A-Place

Linking places through
networked artistic practices

A year
in A-Place

A-Place is a platform dedicated to strengthening the bonds between people and places by means of networked artistic practices, carried out with the co-financing of the Creative Europe programme (2019-2023).
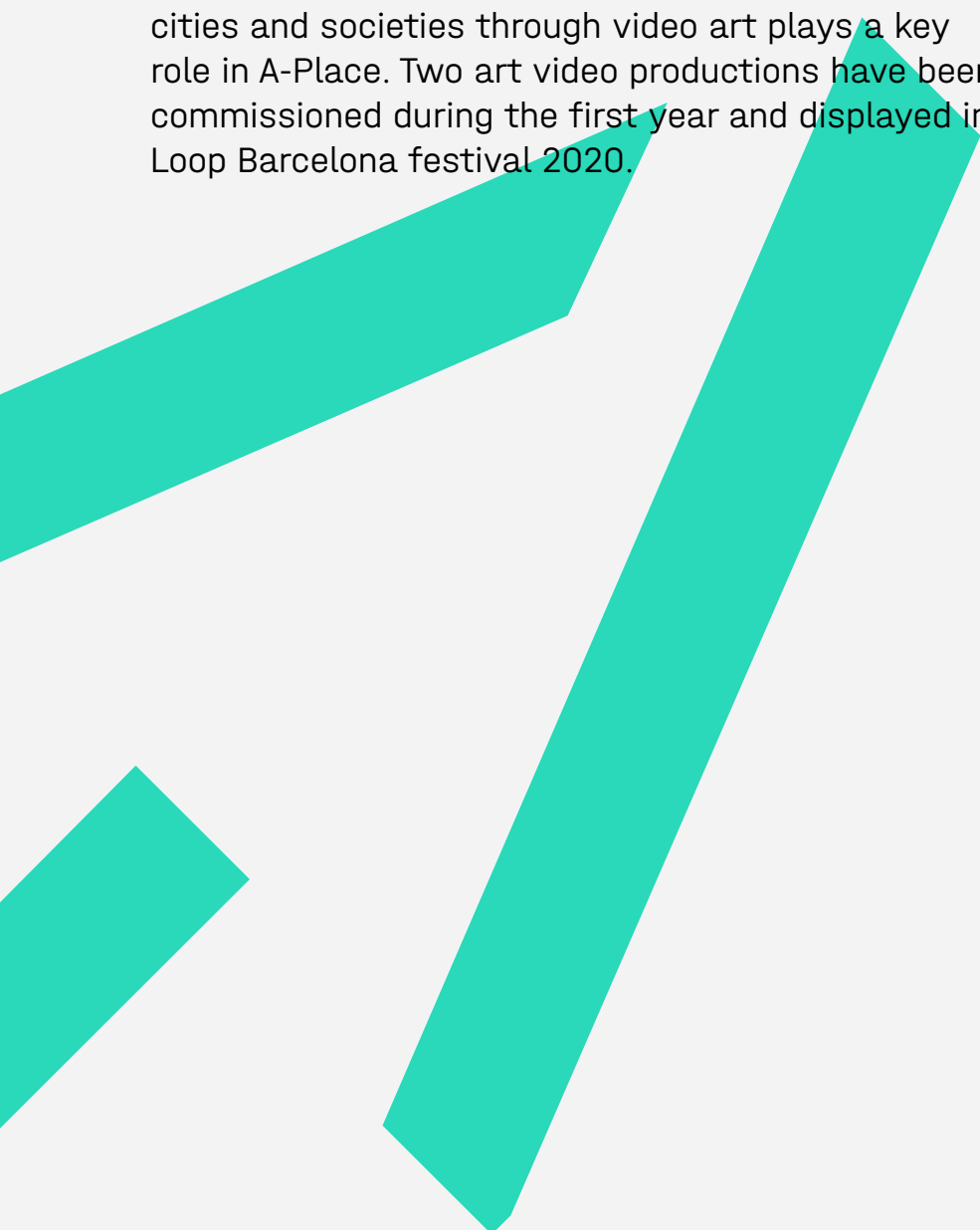
The purpose of A-Place is to design and implement art-centred placemaking activities in six European cities: Barcelona, Bologna, Brussels, Lisbon, Ljubljana, and Nicosia. Through site-specific creative spatial practices and cultural projects, the nine project partners —higher education institutions in the fields of architecture and social sciences, community engaged art groups and cultural agencies— aim to engage a variety of stakeholders —residents, artists, architects, students, policy-makers— in a process of reflection through actions on the meaning of and value of place in our contemporary global culture.

The project kick-off meeting took place in Barcelona, on November 27–30, 2019. A comprehensive plan of activities to be carried out in the first year of the project was released in February 2020. However, the unexpected outbreak of Covid-19 at the very start of the project was a great setback to the implementation of the planned activities. Fostering the notion of community and activating social and physical spaces with placemaking interventions have proven to be difficult tasks in times of lockdown. In spite of, and also because of, this unprecedented situation, during this first year we have carried out a range of actions in physical and digital spaces aimed at exploring, redefining and discussing the sense of community and its connection to places, in times of confinement.

Art Video Productions

## Exploring the sense of place

The exploration of the sense of place in our contemporary cities and societies through video art plays a key role in A-Place. Two art video productions have been commissioned during the first year and displayed in the Loop Barcelona festival 2020.

La città dentro

**by Anna de Manincor and ZimmerFrei**

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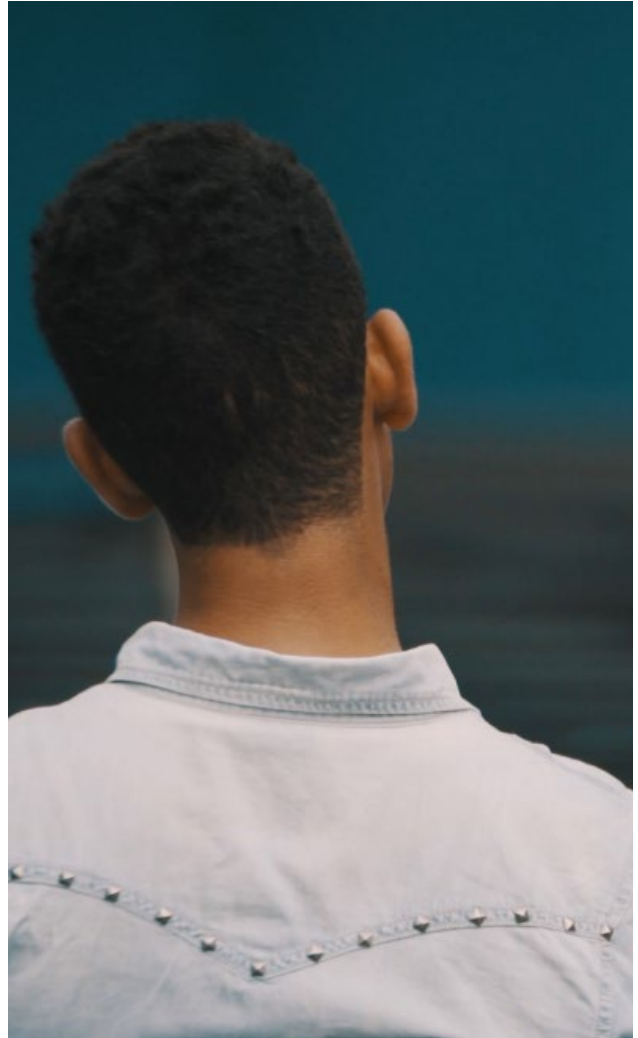
TERRApolis Puig d'Ossa

by Sitesize

Sitesize has been selected as the recipient of the artists in-residence A-Place grant to carry out a first art video production focused on the territory of L Hospitalet. The project proposed by Sitesize is a trilogy about the city that takes shape in a journey through the physical, spiritual, human and non-human life of its territory. The first part was presented in an online premiere on November 21, 2020 as part of the Loop Barcelona festival.
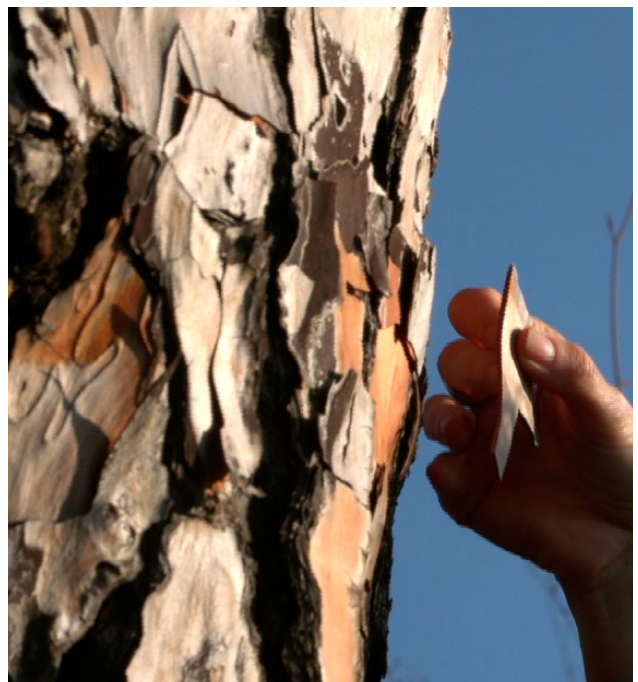
Loop Barcelona

A-Place section

A-Place was first presented in the 2019 Loop Festival, in the professional meetings section of this international festival dedicated to video art. The project scope and objectives were presented to a panel of invited specialists to receive their feedback at the start of the project. The same format has been repeated in the 2020 edition of the festival, with the session "A-Place a Year After: Are We Constructing Places?" in which A-Place partners presented the work done in the first year of the project to a panel composed by Esteban Marín, Fundación Contorno Urbano; María Solé Bravo, Architect BIG Barcelona and Asli Samadova, curator Baku/Milan.

Another meeting, under the title Audio Description and Audio Subtitling of Videoworks: A Place of Its Own, focused on how to facilitate access to the videos produced by ZimmerFrei for the visually impaired community access. The meeting brought to light a great deal of creative possibilities for constructing places around the subject of the audiodescription and audiosubtitling of audiovisual works. The panel of experts included Anna de Manincor (filmmaker, ZimmerFrei, Italy), Anna Matamala (PhD in Applied Linguistics, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain), Carme Guillamón (Philologist, Narratio Llengua i Accessibilitat, Spain), Marta Buzi (Studio Arki, Italy), and Magda Stawarska-Beavan (artist, Poland/UK).

Placemaking activities

A programme of placemaking activities to be carried out in the six participating cities was published in February 2020. However, due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic we had to postpone and/or adapt the original plans to the situation. A variety of placemaking strategies were adopted to implement the activities in hybrid contexts, combining onsite interventions and digital media: food to retain cultural identity; transforming sociophysical spaces into sound places; (physical and digital) urban tours and sensorial experiences; and group meetings and interviews with local actors, onsite and online. In addition, we created a programme of activities focusing on the experience of confinement was added to the original plan, using photography, mixed-media and film to express the sense of place during the confinement.
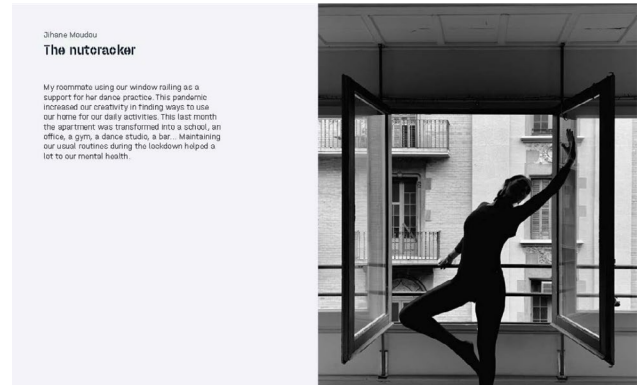
AConfined**Place**

School of Architecture La Salle, Urban Gorillas, City Space Architecture

The impact of the pandemic and the confinement within Europe affected many of the activities planned at the beginning of the project. A Confined Place has been an opportunity to explore the potential of placemaking and artistic creation in a digital context. This programme of activities consisted of:

A blog

Showcasing an exploration of the sense of place during confinement through photography. Over 60 students from Architecture, Sociology, and Art from the partner organizations participated in creating a collection of photographs and texts reflecting the global experience of the confinement.

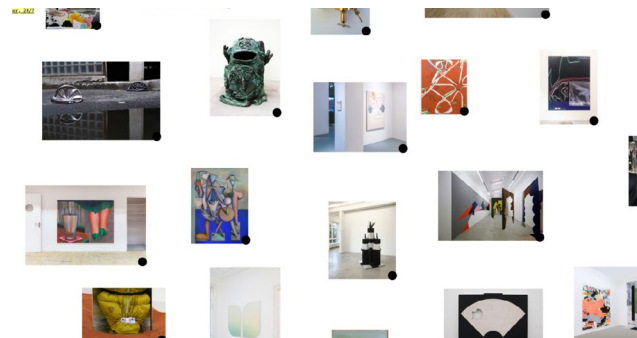View more >

An open call in social media

Using photography, video, and mixed media commenting on life in confinement focusing on two topics: #ARediscoveredPlace and #AReimaginedPlace. The call drew 96 entries from 19 different countries. 2,000 euros in prize money was distributed between the 6 winning projects.

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An open call for short films

To explore and widen the meaning of places in times of Covid-19, in the lockdown and recovery periods. From August 20 to September 30, 2020, we received over 335 films from 59 countries. A jury with representatives of A-Place partners and guest critics will select the winner and two honourable mentions. Selected projects will be screened at the festival Urban Visions, Beyond the ideal city, organized by City Space Architecture.

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A Weaved Place
## in L'Hospitalet

School of Architecture La Salle, Sitesize

During April May 2020 —during the lockdown— the students of the Systems of Representation subject at La Salle School of Architecture carried out an analysis of the visual and social territory of L Hospitalet, a municipality included in the metropolitan area of Barcelona. Due to the confinement, the analysis was conducted in a digital space, using Google Earth to get to know spaces and buildings, and internet to reach civic organizations and neighbours.

A strategy for the social analysis —focusing on the caring city, diverse city, metabolic city and emergency city— was proposed by Sitesize, a platform dedicated to the creation and research of the contemporary metropolis. A series of short videos summarize some of the issues which arose as a result of the interviews with citizens: the city fragmentation and the need to have city centres, the construction of relationships between groups of distinct social origins, the role of public spaces to foster social cohesion and the sense of belonging to the city. Each video is linked to an online questionnaire for the citizens of Hospitalet to convey their experience of living in the city. In the planning and implementation of activities participated architecture students and faculty, artists, residents, civic organizations, local administration and cultural associations of L'Hospitalet.

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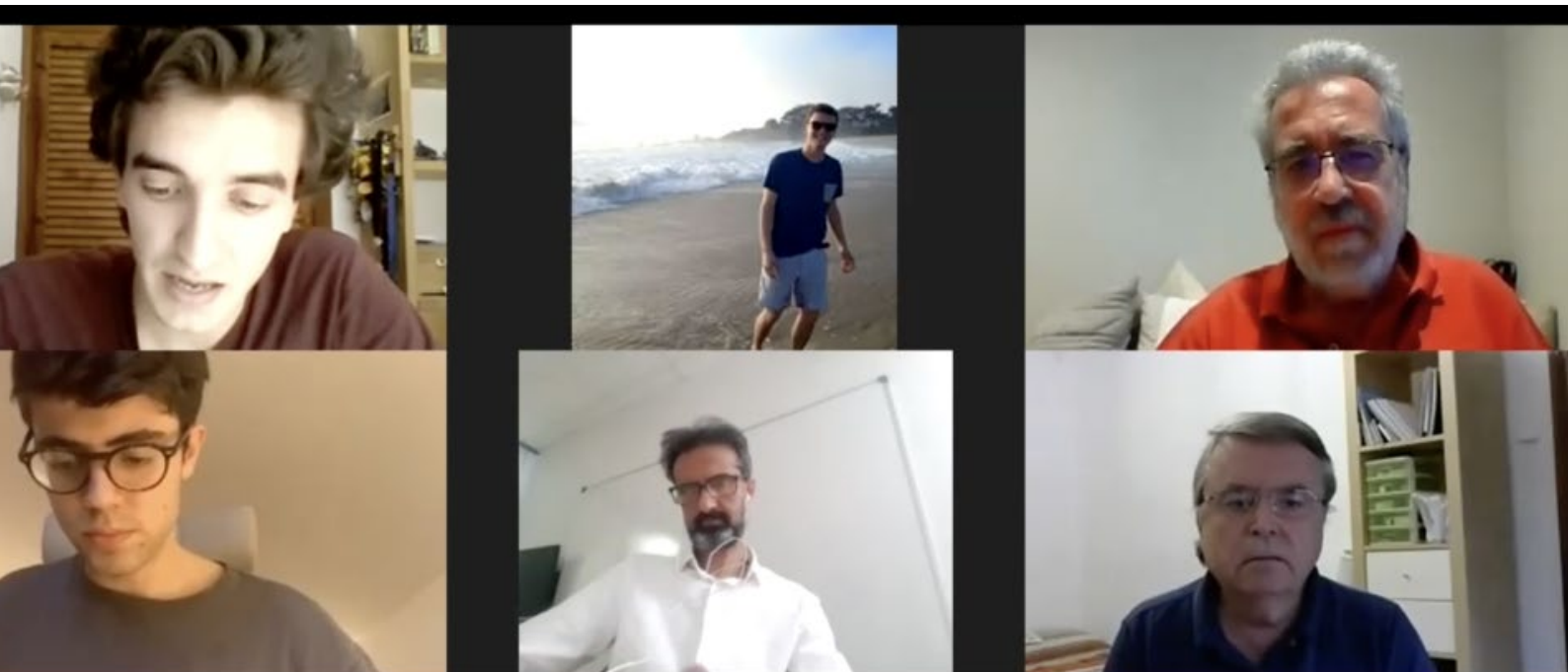
AHiddenPlace
in Ljulbjana

Faculty of Architecture University of Ljubljana, ProstoRož

A Hidden Place focused on the revitalization of an empty plot in the Bežigrajski Dvor district in Ljubljana. The activities carried out from March thru August included workshops, seminars, exhibitions and site interventions, engaging local stakeholders, organised groups and students in a series of events. The activities were carried out online and onsite.

A student workshop taking place from March until June 2020, focused on the socio-cultural context, revealing potential future uses for the site. They proposed temporal or semi-temporal interventions and on-site events to attract the interest of the public. It was a first step towards inhabiting this hidden place, making it more inclusive and attractive for the different social and interest groups. In August, an event was organized in the site to bake burek the imported but well accepted dish brought by migrants from Bosnia which was recorded in a video screened in A Delicious Place pop up cinema in Nicosia.

In the placemaking interventions have participated students from the Faculty of Architecture University of Ljubljana, members of ProstoRož, and Trajna.

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ADeliciousPlace
in Nicosia

Urban Gorillas + project partners

Revolving around the topic of food, a programme of activities took place from the 4th thru 13th of September 2020, as part of the Pame Kaimakli festival in Nicosia. The activities included a collective planting action, a performative dinner, two video productions recording two community workshops, audio visual ethnographic performances, a book launch on the edible gardens of Kaimakli, and a pop-up cinema showcasing two international films and documentary video stories. The activities involved diverse stakeholders such as a local organisation for the elderly, a migrant association, children, artists, local activists, and the wider community. The participating organizations included the A-Place partners prostoRož (Slovenia), University of Ljubljana (Slovenia), NOVA FCSH (Portugal) and KU Leuven (Belgium), as well as other organizations: Cultureghem (Belgium), MultiKulti (Bulgaria), BosserLive (Israel), LaFundició (Spain), ACRA (Italy), and Trajna, (Slovenia).

Actions were supported by the Cyprus Ministry of Culture, the Nicosia Municipality, the Italian Embassy, the Indian High Commission, and Thomopol.

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ACalmPlace
in Brussels

Alive Architecture, KU Leuven

Alive Architecture and KU Leuven, in collaboration with Renovas and Maison des Arts, organized a series of events to generate a place for encounters between local citizens and students in a hidden green place behind the Maison des Arts. The programme of activities which was carried out on October 9-10, 2020 encompassed a community workshop in Place de la Reine led by two Master students from KU Leuven Department of Architecture, where the public learned about recycled materials through a hands on do-it-yourself-approach; a sensory walk guided by a local resident with KU Leuven alumni, using sensorial techniques developed by the urban collective OURB, and a concert on Turkish music from the Tatyos Ensemble together with a dinner prepared and served by a local association.

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ASoundPlace
in Lisbon

Universidade Nova de Lisboa and Nova FCSH

A Sound Place is an interdisciplinary performance and installation focused on the travelling sounds of Mouraria neighbourhood in Lisbon. The event took place on October 31, 2020, in Mouraria Innovation Centre, in Lisbon. The activity was based on the idea of travelling sounds , as a manifestation of the permanently changing nature of a multicultural contemporary society.

The concert-installation program consisted of two different pieces of contemporary classical music: (1) the composer Jaime Reis ''Non-Place: A Tribute to Marc Augē'' (electronics) that include also six parts created by students from Lisbon Superior Music School: Mantra (Marta Domingues, 2020); Ulyssipo (Mariana Ribeiro, 2020); Declamations III (Hugo Xavier d Almeida, 2020); Common Place (Ana Roque, 2020); Frame (Mariana Vieira, 2020); and Mumble (Francisco Rosa, 2020); and (2) Hermes (2017) created by João Quinteiro, composer and Ph.D. student from Artistic Studies, Nova University of Lisbon.

The first composition was created by Jaime Reis and Lisbon Superior Music School students, specifically for A-Place, based on the sounds collected in the neighbourhood, together with imaginary sounds and memories of local communities, migrants, transient population, and artists. The second composition, conceived by the young composer João Quinteiro, was based on the story of an immigrant living in the vicinity of Mouraria, and other inhabitants stories of surrounding parishes.

The activity was organised by the NOVA School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Nova University Lisbon, the Nova Institute of Philosophy, and The Lisbon Uncommon Association. It was supported by Mouraria Innovation Centre, and Lisbon City Hall / Câmara Municipal de Lisboa.

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AVisionaryPlace
in Bologna

City Space Architecture

Urban Visions. Beyond the Ideal City is a film festival that will take place in Bologna from the 22–25 April, 2021. Its purpose is to promote a debate on the complexity of the contemporary city, with a specific interest in public space and urban humanities using film as a means of communication, participation and emotional engagement. With this aim, two open calls have been organized in order to investigate the city s connections, intersections and activities focusing on participation, sharing and social practices in the public realm:

— A Confined Urban Vision (online competition) with online screenings on December 4–18, 2020 on City Space Architecture s website and a final online event on December 18, 2020
— A Place/ Migrants, refugees and displaced communities: with screenings during the Film Festival ''Urban Visions. Beyond the Ideal City'' in April 2021

On October 4, 2020, a pop-up parklet was inaugurated in the neighbourhood of Porto-Saragozza in Bologna, to host public talks, dialogues and small events. This parklet is meant to be an instrument of urban regeneration, a space for life, social interaction and sharing. Two activities have taken place: a one-hour language workshop in English, Come and speak English at the Parklet! , delivered in five sessions limited to 10 people each due to the Covid-19 restrictions; and an artistic show with live music and dance by StaMurga, a group of young street artists. In this performance in the parklet, murga —a form of street theatre that combines percussion, dance, singing and acting— was the expression of peaceful, noisy and colourful dissent.

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Published reports

Two public reports have been released during this first year of the project: Quality Assessment Plan, published in September 2020, which contains guidelines, methods and tools to carry out the evaluation of placemaking activities in the A-Place project; and Planning of local activities 2019–2020, February 2020 (right before the start of the Covid-19 crisis) with a comprehensive description of the placemaking activities to be carried out in the six partner cities —Barcelona, Bologna, Brussels, Lisbon, Ljubljana, and Nicosia— during the first year of the project.

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

Quality Assessment F

Deliverable 5.1

A-Place

Linking places through networked artistic practices

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

Planning of local acti
2019-2020

Deliverables 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4

Conferences

City Street conference

Faculty of Architecture, University of Ljubljana

A-Place presented a <u>paper in the City Street conference</u> organized by the Faculty of Architecture, University of Ljubljana. In this paper, we discussed the scope and activities of the A-Place project, and the methodology to be applied in their evaluation within a social, and educational context. The presentation took place on September 24, 2020.

A-PLACE: LINKING PLACES THROUGH NETWORKED ARTISTIC PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of A-Place "Linking places through networked artistic practices", a project co-funded by the Creative Europe programme (2019-2023) is to design and implement art-centred placemaking activities in six European cities –Barcelona, Bologna, Brussels, Lisbon, Ljubljana, and Nicosia– to connect meanings and experiences associated to places across cultural and geographic boundaries. Placemaking activities will be carried out with the participation of both local residents (from multiple cultural backgrounds) and transient population (refuges, tourists, business travellers, temporary workers), in collaboration with artists and educational staff participating in the project. In this paper, we outline the scope of the project, describe the first-year programme of activities, and discuss the methodology to be applied in their evaluation.

Keywords: placemaking, creative placemaking

INTRODUCTION

The re-appropriation of public spaces by their users, which defies the regulations set by professional planners and policy-makers, has been gaining ground in the last decades, to the extent that it has become part of newly "institutionalized" form of planning. A diversity of practices, including placemaking, creative placemaking, tactical urbanism, pop-up urbanism, performative urbanism and community art-based interventions, among others, coincide in the need to foster bonds between people and the spaces they live in, and to find ways to increase their sense of

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"strategies", both terms now embraced by "tactical urbanism" (Lydon et al., 2012). As Hou concluded, "Under the banners of tactical urbanism, creative placemaking, pop-up, and so on, improvised uses of urban spaces have become a method of urban design interventions and even development strategies", which are becoming increasingly accepted by institutional actors and adopted by companies as part of their marketing strategies (Harris and Nowicki, 2015).

Today, planning practitioners are challenging conventional practices developing new approaches which are more critical and process-driven (McKeown and Courage, 2019). Along this line, performative urbanism (Wolfrum and Brandis, 2015) aims at shifting the focus on perception and interpretation to "action, politics, design", in order to move urban planning and architecture beyond the limits of "objects and images". These alternative practices question existing power relations and offer alternative ways to bring together time, place and communities. In this sense, the concept of spatial practice can be extended to integrate social and political realms, which lead us to think of placemaking as a diverse form of civic-situated knowledge creation .in-and-through design which, as Miessen (2017) contended, lead us "to go beyond conventional physical construction and venture into the construction of realities—to not follow existing protocols, but to proactively generate them."

A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMME OF PLACEMAKING INTERVENTIONS

The purpose of A-Place (2020), a project co-financed by the Creative Europe programme (2019-2023), is to strengthen the bonds between people and places through creative placemaking practices. A number of interventions are planned for the first year of the project, in the cities where the partner organizations operate physically, as well as in digital spaces. The activities to carry out, actors involved and the objectives they pursue are next summarized.

- A **Calm Place in Schaerbeek (Brussels)** aims at enabling exchanges between students and residents in this superdiverse neighbourhood, with mixed cultures and ethnicities, and creatively exploring the potential of the strong presence of the student community. Integrating temporary interventions with the North Brabant Saint Lazare Renovation Contract, the placemaking activities –on-site events around a mobile installation (Mobile Hub) and learning activities involving students, artists, passers-by and residents (Learning Bubble)– will re-discover a green space next to Maison des Arts and transform it into a space for reflection and encounter. The interventions will help to visualize daily practices and activities and to facilitate socialisation between people of different origins and backgrounds, thus contributing to the rethinking and transformation of the urban space.

- A **Confined Place** is a programme of activities, open to those willing to express and share the experience of living in the period of confinement through the digital networks, using a variety of mixed techniques including texts and storytelling, drawings and photographs, audio-visual works and performances. The goal is to

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create a sense of place derived from sharing a confinement across the globe, connecting people's experiences and contributing to community building in this exceptional period.

- A **Hidden Place in Ljubljana** focuses on the revitalization of an empty plot in the Bežigrajski Dvor district, a place without a collective memory or use. The placemaking intervention is carried out together with Trajna, a non-governmental organisation dedicated to promote community economies, creative research, workshops and eco-infrastructure design. We are inviting youth and adults (teachers from nearby schools, parents and child and young relatives, as well as other interested residents and passers-by) to approach the site, to inhabit it and to transform it into a place. This way, it will be possible to reveal the diversity of the ways through which a place can be "sensed" (perceived and felt) by different age groups within various learning environments (formal and informal).

- A **Joint Place in Kaimakli (Nicosia)** will be organized in conjunction with the "Pame Kaimakli" neighbourhood festival, whose aim is to use artistic and spatial practices to facilitate the interaction between the community, the artists and the public. Over the period of one week, representatives of partner organisations (architects, artists, students) will collaborate in the design and implementation of actions which address the current problems of the neighbourhood, using a variety of media (installations, performances, video and photography). This way, academics, artists and students will participate in a joint construction of a sense of place, together with the community.

- A **Sound Place in Lisbon** will involve the collaborative creation of a cultural soundscape of the Martim Moniz surroundings –one of the most multicultural neighbourhoods of Lisbon– by collecting residents' and non-residents' sonic perceptions and using them as materials for the creation of music pieces to be played in a live concert. The placemaking activities will include an installation of videos and photos representing the sounds of the neighbourhood. They will contribute to fostering social inclusion and dialogue between social groups, and will provide new insights for the ongoing rehabilitation plans in the area.

- A **Visionary Place in Bologna** will comprise workshops, talks and small events, which will be part of the Urban Visions festival. The programme will include a section to discuss the living conditions of migrants, refugees and displaced communities. The placemaking activities will concentrate on the Porto-Saragozza neighbourhood, in the south part of the city, near the well-known Arco del Meloncello. The goal is to increase the awareness of the need to integrate marginal groups in a joint construction of a sense of place and belonging.

- A **Weaved Place in L'Hospitalet (Barcelona)**. The multiplicity of social groups with different origins, the marked differences between neighbourhoods, and the transport infrastructures (railways, highways) have given rise to a fragmented social and physical territory in this municipality, which is part of the metropolitan area of Barcelona. The purpose of the activities –workshops, public space interventions, photography exhibitions, video screening– is to involve students,

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by Vertovec (2007), refers to a diversification of diversity which surpasses the conventional interpretations of interculturality (Meissner and Vertovec, 2014). The most evident challenge is a diversification of interests in society which gives rise to intercultural conflicts and makes it difficult for the urban design and planning practices to find a common ground to build upon. On the other hand, superdiversity creates distinct and novel forms of everyday life, which can also be creatively addressed.

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

The term "creative placemaking" arose as a result of a programme of the National Endowment for the Arts in the United States "to integrate art and design in community planning and development, build shared spaces for arts engagement and creative expression, and increase local economic activity through arts and cultural activities" (Landesman, 2013). The aim was to help "public, private, non-profit, and community sectors" to develop strategies to "shape the physical and social character of a neighbourhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities" (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010). Creative placemaking was part of a "creative economy" in which the "creative industries" would play a key role, together with the "creative citizens", in the making of "creative cities".

The addition of the adjective "creative" to placemaking gave rise to a new discursive practice, devised by government agencies, funders and other institutions (Zitcer, 2018). Within this "mode of production of the objects of knowledge", the artist becomes one more member of a partnership whose aim is "to develop projects that have a public impact", together with other placemakers (e.g. developers, citizens, local authorities). However, if "creatively planned", placemaking can

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At this moment, partners are carrying out an overall reflection of the work done in the first year In the different realms encompassed by the project: community building, interactions between community and academia, collaboration between artists and community, use of digital media in placemaking, and, above all, the impact of the pandemic in public space and the need to adapt the project objectives, methods and tools to a situation which is likely to have a long-term impact in the way we think of and intervene in public space with placemaking. We hope to provide more examples our creative capacities to continue creating places in this unchartered territory.