unfortunately, many people living in remote places feel cut-off from the results of the reform because their voices are no longer as loud as they used to be. Lindi village is severely lacking in a proper street network, pedestrian and cyclist trails, modern street lighting and lower speed limits. However, the small community must stand up for these decisions, so that the decisions as well as money do not remain only in that part of the city of Pärnu that really is the city.



On the other side of Estonia, in Viitina, Võru County, Mari Kalkun, a folk musician recognized by the Guardian, is actively engaged in reviving and enriching the local traditional culture. She could also be considered the custodian and ambassador of Võro culture. Evaluating her roots is her heart's desire. In the home village of Viitina, an old barn of an inn was inherited, which is now becoming more like a cultural garden. Thus, for a couple of summers, public concerts have been held in the barn, which have reached both locals and those interested from further afield and from other cities. What makes these events special is that a local farmer as well as a minister could sit next to each other in a very direct and humane atmosphere. However, admission is donation-based, everyone pays according to their conscience. The music and word event is called Aigu OM, which means "There is time" in Võro language, which would include a lecture, chat room or workshop in addition to concerts. The aim of the event is to make people take more time and moments for themselves, stop their fast pace of life for a moment, look and experience the surroundings, enjoy what life has to offer. Make people feel more time-saving and nature-friendly. However, Mari has received almost no financial support for events, a few years ago a project was written to apply for money, but unfortunately it did not receive support. In this way, all the activities around Viitina Kõrtsi Küün have been more of a project that unites the community and friends. Local people, her friends with different backgrounds and students of the school orchestra from the capital have helped her to restore the building and organize events. Mari has also said that since all the activities around the barn are largely based on enthusiasm and a large part of her tightly planned schedule is spent creating new music and performing outside the home village, she has not been able to get involved in it very much yet. It's more of a life project, she said, but Mari hasn't done it for her life work yet, nor is she so sure if she wants to take it as it. It's more of a nice and inclusive venture that enriches the slow-paced rural area with a dose of traditional culture. Despite invitations and small advertisements, people from the capital rather than locals have

come to help tidy up the house as well as for the concerts. Rural people inevitably need to take care of the field, the animals as well as the forest, the culture does not seem to be so important next to them. Inevitably, seeing culture as well as, for example, going to the theater as something elitist and distant, despite the fact that Estonians are one of the most active theater-goers in Europe. (Reference) On the other hand, there are more and more open-minded summer vacationers who have roots or a cottage in Võru County, but who no longer live there permanently. Moving to a rural area has also become popular, many young people have recently moved to the area with their families. They have mainly been the ones who helped Mari with her events. The natural beauty of the area has made it attractive and has also made real estate prices rise. The municipality and welfare services are very open and supportive to new residents, as fresh blood is urgently needed in depopulated rural areas. Despite the fact that there are numerous cultural events in Võro County during the summer, the area is quite quiet in the wintertime. A lot of Estonian creatives are from Võromaa (Võro Land) or have moved there so have Mari imagined of creating a "creative village" one day. However, the sustainability of the project depends a lot on Mari's initiative, but its impact on the introduction and popularization of local culture cannot be underestimated, thanks to which many tourists from Estonia and further afield have found their way to Võro County.

**"...it needs a leader with a spark, who sometimes has to infiltrate from the outside of the community to show new perspectives, sometimes injecting hope for positive developments."**

Käru Museum of Good Deeds, which operates in Käru village, has developed rapidly during the time when they have been part of the case studies of the Estonian Human Cities program. The non-profit organization is headed by film documentary director Aljona Suržikova, who decided to move from the capital city of Tallinn to the village of Käru in Central Estonia a few years ago. The museum is a local history museum created on the initiative of the locals, the aim of which is to preserve, introduce and raise awareness of the history of Estonia in the 20th century in the form of various exhibitions, art and social projects and camps. The idea of the museum came a few years ago when Aljona and her family acquired two old houses near Käru railway station, which date back to before World War II, when the Republic of Estonia still existed and the Soviet occupation had not begun. The windows in these houses were closed with wooden boards. In the summer of 2018, the NGO decided to acquire these buildings with the aim of arranging them with the involvement of the locals. After the acquisition of the houses, an active discussion began in the Käru community on how to restore the buildings and what should be done there later on. The



Käru Museum's volunteering staff, in the middle stands Aljona Suržikova. ©Käru Museum – photo by Sergei Trofimov

idea to create a museum of baby trolleys was born and a campaign to collect trolleys was launched. Currently, more than 60 trolleys have been collected, the oldest of which dates back to the 19th century. One of the oldest trolleys is from the 1930s and several others from later decades. The connection with baby trolleys is logical, because in Estonian Käru literally means a trolley or a cart. During the campaign, a few dozen trolleys were collected, found, received as gifts, and there were some trolleys for twins among them. Involvement in rural areas is a challenge because, as in Viitina, cultural life is often a long way off for people in the remote places. Nevertheless, Aljona and her family have been able to involve a large number of active members of the community in the work and development of the museum. Together with the community, the buildings have been tidied up and local volunteers are also guides in the museum. Through its active operation, the museum has stood out elsewhere, and despite its short period of operation, it has already gained considerable recognition. However, due to the effects of the administrative reform, the village of Käru also feels further away than before. The museum receives small grants because the local government have not considered the work of the Museum and the activities involving the community important enough for the municipality. Most of the museum's money comes from donors and ticket sales. The museum has also involved many young people in its activities, who, similarly to the example of Hiiumaa, sometimes suffer from a lack of developmental activities. For example, a local teenagers broke the newly placed windows of the museum, instead of calling the police Aljona asked the boy to help tidy up and repair the windows of the museum for a small fee. The work of the Käru Museum seems to have a future, because the pioneering management has in a short time helped the NGO to become active and the activities of the community have started with a new impetus.

## Conclusion

Based on Estonian examples, it seems that in order to activate the life in small communities, it is really necessary to have an old house where things are really going to happen. More than this it needs a leader with a spark, who sometimes has to infiltrate from the outside of the community to show new perspectives, sometimes injecting hope for positive developments. In almost all examples, however, the community has been quite active in the activities, as the desire for positive developments exists everywhere except in Aegna, where there is virtually no local community. In the case of the three examples, it is also quite certain from the current data that the activities are in principle sustainable. In the case of Ave Vita! Unfortunately, most of the work has already been done and the positive impact on the community, and especially on young people, has already been left. Unfortunately Ave died 03.04.2022 but good news is that her daughter, an actor, will be her successor. She will take over Ave Vita! and will continue with cultural activities which start 18.06.2022 with farewell event to Ave Alavainu. However, Mari Kalkun is a musician at the peak of her career, who unfortunately does not have the time or the full commitment to actively lead Viitina Inn Barn as anything but a summer event venue. However, the activities so far have also brought fresh air to slow-paced Viitina. In the case of both Kärü and Viitina, the cultural fear or indifference of the locals was highlighted, which has begun to change. In one of her conversations with us, Suržikova pointed out that at first it was difficult to involve the locals because their worldview was narrow and there was little precious contact with culture. The museum's activities seemed incomprehensible at first, but the constant effort to prove its positive impact has also convinced the locals, who are now actively involved. All in all, the results in three examples have been positive and well received by the locals.



Best practices

01

# Poland

Pobiedna  
Biała Piska  
Grójec  
Sejny  
Chełmek



# Wolimierz Station

Stacja Wolimierz

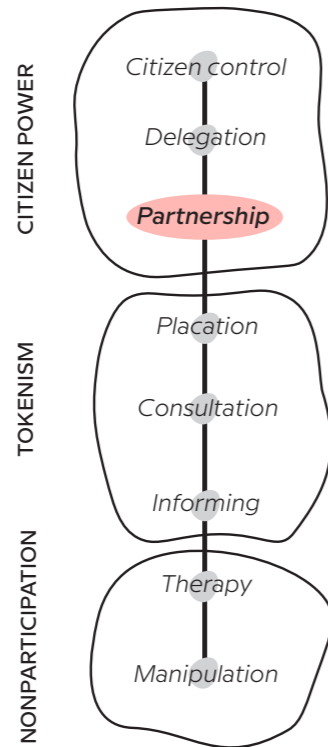
LOCATION  
**Pobiedna, Poland**

TIME PERIOD  
**Since 1991**



## THE PROJECT

In the past, there was a railway line in Pobiedna that reached Wolimierz. After the Second World War, the line was closed down and disassembled. However, the station and its surroundings remained and have become a cradle of initiatives in the village. The challenge was to create a friendly space for people looking for an alternative lifestyle in line with nature while tackling local issues as much as possible.



them began to actively participate in workshops and festivals.

## RESULT

Wolimierz Station is a place which now attracts lots of people from the area, Poland, and from around the world. The activities have succeeded in combining creativity with local problem solving, education, and ecological issues. The cooperation with local organizations brought new possibilities. Everyone who wants to attend the creative works, simple spectators or actors, benefited from the creative works. Some economic effects were even felt in the settlement. Although the local community was initially distrustful of the activities, the creative works are now well perceived by both visitors and the citizens, who are curious and want to contribute to them.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Located at the foot of the Iżera Mountains, Pobiedna could be defined as a remote place by its geographical characteristics as well as **limited traffic connections**. Moreover, the settlement has **only basic life support** facilities and suffers from their small number. Remoteness is amplified by a **low population density, which has decreased** in the last decades. With its 13 streets, Pobiedna is mostly rural and has few public initiatives and services. The only **public places are of poor quality**, such as an old park near the Meffersdorf palace or a playground for children.

## INITIATION AND ACTORS

For more than twenty years, the project has been **mainly operated by a group of artists and friends known as the "Klinika Lalek" puppet theatre**. This group of artists has saved the buildings from

demolition and has renovated it into a cultural space.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

Since the renovation of the station, the place has hosted creative works such as workshops, festivals, and theatre performances. Activities have also been designed for the local community, including the **construction of a playground made of natural materials and a bus stop similar to traditional houses**. Ecological concerns have become important and many activities have focused on these issues. The artists were authorized by the local government to use the old railway station and convert it into a cultural centre. The involvement of the inhabitants in the activities has continued to grow over the years. **At first, the citizens were only spectators or volunteers for the organization, but then some of**



Wolimierz festival 2020  
©Agnieszka Prymon



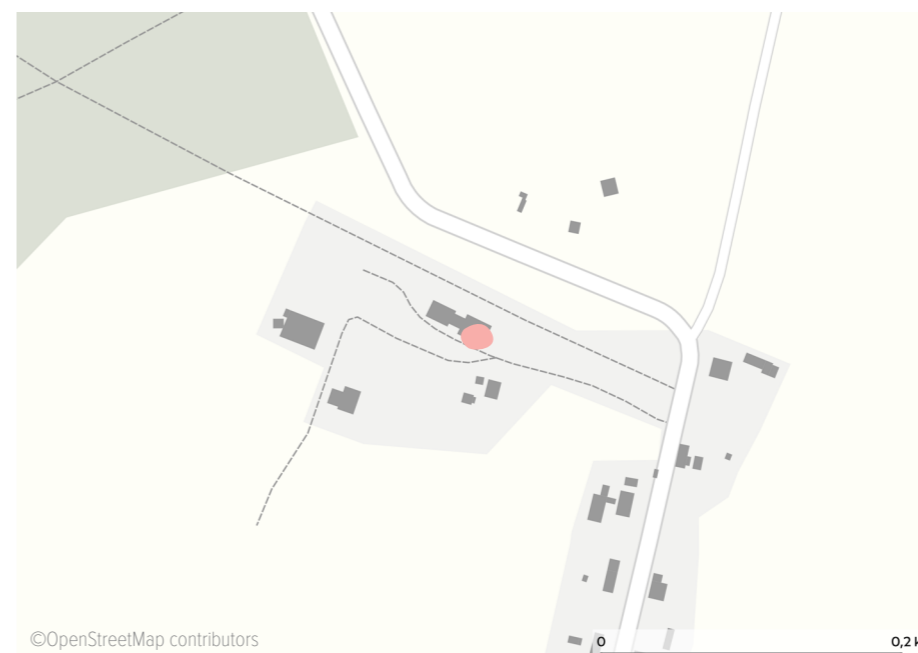
Wolimierz festival 2020  
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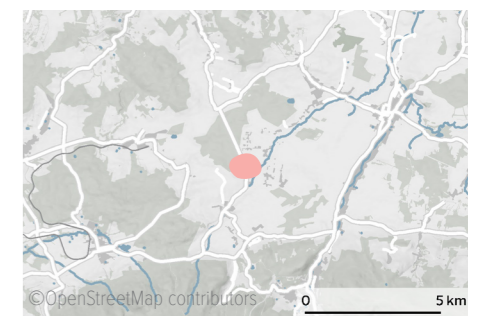
Wolimierz festival 2020  
©Agnieszka Prymon



Wolimierz festival 2020  
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Pobiedna, Lower Silesia, Poland

more about  
this project





## Livable Street

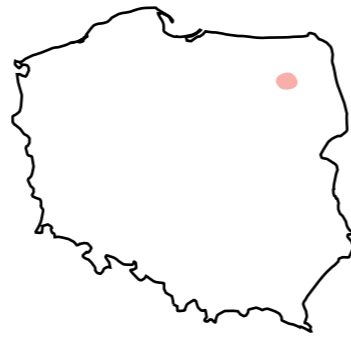
Żywa Ulica

LOCATION

**Biała Piska, Poland**

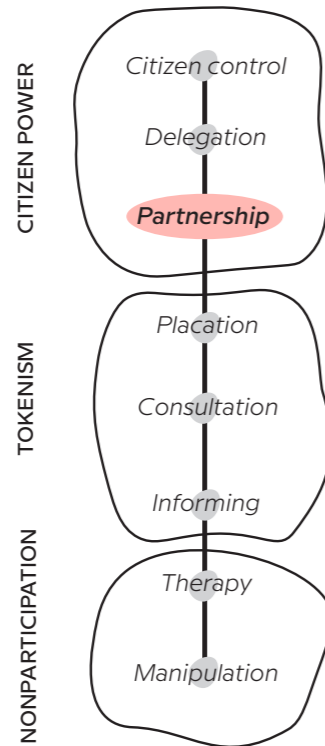
TIME PERIOD

**2019 & 2021**



### THE PROJECT

The Livable Street project took place in a **free parking area** located in the centre of Biała Piska. The aim of the project was to make the residents of the town aware that it is possible to improve the quality of their surroundings. Moreover, it was aimed at **proving that the place could function without cars**. The idea was also to **take culture to the streets** and to conduct a survey to ask the residents about their ideas for interventions in the town and its surroundings.



### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Biała Piska is a small town located in the eastern part of Poland. Its inhabitants consider their town as a pretty remote place (3/5). This feeling of remoteness is a consequence of two factors: the **poor quality of transportation links** which leads to difficulties in accessing the basic facilities, and the **lack of innovation**, especially in the creative sector. The process of urbanization and development led to partial degradation of the historical structure of the town with **some areas that require revitalization**.

### INITIATION AND ACTORS

The **project was launched with the help of local institutions**. Apart from the support of the officials, we need to point out the role of the library and cultural centre staff as

well as the Social Urbanism Studio team, who helped to prepare the event by sharing their knowledge and experience.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

The activities consisted in the **transformation of the parking lot's function. The place turned into a playground with street games, a café, a dance floor, a lounge to read poetry, and a photo booth for taking fun photos**. There was also a **questionnaire in which the residents could express their willingness for interventions in the city**. The changes also reached the surrounding villages with similar activities. The residents were involved at every stage of the Livable Street. A local group was formed, which took part in the workshops with the Social Urbanism Studio team in order to

prepare the activities. They also actively participated in the event itself.

### RESULT

The targeted impacts were achieved in this project. The parking area in the town centre temporarily changed its function and turned out to be a pretty good place for the residents to meet. The organizers also managed to gather a group of active residents who joined the preparation of the event. **The project's outcomes exceeded the expectations because in the following months, similar initiatives took place in neighbouring villages.** The main beneficiaries of the creative works were the local community and the authorities. **The event was a pretext to practice the basics of participation.** The activities were positively assessed by locals according to surveys, which also showed that they wanted more activities like these in the future.



Livable Street event  
©Biała Piska commune office



The residents activities  
©Biała Piska commune office



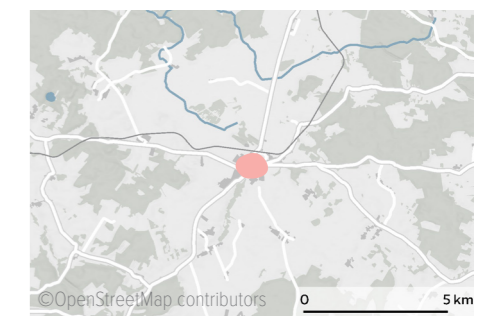
The residents activities  
©Biała Piska commune office



Livable Street event  
©Biała Piska commune office



©OpenStreetMap contributors



Biała Piska, Waria Masuria, Poland

more about this project





# Grójec Free School

Wolna Szkoła Grójec

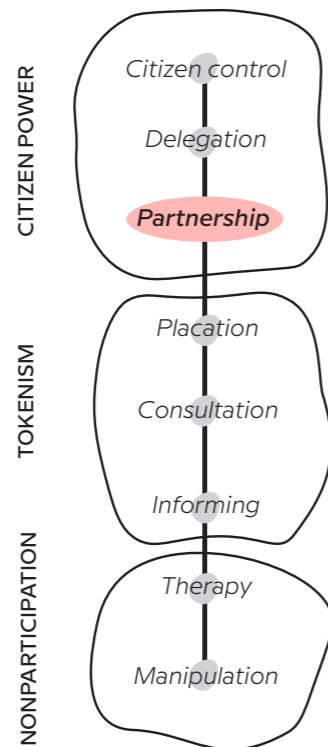
LOCATION  
**Grójec, Poland**

TIME PERIOD  
**Since 2013**



## THE PROJECT

A group of people who cared about their nearest environment and ecological education established a private school called Grójec Free School. The initiative was launched by Fundacja Tropy Przyrody (Nature Trail Foundation), which organized Earth Day events in Grójec since 2013. The project tackled several challenges: introducing alternative education methods, supporting the development of local communities, creating forms of recreation, and running an educational workshop centre for the community.



foundation, who owned a plot of land in Nowe Grobice. She invested her time and finances to develop the space for users and make it more friendly and available.

## RESULT

Earth Day, a bottom-up initiative of local activists, turned out to be a success. It had an interesting family-oriented programme and it was the first event of this kind to place a strong emphasis on environmental issues. The local community became more environmentally aware. The next step was to create the Grójec Free School as an alternative to the traditional school system. The children at the school learn how to take care of the environment and build their social competences; how to develop their interests and enhance their self-esteem. They learn through experience – they spend a lot of time outdoors rather than sitting in classrooms like in a traditional school. The forest surroundings of the town are great for organising a variety of outdoor activities, camps, workshops, expeditions, and field games. They are attended by both the town inhabitants and visitors.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Grójec is a remote place which suffers from geographical barriers and poor transportation links. Despite its location near the capital of Poland, there are still areas that require improvement. Moreover, the number of services offered in the city does not meet the expectations of the inhabitants and it does not allow them to be fully independent. Grójec has a few public spaces, but they are not all well-equipped. The local population also pointed out the shortage of places where people could spend their free time and relax with friends.

support the development of the local community through joint development activities, culture and environmental protection, as well as promoting a lifestyle that respects the environment.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

Earth Day was a cyclical event which included concerts, theatre performances, fairs, and workshops on environmental issues. It was the first initiative of this kind in Grójec, where the residents could be involved in educational stalls and learn about the local issues. Thanks to this experience, Fundacja Tropy Przyrody established the Grójec Free School for children, which offers alternative learning methods. Besides, it continues organizing workshops for the local community. The project was initiated by Anna Makowska, the founder of the

## INITIATION AND ACTORS

The project was created and coordinated by Fundacja Tropy Przyrody (Nature Trail Foundation). This organization wanted to



The Earth Day in Grójec ©Tropy Przyrody



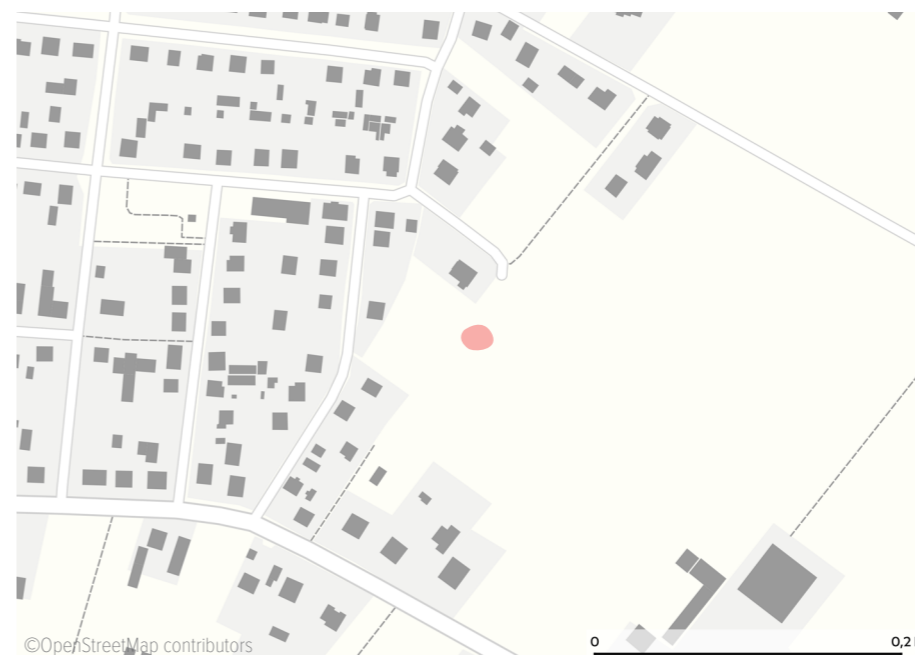
Grójec Free School - cleaning the forest ©Tropy Przyrody



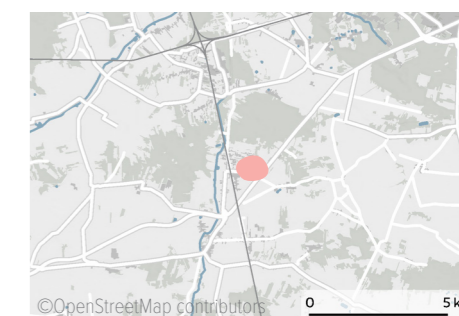
Grójec Free School - Summer Camp ©Agnieszka Mocarska



Grójec Free School - outdoor learning ©Tropy Przyrody



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Grójec, Mazovia, Poland

more about this project





# The Hidden Town

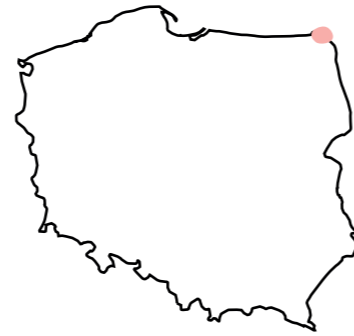
Ukryte Miasto

LOCATION

**Sejny, Poland**

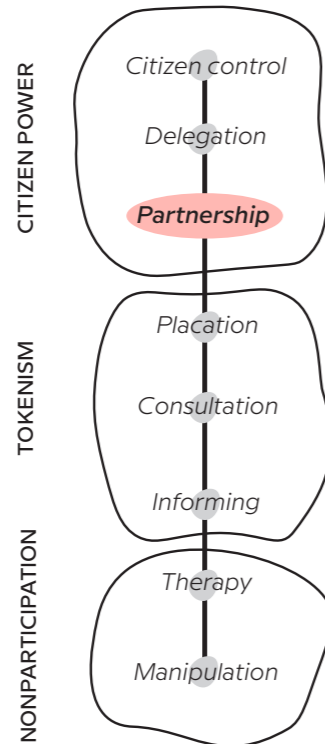
TIME PERIOD

**From 2020 to 2021**



## THE PROJECT

In the past, Sejny was a multicultural settlement. This characteristic was very useful for the implementation of the Hidden Town project. Its aim was to **discover the history of the town** by the youngsters who listened to the **personal stories of the elderly citizens**. The stories were then used for creating a unique **subjective map of the town**, presenting important people and places from the past. Additionally, an installation representing the town was created, where each cubicle resembling a miniature flat was a visual reinterpretation of a story. Then, the installation was displayed in the White Synagogue.



The project was developed thanks to the funding from the Ministry of Culture.

## RESULT

The targeted goal of this initiative was to **develop the ability of young people to be more attentive to others and to better understand their environment**. With these activities, the participants got a deep understanding of how valuable their place of living is. Beyond these objectives, one of the most important aspects is the continuity of the work that lasts until today. Moreover, the subjective map was an important teaching aid and a unique showcase of the city. Although the local community was obviously the main beneficiary, **members of small communities also received more attention** (such as Lithuanians or Roma families). However, although **some inhabitants were enthusiastic about this initiative, others were more sceptical**.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Sejny can be described as a remote place mainly by its geographical location. Far away from the biggest cities in Poland, the **access to it is very limited**. This remoteness is also characterised by a **low population density** or the difficulties in accessing daily life facilities. Although the region is popular during the summer, its attractiveness drops in the off-season. There are many public spaces but the infrastructure is not sufficient. According to the inhabitants, the town suffers from the **lack of quality leisure and meeting spaces**.

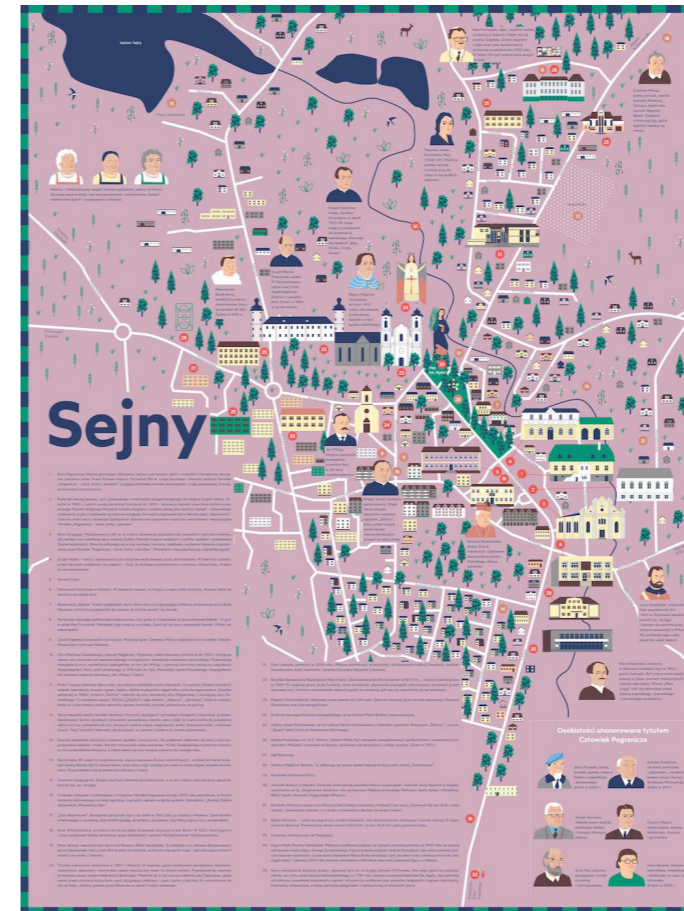
## INITIATION AND ACTORS

This project was **implemented at the initiative and under the supervision of artists** of the Borderland Centre in the frame of memory protection

work. They appealed to a **group of 12 children from Sejny to interview older people** from the settlement about their memories and anecdotes.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

Although the project was not their own initiative, the local community was at the heart of the activities. The transfer of memories was made possible by the willingness of Sejny's senior citizens to share their memories to the teenagers, who related their words in the final publication. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic required a bigger involvement of the parents, especially in logistical matters because common work was impossible. Therefore, **all age groups were involved in the project**. The artists' experience with similar initiatives was crucial.



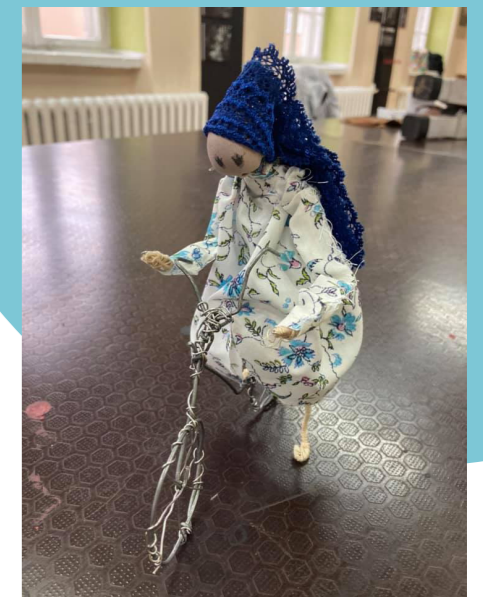
The Hidden Town project. The map of Sejny designed by Barbara Karolina Kotowska



The Hidden Town project - workshops ©Wiesław Szumiński, Bożena Szroeder, Michał Moniuszko



The Hidden Town project - workshops ©Wiesław Szumiński, Bożena Szroeder, Michał Moniuszko



The Hidden Town project - workshops ©Wiesław Szumiński, Bożena Szroeder, Michał Moniuszko



Sejny, Podlachia, Poland

more about this project





# Chełmek Factory

Fabryka Chełmek

LOCATION

**Chełmek, Poland**

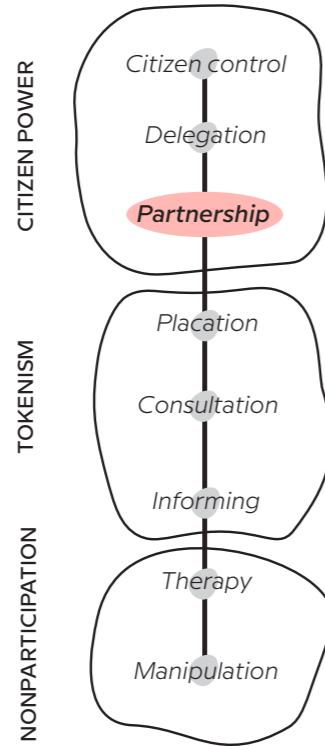
TIME PERIOD

**From 2020 to 2021**



## THE PROJECT

Chełmek Factory is a project that was implemented in a town where a former shoe factory existed. The factory was opened in the 1930s by Tomas Bata, a Czech industrialist. Unfortunately, it was closed in 2003. The main challenge of the project was to rediscover the forgotten history of Tomas Bata. The activities were designed to restore the identity of the inhabitants and show them the value of the history of their town.



who used to work in the factory and were happy to help organize the events and to share the history of the place.

## RESULT

From August to mid-September 2020, there were twelve artistic events in the commune that managed to create a positive trend of discovering the town's old history and taking pride in its heritage. As a result, **the targeted impact was reached. The group of residents interested in discovering the heritage of Bata is growing.** The topic also has its fans outside Chełmek and more objects are sent to the cultural centre that collects artifacts related to the factory. One of the most important lessons is the realization that **time and patience are crucial to work with memory.**

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Located in the south of Poland, between Katowice, Kraków and Bielsko-Biała, Chełmek is characterized by an **aged demographic structure and a shrinking population.** The remoteness that can be felt by the local population has its roots in the closure of the Bata shoe factory in 2003 that had a great influence on the people's life. There are **limited public spaces** in Chełmek which might be attractive to people of all ages, such as playgrounds, tennis courts, a football pitch, and a local park. To change this, Chełmek is undergoing revitalization in the centre of the town.

## INITIATION AND ACTORS

The Chełmek Factory project was made possible thanks to history and architecture enthusiasts and

activists supported by the local cultural centre. They also received funding from the Ministry of Culture, which allowed them to carry out various activities. The support of artists and scientists was also important.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

These actors decided to set up a **series of artistic events, workshops, and concerts inspired by Bata's heritage.** The events took place in the premises of the former factory, the Przemysza riverbank, "Kolonія" (the workers' colony), and the railway station. The project was an opportunity to remember history and to collect information and archives related to the factory. It also demonstrated the values of architecture and nature in the city. The local community was involved in the project through the people



Chełmek Factory project. Artistic residence ©Waldemar Rudyk



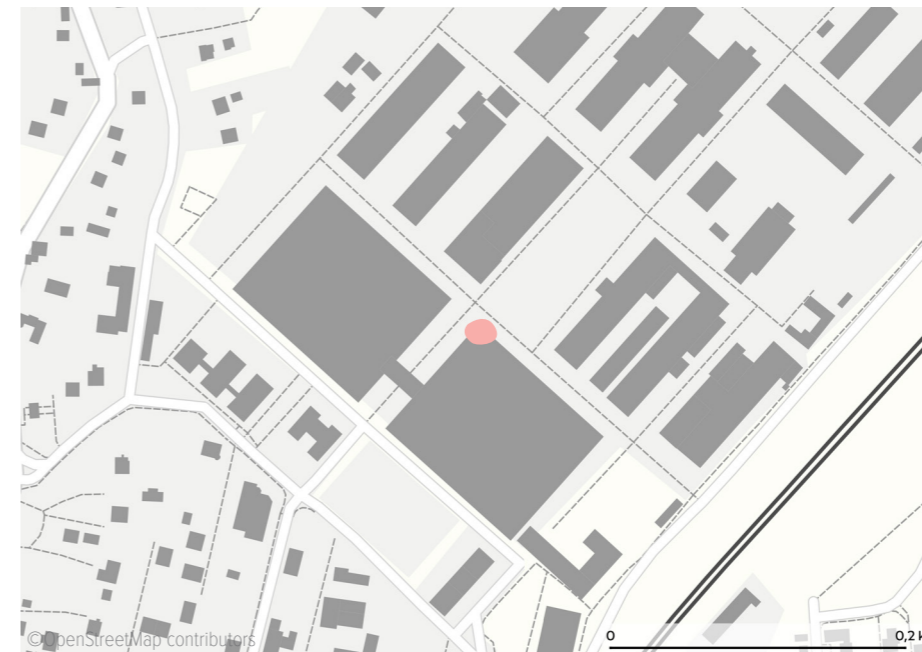
Chełmek Factory project. A walk in former factory ©Mirosław Saternus



Chełmek Factory project. A concert in historic area ©Paweł Waligóra



Chełmek Factory project. A walk in "Kolonія" ©Paweł Waligóra



Chełmek, Lesser Poland, Poland

more about this project



02

# Greece

Pano Lefkara

Elefsina & others  
villages of Greece

Ermoupoli

Demati and Kalentzi

Pyrgos



## Grampus Heritage and Training Ltd

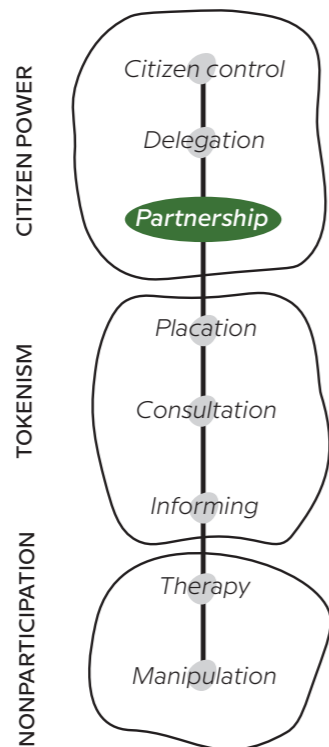


LOCATION  
**Pano Lefkara,  
Cyprus-Greece**

TIME PERIOD  
**Since 1995**

### THE PROJECT

The Grampus project is located in several places in the village of Pano Lefkara. The crux of the creative works undertaken is sustainability and the idea that rural life was closer to sustainability's principles. By engaging in the valorisation of knowledge from the glorious past of the village, Grampus aims to go beyond documenting and preserving this. The goal is to re-engage in these crafts to create meaningful employment and rural regeneration.



tourism board has worked a lot on agrotourism to develop the area. But above all, the **European fundings was decisive** because it shaped Grampus' work.

### RESULT

The targeted impact is partly achieved as the **project is still ongoing**. Moreover, with the covid pandemic, the process of transferring knowledge decelerated but will be restarting soon. The main beneficiary of this creative work is the local community because through the activities combining traditional skills with young people, new examples of sustainable development have been created. This has provided a **pathway to employment for the young people in traditional craft**. Moreover the transnational dimension of the project has allowed influx of visitors as an economic benefit of the educational program. Overall, the creative works have been embraced by the local community as an attempt to revitalize rural communities forgotten by the central authorities.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Pano Lefkara could be defined as a remote place by its **low population density** and the **poor transportation links**. But the remoteness of this settlement is characterized by subjective criteria like the exodus of the population, which resulted in the abandonment of many dwellings. The **village is dense** in its center and surrounded by open space. There are a couple of plazas and overall, there are **adequate public spaces** for the activities undertaken. However, due to the exodus and aging population, the public spaces have been **left empty**.

Its purpose is to **preserve disappearing skills across Europe and support rural communities**. The activities have been coordinated by the Cyprus Agrotourism company.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

The project consists of educational activities led by Grampus in the framework of Green Village partnership in cooperation with other European rural settlements. The local community is involved as the host of those who wish to participate in the local creative workshops. Their culture and their place is in the center of the creative process: **local community learn from their ancestors**. In addition, many local residents play the role of teacher for the education in archeology and crafts. The municipality has been very keen to support the process and the

### INITIATION AND ACTORS

The **project was initiated by Grampus Heritage and Training**, which is a not-for-profit organization passionate about culture, heritage and environment.



Painting lessons  
© Martin David Clark



Church with a cross bearing the 'lefkatiotika' lace patterns  
© Martin David Clark



Overview of the village  
© Martin David Clark



Pyrgos, Tinos, Greece

more about  
this project





# Pilgrims

Προσκυνητές

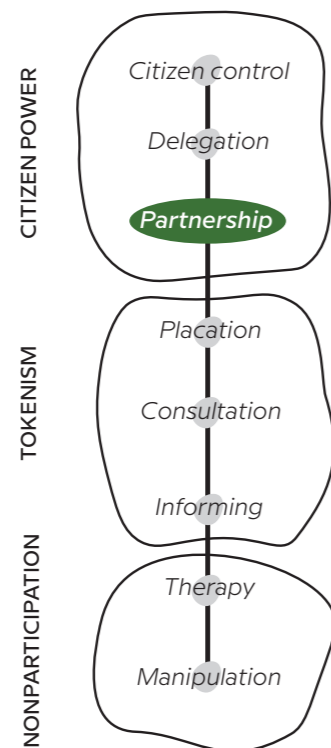
LOCATION  
**Elefsina & others villages of Greece**

TIME PERIOD  
**Since 2021**



## THE PROJECT

Pilgrims is an action umbrella designed for outside/public places, to travel to as many possible provincial places of Greece, from South to the North. The aim of the project is to **make citizens, who do not have access to the art world, discover it through dance.** There, we will focus on the last stop of the Pilgrims journey across Greece: Elefsina (planned around 2023).



they would be happy to organize an open discussion with its viewers of the community.

## RESULT

It is expected for the targeted impact to be achieved at least partially. For sure people will learn about dance and maybe attend an event that has not happened before. For some of them, it will be a first-time experience, and this may trigger a connection with the acting of dance and their bodies. In addition, **the local creative sector will be involved** and develop an understanding of different creative practices, connections with the actors, and their approach. Dance is a language to communicate emotions, to get closer to each other, to tell a story. For these reasons, it is very possible even the more unfamiliar viewers/participants will gain a unique experience.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Even if the project covers various locations across Greece, we will focus here on one specific area: the city of Elefsina. It is located about 20km from the center of Athens and has a population of 24,910 inhabitants. Due to its proximity with the capital city of Greece, the remoteness of this place does not come from geographical characteristics, but rather by its **shrinking industries and high unemployment rate.** Regarding structure public spaces, most of them are not so well organized and look abandoned.

## INITIATION AND ACTORS

The strong need for artistic extroversion combined with the desire to strengthen modern dance in the provinces, established the "Pilgrims". The main source of

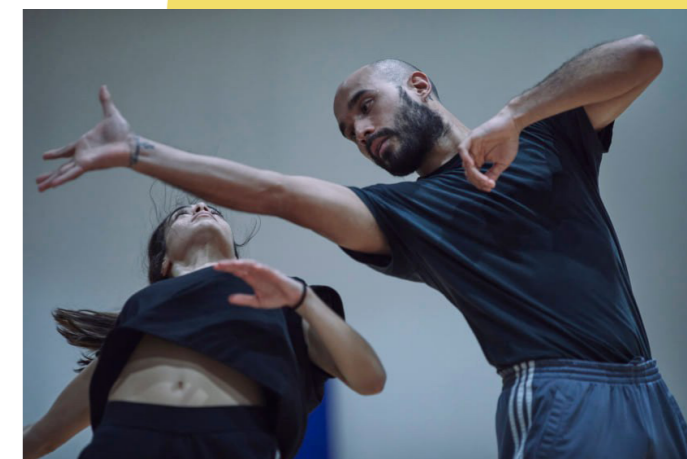
inspiration is the pilgrims' journey from various parts of Europe to Santiago de Compostela Spain, also known as the Camino de Santiago.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

With "Pilgrims", Danae Dimitriadi and Dionysios Alamanos, **two main artists** of the project, will tour small towns and villages of the Greek countryside, carving their own trekking. **A road trip with a van** from place to place, at 54 selected locations that will end in Elefsina. This way of working makes that accommodation and transportation will never be a restriction, while it will also contribute to the spontaneity of the idea. One example of the involvement of the local community is "Farisa". It is a fifteen-minute duet that is presented in public, outdoors. After the presentation of the project and where possible,



Danae & Dionysios on stage ©Barlas Sahinoglu



Danae & Dionysios on stage ©Barlas Sahinoglu



Danae & Dionysios © Barlas Sahinoglu



Danae & Dionysios on stage ©Barlas Sahinoglu



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Harjumaa, Estonia



## Stray Art Festival

Περιπλανώμενη Γιορτή της Τέχνης του Δρόμου

LOCATION

**Ermoupoli, Greece**

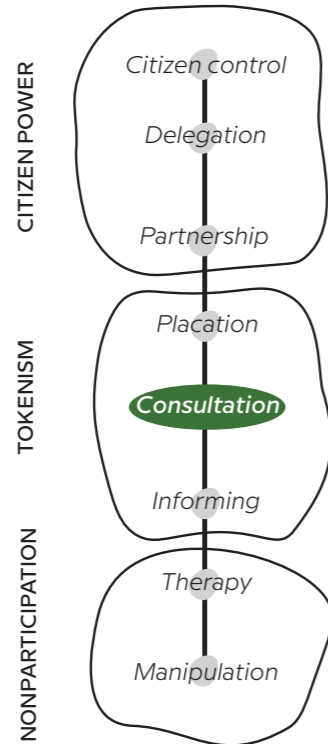
TIME PERIOD

**In 2018**



### THE PROJECT

The project took place in the Sport's Center Dimitrios Vikelas where various infrastructures were used to host the creative work. Its main goal was to make a lasting creative impact offering an experience to the visitors. The festival tried to explore the possibilities of a symbiosis between the traditional and the new in order to show visitors that they have a lot in common.



used for the activity were given by the Municipality.

### RESULT

Although no research was conducted, most feedback from inhabitants, visitors and the municipality were positive. The festival is now getting stronger and the organizers have received several proposals to hold the event in new venues. For the first time in this place, there was a **cultural and social interaction between visitors, artist and the local community**. The creation of this kind of open street art gallery puts today the region of Syros on the world map of street art and brings tourists. The main beneficiaries were first the local community, but also the small businesses and creators that got exposure during the festival. The municipality also benefited from this creative work with many articles published in newspapers and media.



The Athletic Center painted and a muralist in front of it, creating art on the car of a Strayer. ©Stray Art Festival – photo by Tatiana Kasimati

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

What characterizes first Ermoupoli as a remote place is that it is surrounded by the Aegean Sea. This situation explains the other remoteness characteristics of the island: the **difficulties in accessing-daily-life support facilities, poor transportation links and a low population density**. The inhabitants of the island feel this remoteness. In terms of public spaces, the condition of the many paths in the centre is poor. With its proximity to shops and the sea, the central square is the most used public space. Although there are some green spaces, their infrastructures are quite poor and unpopular.

### WHAT MAKES THE SPECIFICITY OF THE PROJECT

The project was initiated and **organized by the Stray Art Festival**

**Team.** To achieve it, they **invited 20 muralists and 50 musicians** from all over Greece to perform during the festival.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

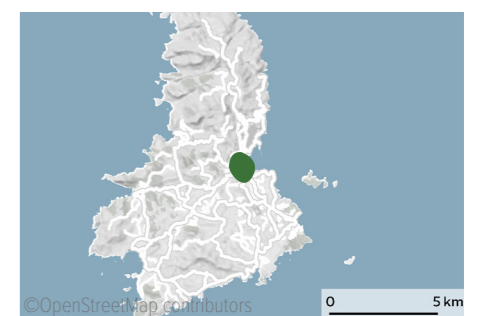
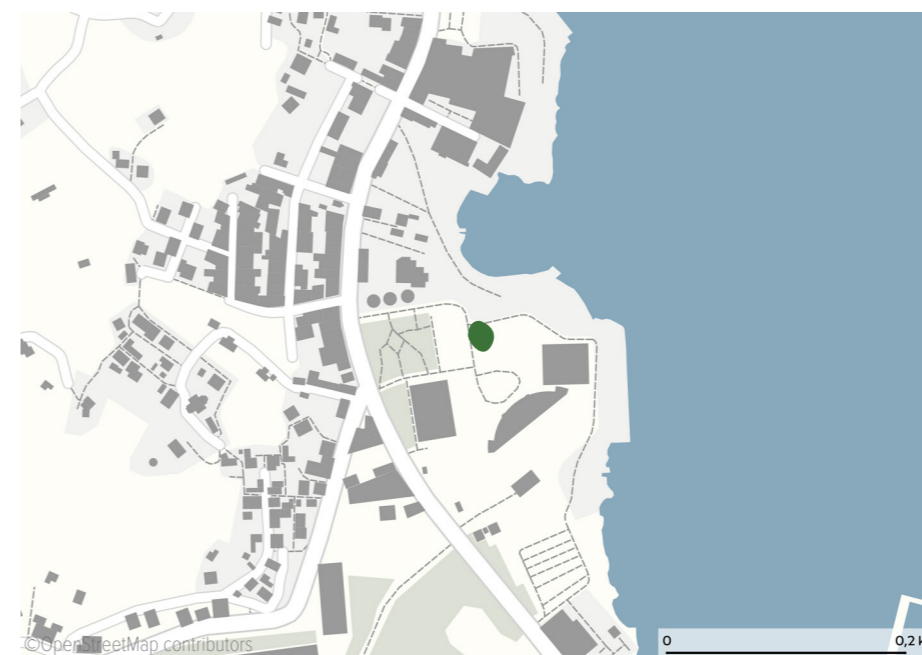
For the festival, **some neglected buildings were renewed** and the Stray Art Festival offered three days full of music, colors, events and performances. The local community was the witness of the **mural's creation process**. They attended **musical shows and theatrical performances** but also participated in **workshops**. Moreover, some of them assisted the organisation team as **volunteers**. To achieve this project, there was financial help from the Municipality of Syros-Ermoupolis and the South-Aegean Region, as well as some small **public funds** from local enterprises. Furthermore, the infrastructures



Stray Art Festival Letters in front of a basketball court with walls being painted by the street artists. © Andromachi Boliou



Organisation before the beginning of the festival by the volunteers ©Festival Archive



Harjumaa, Estonia

more about this project





# Cooperatively design and manufacture tools for small-scale agricultural production

Συνεργατικός σχεδιασμός και κατασκευή εργαλείων για γεωργική παραγωγή μικρής κλίμακας

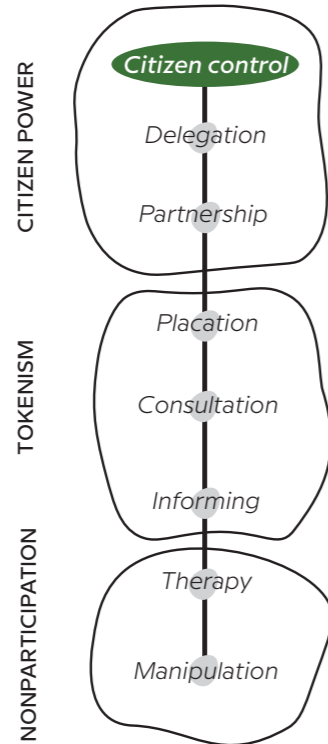


LOCATION  
**Demati and Kalentzi, Greece**

TIME PERIOD  
**From 2015 to 2021**

## THE PROJECT

Despite their different locations, these two projects have in common to be maker spaces supporting cultural functions and connected to the natural environment. In “Tzoumakers” building (Kalentzi), people try to revive the area’s tradition of craft and making things by hand in order to create places where citizens seize technology. “The High Mountains” in Demati, is a social cooperative where people try to revive their villages in a holistic way.



the main condition for them to come to life remains the human capital.

## RESULT

The targeted impacts are partly achieved and the beneficiaries are the people that take part in these projects. The inhabitants showed their curiosity by participating in these activities and were excited to see something different happening in their villages. In Tzoumakers, most of the tools built by the community are now used and repaired internally while in The High Mountains, new virtuous ways of cultivation have been developed. In addition to this, local communities can now interconnect on a more global scale to share their experience, ideas, solutions, and tools as a common resource. These projects have increased solidarity between communities.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

This case study is a network of places connected and Demati and Kalentzi are the main locations of this network. All have many characteristics which define them as a remote place: low population, few inhabitants that have difficulty in accessing daily-life support facilities, an economy turned towards agriculture and no good transportation links to the cities, which are far away. From these facts, the local population feels remote. These villages have sufficient public spaces regarding the number of people but they are not well equipped.

Mountains was created by the people who live and produce in mountainous areas.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

Tzoumakers building is an open lab where more suitable tools are designed for small-scale agricultural production. The local community is involved by its participation in workshops where they can manufacture and borrow tools. In the case of the High Mountains, the local community organizes the High Mountains Solidarity Tour. In this project, inhabitants share their culture and history with visitors. Moreover, activities can intertwine: in fact, members of the two projects met and a tool was made by Tzoumakers. It may after help a new farmer of The High Mountains. If these projects are supported by some associations and institutions,

## WHAT MAKES THE SPECIFICITY OF THE PROJECT

These projects are the result of citizen initiatives. For instance, the social cooperative of The High



“Tzoumakers” space  
©Tzoumakers – photo by Nicolas Garnier, Creative Commons licence)



“The high mountains” space 2  
©The high mountains – photo by Sotiris Tsoukarelis



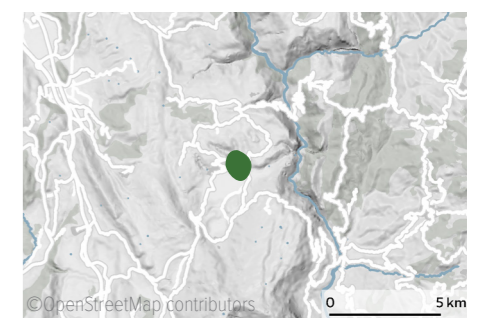
Construction  
©Tzoumakers – photo by Nicolas Garnier, Creative Commons licence



Testing the grinder for aromatic plants  
©Tzoumakers – photo by Alekos Pantazis



©OpenStreetMap contributors



Kalentzi (Tzoumerka), Demati (Zagorochoria), Ioannina, Greece

more about this project





## Interactive Installation in the Museum of Marble Crafts

Διαδραστικό Installation στο Μουσείο Μαρμαροτεχνίας

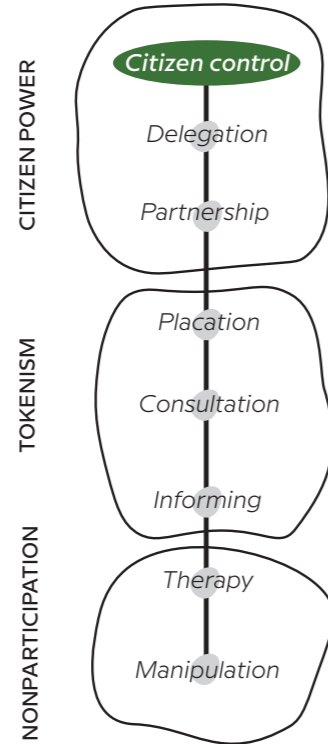


LOCATION  
**Pyrgos, Greece**

TIME PERIOD  
**Since 2018**

### THE PROJECT

This project consists, as its name suggests, of an **interactive installation in the Museum of Marble Crafts in Pyrgos**. It is based on the crane that is at the entrance of the museum. The aim of the project is to **develop a novel approach for learning in a playful manner** about the history and operation of a mechanical crane and the associated historical and cultural context.



playful, experiential and educational manner. The physiognomy of place, and by extension the natural heritage of the settlement was also a very important factor that weighed on the design decisions and development of the creative activities.

### RESULT

Before the installation, users didn't seem to understand the use of the crane and passed by it without giving it much attention. After the installation of the interactive prototype, at the level of laboratory tests, the users understood better how it worked in context, revealing the artefact's intangible cultural heritage. Consequently, the project seems to have reached its goals. The **main beneficiaries of it include the local community, but reach a far greater audience of researchers, academics, engineers and other professionals in the field of cultural heritage conservation**. More broadly, this installation has benefited the settlement of Pyrgos, due to the increased attractiveness of the museum.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

What characterizes Pyrgos as a remote place center is its location, which is the **middle of the Aegean Sea**. The transportation links with the mainland are not scarce, but fairly limited—especially in the winter months. This results in **difficulties in accessing daily-life support facilities in cases of unstable weather** or other limitations. The permanent population of the village is a mere 489 people as of 2011, which indicates quite a **low density**. The main public spaces of Pyrgos are squares, with a big central one being the main open, public, gathering space.

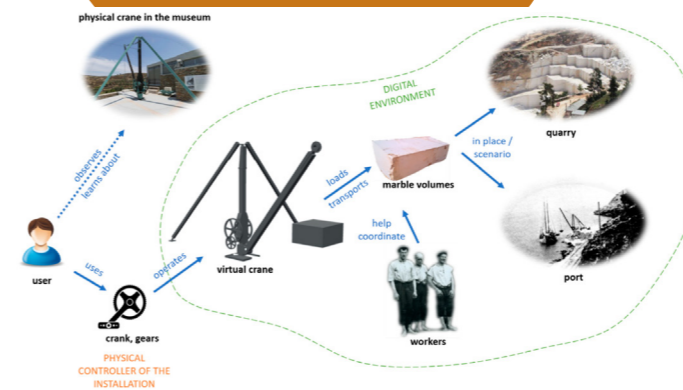
### INITIATION AND ACTORS

The main initiators of the interactive installation are the **University of the Aegean, the local municipality's support**, as well as the **support**

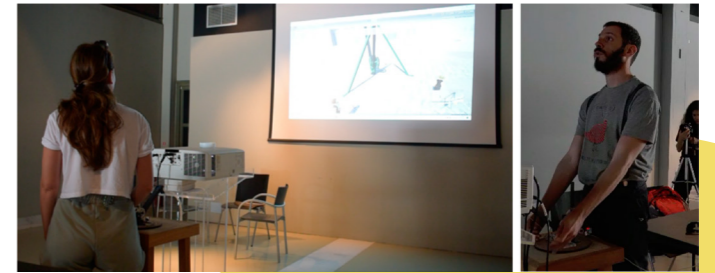
**of the Museum of Marble crafts**. Furthermore, this research has been **co-financed by the European Union and Greek national funds** through the Operational Program Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship and Innovation, under the call RESEARCH—CREATE—INNOVATE.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

Visitors of the museum have here the possibility to embody a crane operator that has to complete challenges in a gamified version of the old quarry. The system lets users operate a tangible controller (a small-scale crane model) and their actions are executed by digital workers in a rich 3D environment. Cultural heritage is also at the heart of this interactive installation, which has as its main role the dissemination of information in a



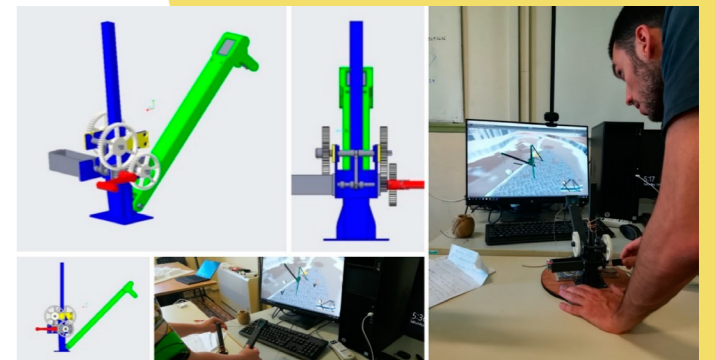
A concept diagram of the interactive installation for the Museum of Marble Crafts  
©Mouseion Topos – photos created by Spyros Vosinakis, Vasiliki Nikolakopoulou, Modestos Stavrakis, Labros Fragkedis, Pavlos Chatzigrigoriou and Panayiotis Koutsabasis, and Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation



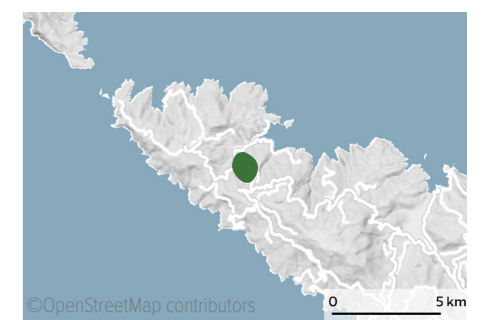
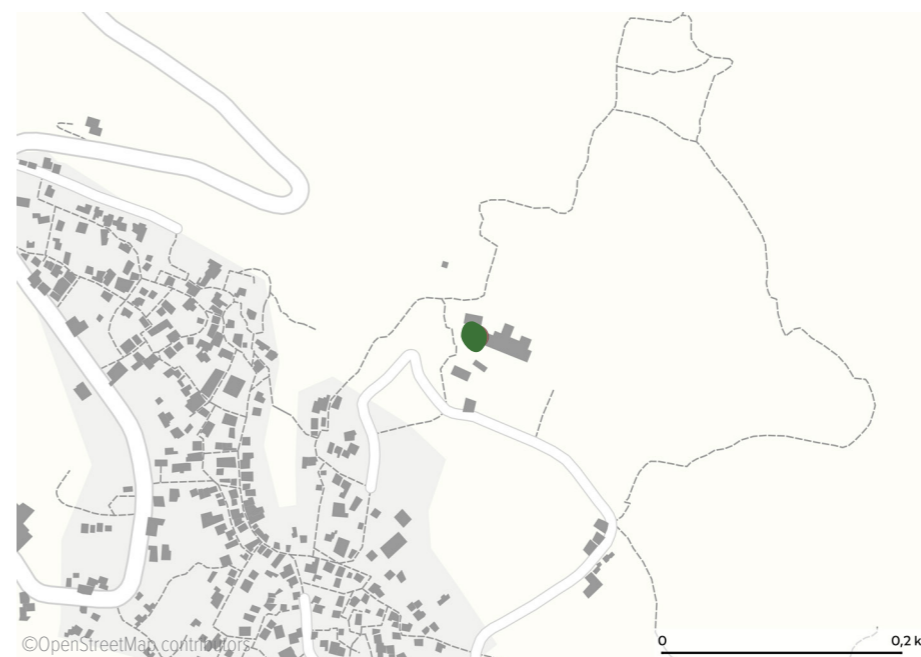
Photos from the user evaluation of the installation in the museum.  
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The crane at the entrance of the Museum of Marble Crafts, Tinos.  
©Mouseion Topos – photos created by Spyros Vosinakis, Vasiliki Nikolakopoulou, Modestos Stavrakis, Labros Fragkedis, Pavlos Chatzigrigoriou and Panayiotis Koutsabasis, and Piraeus Bank Group Cultural Foundation



Second lo-fi prototype with the addition of the boom (green), central axis (blue), ropes, and look and feel gears (white), and screenshot.  
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Pyrgos, Tinos, Greece

more about this project



03

# Portugal

Prazeres

Funchal

Southwest Alentejo  
and Vicentine Coast  
National Park

Ponta Delgada (São  
Miguel Island)

Câmara de Lobos





## Prazeres' Pedagogic Farm

Quinta Pedagógica dos Prazeres

LOCATION

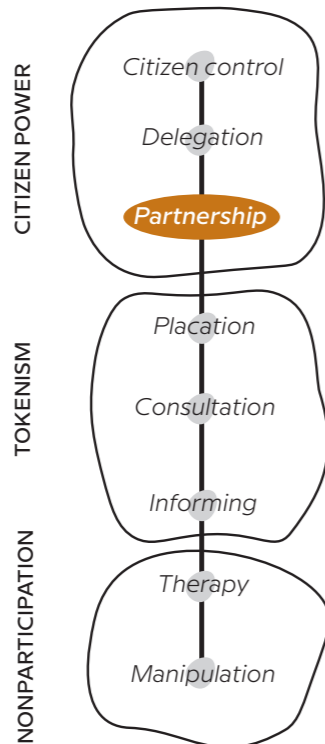
**Prazeres, Portugal**

TIME PERIOD

**Since 2000**

### THE PROJECT

The Prazeres Pedagogical Farm, founded on 1st October 2000, is a project of education, socio-cultural evolution and development of the rural environment. It aims to stimulate the local economy by combating desertification. It's also an educational space where local and endemic species are protected as well as local traditions and culture. It's recognized by all population and public administration as a place of public interest.



tearoom in which you can drink organic teas from the Quinta and buy local products. Most of the visitors are locals or from other parts of the island and they are deeply involved in the activities. This is the case of local students. In the last years, there has been a considerable increase of school visits as well as of other institutions in consequence of the new opening hours through previous scheduling.

### RESULT

The pedagogic farm seems to have reached its aims. In fact, it earned in 2015 a vote of praise from the Legislative Assembly of Madeira for the results achieved. The local community benefited from the interaction with visitors, either from other parts of the island or foreign, seeing their hometown recognized and appreciated. The exchange of knowledge between the participants enriched both parts involved, the locals and the visitors. Local businesses saw a rise in their income as well as new opportunities of business. The local creative sector is, consistently, developing with each intervention in either of the spaces integrated in the project.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Prazeres is a small village in the southwest of Madeira island. It has about 700 inhabitants. The access road infrastructure is of great quality and there is a bus line that allows inhabitants to reach other places in the island, like the capital, Funchal, 40 km away. The main economic resources come from tourism and agriculture, this last one covering 90% of the area. Locals benefit from a good number of daily-life-support facilities including a pharmacy, social community center restaurants, local market a supermarket, which are essential given the fact that most of the population is above 60 years old. The Quinta Pedagogica with its Tea Room, the art gallery and the farm itself is the heart of the cultural and social village life.

### INITIATION AND ACTORS

Quinta Pedagógica dos Prazeres is a dynamic and multifunctional space founded by the local priest, Padre Rui, in order to acknowledge and value this rural area in Madeira Island. Having other projects associated to the Quinta, one of which is the Art Gallery, it is no wonder the big influence gallery curators have had on the project as well.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

The Quinta Pedagogica dos Prazeres integrates four different areas: the farming area which advocates alternative cultures, the transformation area where they prepare homemade jams, cakes and medicinal herbs, the animals' area where you can interact with different species and, finally, a



Exhibition project  
©Quinta Pedagógica dos Prazeres



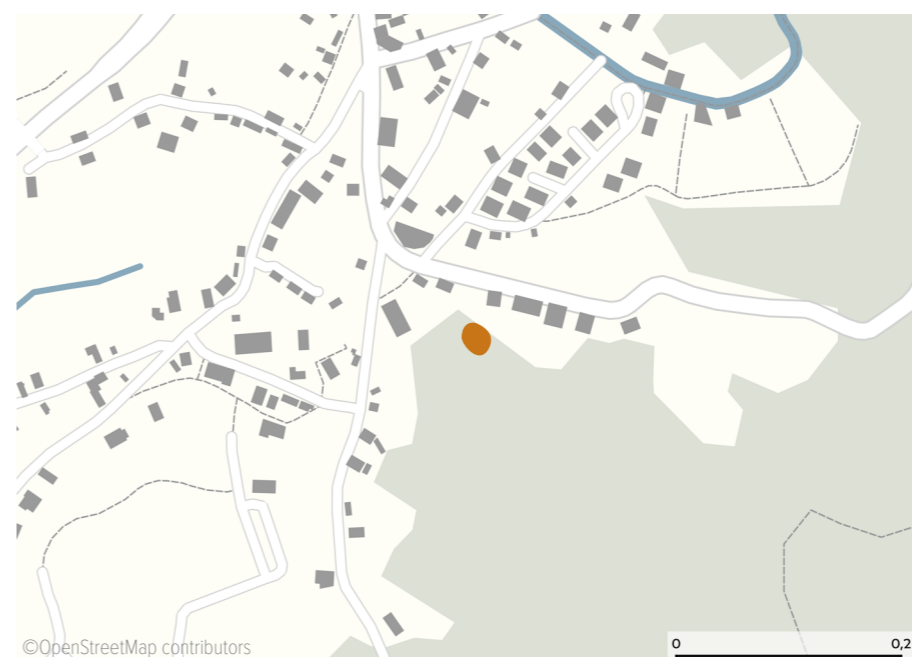
Quinta Pedagógica dos Prazeres  
©Sara Patrícia Abreu



Quinta Pedagógica dos Prazeres  
©Sara Patrícia Abreu



Mostra de Camélias  
©Quinta Pedagógica dos Prazeres



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Prazeres, Madeira Island, Portugal

more about  
this project



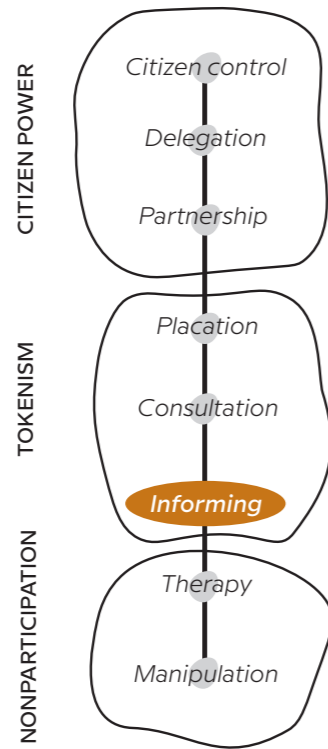


# The light that exists

A Luz Que Há

LOCATION  
**Funchal, Portugal**

TIME PERIOD  
**In 2018**



## THE PROJECT

ALUZ QUE HÁ is an exhibition about drawing exercises made by children which took place in PORTA33, a private contemporary art center. The creative works aimed to help children with emotional instability or little relationship with others in their growth and learning process of the self. The other purpose was to connect young people with the art space in order to promote new behavior and dynamics in our society.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Funchal is the capital city of Madeira Island. This place could be characterized as a remote place because the island is quite far out the continental coast of Portugal. However, the islanders feel less isolated thanks to the internet and the regular daily flight to Europe. The center of Funchal is well equipped with public spaces and services. However, this part of the city lacks fast access to sitting areas. In addition, the roads are narrow, cobbled, with elevation and not suitable, neither for old people, nor children.

## WHAT MAKES THE SPECIFICITY OF THE PROJECT

A LUZ QUE HÁ was initiated by the founders of PORTA33 which asked Luísa Spínola, a school teacher and illustrator, to lead drawing exercises

for children. At the end, the children's drawings were displayed in the PORTA33 gallery.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

The activities consisted of several drawing workshops which explored different themes, subjects or techniques for teenager's educational and psychological needs in order to self-empowerment. The local community was however poorly involved in the project because only a few children participated in the workshops. All family and friends of children were invited to the exhibition opening but the rest of the population could also visit it. The peaceful space offered by PORTA33 for the workshops had a fundamental role in putting the children in the right predisposition to creative work. PORTA33 is

supported financially by public institutions like the Government of the Autonomous Region of Madeira or the Municipality of Funchal but also by some foundations and companies based in the Region.

## RESULT

The creative work was a success. The team managed to impact positively on the children's growth, working with them on their capacity of expressing themselves and interacting with others. Both families and PORTA33 benefited from the activities. First, the children and their parents have found support in education and today more children and adults get involved in workshops. Afterwards, PORTA33 and Luísa Spínola gained even more recognition and visibility for their cultural and education work. A LUZ QUE HÁ exhibition surprised positively usual visitors because of the purity, simplicity and diversity of the creations exhibited in the gallery. The fact that the children saw their work on display helped them gain confidence.



Figure-ground plan of network of public spaces in Funchal. The image represents a portion of São Pedro parish where PORTA33 is inserted.



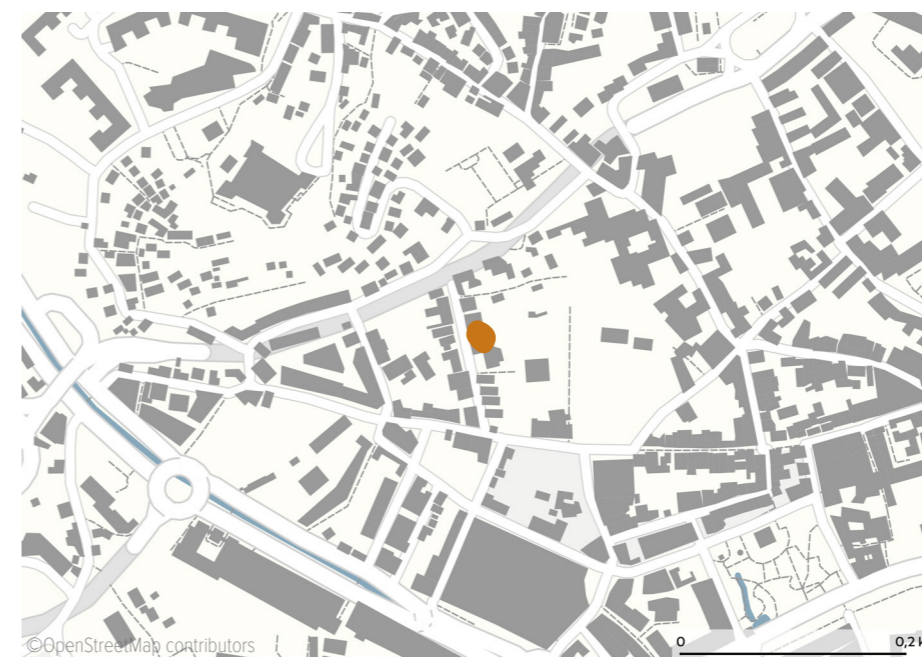
Drawing exercises with Luísa Spínola ©Porta33



Drawing exercises with Luísa Spínola ©Porta33



Exhibition opening ©Porta33



©OpenStreetMap contributors  
Prazeres, Madeira Island, Portugal

more about this project



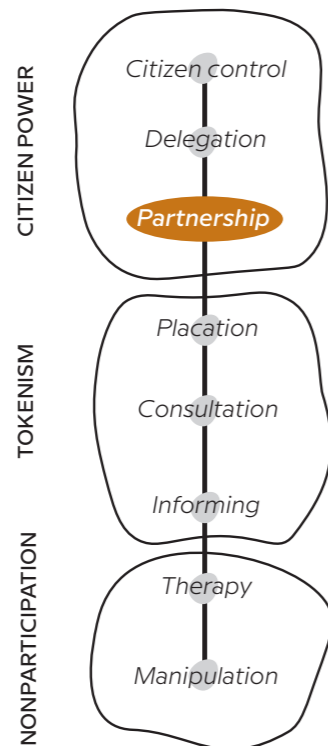




## Rota Vicentina

LOCATION  
**Southwest Alentejo and  
Vicentine Coast Natural Park**

TIME PERIOD  
**Since 2012**



### THE PROJECT

Rota Vicentina is a project that has been implemented in the Southwest Alentejo and Vicentine Coast Natural Park (PNSACV). It is not located in one place, but rather entails several villages across the coast. In fact, it is composed of walking/hiking and cycling paths associated with local commerce, touristic activities and accommodation as well as cultural and natural activities. The project's aim is to promote economic growth and appreciation of the remote areas in the southern coastal and interior areas of Portugal.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

The park where the project takes place was created on 7th July 1987. Inside this area, the villages that are part of Rota Vicentina can be defined as remote due to several factors: **low-density** (the villages have in general no more than 700 inhabitants), geographic isolation reinforced by a **lack of public transportation, low incomes** of the population and sometimes the low level of education. Obviously, natural landscapes are prevalent and **most public spaces that can be found here are directly linked with nature** (watersides, meadows, parks, ...).

### INITIATION AND ACTORS

In the frame of that project, a **variety of actors** have been involved. They are either **public**, such as counties, firefighters, police or **private**, such

as locals businesses, touristics operators of the local communities themselves.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

The project consists of the use of a network of already existing paths that were mapped and further enhanced to promote the passage through these regions of the country. In order to keep up with the mission to protect nature, support the local economy, promote the culture and quality of life of the local communities, they created several touristic products related to walking (historical way, fishermen's trail, circular routes) and cycling. The local community has been involved in this project through local business that fulfil the needs of bikers/hikers and through some who allow a passage in their property. This **integration of the**

**local communities** in the several aspects that entail the project make them not only feel appreciated but **promotes their social, cultural and economical growth.**

### RESULT

The targeted impact was and is still being achieved. It is an **ongoing process that requires constant action and initiative from the local communities, the partners and the project itself.** Here, the main beneficiaries remain the local community, local businesses, the project partners and the territory that supports all these activities. Considering the positive impact on the communities and the growing interest in the project by either the Portuguese population or the foreign population as well, it is safe to conclude the **reactions of the general public were not only positive, but were indeed very satisfactory.**



Forest guards  
©Marta Cebral / Rota Vicentina



Pedestrian Trail  
©Marta Cebral / Rota Vicentina



Bikers  
©Marta Cebral / Rota Vicentina



Agriculture  
©Marta Cebral / Rota Vicentina

more about  
this project

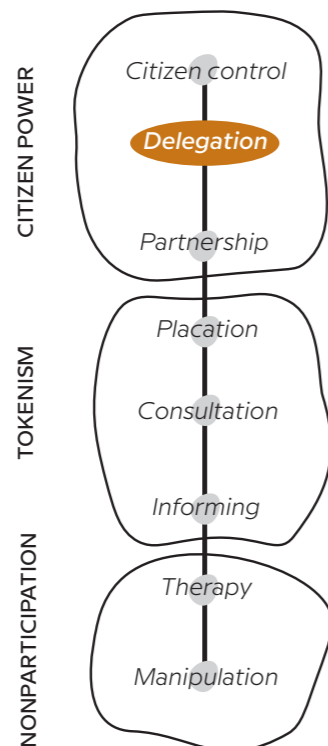




## Casa de Quarteirão

LOCATION  
**Ponta Delgada, Portugal**

TIME PERIOD  
**Since 2016**



### THE PROJECT

The project is located in “O Quarteirão”, a neighborhood close to Ponta Delgada historical city center now used for commercial purposes. The aim of the project was to create a public space in this forgotten area of the city center in order to make it more dynamic and suitable for tourism.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Ponta Delgada is a town located in São Miguel island in **the middle of the Atlantic ocean**. By this fact, the settlement could be considered as a **remote place but the residents do not perceive it completely that way**. Being the capital of the main island of the Azores, the essential services are guaranteed. However, the area **lacks a public space** which is not designed exclusively for a commercial or transit purpose.

### WHAT MAKES THE SPECIFICITY OF THE PROJECT

“Casa do Quarteirão” is a project developed within Walk&Talk 2016 and it was born out of the community that lives and works in the neighborhood. W&T invited Orizzontale and NO-ROCKET to collaborate in the project as co-designer

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

The local community has been involved through workshops with designers whose goal was to materialize a common square. At the end, **the program of the “Casa do Quarteirão” was decided by the citizens**. In this program, **two elements were created: a pavilion and a small structure with a tiny terrace, which was built by a group of inhabitants**. In addition, the designer F.Zorzi created a signage stressing the identity of O Quarteirão. There was already a group of local business owners working in the creative field, but the arrival of W&T has enabled the access to private and public fundings. **The implementation of the project lies in the collaboration between a local association with specific needs, W&T, citizens, designers and artists.**

### RESULT

We do not know if the space is still used and active. However, the targeted impact was probably achieved, giving a new multifunctional public space to the area and also more visibility. **The neighborhood is now perceived as a creative area of the town** thanks to activities and workshops organized by W&T, especially since the international art festival. The place is probably attracting specific kinds of visitors, interested in creativity and art. The local community, local businesses and local creative sectors were the main beneficiaries of this project.



Walk&Talk 2016  
Casa do Quarteirão, Orizzontale  
©Walk&Talk



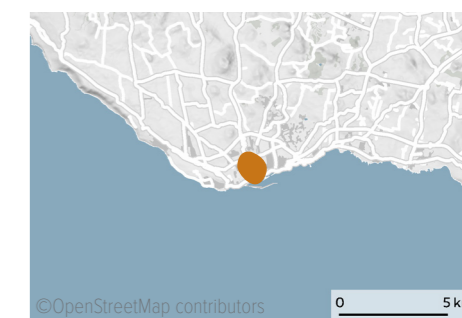
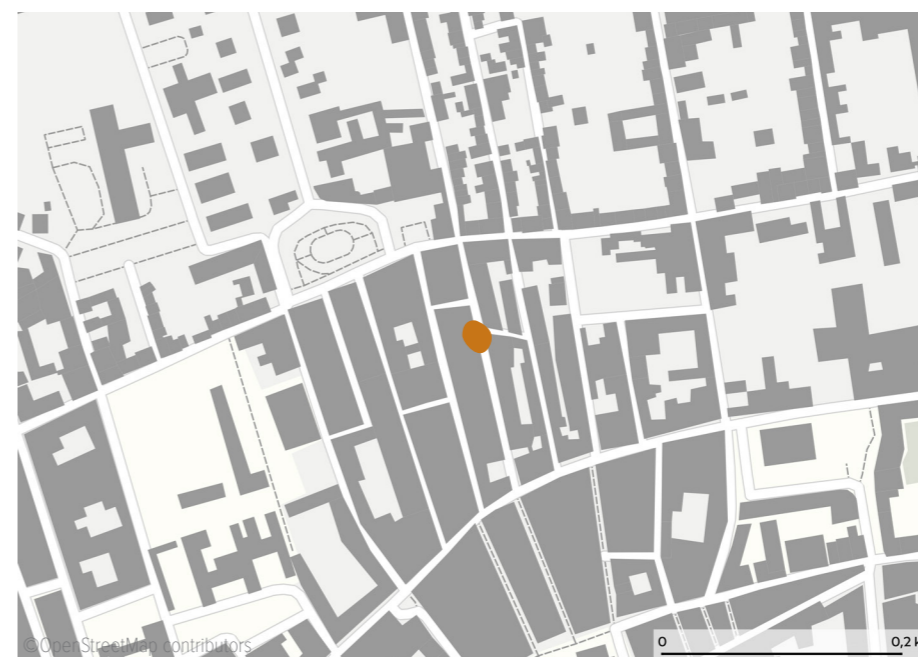
Walk&Talk 2018  
Révéler, Campoaz  
©Filipa Couto / Walk&Talk



Projeto comissionado/ Comissioned project  
Carolina Celas for Nova Gráfica  
©Mariana Lopes / Walk&Talk



Children in street intervention  
©Rui Soares / Walk&Talk



Ponta Delgada (São Miguel Island), Autonomous Region of the Azores, Portugal

more about this project







# Urban Art Project 'Street Decoration through Recycled Art'

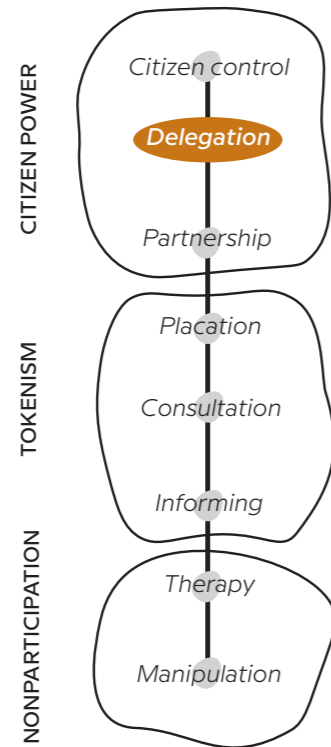
Projeto arte urbana "Ornamentação de ruas com arte reciclada"

LOCATION  
**Câmara do Lobos, Madeira Island, Portugal**

TIME PERIOD  
**Since 2016**

## THE PROJECT

The actions carried out in the frame of the project described have taken place in the center of Câmara de Lobos. The project's aim is to **decorate the rather bare streets of the town center**. The association that has taken the lead with the activities decided to add an internal objective: **to reason, through art, on the issue of the environmental impact of our daily consumption**.



receives young international volunteers.

## RESULT

The objectives have not only been achieved but exceeded. The initiative has been repeated every year since 2016 and **enriches the city center of Câmara de Lobos each time with new art and urban decoration interventions. The decorations have become part of the landscape.** Câmara de Lobos has begun to attract visitors, who like to stroll through the colorful streets of the center. The success of TM's activities are to be found in the constant presence of the association in the daily life of the town. The association has an office open every day in the center of the town, and many volunteers. **Credibility, constant presence and belonging to the community have certainly played a fundamental role in the success of the activities.**

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

10 km away from Funchal city center, Camara de Lobos is mainly a **fishermen village. It's well served by public transportation** and there are enough public spaces to respond to the community needs. In the interviews carried out, researchers collected the perception of a place that until **recently was considered rough by the inhabitants** of the island: somehow Câmara de Lobos had a sort of stigma. There was a tendency not to visit this town that was **considered dangerous**.

embellishment of the city center with other stakeholders.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

All the actions have taken place within the local community. For each new project, **Teatro Metaphora makes a public call, explaining objectives and needs and everyone can respond.** There can be the need to build elements, for transportation, but also simply to collect waste materials that will be used for the making. In the project, the initial idea was to refer to Portuguese traditions with the decorations (e.g. celebrations for patrons and saints). The activities of Teatro Metaphora receive annual fundings from local public institutions. In addition to this, Teatro Metaphora participates in many international projects, including Erasmus +, and constantly

## INITIATION AND ACTORS

The project was initially **born from a request from the Municipality of Câmara de Lobos**. Teatro Metaphora, an association founded in 2009 with more than 100 active volunteers, responded to this invitation and has organized the



CamaraDoLobos  
©Teatro Metaphora – Associação de Amigos das Artes



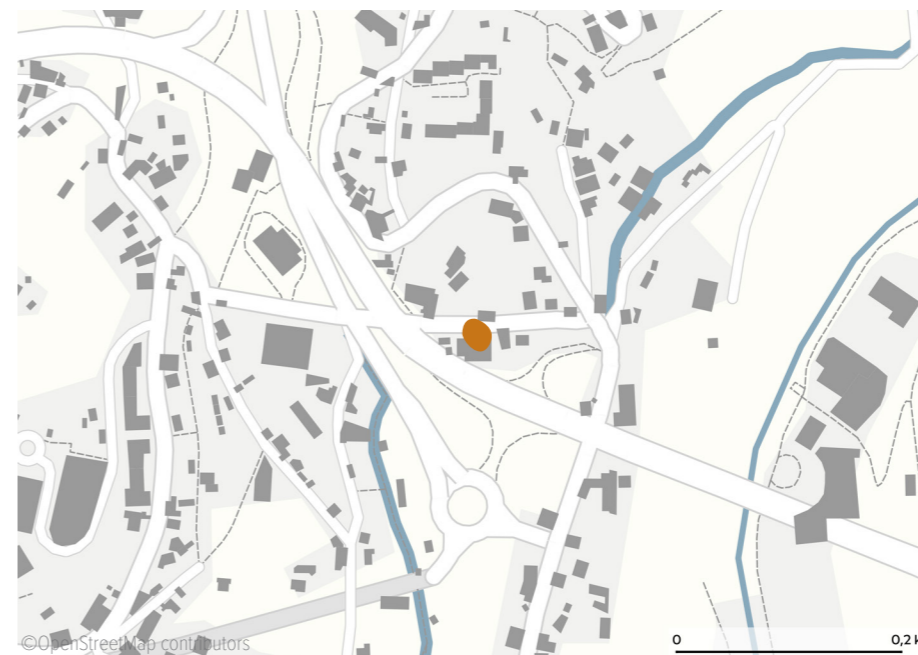
Street Intervention  
©Teatro Metaphora – Associação de Amigos das Artes



CamaraDoLobos  
©Teatro Metaphora – Associação de Amigos das Artes



CamaraDoLobos  
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Câmara de Lobos, Madeira Island, Portugal

more about this project



04

# Austria

Gutenstein

Munderfing

Trofaiach

Stanz in the Mürz  
valley

Murau



## Village Smithy - for sustainable living spaces

Dorfschmiede - für nachhaltige Lebensräume



LOCATION

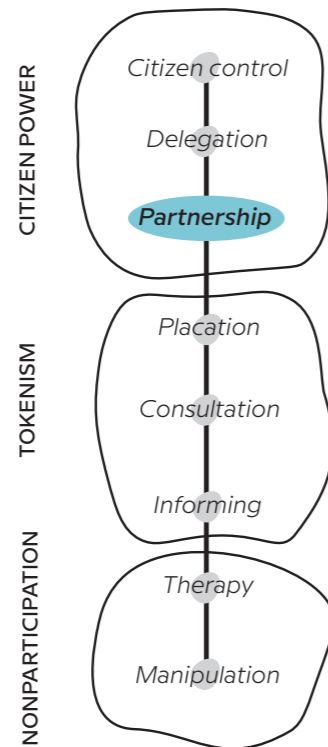
**Gutenstein, Austria**

TIME PERIOD

**Since 2018**

### THE PROJECT

The "Dorfschmiede" project consists of the renovation of an old inn in Gutenstein, which now has many uses, such as a pub, a workshop space or a shop for sustainable products. The goal of the activists - who had settled in the village with their company which produces tiny houses - is to live a self-sufficient, self-determined and sustainable work and life style.



participate in the activities and this place has become a landmark for the economic life of the settlement. It must be clearly stated here that **the success of the project is largely due to the entrepreneurial energy of Theresa Mai and her comrades-in-arms**, also given the fact that there is **no financial support from the official side**.

### RESULT

The goal of finding a suitable production and living location was achieved by far. The village also offered and still offers the possibility of establishing other businesses with which synergies are generated. In the first phase, the company that produces the tiny houses benefited from the move to Gutenstein. Almost simultaneously, other producing and creative companies and individuals have received a benefit through the cooperation. The **project also benefited community life, as the workshops and lectures in the Dorfschmiede provide numerous opportunities to learn from each other**. Consequently, that is why the project is generally rated very positively without exception.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Gutenstein lies in a deeply cut and very long valley. Due to this width restriction in the valley floor, the **village is very elongated and is more a chain of individual settlements or farmsteads** than a village with a center. Thus, the remoteness comes from the low population density, the geographical characteristics of the place and also the poor condition of buildings in the settlements. In Gutenstein, there is a **lack of public open spaces tailored to the special needs of the local community**. Some publicly accessible green spaces have been created, but they are rather rare.

houses, that had the infrastructure to enable self-sufficient, self-determined and sustainable living and business. Of the 90 Austrian villages registered, Gutenstein was chosen. For community purposes, a suitable location was still missing, which was found in the disused inn „Gutensteiner Hof“ (now Dorfschmiede).

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

Regarding the **renovation of the inn, a cooperative was founded with 50 members who are part owners of the property**. It serves as a platform to enable lively togetherness in the village (e.g. workshops, lectures, etc.). New businesses have settled here and existing jobs have been preserved. From the beginning, "wohnwagon" and later the "Dorfschmiede" actively invited the population to

### INITIATION AND ACTORS

The **project began when entrepreneur Theresa Mai was looking for a village for her company**, which builds tiny



Graz Dorfschmiede  
©FH JOANNEUM – photo by thuemmel-strittmatter



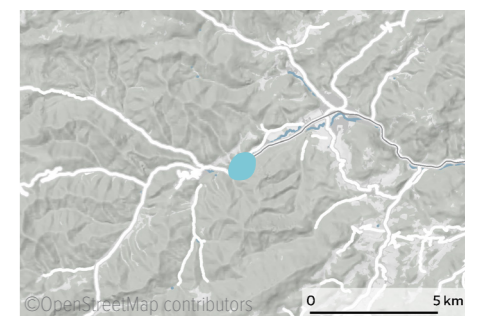
An information event in the rooms of the Dorfschmiede  
©dorfschmiede



Workshops are held regularly at the Dorfschmiede, and the focus here is on sustainable do-it-yourself.  
©wohnwagon.at



Biologically dynamic vegetables from the garden farm are used in the kitchen of the Dorfschmiede.  
©dorfschmiede – photo by Erich Rossmannith



Gutenstein, Lower Austria, Austria

more about this project





# The Brewery

Das Bräu



LOCATION

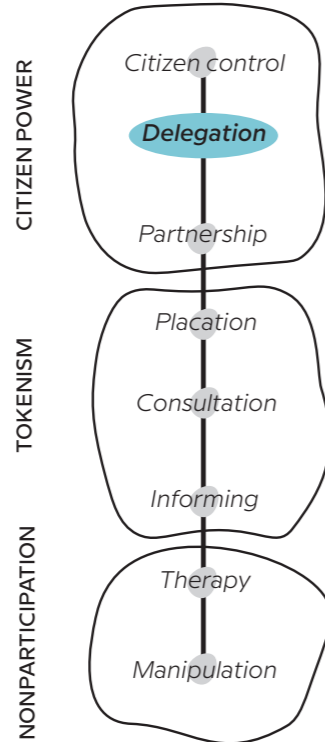
**Munderfing, Austria**

TIME PERIOD

**Since 2018**

## THE PROJECT

To counter the rural exodus, the municipality has reacted with several measures in order to be competitive with other similar villages. The "Dorfbräu" inn, located in the center of the settlement, embodies this goal. For many years vacant, it has been reused to attract new residents and educational facilities were provided in this place. Moreover, a concept for the complete conversion to renewable energies was drawn up in 2004.



opportunity to introduce concerns and ideas. The project owes its creation to this participation model but also to the municipality's experience in obtaining local, national and European funding.

## RESULT

The project is a **total success**. The municipal administration and all citizens have benefited from the activities, as well as local companies. The seminar house serves as a training venue for all interested groups and small start-ups were able to launch their project from the co-working space. The community has seen its incomes increase and the creation of new jobs. In addition, there is the income from the wind turbine, which now also produces electricity for many neighboring communities. The **project was well received by the population because otherwise it would not have been carried out according to the participatory model.**

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Munderfing is **not a very remote place**. The only characteristic of remoteness is the low population density. The village is located in a quite developed area and is pretty well connected to neighboring regions. Munderfing is composed of different kinds of public spaces. Among them, squares, recreational spaces and community air-spaces. However, **if the quantity of public spaces is sufficient, their quality leaves much to be desired.** Since the build of the bypass road, the traffic in the main road, which crosses the village, has dropped significantly.

he also strongly advocated for the possibility of an inexpensive co-working space for young people in these premises.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

The municipality, which was convinced that the fiber-optic network was a prerequisite for new settlements in the village, has carried out the expansion of the network itself. In this context, the **old inn was renovated into a co-working space, a seminar room and a first-class restaurant.** Moreover, the municipality has built wind turbines. In this project, the **population was involved through a citizen participation model called the "decision-making working group"**. According to this model, the municipality can present projects on which the citizens will decide together. They also have the

## INITIATION AND ACTORS

The Bräu is an **initiative led by Erwin Moser, the long-time head of the office** (of Munderfing), who had the goal of making Munderfing a better place to live. That is why



A new restaurant has moved into the old inn.  
©FH JOANNEUM – photo by thuemmel-strittmatter



Transformation of the old vacant inn into a co-working space.  
©Gemeinde Munderfing



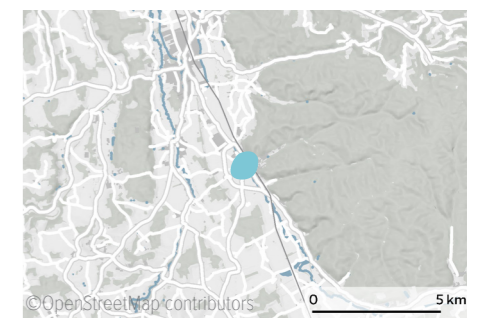
The Braeu, a formerly vacant inn that now houses a restaurant, co-working space and seminar house.  
©Energie Munderfing



The new co-working space.  
©Energie Munderfing



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Munderfing, Upper Austria

more about this project





## A place kissed awake

Ein wachgeküsster Ort



LOCATION

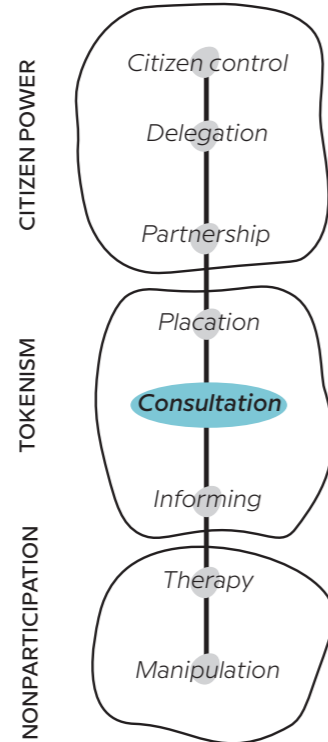
**Trofaiach, Austria**

TIME PERIOD

**Since 2014**

### THE PROJECT

The project is located on the **main street of Trofaiach**, which used to be the economic center of the village where most of the shops were located. However, the city center shops were left vacant especially because of heavy individual motorized traffic in the street. Therefore, the aim was to **counteract vacancies to make this inner-city area economically interesting and liveable again** for all residents.



management. Moreover, the process for inner city development was also financially supported by the office of the Styrian Provincial Government.

### RESULT

**All the goals set were achieved.** Not only did the vacancy rate decline, but in spring 2021, there were more enquiries than offers. The public space has gained enormously in quality of stay. The residents have benefited on several levels. **The inner city has become quieter, cleaner, nicer and its redesign increased the pedestrian frequency fivefold.** The local businesses and its owners have benefited greatly from vacancy management. They now have new tenants and get support in renovating their properties. The project and its success have been the subject of strong media coverage all over Austria with the public being very positive about the activities.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Here, the degree of remoteness refers not to Trofaiach but to the village center. This space faces remoteness due to the **donut effect**. Indeed, the inner city and its shops are affected by vacancy, while around the town there are numerous shopping facilities. Trofaiach has a classic village center with densely built-up areas around the main street and there are numerous small streets and alleys with very good accessibility. However, due to some historical reasons, there is no public square in the area.

### WHAT MAKES THE SPECIFICITY OF THE PROJECT

The **project was initiated by the mayor, who placed great emphasis on citizen participation** right at the beginning. He commissioned the

**architectural Nonconform group**, specialized in citizen participatory work, to carry out these processes.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

Nonconform organized **workshops with 1000 citizens** from different backgrounds about 10 topics. Afterwards, interested people were assigned to specific topics and met regularly. Given the fact that the activities are still ongoing, the population is continuously involved. From these workshops and meetings, **many projects have emerged.** One of the most relevant is the visual upgrading of the main street where, with support of the municipality, homeowners renovated their buildings and especially their facades. The town provides 100 000 euros annually for activities related to the upgrading of the main street and vacancy



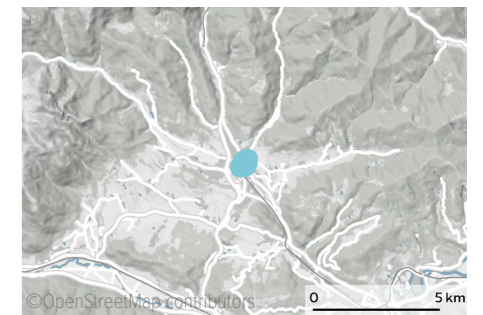
One of the many workshops conducted by nonconform with the residents.  
©nonconform



Participation meeting with nonconform, citizens and community representatives.  
©Stadtgemeinde Trofaiach - photo by Erich Biberich



Since 2016, Trofaiach has held an annual street festival in the Main Street.  
©Stadtgemeinde Trofaiach - photo by Foto Freisinger



Trofaiach, Styria, Austria

more about this project





# Benches Express

Bankerl Express

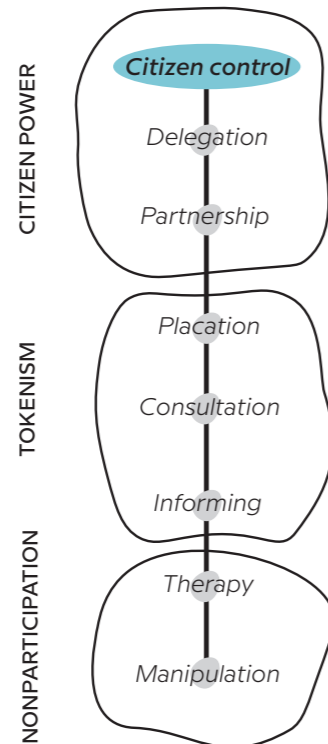


LOCATION  
**Stanz in the Mürz valley, Austria**

TIME PERIOD  
**Since 2013**

## THE PROJECT

Benches Express project simply consists of wooden benches and a parasol. These benches give the possibility to people without cars to have a ride from other residents. They just have to stretch out the parasol to show their need to get a ride. Benches are painted with bright yellow and green, to be visible by car drivers and they are located along the main street, where traffic is most frequent.



received funds from the state government.

## RESULT

The project is well received by the local community and they see in it a successful social and ecological project that has improved their quality of life. The results even exceed the original expectations. The local population is the main beneficiary, especially because cooperation and **solidarity between citizens has increased**. Indeed, the benches have given the possibility to meet fellow residents. The settlement has become a center of attraction for other communities and hosts some cultural events. The most demonstrative element of this success is the fact that Benches Express have been expanded to the neighboring village. The project was even nominated for the German Design Award.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Stanz in the Mürz valley could be defined as remote by its **low population density** but also by the difficulties in accessing daily-life support and its **poor transportation links**. However, most households have cars and do not feel remote. The village has enough public spaces in the center but most of them are unattractive. Places are often used as car parking and affected by traffic noise. The only exception is a large recreation park. To counter this, measures are being planned to make this place more attractive.

the members, Fritz Pichler, later became the mayor of the village.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

The involvement of the inhabitants was decisive for this and other projects. From the citizens' committee, several citizens' working groups were created. In each group there was an external expert who contributed with knowledge. Moreover, the project(s) could not have existed without the interpersonal relations between the citizens but also the personal relationship that the inhabitants have with their village. **In the beginning, there was hardly any institutional and financial support.** However, when Fritz Pichler, a member of the citizen commitment, became mayor, the access to the community's budget was facilitated. Later they even

## WHAT MAKES THE SPECIFICITY OF THE PROJECT

The project was **conceived by a citizens initiative**, originally created to prevent the amalgamation of municipalities in Styria. One of



Description benches  
©FH JOANNEUM – photo by thuemmel-strittmatter



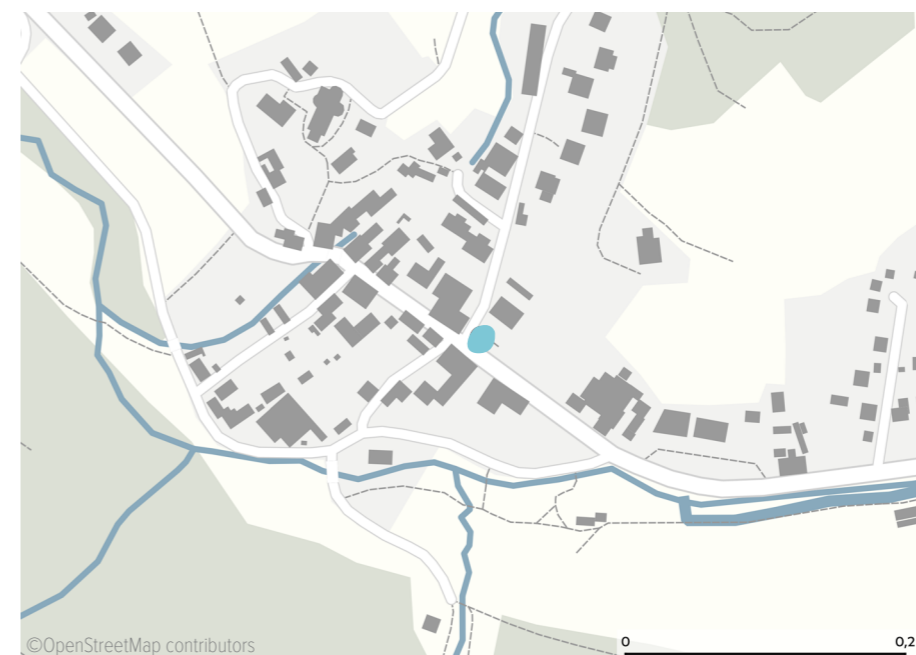
Benches-express  
©FH JOANNEUM – photo by thuemmel-strittmatter



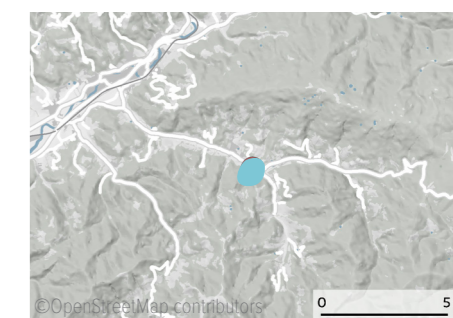
Village of Stanz  
©FH JOANNEUM – photo by thuemmel-strittmatter



Street without sidewalk  
©FH JOANNEUM – photo by thuemmel-strittmatter



©OpenStreetMap contributors 0 0,2 km



Stanz in the Mürz valley, Styria, Austria

more about this project





# Culture Play Spaces – farmhouse parlor

Kultur Spiel Räume - STUBENrein

LOCATION

**Murau, Austria**

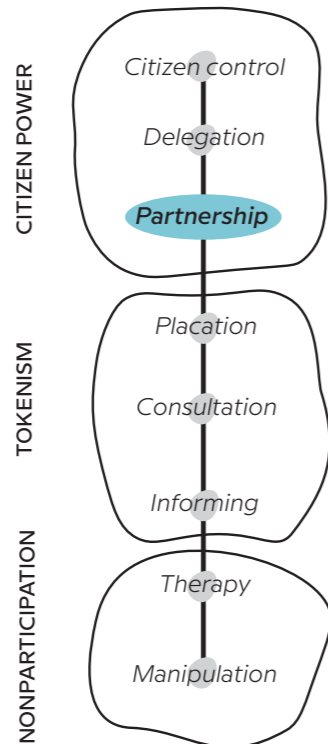
TIME PERIOD

**From 2019 to 2022**



## THE PROJECT

The Culture Play Spaces project takes place in 14 municipalities around the district capital Murau. The creative works have been implemented in very different places, from a vacant vicarage to a parking place. The targeted goal of the project was to find up-to-date ways to gather the local community. Traditions are not taken up in their formal form here, but in their important function for a successful living together.



## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

The area around the district capital Murau covers a total of 1,385 km<sup>2</sup>, 14 municipalities and 28,000 inhabitants. Its remoteness comes from the fact that it is sparsely populated and suffered from falling populations since the 1970s. Moreover, the numerous small hamlets and scattered farms make transportation and access to daily-life-support facilities difficult. The area has historically grown public spaces (e.g. squares in front of churches). But more important are unconventional ones such as bars, empty restaurants or barns that seem to be more spontaneous places for public gatherings.

## INITIATION AND ACTORS

The STUBENrein project was created in 2016 on the initiative of the regional development

association "Holzwelt Murau" (Wood World Murau). The series of different events have been organized by the theater director Andreas Staudinger, the project manager and architect Gunilla Plank and the curator and artist Uli Vonbank-Schedler.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

Within the 14 municipalities, the goal of (re)designing social coexistence in the area has been developed by various activities, from an exhibition in a bus stop to events related to culture. The local protagonists played a central role in the implementation, as their local network was used. This close cooperation between the local community and the organizers ensured that themes were dealt with were important for the people. The project also

gives women a special place in the activities with the idea of making visible their lives, wishes, goals, living conditions and disappointed hopes. Without the help of Gunilla Plank, who is employed by the "Holzwelt Murau" association and the financial support from LEADER project (EU), the project could not have come to life.

## RESULT

STUBENrein seems to have reached its targeted impacts. The local community has been truly involved and new dynamics have emerged. Moreover, politically, socially and culturally well-trodden paths were broken up. However, some projects did not work out the needs of the population. That is the case of some podcasts because apparently the need to come together in real space is too strong. The beneficiaries of this project are probably those who are currently not sufficiently represented in general social life, such as part-time farmers, young women-farmers, the socially disadvantaged, ... More broadly, we can say that these activities have been well perceived by users and this should lead to local follow-up events.



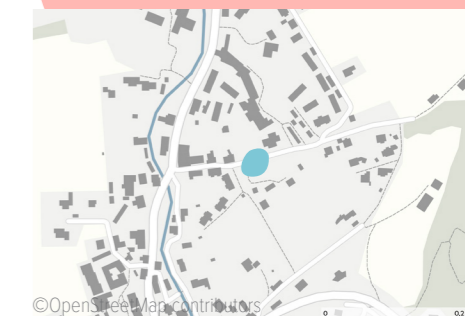
Kultur muss sich lohnen ©Gunilla Plank



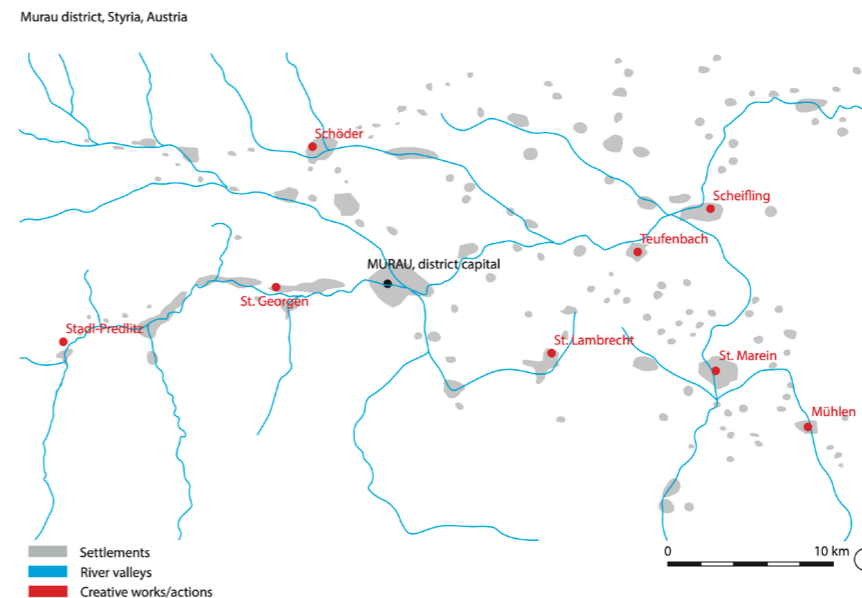
Busstop, 2021 June 17th ©FH JOANNEUM – photo by thuemmel-strittmatter



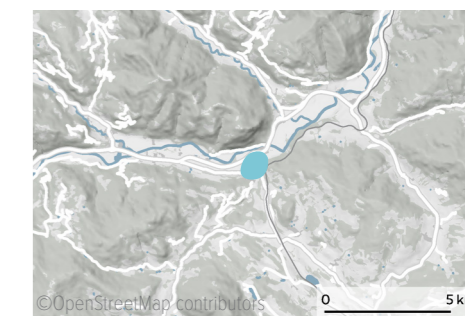
MurauerInnen, Heldinnen May 2020 ©Andreas Staudinger



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Locations of some actions/projects in the Murau district ©FH JOANNEUM – drawing by thuemmel-strittmatter



Murau, Styria, Austria

more about this project



05

# Slovenia

Bohinjska Bistrica

Smlednik

Rodik

Tomaj

Žlebe



## Revitalisation of Triglav road, Bohinjska Bistrica

Oživitev Triglavske ceste, Bohinjska Bistrica



LOCATION

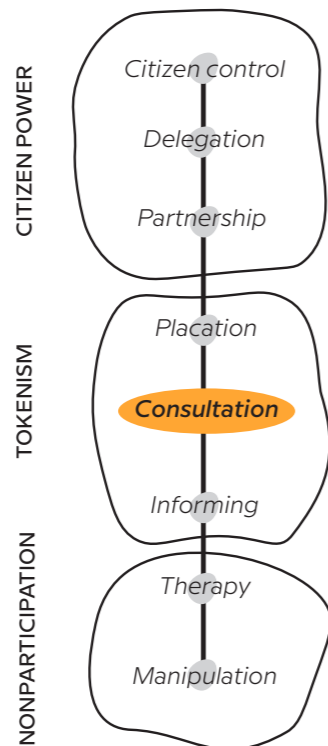
**Bohinjska Bistrica, Slovenia**

TIME PERIOD

**From 2019 to 2021**

### THE PROJECT

The project of revitalisation of Triglav road took place in the west part of the settlement of Bohinjska Bistrica. This road is a **less accessible area**, as it is bounded on one side by railway tracks and on the other by the Belica stream even if the nearby area across the river is the central tourist location of the settlement. The **project aim was to address the lack of spaces which could be used as business or creative nodes** (a problem evident in many small settlements) and **improve public space in the area**.



the Triglavska cesta crosses the Belica river. There, a plan for green areas was made to preserve the ecosystems. In terms of financing, the support of the European Union was crucial for the implementation of the project.

### RESULT

The targeted impact was at least **partially achieved**. The **formerly abandoned buildings are now occupied by various activities** such as a distillery, a print shop, a sugar packaging operation and other small businesses. The main beneficiaries of the creative works are small businesses and individuals from the creative sector who gained new spaces for their operations. Furthermore, the entire community benefits from increased entrepreneurial and creative activity, as well as a diversification of building uses. Given the fact that most of the spaces of the formerly abandoned buildings have been given a new function, the reaction from local businesses and the local community was positive, even if **the new creative node has not sustained**.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

The town of Bohinjska Bistrica is located in an **alpine area**, with traffic connections blocked from three sides by surrounding mountain ranges. This somewhat **limited road traffic accessibility**, which stems from the characteristics of the surrounding terrain, makes the town of Bohinjska Bistrica remote in this regard. A train line connects the town with the Goriška region but with relatively low frequency. In terms of public spaces, there is a severe **lack of squares or plazas** and most open spaces are occupied by parking areas. Also, there is a lack of any area which could be categorised as a town centre.

**urban design group ProstoRož**, and is part of the wider "Zelene rešitve" (Green solutions) project, which focuses on innovative approaches and solutions for redeveloping degraded and empty spaces in the Upper Carniola region of Slovenia.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

The revitalisation of the space included the arrangement of a passenger terminal, a park and a short term **program plan for the area of formerly abandoned buildings**. This plan was developed taking into account the needs of **small businesses, creative individuals** and the local population. The latter has been well involved in the project through participation in **workshops and public debates**. Natural heritage also played a role particularly in the southern part of the redevelopment area, where

### INITIATION AND ACTORS

The project of the revitalisation of Triglav road near the railway station, was developed by the **non-profit**



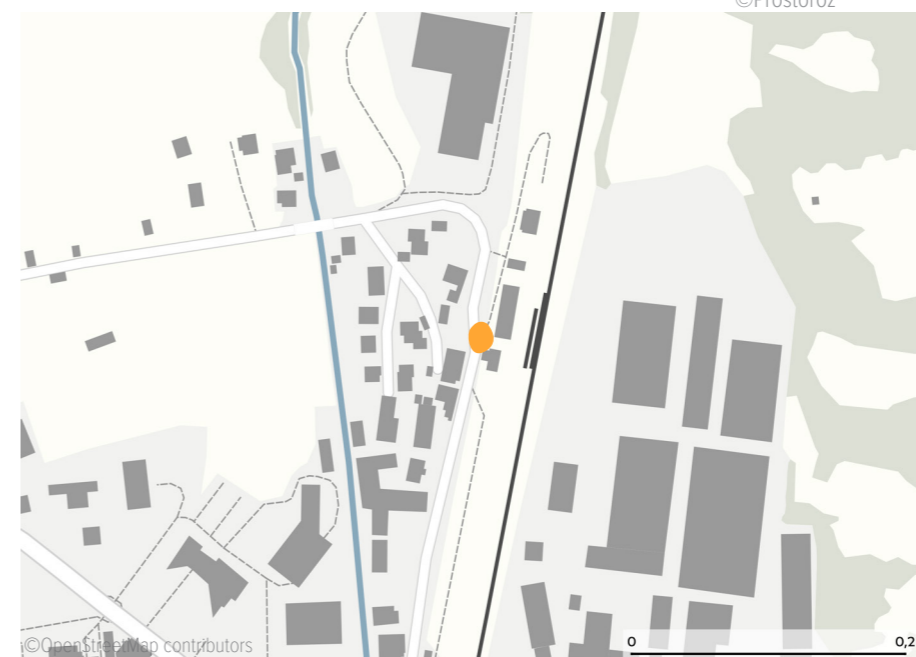
Formerly abandoned buildings being used for creative works ©Prostoroz



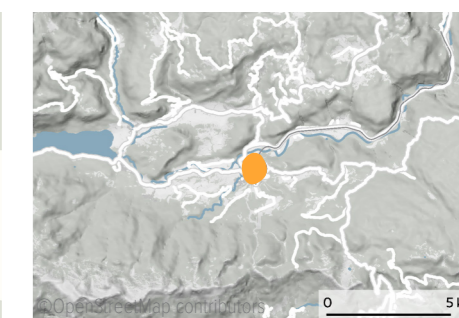
Public discussion in the formerly abandoned facilities ©Prostoroz



Children from the Janez Mencinger elementary school attending a workshop at the formerly abandoned construction firm facilities ©Prostoroz



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Bohinjska Bistrica, Slovenia

more about this project





## The Village Garden

Vaški vrt

LOCATION

**Smlednik, Slovenia**

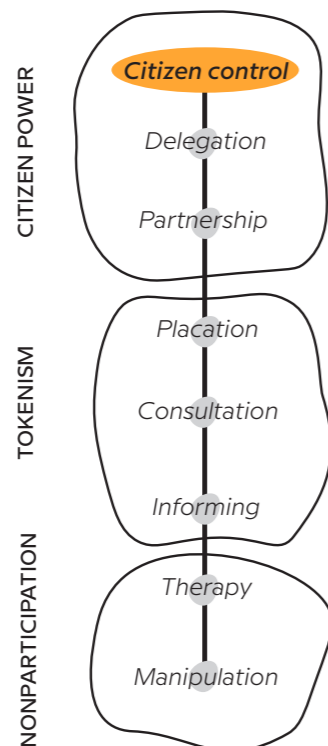
TIME PERIOD

**Since 2018**



### THE PROJECT

The garden was designed at St. Urh Square, in the historical village center of Smlednik. Although it produces herbs and vegetables, its main function is educational and social because this is the place where people and residents can gather and exchange knowledge on growing the plants. Thus, the aim of the project is to link these two functions by connecting the local community while developing the garden to preserve cultural heritage, indigenous plants, and self-sufficiency.



### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

When asked, **inhabitants of Smlednik have the self-impression of being remote.** As a matter of fact, there are poor public transport links to the city of Ljubljana and other towns in the region, but also difficulties in accessing daily-life-support facilities. Apart from a sports park used by the school and the residents, the **only public space is the village square** in the historical center. This place is only surrounded by a few community buildings and residential houses. Even if there is the Society of Arts and Culture next to the village square, we can highlight a lack of creative activities in Smlednik.

### INITIATION AND ACTORS

The **initiator of this project is the local Society for Oral History**, which built the garden in honour

of the 900th anniversary of the first mention of the village of Smlednik with the help of local organizations and donors. The long-term maintenance of the garden however largely **depends on the volunteers** and member of the Society for Oral History.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

The garden is designed permaculturally so as to thrive with little maintenance and follows the principle of sustainable development. Wooden stairs run through the garden, making it easier to access the flower beds and there is also a bench with a view at the top of the garden. The **whole community is involved in this project: the children, through the primary school, as well as the adults who do the maintenance work.** The knowledge, skills and involvement

of local residents were decisive in the implementation of the garden. Local institutions supported the project through financial help but local companies and societies also provided assistance in the form of support and donations.

### RESULT

The project has achieved its target to a large extent. **Thanks to the garden, old sorts of cultural plants, knowledge and traditions of the region have been preserved.** Moreover, residents meet in or around the garden and arrange it. More and more people come to the garden to relax, learn, and there are also many visitors from other places. An annual festival of exchanging seedlings is of benefit to not only the local community but also beyond. If there are no economic benefits, all participants gain knowledge about the traditional ways of growing plants as well as new approaches to it (e.g. permaculture). Moreover it keeps the intangible cultural heritage of Smlednik alive. The project was well accepted in the community, and it has been presented in local and national newspapers in Slovenia.



An exchange of seedlings in the village square  
©Denis Oblak, Društvo za ustno zgodovino



Designing and building the village garden following the principle of community gardens  
©Spela Rakun, Društvo za ustno zgodovino



Children's workshop on learning about plants  
©Janez Strojani, Društvo za ustno zgodovino



Summer gardening in the village garden  
©Urška Sešek, Društvo za ustno zgodovino



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Smlednik, Slovenia

more about this project







## Mythical Park

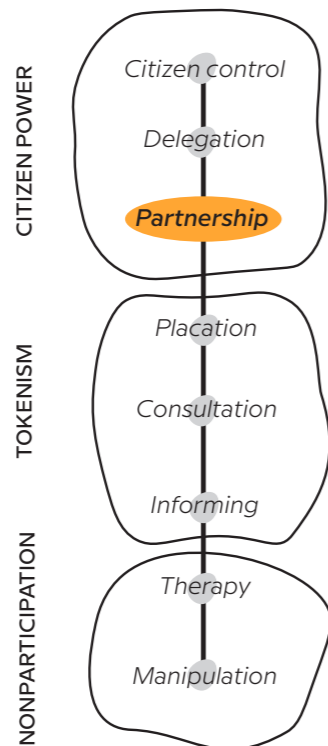
Mitski park

LOCATION

**Rodik, Slovenia**

TIME PERIOD

**From 2018 to 2021**



### THE PROJECT

The Mythical Park extends outside the village itself, including paths through forest and meadows which are the main point of interest. Rodik having a cultural and historical legacy from Slavic and pre-Christian tradition, the goal of the project was to create a **new tourist landmark focused on local legend and heritage**. This place is part of a **cross-border project** involving the Trebišće area from Croatia.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Rodik has a rural image due to its locations but also by the fact the village lacks basic daily life support facilities, forcing locals to drive to fulfil certain needs. The settlement remoteness is characterised too by the **low population density and its economical inferiority**. However this perception of remoteness is mitigated due to **good transportation** long-distance connections by train. In Rodik, because practically all public surfaces are accessible for road vehicles, the settlement **lacks public spaces** such as public squares or parks. The exceptions are the paths integrated to the Mythical park which offer a contact with nature.

### INITIATION AND ACTORS

Even if the project was led by Slovenian-Croatian cooperation

between the municipalities of Hrpelje-Kozina and of Mošćenička Draga, the original idea of the Mythical Park of Rodik came from the **University of Primorska**. However, a wide range of actors have cooperated in the implementation of the work.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

The Mythical Park consists of **twelve mythological points in two "mythic" trails which tell stories of ancient legend with sculptures or stone installations**. The involvement of the local community was crucial for this project. The **inhabitants contributed in different ways like their participation as tour guide or staff member**, the creation of some pieces now exhibited in the park by sculpture students, or the access given by landowners to use their lands. The implementation

of the Mythical Park in Rodik was permitted thanks to institutional fundings from the E.U. Interreg Slovenia-Croatia and from the Slovenian municipality which currently operates the park.

### RESULT

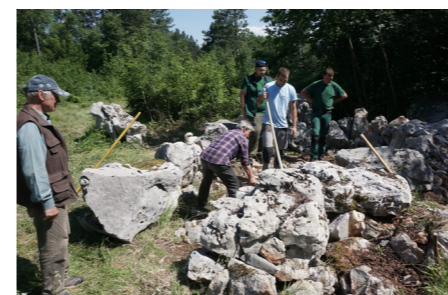
As the park's opening coincided with the Slovenian Covid-19 restrictions, the full economic impact of the project has not yet been fully realised, particularly for the tourism sector which should be the main beneficiary of this project. However, the objective of creating a tangible and intangible heritage presentation has been achieved and it **has raised the awareness of the community about the local legacy**. An additional impact has been the **promotion of young local artists who made some sculptures** now permanently exhibited but also the fact that the concept has attracted two established Slovenian sculptors. Mythical Park has already attracted many visitors who have purchased local products. Both tourists and the local community have shown a positive interest in it.



Students workshop under the mentorship of Špela Šedivy  
©Mitski park - photo by Aleksander Zdjarsky, VSS Sežana



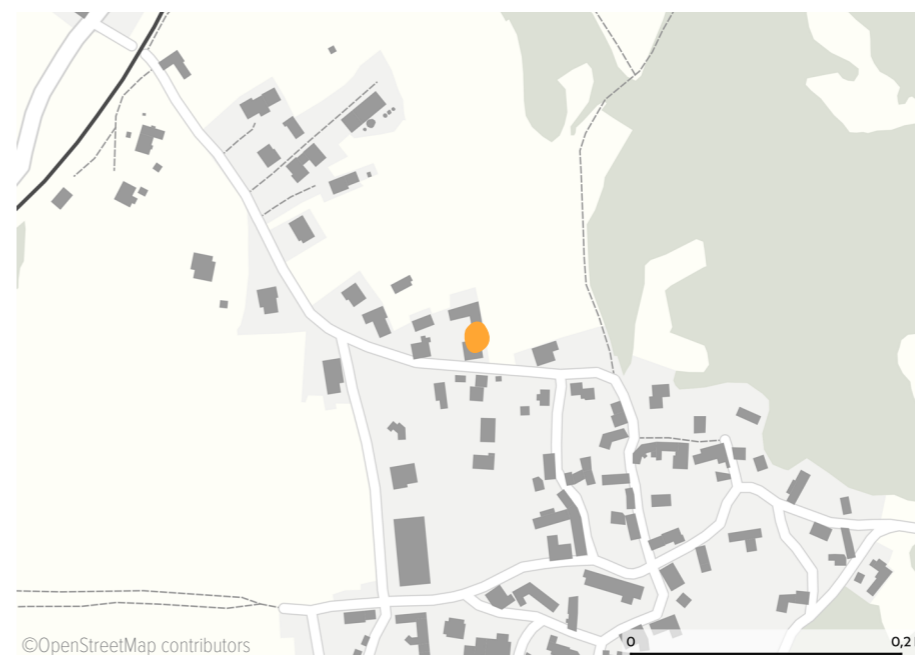
Instalment of stone elements in Rodik  
©Mitski park - photo by Neža Jandrič, VSS Sežana



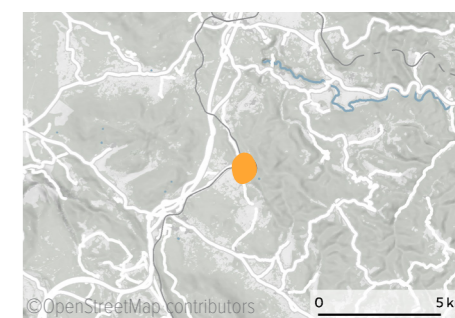
Works on the Baba point lead by sculptor Marko Pogačnik  
©Mitski park - photo by Katja Hrobat Virloget



Sculpture workshop in Rodik, open for visitors to witness the creative process  
©Mitski park - photo by Aleksander Zdjarsky, VSS Sežana



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Rodik, Coastal-Karst, Slovenia

more about  
this project





## New wind in Tomaj

Prevetrimo Tomaj

LOCATION

**Tomaj, Slovenia**

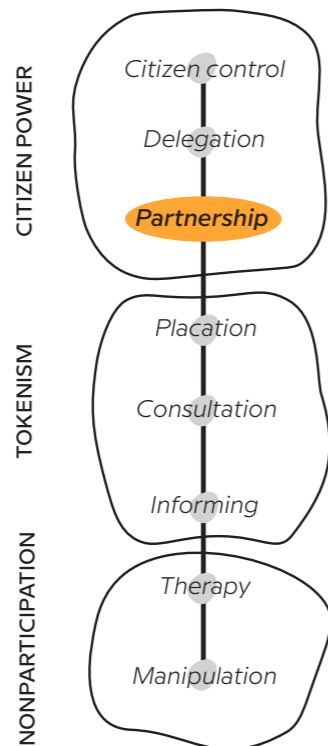
TIME PERIOD

**From 2010 to 2011**



### THE PROJECT

Prevetrimo Tomaj or New wind in Tomaj was an **urban revitalisation project** of the town of Tomaj. It took place in various locations, including a sports field and a recreational space. The **targeted impact of the project was to connect residents of the village so they would spontaneously keep maintaining, cleaning, and upgrading open public spaces just like the residents of the past used to take care of the common places.**



and needs, analysed the local space, debated possible physical changes of the local environment, and carried out surveys. Some residents took part in activities of the voluntary camp and others attended cultural events.

### RESULT

The project's **aim was partly achieved.** Even if it showed that small-scale interventions with residents and other institutions can make changes and can empower the local actors to develop the cultural life of a small town, it seems like the **village still does not attract more younger residents** that could take care of the open public spaces in the future. The biggest beneficiary of the project was the local community through the active engagement in the improved public spaces and learning on the historical values of the village. The residents also gained new knowledge and experiences in participatory active citizenship.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Tomaj is a moderate remote place located in the South-West part of Slovenia, next to the Italian border. The economic activity of the village is centred around tourism and agriculture and its **population is aging and rapidly shrinking.** This characteristic leads to a lack of participatory/cultural activities in the community. One of the main weaknesses is the poor public transport links between Tomaj and the regional centres, like Sežana, Koper, Nova Gorica, and Trieste. This makes it harder for those who don't own a driver's licence (mostly the elderly) to access daily-life-support facilities.

adopted plan for revitalisation, following their experiences and knowledge of participatory practices for improving public open spaces. The project was supported by different institutions that provided knowledge and financial resources.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

To revive the village and its public open space, strengthen the local community and connect the village to the region, they used different tools such as **workshops, events, or presentations.** Schooling youth was an important part-taker. The local community was involved through all the stages of the project. One of their first and most important activities was setting up a plan for revitalising and improving Tomaj. They did that in workshops where they expressed their wishes

### INITIATION AND ACTORS

The **cultural association prostoRož guided and coordinated the activities** based on the previously



The voluntary camp  
©Prostoroz



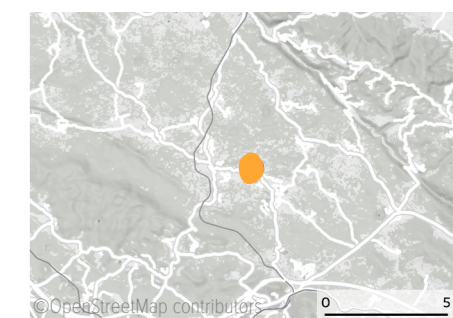
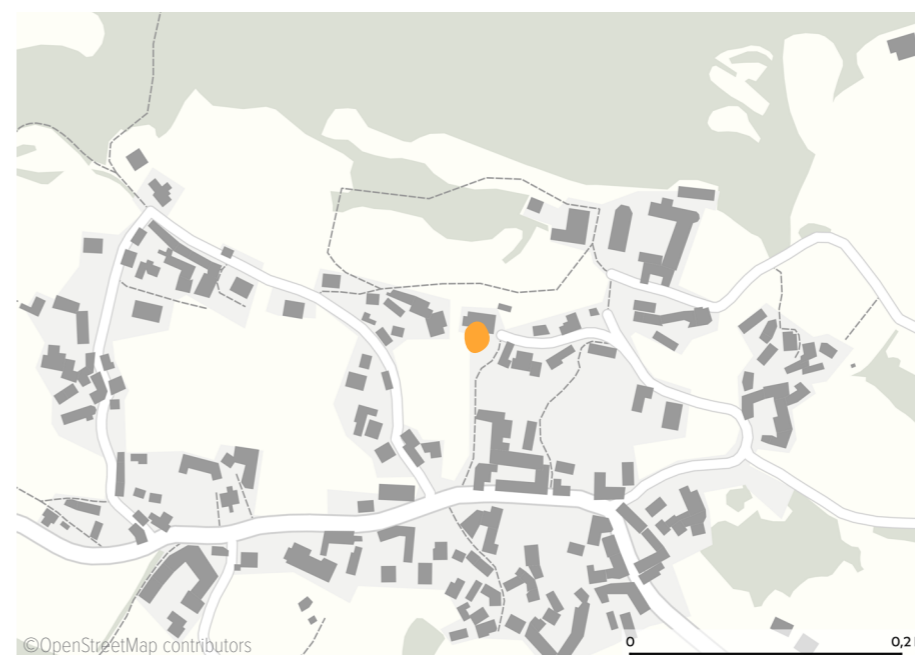
Creative children workshop on school playground  
©Prostoroz



Creative children workshop for school playground  
©Prostoroz



Creative works with children  
©Prostoroz



Tomaj, Slovenia

more about  
this project







## House on the Hill

Hiša na hribu

LOCATION

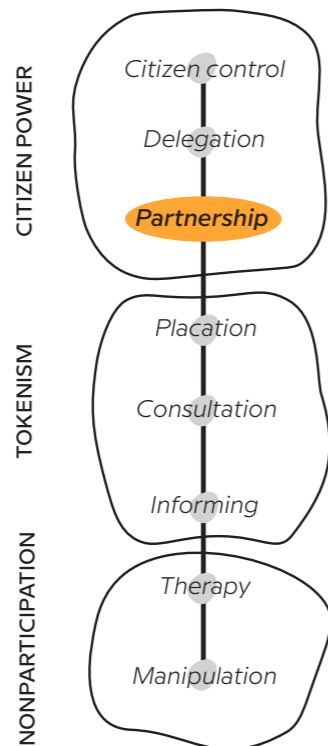
**Žlebe, Slovenia**

TIME PERIOD

**Since 2015**

### THE PROJECT

The House on the Hill project is located on three locations, but the main exhibition stands next to St. Margaret Church in Žlebe. This place is composed of a granary and an old deacon's house where most activities took place. The exhibition was designed with the social aim to connect artists from different backgrounds in a common project but also to fight the "cultural remoteness" of this kind of place while gathering people.



### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Despite the fact Žlebe is only 15km away from Ljubljana, the settlement suffers from poor transportation connections and difficulties in accessing-daily-life support facilities. However, the strong remoteness comes mainly from subjective criteria. As Žlebe is a set of dispersed hamlets and not a continuous settlement, the village lacks public spaces where people can meet. Although few infrastructures exist such as churches, these ones are difficult to reach.

### INITIATION AND ACTORS

The project was initiated by Zavod CCC, a contemporary art institute which seeks to promote contemporary art in remote places. To achieve that goal, 50 artists from different

backgrounds and countries have collaborated to create multiple artworks to be displayed in Žlebe.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

In 2021 the main activity was the co-design of the MI-ZA project ("miza" means table in Slovenian, but can be read as the composition of two words: MI=we/us, ZA=for). MI-ZA was supposed to be a symbol of the local community, a place where family, collectives, strangers and natives gather. This table was an artistic production of different invited artists and locals. The long-term goal of MI-ZA was to involve visitors to the House on the hill in reproducing templates through the wood printing technique. The upper part of MI-ZA (the table) is made from 72 small wooden plates, each carved by one of the artists to become woodcut art works

ready for graphic printing. Creating artworks, they became "artists" by themselves. The local community contributed to the project also by helping to set up the exhibition. It encouraged them to see the final work and visit the place. The project was made possible by funding from public actors such as the European Union and the Public Institute Sotočje Medvode, but also from the private company BB.Bio. In addition, local institutions helped by agreeing to lend the two buildings to host the activities.

### RESULT

Despite some difficulties at the beginning, the project has become a landmark for the cultural life in the area. The achievement is shown by the fact that the project has been renewed every year for 7 years. The artists succeeded in involving visitors in activities and making them aware of the heritage of the settlement and of contemporary art production. The local community seems to be the main beneficiary because it benefited from the access of art and culture, learned more about their traditions but the activities were a way to socialize too. **Although the first creative work was ambiguously perceived by the local community, the project is now accepted and the local community, especially local pupils.**



MIZA table  
© Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (UIRS)



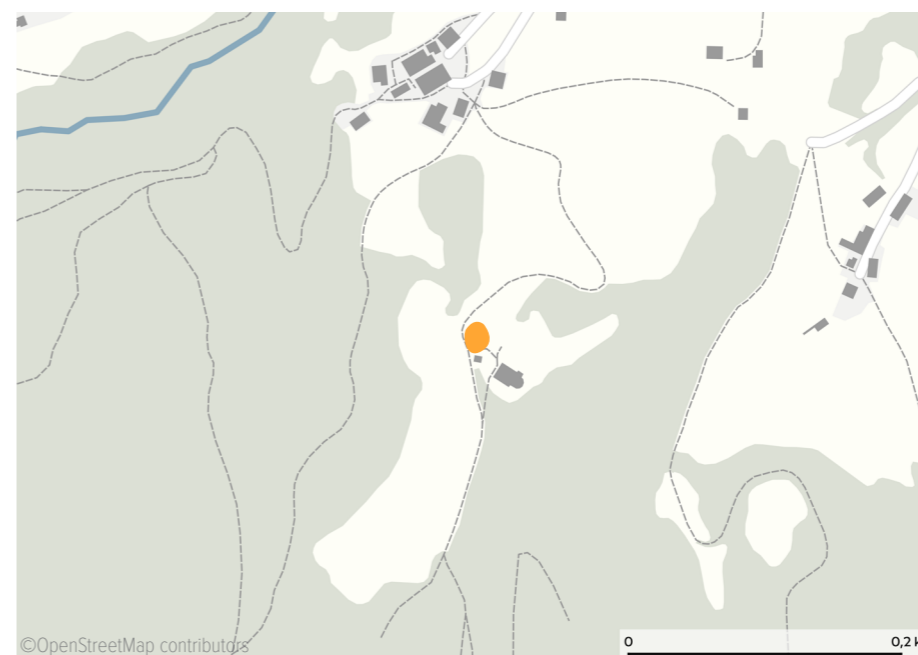
View from the road below the hill  
© Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (UIRS)



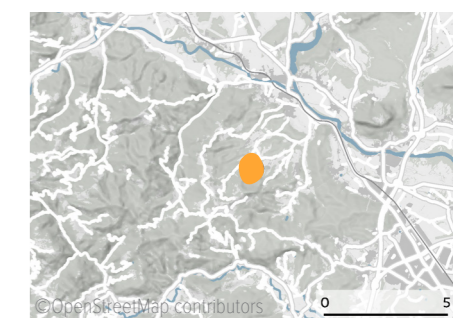
Pots that are part of the hiking participatory artwork  
© Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (UIRS)



Children in main house  
© Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (UIRS)



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Žlebe, Slovenia

more about this project





06

# United Kingdom

Bethesda

Denbighshire

Gwalchmai,  
Penrhyndeudraeth,  
Fron, Bethesda,  
Llangoed,  
Porthaethwy and  
Nant Peris

Llandudno

Ystrad Mynach



# Ynni Ogwen community hydro scheme

Ynni Ogwen community hydro scheme

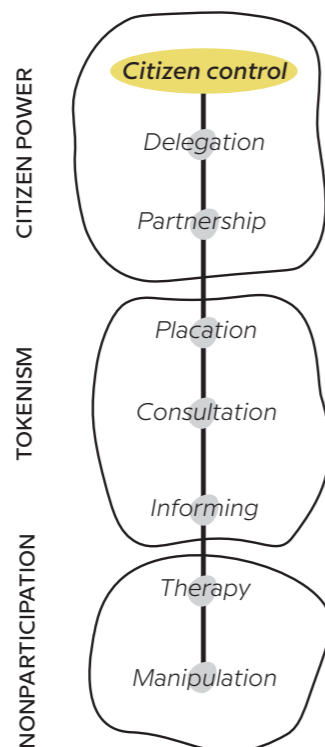


LOCATION  
**Bethesda, United Kingdom**

TIME PERIOD  
**In 2016**

## THE PROJECT

The Ynni Ogwen community hydro scheme project that this case study focuses on takes place around the Ogwen riverbed, which is located in the same valley as Bethesda. Beyond providing electricity, it aims to create economic, environmental and social benefits with a focus on transferring community assets, **buying new assets to create income and projects that make their community stronger, more sustainable and resilient.**



**the members benefitting from the scheme live locally in Gwynedd.** In this project, we must highlight the importance of PO's guidance: it was essential to have full time staff committed to setting this up.

## RESULT

Ynni Ogwen community hydro scheme has partly reached its targeted impact. Although the hydro generator has been constructed and is generating electricity, Ynni Ogwen is still working on the final stages of setting up a direct power supply to the homes of the scheme's members. The project has also **allowed to raise awareness in the community regarding environmental matters, history, language, and culture.** Reactions to the hydro scheme are overwhelmingly positive. Some were initially worried it would be ugly, but **the design complements the natural environment.** There has been a very positive reaction from the users of the energy scheme.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Geographically, Bethesda is a fairly remote town - located in the Ogwen valley, it aspires to be considered the gateway to Snowdonia National Park, and is a 15 minute drive from Bangor, the nearest major city. Its relatively **weak public transport infrastructure** and visitor amenities contribute to its sense of remoteness. Moreover, this feeling of remoteness also comes from its **economic inferiority.** In fact, income levels rank Gerland ward within the top 50% most deprived in Wales. Ogwen is in the top 30% most deprived.

role in the project was to guide its development, and to assist community volunteers in setting up Ynni Ogwen as a community benefit association to take leadership over the hydro scheme.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

The community hydro scheme, which this case study focuses on, began in 2016. It will combine community and environmental benefits by harnessing the power of the river Ogwen to supply local homes with electricity. PO was the lead organisation. It is publicised through educational visits, newsletters, annual general meetings, and there is a strong sense of ownership amongst the members. In 2016 the community share offer was opened, and £500k was raised in 2 months to fund the construction of the hydro. **85% of**

## INITIATION AND ACTORS

The project has been **launched by Partneriaeth Ogwen which is a place-based regeneration organisation** that is committed to Circular Economy principles. PO's



©YnniOgwen



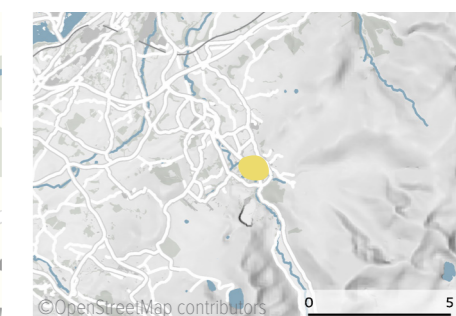
©YnniOgwen



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Bethesda, Wales, United Kingdom

more about this project





# Pentredwr Hub

Hwb Pentredwr

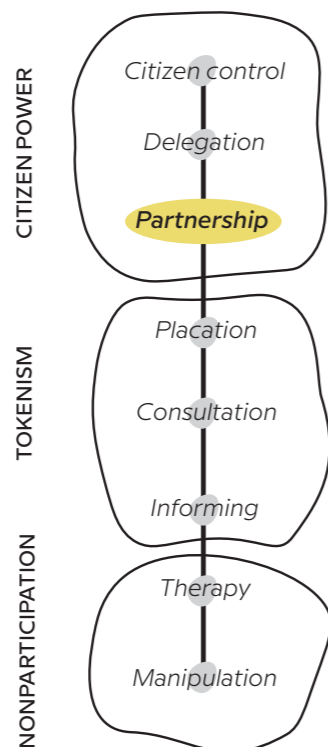
LOCATION  
Denbighshire, Wales, United Kingdom

TIME PERIOD  
Since 2018



## THE PROJECT

This project takes place through workshops, predominantly in the two renovated indoor spaces: the wool museum in Llangollen and the community centre of Pentredwr. Activities' aim is to tackle the increasing levels of social and digital isolation in this remote place but also the community cohesion and the lack of a common public place. The project seeks to secure community prosperity by developing rural skills and enterprise.



was the key of the project.

## RESULT

As objectives' analyses are established after a two year period, it is **too early to say if the targeted impacts are achieved. However, over the past years, there has been an increase in the frequency of events**, in usage of the two buildings and in community connection. In gaining rural skills and a community hub where people can meet, the local community was the main beneficiary of this project. Moreover, the Hwb has resulted in some economic benefits. The first visitors seem to appreciate the project as they keep coming back, enjoying visiting the place. However, the only negative feedback is the fact that Pentredwr is hard to get to.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

The towns inside Denbighshire can be defined as remote by their **lack of transportation connections and a poor access to services**. Indeed, it is difficult to reach the few public spaces without a car. The area's isolation is also due to its geographical location. The **low population density and the economic inferiority** maintain this remoteness. In this area, there are **not that much public spaces but the few ones are well equipped**. The main problem of this county is the lack of a central public place gathering people.

## INITIATION AND ACTORS

Hwb Pentredwr is a project jointly delivered by the Pentredwr and District Community Association and Gwalangollen. The first one wished to develop a community

facility, and the second one's motivation was to pass on heritage skills to future generations.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

Hwb Pentredwr has been created as a rural skills centre. As **sheep production is central in this area, the activities are promoting wool and exploring the uses of locally produced fleece** through demonstrations or workshops of wool craft. The **community has been involved at every steps, from the renovation of the buildings to the grant applications**. Everyone has used their skills and Hwb Pentredwr coordinated them. Sheep farmers are very supportive in coming to the events and donating as much fleece as needed. Although the project received a grant from the National Lottery's Rural Futures, the enthusiasm from the community



Wool event at Ysgol Pentredwr  
©Ema Howe for Pentredwr and District Community Association



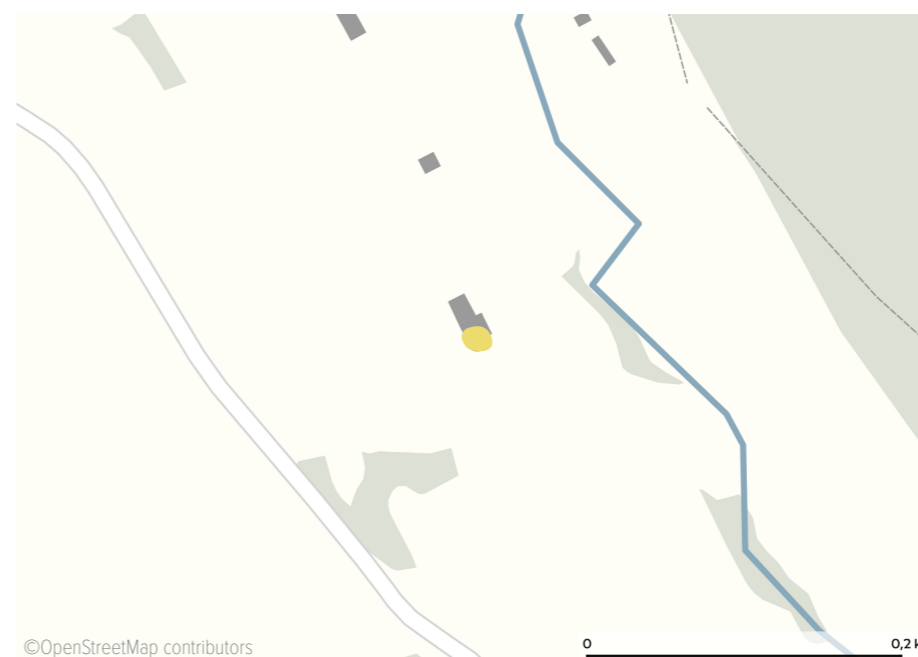
Wool event at Ysgol Pentredwr  
©Ema Howe for Pentredwr and District Community Association



Hand loom  
©Ema Howe for Pentredwr and District Community Association



Wool preparation  
©Ema Howe for Pentredwr and District Community Association



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Denbighshire, Wales, United Kingdom

more about this project





# Utopias Bach

Utopias Bach

LOCATION

**Gwalchmai, Penrhyndeudraeth, Fron, Bethesda, Llangoed, Porthaethwy and Nant Peris, Wales, United Kingdom**

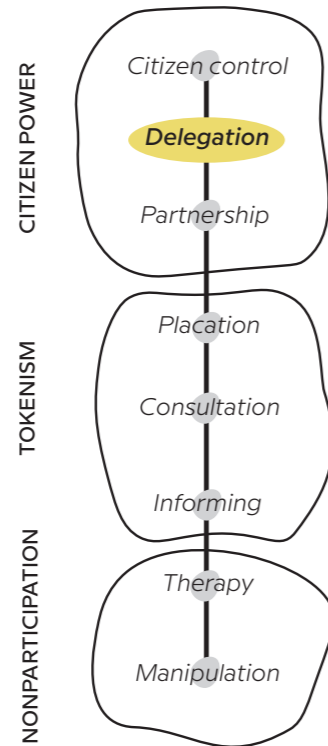
TIME PERIOD

**Since 2020**



## THE PROJECT

Utopias Bach involves experiments where **artists and diverse communities work together to re-imagine the world on a small scale** through interconnected, supportive, creative hubs in North Wales and beyond. The project gives people freedom not to have to think about the real world, and take a playful look at problems without consequence, to radically imagine. The activities have taken place in **7 geographic locations** including community open air spaces, shop windows, and public indoor and outdoor spaces. Others have taken place online due to Covid.



is encouraged to explore and own their biases. Moreover and from the beginning, the local community has been involved in collaboration with Community Connectors

## RESULT

The project has an organic process and is still asking questions, is frequently changed by encounters with new members and world events, and is **in a continuous state of becoming**. The project evolves along with members and with non-members, as well as with other species. Interviewees emphasised that there is a freedom in going forward with a project without it being something, without having an 'outcome'. The **main beneficiaries of these activities are marginalized voices, artists, various communities, non-human beings including flora and fauna**. The strength of the project is that it's not about failure or success, and that deadlines and 'outcomes' don't necessarily allow for deep, organic exploration of ideas, and can lead to weak or superficial solutions for problems.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

The area around the counties of Gwynedd and Anglesey, where the 7 geographic locations of the project are located, are **largely rural**, composed of small villages and towns with direct access to nature and wildlife. This, as noted by the members of the project, is **not necessarily a reason why a place should be labelled remote**. Some of the members reported feeling much more connected to the rest of the world and their community after they moved to these purportedly 'remote' areas. Statistically, in terms of population density, poverty and access to services, these places sit on the lower end of the scale when compared to neighbouring regions.

Project, the host organisation, 'plantlets', a grassroots community group, community connectors and also lead artists.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

The experiments range from geographical communities meeting together weekly to discuss ideas to dispersed networks sharing detailed observations to mini-festivals and small-scale on-the-ground actions. The discoveries and connections made become the starting point for discussion, **generating lasting networks, support, tools and strategies** for thought and action. This project is **counter-mainstream, counter globalisation**, working small and local, and focuses on what the world will be like in future. It's nature is strongly collaborative, democratic, and non-judgmental - each member

## INITIATION AND ACTORS

Various actors have been involved in this project, from Plas Bodfa



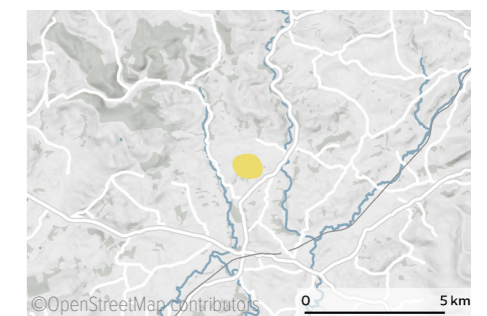
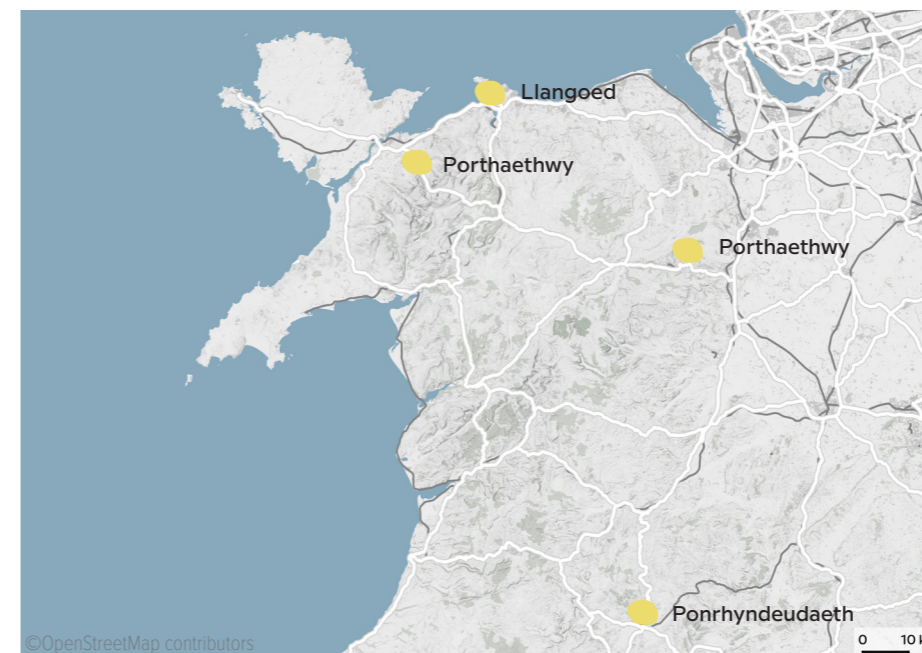
Utopias Bach mapping workshop  
©Utopias Bach - Mark Gahan



Geocache Bach, Treborth  
©Utopias Bach - Lindsey Colbourne



Utopias Bach  
©Utopias Bach - Lindsey Colbourne



Gwalchmai, Penrhyndeudraeth, Fron, Bethesda, Llangoed, Porthaethwy and Nant Peris, Wales, United Kingdom

more about this project





# The Wall Is\_\_

Mae'r Wal Yn\_\_

LOCATION

Llandudno, Wales, United Kingdom

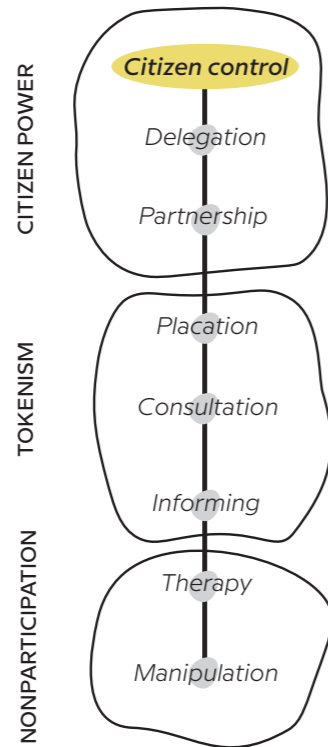


TIME PERIOD

From 2019 to 2021

## THE PROJECT

The Wall Is\_\_ was a two year programme of activities on Tre Cwm housing estate in Llandudno, North Wales, resulting in an artwork for the main boundary wall of the estate. This project tried to answer questions all related to these physical and perhaps societal barriers created by the wall. The overall hypothesis was: 'Does transforming an existing physical barrier through art and design-led engagement processes affect societal barriers to access/participation?'



of the estate residents' experience of remoteness. It addressed community empowerment through long term engagement and a commitment to genuine co-creation throughout.

## RESULT

Practically one year after the end of the project, we can say that it partly reached its targets. The hypothesis of 'Does transforming an existing physical barrier through art and design-led engagement processes affect societal barriers to access/participation?' was tested but conclusions are unclear. The main beneficiaries were residents of the estate, secondary ones were staff at Ty Llywelyn community centre and the general public. **The participants in the project itself perceived it to have engaged the 'hard to reach' who might be less confident in speaking out.** The project helped residents develop the confidence to express their opinions and helped them to feel proud of their estate.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

The Tre Cwm Housing Estate is located in the south part of the city of Llandudno. The remoteness of this place does not come from geographical elements. In fact, the estate is part of a dense area with **good transportation links and daily-life-support facilities.** The only physical barrier between this studied place and the center of Llandudno is **a large boundary wall which has led to economic inferiority and a social division** inside the settlement. Thus, there is a community self-perception that they are not part of the rest of Llandudno, although they would like to be.

as Ty Llywelyn community centre staff, the mayor of Llandudno, North Wales Police, and Llandudno Museum, the project was also funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

In order to define what would be the shape of the artworks that would be implemented on the wall, the **local community participated in roughly 50 different activities to collectively brainstorm.** These included getting to know you van days, a nature walk to explore the local wildlife, youth club design workshops, 3D scanning, ... These activities sought to work on the final artwork, but also to better know the natural/cultural heritage of the Tre Cwm Estate. Other artworks were also created alongside the residents. The project came about because

## INITIATION AND ACTORS

In addition to general support, advice and guidance from community organisations such



Interactive walking tour around estate ©Kristin Luke



Getting to know you van stops ©Kristin Luke - photo by Iwan Williams



Final wall artwork installed ©Kristin Luke



©OpenStreetMap contributors



Llandudno, Wales, United Kingdom - Wales

more about this project





# Cosmic Colliery

Glofa'r Gofod

LOCATION

**Ystrad Mynach, Wales, United Kingdom**

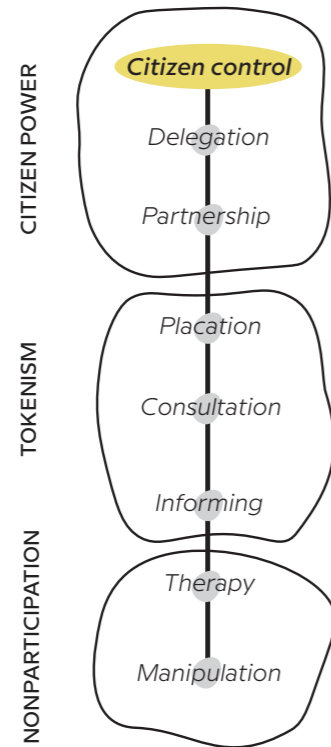
TIME PERIOD

**In 2015**



## THE PROJECT

The Cosmic Colliery project is located in the Penallta Colliery which closed in 1992 becoming abandoned like many coal mines across Wales. The aim of the creative work was to use the mine once more to bring the community together, by imagining it as an astronaut training camp. To alter the perception that young people held for both themselves and their own futures, encouraging them to "think big" by imagining different possibilities for the area and how they are perceived.



in short term interventions. This project was supported by public funding from Arts Council England.

## RESULT

If the project as a whole succeeded in becoming led by the community into something self organised, yet long term opportunities for young people were not measured. Thus, the target was partly achieved. More broadly, the project gave residents the opportunity to connect with others in the village and to be creative. The main beneficiary of the creative work was the young people who partook in the project, namely members of Girls and Boys club. If some people were skeptical about the nature of the work, the final exhibition at the Design Museum was well received by the professional pair audience.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Ystrad Mynach could be defined as a remote place first by its **low population density** but also by its location. Moreover, the settlement suffers from an **economy at half-mast and an ageing population**. However, the residents may deem it as much less remote because of its access to the Wales capital. There are some public spaces in the town like the park but the majority of indoor public spaces are pubs. This kind of place is not ideal for young people, who lack free public space to meet.

## INITIATION AND ACTORS

This project was produced by the designer Hefin Jones in the frame of the London Design Museum's Designer in Residence program. He succeeded in gathering Rhymney Valley communities to work on this

project.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

Cosmic Colliery involved working with communities in the Rhymney Valley to explore the possibilities of what the old coal mine could become. In this project, the local community played a decisive role. Instead of following a predefined path, the project changed in response to people who contributed to it. One example of this involvement is the final project meeting being led by the members of the community and not by its conceptor. In the frame of the residency program, each resident received a budget of £6,000 which goes directly towards producing the work over a span of a few months, demonstrating the how effective a co-design approach can be in engaging the community



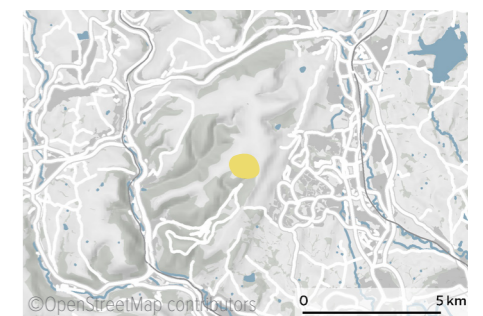
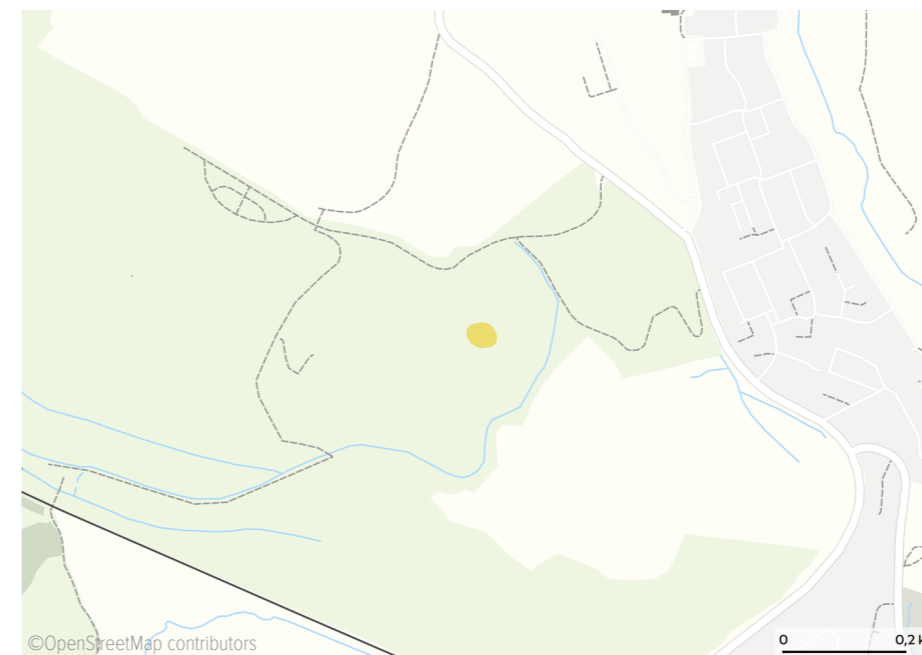
Film still, Cosmic Colliery documentary film. Filmmaker - Liboni Munnings ©Hefin Jones



Penallta Colliery Acid House Festival poster ©Hefin Jones



Film still, Cosmic Colliery documentary film. Filmmaker - Liboni Munnings. ©Hefin Jones



Ystrad Mynach, Borough of Caerphilly, United Kingdom - Wales

more about this project





07

# Italy

Villa Lagarina  
Latronico  
Poggibonsi  
Semestene  
Veza d'Alba



# Wandering oven; We knead desirable futures

Forno Vagabondo; Impastiamo futuri desiderabili

LOCATION

**Villa Lagarina, Italy**

TIME PERIOD

**Since 2020**

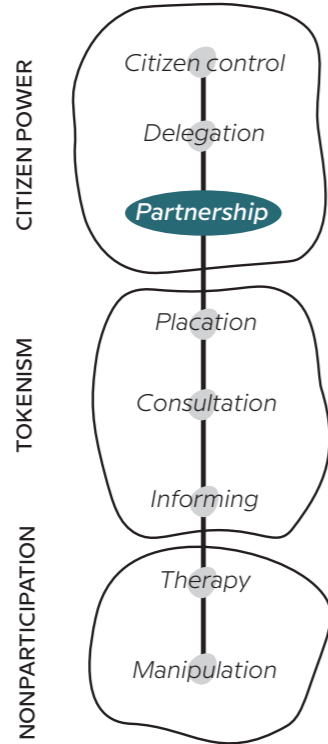


## THE PROJECT

Forno Vagabondo is an itinerant social oven that travels through Alta Vallagarina on an electric cargo bike. At each stop in a public space located in a small village of Vallagarina, the oven becomes a meeting and experimentation point for the local community.

Its challenge is to build an innovative and familiar space to guide people towards sustainable living and to connect stakeholders of the region through a simple and familiar practice such as making bread together.

For the space analysis, we focused on one spot of the itinerary: Palazzo Camelli in Villa Lagarina.



the activities. All of this has been supported by the Research Project "Alpine Community Economies Laboratory" that uses participatory design methods (co-design) to support Alpine communities in addressing issues of sustainable local socio-economic development. Moreover, Forno Vagabondo received financial support from the association sVOLTA.

## RESULT

The Project leaders of Forno Vagabondo didn't set up a specific impact methodology. For this reason, it was not possible to measure a quantitative impact. However, Flora Mammana, one of the creators of the project, highlights the fact that **locals, thanks to Forno Vagabondo initiatives, have begun to open more to others by sharing stories and experiences.**

There have been three main beneficiaries in this project: local inhabitants, the associations involved in the activities and small local businesses.

Generally speaking, the project has been well perceived both by the attendees and by the supporting associations; this is valid for all the different locations where the oven stopped by.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Villa Lagarina is an Italian town in the autonomous province of Trento. It is located in the middle of Vallagarina, on the right bank of the Adige river, 4 km north of Rovereto and about 22 km south of Trento. 3,787 inhabitants live there. The town is characterized by the presence of sumptuous noble palaces, vast parks, squares and rich churches, which make its **historic center** one of the most distinctive of Trentino. Villa Lagarina also hosts different hotels, markets, libraries, and seasonal markets for small producers. However, the town is **badly accessible with public transports** and people mostly move by car.

Foresta with the support of other organizations active on the territory. In fact, **the activities related to the itinerant oven are co-organized by different associations in each town.** These associations collaborate and activate the local community. In Villa Lagarina, the name of the association is Associazione Multiverso.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

The Forno workshops vary from making sourdough together and baking bread, to exploring the valley through excursions to discover new tips related to the labs. The passion for bread, curiosity, and the **desire for discovery and sharing animate the path and guide in kneading desirable futures.** The local community has been involved in the project since its beginning by participating in

## INITIATION AND ACTORS

Forno Vagabondo has been developed by Associazione La



Flora baking bread during one of the workshops ©Fabio Franz



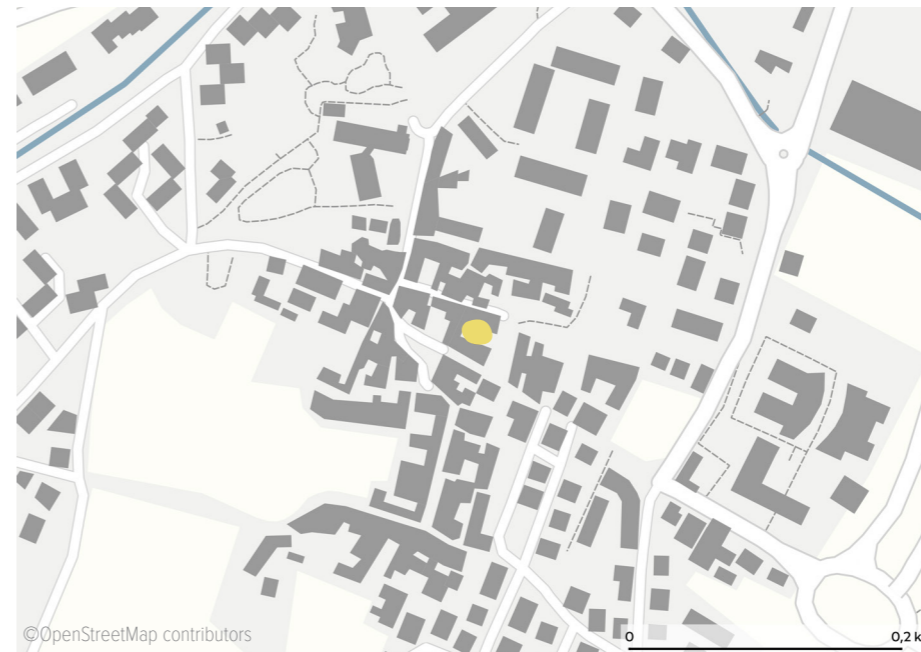
The wandering oven on the road ©Fb page Forno Vagabondo



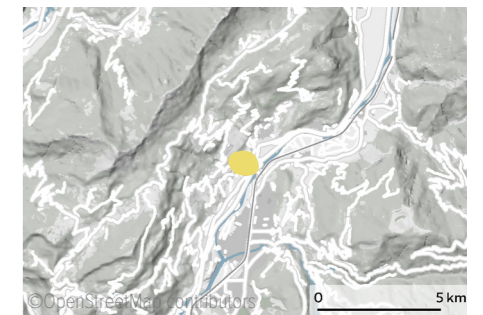
The Booklet with instructions to make sourdough ©Julia Wagner



Villa Lagarina, "La Saletta" in Palazzo Camelli \_The palace courtyard during one of the creative works ©Julia Wagner



©OpenStreetMap contributors



Villa Lagarina / Trento, Trentino-Alto Adige, Italy

more about this project





## Open Air

A Cielo Aperto

LOCATION  
**Latronico, Italy**

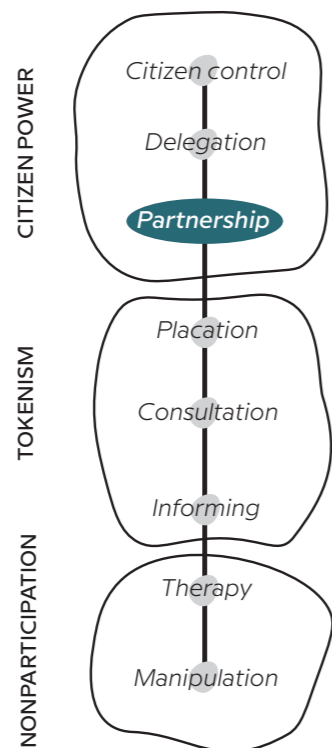
TIME PERIOD  
**Since 2008**

### THE PROJECT

"A Cielo Aperto" is a public art project that takes place in the old town of Latronico.

The project aims to build a widespread open-air museum where various works dialogue with the environment, intervening in the urban space with co-designed art projects.

For the space analysis, we focused on where the art intervention "A Flag for Latronico" took place: Largo Eleonora Pimentel, called "The Castle." This place is the highest part of the old town, looking at a beautiful panorama.



### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Latronico is a mountainous village that can be considered remote due to its poor transportation connections to its surroundings. In addition, the town has suffered from a continuous demographic decrease since the 70s. The old town Capadavutu is primarily vacant, partly because it is just accessible by foot. In this part of the village, there are public spaces like churches and Spazio Cantisani, where many creative works have taken place. The rest of the services and public areas are in the lower modern town.

### INITIATION AND ACTORS

The project was born in 2008 within the cultural association Vincenzo De Luca, and it has been curated since then by the artistic duo Bianco-Valente and Pasquale

Campanella.

Every year, one or two artists are invited to reside for a period of time in Latronico, before proposing their intervention (a workshop or a permanent work to be set up outdoors). In designing their interventions, the artists include inhabitants.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

Over the years, all layers of the population have been involved in multiple and heterogeneous activities in different ways. One example is the engagement of locals in designing the first flag for the town during the art intervention "A Flag for Latronico."

Generally speaking, A Cielo Aperto wishes to create moments of reflection on the history of the community and recover vital, cultural, and communicative



processes that go beyond disciplinary fences towards public sharing.

It aims at creating a path to be built with others and not only the prerogative of artists.

A Cielo Aperto was born thanks to the admiration and affection of local inhabitants towards Vincenzo De Luca, an artist from Latronico whose name has entitled the association that started the project. There were no public fundings but just private funds from the association's membership fees.

### RESULT

Over the years, the project has brought a breath of fresh air to the small town of Latronico, activating cultural processes that enabled such a small town to become a destination for more visitors than ever before.

A Cielo Aperto has helped locals discover that they have a dense and strong cultural heritage and realize that they can be thus carriers of culture.

Moreover, thanks to this epiphany, new cultural associations and virtuous dynamics emerged. The primary beneficiaries of this project have been the local community at all levels.

In the beginning, many struggled to understand the project, and it took several years for locals to become familiar with its concept. However, thanks to discovering their cultural heritage through creative works, the local community's perception has changed over the years.



One of the polling stations where locals have been invited to vote for the flag for the town of Latronico ©Eugenio Tibaldi, una bandiera per Latronico, 2010/2011



Map of "A Cielo Aperto" permanent works with the focus on the place where Latronico Flag has been displayed. ©Pasquale Campanella



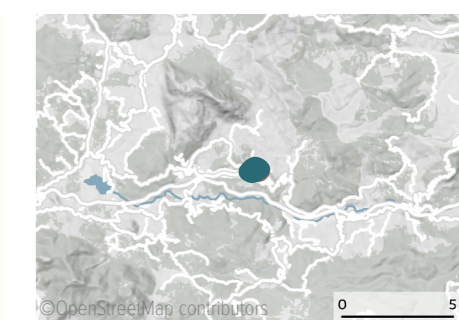
Stefano Boccacini's postcard sent to collect the words for Latronico. ©Stefano Boccacini, Una parola su Latronico, 2011



The raising of the winning flag in Largo Eleonora Pimentel in Latronico ©Pasquale Campanella



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Latronico, Basilicata, Italy



## Art to Art

Arte All'Arte

LOCATION

**Poggibonsi, Italy**

TIME PERIOD

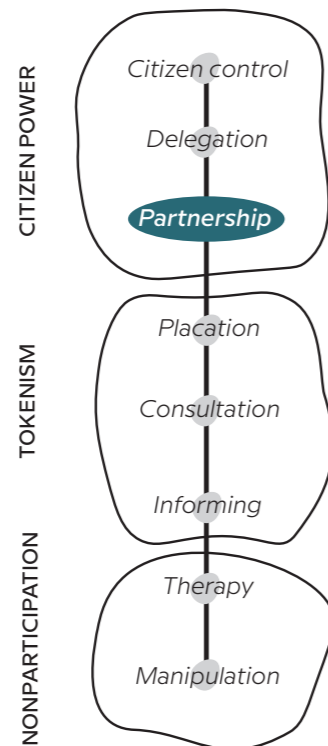
**From 1996 to 2006**



### THE PROJECT

"Art to Art" is a public art project born in 1996 thanks to an idea of "Associazione Arte Continua" and concluded in 2006. The project aimed to promote the municipalities in the province of Siena and Florence as an agri-environmental art district, linking and balancing contemporary art with the beautiful Tuscan historical heritage.

Each of the ten editions of Arte all'Arte has produced several interventions by international artists in the public space. For the space analysis, we focused on the 9th edition carried on in 2004 in Poggibonsi, specifically on the artwork by Antony Gormley, "Fai spazio, Prendi posto" (Making Space, Taking Place).



### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Poggibonsi is an Italian town of 29.009 inhabitants in the province of Siena in Tuscany. Since the Middle-Age, the place has had a particular **commercial vocation**. Thus, it cannot be defined as a small and remote place from an infrastructure or economic point of view. However, it **suffers from an "aesthetic inferiority"** compared to other municipalities surrounding it. In this town there are several squares and meeting places that respond to people's different needs: three cinemas, a couple of theaters and a beautiful public library recently restored.

### INITIATION AND ACTORS

"Arte all'Arte" has been promoted by "Galleria Continua" of San Gimignano and was born thanks to the support of the art critic Luciano

Pistoï. Each year **professional curators were invited to select an international artist** for each town or city. After visiting the site and workshops and meetings with the local population, the artists conceived and executed a project to transform or reinterpret the site through a site-specific installation.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

Gormley's project consisted of **producing and installing seven iron sculptures created from body casts**. Advertisements were placed in local and national newspapers to recruit volunteers to have plaster molds taken of their bodies and then cast in iron. **Six local inhabitants plus one external one were chosen to participate**. A temporary workshop was set up in the town to produce the molds.

At the same time, the artist has worked on creating a **collective memory map**. Sociological research has been led by asking Poggibonsi inhabitants which memories they instinctively associated to specific places of their town.

The sculptures were then installed in seven different spots in the town, familiar places of present times and forgotten areas of the past, ranging from squares, parks, railways, a fortress, and a supermarket (represented on the right page for this latter).

### RESULT

There is no specific information about the achievement of the targeted impact. For sure, the project, together and in connection with the other art-related initiatives and associations present in Tuscany, contributed over the years to attract more visitors to the territory. Regarding the change of perception towards contemporary art, it is still challenging to make non-art-related people understand the value of this kind of creative work. In general, we could say that the local community and creative sector are the primary beneficiaries of this project which has created new artistic landmarks in the territory and tried to address this "aesthetic inferiority."

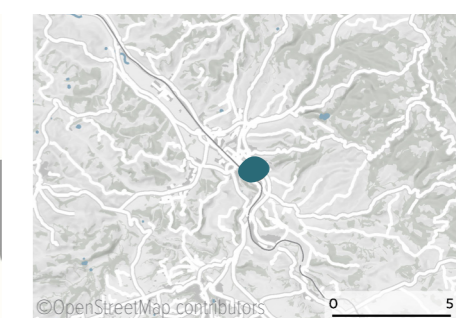
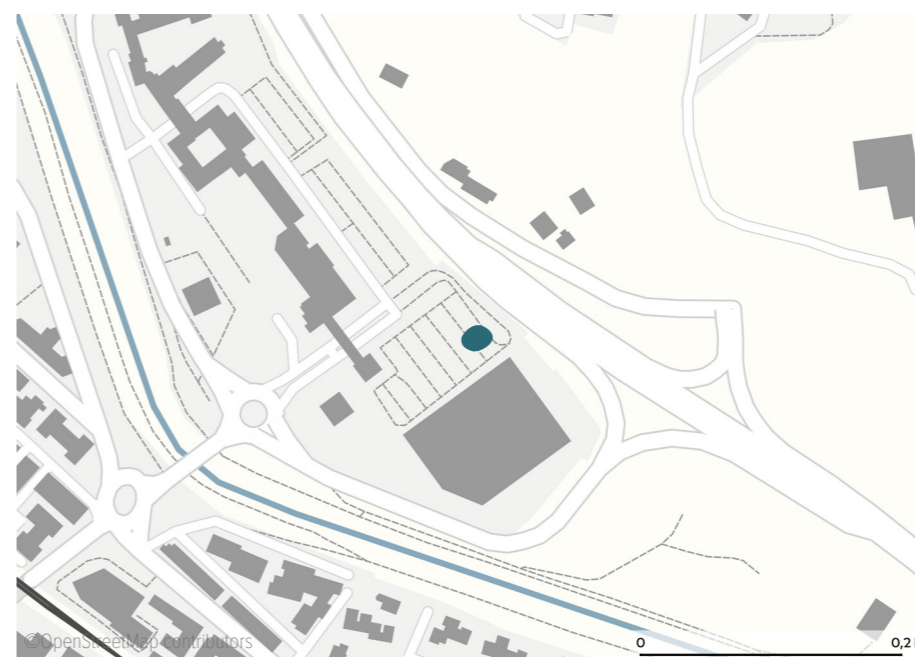
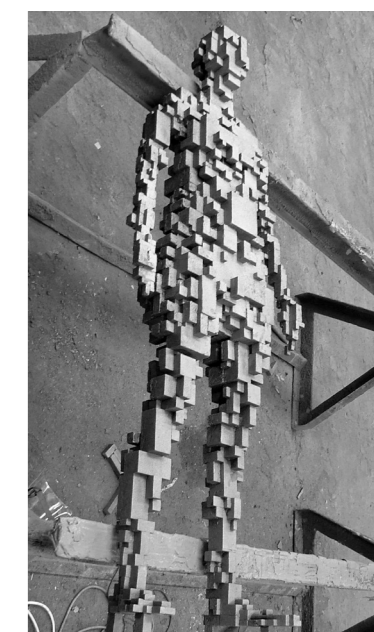


One of the sculptures of Antony Gormley in Shopping center Valdelsa  
©Ela Bialkowska, Associazione Arte Continua

One of Antony Gormley's sculptures  
©Ela Bialkowska, Associazione Arte Continua



Making the molds to produce the statues  
©Associazione Arte Continua



Poggibonsi, Tuscany, Italy

more about this project





## Fireplaces, meetings and experimentation in the rural area

Foghíles, Incontri e sperimentazione nello spazio rurale



LOCATION

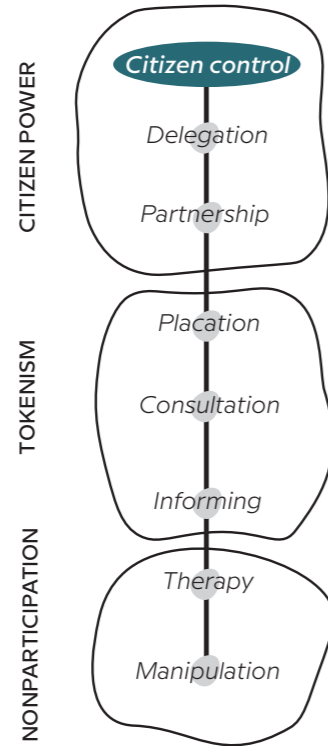
**Semestene, Italy**

TIME PERIOD

**Since 2018**

### THE PROJECT

Foghíles project aims to extend and enhance the life of the little Village of Semestene, bringing in active people eager to promote and organize opportunities for meeting and experimentation in the rural area and to imagine and design the future of the place together. Every year, it takes place for ten days in September and then includes two days of meetings during the following solstice and equinox. The activities take place in different locations around the village; for the space analysis, we focused on one of the spots: the Bia Lada farmland.



animate activities. This project has been **completely self-financed by participants**, and it has come to life thanks to the locals and the visitors from the neighboring towns.

### RESULT

Initially, Po.Ps. Rurbana aimed at bringing life back to Semestene, collecting many people from Sardinia and abroad for ten days a year, making Foghíles a big festival. More than three years after its implementation, we can say that Foghíles has partly reached its goals. Even if they succeed in engaging many people in Semestene, the activities have not brought thousands of visitors to the place.

However, according to the organizers, this "failure" was luck because **bringing in a large crowd in a short time would have disrupted the pace and dynamics of such a tiny community**.

Today, the project is mostly well perceived by locals, even if they struggled to interpret the scope of the project at the beginning.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Semestene is a tiny **village of 120 people** located in the northern central area of **Sardinia**. The town develops according to a medieval urban scheme with an almost radial development around two churches. Its characterized remoteness (4/5) comes from **economic inferiority and difficulty accessing daily-life-support facilities**. Above all, this place is suffering from the digital divide. In terms of connectivity with other cities, Semestene does not lack infrastructure. Due to its size, this settlement does not have large public spaces but **rather small squares and recreational spaces**.

**Sardinian territory**, a potential place for the development of new lifestyles for future generations.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

Foghíles means "fireplaces" in sardo logudorese, the local dialect. In the past and still today, the **meetings around the fire** represent the occasions for transmitting knowledge and direct learning through tales and experiences. Accordingly, this project is strongly connected to the **cultural heritage** of the region, and it has been promoting, since 2018, rural life and the empowerment of the countryside. Various activities have occurred, from a torchlight parade to a pastry workshop. **The community's involvement often happened through the stimulation of memories**, and some locals even proposed themselves to

### INITIATION AND ACTORS

The project is curated by **Po.Ps. Rurbana**, an association that promotes specific interventions and long-term projects in the



Bia Lada during the preparation of the creative works 2  
©Hadriana Casla



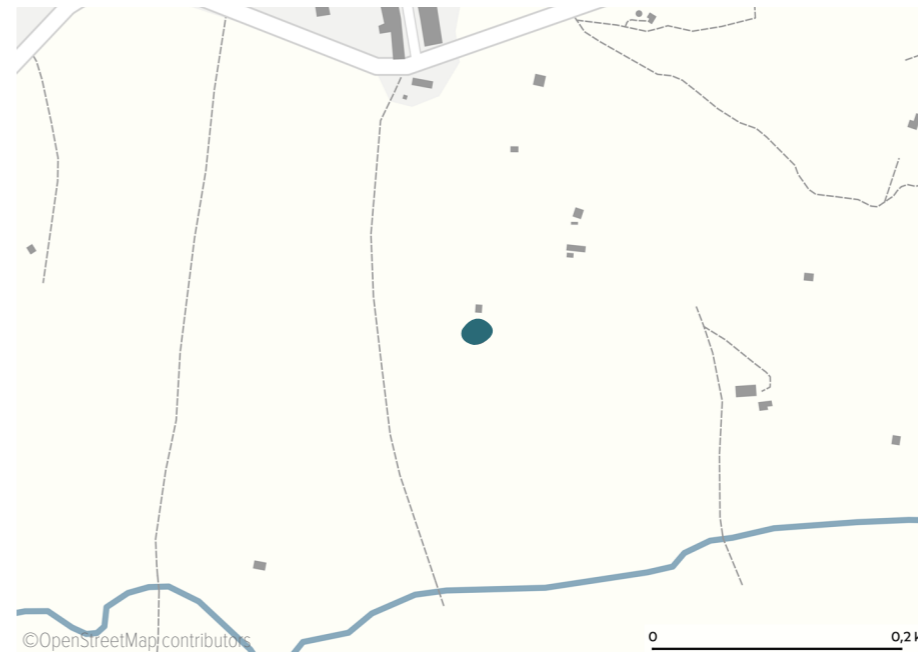
"In sa domo 'e su furru yard" (Umberto I street) during the preparation of the fire for the torchlight parade  
©Hadriana Casla



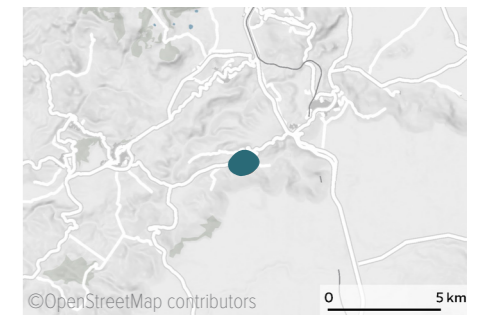
"In sa domo 'e su furru yard" (Umberto I street) during the preparation of the fire for the torchlight parade  
©Hadriana Casla



Bia Lada before the creative works  
©Hadriana Casla



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Semestene, Sardinia, Italy

more about this project





# Big Benches Community Project (or BBCP)

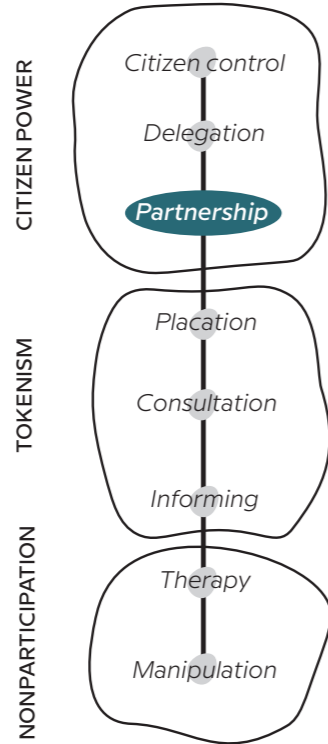


LOCATION  
**Vezza d'Alba, Italy**

TIME PERIOD  
**Since 2010**

## THE PROJECT

The "White Big Bench" is an out-of-scale bench located on the highest point of "Bricco del Castellero" hill. The place hosts Torion's ruins but was left abandoned until 2014 until it was renovated and turned into a recreational space for tourists and local walkers. This big bench is part of the broader "Big Bench Community Project", a non-profit initiative promoted by the American designer Chris Bangle and his wife Catherine to support local enterprise, tourism, and craftsmanship in the towns that host these out-of-scale installations.



bench in a scenic location that must be freely accessible to the public.

## RESULT

For the BBCP team leaders, the initiative is very successful because it has **improved the local economy and attracted more tourists**. Indeed, the central part of the economic return is from the people who visit the benches and become active consumers in that place. The BBCP has strengthened the community's sense of pride and belonging in terms of the human aspect. More specifically, in Vezza d'Alba, the construction of the White Big Bench has generated curiosity, and **the place has become a new recreation point where events take place**. Thus, the local community has widely and positively received the Big Benches for their aims and results.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Vezza d'Alba is a small town in the Piedmont region with a **low population density**. The village has a huge potential for different local activities based mainly on **tourism or agriculture**. However, the **lack of suitable transport connections** and the difficulty in creating a solid systemic network hinder some economic activities. These facts place the population in an isolated condition. Vezza d'Alba **inhabitants do not consider themselves remote but are aware of their "marginal" position**, primarily due to difficulty accessing roads.

on the hill. They contacted "Chris Bangle and Associates," which offered its support providing big benches technical drawings.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

The involvement of the local community happens in different steps of the project, from the activation process to the **construction of the big bench by volunteers** or the fundraising to buy materials. The enthusiasm of local communities and associations that strongly want a Big Bench in their settlement is a crucial factor. Since the BBCP is a nonprofit association, the construction of the benches is financed through private funds by citizens, associations, or Chris Bangle's company. Moreover, the natural heritage is a crucial point of the project because the main requirement from BBCP is to build a

## INITIATION AND ACTORS

The initiative for the construction of the "White Big Bench" has been led by the Association of Merchants and Entrepreneurs of Vezza d'Alba, who wanted to set up a big bench



Vezza D'Alba town\_People sitting on the White Big Bench next to the "Torion"  
©"Big Bench Community Project"



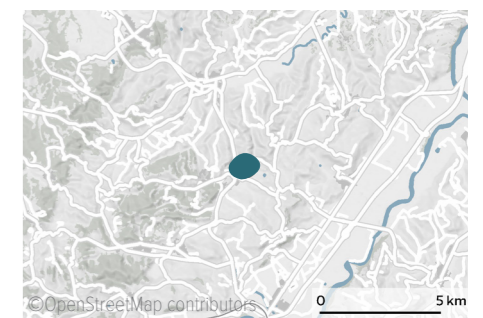
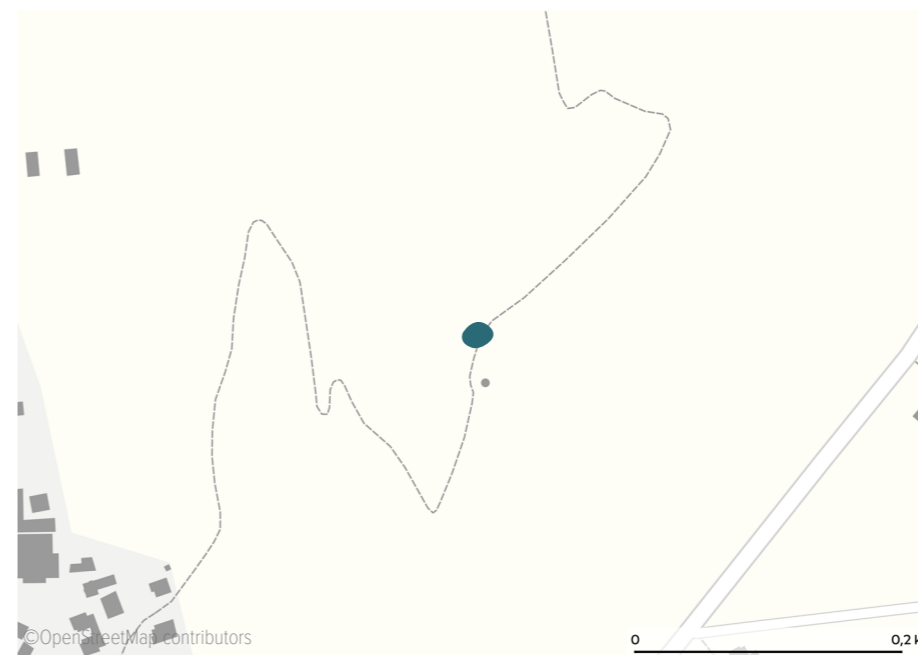
Vezza D'Alba town\_Big Bench under construction  
©"Associazione L TORION" Archives



Vezza D'Alba town\_The space where the White Big Bench is located, next to the "Torion", covered with snow (aerial image - drone)  
©"White Big Bench Vezza d'Alba - L Torion"



Vezza D'Alba town\_Big Bench inauguration with mr. Chris Bangle and authorities of Piedmont region and Vezza d'Alba town  
©"Associazione L TORION" Archives



Vezza d'Alba, Piedmont, Italy

more about this project





08

# Iceland

Drangsnes

Seydisfjordur

Long Beach Sand

Djúpivogur

Hafnarfjordur





## The Hot Tub Trio

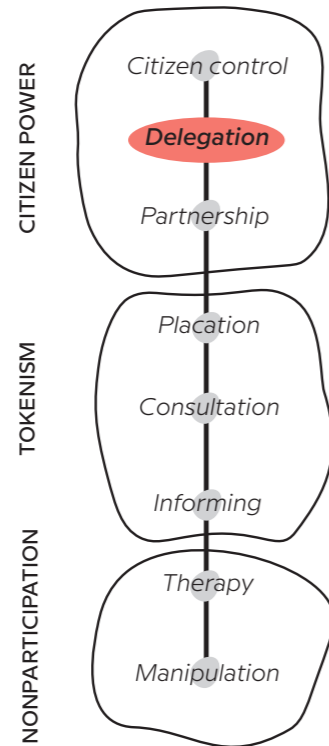
Heitu pottarnir á Drangsnesi

LOCATION

**Drangsnæs, Iceland**

TIME PERIOD

**Since 1997**



### THE PROJECT

The “Hot Tub Trio” project is a public open-air space with three hot tubs and a bench. There is a public parking area by the hot tubs and a small service house with changing rooms with shower and toilet facilities. Initially, the project was only intended as a pet project and wasn’t really meant to tackle any challenges. But as time passed, it has become a tool in order to promote tourism in Drangsnæs and encouraging socialisation in the settlement.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

The town of Drangsnæs can be described as remote by its geographical location. Indeed, the first main road is 20 km away from the settlement. This makes it difficult for locals to access daily life facilities, such as medicine. Moreover, the access can be difficult in winter due to heavy snow. Drangsnæs has **very few planned public areas**. Most of them are green spaces and wild nature but there is no coherent network of public spaces or green ways that connect them together. The public spaces are scattered throughout the small community and the boundaries between public and private spaces are rather blurred.

### INITIATION AND ACTORS

Two major actors have been involved in the project. The first

ones are local residents who wanted to create a pleasant place to relax and connect. The second one is the community council with its financial support and willingness to develop a social platform and attract visitors.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

From the very beginning of the project, the local community has been involved in each step. When in 1997, an earth drill hit a powerful geothermal water vein, children of Drangsnæs rapidly asked for a swimming pool. With the help of a local farmer who brought three fish craters, the locals gave birth to the “Hot Tub Trio”. In this project, the financial help of the community council has been crucial. Indeed, it has allowed some improvement in the infrastructures, such as the parking lot or the service house.

More broadly, we must highlight the fact that the local community has had to cultivate creative thinking in order to find solutions to various issues that have faced them.

### RESULT

With almost 25 years of hindsight, it seems that the project has exceeded its initial goals which were to make use of the hot water and create a pleasant place in the village. The “Hot Tub Trio” has indeed brought the community closer, attracted visitors and encouraged communication between tourists and locals. Consequently, there are numerous beneficiaries of the project, from the local fishermen, who can enjoy the tubs after they come home from the sea, to the local businesses which have benefited from the increased attractiveness of the village.



People in the hot pots on a windy day  
©Vestfirðir



Part of the artwork which is embedded in the surrounding rocks\_Samper Mireya  
©Mireya Samper - photo by Júlí



The hot pots  
©Regína Hrönn Ragnarsdóttir



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Drangsnæs, Westfjords, Iceland

more about this project







## Rainbow Street

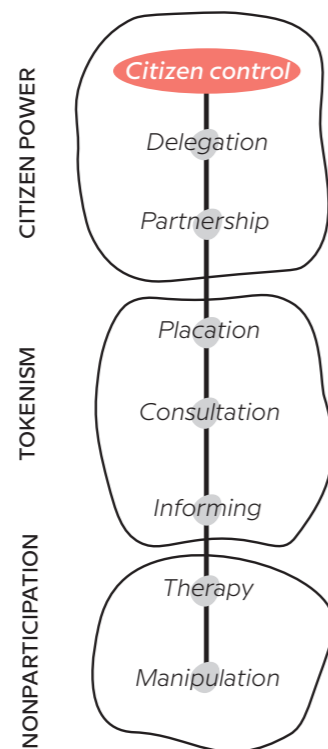
Regnbogagatan

LOCATION

**Seyðisfjörður, Iceland**

TIME PERIOD

**Since 2017**



### THE PROJECT

The Rainbow Street project was originally a temporary installation on a street called Norðurgata in the centre of Seyðisfjörður that was supposed to last one summer. It consists of a series of painted lines that represent the rainbow flag. Thus, the targeted impact was both to make the street more beautiful, lively and festive because of the bad state it was and to celebrate the gay pride.

LGBTQ+ friendly. Moreover, local law enforcement also gave a green light for the parade from the start.

### RESULT

With more than 4 years of insight, we can say that the project reached its targeted aims. Indeed, the rainbow street has become much more than a decorative feature. It is now a destination and a landmark for Seyðisfjörður which promotes local architectural heritage. Moreover, it has also succeeded in supporting and raising awareness of the status of people in the LGBTQ community in remote places. Thus, the initiative benefited to local businesses, through the influx of tourists in the town but also to the locals who find in the gay pride event a way to socialise and create stronger links in the community.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Enclosed by mountains, the town of Seyðisfjörður is located at the bottom of a fjord on the East coast of Iceland. This landscape has made life in the village fragile as avalanches and landslides can be expected in certain seasonal conditions. Its characterised remoteness is also the result of the lack of transportation links with other cities and an aged demographic structure. There are some public spaces in the village, mostly indoor due to meteorological/light conditions. Outdoors public spaces are directly linked with nearby natural landscapes.

So he took matters into his own hands and gathered a few friends and they walked back and forth on Norðurgata to show support for the rights of gay people and to have fun.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

After posting the stunt on social media, it instantly became a hit and this temporary installation has become a permanent landmark in the town. The following years, it has become an official event with more and more visitors. Considering that Snorri Emilsson and his friends are living in Seyðisfjörður, the local community has been from the beginning at the heart of the project. Each spring, they maintain the road by painting it again. This initiative could have come to life thanks to the fact that Iceland is known for being particularly

### INITIATION AND ACTORS

Back in 2014 a local man, Snorri Emilsson, did not have the opportunity to attend the gay pride celebration in Reykjavík.



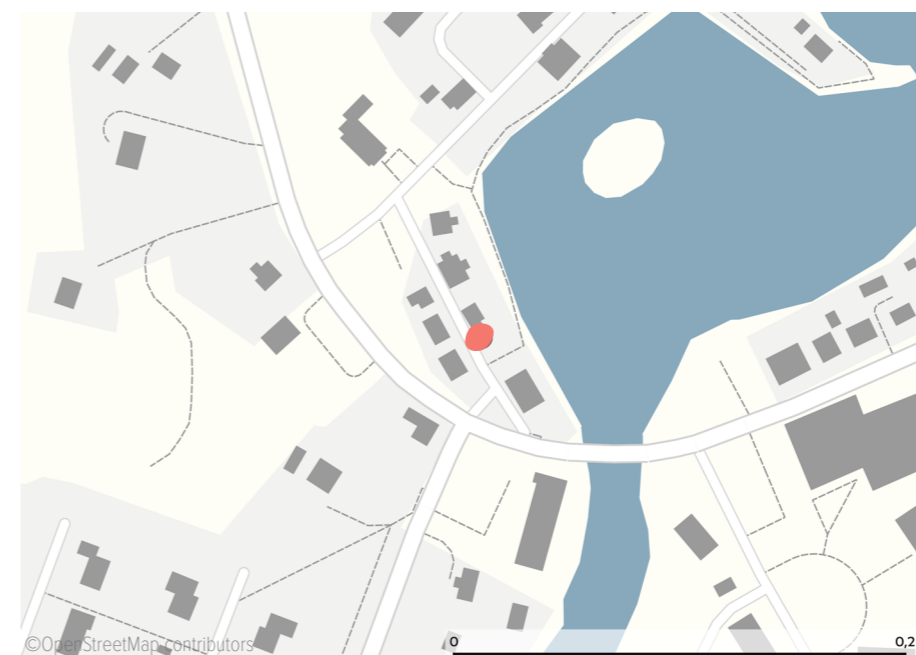
Destination Austurland  
©Ingvi Örn Þorsteinsson



Destination Austurland  
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Seyðisfjörður, Mulathing, Iceland

more about  
this project







# Long Sand Beach

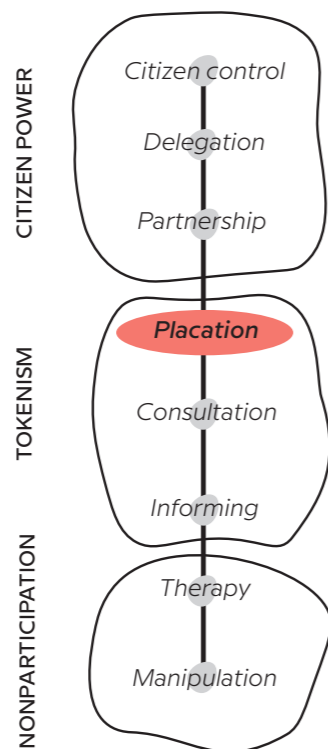
Langisandur

LOCATION

**Akranes municipality, Iceland**

TIME PERIOD

**Since 1990**



## THE PROJECT

The Long Sand Beach project takes place in the main beach of the municipality of Akranes. Started in the early 1990s, this ongoing project has been developed to promote outdoor activities, for reasons of physical and mental health and also to attract more people to the beach and to Akranes. Numerous facilities have been built here: a walking and cycling path, exercise equipment, children's playgrounds and even a geothermal pool.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Akranes is a 7.697 inhabitant municipality located 20 km north of the capital of Iceland on the Skaginn peninsula. Before 1998, the town was 2 hours from the capital (by car) but with the opening of a tunnel which crosses the fjord, it now takes only 40 minutes to reach Reykjavík. This tunnel has led to a feeling of economic inferiority, as Akranes lost influence over the capital. Moreover, it suffers from a lack of public transportation and poor-quality public spaces. However, the inhabitants, when asked, do not have a feeling of remoteness (1 out of 5).

## INITIATION AND ACTORS

Two major actors have been involved in this project. The first one is the municipality which has always wanted to improve the place in

the interest of the inhabitants. The second one are the sea-swimmers members who worked in particular on the hot pools.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

Langisandur is not an "actual" project, but rather an ongoing project with constructions and changes over the past 30 years. The implementation of new equipments is directly linked with the needs of the local community that has expressed what it wanted to local authorities. That is the case for the installation of 10 benches requested by the elderly that live next to the beach or for the creation of the geothermal baths requested by the sea-swimmer group. Consequently, this project would not have been possible without the involvement of the local community. We also need to highlight the role

of the Guðlaug Gunnlaugsdóttir & Jón Gunnlaugsson Memorial Foundation and the Ferdamalastofa-Icelandic Tourist Board for their financial and tactical support.

## RESULT

The project reached its two main targets. In fact, this public space has become a landmark in Akranes for outdoor activities and the municipality has attracted more and more tourists. This is particularly striking since the implementation of the pool Guðlaug which attracted 30.000 visitors in 2018. With this reinforced touristic attraction and these new public facilities, it seems obvious that the local community is the main beneficiary of the project. As written in the papers Akranes.is and Skessuhorn.is, locals are generally happy with it (especially the geothermal pool) and some are fascinated by Langisandur and think of it as one of Akranes' pearls.

Seaside walkpath  
©Astrid LeLarge



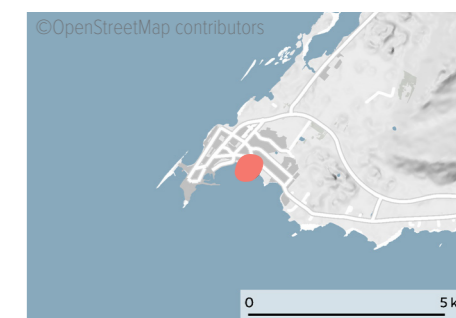
Artificial beach pools  
©Birgir Þ Jóhannsson



Office  
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Long Beach Sand, Akranes municipality, Iceland

more about  
this project







## Karl-Bank

Kallabakki

LOCATION

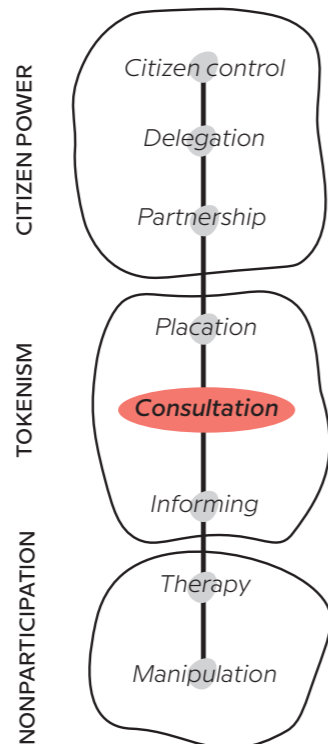
**Djúpivogur, Iceland**

TIME PERIOD

**Since 2017**

### THE PROJECT

The project is located on Kallabakki. This place was originally a sloping grassland on cliffs with a point of view on the town. However in the 1970s, it turned into car facilities. Thereafter, the space was left abandoned and used as a parking lot. The aim of the project was to turn the area into a public space where locals or visitors can rest, talk and enjoy the environment.



### RESULT

The targeted impact was achieved. The place is now used as a public space instead of being a parking lot. It also reinforces traffic safety, because those who are walking are separated from the ones driving. The place has become a town center square with the possibilities that a square this size gives. The will of improving the town structure has become stronger in the local's and municipality's minds. People stay longer in the settlement, it boosts the attraction of the town and local businesses benefit from visitors influx. At the beginning, people were concerned about the loss of parking space. If some people did not notice anything, others accepted the change and think that it is easier to walk there.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

The remoteness of Djúpivogur is based on several factors. The population density is low, the transportation links are not good enough, the job opportunities are very few and there are the minimum daily-life-support facilities to live there. However, the most relevant remote characteristic of Djúpivogur is the geographical allocation, due to its location on the East-fjords. If the settlement is composed of several public spaces, their quality is not good enough. In addition, there is no central place where people can meet and gather in Djúpivogur.

town. They commissioned TGJ Design Studio to manage the project. However, locals also contributed to decision making.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

The public space was created by arranging small wooden blocks in a row along the "Bakki" street to separate the lot and the street. Now, the two areas are separated with big flower pots. In the defined public space, there are some movable benches with tables. The local community participated in the consultation process for the making of the town center's detailed land-use plan, including Kallabaki. The participation of the population was made possible through public town meetings and workshops. This project also benefited from the public authorities listening carefully to the people's ideas.

### WHAT MAKES THE SPECIFICITY OF THE PROJECT

The project was initiated by the municipality of Djúpivogur in order to have better urban planning in



View before intervention B1  
©Páll Jakob Lindal



Kallabakki before the change  
©Páll Jakob Lindal



Kallabakki full of people  
©Páll Jakob Lindal



©OpenStreetMap contributors



Djúpivogur, Municipality of Múlaþing, Iceland

more about this project





# Neighbourhood plan for Flensborgarhöfn and Óseyrarsvaedi



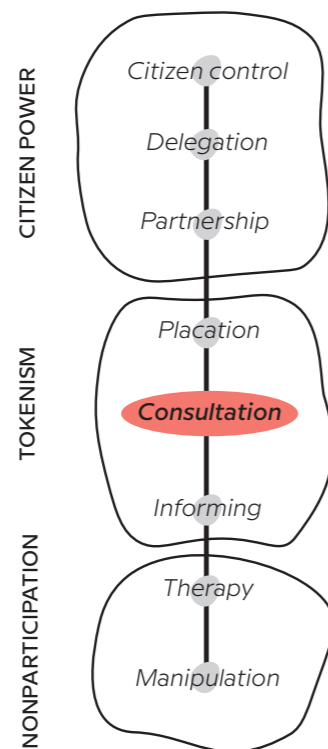
Rammaskipulag Flensborgarhafnar og Óseyrarsvæðis

LOCATION  
**Hafnarfjörður, Iceland**

TIME PERIOD  
**Since 2003**

## THE PROJECT

The project takes place in a harbour area of 20,2 ha that has been losing its function as an industrial site for the fishing and shipping industry. It consists of a new framework and development plan for this area. This ongoing process, which started in 2003, has three major aims: adapting the activities in the harbour since the fishing industry is declining, tackling the lack of character, connection and historical reference and adapting the space to regional planning goals.



based on comments and inputs from locals. In 2018, an open international competition was held and a Swedish team won. They have since proposed a development plan for three separate areas of the harbor.

## RESULT

Since the project has not reached its construction phase yet, it is hard to estimate if it has reached its targeted impacts. However, we should highlight the fact that the local community felt as if they had little ability to influence the project. This is the case when a 22 meter high building was implemented in the project and they protested against it. Thus, even if locals are one of the main beneficiaries of this development plan, they do not feel so enthusiastic about it because they cannot really identify themselves in it.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Hafnarfjörður is a town with about 30.000 inhabitants, located in the outskirts of the capital region (Reykjavik) in Iceland. What gives Hafnarfjörður a feeling of remoteness is connected to its uniqueness and rich history. Since receiving official town rights in 1908, 1490 people lived in Hafnarfjörður. Now, more than a hundred years later, the population has multiplied, but despite this, the town has preserved a strong village feel. In terms of public spaces, this city is well equipped. However, the old center area has suffered from its proximity with Reykjavik with abandoned buildings and poor-quality public spaces.

Hafnarfjörður but other actors have been involved, such as urban designers (Kjellgren Kaminsky and Mareld & Jvantspijker & partners) and the Architect Association of Iceland. The role of the local community will be described below.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

Since 2003, the city has been dealing with this development plan for the harbor area. It is really in 2014 that the local community and other stakeholders have been more involved in the project with a large open meeting. This was done to ensure good communication between the planning authorities and locals, and to ensure that the plan was according to the will of the people. The meeting led to appointing a working group that proposed a preface description for a competition to be held, partly

## INITIATION AND ACTORS

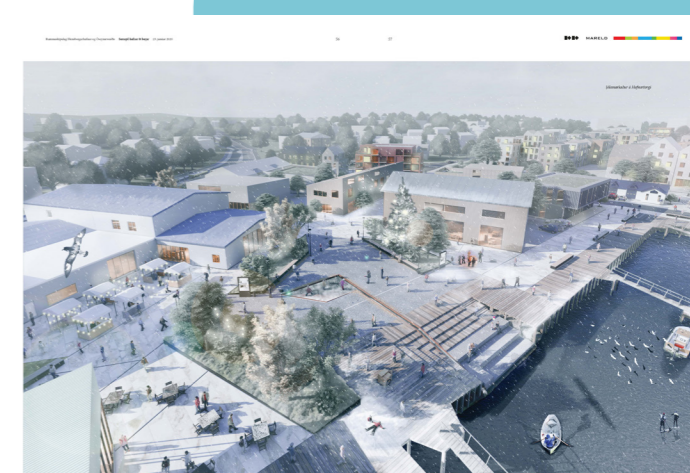
This public project has been launched by the town of



Hafnarfjordur draft project ©Orri Steinarssonm



Hafnarfjordur draft project ©Orri Steinarssonm



Hafnarfjordur draft project ©Orri Steinarssonm



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Hafnarfjordur, Capital Region, Iceland

more about this project





09

# France

Unieux

Dunières

Sainte-Croix en  
Jarez

Communauté des  
Communes  
of Monts du Pilat

Genilac town centre

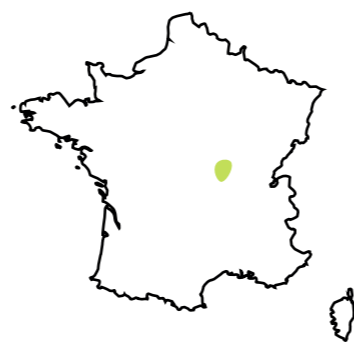


## Agora Bench

Le banc à palabres

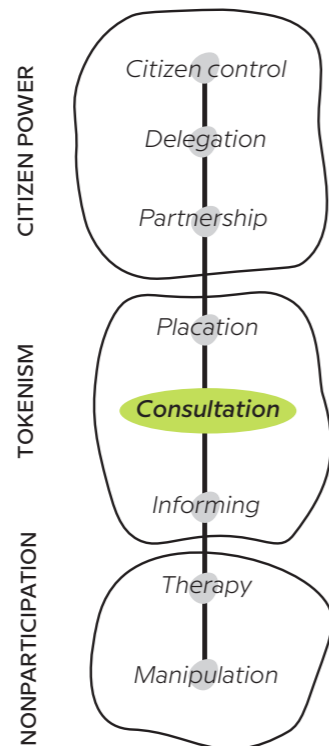
LOCATION  
**Unieux, France**

TIME PERIOD  
**Since 2014**



### THE PROJECT

The Agora Bench was part of the creation of the new Nelson Mandela park in the town. This project simply consists of the installation of a **monumental circular nine meter bench** in the middle of the park, where several footpaths and cycling ways cross. The aim of this project was to **create an inter-generational meeting point in the town**, where people can gather in a pleasant environment.



**people was organised for the design part.** This project being public, the overall budget was managed by Saint-Etienne Métropole and co-funded by the municipality of Unieux.

### RESULT

The park and its furniture have been much used since they were created. The Agora Bench is showing signs of wear on the seats, proof of **intense use**. Since the installation of the bench, new equipment has also been installed in the Nelson Mandela Park. The main beneficiaries were the local population in all diversity, because they are the main users of this facility, from the youngest to the older. Moreover, the Agora Bench project has been the subject of several publications.



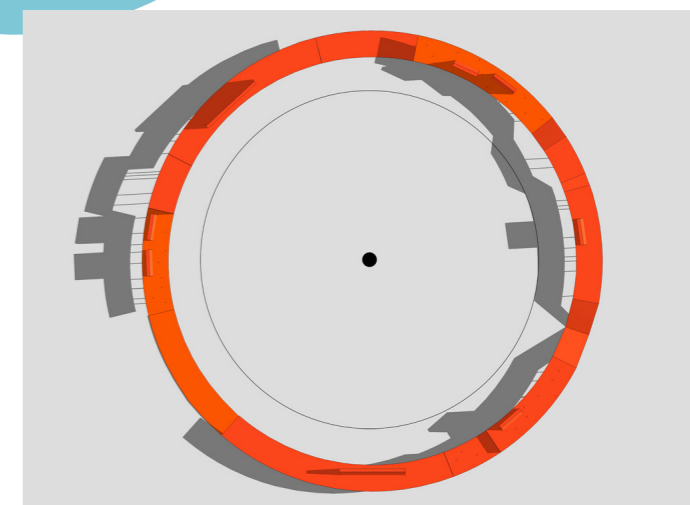
Parc Nelson Mandela in Map (Big Bang Paysage). The agora bench is in the centre of the park.



Unieux banc à palabres ©Sara de.Gouy



Unieux banc à palabres ©Sara de.Gouy



Unieux banc à palabres ©Sara de.Gouy

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Unieux is not a geographical remote town but the place could be defined as remote by **its poor transportation links**. Indeed, the town is located in the suburbs of Saint-Etienne and this fact led to more commuter-type travel, increasing the use of cars as daily transport. However, **residents feel this isolation to a lesser degree**. Also, the settlement suffers from a **lack of public spaces** and especially places where people can gather in a natural setting. In response to this problem, the municipality has reacted.

### WHAT MAKES THE SPECIFICITY OF THE PROJECT

The project was **initiated by the municipality of Unieux** and coordinated by the Saint-Etienne Métropole, which were in charge

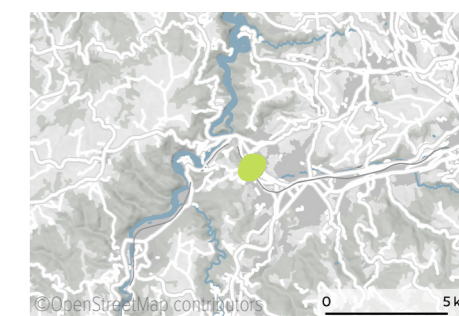
of the project. They were helped by a multidisciplinary team for the landscaping, for the lighting, for the signage and for the design.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

The project summarizes the aspirations behind the park: it translates the **multiple usages** driving the diversification of practices and postures with the public space. It also **symbolises the diversity of its users** and the wishes of the town to open new possibilities. Moreover, the location of the bench acts as an invitation to stop and pause a while. The local community was involved through various consultation meetings and workshops. The aim of these sessions were held to refine the landscaping project and the planned uses. Moreover, a specific consultation process for young



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Unieux, Auvergne Rhone- Alpes, France

more about this project



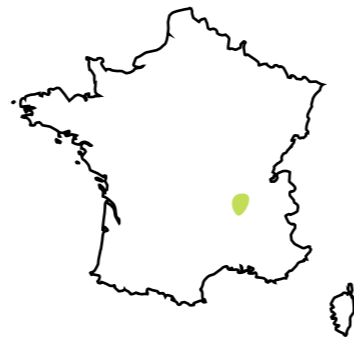


## Local people tell the story of the town of Dunières

Des habitants racontent le bourg de Dunières

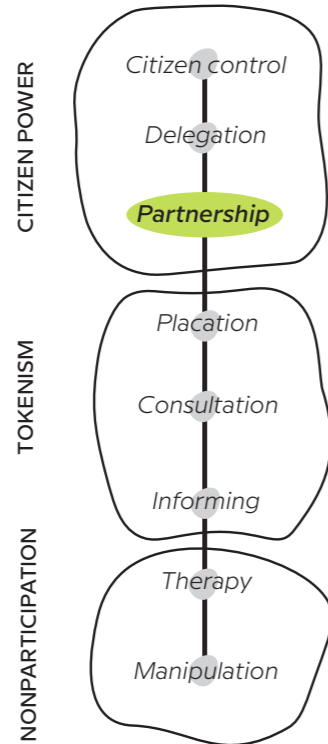
LOCATION  
**Dunières, France**

TIME PERIOD  
**From 2019 to 2021**



### THE PROJECT

This project is a part of the urban study on **revitalising Dunières town centre**. There, a **participatory sensitive-type approach** was proposed. The activity attempted to **reveal the vernacular history and heritage** of Dunières. The aim was to uncover information, curiosity, the cultural and human potential of this territory which is not encompassed in more objective studies.



people's accounts of it. Just as important as the other activities, those that allow the participants to express themselves in a more personal way.

### RESULT

The desired impact of the project was achieved and **this sensitive map had inspired the guide plan for revitalisation of Dunières**. The targeted impact relating to local pride/imaginary representations and stories was partly achieved. During the year 2022 the town has the intention to use this subjective map as a pedagogic tool inside public schools, to work the urban imaginary of Dunières with the children. It will be displayed in the window of a vacant shop in the centre of Dunières and it will be published in the local newspaper.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Dunières is a rural town with a population of 2,733 inhabitants. Although the area is relatively dynamic, thanks in particular to its proximity to the employment areas of Saint-Etienne and Le Puy en Velay, it remains on the fringes of these demographic dynamics due to its distance from Highways or railway track. Moreover, the town has very few quality public spaces even if it is surrounded by a great landscape and a beautiful forest.

**government.** This participatory approach was proposed by the designers of the Urban Project Team. Local authorities, entrepreneurs, shop owners, NGOs and **habitants participated** in the dynamics of the project given the fact that it concerned the renewal of their town and it was essential to have their **contribution about their daily need, their vision for the future, and their emotional link with the territory**.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

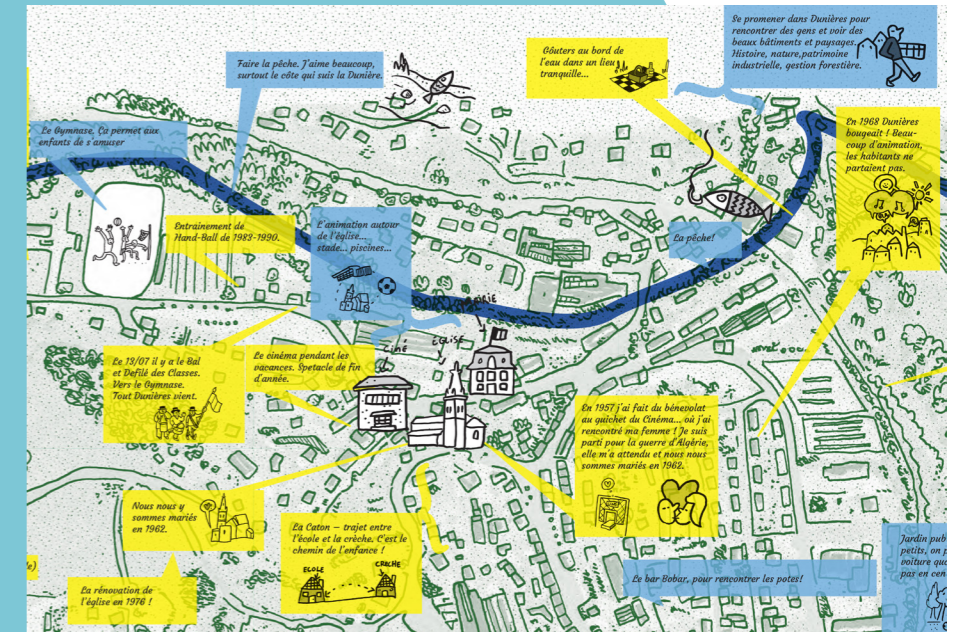
During the Urban **Diagnosis** phase, a Subjective mapping of the territory was drawn up based on multiple meetings with the inhabitants. A **Sensitive map** attempts to convey the affective dimension of a territory, to understand the landscape through a human-scale vision, to define a place based on

### INITIATION AND ACTORS

Looking for ways to improve the quality of life of their inhabitants and to attract new ones, the **local authorities** of Dunières had conducted the urban study for the revitalization of the town center with the **help of the Department of Haute-Loire and the federal**



Commune de Dunières  
©Juliana Gotilla, Atelier Captain Ludd



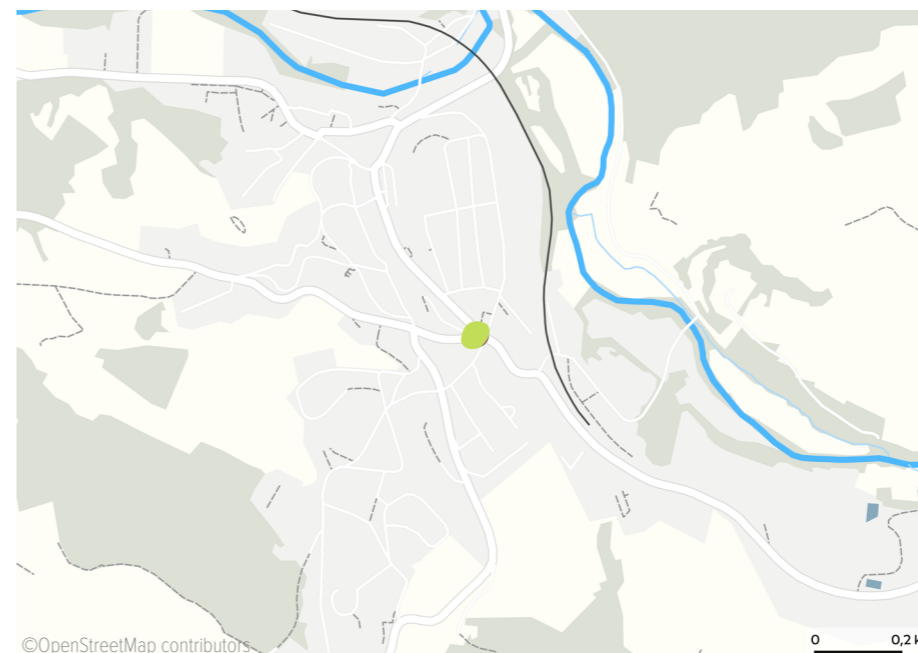
Sensitive map zoomed  
©Urban Project team : NOVÆ Architecture et Ingénierie, Atelier de design Captain Ludd, Adhoc architecture, IEM programmation urbaine (Illustrations : Martin Guillaume)



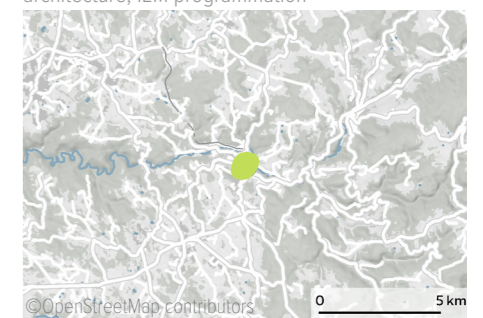
Map of Dunières  
©NOVÆ Architecture et Ingénierie



What future for Dunières center?  
©Urban Project team : NOVÆ Architecture et Ingénierie, Atelier de design Captain Ludd, Adhoc architecture, IEM programmation



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Dunières, Haute Loire, France

more about this project





# Rock to Heavens Trail

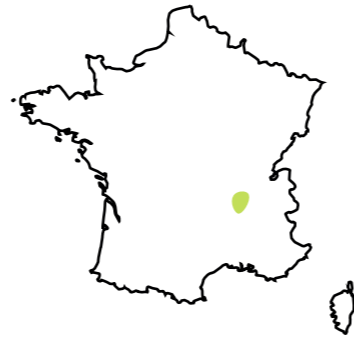
Le Chemin des  
Roches à Cieux

LOCATION

**Sainte-Croix-en-Jarez, France**

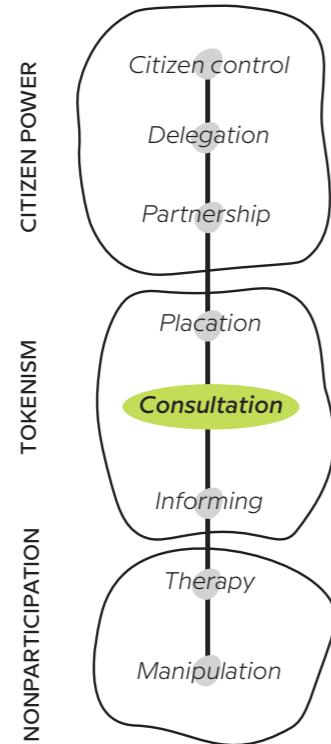
TIME PERIOD

**From 2021 to 2022**



## THE PROJECT

The project consists in the creation of a trail in Sainte-Croix-en-Jarez and around its direct vicinity. This trail goes through the Old Chartreuse, the few streets of the village and natural spaces. The aim of the project is to encourage visitors to explore the surroundings a little further to get to know other aspects of the village. The final goal is the development of slow and green tourism in the area.



elements of Sainte-Croix-en-Jarez. The project received financial and institutional support in the frame of the “designer in residence in the municipalities” program. This program, wished by Saint-Etienne Métropole”, aims to support local development and attractiveness for isolated or rural places.

## RESULT

Given the fact that the project is **still in progress**, it is not possible to say whether the project has achieved its target. The last installations should be completed by November 2022. The project targets different types of people: the inhabitants of the village, the informed visitors with an appetite for creation (those passing through the season), the families residing in the Saint-Etienne Métropole and also people practising outdoor leisure activities.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Sainte-Croix-en-Jarez is a small village located in the Regional and natural park of Pilat. The settlement could be defined as a remote place first by the fact the village is **not connected to a public transportation network**. Moreover, the remoteness of the area is characterised by a **low population density** and by the difficulties in accessing daily-life support facilities. The road network is in good condition and there are some hiking and biking trails. In the settlement, there are few public spaces but no squares or parks.

was supported by the Parc naturel du Pilat. In addition, they benefited from the help of the Cité du design, which was in charge of the design part.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

The trail emphasises the qualities of surrounding nature through installations interacting with the nature flows (wind, light and water). Moreover, »Rock to Heavens Trail« is the redline and guides the visitors along the trail. This material was used for the construction of the Chartreuse and serving as the support for local legends of Roches de Marlin. **The local community was involved in the project when the project started with about twenty interviews with villagers.** These interviews allowed to get a grasp of the specificity and remarkable

## WHAT MAKES THE SPECIFICITY OF THE PROJECT

This project was **initiated by the commune of Sainte-Croix-en-Jarez and Saint-Etienne Métropole.** It



Chemin roches à cieux ©Isabelle Daëron



Chemin roches à cieux ©Isabelle Daëron - photo by Pierre Grasset



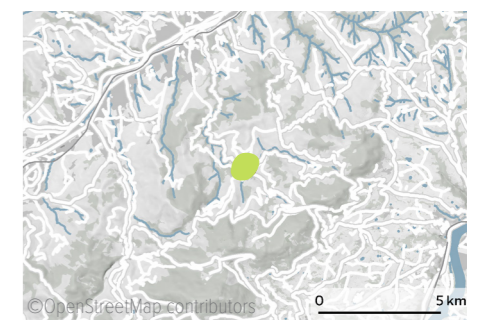
Chemin roches à cieux ©Isabelle Daëron - photo by Pierre Grasset



Chemin roches à cieux ©Isabelle Daëron - photo by Pierre Grasset



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Sainte-Croix en Jarez, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, France

more about  
this project



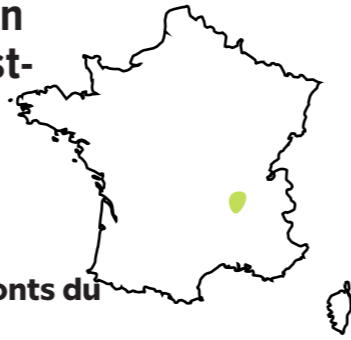


## Design consultancy for the renovation of commercial facades in Saint-Genest-Malifaux and Bourg-Argental

Mission de conseils en design pour la rénovation des façades commerciales à Saint-Genest-Malifaux et Bourg-Argental

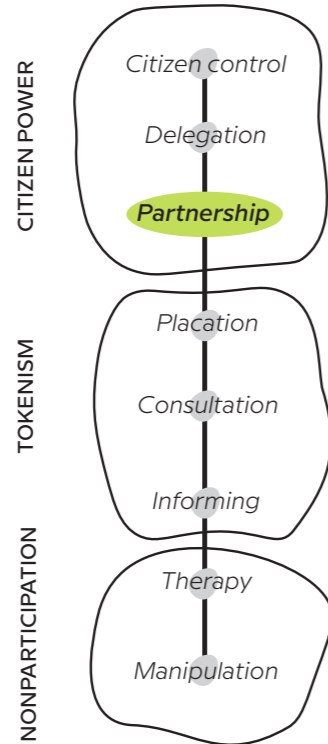
LOCATION  
**Communauté des Communes des Monts du Pilat, France**

TIME PERIOD  
**Since 2020**



### THE PROJECT

The project, located in the center streets of Bourg-Argental and Saint-Genest-Malifaux, is a work of re-reading of the local urban landscape. The aim was to raise awareness among shopkeepers of the need to renovate their signs and shop-fronts, using the skills of graphic designers, in order to strengthen the commercial attractiveness of town centres and trigger a virtuous dynamic.



activities and their development prospects. **Shopkeepers currently have tools in their hands which they can implement in the way that suits them.** The project was made possible thanks to the financial support of the funding authorities, but also thanks to the technical support of community staff, the strong network of artisans and the involvement of designers.

### RESULT

At this stage of the action, it is not possible to conclude if the project has initiated a dynamic. However, it can be observed that the **continuous exchanges with the shopkeepers have enabled them to overcome their apprehensions** concerning, like the regulatory complexity to obtain authorisations for the installation. On the other hand, the mediation of a designer could favor the perception of the renovation projects. The analysis of the global project results can be made after the completion of the first works.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

This place, mainly composed of two communes, could be defined as remote by a demographic decline and ageing population but also by a lack of renewal of the supply of services and shops. By these facts, **the remoteness is more characterised in terms of the definition of the place's identity.** We can also evoke a dependence on the metropolises. There are few outdoor spaces defined as public. Traditionally used for community life, they are now dedicated to parking, apart from occasional use. Moreover, these places are characterized by privatisation and congestion of pedestrian intersections.

**Communauté de Commune des Monts du Pilat** to develop the local economy. The Intervention Fund for Trade and Crafts and Typotopy (a group of designers) also contributed to the project by coordinating the various activities and mobilising shopkeepers.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

The creative work consisted in the **implementation of around thirty projects to encourage shopkeepers to renovate their signs and shopfronts.** Therefore, local shopkeepers have been mainly involved in the project through various activities. A survey was conducted over a period of almost four weeks. Individual meetings in shopkeepers' workplaces enabled the designers to acquire a good knowledge of the situation of each shopkeeper, to understand their

### WHAT MAKES THE SPECIFICITY OF THE PROJECT

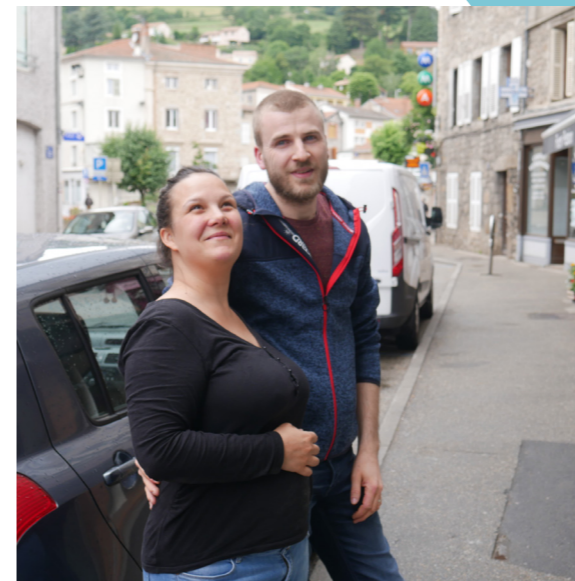
The project was **initiated by the**



Sylvie Soutrenon at her shop door  
©TYPOTOPY / photo by Pierre Hanau



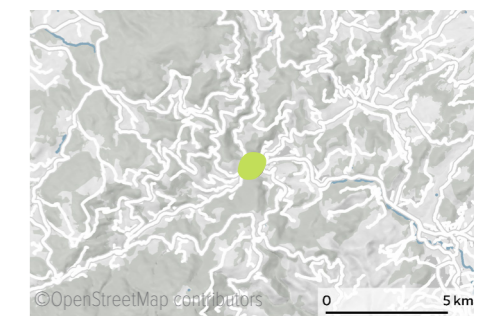
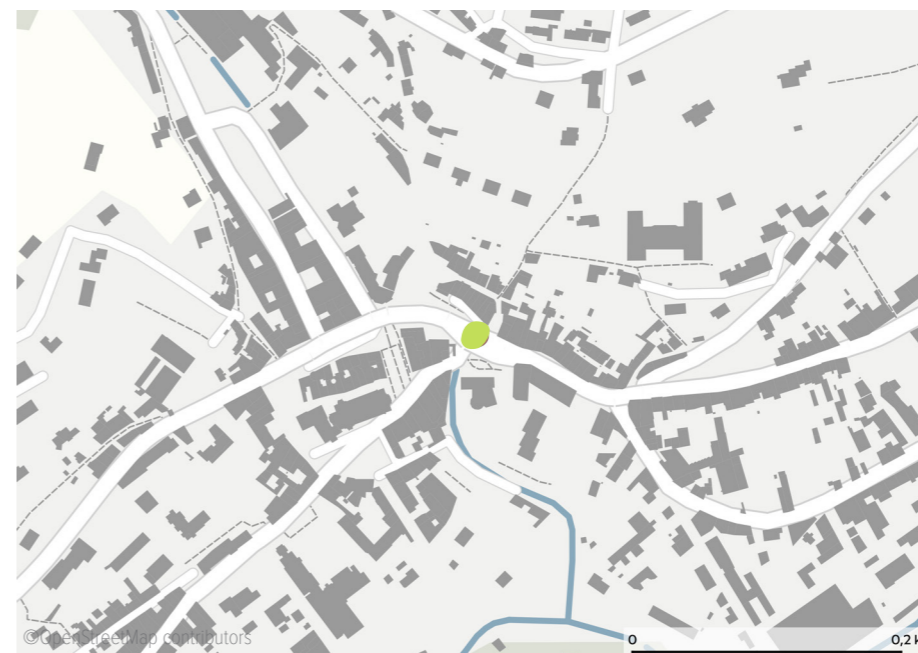
Lorrain's shop front  
©TYPOTOPY / photo by Pierre Hanau



Magalie et Ludovic Lorrain in front of their bakery  
©TYPOTOPY / photo by Pierre Hanau



Design and graphic project by Sylvain Reymondon  
©TYPOTOPY / Sylvain Reymondon



Auvergne Rhone - Alpes, France

more about this project





## Frontage, revealing greenery

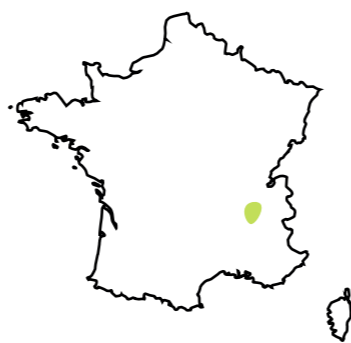
Frontage, révéler le végétal

LOCATION

Genilac town centre, France

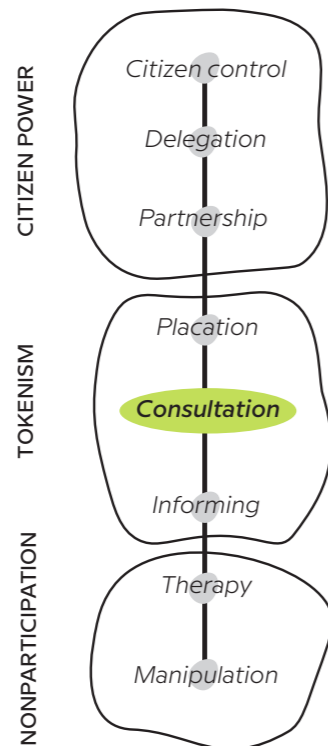
TIME PERIOD

Since 2018



### THE PROJECT

The creative work is a landscaping project in the historic centre of Genilac, which aims to reorganise the area with a pedestrian strip and a frontage strip. The purpose of the project was to give the residents an incentive to re-appropriate the space outside their houses, highlight the front doors and re-green the street. The intention was to create a filter between homes and the public spaces.



the plants made their entrançy. The involvement of the resident and the green spaces department were crucial in the project.

### RESULT

The targeted impact was achieved. The street has been embellished and the quality of life has improved. The creative work has also helped to forge and strengthen ties between the residents of the street. Now, it is about continuing to create structures in other streets in the town to extend and vary a successful experiment. The residents of the houses concerned were the main beneficiaries. With the benches and the greening of public spaces that make the centre more beautiful, the inhabitants of the neighbourhood and the town have also benefited from the project. There were positive feedback from the stakeholders in the town and the residents using the space.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Genilac is a place which could be defined as remote by different characteristics. Residents have difficulties in accessing daily-life support facilities and the village has poor transportation links with the other settlements. Indeed, if the village is located at only 24km from Saint-Etienne, there is not much public transport to serve the town and a car is required to get around. However, residents feel this isolation to a lesser degree. The village center contains several narrow streets but they give priority to cars and are not very suitable for pedestrians.

of Genilac. The design project was led by the Cité du design and the design manager of Saint-Etienne Métropole.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

The activities consisted of the designing facade structures customised by the residents in order to rehabilitate two public spaces in the center of Genilac. Rue Louis Marchand served as a prototype but the project should be extended to the center square. The project was developed in close consultation with residents who volunteered to take part. First, there was an initial walk around the site. After, several consultation workshops were organised with the local population to decide on the uses of each structure. At the end of the first phase, fourteen structures were built and a few months later,

### WHAT MAKES THE SPECIFICITY OF THE PROJECT

The project was organised and funded by the community of municipalities and the municipality



Genilac Frontage  
©Sara de.Gouy



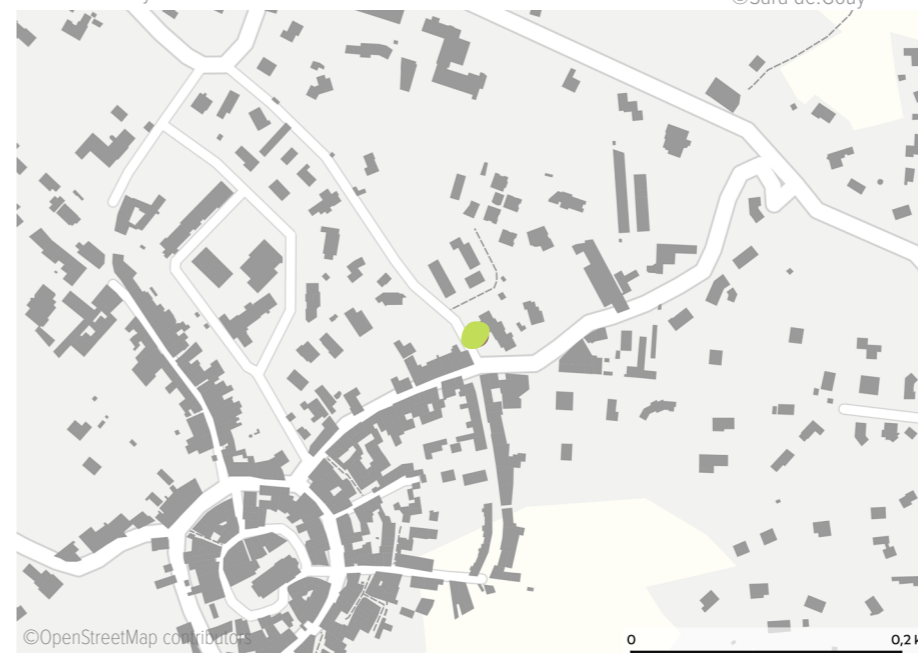
Genilac frontage design concertation  
©Sara de.Gouy



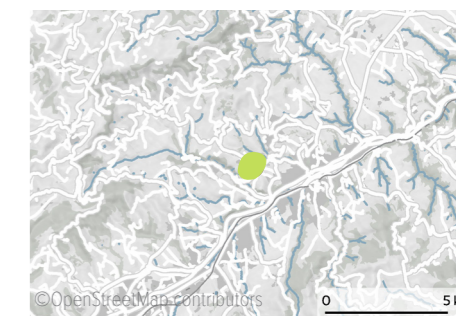
Genilac before  
©Sara de.Gouy



Genilac after  
©Sara de.Gouy



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Genilac town centre, Auvergne Rhone-Alpes, France

more about this project





# 10

# Estonia

Aegna

Kärdla

Käru

Lindi

Viitina



## Meditation Center Estonian Theravada Sangha

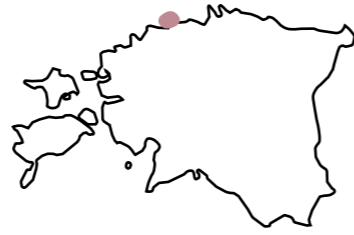
Meelearenduskeskus Eesti  
Theravaada Sangha

LOCATION

**Aegna, Estonia**

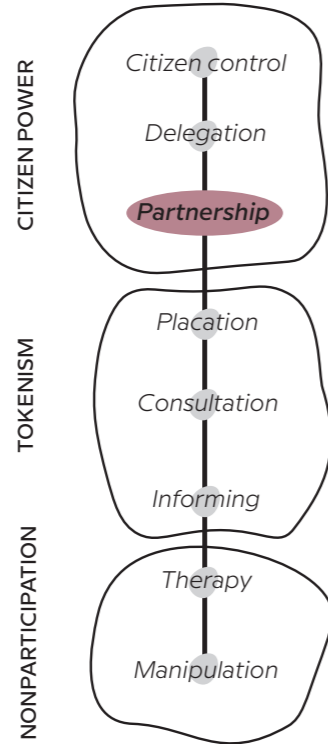
TIME PERIOD

**Since 2014**



### THE PROJECT

The project takes place North-East from Tallinn on the Island of Aegna in a building built before the Second World war and used by Estonian officers. During the Soviet regime, the building hosted recreation center. The intended goal or desire that the project sought to achieve was, and still is, to teach Buddhism and meditation. Thus, the main activities/functions of this space are meditation, relaxation, research and teaching.



place. The work of the center would not be possible without financial support, from **private donations to institutional support of the Asian universities, as well as from Estonia, from the University of Tartu.**

### RESULT

Eight years after its beginning, the **project seems to have partly achieved its targeted goals.** Indeed, the center has only been in operation for a few years and some projects are still ongoing. However, given the fact that it relies mostly on donation, the work accomplished remains impressive. The implementation of this project has benefited the local cultural life, but also to the economic activity of the island, especially in summer with tourism which explains why most of the final users have positively perceived the actions of the meditation center. However, we must highlight the fact that **the only two locals were not receptive and willing to accept the changes on the island.**

### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

The Aegna can be defined as remote due to its insular condition and its rural character (it is fully covered by forests). In addition to these characteristics, the island lacks economic activity, daily-life-support facilities and good transportation links. This explains why **locals, when asked, consider this place as extremely remote (5/5).** In terms of transportation links, the island is characterized by a multitude of paths that connect its different parts by foot. There are only few public spaces, but their quality is good considering the small nature of the island.

### WHAT MAKES THE SPECIFICITY OF THE PROJECT

The meditation center project in Aegna island would not have been possible without **Venerable**

**Thitañāna (Dr. Andrus Kahn)** and his determination to develop the teaching of meditation and Buddhism in Estonia. Moreover, the importance of the other monks that perpetuate the project shall not be forgotten.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

In 2014, Andrus Kahn began to create a meditation center on the island. With other monks, they started to renovate the building and develop activities related to spiritual practices. From the organization of conferences to the publication of literature, the actors of the project are willing to teach these practices in the island, but also at the scale of the country. The local community is well involved in the activities. In fact, inhabitants from Tallinn and tourists are increasingly numerous to reach this peaceful



Estonian Theravada Sangha monks  
©Kirke Tatar



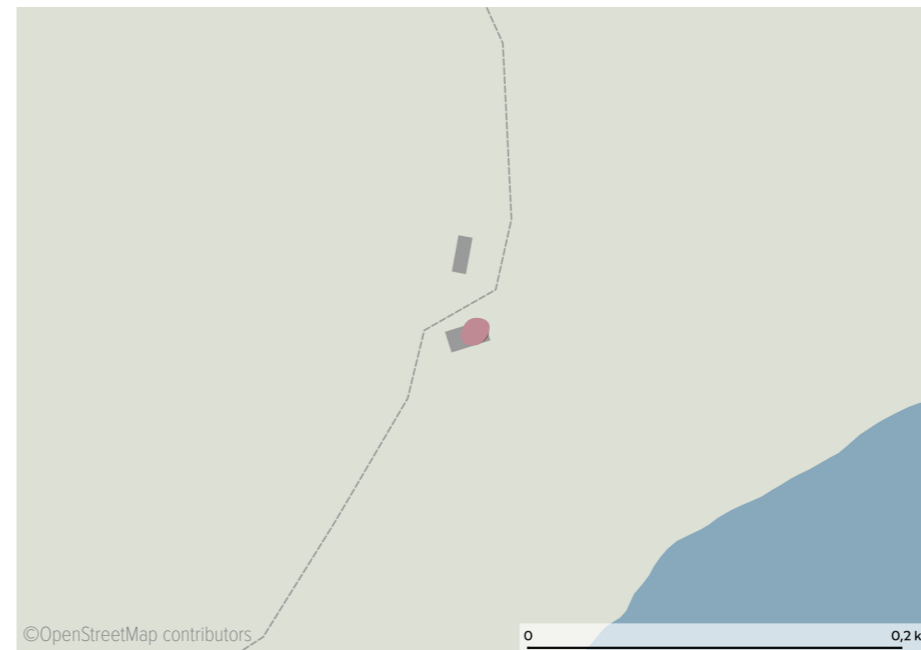
Monk doing the dishes  
©Kirke Tatar



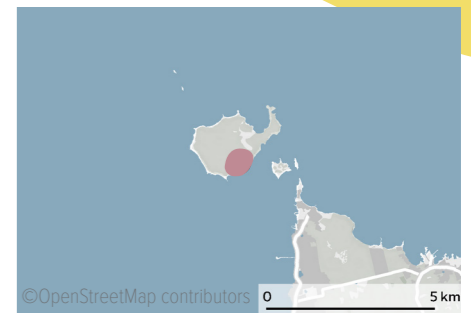
A window at the temple  
©Kirke Tatar



The meditation center is surrounded by forest  
©Kirke Tatar



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Aegna, Harjumaa, Estonia

more about this project





# Ave Vita!

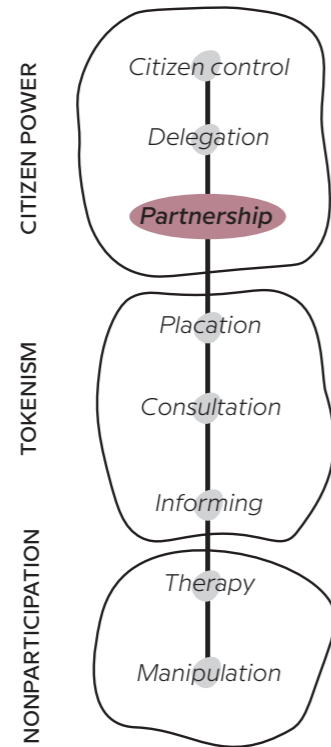
LOCATION  
**Kärdla, Estonia**

TIME PERIOD  
**Since 1997**



## THE PROJECT

The project is located in a wooden house divided into public rooms and private rooms for living. The public events are held mostly in the biggest room of the house and in the courtyard. The aim of this centre at first was to give the possibility for youth to access cultural entertainment. But now the centre is meant for adult poetry and theater and cultural self-improvement.



help of **EU and local volunteers** but most of the everyday work is done by Ave Alavainu and her network.

## RESULT

The targeted impact of the project has been largely achieved. Ave Vita! has become one of the most popular places in Kärdla thanks to the diversity of events. It has involved talented people from the whole country who are always eager to perform. The main beneficiary of this project has been the local community, who has gained access to culture and socialized through the activities. In addition, through discussions between musicians, actors and others, some cooperation projects have grown from there. **Ave Vita! was well received** by the public: a bus stop sign Ave Vita! was erected by Ave Alavainu and a bench was dedicated to the founder because of her talent and activity.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Kärdla is located on the **island** of Hiiumaa. The town could be defined as a remote place particularly by its social specifics but also by its economic inferiority and its low population density. However, the **perception of this remoteness is quite low** according to the residents. In this settlement, the road network is well developed with good transportation links and suitable paths. There are several public spaces like kindergarten, sports facilities or cultural institutions. Generally speaking, the quality of these public facilities is rather good.

in Kärdla and create a space for young people where they can have educational activities and culture.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

Since the establishment of the center, the project is **focusing on socialization, relaxation, through different activities like theater, poetry evenings or concerts in order to raise cultural knowledge.** The **local community** and neighbours have been involved at different steps. First, they **helped in restoring the house and courtyard.** Moreover, they also helped in the **preparation of the events** in several ways (making food and drinks, transportation aid...). Local people are also involved by their participation in activities. The project has received support from various actors. The restoration of the old house was made with the

## INITIATION AND ACTORS

Ave Vita! project was **founded and is managed by famous Estonian writer Ave Alavainu.** Her motivation was to raise cultural awareness



Poetry festival  
©Ave Alavainu's archive – photo by Ilona Gurjanova



Gathering of Estonian language teachers  
©Ave Alavainu's archive – photo by Harda Roosna



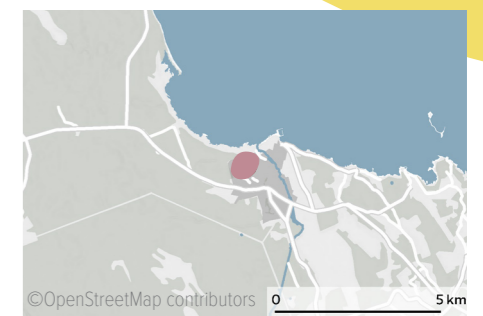
Ave Vita! Centre for cultural activities  
©Ave Alavainu's archive – photo by Toomas Kokovkin



Garden party  
©Ave Alavainu's archive – photo by Toomas Kokovkin



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Kärdla, Hiiumaa, Estonia

more about this project





# Käru Heade Tegude Muuseum

Käru Museum of Good Deeds

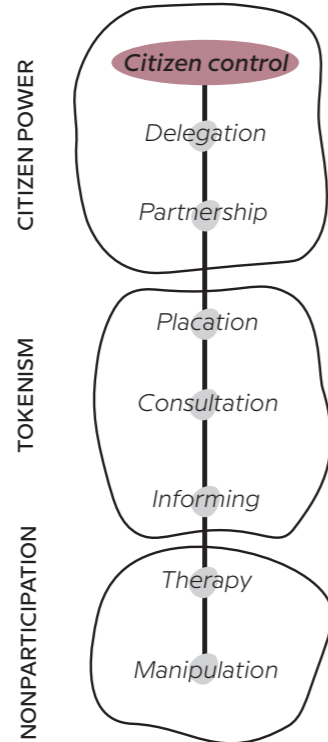


LOCATION  
**Käru, Estonia**

TIME PERIOD  
**Since 2018**

## THE PROJECT

The project takes place in two houses from the pre-war era near Käru railway station, which have previously been empty for years. It consists of a museum of local history which focuses on barrows and trolleys (Käru can be translated as a barrow or cart in English). The idea was to bring more active cultural life to the countryside, to involve the locals and to show the liveability in the countryside in the 21st century.



## RESULT

The Käru Museum of Good Deeds seems to have reached its aims, although a lot is to be done according to the initiators. Through effective inclusive work, a number of local people have already been reached to volunteer to keep the museum running. **This new landmark in Käru has become a gathering place for locals** who are clearly the main beneficiaries of the project. The initiative is thus well received by them, especially by active community members. The museum has a strong binding effect on the whole community and is an inspiration to many. An increasing number of them are also ready to take part in the work of the museum, and there has been significant growth in this aspect.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Käru is a small borough of less than 400 inhabitants. Located in the middle of the country, it is connected with major cities by a railway, some bus lines and roads that are in good condition. Locals benefit from a good diversity of daily-life-support facilities that fit their needs. The remoteness of this place comes from other criteria such as a **lack of economic activity**. Moreover, the **declining population** of Käru also faces alcoholism and a **low level of education** which do not help to develop creative activities which are seen as elitist.

## INITIATION AND ACTORS

The idea of creating a museum in Käru has been carried out by Aljona Suržikova. After acquiring the abandoned houses next to the railway station on June, 22nd 2018,

the activities started.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

**After the acquisition, an active discussion began in the Käru community on how to restore the buildings and what should be done there.** The idea of creating a museum of barrows and trolleys in Käru was born and a campaign to collect carts was launched. The local community is actively involved in the work of the museum. As a matter of fact, **nine local volunteers work in the museum.** This action has also raised awareness about volunteering in the borough by **trying to involve those who would otherwise remain invisible.** This place is more than merely a museum, it has become a place where locals can share their general concerns and ask for help.



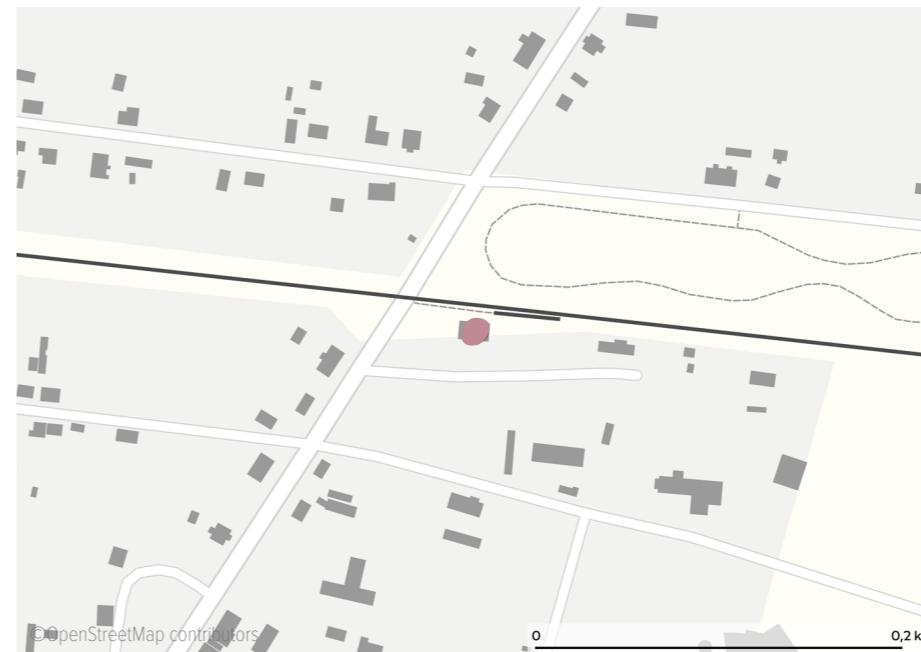
Käru Museum Open Day  
©Käru Museum – photo by Sergei Trofimov



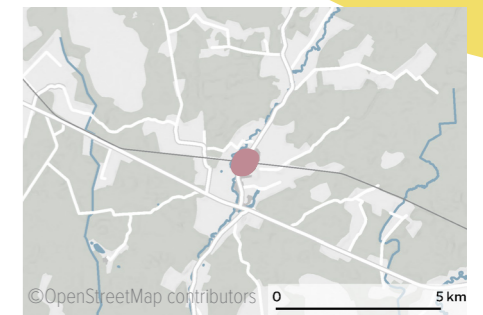
Exhibition  
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Exhibition  
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Käru, Järvamaa, Estonia

more about this project





# Lindi Village Society

Lindi Külaselts

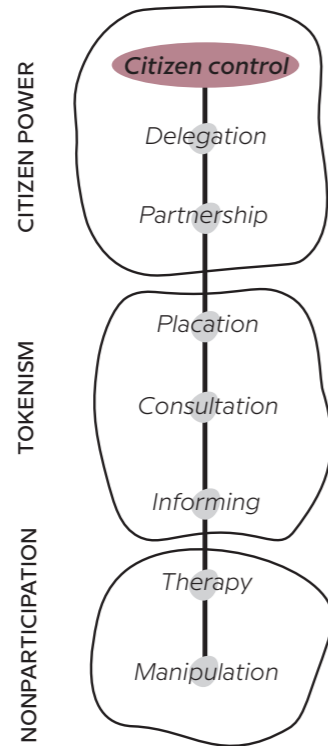
LOCATION  
**Lindi, Estonia**

TIME PERIOD  
**Since 2003**



## THE PROJECT

Lindi Village Society is a project that takes place in the Lindi community centre. The village society operates in the Lindi community centre. Lindi community centre can be considered as a complex of services. In terms of houses, there are two of them - a new school building (Lindi Kindergarten-Primary School) and, from 2020, an old school building will be used for trainings and circular activities. Activities are taking place in the new house in the afternoon because it is primarily a school building during the day. The old house was given in the use of the local community for an initial period of ten years by the City of Pärnu for - just to promote local life. Now there is a permanent Old School café, a guest house and other services are coming in a row. **The aim of this project is to make the voices of the community louder and to bring attention to the concerns of the people.**



encourage community members to actively participate and share thoughts.

## RESULT

**The targeted impact seems to be achieved.** Through the years, many have enjoyed cultural events and people's concerns, thoughts and ideas have been upheld. In 2012, Lindi was even honored to participate in the nationwide Open Village Gates project, through which they also introduced the village to people from different parts of the country. Thus, the project has been well perceived by the local community. However, it has also faced a **lack of financial support**. At present, the city of Pärnu has given funds every year to the project, but these amounts of support are still so small that it is not possible to offer work to anyone on a permanent basis.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Lindi village is located on the coast of southwestern Estonia. Twenty minutes are needed to reach the nearest urban center, Pärnu, with a road network partly in good condition. Yet the locals are not fully pleased with the road network because of **missing pedestrian walkways, cycling paths and running trails** in the area. Besides the disadvantages of the road network, public spaces and vital public institutions are in Pärnu. However, the remoteness of Lindi is reinforced by its **economic inferiority**.

## INITIATION AND ACTORS

The project started in 2003 by the initiative of Taavi Tamberg. In the beginning there was no support, but since the direction of the community center was led to local

NGO's, they could receive funds, including some from the city of Pärnu.

## ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

Under the leadership of the village society, a beautiful **sound chamber and a village swing have been built there and a bridge has been completed**. The traditional co-organized annual Midsummer celebrations take place every year. With the locals, the village society works to make the Lindi area an open community where each member feels the impact of their thoughts, concerns and words, appreciates the power of unity and values a pleasant environment. The local community is actively participating in these activities. They are co-organizing, taking part and helping. One of the Village society's core values has been to



Joint activity  
©Taavi Tamberg



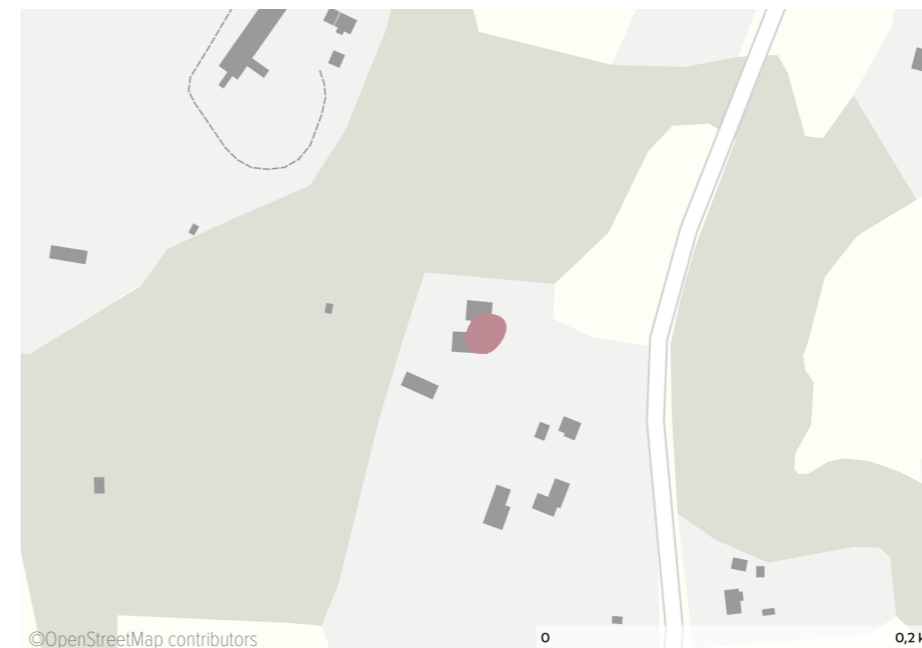
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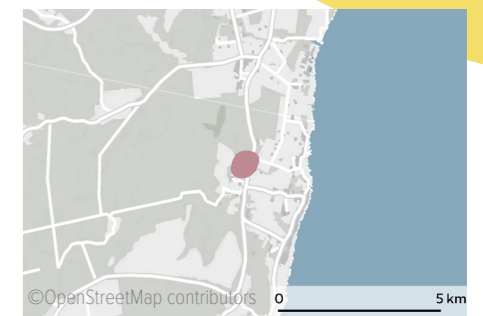
Sign of old elementary school, now a village society  
©Taavi Tamberg



Old school, now a community center/village society  
©Taavi Tamberg



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Aegna, Harjumaa, Estonia

more about this project





## There is time!

Aigu on!

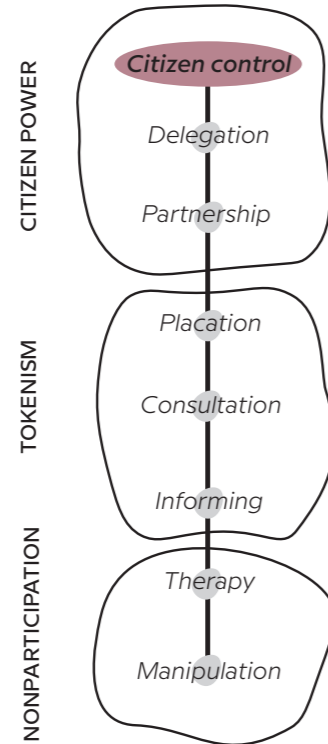
LOCATION  
**Viitina, Estonia**

TIME PERIOD  
**Since 2018**



### THE PROJECT

“There is time” consists of the rehabilitation of an old barn to a creative space for concerts and workshops. The aim of this project is to awaken the local culture and social life by creating activities and excitement to a remote place. It is also to organize events that bring together locals and invite people from outside.



covered by the Ministry of Culture).

### RESULT

“There is time” seems to have **partly achieved its initial goals**. Indeed, a high-quality culture and meeting place was created and the place is gaining notoriety, even if the Covid-19 situation put a curb to some events. The main beneficiaries of the activities are the local community, local businesses and also the owner, Mari Kalkun. This place also attracted local culture people (film makers, writers and so on) that came together and brainstormed on how to develop the region. **In the future it will hopefully create jobs and bring more guests to stay and eat in the region.** Interest is already visible!



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### DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Viitina is a small village located in the Southern part of Estonia and near to border of Latvia. All year round, the place has a total of 154 habitants (2011) and **during summertime, many visitors come here, especially for its lake**. The remoteness comes from various factors, above all **economic inferiority** and the **lack of good transportation links** to reach other cities. This last factor leads to serious difficulties to access daily-life-support facilities.

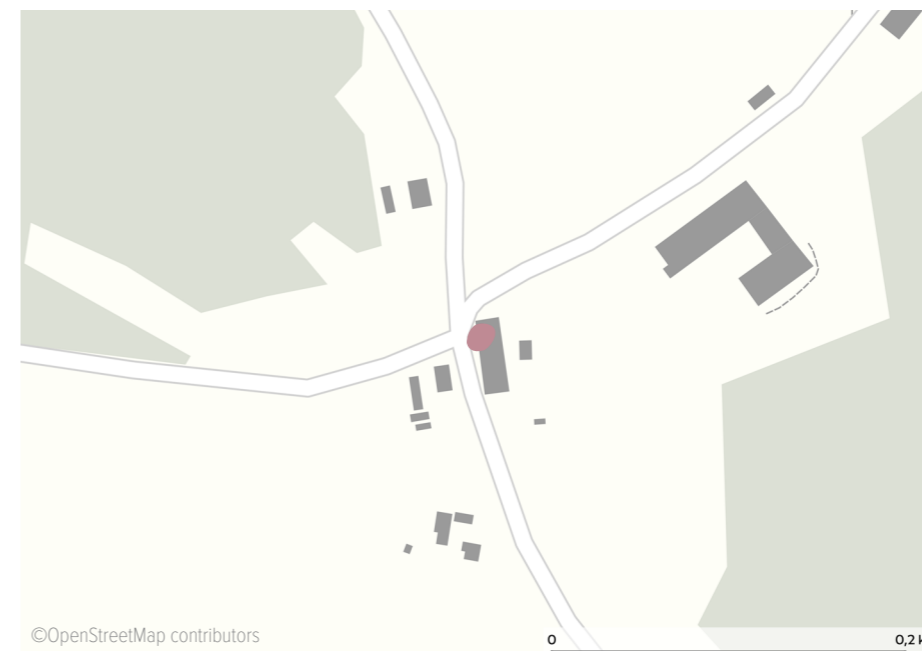
### INITIATION AND ACTORS

The old barn **belongs to a famous Estonian folk singer called Mari Kalkun**. She has been leading this project from the beginning. She found that this old building was romantic and mystical and she imagined how special cultural events could succeed there. More

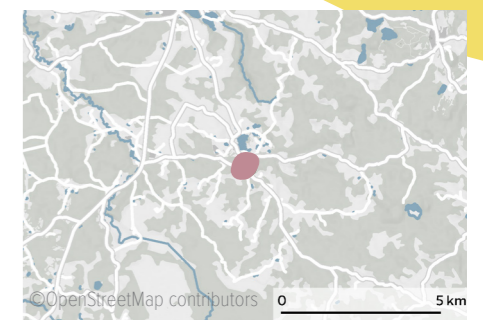
than that she also wanted to give life to her family's heritage.

### ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY & METHODS USED

In the frame of that project, **local people, the artist's friends and students of the school orchestra from the capital have helped** her with the restoration of the building. Many Estonian creatives are from Võromaa (Võro Land) or have moved there recently, so she has thought of establishing a “creative village” one day here. She has also organized a **lot of concerts and events that are popular not only among the locals but are appreciated all over Estonia**. Even if according to the actors any financial support would have helped the idea to grow faster and bigger, **the project did receive little funds in its implementation** (5% of the costs



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Viitina, Võromaa, Estonia

more about  
this project





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This publication has an appendix offering detailed insight into the collected data on SMOTIES best practices. Appendix is available at [LINK](#)



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