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## The importance of creative participatory planning in the public place-making process

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**Abstract.** The idea of ‘place’ has long been central to the planning and design practice. Recent trends illustrate increased intervention in the ‘experience’ and ‘feeling’ of places, in order to influence and enhance community dynamics. While place-making is an important tool for experts to utilize in community planning, it should be accompanied by a thorough understanding of the contemporary social dynamics of place and the implications it has for the people who inhabit these places. In this sense, participatory planning forms an integral part of future place-making processes and planning thereof. In this paper, the first aim is to capture the importance of incorporating public perspective into the place-making process when considering future urban planning. The second is to stress the importance of the creative participatory processes to attract stakeholders and enhance their willingness to partake in the participatory planning processes. The third aim is to identify creative participatory planning tools that can be used to enhance participatory planning within the place-making process.

**Keywords:** creative participatory planning, place-making, place, space, creative participation tools

### 1 Introduction to space, place, and place-making

In an urban planning context the concepts of space and place are often used interchangeably, although they are different in terms of definition and implementation.

Space is organized into places, often thought of as bounded settings in which social relations and identity are constituted (Radboud University Nijmegen, 2000). The concept of ‘trialectic of spatiality’ (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996) proposes three realms of understanding and experiencing space as a dialectical triad. Firstly, *conceived space* (a representation of space) is the dominant mode for understanding space, and the primary mode of operation for planners, and involves the ordering of abstract knowledge and values into signs and codes that are both implicit and explicit. The second realm is *perceived space* (spatial practice), and this refers to the mediated experiences of space that are coherent and empirically measurable. This involves the interpretation of the signs and codes, accurately or otherwise. Thirdly, *lived space* (spaces of representation) is directly produced and experienced as images and symbols formed by the everyday life of users (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996). Lively spaces (places with function and meaning) emerge as a result of people using the space to perform the necessities of daily life.

Place, on the other hand, is a portion (an interpretation) of geographical space, defined as ‘territories of meaning’ (Holt-Jensen, 1999, page 224). “Places are spaces that you can remember, that you can care about and make part of your life. The world should be filled with places so vivid and distinct that they can carry significance. Places could bring emotions, recollections, people, and even ideas to mind” (Lyndon, 1983, page 2).

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Places are spaces with meaning. Planners are the first to handle this transformation from spaces to places. This comprehends a dimension which is in progress to conceptualize things that are emerging (Sentürk and Kovacheva, 2009, page 16), using spaces to plan and transform them into meaningful (living) places. Place can be referred to as ‘social space’, where the environment is perceived through different senses and where perception is influenced by experiences, connecting a meaning to the environment (Sentürk and Kovacheva, 2009, page 10). Place-making can thus be regarded as the process of transforming spaces into qualitative places by focusing on the social dimension of planning, linking meaning and function to the spaces.

In this paper we focus on place-making for public places (or social spaces), such as town squares, that are open and accessible to all, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, age, or socioeconomic level (Efroymson et al, 2009, page 8). Although, by definition, public places are spaces that belong to the public domain that is open and accessible to all, by extension, from a physical point of view, the category covers all spaces to which the public has access, including spaces situated between buildings (for example, the city grid, open to various degrees) and urban collective spaces (that can have private status such as outdoor spaces on housing schemes, shopping centres, or stations). It is primarily the usage of the space in question that dictates whether or not it is public in nature rather than the owner or manager’s status (Loudier and DuBois, 2003, page 2).

While there is no agreed definition of place-making, it is generally understood as a process that is part of urban design that makes places liveable and meaningful (Flemming, 2007; PPS, 2008). In practicing place-making, planners, along with the input of the residents who are the actual users of the space, are engaged directly in the production of meaningful place.

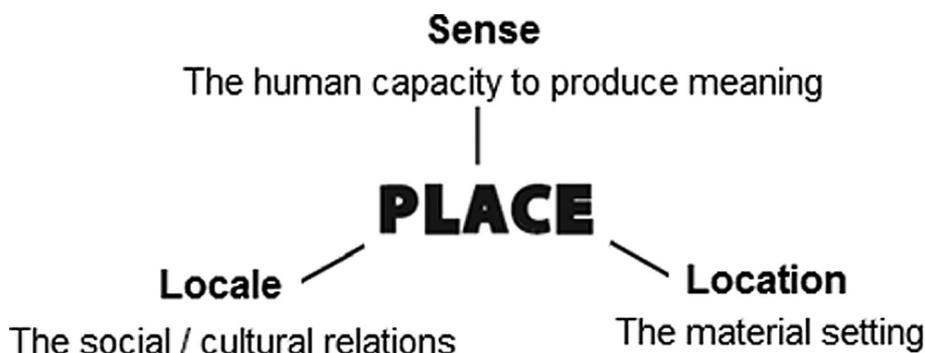
Place-making is a socially constructed process that is shaping cities largely through capital investment designed to generate economic growth and promote cultural tourism (Martin, 2003; PPS, 2007; Zukin, 1995).

Planning for social space, and place-making, thus implies planning for people, whose needs are constantly changing (Barendse et al, 2007, page 3). In this sense, the complexity of the place-making process has increased due to the increasingly dynamic (and changing) needs and preferences of society, with regard to social, sustainability, and economic issues. The urban environment is a traditionally slow-changing environment and as a result there are tensions between the urban environment and the society (with fast-changing needs).

Furthermore, the place-making approach is closely linked to the bottom-up planning approach, favouring the site scale and people scale of planning. Public places are dependent on the quality of the space provided, the overall invitation and function of the space, that is extended to users of the space to walk, stay, sit, or otherwise enjoy the space (Gehl, 2004a, page 1). Such public spaces with meaning and function can be better planned from the people scale, as the human dimension is about creating a nice and inviting environment, at eye level (Gehl, 2004b, page 30).

Whereas the traditional focus of urban planning was to plan for buildings and infrastructure, where the end-product was to attract life, the current place-making approach is focused on adapting spaces to people, thus emphasizing the social realities (in terms of movement patterns, behaviour patterns, interaction patterns) and needs (in terms of social structure, public places to socialize, adhering to the individual’s perspective and vision). The place-making approach identifies where natural life and movement tends to flow, and thereafter creates spaces to enhance these movements and functions and buildings that will support the spaces, thus turning the traditional urban planning process upside down (Gehl, 2004b, page 31).

Thus, place-making is inherently involved in determining the social production of place (Stout, 2008, page 14). Place-making is the most concrete practice of producing place. Cultural and societal knowledge plays an important role in the production of place (Cresswell, 2004), but place is also described as primary to social relations (Malpas, 1999). It is through an individual's experience of social relations that the material setting of space is endowed with value and made distinct from abstract space (Stout, 2008, page 13). This is illustrated in figure 1, the place diagram.



**Figure 1.** The place diagram (source: Agnew, 1987, open access).

The users ascribe meaning to place based on their experience of social dynamics; they also derive meaning from it based on the intentions of its producers. Social and cultural factors inform 'experience of place' (Stout, 2008, page 14) and the sense of place (*genius loci*).

In practice, successful public spaces manifest as qualitative public places, supported by specific factors that are beyond their physical dimensions (Baltimore City Department of Planning, 2010, page 170) including, but not limited to, image, attractions, amenities, flexibility, and access. Historically, public spaces were the centre of communities and traditionally they helped shape the identity of entire cities, thus stressing 'image' as a critical factor in the planning of public places. Along with the image, public spaces also need to create 'attractions'. Successful public places have a variety of smaller spaces within them that appeal to a variety of people. This should be supported by sufficient 'amenities' to make the usage of the space more comfortable and establish social interaction. The function connected to a public place should be 'flexible' and linked to a seasonal strategy, ensuring all-year use of the space. Apart from these factors, 'access' plays a critical role in the planning of public places and should be addressed accordingly in the planning process.

The place-making approach is based on the premise that successful public spaces are lively, secure, and distinctive places that function for the people who use them (PPS, 2011, page 10). Figure 2 captures the key attributes of place-making, namely sociability, uses and activities, access and linkages, and comfort and image, and the intangibles and measurements linked to each attribute.

Feldman and Stall (2004, page 184) described appropriation of spaces as the creation, choice, possession, modification, enhancement of, care for, and/or simply intentional use of a space by 'individuals' and 'groups' to make it their own. Successful and lively places can be characterized by this social orientation as addressing the needs of the communities who are the actual users of the space. In the process of appropriating a physical setting, the self or the social are expressed in spatial form, and this in turn has a transformative effect on people (De Haan, 2005, page 9), and the planning of places. This can also be referred to as the socialization of space, the human intervention which creates space by assembling spatial boundaries, objects, functions, practices, and rules to find their expression in a spatial material form. Thus, these



**Figure 2.** [In colour online.] Place-making elements (source: Baltimore City Department of Planning, 2010, page 90).

spatial forms are embedded with human agency, and have performative power over human action (specialization of sociality) (De Haan, 2005, page 14).

Thus, spaces, places, and buildings are more than just props in people's lives; they are imbued with meaning and resonance, as they symbolize people's personal histories, interpersonal relationships, and shared events in people's extended relationships, families, communities, and wider culture. Sense of place refers to the feeling of attachment or belonging to a physical environment, such as a place or neighbourhood, and the sense of personal and collective identity that comes from this sense of belonging (Butterworth, 2000, page ii). In classical times the 'genius loci' was personified as a guardian spirit living in and protecting the place in question (Stiles, 2012, page 19).

Altman (1993, page 34) noted that the physical environment is more than an influencing factor in people's behaviour, "it is also a medium, milieu or context in which personal relationships are embedded, and without which they cannot be viable." Altman (1993) furthermore stated that "we do not just 'exist' within a physical environment—we interact with it and derive important meaning from it." Curtis and Rees Jones (1998, page 86) identified with this statement and defined the concept *sense of place* as "the meaning, intention, felt value and significance that individuals or groups give to particular places." Sense of place refers to the feeling of attachment or belonging to a physical environment, such as a place or neighbourhood, and the sense of personal and collective identity that comes from this sense of belonging (Butterworth, 2000, page 7). Berkowitz (1996, page 452) referred to it as *social support* of an area. Social support is a key element to sustainable communities:

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“community life is sustained when social networks are strong, when there are people with common interests and who feel a sense of common fate” (Berkowitz, 1996, page 452).

With the focus on creating lively places, and creating a sense of place, the modern planning approach shifted towards a more social-orientated and environmental-orientated approach. The protection of the existing urban open space resource and the *provision* of new open spaces to respond to the demands created by new development is currently a vital part of any strategic approach to urban space. Experience has shown that there is also a need to pay particular attention to planning and design aspects affecting the interests of certain user groups who have tended to be neglected in the past (Stiles, 2012, page 5). It was found that the loss of greenery and open space and the higher density resulting from infill housing gave residents the feeling of a less ordered, less stable, and less understandable neighbourhood. The streets were no longer considered as sites of sociability (De Haan, 2005, page 3). Vallance et al (2005, page 731) conclude that “the increased diversity of people, lifestyles and building that infill housing brings to neighbourhoods has implications for the senses of place associated with particular areas and the extents to which particular senses of place can survive in areas undergoing change.”

## 2 Participatory planning approach

The opportunity to participate in civic life has been identified as a core human need, essential to the psychological health of individuals and communities. Meaningful public participation in decision making on urban environmental issues is seen as important for (i) upholding the notion of participatory democracy, (ii) the effectiveness of the planning process and the quality of the planning outcomes, (iii) improving the quality of, and to validate, political decision making. Meaningful participation in the decisions that affect people’s lives is an integral component of their sense of being sufficiently empowered to have some influence over the course of events that shape their lives. To create living cities and strengthen civic identity, people need to take an active role in claiming their sense of belonging by cultivating political debate over the quality of the built environment and the culture of cities. Health promotion interventions designed to promote healthier built environments need to find avenues for enhancing empowered community participation in the decisions that shape people’s surroundings (Butterworth, 2000, page v).

The goal of participatory planning is to get the public perspectives into the planning process and actual design of a public space (where public is defined as individuals selected by location and interest, and as actual users of the space, as well as stakeholder organizations and experts and professionals).

Qualitative public spaces have meaning and function. Successful public spaces attract people, thereby creating functional places. In this sense, there should be a clear distinction between ‘urban space for everyone’ and ‘urban space for some’, acknowledging the impossibility of providing safe urban space for everyone at the same time. When creating and planning a function linked to a public space, the developer and planner need to understand the preferences of the users of the space. “People who use a public space are the ones who know, from experience, which areas are dangerous and why, which spaces are comfortable, where traffic moves too quickly and how certain aspects of a space could be improved. Uncovering and incorporating their ideas is essential to creating a successful public place, as the users of the space provide perspective and valuable insights into how an area functions, and offer a unique understanding of the issues that are important” (PPS, 2011, page 13).

It is agreed that urban open spaces ought to be designed to benefit society as a whole, but it is important to specify which particular groups we are concerned with, in order to ensure that their explicit needs are taken into account (Stiles, 2012, page 23). Figure 3 captures the complexity of stakeholder identification in terms of urban open space planning.

Pre-School Children	School Children	Teenagers and Young Adults	Men	Women
Tourists and Visitors	<b>Urban Open Space</b>			Families
Migrants and other Minority Ethnic Groups				Parents or Child Carers with Children
The Physically Disabled and their Carers				Working People
Retired People and Senior Citizens	Businesses	Commuters and Incoming Workers	Local Residents	The Unemployed

**Figure 3.** [In colour online.] Parties sitting around the open space ‘table’ (source: Stiles, 2012, page 24, open access).

As can be seen from figure 3, it is quite possible for anyone to be a member of more than one group at the same time, while everyone will move through many of the different groups at different times in their life. Members of these different groups have different needs and requirements with regard to urban open spaces, and it is important that they are considered thoroughly at the planning and design stage to make sure they can be accommodated properly (Stiles, 2012, page 24).

The concept of *community* has, traditionally, referred to a geographical region, such as a neighbourhood, town, or city. However, increasingly, the term has come to reflect the reality of an industrial society in which people, due to their increased mobility and communications technology, relate to each other outside any territorial boundary by their shared interests and skills. Sense of community reflects the symbolic interaction in which people engage as they use aspects of the physical environment (Butterworth, 2000, page iii).

It is crucial to recognize the different types of users and their various interests and needs, and to try to address these needs within the urban planning process (Nørgaard and Børresen, 2010, page 9) in an attempt to create social spaces and built social capital. This can be done through comprehensive participatory planning approaches.

Participatory planning is known to identify further issues and needs that might be overseen from a traditional planning perspective. Supported by the bottom-up planning approach, participatory planning focuses on user input, user support, and end-product success. Social cohesion is strengthened through the participatory planning processes, resulting in more social capital and enhanced *local ownership*. Local ownership is a growth process that imposes demands, on both the citizens and the municipality. A difference of opinion about a future development often stimulates both sides to think about how participation and responsibility can be shared (Overbeek et al, 2009, page 4). The target is expressed through joint openness, two-way communication as a means of reaching a shared vision (recognizing that this is an ideal situation), and an equal contribution by the public and local government. Various case studies proved that such an approach did have a positive impact on the planning process, as communities felt engaged and were more willing to cooperate in future planning and developments [refer to the green credit tool (Cilliers et al, 2010) and the workbench method (Cilliers et al, 2011)].

Competitiveness of cities is also enhanced through participatory planning and local ownership, as qualitative and functional spaces are developed according to specific

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user needs and actual feasibility, supported by the 'local owners'. Participatory planning processes further enhance public awareness. Residents grasp the complexities associated with development and are made aware of the sustainability issues to be considered.

Thus, participatory planning can be beneficial to the traditional planning approaches, enhancing social benefits, economic spinoffs, and sustainable development approaches. Reality reveals that participatory planning is often neglected by developers and planners, or conducted in standard questionnaire format that lacks creativity and innovation. Participatory strategies of research are often limited in their reach and feasibility for practical use by planners. The formal nature and expert knowledge of planning fail to be inclusive of the complexity of social relations (Stout, 2008, page 24). This can be due to the lack of 'know-how', or the complexities associated with participatory planning. Accordingly, the basic issues of participatory planning are discussed below, including stakeholder identification and stakeholder involvement followed by creative participatory planning tools that can be used in the place-making process.

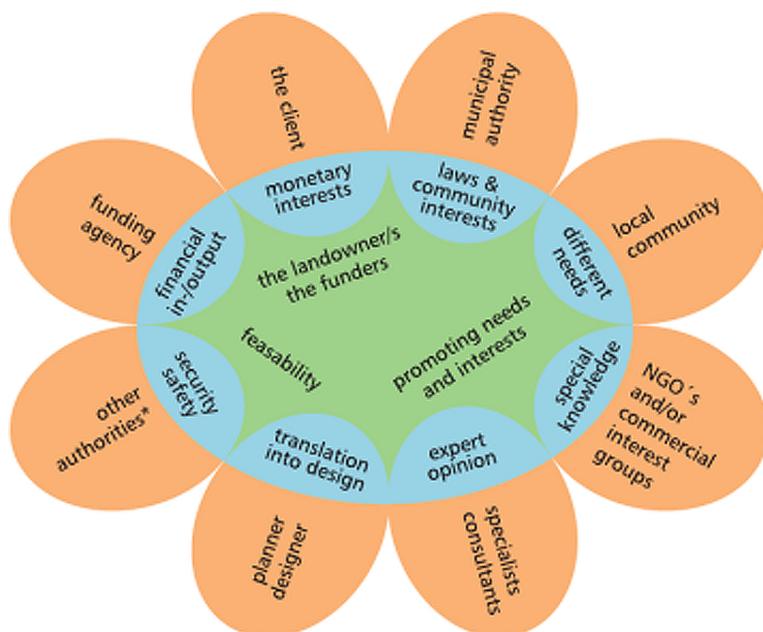
In terms of participatory planning, there are two core issues to consider: stakeholder identification (as each project will be dependent on different stakeholders, and quality and thoroughness will be enhanced when all relevant stakeholders are part of the process), and the level of stakeholder involvement (where the focus is to determine who the actual decision-making authority is and to what extent the actual development plans will be modified and related to actual user needs and desirability).

In terms of stakeholder identification it should be stressed that public spaces, in particular, host the activities of multiple groups who sometimes barely recognize each other's existence. Stakeholders should include (1) individuals (residents mostly) who use the place, have an interest in the place, or would be affected if the place were lost, and (2) professional stakeholders with expertise, such as designers, engineers, planners, local authorities, developers, NGOs, and other affected parties.

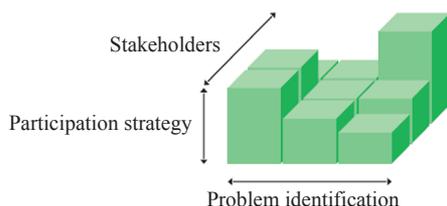
The participation approach cannot be forced on anyone; thus it must rely on the willingness of the relevant persons to participate out of interest, curiosity, or social responsibility. However, it is crucial to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are included in the process in order to get a comprehensive view of the social needs and perspectives. The identification of stakeholders should be adopted in an ad hoc approach, taking the specific challenges, dimensions, and constraints of the space (and the stakeholders and users of the space) into account. Actual interventions within the space are believed to be the most effective way to get individuals (residents and users of the space) to participate. In most cases, professional stakeholders are informed of the participatory processes by means of written communication. The extent of the project would determine the specific list of stakeholders to be included. As an example, figure 4 illustrates the main actors sitting around the open space 'table'.

The complexity of participation lies in the diversity of the members it tries to accommodate; the more diverse the group, the more complex the participation process and input will be (Breman et al, 2008, page 17). Figure 5 is a conceptual representation of the complexities of the participation process, in terms of the participation cubus (Pleitje, 2008). A complex participation process is illustrated by the increase in the volume of the cubus. This can be as a result of increased stakeholders or increasing problems associated with the project. It will have a direct effect on the participation strategy and approach.

Thus, first, the strategy of the participation process should aim to establish a list of relevant (as described above) stakeholders that are crucial to the development and success of the project (Breman, 2008, page 68). Stakeholders should be selected objectively and cover a wide range of sectors and interest fields. The stakeholders should all brainstorm on identifying possible problems and ways to address them. Stakeholder identification determines the success of the participatory planning process, as it includes all linked elements, people,



**Figure 4.** [In colour online.] The main actors sitting around the open space 'table' (source: Stiles, 2012, page 29, open access).



**Figure 5.** [In colour online.] The participation cubus (source: Pleitje, 2008).

problems, and possibilities. Another issue to consider is the extent to which the stakeholders will be involved in the process and to what extent their input would transform or impact on the decision-making structures. This is referred to as the *level of stakeholder involvement*.

The level of stakeholder involvement is determined by means of the participation ladder. This is a tool used to determine the different types of participation, and accordingly state the required input of selected stakeholders. It illustrates the different levels of participation, without focusing on the quality or applicability of the different levels as these are subject to each individual situation (Breman et al, 2008, page 26). Thus, the participation ladder is used to determine the most relevant form of participation within the specific circumstances.

Active participation is needed to ensure the success of the participation ladder. Active participation means the community has a bigger role to play in terms of discussions with authorities, policy formalization, creating solutions, and decision making. The participation ladder is explained in table 1.

The selected level of participation should be clear from the start of the participation process and communicated clearly to all stakeholders. As each project is unique, the level of stakeholder participation should be determined on an ad hoc basis, according to the local needs and objectives of the project. Participation can make a difference to the outcome and success of the project. The difference between participation and good participation lies in the process, how it is conducted, and how it is approached. Evaluation should form a core part of the participation process, in order to determine if the chosen method and approach were successful, if social capital was built during the process, and if the end project benefited from the participatory planning process.

**Table 1.** Participation, forms of management, and roles of community and government in terms of the participation ladder (source: adapted from Overbeek et al, 2009, page 22); Breman et al (2008, page 30).

Level of participation	Management		Roles	
	description	style	community	authorities
None	No community participation	closed	none	sole control
Inform	Authorities give information. Authorities determine agenda for decision making. No actual input by the communities.	open	receive information but cannot comment	self-control, but give information to public
Consult	Community can comment. Authorities determine agenda, but consult communities with regard to the development.	consultative	consolidated meetings	determine policy, but incorporate public view if needed
Advise	Community can give advice. Authorities determine agenda, but are open to advice and suggestions from communities.	participatory	advisor	determine policy but be open to solutions and suggestions
Cooperation	Community decides together with authorities. Authorities, communities, and stakeholders act jointly in the decision-making process.	delegate	decide together	management decide policy with predetermined objectives
		facilitate	equal rights	policy in terms of equal rights
Equal rights	Community decides alone. Final results are subject to equal preferences of the authorities and the communities.	facilitate	initiative	supportive to policy formalization via communities

It should be noted that participation is an attempt to engage local residents and experts in the planning process. The entire community cannot, and will never be, part of the planning process, but adequate stakeholder identification and the level of stakeholder involvement should guide the participatory planning process to be successful and comprehensive. Through participation the stakeholders become more engaged in the place they are designing. The hypothesis is that, by introducing and creating participation tools, planners would be able to attract stakeholders, community members, and local residents and enhance their willingness to partake in the participatory planning process, thereby strengthening the quality and comprehensiveness of the results and outputs of the participatory planning process itself. At the same time, stakeholder interest and social capital are built as stakeholders come to 'own a place' as they invest their own time and energy in it. They become promoters and defenders of the space.

### 3 Discussion: creative participation as part of the place-making process

Innovations in participatory design processes, as well as in the democratic functions of governance, are expanding (Stout, 2008, page 33). Considerations of the tools and experiences of users are becoming critical for all planning practices (Kalinski, 2006). Specifically, local practices of place-making offer planners unlimited potential resources for informing and implementing expert interventions in the place-making processes. The expert and non-expert

knowledge can enable the “communal practice of creating beloved places that also enrich the basis for knowledge and our ability to situate knowledge in place while opening spaces for multiple and contested meanings” (Shibley and Schneekloth, 2000, page 133).

Participatory planning should be creative and innovative, as this tends to enhance community participation and interest (Cilliers et al, 2010; 2011). The following tools are proposed (as a unique contribution and part of this research, but recognizing that other tools exist) to enhance community participation within the place-making process: the workbench method, guerrilla gardening, extreme experience, meet my street tool, and the creative techniques tool. Detailed information regarding these tools is available in the LICI report (Cilliers et al, 2012) as part of the INTERREG EU project Lively Cities: reclaiming public space for public use.

### 3.1 Creative participation tools: the workbench method

The workbench method is an interactive planning method that focuses on the needs of the users (communities, residents) to ensure social capital gain. It is primarily focused on the community visions and viewpoints used to define spatial quality.

Habiforum, a programme initiated by the Dutch government in 2005, developed the initial workbench spatial quality method (Dauvallier, 2009). It was introduced with the aim of organizing the creative planning process in order to result in spatial quality, based on the assumption that spatial quality is dependent on many visions of many different stakeholder groups and actors (as spatial quality is subjective), who together can define spatial quality. Thus, the workbench method is a planning tool which tries to gain an integral view on the use and experience of an urban space from the perspective of different stakeholders (eg, residents, investors, landowners, local authorities, experts) and their different interests.

The method is circular in its approach and consists of four parts: the initiative phase, vision phase, execution phase, and use phase, as captured in figure 6. These four phases are subdivided into eleven steps. The method is flexible and can be implemented ad hoc (some of the steps will always be the same, but should be adapted to each unique situation).

This tool was implemented in various case studies in the Netherlands, with the essence being to apply the four main phases of the process within the development process. The creative participatory process begins with the initiation phase (or strive phase), in order to determine what individuals (the local residents and community members) perceive to be the

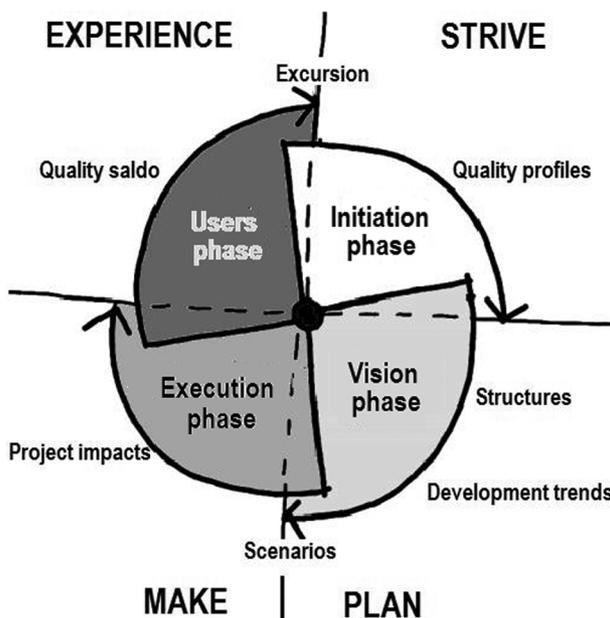


Figure 6. Workbench method (source: Habiforum, 2005).

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qualities (values) of the space. These data are collected by means of an excursion to the urban space to ensure that all stakeholders have a common experience of the area and to create awareness of the feeling (*genius loci*, sense of place) and possibilities of the area. Stakeholders are asked to dream and be creative in what they envisage for the space (not be restricted by planning policies and authority vision). A matrix is used to structure the creative envisioning of stakeholders in terms of (1) user value (actual usage of the space); (2) perceived value (general considerations of the space); and (3) future value (what residents would like to see in the future) in terms of economic, social, ecological, and cultural qualities.

The visioning phase (or planning phase) translates these individual qualities into common themes, in order to integrate the perceived qualities (as captured in the previous phase) into future development plans for the area itself (Habiforum, 2005, page 10). Future visions are designed for each of the possible development scenarios (for example some residents may prefer a green space, while others may prefer a commercial development within the space).

The execution phase (making phase) translates these future visions and ideas into concrete plans, thus transforming the vision into practice. This is done by a quality saldo (balance), evaluating the initial values as captured from phase one (matrix with user values, perceived values, and future values of economic, social, ecological, and cultural qualities) and phase two (different scenario planning), to determine if these values can be (or already are) present in the proposed new development. If, for instance, the participatory planning process revealed that stakeholders value the natural environment, the open feeling and quiet space (as an example), the notion to develop a green space would be preferable, rather than developing a commercial place in the same area. Thus, the execution phase links back to the first phase (strive phase) to ensure the realization of the future values according to the matrix completed in the initial participation process.

From the case studies conducted in the Netherlands, it was found that this tool ensures continuous participation throughout the development process and not just at the beginning of the project. The tool created a platform within each development stage (initiation, vision, planning, and development) to implement a form of participation (strive, plan, make, experience). It was also evident that participatory planning should be conducted from the start of the project and that local residents and stakeholders should feel part of the process, in order to ensure success of the project itself and create social capital. As in the case of Park Randerbroek, a green space in the Netherlands that was earmarked for the development of a new regional hospital, stakeholders and community members were not included from the start of the project, but were included after the development plans had been drawn up. It was more of an 'inform level' of participation than a 'cooperating' level, and this led to communities and stakeholders objecting to the idea and resulted in the development still not being realized after five years of negotiation.

The workbench method is a creative participatory tool which contributes to identifying core values within a space. The focus of the tool is to enhance contact with the community, organize the creative planning process in a way that ensures spatial quality, structure the participation process to enhance participatory planning, and build social capital throughout the process.

### **3.2 Creative participation tools: guerrilla gardening**

Guerrilla gardening is an internationally accepted term for gardening on land that the gardeners do not have a legal right to use, often an abandoned site or area not cared for by anyone. It encompasses a very diverse range of people and motivations, from the enthusiastic gardener whose activity spills over their legal boundaries to the highly political gardener who seeks to provoke change through direct action. This practice has implications for land rights and land reform; it promotes reconsideration of land ownership in order to reclaim

land from perceived neglect or misuse and assign a new purpose to it. It has grown into a form of proactive activism or proactivism. Guerrilla gardening takes place in many parts of the world, and is documented in more than thirty countries (Reynolds, 2008).

The guerrilla gardening tool is focused mainly on enhancing community awareness and public participation. In a case study, the local authorities (local municipalities, development agencies, policy makers) provided local residents with a tree (or plants) and invited them to plant it (them) in their preferred location in a specific park or green space within the direct living environment. In this sense local ownership was given to the residents, and they felt part of the space and the surroundings. Social capital was built by means of creative participatory processes, as residents stated that, even weeks after the participatory process, they still felt connected to the space because they had contributed to the area.

Guerrilla gardening is an effective tool to begin any public participation process. Its creative approach sets the framework and point of interest to engage participants in further conversations. It analyses interests of local residents and identifies the corresponding needs. In many instances it proved to be a catalyst for instant intervention, as communities had a direct influence on the space. Public participation is therefore stimulated, especially among young people. The creative participation approach is stimulated by means of guerrilla gardening, and invites local residents to feel part of the area, enhancing local ownership and acting as a catalyst for future communications.

### 3.3 Creative participation tools: extreme experience

The extreme experience tool is used to raise awareness among local citizens and gain social capital. Two such 'experiences' were tested in the Netherlands. The first being the 'Jungle Bus', which originated as a local approach in the Netherlands to create green awareness amongst local citizens by integrating green initiatives in their daily activities. The inside of a city bus was transformed to be a 'jungle', complete with soil and plants. The daily routine of the citizens was now enhancing green awareness and introducing citizens to planning and the broader future vision. The unexpectedness among citizens was found to trigger awareness. Citizens had an extreme shared experience that led to positive publicity, as illustrated by the photographs in figure 7.



**Figure 7.** [In colour online.] Transformation of a current transport mode to create awareness (source: Cilliers et al, 2010).

The second extreme experience project originated in a forest, where citizens were complaining about the current maintenance of a park and the inconvenience caused. The park manager and citizens had the opportunity to view the park from a different perspective, with the help of electronic machines, as captured in figure 8. This extreme experience provided a different view of the problem, resulting in a better understanding of the different perspectives of the various stakeholders, their functions, and the overall project objectives. It created an opportunity for better communication and enhanced social capital. The stakeholders in this participatory process provided useful information in terms of values, needs, future visions, and expectations that were used in the planning process to create a future development plan



**Figure 8.** [In colour online.] High-rise project (source: Cilliers et al, 2010).

with ‘preferred’ places. The extreme experience initiated a different view and perspective of the area, and enabled stakeholders and residents to ‘think outside the box’ and consider a bigger development picture.

### **3.4 Creative participation tools: ‘meet my street’**

The ‘meet my street’ tool raises awareness among local residents while at the same time capturing information and values from their perspectives. It is based on the understanding that artists work together with local residents of a specific neighbourhood. The artists give citizens a short course in film making in order for them to be able to make their own video of their street or surroundings. Local residents are then asked to film what they perceive as valuable or important within the street (relevant space) or neighbourhood. It is a creative way of capturing the user perspective and identifying the local values and needs. By using technology (home-made videos) information and data are captured (values from the community perspectives). The ‘meet my street’ tool is a creative point of interaction with local communities, especially the youth who are technology orientated. It contributes to the qualitative public participation processes as it captures values from various perspectives. It is an effective tool with which to commence a public campaign and connect spaces to new social media.

The tool in itself does not create a ‘place’, but initiates creative participation that again results in stakeholders who are willing to provide information in terms of values, needs, future visions, and expectations. These results can then be translated by the experts and planners to create places that address the needs and visions of the local residents and stakeholders. The objective is to make actual users of the space, that is, community members and local residents, part of the planning process, and the creative approach enhances the willingness of the stakeholders to take part in the process.

### 3.5 Creative participation tools: creative techniques

The creative techniques tool was primarily created to capture the values as perceived by local citizens, seeing with their eyes and identifying what they consider to be valuable spaces. It enhances awareness and forces people to pause for a moment and consider the environment surrounding them. The images captured by the citizens are used in the planning process as focal points, and the process therefore also contains a part of the ‘create’ tool. Creative techniques are not limited to one specific approach. The field camera was however found to be a successful tool in this regard. A field camera is placed within the selected public space, along with instructions to all community members “to capture the greatest value that this space has to offer”, as illustrated in figure 9.



**Figure 9.** [In colour online.] See through the eyes of communities (source: Cilliers et al, 2010).

The images captured by the community are evaluated and analyzed. The analysis is done by means of a matrix (as captured in table 2), dividing the identified values into social, economic, and environmental categories (comparable with the sustainable development dimensions), and qualitative and quantitative levels. The images tell the story of the ‘genius loci’, the spirit of the place, and how the local users perceive and value the space. Local communities participate in the planning process in creative ways, and not merely by the traditional means of public meetings and discussions. In the case study of Potchefstroom, where a greenfield site was analyzed, the values shown in table 2 were obtained by two different stakeholders, in an attempt to illustrate their different viewpoints and values connected with the same space.

**Table 2.** Values organized according to quantities and qualities within the three dimensions.

Value matrix	Values	
	stakeholder 1	stakeholder 2
Social values	recreation area	socializing, picnic, resting
Economic values	entrance fees to events	none
Environmental values	grass fields for sports	natural space, biodiversity

The creative techniques tool is a fast and effective (quick scan) method to gain insight on the viewpoints and values of local communities and users. The creative approach invites users to be part of the participatory process.

### 4 Conclusion: importance of creative participatory planning as part of place-making

Creative participatory planning is subject to creative thinking, providing inviting opportunities for users to be part of the planning process, supported by adequate stakeholder identification and determined stakeholder level of involvement. The aim of place-making is to determine the need of actual users of a public space, then link that to the functionality and opportunities

of that space, setting the scene for the development. Creative participation can, in this sense, contribute to the place-making process, because stakeholders become more engaged in the place they are designing, thus enhancing their interest in the place and the planning thereof, and building social capital. Stakeholders become promoters and defenders of the space.

The creative participation tools sensitise the values, needs, and future vision as perceived by the various stakeholders, as these tools attract stakeholders' interest and enhance their willingness to take part in the planning process thereby contributing to the overall place-making process where the users and the space meet each other's requirements.

“To create a lively place we need to focus on people. The conventional way of planning should be turned up-side down and a more controversial planning process should be introduced, with the people and the life of the cities and public spaces in focus. There is a need to create spaces that are inviting for people and take in consideration people's needs and behavioural patterns” (Soholt, 2004, page 8).

Place-making, when combined with creative participatory planning, can address this approach to planning and create functional, qualitative spaces and public places. Table 3 captures the creative participation tools described in this paper (recognizing that other tools also exist, but do not fall within the scope of this paper) that can be used in the place-making processes, stressing their individual strengths and opportunities.

**Table 3.** Creative participatory planning tools.

Tool	Benefits of using the tool in place-making processes	
	strengths	opportunities
Workbench method	comprehensive participation approach; identifies actual user values	circular approach can be repeated; organize the planning process
Guerrilla gardening	creative participation approach; creativity invites local residents	catalyst for future communications; enhance local ownership
Extreme experience	creativity invites local residents; stimulates different perspectives	creative participation approach; catalyst for future communications
'Meet my street'	creative interaction point; creativity invites local residents	links technology use and public spaces; technology use invites youth participation
Creative techniques	fast and effective quick-scan method; creativity invites local residents	understanding local perspective of value; 'out-of-the-box' thinking

Furthermore, it should be noted that there is no blueprint for planning public places, and no formula for successful participatory processes. Each project has its own challenges and opportunities, and its own set of actors, contracts, memoranda of understanding, operating guidelines, or informal understandings. Thus, each project should be crafted to fit local circumstances from the resources at hand. The methods and tools presented in this paper aim to guide this process towards successful implementation. The planning of the space as a whole (integrated approach), with all relevant stakeholders committed to a single vision for the space, is important. The ability to implement and enforce, with a clear delineation of roles, is necessary. By understanding and intervening in the production of place through participatory approaches, planners are capable of representing the social, economic, and political dynamics of spaces. The actual users of the space, the residents, have a unique contribution to offer as they can identify the needs in accordance with the space's functionality and usage. Successful place-making is, therefore, subject to creative participatory processes that incorporate the social dynamics of the place.

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