URBACT
Driving change for
better cities

COMUNE DI
udine

URBACT Transfer Network
Play for inclusive, healthy
and sustainable cities

PLAYFUL PARADIGM

Second Wave
Final Product

Play is a serious matter and can make the difference for the future of our cities

Resources, analysis and stories to help cities include play
and gamification in their local urban development

Toy Library

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Project Synthesis

Summarized description of the Good Practice to be transferred

Playful Paradigm increases the capabilities of cities to answer global challenges including those emerged during Covid-19. It promotes inclusion, intergenerational solidarity, SDGs, resilience, healthy lifestyles. PLAY IS A SERIOUS MATTER AND CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE for a better urban future of our cities. The playful paradigm helps to re-think the community welfare it is replicable to other urban contexts, since play is a universal principle, naturally practiced by every human being.

Project Partners

Lead Partner

Municipality of Udine (Italy)

Partners

Municipality of Grosuplje (Slovenia)
Municipality of Igualada (Spain)
Municipality of Jelgava (Latvia)
Municipality of Lousã (Portugal)

Project duration

14th June 2021 - 31st December 2022

Budget

ERDF		Swiss Fund		Norway Fund		Other Financ.	Total Budget
ERDF	Public co-financing	Swiss Fund	Public co-financing	Norway Fund	Public co-financing		
€411,568.00	137,622.00 €	0.00 €	0.00 €	0.00 €	0.00 €	0.00 €	549,190.00 €

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A testimony from the city of Good Practices

by Pietro Fontanini - Major of Udine Municipality

For several decades now, the city of Udine has integrated the game paradigm into its policies to imagine and implement projects with the ever-changing needs of citizens at the centre. The events of recent years, from the pandemic to climate change, from the economic/energy crisis to international tensions, have generated various problems in the population that become matters of decision for administrators. It is here that the theme of play, as a leitmotif, has proved to be particularly important in combating marginalization, loneliness, behavioral disorders, stress and inequalities.

The Playful Paradigm II project, now in its second edition, completes a four-year work where in an international context, which has seen the city of Udine as promoter and example to follow, we have analysed the different aspects of the game which proves to be decisive for obtaining better results in terms of re-urbanization, place-making, education, health and integration well-being, intergenerational solidarity and gender approach. The various co-design initiatives with citizens that took place during Playful Paradigm II facilitated decisions to transform cities into more accessible places that foster healthy lifestyles.

Udine had the task of transmitting its good practices developed over thirty years, starting from joining the WHO Healthy Cities European Network in 1995, to then create the Ludoteca, the Ludobus and the Game Archive and participate in all editions of the World Play Day. The other European cities, project partners, thanks to a mutual exchange of experiences and the participation of experts, were able to increase their skills and gain direct experience in their own territories by initiating projects aimed at improving or recovery of different urban areas.

A training experience to improve the decisions of the future

by Giulia Manzan, Councilor for European Funding

The European project Playful Paradigm II is developed within the Urbact circuit and in this second edition has involved the cities of Slovenia, Spain, Portugal and Latvia. The fruitful exchange of good practices between these municipalities added up to the creation, in Udine, of a work team with experience on the theme of gaming, coming from schools and associations operating in the municipal area.

Playful Paradigm Second Wave was an opportunity to experiment with the use of play in three different areas in the municipality of Udine: the first in a recreational park where baskin (a type of inclusive basketball) was played, the second in a area dedicated to urban gardens where a treasure hunt was held and finally the third in one of the most beautiful and historic parks of the city where an outdoor escape room was held in which adults and children took part.

In addition to these initiatives, there were also other moments shared with citizens such as World Game Day, now in its twenty-eighth edition, which saw the entire city center transformed into a real playground.

These years of work have created not only a dense network of relationships, but precious opportunities for discussion with partner cities. Everything we have shared will certainly be put into practice for the future projects that Udine decides to implement for the theme of play.

I take this opportunity to thank all the numerous participants in the project with the hope that in the future what has been learned up to now will generate new initiatives.

Making all urban public spaces meaningful places for play

by Ileana Toscano, Urbact Lead Expert

The Playful Paradigm experience has clearly shown that people need urban public spaces that are open for play. Taking play beyond playgrounds is the challenge to give children and all citizens the "right to play". Promoting cities that welcome play everywhere is the goal to drive change for more inclusive and liveable cities.

Playful Paradigm II is a "transfer" network that stems from the long experience developed in the city of Udine (Italy), focusing on play as a tool to promote social inclusion and participation. In 2017, the European Union's URBACT programme designated Udine as a "good practice city" thanks to the play approach developed at city level. URBACT funded two project editions of Playful Paradigm, where Udine led the two networks to transfer the play-based philosophy and approach to other EU cities. In total, 12 European cities were involved in thinking about play. The cities involved in the first edition of the project were Klaipeda (LT); Esplugues de Llobregat (ES); Viana do Castelo (PT); Novigrad (HR), Cork (IE), Larissa (HR), Katowice (PL). In the second wave of projects, the transfer partners are Grosuplje in Slovenia, Jelgava in Latvia, Lousa in Portugal and Igualada in Spain.

The experience of the URBACT Network "Playful Paradigm" offered the opportunity to reflect on the strictly relation between "**play** and **cities**". Play is essential for children's health, physical-and emotional growth, and intellectual and educational development. But in cities, especially in suburbs, children do not have adequate spaces for playing and play poverty is on the rise, as is the number of children living low-play lives. Public spaces should be re-designed to welcome play and reflect values of democracy, respect, and solidarity. Play can support urban planning by transforming public spaces through place-making initiatives and encouraging citizen participation. In other words, well planned cities promote play and play supports this positive urban transformation through playful initiatives.
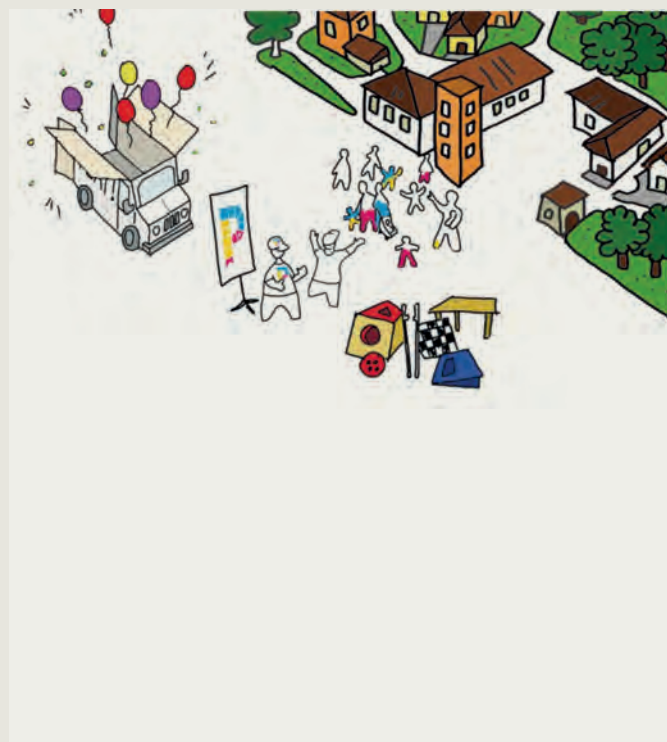
Why is PLAY important to stimulate participation and transform urban public spaces?

Play is a versatile tool to easily engage children and families, even in difficult contexts such as suburbs or deprived neighbourhoods. The Municipality of Udine became aware of the great potential of play more than twenty years ago, when it started to promote play through the Ludobus initiative - a mobile toy library used to promote play activities both in the suburbs and in the city centre. They have had the opportunity to experiment with Ludobus as a powerful tool for inclusivity, as there are no barriers of culture, language, gender or age in play.
Udine has experienced that the Ludobus can transform public spaces, making them places for play. The Ludobus conveys an important message: "all spaces in a city are places for play", "all public spaces are spaces for children and for everyone". Ludobus is a catalyst: people start to play without being addressed or informed in advance. Ludobus is also a tool to reach out to families and involve them in participatory urban processes.

The Municipality of Udine, having discovered the social impact of play at the city level, has set up a municipal office dedicated to play. Thanks to this, the city has become a leading city of play in Italy and Europe and it has been able to manage several play initiatives, such as: the creation of a toy library, the collaboration with schools and educational centres, the development of healthy play programmes for elderly people and people with special needs, the organisation of several play events in the city, the prevention of gambling problems through dedicated play programmes, the opening of the National Archive of Games and, of course, the management of the Ludobus activities.

Inspired by Udine, the Playful Paradigm partners started experimenting with play outside playgrounds and organised play initiatives in their city. They organised temporary closure of streets to cars to allow people to play and stay together. They transformed urban spaces into places for play: the areas in front of schools where children can play before going to school, the market streets where children and families can meet in a relaxed atmosphere, and so on. All the city partners organised the World Day of Play on 28 May 2022, experimenting with the intergenerational approach and the learning process through play for children and adults.

Playful Innovations for cities

Considering the experience of the first edition of the project and the long experience of Udine, the second wave of the Playful Paradigm followed on four dimensions of the play approach, aiming to further enhance the Playful Paradigm by fostering the inclusion of marginalised communities and promoting the gender-based approach to rethinking public spaces. These are:

1. PLAY FOR SUSTAINABLE URBAN REGENERATION analyses the potential of play to re-think urban public spaces. Starting from the Ludobus initiative and play placemaking experiences, it looks at gender-sensitive approaches to public spaces and playgrounds, and the intergenerational approach to involving older people and young people in urban life.

2. PLAY FOR INCLUSION & PARTICIPATION aims to develop a new concept for Toy Libraries, exploring new ways to transform them into inclusive living labs.

3. PLAY FOR EDUCATION focuses on the innovative approach to education by providing playful experiences in both formal and informal learning environments.

4. PLAY FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING promotes an integrated approach - social, economic and environmental - through the WHO Healthy Cities philosophy, involving project partners in the co-creation of novel solutions to promote health and well-being in local communities.

Among them, two innovations in promoting play have been followed up by Playful Paradigm second wave: the **Gender sensitive approach for playgrounds and Urban Public spaces and the Toy Libraries as living labs**.
The re-design of play places like "school yards, playgrounds and recreational spaces" through a gender sensitive approach can provide an important contribution to deconstruct gender stereotypes and the inequalities starting from early age. The redesign of play places should prioritise gender neutral colours and multiple play 'worlds', rather than one central one, encouraging interaction between girls and boys and multiple uses of space. It should foster creativity and engage with nature, as well as sports and active games. This allows children to choose how they play without the pressure to conform to stereotypes.

Toy Libraries are key within new innovative and more dynamic urban policies reflecting the huge demographic change happening in societies. Toy Library helps meeting different objectives: promoting play, educating children but also supporting families. In deprived neighbourhoods where streets are the only option for kids to socialize, Toy libraries can help families keeping kids away from the dangerous exposure to petty crimes or drugs.

The Playful Paradigm promotes the concept of Toy libraries as hands-on public spaces addressing novel opportunities of participation, equality, and intergenerational learning. They can be improved by Local Administrations and transformed in truly "inclusive living labs" to engage citizens, families, boys and girls, elderly people, children, and adults, making sure to leave none behind.

Playful Paradigm Alliances!

Playful Paradigm has promoted cooperation between cities not only at the transnational project level, but also at the local and national level. Thanks to Playful Paradigm, local alliances have been strengthened to promote playful urban policies. In Catalonia, Igualada (2nd wave), Esplugues de Llobregat (1st wave) and Barcelona started to work together to share play approaches and co-design city play plans. In Ireland, the city of Cork led a national network of cities focusing on play as a cascade effect of the Playful Paradigm. The municipality of Jelgava in Latvia and the municipality of Klaipeda in Lithuania have developed a joint play strategy to promote the Play for Education approach in schools.

In addition, the Playful Paradigm cities have collaborated with other cities and international organisations, such as UN agencies, EU partners, private organisations, Arup, LEGO, etc.

Can urban public spaces foster equality in cities?

by Ileana Toscano, Urbact Lead Expert

**In the lead up to the International Women's Day, let's look into this question and much more.
How may girls and women feel free to move in streets and spend time in squares and parks without feeling discomfort or fear? How does city planning have an impact on gender equality and social inclusion? Ileana Toscano, URBACT III Expert, takes a deeper look into gender equality in cities and how the programme is contributing to a just transition.**

Drawing inspiration from the Gender Equal Cities report and the activities done under the URBACT Knowledge Hub umbrella, both the Erasmus plus project "PART-Y - Participation and Youth: Lab for Equal Cities" and the URBACT Playful Paradigm Second Wave Transfer Network reflected on the gender sensitive approach to design and use urban public spaces.

On one hand, PART-Y focused on public spaces as experimental places of democracy by introducing the methodologies of Placemaking, Design Thinking and the Gender Equal Cities approach to foster the "generation equality" goal promoted by UN Women. On the other hand, the Playful Paradigm Second Wave, building on the successful experience from the first round of Playful Paradigm, focused on play as a tool to re-think cities. It took "play" beyond playgrounds to give children, girls and boys and all citizens the "right to play" and drive change for more inclusive and liveable cities.

PART-Y developed a series of products to call young people to action for equality in public spaces by testing placemaking experiences: a Handbook and a Toolbox "to build gender sensitive placemaking projects". These provide a practical guide to transform

urban public spaces into beautiful and comfortable places to live. It consists of a new methodology that enriches placemaking techniques, linked to the creation of community-led urban places, with elements taken from design thinking – an approach to produce analytical and creative solutions to solve complex problems mainly used for the development of innovative products. Adding to this mixed methodology the gender equal perspective, it was built a new effective tool that guarantees equal access and use of the city in particular for girls and boys.

Led by the Italian association Kallipolis and co-implemented by a consortium of seven entities from different European countries, including local authorities and associations as the Municipality of Trieste (IT), an URBACT II beneficiary; the Cork City Council (IE), an active partner from Playful Paradigm 1, which had the great opportunity of later on sharing its successful experience with other Irish cities; and Umeå Kommun (SE), URBACT's lighthouse city when it comes to gender, the city was awarded an URBACT Good Practice Label in 2017, then it proceed to lead the Genderedlandscape Action Planning Network (2019 – 2022) and was at the heart of the very first Gender Equal Cities report. All three cities are highly committed to placemaking actions for their citizens.

The experience of Umeå brought a sound inspiration for the PART-Y Handbook and for the whole project development. Since the 80s, the city has had the overall goal to foster gender equality by creating the conditions for women and men, girls and boys, to have equal power to shape society and their own lives. The Genderedlandscape Network bears witness of the commitment of the municipality to this cause: this was the first European network focused on "gender and city". Among others, Umeå has applied the gendered approach concept to the design of a new urban park called "FRIZON - Free zone".

The FRIZON was created by involving just girls in the co-design process, through the methodology of "inclusion (of girls) through exclusion (of boys)", which offered the possibility for girls to share freely their wishes for this new space. One of the most important wishes expressed by girls was that they wanted a space free from expectations, where they could hang out with their friends and just be, without having to perform. A zone free from expectations, hence the name "free zone". This particular experience was an inspiration also for the Playful Paradigm Transfer Network Second Wave, a spin off Network led by the Municipality of Udine (IT) that focused on gender sensitive approach for playgrounds and urban public spaces.

Indeed, the redesign of play places like school yards, playgrounds and recreational spaces through a gender sensitive approach can provide an important contribution to de-construct of gender stereotypes and the in-equalities starting from early age. A motion graphic called "Gender sensitive playgrounds & Urban Places" was created to raise aware-ness about the importance of considering the needs of girls and boys when designing places for them. While, both editions of the Playful Paradigm Networks draw attention of cities to "play, which is essential for children's health, physical-and emotional growth, and intellectual and educational development.

Gender sensitive playgrounds & Urban Places

Through play, girls and boys learn about democracy, respect, and solidarity. Spaces for playing that reflect those values have a huge importance in education. Evidence has shown that there is a disproportion in the use of playgrounds and schoolyards: football pitches are often positioned in the central space hosting few athletic boys, while girls and un-sporty boys are pushed to the fringe. The redesign of play places should priori-tise multiple play 'worlds' and gender-neutral colours, rather than a single central one, encouraging interaction between girls and boys and multiple uses of space. It should also foster creativity and engagement with nature, as well as sports and active games. This allows children to choose how to interact and play without the pressure to conform to stereotypes.

The most recent experience from Playful Paradigm also had the opportunity to follow up on the importance of "gender planning and play" by meeting the Municipality of Barcelona (ES), in July 2022. Barcelona has developed an innovative City Play Strategy that also embraces gender approaches principles. The city shared an important lesson for the Playful Paradigm's partners, dealing with the creation of local policies and city planning strategies able to embrace play, gender and the regeneration of urban public space to guarantee the right to the city to children and the most vulnerable ones.

So, back to the question: **can urban pub-lic spaces foster equality in cities?** We can answer **YES, they can and they should**. The way public spaces are designed and man-aged have a huge impact on spreading de-mocracy and embodying the inclusion of diversities, as well as considering gender needs. The #UrbanGirlsMovement, promot-ed by the Swedish think tank Global Utman-ing shared the motto "**plan a city for girls, and it will work for everyone**".

To position girls' needs at the top priority of the policy agenda, especially when focusing on low-income areas, can provide an important contribution to improve the living conditions not just for girls and women, but also for all vulnerable groups, all citizens. Guaranteeing free access to public spaces at different times of the day and night by making them beautiful and comfortable, makes everyone feels safer. **Embedding the gender sensitive approach into urban planning activities can drive European cities towards inclusivity and respect for diversity, making these places where all can feel represented**.

Gender is at the centre of URBACT IV activities. The current open call for Action Planning Networks is a unique opportunity to rethink how diversity, inclusion and equality can be an underlying response to wider urban issues. Check out all the gender-related proposals for networks at the Partner Search Tool and learn more about the call.

Network Partner Cities

Jelgava

Udine

Grosuplje

Igualada

Lousã

Lead Partner
Partner

The Playful Paradigm Second Wave aims to adapt and reuse in other 4 European cities the good practice developed in Udine (Italy), the project Lead Partner. The cities involved are: Grosuplje (Slovenia), Igualada (Spain), Jelgava (Latvia), Lousã (Portugal).

Transfer Stories

Play offers unique opportunities for engaging stakeholders in cities. European Cities face challenges of ageing, climate change and social exclusion: we need to find enjoyable ways to co–create solutions. The URBACT Playful Paradigm transfer network is based on the use of "play" as innovative concept for promoting social inclusion, healthy lifestyles and energy awareness, place-making and economic.

Udine

Partner organisation	**Lead Partner**
Type of organisation	**Local Public Authority**
Regroumping	**EU More developer regions**
Country	**Italy**
Area	**Friuli Venezia Giulia**
NUTS3	**Udine**
Size	**57,17 km²**
Inhabitants	**97.754**

Udine started 20 years ago in promoting Play as a flexible and innovative tool to tackle contemporary challenges and to promote healthy and sustainable lifestyles. The first Play Initiatives were mainly temporary gaming events in the city centre, but then they became a planned and permanent activity through the «Ludobus» initiative - a mobile toy-library used to promote playing activities both in the suburbs and in the city centre - and through a calendar of scheduled events (World Games Day, Energy in Play, Pi Day, Darwin Day, Library of Living Books, etc.). Finally, a municipal unit responsible for playing activities was established by the Municipality of Udine to coordinate the Ludobus and the Toy-library activities, to promote the permanent "play educational programme" for schools and other institutions, to organise the numerous playful events and boost new play initiatives. The added value was the opportunity to improve and scale up this good practice through the URBACT network, whereas partners have transferred this paradigm which leverages on participation and gaming for triggering responsible change and promoting healthy and sustainable lifestyles, physical, cognitive activity. Making the healthy and sustainable choice the enjoyable choice has been our inspiring principle also in this transfer process.

The transforming power of play. Exploring urban spaces in Udine through play

by Maria Cecilia Corsini, Local Project Officer

The central idea of Playful Paradigm Second Wave has been the promotion of culture of inclusive play in open public spaces. With respect to the Playful Paradigm First Wave, the Municipality of Udine has decided to experiment play in public spaces as a tool of urban regeneration and community building, taking into consideration the recovery needs that the Covid-19 Pandemic has generated among people and that must be addressed by public authorities.

Encouraged by the achievements reached during Playful Paradigm First Wave, Municipality of Udine decided to apply for Playful Paradigm Second Edition. This second edition gave the opportunity to improve the good practice, by enhancing the transfer process, strengthening alliances and partnerships for play at the international level, and further investigating some aspects of the first phase of the project. In particular, the Covid-19 Pandemic has been an element of reflection in the development of the project's second phase, especially in relation to the need to have open public spaces as an element of health and wellbeing.

The central idea of Playful Paradigm Second Wave has been the promotion of culture of inclusive play in open public spaces. With respect to the Playful Paradigm First Wave, the Municipality of Udine has decided to experiment play in public spaces as a tool of urban regeneration and community building, taking into consideration the recovery needs that the Covid-19 Pandemic has generated among people and that must be addressed by public authorities.
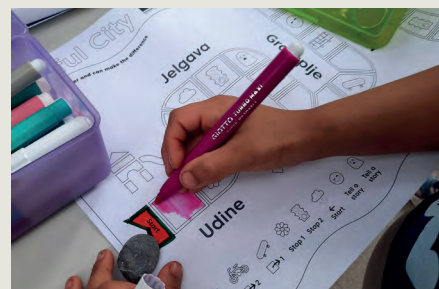

The importance of Play

The Municipality of Udine has been promoting policies that use play as a tool to improve the health and well-being of citizens for twenty years. Play is a great benefit to people of all ages. Play brightens life, decreases stress, develops motor and relational skills, prevents cognitive decline, fuels creativity and educates respect for rules and for others. Play activities overcome cultural and physical barriers, build bridges between people, generations and places. During the project we used the tool of play to underline the right of everyone to be part of urban public spaces and of the city.

The topic of inclusion through play

The Covid-19 crisis revealed the importance of human connections and physical interaction among people. Play has a core role in community building by promoting the sense of community and facilitating relationships among people. Studies show that it is easier to learn and establish relationships through play because physical or cognitive deficiencies can be easily compensated for by the combined emotional and cognitive reactions that play triggers. For this reasons Play is a fundamental tool for promoting social inclusion and the involvement of vulnerable groups as well. The games tested and proposed during the project's events were designed to be used to bring together people, involving persons with physical or mental disabilities and in a view to gender equality.
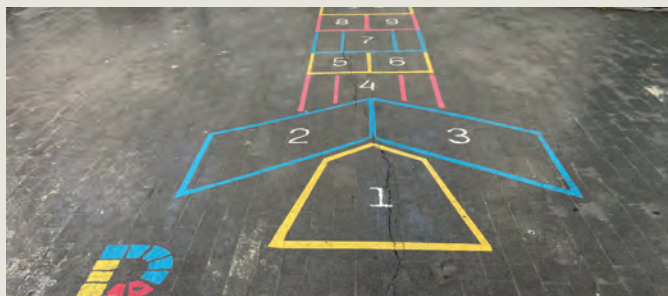
The ULG and Comunità Piergiorgio Onlus developed an inclusive horizontal game. This game can be played by people with physical disabilities.

Zio Pino Baskin, one of our ULG members, promotes an inclusive typology of basket, the Baskin.

Play in public spaces

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us how urban public spaces are essential to promote sociality, protect psycho-physical well-being, counteract loneliness and facilitate motor activity. Outdoor play is an excellent tool through which to decline public spaces and an urban planning paradigm that makes cities more inclusive and sustainable. The events organized during the project have been an invitation to take possession of the spaces of the city, to spend time collaboratively and to experiment how, through tactical urbanism actions, public urban spaces can become safer, more alive and more inclusive.

In Playful Paradigm Second Wave the activities have been especially dedicated to boost the concept that play in public spaces can be a tool of place activation and urban planning inspiration. The project has developed placemaking experiments useful to suggest and promote new ways to shape the public space in a permanent way.

The Municipality, in coordination with the Urbact Local Group, has organized several events in underused spaces of Udine on the topics of education, health and wellbeing and inclusion. The crosscutting issue of the events has been urban regeneration. Play in fact can be used to discover the space and suggest new uses for it and, at the same time, is an excellent booster of social interaction and participation.
In some area of the city girls and boys don't have spaced where to meet and play. Most of the public parks are built especially for boys who play football or basket and they do not take into consideration the needs of girls or minorities groups. We experimented new ways of using the space and we proposed a polycentric and not hierarchical organization of it, where everyone can feel included. We tested converting a car park in the city center to a walkable area for children's playground and for adults to gather and relax.
In conclusion participants were very satisfied of the events, underling how this kind of activities, inclusive, innovative and neighbourhood based, are needed to stimulate children and adults in open air, to gather people together after Covid-19 boosting the sense of community and to activated urban spaces.

The Municipality of Udine wants to thank all the ULG for their such commitment and great work in this project and look forward to keeping working together following the playful paradigm approach!

Grosuplje

Partner organisation	**Partner**
Type of organisation	**Local Public Authority**
Regroumping	**EU More developer regions**
Country	**Slovenia**
Area	**Zahodna Slovenija**
NUTS3	**Osrednjeslovenska**
Size	**133,8 km²**
Inhabitants	**21.314**

Jelgava

Udine **Grosuplje**

Igualada

Lousã

The Municipality of Grosuplje is a medium-sized Slovene municipality, located on the southeast edge of the Slovene capital, Ljubljana. It spreads over 134 km2 and has 67 settlements. Its population is 21.314 inhabitants. It is also a city that is only a twenty-minute drive from Ljubljana and along the highway towards Zagreb. The municipality of Grosuplje is well known for its rich economic activities and openness to innovation. Because of its cultural heritage, natural beauties, and its proximity to Ljubljana, Grosuplje has a great potential for tourism development. The Municipality of Grosuplje holds three important certificates: A Youth Friendly Municipality, An Elderly Municipality, and a Reading Friendly Municipality. Grosuplje is committed to ensuring a healthy and active living environment for all generations. It is one of the leaders in the field of healthy aging, e.g., we have opened a "Path of Health" where people can test their physical abilities and enjoy being in nature. The Municipality of Grosuplje is also encouraging young people to do sports with a variety of publicly accessible sports facilities. Grosuplje continues to develop activities and various preventive programs that positively influence the health of the population, both for children and adults.

How Grosuplje made the municipality a playground for its locals, no matter the age

by Živa Vertič, Local Project Coordinator

As a municipality with over 21.000 inhabitants and laying on the southeast edge of Slovenia's capital (Ljubljana), Grosuplje is well known for its rich economic activities and openness to innovation. The municipality population is dispersed in many rural settlements. It is also a municipality with an aging population and a trend of young families moving in. What is the right social inclusion strategy for these changing demographics?

Being playful

Statistical data indicates a great growth of families with small children moving to Grosuplje. Roughly 16 percent of the whole population in the municipality is aged 12 or under. Of that percentage, 43.5 percent are children aged 5 or under. Nevertheless, Grosuplje also has a high percentage of senior citizens – 20 percent of inhabitants are older than 60 years.

The fact that play is important just for children's development is out-of-date. It is crucial for people of all ages, especially seniors, which scholars from all over the world are repeatedly confirming. The most common and exposed benefits for children are probably

building imagination and creativity and delivering emotional and behavioral growth. For seniors advantages of play are cognitive maintenance and prevention of isolation and loneliness.

Connecting all statistical data on demographics in the Municipality of Grosuplje and the importance of play with the support of scientific facts made us think about what if The Good Practice of Udine is a great opportunity to provide our inhabitants an unconventional tool for participation, inclusion, and making sense of a community again?

Fun for all ages

For setting up a group of local stakeholders (URBACT Local Group), we involved stakeholders who are in some way or another connected to the subject of the Playful Paradigm philosophy. Different elementary schools, kindergartens, retirement associations, retirement homes, and local youth councils gave us a chance to look at the challenges caused by changing demographics as a multi-layered problem.

They gave us different insights into the problem, from which we could start building a strategy to playfully tackle it. Members of the Local Group were very helpful with the primary ideas for the actions and events we later developed.

In the year and a half, we developed three actions that stand out. The first was a collaboration with Minibus of Joy, the second was Physical Activity for Seniors in nature, and last, but not least - Street Art Workshop.

The Minibus of Joy was the first activity we presented to our locals. It is the program carried out by an NGO Skala, established in 2009 as a preventative for socially disadvantaged children in Ljubljana. When our municipality started the collaboration with Minibus of Joy the objective, however, was different. Based on the statistical data discussed before, our objective was to offer young families with small children a place where they can meet, socialize, and connect in a fun and playful way.

Minibus of Joy has been active throughout the whole duration of the project. It has been visiting different rural settlements two Saturdays a month. Cooking workshops, board

games, many sports props, and different tournaments attracted many families to enjoy weekends in a different way. Parents recognized the Minibus of Joy as a big added value to the municipality. Boštjan Jamnik from an NGO Skala stated "kids, youth and parents showed deep appreciation every time Minibus of Joy showed up in their settlements and expressed there should be more of these kinds of activities happening in the municipality."

Within the project, we also created a physical activity program for seniors. It took place on the nearby hill, where the municipality stationed a new outside fitness facility. The program was very successful since all spots were almost instantly booked. The positive energy of the facilitator permitted them to be childish, goofy, and playful whilst doing physical exercises. This program was a great indicator of how important activities for that age group are. "Children are playful, but adults just need to be reminded of their playful nature," said Tjaša Babnik, facilitator of the program.

For the Street Art Workshop activity, we collaborated with graffiti artist Fedja Šičarov, one of the local elementary schools, and involved teenagers between the ages of 12 and 14. The workshop was designed not only for them to learn how to use spray, but to also stimulate them on an intellectual level. Graffiti artist opened discussions for example about the history of street art, and what is the difference between street art and vandalism. The final product of the workshop was a big mural of values. Each value was picked and designed by the teenagers. The values they picked out are trust, peace, friendship, persistence, knowledge, and creativity.

A mural was placed on one of the big balconies in their school. It changed an unused school space. It gave a place colours, a creative edge, and meaning. However, besides teenagers enjoying the workshop, there were three important outcomes. First, the new mural gave all the kids in that school reassurance that their opinions matter. Second, by final mural being seen by teachers and other professionals employed in the school, it is a reminder for them to involve more kids in the decision-making process. And third, we also used this opportunity for placemaking. This workshop enabled further discussion of what might this space be used for.

What the future holds

Some of the actions and initiatives that we implemented were a success, some weren't. However, focusing on the positive is crucial. That is the reason why we are working on a strategic plan to incorporate outstanding playful actions in the future.

Our involvement with a URBACT Good Practice network was our first time being a URBACT partner. It was a great learning journey with super nice project partners and professional experts who helped us grasp the whole methodology and philosophy along the way.

What we learned through this experience is that the quote by George Bernard Shaw is definitely, one hundred percent accurate. "We don't stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing."

Igualada

Partner organisation	**Partner**
Type of organisation	**Local Public Authority**
Regroumping	**EU More developer regions**
Country	**Spain**
Area	**Cataluña**
NUTS3	**Barcelona**
Size	**8,1 km²**
Inhabitants	**39.540**

Igualada is located in Catalonia, just 60km from Barcelona, and has a population of approximately 40.000 within the city and of 70.000 in its catchment area. Historically, Igualada's economy was mainly based on the textile and leather industries. However, over the past few years these industries have suffered a significant decline due to liberalization processes and the relocation of companies to lower-wage countries. As a result of the economic decline the municipality is dedicating efforts and resources to combat the negative trend by means of upgrading local economic sectors as well as creating new pools of development. The city focused on a number of working strands: Health Innovation through the 4D Health Simulation Centre, the Igualada Anoia socio-sanitary Laboratory and the 5G Area. The City Council is also implementing policies to give prestige to the leather industry producing for luxury brands; and reinvigorating the retail sector and various city events to make it attractive for the local residents and for visitors. One of those events is The European Balloon Festival, an international meeting of hot air balloons. The festival is held in the first fortnight of July and over four days gathers more than fifty hot air balloons with their teams from around the world, and over 25.000 visitors. Children and families are an important part of the event as there are lots of activities for them around the city. In 2018, Igualada received the 2018-2022 Child-Friendly City seal awarded by UNICEF. This recognizes the city's commitment to enforcing the rights of children and teenagers s as set forth in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Local Plan for Children, Teenagers and Families of Igualada 2018-2022, approved in July 2018, is working to promote this distinction in the area.

Igualada striving for a more playful city

by Marta Correira, Local Project Coordinator

Igualada is located in Catalonia, 60 km from Barcelona, and has a population of approximately 40.000 inhabitants. Thanks to the action taken by the Igualada city council, 89% of the population has a green area within 50 meters of their home. The city has 22,89 m2/inhabitant of green areas, above the recommended standard of the World Health Organization (10 m2/inhabitant).

The main purpose of the actions with the URBACT Playful Paradigm project in our city was the playful approach of urban areas and green areas and to study the best use of these areas for inclusion and participation. Taking advantage of the fact that we have so many green areas, we wanted to encourage the citizens to get to know all these spaces in order to make them more dynamic organising different community activities and also creating new green and playable areas.

To diagnose the needs of our city and look for more challenges and opportunities to strive for a more friendly and inclusive city with play as the main tool, we are lucky to have our ULG, composed of different agents of entities, organizations and Departments of the City Council of Igualada that work with children and adolescents of the city, as well as in the promotion of social cohesion, social inclusion, healthy habits and/or sustainability.

All the agents involved were invited to a first day of training and participation in the concept of playable city by Emma Cortés, specialized in childhood, play and participation and project coordinator at the Institute of Childhood and Adolescence of Barcelona. Then they collaborated in an activity to debate and identify the challenges and opportunities we had.

As a result of the first contact with the ULG, we realized that we were very ambitious with our proposal, since one of our problems of having so many green areas was the lack of maintenance of them. The members of the ULG encouraged us to promote the conservation and maintenance of the areas that we already had, before we made them more visible. If these areas are properly cared as well as meaningfully built, the citizens themselves will make them part of their community and will become more self-dynamic.

In 2018, Igualada received the seal of Child Friendly City 2018-2022 awarded by UNICEF. This recognizes the city's commitment to the implementation of the rights of children and adolescents set out in the Convention on the Children Rights. The municipality of Igualada organises a significant number of important events for children during the year and has already implemented projects organised by the Children City Council. Taking that opportunity, the best option was to involve our little councillors to the Playful Paradigm journey, making every step thinking of our kids and teenagers from the city, as we are sure our children are the experts in playing. However, as Francesco Tonucci says, "The most important learning in life is achieved by playing", so we involved all ages in this project, as we should never stop playing and learning.

As we progressed with the meetings and new learnings, we designed our action plan and pilot actions that would help us to raise awareness in the urban planning department, which is responsible for public spaces in our city. With the aim of revitalizing public spaces to demonstrate that we must continue to preserve our city, we organized a bunch of activities in different neighbourhoods: the installation of a *Ludomobile* with different elements and activities for children from 0 to 12 years old in 5 different neighbourhoods, the *"Free&Creative Area"*, an activity of creation and construction to give value to the autonomous and familiar game in public space, the *Intergenerational Gymkhana* coorganized with the scouts and the Department of Aging, the *Traditional Games Day*, and many others.

With these activities, we corroborated that the neighbourhoods need community activities to socialize, love their environment and city and, thus, do not feel distant from the centre and the activities that always are carried out in the same places. As a result of this good response received with the pilot actions and activities organized by the Children's Council, the Urban Planning Department gained awareness of the importance of its work. They are not only responsible for the public areas of the city, but also for making them inclusive spaces, designed for the community, promoting wellness and healthy living in our neighbourhoods.

It's a great achievement for us to have created interdepartmental connections in the municipality, as we are sure it's the key to the proper execution and to respond to the demands and needs of our citizens. Another great success achieved with this Playful journey has been to co-design a new play area in a secondary neighbourhood of the city, together with the little councillors. The importance of children's participation in political decisions that affect children and adolescents is becoming progressively more important in our Municipality, and in February 2023 a participatory event led by the young councillors will be held with local children to co-design this new play area with the city's Urban Planning Department and the Child Services Department.

We must continue providing spaces for the participation of citizens and give voice to the children of our city. We will build a city for everyone, designed for everyone, taking care of people and the planet, if we allow everyone to participate in its decisions. The journey does not end here, we must continue working on these activities and challenges in order to continue to grow in accordance with the lessons learned throughout the Playful Paradigm journey.

Jelgava

Partner organisation	**Partner**
Type of organisation	**Local Public Authority**
Regroumping	**EU Less developer regions**
Country	**Latvia**
Area	**Latvija**
NUTS3	**Zemgale**
Size	**60,56 km²**
Inhabitants	**61.623**

Latvia is situated in the Baltic region along with Estonia, Lithuania, and Poland. Jelgava Local Municipality (JLM) is located in the very heart of Latvia in Zemgale region. It borders with Republic of Lithuania in the south. It has favourable geographical location – 42 km from Capital City Riga and it surrounds the 4th largest city in Latvia with national importance – Jelgava. Forests cover 26 % of territory of JLM, agricultural land 68 %. Although situated next to the city, Jelgava Local Municipality is considered as the rural region.

How Jelgava Local Municipality is becoming a healthier place for Youth and Children

by Anita Škutāne, Local Project Coordinator

In Jelgava Local Municipality, similarly to other parts of Latvia, children and young people do not do enough physical activities, as a result of which they suffer from excess weight. These problems are observed in every fifth student from the first grade. The most common reasons for that include inactivity, stress and poor diet. Inactivity is often related to the lack of involvement of the family in the course of physical activities - children and young people have not developed the habit of doing sports or any other physical activity.

The situation does not improve over the years, even more - it worsens. Obesity problems caused by a sedentary lifestyle are not only a question of physical appearance, but what is more crucial - can leave negative impact on the health of children and young people in the future, contribute to their social isolation and provoke issues with self-realization and self-esteem. It is important to teach young people and create preconditions where a healthy lifestyle and regular physical activity become a habit for them – a part of their natural and daily routine.

Recognizing that children and young people can be inspired by a good example, we found that one of the reasons for previously described issue is the fact that not enough democratic and accessible sports events are held in the municipality for the target group.

As Dace Mauliņa, Project Module No 4 coordinator, mentioned in one of the ULG meetings, creating a healthy lifestyle as a habit is one of the biggest challenges right now - how to motivate citizens to get involved and to be active. There is also a lack of gaming experience and technical support for that. It is important that residents go out of their usual and customary physical environment – e.g. home, and their comfort zone as this is where development of new skills begins as well as promotion of active and healthy lifestyle becomes possible, continues Dace.

Project manager Anita Škutāne believes that one of the reasons for inactivity is also digital devices that occupy today's children and young people. One of the solutions could be the use of these technologies in promotion of activities, for example the application - Digital trainer.

As one of the challenges for solving the situation and organizing events for the promotion of a healthy lifestyle is the possibility of finding universal/ tailor made solutions that would be suitable and understandable for the children and young people of Jelgava Local Municipality. It is their motivation or non-motivation that needs to be addressed in order to offer a solution. Another challenge is to involve in the promotion of a healthy lifestyle those groups of young people who are excluded from everyday social life and those families where adults do not observe a healthy lifestyle - sedentary, with unhealthy eating habits and harmful habits. When organizing events, an inclusive and supportive environment is a must – to create conditions where not achievement and success itself is a victory, but participation.

An organizationally important challenge is to unite municipality specialists for joint work and common understanding, as well as prioritizing health and mobility of young people as a value among other priorities, e.g. social issues and others. This also applies to the continuation of initiatives and making them a tradition, because this is the way to make the daily individual choices of young people healthy and connected to movements.

And so, within the project, in the Jelgava Local Municipality, we started to organize more and more activities both popularizing an active way of life as well as actually providing possibilities for young people to be active and get involved. Following activities were organized: Sports games for school children of Jelgava Local Municipality in disc-golf and orienteering, Sports and team building event for 7th grade students of all schools of Jelgava Local Municipality, Jelgava Local Municipality Championship in running, orienteering and disc-golf for inhabitants of the municipality for all ages.

Those events gained positive response and provided good feedback from inhabitants and target group. The side-by-side activities with the inclusive character for different ages, created synergies between people and proved to have positive influence of different generations on each other.

Although activities reached popularity, they do not immediately solve all the problems. The work must be continued. Efforts must be made to provide that in people's perception health promotion events and activities are not linked to exclusively champion sports, but are activities equally intended for all individuals. It is precisely such values as health

and wellness in movement and cooperation that can be integrated into communication about events and cross-activities within the framework of communication campaigns, especially those that affect children and young people.

The main conclusion is that healthy municipalities are defined by a process, not an outcome. They are conscious of the health and striving to improve it. Thus, any place can be a healthy municipality, regardless of its current health status. Healthy municipalities are places that deliver for people and the planet. They engage the whole society, encouraging the participation of all communities in the pursuit of peace and prosperity.

In the future we should concentrate to ensuring community participation in decisions that affect where and how people live, their common goods and services. This includes improved spaces and services, based on the needs and assets in communities, stronger accountability and governance for health and well-being, empowered and resilient populations, increased ownership over individual health and well-being.

Lousã

Partner organisation	**Partner**
Type of organisation	**Local Public Authority**
Regroumping	**EU Less developer regions**
Country	**Portugal**
Area	**Centro (PT)**
NUTS3	**Região de Coimbra**
Size	**138 km²**
Inhabitants	**17.252**

Culturally it is a very dynamic town, as its associations work in collaboration with governmental entities, producing a wide range of activities, suited to the interest of the population. Lousã also has a network of libraries, an Ethnographic Museum, a Museum on the heritage of Lousã and the MOMO - Circus Museum, the only one of this kind in Portugal, among other cultural facilities. Comparing with the municipalities in the region, Lousã is one of the municipalities with best demographic data, higher than the average values in the region and the country. This characteristic gives the town of Lousã a certain relevance at a regional level, being one of the places in the District of Coimbra with the most population and with a concentration of some services. For this reason, Lousã has several kindergartens and public schools, namely a secondary school and a professional school.

Lousã also belongs to several networks that share their good practices, such as the "Network of Educating Cities", the "Network of Healthy Municipalities", The "Network of sports-friendly municipalities", or the "Municipalities Movement for peace". Due to its practices, it has been recognized in several national awards, such as the "Living in Equality" Award - awarded by the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality of the Portuguese Government, the "Rainbow Award" - awarded by the ILGA Association to institutions distinguished in the fight against discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression and sexual characteristics, or the "APOM Award" - awarded by the Portuguese Museology Association, that recognized the work to make the museums accessible to people with disabilities through multimedia experiences, among many others.

How Lousã made the citizens life more playful with ageless activities

by Soraia Correia, Local Project Coordinator

Lousã is a small municipality located in the countryside of the center of Portugal, with a population of around 17.000 inhabitants. As a small community, implementing projects that aim to improve people´s lifestyle and wellbeing is not impossible, but can be challenging.

Lousã's policies are focused on Lifelong learning, Education and Integration, and the municipality has already implemented several actions and initiatives to this end. Throughout the years, Lousã has been able to bring people together and enable the development of joint efforts to overcome the difficulties faced in the implementation of several projects. With this URBACT networking experience, Lousã Municipality aimed to attract and engage new partners and participants, implement new forms of civic participation, promote the territory for all ages and innovate in schools with appealing teaching methods.

It is always a challenge to instigate the population to use the public spaces, both indoors and outdoors, to promote places and initiatives outside the city center, such as small gardens and parishes, and to connect and integrate the thriving associative community through playful activities and spaces.

The pandemic situation has affected people's emotional and physical state, especially children and youth, who have spent time in isolation and are still dealing with the consequences of remote studies and communication in general. People became less active, and internet addicted, therefore it is crucial to make them more physically active, boost their mental state, and help them to get involved and to be more socially included.

Play has the power to ensure positive experiences and changes, and can "speak" without words, making it an effective way to reach out to society. Lousã's ULG engaged in improving the existing project and giving input on placemaking issues with the help of local stakeholders. Social inclusion, the boost of mental and physical health and sustainable development via digital solutions using playful methods were important goals for the municipality.

As a first-time partner in a URBACT transfer network, Lousã's Municipality achieved its main goal, ensuring positive changes and giving inputs as well as receiving the several experiences and learning from the other partners.

As a result of this experience, Lousã's Municipality recently presented to the community a new equipment, the **Ludobike**, which is a bike that carries games adapted to the audience, and will travel with youth volunteers around the town, bringing play and joy.

Writing a transfer story gives us a bittersweet feeling, as it marks the end of a wonderful journey, but on the other hand, we now have a community committed to making our town more playful, ageless, greener and inclusive.

In the end, we just reassured what we already knew, people love to play...and **Play is a serious matter**!

Playful Paradigm celebrates the World Play Day 2022

by Maria Cecilia Corsini, Local Project Officer

"The reason for promoting World Play Day is to emphasize the role of play in our lives and in particularly in the life of our children. Children learn to talk through play, they learn to make friends through play, they get exercise through play; they also acquired the basic skills for formal education, such as concentration, imagination, self-expression and the retention of useful facts. Let's children play today and ensure their happy, useful and healthy future." Frida Kim, World Play Day Founder.

World Play Day is celebrated internationally on 28 May each year. This day commemorates the day in 1987 when the International Toy Library Association (ITLA) was first proposed. Toy libraries and Play-focused organisations around the globe celebrate World Play Day on 28 May each year.

We want to underline the fact that play is not only important for children but for adults as well. In addition to the intergenerational connections that play can bring among people, play has an important value per se. Adults need to find a purpose in what they do but one of the peculiarity of play is that it can have its most satisfying aspect in itself and not

in the aim it may reach. A no aim play let the participants enter in an expanded time with no stress. People can be detached for daily worries and recharge their batteries. Play is therefore a tool of mental health and wellbeing.

In May 2022, after two years stop due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we could finally celebrate in presence, outdoor, the World Play Day. The theme for 2022 was "Rediscover play. Recover through play". As written before, play, especially nowadays, shows its fundamental importance in coping with the dramatic effects of this crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the increase in loneliness, mental disorders, stress, resentment, discrimination, dis-connection, health inequities.

Udine has a 20 year tradition in celebrating the World Play Day in town by involving local organizations in an afternoon of play in the city centre and this year the Playful Paradigm Network joined the World Play Day organizing playful activities in the cities.

This shared activity permitted: to enhance the cohesion in the network; to give more visibility to the culture of play among the network cities; finally to experiment how open door play can be a tool of wellbeing and recover from the health crisis the world faced.
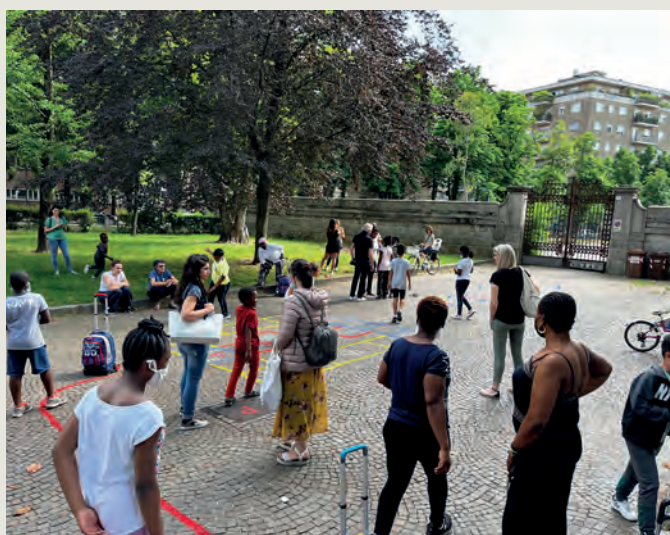
Lousã organized playing activities in didactic farm near the city centre where several kinds of games (science games, imitation games, active games) were proposed to people. There has been a big interaction between children and parents, and this was the biggest achievement of the day: to promote play for all and promote play as a tool of constructive bonding between parents and children.

Igualada worked with two groups of Scouts as well in intergenerational relationship linking the World Play Day with the Week of the elderly. A Gymkhana of playful activities were organized in different town's locations. More than 150 people attended the event therefore this has been a wonderful opportunity to give visibility to the project and to ULG group.

Also Grosuplje focused its event on the intergenerational solidarity approach, naming the day Intergenerational Play Day. Among the other activities. They draw with chalks a horizontal playground and promote movement games between girls and grandmothers.

Jelgava proposed playful activities in the parishes involving several stakeholders in the organization. Participants were satisfied about the play day with board games, street games, small competition with rewards. Another important aspect to underline is that Playful Paradigm works well in different local stakeholders are involved in the process and are mutually connected in project implementation.

In Udine the ULG focused the work for the World Play Day on the topic of inclusion. The ULG proposed to the people two games especially developed for this event. One is the inclusive hopscotch game, which can be played also with people on a wheelchair. The other is a Snakes and Ladders game to be played with Alternative Augmentative Communication for people with communication difficulties. It has been very interesting to explore the possibilities of make play more and more inclusive.

See you on World Play Day 2023!
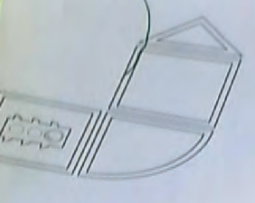
Thematic reports

URBACT provided the Playful Paradigm Network with a team of experts to support Municipalities in the improvement and implementation of the Good Practice. Here's their analysis on the use of play that the Cities of the Playful Paradigm Network made to directly or indirectly achieve specific goals.

Play and Placemaking, a perfect match for great public spaces

by Wessel Badenhorst, Urbact Ad Hoc Expert

When we think about placemaking in public spaces we might be tempted to judge a place just on its physical appearance. If that was the main factor to improve a place, then it will be sufficient to get a landscape architect to design a plan and the municipality to spend the money on its implementation.

Yet we know that many 'well designed spaces' end up being less appreciated in the neighbourhoods and communities where they are located. Why? There is a simple answer to this question. The secret to what makes a great place is not only in its appearance or 'functionality', but is rather determined by four main factors. These are:
• the range of actual uses and activities of people in the space throughout the day and week;
• the sociability of the space, especially as a location for meeting people and socialising;
• the ease with which the space can be accessed irrespective of the users' abilities together with the variety of transport modes available to connect to the space;

• the image of the space (i.e. physical appearance) in addition to the perceived comfort and safety associated with the space.

The Project for Public Spaces, a New York-based organisation that have been at the forefront of promoting the value of public spaces in the everyday lives of people living in cities, developed the Place Diagram (see below) to help placemakers use metrics to evaluate a public space and to plan and implement actions to improve the space.
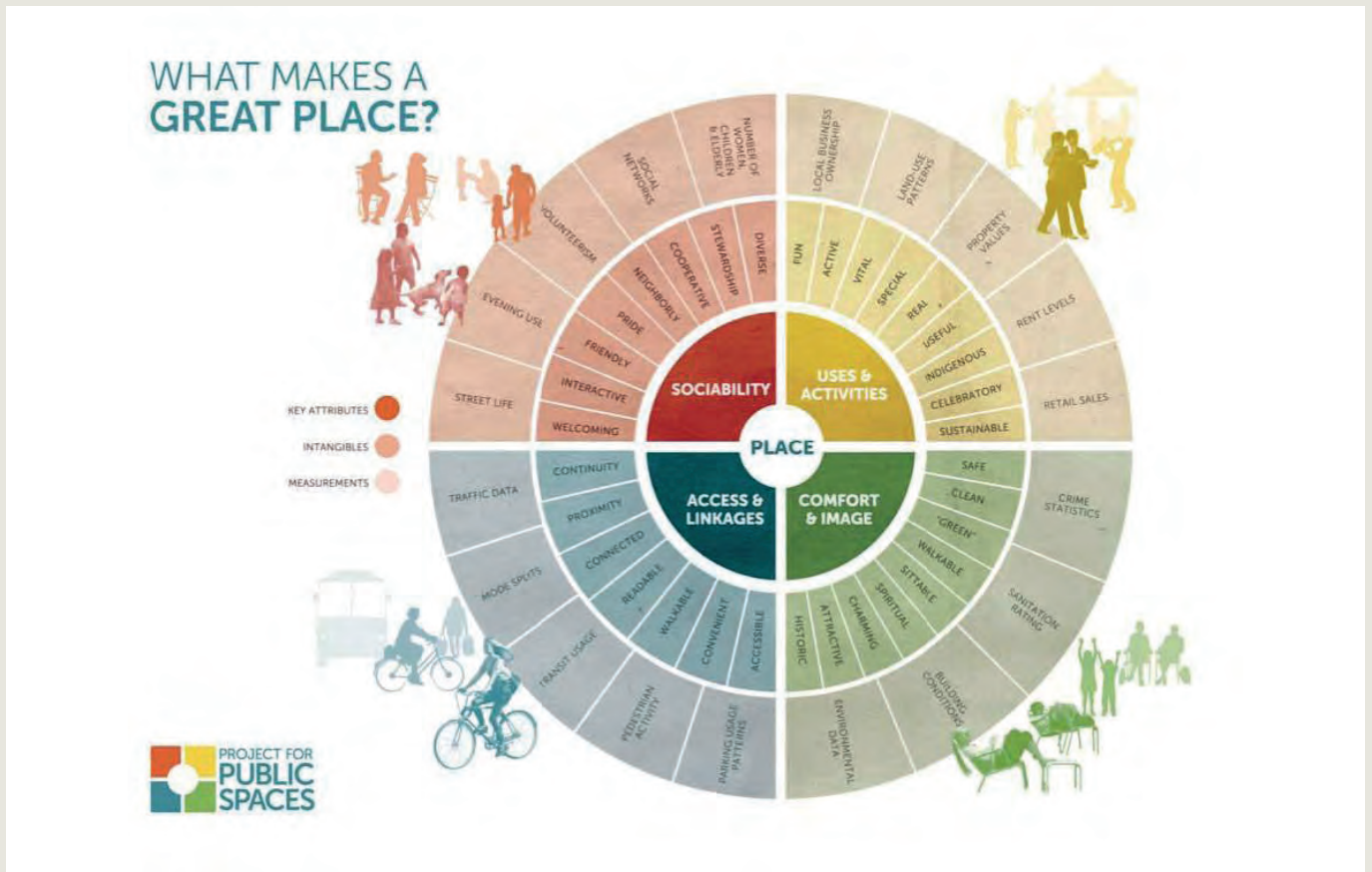
A working definition of placemaking follows from this systematic approach to public spaces namely:

Turning public spaces into great places by increasing the presence of people through user participation and stakeholder cooperation.

From this definition it is clear that how people interact with a place is at the core of the understanding of how we should develop public spaces. It is also acknowledged that stakeholders will have different perspectives to what is valued in a specific public space. For example parents or grandparents accompanying their young children or grandchildren will have a different perspective on the use of the space than for example teenagers or young people. The art of placemaking thus requires a process of facilitating discussions and ideas from as many stakeholders as is practically possible to identify matches between needs and actions that will improve the space.

The process of placemaking can be understood as consisting of five stages and follows the logic of analysis and planning preceding implementation and evaluation. A good start will be to define and map the space in question and to identify who are key stakeholders that should be involved in the process.

The quality of outcome (i.e. a better, even great place) is often closely related to the depth and breadth of participation from stakeholders in the process. This starts with the evaluation of the space and the identification of issues, which requires the use of observation tools and creative participation activities.

The conversations between stakeholders together with the data from the space observations will inform new insights into what the space can be for as many types of users as possible. A critical part of placemaking is to visualise these insights and design professionals make valuable contributions to this end.

DEFINE PLACE & IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS

EVALUATE SPACE & IDENTIFY ISSUES

PLACE VISION

SHORT-TERM EXPERIMENTS

ONGOING REEVALUATION & LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS

Source: www.pps.org

Placemaking however is an iterative process. Ideas generated in the discussions, need to be put into practice and tested. Many ideas are not new (i.e. have worked in other places), but stakeholders need to feel how it works when 'in place'. Also, change is never easy and by doing a temporary installation (see picture of the parklet), a change can be rolled back or tweaked.
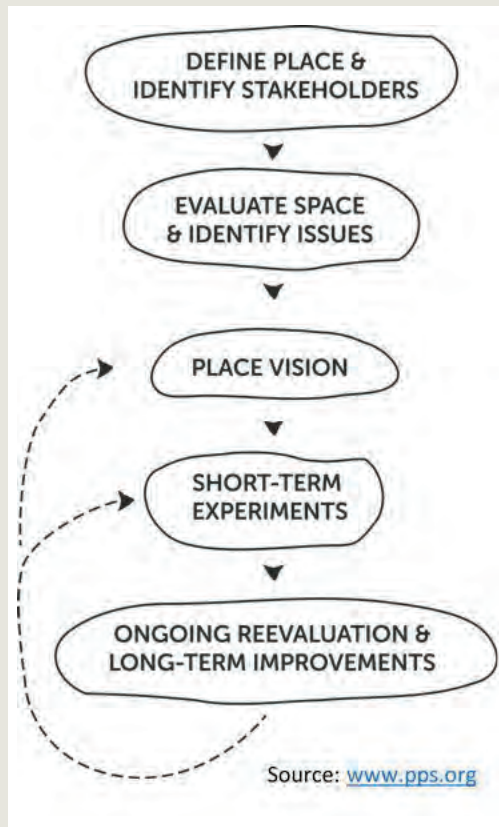
Parklets temporarily replacing parking spaces in San Dona di Piave

These short-term experiments often lead to more informed decision making in an ongoing re-evaluation of the space that creates more certainty for longer term investments and improvements.

By getting involved in a placemaking process, stakeholders tend to get to know each other and hopefully develop mutual trust. This is so important for the ongoing management of a space and especially to continue starting initiatives to animate and activate the space while also promoting active stewardship (i.e. looking after the place) among the users of the space.

In URBACT's Playful Paradigm Project, a further dimension to placemaking has been explored. How can play be used to activate public spaces and meet the needs of users of these spaces? If playfulness is inculcated through several play activities in public spaces in a city or in specific neighbourhoods, will it result in building social inclusion and affecting the general wellbeing of communities?

In the Playful Paradigm Project the following conclusions were reached on the association of play making and placemaking:

• Play brings people together. Placemaking brings people together. It is a perfect match!
• The emphasis in placemaking is often on activities to animate public spaces and play is an excellent way to do this.
• Placemaking is about going 'cheap and cheerful', especially re-using and repurposing materials (i.e. circular economy). Creating playful places is also about using affordable materials like chalk or even natural objects like the trunk of a fallen tree.
• It helps to have a targeted approach in play making and placemaking for example the needs of target groups such as young people, older people, women and girls. This will influence aspects such as types and times of play, safety and who to include in the placemaking process.

The Project also practically demonstrated in partner cities that through play strong community participation can be activated. The initial play activities and experiments can lead to further cooperation and collaboration in the interest of community development.

In conclusion, if any group of people want to start a project to improve a public space in their neighbourhood or in the city centre, it makes sense to follow the stages of placemaking described in this article and to build a strong element of play into the process! Let's play and make!

Enhancing placemaking with play

by Wessel Badenhorst, Urbact Ad Hoc Expert

The purpose of this report is to set out practical steps that can be pursued by participants in URBACT's Playful Paradigm 2nd Wave Project to improve public spaces in their respective cities by integrating play into their placemaking processes.

The practices and experiences of partner cities in both Playful Paradigm Networks have demonstrated that by designing actions with creative processes like play and placemaking in mind, will deliver significant societal impacts such as inclusion and wellbeing.

The aim of this report is to build on the knowledge gained from these practices and experiences.

Rationale

The ethos of placemaking is evident when a diverse group of people ('placemakers') work together to enhance the attachment people have to a place through community-oriented actions with reverence for the ecology of the place. The mission is to make public spaces more aesthetic, amenable and accessible. To achieve the mission, the metrics should be clear and measurable.

A placemaking process can be understood as a set of stages, each with place-specific

goals and objectives. It is a learning process where participants deepen their understanding of how a place works; test what could be changed; and build trust among stakeholders to create a foundation for place stewardship. As a group of placemakers make their way through the stages, they are building local capacity for more actions and gaining the confidence to engage more stakeholders to commit to more change. It follows that good placemaking is the result of sustaining momentum in an iterative process of persuading and doing, mindful that the direction might be forward but also sideways and sometimes temporarily backwards.

The question is how can play catalyse the placemaking process? The proof is in the evaluation of play activities designed into every stage of the placemaking process.

Using Play in the Stages of Placemaking

The stages of placemaking has been well described by the Project for Public Spaces starting with defining the space and identifying stakeholders that use the space or who are affected by the use of the space. The engagement with stakeholders is also the start of a stage where placemakers have conversations with users, potential users, residents, local businesses and the local authority about ideas to make the public space a better place. To bring these ideas into a cohesive place concept and to give a sense of how to make the concept 'real', requires a stage where design is key to visualise outcomes and to articulate a vision.

Once the vision is agreed, placemakers begin a stage of experimentation where ideas are tested with pilot actions. It is a learning process which could change the original idea and influence the thinking of stakeholders. These pilot actions also provide data for planning more permanent actions which is a stage that requires more intense resourcing and professional design and implementation. The final stage is to monitor and evaluate impacts including to analyse the needs of users and stakeholders with a view of further placemaking actions.

Play can enhance the placemaking process in the following stages:

1. Engaging stakeholders
The initial task of making contact with users of the identified public space also entails reaching out to more disadvantaged target groups and people who have limited access to the public space but a desire or need to use the space.
The city of Udine (Italy) has successfully used play as a means to engage with ethnic minorities in public spaces. Their approach is to bring children from all backgrounds together to play as the quickest way to engage with the parents and to understand their needs and aspirations. Play thus creates the opening for more engagement.
In cities like Trieste (Italy) and Koper (Slovenia) there is a focus on finding out how young people want to relax and play in public spaces. Their approach is to interview young people in and around specific public spaces at different times of the day and then to compare their data to find the issues and challenges that need to be further explored with more conversations.

2. Conversations about ideas for actions in the public space

An important stage is where placemakers have conversations with many people in practical settings to co-create ideas for the public space/s in question. Usually placemakers try to make these idea-creation events fun and creative. This can include activities such as playful mapping of the area, cartoon-type drawings of typical users (or personas as per the design thinking methodology) and using play equipment like Lego and clay to build models depicting the ideas of participants.

In a city like Umea (Sweden) the ideas of a specific target group – young women and teenage girls – were prioritised to shape the future development of public spaces in the city. How they want to relax and play in a public space, then influenced the type of play equipment (e.g. swings) and seating the city designed for their public spaces.

Importantly many ideas for public spaces are transferable and replicable. It therefore means that through networks like URBACT's Playful Paradigm Project cities can exchange their ideas (and variety of games!) and invite other cities to see and try for themselves. Some of the ideas of the city of Udine, lead partner of the Playful Paradigm Project like the Ludo Bus and the toy libraries have been enthusiastically adapted by other partner cities of the network.

3. Experimentation with pilot play actions

Often placemaking is not confined to the reconstruction of a public space. Rather, the immediate need is to animate the space. This is especially important when placemakers are testing which activities will bring a 'turnaround' in the public perception and usefulness of a public space.

There appears to be endless opportunities to design and test playful activities for public spaces. For example, in Ireland there are examples ranging from new types of music instruments made from recycled materials in Cork City to old-school street games like hopscotch chalked on city centre streets in Sligo.

Sometimes play is a way to reimagine what could be other uses for a public space. This is especially the case when attempting to expand the uses of streets, i.e. moving away from a car-centric single use. In Cork City, during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, placemakers arranged that more than a kilometre of one of the thoroughfares be 'opened for play' over 4 Sundays in the summer of 2020. This pilot action was part of the Playful Paradigm Project, the impact of which was that stakeholders changed how they viewed this street. Today the street has been fully pedestrianised!

4. Having fun in the evaluation

The final stage of placemaking is the evaluation of actions with a view of assessing impact and needs. This could be a 'dry' exercise, for example, with a questionnaire followed by lots of statistics and graphs. The problem is that often then the participation levels are low and the enthusiasm even lower.

To bring some fun and creativity in the evaluation exercises could address this lethargic situation. This could be in the form of changing the presentation of information or using playful elements in the questionnaire (the most obvious being emojis).

Gamification could also be used to probe the ambitions of stakeholders through 'playing' with the scenarios for future placemaking following the assessment of the outcomes attributed to current actions. To do this however, requires proficiency in game theory.

In general, making the evaluation process more fun will be helpful for the placemaking process as-a-whole, including to foster place management and stewardship.

Conclusion

The takeaways from the learning and experimentation in the Playful Paradigm Project are:

• Use play to bring people together in a public space.
• Use play in workshops and co-creation planning events to creatively generate ideas.
• Use play to animate the public space with more active user participation and interaction.
• Use play to experiment with reimagining uses in a public space.
• Use play in the evaluation of actions.

Taking a gender sensitive approach to playgrounds and public spaces

by Mary Dellenbaugh-Losse, Urbact Ad Hoc Expert

Gender is an important and often overlooked aspect of urban planning, in particular with regard to spaces of play and active recreation. In addition, incorporating play and playfulness into urban planning decisions can foster gender equality and inclusion of multi-generational voices in cities. In the following toolkit, we wish to share insights from the Playful Paradigm master class on gender for both taking a gender-responsive approach to recreational spaces and in incorporating playful approaches to urban planning.

Gender-responsive urban planning: Challenges and approaches
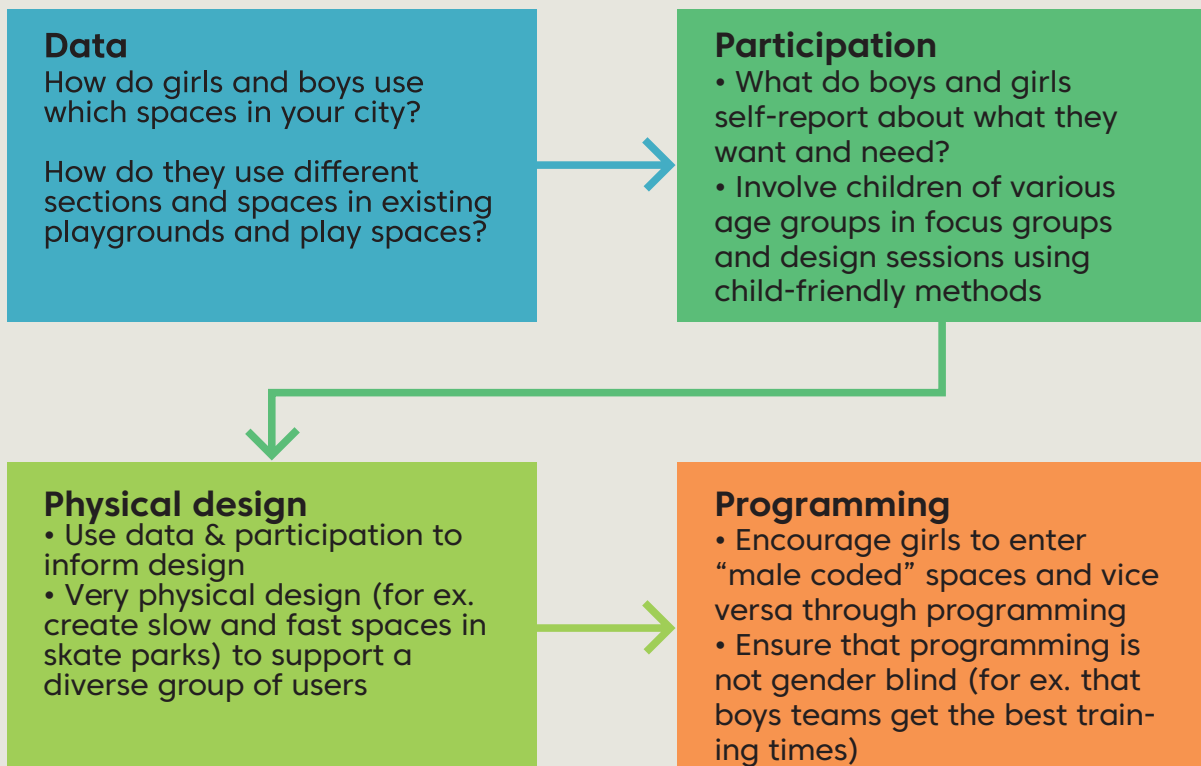
Studies in cities show time and again that women and men perceive spaces differently and have different needs with regard to public space and city infrastructure. For this reason, the same space can affect women and men's actions differently.

Policies, programmes and services which do not take gender into account (for example through targeted participation or gathering gender-disaggregated data) are said to be "gender blind." Spaces which are designed as the result of a gender blind approach can, in the worst case, increase disparities between genders and entrench gendered stereotypes about what roles men and women and boys and girls should play in society and what types of activities are appropriate for them.

Tackling gender inequality in play and recreational spaces

Dr. Mary Dellenbaugh-Losse has developed a framework for tackling gender inequality in play and recreational spaces called "Data and the three little Ps." In order to design spaces which are welcoming and equitable for all participants, we first need to understand what possible users need and expect from the space (**Data** & **Participation**). We then need to incorporate this information into the **Physical Design**. In cases where spaces already exist or we notice that there is a gender split in the use of it, we can use **Programming** to help encourage underrepresented groups to feel more comfortable in the space.

Data
How do girls and boys use which spaces in your city?

How do they use different sections and spaces in existing playgrounds and play spaces?

Participation
• What do boys and girls self-report about what they want and need?
• Involve children of various age groups in focus groups and design sessions using child-friendly methods

Physical design
• Use data & participation to inform design
• Very physical design (for ex. create slow and fast spaces in skate parks) to support a diverse group of users

Programming
• Encourage girls to enter "male coded" spaces and vice versa through programming
• Ensure that programming is not gender blind (for ex. that boys teams get the best training times)

The city of Umeå (Sweden), lead partner in the URBACT GenderedLandscape Action Planning Network, presented a number of examples demonstrating the application of this approach.

Encouraging girls in male-coded spaces

Girls frequently feel intimidated entering male-coded spaces, so spaces with activities that are stereotypically attributed to men and boys, such as skateboarding. Thus, to promote women and girls entering and using these spaces, the municipality used a gender-sensitive approach in the design and programming of their new **skate park**:

- **Placement**: Typically, skate parks are located in former industrial areas, which can be dark and forbidding and have a lack of footfall. Umeå's skate park, in contrast, is located along the river in a space that is well-travelled by a range of people, and is near a youth centre.
- **Empowerment**: The municipality worked with the programme "you skate girl" from the outset of the redesign process in order to embed girls' use of and entitlement to the space from the beginning.
- **Gender-responsive programming**: The rules for the park are agreed in cooperation with all users and there are also specific girl-only events and programmes.

Increasing girls' presence in public space

Umeå also conducted research which showed that teenage girls are often underrepresented in public spaces and also stop using municipal sport facilities at a younger age than boys. For this reason, the municipality decided to design a new public space called the **Freezone** using a participative approach they describe as "inclusion though exclusion." Focus groups were conducted with girls between 15 and 20 years old and the result was a space of relaxation for "hanging out" in which the seating opportunities, round swings, are designed for bodies with an average height of 165cm.

Creating gender-neutral youth centres

Finally, Umeå presented their gender analysis with regard to youth centres. Considerations included:

- What are youths' first impression when entering the youth centre? Is it a gender-coded space such as a pool table or a neutral option such as a café?
- Where is the youth centre located? Is it in a dark and quiet residential neighbourhood or in a lively social area, for example next to a supermarket?
- What does the entrance look like? Do youths have to walk through hallways and well into the building before they encounter their friends and the youth workers, or is the entryway direct and welcoming?

- How is the youth centre decorated? What sorts of colours are used? Are the decorations neutral and welcoming? Are there defined spaces for different activities?
- What sorts of games and activities are offered? Are video games directed at boys (i.e. FIFA, shooters, etc.) or are they neutral and welcoming (dance dance revolution, gender neutral activities)?

Playful approaches to urban planning

Two further cities presented their playful approaches to urban planning for the network.

Pristina, Kosovo:
Gender-responsive urban planning and the block by block Project
Pristina was one of the first sites in Europe to be selected by UN-Habitat to test the Block by Block Methodology for participatory urban planning.[1] The project focused on a cooperative re-design of the former green market in Sunny Hill following the idea that residents know better than planners what is needed. The design proposal was developed in three phases. First, residents, with a specific focus on including the voices of young girls, identified needs and priorities for the design of the park. Then, after a short introduction to design and public space, small teams of participants modelled different design solutions. Gender and multi-generational inclusion underpinned all of the design categories. For example, participants suggested that the natural slopes in the area be transformed into slides for children and youth. Urban furniture was designed with a view toward accessibility, user-friendliness and comfort for a variety of body shapes and sizes. In the last stage of the co-design process, participants co-created the final design on a multiplayer Minecraft server based on the seventeen ideas generated by the teams.
These final designs were presented to a wide audience of urban professionals as well as the mayor of Pristina. The final concept featured a range of facilities addressing the needs of various groups, including gardens, comfortable resting places, a playground, and Kosovo's first skate park. The final report can be downloaded online.[2]

Minecraft has been used for other UN-Habitat co-design projects such as:
https://hercity.unhabitat.org/botkyrka.
Watch the video on this project here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ItMomtypFs

Pordenone, Italy:
Using Live Action Role Play to explore gender and urban planning
Women make up more than half of the Italian population, but they continue to live, move and work in organisational and urban contexts historically designed and coded by men; Gender gaps in participation and planning highlight persistent structural imbalances. Against this backdrop, the city of Pordenone sought to develop a participative format that could be applied in medium-sized cities to encourage the collective conceptualisation of how the future of the city might be. Their core question was: Can we envision a better future from a gendered perspective? Their main goal in this process was to raise awareness among the population of the city and embed gender mainstreaming in planning and policy in the city.
The city chose three strategic areas to work on - work, intergenerationality and time & spaces - and designed a treasure hunt through the city based on Live Action Role Play (LARP). A path was designed which included stops at schools, supermarkets, municipal buildings, the cinema, etc. Female participants were instructed to answer questions at each stop and find an object from the past and the future. The next point in the path resulted from their answers and choices. The aim of this exercise was to facilitate a new vision among the participants by disrupting usual/ habitual paths and offering a new per-

1 https://www.blockbyblock.org/projects/kosovo
2 https://unhabitat-kosovo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Inclusive_-Safe-and-Accessible-Public-Space_2.pdf

spective on familiar spaces.

The exercise offered a reflexive and immersive approach to thinking about the future of the city which pointed to opportunities and not just problems. You can read more about the project in the final report (in Italian):

https://www.comune.pordenone.it/it/comune/progetti/pordenone-citta-futura

Gender-responsive and playful approaches in your city

So how can playful approaches help you design your city in a more inclusive way and how can you use an inclusive approach to design and programme your play and leisure spaces? The examples and the framework above offer starting points and inspiration for beginning to be able to tackle these questions in your own context. Above all, they demonstrate that knowledge and data are the main starting point for any strategy. We need to know what our residents want, feel, need and long for in our cities. Playful approaches then allow us to engage them in lighthearted ways which promote emotional expression, innovation, thinking "outside the box", and enjoyment. Above all, remember that you don't have to be an expert to make incremental change in your own city!

You can find a range of additional resources below.

Additional resources

- Lousã (Portugal), one of the Playful Paradigm partners, has a Guide for the Local Integration of the Gender Perspective in Urbanism and Environment in Portuguese, available here: https://lge.ces.uc.pt/files/LGE_urbanismo_habitacao_ambiente.pdf
  They have been also awarded as gender equal city.
- Check out the card game "Citizen Participation? Hell No!" developed by the URBACT ActiveCitizens Action Planning Network, available in English and French here:
  https://www.shop.strategicdesignscenarios.net/?product=citizens-participation-hell-no-en
- Check out Vienna's case study on gender-responsive park design, which considered in particular the needs to 10-13 year old girls:
  https://use.metropolis.org/case-studies/gender-sensitive-park-design
- Read more about the Berlin district Lichtenberg's gender analysis of their playground infrastructure and two case studies of gender-responsive play space planning (in German) here:
  https://www.berlin.de/ba-lichtenberg/politik-und-verwaltung/beauftragte/gleichstellung/mdb-balichtenberghohenschoenhausen-gleichstellung-spielplatzbroschuere_1_.pdfw

In designing spaces of play and recreation, we need to make sure we have our "gender glasses" on!

Reproducing gender stereotypes about the role of men and women in society

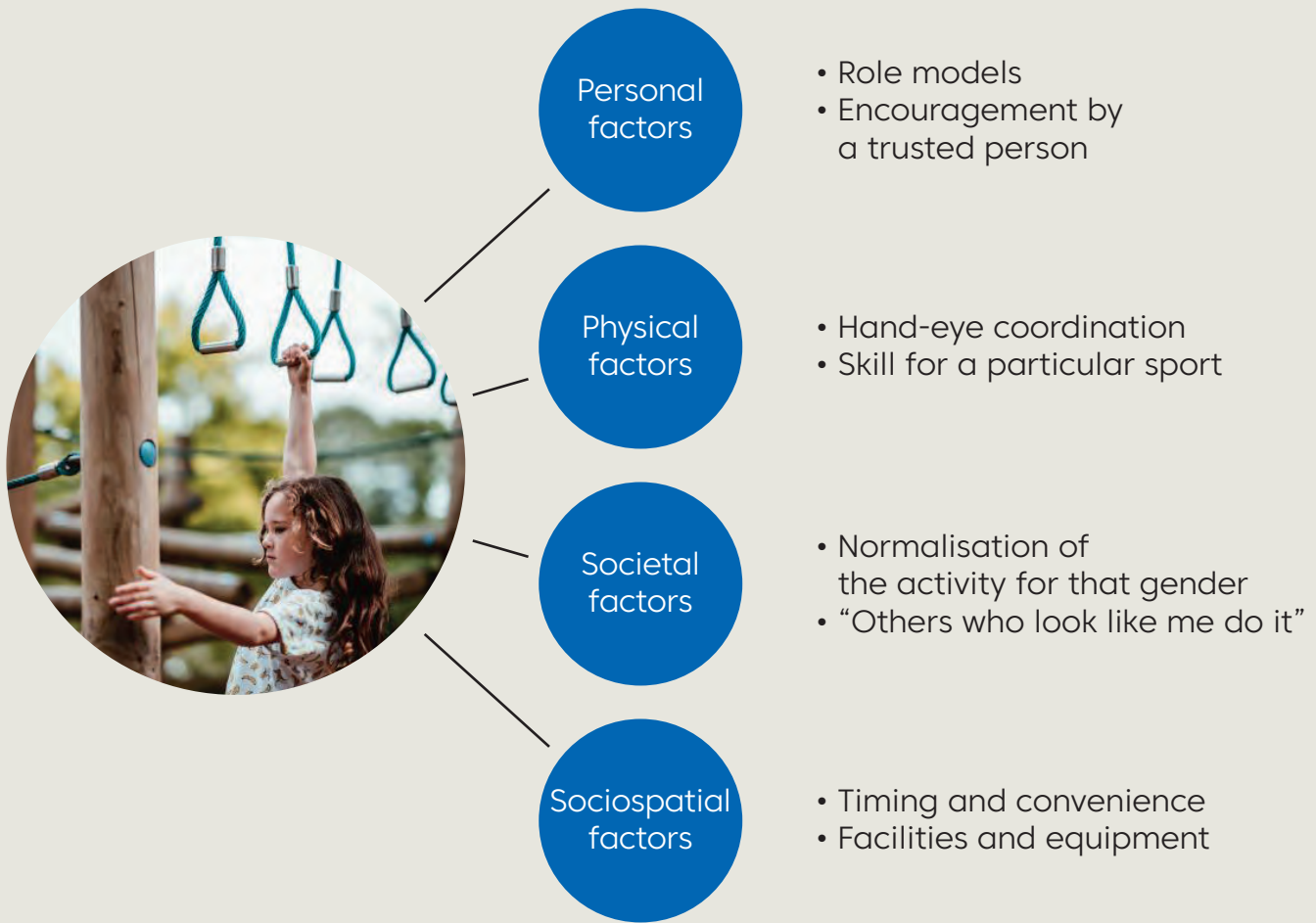**Gender blindness in urban planning can also increase inequality**

Gender stereotypes are reinforced through play

How To Design Gender-Sensitive Recreation Spaces and Playgrounds

by Mary Dellenbaugh-Losse, Urbact Ad Hoc Expert

Personal factors
- Role models
- Encouragement by a trusted person

Physical factors
- Hand-eye coordination
- Skill for a particular sport

Societal factors
- Normalisation of the activity for that gender
- "Others who look like me do it"

Sociospatial factors
- Timing and convenience
- Facilities and equipment

Studies show that girls tend to stop using parks, playgrounds & recreational facility years earlier than boys (around the age of 12 12-14).

Is it true for your municipality and, if so, what can we do about it it?

Who uses which facilities and how?

• Observing and counting

– Are there both girls and boys? Approximately how many of each are there?
– Are they using all spaces equally or do they seem to (each) prefer certain spaces?
– How are they using the space? Actively / Passively? Alone / In peer groups / With adults? Physically moving / sitting and watching?

• Asking

– What is your favourite place to play in [YOUR CITY'S NAME] and why?
– What do you like about this park / playground / sports field? What is not so great?
– What kind of spaces would you like to play in? What's missing?

General good practices for gender gender-sensitive design

Choosing and/or improving the space and its surroundings

– How do children and young people of different ages get there? Do they feel comfortable going there alone on foot, with a bike or with the public transport? Is this answer the same for both girls and boys?
– What about lighting? Is there both sufficient lighting within the space and in its surroundings?
– Are there shops and other spaces nearby which add liveliness or does the surrounding space feel empty or abandoned? Does this differ at different times of day or times of year?

Choosing and/or improving the space and its surroundings

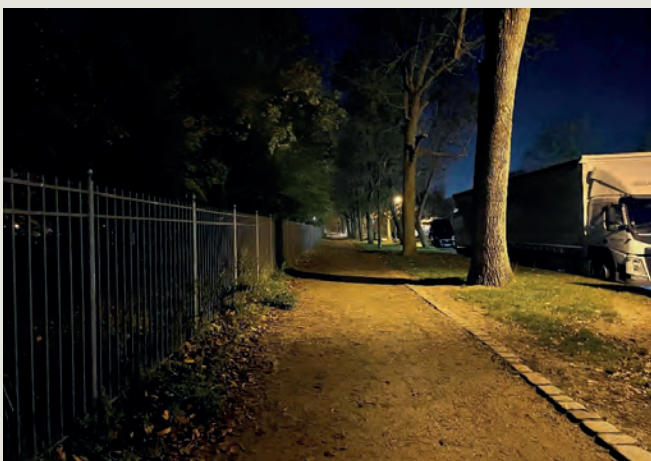Continuous, bright light

Lighting that leaves dark areas

Bright light on facility

But surroundings are dark

Bright light outside park

But park is dark

Who uses which facilities and how?

Designing for Diversity

- Creating opportunities for a wide range of users, including beginners and advanced users, as well as individuals with mobility issues and disabilities
- Central spaces to "see and be seen" and marginal spaces to be able to practice without embarrassment
- Spaces to sit and watch and take a rest which are comfortable for a variety of body types and sizes (e.g. not normed to 1,8m tall bodies).

Who uses which facilities and how?

Midsummer quarter in Vienna on a warm July evening at 10pm

Designing for diversity can also mean innovation

General good practices for gender gender-sensitive design

Manufacturing normalisation

- Municipal programming (for example through youth workers or youth centres) or cooperations with local clubs and associations
- Peer support & "strength in numbers"
- Representation in promotional materials
- Word choice
- Photos
- Welcoming for beginners

REPLAY THE CITY
The value of inclusive playgrounds and public space to play for community wellbeing and skills development

by Raffaella Lioce, Urbact Ad Hoc Expert

"Man is fully such only when he plays"
Schiller, Friedrich, 1759-1805

The play has always played an important role in the history of human beings. Many thinkers, philosophers and scholars have reflected on the subject, trying to define its particularities. Starting from Aristotle, who considered play an activity and an experience that was not finalized and productive but useful for the development of the personality and for the training of the cognitive sphere, we arrive at nineteenth-century thinkers such as Fröbel, who is at the beginning of pedagogy and early theories on early childhood education.

Friedrich Schiller, a German philosopher, poems writers and academic, states that a *"Play is any activity that is chosen for itself, and not with a view to an external profit or purpose"*. Then exploring the aesthetic and ethic dimension of the play he affirms that *"only by playing, the individual can free his mind from external conditioning, which may be the judgment of others"*.

The play has no other purpose than the play, and is therefore, the only activity which is chosen by individuals since for itself, and not in view of a useful or an external purpose. This perspective of interpretation of the play does not consider, of course, gambles nor the so-called serious games: games designed for a primary purpose other than pure entertainment that allow players to carry out activities that enable them to practice skills and achieve aspects beyond simply enjoying a leisure activity or involve players to simulate and co design solutions using role-play models.

The importance of the play for the play brings us back to childhood and frees us from specific constraints or objectives. In pure playful activities, in fact, the sensitive component is not subordinated to a rational purpose, nor is the intellectual moment sacrificed to the sensitive impulse: indeed, in them sensitivity and intellect, matter and form, exteriority and interiority, the two aspects being inseparable of a single activity, they are always an expression of beauty. In the Schillerian perspective, therefore, the game retains a fundamental importance also for the adult, to whom it offers the possibility of experiencing himself in a totally free way from external conditioning (social in particular) and to enter a dimension of pure creativity. In this philosophical vision in which Man/Women is fully such only when he/she plays on the one hand the role of play in feeling free is valued, it does not exclude the fact that play for play is able to develop soft skills, from the relational ones, problem solving, up to motor skills etc.

The different theories agree in considering play a vital activity for the child, as a fundamental tool for his psychological, motor and cognitive development, at the basis of the first perception of himself/herself and the construction of his/her own personal identity Among the recognized rights of girls and boys, the right to play and free time is certainly one of the most qualifying. Because it closely affects one of the aspects that most characterize the well-being of the minor, as a person with their own needs and needs, independent from those of adults. It's not just about being able to live in a healthy environment. It refers to the right to carry out one of the most important activities for growth and development in full freedom and according to one's preferences: play. (ref.: Convention on the rights of the child).

Play, which represents a exceptional value for personal development during childhood, is also of essential and vital importance for adults.

In this prospect public places, playgrounds, green areas, as well as outdoor sports areas, recreational play areas used as sports fields and other similar facilities to play, represent vital spaces for the health of the community and the quality of life, and a mean to counter educational poverty. In cities, green areas and playgrounds have a series of strategic functions, which leads them to be considered real "green infrastructures" and vibrant facilities for collective well-being. Facing educational poverty requires an integrated approach that bridges the gap between school, civic society, education community and cities.

Cities play a pivotal role in providing citizens of all ages with places and opportunities to play, exploiting both cultural and natural ecosystem services. The design of urban spaces is an essential variable for the quality of life of residents. This is true for adults, but even more so for minors. Growing up in a run-down neighbourhood, with few or no meeting places, no green spaces, or playgrounds can expose you to a number of risks and have negative effects in terms of educational opportunities. Cities developing the Playful Paradigm approach are rich in liveable spaces and well designed with inclusive approaches and attentive to gender differences. A Playful city represents an added value on an educational and cultural level. As we learned during the playful paradigm experience, a square or a public place that is valued, hospitable, convivial, safe, inclusive offers opportunities for socializing, playing, and getting to know each other. Well-kept green spaces, preserved cultural places, clean and safety streets can help educate people to respect the environment and public goods in general, as well as can become community hub for all, kids, adults and seniors.

Right to play, to free recreational activities! This is the watchword that has guided the partners of the Playful Paradigm network in the various experiments of placemaking, play bus, playground and play libraries and creative initiatives base don play in public spaces, form squares streets to vegetable garden and parks.

Lots have been experimented, much more can be done! It is time "to replay the city" and give new senses to public spaces integrating nature based solutions with the playful paradigm. It is time to rethink cities, with less traffic and fewer indoor shopping centers, with more playgrounds and youth and community hubs, spaces for recreational activities, for fun, sports and socializing for adults and children. A city in which no one and no one is left behind: a child-friendly city is a playful city for everyone.

The importance of Play at an international level

by Martin O Donoghue, Urbact Ad Hoc Expert
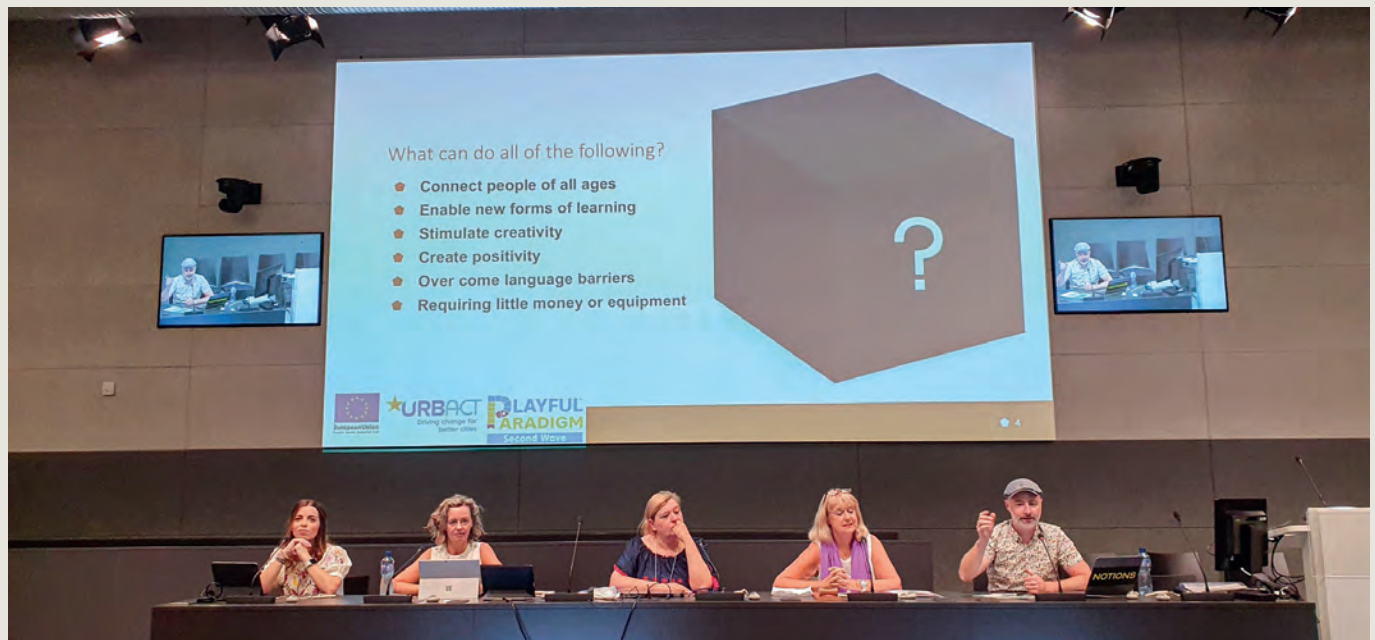
In June 2022, I was invited to represent the Playful Paradigm II programme at a UN summit in Geneva and to present on the value of play as a powerful tool to assist in positive societal change, in an urban context. With 400 delegates present from over 50 countries, it was a great opportunity to share the lessons that Cork City had gained from our involvement in this programme and the novel strategies evolved through the adoption of a playful mindset and the development of playful tools.

The presentation resonated strongly with those present. I believe this is due to the following reasons:

1. The fundamental principle by which play connects all people, from all cultures and all ages. When the proper conditions for play exist, permission to play, a low risk environment and open ended non structured format, people flourish.

2. There is no need for capital intensive infrastructure or equipment.

3. The co liberating feeling of a community coming together to play, open to all ages and abilities.

4. Play and programmed play activities demonstrate new possibilities of use for existing community spaces.

One of the key insights realised by Cork, was the use of play as a common language to connect different people & perspectives from the multitude of agencies involved in place-making. Play acted as the primary engagement tool with community - open and accessible to all. Planning for play activities then linked across disciplines to engage policy makers, engineers, architects, landscape designers, educators, health professionals and community workers, all of whom need to be involved in placemaking, to ensure any development has the best outcome possible for the community who live and work there.

Play enabled a framework for new interagency collaborations, to design and implement these actions. I concluded the presentation by demonstrating how play could act as the engagement strategy for achieving the high level goal of SDG17 - creating new partnerships. If the SDG's (Sustainable Development Goals) are to be realised it can only be through part-nerships.

Following the presentation I spent an afternoon with Daniela Bass, Director of UN Division for Inclusive Development, exploring how the UN can adopt playful practices into their devel-opment policies. I may also be the first presenter in UN history to end his presentation by blowing bubbles over the panel moderator. So it is true that the UN became a more playful organisation - at least for that one moment but perhaps through the conversations that fol-lowed it may choose to adopt play longer term.

Martin O Donoghue is a URBACT Lead Expert in the Arts & Creativity, the worlds first Play Strategist and based in Cork, Ireland.

Exchanging World Game Day experience. Pilot experiences and upscaling projects

by Anamaria Vrabie, Urbact Ad Hoc Expert

Understanding pilots / prototyping

A pilot action is an experimentation. It is an idea or a concept, perhaps already tried in another city, which can be tested to check the relevance, feasibility and added value of its implementation in different local contexts .
Pilot projects / actions are limited in time, scale and space and by their nature have the right to fail. Cities will be able to learn from these tests, measure the results and either adapt , upscale or reject actions to be included in their future strategic plans.

Why is it important to experiment?

You can't know if an idea can become a solution until you try it out. It is a way of building a Proof of Concept. It is an iterative way of working . From point A to point B, then decide point C. It is way of cost saving . Rather than financing an entire policy (free public transportation), you test how it could work on a smaller scale. It resembles much more how are world works. Change is constant.

Experimentation in public sector

Public Sector Innovation Structures.
- Can be structured as labs / living labs / department inside or outside government
- Can operate at any government level: urban, regional, national,
- Use various innovation methodology: human centered design, prototyping, behavioral insights, data science, AI etc.
- Are still considered novel structures, as the public sector is built to be risk adverse.

OPSI
Observatory of
Public Sector Innovation

Examples of prototyping processes

BOSTON Office of New Urban Mechanics.
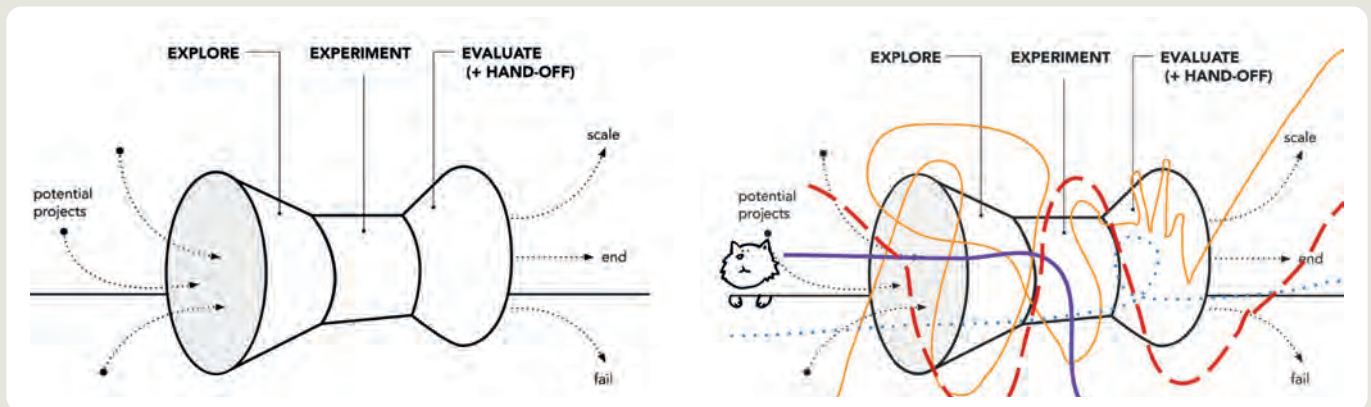
Prototyping Model

Reality of experimentation

Streets

We're dedicated to making Boston's streets safer, more efficient, and more delightful.

Housing

We are working to test innovative housing models and accelerate the pace of innovation in the housing sector.

Third Spaces

Making Boston's spaces more welcoming, connected, and creative.

Education

We're working to improve the systems that support learning experiences in Boston.

Play

We believe playfulness is a vital part of thriving democracies, caring communities, and resilient cities.

Civic Research

A primer on the questions we're asking, the problems that stump us, and the partnerships we need.

PHONE-DISTRACTION SCORES IMPROVED BY 47 PERCENT

HARSH-BRAKING SCORES IMPROVED BY 37 PERCENT

SPEEDING SCORES IMPROVED BY 35 PERCENT
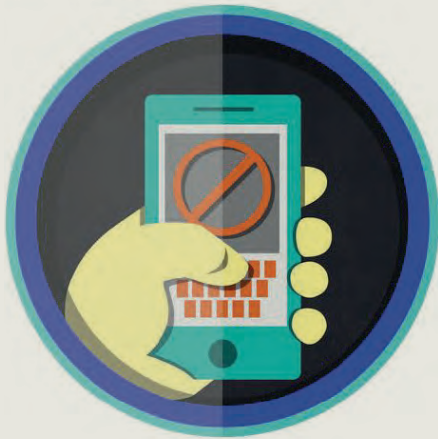
LOCATION/SPECIFICATIONS

▸ Parklets cannot be located on top of any public utility.

▸ Sidewalk to parklet entry and exit must be

DESIGN AND PLACEMENT GUIDELINES

▸ Parklets must have posted signage indicating that it is a public space (sign specs to be obtained from BTD).

RULES OF SERVICE

▸ There is no table service or alcohol consumption allowed on parklets at any time.

Cluj-Napoca Urban Innovation Unit
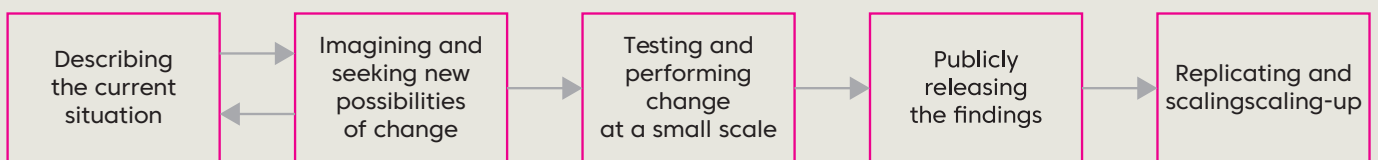
WE   AS   T

WONDER   **XPLORE**   **ACTIVATE**   **SHARE**   **TRUST**

| Describing the current situation | → | Imagining and seeking new possibilities of change | → | Testing and performing change at a small scale | → | Publicly releasing the findings | → | Replicating and scalingscaling-up |

Prototyping Model

Mobility pact

Understand how the current traffic conditions influence our decision for a particular mode of transport.

→

Molnar Piuariu Street Food

During one weekend, the Molnar Piuariu street was transformed into a pedestrian street.

→

Our Creek from La Terenuri

Improving how we spend our free time in the Mănăștur neighborhood.

→

What happens after prototyping?

Upscaling can come in many forms

1. Grow/ Test at a different scale

2. Replicate. Use the same scale.

3. Stop. Learn from failure or from not enough results/ reasons to continue.

Stage 1: Building culture of experimentation

Key challenge: How to you tackle resistance, while managing risks, while also achieving results?

Focus: establish trust and influence

Stage 2: Connecting

Key challenge: How do you continue when things don't go according to plan?

Focus: build resilience

Stage 3: Scaling

Key challenge: How do you scale this work in a way that lasts, even with leadership changes?
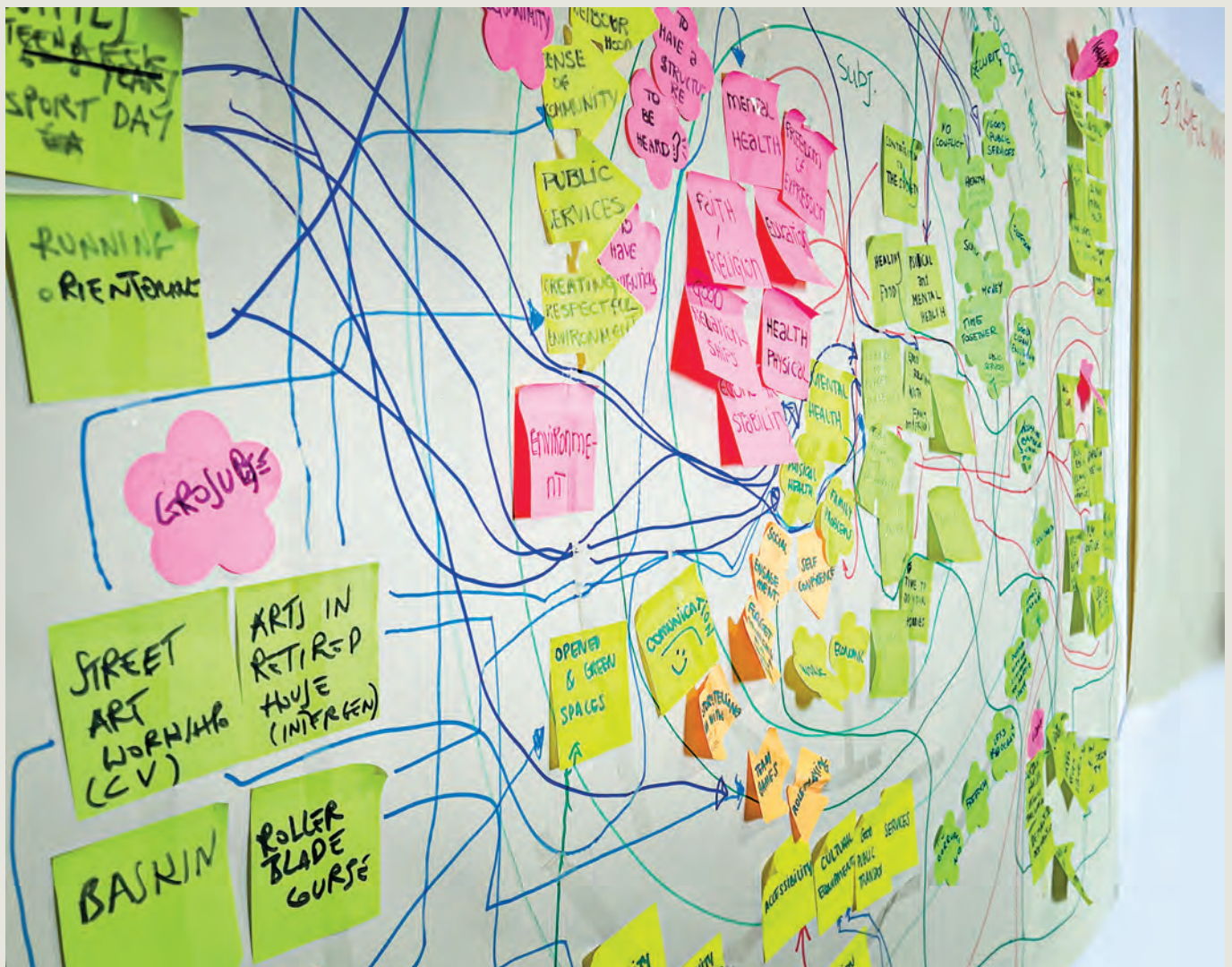
Focus: spread the mindset

Let's understand what happened for your World Game day!

PLAY4WELL-BEING
The Playful Paradigm II position paper on play for eco-systemic well-being in cities

by Sandra Rainero, Urbact Ad Hoc Expert

We, the cities of the URBACT Transfer Network Playful Paradigm II believe that cities are at the best-positioned level to foster playful well-being for their communities

Through the activities that we carried out in our cities, we have demonstrated time and time again how playful approaches in the different urban policies can support the individual and social well-being of our citizens, organizations and institutions.

This position paper starts from established and multidisciplinary scientific evidence, but it is foremost the result of the understanding of the multidimensional nature of well-being and how playfulness can support healthy, joyful and inclusive environment in the city. It displays, from an integrated and holistic point of view, the playful well-being that the small-scale actions of our transfer process have generated for people of all ages, conditions and walks of life in our communities. It also conceptualizes the reflection activity carried out in Lousa, Portugal in September 2022 with the partnering cities and URBACT experts.

Well-being and play: the pursuit of happiness

It's hard to summarize the evidence produced by numerous scientific fields on the topics of well-being and play. We mention, only as food for thought, some seminal works and sources that deal with the theories and studies on these two domains.

Well-being is seen as a complex interaction of subjective and objective conditions that psychological, medical, social, environmental and economic studies have all highlighted. Scientific disciplines have created conceptual frameworks that explain how well-being is a multifaceted notion.

Psychology, mental and physical health studies start from the subjective well-being[1] while social studies frame individual issues to include the social and environmental responsibility of others[2].

From a policy perspective, the OECD has also defined a conceptual framework for well-being in regions[3]. In this framework OECD identifies nine areas of well-being that include both material conditions such as income, jobs and housing and conditions for quality of life such as education, health, environment, safety, civic engagement and access to services.
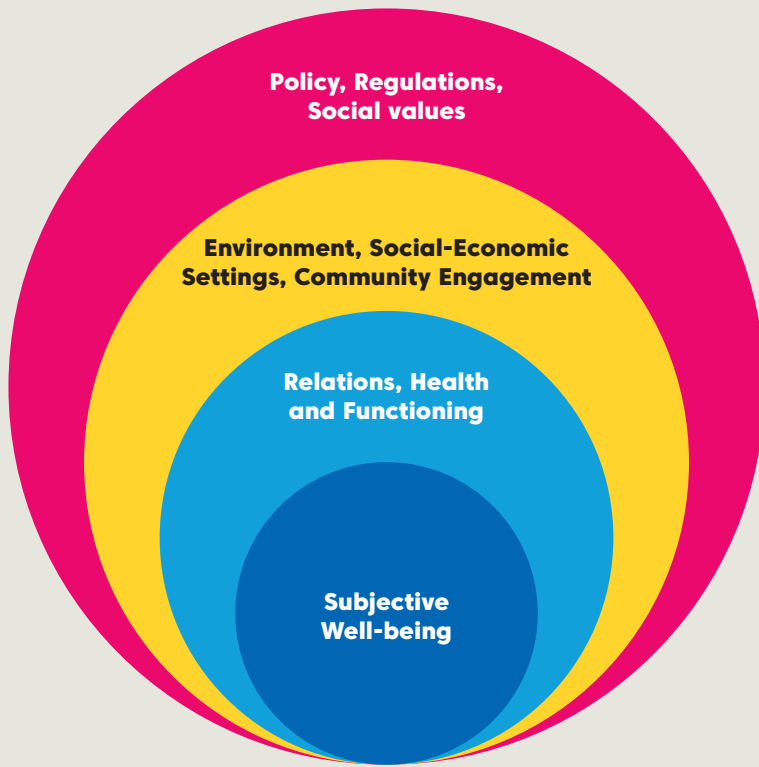
What these distinct studies share, regardless of their focus and scientific assumptions, is the fact that well- being is an ECOSYSTEM embedded IN PLACE AND TIME where subjective and objective conditions are nested and feed into each other, whereas governance and integrated policy making play a pivotal role.

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1 - https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma16-4958.pdf
2 - https://mch.umn.edu/resources/mhecomodel/
3 - How's Life in Your Region? Measuring Regional and Local Well-being for Policy Making in:
https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/urban-rural-and-regional-development/how-s-life-in-your-region_9789264217416-en#page22

Policy, Regulations, Social values

Environment, Social-Economic Settings, Community Engagement

Relations, Health and Functioning

Subjective Well-being

A simplified "Nested Well-being Ecosystem in cities" used in Playful Paradigm II

Human beings, like many other animal species, have an **innate penchant for play**. Numerous disciplines and science fields have increasingly studied and experimented on play as a crucial factor for the quality of life and human development and evolution[4].

Play is instrumental for resilience, learning processes, human development, social engagement and sense of self-efficacy.

Neuroscience, as well as psychology and psychoanalysis, show how play-based activities develop LIFE SKILLS in cognitive, psychological, and social terms, and enhance personal and societal well-being. In adopting playful approaches to education, leisure, social and cultural life, cities contribute to the well-being of their communities.

The Playful Paradigm of well-being

Both constructs of well-being and play in all their complexity and differentiated approach have – among other things - one common feature: they are PLACE-BASED, embedded in the reality of localities.

Cities are the "place" where well-being can be embodied in playful activities for all. Places for playful well-being are certainly homes and neighbourhoods, but also city parks, the surrounding nature, public spaces and institutions.

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4 - https://www.nifplay.org/play-science/scientific-disciplines-researching-play/

This is the reason why we believe that cities and urban dwellings are the PRIMARY ENVIRONMENT to foster play for well-being. City administrations can design and implement human-centric and playful well-being practice within urban development frameworks, which they can develop with an integrated and participatory approach such as the one adopted by the cities of the Playful Paradigm.

Playfulness for well-being in policymaking: what it takes

Through the collaborative exercise carried out in Lousa in September 2022, we have been able to first identify the factors at personal, relational, community, sustainability and policy making/ systemic levels that can enable multidimensional well-being.

After that, we have used the actual activities that we have carried out as part of the good practice transfer process and linked them to the different nested levels.

The result has been a colourful and multifaceted **ecosystemic map of playful well-being** that shows the interconnectedness between play and well-being.

The interconnectedness of playful activities for the urban well-being ecosystem.

The identification of the enabling conditions that city administrations can put in place through value-based policy have concluded the activity and are summarized below.
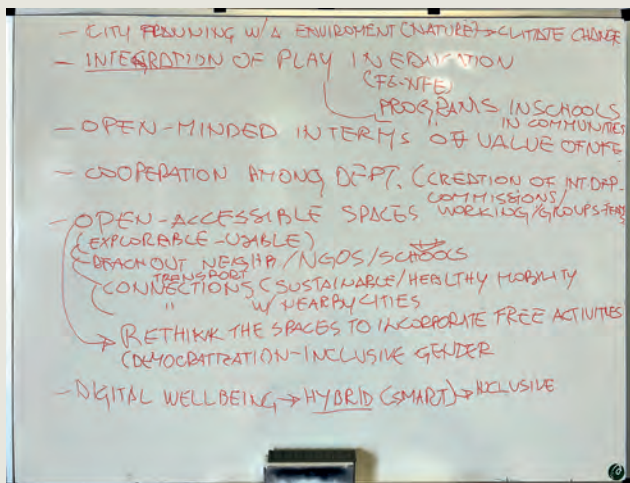
We, the partners of the Playful Paradigm II, have identified key integrated urban policy approaches, which represent our short final messages and position on enabling playful well-being at different levels and through various playful activities in integrated and sustainable urban development.

Playfulness is a *serious* urban cross-policy tool

Since well-being is multidimensional, we deem important that different offices in the administration overcome the unplayful "silos mentality" and cooperate.
The creation of interdepartmental teams, working groups and commissions that understand how play can support the goals and work of health and social services, education, urban planning etc, become a fundamental step to start a play-based policy for well-being.

Playfulness is educational

We promote the integration of play-based education approaches and methods – mostly drawn from non-formal education – allowing for purposeful and simply enjoyable play as natural way for learning and experience life skills in safe contexts.

This playful educational approach can be used in collaboration with schools – integrating them in school curricula and cultural/educational organizations, associations and volunteering, but also within adult and lifelong learning policy, encompassing all generations.

Playfulness is for inclusiveness, equity and equality

Playful activities in the city can be unstructured and have value even when they have no obvious goal. We recognize that engagement and enjoyment may suffice for well-being – no judgement is cast for purposeless or goofy play. However, they need to be age- and family friendly. They need to imagine a wide range of initiatives that are accessible for a diverse society, made up of individuals with special needs.

They need to make sure to removing all obstacles of physical and cognitive/mental – and economic – nature that prevent people to develop capability for and enjoying playing. They need to be engendered, facilitating gender equality and balance between work and family times.

Playfulness is for open and democratic city planning

Placemaking for playful activities (playmaking) is another way to engage stakeholders and citizens in urban planning and development. Co-designing the use of public space as places for playing (parks, gardens, playgrounds, but also temporary use of streets and squares or public buildings) can support urban regeneration, socialization, sense of identity and intercultural and intergenerational dialogue, and healthy relations in communities, especially those at the margin.
We reach out to them though playing. Co-planning public spaces for play also represents the democratization of play and of public places, that can become explorable and usable, as commons should be.

Playfulness is for Healthy Environments

Climate and demographic change pose many a challenge for the health of people and our environment. Playful policy and activities have the potential to prevent, reduce health risks and heal both people and nature.

Play needs to always promote – or be accompanied by – sustainable mobility. It invites -always mindful of mobility impairments- the use of bicycles, other man-powered means of transport, including suitable sports gear and physical explorations, serving the double goal of a healthier lifestyle for all and reduction of GHG emissions.

Playfulness is for Digital well-being

The digital revolution is pervasive in our lives. It has the potential to empower but also to harm. Gaming and gamification are very popular leisure tools, especially for the younger generations. We need to harness the power of digital play to steer it toward more active uses, that may become educational (introducing games into schools as educational methods), more inclusive and smarter. We promote smart and hybrid digital well-being, where play in the metaverse does not turn into isolation and addiction, but rather is used in smart, social and creative ways.

Play is a serious matter and can make the difference for the future of our cities

Toy Library

Toolkits

Illustrated guides to summarise the main tips to be considered during the implementation of the Good Practice.

The Joyrnal

Texts by Ileana Toscano, illustrations by Federico Barile, editing by Elisa Cannistraci

Joyrnal is the name of the project 's magazine. Four online issues have been created with news and details about Playful Paradigm Second Wave, reporting the main events on the calendar. All issues were also accompanied with games, making the publication fun and much appreciated.

Udine Transfer Roadmap

Play for Sustainable Urban Regeneration
To design the urban redevelopment of the park in front of the Toy Library, through the creation of an equipped area designed for (and with) different target groups: older, children, youth, schools, community homes and residents.

Play for Inclusion and Participation
To provide play spaces accessible to people with disabilities, and realize social utility campaign to promote games as inclusive and participatory tools for involving local organizations.

Play for Health and Wellbeing
To develop "green play" projects in collaboration with the coordinators of the urban vegetable gardens and improve the project "Healthy Cities". Udine aims to enhancement of the projects already started that use game as a tool for improving mental faculties and the prevention of brain decay in the elderly, and as a tool for strengthening soft skills in the younger population, also through the involvement of experts in the field.

8

Igualada Transfer Roadmap

Play for Sustainable Urban Regeneration
To redesign the "Parc Central" area and open school parks to all citizens. The ambition is to transform those areas into great places to live, work, create relationships and play, through innovative ways to engage and empower citizens through a playful approach.

Play for Inclusion and Participation
To set up an innovative toy library programme that foresees the promotion of play activities in city parks and school playgrounds full accessible during the day.

Play for Education
By promote a novel playful educational programme in the "Olive tree Park", to boost the healthy use of olive oil. Children of Igualada will learn about the process of olive oil production, the importance of olive oil for a healthy diet, the history of olive oil in our city and region and the process of production and distribution of olive oil.

Play for Health and Wellbeing
To foster health and wellbeing programmes for the whole community. Families and Local Communities will be involved through tactical urbanism initiatives which foresee the painting of traditional games on the ground "asphalt games" and olive picking sessions in the olive tree park that will bring people closer to city history.

9

Let's...

PLAY

... Together!

Joyrnal
News From the network April - June 2022

01 Sep

Joyrnal
News from the network April - June 2022

Find the hidden objects!

Playful City

Jelgava
Grosuplje
Udine
Lousã
Igualada

Motion graphics

Text by Ileana Toscano, illustrations by Federico Barile, editing by Jessica Lima
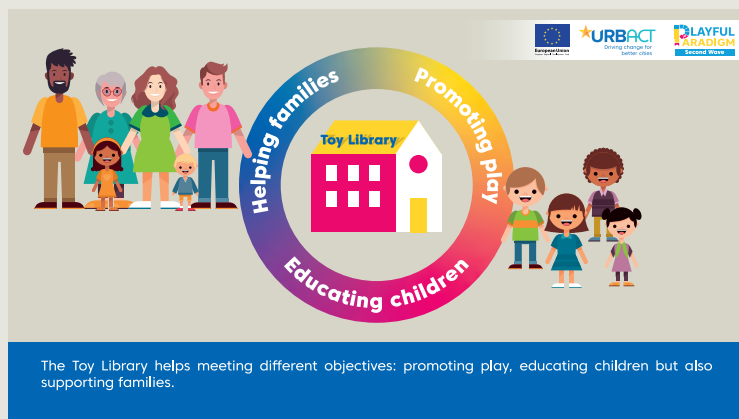

Toy Libraries as contemporary living labs

Toy Libraries are key within new innovative and more dynamic urban policies reflecting the huge demographic change happening in societies.

Play is a positive and strong driver to trigger social inclusion, intergenerational transition, life-long learning, and healthy behaviors.

The Toy Library helps meeting different objectives: promoting play, educating children but also supporting families.

In deprived neighborhood when the street means the only option kids have to socialize, Toy libraries can help families keep kids away from the dangerous exposure to petty crimes or drugs.

Toy Library-Living Lab

The Toy Library-living lab should become a place of: democracy by promoting community planning; creativity, where it is possible learning how to make craft-toys and transform a space into a playful place through cheap and cheerful materials, like chalks or natural objects;

Toy Library-Living Lab

Democracy · Creativity · Equality · Accessibility

equality by welcoming women and girls to play, participate at the decision-making processes and join learning programmes, particularly addressed to marginalised women; cooperation with the territory by building networking relationships; accessibility, opening the use of the space to all people.

They could foster a strong cooperation with the whole territory by building networking relationship and opening the use of the space to all people.

Toy Library-Living Lab can be a new home for families positioned in the centred the needs of children, girls and boys and their parents, with a special attention to those in the fringe.

Play is a serious matter and can make the difference for the future of our cities


Jelgava · Udine · Grosuplje · Igualada · Lousã

Gender sensitive playgrounds & Urban Places

In cities, especially in suburbs, children do not have adequate spaces for playing. Cars are the main obstacles and urban public spaces don't welcome play.

Play and Children are relegated to Playgrounds, which many times are sad, and made by concrete. Child's play, and the immense learning potential it brings, is the greatest victim. Play poverty is on the rise, as is the number of children living low-play lives.
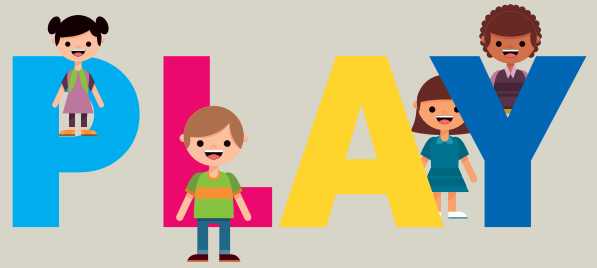
Play is essential for children's health, physical and emotional growth, and intellectual and educational development. Girls and boys, through play, learn about democracy, respect, and solidarity. Spaces for playing, that reflect those values, have a huge importance in education.

Evidence has shown that there is a disproportion in the use of playgrounds and schoolyards. Football pitch is often positioned in the central space hosting few athletic boys, while girls and un-sporty boys are pushed to the fringe.
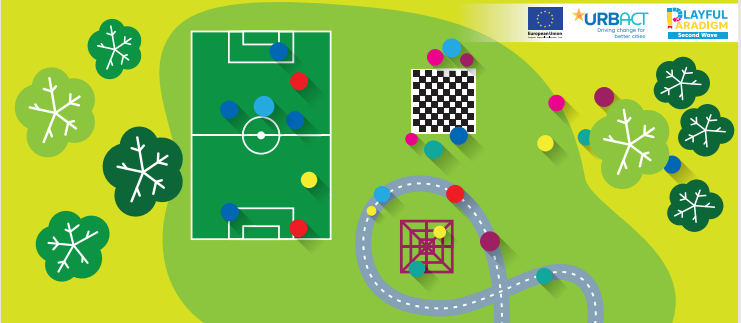
The re-design of play places such as "school yards and playgrounds" through a gender sensitive approach can provide an important contribution to deconstruct gender stereotypes and the inequalities starting from early age.

Co-design processes should boost to engage with children and their families to analyse their daily habits, their needs and propose improvements that benefit the entire community.

Gender neutral colors

Multiple play worlds

Interaction between boys & girls
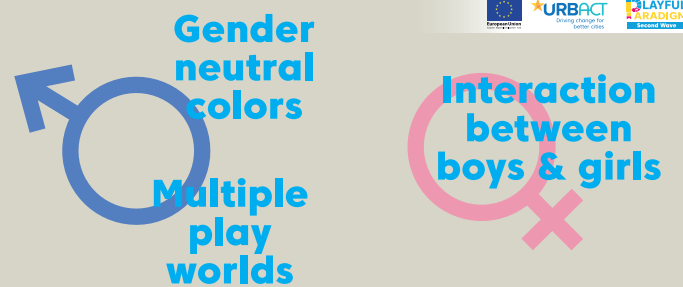
The redesign should prioritise gender neutral colours and multiple play 'worlds', to promote interaction between girls and boys and versatile space uses.

Versatile space uses

Foster new creativity

Engage with nature

It should foster creativity and engage with nature, as well as sports and active games.

Play without stereotipes

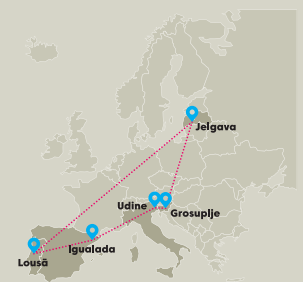In this way, children can play without stereotypes.

The future of the public spaces passes through schoolyards and playgrounds of today!

The future of the public spaces passes through schoolyards and playgrounds of today!

Play is a serious matter and can make the difference for the future of our cities

Jelgava

Udine
Grosuplje

Lousã
Igualada

You can watch this motion graphics and other videos about the Project on our You Tube Channer at this address:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxmYGtABMvdeTNp4wWFIRwA

Social Networks

Meetings, masterclasses, events that has characterized the intense work during the Playful Paradigm II Project.

https://urbact.eu/networks/playful-paradigm-ii

https://twitter.com/PlayfulParadigm

https://www.facebook.com/PlayfulParadigmSecondWave

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxmYGtABMvdeTNp4wWFIRwA

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healty and sustainable cities**

PLAYFUL PARADIGM

Second Wave