Placemaking in Practice

VOLUME 1

*Experiences and Approaches
from a Pan-European Perspective*

Editors-in-Chief
Carlos Smaniotto Costa, Mastoureh Fathi and Juan A. García-Esparza

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Dynamics of Placemaking
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Guideline Principles to Accomplish Social Inclusiveness in Placemaking

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Abstract

Placemaking is a collaborative process to design urban spaces through creatively sharing interests, needs, activities and ideas. The literature on urban planning, design, human-computer interaction (HCI), geography, sociology and anthropology is rich in examples of methods that can be used in placemaking. However, the rationality that defines the methodological approach is essential to acquire a common view for places, ensuring an inclusive and open process. Before or in parallel to defining why, how and what to do in placemaking, it is relevant to consider different methodological approaches. In this chapter, we explore three methodological principles: (1) providing a multidimensional view on the context together with interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary knowledge, and with early engagement with people and stakeholders; (2) responding to the common view, needs and priorities regarding the transformation, regeneration and urban management of spaces; (3) experimenting with the inclusion capacity of the methodological approach, improving methodological efficiency and effectiveness, adhering to the social actors and stakeholders, detecting difficulties and correcting and improving the placemaking process from an inclusive perspective. An overview of the subject of placemaking will subsequently be performed and afterwards two methodological approaches presented. Finally, considering that the issue of placemaking is a dynamic and collaborative process, this chapter explores how the role of the methodological approach impacts inclusiveness.

Keywords

methodological approach – inclusive and collaborative process – participation – adaptability of procedures – place transformation

1   Introduction

There is a great deal of discussion about placemaking in terms of urban spaces and urban development that addresses issues related to sustainability, the built environment, and creative and collaborative urban practices (Courage & McKeown, 2019; Courage, 2021; Duconseille & Saner, 2020; Mateo-Babiano & Palipane, 2020; Hes & Hernandez-Santin, 2020; Carriere & Schalliol, 2021; Basaraba, 2021). Often, placemaking has been used to "communicate a desire or ambition for a place in a city to become better or more attractive; and sometimes there is even a set of actions described to achieve a placemaking objective" (Badenhorst, 2019, p. 2).

Placemaking has assumed a prominent role in the debate on issues related to urban development and may even appear in planning documents (Badenhorst, 2019). For Ghavampour and Vale (2019), an integrated approach between sustainability policies and the use of placemaking strategies is important. Nevertheless, there is a trend towards a professionalism of the placemaking process, highlighting the relevance that designers and planners have had on the process, such as with the physical attributes of the design in detriment of the essence of placemaking – behaviour and meaning. Akbar and Edelenbos (2021) emphasize the importance of "the interplays among the roles of actors, along with physical-spatial elements of places" (p. 1). For example, Thomas (2016) proposes to approach placemaking as a methodology of urban design based on a literature review to propose a scoring system to guide specialists and the community. One could ask, From what methodological perspective(s) would this essence be guaranteed? (in addition to referencing the history of placemaking and pointing out the planning and design results produced). Although specialists and planners are important, placemaking is more than a nuance of urban design and urban planning. Kent (2019) points out that there is greater disciplinary sensitivity to places, people and public life in the development of urban communities. However, professionals continue to speak within their own discipline, not always recognizing the potential of other disciplines and sectors and, above all, the importance of communities' involvement. This is fundamental to increase collaborative dynamics to public space improvement, especially when it comes to creation and recreation,

management and public governance. Therefore the prominence of placemaking as a community-led process.

In addition to planning and design issues, one of the aspects that matters most in placemaking is the process through which it takes place. At the outset, placemaking is defined as a bottom-up process, with a place-based approach, community participation and sharing of the benefits generated. Through the placemaking process, it is expected that the democratic participation will increase while also augmenting socio-environmental awareness (Karacor, 2014). Each space reflects a specific character and its relation to social dynamics, needs, resources and opportunities. The deficiencies and problems experienced during the placemaking process are also useful to guide future studies on this urban intervention theme (Karacor, 2014). This observation allows, on one hand, to highlight a cross-sectional aspect to several reports of experience in placemaking. Where difficulties experienced and the ways in which they were (or were not) overcome are not always made known. Which, on the other hand, helps to show how the challenges were overcome, going beyond just taking the action as a success in itself –as if placemaking is meant to be the guarantee of democratic participation, social inclusion and sharing of the benefits generated. It also appears that placemaking has been transformed into a successful "brand" in urban rehabilitation and revitalization interventions. This has raised its criticism as a process of urban intervention. It is important to take a critical look at placemaking processes (Toolis, 2017; Chica, 2021) because placemaking may not promote the sharing of benefits generated among the low- and middle-income population, creating gentrification dynamics and social and spatial injustice. Placemaking involves different actors and particularities, and different access to resources in creating a cooperative effort to improve the place.

What makes a place in a city meaningful to its residents? How do people engage with a place to create meaningful social and cultural activities? Within the field of human-computer interaction (HCI), the interaction between humans and their environment is an essential intersection of past and future that in a dynamic way makes possible or discloses different ways of living, working and belonging. This interaction is done through implicit and explicit materials (Hansen et al., 2021a, 2021b), such as sensors or objects within a place/space. Recently, HCI has focused on these interactive built environments and placemaking has been viewed as a socio-technical system. From an HCI perspective, places are also about experiences, histories, purposes and creating new culture. Freeman et al. (2017) describe different focus points within the area of urban informatics, especially with an emphasis on how to make the urban design process more broadly open and participative. Emerging

technologies of urban cities, such as the "internet of things" and ubiquitous computing, affect the perceptions and attitudes of residents towards places in a city. Theories of "placemaking" suggest ideas for how to develop community attachments and enhance lived experiences in the city. Placemaking is as much about places as well as spaces, in which a physical space can be considered as a meaningful construct of place and/or a cultural product (Harrison & Dourish, 1996). Three different strategies of meaningful placemaking for city residents have been identified in HCI and urban design (Freeman et al., 2019):

– Community attachment featuring an emotional connection to a place that affords satisfaction, loyalty and passion
– The apparent distinction or "legibility" of the cityscape, i.e. how the city is perceived or read by its inhabitants
– The depth and intensity of lived human experience

Participation is crucial when talking about placemaking activities and one specific methodology that has been used is participatory design (Cilliers & Timmermanns, 2014; Rachel et al., 2021; Stydom & Puren, 2013).

Along with these different aspects observed in placemaking, it is also of interest to ask: What in the course of the process can be contributed to guarantee an inclusive dynamic? The answers are varied depending on each place, dynamics, needs and opportunities, and this chapter aims to discuss some aspects related to inclusiveness. First, providing an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge on the context (e.g. on the social, cultural and morphological attributes and the evolution of the urban context) together with the early people and stakeholder engagement. This collaboration builds a multidimensional and participatory vision of the context in which one will act. Second, responding to the common views, needs and priorities of space transformation, regeneration and urban management. Then, friendlier procedures for non-technicians and different stakeholders can be designed and made suitable for the placemaking process. Third, experimenting with the inclusion capacity of the methodological approach outlined from the ongoing evaluation of the placemaking process, which will be jointly analysed by different social actors. It is important to deal with the methodology incrementally in order to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and adhesion of the social actors and the stakeholders, detecting difficulties, correcting and improving the placemaking process from an inclusive perspective.

This chapter is, in essence, a proposal for theoretical reflection around a methodological approach that safeguards and promotes social inclusivity in placemaking. As such, rather than detailing case study methods, techniques and tools, this chapter is a theoretical-methodological reflection that draws from our experience. Subsequently, the rationale that sustains the principles

indicated above is presented in the following section. Next, two experiences of placemaking initiatives are briefly presented as paradigmatic examples of a theoretical-methodological reflection. The main outcomes are presented, and the lessons learned in relation to these principles are then highlighted.

2   The Principles That Can Increase Inclusivity in Placemaking Processes

2.1   *Providing a Multidimensional View of the Context*
It is important to highlight the importance of creating action logic that, little by little, makes it possible to replace the focus on problems with the identification of needs and potentialities of the contexts. Not only when drawing up plans and placemaking proposals, but also for the evaluation process and their results. This procedure makes it possible to identify, define and scale the origin, meaning and character of the problems that affect social and spatial reality. This also highlights the resources and the potential that, even if obtuse, make up this same reality.

From the outset, this prior knowledge of the context should be guided towards providing answers to the following questions: What? For what? Why? Furthermore, prior knowledge should support both learning processes and collaboration so that it contributes, at the same time, to the definition of strategic ideas and ways of acting that is close to reality (Ascher, 2004). This prior knowledge tool involves guiding criteria for the multidimensional diagnosis of the placemaking context (Table 11.1). Cohen and Franco (1999) refer to the following more specific diagnosis objectives:

– *Describe* – related to what is intended to be modified, referring to the descriptive categorization of phenomena based on an ordered classification scheme.
– *Explain* – related to the explanation of the causal relationships between variables that inform about the current situation, indicating what can or should be changed. It is a fundamental condition for carrying out a good diagnosis and must include all the dimensions and variables that facilitate the explanation of the phenomena or processes that are being analysed.
– *Predict* – is the result of the explanation and indication of the changes foreseen by the implementation of the action plan.

To ensure a multidimensional knowledge of the placemaking context and to identify its particularity, it is important to increase the interactivity between different records, diagnoses and surveys (Table 11.2), in order to carry out:

– The interrelated reading of problems/needs, resources/potentials and the measures/actions proposed by each type of diagnosis, in addition to allowing

a better view of the role of sociocultural, socio-spatial, socio-institutional and operational issues

– The hierarchy of issues and needs, and the definition of measures and actions in an integrated and interactive way

The objectives that frame the placemaking process must be essential, precise and strategic. For this, it is important to create conditions that guarantee that these qualities are sustained throughout that process. Here, three essential conditions are considered: existing resources, risk situations and the willingness to change. These considerations help to avoid the production of static images or the immutability of contexts, which often condition the desired change (Bonetti et al., 1991).

TABLE 11.1   Guidance criteria for a multidimensional view of the context

Knowing the socio-spatial reality	Operationalize the information produced
– Provide information on constraints and consequences of the problems, thus making it possible to identify trends and needs – Identify resources inherent to contexts and identify means to enhance them – Identify potential conditions for the success of an intervention and those that are obstructive and risky for the action itself – Identify dynamics – endogenous and exogenous – that most affect the reality of the contexts – Identify potential partners and stakeholders	– Relate problems and needs – Establish a hierarchy of problems and needs – Identify intervention priorities – Enhancing, in a relational way, the means of minimizing problems and solving needs through strategies for valuing the resources and potentials inherent to the system – Pre-identify the means of action and the types of social support that such measures may imply – Pre-define ideas for action strategies that make it possible to respond to internal needs and external changes – Establish communication relationships with different partners and stakeholders – Create negotiation dynamics among objectives, ideas and propositions – Develop references for the placemaking process

SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM MENEZES, 2006.

To ensure the effectiveness of inter/transdisciplinary knowledge in a multidi-mensional diagnosis process, it is essential to safeguard community involve-ment and citizen participation. This allows considering people's perspectives in the diagnosis frame, and which should be taken as transversal throughout the whole process. By knowing the contexts through the eyes of the different actors directly related to it, from its embryonic stage, the placemaking process becomes more capable of engaging people and even involving them.

2.2   *Providing Friendly Procedures to Non-technicians*

The diagnosis must include (pre)proposals for actions that make it possible to improve the contexts. In this sense it is important to:

– Involve social actors – the position of social actors and their ways and means of appreciating the problems and needs, and their interpretations of possible solutions are essential
– Respond to needs – the way in which needs are identified is related to the proposals for their resolution

To establish connections with a common point of view for placemaking, as "the participatory act of imagining and creating places with other people" (Derr et al., 2018), open communication and a more friendly, horizontal, and qualitative approach are important to engage people and stakeholders in an immersive process to the territory's re-signification (Menezes et al., 2019). This contributes to generating links between people, territory, and the trans-formative process, and to co-create a protocol for acting. The implementation of the placemaking process – at multiple levels and with an evidence-based approach – are complex, demanding flexible, adaptative and collaborative tasks and activities. Examples include observing, applying exploratory and sen-sory searches, collecting and recording information, interviewing inhabitants and other users of the context, holding collective and open meetings to discuss the meanings of place and its potential to reveal placemaking ideas, etc. The aim is to inspire people and involve them in reimaging the territory, turning it into a better place. As an enveloping, collaborative and sharing perspective in the production of a new, inclusive and open idea for the urban space, it ena-bles the promotion of an "ethical value of the common" to "obtaining mutual benefits" (Sennett, 2018).

Bearing in mind the idea of placemaking as a community-led process, it will be interesting to consider some principles, such as:

– Design is fundamental in the collaborative creation of ideas, and in the vis-ualization of proposals for the space
– The site analysis should be evidence based, as a site diagram helps place-makers identify different indicators and data sources

- The role of observing space uses and behaviours to get a sense of its real use and blockage
- The interest in providing actions that are soft, easy to perform, quick and cheap, to make experimentation feasible
- The role of evaluating actions to identify those that are successful and those that should be stopped or improved – "To learn what is not working is as valuable as to discover what works well" (Badenhorst, 2019, p. 12)
- There is no end to the placemaking process, and it is important to continue to learn from other and different placemaking initiatives and placemakers

From within the field of HCI and interaction design, participatory design (PD) is considered both as an approach and a process. PD actively involves both designers and stakeholders (end-users, customers, or employees) in the design process. The goal is to ensure that the design of an artefact, product, procedure, tool or system meets the stakeholder's needs and is usable. The goal of practising participatory design is to make the end-users part of and included in the creative design process. As such, their own needs, behaviours and views on everyday lives are considered (Hansen et al., 2021a, 2021b).

As a key concept, participation can happen in different ways and can contribute to different parts in the design process. Bratteteig and Wagner (2016) is looking on participation from three dimensions (p. 465):

- Participation of what? This dimension deals with the depth of participation
- What shapes participation? The influence of context, including the situations are framing the project
- How participatory is the design result? This dimension is dealing with one of the core aspects of participation, increasing users' ability or "power to" influence the design. It is about the artefact(s) resulting from the design process and if it gives them a voice in and influence on everyday processes. For example, when including participants from a place in which they live, ask them to be a direct part of the designing of an artefact within their own space, and thus, they will add their own "voice" to how, where and what is actually placed and created. This way, the participants will ensure that the artefact will be a part of everyday living

In its core elements, participatory design can be seen as a collection of tools and techniques, a set of methods and a mindset. Widely used techniques and tools include workshops, collage, ethnography, brainstorming, sketching, prototyping, mock-ups, card sorting, storyboarding, walkthroughs, organizational visits, etc. Participatory design as a method entails a variety of cognitive processes such as collective reflection and understanding in complex contexts and environments, using different appropriate tools and techniques to actively engage diverse communities (i.e. objects, systems, activities, users and

stakeholders) in creatively designing technologies, artefacts, tools, products, information objects and environments, which are more responsive towards different socio-cognitive experiences, tasks and domains (Hansen et al., 2021a, 2021b).

2.3   *Providing Ongoing Evaluation and Improving the Process*

Alongside the interest in increasing a participatory culture, it would also be useful to incorporate an evaluation of the participatory culture of the placemaking process. This contributes to updating and/or correcting implemented initiatives whenever necessary. Allowing others to join and enhance the dynamics that are being created throughout the placemaking process. Enabling in parallel the improvement of self-reflection on the changing process, and a more equitable mix of different ideas and action goals (Bourdin, 2000). This in turn contributes to improving the performance of the process itself through the adoption of a more strategic perspective (Ascher, 2004). The adoption of evaluation dynamics contributes to augmenting knowledge about the placemaking process, and to a more informed choice of priorities for action and decision-making. Also contributing to increased participation and creation of a dynamic of ideas negotiation, meanings, perceptions and therefore improving the placemaking process. A dynamic evaluation process helps to improve, reorient, innovate, systematize and articulate a set of aspects related to placemaking processes (Menezes, 2006, 2012) (see Table 11.2).

TABLE 11.2   The main advantages of evaluation dynamics

Improve the placemaking process regarding:	
The modes in which its development is verified	– Articulation and operationalization of action aims
	– Raising levels of use of available resources and the production of new resources, with increased efficiency in social spending and better use of services and equipment
	– Production of more effective and compensatory results
	– Definition of the most appropriate strategies, as well as the verification of opportunities to implement new strategies
	– Qualification of technical staff
	– Raising levels of resource utilization

TABLE 11.2   The main advantages of evaluation dynamics (*cont.*)

Improve the placemaking process regarding:

The dynamics of creation, implementation, conduction, management and operationalization of action initiatives	– Arrangements for concerting dynamics and actions – Feedback mechanisms – Improved knowledge of placemaking situations, enabling the systematization of the information produced and the creation of innovative devices – Diffusion, information, participation and negotiation of change processes, enabling the creation of a culture of dialogue, as an exchange of ideas, of collective learning, that is, as a practice that stimulates, mobilizes and engages people more – Accountability, weighting of results and performance
The dynamics and processes of choosing priorities and decision-making	– Develop more compensatory and equitable practices – Discuss and analyse the relevance of actions to be implemented or already implemented – Develop areas of autonomy of actions and responsibilities, to ensure a better functioning of the action system
The skill of the different social actors involved	– Development of self-assessment, reflection, technical, social and relational skills and knowledge – Weighted judgement of actions, results and ideas

SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM MENEZES, 2006.

3   Theoretical-Methodological Placemaking Experiences

In this section, we will briefly present two different methodological approaches, namely, the Old Ghettos, New Centrality Project on the Alagoas neighbourhood in Peso da Régua, Portugal, and the Detelinara Urban Pockets project in Novi Sad in Serbia.

3.1   *Old Ghettos, New Centralities Project, Alagoas Neighbourhood – Peso da Régua (Portugal)*

The Old Ghettos, New Centralities Project was supported by EFTA European Funds and Portugal's Instituto da Habitação e da Reabilitação (Housing and Urban Rehabilitation Institute, IHRU) and took place from 2005 to 2008. This

FIGURES 11.1 AND 11.2   Alagoas neighbourhood, before (2005) and after (2008)
SOURCE: M. MENEZES

project addressed two neighbourhood interventions carried out in Portugal, at Rabo de Peixe (São Miguel Island in the Azores) and Alagoas (in Peso da Régua in the north of Portugal). Within the scope of this chapter, only the Alagoas example is discussed (figs. 11.1 and 11.2).

The main challenges were to contribute to the sustainable reversal of cyclical situations of precariousness of public space and equipment, and a lack of urban integration, minimizing socio-territorial inequalities and creating place attachment. The objectives were to promote an integrated intervention between urban, social, environmental, organizational (in management sense) and innovation and knowledge levels. Several placemaking initiatives were carried out over the three years of the project. These initiatives involved different audiences, with different ages and cultural backgrounds, and responded to different objectives and action strategies. Among the initiatives implemented the following stand out: (1) painting of the walls and creation of sculptures in public space by children and young people; (2) discussion and decision-making regarding the colour that the buildings should be repainted; (3) organizing, managing and holding the neighbours' party; (4) engaging in intercultural dance activities (e.g. gipsy dance and hip hop); (5) carrying out cultural activities outside the neighbourhood to combat its negative image, and carrying out activities that attracted residents from outside; (6) the creation and renewing of public spaces in conjunction with a more responsive appropriation behaviour of these spaces.

People were involved from the drafting of proposal ideas to the implementation of the action plan. For this, an integrated, dynamic and continuous diagnosis of the situation, and a collaborative protocol of ideas and co-responsible actions, were implemented. These were carried out with the involvement of residents and local partners and stakeholders. Initially, it was to identify the needs, resources and risks for the development of actions. At a later stage, it was to discuss and create new ideas for the place, and to involve more people from the community in the placemaking process. To respond to the main placemaking challenges, the following aspects were fundamental:

– Partner and stakeholder mapping, and respective identification of the potential contribution that each one could make to the project
– Surveys (interviews and questionnaires), focus group, SWOT, documentary and bibliographic analysis
– Multidisciplinary and technical intervention team, and a local office
– External technical team to provide methodological support to the local intervention team
– Daily visits to the territory with multidisciplinary teams, participation of the technical team in local events, promotion of workshops between the technical team and residents, etc.

– Spatialization of the socio-spatial phenomena observed
– Protocol for interaction, spatialization of social phenomena, development of tools and mechanisms to the management and communication (endogenous and exogenous) of the project, development of matrices of partners and action strategies, matrices of needs and ideas for transformation carried out with residents, stakeholders and local intervention partners

The placemaking process was also supported by a methodological logic that considered the following aspects:

– Dynamic and continuous diagnosis
– Ongoing evaluation of actions and results
– Assessment and continuous review of the strategies and actions
– Database of the actions, strategies, results obtained, difficulties, conflicts and respective changes

3.2   *Detelinara Urban Pockets Project – Novi Sad (Serbia)*

The reconstruction of "urban pockets" in Novi Sad was the project that initiated mapping and activation of creative and cultural potentials of public spaces located at different parts of the city. The long-term goal of the project was to improve the cultural and social life in local communities through the improvement of public spaces as well as to promote an integrated intervention between urban, social, environmental and innovative levels. The short-term goal of the project was the revitalization of small public places identified by the citizens as focal points of their local communities. The Detelinara neighbourhood is one of 46 open places selected for reconstruction and revitalization (figs. 11.3 and 11.4).

The Urban Pockets project has been realized as the combination of a bottom-up and an up-to-bottom approach. The process of placemaking began with active participation in various forms. The conclusion of this phase was incorporated into a programme for a public urban architecture competition. The first phase of the participation started with the survey, which was held in-person and via social networks. The goal of the survey was to give opportunities to citizens to select the place for intervention in their neighbourhoods and to express their thoughts about its contents, functions and design. In the process of the selection of public spaces, the representatives of the Council of Local Communities have been consulted. In addition to surveys, citizens participated in drafting proposals for improvement of public spaces through focus group discussions, as well as in voting for the best solution after the design of the places was completed. The selection of the best competition proposals was chosen by jury members and citizen participation (Jandrić, 2021). The result of the project was the realization of a new vertical garden and kindergarten.

FIGURES 11.3 AND 11.4   Reconstruction of "urban pockets" in Novi Sad (Detelinara neighbourhood)
SOURCE: A. DJUKIC

To respond to the main placemaking challenges, the following aspects were fundamental:

– Surveys (interviews and questionnaires), focus group, documentary and site analysis.
– Citizens also participated in drafting proposals for improvement of public spaces through focus group discussions moderated by urban sociologists, as well as in voting for the best solution.
– Multidisciplinary team which provides professional assistance, up until project realization.

For the process improvement, it was important to consider:

– That citizens can choose the locations to focus and the type of intervention.
– Multiple cycles of surveys and feedback.
– Interdisciplinary approach to design.
– It was a combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches.
– Bottom-up – participation in various forms.
– Up-to bottom – expert research of subject areas was conducted: identification of locations; their urban environment and social values, as well as the potential for interventions.
– Implementation – incorporation of the conclusions of previous phases in a public architecture competition, as well as profiling through jury members and citizen participation in further considerations of competition proposals.

4   Discussion of Outcomes

Within the scope of the Alagoas neighbourhood and the Detelinara Urban Pockets projects the integration of both physical and social aspects was outlined as an objective, as well as the cultural dimension and enhancement of the place attachment.

In the Alagoas neighbourhood, it was observed that in the transition from intentions to practice, the path followed proved to be more complex regarding the interaction between social, cultural and physical actions (Menezes, 2013). The project was further complicated by issues inherent to the nature of social involvement, including technical-methodological issues and the mismatch between the time needed for reflection and the time for action (to which the project's duration is also added). The rigid functional accountability associated with disciplinary domains (e.g. social technicians are not interested in physical issues and vice versa) and the hierarchical management structure can

compromise the interactive and community-led objectives. Another aspect to note is that, during the process, it was important to combat preconceived ideas. For example:

– The diagnosis was often seen as a starting characterization tool (upstream) of the project, which undermined its interest in the downstream phase as a tool to stimulate, instigate and provide feedback regarding the intervention project.
– The interest in recognizing not only advances, but also the critical points that hinder the promotion of integrated and sustainable socio-territorial development.
– Overcoming the idea that the identification of social and territorial needs, problems and potentialities – even when considered from a multidimensional principle of approach – should not be restricted to the technical view of the specialities involved.
– Overcoming the idea of the intervention project with the single purpose of a finished work, since this may compromise the promotion of an integrated and sustainable development intent.

In the case of the Urban Pockets project in Novi Sad, the promotion of the participatory process was done through the social networks and other media, which resulted in a more diverse audience of attendees, while at the same time it excluded the possible participants who do not use social networks and follow local media. The conflict that arose through the implementation of the process was solved by an urban sociologist. The focus groups were most productive when they were established as a system of participants equal in significance and who were ready to engage and listen to each other.

5   Lessons Learned

5.1   *Multidimensional Context View*

In order to implement a multidimensional and integrated (social, physical and territorial) diagnosis and actions, Alagoas shows the importance of creating, from the beginning of the process, dynamic and continuous dialogue between the community and the technicians, also among different technical fields. In this regard, the spatialization of the socio-spatial phenomena was observed, which facilitated the interaction between technicians and community. Also, the inter-knowledge of different work agendas, as well as daily visits with interdisciplinary teams, and the existence of the local office, facilitates the interrelationship of these technicians with the community. Other important

points were the creation of an interactions protocol, and the articulation of the aims of the action (physical and social) and its expected results. The technical inter-knowledge and respective areas of action promote more multidimensional and interactive decisions as well as integrated discussions regarding the activities to be implemented to minimize problems, respond to needs and leverage existing resources.

The example from Novi Sad shows that an interdisciplinary approach which integrates interventions between urban, social, environmental, psychological, economic, historical and innovative levels could provide better results in place-making regarding the strengthening of relationships and intangible values between the community and their open public spaces. Another important point was fruitful interaction between the local government of the city of Novi Sad, the Društvo arhitekata Novog Sada (DaNS, Society of Architects of Novi Sad) and the local community that provides multidimensional and interactive decisions. The realization of this project helped citizens from different social groups to develop a feeling of community and to recognize/identify that place as their own.

5.2   *Friendly Procedures to Non-technicians*

From Alagoas, one of the aspects that guaranteed a greater interactivity between technicians and the community was the participation of the technicians in local informal socializing initiatives (e.g. going to local cafés, attending parties, chatting with people on casual walks, etc.). This increases the proximity between the technicians and the community, and the interest in each other, and encourages social engagement. Casual and informal conversation also helps in gathering information and ideas, and in reconciling action interests. Identifying key interlocutors in the local area helps to create a channel of communication with the community, and of the community with the technicians. However, it was important to have occasional meetings to explain the process and listen to people's perceptions and ideas, improving the participatory design.

The participation in the Novi Sad case was multi-levelled and was present in different ways in all five phases of the placemaking (preparation, location research, programme, competition, and realization) due to providing fruitful connections between non-technicians (citizens) and architects, professional associations and the local government. A combination of bottom-up and up-to-bottom approaches succeeded to help overcome the gaps between professionals, non-professionals and investors, and to provide the right place in the process for each part. Various forms of participation from surveys held in-person and via social networks to the panels, focus groups discussions and

evaluation of proposed design solutions covered the different social groups (age, gender, social status).

5.3 *Ongoing Evaluation and Improve the Process*

The experience lived in the Alagoas neighbourhood demonstrates the importance it holds: (1) the establishment of a continuous situation diagnosis dynamic creating a logic of feedback and improvement of the intervention system; (2) the active, present and methodical technical monitoring of the intervention dynamics; (3) the continuous review of the strategies adopted, with a successive adaptation of the techniques and working tools to accommodate the emerging needs and the results and impacts obtained.

The participatory process in Novi Sad could be improved including more cycles and feedback within the process methodology (preparation, location research, programme, competition and realization) to provide better connections and understanding between the citizens, local government and professionals (planners, architects, designers). Furthermore, the education of the citizens regarding the importance of participation in urban planning and urban design should be improved to raise motivation and awareness of the participants within their role in placemaking of successful open public places. Also, new techniques in public participation, especially the digital ones, should be introduced to the citizens and local government as productive and efficient tools in the process of public participation.

6 Conclusions

The combination of a bottom-up and up-to-bottom approach, community involvement and citizen participation were transversal in the placemaking processes implemented in the Alagoas neighbourhood (Portugal) and in Novi Sad (Serbia). From a continued learning perspective, however, the four methodological approaches briefly presented allows us to consider the importance of increasing:

– The integration of a social actor's space perceptions, namely their socio-spatial skills, which refers to the symbolic dimensions and practices of use and appropriation of contexts, and their feelings of well-being
– The approximation and articulation of categories and notions of understanding of space between different disciplinary areas, and between technical-disciplinary perspectives and the perception of people/communities involved in the placemaking process

– The adoption of more flexible procedures, methods and tools that are closer to the social and spatial reality of people, considering their limitations, potentialities and resources
– The common benefit achieved with placemaking as a process (as opposed to the excessive promotion of its physical-spatial outcome)

As discussed above, the following important aspects can be highlighted:

– Establish a protocol between inter-perceptions/meanings and inter-actions, to guarantee the articulation between action objectives and results obtained.
– Identify a set of strong and weak points to enhance the former and minimize the latter.
– Carry out a continuous review of the adopted strategies, along with the successive adaptation of the methods, techniques and tools for the emerging needs, results and impacts obtained – which means the need for continuous collection and analysis of information, along with its systematization.
– Create communication and dissemination tools (endogenous and exogenous) to safeguard the involvement of people and stakeholders.
– Consider that the process of participation of social actors must be dynamic and flexible and to include a diversity of community actors and stakeholders to be part of the placemaking process through participatory design procedures, tools and techniques.
– Carry out the training of key actors involved in the placemaking process, increasing the general participation and empowerment. They are central to the conception of ideas, implementation of the placemaking process and support of the decision-making.
– Consider the role of a placemaking pedagogy. This pedagogical approach may help fill the gaps in dialogues between the technical and non-technical knowledge.
– Create mechanisms that facilitate the transferability of good sustainable practices.
– Produce continuous reflection documentation and support for the future placemaking process.

This chapter aims to discuss these issues, presenting three principles that, from a methodological logic of safeguarding and promoting social inclusion, can contribute to guiding placemaking processes. In this sense, this chapter discussed the role of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge from a community-led process; the importance of a common vision to obtain mutual benefits, creating and reinforcing ethical values; and, finally, the meaning of participatory design and continuous evaluation in taking placemaking as a continuous learning process, which requires a critical perspective of approach.

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Placemaking has become a key concept in many disciplines. Due to an increase in digitization, mobilities, migration and rapid changes to the urban environments, it is important to learn how planning and social experts practice it in different contexts. *Placemaking in Practice* provides an inventory of practices, reflecting on different issues related to placemaking from a pan European perspective. It brings different cases, perspectives, and results analysed under the same purpose, to advance knowledge on placemaking, the actors engaged and results for people. It is backed by an intensive review of recent literature on placemaking, engagement, methods and activism results - towards developing a new placemaking agenda. *Placemaking in Practice* combines theory, methodology, methods (including digital ones) and their application in a pan-European context and imbedded into a relevant historical context.

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