

A-Place



A-Place



Placemaking activities have been designed and implemented at specific locations, each one focusing on themes identified in close collaboration with local stakeholders and based on the partner's knowledge of the sociophysical environment, their experience and know-how.

In the retrospective assessment conducted to showcase the project's outcomes in this publication and the final collective exhibition, the activities have been categorised into themes. Each theme encompasses a set of concepts that embody core values of placemaking practices. In addition, each activity employs a range of techniques to intervene and transform places.

This mapping illustrates the emergence of a placemaking framework, structured around themes, concepts, and techniques, which supports the diverse range of activities collaboratively undertaken in various locations by artists and citizens, students and faculty, civic organisations, and public administrators.

A-Place

Linking places through
networked artistic practices

www.a-place.eu

Editors:

Leandro Madrazo
Špela Verovšek

Guest authors:

Arash Fayezi
Rodrigo Hill
Özgür Ilter
Claudio Zulian

Graphic design:

Laura Membrado
Sara Badovinec

Illustrations:

Nina Povše

Proofreading:

Lisa Kinnear

ISBN:

978-84-09-59295-1

Publisher:

Edicions La Salle —
Universitat Ramon Llull



CREATIVE EUROPE Cooperation Project Agreement Number
607457-CREA-1-2019-1-ES-CULT-COOP2

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

A-Place

Linking places

through networked artistic practices



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Leandro Madrazo

Exploring the concept of place across disciplines

Leandro Madrazo

A-Place project coordinator, full professor at the School of Architecture La Salle, Ramon Llull University, Barcelona. Head of the ARC Engineering and Architecture La Salle research group since its creation in 1999.

He graduated in architecture from the Polytechnic University of Catalonia in 1984. Later, as a Fulbright scholar, he pursued a Master of Architecture at Harvard University and the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), where he earned his master's degree in 1988.

From 1990 to 1999, he taught and conducted research in the Department of Architecture and CAAD at ETH Zürich, where he completed his PhD in 1995. His teaching focuses on integrating architecture theory and representation, art and media, as well as housing studies and design methodology.

Among various research projects, he coordinated the EU-funded projects HOUSING@21.EU (2003-06), OIKO-DOMOS (2007-09, 2010-11), and DIKONET (2013-16). He co-coordinated PROHABIT (2015-18) and led the UMVA (Mobile Unit of Video Architecture) programme, in collaboration with the Loop Festival, from 2012 to 2017.

This chapter provides a cross-disciplinary exploration of the concept of "place," thematically structured to establish a theoretical framework for the A-Place initiatives which are subsequently presented in the book. Some of the insights discussed here are directly manifested in the project activities conducted in various locations, involving a wide array of participants, media, and methodologies. Conversely, much of the practice-oriented work carried out throughout the project can be better understood through the theoretical insights outlined in this overview.

to enhance urban environments and foster community engagement, supported by government agencies, funders, and institutions. However, tensions can arise between the objectives of funding organisations and the beliefs of practitioners responsible for implementing creative placemaking projects (Zitcer, 2020). Moreover, there is a difficulty in evaluating the extent to which project objectives meet the diverse expectations of the various stakeholders involved since the evaluation of the creative placemaking projects “often avoid addressing explicitly the problem of conflicting values and goals among the massive development industry (often quite powerful locally) and artists, art organisations, neighbourhood leaders, and elected officials.” (Courage & McKeown, 2019).

From place to A-Place: the art of making places

A place is not a static or isolated entity, but a dynamic interplay of physical settings, social interactions, and cultural meanings. Place is a location, an event, an experience, and a social construction. It is a built space, an image, an ideal, and a symbol. It serves as a repository of memories and personal experiences; it is my place, your place, and our place: a place and a non-place.

In **A-Place**, we engaged residents from culturally diverse neighbourhoods in co-design workshops to transform underused public spaces into a vibrant, inclusive environments that foster social interaction, strengthen community bonds, and exemplify sustainable urban planning tailored to community needs — **A Happy Place**. During the lockdown, we harnessed digital technologies to foster engagement and connection across geographic boundaries in **A Confined Place**, sharing a sense of place and encouraging creativity in representing and transforming living spaces under those unique circumstances through a variety of media.

We have transformed alleyways from mere passageways into lively, safe, and inclusive play spaces — **A-Pla(y)ce** — through collaboration among educational, artistic, and community stakeholders, promoting democratic participation and enabling residents to actively engage in shaping their living environment. In **A Place of Our Own** we engaged homeless individuals and refugees in actively transforming their shelter, fostering a sense of community spirit and

ownership through workshops where they used recycled materials to build furniture in collaboration with university students, thereby breaking down barriers between social groups and strengthening community bonds. In **A Re-Place**, we revitalised an abandoned area by hosting a workshop on crafting recycled furniture, sparking dialogue on architectural reuse and placemaking, and emphasising the link between community identity and environmental sustainability in urban spaces.

An on-street parking area was transformed into **A Visionary Place**, a parklet designed to host educational activities, cultural events, and artistic performances, enhancing the sense of place and fostering social interaction, all supported by social media initiatives. Through a combination of artistic and educational activities, in **A Weaved Place** we converted public spaces areas into innovative learning places embedded in the socio-physical milieu promoting exchanges between academia and community, art and architecture, digital and physical spaces. An overgrown and inaccessible green area — **A Hidden Place** — was transformed into a communal space where residents can learn about the environmental benefits these areas offer, including providing habitats for biodiversity, reducing noise, and regulating temperature.

A Delicious Place served as a platform to strengthen community ties through food events that brought together people from diverse backgrounds and generations, celebrating local customs and sharing culinary traditions across cities and countries. We organised literary contests to help neighbours envision **A Future Place**, encouraging residents of all ages to share their experiences of the living environment through poetry and storytelling, with the collaboration of writers, local associations, as well as university students and faculty. In **A Reconnecting Place**, we captured neighbourhood soundscapes and transformed them into music, which was then performed through a soundwalk and dance in the streets, blending visual, auditory, and movement elements to re-inforce community bonds.

Photographs have been used across the project activities to capture and share the experience of places worldwide, during the lockdown in **A Confined Place**, as well as in the open calls in the various editions **A-Place: Mapping** contests. Audiovisual works selected in yearly open calls covered a range of topics dealing with the production of places in multicultural and inter-connected societies. The screenings of the video productions in various settings, from pop-up cinemas in neighbourhoods to art festivals, have contributed to connect creators and communities.

Embracing vibrant places

- From parking space to peoples' place
A Visionary Place
- Playmaking is placemaking
A-Pla(y)ce

Building engaged communities

- Better together
A Place of Our Own
- The happiness of commitment and togetherness
A Happy Place

Reinforcing a sense of place and belonging

- If places were confined
A Confined Place
- The shifting threads of L'Hospitalet de Llobregat: Weaving the past and present
A Weaved Place
- Sonic pathways: Reconnecting with place through soundwalking
A Reconnecting Place

Growing sustainability awareness

- Placemaking is changemaking: Growing inspirations for more sustainable places
A Hidden Place
- Growing seeds for better streets
A Seedling Place
- The new life of the forgotten
A Re-Place

Evoking sensory awareness and feeling our places

- When the sounds of a place can tell a thousand stories
A Sound Place
- Celebrating our senses by walking our places
A Calm Place
- Delicious foodscapes of our cities
A Delicious Place

Building creative societies

- Prose your memories, sketch your thoughts, imagine your homescapes!
A Future Place
- Pop-up wishes: Creating renewed narratives in the City Plaza
A Wish-full Place
- Rhythms of the place: Dancing to the sounds of Bairro do Rego
A Reconnecting Place

Celebrating diversity and inclusiveness

- Placemaking is fairmaking
A Just Place



Embracing vibrant places

Interaction, Playfulness, Lingerability, Safety, Vividness, Curiosity rising, Liveliness, Charm, Dynamics

Creating vibrant places is important in making cities more liveable as it promotes social interaction, community engagement, and physical and mental health, while also providing economic benefits, reducing crime and promoting safety, and fostering a sense of identity and pride. Cities that have places of interaction, where people can gather, play, socialise, and engage with each other, foster a sense of community and belonging, and to express themselves creatively.

Exploring interests and behavioural trends

The architecture students had to apply the knowledge acquired in the classes and understand the behavioural patterns of the area. Various observation and interview techniques were used to interact with potential users of the spaces, such as kindergarten children, teachers, parents, teenagers, other residents and passers-by, who were invited to share their opinions about the alleys.

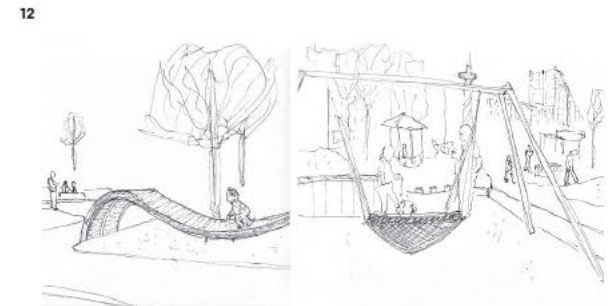
7-9: Gaining insights into children's perspectives through play, as well as the opinions of residents and passers-by.



Plan and design

Students unveiled their innovative ideas for new playscapes and developed design proposals based on the knowledge and insights gained in previous workshop steps. The backbone of these proposals included safety requirements recommended by experts, the needs and expectations expressed by local community members in interviews, and the desires observed through children's behaviours.

10-12: The planning and design phases involved a thorough evaluation of students' current skills and the knowledge they acquired during the process.





Building engaged communities

Together, Care, Commitment, Collective identity, Community building, Solidarity, Collective spirit, Shared values, Empowerment

Community engagement involves commitment, caring, and togetherness. When people have common interests, a strong bond is created that can lead to a shared sense of identity and purpose. If they feel like they are part of a larger group with shared values, they are more likely to work together towards common goals, care for each other and invest their time and energy in building resilient and sustainable communities.

The happiness of commitment and togetherness

Brussels

[A Happy Place](#)

The Marolles neighbourhood in Brussels can be seen as a multicultural universe, a hub of diverse social interactions, a vibrant tapestry of alleys, and a collection of eclectic moments. Traditionally home to the most deprived residents of the capital, as well as those who cherish freedom and art, Marolles has evolved into the first neighbourhood where citizen movements advocated for respectful urban and social fabric renovation, including the provision of social housing which now constitutes a third of the housing stock in the area.

To support residents in their efforts to improve their living environment, A-Place partner Alive Architecture, in collaboration with BRAVVO, the city of Brussels' prevention service, joined the neighbourhood renovation project "Contrat de quartier durable Marolles". The project included activities aimed at transforming the neighbourhood into inviting public spaces where locals can gather, collaborate, and foster community spirit. Achieving this was not easy — building togetherness, commitment, and engagement as pillars of successful community spaces always takes time, and effort.

The programme unfolded through a series of actions spanning nearly two years. It was a rewarding period for both the team and residents, resulting in tangible improvements that have truly made Marolles a happier place.

OBJECTIVES

The series of community building actions aimed to establish a robust process of place co-production in a culturally diverse social housing area. The goal was to transform underused public spaces within the neighbourhood into welcoming environments, with a particular emphasis on creating spaces that are family-friendly for children living in nearby social housing complexes.

APPROACH

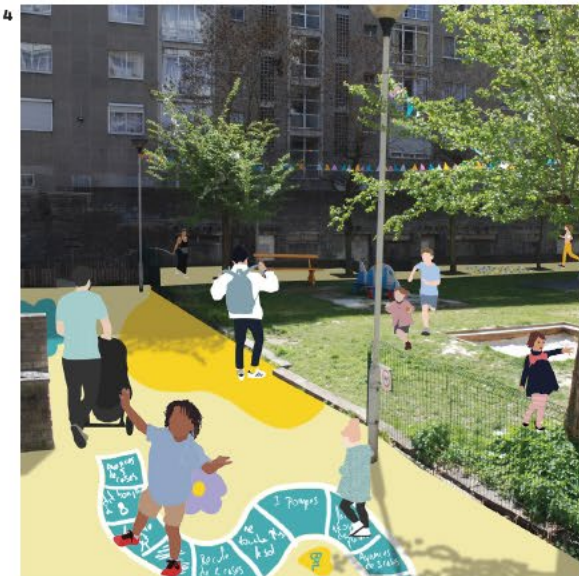
Through co-design workshops we identified residents' needs, desires and site opportunities, which resulted in temporary spatial solutions, implemented and tested before becoming permanent. The participation of residents, especially children and youth, facilitated the development of a sense of belonging and pride among neighbours.

OUTCOME & IMPACT

After two years of participatory activities, the Pieremans playground and the alleys of Cité Hellemans were transformed into places that foster encounter and mutual respect, creating an environment for engagement and understanding between generations.

The Alive Architecture and BRAVVO team members engaged with the residents and other local participants to discuss the needs and possibilities of the transformations for Pieremans playground.

During the implementation phase of the planned interventions, the Pieremans playground got a new look for some time. A provisory fence to avoid children running onto the street was built and installed, and additional drawings on the walls were realised by artist Chloé Saelens.





Reinforcing a sense of place and belonging

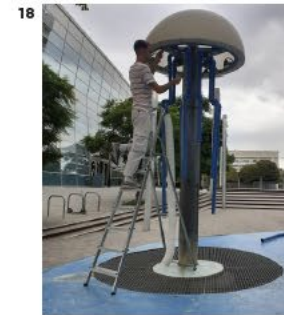
Place identity, Sense of place, Collective memory, Tradition, Local pride
Third space, Storytelling, Roots, Sense of belonging

A sense of place is a unique combination of visual, cultural and environmental factors that give a location its distinct character. It's the memories, emotions, and perceptions that people associate with a place and that make it special and meaningful to them. By cultivating and celebrating the unique qualities and characteristics of a place, communities can build a sense of identity, promote well-being, and drive economic growth.

Artistic interventions in public space

The experiences tied to places are deeply embedded in public spaces and in residents' memories. Students from local schools and architecture faculty collaborated in the design and execution of artistic interventions to visualise and share the stories hidden in the places.

13-14: Secondary school students from Institut Bellvitge, Institut Europa and Escola Pare Enric d'Ossó identified personally significant places and shared their experiences with architecture students who then designed artistic interventions to convey these stories to the community. These joint sessions were held in the Plaça de la Cultura de Bellvitge from April to May 2021. The panels used in the discussions were displayed in the civic centre located in the square. Source: School of Architecture La Salle.



15-19: Students from local schools and the architecture faculty collaborated in constructing the installations. All the pieces were made using ducts of various sections and colours selected from a product catalogue by the students. Existing public infrastructure gained new significance as a result of these interventions. The process was documented on [video](#) for wider dissemination. Source: School of Architecture La Salle.



1-2: Rego is characterised by a unique blend of diverse sounds that contribute to its distinctive charm. Our efforts were directed towards revitalising the neighbourhood's identity, fostering reconnection, and cultivating a sense of belonging through sound and movement.



3-6: The younger generations of the community collected sounds which would later be sampled and integrated into the final composition of a sound walk. At the same time, the workshop entitled "Creating a soundscape with Bairro do Rego" delved into the concept of soundscape and its application in a community context to recognise and enhance the experience of the participants with a specific place.





Growing sustainability awareness

Nature, Responsibility, Urban ecology, Green living, Respecting limits, Eco-activism, Upcycling art, Resilience, Consumption ethics

Increasing awareness about the presence of nature in daily lives, the naturalisation of the city, and the need for circular economy are important steps towards promoting sustainability and creating a more environmentally responsible society. By incorporating green infrastructure, educating people, encouraging recycling, promoting renewable energy sources, and using non-polluting transportation, communities can contribute to a more sustainable future.

1

Initial phase

During the initial phase of our activities, we strived to arouse the curiosity of the participants, whether they are locals, visitors, passers-by or nearby residents.

2

Second phase

In the second phase we organised a series of activities that ended with a community dinner. These included cleaning the area, a hands-on papermaking workshop using local plants, setting up the dining table and preparing a traditional Burek dish using unconventional ingredients from wild invasive plants.

2



1



1-4: Intervention aimed at enhancing the visibility of the site, by students Oriol Gracia Vallès and Lara Jana Gabrijel Milanovič from the Faculty of Architecture, implemented by prostoRož and the Faculty of Architecture, with support from Trajna NGO and municipal permission.

3



4



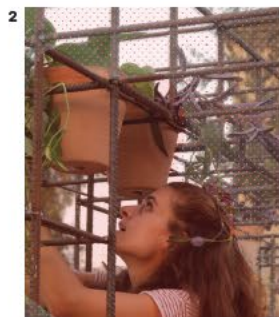
5: Intervention proposal by students Xavier Llerena, Nives Otašević, Lea Elena Vidmar, Klemen Žibert, and Marieke Van Dorpe.

5

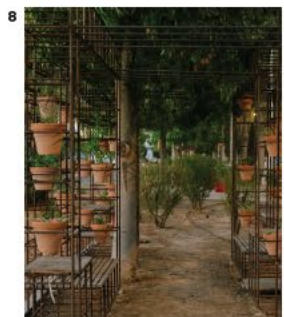




1-3: A Seedling Place was inspired by the installation of the Vertical Gardens in Kaimakli, Nicosia. This initiative was subsequently expanded to encompass the seeding of plants in partner cities and beyond. It was showcased at the Cyprus Pavilion of the 2021 Venice Biennale and digitally archived.



4-9: The vertical garden and the community planting actions in Nicosia. A new structure was installed in an underused square in Kaimakli to enhance the role of public spaces in connecting communities. The structure served as a catalyst for a socially diverse neighbourhood to reimagine their public spaces, beginning with the simple act of planting and tending a garden.



A Re-Place is like a new place!

During the community event to inaugurate *A Re-Place*, workshop participants came together to explained what they had done so far, review their progress, and discuss what they might do next.

15-21: In the final stages of the workshop, the participants devoted their best efforts to perfecting the artefacts, putting the finishing touches and preparing everything for presentation and demonstration.

Following the presentations, there was a lively discussion among students, mentors, and guests. They debated the benefits and importance of recycling and reuse in design, as well as the value of natural resources in urban environments.



Photo credits 1-21: Žiga Gorišek // Maša Cvetko // Špela Verovšek



Evoking sensory awareness and feeling our places

Soundscapes, Scentscapes, Immersion, Sensory perception, Emotional connection, Mindfulness, Sensory narratives, Foodscapes, Place attachment, Sensory triggers

Our senses play a crucial role in perceiving and understanding places. They help us to experience and understand the unique qualities and characteristics of a particular location, such as its aesthetic, cultural, social and environmental features: sights and sounds can evoke feelings of excitement and energy, smells can bring back childhood memories, and textures can evoke a sense of history and tradition. In this way, our sensory experiences help us to create a sense of place and connect with the places we inhabit.

When the sounds of a place tell a thousand stories

Lisbon

A Sound Place

The neighbourhood of Mouraria in Lisbon is a place of many facets and countless stories. It is vibrant, bustling, multicultural, and alive with sounds, known for its distinctive colours and aromas, as well as the sounds of religious chants and multiple languages. The centre of the neighbourhood located at Martin Moniz square serves as a trading hub predominantly managed by members of the Chinese, Africans, Arab, Indian and Pakistani communities. Despite this rich diversity and apparent coexistence, these communities rarely interact. They live in separate spheres, maintaining their cultural and religious practices, which creates small enclaves that fragment both the city and its people.

In an attempt to overcome this “silence” among members of diverse communities and between them and other Lisbon residents, **A-Place** partners from the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences at NOVA University of Lisbon launched *A Sound Place*. The project involved collecting the auditory impressions and recordings of voices in the neighbourhood to create music compositions that reflect the multicultural character of Mouraria. Listening to the music pieces performed in neighbourhood settings provides an opportunity to immerse oneself in the cultural tapestry woven through the harmonious blend of sounds.

OBJECTIVES

The sounds of Mouraria blend voices and music from diverse parts of the world, carried by immigrants, creating a vibrant soundscape that distinguishes it as one of Lisbon's most cosmopolitan areas. *A Sound Place* is built upon the idea of layered sounds, creating a “third space” that embraces and integrates cultural differences.

APPROACH

Students from the doctoral programmes in Arts Studies and Communication, together with the Lisbon School of Music, captured ambient sounds from different locations in Mouraria. Then, composers and musicians used these recordings to create a sound narrative that reflected the history of the neighbourhood, its current dynamics and multicultural character. This rich cultural backdrop provided inspiration for the young composers involved in the project.

OUTCOME & IMPACT

Due to pandemic restrictions, the performance of the music compositions was held indoors at the Mouraria Innovation Centre and live-streamed. This allowed both the in-person audience and those watching and listening online to experience the place through the images, memories, and emotions evoked by the music.



1-5: Every place has its own unique sounds and transmits specific vibrations: are we aware of them? Do we feel and hear what they are telling us? The vibrant sounds of the Mouraria neighbourhood in Lisbon were captured and later recomposed by senior and junior composers from the Lisbon School of Music and NOVA University of Lisbon.



6-9: Miguel Rocha (cello), Adriano Aguiar (double bass), Jaime Reis (senior composer), Joao Quinteiro (senior composer) and Henrique Portovedo (saxophone) performing and narrating the stories of Mouraria in the Mouraria Innovation Centre.



Photo credits 1-4: Lisboa Incomum // 5-9: Marta Flollió

Celebrating our senses by walking our places

Brussels

A Calm Place

*I walk and I see,
I close my eyes and I hear,
I walk, and I smell, and I touch,
and simply I feel the places
passing by under my feet,
and the fleeting backcloth around.
When I walk, I explore,
I am alive, and I am aware...*

There are places in Brussels that can stimulate multiple senses, and Schaerbeek is one such neighbourhood. It is a vibrant area rich in cultural diversity and sensory experiences, known for its long migratory history, which has woven a complex tapestry of languages, cultures, and traditions. The streets are filled with sights, sounds, and smells that tell the story of its diverse community. Over time, the local identity has evolved into a unique blend of different ethnicities, creating a rich sensory footprint.

To celebrate our senses and explore these rich sensory experiences through walking, **A-Place** partners organised a series of events in Schaerbeek under the common name *A Calm Place*. One key event was an open sensory walk. Guided by students and a local artist, participants were invited to sharpen their senses and explore the neighbourhood with heightened awareness. This immersive experience enabled them to fully appreciate the stories the neighbourhood tells through its sensory details and to foster a deeper connection with the diverse community of Schaerbeek.

OBJECTIVES

The sensory walk aimed to enhance spatial awareness by encouraging participants to focus on sounds, smells, and the texture of materials using various sensory techniques. Guided through selected locations, participants reflected on the tranquillity or bustling nature of each place along the way.

APPROACH

The sensory walk was developed as part of the community-building initiative OURB and guided by KU Leuven alumni and local artist Desislava Petkova. Initially, students explored different locations and paths to identify potential routes for the sensory walk. During these initial explorations, they familiarised themselves with the surroundings, drew inspiration from the sensory potential of the area, and eventually proposed paths and related artistic interventions aimed at enhancing the sensory experience.

OUTCOME & IMPACT

The sensory walk brought students and participants together, fostering connections with each other and with the places and people they encountered. This heightened awareness of the environment also encouraged interaction between members of diverse social and academic groups. The walk concluded in a garden, where participants were invited to reflect on their experiences. They expressed their thoughts by writing on red ribbons and tying them to a stick placed on the grass, creating a collective art installation.



1-2: The sensory walk was planned and mapped out by KU Leuven students and A-Place partners.



3-4: Students tested the floating bowls installation for use along the sensory walk. The resonating sounds produced in front of the Maison des Arts transformed it into a serene and contemplative space.

5-6: Participants of the sensory walk were encouraged to explore their surroundings and to heighten their sense.



7: The walk concluded in a garden with participants reflecting on their experiences by writing on red ribbons and tying them to a stick placed on the grass, forming a collective art installation.



Photo credits 1-7: Beatriz Caon and Rosaura Romero

Delicious foodscapes of our cities

Nicosia / Brussels / Lisbon / Ljubljana

A Delicious Place

Food is a fundamental aspect of culture, symbolising well-being and carrying diverse cultural, religious, social and environmental connotations. What we eat, how we prepare it and with whom we share it reflect the identities, beliefs, values and lifestyles of a place and its people. Culinary traditions not only nourish our bodies, but also strengthen the bonds between people and places by communicating values and attitudes. Enjoying a delicious meal while sharing one's culinary experiences and culture with others is an enriching experience.

To celebrate and share experiences of diverse cuisines and culinary traditions, we hosted a series of events called *A Delicious Place*. Starting with Urban Gorillas in Nicosia, and continuing in Brussels, Lisbon, and Ljubljana, these events showcased the foodscapes of each city. At the Pame Kaimakli festival in Nicosia, narrative videos created from these events were screened. These stories projected the multifaceted role of food in society, bridging connections between people and places.

OBJECTIVES

The initiatives aimed to connect communities by encouraging food-related activities such as growing, sharing and discovering new ingredients and recipes, as well as sharing cultural and religious traditions by cooking and eating together. In this way, we valued rituals, social initiatives and local traditions, involving people from several generations and diverse backgrounds.

APPROACH

Culinary and gastronomic workshops and events were organised in several partner cities. These activities were documented on video to illustrate the role of food in distinct cultures. Parallel screenings of these videos connected the partner cities, fostering a delicious diversity and exchange of culinary experiences.

OUTCOME & IMPACT

The workshops and gastronomic events fostered greater communication between participants from Nicosia, Brussels, Lisbon and Ljubljana. Video stories about these events helped to deepen connections and facilitated the exchange of knowledge about different cultures through their traditions, rituals and culinary habits.



Nicosia

1-3: *A Delicious Place* in Pame Kaimakli 2020 presented a series of activities focusing on food as a socio-cultural, artistic and place-making process. The festival included workshops, theatre performances, film screenings, ethnographic audiovisual projects, a series of open-air dinners, neighbourhood walks and a pop-up festival of short documentary films.



Nicosia

4-9: Migrants and locals participated in food and storytelling workshops, including a tagliatelle workshop at Thalami, and performative and storytelling workshops conducted by We Circle Collective, titled "A Restaurant of Stories".





Building creative societies

Collective creativity, Creative placemaking, Imagination, Urban art, Participatory art, Situated learning, Aesthetic experience, Artivism, Inspiration

Public spaces provide an open platform for artistic expression where artists and communities can bring their visions to life, explore new ideas and connect with others through shared experiences. By promoting the use of public spaces as territories for artistic creation, cities can encourage cultural diversity, foster creativity, promote social cohesion and contribute to the dynamic and vibrant fabric of urban life.

Prose your memories, sketch your thoughts, imagine your homescape!

Lisbon

A Future Place

Imagine a sports community association called Amigos da Luz in the neighbourhood of Bairro Padre Cruz in Lisbon whose role in the district has revolved around sports, particularly football. People go there to practice or talk about sports. But suddenly they are challenged to write a poem or tell a story from their home place! Just for once, just for fun, just to test some other skills and boost creativity. Of course, football is fine, it is also creative and remains a priority. But let's just give our "homey" stories a try. We might all like it!

The partners of A-Place at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities and Institute of Philosophy from the NOVA University of Lisbon, together with the association AMIGLuz, organised a poetry and prose contest called "My Neighbourhood... my Place". People were invited to reflect poetically on the past, present and future of the Padre Cruz neighbourhood through texts, drawings, recitals or other creative forms. Residents were prompted to share their stories, their memories and creatively express their feelings about their homescapes, with the overall aim of creating and strengthening the bonds between them and the places they inhabit. The initiative succeeded in engaging neighbours in creative processes as part of their daily life and civic experience.

OBJECTIVES

The literary activities aimed to re-establish the neighbourhood's sense of identity through imaginative expression and storytelling. They facilitated intergenerational exchanges, revealing the common values reflected in each individual's cultural experiences and memories, while showcasing the history and future of the neighbourhood.

APPROACH

To prepare and motivate the participants, a series of workshops on creative writing, photography, illustration and sports leadership techniques were organised at the AMIGLuz association. The award ceremony was held in a car park in front of their premises.

OUTCOME & IMPACT

The competition and accompanying workshops provided local residents with a platform to express their connection to their surroundings through poetry, prose and photography. These activities enriched the association's role with a cultural and artistic dimension, drawing new audiences to the arts and increasing awareness of the necessity for physical and social improvements in the neighbourhood. A parking area was creatively repurposed into a venue for the award ceremony and a fado concert.

1-3: Padre Cruz blossomed into a community of collective artistic creativity through the "My Neighbourhood... My Place" prose and poetry contest.



4-7: Residents participated in the creative workshops held at the residents' association, which for a few weeks became a creative hub. These activities enriched the role of the sports association with a cultural and artistic dimension.





Celebrating diversity and inclusiveness

Tolerance, Diversity, Social inclusion, Multiculturalism, Design justice, Coexistence, Shared visions, Empathy, Fairness

Diversity and inclusion are key components of a healthy and thriving urban community. By embracing diversity, we can enrich our communities with a broader range of perspectives, experiences and ideas, contributing to a more inclusive society. Inclusion also helps to create a more equitable environment, where everyone has the opportunity to participate and contribute, regardless of their background or identity. Shared places can be powerful tools for building community, promoting cultural exchange and celebrating the richness of the human experience.

8



9



8-10: The outcomes of the students' reflections prompted cultural actors to reconsider their current practices. These reflections were shared in hospice spaces and contributed to ongoing discussions about how effectively these practices align with the goals of design justice.

10



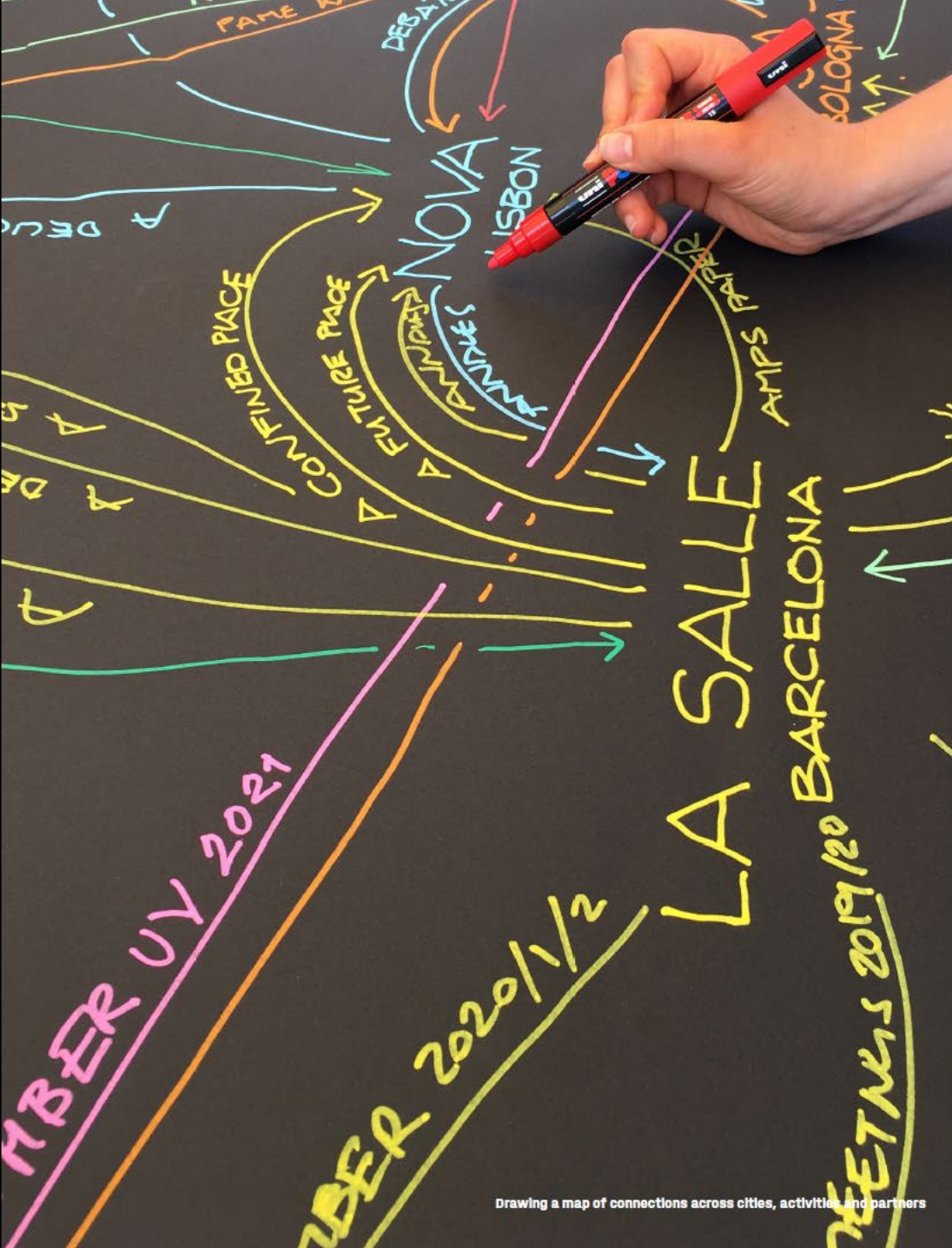


A Seedling Place: Cultivating connections

Venice Biennale
October 2021

This collaborative activity took place at the Cyprus Pavilion during the Biennale di Venezia 2021. Partners gathered in Venice and distributed 140 packets of mixed seeds from their respective cities — Bologna, Brussels, Ljubljana, and Nicosia — among the visitors. Each packet included detailed instructions on planting the seeds and sharing their growth with updated on the digital platform *A Seedling Place*.

Through this initiative, four cities — through the presence of partners and the seeds they brought with them — converged physically at the Cyprus Pavilion. However, the action extended beyond the confines of this location, as other participants collaborated by sharing the plants' development on digital platforms.



Visualising growth and collaboration

Parckfarm, Brussels
June 2022

A-Place partners met at Parckfarm, a community-driven urban farming project developed by Alive Architecture and Taktyk. Parckfarm has transformed a wasteland into a new model of public space that integrates park-like features with local micro-farming. Here, the community grows the plants, and the site features a bread oven, sports facilities, and a honeycomb.

During their meeting, partners reflected on their collective efforts over the past three years, discussing connections among cities, organisations, and activities, and visually mapped out these links on a blackboard laid out on the table.

Parckfarm serves a vibrant hub of community engagement where sustainable practices and social interactions flourish. The partners' meeting added another significant event to the history of the place.



Echoes of inspiration: Words reflected in a chapel

Grand Hospice, Brussels
June 2022

The old chapel of the Grand Hospice in Brussels provided a captivating setting for partners to engage in a one-hour session reflecting on some of the key concepts that characterise the placemaking activities undertaken in A-Place. In preparation for this gathering, each partner crafted a 30-second voice recording of their chosen terms. These recordings reverberated through the chapel, filling the space with diverse voices.

Drawing inspiration from these recordings, participants transformed them into sentences and visual representations. They shared their interpretations, exchanging insights and unveiling their creative expressions. This collaborative exercise epitomised placemaking: imbuing an existing space with new purpose while honouring the memories enshrined in its walls, reminiscing the actions that once unfolded within.

The outcomes of this session — drawings and words displayed on the walls — adorned the chapel for subsequent days, inviting visitors to contribute their own reflections and further enrich the space with their presence and ideas.

A moment of reflection at
the Grand Hospice chapel



“Shoulder to shoulder”: Sharing creativity with children and community

Cité Hellemans, Brussels
June 2022

The A-Place partners convened for the culminating event of *A Happy Place* in the Marolles, a vibrant and dynamic neighbourhood that embodies Brussels’ cultural diversity and historical heritage. This event marked the official opening of the revitalised Piere-mans playground at Cité Hellemans; an iconic example of early social housing in Brussels, constructed between 1912 and 1915. It showcases a remarkable architectural ensemble in eclectic style, characterised by red and yellow brick buildings and arcades connecting pathways and alleys.

The project to reinvigorate the unused playground and adjacent spaces started in 2021 with co-design sessions and idea testing involving residents, and continued in 2022 with the transformation of public spaces facilitated by the collaboration of neighbours and professionals. During the final event, partners engaged in a lively celebration of the successful revitalisation of the spaces sharing a picnic with residents. They also participated by helping children paint street furniture to enhance the public space and transform it into an artistic playground.

Mapping places across the world



First prize

Wild and free

Azbah Ansari

Jury's assessment:

The light, the texture, the shadow, and the symmetry, all through the eye of the architect (photographer) supported by a well-explained concept (the sublime) and a written personal experience. The photography is an excellent composition of colour and light that creates the atmosphere of an abounded and at the same time empty space which is open to receive new inhabitants and new life stories. Through the reference to the sublime, the author opens up a relevant discussion about what the domestic place is today, and what it could be tomorrow.

Author's description: *My little cousins, in their toddler age, has an immense love for cars and vehicles. One of them has deep love for police cars and he loves to rescue animals who are injured and take them to hospital, the gorilla is the doctor for him. He often asks that he wants to play with his cars on road and bing.... We had a plan. One of the room in their house is made of cement, without any tile furnishing and we have a little library there. So, we made road map for them, and placed some building models like police station, hospital and airport as landmarks and their destination points and set the cars to play on the road with a chowk at the centre. It is their play area now and when they first saw it they were out of words and expressing their joy by jumping and rushing in to play. What a joyful sight. As much as i enjoyed their expressions, I enjoyed making this whole space transform into play area and yes i played with cars as well. Because, why not!*



Claudio Zullian

Artist, film director, musician and writer. Born in Italy and lives in Barcelona. He holds a PhD in Aesthetics, Science and Technology of the Arts, University of Paris-Saint Denis (France).

He has shown his films at international festivals and has received awards in New York, Sydney, Singapore, Jakarta, Leipzig, and Milan. He has received the City of Barcelona Award and National award of Catalonia for *The Shifting City* — an intimate portrait of the neighbourhood of the same name.

He presented his documentary (2020) *We Were Not Born Refugees*, which explores the lives of eight refugees in Barcelona and premiered at the Festival Nuovo Cine Latinoamericano in Havana, Cuba. His latest project (2023) *The Magio Mountain*, documentary film in which twenty people from Veneto (Italy) question themselves about their existence, award Witnesses of our time award, Padua.

In 2022 the Galego Centre of Contemporary Art dedicated to him an extensive exhibition, *Lives*, which explored his entire career.

Claudio Zullian participated in *A-Place* as the director of the video "*A Journey to L'Hospitalet de Llobregat*," which was a result of his role as a tutor for students in the Systems of Representation course for the academic year 2021/2022 at the School of Architecture La Salle.

Claudio Zullian

Filmmaking places

With the typical American taste for the practical shortcut, nurtured by a distrust of conceptual speculation, the word "placemaking" seems to invite us to "make place" without delay: leave aside long political, philosophical or anthropological debates, this word seems to suggest, and observe carefully which people pass near a certain lot, at what time, where they are going and whether they are in a hurry. Instead of drawing up polished urban planning projects, ask people what uses they would give to the space, whether they would stop to chat with a friend or have a coffee with a colleague — if there were public benches, tables and chairs. The passers-by whom you confidently question in the concrete bustle of the city are as many incarnations of the "common citizen", the one on whom rests all the political and even moral legitimacy of a democracy. Placemaking is the one who must guide us.

One of the most admired examples of placemaking to date has been the rehabilitation of Bryant Park in New York City, which was reinaugurated in 1992 after a lengthy overhaul. This park, located next to the New York Public Library in Manhattan, had become a dirty and unsafe place over time. The intervention involved not only the restoration of landscaping and physical elements (walls, sculptures, fountain) but also the incorporation of kiosks and cafes. The Bryant Park Restoration Corporation took charge of the project, carrying it out with both public

Rodrigo Hill

Photography and placemaking

Introduction

This essay delves into broad discussions around photography and placemaking, with an emphasis on the photographs produced in the course of the **A-Place** project. As a starting point, the essay will introduce and discuss the intricate relationships between photography and placemaking, establishing a historical timeline and contextual overview of pivotal moments. These contextual discussions serve as a foundation to subsequent discursive and visual analytical commentary on the photographs. In addition, the historical overview and contrasting views on place and ways of placemaking offer valuable points of reflection on how photography has become integrated into various projects, agendas, and modes of representing places. These reflections lead us to the present, a compelling period characterised by the interplay of various camera technologies and lens-based modes of representation which are in a constant state of visual flux and change, shaping our contemporary understandings and ways of perceiving the world.

From the outset, I explore key ideas related to the invention of photography and how it quickly became integrated into the agenda of place representation and making. Subsequently, I engage in discussions concerning the notions of place and placemaking. The term “placemaking” is critically examined in the context of photographic imagery and practice, emphasising the intrinsic connection to the subjective processes of perception and understanding. This exploration highlights how

Rodrigo Hill

An established exhibiting artist both in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally, Rodrigo specialises in gallery installations and publications. His creative interests are rooted at the intersection of lens-based and documentary approaches where photography represents layered place imaginaries.

Rodrigo is a lecturer, academic researcher, and writer at the University of Waikato Te Kura Toi School of Art. His research delves into the diverse possibilities of photographic practices and examines how photography serves as a medium to perceive and construct a sense of place.

Arash FayeZ

Arash FayeZ is an artist working with different forms of image-making, exploring notions of in-betweenness. His projects explore situations where the mind is in limbo and the body is in between; in other words, the mental and physical states resulting from being between two locations, two cultures, or two identities. FayeZ was born in Tehran, studied Fine Arts at California College of the Arts in San Francisco, and currently lives in Barcelona.

He has exhibited widely, including group shows Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo (Madrid, 2022), MACBA in Barcelona (2021), Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art (2020), and Mattress Factory (Pittsburgh, 2019). His performances and screenings have been featured at prominent venues such as Cineteca Matadero (Madrid, 2022), Württembergischer Kunstverein (Stuttgart, 2020), La Virreina Centre de la Imatge (Barcelona, 2019), Asian Art Museum and Yerba Buena Centre for the Arts (San Francisco, 2017), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, 2015).

Arash FayeZ won the A-Place video open call in 2021 with his work titled "I Can Only Dance to One Song".

Arash FayeZ

A place is nowhere to be found

What is language, Mummy?

*Language is the house man lives in.*¹

¹ *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle*, film by Jean-Luc Godard, 1967.

I am sitting in Terminal 2 of El Prat airport in Barcelona, awaiting my departure. As I pull out my computer to begin writing, it strikes me how natural it is to contemplate the peculiar sensation of being "in-between"² places when you're at an airport.

² I am borrowing the term "in-between" from the Indian-English scholar and critical theorist Homi K. Bhabha.

When you are inside an airport, or more precisely, inside the terminal of an airport, you may consider that you have entered an intermediate space; somewhere lost in the midst of departures and arrivals.

A space that is between here and there, because you are not here anymore, and still, you haven't arrived there yet; or the other way around.

While you are in this space, the sun may set, and so the twilight would begin; a period between daylight and darkness. When it is no more the day, and yet, the night hasn't started.

*The range of colours would change rapidly to highlight that it is a time of in-between.*³

³ From the performance *Anecdotes from the elsewhere*, script for a performance by the author, in collaboration with Euyin Eugene, Noela Covelo, and TRIIM, 2023.

Özgür İlter

Musings on A-Place's journey in placemaking

Spaces to explore, places to create

In his book, *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, Neil MacGregor explores world history through his examination of a hundred selected items from the British Museum. Alongside the intriguing biographies of the chosen objects, another thought flashes to mind with a simple question: What makes humans human? This is most definitely not a question seldom asked. Among the variety of available answers, MacGregor's response is unique. He speculates that it is not our specific evolution of the brain that distinguishes our humanity, but rather our almost inherent need to accumulate knowledge and pass it down through generations, distinctly separating us from the other inhabitants of this planet. We depend not only on evolutionary knowledge (such as learning to walk on two feet) but also on acquired knowledge. A significant part of this process of generation and transmission of knowledge revolves around our environment (Relph, 1976, p. 31). Where we live, where we exist, what we can see and what we cannot see but can sense. Explorers after explorers have ventured out to find new lands, cultures, people. We have mapped the face of the world, seeking to discover the depths of the oceans, the vast infinity of the cosmos. Our spatial wonder, as a species, creates the desire to delineate and define the environment that surrounds us with respect to our human presence.

Anthropologists have long been interested in the spatial aspects of cultural practices. They achieve this by analysing and describing

While each theme carries a specific focus and distinctive characteristics, they do not exist in isolation; rather, they coexist in a state of interconnectivity. The conducted placemaking activities seamlessly integrate these themes, emphasising their synergy and adaptability. These activities promote sustainability practices to raise environmental consciousness, forge connections among inhabitants, and strengthen community bonds. Moreover, they are multisensory and creative, fostering personal growth and development while supporting the establishment of innovative communities. **A-Place's** unique contribution lies in its ability to map and structure these felt and lived experiences into well-articulated, embodied actions. It is in the harmonious blend of thoughtfulness and collaborative effort which brings an exceptional depth to the activated spaces.

Although **A-Place** crafted these themes in a conversational continuum, this text will specifically delve into two of them: *Reinforcing a sense of place and belonging*, and *Growing sustainability awareness*. It will meticulously review the activities conducted under these frameworks to discern their unique contributions and conceptual significance.

Reinforcing a sense of place and belonging

Place affects how we perceive, comprehend, and know the world. We observe ties and connections between individuals and places, as well as between worlds of meaning and experience. This way of seeing can appear to be an opposition against rationalising the world as a collection of facts and figures (Cresswell, 2015, p. 10). This theme prioritises social inclusion and delves into the relationship between memory, identity, and narrative. In the shaping of one's sense of place and belonging the personal experience plays a vital role. Recognising this intrinsic value acts as a catalyst to engage with meaningful and comprehensive environments.

Philosophical contemplation, rigorous academic investigation, stakeholder engagement, and mixed-method strategies are just a few of the distinct tools that work together with deeply personal, emotional, and socially transformative elements in the **A-Place's** placemaking activities. The significance of capturing these nuanced elements is emphasised through qualitative approaches such as in-depth interviews, participant observations, and narrative analysis.

The inception of *A Confined Place* originated from the unforeseen challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. This venture encompasses diverse undertakings aimed at investigating and reshaping the

perception of space amid isolation. Within this programme of activities, photography and film were the media for participants to encapsulate and convey their experiences, prompting a re-evaluation and transformation of their domestic spheres during the lockdown. As such, artistic ebullitions throughout this project utilise hybrid media to encourage artists to explore the abstract bridges between public and private realms. By inviting submissions disseminated via social media, *A Confined Place* fosters a global colloquy about the importance of shifting places.

Through the creation and dissemination of concise films, creators from all over the world envisioned novel methods of inhabiting and rejuvenating public spaces in the new normal. *A Confined Place* open calls achieved notable success in terms of participation, innovation, and societal dialogue. The submitted works from creative individuals and groups around the world demonstrated the malleability to shift from geographical boundaries and physical spaces to digital platforms as new arenas of interaction.

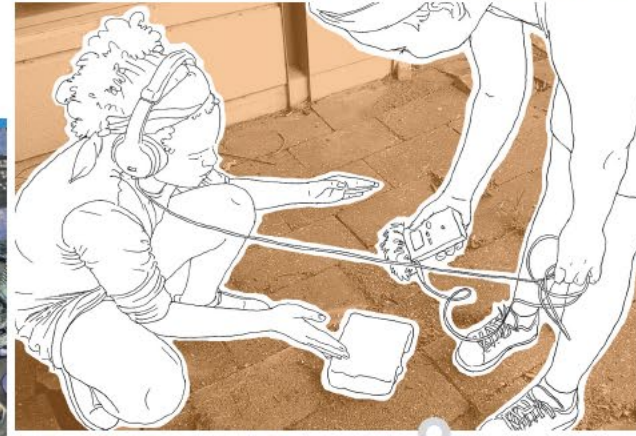
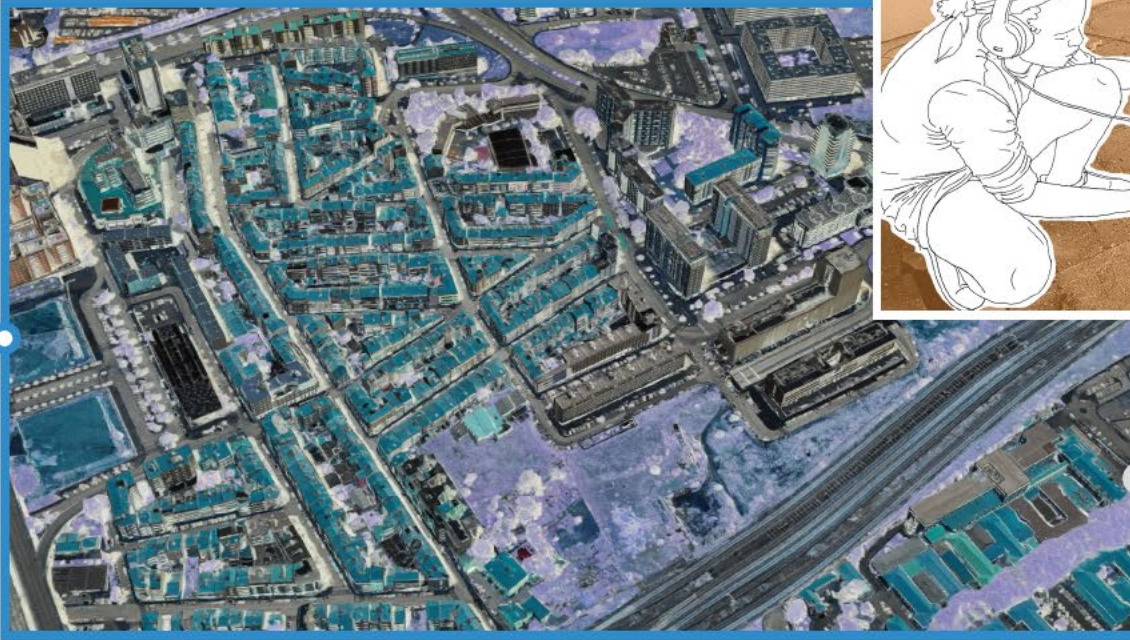
The *A Confined Place* project stands out as especially fruitful, not only because it creatively confronted the challenges posed by the unprecedented global lockdown, but also because for its facilitation of a worldwide dialogue on the evolving significance of spaces. **A-Place's** adaptable approach has efficiently yielded diverse participation and outcomes, all contributing to placemaking by encouraging individuals to reassess their relationship with their surroundings during this unique period of the pandemic.

Placemaking is a process that involves several stages: identifying a space, evaluating it, imagining change, implementing interventions, measuring effects, and suggesting new activities. The aim is to enable people to design their environment for satisfaction and pride. Within this process, participants gather data, take action, reflect, and inquire in a continual cycle of action and reflection akin to research. From this perspective, placemaking can be seen as the creation of a learning environment, similar to participatory action research, where various stakeholders collaborate to transform the present reality (Madraza et al., 2022, p. 154). Recognising these parallels, place-based education — a pedagogical approach that leverages the local environment and community as a foundation for learning and action — aims to enrich the sense of place, promote civic engagement, and encourage critical thinking.

A-Place's approach through place-based education is exemplified by *A Weaved Place*, which initially engaged architecture students from the

A Reconnecting Place

Reinforcing a sense of place and belonging



A Reconnecting Place aims bolstering the sense of belonging and identity, to reignite communal bonds for the Bairro de Rego community in Lisbon, and revitalise urban areas through placemaking practices that reflect the themes of motion and cycles of nature, life, and places by crafting a unique auditory landscape.



Co-constructing lived spaces

KU Leuven and La Serre NGO Communa, Brussels
May 5 to June 9, 2023

The closing event and exhibition in Brussels took place in two venues: the exhibition was hosted at KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture for a three-week period, while the daily conference was held at La Serre, a community centre operated by the NGO Communa, on May 26, 2023.

During the morning at La Serre, A-Place partners presented their project work. Following the presentations, participants engaged in a discussion about how the A-Place project aligns with the placemaking activities of these groups in Brussels.

After a community lunch at the same venue, three invited speakers presented their work with communities in the area of Brussels: Bram Dewolf from Urban Foxes, Lisa Pleysier from Parc Poetik, and Antoine Dutrieu from Communa. Subsequently, participants moved to a nearby park, where they were divided into two groups to address the following questions: "How can we engage citizens in public spaces?" and "How can we promote inclusivity in urban art projects?" Each group discussion concluded with a facilitator-led round-table discussion involving all participants.

The day finished with a drink and a concert of the Brussels based world-music trio Peixe e Limão.

An outdoor round table on creating meaningful place

for target audience
≠ channels
for ≠ audience

Creation

Lot of people

MUSIC

rafitis ← Story telling
sharing
Keep it simple

Accessibility
learning from the past
going back to older ideas

Go find people
that are excluded

expert in
creativity

INCLUSIVITY

OPEN

SHARE
memories
Stories

Put ourselves in
someone else's shoes

Flexibility
Flexibility

make it fun

collec

OBSERVE BUILD TRUST

Go on site
on the street

Bottom up
participation

Food

SIMPLE

SURPRISE

humility

No pre conception

teaching

sts in the process

Non verbal
activities
Ordinary

Include in the building
process

Sensitivity to the

repetition

breaking

to
change the norms

Active listening



A place in Can Trinxet

Can Trinxet, L'Hospitalet (Barcelona)
June 3 to 7, 2023

The closing event took place at Can Trinxet, a restored old textile factory building now serving as a community space. The municipality of L'Hospitalet, and the Centre Cultural Santa Eulàlia, which oversees the management of the equipment, made the venue available for the event. An exhibition of the A-Place project, which remained open from June 3 to 7, was part of the programme.

The one-day programme included debates, music performances, participatory creative activities, students' presentations, a sensorial workshop and, to finalise, a concert by a local music school.

Three dialogues took place outdoors the old nave of the factory, with the participation of invited speaker and A-Place partners.

- Creating learning spaces: the transformation of public spaces into meaningful educational environments
- Art, activism and public space: exploring how artistic expression can serve as a catalyst for social change within the public realm
- The sense of place and audiovisual language: the links between location, visual storytelling, and the impact of digital imagery

Bringing the event to a close, the Django Orchestra Academy performed a concert



Debate "Art, activism, and public space" In the outdoors of Can Trinxet

The event finalised with a live concert "Passages" by composer João Ferreira, with music for electronic organ inspired by the sounds of Bairro da Mouraria, with the screening of a video essay created for the A-Place project. This concert-installation recreated the feelings of women of the "Somos Mulheres" association who attended the performance.

During the event, the panels of the final exhibition were on display in one of the spaces, which also served as a projection area for videos summarising the project activities.



Duo Contracello & Jalma Reis (composer):
"A (travelling) Sound" concert

- Carpentry ◊
- Cooking ◊
- Installations ◊
- Interviewing ◊
- Murals ◊
- Music ◊
- Painting ◊
- Performing ◊
- Planting ◊
- Playing ◊
- Reusing ◊
- Storytelling ◊
- Walks ◊



A-Place partnership includes nine organisations from six European countries:

Schools of architecture and urban planning

- School of Architecture La Salle, Barcelona (Spain) – (Project Coordinator)
- Faculty of Architecture, University of Ljubljana (Slovenia)
- KU Leuven, Department of Architecture (Belgium)

Multidisciplinary groups focusing on arts and community engaged urban interventions

- Alive Architecture (Belgium)
- prostoRož (Slovenia)
- Urban Gorillas (Cyprus)

Cultural agencies specialised in film and video art

- Screen Projects (Spain)
- City Space Architecture (Italy)
- Faculty of Human and Social Sciences at NOVA University of Lisbon (Portugal)

The aim of A-Place, a project co-funded by the Creative Europe programme, has been to create a network of places across countries and cultures, artistic forms and educational fields, involving professional and non-professional stakeholders in six European cities and beyond, through the use of digital media.

Over four years, from October 2019 to 2023, the A-Place project partners — nine organisations, including universities, community-based creative groups, and cultural agencies — designed, implemented, and evaluated a diverse range of placemaking activities aimed at strengthening the bonds between people and places, combining artistic and educational practices in multiple forms and contexts.

This online publication compiles the extensive work undertaken during the four-year life of the project. It provides an overview of the activities and serves as a guide to the wealth of information amassed on the website throughout this time.



www.aplace.eu