

Špela Verovšek: S KREATIVNIMI PRAKSAMI K USTVARJANJU PROSTORA TOWARDS NETWORKED ARTISTIC PRACTICES IN PLACEMAKING

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1.03 Kratki znanstveni članek / Short Scientific Article

POVZETEK

Eden temeljnih ciljev programa A-Place je krepitev vezi med ljudmi in prostori skozi prakse kreativnega ustvarjanja prostora. Pristop dela v štirih letih projekta je bil raziskovalno in akcijsko naravnani in je potekal v načrtovanih letnih ciklih dejavnosti, ki so se izvajali v posameznih partnerskih mestih (Barceloni, Bologni, Bruslju, Lizboni, Ljubljani in Nikoziji). V obdobju trajanja projekta so se v organizaciji partnerskih mest zvrstile številne akcije in dogodki, ki so sledili trem glavnim implementacijskim ciljem, to so, ustvarjanju urbanih prostorov za vse, organizaciji in spodbujanju produkcije multimedijskih prispevkov različnih javnosti na temo prostora, identitete ter bivanja, in nenazadnje diseminaciji kreativne produkcije, nastale v okviru projekta skozi tri festivale - Urban Visions (Bologna) Pame Kaimakli (Nicosia) in LOOP (Barcelona). Za zagotavljanje učinkovitosti prihodnjega dela so vse izvedene aktivnosti tudi predmet ocene vpliva: metodologija ocene učinka, ki smo jo zasnovali posebej za namen projekta združuje družbeno-etnografske, fenomenološke in estetsko teoretične okvire za kritični argument in presojo, kako participativno ustvarjanje prostora lahko krepi sodelovanje v družbi in pomaga izboljšati odnose med skupinami v skupnosti ter odnos do prostora.

KLJUČNE BESEDE

trajnostna šola, sodoben učni prostor, šolske stavbe, šolska arhitektura

ABSTRACT

One of the fundamental goals of the A-Place project was to strengthen the connections between people and places through practices of creative placemaking. The approach was both research-oriented and action-oriented, carried out in planned annual cycles of activities implemented in various partner cities (Barcelona, Bologna, Brussels, Lisbon, Ljubljana, and Nicosia). Throughout the project's duration, numerous actions and events were organized by the partner cities, following three main implementation goals: the creation of urban places for all, the organization and promotion of multimedia contributions from various target groups on the topics of place, identity, and living, and lastly, the dissemination of creative production generated within the project through three festivals - Urban Visions (Bologna), Pame Kaimakli (Nicosia), and LOOP (Barcelona). Each carried-out activity has undergone impact assessment, specifically crafted for the project. This methodology incorporates socio-ethnographic, phenomenological, and aesthetic theoretical frameworks to critically argue how placemaking strengthens social cooperation and helps improve relationships between groups in the community and their relationships with urban environments.

KEY-WORDS

sustainable education, urban placemaking, creative practice, learning spaces, and impact assessment architecture

UVODNIK
EDITORIAL
ČLANEK
ARTICLE

RAZPRAVA
DISCUSSION
RECENZIJA
REVIEW
PROJEKT
PROJECT
DELAVNICA
WORKSHOP
NATEČAJ
COMPETITION
PREDSTAVITEV
PRESENTATION
DIPLOMA
MASTER THESIS

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of space in shaping individual and communal identity is fundamental, driven by the dynamic interplay among people, activities, and the spatial realities specific to a given time period. In the context of global and multicultural societies, the creation of space is a multifaceted process involving numerous actors, diverse perceptions, and various media (Markusen & Gadwa, 2019; Walker & Marsh, 2018). However, not all community groups consistently interpret the meanings associated with a particular space (Courage, 2020) leading to possible conflicts, or intolerance within spaces that, due to their diverse user base, could otherwise serve as crucial hubs for multicultural interactions.

At the same time, artistic practices can play a pivotal role as catalysts or intermediaries, bridging the gap between spaces and users (Project for Public Spaces, 2007; Redaelli, 2018). They can unveil the diverse meanings of spaces, allowing multiple social groups to concurrently grasp and interpret them. Creative placemaking allows partnership across sectors, deeply engages the community, involves artists, designers and culture bearers, and helps to advance local economic, physical, or social change, ultimately laying the groundwork for systems change (Rosario Jackson, 2022). The creative sector is playing an ever more vital role in promoting global awareness of climate change, encouraging sustainable practices and justice in design. Artists, cultural entities, and creative industry leaders are utilising their talents and resources to draw attention to issues, inspire change, and initiate behavioural change. According to Madsen (2019), they are breaking down barriers between aesthetics and politics, asserting culture as a powerful catalyst for sustainability, design justice and participatory decision-making. Moreover, artistic practices also facilitate the formation of connections that transcend cultural and physical boundaries, empowering individuals to establish meaningful ties with spaces beyond the confines of culture and physicality.

Within this concept, the A-Place program focused on strengthening connections between individuals and urban spaces in six European cities, by employing a diverse range of approaches – from local placemaking actions in the partner cities, networking empowerment, and multimedia production to dissemination and contest activity in frames of three ongoing festival settings: *Urban Visions (Bologna) Pame Kaimakli (Nicosia) in LOOP (Barcelona)*. The examination centred on the distinctive agency of art in overcoming societal numbness and disconnection from one another and the urban environment. Artistic practices have the capacity to alter perspectives, render the invisible, and facilitate the contemplation of alternative futures (Landesman, 2013). The implemented actions within A-Place explored the unique capacities of artists in addressing urban complexity, observing and disrupting patterns, introducing unforeseen social perspectives, and activating the innate creativity of individuals. The diverse range of actions accomplished during the project lifespan aimed specifically at addressing the following questions:

- Can architecture and urban design become more accessible, affordable, and widely produced through the targeted implementation of artistic or creative practices?
- Can artistic and creative approaches in placemaking effectively convey the profound importance of values in urban systems to foster behavioural change?
- How can cities—comprising political leaders, business enterprises, and citizens – be persuaded to recognize artists and the creative sector as crucial allies in constructing sustainable communities?

- How can arts and cultural institutions serve as valuable partners in local and regional transitions toward urban well-being and contribute to prompting necessary moral leadership

2. APPROACH

In the pursuit to explore the role and exploit the potential of networked artistic practices in the process of creating places, in physical and digital spaces, we approached by continuous interplay of the learning-, research- and design- practices. Namely, the increased necessity to contribute to the humanisation and liveability of places at risk in cities shows through the places that are undergoing transformation processes, resulting from the contemporary movements of migration, acculturation to local life, political activism, sustainability ideologies and other urban trends in the past decade (Hölscher & Frantzeskaki, 2021). The convergence of these complexities enacts creative synergies in research, education, design, and artistic endeavours.

2.1 Shared learning and knowledge construction: placemaking as practice-based research

The synergy between participatory action research and placemaking is evident in their shared mission to comprehensively comprehend and enhance the world through proactive transformation. Both methodologies underscore the empowerment of communities by actively involving them in shaping their environments, fostering a sense of ownership and facilitating improvements in built environments as well as community welfare (Cornish et al., 2023). This symbiotic relationship is closely aligned with the tenets of participatory action research, a methodological approach characterized by systematic inquiry in collaboration with those directly impacted, with the overarching objectives of fostering education and effecting tangible change through knowledge production (Baum et al, 2007; Cornish et al., 2023). Hence, in the context of participatory action research, the primary focus is on empowering individuals and affording them increased autonomy over the quality of their living. Similarly, placemaking operates to empower individuals, allowing them to take charge of the spaces they inhabit and forge meaningful connections within them. In participatory action research and placemaking taken in the actions during the span of the project, a collaborative process of shared learning and knowledge construction took place, engaging all partner participants and their networks. This dynamic approach combined experiential understanding, characterized by sensing and feeling the presence of diverse elements, with expert knowledge, which leaned towards conceptual or propositional understanding and tacit knowledge. This interchange among participants that happened in the common activities and joint events, in particular, blurred the distinction between professional research and tacit learning, both engaging in a cyclical iterative process of action and reflection.

2.2 Cyclical iterative process: plan-perform-reflect-evaluate

In all the placemaking and multimedia production activities accomplished throughout the A-Place program, an iterative approach was employed; it involved sequential cycles of planning-performing-reflecting-evaluating, which were consistently implemented over the course of the project's four-year lifespan. Following the completion of activities, a reflective process resulted in the identification of common target values and the estimation of the level by which the actions contributed towards the eight placemaking targets: 1) creating vibrant

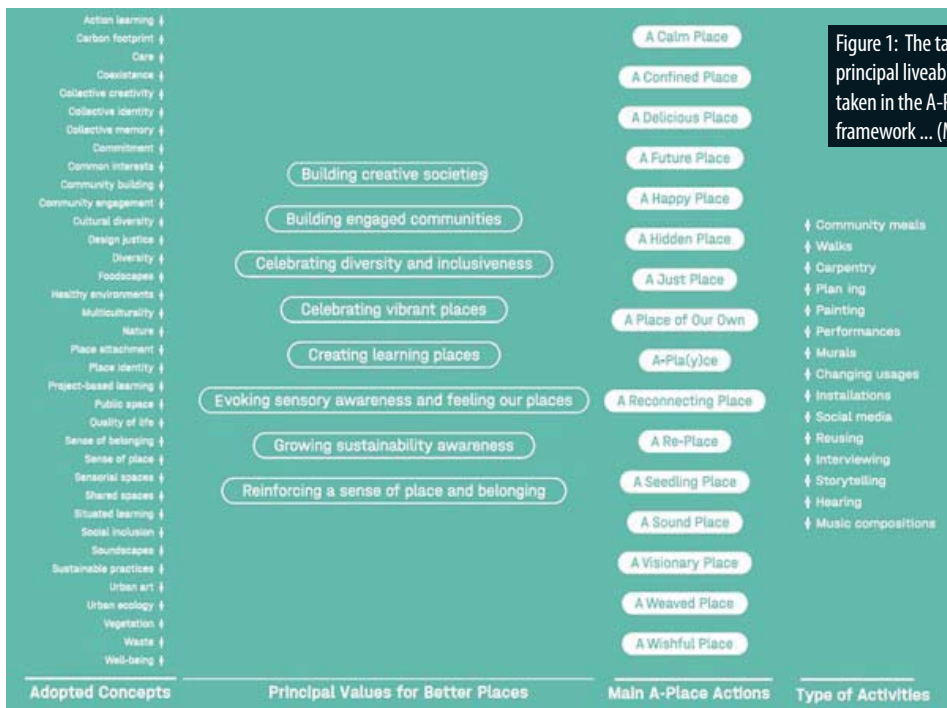


Figure 1: The taxonomy of the adopted placemaking concepts, principal liveability values and the main actions and activities taken in the A-Place project as a basis for the impact evaluation framework ... (Madrado, L.).

places, 2) building engaged communities, 3) reinforcing a sense of place & belonging, 4) growing sustainability awareness 5) evoking sensory awareness & feeling for our places; 6) building creative societies; 7) celebrating diversity and inclusiveness and 8) creating shared learning spaces. This reflection was accomplished on a yearly basis, led by a group of social sciences experts from NOVA University of Lisbon. It played a crucial role in drawing the strategies for further program implementations and the construction of a network of places at hand. Each cycle concluded with an evaluation of both the process and outputs. This involved stepping outside the self-reflective process (Lang, 2017) to adopt an objective position, paving the way for initiating the next iteration while incorporating the insights gained from the evaluation.

3. IMPACT ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

In parallel to the iterative cyclic process of action and evaluation during the project, the framework for the long-term impact assessment was established, that goes beyond the spatiotemporal limits of a specific placemaking activity. The main targets were set as: a) cultivating innovative placemaking practices that excavate the diverse meanings attributed to shared spaces by individuals and social groups. These practices aim to forge meaningful connections between places across various cities and cultures; b) establish interdisciplinary learning environments that arise from the fusion of artistic practices with educational programs, spanning from school-level to higher education. These spaces transcend the boundaries between academia and society, as well as between different disciplines; c) investigating the role and harnessing the potential of networked artistic practices within the creative placemaking process. This involves integrating these practices within the community and engaging other stakeholders, such as residents, students, and educational staff in the co-creation process, both in physical and digital realms; d) leveraging the capabilities of digital technologies to forge new connections between representations of places (including videos, photographs, and narratives) disseminated through digital networks. These efforts contextualize activities within sociocultural settings where they can be utilized in creative placemaking endeavours.

A crucial ongoing consideration has been in determining the extent to which these objectives have been realized. Here, the evaluation leaned upon the aforementioned compilation of eight central values, extracted as the main action- and impact-ambitions of our program, in order to contribute towards 1) creating vibrant places, 2) building engaged communities, 3) reinforcing a sense of place & belonging, 4) growing sustainability awareness 5) evoking sensory awareness & feeling for our places; 6) building creative societies; 7) celebrating diversity and inclusiveness and 8) creating shared learning spaces.

These concepts are drawn from the deep connection with past and current placemaking practices worldwide. Most of these values gained traction decades ago when authors, architects, and urban practitioners like Jane Jacobs (1961), Jonathan Sime (1986), Edward Relph (1976) or Taylor (1988) among many others, introduced theories and ideas around the notion of city well-being, urban liveability and designing cities for people. In the context of modern urban development and placemaking, the combination of ideas and ideals from the past are nowadays promoted by initiatives such as the Project for Public Spaces¹ (PPS) and the forward-thinking New European Bauhaus² (NEB) that creates compelling placemaking principles. Both PPS and NEB, with their shared focus on human-centred design, sustainability, cultural context, collaboration, accessibility, and innovation, are forging a powerful alliance that aligns with European Urban Initiative³ (EUI) objectives as well as the United Nations Sustainability Goal⁴ of making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. This convergence beckons policymakers and urban planners to align their strategies, channelling resources, and expertise into the creation of inclusive, aesthetically inspiring, and sustainable urban environments, as well as to facilitate the transfer and integration of knowledge.

To estimate the relevance of these concepts in the project actions and the level by which they were achieved the evaluation

1 Project for Public Spaces <https://www.pps.org/>
 2 New European Bauhaus https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/index_en
 3 European Urban Initiative <https://www.urban-initiative.eu/>
 4 Sustainable Cities and Communities; SDG 11: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal11>

was meticulously tailored for each placemaking/creative practice activity, considering the expectations of various stakeholders (e.g., artists, planners, citizens) participating in the events/actions as well as the type of the activity and placemaking concepts adopted for their accomplishment. As such the taxonomy framework was formed (Figure 1) as a basis for identifying possible interlinks and integral estimation.

4. CONCLUSION

Throughout the project's four-year duration, diverse methodologies were employed to embrace placemaking as a "collaborative process," aimed at shaping our public spaces to maximise their shared value. Beyond merely promoting better urban design, placemaking was considered a means to facilitate creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define localities (Martin, 2023) and support its ongoing evolution. Additionally, it served as a platform for learning and the exchange of knowledge. The project partners adopted a variety of tactics and communication forms to execute activities, enhancing the capabilities of each participating organization. The transfer of expertise that happened in the course of collaborative activities positively affected a broad network of places involved in the activities across the partner cities. This contributed to diversifying the issues inherent in each node of the evolving network within the project and their interconnections. The emerging network of knowledge and action was finally delivered as a collective digital platform which now serves as a foundation and transferable model for innovative forms of artistic production, placing digital media (such as virtual platforms, personal devices, and online presence with impacts in multiple locations) at the forefront of the creative and artistic process while redefining interactions with the public.

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PROJEKT PROJECT

Linking places through networked artistic practices
Krepitev vezi med prostori in ljudmi s kreativnimi praksami

ŠT. PROJEKTA PROJECT NO

607457-CREA-1-2019-1-ES-CULT-COOP2

LOKACIJA LOCATION

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