BRING NATURE HOME

- a practical handbook -

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FOREWORD

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This handbook is a result of an EIT Community New European Bauhaus project - Bring Nature Home. For the last six months, the project leader, UrbanizeHub Romania, has worked to re-connect residents from the Alexandru cel Bun neighbourhood in Iași with nature, while regaining a sense of community and belonging. Thus, the NEB values have been translated into practice through the implementation of biophilic design principles which improved the design and functionality of the area and fostered inclusive activities.

As the topic of participatory, inclusive and sustainable urban design has attained increased attention in recent years, the project team wanted to share its experience and knowledge gained during the various stages, with the hope to help or inspire others trying to tackle similar issues. Whether you are an NGO, public administration or an active citizen looking for guidance and tools to enhance your participatory strategies, this handbook is for you.

This handbook draws upon the experience gained by UrbanizeHub during the implementation of the Bring Nature Home project and makes reference to numerous activities conducted within the scope of the project. It describes the essential steps for a successful participatory urban design process. Starting with the importance of citizen engagement in urban development practices and the need to expand green spaces in between residential blocks, it then moves forward and presents various participatory activities and methods that can bring people closer and foster collaboration across generations. Highlighting the challenges and opportunities encountered by the project team, the handbook provides transparent and step-by-step guidance on how biophilic design can be integrated into urban development.

INTRODUCTION

About UrbanizeHub.

Urbanize Hub is a community of people committed and passionate about the future of cities, a platform for innovation and collaboration, bringing together different stakeholders, including public institutions, companies, non-governmental organisations, architects, urban planners and citizens, to find solutions and ideas for smarter and more sustainable urban development.

UrbanizeHub is a pioneering organisation dedicated to advancing sustainability and combating global warming within the urban context through its comprehensive projects and initiatives. UrbanizeHub is deeply committed to education and active participation, as reflected in its diverse and impactful project portfolio. Leading innovation labs focused on facilitating transitions in sustainable urban mobility, the organisation consistently advocates for sustainable urban development. Additionally, UrbanizeHub organises a variety of events and conferences under the UrbanTalks umbrella, making substantial contributions to the promotion of sustainability in urban contexts. Noteworthy contributions include leading the initial phase of the visionary Line Park Project in Bucharest's 6th district and driving the formulation of city-wide green transformation strategies and climate action plans in various cities across Romania. In a recent milestone, UrbanizeHub facilitated the creation of the Green Cities Alliance, a pact signed by mayors from nine municipalities in Romania, marking a groundbreaking step towards fostering sustainable local development.

Henceforth, UrbanizeHub acquired significant experience over the last years in impactful projects, campaigns and events, which inspire change and provide practical guidance towards a more sustainable future in Romanian urban communities.

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Purpose of the handbook.

This Handbook stands as a beacon of empowerment, charting a transformative journey for communities and local authorities alike. Its core purpose is to guide the replication of the processes used in the pilot project and catalyse active engagement in the metamorphosis of urban spaces. It should be used for **guiding stakeholders** toward the creation of dynamic, sustainable, and nature-integrated environments using the values and principles of the New European Bauhaus.

At its heart, the handbook is **a tool designed to empower** vibrant communities based on the example of Bring Nature Home, the pilot project implemented in the city of Iași, Romania between June and October 2023 and funded by EIT Urban Mobility. It seeks to instil a sense of ownership and agency within residents, transcending passive observer roles to active contributors in the reshaping of their urban surroundings. By equipping individuals with knowledge and practical insights, the handbook becomes a catalyst for community-driven change.

Simultaneously, the handbook **serves as a practical guide,** offering valuable insights for decision-makers dealing with the intricate balance between development and preservation. Its primary aim is to facilitate collaboration between local authorities and community members, providing essential guidance for creating a cohesive and inclusive dialogue that embraces diverse perspectives within the community.

Central to its purpose is the revitalization of underutilised urban spaces. The handbook envisions these spaces not merely as physical landscapes but as canvases for transformation. It advocates for the integration of biophilic design principles, breathing life into neglected areas and establishing connections between urban environments and nature.

In line with the New European Bauhaus values, the handbook embraces sustainability at its core. It guides users in adopting climate-adapted plants, environmentally friendly tools, and recycled materials, aligning urban design efforts with broader sustainability goals.

The handbook goes beyond a singular project; it is a repository of knowledge exchange. Its purpose extends to facilitating collaboration between local authorities, landscape architects, NGOs, and civil society, creating a network of shared wisdom. Furthermore, it aims to be **a replicable model**, offering insights and methodologies that can be adapted and scaled, not just within Iași but serving as inspiration for urban communities in Europe.

In essence, the Participatory Urban Design Handbook for BNH is a visionary catalyst for change. It envisions a future where urban spaces are not just functional but thrive as vibrant, sustainable, and nature-embraced havens. Through empowerment, collaboration, and a commitment to sustainable urban living, the handbook ignites a shared vision of urban spaces that echo the harmonious coexistence of communities and nature.

Objectives and goals of the project:

1. To *empower* residents of Iași to actively contribute to the design and improvement of their local urban spaces. Foster a sense of ownership and responsibility among community members, encouraging them to *actively participate* in the urban design process.
2. Facilitate meaningful *intergenerational dialogue* among children, teenagers, adults, and pensioners. Bridge the generational gap by providing a platform for knowledge exchange, ensuring that the design reflects the diverse needs and perspectives of all age groups.
3. Integrate *biophilic design* principles into the urban fabric to enhance the quality of the environment. Showcase the benefits of incorporating natural elements, fostering biodiversity, and improving overall well-being.
4. Develop an inclusive co-design framework accessible to all stakeholders involved in urban development. Create *a handbook that is user-friendly*, providing practical guidance for implementing participatory and inclusive urban design processes.
5. Develop a *replicable framework* that can be scaled and adapted to different urban contexts. Enable other municipalities and communities to utilise the handbook as a model for implementing participatory and nature-centric urban design initiatives.
6. Align urban design efforts with *sustainability goals* at the local, national, and EU levels. Demonstrate how the BNH initiative contributes to broader sustainability objectives, emphasising the use of climate-adapted plants and environmentally friendly tools.
7. Facilitate *knowledge exchange* between different stakeholders, including local authorities, landscape architects, NGOs, and civil society. Encourage collaboration and collective efforts toward creating sustainable and resilient urban spaces.
8. *Strengthen community identity* by involving residents in the design and regeneration of their public spaces. Establish a shared sense of belonging and pride in the transformed urban environment.

The importance of urban design & landscaping in creating sustainable and livable cities.

Urban design and landscaping play pivotal roles in shaping cities into sustainable and livable spaces, influencing not only the physical environment but also the overall well-being of their inhabitants. The strategic arrangement of buildings, public spaces, and green areas contributes to the creation of a harmonious urban fabric. Thoughtful urban design integrates sustainability principles, fostering environmental resilience by incorporating green infrastructure, optimising energy efficiency, and mitigating the urban heat island effect. Beyond the ecological impact, well-designed urban landscapes enhance the quality of life for residents. Accessible parks, green corridors, and intelligently planned public spaces offer recreational opportunities, promoting physical and mental health. Furthermore, a carefully crafted urban design considers walkability, public transportation, and mixed-use zoning, reducing reliance on private vehicles and fostering community connectivity. In essence, the importance of urban design and landscaping lies in their ability to transform cities into sustainable, vibrant, and people-centric environments that stand as testaments to the harmonious coexistence of nature and urban life.

The importance of community participation in urban design & landscaping.

Community participation in urban design is paramount for creating inclusive, responsive, and vibrant cities. Engaging the community in the urban design process ensures that diverse voices, needs, and aspirations are considered, fostering a sense of ownership and belonging. When residents actively participate in shaping their urban environment, it leads to more contextually relevant and culturally sensitive designs. Beyond this, community involvement promotes transparency, trust, and social cohesion among residents and stakeholders. People become not just recipients but active contributors to the development of their neighbourhoods, enhancing a collective sense of responsibility. This participatory approach often results in innovative solutions and sustainable designs that address local challenges and reflect the unique character of the community. Ultimately, the importance of community participation in urban design lies in its capacity to empower individuals, strengthen social bonds, and contribute to the creation of resilient, people-centred urban spaces.

Brief introduction to the specific context of the handbook.

Situated in the northeastern region of Romania, Iași is a city renowned for its historical significance, cultural vibrancy, and architectural legacy. Recognized as the cultural capital of the nation, Iași harmoniously combines medieval allure with a lively contemporary atmosphere. However, similar to many urban centres, it faces the challenge of transforming overlooked spaces to meet the evolving needs of its residents, all while struggling to foster sustainability. With a growing population of over 300.000 inhabitants, the city struggles to ensure the 26 sqm/inhabitant value of green space per capita imposed by both national legislation and the EU.

Having the second highest population density in Iași, the Alexandru cel Bun neighbourhood is characterised by crowded housing units while only 11% of its surface is covered by green spaces. Thus, choosing an underutilised space from this neighbourhood for the proposed transformation was thought to be beneficial for the inhabitants, mostly families with children and pensioners. As residents' accessibility to green spaces is limited and the connectivity to other parks or recreational areas in the city is low, the transformation of existing urban infrastructure offered a solution to these challenges.

Location of the intervention.

The space is located on Bistrița Street No 8, Alexandru cel Bun neighbourhood, in the city of Iași, Romania. A specific area of intervention was deliberately not chosen as in order to achieve our aim - to make everything participatory and to create a community - we had to let the participants choose a specific area. Thus, we considered two areas: the study area, i.e. the macro area where all the project activities took place, which measured about 400 sqm and was represented by the space behind blocks A1-A8 and the micro area, the actual space set up in the Bring Nature Home project, which measured about 40 sqm, i.e. about 10% of the macro area.

As it was mentioned, the specific location for the micro-intervention was determined through interactive workshops with the community and informal interviews involving children, parents, and grandparents. These qualitative engagements yielded valuable insights that guided the selection of the appropriate site for the intervention. During these interactions, we discovered that the playground situated behind the blocks is commonly referred to as the "Hidden Park" due to its previous concealment by nearby garages. Over time, multiple generations have enjoyed this space, making it a cherished landmark in the collective memory. However, changes in spatial configuration, including the demolition of garages, have altered the intimate and familiar character of the area.

Applying
New European Bauhaus
Values and Principles

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The New European Bauhaus constitutes a creative and interdisciplinary initiative that establishes a nexus between the European Green Deal and our living spaces. It manifests as a transdisciplinary movement that bridges science, technology, art, and culture. The initiative's objective is to leverage the challenges presented by the green and digital transitions to effect positive transformations in our lives. It extends an invitation for collaborative endeavours to address intricate societal issues through co-creation.

The New European Bauhaus inspires a movement grounded in three fundamental values: sustainability, aesthetics, and inclusion. These values encompass climate goals, circularity, zero pollution, biodiversity, quality of experience, style, diversity appreciation, accessibility, and affordability. Functioning as a platform for citizens, experts, businesses, and institutions, the New European Bauhaus collectively envisions sustainable living in Europe and beyond. Beyond fostering experimentation and connections, the initiative facilitates positive change by offering access to EU funding for projects aligned with the principles of beauty, sustainability, and inclusivity.

In aligning with the New European Bauhaus, the Bring Nature Home project sought to address the challenges posed by the green transition, particularly in transforming urban landscapes. The emphasis on co-creation and collaboration within the New European Bauhaus framework encouraged community engagement, echoing the participatory design principles that underpinned the Bring Nature Home project.

Furthermore, the New European Bauhaus's commitment to connecting diverse stakeholders, including citizens,

experts, and institutions, influenced the collaborative nature of the Bring Nature Home initiative. The shared values of both initiatives, such as the importance of biodiversity, accessibility, and afford-ability, contributed to a cohesive vision for enhancing the quality of urban living.

Overall, the New European Bauhaus served as a guiding compass, shaping the approach and values of the "Bring Nature Home" project, developed in the city of Iași, to create more sustainable, aesthetically pleasing, and inclusive ur-ban environments. This handbook draws inspiration from the principles of the New European Bauhaus, shaping its approach, values, and strategies to foster the de-velopment of a more comprehensive and community-driven approach to urban de-velopment.

The "Bring Nature Home" project is a concrete manifestation of New European Bauhaus (NEB) values and principles, ad-dressing innovative ways of urban regen-eration through community involvement and the adoption of biophilic design. We will explore how the project integrated the three core NEB values of Sustainabil-ity (Sustainable), Aesthetics (Beautiful) and Inclusion (Together), as well as the application of the three key NEB princi-ples of Participatory Process, Multi-level Engagement and Transdisciplinary Ap-proach.

Sustainability through biophilic design.

The Bring Nature Home project addressed sustainability through biophilic design, using principles that support the restoration and revitalization of the relationship between community and environment. Through the use of climate-adapted plants, recyclable materials, and environmentally friendly tools, the project contributes to sustainability goals while having a positive impact on the environment and society.

Integrated aesthetics and enhanced functionality.

The "beauty" of the "Bring Nature Home" project is not just a superficial component but is integrated into the improved functionality of the area. By applying the principles of biophilic design, the area is clearly demarcated, regaining its function in the neighbourhood and giving it the quality necessary to be considered a public green space. In addition, the study of the context and the careful choice of all elements, plants and materials used in the design contributed to an aesthetically pleasing solution. In this way, aesthetics become an essential part of the project, contributing to the creation of a collective identity and connecting people to the beauty of untouched nature.

Inclusion through inter-generational participation.

NEB's principle of inclusion is reflected in the way the project has involved all age groups, from children and teenagers to adults and retirees. Children contributed creative ideas through drawings, teenagers used their writing and photography skills to identify problems and solutions, and adults and retirees provided qualitative feedback based on their experience of the evolution of the space over the years.

Participatory process and multi-level approach.

The participatory process was the foundation of the project, where all participants were involved in identifying problems, proposing solutions and co-creating the transformation concept. By organising a co-design workshop, the project brought together over 60 participants, ensuring that residents felt empowered and that there was an exchange of knowledge between generations. The multi-level approach was also reflected in the involvement of local government, landscape architects, NGOs and civil society, ensuring a collective and transdisciplinary approach.

The "Bring Nature Home" project in Iasi is not only an example of urban regeneration but also a successful model of applying NEB values and principles in a specific context. By integrating sustainability, aesthetics and inclusiveness at every stage of the project, it demonstrates how the New European Bauhaus approach can transform urban spaces into living, nature-connected and future-oriented communities.

Why Participatory Processes?

Co-creation processes, integral to emotional and affective development, offer a platform for individuals to express feelings and enhance social skills. Particularly for children engaged in reshaping cities, co-creation fosters teamwork, empathy, and a deeper understanding of emotions. It also contributes to developing self-confidence and self-esteem, as participants feel valued for their contributions.

Encouraging co-creation processes and participatory initiatives is crucial for fostering creativity and critical thinking. Participatory urbanism, a global movement advocating a social and cooperative model of city management, involves collective leadership from community members, local businesses, non-profit organisations, and local authorities.

The trend towards introducing participatory approaches to urban system management gains momentum, challenging traditional flat-planning. The evolving perspective on the relationship between individuals and the built environment empowers communities and individuals to shape cities to align with their well-being.

Research on ensuring urban life quality through planning is limited. Economic aspects often dominate studies, overshadowing interconnected factors that ensure overall quality of life. The concept of quality of life gained attention only recently, facing integration challenges into the existing urban framework.

Participatory urbanism has roots in the Situationist movement, shaped by Guy Debord's and Jane Jacobs's discourses. Emerging in the 1970s, participatory movements, spurred by cultural liberation trends, led to various civic manifestations, reflecting communities' concerns and priorities.

Participatory urbanism trends, such as DIY urbanism, informal urbanism, tactical urbanism, and temporary urbanism, involve citizen-led interventions. These approaches contribute to social cohesion, addressing social, cultural, spatial, and environmental concerns, promoting sustainability, and creating affordable alternatives for public spaces.

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Participatory processes vary in occurrence (organic or planned) and evolution (linear or cyclical). They aim to improve public spaces, contributing to social cohesion. Though context-defined, consolidated methodologies support participatory practices. Identifying real community needs is vital for constructing effective participatory processes at the urban level.

The application of participatory methods in urban planning thrives when the community's value is perceived as a resource, leading to effective communication and fulfilling the real needs of citizens. Participatory interventions actively contribute to managing urban landscapes, anchoring functionality, culture, and aesthetics more efficiently than administrative projects.

Overcoming limitations requires acknowledging the triad of information, consultation, and involvement in participatory processes. Mediation, improved communication, and deep democracy principles enhance the efficiency of urban development processes.

Case Studies

The aim of selecting these case studies is to pinpoint urban scenarios that hold broad relevance in contemporary settings — situations that can significantly impact the trajectory of participatory processes at the urban level, whether positively or negatively. The objective is to scrutinise each situation, discerning best practices in participatory urbanism. This analysis seeks to establish guidelines for formulating a strategy conducive to implementing participatory processes. Additionally, one can view this through the lens of participatory landscaping, an emerging term that, with our assistance, may gain wider recognition as an exemplar of good practice.

This research delves into various factors shaping the execution of participatory urban action, encompassing:

→ Identifying opportunities or driving forces;
→ Examining initiators, be they internal or external entities;
→ Exploring the relationship to site specificity;
→ Evaluating alignment with genuine community needs versus spontaneous generation;
→ Analysing community reaction and organisation;
→ Assessing the local government's stance and its impact on the process;
→ Considering the nature of the process, accounting for different degrees of freedom of expression among community members;
→ Examining the level of rigidity in administering the participatory process.

Despite considerations of location and the characteristics of host cities, it proved challenging to identify examples that closely align with the city of Iași. However, it is noteworthy that cities of similar size or population, ranking high in smart city indices or quality of life rankings, exhibit few instances of participatory urbanism. This scarcity may stem from urban conditions that do not provoke such reactions, a phenomenon more necessary in cities with a lower quality of life.

Participatory processes, regardless of their nature, are inherently influenced by a myriad of factors — spatial, demographic, social, economic, and cultural. Recognizing that participatory urban planning projects operate at the community level rather than the scale of the entire city, the absence of easily comparable examples in cities akin to Iași does not undermine the feasibility of such a project. Starting with the premise of equality between communities, the selected case studies focus on analysing diverse strategies and typologies of interventions in participatory urbanism, disregarding location and preserving local qualities as a reality to be addressed later.

Madrid, Spain: El campo de Cebada - creating a public space on the site of a former market

Background.

In the 1970s, part of Madrid's food markets were covered with metal structures and transformed into municipal markets. La Cebada Market, one of the oldest markets in Madrid, also suffered the same fate, becoming a meeting and social centre for the inhabitants of the working-class neighbourhood of La Latina. In the middle of the 20th century, due to the hygienic conditions imposed by the legislature, the elegant metal structures of the previous century were replaced by massive concrete volumes that enclosed the space.

In 1968, the last free space in La Cebada Square was also occupied by a municipal sports centre, at which point the square completely lost its character as an open public space. In the 21st century, the City Council presents a plan to reclassify the two public facilities (the new market and the sports centre) and privatise them. The sports centre was demolished in 2009, and although it was the only sports venue in the district, due to the economic crisis, no investor has been willing to build another one. Thus, in the heart of the historic city centre, there is now only a derelict site of about 5500 square metres, surrounded by an opaque fence.

The first public intervention in this space took place as part of the "White Night" initiative, which periodically proposes the temporary occupation of a public space with the aim of improving the relationship between the city and its inhabitants. A rainforest and an open swimming pool were set up here, attracting enthusiasm from residents about the potential of this space.

Purpose.

With the removal of the 'installation', residents felt disenfranchised. They did not want to give up the space that was theirs and in which they felt comfortable, especially as the City Council did not keep its prom-

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ise to offer again the facilities that once existed there. People of all ages and young architects came together under the name "El Campo de Cebada" (The Barley Field) to find a way to keep the space in the community's use until the eventual construction site could begin.

To this end, they launched a website for information and discussion and held several meetings in a nearby bar so they could agree on the demands they wanted to make of the council. Although they did not want permanent intervention to prevent the construction of future facilities, nor disruptive activities at night, the officials were nevertheless reluctant to the proposal, arguing that the group was not an association and that the transfer of a public area to which a project had already been assigned required the presence of a legal entity to negotiate with the public administration.

In addition, a host of administrative issues were also raised: who would hold the keys, how exactly the space would be used and between what hours, who would be responsible for insurance, who would sign for the work, who would finance it, etc.

However, all those involved insisted, showing themselves willing to experiment a new way of collaboration with the City Council, so that the space in question could be used as a support for various social activities, and they themselves would be directly responsible for proposals, decision making and administration. It was only in 2011, after the neighbourhood associations had been legally established, that they received permission from the Council for temporary use of the space.

Process description.

The first activities that took place on the site were weekly meetings where committees were formed to propose and approve activities to be carried out there. Proposals from internet users and other interested people, as well as information about planned events, were posted on the website and on boards at the entrance to the site. Soon the site was cleaned up and provided with water and electricity, the sports areas were painted and football goals and basketball hoops were installed.

The grey of the cement was replaced by colours and graffiti by local artists. There is also an area where children can skate or ride their bikes, safe from cars. The street furniture was created from recycled materials in "temporary urban design - handmade" workshops. The objects produced in these workshops are mobile and flexible, so they can, for example, mark out a play-

ground.

The success of the local basketball team led to the need for tiered seating mounted on the ramp that gave access to the court. Large boxes on wheels were planted with plants that could be moved around so they could enjoy enough sun. Moreover, the residents regularly organise botany and horticulture courses. To avoid the summer heat, a shelter has been built from a metal structure with recycled textiles covering the entire site. A container for storing tools and some street furniture was placed on top, forming a terrace that functions as a grandstand during public events.

There is indeed a wide variety of public events and the programme of plays, open-air cinema, conferences and concerts is dynamic and constant. One of the most popular programme elements is the "Piscinazo", where in summer several inflatable pools are set up and various games are organised. Local festivities, traditional dance events or open-air celebrations, etc. are also organised here.

In addition to all this, there are also spaces for private social initiatives such as debates, communal breakfasts or meetings to resolve conflicts.

Evaluation.

With regard to the genesis of this project, it is interesting to identify the generating characteristics of the urban focus, i.e. to observe the reactive character of the project, as a response to a national-critical situation: Spain is today one of the countries with most participatory interventions at urban level. Apart from the revolutionary nature of the Spanish population, an additional reason for this boom in participation and involvement of both the population and specialists is the economic crisis.

The development of the economy since the 2000s has also had a positive impact on the architectural profession, which is seeking new ways of shaping the urban environment together with the community. In a sense, El Campo de Cebada began as a spontaneous response by citizens to an unusual situation resulting from the collapse of the country's construction industry.

"El Campo de Cebada" is a telling experiment for local administrations, specialists and citizens alike. Administrators should consider the spontaneity of this project, which has challenged the official channels with a bold initiative, remarkable for its transparency, participation and social

inclusion. Fully aware of its provisional status, the project originated in a dispute with the administrative sector, which ultimately benefited both sides. In addition, the project now sets a precedent that could be repeated anywhere, given the frequency of abandoned spaces today.

As far as the architects and engineers are concerned, the project becomes interesting because of its temporary nature and the fact that it is the result of a consensus, not the orders of an external entity. Unlike the fate of most public spaces, in this case function precedes form. The space is constantly reshaped through an open and dynamic process led by people with the necessary technical knowledge. They are in partnership with the users, whom they train, sharing skills and goals.

For the locals, "El Campo de Cebada" is proof that together they can improve the city, that there is more than just top-down urban planning. After living as a volume for several decades, the space has returned to being perceived as a market, as there is now once again an open-air area accessible to the community. It is no longer an inaccessible empty space, abandoned indefinitely, but a public space in the true sense of the word, enjoyed by the whole community, all the more so as it is used by many members of the community.

Conclusions.

The interaction between groups of young architects over time is to be appreciated in this example. The architects from Exyzt proposed the island intervention with a swimming pool, those from Todo Por La Praxis came up with the structure for the terraces and the suspended container, Paisaje Transversal proposed street furniture and provided the necessary infrastructure for meetings and debates or other social activities, etc. On the other hand, the interlinked non-governmental organisations and residents' associations also functioned as a support facility for the smooth running of the space, ensuring dynamism and continuity in use until today.

Since its creation, El Campo de Cebada has become a process dedicated to participation, transparency and sociability, an example of place-making through cooperation between citizens and local authorities, proposing new perspectives for the image of the city in the 21st century. As a result of the economic downturn, citizens have become motivated to find new possibilities to build the urban space according to their own desires, so that it reflects their needs and ultimately their identity.

This has been made possible through the concept of non-authorship, whereby people work to-

gether to take care of their urban space and, by making decisions together and through participation, they are able to reverse the top-down urban planning model.

Nevertheless, El Campo de Cebada remains a unique model for exploiting the possibilities of collaboration between officials and a community, all the more so because although it has encountered difficulties, even conflicts between the two sides, solutions have always been found, which will indeed constitute a precedent for any future urban interventions.
New ideas in economics and urbanism, such as co-creation - the creation of solutions together with their beneficiaries - or collaborative consumption - the sharing and exchange of resources between people, supported by constant, transparent and interactive communication, allow the democratisation of community space and the redefinition of the relationship between people and the city, as well as between members of a community.

It follows from this that the most important factor in redefining/improving urban life and space is to discover and correctly interpret the needs and expectations of the inhabitants, and then, as a result of a real dialogue between them, the authorities and specialists, to be able to participate and take decisions on the reconfiguration of public space.

Learning key points.

This experience teaches us valuable lessons for our own small intervention area. Conflict emerges as an inherent aspect of the design process, offering a pathway for transformation. Understanding the genuine needs of the community proves to be of utmost significance. To achieve this, we conducted surveys, posing questions that prompted the community to recognize the potential for a green space in what was initially envisioned as a parking area. Furthermore, we discovered the benefits of collaborative efforts, emphasising the importance of teamwork. To enhance the intervention, we engaged a local NGO for support and enlisted the skills of local artists to infuse the site with their creative contributions.

- *Significance of understanding community needs - Recognizing the genuine needs of the community is crucial. Surveys were conducted to prompt the community to identify the potential for a green space in an area initially intended for parking.*

- *Benefits of collaborative efforts - To enhance the intervention, we engaged a local NGO for support and enlisted the skills of local artists to infuse the site with their creative contributions.*

Source of the images: https://www.publicspace.org/works/-/project/g362-the-barley-field

Ljublijana, Slovenia: Beyond a Construction Site - building community gardens on an abandoned site

The project presents the transformation of a derelict area of land into a community space by a group of young architects working with the residents of the neighbourhood to create urban gardens, provide a space for socialising, develop environmental projects, education and culture. The aim of the project is to examine and reveal the potential of neglected urban areas and the possibility of their valorisation through temporary use and interventions involving the community.

Background.

The land, located not far from the main railway station and the old town, was in a state of neglect, becoming over time overgrown with weeds and rubbish. In 2010, the 'Beyond a Construction Site' project began as part of a larger Bunker Institute programme called 'Garden By the Way'. This programme proposed a series of events (pre- and anticipatory actions) in the Tabor neighbourhood, with the aim of raising awareness/attention to green spaces in the city and encouraging urban gardening, providing support for the creation of social urban spaces

An oversized building site in the middle of a residential neighbourhood, a result of real estate speculation, was considered to be an ideal place for such initiatives, because of the area of need it indirectly proposes: another kind of urban revitalisation, in which space becomes first and foremost, or rather becomes again the support for social actions.

Purpose.

The development of an urban community garden on a site in the city centre, in the ownership of the state, is also a critique of the new local policy of organising and renting small parks for gardening - a rigid, standardised and formalistic approach. Many of the public gardens maintained by citizens have been destroyed by the municipality on the grounds that they are unsightly or should not occupy land in the central part of the city, and as there are currently no public funds to provide state-maintained garden plots, there is virtually no discussion in Ljubljana about the impossibility of urban gardening.

The authors of this initiative considered it essential that the local government review its position on urban gardening by systematically supporting community environmental initiatives. Involv-

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ing the public in an active way in the planning and management of abandoned spaces was vital to transfer this project to other areas of the city.

Process description.

After finding out the owners of the land (Municipality of the City of Ljubljana) the residents of the Tabor district were invited to take part in the process of planning, design and use of the site. Through informal conversations with the residents but also with those who work in the area, it was first verified whether the proposal to turn the site into a green space for the community was agreed upon and desired and also data collection was carried out on the wishes, needs and ideas of those who are in the area of influence of this space, being influenced by this presence directly in their daily life. Indeed, the participants affirmed and confirmed the need for green spaces, gardens and places to socialise, and the presentation of the survey results to the municipality led to its agreement to give the land to people for use.

With the permission of the Municipality of Ljubljana, the site was opened for temporary use for the duration of the "Garden By the Way" programme, but the City of Ljubljana was asked to extend the land use permit - free of charge - until the opening of the construction site of the proposed building on the plot.

A gate was first installed to allow access to the site, and the area was cleared, with care taken to preserve the existing trees and wild plants. Planning for the organisation of the space started with the active engagement of residents and other interested residents. During the summer, autumn and winter, there was a low number of participants, especially in terms of organising and clearing the site. At the end of December, the municipality showed its support for the citizens' initiative to maintain a space belonging to the city by offering them a contract of use for the whole of the following year. In the spring, residents' enthusiasm began to grow with the launch of the "Make your own garden" project. The invitation to take part in the project anticipated residents' desire to cultivate small areas of land, building on a local tradition. Recycled materials or materials found on the site were used to design the planting plots.

The initiators of the project have defined 3 basic rules regarding the use and organisation of the site: each person is responsible for setting up their own seedling area; chemicals are forbidden; the common area will be cared for by all participants in the project. Community members received, after signing a declaration, keys to the main gate and to the common tool shed.

Evaluation.

The role of the public and their active inclusion in decision-making on the development and organisation of the space were significant aspects of the project, as public participation in both architectural and urban planning allowed the limits of neo-liberal urban policies, whose only aim was economic growth, to be overcome.

In addition, the concept of participation was seen as an opportunity to redefine architectural and urban planning practice in this case as well. At a time of exponential development of the market-oriented society, architects became critical of the acceptance of architecture as a discipline centred on itself, on architecture as an object, considering it necessary for this notion to undergo a semantic expansion so as to include the processes and relationships achieved as a result of the creation of a space.

This project started from the idea that participation should not become a standardised norm or technique, as this would imply standardised participants, and since communities are not abstract entities of participants, there cannot be one general method of participation. Precisely in this sense, the initiators chose to leave the area of methods and methodologies and to refer to the space through intuition and questionnaires, proposition and invitation, informal attitudes in the field of architecture and urbanism specialists, which however managed to win over the inhabitants precisely by their non-specific character.

The assessment of the process, the outcome and the possible future effects converge, in this case, in a series of guidelines on the relationship to the city of both the community, the specialists and the public administration. The implementation of the project today constitutes a precedent that on the one hand allows the relaxation of rigid policies in favour of the needs of the community and on the other stimulates its interest in public space and the possibilities it offers.

Conclusions.

Unlike the previous example, in this case, the real needs of the community were speculated, then the validity of the hypothesis was verified and only after the confirmation of the hypothesis the steps for the occupation of the land began. Thus, although this process was also initiated by a group of architects, they were anchored more in the stated needs of the community than in the social-spatial needs, which are otherwise more difficult to intuit and quantify.

The less experimental nature of the intervention and more based on concrete realities identified as problematic facilitated the relationship with the municipality, which assimilated the public desire despite the context given by local policies on urban gardening. All the more so, in this example, the support of the municipality was seen as a positive thing by the community, even if the promise received from officials was only of a temporary nature. This example can now be used as a precedent to generate more urban gardens in the city, with the community already taking a new position in the negotiation dialogue with the authorities.

Learning key points.

While communication between communities and local authorities may sometimes be lacking, a collaborative approach could involve initiating a temporary project. This allows the assessment of its impact, and if the community responds positively, the City Hall can then explore ways to make it a permanent fixture. In our project, we followed this strategy, considering the ambiguous status of the implementation area. Here, conflicting preferences existed, with most people envisioning the space as a parking lot while the authorities aimed to convert it into a green space. Therefore, our implementation approach involved occupying a space closer to the existing playground and transforming it into a small garden.

- *Collaborative approach to address potential communication challenges - Utilise temporary projects as a practical tool to assess community responses, providing a basis for informed decisions on permanent interventions.*

- *Strategic implementation in ambiguous contexts - Considering the conflicting preferences, as most people envision the space as a parking lot while the authorities aimed to convert it into a green space, our implementation approach involved occupying a space closer to the existing playground and transforming it into a small garden.*

ONKRAJ GRADBIŠČA

Resljeva

obstoječa, starejša
večstanovanjska hiša z
vhodom z Resljeve

1. vhod
nasproti Resljeve 32
2. rampa
(utrjena zemljina
in lesene podpore)
3. stopnice
(utrjena zemljina
in lesene podpore)
4. gredice
(okrasne rastline,
zelenjava, dišavnice)
**5. obstoječa drevesa
in grmovje**
6. steze
7. Obstoječa ploščad
(predavanja, dogodki)
8. namestitev nove ograje
na ob večmetrov globoke
gradbene jame)
9. kompost
10. zbiralnik za deževnico
speljano s strehe
obstoječega
objekta na Resljevi
**11. večnamenska
površina** za otroška
igrala, peskovnik
**12. obstoječ zeleni
pas dreves**, ki obkroža gradbišče

Obstoječi niz blokov Resljeva
s pogledom na gradbišče

Zadnji stanovanjski
blok v nizu od Kotnikove
proti Resljevi,
s pogledom
na gradbišče

36

Tools and Methods

The significance of engaging in play for both children and adults.

An essential aspect of participatory processes lies in their inherently playful nature. Play serves as a vital source of energy, fostering optimism, boosting the immune system, nurturing empathy, and instilling a sense of community belonging. The study of play encompasses various perspectives, including its impact on the brain, its significance across different age groups, and topics such as Nature Deficit Disorder.

In the past century, societal shifts have significantly influenced the play behaviour of individuals of all ages. Children's reduced exposure to nature, both in terms of time spent outdoors and the scale of accessible outdoor spaces, has been noted by parents, families, and education professionals. This shift is increasingly linked to physical and emotional health issues in young children. Limited access to nature hampers various aspects of children's development, while active outdoor learning stimulates physical, cognitive, and social dimensions more effectively than indoor environments. Furthermore, it helps maintain a harmonious balance between seriousness and playfulness, crucial in today's turbulent world.

6

The importance of play extends beyond children to encompass adults, particularly in outdoor environments. Unlike indoor play areas, outdoor spaces offer distinctive advantages that cater to the needs of both age groups. Playfulness in adulthood serves as a valuable outlet for stress relief, fostering creativity, and promoting overall well-being. It provides a break from the demands of daily life, allowing individuals to relax and rejuvenate. Moreover, incorporating play into adult routines encourages a sense of joy and spontaneity, contributing to improved mental health. Whether through sports, games, or creative endeavors, engaging in play enhances social connections, stimulates cognitive functions, and adds a refreshing element to the often hectic adult lifestyle. In the realm of place-making, these spaces become crucial elements in shaping social and cultural identity. For children, outdoor play establishes

connections with the broader world, granting them opportunities to actively contribute to its formation. Moreover, the psychological advantages of green spaces empower children to explore, take risks, and interact with their surroundings on various scales, fostering holistic development.

The Attention Restoration Theory suggests that exposure to nature enhances attention and focus, allowing individuals to "rest" their directed attention. Play serves as a generator and transmitter of culture, tapping into creativity by revealing new worlds and rules. Society has readily embraced the idea of designated play areas for children in public spaces, such as playgrounds and kindergartens, particularly in urban settings. The evolution of urban movements, starting with the Situationist movement, has deepened the exploration of cities and communities' playful capacities, emphasising the subjective and emotional dimensions. There is a growing interest in playful landscapes and exploring their roles and advantages in urban environments. This presents an opportunity to perceive the city as a collective playground for both children and adults.

Our modules are grounded in this often-overlooked significance of play. Through workshop activities designed to relax and uplift the community's mood, we aimed to encourage playfulness. Games played with children, parents and even grandparents during the workshops were later transformed by the team into substantive solutions for the Bistrița Street space.

Ecopedagogy - a tool for empowering biophilic design.

We firmly believe that the challenges we face in life are rooted in our struggle to live authentically and responsibly. In a society fixated on financial pursuits, we often overlook essential aspects like gratitude for our natural resources, taking them for granted. The current climate crisis signals nature's subtle warning that our relationship with it needs reevaluation.

The initial step is for each of us to monitor and restore our authentic connection with nature, fostering a keen desire to protect it. However, this necessitates increased and equitable accessibility to the natural environment. Unfortunately, our current situation isn't ideal, as psychological and emotional recovery often occurs in clinics rather than amid the soothing embrace of a forest. Trees and greenery, in addition to providing emotional solace, also contribute to cooling the air, combating the urban heat island effect.

One of the significant challenges in our project was the conflict between cars dominating pub-

lic spaces and the pedestrian areas serving as mere appendages to roads. This mirrored the situation in the designated green space on Bistrita Street, utilised predominantly for parking instead of its intended purpose. Solutions to address this issue involve creating free public car parks on the outskirts of the city, coupled with efficient public transportation, thereby gradually reducing the number of cars in central areas.

The urban heat we experience is exacerbated by materials used in pavements and structures absorbing solar heat. By incorporating planted surfaces and natural materials, such as wood, we can create a protective urban blanket. Afforestation of available land is another solution, fostering a cooler urban environment.
Public administrations can learn from successful initiatives worldwide. For instance, Paris established 'cold' islands connected by tree-lined walkways to combat heat-related issues. Seville implemented shading policies and extensive tree planting, while Rotterdam plans substantial rooftop greenery. Athens is renovating a historic aqueduct to reintroduce water into the city.

Recognizing the challenges and opportunities for positive change is the first step. Reclaiming nature as part of our living space empowers us to become proactive, from organising balcony gardens to participating in community green projects. Studies highlight the positive impact of nature on emotional and mental well-being, emphasising the need to address issues like Nature Deficit Disorder.

Ecopedagogy, an interdisciplinary field focusing on environmental education, plays a crucial role in fostering a sustainable and responsible attitude toward the environment. Integrating eco-pedagogical principles into community actions, such as nature study, environmental conservation projects, and sustainable development education, is essential for creating a more harmonious relationship between humanity and nature.

Biophilic design and communities.

When considering the principles of biophilic design, various perspectives come into play, encompassing general principles such as the incorporation of environmental features, utilisation of natural shapes and forms, integration of natural patterns and processes, manipulation of light and space, establishment of place-based relationships, and recognition of evolved human-nature relationships.

In our view, all nature-based interventions inherently lean towards being biophilic. However,

what held particular significance in this project extended beyond the creation of a garden between blocks. Our emphasis was on incorporating personal experiences and community insights. Rather than solely focusing on crafting organic shapes and involving natural materials, we sought to foster a connection through the communal understanding and personal experiences of the individuals involved. The true essence of biophilia, in our conception, emerged as we encouraged people to bring elements from their surroundings that held personal significance and share their feelings with one another.

The design featured organic shapes and incorporated natural materials, with structures designed to cater to the diverse population, enhancing the biodiversity of the area. Thoughtful consideration went into the selection of plant species, opting for those compatible with the specific light conditions of the location. Moreover, the chosen species were those requiring minimal maintenance. While the community established a maintenance schedule and responsibilities during the final workshop, our intention was to ensure this aspect remained as straightforward as possible for them.

Additionally, the plant selection aimed to create a sense of familiarity by choosing species native to rural areas. This deliberate choice was intended to forge a connection with the residents who had previously lived in the countryside before relocating to the city.

Implementation

Site location - presentation of relevant aspects of the site study.

The chosen micro area was not being fully utilised. Even though it was right in front of a playground, people were parking cars there, making it difficult for others to reach the playground. The ground was a mix of packed earth, gravel, and broken stones, and because of the slope, puddles often formed when it rained. There was also a neglected and vandalised district heating point nearby. The playground itself had old and poorly maintained furniture and equipment. Given all these factors, we came to the realisation that the location had essentially transformed into an ideal testing ground for biophilic design.

The transformation of the space is vividly evident in the tangible results of our collaborative efforts. The once-neglected area now boasts vibrant greenery, colourful flowers, and inviting pathways that beckon residents and visitors alike. The introduction of benches and seating areas offers places for social interaction and relaxation.

Our community mobilisation strategy played a pivotal role in this metamorphosis. We engaged residents through workshops, events, and open dialogues, encouraging them to actively participate in the decision-making process. The Wishing Tree, an emblem of collective dreams, facilitated a deeper connection among community members, fostering a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the transformed space.

Looking ahead, the future of this revitalised area is promising. We envision ongoing collaborations with local stakeholders, including city officials, businesses, and neighbourhood associations. This entails creating a maintenance plan and implementing rules for the utilisation of green space, actively involving the community in the care of the greenery to guarantee its long-term sustainability. Regular workshops and events will continue to encourage a sense of pride and belonging among residents, fostering a dynamic relationship between the community and the transformed space. Through these measures, we aim to cultivate a lasting impact on the well-being of our community.

7

Methodology of intervention in the public space by creating a community.

In the pursuit of revitalising public spaces as dynamic community hubs, a comprehensive and inclusive methodology is essential. Our approach pivots on the active engagement of the community throughout the entire intervention-from preliminary needs assessments to collaborative design, seamless implementation and sustained maintenance. By fostering partnerships with stakeholders, embracing creative expression and conducting iterative design processes, the aim is not only to enhance the physical aspects of public spaces but also to cultivate a strong sense of community ownership and pride. This section outlines a comprehensive methodology that prioritises community empowerment, inclusivity and sustainable practices to create public spaces that resonate with the unique identity and aspirations of the people they serve.

Project Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement.

At the project's inception, our primary focus was on forming essential partnerships with local entities such as kindergartens, schools, elderly homes, and community organizations. Concurrently, we introduced the project to both the community and stakeholders, seeking initial input to shape the project's trajectory.

Community Workshops and Peer Learning Activities.

Diverse workshops were conducted to gather insights and feedback from community members spanning various age groups. A unique feature, "The Wishing Tree" panel, was erected, providing children with a platform to contribute creative solutions and ideas for the envisioned urban garden.

Design and Planning Phase.

This phase revolved around the concept of The Wishing Tree. The Wishing Tree is a symbolic and participatory activity that involves individuals expressing their hopes, dreams, or wishes by writing them down on pieces of paper and attaching them to a designated tree. The tree serves as a visual representation of collective aspirations within a community or group.

Participants are encouraged to think about their personal desires, goals, or positive affirmations and then write them on tags, ribbons, or pieces of paper. These wishes are then attached to the branches of the Wishing Tree. The tree, adorned with these collective aspirations, becomes a

powerful and tangible embodiment of shared dreams.

The Wishing Tree concept is often used in community events, workshops, or public spaces to promote unity, positivity, and a sense of belonging. It fosters a connection among individuals who contribute their wishes, creating a shared experience and a visual reminder of collective optimism.

The solutions and ideas curated from "The Wishing Tree" panel were entrusted to a dedicated team of teenagers. Under the guidance of the project team, these teenagers translated these concepts into a tangible garden design plan, ensuring the inclusion of the community's collective vision.

Implementation Phase.

The tangible realisation of the urban garden involved collaborative efforts between teenagers and the elderly. Together, they engaged in planting and maintaining the garden, not only bringing the design to life but also nurturing intergenerational learning and fostering meaningful bonds within the community.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Feedback.

Post-establishment of the urban garden, our commitment extended to ongoing monitoring of its progress and its impact on the community. Integral to this process was the collection of feedback from community members and stakeholders, providing valuable insights to gauge project success and identify areas for refinement and enhancement.

Achieving various objectives through this approach includes:

- Community empowerment: Empowering the community by providing a platform for expressing their wishes and discovering their identity through the creation of a wish tree.

- Youth involvement: Promoting children's active participation and leveraging their ideas through initiatives like a garden design competition for young people.
- Intergenerational

- Collaboration: Involving adults and older individuals in the selection of winning ideas, fosters intergenerational collaboration.

- Inclusiveness: Realising the project with active involvement from all age groups, ensuring a collective effort in its implementation.

Considering the current state of the site, originally functioning as a parking lot, we formulated specific design guidelines:

- Seating and gathering spaces: Incorporating wooden garden furniture with four seats and a small table to facilitate social interaction and communal activities.

- Paving design: Introducing wooden roundels and boulders in designated areas, providing contrast to the existing dirt and dust, while simultaneously delineating spaces for play, sitting, and relaxation.

- Environmental enhancements: Integrating birdhouses and an insect hotel crafted in collaboration with kindergarten children, fostering environmental awareness and interaction.

- Playground expansion: Installing a net in the existing playground, expanding the range of activities and enhancing the overall functionality of the space.

- Indicating access: Incorporating an access apparatus to the playground, symbolizing an invitation for the gradual transformation of the space from its previous usage as a car park.

Participatory activities in urban design and landscaping - a method of intervention in the community.

We will outline a series of outdoor activities that we used in our pilot project centred around the co-creation principle, specifically aimed at establishing a garden or playground in a community. This proposal can be applied to schoolyards, gardens, parks, or any green space identified by participants. The objective of engaging community members is to infuse positive affective memories into the space, enhancing its appeal and fostering a desire within the community to replicate such playful events. Three community meetings were planned, each serving distinct purposes while maintaining a biophilic theme in activity selection. A fourth meeting involved the actual place-making event.

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Workshop 1: Building community

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The initial meeting focuses on community building. It commences with informal welcome talks, potentially including questionnaires for those who missed the online survey to gauge the community pulse. Facilitators introduce themselves and initiate an interactive activity using a ball of string. Participants, while introducing themselves, pass the string randomly, creating a network symbolising community connections. Each participant then presents their totem, an object with personal significance related to an ideal park or garden. This exercise forms a mandala, symbolising community desires and space potential.

To evoke empathetic responses, participants create portraits of their neighbours based on shared information. The pivotal "Wish Tree" exercise follows, where participants write wishes and fears on coloured post-it notes, placing them on a tree drawing. This activity guides co-creation processes. Ideally, a pre-made mood board is displayed, showcasing ideas. Participants vote on preferred ideas, initiating discussions. The workshop concludes with the announcement of a photo and prose competition, encouraging participants to highlight aspects they appreciate or find concerning in their neighbourhood.

The outcomes of the competition play a pivotal role in understanding the community's sentiments towards their neighbourhood. Through the expressions shared by participants, a nuanced comprehension emerges regarding their appreciations and concerns. These insights contribute to refining the activities within the Bring Nature Home project, ensuring a closer alignment with community preferences. The competition findings also serve as inspiration for design elements, ensuring that the final project is a true reflection of the community's desires.

Workshop 2: Exploring human-space dynamics

This workshop was all about exploring the fascinating connection between people and the space around them. With a keen focus on spatial perception, diverse activities were crafted to elicit insightful discussions and understanding among participants. From strolling through the space at varying speeds to engaging in unique exercises like walking backward and navigating with closed eyes, the aim was to explore distinct perspectives on the given area. The results from these dynamic activities became the foundation for subsequent exercises, such as fear-based games, role-playing, and creative design endeavours. The thoughtful integration of community feedback and emotional expressions throughout the workshop not only shaped the final design options but also paved the way for a vibrant competition aimed at harnessing the creative potential within the community for the project's further enhancement.

Activities

In this session, our focus shifts from the creation of a community to understanding the intricate relationship between individuals and their surroundings.

Participants commence the workshop by strolling through the space, delving into its various nooks and crannies. Facilitators introduce 10 speed levels, ranging from very slow (1) to very fast (10). Random numbers between 1 and 10 are recited, allowing participants to experience distinct perceptions of space.

Throughout the exercises — such as walking backwards, walking with eyes closed, and dwarf walking — participants engage in discussions about differences in spatial perception. The fundamental rule is to avoid physical contact.

To invigorate participants after these activities, a game is proposed where each person mentally selects a fear and manoeuvres through the space, always keeping a shield (another participant) between them and that fear. This dynamic game adds an energetic and lively dimension to the workshop.

The subsequent exercise involves role-playing based on goals assigned in a previous meeting. Participants strive to find the optimal locations for their goals, fostering connections with others who also have specific roles. The interplay with a "bomb game" encourages active participation and creativity, ideally complemented by aerial photography using a drone.

Scaffolding follows, prompting participants to choose a place in the space that resonates with them. Armed with a ball of thicker, beautifully colored string, they build itineraries based on their preferences and experiences. Anchors provided before the walk create routes that may be considered in the final design.

Participants are then presented with two design options derived from the Wishing Tree, initiating a constructive debate on the proposed solutions. The final workshop stage involves working with a pre-made model, allowing participants to focus solely on layout creation. Various materials are provided for this hands-on experience.

As the workshop concludes, facilitators seek feedback from the community, opening discussions about the emotions and feelings that surfaced during the activities. This provides a platform for all participants to express themselves.

To cap off the session, the announcement of a garden ideas competition, for example, encourages participants to contribute creative solutions to the project.

Workshop 3: Nature exploration and co-creation

In organising workshop no. 3, our primary goal was to deepen the connection between children and their natural surroundings. This workshop serves as a practical micro-guide, offering hands-on activities and collaborative exercises to foster a meaningful understanding of the intricate relationship between community members and the space they inhabit. Participants can explore diverse perspectives on spatial perception, engage in expressive movements inspired by nature, and contribute to the creation of an ideal garden through collaborative drawings and co-creation workshops.

Activities

Activity 0 / Intro: We initiate the session by introducing ourselves and seeking permission from the children to record the biophilic workshop for wider participation. Emphasising the voluntary nature of participation, we reassure them that alternative activities are available for those who might not feel comfortable with the proposed activities.

Activity 1: Getting to know each other - Forming a circle, all children share their names, accompanied by a word starting with the initial letter of their name and a friendly gesture. Mutual greetings follow each introduction, fostering a sense of community.

Activity 2: Let's move together - Children are divided into bees and butterflies. Pairs are created, and music is played for expressive activities such as mirroring and dancing with continuous contact between partners. A nature-inspired movement exploration ensues, encouraging children to walk like various creatures. Post-activity, reflections on feelings and connections to nature are discussed.

 2.1. Mirror: One child has total freedom of expression and the other has to make the same gestures as their partner, as if they were their mirror. Then we switch roles.

 2.2. Contact: Still in teams of two they must now dance, but the dance has one condition, the two forming the pair must always have a point of contact. It can be head-head, hand+foot, elbow-knee, etc.

 2.3. Metamorphosis: Children are asked to spread out and walk around the surrounding area. In time, they will be asked to change their gait so that they walk like a frog, then like a but-

terfly, then like a bear, then like a falling leaf, then like a wind-blown tree, without bumping into each other. At the end they are asked how they felt and if they feel more connected to nature now.

Feedback: children are asked which activity they liked best and why, they are asked how they feel, if they feel ready for the next challenge.

Activity 3: Drawing together - Building on previous activities, children work in teams of five to draw an ideal garden. Each team member contributes a drawing, creating a collaborative representation.

Activity 4: Getting to know nature together - Several aspects of nature are explored, starting with tree leaves. Children learn to differentiate between them and select trees for their ideal garden. The knowledge expands to flowers, introducing botanical pressing to 'preserve' them. Understanding pollinators is emphasised, connecting the workshop's purpose to bringing joy to garden inhabitants.

Activity 5: Building together - Participants divide into five groups for mini co-creation workshops, rotating through various activities. These include plasticine modelling of butterflies, ladybirds, and gardens, setting up birdhouses, insect hotels, and painting stones. Each group engages in hands-on, creative endeavours, contributing to the overall garden vision.

In the reflection phase, children share their thoughts on how their garden would differ now and their experience with the activities. The session concludes by inviting feedback on the perceived difficulty of organising such activities and whether they feel capable of doing so for each other. The children are thanked, and an invitation is extended to join the workshop the next day.
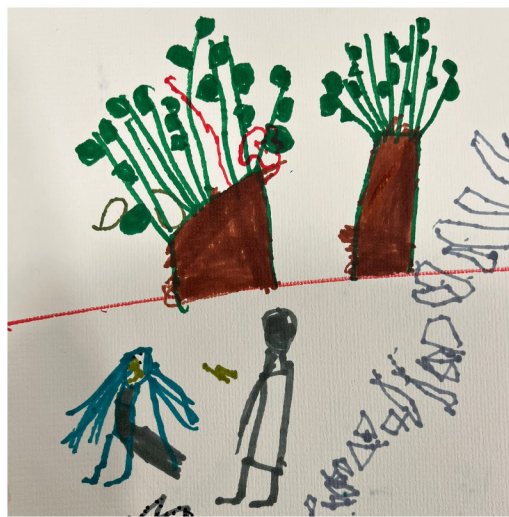
Workshop 4: Place-making

Workshop no. 4 unfolded over two days, with the first day dedicated to hands-on activities like building bird and insect houses, painting them, engaging in a stone painting workshop, and participating in a recycling workshop. The second day involved assembling planters, organising plants, and planting them, as well as workshops on paving with painted stones or wooden roundels and crafting wooden seats. Discussion points revolve around comparing the game to real-life ecosystems, exploring participants' feelings during simulated natural disasters, and contemplating the fragility of nature in reality. These discussions add depth to the experiential learning of ecological dynamics.

Activities

Day 1: On the initial day, participants engaged in constructing bird and insect houses, followed by painting these structures. Additionally, a stone painting workshop and a recycling workshop were conducted.

Day 2: The second day involved the assembly of planters, the organization of plants, and planting in the planters. Workshops on paving, using either painted stones or wooden roundels, and crafting wooden seats were also held. The day concluded with a sustainability game.

FOOD, WATER & SHELTER (OH DEER)

Goal: Learn about nature
Materials: None
Time: 15 min +
Age: All
Participants: 10 +
Preparation: None

In this interactive game, participants divide into two groups – one representing the environment and the other, the deer. The environment team offers resources crucial for deer survival, including food, water, and shelter. Each team stands opposite each other with bags against each other.

The environment team decides what they want to provide (water, food, or shelter), and the deer team indicates their current needs through specific gestures:

Shelter = Form a roof over the head with hands
Food = Both hands on the stomach
Water = Both hands form a cup at the mouth

Upon a signal, both teams turn and reveal their chosen resources. The deer team runs towards individuals in the environment team who have what they need. If a deer with a specific need reaches an environment member with the corresponding resource, the deer retrieves it for their team. The resource then transforms into a deer in the next round.
If there isn't enough of a resource, such as food, for hungry deer, they "die" and transform into the environment. The cycle continues, with occasional natural disasters forcing changes in the available resources.

Discussion Points:

Can this game be compared to real-life ecosystems?
How did participants feel during the simulated natural disaster?
How fragile is nature in reality? and other related discussions.

Workshop 5: Reflections

In the final workshop, the participants, carefully grouped based on their active engagement in the preceding creative sessions, embark on a transformative journey into the theoretical landscape of co-creation. Each individual, granted a personal canvas of 30 minutes, shares a song that resonates with their understanding of creativity, freedom, and expression. This melodic exchange sets the tone for the workshop's exploration of three pivotal design concepts — creative design, participatory design, and biophilic design. Through interactive stations, teams weave intricate mind maps in response to probing questions, laying bare the essence of each concept. As the session unfolds, a collective discussion becomes the nexus for the amalgamation of diverse perspectives, providing a forum for sharing newfound insights and reflections. The subsequent activities draw inspiration from strategic games, fostering lively debates and insightful discussions. The workshop ends in an engaging activity called "Yellow and Blue", sparking a dynamic conversation about competition and cooperation. This offers a flexible spectrum of concluding activities, allowing participants to reflect, connect, and celebrate the culmination of their co-creative journey.

Activities

Participants are organised into teams based on their engagement in the previous creative workshop. The focus of this session revolves around the theoretical aspects of co-creation. Each participant is allocated 30 minutes to share a song with their team that evokes thoughts about creativity, freedom, and expression. They elaborate on why the chosen song holds significance for them.

Three stations, each displaying an A1 sheet labelled with one of the three concepts — creative design, participatory design, and biophilic design — are set up. Teams rotate through these stations, filling out mind maps with responses to questions such as: What is this? Why is it important? How do we find resources for this design type? Where can we seek assistance? Whom can we connect with to achieve our goals? The exercise concludes with a collective discussion among the teams, encouraging them to share their perceptions, insights gained, and reflections on the experience.

The subsequent activity is based on the prisoner's dilemma, emphasising the idea that cooperation leads to collective success. Following the game, a debate ensues, allowing participants to express their feelings. The facilitation of the generalisation phase is based on this game,

leading to conclusions. Participants have the opportunity to inquire why this specific game was chosen for the workshop.

YELLOW AND BLUE

Objective: Discussion about competition and cooperation
Materials: Yellow and blue tickets, envelope, and pens
Time: 1 hour
Age: 11 years and over
Participants: Groups of 4-8 people + 1 leader
Preparation: Yes, writing the provided text on paper.

Activity: Participants are divided into small groups of 4-8 people, with one group and a leader assigned to a room. Communication between groups is prohibited. Each group receives 10 yellow and 10 blue slips along with a piece of paper containing game instructions. The aim is to accumulate points through collaborative efforts with the other group.

After ten rounds of sending notes, the scores of all participants are tallied. A discussion follows, exploring the scores submitted, decision-making within the groups, the learning derived from the game, its real-world implications, and the prevalence of competition versus cooperation.

It is essential to ensure a clear understanding of the game's objectives, requiring the translation and documentation of rules for participants before starting. The conclusion of the session may vary based on factors such as time constraints and group dynamics, with options including a roundtable discussion, music, communal meals, or even a bonfire.

Information, integration and implication of the community - the story of a pop-up garden or how to handle uncertainty

Utilising flexible approaches becomes imperative when engaging in participatory methods, where having a clear goal is essential. Our initial intent in the Bring Nature Home project was to plant, but we also aspired to organise diverse competitions involving photography, community feedback, and garden design. However, these ideas faced challenges in aligning with the community dynamic. It's crucial not to abandon your processes entirely when faced with challenges; rather, adapt and ensure alignment with community desires. In Iasi, survey results revealed community openness to more green space. Despite not initially considering lawn areas, we or-

ganised an exhibition to showcase potential green space designs, allowing the community to vote for their preferences.

In response to the community's wishes, particularly from the Wishing Tree, we adjusted our concept, exemplified by installing a sports field requested by children. An unexpected transformation involved turning a small building into an artistic statement about the collaboration between humans and nature. The act of painting the building went beyond aesthetic considerations or the potent influence that an artistic statement can exert on both the existing community and visitors. It wasn't necessarily intended to draw more attention to the place. Instead, it served as a means to integrate the broader local community, involving collaboration with a local graffiti artist for this unique intervention. This endeavour aimed to foster a sense of ownership, extending not only to those living nearby but reaching out to the larger community, attracting participation from individuals residing in other parts of the city who also engaged in the workshops

While our expectations from the City Hall were hopeful, the proposal emphasised the removal of hedges to enhance access to existing green spaces. Recognizing potential inequity, we announced plans for seven meditation gardens in the remaining land after hedge removal. Each garden, outlined in the final proposal, serves as a tranquil space for contemplation, featuring distinct pavements for a sensorial experience.

Initially envisioning multiple paths within an interactive space, we adjusted our approach based on community preferences, with a focus on functional parking areas. Recognizing the lack of unanimous community acceptance, we refrained from presenting specific planting designs, suggesting the intervention area based on existing access to the playground. This approach proved fruitful as participants enthusiastically engaged in the implementation, working with various materials to prepare beds and walking areas.

Our impromptu actions during the workshop brought forth a surge of enthusiasm and joy among participants. The unscripted nature of the event, particularly during the preparation of plant beds and walking areas, involved collaborative work with diverse materials, including sand, soil, gravel, and large stones. The only predetermined aspects of this specific workshop were the quantity of materials at our disposal, the types of plants available, their quantity, and considerations for light and shade. Our plant selection prioritised low-maintenance species, drawing inspiration from the charm of rural landscapes where grandparents dedicated time to cultivating flower-based gardens beyond mere sustenance.

The participatory process unfolded organically, with responsibilities delegated to participants and guidance provided by the organising team. Upon completion, the project not only attracted more participants but also culminated in a celebratory event where we had champagne, music and cake but also an exhibition of photos with the participants during the workshops, which facilitated a discussion about the wishing tree and current feelings about the entire time spent together. The achievements included a planted area mitigating the heating island effect, support for pollinators through blooming plants, birdhouses and insect hotels fostering biodiversity, innovative walking areas, playful Japanese stone steps, and the enhancement of an existing building. As the project neared its end, we realised that the entire journey could serve as a testament to the efficacy of adaptable and participatory approaches in community-led transformations.

Design concept evolution.

As we previously mentioned, we tried to be as flexible as possible in defining the concept and the objectives. At the beginning we planned to launch a contest where teams would compete about how the garden should look like, pick the first 5 best ideas and implement them together with the winning teams. Taking into consideration the scale of the place, we thought that creating a group of gardens will have a better impact on the landscape, so even when we got to make some possible versions for the community to start giving feedback and start narrowing the number of options, we still had in mind a space with multiple, smaller garden areas.

Objectives like self-sustainable planted areas, biodiversity incentives and sitting areas were kept as anchors in all the versions. As the community mentioned that teenagers come in the evening, sending away the younger kids, and having a negative impact on the playground, we noticed that there was no place for the teenagers to gather so we came to an agreement that there is an imminent need for a place where teenagers could gather and where people could also sit during the day.

Here, we showcase several iterations that were conceived and deliberated upon, in collaboration with the community, following the moodboard presentation in the initial workshop. The final iteration is the version we submitted to The City Hall of Iași, emphasising the optimal arrangement of parking areas within the space and proposing the relocation of hedges to facilitate the creation of acupuncture-inspired meditation areas. As part of their assumed responsibility for redevelopment of the larger area, they will reassess and modify accordingly this proposal when intervening in the neighbourhood.

gardens

paths

houses for birds & insects

water

pavilion

sitting area
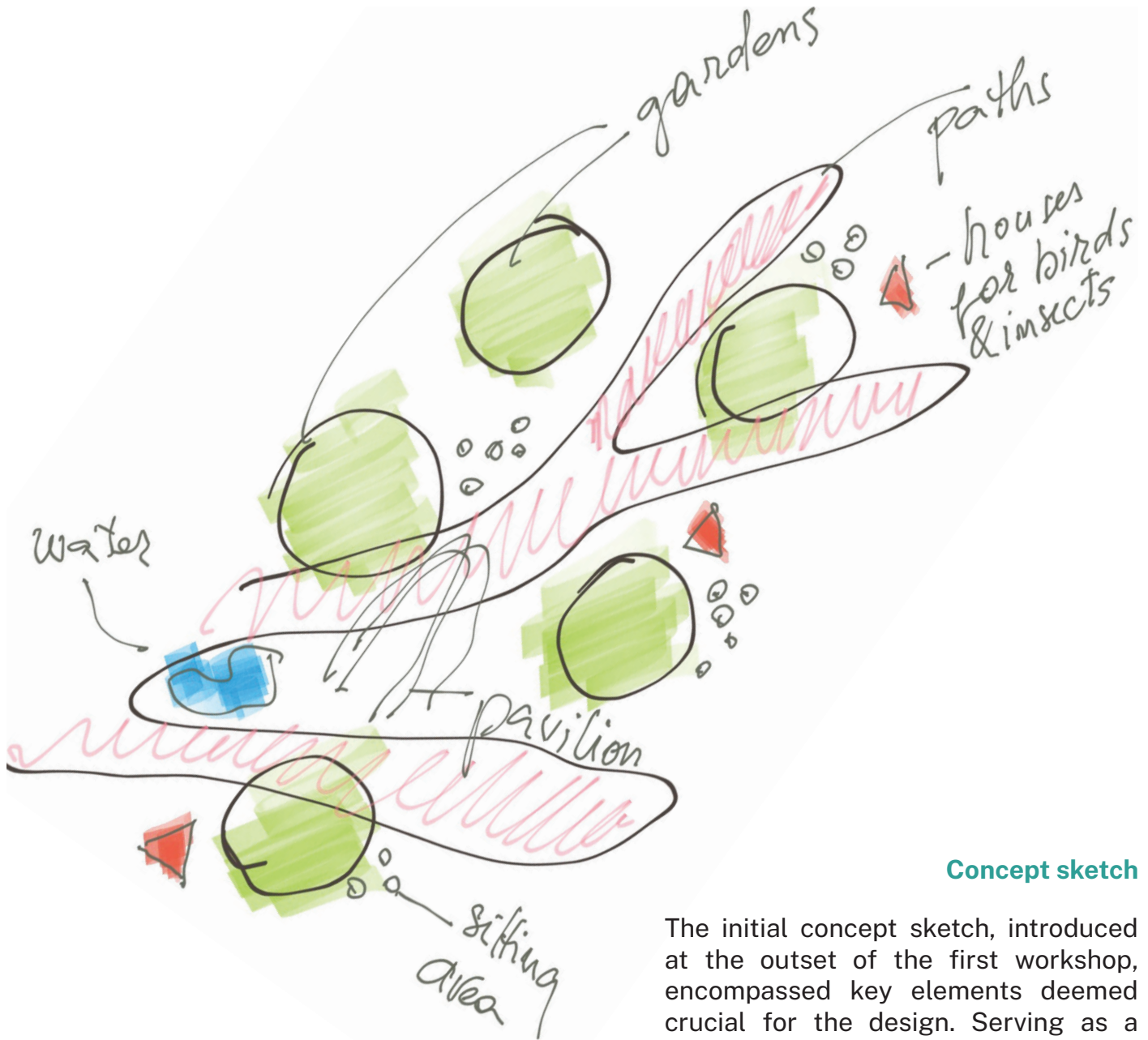
Concept sketch

The initial concept sketch, introduced at the outset of the first workshop, encompassed key elements deemed crucial for the design. Serving as a foundation, this sketch initiated discussions with the community regarding the envisioned future of the space.
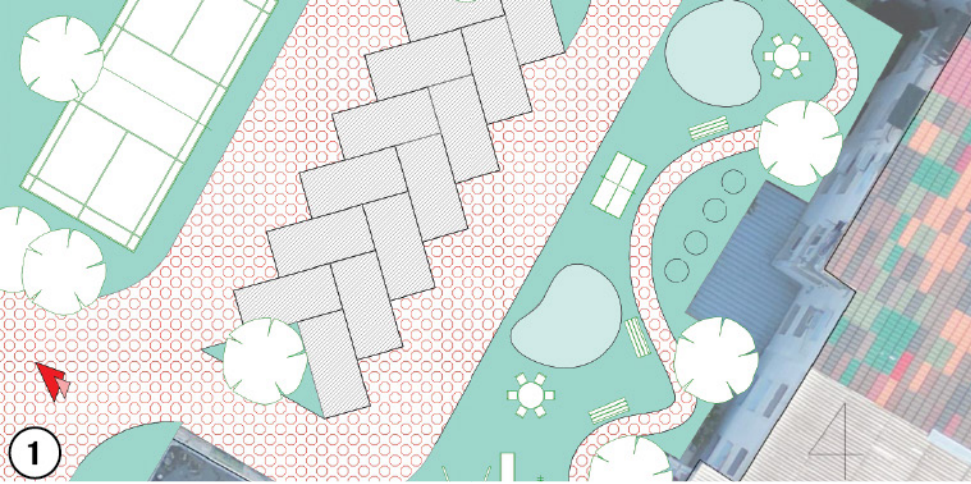
First workshop

The initial draft plan aimed to integrate the community's expressed wishes from the first workshop to the fullest extent. Its primary emphasis was on augmenting green spaces and establishing accessible pathways.

ALEE PIETRIS
SCOARTA DE COPAC
COS DE GUNOI
GRADINA PLANTE PERENE
2.30 3.20 3.20 0.90 0.90 0.80 3.50 3.00 3.50

Second workshop

In contrast to the preceding plan, which was crafted based on the conceptual sketch, the second plan not only refined the layout derived from community feedback in the second meeting but also incorporated the precise dimensions of the space.
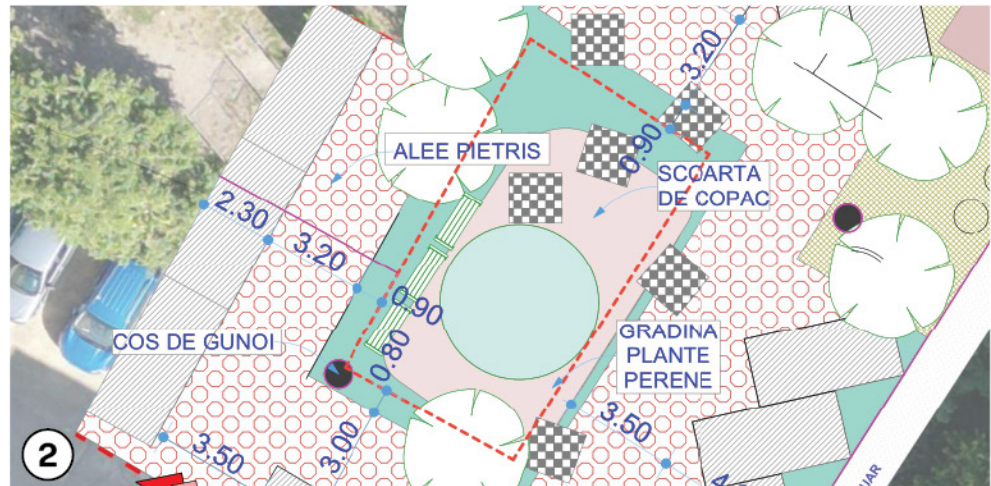
Third workshop

The proposal outlined in the final drawn plan prioritized landscaping the entire area, serving as a guideline for the local government in planning future projects that incorporate this space.
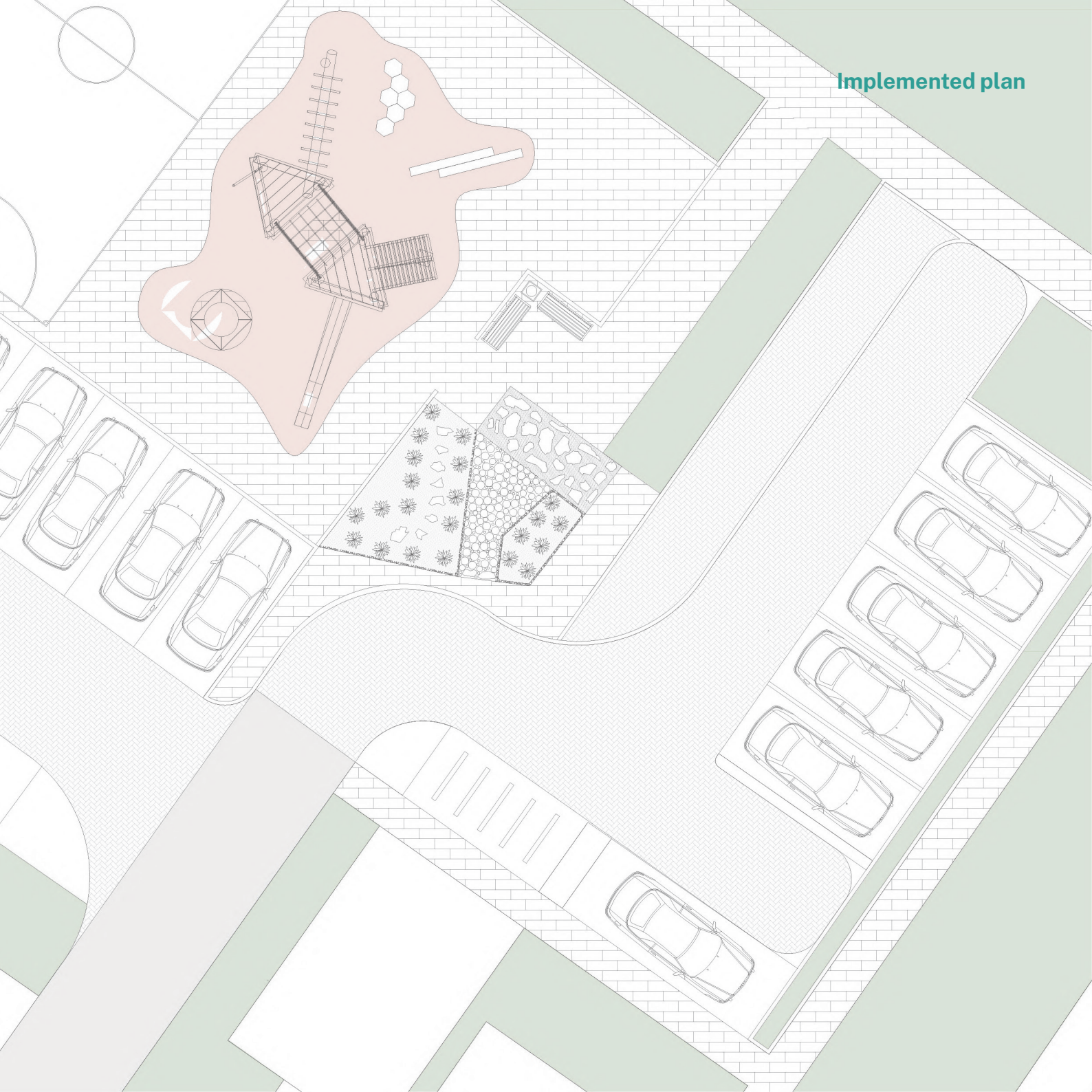
Concrete transformation.

The project took the form of a temporary landscaping of a 36 sqm area, involving the placement of two raised plant beds perpendicular to the direction of travel (according to the access point), the placement of wooden roundels and boulders at ground level to delineate play/sitting/relaxing areas, as well as wooden garden furniture, bird and insect houses. The appearance of the space was also improved by rehabilitating the thermal point and painting it with the help of local artists, keeping the nature-inspired design direction.

In order to help interested communities implement and replicate our transformation concept, the Bring Nature Home lists the unavoidable expenses and resources invested in the achievement of the desired transformation outcomes (both physical transformation of space as well as engagement of community):

Physical Resources

Item	Cost (EUR)
Perennial Plants (30)	600,00
Furniture (table + 2 benches)	260,00
Stone, Sand & gravel	520,00
Wooden roundels & pavement stones	720,00
Other garden decorations	170,00
Gardening equipment	50,00
Mural Painting	1000,00
Workshop Supplies	800,00
Total	**4120,00**

The costs mentioned above incurred for the setup of a 36 sqm garden, the painting of a service building and the hosting of 5 workshops in Iași, leading to an approximate garden setup cost of approx. 87 EUR per sqm. The costs were covered in the following manner:

- 2120,00 EUR covered by an EIT Urban Mobility sub-grant

- 2000,00 EUR covered by a private company sponsorship

Please note this estimate does not include personnel costs, as this cost category can vary quite a bit from community to community and the Bring Nature Home anyway provides a blueprint and an exact description of the activities to be implemented, thus facilitating the implementation of a transformation project through volunteering.

However, the Bring Nature Home team believes it is important to estimate the time commitment of the various members of its team for the planning and implementation of the transformation concept (workshops and gardening), as described below:

Human Resource/Time Commitment (hours)

Position	Commitment
Project Manager	150
Landscape Architect	150
Urban Planner	115
Volunteers	30
Total	**445**

Community feedback.

The interviews with participants in the Bring Nature Home project offer valuable insights into their motivations and experiences. Rareș, a 12-year-old, expresses a strong desire to enhance the project's success, emphasising the need to protect the transformed space. Robert, an 11-year-old, joined the effort to create a more nature-friendly environment for children of various ages. His enthusiasm stems from a lack of recent activities and a genuine interest in contributing to the project. Ștefan, initially hesitant, praises the team's friendly and engaging nature, highlighting the workshop as an opportunity to beautify their living space discreetly. These testimonials underscore the diverse motivations and positive impacts of community involvement in the project. Full interviews are included in the annex.

THE REPLICABLE FRAMEWORK

One thing if not all, then most of the people have in common nowadays is an even deeper need to connect: with their own selves, with others and with nature. But there is another thing that also affects most of us: global warming, which can lead to symptoms of anxiety or even depression, because it seems to be such a big thing that can't be tackled by normal people with normal lives.

We consider that this guide is indispensable in every household, not just for narrating the inspiring story of a pop-up garden but for imparting the knowledge to transform mineral areas into verdant spaces. This empowers ordinary individuals to contribute significantly to mitigating urban heat islands.

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The primary objective is to achieve real impact. Increasing green spaces within neighbourhoods directly correlates with reduced temperatures during summer, as plants serve as natural shields against heat absorption and reflection.

Replicating this exercise hinges significantly on human resources. While transforming an ordinary person into a leader is challenging, community leaders can naturally emerge. Utilize our designs for branding your event, especially if graphic design isn't your forte. Begin by crafting your message and disseminating it to potential community members, a powerful tool not only for collaboration but also for forging new friendships.

For instance, if there's a vacant piece of land, extend invitations to local residents, activists, NGOs, and institutions working with children and students. This multi-generational approach can foster a richer community dynamic. Communication is paramount. Clearly articulate the purpose of the meeting and, equally importantly, listen to the community's insights.

Prepare a survey to gather measurable feedback. The template can be printed for distribution during community meetings or emailed for digi-

tal responses. This aids in understanding group dynamics and ensures that everyone is heard in the first 20 minutes of the meeting, until you make sure that everyone is there.

Collect contact details such as email addresses or phone numbers to create a communication platform, like a WhatsApp group, fostering interaction and enthusiasm leading up to workshops. The workshop narratives have been meticulously detailed and can be applied as described, whether you're a resident, an NGO representative, or a municipal official.

To bring the entire process to the very essential steps that need to be done, we would mention the next steps as paramount to the long-term collaboration that you intend to have:

1. Find a suitable plot, e.g. an abandoned area.

2. Get data about it : who owns it, short history of the place.

3. Find a place close to that area where it's safe and you can organise the first meeting.

4. Create an attractive invitation to the first community meeting.

5. Decide who do you want to take part to this meeting (local community, design students, older community members who might know better the history of the place).

6. Have the workshop and gather all necessary information, including contact details and specific things the members of the community might help with.

7. Stay in touch with the community while doing your research or prepare solutions.

8. Create multiple design versions, building upon the community feedback.

9. Address the local administration and share your objectives with them.

10. Estimate the costs for the final design, approved by the City Hall.

11. Discuss possible money income from City Hall, Sponsors, European Programs.

12. Implement the final solution together with the community - delegate responsibilities.

Limitations and challenges.

Considering the community's expressed desire to preserve parking lots while incorporating more green space, we adjusted our expectations regarding the intervention's size and appearance. We opted to situate the intervention near the existing playground, viewing it as an extension and a potential element for integration into a larger project. The City Hall had already shown interest in transforming the area into a green oasis.

In response to the strong community opinion and challenges in communication and collaboration with local authorities, we decided to scale down our ambitions and focus on strengthening the community's relationship with the project. Consequently, we reconsidered the idea of inviting other communities to merge with the existing one.

For this specific project, we made the involvement of the university, botanical garden, potential sponsors, and other NGOs optional. While we advise against a similar approach, we emphasise the importance of careful consideration when selecting the intervention site. In our case, the recommendation from someone at the City Hall highlighted the necessity of involving the community in the decision-making process.

This experience reinforced the understanding that choosing the intervention location should be a collaborative effort with the community. The three steps of participatory design — Information, Inclusion, and Implication — must be integrated at all stages.

This guide empowers anyone, whether from the city hall, local NGOs, stakeholders, or a motivated citizen, to facilitate similar workshops using the provided methodology and strategies. The key difference lies in how they engage the community to gather and discuss the issue. While we opted for event posters, we strongly recommend distributing small flyers in mailboxes to ensure broad community awareness and participation.

CONCLUSION

In our perspective, biophilia offers expansive opportunities for self-discovery, connection with others, and, most importantly, a profound connection with nature. We believe in the significance of biophilia, emphasising its importance as a catalyst for personal and communal growth. By shedding our insecurities and actively engaging with others, we transform ourselves into creative beings. The act of dreaming collectively, illustrated through initiatives like the Wishing Trees, binds us together in shared aspirations and encourages us to contemplate potential solutions. This seamless transition from individual wishes to collaborative co-creation processes allows us to integrate our unique identities into a collective outcome. Ultimately, this approach contributes to the fertility of urban landscapes, enabling them to authentically mirror the diverse identity of the community.

In conclusion, the Bring Nature Home project stands as a remarkable journey fueled by community collaboration, creativity, and a commitment to environmental transformation. Participants of all ages, from the youngest to the seasoned community members, have not only breathed new life into neglected spaces but have also cultivated a stronger sense of community identity. The power of collective action, demonstrated through workshops, activities, and co-creation processes, serves as a testament to the potential for positive change when communities unite to enhance their living spaces. Looking ahead, the handbook encapsulates these invaluable lessons, serving as a guide for future endeavours dedicated to bringing nature home to communities worldwide. May the shared insights within these pages inspire and empower others to embark on their transformative journeys, fostering greener, more vibrant, and interconnected urban landscapes.

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ANNEX

Interview with Rareș - 12 years

Luiza (BNH): Why did you come to help us with this project?

Rareș: Because I want it to come out nice here, to know what to do, to take care of those who will come and spoil it.

Luiza (BNH): It's very nice. So you don't have much faith that the place will last long.

Rareș: It'll last as long as we're here.

Luiza (BNH): Well, you'll guard it, I mean.

Rareș: Yes, we'll guard it.

Luiza (BNH): What did you like most about what you did here?

Rareș: What did you like most?

Luiza (BNH): Well, I liked that we put more flowers, and more greenery around here, and made a nicer road.

Rareș: We'll have the land I promised you, not like I promised you, unfortunately.

Luiza (BNH): It's good either way. The land is. It's good that it's there.

Rareș: We're glad you're so kind to us.

Luiza (BNH): What else would you like to see happen in this space?

Rareș: To change the place from the ground itself and put in more greenery.

Luiza (BNH): Could we find room for some trees?

Rareș: And some trees!

Luiza (BNH): Would you like that?

Rareș: Yes, some walnuts would be nice.

Luiza (BNH): Yes.

Rareș: Yeeees, some walnuts, they make walnuts, and we can eat them. That's great. Thank you very much.

Interview with Robert - 12 years old

Luiza (BNH): Why did you come here to help us?

Robert: Because I wish there was more greenery and more flowers here, and I would like this place to be suitable for younger children, even those who are older than us or of the same age as us.

Luiza (BNH): But you could have stayed home and played, yet you chose to come and stay with us and work today. Today you worked hard.

Robert: Yeah, well, I liked it here because I haven't been doing anything lately. I've just been sitting around the house with nothing to do, and I thought I'd come help out. I'll probably hurt my hands, but that's it.

Luiza (BNH): How'd you find the team?

Robert: Cool team.

Luiza (BNH): Thanks a lot.

Robert: Especially with the materials.

Luiza (BNH): In what way?

Robert: Well, we were able to do a lot more than we could have imagined.

Luiza (BNH): And we imagined we'd do less, and we've done a lot, with your help that's why we thank you so much. Is there anything else you'd like other people to know about the park?

Robert: Yes, well I was going to say that they need to be better persons in the future and help this town first and foremost.

Interview with Ștefan - 18 years old

Luiza (BNH): Can you tell me a few words about attending the workshop? You didn't want to join us when you first came. What made you change your mind?

Ștefan: Well, I found the team here very interesting, very friendly, that even if you don't want to work, they make you work in a way....

Luiza (BNH): We didn't want to at first either. But what do you mean?

Ștefan: I mean not in a bad way, in a very good way. I didn't necessarily feel it was work; it seemed more like an activity to beautify the place we live in, and I thought it was very nice that these things happen in parks that are not really seen by everyone, not necessarily in public. That's one thing I really liked.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the vibrant community whose enthusiasm and participation breathed life into the Bring Nature Home project. Your unwavering commitment to transforming urban spaces into thriving green oases has been the driving force behind this endeavor. A special thanks goes to the local authorities for their support and collaboration, laying the foundation for positive change. To our dedicated volunteers, your time, energy, and passion have left an indelible mark on the landscape and hearts of the community. We are immensely grateful for the generosity of our sponsors whose contributions have made this project possible. Together, we have cultivated not just green spaces but a sense of unity and shared purpose.

Thank you for being the roots that anchor this transformative journey!