

Placemaking

Cities in Placemaking

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- DURATION

Ongoing since 2023

- POPULATION 2024

N/A

- URA SCOPE

SOCIETY: STAYING HUMAN

- TOPICS

PLACEMAKING,
COMMUNITY,
SUSTAINABILITY,
ENGAGEMENT

- MAIN ACTORS

Placemaking Europe,
International Society for Urban Health,
Creative Bureaucracy Festival,
Intercultural Cities Programme



Picture a bustling city square: people gather, conversations flow, and ideas spark. This is where the magic of placemaking begins—a movement that turns public spaces into thriving hubs of connection, creativity, and community. At the heart of this global transformation is Placemaking Europe, a foundation uniting practitioners, academics, community leaders, market innovators, and policymakers. Together, they weave a tapestry of knowledge, tools, and advocacy to reimagine how public spaces shape the future of our cities.

Placemaking Europe's mission is bold yet simple: to accelerate placemaking as a force for a thriving, equitable, and sustainable world. By aligning values, passion, and action, they champion public spaces as catalysts for change. Their work transcends theory, embedding practical strategies into real-world settings to influence policies and improve lives.

Among their flagship initiatives is Cities in Placemaking, a two-year learning journey designed for municipal public administrations. This isn't just a programme; it's a movement to redefine urban governance. With a focus on long-term impact, it aspires to shape a new generation of placemaking leaders—city officials who see public spaces not as mere infrastructure but as living, breathing centres of community potential.

At its core, Cities in Placemaking is about creating a roadmap—a detailed guide to embedding placemaking into the DNA of urban development. The journey unfolds through eight carefully crafted sessions, blending in-person collaboration and remote learning. These sessions explore essential topics like:

The fundamentals of placemaking: Tackling challenges and overcoming organisational bottlenecks, bridging gaps between departments and fostering holistic collaboration, shifting perspectives from short-term projects to long-term strategies, rewriting rules to make placemaking systemic

Guided by Placemaking Europe, this programme brings together leading knowledge partners—such as the Creative Bureaucracy Festival, International Society for Urban Health, and the Intercultural Cities Programme. Each contributes unique insights and specialised expertise, ensuring a rich and collaborative learning experience.

This is the story of a growing movement, one square, park, and street at a time. It's a story of people—working together to transform public spaces into the heartbeats of their cities. Welcome to Placemaking Europe's vision for a better tomorrow.



Impact

The Placemaking Capacity-Building Programme is a transformative initiative designed to equip cities with the knowledge and tools to embed placemaking into urban development strategies. Across eight sessions, it fosters collaboration among a diverse network of participants, including municipal officials and community leaders, ensuring a comprehensive exchange of ideas and best practices.

Key Milestones and Impacts

Essentials of Placemaking established a shared understanding of placemaking principles, emphasizing community collaboration to create inclusive, vibrant spaces.

Placemaking Challenges addressed urban issues like social inequality, climate action, and mobility, introducing equity as a framework for tackling these challenges.

Organizational Bottlenecks explored internal barriers, advocating for flexible governance and innovative practices to support placemaking initiatives.

How to Work Across Departments highlighted strategies for interdepartmental collaboration, using case studies to demonstrate how breaking silos fosters systemic change.

Programme Vision and Impact

By its conclusion in December 2024, the programme aims to produce a *Roadmap for Systemic Placemaking*—a comprehensive guide to integrating placemaking into urban governance. Expected outcomes include:

Vibrant Public Spaces: Transforming urban areas into dynamic hubs of interaction and cultural expression.

Social Cohesion: Strengthening community bonds through inclusive design and participatory practices.

Economic Growth: Boosting local economies by attracting businesses and investment.

Systemic Change: Empowering cities to adopt sustainable, long-term strategies for placemaking.

This programme is more than education—it is a catalyst for creating equitable, thriving cities where communities take centre stage.

Challenge

Cities today face significant challenges such as overcrowding, traffic congestion, and a lack of community spaces. These issues often lead to social isolation, a reduced quality of life, and disconnection from the environment.

There is a pressing need to transform underutilized areas into vibrant hubs where residents can connect, express their culture, and enhance their surroundings. We urgently require impactful initiatives and projects that effectively address these pressing issues.

However, the journey to implementing these projects is not without obstacles. Urban areas must address critical issues such as climate adaptation, intercultural integration, and social inequality.

Cities struggle to mitigate the impacts of climate change on infrastructure while fostering harmony among increasingly diverse populations. Ongoing disparities in access to resources and public spaces hinder community cohesion and overall quality of life.

Another major challenge is the absence of a standardized framework for incorporating these initiatives into city governance, which leads to inconsistencies and limited integration.

Additionally, cities often encounter resistance from rigid bureaucratic structures and insufficient community engagement.

Solution Proposed

Placemaking is an innovative approach to building vibrant and inclusive urban communities. It empowers individuals to collaboratively reimagine public spaces, transforming them into lively centres that reflect local identities while supporting growth. A city-wide placemaking strategy ensures that these benefits reach all residents, enhancing their quality of life. By embracing this vision, cities can achieve sustainable development, creating engaging environments that foster community ties, social unity, and economic prosperity.

To realize this vision, the project focuses on:

Developing Expertise: Cultivating a deep understanding of placemaking principles, challenges, and success factors.

Strengthening Collaboration: Overcoming bureaucratic hurdles and fostering cross-departmental and interagency cooperation.

Driving Systemic Change: Transitioning from short-term projects to integrated, long-term strategies embedded within governance frameworks.

Building Leadership Networks: Equipping leaders with the skills and knowledge to implement transformative placemaking policies.

This initiative empowers cities to create enduring, inclusive public spaces while embedding placemaking as a cornerstone of urban governance.

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