placemaking week europe
Reggio Emilia

Creating better cities together

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COMUNE DI REGGIO NELL'EMILIA

Reggio Emilia città delle persone

Official Report

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Section 1

Welcome

This report provides an overview of Placemaking Week Europe 2025, hosted in **Reggio Emilia**, Italy, from September 23–26, 2025 — the result of a close collaboration between Placemaking Europe and the City of Reggio Emilia.

Placemaking Week Europe is an annual festival that gathers hundreds of placemakers, urbanists, city officials, and community leaders from across Europe and beyond. Created in the spirit of collaboration and inspiration, it has become a vital platform to share best practices, foster cross-border partnerships, and experience the host city's places and initiatives firsthand. It is not merely a conference — it is a **celebration of collective learning, co-creation, and civic imagination.**

The **9th edition** marked a meaningful milestone in the evolution of the European placemaking movement. Over the course of four days, **622 participants from more than 50 countries** explored how mid-sized cities can lead the transition toward more inclusive, regenerative, and caring urban environments. Reggio Emilia, a city internationally recognised for its educational vision and participatory culture, provided a unique context where ideas could be tested in real places and through real relationships.

Reflecting on our time together, we are proud of the following outcomes:

● **A truly European gathering with a local heart.** 622 placemakers from 50+ countries connected international perspectives with Reggio Emilia's civic tradition of participation, education, and cooperation.

● **A city-wide learning environment.** Workshops, walks, and dialogues unfolded across public spaces, schools, and community hubs — turning Reggio Emilia into an open classroom for creativity and exchange.

● **Knowledge that stays embedded.** Local actors — from municipal staff to community organisations — continue to build on the placemaking methodologies shared during the week.

● **Candid and reflective dialogue.** In line with the festival's ethos, the week encouraged open conversations on equity, collaboration, and the future of the movement.

● **A sense of shared ownership and pride.** Residents, institutions, and international guests co-created an experience that celebrated Reggio Emilia's spirit: combining reflection, creativity, and joy.

● **A strong institutional partnership.** The collaboration between Placemaking Europe and the City of Reggio Emilia exemplified how municipalities and networks can co-design events that leave both local and international legacies.

● **Five thematic challenges with tangible outcomes.** Sessions focused on **well-being, inclusion, regeneration, and mobility**, generating actionable proposals and insights for ongoing projects in the city.

● **A welcoming and intergenerational community.** Participants described PWE 2025 as "a professional gathering where everyone, from students to mayors, shares the same table."

● **A measurable and lasting impact.** The event generated an estimated **€1.33 million in direct local economic value,** while also strengthening Reggio Emilia's visibility as a European hub for innovation and participation.

● **A foundation for future cooperation.** The relationships built during the week continue to inspire projects across Europe, setting the stage for the next edition in **Wroclaw, Poland (2026).**

Stories from Placemakers

The Urbanistica Podcast, hosted by urbanist Mustafa Sherif and interviews led by Robin Cox on the iconic portable Good Place Bench create a significant part of the festival and its long-term impact.

During Placemaking Week Europe 2025, Mustafa Sherif amplified the voices and stories of placemakers, spotlighting their projects, challenges, and passions through his temporary Urbanistica Podcast Outdoor Studio at Reggiane Parco Innovazione, where he recorded a series of special live episodes. The show reached listeners in over 150 countries.

Throughout the week, **Urbanistica** produced 30 episodes featuring 40 placemakers from 25 countries, resulting in over 13 hours of inspiring content.

The conversations explored a wide range of topics, including rural placemaking, music, dance, and cultural placemaking, the role of academia in the placemaking movement, digital placemaking, storytelling in placemaking, climate-resilient design, playful placemaking, and much more.

You can find the Placemaking Week Europe 2025 episodes from #536 to #566. Listen to the episodes on:

● Apple Podcasts: Urbanistica Podcast
● Spotify: Urbanistica Podcast

Featured Episodes:

● 564. Mental health, cultural identity, and place-based healing - Ronke Oluwadar
● 552. Cultural placemaking - Bruno Costa and Daniel Vilar
● 562. Kolarec: Rural Placemaking and the Power of Community - Ivana Šatrak
● 555. When Inclusion Excludes - Donica Buisman and Hans Karssenberg
● 546. Digital placemaking with marginalized communities - Sirin Hassan and Vineeta Shetty

Robin Cox brought the **Good Place Bench** across the border and invited the placemaking community to share their vision on how we can create a good place together. The Good Place Bench hosted conversations with different city makers, from Reggio Emilia, Vienna, Kaunas, Boston, Amsterdam, Nova Scotia, Milan, Helsingborg, and London.

You can now watch & listen to all episodes on:

● YouTube - Good Place
● Substack - Good Place

The highlights include:

● Getting to know The People's City - in conversation with Domenico Martino of Reggio Emilia Welcome
● Architects are placemakers. Ksenia Kuzmina shares how the industry evolves to embrace placemaking
● Gaming a future of elderly-friendly public spaces with Jammy Zhu
● Rooted in Place - Marcos Gold on heritage, accessibility, and community design - How real estate and art can challenge stigmas with David Valecillos
● Where do people and nature meet? Insights from Lithuanian-based NGO, KULTŪROS DIRBTUVĖ
● How does a placemaking lab shape communities? Abbas Sbeity shares his experience
● From street parties to co-creating places for all with Rotem Carmi
● Empowering children to shape public spaces with Ilvana Noncheva
● The shift from livability to lovability in cities with Thomas (TJ) Maguire

We want to thank Mustafa, Robin, their teams, and of course all the participants and contributors, for their time, curiosity, openness, and dedication in sharing their personal stories!

Keep reading to learn more about:

● Why did we collaborate to host PWE 2025 in Reggio Emilia ● What themes and questions did we explore together with Reggio Emilia ● How did we address the local challenges of the city ● What are the facts & figures ● Insights from our keynote listeners ● What was the impact of the event ● What's next...

Section 2

Reggio Emilia and the 2025 edition

Reggio Emilia stands as a crucial intersection of history, innovation and inclusivity, where the historical legacy of resistance continues to shape today's strong culture of social cooperatives, community engagement and civic activism.

These values have shaped the way the city approaches inclusive urban development, particularly in balancing the needs of diverse communities. The active network of local associations fosters a sense of collective responsibility, ensuring that solidarity and mutual aid remain central to urban life. At the same time, Reggio Emilia's commitment to well-being—through inclusive urban design, sustainable consumption, and local food systems.

As a city of mid-size, Reggio Emilia models how historic centres, mobility systems and civic life can be rethought for today's challenges. It combines a rich architectural and social heritage with forward-looking practices of participation and urban reinvention, making it a fitting host city for this edition of the festival.

Words from Reggio Emilia's team on PWE 2025

The Municipality of Reggio Emilia has identified, in the framework of its policy guidelines, the fundamental reasons that led it to host the Placemaking Week Europe Festival for the 2025 edition.

Understanding and enhancing the energies and networks active in our city, giving them value in an international event and promoting opportunities to discuss together how to rethink public spaces to make them more comfortable, beautiful, and welcoming, were the strengths that led Reggio Emilia to see the Festival as a practical field for experimenting with and applying the Placemaking approach in the local context.

The organization of the Festival with the Placemaking Europe foundation was followed in particular by the 'Cura della Città' (Care for the City) Department, which aims to invest in the care and community life of the city's neighborhoods, identifying them as places where needs emerge, solutions are implemented, and life choices are made. This is where the enhancement of the city's social capital, so dynamically represented by the rich network of volunteers and associations that animate our territory, finds its natural roots.

"Caring for neighborhoods is one of the main objectives of our mandate, and placemaking is a tool for innovating urban policies, for thinking about and creating places with the communities that inhabit them, strengthening local democracy, and promoting social cohesion. For Reggio Emilia, the festival is a wonderful opportunity to engage with a European dimension, to enter into dialogue with international experiences, and to improve the quality of urban public space through the active participation of people."

– Davide Prandi,
  City Councilor for Neighborhood Care

Every year, the Festival welcomes over 500 participants, experts in architecture, urban planning, design, culture, and performing arts, as well as representatives from public administrations, university researchers and students, associations, and operators in the field of urban regeneration and social innovation, both local and international. This journey towards the Festival, carried out in close collaboration between the Placemaking Foundation team and the City, has been an extraordinary opportunity for Reggio Emilia to broaden its engagement and promote, in an increasingly systematic

way and with an international outlook, an approach to architectural and urban design of public space as an essential component of culture and people's daily lives.

The Festival was structured and developed around four themes that were identified internally by the Municipality and agreed upon politically. Based on these themes, the festival program was then co-created in collaboration with the Placemaking Team. These themes were considered particularly relevant and functional to the development of this Administration's mandate, so it was decided to focus on (1) **mobility**, as a complex and integrated multi-scale system that shapes the way people move and interact in urban space; (2) **new opportunities for historic centers**, which are increasingly facing unique challenges, such as the decline of local commercial spaces, the shortage of housing, and the reduced capacity to accommodate new potential users; (3) **quality of life in medium-sized cities**, investing in policies that focus on people's quality of life and promote equitable and sustainable urban development, making smaller urban centers more attractive, due to the increasing polarization towards large urban centers; (4) **cities for everyone**, embracing diversity and interculturalism, promoting the design of spaces where children, the elderly, women, people from different cultures or with vulnerabilities can feel welcome, comfortable, and safe.

From our point of view, the results of the Festival in terms of participation and the city's response to the event were excellent. Numerous institutional partners were involved at the local level, including the Emilia Romagna Region, ARTER Emilia Romagna, STU Reggiane, Istituzione Nidi e Scuole, Fondazione Mondoinsieme, Fondazione Palazzo Magnani, Fondazione E-35, Consorzio Cooperative Sociali Quarantacinque, Centro Loris Malaguzzi, Farmacie Comunali Riunite, Consorzio Oscar Romero, Collezione Maramotti, Fondazione I Teatri Reggio Emilia, Ordine architetti Reggio Emilia, LILT – Luoghi di Prevenzione, Credem - Credito Emiliano spa, and many others. The more than 200 sessions of the Festival, including conferences, workshops, plenary and outdoor activities, were hosted in about 30 different locations throughout the city, both indoors and outdoors, for which specific collaborations were established; These included, in particular, Reggiane Parco Innovazione, Chiostri di San Pietro and Laboratorio Aperto, Centro Internazionale Loris Malaguzzi, ex Mangimificio Caffarri, Viale Ramazzini 33, Musei Civici, and many others.

Especially meaningful for the City were the five "local challenges" that focused on the places that the Administration submitted to international experts for study to gather perspectives and project ideas that could serve as inspiration or starting points for developing proposals and paths for urban regeneration. (1) **The Railway Station district**, focusing on the inclusion of the various communities that live there and investigating innovative tools such as temporary uses, cultural practices, and new models of governance for its redevelopment; (2) **the Via Roma district**, a multifaceted and complex neighborhood, home to multiple communities, associations, and institutions, to test how placemaking can operate both as a method of listening and as a practical tool for inclusion and participation; (3) **the ex Gasometer building**, a partially disued former, strategically located at the edge of the historic center, to open a debate on how to recover this existing infrastructure through shared governance, innovation in mobility, and community involvement; (4) **Piazza della Vittoria**, one of the most significant places in the historic center of Reggio Emilia, to explore a climate-focused approach, using nature-based solutions to improve people's well-being and make it more welcoming; (5) **Via Premuda**, a strategic urban axis connecting the historic center of Reggio Emilia with the southwestern suburbs, already the object of the European Proximities project, a testing ground for understanding how proximity can guide a more sustainable, livable, and community-oriented urban future.

As part of the Festival, the Municipality of Reggio Emilia promoted, in addition to the "official" program, numerous initiatives, events, and activities that were free and open to the public, organized in various locations throughout the city. Communication materials were also created in Italian to help disseminate the content to the local population. These included, for example: the conference **"Di città e di cura"** (On cities and care), promoted by the Fondazione Architetti Reggio Emilia, which proposed a reflection on the role of care as a design, cultural, and political approach to addressing urban transformation; **'How can the placemaking approach innovate urban planning in public administrations?'**, a round table organized by the Emilia Romagna Region to explore future scenarios for city planning, starting from 'placemaking'; **'Cà Reggio. Il bello del quartiere'** (Cà Reggio. The beauty of the neighbourhood), an evening of workshops and debates to rethink and redesign public space and discuss educational policies in the

context of the railway station neighbourhood, followed by a community dinner; **'Btalks'**, dialogues, performances, installations and exhibitions that enlivened the Via Roma neighbourhood with events dedicated to sustainable themes and practices for urban spaces; **"15-minute city, city of proximity, an idea for a happier city"**, a meeting on discovering the 15-minute city, to make neighborhoods more accessible and welcoming.

The activities carried out as part of Placemaking Week Europe and the impact generated by the event, in addition to the potential future positive effects on urban transformation and social activation in the city of Reggio Emilia, are perfectly in line with the city's policies on urban care, sustainability, and stakeholder involvement. For this reason, taking advantage of the boost generated by the Festival, the Municipality of Reggio Emilia is increasingly aiming to promote flexible, participatory, and replicable interventions able to regenerate urban space through small gestures with a high social and symbolic impact. The goal is to build a city where caring for places translates into relationships, identity, and new models of civic collaboration.

Placemaking becomes a tool for reactivating local energies, promoting a more equitable and creative use of public space, and strengthening the culture of participation that has always been one of Reggio Emilia's distinctive features.

The actions planned under this strategy are part of projects that have already been launched or are in the process of being activated, with the aim of enhancing what is already in place, promoting connection and amplifying existing experiences. In this way, the strategy acts as a mechanism for coordinating and enhancing the energies already active in the area, capable of generating increasingly shared and lasting impacts.

Our venues

Parco dell'Innovazione (former Officine Reggiane industrial site)

The main festival hub, symbolising Reggio Emilia's transformation from industrial heritage to innovation district. This vast complex hosts the **Reggiane Parco Innovazione** and connects education, research, and entrepreneurship — an ideal setting for Placemaking Week Europe's collaborative spirit.

Chiostri di San Pietro

A restored 16th-century cloister in the heart of the city, now home to the **Laboratorio Aperto**, a civic innovation centre that blends heritage, technology, and participation. It will host workshops, exhibitions, and co-creation sessions.

Teatro Municipale Romolo Valli

The city's iconic opera theatre and one of Reggio Emilia's cultural landmarks. The theatre embodies the city's architectural elegance and serves as a stage for plenary moments and public dialogues.

Ex Mangimificio Caffarri

A former feed mill turned creative space, reflecting Reggio Emilia's talent for adaptive reuse and local regeneration. It will host thematic sessions and community-driven activities.
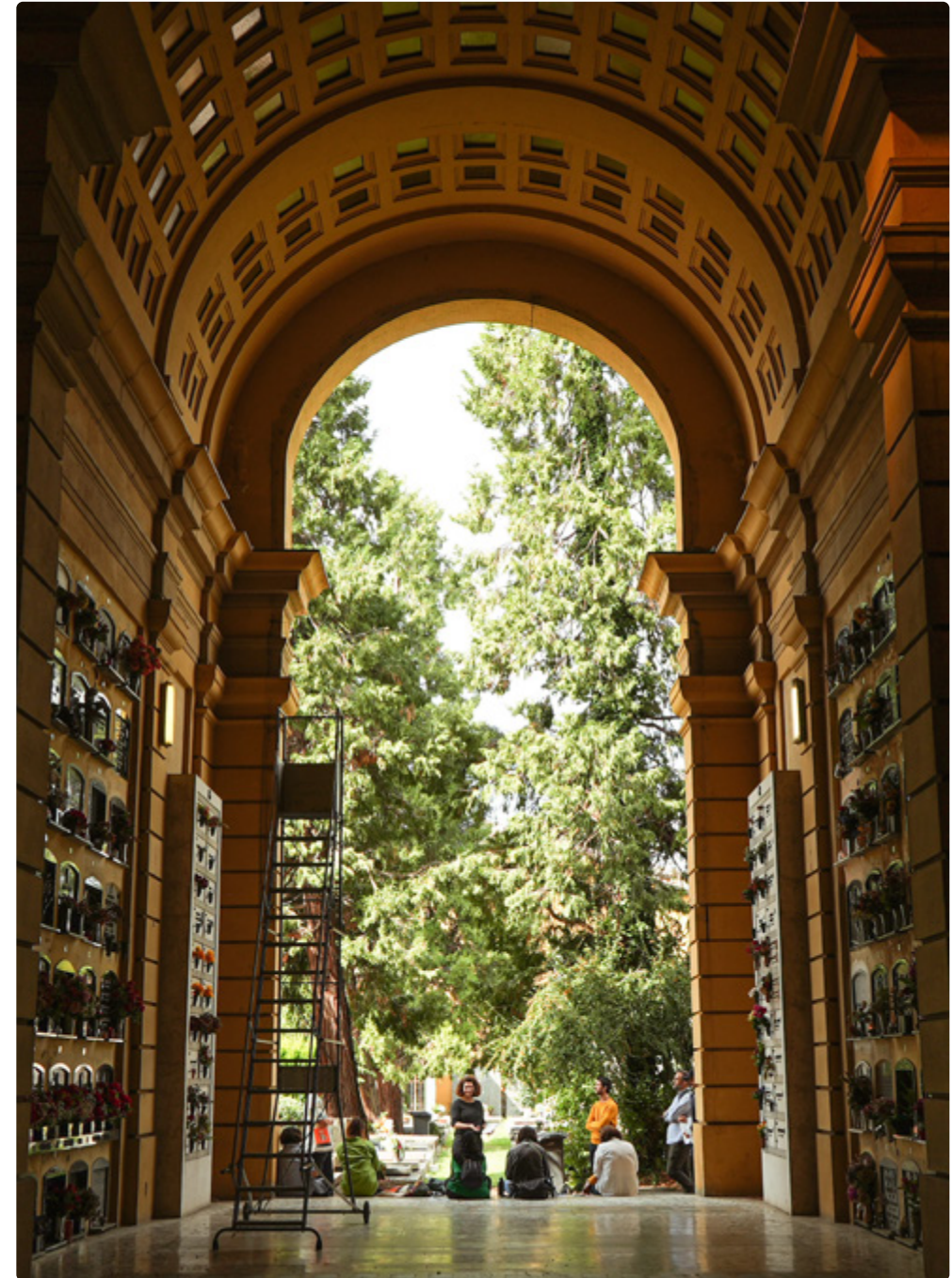
Binario 49
A neighbourhood cultural hub located along the city's railway line, focused on social inclusion and local creativity. It will serve as a venue for hands-on workshops and local initiatives.

Musei Civici di Reggio Emilia
The civic museums will open their doors to placemakers, linking cultural heritage with contemporary urban practice through curated visits and discussions.

1. Personal highlight from the festival

2. To improve for next year

Main takeaways:
Participants consistently highlighted the **people** and **community spirit** as the core of their experience: meeting new peers, reconnecting with old ones, and sharing knowledge informally. The **local dimension** (walking tours, local dinners, engagement with Reggio's projects) was highly valued, making the city feel like an integral part of the programme. The **blind dinner** and **public spaces** were repeatedly mentioned as symbolic, memorable moments that embodied the event's philosophy. Many noted that the mix of "local authenticity and international diversity" created a unique atmosphere.

Main takeaways:
The clearest pattern is **session overload** — too many sessions running in parallel or scheduled too tightly, making it hard to choose or move between venues. Participants also requested **clearer signage**, **longer breaks**, and **better orientation tools** (maps, app, or signage). Some suggested more **spaces for reflection** or **cross-session synthesis**. A smaller but relevant note concerns **accessibility and inclusivity**, including clearer language support and easier venue access.

Selected quotes:

- "Meeting people who actually do placemaking in their cities — not just talking about it."
- "The blind dinner was an unforgettable experience of empathy and connection."
- "Feeling part of a real community rather than a conference audience."
- "Exploring Reggio Emilia through the walks — learning by walking."
- "The dinner under the stars in the piazza captured what placemaking is all about."
- "Collaborating with locals and seeing their pride in the city."
- "The diversity of people and approaches, from artists to planners."
- "Conversations continued everywhere — streets, cafés, trains."
- "Seeing how the host city embraced the event, not just hosted it."
- "The mix of informal and structured activities created a rare balance."

Selected quotes:

- "Too many good sessions at the same time — I constantly had FOMO."
- "Maybe fewer, longer sessions to allow deeper discussion."
- "Better directions and signage between venues would help."
- "A digital map or app would make navigation easier."
- "More time between sessions for spontaneous conversations."
- "Consider offering language support for non-English speakers."
- "Venue labels were sometimes confusing; a clear numbering system would help."
- "Some sessions felt rushed — quality over quantity."
- "I missed a closing session where everyone could share key takeaways."
- "Include more accessible spaces for people with mobility challenges."

Reflections from Attendees

3. Other comments

4. Personal reflection on the experience at Placemaking Week Europe 2025 in Reggio Emilia

Main takeaways:
These responses reaffirmed the festival's **friendly**, **human scale** and **inclusive atmosphere**. People appreciated the **energy and authenticity** of the team, but some suggested practical refinements: **name badges, QR networking tools,** and better **on-site coordination**. Others praised the **city's warmth** and **strong local partnership**.

Main takeaways:
Reflections reveal deep appreciation for the **spirit of collaboration**, the **embeddedness in the city**, and the **value of learning through place**. Many felt personally inspired or reconnected to the purpose of placemaking. Several noted that Reggio Emilia exemplified "a city as a learning environment." The week was perceived not just as an event but as an **experience of community-building** — reinforcing the importance of maintaining its non-hierarchical, co-created format.

To capture the diverse experiences of participants, we collected personal reflections through a Google Form after the Placemaking Week Europe 2025 in Reggio Emilia.

The form invited session collaborators to reflect on the main goal of their session, the process or methodology used (such as co-creation games, participatory mapping, case presentations, or collective walks), their target group, and the approximate number of participants involved. Respondents were asked to highlight the most relevant ideas and takeaways from their discussions, note any points of consensus or disagreement, and share illustrative quotes or examples that captured their session's key message. Additional questions explored how each session connected to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices and whether any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments emerged. The form also allowed contributors to upload photos, slides, maps, drawings, posters, or other relevant materials, along with a short 1–2 sentence quote encapsulating the spirit of their session.

Thanks to the overwhelmingly positive response, we received a rich collection of reflections. To maintain clarity and flow in this report, key themes are summarised below, but the full responses with the set of detailed contributions is included in the **Appendix**.

Selected quotes:
- "This was one of the best-organised events I've attended — warm and efficient."
- "Name badges would help connect names and faces."
- "A QR code to connect with participants would be useful."
- "I loved how the city felt open and welcoming everywhere we went."
- "Thank you for the human touch — it made a huge difference."
- "Maybe a printed map or small handbook for the venues."
"Great balance between content and atmosphere."
- "It was clear how much the local team cared — we felt it."
- "Keep the no-sponsor policy — it keeps the vibe honest."
- "The evening gatherings helped build real relationships."

Selected quotes:
- "Reggio reminded me why I started doing placemaking in the first place."
- "The city became our classroom — every street was part of the programme."
- "It felt like a living lab for European collaboration."
- "This event restored my faith in how we can learn from each other."
- "No other conference gives this sense of belonging and openness."
- "The mix of cultures, disciplines, and languages created a real mosaic."
- "Being here changed how I think about the role of municipalities."
- "The week was intense but deeply human — a festival of care."
- "Reggio showed that smaller cities can lead with humility and innovation."
- "This was more than an event — it was a collective experience of the future we want."

FROM FORGOTTEN TO FAVOURITE – In Cairo, Vancouver and across France; Placemaking provides the missing link to breathe new life into city centres

Panel	Heritage Reimagined
Collaborators	Omar Zahran (Revive Egypt), Claire Leonard (Downtown Van), Laurie Duran (Social Designer), Suzanne Pergal (Greater Paris Metropolis), Louis Robert (Umarell)
Date	24th September
Venue	Remida Workshop Area (Ex Mangimificio Caffarri)

The main goal of the session was to demonstrate how placemaking, when rooted in cultural memory and community engagement, can transform neglected or overlooked urban spaces into vibrant, inclusive and resilient city centers.

The session had five main takeaways highlighting that memory-driven placemaking can activate invisible or forgotten heritage as a catalyst for social and cultural revitalisation. It was also discussed that cross-sector alliances (municipalities, community groups, private actors) are essential to sustain long-term transformation.

Urban Pulse: The Urban Environmental Comfort Challenge

Game	Places of well-being
Collaborators	Sina Ataee, Farzaneh Abedian Aval, Myriam Lopes, Helder Relvas (CESAM and the Environment and Planning Department, University of Aveiro)
Date	25th September
Venue	VR33

Through a fast-paced, collaborative game, participants stepped into roles like urban planners, developers, community reps, and environmental advocates, working together to co-create a more sustainable, comfortable, and inclusive city.

This session resulted in multiple conclusions including that human-social interventions have the highest leverage, often creating broader system-wide impact compared to complex infrastructure investments. Simple behavioural activation can significantly enhance comfort.

Placemaking Across Context: Learning from 'La Polveriera'

Panel	Places of well-being
Collaborators	CAIRE Consorzio - Lorenzo Baldini, Antonio Pisanò, Julia Lydall-Pisano, Veronica Pieracci
Date	25th September
Venue	La Polveriera

The session examined how architecture, governance, and social innovation intertwine to shape places that are both resilient and inclusive, our goal was to create a constructive discussion and collect new ideas and past experiences from the participants.

The session highlighted the need for new governance models that integrate voluntary action, cooperative management, and institutional support. It also touched upon the role of placemaking as a mediator between physical space and social relationships, providing a framework through which inclusion and participation can be cultivated over time.

Growing a Community Placemaking Movement in SE Europe

Workshop	Designing Cities for All
Collaborators	Matevž Hrženjak (Korimako), Tim Taylor (Korimako) Milosh Sokolikh (SmartUP)
Date	24th September
Venue	Remida Projection Area (Ex Mangimificio Caffarri)

The session focused on thinking about how to grow a movement of community placemaking action in the SE Europe region.

Two main outcomes showed that placemaking in SE Europe is lagging and that there is no interest from participants outside the region.

Via Premuda: Bridging Proximity and Urban Transformation

Local Challenge	Designing Cities for All
Collaborators	Alessandro Ardenti (Ordine degli Architetti di RE e Nazionale), Ordine degli Architetti di RE e Nazionale
Date	September, Venue

This session's main goal was the active participation of the children. The main take away was the decision to continue with the experience and finalize the design of a new square.

Reviving the Soul of Cities: Creative Placemaking in Historic and Underutilized Urban Spaces (From Vacancy to Vitality: Adaptive Reuse Across Borders)

Panel	Heritage Reimagined
Collaborators	Evan Snow (Zero Empty Spaces), Yvette Vašourková (CCEA MOBA Prague)
Date	24th September
Venue	Tecnopolo - conference room (Reggiano Parco Innovazione)

The session aimed to showcase real-world models of creative placemaking that breathe new life into historic and underutilized spaces, while fostering inclusive community engagement, economic activation, and cultural continuity.

The participants concluded that besides other takeaways, underutilized historic spaces can be reactivated without displacement through artist-led and community-grounded models. They also stated that adaptive reuse of commercial spaces (like malls or viaducts) can drive new forms of cultural life and civic participation.

Learning Grounds for Well-Being: Schools as Laboratories for Regenerative Placemaking – A school plaza for every community!

Outdoor session	Places of well-being
Collaborators	Ombretta Caldarice (Politecnico di Torino), Zandra Thuvesson and Bjorn Wallsten (Formas – Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development), and Mario Bellinzona (LaQUP)
Date	25th September
Venue	Remida Open Space (Ex Mangimificio Caffarri)

The main goal of the session was to understand the role of children in regenerative placemaking.

The group concluded that schools are living environments which can contribute to enhancing the transformative potential of cities. In addition, co-design solutions with children can have a strong role in dealing with climate crisis

Own the future – How Cities, Capital and Community shape public spaces

Panel	Designing cities for all
Collaborators	Fredrik Lindstål from Glad stad, Ulrica Berglöf, Lilja from the Skärholmen District Administration, Philippa Staffas and Helena Olsson from the Centre for AMP.
Date	25th of Septembe
Venue	Officine Credem (Reggiane Parco Innovazione)

The purpose of the seminar was to highlight different financing models for placemaking in Stockholm and how different places require different methods to be developed.

The key lessons from the seminar were that different places need different types of interventions; a city benefits from having many different organizations working with placemaking based on different conditions; and placemaking is not a quick fix—it takes at least a year to launch and establish an activity in the public space together with engaged stakeholders.

Meet Me at the Market: Where Food Builds Place

Panel	Places of well-being
Collaborators	Jessica Ferey, Executive Director (The Food Capitals by Délice Network), Cristina Cerutti, Turismo Torino e Provincia (Turin), Peggy Bauer, CEO, Helsinki Premises Ltd (Helsinki), Edyta Pawlaczek, City of Wroclaw (Wroclaw), Zeynep Aybüke Mutlu, Roof Coliving (Turkey), Ryan Smolar, PlacemakingUS & Long Beach Fresh (USA)
Date	25 September 2025
Venue	VR33

The session explored how food markets can act as social infrastructure that strengthens community life, fosters inclusion, and revitalises public space.

The group concluded that markets are essential social infrastructure, not just commercial spaces where food is a powerful catalyst for community building, inclusion, and urban–rural connection. Small interventions such as seating, music, lighting, and wayfinding can dramatically improve market sociability.

AFFORDABLE CITIES: Perspectives, leverages and experiences to make our cities more accessible, inclusive and livable

Panel	Designing cities for all
Collaborators	Greta Stucchi, Redo Sgr, LAMA Impresa Sociale, Plateau Urban, Agenzia del Demanio, Fondazione Housing Sociale
Date	25th September
Venue	CREDEM

This session explored how culture, housing, and community dynamics can become levers for more inclusive, livable cities.

If we want to create resilient neighborhoods, we need to think beyond the housing units and consider temporary uses or ""meanwhile uses"", which are not a side activity, but an integral tool in urban regeneration. To start with, they enhance neighborhoods by activating unused areas with initiatives that create opportunities for interaction, that generate a sense of belonging and local pride.

Local Challenge: Unlocking the Ex-Gasometro

Local Challenge	Connected Journeys
Collaborator	Rotem Carmi (CityMakers), Philippa Staffas (Centre for AMP), Elin Karlsson (Stockholm Business Region), María Tula (Hiedra), Pasquale Modesto & Matteo Fiorentino (Ciudà), Ulrica "Rica" Berglöf Lilja (Stockholm).
Date	25 September 2025.
Venue	The session began with a site visit to the Ex-Gasometro structure, followed by a workshop at the Musei Civici

The main goal was to transform the Ex-Gasometro from a single-use, car-centric structure into a multifunctional, community-oriented civic asset. The goal was to co-create a roadmap for "domesticating" the impersonal structure through physical design, temporary programming, and community-led governance.

The participants identified four main takeaways in the form of "Green Second Skin", "Green Bombing", The Rooftop Destination and Hybrid governance in the form of a "Friends of the Gasometro" association to manage the space, ensuring residents have a real stake alongside the municipality."

Mapping Meaning: Emotions, Art, and Playful Public Spaces

Workshop	Places of well-being
Collaborators	Malak Mehta (The Mindful Scapes)
Date	25th September 2025
Venue	Mamimò - Officine Creative Reggiane

The main goal of the session was to explore how emotions, memories, and creative expression shape people's sense of meaning, belonging, and ownership in public spaces.

The discussion focused on the need for both functional and emotional layers in public spaces, the impact of sensory experiences on our sense of belonging in public spaces. They also touched upon playfulness, creativity, and hands-on participation as a way to deepen ownership and on creating meaning in places through leaving a mark and co-creation.

City Safari: Reggio Emilia Through the Eyes of Children and Youth

Workshop	Designing cities for all
Collaborators	Clarisse Maye Bau, Ilvana Noncheva, Jelena Markovic, Mihaela Milosevic, Svenja Wirz, Nina Istamboulie (Shift + space collective)
Date	25th of September, Starting point
Venue	Front entrance to Community Home Catomes Tôt

The main goal of our session was to explore Reggio Emilia's historic center through the perspective of children and youth, revealing how young people experience safety, play and mobility in public space. Our aim was to inspire participants to adopt youth-centered mindsets when designing or planning cities.

It was visible through the session that meaningful youth inclusion requires shifting mindset first, not just adding new infrastructure.

Pordenone, Italian Capital of Culture 2027: a bold vision placing culture at the heart of well-being for mid-sized cities and their communities.

Short present.	Places of well-being
Collaborators	Valentina Dalla Torre (Itinerari Paralleli SRL Impresa Sociale)
Date	25th September
Venue	Officine Credem

The main goal was to share about our experience in Pordenone, a mid-sized city in Italy, winner of the Italian Capital of Culture title with a major participatory process.

The session discussed multiple points including the importance of understanding that culture serves as a lever for development and for activating local areas. The participants also discussed the importance of recognizing that cultural spaces and activities can act as tools for social well-being, helping to combat loneliness, social isolation, and educational and cognitive poverty.

Sense of place: Sensory bike tour

Workshop	Connected Journeys
Collaborators	Danique Donia Nota (University of Amsterdam) Katusha Sol (University of Amsterdam), Romee Nicolai (Bicycle mayor of Amsterdam/BCYS)
Date	September 25
Venue	Meeting point Reggio Emilia Central Railway station - Piazzale Marconi

Participants explored Reggio Emilia by bike, using the senses to experience the city's atmosphere. During the sensory bike tour participants experienced the unique character of the city through one of their senses: smell, hear, touch or see.

The participants were impressed by how much more you can experience (sensory wise) when you eliminate another sense - for example closing your eyes to hear better or viewing a city park through frog's-eye view. Participants noted that piazzas/inner city squares are places where your senses could sometimes mislead you because of the busyness, different smells and harder to place sounds.

BluePrint Cafe: Placekeeping shapingEquitable Cities, One Space at a Time!

Outdoor session	Places of well-being
Collaborators	Andrew Bui and Cristina Murphy (Morgan State University/BluePrint Cafe)
Date	24 September
Venue	Outdoor area of Remida (Ex Mangimificio Caffarri)

The session aimed to teach participants how to read urban environments and ensure design respects existing narratives to resist gentrification and foster belonging.

The takeaways included there approaches: Adopt an Open and Observant Approach, Prioritize Community Voice, Harness Existing Assets. It was agreed that inclusive collaboration is essential to transform spaces and ensure they remain truly public and accessible.

Spaces that hold us: Rebuilding Communities in Ukraine

Short present.	Designing cities for all
Collaborators	Maryna Bakaienko (Cedos)
Date	25th September
Venue	Officine Credem

To share how community centres in small Ukrainian towns become inclusive, welcoming spaces that unite people across age, culture, and vulnerability.

The session highlights that diversity of local communities is an important factor of resilience and that it is important to develop such physical spaces in a participative way. These places are crucial for the local democracy and inclusive processes, and are important in the times of war as well as in peaceful times.

Walk, sense, imagine: valuing and learning public spaces

Outdoor activity	Designing cities for all
Collaborators	Iakovos Sierifis (OPU - Organisation for Positive Urbanism), Emelie Lenning (Reka Studio), Raphaela Mak (Metvibee)
Date	26th September
Venue	Park of Santa Maria

This collaborative session explored how sensory experiences, walking practices and imagination can support more inclusive urban development and civil dialogue.

The group experienced that there are many textures around the city and how the urban fabric can be contradictory and change depending on what you focus on. They become aware of new things in a place when we focus on one sense at the time

Participatory arts as placemaking tools: lessons from around the world

Workshop	Designing cities for all
Collaborators	La Libélula Cooperative (Canada), Fondazione Palazzo Magnani (Italy), Bússola/Outdoor Arts Portugal (Portugal), Blind Walls Gallery (Netherlands), and the Kaya Kaya Movement (Curaçao)
Date	24th September
Venue	Remida Workshop Area (Ex Mangimificio Caffarri)

This session brought together practitioners from Canada, Italy, Portugal, the Netherlands, and Curaçao to explore how participatory arts transforms public space and strengthens community connections.

The main takeaways focused on the capacity of public art to make you feel more important and part of a community. Sharing is caring, making art together develops a sense of belonging towards the place while public institutions can help the projects as long as private sector.

From Mono-centric to Poly-centric City: Riga's Approach to Balanced Spatial Development

Short present.	Designing cities for all
Collaborators	Signe Pērkone
Date	26th September
Venue	Remida Projection Area (Ex Mangimificio Caffarri)

Participants learned how Riga develops neighbourhood centres through integrated spatial planning that connects mobility, public space, local identity, and small businesses, while reducing fragmented management, guiding municipal investment, and involving residents in shaping their neighbourhoods' future.

The discussion highlighted that fragmented, sector-based planning cannot meet the interconnected needs of urban residents, making integrated spatial planning

and the prioritisation of neighbourhood centres essential for delivering high-quality, accessible public spaces. It also underscored the importance of ongoing community engagement and the role of artistic and public-space interventions in reinforcing local identity and a strong sense of place.

Everyday Adventure: Designing the city for children

Panel	Places of well-being
Collaborators	Bella Filatova, Andrea Boni, Valeriya Saymova, Mustafa Sherif, Antonietta Casini, Paolo Gandolfi.
Date	25th of September - Officine Credem

The session aimed to shift child-friendly city thinking from isolated projects to systemic urban transformation by fostering cross-disciplinary dialogue, exposing barriers to children's autonomy and safety, and defining what municipalities and planners need to make child-friendly principles truly operational.

The discussion highlighted that a child-friendly city requires systemic change beyond isolated playgrounds, rethinking mobility, public spaces, and children's everyday autonomy, with Reggio-inspired principles applied across the urban scale. Participants also noted that children's perspectives reveal universal qualities of good urbanism, while structural barriers and well-designed precedents play a crucial role in enabling practical implementation and broader transformation.

Walking and Drawing to Invoke the Disappeared Water Streams of the City

Outdoor session	Designing cities for all
Collaborators	María Tula García Méndez (Hiedra)
Date	26th September
Venue	Parco Santa Maria

The session aimed to uncover hidden urban waterways through storytelling and artistic interventions, fostering a deeper emotional connection to place and raising awareness of the relationship between cities and natural cycles.

The discussion emphasised recognising the invisible presence of water in cities and how its memory continues to shape urban spaces, using walking, storytelling, and on-site drawing to reconnect with hidden waterways. Participants also highlighted the importance of integrating ecological and cultural memory into placemaking through creative, participatory actions that combine technical and lived-experience perspectives.

Shaping the Future of Urban Policymaking

Workshop	Designing cities for all
Collaborators	Dr. Mirian Calvo (Lancaster School of Architecture), Susanna Dart, (Freelance Placemaker) Lancaster - UK, Paul Kelly (retired teacher, environmental advocate, and volunteer with the Boston Food Forest Coalition), Denny Dart (Freelance environmental engineer).
Date	26th September
Venue	Catomes Tôt

The workshop aimed to equip participants with tools from the Placemaking with Young Adults project to create inclusive, community-driven urban policies that integrate diverse perspectives and sustainability principles in the Lancaster District.

The discussion highlighted the importance of integrative policymaking that incorporates diverse community voices, especially young people, and ensures transparency in data analysis to build trust and clarity. It also emphasised empowering participants through collaborative frameworks and long-term visioning to create actionable, inclusive, and sustainable urban policies.

Friction as Fertilizer Reframing Resilience for Urban Coexistence

Workshop	Places of well-being
Collaborators	Johanna Musch, Social design lead, Umarell; Alexandra Coutsoucos, Urban and social innovation design strategist, Practitioner and PhD student at Rome Sapienza University; Irene Verdi, Communication & Service Designer; Marco Finardi, Service Designer & Researcher at Politecnico di Milano; Lea Karrasch, Urban designer
Date	25th September
Venue	Officine Credem (Reggiane Parco Innovazione)

The session aimed to challenge participants to rethink resilience and placemaking through friction, using real cases and empathy exercises to confront power dynamics, embrace diverse perspectives, and explore how disruption can foster climate-responsive urban change.

The discussion highlighted the value of embracing friction in placemaking, fostering authentic engagement through honest dialogue, self-reflection, and critical analysis. Participants also stressed the constraints of top-down decision-making and the need for public authorities to be accountable, resource-aware, and clear about their capacities before engaging in placemaking initiatives.

Designing Healthier Cities: Citizen Voices at the Heart of Urban Planning

Workshop	Places of well-being
Collaborators	Ruth Gow McLenachan (Healthy Cities), Celia García (Healthy Cities), Saira Ali (City of Bradford), Richard Middleton (City of Bradford)
Date	24th September
Venue	Remida Open Space (Ex Mangimificio Caffarri)

The main goal of the session was understanding cities as an invaluable resource for health and exploring how residents' lived experiences can reshape the way we design healthier cities.

The discussion highlighted the gap between technical data and community experiences, showing how perceptions of safety, accessibility, and public space quality can vary across different groups. Key takeaways included starting with easy wins to build trust, integrating health into broader city planning, and measuring and communicating the impact of urban transformations on wellbeing.

Creative tools for place making (cards, dice, dart)

Game	Designing cities for all
Collaborators	Dipon Bose and Marianna Frattarelli
Date	25th September
Venue	VR33

The main goal of the session was to bring out the specific features of the place and the genius loci to start co-design processes with greater adherence to the needs of the community, which is increasingly multi-ethnic, and in compliance with the territory.

The discussion highlighted that game-based participatory mapping allows participants to explore places through personal memories, sensory impressions, and

prior experiences, while fostering group exchange and co-design dialogue. Iterative gameplay and prompts encourage repeated interaction with locations, stimulating new ideas, problem-solving, and informal, emotionally grounded discussions rather than focusing on objective metrics.

Photo Orienteering - Get to know the city!

Outdoor session	Connected Journeys
Collaborators	Raphaela Mak (Studio Raphaela/Metvibee)
Date	25th September
Venue	Reggiane Street Park

The main goal of the session was to explore the city through photo orienteering and learn first-hand from the locals on the places they visit

The discussion highlighted that actively engaging with locals encourages participants to step out of their comfort zones and practice vulnerability while inviting participation in urban activities. Participants also gained insights into personal stories tied to specific places and learned the importance of respecting consent and handling rejection in placemaking work.

Placemaking in the Planning Process: let's talk about it!

Panel	Designing cities for all
Collaborators	Giulia Sicignano (AMAT), Ariela de Oliveira (Superwien), Theresa König (Superwien), Roland Krebs (Superwien)
Date	24th Septembe
Venue	Officine Credem (Reggiane Parco Innovazione)

The session aimed to explore how placemaking can foster inclusive, process-oriented urban planning by engaging diverse groups and promoting meaningful community involvement throughout a project.

The discussion highlighted that while planning contexts vary, integrating placemaking, particularly through participatory and inclusive approaches, adds significant value, though many cities still face challenges in formal adoption. Exchanging experiences and examples helps build collective knowledge, inspire new ideas, and develop context specific strategies tailored to local needs and actors.

Historic centres as sites of future-making

Panel	Heritage Reimagined
Collaborators	Astrid Stroobandt (City of Bruges), Marzena Horak, Malgorzata, Klarczyk, Karolina Walęsa, Agata Bańkosz (City of Wroclaw), Martina Bergamo, Simona Bravaglieri, Anna de la Torre, Giulia Ferro, Luigi Magnini, Jacopo Paiano, Marco Paladini, Paola Peratello, Duna Viezzoli, Margherita Zucchelli, (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)
Date	24th September
Venue	VR33

The session explored how cities adapt their unique environments to address climate and social challenges while co-creating ideas to keep historic city centres vibrant and liveable for both citizens and future generations.

The discussion highlighted that green-blue infrastructure has the potential to transform historic spaces by improving environmental quality and public life. Involving people in these changes ensures that the impact extends beyond policy, shaping everyday habits and behaviours.

Youth-Centered Design

Workshop	Designing cities for all
Collaborators	Safe and Sound Cities Programme, Global Infrastructure Basel Foundation Emily Simpson, Amber Lingg
City of Wroclaw	Marzena Horak Malgorzata, Karolina Walęsa
Date	24th September
Venue	Architects Office (Reggiane Parco Innovazione)

The main goal of the session was enabling participants to exchange experiences and reflect on practices, while cultivating innovative ideas and tools to design more inclusive cities that are safer for youth and for all.

The discussion emphasised that safety in urban spaces must address both physical and psychological aspects, and that youth should be involved at every stage from planning to maintenance. Building trust through lasting relationships and providing support from qualified mentors, educators, and therapists are essential for creating meaningful and safe environments.

Every City Needs a TIRANA Pyramid

Outdoor Activity	Heritage Reimagined
Collaborators	Noa Haim Collective Paper Aesthetics
Date	24th September
Venue	Foodcourt Field (Carroponte delle Officine Reggiane)

The main goal of the session was to share the experience of a unique project design, developed and tested during COVID, with like-minded individuals, in order to gain valuable professional feedback.

The discussion highlighted the idea of creating a dynamic incubator that bridges placemaking and product design, guiding creatives through the full development process. Such an incubator would provide a comprehensive toolbox, fostering independence, reducing reliance on grants, and supporting sustainable project growth.

Urban Reflective Pauses: Centering Care and Inclusion in Placemaking

Workshop	Designing cities for all
Collaborators	Milagros Hurtig, Theresa Koenig, Andrew Shaw, Lonci Tobias, Rana Habibi, Kim Weger, Arild Eriksen
Date	25th September
Venue	Architects Office (Reggiane Parco Innovazione)

The session aimed to provide a space for pause and self-reflection in participatory urbanism, exploring care-focused frameworks to help participants build more inclusive and responsive placemaking practices.

The discussion emphasised that creating welcoming, safe, and responsive environments requires careful facilitation, honesty, and follow-through, particularly when engaging young people. Participants also highlighted the importance of emotional presence, reflection, unlearning assumptions, and acknowledging contributions to foster meaningful inclusion in placemaking.

From Narratives to Action: Participatory tools for Collective Resilience in Historic Centres

Workshop - Heritage Reimagined	
Collaborators:	Mary Kerrigan, Placemaker~Architect and Transformational Leadership Practitioner/Coach and Emanuele de Angelis, Futurecity, London
Date	26th September
Venue	Musei Civici

The session aimed to show how arts, culture, and grassroots engagement can transform heritage environments, turning place narratives into meaningful action and positive change in communities.

The discussion highlighted that structured tools like the Terrain of Conversations can empower participants to share stories, co-envision change, and take meaningful action in historic environments. It also emphasised that arts and culture serve as powerful catalysts for collaborative citymaking, generating tangible social and economic impact.

From Distress to De-Stress: Building Spaces of Belonging for Collective Well-Being

Panel	Places of well-being
Collaborators	Mariia Gryshchenko (Moderator), Institute of Sociology NASU / Bureau of Participatory Planning Cité; Mary Kerrigan, Placemaker, Architect, Transformational Leadership Practitioner/Coach, Ireland; Victoria Pennacchio, The Place Institute / Downtown Alliance, USA; Maryna Bakaienko, Project Manager at Cedos / Nashe Place team, Ukraine; Alya Drazhenko, Ro3kvit Urban Coalition for Ukraine.
Date	24th September
Venue	Tecnopolo (Reggiano Parco Innovazione)

The session aimed to showcase case studies from Ukraine, Northern Ireland, and the

US to explore how inclusive placemaking, relationship-building, and community resilience can support disaster response, post-conflict recovery, and refugee integration.

The discussion highlighted that long-term grassroots placemaking, as seen in 'Breathing Neighbourliness into Neighbourhoods' in Derry~Londonderry, Northern Ireland, generates lasting positive impacts on community life. These include caring for the elderly and pets, sharing resources generously, fostering strong connections across generations, and welcoming new residents instantly.

Inclusive Activity Spaces – From Norway to Spain: Sport as a Tool for Designing Places for All

Workshop	Designing cities for all
Collaborators:	Nina Eschenröder, Jerome Picard
Date	24th September
Venue	Officine Credem (Reggiane Parco Innovazione)

The session aimed to show how sport and activity can be used as placemaking tools to foster inclusion, well-being, and community connection, transforming facilities into multi-generational spaces that support physical, social, and emotional needs.

The discussion highlighted that co-created sport and activity spaces can drive social inclusion and foster belonging across ages, abilities, and communities. It also emphasised the need for flexible, multi-use environments, placemaking approaches in hospitality facilities, and rethinking formal/informal and inside/outside boundaries to support contemporary health, wellness, and recreation needs.

Are streets inviting places for all? Adding a child-focused lens and free play to placemaking

Outdoor Activity	Designing cities for all
Collaborators	Maria Sitzoglou (Design Clips), Nafsika Michail (Design Clips), Borbála Marosán (Free Play Association), Borka Moravcsik (Free Play Association)
Date	24th September
The streets around	Chiostri di San Pietro and a little square (free space) nearby a local school

The session aimed to empower urbanists to co-create child-friendly streets by using children's perspectives and play to inform real actions, design guidelines, and urban interventions.

The discussion highlighted that even small elements of nature, like a single tree, can provide meaningful play opportunities when seen from children's perspectives. Participants also noted that safety and play are interconnected, and that urban spaces hold untapped potential for creative, movement-based play if we allow children the freedom to engage with their environment.

Holding her Fall - Playgrounds, aging and the women we will become across cultures and cities

Outdoor activity	Designing cities for all
Collaborators	Spring Onion Atelier
Date	24th September
Venue	Foodcourt Field (Carroponte delle Officine Reggiane)

This project explores aging as a collective urban issue through gender, work, care, and spatial inclusion, revealing how social and spatial infrastructures reflect society's values of dignity, interdependence, and belonging.

The discussion highlighted that Holding Her Fall provided a reflective and restorative space for openly discussing

ageing women in a non-hierarchical way. Participants also noted that using play facilitated engagement with a challenging topic and enabled cross-cultural exchanges, revealing shared emotional experiences despite differing ageing narratives.

Promoting Diversity in Urban Design Through Artist/Developer Collaboration

Panel	Designing cities for all
Collaborators	Juanita Hardy, ULI Senior Visiting Fellow for Creative Placemaking, Urban Land Institute; Matt Norris, Senior Director ULI Building Healthy Places and Project Manager, ULI Art in Place Project; Shain Shapiro, PhD, Author, Founder, Thought Leader & Senior Executive; Vicki Davis, Managing Partner, Urban Atlantic; Oliva Sartogo, Director, VIV Arts; David Valecillos, Senior Development Project Manager, The Community Builders. 25th September, Architects Office, Reggiane Parco Innovazione.
Date	25th September
Venue	Architects Office (Reggiane Parco Innovazione)

The session explored how viewing real estate development as a canvas for creative expression allows artists and developers to collaborate, integrating history, culture, and community stories to foster social cohesion, value, and a sense of place.

The discussion highlighted that artists can expand the impact of development by reflecting local culture, strengthening identity, and creating community-rooted places. It also emphasised the need for clear structures, early engagement, and context-sensitive approaches, with arts integration enhancing social cohesion, economic value, and a genuine sense of place.

Social Value Indicators: Developing a resilient framework for capturing, measuring and monitoring social value delivery

Workshop	Designing cities for all
Collaborators	AR Urbanism / Forma Urbis. Ioana Gherghel and Anna Saveleva.
Date	24th September
Venue	Binario49

The session aimed to introduce a place-based social value capture method to identify diverse community needs and design targeted, equitable interventions in the Reggio Emilia Stazione area.

The discussion highlighted a growing focus on defining and delivering Social Value as part of planning and development processes. Practitioners and decision-makers are increasingly aiming for place-based outcomes that create meaningful benefits for local communities, rather than relying on standardised, top-down metrics.

From Margins to Influence: Digital Placemaking with Marginalized Communities

Panel	Designing cities for all: valuing diversity as an approach to urban design
Collaborators	Sirin Hassan (Qalb Al-Balad Placemaking), Minouche Besters (STIPO), Vineeta Shetty (Placemaking India), Guillermo Bernal (The Place Institute)
Date	25th of September
Venue	Tecnopolo (Reggiano Parco Innovazione)

The session aimed to show how digital placemaking empowers marginalized and indigenous communities in Palestine, India, and Mexico to reclaim visibility, narrative, and agency in contexts of exclusion.

The discussion highlighted that digital tools can amplify marginalized voices, enhance community ownership, and create new avenues for visibility within planning systems that often overlook them. Participants also stressed the importance of rethinking Western labels such as "minority" or "marginalized" in favour of language that communities feel accurately represents them.

Section 3

Key insights of Placemaking Week Europe 2024

#01 Designing cities for all

Placemaking is key to creating cities that truly embrace diversity and bring people together in their cultural and generational differences. These cities are designed to be physically accessible and socially welcoming, offering spaces where people from different cultures, backgrounds, and with various vulnerabilities can feel valued, comfortable, and safe.

Good placemaking helps build a sense of belonging and promote social cohesion, allowing everyone—kids, the elderly, women, and people from diverse cultural backgrounds— to thrive.

It's not just about making cities physically accessible; it's about making sure people feel included and part of the community. By using thoughtful approaches that promote inclusivity, we breathe life into our urban spaces. We want to make sure everyone, especially newcomers and marginalized groups, feel welcomed, supported, and free to engage in public spaces without fear. Inclusive placemaking turns cities into vibrant, dynamic places where diversity is celebrated, and everyone plays an important role in the community's growth.

Valuing diversity as an approach to urban design

Keynote Listener Khadidja Konate on 'Designing cities for all'

Dear placemakers, I was genuinely excited to be the keynote speaker —and the week did not disappoint in energy or sincerity.

Before attending Placemaking Week in Reggio Emilia, I took a moment to reflect and examine the programme, hoping to shape a shared understanding of its theme. I noticed an inspiring range of content: tangible elements like public spaces, civic centres, schools, and markets, as well as intangible ones—feelings, belonging, memories, and stories. There was a tension between small interventions and strategic thinking, temporary and permanent approaches, urban and mountain contexts. Importantly, the programme addressed the needs of often underrepresented groups, from young people to older adults. Yet everyone seemed to start from a common principle: equity as the central purpose.

Exploring diversity revealed its rich complexity. It is often difficult to articulate, and discussions can lean too heavily on one dimension while overlooking others. This makes me wonder whether we truly capture the full spectrum of what diversity means. As Shrek famously told Donkey, "It's more complex than that." Like onions, people have layers—and only by peeling them back can we understand their full stories.

Cultural diversity also shapes how we perceive care and community. In one workshop, participants from Palestine described how older people are cared for by family and neighbours, unlike in much of Europe, where care homes are the norm. It reminded me that design always begins with listening—and that meaningful listening requires humility and continuous learning.

One particularly powerful story came from Luz Romero, who shared how she found her new home in Reggio Emilia, inspired by the city's welcoming spirit.

Similarly, the founders of Spring Onion Atelier created solutions after recognising the needs of their elderly mothers in China—women full of energy yet facing hearing loss or digital exclusion. These stories remind us that without people's narratives, data is just numbers. Stories give direction to our action.

We must also have the courage to confront everyday barriers, starting with the simplest ones. As one parent of an autistic child once told me, something as ordinary as a traffic light can hinder access, and the availability of a bathroom can determine whether someone feels safe leaving home.

While we often celebrate lively, vibrant places, we must also design for calm and rest. One participant called this "shadow placemaking"—creating quiet spaces that balance the urban rhythm. Pursuing equity means ensuring everyone has the opportunity to move, access, and belong. The murals in Reggio or the art projects involving Hikikomori teenagers show how collaborative art can transform public spaces—not as decoration, but as a language of inclusion.

We also recognise that meaningful placemaking takes time. Everyone agrees on this, yet opinions differ—some say a year, others six months. The important thing is that we allow processes to breathe and people to grow with them.

As the week unfolded, a few important questions surfaced within our network: Are we truly diverse? Are we leaving space for new voices? Are we transparent in our processes? These reflections are not signs of weakness but of maturity—they help us evolve.

Looking back, I realise that the journey is as meaningful as the conclusions. The week once again created new possibilities, sparked countless "aha" moments, and nurtured connections that will continue to grow.

The insight I'll carry forward comes from my visit to the Loris Malaguzzi Centre:

"What else can I do?"

A simple question—yet one that drives every step we take.

Take care, and see you at Placemaking Week 2026 in Wroclaw! ■

#02 Heritage Reimagined

Historic centres lie at the heart of each city, full of stories, charm, and timeless architecture. Over time, historic centres have faced challenges. Local shops have closed down, affordable housing is hard to find, and there's a struggle to maintain liveability and a community vibe.

Adapting to how people live and leisure today, while keeping the character and vibe of these historic centres, is tricky. We need to find ways to change from places to buy to places to be: to live, to meet, to create, both during the day and at night. City centres regain their vitality when all citizens – children, teens, adults and elderly – have reasons to live or engage there.

Reviving historic cores takes a careful approach, finding the right balance between holding onto the past and meeting the needs of the future. Placemaking and meanwhile uses of social, cultural organisations provide opportunities to imagine a new future.

New Life for Historic Centres

Keynote Listener Fiza Azmi on 'Heritage Reimagined. New Life for Historic Centres'

I came to Reggio Emilia carrying stories from Kuala Kangsar, the royal town where I grew up. *Cerita Kurang Sa* began as a response to a quiet loss I felt each time I walked its streets — shops closing, trades disappearing, stories left untold. I wanted to document them before they faded, not out of nostalgia, but to understand what remains and what continues to evolve.

What struck me during the *Heritage Reimagined* sessions was how similar the questions were — whether in Malaysia or Italy, we're all asking:

> *How do we keep what matters, without freezing it in time?*
> *How do we make heritage move —breathe— belong to the present?*

I saw an old map of Reggio Emilia's city centre drawn in the shape of an eye. It reminded me to look carefully, while listening with intent. So I did. I listened with my eyes open. One of the most memorable sights was at the Remida space — a few nonnas folding used coffee bags, preparing them for the materials library where teachers come to "shop" for classroom activities. It was simple and unassuming, yet it captured what *Heritage Reimagined* truly meant: passing knowledge through hands, making the ordinary sacred again.

As one of the Keynote Listeners, I noticed how people were often surprised that something as heavy as loss and memory could be approached in a playful way. But to me, that's where hope lives — in the lightness that allows people to keep engaging, to keep imagining. Play doesn't trivialise loss; it gives it air. It's how stories travel from one generation to the next without breaking under their own weight.

During one discussion, we were asked to name our biggest fear as placemakers. Mine was this: that in our effort to be taken seriously, we might lose the element of play. Because play is how communities experiment, remember, and make sense of change. Without it, placemaking risks becoming performance, not participation. And maybe that's part of why intangible heritage so often lives in the shadow of the tangible — because play, memory, and emotion are harder to measure, harder to map. Yet they're what make everything else meaningful.

As I return home, I keep thinking about the artisans who never called their work "heritage." They simply worked — every day — folding, carving, weaving, teaching. Maybe reimagining heritage begins there: in recognising that the everyday is already extraordinary, that the smallest acts of making can also be acts of keeping.

Maybe that's what Reggio reminded me most — that heritage is not a fixed archive, but a shared experiment in attention. To notice what stays, what shifts, and what still hums quietly underneath. That act of noticing, I think, is how we begin again. ∎

#03 Places
of well-being

Urban health becomes more of a concern. More people and resources continue to pour into cities and access to social amenities and green, quiet and healthy spaces becomes scarce for many. It's increasingly important to invest in solutions that improve quality of life, foster communities and encourage equitable and sustainable development.

Social quality and equity needs to be embedded into the urban fabric to foster communities where social interaction, trust, and communal support thrive, alongside physical and mental safety. This helps to create attractive and inclusive places, particularly for families, children, persons with disabilities and minority groups. Cities need to facilitate physical activity, cultural exchange and aspire to healthy lifestyles. This includes the design, the use, the programming and the maintenance of public space and amenities.

Within this theme, we will also explore the role of sustainable consumption, the green economy, and social cooperatives in promoting eco-friendly solutions that enhance the resilience of urban ecosystems. Additionally, we will examine the crucial role of access to local food systems and green spaces in supporting urban health and well-being.

Mid-sized cities
in today's world

Keynote Listener Francesca Braglia on 'Places of well-being. Mid-sized cities in today's world'

Dear placemakers, This week marked my very first Placemaking Week, and I am deeply moved by the wealth of experiences, skills, and ideas that you have brought to my city. Over the past few days, I have been surrounded by people who approach urban life with creativity, generosity, and a strong sense of community. As a keynote listener, I tried to attend as many sessions, workshops, and walks as possible — and soon realised it was a true mission impossible. Yet each moment offered a new perspective. Through a few examples, I will try to outline what a "place of well-being" could mean for me, both as a participant and as a citizen.

In the session "Learning Grounds for Well-being," I was struck by the inspiring idea of transforming schoolyards into climate shelters that remain open to the wider community. The project resonated with me because it merges two urgent priorities: climate adaptation and the regeneration of underused public infrastructure. In Italy, for instance, schoolyards are rarely accessible after school hours. Opening them represents a cultural shift — an act of reimagining educational spaces as community assets. Increasingly, the fight against climate change is interwoven with struggles for inclusion, equity, and the intersectionality of rights. Public access to schools helps reconnect citizens to learning environments and fosters intergenerational and intercultural dialogue.

In the same workshop, we placed children's needs and desires at the centre. We discussed how essential it is to build not only participation, but genuine relationships — both with and among the communities we work with. Relationships are the invisible infrastructure of well-being. They nurture belonging and continuity, helping preserve traditions that risk fading in a rapidly changing society. Communities with strong internal bonds are more open to experimentation, diversity, and change. The experience shared by SINGA beautifully illustrated this principle: inclusion and creativity grow from trust, time, and mutual curiosity.

We were also reminded that in contexts of crisis — whether post-disaster, conflict zones, or areas under chronic stress — the first step toward recovery is reclaiming space together. The session "From Distress to De-Stress" showed how communities can rebuild resilience when given a playground for relationships. This can take the form of cultural and social activities that turn damaged or neglected sites into places of encounter, leisure, and hope. Regeneration begins with citizens, not for them.

Throughout the week, I learned that culture and creativity are not decorative elements, but essential instruments for shaping active urbanism and stronger communities. A particularly inspiring encounter was with VIA ROMA ZERO, an association revitalising one of Reggio Emilia's main streets through inclusive events and cultural interventions. Participants discovered how an artist-designed shop window can reflect the city's multicultural identity, and how a shaded square with misting pavements can offer comfort during extreme heat. At the point where Via Roma meets the railway and ring road, an illuminated underpass now reconnects divided areas — linking mobility, heritage, and public space. What was once a "non-place" has become a meaningful passageway for residents.

Another voice that deeply influenced my reflections was Stefano Mancuso, the Italian botanist known for his research on plant intelligence. He challenges us to rethink our assumptions about life itself. Mancuso reminds us that plants are far from passive: they live in complex networks of relationships and exchanges, forming living systems that sustain entire ecosystems. This awareness mirrors the essence of placemaking — creating multi-dimensional spaces that nurture connection, resilience, and regeneration.

I was also intrigued by a provocative reflection during the "Radical Honesty Fishbowl Tavola." One participant challenged the conventional metaphor of public space as the city's "living room," suggesting instead: what if it were a teenager's bathroom? This bold image flips the narrative — transforming public space from something tidy and controlled into a space of expression, transformation, and vulnerability. It invites us to imagine cities where young people can express confusion, test identities, and seek belonging. Taking inspiration from the plant world, this means cultivating cities that embrace intersectional inclusion — across abilities, genders, cultures, languages, economies, and faiths. A living city, like a forest, thrives through diversity and interdependence.

In conclusion, I believe the research of Jenny Andersson on Regenerative Design can offer a valuable framework for future placemaking practice. It encourages us to see cities as evolving systems where ecology, economy, and culture must develop in balance. Regenerative thinking moves us beyond sustainability toward renewal — understanding space not as a static object, but as a living organism in constant dialogue with its inhabitants.

So I end this reflection with an open question: which elements of our projects have the power to generate collective well-being in cities?

The answer, I believe, lies both in design and policy — and in the everyday gestures of care, creativity, and connection that define the essence of placemaking itself. ∎

#04 Connected Journeys

Mobility shapes how cities interact, and influences the flow of people, goods, and ideas. This theme explores opportunities for mobility across scales while decreasing car dependency: from intercity connectivity to local networks.

In midsize cities it is essential to strengthen how we move between cities while also keeping things accessible locally. We're exploring how different modes of transport -walking, cycling, public transport- can bring people closer together and make getting around easier for everyone. Moving away from car-dependency and allowing for transport systems with smooth connections to other, local transport modes, is the goal.

Doing this right will evoke other challenges. High-speed intercity train networks need to be accessible easily for everyone. Local mobility hubs can facilitate this access and act as new social hearts of the community, now providing mobility sharing systems (bicycles, scooters, cars) and potentially other shared amenities. As car-depency decreases, public space is freed up and parking garages need to find new uses, providing opportunities for new vibrant, inclusive and social places. Let's explore how new mobility systems can catalyse social life and community interaction.

Rethinking Mobility Across Scales

Keynote Listener Francesca Goia on 'Connected Journeys. Rethinking Mobility Across Scales'

Connecting the Journey: From the Personal to the Collective

Between 2009 and 2010, I lived between Antwerp and the Netherlands. At the end of those twelve months, I was happy — and I knew I was happy. I also knew why: those human-scale cities, where moving around was simple, easy, and deeply fulfilling; places where, along the way, human connections emerged — a brief chat, or simply a smile while waiting for the green light. Placemaking wasn't yet called by that name, but it was already speaking that language.

Before the Festival

When I learned about the theme, as a Keynote Listener, I couldn't help but reflect on the context in which it would take place. In Italy, people are still dying on the roads — and most of the victims are pedestrians or cyclists, 40% of whom bear no responsibility for the crash. Road accidents remain the leading cause of death among young people under 29, yet this tragedy still fails to strike a deep chord in many.
The INRIX 2024 Report tells us that, in Italy's most densely populated areas, people spend more than a month of their lives each year inside their cars — between 36 and 43 days. Over a 20-year career, that means two full years spent in traffic and pollution.

Public transport remains underfunded and still treated as a secondary issue in national policy.

Everything tells us that we must change course — and we must do it now.

During the Festival

The theme of mobility proved both stimulating and complex: a technical issue, yes, but also a profoundly human one — deeply connected to each person's everyday experience.

Throughout the sessions and discussions with over 650 participants, a clear vision of future mobility emerged.

The bicycle is establishing itself as the most competitive mode of transport, and cities are being redesigned to welcome it — alongside intermodality and shared mobility systems that are expanding across increasingly large urban areas.

Walking + Cycling + Sharing + Intermodality is the formula that many cities — not only Paris and London — are already applying in their regeneration strategies, planning tools, and governance frameworks.

But the means of transport alone are not enough. We must also design the experience if we truly want to change mobility.

I was genuinely moved during the session that simulated the participatory processes implemented by the cities of Utrecht and Eindhoven to design shared mobility services. I felt included, seen as a human being, and relieved — because a public administration was taking care of me, ensuring that the service would give me back something precious: quality time.

In other experiential sessions across the city, we explored how shaping urban spaces that foster children's autonomy — while ensuring that their caregivers are not solely responsible for their safety — creates cities that are perceived as perfect by everyone, even if they are not.

"It is the urban planner's responsibility to ensure that a child arrives safely at school, not the parents who accompanies them," a Dutch placemaker told me.

Shared care, collective care. Care and co-participation complete the equation of a reimagined mobility.

Beyond the Festival: Legacy and Looking Forward

Placemaking represents an ethical way of planning, grounded in listening and collaboration with communities. Participation and facilitation tools must be increasingly adopted by city governments to truly design cities and services for everyone.

In the next 30 to 40 years, the urban population will grow dramatically; without a community-centred approach, we risk creating irreversible social fractures.

But how can we lead real change if we don't first change the way we see things?

Being a placemaker today is not a job title but a competence — one that must emerge in positions of leadership, policy, and decision-making. Those who design cities, streets, and mobility plans — but also offices, schools, and workplaces — must have placemaking in their toolbox as a key instrument for participatory and inclusive design.

Who is invited to the table where decisions are made? Are all ages represented? All genders? All cultures? All identities? All abilities and disabilities?

We must influence planning structures within administrations through dialogue, finding a language that resonates with everyone — accessible, shared, and aligned — because together, we are the city.

It takes the heart of a placemaker to design the cities of tomorrow and to shape how people move within and beyond them. Artificial intelligence can only serve this vision — never replace it. ■

Each year, at the end of September, something unusual happened. A city opened its doors to friends and collaborators. Placemakers from across Europe and beyond gathered not to be instructed, but to share, test, question, and connect. It was not a conference and it was not a trade fair. It felt more like a festival of learning, built on trust and exchange.

Every edition of Placemaking Week Europe carried the imprint of its host city. In 2025, it was Reggio Emilia — a city shaped by cooperation and inclusion, by education and civic activism, and by the memory of resistance.

What makes Placemaking Week Europe distinctive were the values that held it together. The city is always the main speaker, setting the tone and shaping the questions. The programme is co-created, with the vast majority of sessions emerging through the open call. There are no VIPs, only participants. Sessions are not livestreamed — not to hide them, but to allow space for honest and open conversation. And the festival is sponsor-free: no booths, no logos, no branded lanyards — keeping it independent and making it possible to support placemakers who could not otherwise attend. These choices make the week sometimes messier, but also more human.

In Reggio Emilia, these values met the city's own urgencies and opportunities. The programme unfolded around four themes that mirrored the transitions shaping our urban future. *Designing cities for all* insisted that diversity was not a burden but a strength, and that places must be physically accessible and socially welcoming so everyone could feel a sense of belonging. *Heritage reimagined* challenged participants to breathe new life into historic centres, turning them once again into places where people live, meet, and create. *Places of well-being* focused on urban health, trust, and resilience — especially in mid-sized cities — and on embedding equity into the everyday fabric of neighbourhoods. *Connected journeys* invited reflection on mobility across scales, moving away from car dependency and freeing public space for new forms of community life.

These themes were lived issues. They surfaced in plenaries, workshops, and informal encounters. Different voices took them up in different registers — practitioners, activists, municipal leaders, researchers, and citizens — each adding their own tone. By the end of the festival, what had been shared in Reggio Emilia did not remain a series of isolated notes but came together as a collective score.

A symphonic metaphor ran through the structure of the plenaries, with each session given a musical tempo that reflected its mood and intention. *Largo con brio* opened the festival slowly but with spirit, rooting participants in Reggio Emilia with care and energy. *Allegro energico* set a lively pace for the first full day, with vision and drive. *Adagio sostenuto* slowed down into a more reflective and sustained rhythm, creating space for honesty and depth. *Scherzo vivace* was playful and animated, a quick exchange of ideas across disciplines. *Allegro ma non troppo* struck a balance between urgency and restraint, exploring transitions with both seriousness and hope. Finally, *Andante maestoso* brought a dignified and steady conclusion, weaving together the threads of the week and handing the baton to the next host city.

The festival opened on Tuesday, 23 September, at the Chiostri di San Pietro with Largo con brio. The first plenary rooted the week in place, setting the rhythm for the days ahead. Mayor Marco Massari and Davide Prandi welcomed participants on behalf of the City of Reggio Emilia, joined by Antonietta Serri from Consorzio Quarantacinque and Emiel Arends from the City of Rotterdam, who passed the baton from last year's edition. Their words reflected Reggio's civic spirit — cooperative, inclusive, and shaped by the memory of resistance. Lisette van Rhijn and Vivian

Plenaries Storyline

Doumpa opened the festival on behalf of Placemaking Europe, inviting participants to embrace curiosity and collaboration. A personal reflection by Luz Romero, a local neighbourhood activist, grounded the conversation in lived experience. The four keynote listeners — Khadidja Konaté, Fiza Azmi, Francesca Braglia, and Francesca Gioia — introduced the themes they would follow throughout the week, weaving the first threads of what would become a collective score.

On Wednesday morning, the energy shifted to Allegro energico at Parco Innovazione, symbol of Reggio Emilia's transformation from an industrial hub to a space of innovation and learning. Hosted by Rosaria Battista and moderated by Fredrik Lindstål, the session combined visionary perspectives and concrete place-stories. Luca Torri and Michele Bellelli traced the history of the Reggiane area, linking its industrial past to its new civic future. Jenny Andersson called for a regenerative approach to urbanism that "creates places for life," while Savvas Verdis showed how personal and collective storytelling can mobilise shared values for change. Place-stories by Ayanda Roji (Johannesburg), Vincent van Zon (Rotterdam), Jade Juillet (Brussels), and Mike Lydon (U.S.) illustrated how diverse cities translate placemaking into action — from inclusive parks to revitalised heritage streets and healthier neighbourhoods.

That evening, Adagio sostenuto offered a slower, more intimate tempo. The "radical honesty fishbowl," moderated by Ramon Marrades, created a space of trust and vulnerability. Around a central circle, provocateurs Robin Abad Ocubillo, Mili Hurtig, Greg Scarpella, and Demetrio Scopelliti opened the conversation with reflections on success, burnout, and the institutionalisation of placemaking. The dialogue soon expanded to the whole room. Participants spoke openly about power dynamics,

diversity gaps, and the tension between tactical action and long-term change. The session reaffirmed that honesty — not perfection — is the real foundation of community building.

On Thursday morning, Scherzo vivace brought a burst of creativity and intellectual cross-pollination. Hosted by Levente Polyak and moderated by Charles Landry, the session explored intersections between culture, economy, psychology, and mobility. Aida Esposito discussed cultural strategies for regenerating historic centres while keeping them inclusive. Giulio Buciuni examined how smaller or peripheral cities can strengthen their innovation ecosystems. Ronke Oluwadare reminded the audience that well-being and belonging also depend on recognising minority stress and fostering intercultural dialogue. Alexander Premm challenged participants to consider the emotional and political barriers to mobility transitions. The exchanges were lively, connecting practical know-how with deeper cultural insight — a vivid demonstration of placemaking as a field that thrives at the crossroads.

That evening, Allegro ma non troppo invited participants to slow down just enough to listen deeply. Moderated by Hans Karssenberg and Laska Nenova, the session connected four cities — Frankfurt, Valencia, Wroclaw, and Bradford — each facing different transitions yet united by shared values. James Ardinast described efforts to transform Frankfurt's Bahnhofsviertel into a laboratory of urban healing through culture and hospitality. Ramon Marrades reflected on "Innovation for Recovery" after the DANA floods, exploring how journalism and civic engagement can rebuild trust. Marzena Horak from the City of Wroclaw shared lessons from a municipality that has embraced experimentation and empathy in response to war and migration. Saira Ali, from Bradford Council and the Landscape Institute, highlighted how design and

culture are helping her city address inequality while preparing for its year as UK City of Culture 2025. Together, they showed that transitions are not abstract agendas but lived processes — slow, imperfect, and profoundly human.

Finally, on Friday morning, Andante maestoso brought the week to a dignified close. Hosted by Charlot Schans and Melany van Twuijver, the session gathered the festival's keynote listeners — Khadidja Konaté, Fiza Azmi, Francesca Braglia, and Francesca Gioia — who each shared their reflections on the themes they had followed: diversity, heritage, well-being, and connected mobility. Their insights resonated with both clarity and emotion, highlighting tensions between inclusion and identity, between care and change. A scholarship awardee, Alevtyna Drazhenko, offered a moving personal reflection on what she had learned from the Reggio Emilia edition. The closing remarks by Davide Prandi celebrated the city's hospitality and the collective achievement of hosting such a transformative week. As the baton was handed over to the next host city, the festival ended not with closure but with continuity — a shared commitment to keep building places of trust, imagination, and belonging. ∎

SECTION 4

The Festival at a Glance: Numbers and Impact

1. Participants and Experience

Placemaking Week Europe 2025 brought together people from **52 countries** across Europe, the Americas, Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Oceania. While most participants came from Europe, especially Southern Europe with a strong presence from Italy, many others joined from across the world, adding new perspectives and stories. This mix of voices and experiences turned the event into a truly international conversation about the future of our shared spaces, creating a rich environment for learning, collaboration, and exchange. Bringing together participants from different cultures, professional backgrounds, and regions allowed for the sharing of innovative ideas, best practices, and local insights, making the discussions more inclusive, grounded, and impactful.
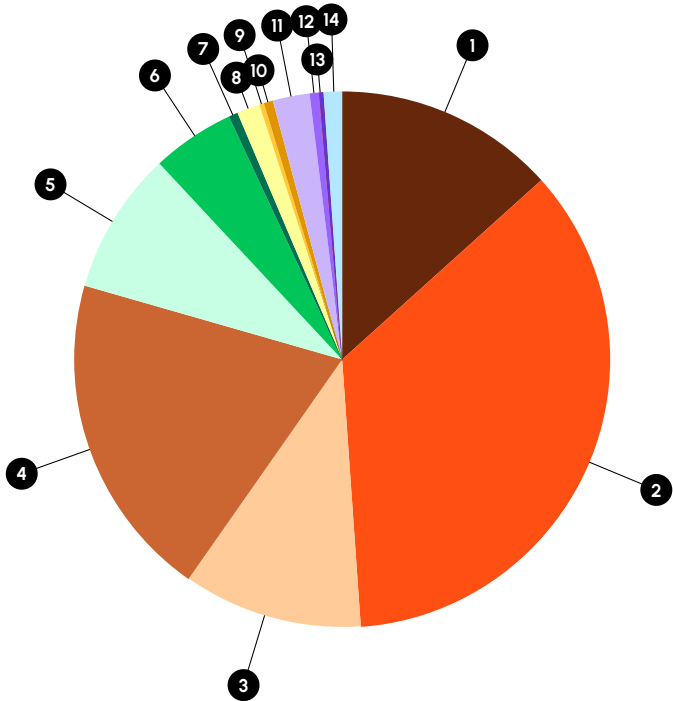
❶ Northern Europe: 13.60%   ❷ Southern Europe: 35.50%   ❸ Eastern Europe: 10.70%
❹ Western Europe: 19.70%   ❺ Central Europe 8.80%   ❻ North America: 4.90%
❼ South America: 0.50%   ❽ East Asia: 1.50%   ❾ South Asia: 0.20%   ❿ Central Asia: 0.50%
⓫ Middle East: 2.40%   ⓬ Oceania: 0.50%   ⓭ North Africa: 0.20%   ⓮ Sub-Saharan Africa: 1.00%

Global Representation of PWE Participants:

I. EUROPE				II. NORTH AMERICA		IV. OCEANIA	
Italy	32.55%	Estonia	1.31%	USA 3.15%		Australia	0.26%
The Netherlands	16.80%	Finland	1.31%	Canada	1.31%	New Zealand	0.26%
United Kingdom	4.72%	Ireland	1.05%	Mexico	0.79%		
Germany	4.46%	Lithuania	1.05%			V. SOUTH AMERICA	
Poland	3.67%	Bulgaria	1.05%	III. ASIA		Brasil	0.26%
Sweden	3.41%	Slovenia	1.05%	Japan	0.79%	Chile	0.26%
Austria	2.62%	Romania	0.79%	Palestine	0.79%		
Spain	2.36%	Norway	0.79%	South Korea	0.52%	VI. AFRICA:	
France	2.10%	Serbia	0.52%	Azerbaijan	0.52%	South Africa	0.79%
Hungary	2.10%	Belgium	0.52%	Turkey	0.52%	Ethiopia	0.26%
Switzerland	1.84%	Croatia	0.26%	Qatar	0.26%	Sudan	0.26%
Czech Republic	1.57%	Latvia	0.26%	Saudi Arabia	0.26%		
Greece	1.57%	Montenegro	0.26%	India	0.26%		
Slovakia	1.57%	North Macedonia	0.26%	Iran	0.26%		
Portugal	1.31%			Thailand	0.26%		
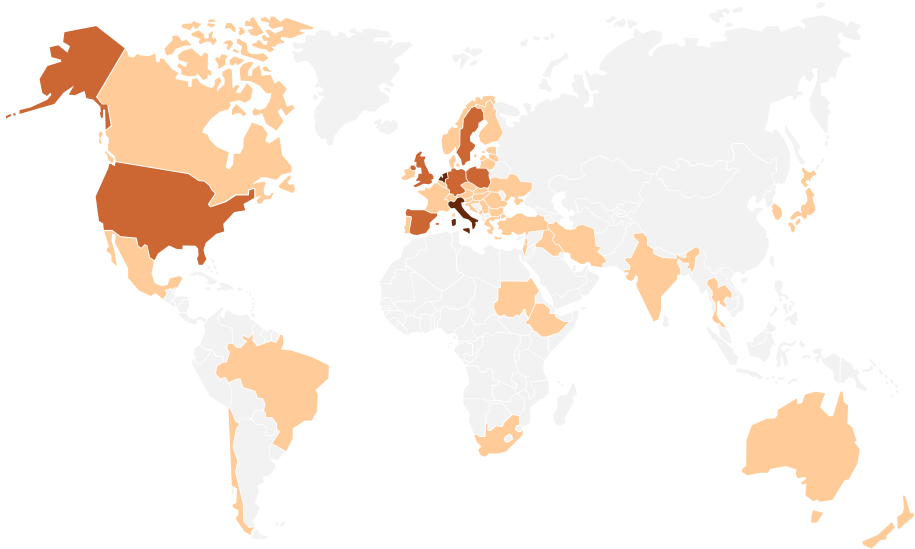
The diversity of perspectives not only highlighted the challenges faced in different contexts but also inspired creative solutions that can inform placemaking initiatives worldwide.

4.3/5

Average participant rating:

159

Total number of sessions:

For a total of 159 sessions, participants rated their experience at Placemaking Week Europe 2025 highly, giving an **average score of 4.3 out of 5**, reflecting strong satisfaction with the event's content, discussions, and networking opportunities.

2. Sectoral Diversity:

Participants at Placemaking Week Europe 2025 came from a wide range of sectors, reflecting the multidisciplinary nature of placemaking. The largest share represented **non-profits and NGOs (22%)**, followed by **city and local governments (16%)** and **architecture, planning, or design studios (13%).** Independent professionals, private companies, universities, and students also featured strongly, alongside community groups, cultural organisations, and other organisations.

This rich mix of backgrounds created a dynamic environment where policy, practice, and creativity intersected, fostering dialogue across disciplines and perspectives. The diversity of sectors not only encouraged the exchange of innovative ideas and approaches but also strengthened collaboration, helping participants see how different roles and expertise contribute to shaping more inclusive, vibrant, and resilient public spaces.
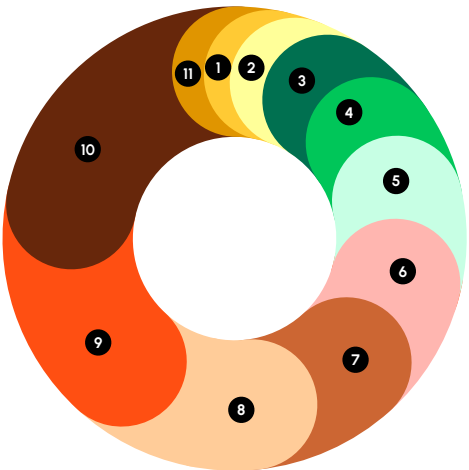
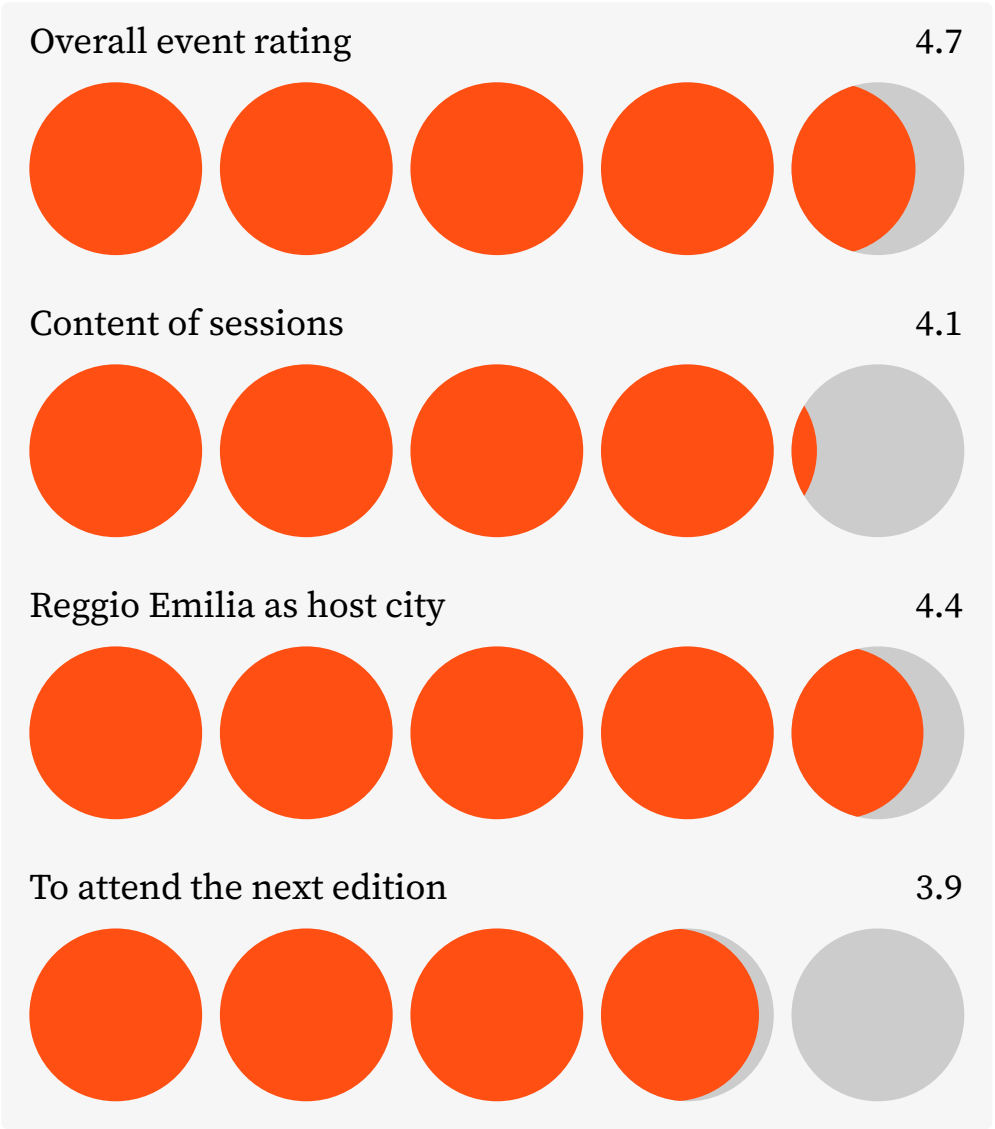| Type of organisation	Percent.(%)
1. Community group or grassroots initiative	2.7
2. Cultural or arts organisation	3.6
3. Public institution	5.8
4. Student	6.1
5. University or research institution	8
6. Private company or developer	8.8
7. Independent professional or freelancer	10.2
8. Architecture, planning, or design studio	13.4
9. City or local government	16.3
10. Non-profit or NGO	22.1
11. Other	2.9

3. Roles & Specialisations

In terms of professional focus, three main groups emerged among attendees:

- **High participation:** The largest group comprised specialists in non-profits and NGOs, city and local government, and architecture, planning, or design studios, reflecting the strong presence of practitioners shaping public spaces through policy, design, and community engagement.
- **In-between:** A moderate number of participants came from independent professionals, private companies, universities, and students, contributing research insights, innovative approaches, and fresh perspectives to the discussions.
- **Lower turnout:** Smaller groups included community and grassroots initiatives, cultural or arts organisations, and other types of organisations, whose voices, while fewer in number, added unique experiences and localised knowledge, enriching the diversity of perspectives at the event.

Compared to the 2024 edition in Rotterdam, Placemaking Week Europe 2025 saw a shift in professional focus from individual disciplines to organisational sectors. While 2024 was dominated by Urban Planning, Architecture & Design, and Governance & Policy professionals, 2025 attracted a broader mix, with the largest groups coming from non-profits and NGOs, city and local governments, and architecture, planning, or design studios. Independent professionals, private companies, universities, and students also featured more prominently, reflecting a more multidisciplinary and sector-focused participation. Although community groups and cultural organisations remained smaller in number, their continued presence ensured that grassroots and creative perspectives remained part of the conversation, highlighting the growing diversity and richness of voices compared to last year.

4. Evaluations: how participants enjoyed Reggio Emilia and the festival

Overall event rating — 4.7

Content of sessions — 4.1

Reggio Emilia as host city — 4.4

To attend the next edition — 3.9
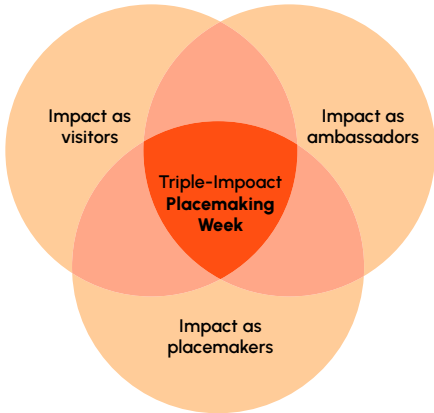
5. Economic impact

In a qualitative way, **Placemaking Week Europe in Reggio Emilia** generated a threefold kind of impact.

On one hand, we can measure the **direct economic impact** through the visitors' expenditure in the city — from accommodation, restaurants, and local shops — as well as the **local investment** that went into hosting the event.

Additionally, there is a **long-term impact** that extends far beyond the festival week. Around **620 international participants** joined hundreds of local actors, becoming ambassadors of Reggio Emilia and its distinctive culture of education, care, and innovation. Their glowing recommendations will continue to attract attention, visits, and collaborations to the city in the years ahead.

Finally, there is the **knowledge legacy**: the expert placemaking practices, methods, and insights that remain embedded in the local ecosystem — within the municipality, universities, associations, and community networks that co-created the event.

Placemaking Week Europe brought **international talent and ideas** to help Reggio Emilia reflect on and respond to its key challenges, framed around the four thematic questions that guided the workshops and site visits. While we recognise the **positive economic footprint** the event left in the city, we equally value the **intangible impact** — the exchange of learning, inspiration, and shared responsibility — that emerged through collaboration between the global placemaking community and Reggio Emilia as a living case study.
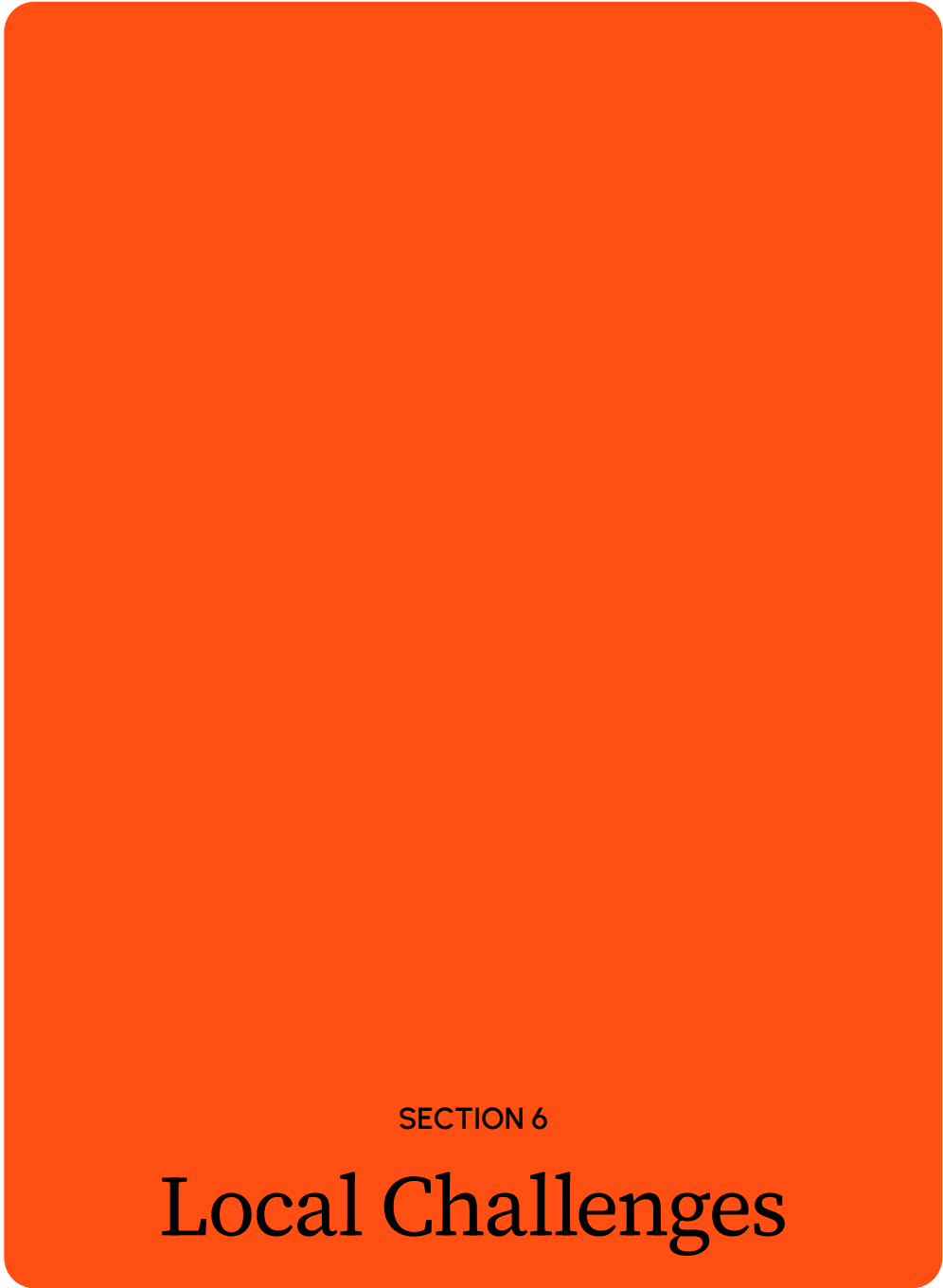
Placemaking Week Europe 2025 had an overall economic impact of over 1,3 million Euros

Attendees spent on average 4,4 nights in the city and had an average individual expenditure of 820€; which made a total figure in the city of 410,000€ from participants alone.

Considering the organisational costs, the total direct impact linked to the event was off 570,000€. If we take the multiplier effect of MICE activities that helps us to calculate the indirect impact and we estimate the value of the knowledge created in the city and the communications campaigns, the overall impact of the festival is calculated to be over 1,328,900€. That makes a Return of Investment (ROI) for

the city of Reggio Emilia of 9,49, benefiting almost 10€ for each 1€ of investment.

Impact as visitors

Impact as ambassadors

Triple-Impoact **Placemaking Week**

Impact as placemakers

Direct expenditure attendants	410,000
Direct expenditure of organisation	160,000
Total direct impact in the city	570,000
Multiplier effect*	1.77
Total impact of the expenditure	1.008,900
Estimated direct value of generated knowledge	220,000
Estimated impact of communications campaign	100,000
Total economic impact	1.328,900

*Source: Impacto de la Actividad Turística Española. Cámara de Comercio. 2021

SECTION 6

Local Challenges

Placemaking Week Europe 2025 in Reggio Emilia set out to do more than gather international experts — it invited the city itself to become the stage, the classroom, and the protagonist. At the heart of this approach were the Local Challenges, a series of hands-on explorations where local communities and global placemakers worked side by side to tackle real issues in real places.

Each challenge focused on a specific site or neighbourhood: from the fragmented central station area to the underused Ex-Gasometro, from the intercultural vibrancy of Via Roma to the overheated Piazza della Vittoria, and the car-dominated Via Premuda. Together, they represented the spectrum of urban challenges facing European cities today: **inclusion, adaptive reuse, intercultural cohesion, climate resilience, and mobility.**

The process was simple yet transformative: listen, walk, co-create. Starting with site visits and testimonies, participants grounded themselves in the lived realities of residents, associations, schools, and institutions. Collaborative workshops then generated proposals that combined immediate actions with short-term experiments and long-term visions.

What emerged was not just a set of design ideas, but a deeper understanding of how cities can evolve when local knowledge and international perspectives converge.

The Local Challenges showed that placemaking is not only about improving public space, but also about building trust, testing governance models, and turning civic imagination into action.

This report brings together the outcomes of the five Local Challenges. For each, it outlines the context, participants, process, and key learnings, followed by a matrix of actions (immediate, short-term, long-term) across the three dimensions of placemaking: hardware, software, and orgware. The goal is to share insights that are practical for Reggio Emilia, while also offering inspiration for cities across Europe and beyond.

Local Challenge 1: Reimagining the station neighbourhood

How can temporary and permanent placemaking tools turn Reggio Emilia's central station area into a more connected, inclusive neighbourhood? This challenge focuses on migrant inclusion, unlocking semi-public spaces, and linking cultural hubs and housing estates. Participants explore how to bridge short-term tactics and long-term visions, testing tools on adaptive reuse, social value capture, and public space activation.

Context

- Reggio Emilia's central station area is culturally rich but fragmented, with migrant communities, civic hubs (e.g. Binario 49), former industrial sites, and housing estates.
- The challenge: how to use temporary and permanent placemaking to make the area more connected, inclusive, and future-oriented, while avoiding gentrification.

Participants

- Local government: Councillors Annalisa Rabitti & Lanfranco De Franco, municipal staff.
- Associations: Cinque Minuti, Via Turri Magazine, Binario49, ART-ER, Regione Emilia Romagna.
- International experts: AR Urbanism, The Place Institute, Fundación Placemaking México, PlacemakingX.
- Community actors and local residents.

Process

- **Block 1**: Site visit through Piazza Domenico Secchi, Sottoponte, Binario49. Local voices presented cultural richness, challenges, and opportunities.
- **Block 2**: Collaborative workshop testing tools:
  – ART-ER (temporary uses & adaptive reuse)
  – AR Urbanism (social value capture)
  – The Place Institute (public space activation)
- Group work linked short-term interventions with long-term visions.

Key learnings

- **Strategy & monitoring:** Regeneration must address risks of gentrification; use monitoring tools early; balance local and citywide needs.
- **Community engagement:** Address basic issues (cleanliness, maintenance) while also asking ambitious, complex questions about the area's future.
- **Priorities:** Local initiatives and investment ranked higher than public realm improvements; only communities can define relevant priorities.
- **Interventions:** Recycling education, reusing car parks, using containers to fight fly-tipping.
- **Evaluation:** Focus on outcomes (quality of life, park use, business vitality) rather than number of activities.
- **Collaboration:** Shift from public-private to public-civic partnerships; co-design with signed commitments; engage all stakeholders, including police.
- **Methodology:** Start with people → activities → infrastructure. Begin light and cheap, scaling up with resources.
- **Examples:**Low budget: community dining events with local shopkeepers. Higher budget: sustainability workshops, cooking competitions, mobile food carts, shaded parklets.

Reporting matrix

	Immediate (now–3 months)	Short-term (1 year)	Long-term (5+)
Hardware	Small, low-cost interventions (containers to reduce fly-tipping, temporary parklets, movable furniture)	Transform car parks into multi-use spaces; temporary shading or pergolas; pilot pedestrian/bike improvements	Permanent public realm improvements (green infrastructure, pedestrian connections, intercultural spaces)
Software	Recycling education campaigns; support active local initiatives; pilot community events (shared meals, cultural activities)	Expand cultural & sustainability workshops; support grassroots projects with micro-grants; co-program events with migrants and residents	Sustained programming of cultural, educational, and community activities; support local entrepreneurship
Orgware	Start public–civic partnerships; identify civic associations; set up initial monitoring tools for regeneration effects	Formalize co-design processes with signed agreements; engage schools, businesses, and police; develop social value indicators	Establish durable governance structures (public–civic boards); embed monitoring in municipal planning; balance local/citywide needs

Local Challenge 2: Unlocking the Ex-Gasometro

How can an underused parking structure shift from car-centric legacy to a platform for urban experimentation? At Ex-Gasometro, participants will explore its vast empty spaces, then co-design future uses through a world café format. Themes include spatial redesign, temporary programming, governance, and community engagement — aiming to transform the building into a hub for innovation and civic life.

Context

- The Ex-Gasometro is a massive, underused parking structure in the heart of Reggio Emilia.
- Once a car-centric project, it now represents an opportunity to reimagine a strategic site as a civic hub.
- The challenge focused on how to "domesticate" the structure — making it human-scaled, vibrant, and inclusive — through physical redesign, temporary programming, and community-led governance.

Participants

- **Municipality:** Alberto Merigo and local administration.
- **Facilitators/Moderators:** Rotem Carmi (CityMakers), Philippa Staffas (Centrum för AMP), Elin Karlsson (Stockholm Business Region), Pasquale Modesto & Matteo Fiorentino (ciudà), María Tula (Hiedra), Ulrica "Rica" Berglöf Lilja (Stockholm).
- **Stakeholders:** Local residents, the Consulta (neighborhood association), schools, cultural associations, businesses, mobility groups (FIAB Reggio Emilia).
- **International experts:** From Sweden, Spain, and other European networks.

Process

- **Block 1** – Urban exploration: Guided walkthrough of the Ex-Gasometro, experiencing its immense scale and physical challenges. Participants were invited to reflect on impressions and keywords during the walk.
- **Block 2** – Collaborative workshop (World Café): Participants rotated between three thematic stations:
- **Physical Design & Spatial Potential** (rethinking facade, rooftop, ground floor).
- **Temporary Uses & Programming** (quick wins, modularity, short-term activities).
- **Community & Artistic Engagement** (governance, stakeholders, participatory tools).
- Harvesting session collected cross-pollinated insights and recommendations, shared with municipal representatives.

Key learnings

Physical transformation:

- Wrap facade with a "green second skin" (plants + steel).
- Make rooftop a destination (urban farm, cinema, event space).
- Open up ground floor to connect with the street.
- Use modular structures for flexible interior uses.

Quick wins:

- Light installations, public art, and community-led "green bombing" to change perception immediately.
- Use wayfinding to connect the site with the city center.

Programming & resilience:

- Regular markets, skatepark, youth-focused activities.
- Ensure activities work year-round, not just seasonally.

Governance & community:

- Start with mapping stakeholders and involving residents, Consulta, and schools.
- Form a "Friends of the Gasometro" association.
- Adopt a hybrid governance model (public–private–community).
- Use participatory budgeting and co-design tools to build ownership.
- Build a strong governance base before finalizing physical design.

Process orientation:

- Think in phases, treating the building like a flexible puzzle.
- Start with low-cost, reversible interventions to build momentum. Long-term vision is integration into the city's civic and cultur+

Reporting matrix

	Immediate (now–3 months)	Short-term (1 year)	Long-term (5+)
Hardware	Light installations on facade; pop-up gardening ("green bombing"); temporary planters	Creative wayfinding; modular interiors prototyped on one floor	Permanent green facade ("second skin"); rooftop destination; ground floor opened to street
Software	Temporary art projects; pop-up beach / open-air cinema	Regular community market; co-design workshops with youth; series of events	Permanent cultural program (library, institution); resilient, year-round activities
Orgware	Stakeholder mapping; initiate "Friends of the Gasometro"	First participatory budgeting cycle; establish hybrid governance model	Fully operational governance entity managing site sustainably; Ex-Gasometro integrated as city asset

Local Challenge 3: Enhancing cultures in Via Roma

How can placemaking foster intercultural exchange and shared ownership in a diverse corridor? Via Roma and Parco Santa Maria host vibrant associations but also tensions. Through a walking tour and collaborative workshop, participants will map cultural diversity, reflect on successes and challenges, and co-create strategies for inclusion, social cohesion, and lively multicultural urban life.

Context

- Via Roma and Parco Santa Maria form a dynamic corridor, home to diverse communities, civic associations, and cultural rhythms.
- The area has a bad reputation but is also full of intercultural vibrancy.
- Civic groups like **Via Roma Zero** are testing inclusive approaches: cultural mapping, sound documentaries, guerrilla urbanism, and small interventions that push the municipality to respond.
- The challenge explores how to strengthen social cohesion, support minority groups, and scale up inclusive practices citywide.

Participants

- **Local associations**: Via Roma Zero, Mondinsieme Foundation, Artists in Residence.
- **Municipality**: City of Reggio Emilia.
- **International experts**: Council of Europe, ICEI.
- **Community actors**: shopowners, residents, schools, cultural groups.

Process

- **Block 1 – Walking tour**: Guided by Via Roma Zero to explore initiatives (sound documentary, Piazza di Popol Giost transformation, guerrilla urbanism, public library in a phone booth). Discussions highlighted challenges (shop turnover, wealth gap, bad reputation) and opportunities (new underpass project, intercultural vibe).
- **Block 2 – Collaborative workshop**: With local and international experts. Participants co-created strategies for strengthening social cohesion, addressing complexity in multicultural contexts, and producing actionable recommendations for the municipality.

Key learnings

Immediate actions

- Listen to shopowners; collect and exhibit their stories in an open-air format.
- Organise markets in the new square, inviting local communities.
- Use flower pots/artworks to highlight shops.

Short-term actions

- Temporarily activate empty shops with arts and cultural projects.
- Develop school projects where students collect local stories, culminating in exhibitions.
- Draw and distribute a cultural map of shops and places (made by local artists).
- Organise a community dinner with long tables in Via Roma.

Long-term actions

- Create a shopowners' organisation.
- Introduce legislation for easier temporary use of empty shops.
- Establish a shop land trust to secure affordable rents and community curation of ground floors.
- Strengthen integration of minority groups.
- Create a municipal department dedicated to intercultural diversity and local good news stories, citywide.

Reporting matrix

	Immediate (now–3 months)	Short-term (1 year)	Long-term (5+)
Hardware	Flower pots or artworks to signal shops	Temporary activation of empty shops	Shop land trust securing affordable ground floor use
Software	Shopowner storytelling exhibition; local markets	School projects collecting narratives; community dinners; cultural map	Municipality-wide communication of intercultural diversity (new department, local newspaper)
Orgware	Engage shopowners' communities in conversations	Build partnerships with schools and artists; pilot collaborations with shopowners	Establish shopowners' organisation; new intercultural municipal department

Local Challenge 4: Nature-based and climate-proof Piazza della Vittoria

How can a fully paved, overheated square become a climate-resilient cultural commons? Surrounded by theatres and museums, Piazza della Vittoria is impressive yet inhospitable in summer. Using nature-based solutions and participatory tools like SOS4Cities, participants will design shading, vegetation, and adaptive uses to enhance well-being and long-term resilience, while engaging institutions and citizens in shared stewardship.

Context

- Piazza della Vittoria is one of Reggio Emilia's most prominent squares, framed by major cultural institutions (Valli Theatre, Ariosto Theatre, Civic Museums).
- Its current design — fully paved with little shade — makes it almost unusable during hot summers.
- The challenge explored how climate-focused placemaking can improve liveability, while involving cultural institutions, retailers, and other local actors in long-term stewardship.

Participants

- **Municipality of Reggio Emilia** (urban planning, culture, environment departments).
- **Cultural institutions**: theatres, museums, galleries.
- **Community stakeholders**: schools, universities, retailers, parking operator.
- **International experts**: Placemaking Europe network, climate adaptation specialists.

Process

- **Block 1 – Exploration**: Site visit and collective walk to understand the square's scale, current design, and heat exposure.
- **Block 2 – Workshop**: Collaborative discussion with local and international participants to test ideas using nature-based and tactical interventions.
- Outputs focused on lighter, quicker, cheaper experiments, design strategies, and governance approaches.

Key learnings

Design approach

- Think in islands of activity instead of one vast paved void.
- Prioritise the most vulnerable users (elderly, children, families) when redesigning.
- Use lighter, quicker, cheaper interventions (modular furniture with greenery, fabric shading, temporary cooling structures) as first steps.

Climate strategies

- Introduce water features and interactive fountains to cool and animate the square.
- Extend greenery into shaded "green tunnels" and plant seasonal canopies (e.g. grapevine pergolas). Use permeable materials wherever possible despite underground parking constraints.

Programming & social use

- Activate the square through cultural and educational programming with local institutions.
- Create a mosaic of spaces for daily life, complemented by flexibility for large events.
- Treat interventions as both functional and educational tools (living classroom on climate resilience).

Collaboration & governance

- Engage theatres, museums, schools, retailers, and the parking operator as co-stewards.
- Build a shared programming calendar with rotating art exhibitions, school-led activities, residencies.
- Move towards a coalition-based governance model for long-term stewardship and integration into city strategies.

Reporting matrix

	Immediate (now–3 months)	Short-term (1 year)	Long-term (5+)
Hardware	Pop-up shading, temporary "green maze"; modular furniture with greenery	Seasonal canopies; water pathways; small islands of activity	Permanent greenery extensions, shaded tunnels; interactive fountain; permeable surfaces
Software	Pop-up cultural events; school/university pilot lessons using temporary features	Weekly residencies; rotating outdoor exhibitions; community workshops	Permanent festivals and cultural programming; square as a living classroom for climate adaptation
Orgware	Schools as first partners; engage parking operator	Formalise partnerships with theatres, museums, retailers; create programming calendar	Coalition of institutions, businesses, and citizens managing square; stewardship body integrated into city climate & culture strategies

Local Challenge 5: Bridging proximities via Via Premuda

How can a residential connector between the centre and peripheries become a liveable, sustainable axis? In Via Premuda, participants will explore mobility, accessibility, and youth engagement as drivers of transformation. The session combines site visits, international exchange, and contributions from students and local stakeholders to rethink proximity as a principle for more community-oriented urban development.

Context

- Via Premuda is disproportionately wide for cars, with a painted, unsafe cycle lane forcing cyclists and pedestrians into conflict.
- During school hours, traffic congestion and smog are severe.
- Parco del Gelso nearby suffers from unsafe use by scooters and e-bikes, with little regulation or police presence.
  Lepido School, one of the largest in the city, is central to the neighbourhood and a key stakeholder in rethinking the street as a community anchor.

Participants

- **Municipality of Reggio Emilia** (urban planning, mobility, education).
- **Schools**: Lepido School (elementary & middle school).
- **Community actors**: Gattaglio community home, parents' and teachers' networks.
- **Associations**: A.S.D. Shodan (martial arts), art/music groups, sports organisations.
- **Residents**: neighbourhood families and elderly associations.
- **International inputs**: Placemaking Europe, Milan's Piazze Aperte model as inspiration.

Process

- **Block 1 – Site visit**: Observations and resident testimonies highlighted congestion, unsafe conditions, and opportunities for tactical urbanism.
- **Block 2 – Workshop**: Collaborative co-design with Lepido School, associations, and international experts. Participants tested tactical strategies (school streets, painted traffic filters, parklets) and long-term ideas for sustainable transformation.,

Key learnings

Immediate actions

- Convert Via Premuda into a one-way street with a widened, separated cycle lane.
- Apply Città 30 speed limits in school zones.
- Close streets temporarily at school hours; use cheap planters, painted filters, and creative co-design by students/artists to slow traffic.
- Involve emergency services early to ensure safe access.

Short-term actions

- Pilot school streets experiment: close streets around Lepido School before dismissal, activating spaces with sports, art, and community activities.
- Expand and integrate the bici-bus during closures.
- Create volunteer networks (teachers, parents, associations) for programming and street management.
- Organise annual street festivals and communal dinners around closures.

Long-term actions

- Plant trees as permanent traffic filters and shade providers.
- Strengthen police presence in Parco del Gelso for scooter/e-bike regulation.
- Remove the unnecessary roundabout, redesigning the area for people.
- Move trash bins underground, replace with parklets in front of associations.
- Create a continuous green network connecting small patches and courtyards.
  Develop a shopfront/parklet strategy linked to neighbourhood identity.
- Treat children's autonomy as the guiding principle: "children are the cement of the city."

Reporting matrix

	Immediate (now-3 months)	Short-term (1 year)	Long-term (5+)
Hardware	One-way conversion; widened cycle lane; cheap planters as traffic filters	Tactical closures at school times; seasonal switch of parking layouts	Permanent tree filters; removal of roundabout; underground trash bins; continuous green network
Software	Student-led painting of traffic filters; creative street activation	School street programming with sports, art, music; bici-bus expansion; annual street festival	Intergenerational projects (cycling/recycling workshops, "1000 Slow Steps" revival); community-led parklet and street uses
Orgware	Engage emergency services; mobilise Lepido School community	Volunteer coalition of teachers, parents, associations; co-management with Gattaglio community home	Long-term governance framework with schools and associations; stronger municipal role in enforcement and integration
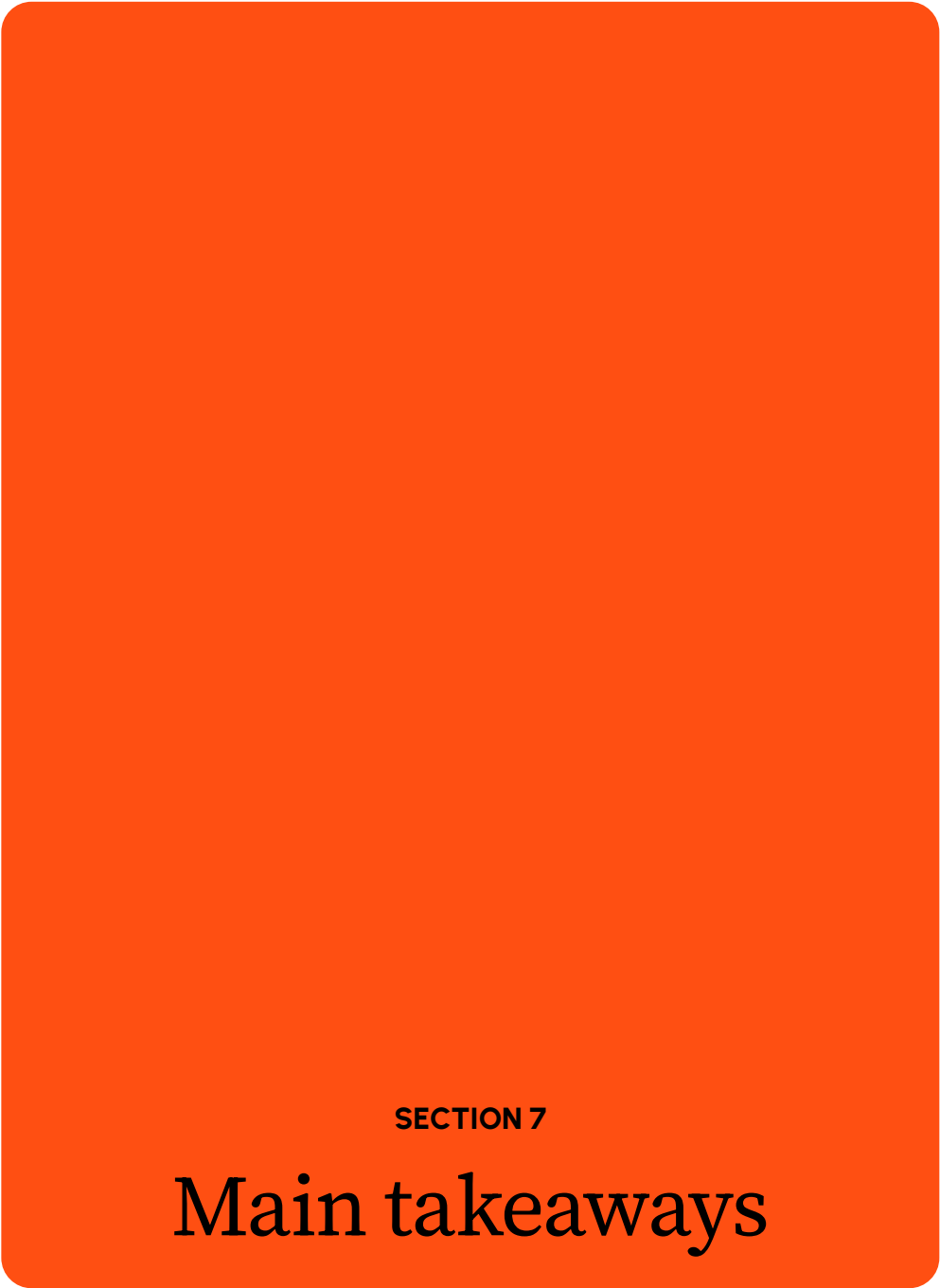
SECTION 7

Main takeaways

Placemaking Week Europe 2025 brought together 622 participants from more than 52 countries in Reggio Emilia — a city renowned for its educational vision, civic innovation, and culture of cooperation. For four days, local and international placemakers explored how inclusion, well-being, regeneration, and mobility can converge in mid-sized European cities. The event confirmed that placemaking is not only a methodology, but also a mindset — one that blends care, creativity, and collective action

1   **A living laboratory**: Reggio Emilia demonstrated how a mid-sized city can host a truly embedded international festival, turning its streets, schools, and public spaces into active classrooms for collaboration.

2   **Economic and social value**: The week generated a direct **economic impact of about €1.3 million**, with participants staying an average of **4.4 days**, but its deeper legacy lies in shared knowledge and civic pride.

3   **Equity as a compass**: From mobility to culture, the week reaffirmed that inclusion must be designed from the start — listening to those often excluded and turning diversity into a design principle.

4   **Well-being through relationships**: Across sessions and workshops, participants recognised that emotional, physical, and social well-being all depend on one foundation — strong, caring relationships.

5   **Mobility as collective care**: Reggio's workshops showed how safer, human-centred mobility systems — from school routes to shared transport — can improve trust and accessibility for all.

6   **Climate adaptation as placemaking**: Tactical and nature-based interventions, such as shading and community-led stewardship, demonstrated how placemaking can be both ecological and social.

7   **Children as agents of change**: Echoing the Reggio Emilia educational philosophy, children's perspectives guided discussions on autonomy, proximity, and intergenerational city-making.

8   **Learning from place**: Five thematic workshops connected the city's challenges — from heritage reuse to intercultural coexistence — with global expertise, producing real proposals for local partners.

9   **Community as governance**: New alliances between institutions, associations, and residents illustrated that durable urban transformation depends on shared ownership and trust.

10   **A lasting network**: Beyond the event, Reggio Emilia now joins a constellation of European cities committed to applying placemaking principles — strengthening the bridge between local realities and continental cooperation.

Next Steps

The experience of Reggio Emilia sets the stage for continued collaboration between the city, Placemaking Europe, and the global network of practitioners.

The next steps include:

1 **Embedding placemaking tools** within local policies on mobility, inclusion, and climate adaptation.

3 **Documenting methodologies** and monitoring outcomes to inform future editions and municipal learning.

2 **Sustaining local coalitions**: from "Friends of the Gasometro" to intercultural networks in Via Roma, as long-term civic partnerships.

4 **Preparing for Placemaking Week Europe 2026 in Wroclaw**, building on Reggio Emilia's legacy of cooperation, empathy, and imagination.
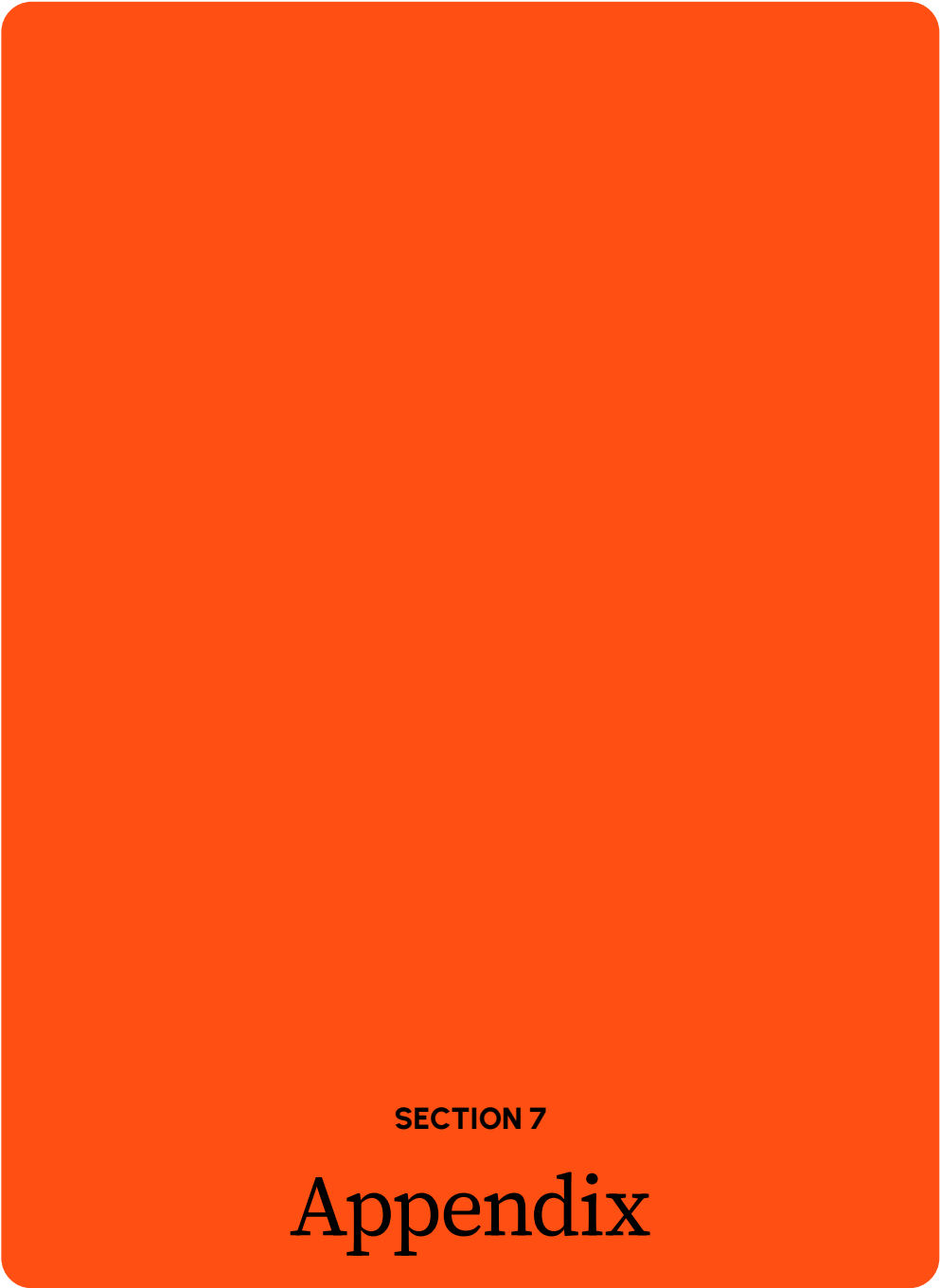
SECTION 7

Appendix

Omar Zahran
FROM FORGOTTEN TO FAVOURITE – In Cairo, Vancouver and across France; Placemaking provides the missing link to breathe new life into city centres" - panel - Heritage Reimagined

Collaborators: Omar Zahran (Revive Egypt), Claire Leonard (Downtown Van), Laurie Duran (Social Designer), Suzanne Pergal (Greater Paris Metropolis), Louis Robert (Umarell)

24th September, Remida Workshop Area (Ex Mangimificio Caffarri)

40 participants

"From Cairo to Vancouver to rural France, the recipe is the same: when memory meets community imagination, forgotten spaces can become favourite places again."

Main goal

To demonstrate how placemaking, when rooted in cultural memory and community engagement, can transform neglected or overlooked urban spaces into vibrant, inclusive and resilient city centers. The goal was to showcase transferable lessons from Cairo, Vancouver, Greater Paris and rural France that highlight actionable strategies for revitalising historic environments.

Methodology

The session was delivered through a series of case presentations, each illustrating a concrete placemaking methodology: public space activation, community co-creation, adaptive reuse, cultural storytelling, and on-site prototyping. The presentations highlighted "secret ingredients" from each context to reveal a shared recipe for revitalising city centres.

Target audience

Urban practitioners, local authorities, placemakers, architects, community organisations, cultural institutions, and students interested in revitalisation of historic city centres.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- Memory-driven placemaking can activate invisible or forgotten heritage as a catalyst for social and cultural revitalisation.
- Small, light, and testable interventions across contexts (France, Cairo, Vancouver) proved effective in generating trust and momentum.
- Cross-sector alliances (municipalities, community groups, private actors) are essential to sustain long-term transformation.
- Cultural narratives—cinema, crafts, rituals—reconnect people with place, making revitalisation rooted in identity rather than purely physical design.
- Public space activation strategies can revive downtowns when linked to economic opportunity, social inclusion, and creative programming.

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- There was strong consensus that placemaking succeeds when communities are genuinely included as co-creators, not as beneficiaries. No major disagreements emerged, though participants highlighted the challenge of scaling such models within bureaucratic systems.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- The Placemaking at Bayt al-Sinnari in Historic Cairo through cinema and storytelling we activated a forgotten Bayt al-Sinnari as a space for dialogue, creativity, and community.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- Reggio Emilia is grappling with reconnecting residents to their historic cores while promoting inclusion, mobility, and cultural vibrancy. The session offered transferable models showing how memory, community involvement, and low-cost interventions can reactivate public spaces, foster belonging, and restore vitality—directly resonating with Reggio's efforts to make its centres more participatory, accessible, and culturally rich.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

- Participants expressed interest in future cross-city exchanges, particularly around adaptive reuse, community storytelling, and downtown revitalisation strategies. Several attendees requested collaboration materials and indicated interest in engaging with the presenters' organisations, especially Revive Egypt and Downtown Van.

Anything else you would like to add?

- A shared call to continue exploring how cultural storytelling and community co-creation can shape more vibrant, resilient, and human-centred city centres.

Sina Ataee
Urban Pulse: The Urban Environmental Comfort Challenge - Game - Places of well-being

Collaborators: Sina Ataee, Farzaneh Abedian Aval, Myriam Lopes, Helder Relvas (CESAM and the Environment and Planning Department, University of Aveiro)

25th September, VR33

15 participants

"Urban comfort is not built by infrastructure alone; it comes to life when people activate spaces through social connection, shared purpose, and community engagement."

"People are not just users of the city; they are the true creators of comfort, belonging, and sustainable urban change."

Main goal

Through a fast-paced, collaborative game, participants stepped into roles like urban planners, developers, community reps, and environmental advocates, working together to co-create a more sustainable, comfortable, and inclusive city.

Methodology

We used a co-creation, participatory role-playing game that brings together diverse urban stakeholders to collaboratively design and evaluate interventions for urban environmental comfort. Participants are assigned realistic stakeholder roles (Planner, Community Rep, Developer, Environmental Advocate, Social Equity Advocate, Mobility Specialist, etc.) with budgets and secret missions, and they use action cards and social-order cards to propose, negotiate and implement changes to the city.

Target audience

Urban planners and practitioners.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- Human-social interventions have the highest leverage, often creating broader system-wide impact compared to complex infrastructure investments. Simple behavioural activation can significantly enhance comfort.
- Social vitality is a key driver of urban environmental comfort, as community gatherings, social attendance, and public space interactions strongly influence outdoor comfort and overall urban wellbeing.
- Environmental quality alone is not enough: clean air, green infrastructure, and acoustic comfort must be activated through human use and engagement to generate meaningful urban comfort.
- Spatial design should enable social interaction, meaning that infrastructure, connectivity, and space design must support community engagement and not exist as isolated physical improvements.
- Integrated solutions across social, spatial, and environmental systems, rather than single-dimensional actions, lead to higher comfort and more sustainable outcomes. Balancing these three layers optimises overall urban comfort.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- "People are the heartbeat of places!": Emphasizing that social vitality and active public life are the core drivers of urban comfort, more than physical or environmental improvements alone.
- "Simple changes, massive impact!": Highlighting that small, human-centered behavioral interventions can create higher leverage and broader impact than complex infrastructure projects.
- "The environment needs human activation!": Pointing out that green spaces, clean air, and environmental assets only generate comfort when people actively use and engage with them.

- "Build for behavior, not beauty!": Stressing that infrastructure should be designed to enable social interaction and behavioral activation, not just aesthetic or technical improvements.
- "Balance the three layers perfectly!": Capturing the key insight that sustainable urban comfort emerges only when social vitality, spatial integration, and environmental quality are strategically aligned.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- The concepts of the Urban Environmental Comfort game strongly resonate with Reggio Emilia's locally rooted traditions of community participation, child-centered urban planning, and the belief that public space is a social common rather than just physical infrastructure. Reggio Emilia already emphasizes co-designed public spaces, educational placemaking, and active citizenship , aligning with the game's focus on social vitality as a primary driver of urban comfort, rather than relying solely on spatial or environmental improvements.
- Reggio Emilia's challenge is not just to provide green spaces or infrastructure but to activate them, to make parks, streets, and piazzas places of interaction, belonging, and shared identity. This directly reflects ideas from the game, such as "People are the heartbeat of places!" and "Environment needs human activation!" The town's culture of participatory planning with children, families, and local associations mirrors the game's insight that human-social initiatives have greater leverage than complex projects in producing comfort, inclusion, and well-being.
- In essence, the game reinforces what Reggio Emilia is already pioneering: that urban comfort emerges when social behavior, spatial design, and environmental quality are integrated through community engagement and co-creation, not simply through physical investments.

Veronica Pieracci

Placemaking Across Context: Learning from 'La Polveriera' - Panel - Places of well-being

Collaborators: CAIRE Consorzio - Lorenzo Baldini, Antonio Pisanò, Julia Lydall-Pisano, Veronica Pieracci

25th September, La Polveriera

15 participants

The richness of perspectives shared during the session reinforced the idea that placemaking is not a one-time design act, but an evolving process pushed by collective imagination.

Main goal

The session examined how architecture, governance, and social innovation intertwine to shape places that are both resilient and inclusive, our goal was to create a constructive discussion and collect new ideas and past experiences from the participants.

Methodology

We presented 4 case studies followed by an audience discussion divided in three groups, each of them represented one of the themes proposed.

Target audience

Planners, designers, and policymakers interested in contributing with their experience and curious to learn from current projects.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

Together, we reflected on three central questions:

- The first question guiding the session — "How can community engagement be leveraged to support the everyday management of the asset?" — highlighted the need for new governance models that integrate voluntary action, cooperative management, and institutional support.
- A second theme addressed during the session focused on cultural programming. "How can the cultural programme foster a wide and diverse network of users and stakeholders?" Placemaking acts as a mediator between physical space and social relationships, providing a framework through which inclusion and participation can be cultivated over time.
- The third guiding question — "How can the ongoing redesign, both of the building and the outdoor space, foster social innovation?" — shifted attention to the iterative nature of design. This approach positions design as a facilitator of social innovation, rather than its aesthetic expression. Architecture, in this sense, becomes the spatial infrastructure for relationships, care, and creativity.

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- The session reaffirmed a core idea: placemaking is not about producing spaces, but about nurturing relationships that give spaces meaning. La Polveriera continues to evolve as a platform for experimentation — a place where design and community co-create shared value.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- The dialogue marked another step in this ongoing journey, reminding us that every act of regeneration is, ultimately, an act of collective imagination.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- La Polveriera represents a living example of placemaking as an ongoing process rather than a completed project. While rooted in the specific context of Reggio Emilia, the themes discussed extend to a variety of territorial scales — from the Nuovo Delfino in Rio Saliceto, to the Vetto Social Club, and up to the mountain-based Girotondo Basecamp in the Apennines. Each project demonstrates that the principles of placemaking — collaboration, adaptability, and inclusion — can be applied flexibly across different urban and rural settings.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

- The richness of perspectives shared during the session reinforced the idea that placemaking is not a one-time design act, but an evolving process — one that grows through collaboration, care, and creativity. The hope and aim is to create collaboration to replicate the example of Polveriera not only in Italy, but internationally.

Matevž Hrženjak

Growing a Community Placemaking Movement in SE Europe
- Workshop - Designing Cities for All

Collaborators: Matevž Hrženjak (Korimako), Tim Taylor (Korimako) Milosh Sokolikh (SmartUP)

24th September, Remida Projection Area (Mangimificio Caffarri)

10 participants

Main goal

Thinking about how to grow a movement of community placemaking action in SE Europe region.

Methodology

Pitching plans, thinking about possible actions mapping

Target audience

Anyone with the interest in the topic presented

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

● Placemaking in SE Europe is lagging
● No interest from participants outside the region

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

● Remains to be seen, but it did strengthen the relationship between organisations that attended.

Alessandro Ardenti

Via Premuda: Bridging Proximity and Urban Transformation -
Local Challenge- Designing Cities for All

Collaborators: Alessandro Ardenti (Ordine degli Architetti di RE e Nazionale), Ordine degli Architetti di RE e Nazionale

26th September, Catomes Tôt and Via Premuda

50 participants

Main goal

The active participation of the children

Methodology

Participatory mapping, case presentations - The beauty of a school context adapted to the needs

Target audience

Architects, urban planners, students and all those who participate in teaching

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

● Continue with the experience and finalize the design of a new square

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

● The consent and immediate participation of all those present but also the critical analysis of the various problems of the site

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

● New awareness of the importance of the sense of proximity

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

● Not yet in a concrete way, but certainly in the next period with the various institutions of the city.

Evan Snow

Reviving the Soul of Cities: Creative Placemaking in Historic and Underutilized Urban Spaces (From Vacancy to Vitality: Adaptive Reuse Across Borders) - Panel - Heritage Reimagined

Collaborators: Evan Snow (Zero Empty Spaces), Yvette Vašourková (CCEA MOBA Prague)

24th September, Tecnopolo - conference room (Reggiano Parco Innovazione)

6 participants

Main goal

To showcase real-world models of creative placemaking that breathe new life into historic and underutilized spaces, while fostering inclusive community engagement, economic activation, and cultural continuity.

Methodology

Followed by facilitated discussion. Each speaker shared insights from their own placemaking efforts—U.S./Italy (ZES & Art Room), and Czech Republic (Negrelli Viaduct) —with emphasis on adaptive reuse, artistic activation, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. The session closed with an interactive dialogue with the audience around replicability and policy integration.

Target audience

Urban practitioners, cultural producers, municipal officials, developers, architects, artists, and community organizers interested in creative reuse, cultural placemaking, and adaptive strategies for historic centers. We thought we had a good location right after the opening plenary, but unfortunately we didn't get the attendance we hoped for - which is not the end of the world. We know there was a lot going on and it was spaced out, my feedback would be to have less sessions running concurrently.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- Underutilized historic spaces can be reactivated without displacement through artist-led and community-grounded models.
- Adaptive reuse of commercial spaces (like malls or viaducts) can drive new forms of cultural life and civic participation.
- Cross-border inspiration works—Art Room in Genoa was directly inspired by participation in Zero Empty Spaces in the U.S.
- Partnerships with social cooperatives and local nonprofits (like Il Ce.Sto) anchor these projects in social equity.
- Mid-sized cities are ideal testbeds for low-cost, high-impact placemaking interventions.

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- There was strong consensus that creative reuse of underutilized historic spaces requires grassroots vision, flexible policy, and long-term support. Some discussion emerged around balancing artistic freedom with preservation guidelines and community needs.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- "Sometimes all a space needs is people who believe in its possibility—then art, community, and vibrancy follow."

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- Our session spoke directly to Reggio Emilia's focus on adaptive reuse, social cooperatives, and inclusive urban design. The case studies aligned with local values of mutual aid and well-being by demonstrating how international placemaking efforts reimagine heritage spaces into cultural commons—especially through artist-led models and nonprofit collaboration.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

- "Yes. Conversations began around creating an informal cross-city alliance between Reggio Emilia, Genoa, Esna, and Prague to exchange placemaking tools and documentation. Participants also discussed piloting temporary activations in underused buildings in their own cities using lightweight, ZES-style models.
- Nothing has come to life yet, but we would welcome + appreciate you sharing our ""Interior Placemaking"" resources with the network so we can assist other Placemakers in making a positive impact in the communities they serve."

Anything else you would like to add?

- We're open to sharing the session as a short video or podcast segment for future festivals or knowledge platforms. Here is a link to the replay.

"Historic spaces don't need to be frozen in time—they just need to be reimagined with people, purpose, and creativity at the center."

Ombretta Caldarice

Learning Grounds for Well-Being: Schools as Laboratories for Regenerative Placemaking – A school plaza for every community! - Outdoor session - Places of well-being

Collaborators: Ombretta Caldarice (Politecnico di Torino), Zandra Thuvesson and Bjorn Wallsten (Formas – Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development), and Mario Bellinzona (LaQUP)

25th September, Remida Open Space (Ex Mangimificio Caffarri)

15 participants

Main goal

Understand the role of children in regenerative placemaking.

Target audience

People interested in discussing about the role of school plazas in urban regeneration

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- Schools are living environments;
- Schools can contribute to enhance the transformative potential of cities;
- Co-designing solutions with children can have a strong role in dealing with climate crisis

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- A school plaza for every community!

Philippa Staffas

Own the future – How Cities, Capital and Community shape public spaces - Panel - Designing cities for all

Collaborators: Fredrik Lindstål from Glad stad, Ulrica Berglöf, Lilja from the Skärholmen District Administration, Philippa Staffas and Helena Olsson from the Centre for AMP.

25th of September Officine Credem (Reggiane Parco Innovazione)

50 participants

Main goal

The purpose of the seminar was to highlight different financing models for placemaking in Stockholm and how different places require different methods to be developed.

Methodology

We presented the private, municipal, and non-profit sectors, and they gave different examples of placemaking.

Target audience

Professional looking for inspiration of different way of financing placemaking

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- The key lessons from the seminar were that different places need different types of interventions; a city benefits from having many different organizations working with placemaking based on different conditions; and placemaking is not a quick fix—it takes at least a year to launch and establish an activity in the public space together with engaged stakeholders.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- Hopefully inspiration for how they can finance and implement different types of placemaking in the city.

Jessica Ferey
Meet Me at the Market: Where Food Builds Place - Panel - Places of well-being

Facilitator - Jessica Ferey, Executive Director (The Food Capitals by Délice Network)

Speakers - Cristina Cerutti, Turismo Torino e Provincia (Turin), Peggy Bauer, CEO, Helsinki Premises Ltd (Helsinki), Edyta Pawlaczek, City of Wroclaw (Wroclaw), Zeynep Aybüke Mutlu, Roof Coliving (Turkey), Ryan Smolar, PlacemakingUS & Long Beach Fresh (USA)

25 September 2025, VR33

35-40 participants

Participants expressed interest in continued exchange on food-based placemaking approaches and several cities requested follow-up conversations to explore potential collaborations within The Food Capitals network and with PlacemakingUS. Plans for knowledge-sharing and future joint sessions were initiated.

Main goal

To explore how food markets can act as social infrastructure that strengthens community life, fosters inclusion, and revitalises public space. The session highlighted how cities use food and markets as placemaking tools to build belonging and support more resilient local food systems.

Methodology

A moderated roundtable featuring short city presentations (case studies from five countries), followed by group discussion and Q&A. Speakers shared practical examples using community mapping, design interventions, cultural programming, and food-based placemaking. Participants then joined breakout conversations with each speaker.

Target audience

Urban practitioners, city representatives, placemakers, designers, cultural professionals, food policy advocates, and anyone interested in the intersection of public space, community development, and food systems.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- Markets are essential social infrastructure, not just commercial spaces.
- Food is a powerful catalyst for community building, inclusion, and urban–rural connection.
- Small interventions such as seating, music, lighting, and wayfinding can dramatically improve market sociability.
- Cities must balance tradition and innovation when revitalising markets.
- Climate, regulation, and waste challenges require creative, community-driven solutions.

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- There was strong consensus that improving food markets can significantly strengthen community life. Participants agreed that food is a uniquely accessible way to activate public space and support wellbeing. Discussions highlighted recurring barriers—particularly regulations limiting seating or activation—but no major disagreements.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- Helsinki's use of shared meals to activate hidden or highly regulated spaces.
- Turin's concierge kiosks acting as neighbourhood social anchors.
- Turkish bazaars producing up to 300 kg of waste per stall per day, sparking redesign for sustainability.
- The story of Phil's Farmstand in the U.S., showing how food and placemaking can nurture care and belonging.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- Reggio Emilia emphasises wellbeing, social cohesion, and community-driven public space—values deeply aligned with food-based placemaking. Like many cities, it is exploring how to make public spaces more welcoming and inclusive. The session offered concrete international examples that mirror Reggio Emilia's focus on shared spaces, cultural identity, and neighbourhood vitality.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

- Participants expressed interest in continued exchange on food-based placemaking approaches and several cities requested follow-up conversations to explore potential collaborations within The Food Capitals network and with PlacemakingUS. Plans for knowledge-sharing and future joint sessions were initiated.

Greta Stucchi

AFFORDABLE CITIES: Perspectives, leverages and experiences to make our cities more accessible, inclusive and livable - Panel - Designing cities for all

Collaborators: Greta Stucchi, Redo Sgr, LAMA Impresa Sociale, Plateau Urban, Agenzia del Demanio, Fondazione Housing Sociale

25th September, first floor room, CREDEM room

50 participants

Main goal

We explored how culture, housing, and community dynamics can become levers for more inclusive, livable cities.

Methodology

Case presentation each based on our experience

Target audience

Professionals. They brought up interesting questions about temporary uses

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- Another urban future is possible
- If we want to create resilient neighborhoods, we need to think beyond the housing units and consider temporary uses or ""meanwhile uses"", which are not a side activity, but an integral tool in urban regeneration. To start with, they enhance neighborhoods by activating unused areas with initiatives that create opportunities for interaction, that generate a sense of belonging and local pride.
- Temporary uses are a win-win strategy for everyone. They create immediate impact while preparing the ground for long-term transformation.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- Reggio Emilia, like every other city, has underutilized spaces that can deteriorate over time or negatively affect the perception of an area.

Rotem Carmi

Local Challenge: Unlocking the Ex-Gasometro - Local Challenge - Connected Journeys

Collaborators: Rotem Carmi (CityMakers), Philippa Staffas (Centre for AMP), Elin Karlsson (Stockholm Business Region), María Tula (Hiedra), Pasquale Modesto & Matteo Fiorentino (Ciudà), Ulrica "Rica" Berglöf Lilja (Stockholm).

25 September 2025. The session began with a site visit to the Ex-Gasometro structure, followed by a workshop at the Musei Civici

30-40 participants

Main goal

To transform the Ex-Gasometro from a single-use, car-centric structure into a multifunctional, community-oriented civic asset. The goal was to co-create a roadmap for "domesticating" the impersonal structure through physical design, temporary programming, and community-led governance.

Methodology

We utilized a "World Café" format following a site immersion. Participants rotated between three thematic stations: 1) Physical Design (using "The 1% Rule" methodology to map micro-interventions), 2) Temporary Uses (brainstorming programming on floor plans), and 3) Community Engagement (participatory mapping of stakeholders). This allowed for cross-pollination of ideas across hardware, software, and orgware.

Target audience

A mix of international placemaking experts, architects, urban designers, and local Reggio Emilia stakeholders. The group brought diverse perspectives, ranging from technical design expertise to local community knowledge

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- "Green Second Skin": Wrap the industrial facade in a steel and plant structure to soften its appearance and reduce environmental impact.
- "Green Bombing": Initiate immediate, low-cost "quick wins" like pop-up gardening and light installations to change the building's reputation before permanent construction begins.
- The Rooftop Destination: Develop the top floor as a major public plaza and green roof, serving as a new landmark for the city.
- Hybrid Governance: Establish a "Friends of the Gasometro" association to manage the space, ensuring residents have a real stake alongside the municipality."

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- There was a strong consensus on the need for a phased approach: starting with "lighter, cheaper, quicker" interventions (software) to build community ownership before committing to heavy infrastructure changes (hardware). Participants agreed that without overcoming the current stigma of the site through immediate activation, physical renovation alone would fail.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- A key example was the concept of "The 1% Rule," where the massive structure was broken down into 100 small units. This illustrated that "Small, consistent improvements lead to big transformations," allowing the community to take ownership of the space one "pixel" at a time.

"By domesticating this industrial giant, we can transform a space for cars into a place for people, turning a 'no man's land' into a vibrant civic canvas."

Malak Mehta
Mapping Meaning: Emotions, Art, and Playful Public Spaces - Workshop- Places of well-being

Collaborators: Malak Mehta (The Mindful Scapes)

25th September 2025 , Mamimò - Officine Creative Reggiane

12 participants

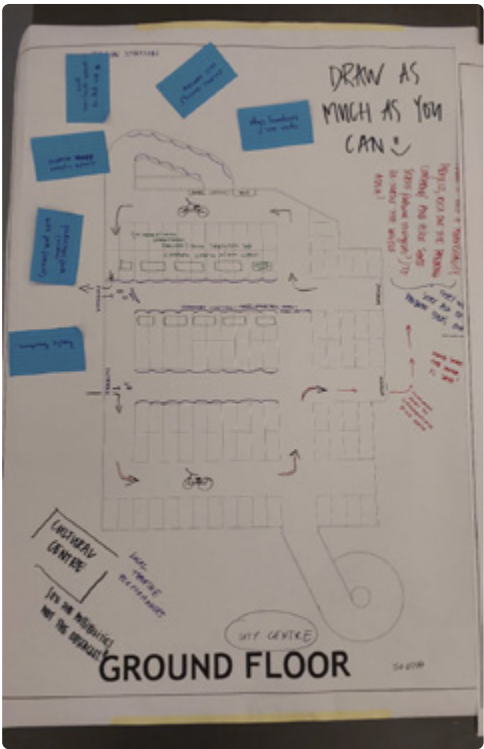### How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

● It directly addresses the challenge of the Ex-Gasometro, which is currently viewed as a dangerous "no man's land" of social degradation. The session supported the city's Urban Plan for Sustainable Mobility (PUMS) by reimagining a parking garage not just as storage for cars, but as a "Connected Journey" hub that integrates community life with sustainable mobility.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

● Participants proposed the immediate creation of a "Friends of the Gasometro" community group to ensure long-term care. There was also a specific recommendation to implement participatory budgeting for the site's future programming to keep local youth and residents engaged in the decision-making process.

Anything else you would like to add?

● We recommend the "1% Rule" methodology as a resource for other cities dealing with massive, overwhelming industrial reuse projects. It effectively lowers the barrier to entry for community participation by breaking large spaces into manageable "micro-interventions"

GROUND FLOOR

Main goal

The main goal of the session was to explore how emotions, memories, and creative expression shape people's sense of meaning, belonging, and ownership in public spaces.

Methodology

The session combined a case-study presentation with experiential, participatory methods. We began with Build Your Own Throne, a project illustrating how playful co-creation can foster ownership, attachment, and belonging in public spaces. This was followed by a guided visualization exercise that invited participants to revisit a personally meaningful place through sensory memory. Participants then translated these impressions into abstract art, using creative expression as a form of emotional mapping. Together, these methods helped uncover the personal and collective qualities that make public spaces feel significant.

Target audience

The session was designed for practitioners, designers, planners, community builders, artists, and anyone interested in the emotional and social dimensions of public space.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

● Public spaces need both functional and emotional layers—spaces that support comfort and invite expression, interaction, and shared experiences.
● Personal memories, emotions, and sensory experiences significantly shape how people form attachment and a sense of belonging in public spaces.
● Playfulness, creativity, and hands-on participation can deepen ownership and connection, even through small-scale interventions.
● Meaningful places are created not only through design but through opportunities for people to contribute, co-create, and leave their mark.

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

● There was a shared consensus that people often focus on creating places and communities for others but rarely pause to reflect on their own meaningful places and emotional connections. Many participants resonated with the idea that personal memories shape belonging. At the same time, different levels of comfort emerged during the creative exercise; some participants found it easy and enjoyable to express their emotions visually, while others found it challenging to translate feelings into abstract art. This mix of responses highlighted the diversity of emotional expression and the importance of offering multiple ways for people to engage.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

The session successfully captured the emotional depth and personal connections it aimed to evoke. Participants were reminded of the public places that matter most to them — from parks and natural spaces to a favourite

Meaningful public spaces are created at the intersection of the physical, social, and psychological spheres — where comfort, communities, memories, creativity, and play come together to foster belonging and connection.

beach spot, a restaurant or a local street and the memories and emotions tied to those spaces. Participants shared reflections such as:

- "Loved that the workshop invited me to pause and see my city not as a placemaker, but as a person experiencing it."
- "I was transported back to a place in my hometown I have visited for years, and it reminded me how I keep returning there during both good and bad times."

Together, these reflections underline how revisiting meaningful spaces through visualization and creative expression helps participants connect emotionally, recognize patterns of belonging, and better understand how to design public spaces that foster attachment and wellbeing."

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- The session connects to Reggio Emilia's theme of Places of Wellbeing by emphasizing the emotional and social dimensions of public spaces -elements that are central to creating inclusive, resilient, and human-centred urban environments. It further demonstrates how emotional and participatory approaches can complement functional planning to enhance wellbeing in the cities.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

- Participants shared that they were inspired by both the case study and the hands-on workshop. Many expressed interest in applying this approach in their own cities/countries, using guided visualization and participatory creative exercises to engage communities at an emotional level and foster wellbeing, belonging, and ownership in public spaces.

Shift + space collective
City Safari: Reggio Emilia Through the Eyes of Children and Youth - Workshop - Designing cities for all

Collaborators: Clarisse Maye Bau, Ilvana Noncheva, Jelena Markovic, Mihaela Milosevic, Svenja Wirz, Nina Istamboulie (Shift + space collective)

25th of September, Starting point: Front entrance to Community Home Catomes Tôt

15 participants

Main goal

The main goal of our session was to explore Reggio Emilia's historic center through the perspective of children and youth, revealing how young people experience safety, play and mobility in public space. Our aim was to inspire participants to adopt youth-centered mindsets when designing or planning cities.

Methodology

We organised a collective urban walk using youth persona cards that invited participants to embody a specific age and character at each stop. Moving through five key locations, they observed, documented, and reflected on the city through young people's eyes, concluding with a shared group reflection.

Target audience

Our workshop was open to everyone, with a focus on those involved in creating spaces for children and youth. Participants included students, architects, local officials, and other interested community members.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- Meaningful youth inclusion requires shifting mindset first, not just adding new infrastructure.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- The session reflects Reggio Emilia's philosophy that the environment is the third teacher, emphasizing children as active citizens. By exploring real urban spaces through youth perspectives, the workshop highlighted how public spaces can be designed to be inclusive, engaging, and supportive of learning for all ages.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

- Yes, we submitted the workshop to Urban Future and plan to adapt it for WHATS THAT GREEN, focusing more on green, nature-based, and climate-friendly urban spaces.

Valentina Dalla Torre

Pordenone, Italian Capital of Culture 2027: a bold vision placing culture at the heart of well-being for mid-sized cities and their communities. - Short presentation - Places of well-being

Collaborators: Valentina Dalla Torre (Itinerari Paralleli SRL Impresa Sociale)

25th September, Officine Credem - conference room A (Reggiane Parco Innovazione)

15 participants

Main goal

The main goal was to share about our experience in Pordenone, a mid-sized city in Italy, winner of the Italian Capital of Culture title with a major participatory process.

Methodology

Simple presentation

Target audience

Mainly professionals working with public administrations and participatory approaches.

Culture is a fundamental spark to connection and wellbeing, giving communities a space to engage, share, and grow together.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

The main takeaways from my talk were:

- Understanding that culture serves as a lever for development and for activating local areas.
- Recognizing that cultural spaces and activities can act as tools for social well-being, helping to combat loneliness, social isolation, and educational and cognitive poverty.
- Acknowledging that participation must be broad and necessarily takes time, as it strongly depends on relational dynamics.
- Medium-sized cities need to invest in culture to avoid falling behind major urban centers and to ensure the well-being of their citizens."

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- Yes, in the sense that several professionals shared their perspectives and each positively emphasized different aspects.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- Although Reggio has a different historical and cultural background from Pordenone, the link between the two experiences lies in the socioeconomic dynamics that the cities share, given their size and the economic and demographic challenges they face.

Danique Donia Nota
Sense of place: Sensory bike tour - Workshop - Connected Journeys

Collaborators: Danique Donia Nota (University of Amsterdam) Katusha Sol (University of Amsterdam), Romee Nicolai (Bicycle mayor of Amsterdam/BCYS)

September 25, meeting point Reggio Emilia Central Railway station - Piazzale Marconi

20 participants

Let your senses guide you!

Main goal

Participants explored Reggio Emilia by bike, using the senses to experience the city's atmosphere. During the sensory bike tour participants experienced the unique character of the city through one of their senses: smell, hear, touch or see.

Methodology

Photo safari, touching surfaces/objects at the stops, experiencing the city through smelling/hearing, creating a map of the city by using stickers, joining two maps together to compare / share insights

Target audience

Mostly urban developers/placemakers with a love for cycling, also participants to wanted to see more of Reggio Emilia and thought this workshop was a good way to do so

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- Participants were impressed by how much more you can experience (sensory wise) when you eliminate another sense - for example closing your eyes to hear better or viewing a city park through frog's-eye view.
- The city park in general proved to be the place that all the groups/senses thrived. This was the stop that all participants said they could've and would've spent more time.
- Participants noted that piazzas/inner city squares are places where your senses could sometimes mislead you because of the busyness, different smells and harder to place sounds.

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- The tranquility of the city parks was what all participants experienced as most meaningful.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- As a city where cycling is at the heart of everyday life, this workshop shed light on the different ways mobility - though cycling and bike paths - connect the people of Reggio Emilia with their city and each other.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

- Participants ended up having a (network) lunch together after the workshop ended. Afterwards the placemaking-team published the workshop on our website (for everyone do experience/try).

Cristina Murphy

BluePrint Cafe: Placekeeping shapingEquitable Cities, One Space at a Time!- Outdoor session (walkshop) - Places of well-being

Collaborators: Andrew Bui and Cristina Murphy (Morgan State University/BluePrint Cafe)

24 September, Outdoor area of Reimda (Ex Mangimificio Caffarri)

20 participants

What's possible when an architect and urbanist are your barista?

Main goal

To empower participants with a toolkit for preserving community identity by transforming spaces into meaningful places. The session aimed to teach them how to read urban environments and ensure design respects existing narratives to resist gentrification and foster belonging.

Methodology

From our café, we've learned to truly observe people and how they move through space — insights that often go deeper than what we find in classrooms or offices. These 70 minutes together were about discovering that spaces only reveal themselves once we get to know them. At Placemaking we manifested our own values, shared them, and brought them into a public space. Here's how:
- Shape a story from the material provided.
- Share it with a partner.
- Take a 20-minute walk to collect sounds, objects, and impressions.
- Place them in the site and weave a new story together.
- Caterina will then join us to share her perspective on the space.

Target audience

Everyone. Specifically, the Mirabello's community.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- Adopt an Open and Observant Approach: Remain open, observe carefully, and listen to understand, rather than entering with preconceived conclusions.
- Prioritize Community Voice: Allow people to express themselves to ensure their lived experiences and emotional connections to a place are heard and valued.
- Harness Existing Assets: Assess and utilize the inherent power and identity of the existing space, viewing redevelopment as ""placekeeping"" that respects and builds upon community narratives.

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- While the session was not focused on achieving consensus, the conversation strongly emphasized the collective responsibility for placekeeping. It was agreed that inclusive collaboration is essential to transform spaces and ensure they remain truly public and accessible.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- "Making a new place is not necessary..." This quote challenges the conventional approach to design, emphasizing that the goal is not always to build something new.
- "...the designer's responsibility is to facilitate [a place's] existence." This redefines the designer's role as an enabler who works with what is already there.
- "Design is helping the community cope with changes." This provides a clear, actionable example of the designer's purpose: to support and empower a community through transitions, rather than imposing a new vision.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- When we arrived in Reggio, we wondered, Where is everyone? Exploring, we found the answer in the square, people gathering, meeting, and manifesting solidarity. This is a people's city. For us, manifesting means something tangible: open, public, inclusive sharing.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

- The session belongs to a continuum of activities this group engages with, daily from the cafe.

Maryna Bakaienko

Spaces that hold us: Rebuilding Communities in Ukraine - Short presentation - Designing cities for all

Collaborators: Maryna Bakaienko (Cedos)

25th September, Officine Credem - conference room A (Reggiane Parco Innovazione)

12 participants

Main goal

To share how community centres in small Ukrainian towns become inclusive, welcoming spaces that unite people across age, culture, and vulnerability. The session explored placemaking as a tool for healing, belonging, and resilience — showing how thoughtful design and community involvement foster trust, inclusion, and vibrant local life. The goal was also to inspire and equip participants to initiate or support similar spaces in their own contexts.

Methodology

Individual presentation

Target audience

People who develop such places in their communities or support the creation of those.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- Diversity of local communities is an important factor of resilience.
- It is important to develop such physical spaces in a participative way.
- These places are crucial for the local democracy and inclusive processes, and are important in the times of war as well as in peaceful times.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- "Community and cultural centers, or community-building centers, play a key role in the process of community development, as they provide the physical space for interaction among community members. Through the organization of cultural, educational, and social events, such centers help develop social ties, form shared values, and increase trust among people. Strengthening communities is an important aspect of community development during the full-scale war."

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- Reggio Emilia has a wide range of community centers of different scales and formats, thus it gives the ground for all the social groups to be included in the social life. And it's amazing!

Anything else you would like to add?

- Project website: https://cedos.org.ua/en/community-rebuilding/

Iakovos Sierifis

Walk, sense, imagine: valuing and learning public spaces - Outdoor activity - Designing cities for all

Collaborators: - Iakovos Sierifis (OPU - Organisation for Positive Urbanism), Emelie Lenning (Reka Studio), Raphaela Mak (Metvibee)

26th September, park of Santa Maria

20 participants

Main goal

This collaborative session explored how sensory experiences, walking practices and imagination can support more inclusive urban development and civil dialogue.
The main goal was to experience how our senses can enrich future planning methods and enhance design processes by increasing awareness of how urban environments are perceived and shaped through sensory experience.

Methodology

Using simple playful techniques and exercises, participants were encouraged to observe and experience spatial patterns, textures, moods, and barriers. We moved through varied environments to explore spatial transitions to conclude with a creative debrief and the sharing of collective insights.

Target audience

Urban enthusiasts, Placemakers, Artists, Researchers, practitioners such as architects and designers

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- There are so many textures around the city
- How the urban fabric can be contradictory and change depending on what you focus on
- We become aware of new things in a place when we focus on one sense at the time

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- There were so many different ideas and perspectives of how a city can be. However, there were quite a few comments about how sound has a big impact on urban well-being.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- "This was fun! I want to continue doing this"

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- Including people in the overall caring of the city, by becoming aware of how we can shape a city together.

"I was struck by how a group assembled by the festival organically developed a new collaborative method during the session, and how participants confidently explored the public space without concern for onlookers. It showed me how the session itself became a form of placemaking— inviting others in the district to become curious about their own space and place."

Francesca Tagliavini

Participatory arts as placemaking tools: lessons from around the world - Workshop- Designing cities for all

Collaborators: La Libélula Cooperative (Canada), Fondazione Palazzo Magnani (Italy), Bússola/Outdoor Arts Portugal (Portugal), Blind Walls Gallery (Netherlands), and the Kaya Kaya Movement (Curaçao)

24th September, Remida Workshop Area (Ex Mangimificio Caffarri)

20-25 participants

Main goal

Our session brought together practitioners from Canada, Italy, Portugal, the Netherlands, and Curaçao to explore how participatory arts transforms public space and strengthens community connections.

Methodology

We used the World Café format, combining short presentations with two rounds of rotating small-group discussions.

Target audience

We truly believe that a multidisciplinary approach is the key of a good project. So we were interested in every point of view.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- Public art make you feel more important and part of a community (accessibility for everyone even the people who don't belong to museum or city centers)
- Sharing is caring, making art together develops a sense of belonging towards the place
- Public institutions can help the projects as long as private

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- Art can improve social cohesion and sense of belonging

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- I'm actually part of the local community and it has been very useful to see if what we produced and organized could be useful or not.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

- Not yet, but we're in touch with our co-contributors.

Signe Pērkone
From Mono-centric to Poly-centric City: Riga's Approach to Balanced Spatial Development - Short presentation - Designing cities for all

Collaborators: N/A

26th September, Remida Projection Area (Ex Mangimificio Caffarri)

25-30 participants

Main goal

Participants had the opportunity to learn about the City of Riga's approach to developing neighbourhood centres through integrated spatial planning that weaves together mobility, public space, local identity, and support for small businesses. This strategy seeks to overcome fragmentation of public space management and directs municipal investment for maximum impact, while actively involving residents in co-creating the future of their neighbourhoods.

Methodology

Format was short presentation with discussion in the end around the question of how different cities might adopt and adapt Riga's approach.

Target audience

Urban planners, city officials, urban activists, architects

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- A sector-based approach to planning and managing public space is insufficient for addressing the complex and interconnected needs of urban residents.
- Recognising that a city cannot become uniformly liveable all at once, prioritising neighbourhood centres helps deliver high-quality public spaces and recreational areas in the most densely populated districts—reachable for most residents within a 15-minute walk.
- Integrated spatial planning is essential for aligning the many dimensions of public space and creating a shared plan that both users and implementers can support.
- Ongoing engagement, including follow-up discussions and repeated meetings, is crucial for ensuring that residents feel genuinely heard and involved in shaping their neighbourhood.
- Artistic and public space interventions can significantly strengthen local identity and create a meaningful sense of place.

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- There was consensus that developing neighbourhood centres is a sensible and strategic approach to delivering liveability and quality public space democratically all over a large and diverse city.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- Neighbourhoods differ greatly, and so do the challenges we encounter and address. In one area, the priority may be planning new recreational functions within an underused green space; in

another, improving access to an existing park and resolving mobility issues. Elsewhere, the focus might be on connecting fragmented pieces of infrastructure or redesigning a complex intersection to carve out usable public space that expands opportunities for local businesses. In some neighbourhoods, we concentrate on creating places for community events and cultural activities, while in others we work to shift perceptions through public art.
- To be effective, we must think in layers—understanding how one type of intervention can reinforce another—so that together they produce a cumulative and lasting impact.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- Connection to Reggio Emilia stems from emphasis on civic society - citizens being engaged in development processes of their city and taking responsibility for the space around them.

To be effective, spatial planning must work in layers—seeking how one type of intervention can reinforce another—so that together they produce a cumulative and lasting impact.
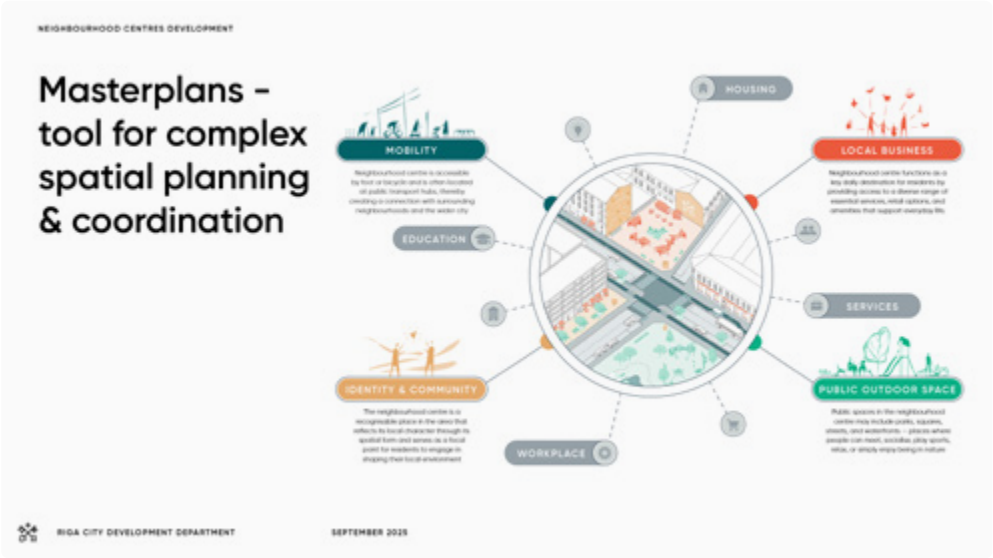
Valeriya Saymova

Everyday Adventure: Designing the city for children - Panel - Places of well-being

Organizers: Bella Filatova, Andrea Boni, Valeriya Saymova. Moderator: Mustafa Sherif.
Speakers: Antonietta Casini, Paolo Gandolfi, Andrea Boni, Bella Filatova, Mustafa Sherif

25 of September, Officine Credem - conference room B (Reggiane Parco Innovazione)

25 participants

"We know how to build public spaces. We don't know how to listen to children. We need to change our mentality and recognize children's power in the design process."

Main goal

The main goal of our session was to move the idea of a child-friendly city from abstract concepts and isolated playground projects toward systemic urban transformation. The session aimed to create a dialogue among different professional perspectives and uncover the real contradictions and barriers that prevent cities from supporting children's autonomy, safety, curiosity, and development on an everyday, spatial level. Ultimately, the goal was to identify what is needed for child-friendly principles to become a practical, operational tool for municipalities, planners, and communities.

Methodology

Case presentations and collective discussion

Target audience

The session was designed for a broad group of urban actors whose collaboration is essential for systemic change. This included: Municipal representatives and city administrators Architects, urban planners, and designers Academics and researchers Educators and institutions inspired by Reggio pedagogy Nonprofit and advocacy organizations Media representatives and community facilitators The target group was intentionally diverse to ensure that different positions, disciplines, and decision-making levels could engage in a shared conversation.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- A child-friendly city is a systemic framework, not a playground strategy. Participants emphasized that improving isolated sites is not enough — real change requires rethinking mobility, public space networks, and everyday autonomy for children.
- Children's perspective benefits everyone. Viewing the city through a child's needs revealed universal qualities of good urbanism: safety, clarity of transitions, access to nature, inclusive design, and places that encourage social connection.
- Reggio principles can and should operate at the scale of the entire city. The idea of space as the "third teacher" resonated strongly, highlighting the need to bring Reggio-inspired spatial values into streets, parks, and neighborhoods.
- The biggest barriers are structural, not conceptual. Many cities agree with the philosophy, but political inertia, fragmented responsibilities, and lack of practical tools prevent implementation.
- Precedents matter. Even small, well-designed projects can shift mindsets, influence policy, and open doors for broader transformation when they clearly demonstrate what systemic change looks like in practice.

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- A consensus emerged that playgrounds alone are not enough to make a city truly child-friendly and that deeper systemic transformation is required. Participants generally agreed that a city should enable children to move safely, gain autonomy, explore, and feel integrated into the social and spatial fabric.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- The session directly connected to Reggio Emilia's legacy and current challenges by showing how Reggio pedagogy can extend beyond school walls into the city itself. Key links included:
- Reggio's idea of space as the "third teacher," which parallels the session's argument that the entire urban fabric—not only educational buildings—should support children's development.
- The challenge is that, despite Reggio Emilia's global influence, its spatial principles remain largely confined to educational environments.
- The shared ambition to translate pedagogical values such as autonomy, curiosity, nature-based learning, documentation, and inclusion into urban planning practices.
- In other words, the session addressed a local paradox: Reggio's world-renowned approach is deeply embedded in schools, yet the city itself has not fully absorbed these spatial principles. The session explored how to bridge that gap.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

- Yes. The session strengthened interest in continuing work on practical tools, guidelines, and design frameworks that municipalities and designers can apply directly. Participants expressed readiness to collaborate in the writing of a book with methodological tools based on the guidelines that we have presented during our session "Educating City: the concept of a city for children"

María Tula García Méndez

Walking and Drawing to Invoke the Disappeared Water Streams of the City - Outdoor session - Designing cities for all

Collaborators: María Tula García Méndez (Hiedra)

26th September, Parco Santa Maria

12 participants

Reconnecting emotionally with water—by walking, drawing, and sharing memories—is essential to imagine futures where its presence can return to and reshape our cities.

Main goal

Collectively recall the hidden waterways beneath our cities. By tracing their paths through stories and on-site chalk drawings, explore how artistic, place-based actions deepen our emotional connection to place and raise awareness of how cities and urban design relate to natural cycles.

Methodology

The session was designed as a collective walk with situated artistic and storytelling practices. After a preliminary research phase identifying the historical water courses of the city, participants followed a curated route along the disappeared Canale di Secchia. Through the walk, we stopped at key points to share memories, insights and visions related to our relationship with water bodies. We observed spatial clues and drew with chalk on the pavement to temporarily "invoke" the traces of the buried streams.

Target audience

Architects, urban strategists an activists, policy makers,teachers, urban designers

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- The importance of paying attention to the invisible presence of water in cities and recognising how its memory still shapes urban space.
- The value of walking as a method to sense traces, stories and spatial clues that reconnect us with buried or forgotten waterways.
- How collective storytelling and on-site drawing can foster emotional awareness and open new ways of imagining the role of water in future urban environments.
- A shared interest in bringing ecological and cultural memory into placemaking practices, especially through lightweight, creative, and participatory actions.
- The recognition that rethinking water in cities requires both technical and cultural approaches, connecting infrastructure with lived experience.

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- There was a clear consensus on the need to pay more attention to our relationship with water—especially in urban contexts—in order to reimagine how it could be present, visible and valued in our cities. No major disagreements emerged during the discussion.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- The discussion relates closely to Reggio Emilia's ongoing challenges around water management in a context of climate emergency. Rethinking how water is integrated into the city—both functionally and symbolically—can support more resilient and ecological urban strategies. Recovering local water memories, revisiting historical waterways, and recon-sidering the space given to water in public areas can all inform future planning, from adaptation measures to urban design and placemaking practices.

Anything else you would like to add?

- You can listen to the interview about the session on the Urbanistica podcast, recorded by Mustafa Sherif during Placemaking Week: https://poddar.se/podcast/urbanistica/549-the-power-of-drawing-maria-tula-garcia-mendez

Mirian Calvo
Shaping the Future of Urban Policymaking - Workshop - Designing cities for all

Collaborators: Dr. Mirian Calvo (Lancaster School of Architecture), Susanna Dart, (Freelance Placemaker) Lancaster - UK, Paul Kelly (retired teacher, environmental advocate, and volunteer with the Boston Food Forest Coalition), Denny Dart (Freelance environmental engineer).

26th September, Catomes Tôt

21 participants

Main goal

The primary aim of our workshop, "Shaping the Future of Urban Policymaking," was to equip participants with tools and techniques to make urban placemaking policy responsive to community input. These tools were developed through the Placemaking with Young Adults (PYA) research and consultancy project. Our goal was to craft inclusive urban policies using community-data-driven placemaking. We concentrated on fostering collaborative dialogue and generating actionable policy ideas that integrate diverse perspectives and sustainability principles within the Lancaster District context.

Methodology

In our workshop, we employed a participatory data-driven methodology featuring collective analysis and co-creation techniques. We began with contextual presentations, followed by dividing participants into small multidisciplinary teams. Using a set of over 300 quotes from previous engagements with young adults, participants conducted a resonance analysis through our placemaking framework. This was followed by clustering activities to identify themes for potential policy development. Participants then engaged in co-creation exercises using policy concept sheets to collaboratively generate actionable urban placemaking policies. The session concluded with a reflective dialogue, reinforcing the value of inclusive analysis by engaging community members directly in the policymaking process.

Target audience

Our workshop brought together an international and diverse group of participants from Canada, the USA, Russia, the UK, Austria, the Netherlands, Serbia, Australia, Argentina, and more. The group included urban planners, placemaking experts, sociologists, architects, community activists, policymakers, public planning officers, educators, non-profit organisations, and urban researchers. Participants contributed a wide range of perspectives—spanning academic insights and policy expertise to grassroots community engagement and youthful innovation. This multidisciplinary mix enhanced the collaborative atmosphere, enabling a rich exchange of ideas and experiences that informed our exploration of inclusive and sustainable urban policymaking.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- Integrative policymaking: emphasising the importance of integrating diverse community insights and voices, especially those of young people, into the policymaking process to create inclusive and representative urban planning and placemaking policies.
- Data transparency: highlighting the value of transparent data analysis processes involving local communities, which helps clarify intent and meaning, reduces misinterpretation and increases trust.
- Empowerment through participation: recognising that involving young community members in the analysis and policy idea-generation process not only empowers them but also provides unique insights that might otherwise be overlooked.
- Collaborative frameworks: the use of collaborative tools and frameworks, like the placemaking

We collectively delved into the richness of community voices, discovering that the true strength of urban policies lies not just in data, but in the shared stories and insights that drive meaningful change.

framework, in facilitating impactful discussions and guiding the development of actionable policy themes.
- Long-term visioning: the need to visualise and implement policies that account for short, medium, and long-term urban developmental goals, ensuring sustainable and adaptable urban futures.

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- Consensus: overall participants agreed on the importance of integrating diverse community voices, particularly those of young people, into the urban policymaking process. There was a shared understanding that this inclusivity enhances policy relevance and effectiveness.
- Disagreement: some participants debated the level of involvement that young community members should have in the policy analysis phase. While many advocated for their active participation to promote transparency and empowerment, others expressed concern about the potential confrontational nature of the analysis process. Despite this, the majority supported fostering young adult involvement to ensure authentic representation of their insights.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- Quote on inclusive analysis: One participant stated: "The challenge is not just to tell and listen but to transform those insights into sustainable meaning, and into a potential policy." This quote encapsulates the workshop's focus on converting community insights into actionable urban policies.
- Illustration of collaborative dynamics: "The use of over 300 quotes from previous workshops with young adults demonstrated the value of diverse

perspectives". By categorising these insights according to the placemaking framework, participants experienced firsthand the power of collaborative analysis in shaping inclusive policies.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- The workshop was held at Catomes Tôt, a coffee shop with presentation infrastructure and large windows facing a public park. The venue embodies Reggio Emilia's tradition of community engagement and participatory organisation. Its design promoted collaboration and inclusivity. We easily reconfigured tables and used both the presentation screen and the gallery wall to facilitate interactive activities and collaborative policy design. The venue fostered the spirit and work of co-creation, encouraging participants to engage deeply with the material and with each other—key elements of the Reggio Emilia approach.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

- Participants provided invaluable insights, offering specific tweaks that will enable us to refine our community-data-driven methodology, enhancing its effectiveness and applicability.
- Several participants expressed interest in exploring our methods further after the event, opening avenues for potential collaborations. These discussions focused on developing ways to bridge the gap between community engagement data-gathering and sense-making to inform policy design.
- We received invitations to conduct workshops showcasing our collective analysis method, aimed at illustrating its potential in informing policy through community engagement.

- Our involvement with a COST proposal emerged as a direct outcome, focusing on future landscape management and policy development.
- We engaged with partners for a New Bauhaus– Horizon funding bid, further extending the impact of our session's themes.

Anything else you would like to add?

- Short Report Placemaking with Young Adults DOI:10.13140/RG.2.2.17215.52643

Videos

- PYA1.0 Short introduction: https://vimeo. com/781789679
- Planning for Tomorrow's Environment, Royal Town and Planning Institute with Content with a Purpose from 19:49: https://planningfortomorrow.rtpi.org.uk/planning-for-tomorrows-future/

Project Pages, Lancaster University

- PYA1.0: https://imagination.lancaster.ac.uk/project/youth-democracy-and-sustainable-citizenship/
- PYA2.0: https://imagination.lancaster.ac.uk/project/pya2-placemaking-with-young-adults-2-0/

Project Pages, Lancaster City Council

- PYA1.0: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/cd786e22aec74b57a8da1a6522d6739a
- PYA2.0: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/04fa69be99cc4c42b6504b6e5df8c766

Alexandra Coutsoucos

Friction as Fertilizer Reframing Resilience for Urban Coexistence - Workshop - Places of well-being

Collaborators: Johanna Musch, Social design lead, Umarell; Alexandra Coutsoucos, Urban and social innovation design strategist, Practitioner and PhD student at Rome Sapienza University; Irene Verdi, Communication & Service Designer; Marco Finardi, Service Designer & Researcher at Politecnico di Milano; Lea Karrasch, Urban designer

25th September, Officine Credem - conference room A (Reggiane Parco Innovazione)

30 participants

Main goal

The session's goal was to push participants beyond comfort zones to rethink resilience and placemaking as processes of inevitable friction. By working with real cases and engaging in exercises of empathy and positionality, participants will confront power dynamics, embrace contrasting viewpoints, and explore how disruption—not just adaptation—can build collective capacity for climate-responsive urban change.

Methodology

We used a participatory mapping grounded in real cases proposed by participants. In small groups, participants collaboratively mapped key actors, relationships, enablers, and frictions. Rather than aiming to resolve tensions, the process encouraged participants to sit with conflict, uncertainty, and discomfort as analytical material. Through guided dialogue and visual mapping, groups reflected on how power, positionality, and cross-sector dynamics influence actions of placemaking.

Target audience

Placemakers. Urban practitioners, public sector officers, active citizens, ngo's...

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- Embracing friction in placemaking was deeply appreciated — participants described the workshop as almost "therapeutic," and many argued that this type of conflict-focused dialogue should be part of every placemaking initiative.
- There is a strong desire for authentic engagement: space for honest conversations, unfiltered narratives, self-reflection, and critical analysis.
- Participants expressed a clear recognition of how much institutional, top-down decision-making cons- trains placemaking efforts — and shared frustration at how difficult it is to influence those processes.
- Participants convened that public authority engaging in placemaking activities should be ready to be accountable and responsible. Before engaging in placemaking as a city, you should make sure you can afford it (cover all the costs in the long term, being consistent and clear about the possibilities and the limits towards the different stakeholders (citizens, urban practitioners), have the strategic resources or find it elsewhere) or not do it.

### Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- No consensus nor disagreement. What emerged instead were shared emotional responses: empathy for actors striving to create change, distress at the perceived powerlessness of individual or community efforts against top-down decision-making, and discomfort in confronting one's own positionality within complex conflicts.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- The session connects closely with Reggio Emilia's local challenges. Despite a strong participatory tradition, practitioners still face tensions between community initiatives and top-down institutional processes. The workshop's focus on friction, power asymmetries, and honest dialogue mirrors these realities. Its emphasis on sitting with conflict and recognising positionality directly supports local efforts in neighbourhood regeneration and collaborative governance, offering tools that align with the city's ongoing urban transfor- mation work.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

- Internal collaboration worked very well and keeps open for future opportunities
- Some follow-ups between participants and workshop leads have taken place, pointing at a generalised inte- rest in the shared topic and potential collaborations
- Results of the workshop will contribute to a wider research on participatory processes in urban and social innovation, which will fuel future publications.
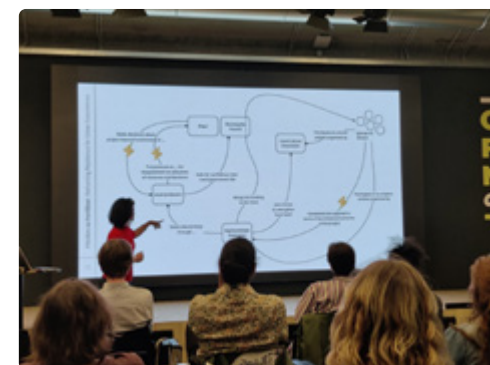
Ruth Gow McLenachan
Designing Healthier Cities: Citizen Voices at the Heart of Urban Planning - Workshop - Places of well-being

Collaborators: Ruth Gow (Healthy Cities), Celia García (Healthy Cities), Saira Ali (City of Bradford), Richard Middleton (City of Bradford)

24th September, Remida Open Space

30 participants

Main goal

Understanding cities as an invaluable resource for health and exploring how residents' lived experiences can reshape the way we design healthier cities.

Methodology

Brief introduction to the concept of citizen engagement for health, case presentation of Bradford's city centre transformation and it's widespread health benefits, ending with a live demonstration of the Healthy Cities Generator tool, engaging participants to rate the surrounding area.

Target audience

Urban planners, decision-makers, community leaders.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- Gaps between technical data and the lived experiences of the community showing, for instance, how perceptions of safety, accessibility, or public space quality often differ from data-driven analyses, but also amongst different population groups, such as elderly people or women.
- Lesson from Bradford: focus on the easy wins to begin with, then take embrace health in city-wide planning once you have support and trust from local stakeholders.
- Measure your impact, make sure you communicate about the health benefits of urban transformations.

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- General consensus around the value of engaging citizens in a meaningful way, and health as an effective way to achieve this. Engagement fatigue emerged as a potential threat and barrier.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- "When residents' voices are recognised alongside technical expertise, urban environments can better serve diverse needs and support healthier lives for all"

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- Our demonstration was centered around the "Reimagining the Station Area of Reggio Emilia",

imagining 2 actions: converting it into a vibrant connector, and reclaiming public space for everyone. These interventions were estimated to save up to €80M per year.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

- As an outcome we produced a short video, summarising our experience and featuring short interviews with fellow place-makers.

Anything else you would like to add?

https://open.spotify.com/episode/6MyCuWqlfGHaZvb-8b8xbwz?si=fe003bff5dfd4ec6
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRWHETF-1C0

"When residents' voices are recognised alongside technical expertise, urban environments can better serve diverse needs and support healthier lives for all"

Dipon Bose
Creative tools for place making (cards, dice, dart) - Game - Designing cities for all

Collaborators: Dipon Bose and Marianna Frattarelli

25th September, VR33

7 participants

"We remember something that happen in the past, so I remember" says a placemaking player in our session. For us, it evokes the words of Plato, "All learning is remembering", thus bringing out the concept of anamnesis, that our "snake and ladder game – to make our place together" illustrated in Reggio Emilia.

Main goal

Bring out the specific features of the place and the genius loci to start co-design processes with greater adherence to the needs of the community, which is increasingly multi-ethnic, and in compliance with the territory.

Methodology

Participatory mapping

Target audience

Our target group was citizens and specialists involved in city planning, design and management

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

● Even though certain attributes of a city like a street name (topophilia) have a subjective appeal to citizens, they often are loaded with unified and objective meanings by virtue of their naming relatable to most people. Hence, places in a map come with a priori connotations as imagined by most participants
● Individual prompts about a particular place on an area map, stimulates a memory based individual narrative of a place as well as facilitates exchange of ideas in a group setting. Certain locations may evoke certain individual memories in a mapping exercise.

● Players involved in game based participatory mapping, often interpret an unknown map or place through their previous relational idea of a place, based on physiognomy of a place, activities done in similar place or through most common sensations of a place like that of color, taste, smell etc.
● An iterative gaming sequence through dice, can make players interact with same place multiple time and excavate new ideas about the place, or instigate certain problem-solving skills. Some participants in our gaming session, drew analogy to their real-life problems in their municipality, when they came across a range of prompts in the snake and ladder game. A map has a strong ability to facilitate co-design solutions through mutually negotiated discussions.
● When participants enter in the game space, they interact with each other in a self-simulated environment guided by the prompt cards and their movement on board using dice. They cross reference their subjective ideas in an emotional setting. Instigating objective or qualitative parameters often breaks the smooth flow of the game space. A game-based mapping tilts a co design workshop towards informal and intimate discussions rather than quantifiable metrics of a place.

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

● Since the objective of the game was to collect diverging range of thoughts, imageries and stories related to a place, most participants shared their personal insights or feelings about the places on the map. There were a range of place based local discussions. This involved co creation of both concurrent and asynchronous opinions about specific places where the players paused at their turns in the game. As a general consensus, we can say that, subjective imaginations of a place are often based on individual memory and differ for every individual. Users experience a place based on wide range of emotions, memories and sensations which can include intimate personal feelings or collective social perspectives.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

● It would be nice if, we were referring to a real place and that, we were all connected", as mentioned by a participant in one of our gaming sessions. Place based participatory mapping on a simple and ancient gaming board like snake and ladders help players to share their opinions about a place in a light atmosphere, but are often imaginary if the players don't belong to a place. Participants shared about their everyday simple activities like eating, a summer night or football that certain places in the map, evoked in their memory. Though they draw analogies , but they would like to have real placed based experience in the mapping .

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

● Our gaming toolkit promotes the idea of diversity and inclusion embodied in urban practices and values of Reggio Emilia. Just as the city, tries to balance history, innovation and inclusivity through co creation of meaningful places, our co design workshop, allows freedom of innovative thoughts which are playful and inclusive. Our gaming toolkit fosters the Reggio Emilia approach, letting specialists and citizens be a child, who learn through "hundred languages" of subjective mapping and grow in relationship to each other. With a considerable demography of migrant populations, Reggio Emilia creates new playful spaces to let its citizens interact without any intellectual or language barriers. Our game allows a shared platform to bring such diverse user groups together to share their idea of "the spirit of a place".

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

● Certain people working in municipal agencies in other parts of Europe shared interest in trying our gaming toolkit for solving community grievances in their locality. We are working on a Beta mode of the game, in order to have trials and improve it to suit to particular user groups and are open to suggestions.

Anything else you would like to add?

● Huizinga, J. (2016). Homo ludens. Angelico Press
● Champlin, C. J., Flacke, J., & Dewulf, G. P. (2021). A game co-design method to elicit knowledge for the contextualization of spatial models. Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science, 49(3), 1074-1090. https://doi.org/10.1177/23998083211041372 (Original work published 2022)

Raphaela Mak
Photo Orienteering - Get to know the city! - Outdoor session - Connected Journeys

Collaborators: Raphaela Mak (Studio Raphaela/Metvibee)

25th September, Reggiane Street Park

3 participants

Main goal

To explore the city through photo orienteering and learn first-hand from the locals on the places they visit

Methodology

Urban orienteering is a sport and activity that involves active navigation and recognition of diverse features that contribute to the sense of place. It can be combined with tasks at checkpoints (e.g. quizzes or games) to achieve learning objectives as defined for the specific activity.

Target audience

Urban practitioners and creative workers

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- The activity encouraged participants to actively reach out to locals, which helped them practice vulnerability and getting out of their comfort zone to invite locals to participate in an urban activity.
- The participants learned personal stories from locals that are connected to the specific places, and therefore why they like/don't like the place.
- Some locals declined participating, which is completely normal and okay, and important for the participants to practice consent and rejection that's relevant for placemaking work.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- Places where locals have personal stories connected to it, which needs to be taken into consideration when these places are "upgraded"/renovated.

Anything else you would like to add?

- It rained very heavily during the activity, which is challenging for an outdoor activity that requires running around, but the participants stayed together as a group and completed the activity. The locals chill out at places around the city despite the weather. This illustrates how humans can be (safely) resilient around unexpected weather, and gave me insights on all-weather placemaking.

Ariela de Oliveira
Placemaking in the Planning Process: let's talk about it! - Panel - Designing cities for all

Collaborators: Giulia Sicignano (AMAT), Ariela de Oliveira (Superwien), Theresa König (Superwien), Roland Krebs (Superwien)

24th September, Officine Credem - small room (Reggiane Parco Innovazione)

50 participants

Placemaking enriches planning by bringing people, stories, and local knowledge into the process—challenging us to rethink rigid structures and design with communities, not just for them.

Main goal

The goal of the session was to explore the role of placemaking as a tool to support inclusive and process-oriented urban planning and design. We focused on how placemaking can engage diverse groups and contribute to meaningful community involvement throughout different stages of a project.

Methodology

We used a case-based discussion format structured around four key questions. For each question, two short "pills" (case studies) were presented to illustrate different approaches or challenges. These were followed by group discussions, where moderators and participants collectively reflected on tools, strategies, and experiences, encouraging knowledge exchange and co-learning.

Target audience

Our target group included professionals actively working in urban planning, design, and development—whether from public institutions, private offices, or academia. Participants brought a strong interest in exploring placemaking as a tool, method, or approach within planning processes. Many had practical experience and contributed insights from their own contexts. We had a significant number of participants from local and regional governments, interested in how to integrate placemaking into public planning frameworks, as well as private-sector practitioners sharing concrete cases and strategies from their work.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- Planning processes differ widely across contexts, but the value of integrating placemaking is evident—especially in participatory and inclusive approaches.
- Many cities and public institutions still face challenges in adopting placemaking within formal processes. Sharing both limitations and successful examples helped foster a realistic and constructive dialogue.
- There is no one-size-fits-all model for placemaking in planning; each context requires tailored strategies based on local needs, goals, and actors involved.
- Exchanging experiences is essential—not only to inspire and bring new ideas, but also to build collective knowledge, offer alternatives, and support others facing similar challenges.

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- There was broad consensus that integrating placemaking into planning processes is both desirable and valuable. Participants from diverse backgrounds—activists, architects, planners, and city representatives—shared a common interest in using placemaking to make planning more inclusive and community-oriented.
- At the same time, challenges in applying placemaking within formal institutional frameworks were widely acknowledged. A key tension emerged around the idea of institutionalizing placemaking: for some, it represents a hopeful step toward recognition, funding, and wider adoption; for others, it risks limiting the grassroots, spontaneous, and critical nature of placemaking itself.
- Rather than clear disagreement, this highlighted the diversity of perspectives and realities across contexts, and reinforced the need for flexible approaches, open dialogue, and mutual learning.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- The session was structured around four guiding questions that captured key themes and helped spark discussion among participants from diverse backgrounds. These questions reflected the core message that placemaking can be a powerful and adaptable tool within planning processes:
- How can a placemaking approach support community activation and shared visioning at the beginning of a planning or design process?
- How can a placemaking approach emerge and take form during a planning or design process?
- Is placemaking an effective way to make planning and design processes more inclusive—and how can we ensure it truly reaches diverse social groups?
- Can administrative tools and formal planning instruments facilitate relevant placemaking activities?
- These questions encouraged rich discussions, shared experiences, and reflection on both challenges and possibilities of integrating placemaking into planning.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- While the session did not directly address Reggio Emilia's specific context, the discussions resonated with broader urban challenges that are also relevant locally, such as how to embed placemaking in planning processes and reach underrepresented groups. Moreover, the presence of AMAT, based in Milan, helped ground the exchange in Italian planning realities, encouraging reflection on how similar methods could inspire inclusive practices in Reggio Emilia, Italian cities and beyond.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

- While no formal commitments were made, the session clearly sparked follow-up interactions. Participants were seen exchanging contacts and continuing conversations after the session. We also set up a poster board where attendees could share their projects (whether mentioned in the session or not) so others could learn more and connect. Many participants contributed to the board and took photos of it afterward, suggesting ongoing interest and potential future collaborations.

Karolina Walęsa

Historic centres as sites of future-making - Panel - Heritage Reimagined

Collaborators: Astrid Stroobandt (City of Bruges), Marzena Horak, Malgorzata, Klarczyk, Karolina Walęsa, Agata Bańkosz (City of Wroclaw), Martina Bergamo, Simona Bravaglieri, Anna de la Torre, Giulia Ferro, Luigi Magnini, Jacopo Paiano, Marco Paladini, Paola Peratello, Duna Viezzoli, Margherita Zucchelli, (Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

24th September, VR33

15 participants

Main goal

To explore how cities are adapting their unique environments to meet today's climate and social challenges and co-create ideas how historic city centres can remain vibrant and liveable, not just for tourists, but for its citizens and future generations.

Methodology

Case presentations, participatory model in the form of a round table.

Target audience

People actively involved in cultural heritage - cultural operators and managers, researchers and students, professionals, decision- and poli-cy-makers, volunteers, activists, and components of the communities.

Historic centres are not just for tourists, but for its citizens, which is why we must care about quality of life there.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- Green-blue infrastructure can transform historic spaces
- Involve people in changes
- Change impact: policy to habits

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- Our group agreed that historic centres are not just for tourists, but for its citizens.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- All of our cities examples: Bruges, Venice and Wroclaw show that historic spaces can change for better.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- Reggio Emilia faces similar challenges to other historic cities in balancing heritage protection with climate resilience and social inclusion, and its strong tradition of participatory planning offers valuable insights into co-creating vibrant public spaces with local communities. Ongoing initiatives in Reggio Emilia show how the city is already integrating some of its practices into its historic centre.

Karolina Walęsa

Youth-Centered Design - Workshop - Designing cities for all

Collaborators: Safe and Sound Cities Programme, Global Infrastructure Basel Foundation Emily Simpson, Amber Lingg

City of Wroclaw: Marzena Horak Malgorzata, Karolina Walęsa

24th September, Architects Office (Reggiane Parco Innovazione)

12 participants

Main goal

Enabling participants to exchange experiences and reflect on practices, while cultivating innovative ideas and tools to design more inclusive cities that are safer for youth and for all.

Methodology

Short presentations followed by a group workshop

Target audience

Youth, operators and managers of places for youth, teachers, researchers and students, decision- and policy-makers, volunteers, activists

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- Safety must be both physical and psychological from.
- Youth have to be involved at every stage, from planning and mapping needs, to designing, building and maintaining spaces.
- Cultivate trust through building lasting relationships
- Support from qualifies mentors, educators, and therapists

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- Yes, consensus that the safety is the most important part, especially for young people.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- Long-term sustainability depends on strong collaborations across public, private, and civic sectors.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- Reggio Emilia has a long tradition of involving young people and diverse communities in shaping public spaces. The city's participatory culture, educational approach and community spaces align closely with the workshop's focus, offering both relevant local experience and a need for new tools to address increasing cultural diversity and ensure that all young residents feel a sense of belonging in the cities.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

- Yes, after a workshop we created a document from the collected ideas - Principles for Safe and Inclusive Cities - which was sent to the workshop participants.

Noa Haim

Every City Needs a TIRANA Pyramid - Outdoor Activity - Heritage Reimagined

Collaborators: Noa Haim Collective Paper Aesthetics

24th September, Foodcourt Field (Carroponte delle Officine Reggiane)

12 participants

Main goal

To share the experience of a unique project design, developed and tested during COVID, with like-minded individuals, in order to gain valuable professional feedback.

Methodology

Hands-on participatory workshop.

Target audience

Vary

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

● Creating an Incubator for Creatives: Bridging Placemaking and Product Design
● Foreseeing a dynamic incubator that guides creatives from placemaking to product design, offering a comprehensive toolbox to help develop projects more independently—reducing reliance on grants and empowering sustainable growth.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

● How can we communicate architectural heritage—whether celebrated, neglected, or threatened by new developments—in a playful and engaging way to the public?

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

● The use of nature-inclusive corrugated cardboard and participatory practice.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

● We had the opportunity to join an open call for the Placemaking Biennale in Macao, although we were not selected. In addition, several LinkedIn connections, one email exchange, and one Zoom meeting are planned for next week.

Anything else you would like to add?

● An amazing production team, and I thoroughly enjoyed the brilliant idea of the blind date dinners. Although it was difficult to keep up with the content during the day, I had plenty of delicious opportunities in the evening to connect with participants on a deeper level.
● A session originally planned for 90 minutes was extended to two afternoons on the grass lawn, facilitated by some of the participants. After all, a good conference is like a good party—you stay longer than planned and even wash the dishes.

Theresa Koenig

Urban Reflective Pauses: Centering Care and Inclusion in Placemaking - Workshop - Designing cities for all

Collaborators: Milagros Hurtig, Theresa Koenig, Andrew Shaw, Lonci Tobias, Rana Habibi, Kim Weger, Arild Eriksen

25th September, Architects Office (Reggiane Parco Innovazione)

30 participants

Main goal

The main goal of this session was to create a space for pause and self-reflection–often overlooked in participatory urbanism, but essential for reorienting placemaking toward inclusion. The session aimed to explore different frameworks for care in placemaking (careful facilitation, trauma-informed approaches, and counter methods), helping participants reflect on their own roles and how to build more responsive and supportive engagement processes.

Methodology

We began with a performative and pre-recorded reflective meditation accompanied by music, helping participants arrive, slow down, and settle into a calm and safe space. Participants were invited to take out their shoes and immerse themselves in the room and in a reflective mindset. The setup included soft lighting, pillows, blankets, and open floor seating – invited practitioners to disconnect from the festival's intensity, pause and reflect. The meditation included short real-world examples from the InclusiveCity ULL cities connected to different perspectives on inclusion, safety, facilitation, and community care. After the meditation, participants worked in small groups, exploring critical questions while enacting a reflective attitude. Using large rolls of paper, objects brought by InclusiveCity facilitators from their contexts, storytelling and active listening practitioners discussed lived experiences, dilemmas, and practical challenges around inclusive placemaking. The session closed with a collective silent pause and reflection to ground learnings.

Target audience

Our session attracted a diverse group of practitioners working with participation, facilitation, youth engagement, community activation, and inclusive urban planning. Participants included urban planners, designers, community organizers, youth workers, cultural practitioners, researchers, and NGO actors. Many were exploring dilemmas around inclusion, facilitation challenges, emotional safety, or how to make participation feel genuinely welcoming. Others brought experience from community projects and were curious about reflective tools, care-centered methods, and more intuitive approaches. This diversity created a rich mix of perspectives and an honest, open atmosphere for shared learning.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

● We need to design and facilitate processes that feel welcoming rather than intimidating, recognizing that people's sense of safety or unsafety emerges in specific environments, leadership behaviours, tone, and group dynamics — not only from physical design.
● Meaningful participation requires honesty and follow-through, particularly when working with young people. Participants reflected on how contributions are often symbolically acknowledged but not acted upon, which can undermine trust.
● Care in facilitation is embodied: participants highlighted the importance of presence, emotional awareness, and the ability to shift from rigid, linear scripts toward more organic, intuitive processes that respond to the moment.

We invited participants to slow down, take a reflective pause, and consider their own placemaking practice. This simple moment of attention reminded us that care begins with awareness, honesty, and the willingness to adapt.

- Reflection, collective memory, and unlearning are essential. Many noted the need to "read between the lines" and question assumptions — about inclusion, participation, and who we expect to be in the room.
- Acknowledgment emerged as a powerful component of inclusion. Feeling seen, welcomed, or recognised — even in subtle ways — was described as a basic but often overlooked need in placemaking and facilitation.

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

Consensus

- Inclusion is complex and fragile: Even practices meant to be inclusive can still be perceived as intimidating or exclusionary depending on context and facilitation style.
- Meaningful participation requires honesty and follow-through: Multiple groups discussed the gap between community input and actual implementation, especially when working with young people or marginalised groups.
- Safety in public space is relational: Feelings of safety or discomfort are shaped by leadership behaviours, tone of interaction, and social cues—not only by physical conditions.
- Facilitation must be caring and flexible: Participants agreed on the need for responsive, empathetic facilitation that can hold emotional realities and adjust to different needs.
- Reflection and unlearning are necessary: The call to "read between the lines" and "learn to unlearn" shows shared recognition that assumptions need to be continuously questioned.

Areas of Tension or Potential Disagreement

- Openness vs. depth: Some participants felt that inclusion efforts can lack depth or become superficial if not adequately supported by time, resources, or honest reflection.

- Linear vs. organic processes: A recurring dilemma was how to create more intuitive, care-centered facilitation while still meeting institutional timelines or project requirements.
- Is inclusion always needed? A few participants questioned whether "inclusion" is inherently the right goal in every situation, prompting reflection on when and why we invite people into processes.
- The role of acknowledgment: While many stressed its importance, some noted the challenge of offering acknowledgment without slipping into performative or overly structured gestures.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- "One reflection that resonated strongly during the session was the idea that leaders must allow themselves to be vulnerable. Part of facilitating with care is letting our own vulnerability soften the space and break down the barriers between leaders and participants.
- Another example came from a reflection shared during the meditation: moments of being overlooked in public space can deeply shape a person's sense of safety, while small acts of acknowledgment — being seen, greeted, or listened to — can completely shift that experience. This highlighted how care often emerges through subtle, relational gestures."

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- The session resonated with Reggio Emilia's ongoing work around social inclusion, community care, and addressing the needs of diverse and sometimes fragile groups. The city, like many others, grapples with complex social issues that require sensitive, relational approaches rather than only technical ones.

Mary Kerrigan and Emanuele De Angelis
From Narratives to Action: Participatory tools for Collective Resilience in Historic Centres - Workshop - Heritage Reimagined

Collaborators: Mary Kerrigan, Placemaker~Architect and Transformational Leadership Practitioner/Coach and Emanuele de Angelis, Futurecity, London

26th September, Musei Civici

25 participants

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

- While no formal commitments were made, participants expressed interest in integrating reflective pauses or meditation-inspired tools into their workshops or community engagement practice. Others showed enthusiasm for care-oriented and trauma-informed approaches and exchanged contacts to continue discussing these topics. Furthermore, there is an InclusiveCity peer-reviewed article being submitted to CoDesign Journal based on Urban Reflective Pauses insights.

Anything else you would like to add?

- TIO | Trauma Informed Oregon - Your Resource for Trauma Informed Care
- Livet skjer med oss alle – veien mot en traumeinformert by - Kompetansebroen
- https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/nov/30/beyond-maximum-cities-booming-party-ny-rio-mumbai?fbclid=IwY2xjawORDdpleHRuA-2FlbQIxMABicmlkETFCZGVJWWZHUk9JYzNmeFl-Jc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjIyMDM5MTc4ODIwMD g5MgABHmVIVNcjcbyUPXUUpsJIiP36Bw9-aAjxxRDkt1wy8z-xje1nBUEPj2lG-H_a_aem_oNiV3lYWlOPIVpXj5u0X2Q

Main goal

- **Mary:** Our goal was to share exemplar case studies of placemaking in heritage environments in London and Derry~Londonderry where effective cultural action; and the application of tools of transformation through grass roots engagement effectively changed communities and their places - against the odds.
- **Emanuele:** The main goal of the session was to demonstrate how arts and culture can act as powerful catalysts, transforming place narratives into meaningful action and unlocking opportunities for positive, tangible change in historic towns and cities.

Methodology

- **Mary:** 4 step sequence of conversations for transformation; small and large group technology; case study presentations
- **Emanuele:** We employed a highly participatory, practice-based methodology combining case presentations from Chatham, England and Derry~Londonderry, Northern Ireland, small-group exercises, and live problem-solving. Through interactive storytelling and co-creative tools, including cultural strategy frameworks, participants engaged with real placemaking challenges and applied transformative approaches to foster cultural impact and strengthen community resilience in their own contexts.

Target audience

- **Mary:** Professional placemakers from around the world and one or two who are thinking about becoming placemakers. They were from Palestine, USA, Costa Rica, Spain, Poland, Canada and more. They included members of the Board of Placemaking Europe, Placemaking US and Placemaking Canada. Their backgrounds ranged from sociology, urban planning, urban design, geography, and more. Participants are dealing with some of the most intractable contexts imaginable - eg Flint, Michigan the city with the 3rd highest murder rate in the US; and others navigating public space in divided Jerusalem to mention but a few.
- **Emanuele:** The session brought together practitioners from around the world with 1 to 20 years of experience in placemaking across the educational sector, consultancy, and public sector, as well as students. Participants shared diverse perspectives on how their communities benefit from arts and culture. Conversations sparked around the adaptive reuse of vacant spaces, with several participants particularly interested and well-equipped to explore innovative reuse approaches and funding models.

"The 'what's wrong?' conversation is very valuable. yes, people feel heard AND it can't create anything new. This session gave people new tools to break through the blocks."

"Arts and culture have the strength to make financially and socially viable the re-use of a vacant building"

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

Mary

- Sharing a case study from Heritage Streets Alive 2015 © placemaking work in the historic walled city of Derry~Londonderry, Northern Ireland, Mary Kerrigan spotlighted:
- The Terrain of Conversations © - a 4 part sequence equipping placemakers with tools that:
- Better engage and empower their participants to co-envision to make a difference
- Hear their participants' heartfelt stories and move on from these powerfully
- Lift participants' needle out of the groove in the record
- Empower co-envisioning a new world
- Take effective next step actions to realise it

Emanuele

- Arts and culture are powerful vehicles for collaborative citymaking with real economic and social impact

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- **Mary:** No disagreement
- **Emanuele:** Everyone agreed that Arts and culture are powerful vehicles for collaborative citymaking with real economic and social impact.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- "Digging into the narratives placemakers often hear - and perhaps some they tell themselves - PWE 25 participants revealed things like…
- 'It'll never change.'
- 'Same old, same old'
- A litany expressing how we feel. Describing our situations brilliantly we remain stuck in the groove. This session gave placemakers the key to unlock the door to a whole new future."
- "Arts and culture have the strength to make financially and socially viable the re-use of a vacant building" and "How to stop having 'fireworks' project"

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- **Mary:** I noticed that Reggio Emilia's historic city core was relatively quiet for a city this size. It struck me there are parallels with the walled city of Derry and its immediate environs (also socio-economically very quiet). The Heritage Streets Alive 2015 case study from Derry~Londonderry (which successfully addresses significant heritage vacancy and economic malaise) is directly relevant and transferable to Reggio Emilia.
- **Emanuele:** The role of culture as a catalyst directly addressed one of Reggio Emilia's local challenges: reactivating the station neighbourhood. Culture, particularly performative arts, served as a bridge between different spheres of society while connecting with the other 4Cs: Civic, Community, Consumer, and Commercial. In fact, I have explored the systemic power of culture through the inspiring work of Irene Manzini and Caterina Tonon, whose Sottoponte and Binario 49 projects are revitalising Reggio Emilia's station neighbourhood through inclusive and engaging cultural programming with many local actors involved.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

- **Mary:** We'd love to collaborate further when the time is right.
- **Emanuele:** Yes, there was an initial discussion to explore the possibility of a cultural placemaking strategy for the area of Parco Innovazione Officine Reggiane

Anything else you would like to add?

- **Mary:** "You were one of the two most inspiring people I heard at Placemaking Week Europe 2025. The other was Jenny Andersson." Wiktor Demps, Social Designer, Gdańsk (Direct feedback to Mary Kerrigan. Permission to quote granted.)

Mary Kerrigan
From Distress to De-Stress: Building Spaces of Belonging for Collective Well-Being - Panel - Places of well-being

Collaborators: Mariia Gryshchenko (Moderator), Institute of Sociology NASU / Bureau of Participatory Planning Cité; Mary Kerrigan, Placemaker, Architect, Transformational Leadership Practitioner/Coach, Ireland; Victoria Pennacchio, The Place Institute / Downtown Alliance, USA; Maryna Bakaienko, Project Manager at Cedos / Nashe Place team, Ukraine; Alya Drazhenko, Ro3kvit Urban Coalition for Ukraine.

24th September, Tecnopolo - conference room (Reggiano Parco Innovazione)

30-35 participants

Mary Kerrigan's 'Breathing Neighbourliness into Neighbourhoods' case study evidences a ratchetting up of a sense of belonging for long standing locals and incomers alike, no matter who they are or where they come from – the kind of belonging from which deep-seated wellbeing is derived.

Main goal

Drawing on case studies from Ukraine, Northern Ireland and the US, the panel focused on the following key themes:
Building community resilience
Inclusive placemaking
Relationship building across divides
Our goal was to communicate effective disaster response and recovery after earth quake and hurricane events; and placemaking across different contexts (natural disasters, conflict zones and refugee integration) that effectively builds community relationships and resilience post conflict and sharing community rebuilding projects in war-affected Ukraine.

Methodology

Case presentation, moderated panel discussion and Q+A from the floor

Target audience

Placemakers dealing with: disaster recovery; current and post conflict situations; community division and social isolation

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- Long term grass roots placemaking such as evidence by 'Breathing Neighbourliness into Neighbourhoods', Derry~Londonderry, Northern Ireland, offers sustained positive benefits. These include:
- Ready caring of the elderly, even the pets
- Generous sharing of resources
- Everyone knowing their neighbours, across three generations
- New residents are welcomed instantly - no longer does it take years to get to know people

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- No disagreement arose, either within the panel or from the audience

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- In response to a question from the floor as to whether this kind of placemaking work generates sustained belonging, the evidence in the 'Breathing Neighbourliness into Neighbourhoods' case study from the post conflict historic walled city of Derry~Londonderry (2016, 2017, 2019) is, that the impact of this work has been a distinct increase in the sense of belonging and the well-being and welcome that comes from a truly neighbourly community looking out for, and looking after, each other through the ups and downs of life. This has sustained over 9 years.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- While warmly embracing and enjoying the presence and contributions of its c.20% of residents originating from other places and countries, the relative quietness in its streets (both during the day and after dark) suggests the historic core of Reggio Emilia may have a residential population deficit.
- A decline in people living in the old city along with a lot of new people suggests a need and opportunity to breathe neighbourliness into inner city historic neighbourhoods - and new outer city neighbourhoods too.
- In a Europe set to experience increasing mass migration (due to climate change and conflict) any complacency that things are 'ok' as they are runs the risk of the current integrated ethno-religious and socio-political context easily deteriorating unnecessarily, to the city's economic, social and environmental detriment.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

- Interested in maintaining the collaboration when the time is right

Anything else you would like to add?

- Recommended reading: 'The Abundant Community - Awakening the Power of Families and Neighbourhoods' by John McKnight and Peter Block

Nina Eschenröder & Jerome Picard
Inclusive Activity Spaces – From Norway to Spain: Sport as a Tool for Designing Places for All - Workshop - Designing cities for all

Collaborators: Nina Eschenröder, Jerome Picard

24th September,Officine Credem Conference Room B

20 participants

Sport and activity spaces become true places when they are shaped with the people who use them. Our session showed how co-creation can transform schools, public spaces, and even hospitality settings into inclusive, intergenerational environments of belonging.

Main goal

The session aimed to explore how sport and activity can serve as powerful placemaking tools to foster inclusion, well-being, and community connection across different contexts - from Norwegian rural schools to Spanish hospitality environments. We demonstrated how activity-based design can shift facilities into meaningful, multi-generational places that support users' physical, social, and emotional needs.

Methodology

We combined case presentations, participatory design insights, and cross-sector reflection. Using examples from Norwegian schoolyard pilots programmed directly with children and community members, we showed how iterative user engagement, interviews, site walks, tactile workshops, and conceptual prototyping inform inclusive activity spaces. We then linked these approaches to hospitality and placemaking-thinking to demonstrate transferability.

Target audience

Professionals and practitioners interested in youth engagement, sport & activity design, placemaking, architecture, and hospitality transformation. The session addressed people working at the intersection of community development, public space, well-being, and experience design.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- Sport and activity spaces can be major drivers of social inclusion when designed through co-creation, supporting belonging across ages, abilities, and communities.
- Self-organised activity is a global megatrend, requiring flexible, multi-use environments rather than single-purpose sports halls.
- Placemaking-thinking can transform hospitality facilities into meaningful, place-based anchors connected to community, culture, and local identity.
- Formal/Informal and Inside/Outside boundaries must be rethought to create activity systems that support contemporary health, wellness, and recreation needs.

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

Consensus

- Participants strongly agreed that the future of sport and wellness infrastructure must move toward multi-use, community-integrated, and intergenerational spaces, and that co-creation is essential for relevance and long-term ownership.

Disagreement

- A recurring question was how far hospitality or municipal operators can realistically integrate self-organised, less structured activity styles without compromising operations or safety standards. This sparked debate but also highlighted opportunities for hybrid models.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- A student in Etne described the new activity space as something that now "feels like it's ours," illustrating the shift from standard infrastructure to community-owned space.
- In the hospitality context: "Hospitality needs placemaking principles to remain socially relevant and competitive," summarising the core argument of the cross-sector link.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- Reggio Emilia has a long tradition of education-driven community participation, and the session connected to this ethos by demonstrating how youth-led, participatory processes shape public space and activity infrastructure. The emphasis on co-creation and inclusive spaces echoes Reggio's belief that environments are "the third teacher.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

- Yes — several participants expressed interest in:
- Exploring cross-sector pilots where sport, youth services, and hospitality collaborate on shared facilities.
- Continuing discussion on placemaking-thinking in hospitality, including potential future workshops or consultancy exchanges.
- Representatives from various cities asked for the Norwegian case material to consider adapting similar community-driven sport spaces.

Borbála Moravcsik
Are streets inviting places for all? Adding a child-focused lens and free play to placemaking - Outdoor Activity - Designing cities for all

Collaborators: Maria Sitzoglou (Design Clips), Nafsika Michail (Design Clips), Borbála Marosán (Free Play Association), Borka Moravcsik (Free Play Association)

24th September, The streets around Chiostri di San Pietro and a little square (free space) nearby a local school

15 participants

Main goal

To empower urbanists for meaningfully co-create of spaces that serve children and their rights, by working with their eye levels and actions to make the potential for play in existing street environments visible to adults. Through playful interventions that translate this input into real actions, tailored design guidelines, and urban interventions, the session aimed to have streets taken over by playing communities who evaluate the importance of children's lens and their playfulness in our urban spaces.

Methodology

A walkshop - with the child-focused assessment tool, and a placemaking approach by play - with open ended play parts.

Target audience

Urbanists, designers, architects, educators and local citizens.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- When talking about nature in the city, we could barely recognise any; however, talking about it from the kids' perspectives, the participants agreed that even one tree could be enough to play around and to use any opportunity of the nature.
- Talking about safety is also dependent on how we accompany them; if we would let them play more freely on streets (of course without vehicles), they could be more safe just by enabling themselves to play.
- Truly every opportunity in our spaces holds possibilities for play; why don't we use our environment in such manners and with such movements?

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- After evaluating some streets of Reggio Emilia from the eye-levels of children and then arriving to a space with their knowledge and perspective, our only task was to play, but without having to say any words all the adult participants transformed the space into play, and that truly reminded us of this main right of the children, their right for free play, which needs to be addressed for better communities in our urban spaces.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- Taking a child-focused lens with two methodologies: one based on evaluation and the other on real action through free play really deepened in us, the meaning of children's perception of our urban spaces.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- The placemaking part connected to the Reggio Emilia approach by taking over a street or square guided by play and children. With play and the environment as our first teachers, we followed Reggio Emilia's principles of learning through movements, observation, and endless ways of expression - values we also use in our everyday work.

Yang Zhang
Holding her Fall - Playgrounds, aging and the women we will become across cultures and cities - Outdoor activity - Designing cities for all

Collaborators: Spring Onion Atelier

24th September, Foodcourt Field (Carroponte delle Officine Reggiane)

25 participants

Tracing the lives of aging women across cultures to uncover how migration history, ethnicity, caregiving backgrounds, socio-economic conditions, and other intersecting factors converge in everyday spaces and shape their visibility, feelings, and connection.

Main goal

This project examines aging as a collective urban issue through an intersectional lens of gender, work, care, and spatial inclusion, challenging its usual framing as a private medical matter. It shows how spatial and social infrastructures reveal society's deeper values of dignity, interdependence, and belonging.

Methodology

The workshop unfolds through three interactive games, each staged on custom-designed picnic carpets. These carpets act as both research surfaces and gathering spaces, inviting participants to sit, move, and talk together. Through touch, arrangement, and repair, the carpets transform abstract data into shared physical experience, turning public ground into a living research platform.

Target audience

Everyone

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- Participants found Holding Her Fall both reflective and restorative, offering a rare space to openly discuss ageing women in a non-hierarchical way.
- The use of play made it easier to engage with a difficult topic, helping participants unpack ageing without detachment or pity.
- Cross-cultural exchanges emerged naturally, showing that while ageing narratives differ across contexts, they share common emotional ground.

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- The feedback was clear: there is a growing need for spaces that connect intergenerational dialogue with spatial practice. Following the pilot workshop, Holding Her Fall received invitations to extend the format in universities, cultural institutions, and civic programmes across Europe. The next phase will deepen its intersectional lens on aging, exploring how gender, class, ethnicity, and care intersect in shaping our experience of public space.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- "Holding Her Fall" brings aging women back into view, transforming data, memory, and care into shared spatial understanding."

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- Reggio Emilia is admired for its culture of care and learning, yet it faces the same ageing pressures as many Italian cities. 'Holding Her Fall' asks whether this spirit of care can extend to ageing women and become a visible part of the urban landscape.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

- This session marks just the beginning of Holding Her Fall. In the next phase, we want to explore ageing through a more intersectional lens, connecting gender with class, culture, and care. Our goal is to move from ice breaker games to co-design, to collectively imagine and build public spaces and neighbourhoods that are truly inclusive for all generations, especially aging women.

Matt Norris
Promoting Diversity in Urban Design Through Artist/Developer Collaboration - Panel - Designing cities for all

Collaborators: Juanita Hardy, ULI Senior Visiting Fellow for Creative Placemaking, Urban Land Institute; Matt Norris, Senior Director ULI Building Healthy Places and Project Manager, ULI Art in Place Project; Shain Shapiro, PhD, Author, Founder, Thought Leader & Senior Executive; Vicki Davis, Managing Partner, Urban Atlantic; Oliva Sartogo, Director, VIV Arts; David Valecillos, Senior Development Project Manager, The Community Builders. 25th September, Architects Office, Reggiane Parco Innovazione.

25th September, Architects Office (Reggiane Parco Innovazione)

10 participants

Main goal

What happens when we see real estate development as a canvas for creative expression and community stories? This session explored how artists and developers can collaborate to weave history, culture, and belonging into new projects. The session was grounded in fresh research and brought to life through international case studies that show how these partnerships foster social cohesion, value, and a true sense of place.

Methodology

This session used case study presentations—from the United States, Italy, and beyond—alongside thoughtful discussion to illuminate seven key best practices in artist/developer collaboration that advance successful placemaking.

Target audience

Our target group included real estate developers, urban planners, public-sector leaders, artists, cultural organizations, and community-based practitioners interested in integrating arts and culture into development. This range of professional expertise—spanning design, finance, and project management to creative practice, community engagement, and policy—can offer rich insights and lived experience from neighborhoods where arts-driven placemaking has the power to strengthen identity, cohesion, and long-term value.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- Artists broaden what development can achieve, helping projects reflect local culture, strengthen identity, and create places rooted in community history.
- Clear structures and early engagement are essential, with defined roles, and transparent processes. Intermediaries can help bridge creative and real estate perspectives.
- Integrating arts and culture adds both social and economic value, enhancing belonging, supporting cohesion, and differentiating projects in competitive markets.
- Approaches must be grounded in local context, ensuring arts integration aligns with neighborhood priorities and deepens a genuine sense of place.

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- There was broad consensus that artist/developer collaboration is essential to creating authentic and equitable placemaking that reflects community identity. Participants also emphasized the need for additional guidance and more case studies to demonstrate how these partnerships can be structured effectively and responsibly.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- **Build the business case for artist engagement:** Engaging artists delivers measurable returns—faster lease-ups, lower turnover, and stronger community buy-in—that help keep projects on time and on budget. At Monroe Street Market, a $350 million transit-oriented development in Washington, D.C.,

"When artistic insight is woven into real estate development, placemaking shifts from a design exercise to a shared act of culture-building rooted in people and place."

27 ground-floor artist studios boosted revenues for developers and local businesses while enhancing cultural vibrancy.
- **Be expansive about the role artists can play:** Artists contribute far more than just murals or sculptures. They can shape site design, wayfinding, landscaping, and lighting to create places where people linger and businesses thrive. In Miami Beach, The Reefline—an artist-designed underwater sculpture—delights visitors and restores dying coral.
- **Engage artists early and often for maximum impact:** Artists have the greatest influence when involved from the start and throughout the development process. Their participation in visioning, design, and community engagement can help build trust and advance developer goals. At the Kimpton Marlowe Hotel in Cambridge, Massachusetts, steampunk artist Bruce Rosenbaum collaborated with the development team from the very start to design and install Celeste, a 6,000-pound sculpture. Integrated early into the project, the artwork became a key feature and a major draw, generating an estimated $400,000 in additional annual revenue for the hotel.ç
- **Build bridges through a common language:** A shared language between artists and developers fosters mutual understanding of creative processes and timelines, allowing artists time to produce quality work while helping developers meet project goals. At Park Towne Place Museum District Residences in Philadelphia, Aimco/AIR Communities and nonprofit consultancy InLiquid aligned roles and goals to establish residencies, exhibitions, a sculpture park, and public events that enrich both residents and the wider community.
- **Leverage intermediaries:** Specialized intermediaries connect developers with the right artists, ensure fair compensation, and manage implementation—reducing risk for all parties. At Denver's Dairy Block, collaboration among art consultancy NINE dot ARTS, local artists, and developer McWhinney transformed a pedestrian alley and hotel into a vibrant cultural destination.

Ioana Gherghel
Social Value Indicators: Developing a resilient framework for capturing, measuring and monitoring social value delivery - Workshop - Designing cities for all

Collaborators: AR Urbanism / Forma Urbis. Ioana Gherghel and Anna Saveleva.

24th September, Binario49

Unknow participants, but well-attended

- **Use a competitive selection process:** Transparent, locally rooted artist selection—often guided by intermediaries—builds trust and strengthens project outcomes. At Barangaroo South in Sydney, Lendlease and the New South Wales government created an art advisory panel to select artists who reflect local heritage and uplift Indigenous voices.
- **Invest in training to ensure project readiness:** Education helps artists and developers collaborate successfully by building shared understanding and demonstrating the return on investment of creative engagement. At Memphis's Crosstown Concourse, project leaders launched Crosstown Arts to train teams, engage the community, and cultivate the creative ecosystem—contributing to 98 percent occupancy when the 1.2 million-square-foot adaptive reuse project opened in 2017.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- Reggio Emilia's long-standing commitment to participation, cultural expression, and community-centered design closely aligns with the principles of artist/developer collaboration. The city's challenges--such as balancing growth with heritage, strengthening social cohesion, and ensuring that placemaking reflects diverse community voices--mirror the very issues this work seeks to address. Reggio Emilia's practices of celebration of local identity and integration of arts into everyday civic life make it an ideal context for exploring how collaborative, equitable placemaking can be put into practice.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

- Participants expressed enthusiasm for the best practices shared during the session and offered additional case studies from their own contexts to help expand the growing knowledge base. Several attendees connected after the discussion to explore potential collaborations and exchange resources on artist/developer partnerships. ULI will also be releasing a summary report on Best Practices in Artist/Developer Collaboration in early 2025, which will provide further guidance and opportunities for continued engagement.

Anything else you would like to add?

- Additional resources are available at: https://americas.uli.org/research/centers-initiatives/creative-placemaking/art-in-place/.The upcoming report on Best Practices in Artist/Developer Collaboration will be available at: https://knowledge.uli.org/de-de/reports/research-reports/2025/best-practices-in-artist-developer-collaboration

Main goal

Too often regeneration projects fail to deliver necessary benefits for local people. Our session introduced a place-based social value capture method to uncover diverse needs and identify targeted, equitable interventions in the Reggio Emilia Stazione area.

Methodology

Participants were then invited to take part in a workshop that walked them through each step of the methodology in more detail, so that participants could understand and test the method themselves. First participants identified a series of outcomes for the Reggio Emilia Stazione area. This was done using a desktop review approach, i.e. extracting outcomes from the Consulta Area Agreements 2023. Through discussion and voting exercises, participants identified the level of priority of each outcome based on their observations and knowledge from the site visit in the station area earlier in the day, as well as provided their views on the potential interventions that could achieve the identified outcomes. Priority results were obtained using an aggregation method developed by ARU.

Target audience

The workshop targeted festival participants, which in this case were local authority officers as well as other social value practitioners.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

- There is a growing discussion around the Social Value definition, and its delivery as part of the planning and delivery processes.
- The practitioners and decision-makers are seeking to create more value for the local community than the traditional approaches can allow.
- There is an interest in securing specific place-based outcomes, as opposed to top-down standardised outcomes, such as the number of apprenticeships created during construction.

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

- Participants were fully aligned with the strategic direction of the place-based Social Value movement. The different professional backgrounds of participants allowed for a healthy variety of proposed outcomes for the Reggio Emilia Stazione area, which is instrumental for subsequent targeted discussions with local stakeholders.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

- "Social value is defined as 'public value' that includes 'all significant costs and benefits that affect the welfare and wellbeing of the population'. This is supported by interventions to economic, social and environmental factors."

"Social Value emerges from grounding decisions in local needs. Together, we will explore how a place-based lens can steer more just and resilient urban change."

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

- Based on the workshop discussions, strong social support of residents is key to achieving active, pleasant streets and public spaces. It was mentioned as a factor more significant than any public realm intervention. Another finding is the importance of regular maintenance: the issue of rubbish is immediately visible and has a profound impact on one's perception of the area. A quick win for the area would be in securing timely rubbish removal and street cleaning.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

A prioritised list of outcomes was obtained using an aggregation method developed by ARU:

- 1. Supporting local initiatives (score 12)
- 2. Improve the quality of public realm (score 11)
- 3. Increase large & accessible park areas (score 10)
- 4. Reduce summer heat (score 9)
- 5. Reduce noise in the area (score 6)

Note: This shows that social support is seen as more important than physical improvements, in the view of our participants. Also, it is useful to note that the 2nd and 3rd ranking outcomes both identify the importance of accessible green spaces.

In the short time we had, we collectively selected one outcome to develop further and identify actionable steps for the station area. Using their professional judgement and observations, participants recommended a series of interventions for the ""Improve the quality of public realm"" outcome for the station area, which were also voted by priority.

- Provide more education regarding recycling (score 132)
- Transform parking areas into multiple use spaces (score 110)
- Adding more rubbish containers to reduce flytipping (score 88)
- Promote public-private connections to increase the use of private space for public purposes (score 88)

Note: There are 2 interventions regarding rubbish/flytipping in the set. Given the overall number of interventions in the exercise is low due to the time constraints, this shows how the issue of rubbish is immediately visible and has a profound impact on one's perception of the area. The interventions listed above could be further validated with the local community and actioned through available funding streams.

Sirin Hassan
From Margins to Influence: Digital Placemaking with Marginalized Communities - Panel - Designing cities for all: valuing diversity as an approach to urban design

Collaborators: Sirin Hassan (Qalb Al-Balad Placemaking), Minouche Besters (STIPO), Vineeta Shetty (Placemaking India), Guillermo Bernal (The Place Institute)

25th of September - Tecnopolo - conference room (Reggiano Parco Innovazione)

40-50 participants

"Digital tools can turn fragmentation into connection and invisibility into influence. When marginalized communities map, document, and tell their own stories, placemaking becomes a form of collective power."

Main goal

Our session aimed to highlight how digital placemaking becomes a tool of empowerment, resistance, and civic presence in marginalized and indigenous communities across Palestinian inside the green line, India, and Mexico. We sought to show how digital tools can help communities reclaim visibility, narrative, and agency in contexts of exclusion.

Methodology

We used case presentations from India, Palestinian towns inside the green line, and Mexico to immerse participants in real-life placemaking stories rooted in marginalized contexts. These cases demonstrated how digital tools, such as mapping, voice-note documentation, and participatory media; enable local people to lead the process of reviving and reinterpreting public space.

Target audience

Urban practitioners, placemakers, activists, and policymakers interested in inclusion, digital innovation, and community-led transformation, particularly those working with marginalized, indigenous, or politically excluded groups.

What were the most relevant ideas or takeaways from the discussion?

● Participants emphasized that digital tools can amplify marginalized voices, strengthen community ownership, and create new pathways for visibility in planning systems that often overlook them. Another key takeaway was the need to rethink Western framings like "minority" or "marginalized," and instead adopt language that communities themselves feel represented by.

Did any consensus or disagreement emerge?

● There was strong consensus around the importance of benefiting from digital tools in supporting community power, storytelling, and connection. A constructive disagreement emerged around the use of terms such as "minority," leading to deeper reflection on how language shapes identity, agency, and global placemaking narratives.

Were there particular quotes or examples that illustrate your session's main message?

● Examples included Indian women street vendors and waste workers using smartphone voice notes to counter-map their lived city, and Palestinian activists using simple digital platforms such as social media and WhatsApp to self-organize and influence decisions for the first time. These stories showed how everyday tools can catalyze profound shifts in visibility and ownership.

How does this connect to Reggio Emilia's local challenges or practices?

● Reggio Emilia's commitment to social inclusion and community-rooted placemaking aligns closely with our session's theme. The city's emphasis on participatory processes reflects the same belief we highlighted: that meaningful public space emerges when people are trusted as co-creators of their environment.

Did your session generate any follow-up actions, collaborations, or commitments?

● Yes. Participants from the audience reached out to explore future collaborations around digital placemaking and marginalized communities. Additionally, a continued collaboration between India and Palestine was discussed, with shared interest in developing future joint initiatives

Anything else you would like to add?

● Our session affirmed a shared desire to build a global network of placemakers working in marginalized and indigenous contexts, one that exchanges tools, supports local struggles, and strengthens solidarity across borders, and we invite anyone interested to share ideas or opportunities that can help strengthen and developing this network.

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