

URBACT



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Interreg

GreenPlace

A young boy in a bright pink t-shirt is seen from the side, looking towards a woman. The woman is standing behind a white table with a clear ballot box. She is holding a piece of paper and appears to be interacting with the boy. The background shows a wall with many small papers pinned to it, suggesting a community engagement or voting activity.

INSPIRING PRACTICES on COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

June 2024

INTRODUCTION

The GreenPlace network

GreenPlace is an URBACT network consisting of ten partners who aim at developing a set of activities for "recycling" unused urban areas, using social participation tools. The project takes into account not only the regional specificities and conditions of each of the partners but also introduces greenery as a key factor in limiting climate change in urban areas. It is running from July 2023 to December 2025.

It is led by the City of Wrocław (Poland) and is composed of 9 project partners:

- Boulogne-sur-mer Développement Côte d'Opale - France
- Bucharest Metropolitan Area Intercommunity Development Association - Romania
- Cehegín - Spain
- Limerick - Ireland
- Löbau - Germany
- Nitra - Slovakia
- Onda - Spain
- Quarto d'Altino - Italy
- Vila Nova de Poiares - Portugal

More information and contacts : <https://urbact.eu/networks/greenplace>.

Overview of the Inspiring practices on Community Engagement

The practices presented here were exchanged during the Core Network Meeting of the GreenPlace Network which took place on 12 March in Onda, Spain.

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Limerick Tidy Towns

Identity

- Limerick , Ireland
- 102, 287 inhabitants , 61.3km²
- <http://limericktidytown.com/>



Initial challenge

The city centre of Limerick had been facing many challenges, such as a lack of pride in the City, an image of one of dereliction, as heavily littered. There was a need to harness community spirit and manpower to recruit citizen volunteers to help tackle these issues.

Proposed solution

In 2011, the chair of the Limerick City Business Association, entered the city centre into the TidyTown Competition. This National Competition aims at providing training and yearly assessment of communities' work to improve their local environment and make their area a better place to live, work and visit, creating a 'sense of place' for those living in the area. The focus is on good planning, buildings and public spaces maintenance, appropriate landscaping and respect for natural amenities, biodiversity protection, clean and uncluttered thoroughfares and community engagement. Funding for actions can come from National Government and cash prizes can be won for placing in the Tidy Towns Categories or in the Limerick Going for Gold competition awards

The aim of the Limerick Tidy Towns was not only to enter the TidyTown Competition but to create a cleaner brighter city centre for all to live, work and visit, with the support of the community as a whole. Limerick City Tidy towns take part in the annual Team Limerick Clean up (TLC) , they award a bimonthly award to the local business with the most attractive and well-kept frontage. The group carries out regular activities such as litter picks and weeding. Limerick City Tidy towns are very active on social media , sharing stories on volunteer sessions , events of interest and progress in competitions.

Limerick City and County Council appreciates this volunteer work and supports the Tidy Towns via: [Annual Tidy Towns Seminar](#), Environmental Workshops, Waste Prevention, Reuse and Recycling Advice and Initiatives, Litter prevention Advice and Initiatives, Landscaping Advice, Biodiversity Advice Campaigns, Grants and Competitions.

Limerick City Tidy Towns to date have won 5 bronze medals in the national Tidy Towns competition.

Changes it brought

The city is cleaner. The social media activity highlights areas that need attention and gets the call out for volunteers to meet and give back to their community. There is also a decline in the number of litter blackspots has seen Limerick City improve its rating to 'moderately littered' in the latest surveys. Last but not least, the Limerick City Tidy Towns help bring different groups together, creating community spirit, e.g. the TLC group was joined by over 150 Ukrainian volunteers.

Transfer potential

Easily transferable, the concept can be used in any town:

- Use the spirit of competition
- Recruit your volunteers using social media and civic a pride, ensure you have a good mix of volunteers and broad representation.

Main takeaways

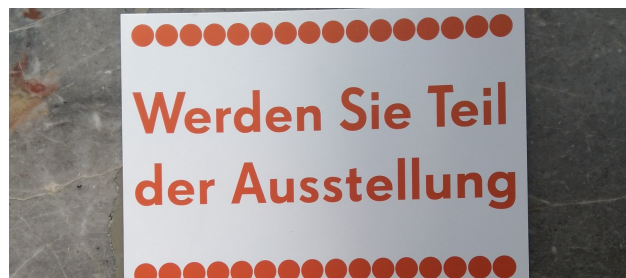
- Tidy Towns groups deliver the United Nations Sustainability Goals as part of their overall volunteer work within a community - the Tidy Towns groups act locally but think globally.
- Volunteering with Limerick Tidy Towns gives the opportunity to get out and about and feel involved in the community, to make new friends and to have a say in how Limerick should look.
- Getting involved in Tidy Towns means getting involved in community events such as TLC, landscaping, or engaging with schools and businesses about minimising waste.



COLLECTING PERSONAL STORIES

Identity

- Löbau, Germany
- 14,000 inhabitants, 78.9 km²
- www.fabrik-reanimiert.de
- info@fabrik-reanimiert.de or
- info@stiftung-hausschminke.eu



Initial challenge

For buildings with a history of different uses, it is often problematic that older history is well more researched than recent history, especially the history of German Democratic Republic (GDR) times. For the Haus Schminke, former residence of the director of the nearby Noodle factory, we started to collect personal stories from its time as a “Kreis pionierhaus” (a club house for kids and teens from the GDR youth organisation Freie Deutsche Jugend - FDJ - Free German Youth), as there are very few official pictures or stories.

Proposed solution

We addressed Löbau’s citizens, guests at the Haus Schminke with a postcard and our international audience via our newsletter. For the Noodle factory we are trying to reach out to as many people as possible who actually worked at the factory during GDR times and are willing to tell their stories.

To reach out to the target group we found support by the City’s organisation for senior citizens (“Seniorenrat”) who are in touch with the target group (mostly people >60 years). As a next step we are organizing an event for telling those stories (“Storytelling café”) at the noodle factory to create a good atmosphere and trigger memories.

We are working on developing different methods of visualising the stories, e.g.. connecting 3D printing and methods of recording. The storytelling café will take place in August 2024, it is part of the Schminke House foundation’s project [“Fabrik reanimiert”](#) (Factory revitalised). It is part of the participation process and will be financed through the project.

Changes it brought

The project is still in the making as the storytelling café will take place in August. So far, we are getting very positive feedback that shows that the public is very interested.

Transfer potential

We are convinced that personal stories are very helpful to present a building or place to the public. The practice should match the building and the situation, but apart from that it is very well transferable.

Main takeaways

- Find support to reach out to a wide audience with the help of clubs, NGOs etc.
- Create a location/event/situation where and when to collect the stories
- Record and collect anything, then find a way to present it.



COLLECTING NEEDS AND IDEAS FROM THE PUBLIC FOR FUTURE USES

Identity

- Löbau, Germany
- 14,000 inhabitants, 78.9 km²
- www.fabrik-reanimiert.de
- info@fabrik-reanimiert.de or
- info@stiftung-hausschminke.eu



Initial challenge

The Noodle factory is a former industrial building now abandoned. In order to better design its future usages, the neighbouring Stiftung Haus Schminke (Schminke house foundation) is trying to find out what the people of Löbau want, lack or need in their city, in general. Therefore, we were looking for a low-budget and easy way to ask those questions. But asking the question is only half of the task. We needed to also find ways to get people to answer those questions, initiate interest and get them involved.

Proposed solution

Obviously, there are different ways to reach different people, the practice needs to match the target group (e.g. online or on a postcard). As in the Stiftung Haus Schminke's project "[Fabrik reanimiert](#)" it was important to reach a very broad audience. Therefore, it had to be as low-threshold as possible.

The very simple question « What do you miss in Löbau? » is only a first step. It was printed on a postcard and handed out to all guests of an event at the Noodle factory. When people handed the filled-out postcard back in at the "Wunschbude" ("Wishbooth"), they got a little reward, e.g. a snack or a drink.

For the next event there will be different questions that take a next step on a new postcard. We tried to get away from long questionnaires and make it easy and fun to participate. In any way: Try to offer time and an open ear anytime it is manageable.

Changes it brought

The postcards got a really good feedback, as they were easy to fill out and had an instant gratification in form of a little snack. All in all, people like being asked, it is a form of appreciation. With the postcards we got a first statistical overview on the most important needs and wishes. We collected everything from "movie theatre" to "swimming pool", "senior citizen's dance club" to "kids indoor play park".

Transfer potential

Public participation is needed everywhere, the practice can be transferred to any place or initiative.

Main takeaways

- Record and collect anything, then start sorting and categorizing
- There are no stupid ideas



AN OPEN-AIR CINEMA FOR RESIDENTS

Identity

- Löbau, Germany
- 14,000 inhabitants, 78.9 km²
- www.fabrik-reanimiert.de
- info@fabrik-reanimiert.de or
- info@stiftung-hausschminke.eu



Initial challenge

The Noodle factory is a former industrial building now abandoned. As a first step we needed to find a way to raise interest about it, get attention and start first test uses on the premises without entering the buildings – for health and safety reasons. We were looking for something fun to create a positive atmosphere. It also had to be as easy, cost-effective and low-threshold as possible to get people on the premises and to bring the buildings back into people's minds.

Proposed solution

As we at the Stiftung Haus Schminke showed a special exhibition about the noodle factory at that time, we decided to organise a free open-air cinema on the premises for everybody. To make it as easy as possible, the slogan was "Bring your own picnic and chair", what saved us a lot off planning effort. At the same time, people thought it was a lot of fun to bring their own stuff. The open air cinema was a one time event, but would be possible to be continued. Posters and flyers in local shops invited people to come. The Stiftung Haus Schminke financed it in their budget for special exhibitions.

Changes it brought

People liked it a lot and wanted to "do it again". They instantly started to trade snacks and drinks with each other. That way people got to talk to each other and felt as a community. People started to get into communication about the factory and offered their support. The practice created a very positive atmosphere with happy guests. To get people on the premises and get the factory back into their heads again worked very well. The open-air cinema was a first event before the "Fabrik reanimiert" and the URBACT project.

Transfer potential

The practice of an open-air cinema was very easy to do with a good beamer, some speakers and a white wall. It can be big or small and works at a lot of places.

Main takeaways

- Can easily turn into something regular
- Don't do it in midsummer when it gets dark so late



CO – DESIGN, CO – DEVELOPMENT, CO – MANAGEMENT

Identity

- Nitra, Slovakia
- 100.48 km², 77 000 inhabitants
- [IN-HABIT](#)



Initial challenge

Nitra is a small city in the Slovak Republic with less than 80,000 inhabitants. With the arrival of large employers, there was an increase in foreign immigration. Foreign investments brought economic growth to the city, but also important challenges related to the health and well-being of the residents. Experts from the university found that there is no unified vision of health and well-being in the city.

Proposed solution

- Set up of a partnership between the Slovak Agricultural University, civil association Hidepark (NGO) and the municipality City of Nitra in the project IN-HABIT, an EU Horizon 2020 project. It aims to identify visionary and integrated solutions to promote inclusive health and wellbeing in small and medium-sized cities.
- Usage of a complementary approach:
 - Co-design: envisaging the future of a place altogether
 - Co-development : all relevant stakeholders are part of the structuring of the project and its actions
 - Co-management : share the responsibilities for implementing the project
- Organize various workshops in collaboration and with the support of experts in various fields together with residents and stakeholders.

Changes it brought

- Co-design of a **community garden** Hidepark (a grassroot-led brownfield) : 2 co-design meetings with gardeners on 26.03.2022 (13 participants) and 07.04.2022 (14 participants). With the aid of experts in design, landscape architecture, dendrology and permaculture, gardeners worked on a plan for the community garden (revitalisation of dilapidated structures, ground plan and plan for accompanying soft solutions).
- Co-design of a **school garden** with teachers (with 11 participants), parents (with 19 participants) and children themselves (17 children). The results were given to 15 landscape architecture students and they transformed these drafts into technical drawings of final solutions to be deployed.
- Co-design of **new public green spaces** to be deployed along the cycling corridor and Nitra river. In the co-design process of “Picnic Meadow Zelokvet” families with children, local fishermen, NGOs, expert from different fields, landscape architecture companies, Nitra City Department of Environment and Chief Architect representatives, Slovak Waterways Management Company were involved. Initial meeting was held on 23.04.2022 with 16 representatives present, and 20+ subsequent one-on-one meetings. 41 trees were planted in 2022 as a result of this process.

Transfer potential

Co-design is suitable for designing various small public spaces. Co-management requires more skills and resources as participatory implementation is still new and a complex process in most cities.

Main takeaways

- Collaboration with participation and design experts is critical to success.
- Volunteers are needed for all kinds of activities



PUMPKIN CARVING TO REACH OUT TO MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES

Identity

- Nitra, Slovakia
- 100.48 km² , 77 000 inhabitants
- More details [here](#)



Initial challenge

In the Dražovce district, there is a marginalized community living in poor conditions, while the conflict with the majority is constantly growing. This community does not have its representatives in the city management process and is outside the standard participatory processes, therefore their visions are not taken into account.

Proposed solution

As part of the IN-HABIT EU Horizon 2020 project, the Slovak Agricultural University, civil association Hidepark (NGO) and the municipality City of Nitra sought to increase community interest in the participation process.

One of the goals of the project is to improve the lives of the marginalized community - residents of the Dražovce district in Nitra, with a majority of Roma. Before starting the implementation of measures to improve life, a process of participation with marginalized people was also necessary in the form of a questionnaire to find out the vision of urban design and green spaces in this district.

This participation took the form of a cultural event with drinks and music and workshop, including pumpkin parade with pumpkin carving workshop, creation of autumn decorations, local artists exhibition and cooking of vegan pumpkin curry, attracting local Roma residents to you fill out questionnaires with residents.

Changes it brought

110 local residents took part in the event. The result of the activities was the sensitisation of the majority towards the marginalised minority and the involvement of the minority in the process of caring for its surroundings. The knowledge gained will be included in the local design. It also enabled researchers and urban practitioners to gain knowledge about the local Roma community as well as how best to collect data from it (e.g. an academic questionnaire does not work and interviews should be preferred).

Transfer potential

This is a simple method of activating the residents' interest in the selected space. The method requires the involvement of volunteers, non-profit organizations, but also experts in the participation process.

Main takeaways

When working with the community, it is necessary to consult with them for a long time to gain their trust. Therefore, do not stop even after the end of the project, they must see the results of participation and the implementation of their own ideas.



A BOTTOM-UP MULTIFUNCTIONAL PLACE ADDRESSING LOCALS' NEEDS

Identity

- Nitra, Slovakia
- 100.48 km² , 77 000 inhabitants
- [Hidepark Nitra](#)
- info@hidepark.sk



Initial challenge

In the city of Nitra, there was a long-term need for a separate cultural and community center that would serve mainly young residents and independent artists.

Proposed solution

Hidepark was created in 2010, on a former illegal landfill, when a group of enthusiasts were looking for a place for a music club. At that time, two underground clubs, where the community met, were closed at the same time in the city. In May 2010, they found and rented an abandoned meadow that was privately owned. During the summer, they mowed it down, built a military tent, invited bands, DJs, and the community had a place to meet again. HidePark supports different communities and informal associations in creating an informal platform for their activities, as they can benefit the development of cultural life in the city. The local government financially supports some cultural events every year.

Changes it brought

Hidepark is an independent summer cultural-community center in Nitra built on volunteer enthusiasm. Sport, culture, art, ecology and open-minded people meet here. Its main activity is the organization of cultural events of the current Slovak and foreign independent cultural scene - concerts, theaters, literary readings, experimental multi-genre performances, international projects, but also lectures and workshops focused on ecology, growing crops, education, bicycle transport or the topic of migration.

Part of Hidepark is the KOZA Community Garden, which offers people living in Nitra space to grow their own crops based on permaculture principles and a community bicycle workshop. Several active civic associations and informal groups operate in Hidepark, which did not know each other and had no space for their ideas in the city and Hidepark offered them this space. As part of a wider movement of citizens embracing their cities and become proactive in designing urban solutions that fit them, their regulation has been only recent.

The park has proven to address some temporary and long-terms needs, e.g. in being used by locals unable to enjoy the City parks under renovation, as well as those searching for an alternative.

Transfer potential

It is a complex activity, completely based on the volunteerism and enthusiasm of various communities, as well as funding opportunities from various grant schemes focused on culture and community.

Main takeaways

As a municipality, support the independent culture of the community, for example by renting a city plot or building, or by creating a grant scheme in the city budget.



CO-CREATION WITH ARCHITECTS AND SOCIOLOGISTS

Identity

- Nitra, Slovakia
- 100.48 km², 77 000 inhabitants
- More details [here](#)
- [GreenPlace page](#)



Initial challenge

In the city of Nitra, there is an extensive brownfield - an abandoned area of former military barracks that does not have a clear vision, Martin's hills. Various investment plans are currently underway in the area, but mutual communication between the different owners of the area appears to be insufficient. Therefore, there was a need for the participation of owners and residents in planning the development of this area.

Proposed solution

The municipality has cooperated with experts in the field of architecture and sociology, in the process of participation and co-creation of a vision. The city of Nitra has decided to cooperate with experts from the fields of architecture and sociology in the process of participation and co-creation of a vision for brownfield. The experts provided tools and approaches that the local government does not know and cannot handle.

Changes it brought

Under the guidance of an expert, the city appeared in the participation process on the same level as other owners, and the negotiations took place on neutral ground. The participation process consists of an analysis of stakeholders and interviews with the main stakeholders. Residents were involved in the participation process using an online questionnaire, which was filled out by up to 1,500 residents. To support residents' interest in filling out the questionnaire, a guided tour of the area was organized so that residents could get to know brownfield. After obtaining input data, a workshop followed, where stakeholders created an analysis of the territory and its vision. The participation process and data from this process are summarized in a publication available online and in printed form.

Most importantly, experts have provided tools and approaches unknown to and unmastered by the Municipality

Transfer potential

The method is easily transferable, each city can hire experienced experts to work with them.

Main takeaways

- Be humble and realize that you need external support to ensure the expertise of the process.
- Include precise procurement criteria to ensure you have the most suitable supplier (e.g. appropriate expertise or knowledge of the local context, etc.)



ODPORÚČANIA

NA ZÁKLADE AKTIVÍT S VEREJNOSŤOU VZNIKLI ODPORÚČANIA, KTORÉ MESTO NITRA ZAHŔNIE DO ARCHITEKTONICKO-URBANISTICKEJ SÚŤAŽE NA BUDÚCU PODOBU AREÁLU:

- Pokojná atmosféra
- Dlhodobé trávenie času
- Areál, to je park vrátane budov
- Prístupnosť a priechodnosť
- Dôležitosť modro-zelenej infraštruktúry
- Bezpečný priestor

Tieto odporúčania sú vzájomne prepojené. Predstavme si ich na nasledujúcich stranách.

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HACKATHON FOR THE CO-DESIGN OF A PUBLIC SQUARE

Identity

- Nitra, Slovakia
- 100.48 km², 77 000 inhabitants
- [Presentation](#),
- [Article](#)
- [TV documentary](#)



Initial challenge

The goal is the need to solve the problem of an empty, sunny but windy square, the Svätoplukovo square in the city centre, and transform it into a more pleasant place for people. Since this is a timely, organizationally and financially demanding change, the city preferred quick solutions in the form of a temporary architectural intervention.

Proposed solution

In 2019, the Municipality decided to look for interesting solutions to the problem in an attractive way for professionals - launch a hackathon – an intense competition format with the aim of solving a specific problem. It took the form of a 5-day design competition in the form of a workshop with volunteer architects (students and professionals). The competition workshop was organised by the City of Nitra and the participants were architects, professionals and students who formed 4 teams. 18 participants worked intensively for 5 days, At the end, the results of each team were presented to the public.

Changes it brought

The result was a selection of various minor architectural interventions, which the city decided to gradually implement.

Seating modules with plant plantings and shading elements were implemented, and the restoration of the park on the square was completed, where the lawn was revitalized, old bushes were removed, and tree planting was completed. Repair of the fountain is still planned.

Inhabitants and tourists have started reusing this space for leisure, meeting, enjoying the city. The city centre has become more vibrant, more connected, and the past of this concrete square is slowly being transformed into a green areas.

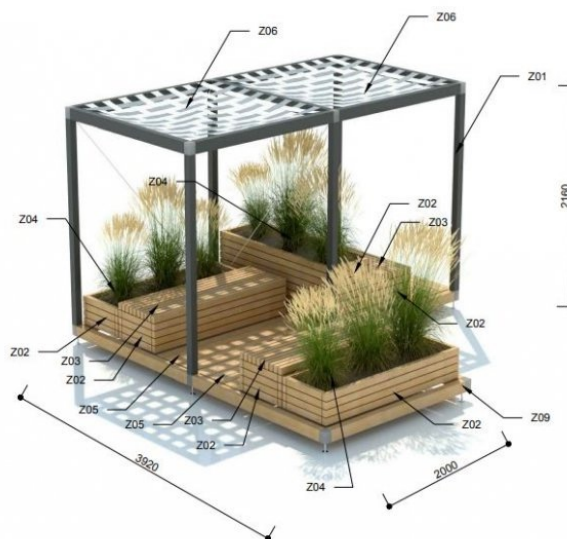
Transfer potential

The method is simple, its implementation is low-cost - it is also organized with its own capacities, without an external company. The format of the competition is originally from the IT sector, but it is also suitable for smaller architectural urban interventions.

Main takeaways

This is a quick way to experiment with new solutions, which can also be temporary.

It works if you have political support and you have the support of the professional community.



A TRANSITIONARY PARKLET TOWARDS PEDESTRIANISATION

Identity

- Nitra, Slovakia
- 100.48 km² , 77 000 inhabitants
- [Social media](#)
- [Report on the project](#)



Initial challenge

The city is faced with the vision of expanding the already existing pedestrian zone in the city center by another part of the Štefánikova street. However, there is heavy traffic in this part of the street and closing the entire street is not yet possible.

Proposed solution

The city approached the need to transform a busy road from a place for cars to a place for people with a quick and cheap temporary solution, which consisted in moving the existing parking lot off the street. The area of the parking lot now provides an area to create terraces for the surrounding gastro businesses.

The municipality ensured the entire design of the space and the transformation process with its own capacities and finances. The area was graphically landscaped and separated from the road by potted plants as well as designed by coloured stripes on the floor. The parklet provides space for the bars and restaurant to rent terraces and add furniture (tables, chairs, umbrellas) – under the design control of the municipality.

Changes it brought

This temporary solution is a test of the possibilities of the target desired state. The solution brought the desired changes, namely the slowing down of traffic and the return of people and life to the street.

It also changed gradually the perception and usage of the street, reducing car usage and increasing pedestrian one. Future plans to make the entire street pedestrian are under reflexion.

Transfer potential

Architectural interventions are a moderately demanding measure to implement, it always depends on specific circumstances. It is a relatively cheap solution that also uses the own capacities of local government employees.

Main takeaways

This is a quick way to experiment with new solutions and which ones uses local resources and interests (financial profit for restaurants, free time for citizens). It is just the beginning of a longer-term project → a long-term vision / which must be well communicated and have political support.



CO-CREATION OF THE URBAN AGENDA 2030

Identity

- Onda (Spain)
- 24859 inhabitants; 108.42 km²
- More information
- proyectoseuropeos@onda.es
- <https://www.onda2030.es/>



Initial challenge

Onda has many natural and scenic resources and a surface area of 108 km², of which 10% is used for industrial land. The municipality also has a great historical heritage. The entire historic centre has been declared an Asset of Cultural Interest. The city needs to properly manage its urban waste, as well as the challenges of climate change and territorial cohesion. However, this required the active participation of the community in order to increase the effectiveness and legitimacy of the decisions taken.

Proposed solution

The City Council decided to draft and adopt the Onda Urban Agenda, a municipality's roadmap, which is divided into four main axes: Economy and Prosperity, People, Sustainable City, and Innovation and Governance. For the development and execution of the Onda Urban Agenda:

1. A working group was set up, made up of members of the town council and political representatives, to carry out a preliminary analysis of the situation and identify the main stakeholders. Today, this group is responsible for monitoring the Agenda at quarterly meetings.
2. A commission was set up with the main stakeholders (industry, social sector, tourism, education...) to lay the foundations for the plan. Several meetings were held.
3. A public day is held once a year to report on the latest progress of the Agenda, with the participation of the stakeholders and anyone else who is interested.

Changes it brought

The Agenda has allowed us to:

- Monitor and ensure the implementation of the actions proposed in the different axes
- Involve citizens in decision-making to improve the municipality, thus enriching the democratic process.
- Implement actions in line with our Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan, such as, improving sustainable mobility or promoting the use of renewable energy in municipal buildings.

Transfer potential

The project is not difficult to replicate, as it doesn't require large economic resources. However, it requires strong organisation and involvement of citizens (which need to be encouraged) and political and municipal leaders.

Main takeaways

The awareness of citizens to participate in municipal projects and initiatives is fundamental to their success.

The implementation of the defined actions has a positive impact on citizens, the city and the environment.



WALK FOR ONDA & CONTRIBUTE TO THE GREENLUNG

Identity

- Onda (Spain)
- 24859 inhabitants; 108.42 km²
- More information [here](#)
- proyectoseuropeos@onda.es



Initial challenge

The Municipality of Onda is working on the regeneration a large area in the city centre, so-called Onda's GreenLung. Since the idea of developing this project was first conceived, the main challenge has been to inform and consult the public in order to gauge the level of acceptance and, at the same time, to gather ideas that could enrich the project. The high level of participation of the citizens of Onda in events of this kind is important for carrying out this type of consultation.

Proposed solution

The Municipality of Onda took advantage of the influx of citizens during a walking tour in September 2023, to survey their opinion about the GreenLung. The walk was organised by the Municipality to discover the city and its landscape. 700 people from the entire city and the suburbs came to walk for more than 10 kms.

In between the end of the walk and before the lunch, participants were asked about their vision and wishes for the GreenLung. In reward of their Responses, the participants were awarded small gifts (such as t-shirts, raffle of a scooter). This consultation lasted 1.5h and was self-funded by the municipality.

Changes it brought

Thanks to this consultation, the municipality knows directly the opinion of the citizens for its future project. The high participation of the attendees in the walk is the best proof that justifies the need to undertake the green lung project: local residents need green spaces and recreational areas.



Transfer potential

This type of interaction is a low hanging fruit, each city can adjust it to its own needs, skills and existing events.

Main takeaways

- Encourage citizens to participate through recreational and leisure activities (competitions, meals, gifts, ...).
- Take advantage of events or celebrations that are attractive to citizens.
- No need for specific moderation skills
- Dissemination through social network is key.



FROM BROWNFIELD TO INTERGENERATIONAL GARDENS

Identity

Onda (Spain)

24859 inhabitants, 108.42 km²

More information [here](#)

proyectoseuropeos@onda.es



Initial challenge

On the outskirts of the town of Onda there is an area of land that has been unused for many years, creating a sense of abandonment and a waste of resources in the community. On the other hand, the City Council has recently become more committed than ever to sustainability and environmental education.

Proposed solution

In 2022, the City Council rented one of these abandoned plots and decided to turn it into a large intergenerational garden: an area where neighbours can grow their own fruit and vegetables and where the transfer of agricultural knowledge from the elderly to the young is encouraged.

Changes it brought

To date, this initiative has proven to be a success in the town, providing opportunities for growth, learning and collaboration between individuals aged between 29 and 84, who work cooperatively on more than 20 available plots. Moreover, during this period, students from various educational institutions within the municipality have been engaged, and a range of training and guidance resources have been created for users and individuals interested in learning about organic farming. Finally, a questionnaire was distributed to local residents, affording them the opportunity to express their perceptions of the intergenerational garden. The responses indicated that the garden is perceived as a space for: teamwork, family, improvement of mental health, transmission of knowledge by older people, healthy eating, combating unchosen loneliness, recovery of traditions and a learning point for the most youths.

Transfer potential

This project is easily transferable with the involvement of the municipality and citizens.

Main takeaways

Through intergenerational gardens we promote: social integration, healthy lifestyles, environmental education, awareness and cooperation

It is essential to have political support and to encourage citizen participation

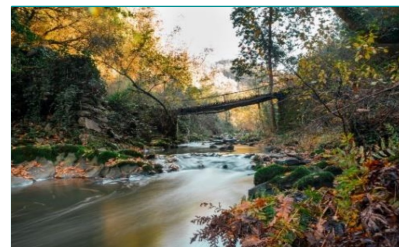
It is necessary to have the necessary resources to support people and be able to carry out the project



Volunteers to improve the forest

Identity

- Vila Nova de Poiares, Coimbra, Portugal
- 7000 inhabitants, 84.5km²
- <https://cm-vilanovadepoiares.pt/1374/active-forest>
- https://youth.europa.eu/solidarity/placement/34592_pt



Challenge

- maintaining and protecting native species;
- enhancing accessibility to forest trails;
- Need to promote physical activity in the surrounding natural environment.

Proposed solution

Our interventions primarily focus on improving pedestrian and cycling routes. By enhancing these routes across various dimensions such as maintenance and protecting native species, presentation, accessibility, comfort, and promotion, our aim is to boost local usage while also promoting them nationally and globally. Additionally, we aim to facilitate the personal, social, educational, and professional development of volunteers, as well as provide knowledge on how to promote these locations and the types of events and activities they can host.

Through the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) Programme, which offers volunteers, we aim to strengthen the involvement of young people and organizations in solidarity activities, particularly volunteering, with the goal of promoting cohesion, solidarity, democracy, European identity, and active citizenship. Since 2020, the municipality has been implementing projects, such as the Active Forest project, which focused on promoting healthy habits and outdoor activities for young people from different countries. This project lasted for 20 days, from August 17th to September 5th, 2023, with a total of 10 volunteers from various EU countries and three local youths from Vila Nova de Poiares participating.

Changes it brought

- Maintenance and increasing of routes accessibility.
- Control measures for invasive species.
- Create content and make interventions for promotion of the ESC, the EU and pedestrian and cycling routes

Transfer potential

The method is easily transferable; any city or entity that wishes to do so, can apply to join the European Solidarity Corps of the European Union.

Main takeaways

- Volunteer engagement is crucial in environmental education, empowering both children and parents to combat climate change and foster a sustainable future.
- Collaborating with volunteers expands the reach and impact of initiatives, inspiring eco-friendly practices for a greener world.



A TREE FOR A NEWBORN (WROŚNIJ WE WROCŁAW)

Identity

- Wroclaw, Poland
- [893 506 inhabitants](#), 292.81 km²
- [WROśnij we WROcław](#)
- [Tree planting maps](#)

Initial challenge

Greening the cities has always been a constant and continuous concern, so the challenge was to increase the number of trees planted in the parks and also new areas without much greenery. There was also a need to increase resident's (mostly new parents) sense of belonging and engagement establishing a connection with tangible and growing part of the city.



Proposed solution

Growing in Wroclaw is a project aimed at honoring the arrival of a new family member. A newborn child in Wroclaw can become a patron of a tree planted as part of the project.

Tree planting usually takes place twice a year - in spring and autumn. It is an opportunity to meet, plant a tree, and receive a certificate confirming the event. The event is organized by Wroclaw Center for Social Development and the trees are prepared by the Municipal Greenery Management in Wroclaw, with the help of specialists during planting. The project is fully funded by the city of Wroclaw.

With each edition, interest in the action is growing in Wroclaw, and all the planned trees are being booked within a few days. Since the start of the project in 2018, 3 431 trees have been planted in different parts of the city e.g. Park Tysiąclecia, Park Jedności or the square on the Tczewska St.

The trees grow along with the children, rooting in Wroclaw. We encourage regular visits and care for the trees.

Changes it brought

Participation in this action brings many benefits not only for the city and the environment (with the high number of trees planted), but also for the participants themselves. The event became a unique opportunity to commemorate the arrival of a new family member, bringing people and their families a sense of belonging to the city they live in. Planting a tree also brought an opportunity to learn about taking care of the environment and having fun at the same time. It's also a great occasion to make new acquaintances so there is also a social aspect to this event.

Transfer potential

It is an activity that is easily applicable in any city. It is necessary to indicate the areas that can be greened and choose the appropriate types of plants. However, the project also requires a strong political will.

Main takeaways

- The good communication and strategy and collaboration between municipal units is essential to this project. Residents like that they have something of their own in the city, something they can feel attached to.
- It's also simply a good fun.
- A newborn, and a freshly planted tree are both signs of a new start and good changes.



CREATING A SAFER RECREATIONAL AREA THROUGH GREEN REVITALISATION

Identity

- Wroclaw, Poland
- [893 506 inhabitants](#), 292.81 km²
- [Article about the place](#)
- [Contact for further info \(Municipal Investment Board\)](#)



Initial challenge

Pre-World War II, along the wharf of the Olawa River, life used to be bustling. Residents would stroll along the boulevards, spend their free time on sports fields, and enjoy the beach and swimming area. In the post-war years, this area, covering 2.96 ha was forgotten. The riverbank was unmaintained and neglected. The place was full of trash, and frequented by people drinking alcohol that's why it was perceived as unsafe and unwelcoming, especially for the families with kids. It was also not adapted for use by the elderly or people with disabilities.

Proposed solution

The renovation project of the banks of the Olawa River aimed to create an area of activity and recreation for the residents along the banks of the Olawa River. A first analysis of the issues at stake was first carried out by the contactors before designing some urban planning elements which would bring back area to the residents, make it more friendly and safe, respecting the natural and scenic values of the place. Construction works were carried out from August 6, 2018 to September 20, 2019.

The investment in the over one-kilometer long Olawa waterfront cost nearly 15 million Polish zlotys. Five million comes from EU funding. Wooden footbridges, benches, trash cans, and lighting appeared along the river. Pedestrian and bicycle paths connected the over a kilometer long space between the bridges. At the central point of the area, where cars used to park illegally, now there is a roller skating track. In the middle, a flower meadow has been sown, which will bloom in spring. Next to it is a huge water playground. There, the youngest can play as little engineers, pumping water, passing it through locks, water wheels, and even an Archimedes screw. A beach has also been created by the river. The area has been adapted to the needs of people with disabilities.

During the construction, the assumption was for the contractor to use as many natural materials as possible for the investment: wood, sand, stones, and greenery. Concrete was used basically only where it was necessary (including the roller skating track and the piers' supports).

Changes it brought

Residents have come back to the site. Nowadays, many residents of different ages visit the riverbank regularly, strolling or biking with kids also playing in the area. The wharf is much prettier, safer and more secured both during a day and the evenings.

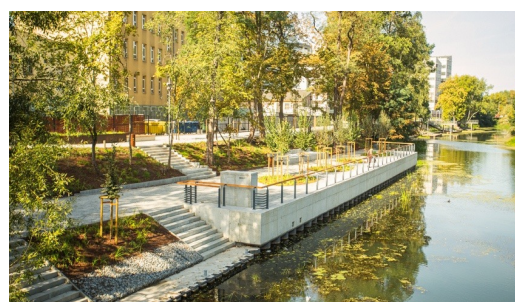
It has become a meeting place for the residents.

Transfer potential

It's possible on all wharfs but requires formal approvals and securing the funding as it is a huge investment.

Main takeaways

People are very eager to spend time in nature, as long as they feel the place is safe and taken care of.



GREEN REVITALISATION FOR AND WITH INHABITANTS

Identity

- Wroclaw, Poland
- [893 506 inhabitants](#), 292.81 km²
- [Zarząd Zasobu Komunalnego](#)



Initial challenge

In Wroclaw, there are many buildings (often tenements and blocks) that are closely situated next to each other. Often residents do not have easy access to extensive green areas near their homes. Usually, there are small neglected squares close to the buildings.

Proposed solution

Residents of apartment buildings and tenement houses surrounding the squares, if they want to take care of the greenery there, can apply to the city to request access to these squares for care. If the authorities do not see any objections, a contract is signed between the municipality and the resident for three years. If the area of the rented square does not exceed 350 square meters, the resident pays the municipality just under 43 PLN annually for its rental.

Changes it brought

Thanks to the gardens, there is a true harmony among the residents. It is precisely because the residents do not sit at home in front of the TVs, but meet in the gardens, that there is a real neighborly atmosphere in the area, and in particular, we have seen the following changes:

- creating a greater relationship with the place
- strengthening the relations and cooperation in the neighbourhood
- transforming the place to more friendly for inhabitants and environment

Transfer potential

Usually it's not complicated. Just look around and find a suitable place. It could even be a part of a courtyard between buildings. If you find unused land, and officials confirm that the land belongs to the municipality and can be leased, there's no problem. Of course, the city hall will still have to check if you are not occupying land designated for a playground or parking lot. If that's not the case, all that's left is to sign the agreement and you can start planting flowers or vegetables.

Main takeaways

- Sense of caring for one's surroundings in the city is very important (and difficult, as people feel that the common areas are nobody's responsibility)
- Sense of caring increases the desire to take care of the wider areas.



RELYING ON VOLUNTEERS TO MAKE A PLACE ALIVE

Identity

- Wroclaw, Poland
- [893 506 inhabitants](#), 292.81 km²
- [More about Czasoprzestrzeń](#)
- [Czasoprzestrzeń promotional video](#)
- [Czasoprzestrzeń manager contact](#)



Initial challenge

The Dabie depot served as a parking and repair facility for streetcars and buses until 2015. For technical reasons, it was abandoned by the municipal transportation company. For two years the historic building stood empty and deteriorated. There were ideas of sale and commercialization. The depot was also the central point of a post-industrial area without identity or connection to residents.

Proposed solution

The Municipality of Wroclaw's social participation department decided to lease the facility to a non-governmental organization in partnership with the Academy of Fine Arts and Wroclaw University of Technology. The leader of the partnership is the *Tratwa* association, which since 2017 has been turning the old depot into a center for culture and social initiatives. The association raises funds by organizing commercial events - plant, fashion and local product fairs, as well as commercial concerts. It uses the funds raised to maintain and renovate the facility and organize its own events. There is also a grant from the city for renovating.

Changes it brought

In the harsh, industrial walls of the former Dabie Depot, there is now a The Center for Young Culture and Local Initiatives – CZASOPRZESTRZEŃ. Between 2017 and 2020, most of the events were organized by volunteers and art collectives and groups of local leaders. In March 2020 when the Covid - 19 outbreak broke out, the venue was turned into a warehouse for pandemic control supplies and a place for packing packages for those in quarantine. In 2022 in March the place was turned into a hub for humanitarian aid for Ukrainian refugees. In parallel, all the time groups of artists - musicians, visual artists performers, organize events, exhibitions and shows. Volunteers helped in all these initiatives. About 1,000 volunteers - from schoolchildren to senior citizens - passed through the center during the assistance to Ukraine. Some of these people are still working there today - organizing meetings, such as photography, taking care of the community garden, making exhibitions, exchanging goods at garage sales, discovering their passions in workshops or helping to organize the Christmas Eve. Artists gather here and in the evenings, converse about alternative cinema, architecture, and transcendence take place over craft beer.

Transfer potential

Other cities can identify similar spaces in different communities for revitalization and work on:

- Engaging local stakeholders, like government departments and NGOs, to assess needs.
- Forming partnerships with NGOs, academic institutions, and community groups for resources.
- Securing funding through grants, sponsorships, and crowdfunding.
- Developing a sustainable business model including revenue-generating activities.
- Building community engagement by involving residents in planning and decision-making.

Main takeaways

The involvement of young people with an open mind to ideas can greatly bring the place to life. Working with such large groups of volunteers requires good coordination and organization but can bring very interesting results.

