

COMMUNITY-LED INCLUSIVE GREEN SPACES: IN-HABIT METHODOLOGY FOR PARTICIPATORY URBAN INTERVENTIONS



Published by: Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra

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August 2025, Nitra, Slovakia

IN-HABIT project (INclusive Health And wellBeing In small and medium size ciTies) has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No. 869227.

10.5281/zenodo.17014153



Methodological Guide for Co-creation, Co-deployment, and Co-management of Inclusive Green Public Spaces

This document is part of the IN-HABIT project funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme that explores how integrated and visionary solutions – combining nature-based, cultural, social, and digital innovations – can improve health and well-being inclusively. Implemented in four European cities (Córdoba, Lucca, Riga, and Nitra), the project demonstrates how small and medium-sized cities can become laboratories of participatory transformation.

This methodological guide builds on the experience of community-led interventions that reimagined neglected or underused public spaces in Nitra pilot as inclusive green hubs. It provides a practical roadmap for adapting and replicating these approaches in diverse urban contexts. The emphasis is on co-creation, reversibility, multifunctionality, and inclusive governance as tools for designing resilient public spaces rooted in community trust and ownership.

You are reading a methodological guide designed for:

- Local governments, planners, and decision-makers seeking to activate inclusive green public spaces.
- Civil society organisations, community groups, and cultural actors who want to foster participation and stewardship.
- Researchers, educators, and practitioners interested in linking scientific knowledge with practical urban innovation.

Inside you will find:

- The core principles of the IN-HABIT methodology developed and tested in Nitra, Slovakia.
- Key phases for replicating the approach.
- Tools, methods, and entry points for participatory co-design.
- Factors of success and common barriers.
- Lessons learned and pathways for adaptation in other cities.

We invite you to explore this guide not as a rigid formula, but as a flexible and adaptable framework that can be tailored to your city, community, or initiative.



GREEN SPACES ARE NOT LUXURIES — THEY ARE INFRASTRUCTURES OF HEALTH, TRUST, AND BELONGING

The Context

Green spaces in European small and medium-sized cities are essential tools for addressing complex environmental and social challenges. Environmentally, they mitigate urban heat islands through evapotranspiration, act as carbon sinks, and manage stormwater (Đoàn et al., 2024; Egerer et al., 2024). Their multifunctional and reversible designs allow for adaptation to shifting urban and climatic needs, ensuring long-term resilience (Wallinder, 2024; Dabbas, 2019). Socially, inclusive and co-created green spaces foster cohesion, reduce inequalities, and encourage participation. Community gardens in particular serve as hubs for collective action and identity-building across diverse populations, from Asian American refugees (Đoàn et al., 2024) to Syrian migrants in Denmark (Storm et al., 2023). They break down barriers (Nyers, 2024), foster belonging (Richardson, 2024), and empower through co-ownership (Barata et al., 2019; Codato et al., 2024). Health-wise, green spaces improve mental well-being by alleviating stress and anxiety and support physical health through cleaner air and active lifestyles (Dyg et al., 2020; Christensen et al., 2019). Their multifunctionality and reversibility supports flexible urban strategies in response to demographic and environmental shifts (Ochoa et al., 2019; Veen et al., 2016). Accessibility and design – paths, inclusive seating, trees, and flowers – are crucial for maximizing use across all demographics (Amato & Simonetti, 2021). However, to achieve this in practice, green spaces require

integrated planning and participatory governance involving public, civic, and private actors. In this aspect, challenges remain – land tenure insecurity and lack of policy support have made some of the community built green space temporary fixtures, making them vulnerable to urban planning threats (Egerer et al., 2024) and socio-cultural divides (Wallinder, 2024). Piloting community-led green public spaces is all the more important in Central and Eastern Europe, where the legacy of centralized decision-making, low public trust, and limited experience with inclusive governance continue to hinder the effective implementation of participatory planning. Institutional frameworks are often inflexible, public engagement remains low, and the capacity for skilled facilitation is still developing – making locally adapted co-design approaches essential for meaningful community involvement in delivery of inclusive green spaces.

The Nitra Pilot

The Nitra pilot addressed the challenge of **limited access to inclusive, high-quality green spaces** in socially and spatially marginalised areas of the city. Many such spaces were **underutilised**, lacked ecological maintenance, or did not reflect the needs of diverse user groups, particularly **Roma communities, migrants, Ukrainian refugees** and **young people**. These groups were also typically underrepresented in formal urban planning and public participation processes. The pilot responded to these challenges by fostering **co-design processes** that were both place-

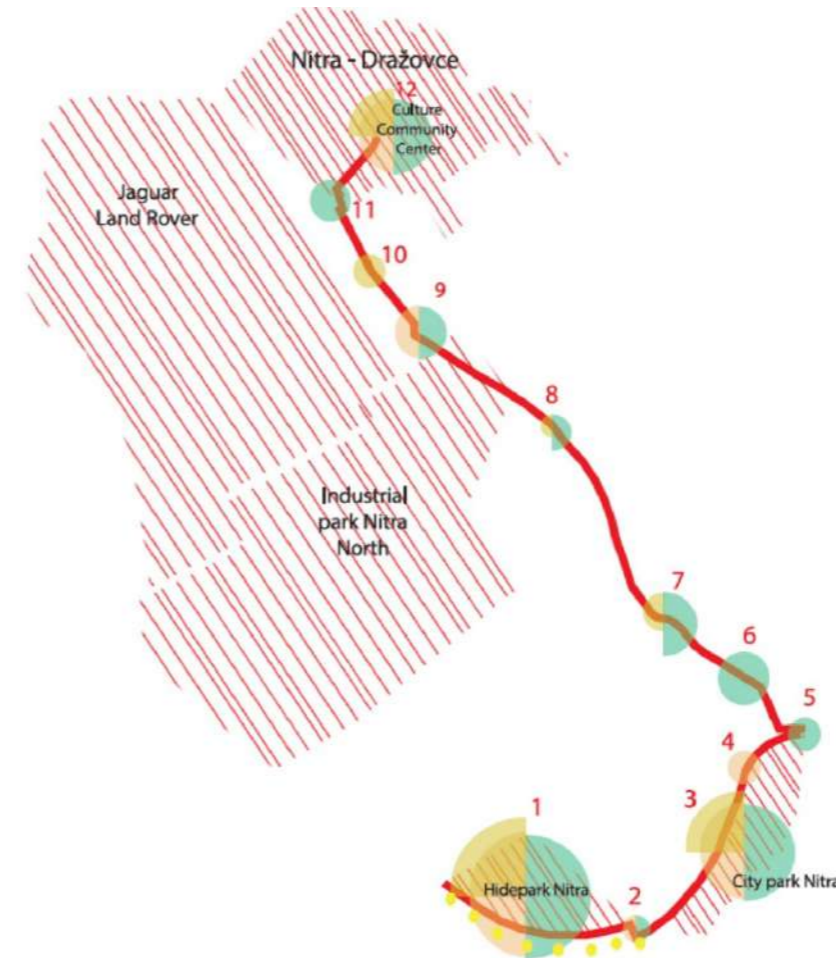


based and inclusive, focusing on building trust and visibility in communities with historically low engagement.

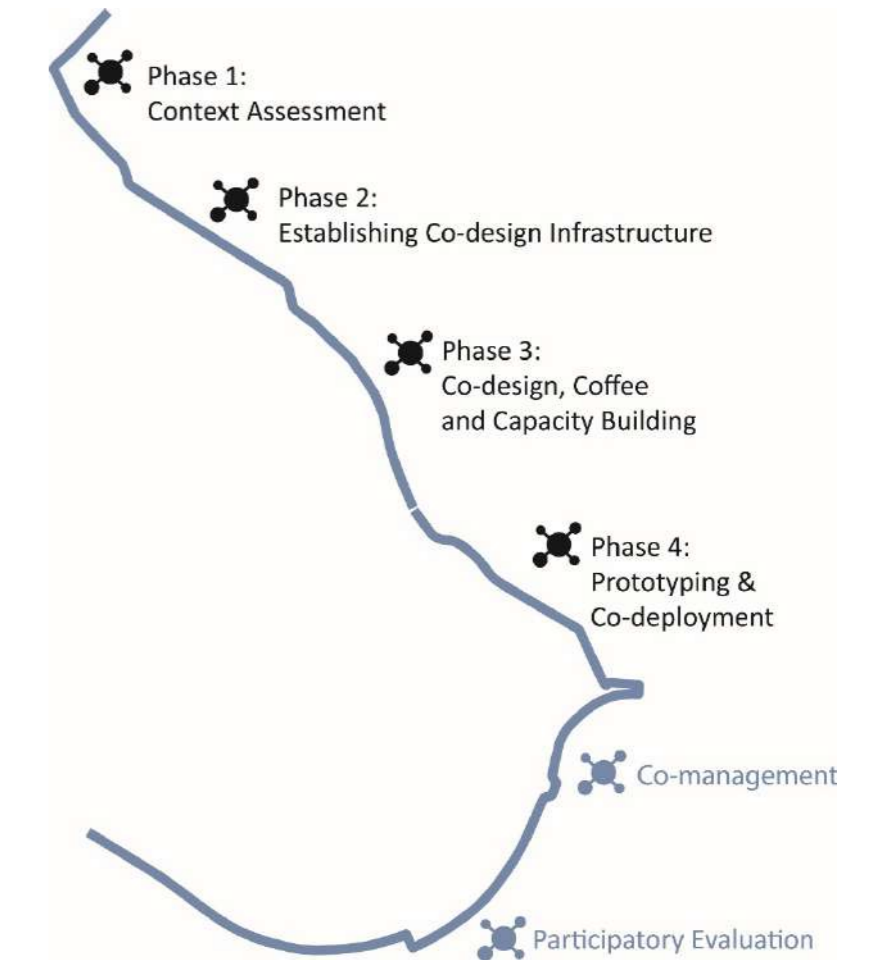
In Nitra IN-HABIT project implemented a community-led strategy to revitalise underused green spaces through nature-based solutions, artistic engagement, and participatory design. The focus was on building trust by offering **low-threshold activities** and fostering **long-term collaboration**. As a result, neglected areas like **floodplains, schoolyards, and informal parks** were transformed into inclusive, ecologically resilient public spaces. These interventions also improved **social trust, strengthened local planning and stewardship capacities**, and supported **cultural programming** aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and the New European Bauhaus values. The tested concept, called **REMOULD** – Reversible Multifunctional Open-source Urban Landscape, combined flexibility, multifunctionality, and co-creation. Modular furniture, terrain-based interventions, and movable installations ensured that the landscape remained **reversible and adaptable**. Spaces were designed to serve **multiple functions**; meadow areas doubled as picnic spots, classrooms, concert venues, and grazing fields, depending on use and time. **Open-source** design allowed continuous co-creation, with elements like community gardens and art installations shaped and adapted by residents. Rather than a fixed urban redesign, the intervention evolved as a living process, intended to be managed and scaled by those who built it. More information about the process can be found in Melichová and Hrivnák (2025).

The approach demonstrated how **low-cost, co-designed solutions and shared governance** can transform public space in socially inclusive and sustainable ways. It offers a replicable model for small and medium-sized cities looking to enhance green spaces while engaging diverse communities, especially where trust in institutions is limited and large-scale investment is not feasible.

The **Nitra IN-HABIT pilot area** is located in the northern part of Nitra city, focusing primarily on the **Dražovce district** and its surrounding peri-urban landscape, including **Hidepark** and adjacent green corridors along the **Nitra River**. The area combines **residential zones**, semi-natural habitats, a public park and transitional spaces between the urban core and agricultural land. Dražovce is characterised by a **high concentration of marginalised Roma communities** and limited access to quality public spaces, while Hidepark represents a grassroots **outdoor civic-cultural centre** situated on former brownfield land. The pilot area integrates diverse spatial typologies, including **underutilised greenfields, neglected schoolyards, abandoned plots, and fragmented ecological corridors**, alongside a **bike path** that connects the site to the city centre.



The Methodology as a Replication Axis





PARTICIPATION IS NOT A COMPLEMENT TO DESIGN—IT IS THE DESIGN.

Phase 1: Context Assessment: Identify underutilized green or marginal urban areas and underrepresented groups.

The first phase of replication focuses on understanding the local **social, spatial, and institutional context** to identify opportunities for **inclusive green space transformation**. Rather than starting from predefined “problem areas,” this step emphasizes the discovery of **untapped potential** – both in **underused urban spaces** and in the **capacities of local communities**. The objective is to identify **accessible sites with ecological or social value** and engage **underrepresented groups** through trust-building, low-threshold activities.

The process begins by scanning the urban territory for **vacant, underutilized, or transitional spaces**. These may include floodplains, informal parks, disused green corridors, or schoolyards that already exhibit spontaneous or informal use but lack long-term support or visibility. Equally important is **mapping existing civic actors and networks** – NGOs, informal initiatives, and cultural hubs – that can serve as partners or facilitators.

To understand how spaces are currently used – and by whom – **light-touch participatory methods** can be applied. These include informal engagements that surface both material and intangible assets, as well as perceived needs and barriers. For example,

transect walks help uncover spatial dynamics and local knowledge; **cultural events** such as Sunday Chill serve as entry points for open interaction; **BioBlitzes** can reveal overlooked ecological value; and **photovoice** offers a way for vulnerable groups – such as migrants or refugees – to share their lived experiences and perspectives visually.

In the Nitra pilot, this phase involved working with schoolchildren in the Roma-majority district of Dražovce through art-therapy methods, using photovoice workshops with Ukrainian refugees to explore their lived experiences in green public spaces of the city. In the Hidepark area, Sunday Chill events and nature walks engaged diverse groups – including NGOs, municipal officers, and youth – well before formal co-design began. These early actions helped establish **trust, legitimacy, and relevance**, which proved essential for deeper engagement and long-term stewardship.

Key principles for this phase include: **listen before designing, value informality, embrace diversity, and start with small, visible actions**. A strong foundation of mutual understanding at this stage significantly improves the quality and sustainability of all later phases.

Key lessons that can be replicated:

- **Don't start with designs, start with dialogue:** Early conversations with community members revealed hidden tensions and unexpected allies.
- **Show up before you ask others to:** Regular presence in Dražovce and Hidepark before launching activities helped overcome scepticism.
- **Map local actors, not just stakeholders:** The elementary school janitor proved to have more central role in local community dynamics than formal leaders.
- **Start with questions, not answers:** Initial participatory transect and photo walks asked people to “show us your city,” revealing emotional geographies.
- **Make everyone a knowledge holder:** IN-HUB meetings in Nitra gave equal space to local knowledge, experiential insight, and academic expertise – with focus on triangulation between them in the early stages of pilot area mapping.
- **Create low-pressure learning zones:** Informal, playful formats like Sunday Chill events made people more open to trying new roles and tools.
- **Mix formats, not just people:** Workshops, walks, brainstorming, and field visits worked better than fixed-format meetings for engaging diverse members.
- **Give tools, not just tasks:** Participants were trained in mapping, model-making, and even plant identification –

which boosted their confidence and long-term involvement in subsequent phases

- **Give before you take:** Gifting cameras during the photo walks or co-hosting events gave people a sense that the project wasn't extractive.
- **Work with existing social rituals:** Integrating mapping and early capacity building in existing school activities and curricula anchored new ideas in familiar rhythms.
- **Use fun to build familiarity:** Early BioBlitz and community games reduced barriers to participation and created a shared starting point.
- **Use nature to teach participation:** BioBlitz events doubled as biodiversity education and training in observation, patience, and shared discovery — skills essential for co-design.
- **Start with co-learning:** Facilitated exchange sessions between planners and locals helped level the playing field before design discussions.
- **Make knowledge visible:** Exhibition of workshop outputs (drawings, models, photo stories) reinforced the legitimacy of community knowledge and served as a “thank you” to those who contributed at this stage





Phase 2: Establish Co-Design Infrastructure

Once the context is mapped and initial trust-building is underway, the second phase focuses on **institutionalizing participation** through the establishment of a dedicated coordination mechanism and infrastructure to support inclusive co-design. In the Nitra pilot, this was achieved through the creation of the **IN-HUB**, a local partnership platform embedded in both the civic and institutional life of the city.

The **IN-HUB in Nitra** was not a standalone or bureaucratic body, but a **flexible, cross-sectoral coordination structure** that brought together representatives from the **municipality, local NGOs** (notably Hidepark and civic associations using the community and cultural space it operates), **Slovak University of Agriculture, schools, and informal community actors**. The strength of the IN-HUB came from its embeddedness: it operated as a **mediator between public administration and grassroots stakeholders**, ensuring that both institutional resources and community knowledge were mobilized.

Since public space interventions require interdisciplinary expertise – including **architecture, urban planning, landscape ecology, and green infrastructure design** – the IN-HUB in Nitra was supported by the establishment of a **Co-Design Atelier** and a **Forum**.

Together, these functioned as structured participatory mechanisms that combined education, expert input, and community consultation.

The **Co-Design Atelier** was implemented as an **educational and creative process**, embedded within the curriculum at the **Slovak University of Agriculture (SUA)**. Students of **landscape architecture** worked under the guidance of invited **experts in architecture, green infrastructure, landscape ecology, and dendrology** to co-develop conceptual proposals for inclusive green interventions. This was not a one-off event, but a **multi-stage engagement and prototyping sequence** aligned with the Inclusive Transformation Plan. The student designs drew upon previous engagement activities with stakeholders and developed them into technical proposals. The **Forum** complemented the Atelier by serving as a **multi-actor review and exchange platform**, including **institutional and thematic experts** (e.g. representatives from Manifest 2020 and the NEB national contact point at the Ministry of Transport and Construction), **city administration staff** (including current and former Chief Architects), and the community.

The Forum enabled the **evaluation, discussion, and refinement** of student proposals, helping to align them with policy frameworks, technical feasibility, and community needs. Together, the Atelier and Forum created **visible, low-barrier entry points** into the project, especially for groups typically underrepresented in



planning processes while also ensuring quality and conforming with building codes and standards.

Engagement should be made **iterative and continuous**, rather than one-off, through a mix of **regular forums, ad hoc co-creation workshops**, and **informal community events**. This flexible participation infrastructure allowed for new people to enter at different stages, and for ideas to evolve through practice. **Artists, educators, youth workers, and researchers** acted as **community connectors**, translating between institutional frameworks and lived experience. Their cross-sectoral skills helped to sustain relationships and momentum across very different types of actors.

In a context like Nitra, where **public trust in participatory planning is generally low**, legitimacy was gained by working through **existing civic infrastructures** – particularly **Hidepark**, an independent cultural and ecological initiative – and through collaboration with the university, which brought both credibility and neutrality. The IN-HUB functioned more as a **network and platform** than a fixed entity, adapting its role over time to support implementation, mediation, and monitoring.

Resources required for this phase include **human capacity** – especially facilitators and connectors with interdisciplinary skills – and **flexible financial support** to fund not just physical infrastructure but also ongoing programming and event-based activation. Critical success factors are the **presence of trusted**

community entry points (such as NGOs or cultural spaces), and the **ability to grant real co-decision-making power** to marginalised participants.

Key lessons that can be replicated:

- **Expect initial silence:** Early meetings in segregated areas were quiet — trust built gradually through informal follow-ups.
- **Start with people, not institutions:** The IN-HUB began with informal dialogues among activists, academics, and city staff – not formal agreements.
- **Create a home for co-creation:** Establishing the Co-Design Atelier at the university and meeting points at Hidepark gave the process a recognizable space — not just metaphorically, but physically.
- **Create a safe meeting space:** Holding early meetings in neutral venues (like the university) helped ease power imbalances and encourage honest input.
- **Mix the experts with the amateurs:** Nitra pilot invited artists, ecologists, students, and gardeners to learn from each other on equal footing.
- **Make values explicit:** Early discussions weren't just about logistics – they focused on shared values like equity, trust, and mutual care.

- **Build bridges, not just networks:** The IN-HUB helped overcome long-standing disconnects between grassroots actors (like Hidepark) and city officials.
- **Informality can be a strength:** The IN-HUB's flexible structure allowed creativity and experimentation that rigid governance bodies often suppress.
- **Consistency > size:** A small group of committed actors meeting regularly was more impactful than large one-off stakeholder events.
- **Don't wait for perfect alignment:** The IN-HUB moved forward even when institutional actors weren't fully on board – and convinced them through results, so don't focus on membership KPIs early on, rather on meaningful engagement.
- **Let conflict surface early:** Disagreements between activist and municipal logics were not avoided but addressed head-on — this made collaboration more robust.
- **Clarity of roles avoids burnout:** Defining responsibilities early helped prevent overburdening certain actors (especially NGO staff and volunteers).
- **Hybrid leadership works:** The shared leadership between the university, NGO (Hidepark), and city created a balance of knowledge, grassroots legitimacy, and institutional access.
- **The IN-HUB is also an incubator:** It became a space where new collaborations were born – beyond the original project scope.

- **Reflexivity is essential:** The IN-HUB evolved through regular self-assessment and adaptation – not everything worked the first time, so don't fight the changes.
- **Let leadership for certain tasks circulate:** Rotating facilitation roles gave voice to different actors and built shared responsibility.
- **However, trust takes time (and consistent faces):** Rotating facilitators or consultants can derail early-stage trust-building.
- **Create roles, not just invitations:** Assigning small roles (e.g. event co-host, guide, documentarian) helped people feel ownership early on and also helped reach underrepresented groups (e.g. an elderly IN-HUB member from Dražovce neighbourhood engaging network of Roma mothers)
- **Translate everything – and not just the language:** Cultural mediation was key for involving Ukrainian refugees meaningfully.
- **Facilitators are MVPs:** identify local “connectors” or local facilitators (can be artists, educators, or NGO staff) to link between institutions and citizens, preferably with **cross-sectoral experience** (urban planning, social, educational).





Phase 3: Co-design, Coffee, Cake and Capacity Building

This phase outlines a replicable approach to fostering inclusive urban transformation through delivery of reversible, multifunctional and inclusive urban green spaces, drawing on the IN-HABIT project's experiences in Nitra. This phase emphasizes participatory design, fostering informal engagement, and empowering local communities through skill development:

Structured and iterative co-design process:

1. **Initial idea generation (Nitra approach: Association Exercises):** Begin with workshops where participants identify significant locations in the pilot area (e.g., interesting, underutilized, unsafe, or having new potential). Encourage them to propose activities and "proto-solutions" needed for those activities, specifying types of users they would attract.
2. **Contextual validation (Nitra approach: Interactive Transect Walks):** Follow up the initial workshops with on-site interactive walks through the identified areas. Provide participants with maps and diaries to record observations, discussions, and their own comments regarding existing conditions (e.g., safety, accessibility, noise pollution,

emotional responses). Use these inputs to refine and update the initial proposals for both hard (physical infrastructure) and soft (intangible processes) interventions.

3. **Expert-led design development (Nitra approach: Co-design Atelier):** Integrate academic expertise by offering a "Co-design Atelier," such as an elective university course facilitated by experts in design, architecture, landscape ecology, and dendrology. Students receive the initial community-generated "proto-solutions" and conduct detailed field research and analysis. They then transform community drafts into concrete technical drawings, visualizations, and indicative budget proposals (e.g., turning children's schoolyard redesign ideas into technical plans). The process included **data collection, site visits,** and **iterative design development,** with student teams working on different thematic components such as sensory accessibility, edible landscapes, social interaction, and inclusive aesthetics.
4. **Formal validation and feasibility check:** Conduct validation workshops with the broader IN-HUB and relevant institutional stakeholders (e.g., city administration, urban planners). During this step the initial interventions are re-evaluated for its feasibility, compliance with city-wide policies, and strategic documents. Use interactive formats like "World Café" for moderated discussions on proposed functionalities, reversibility, safety, accessibility features

(including a Gender, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (GDEI) perspective), and plans for co-deployment and co-management.

5. **Leverage digital tools:** Incorporate online co-design tools, such as 3D mapping software (e.g., Kuula), to enable remote participation and visualization of proposed interventions. This is particularly useful when in-person meetings are not feasible.



Integrated capacity building and empowerment

- 1. Skill development and entrepreneurship:** Provide low-threshold educational and skills courses tailored for low-income and under-educated vulnerable groups. These courses can focus on practical skills like indoor greenery and green wall care, fruit tree care, experimental flower bed care, and working with wood and textiles, as well as upcycling and recycling. This promotes healthier lifestyles, skill satisfaction, and potential economic opportunities.
- 2. Use the co-design process to develop skills and empower those most vulnerable:** Embedding meaningful, hands-on, and inclusive learning opportunities in the co-design process means that participants' contributions not only help inform the design priorities but also enhance their communication, observation, and confidence. Co-design process in Nitra served not only to co-create spatial solutions, but also to **build local ecological knowledge, strengthen agency, and create a sense of ownership, belonging and environmental stewardship**, particularly among groups typically excluded from planning and design processes. For example, a participatory phytosociological analysis where 38 schoolchildren from vulnerable backgrounds (almost completely segregated so-called "Roma school" from the nearby residential neighbourhood), together with 5 teachers and 3 researchers collected data on plant composition was conducted in Nitra pilot. This not

only allowed the project partners to select native, resilient plant species but also promoted ecological literacy, environmental awareness and provided early STEM exposure to a community with limited access to such opportunities.

- 3. Support local leaders and fundraising:** Establish platforms or initiatives to support and educate active citizens in project management and fundraising. Offer lectures and workshops on topics such as setting up civic associations, obtaining grants from various private and public schemes, accounting, and volunteer management. This approach helps secure additional funding for co-designed interventions and fosters local ownership and sustainability of the solutions beyond the project's lifespan.
- 4. Integrate soft and hard solutions:** Plan and execute soft (intangible processes and innovations like workshops, cultural events) and hard (physical interventions or infrastructures) interventions in a coordinated manner. Soft interventions can build trust, social cohesion, and awareness, laying the groundwork for successful hard interventions implementation and maximizing their combined impact on health and well-being.

Key success factors are:

- 1. Embrace two-way design:** Implement a flexible methodology that integrates both top-down (expert-driven) and bottom-up (community-driven) approaches to ensure comprehensive and relevant solutions that will not be rejected either by the community or local building permits office.
- 2. Target diverse groups:** Actively involve vulnerable populations, such as ethnic minorities, migrants, persons with disabilities, children, and the elderly. Also, include institutional stakeholders and active individuals from various thematic fields like social and community innovations, art, culture, healthy lifestyles, education, nature-based solutions. Utilize open calls and communication campaigns to ensure broad participation.
- 3. Foster open dialogue and trust ("Coffee" aspect):** Create a welcoming and comfortable atmosphere for discussions, adapting to local contexts and community needs. This includes conducting one-on-one meetings with stakeholders and community leaders, especially for those who may be hesitant to participate in larger forums. The Nitra experience showed that adapting engagement strategies, such as intensified involvement of schools with high attendance by Roma children, was crucial when initial workshops faced low participation from specific groups.

- 4. Continuously map stakeholders:** Recognize that the IN-HUB's composition is dynamic. Continuously update stakeholder involvement to reflect evolving needs and project progress, allowing individuals and institutions to transition between participation levels based on their engagement intensity.
- 5. Continuous monitoring and adaptation:** Regularly monitor and evaluate activities to understand their impact and provide timely feedback for necessary adjustments. Be prepared to adapt plans based on emerging needs, unforeseen circumstances (e.g., influx of refugees in Nitra), and community feedback. This flexible approach ensures that interventions remain relevant and effective throughout the project's duration.

Key lessons that can be replicated:

- Let communities teach you first:** Before planning anything, Hidepark volunteers hosted us for a DIY workshop on how *they* build spaces.
- Visual tools go further than words:** Sketching, mapping, and model-making worked better than long presentations.
- Don't separate education from co-design:** Nature-based learning sessions became informal engagement platforms, especially for children and families.



- **Build social capacities too:** Soft skills like facilitation, translation, and conflict mediation were just as critical as design or ecological literacy.
- **Celebrate skill-sharing:** Participants teaching each other how to compost, prune trees, or use hand tools created a culture of mutual learning.
- **Design for multi-generational learning:** Children, parents, and seniors were engaged together – which normalized intergenerational collaboration in later design phases.
- **Institutional partners also needed capacity building:** City representatives gained confidence in participatory methods through the IN-HUB – it wasn't just the community learning.
- **Celebrate often:** Public moments of recognition (e.g. exhibitions, events, awards) kept the IN-HUB motivated and visible in the city.
- **Cross-sector learning takes time:** Some experts began to see cultural interventions as legitimate “infrastructure” only after repeated exposure in the IN-HUB.
- **Involve children as catalysts:** Activities in the Dražovce school engaged families and created bridges across ethnic divides.
- **Use art and culture as infrastructure:** Informal picnics and community meals built more trust than structured meetings ever could.

- **Translate between worlds:** The IN-HUB facilitators functioned as a translator between municipal logic, activist values, and academic frameworks.
- **Document learning as it happens:** Visual and verbal storytelling helped participants reflect on what they co-designed – reinforcing it and building pride.





Phase 4: Prototyping & Co-deployment:

This phase emphasizes the iterative development, participatory implementation, and sustainable integration of solutions into the urban fabric.

1. Adopt a phased and adaptive deployment strategy

- **Integrate co-design and co-deployment phase:** To ensure a **seamless transition from ideas to action**, and to maintain the momentum and trust built during participatory processes involve community members not only in conceptual planning but also in **hands-on implementation activities**. By doing so, the process preserved inclusivity and ownership, while allowing space for **real-time adaptation** based on how users interacted with the evolving space. This approach also allowed for feedback to be addressed during installation – ensuring that materials, locations, or functions responded to lived experience. The blurred boundary between co-design and co-deployment made interventions more **context-sensitive, reversible, and collectively maintained**, strengthening their long-term sustainability. In Nitra, participatory site-specific artist residencies were the most successful approach in this regard. During these residencies, artists organize workshops with IN-HUB members, gardeners, and other visitors to the intervention

area, and also co-create the final landart together with their involvement. The residency aims to provide a blend of active and passive engagement for participants, fostering community connection to the spaces and specific interventions.

- **Initiate with smaller-scale pilot interventions ("Seedbed Approach"):** Begin the co-deployment process gradually by implementing low-threshold activities and smaller-scale pilot interventions. This approach, demonstrated by planting trees with Roma schoolchildren or building birdcages in their schoolyard, serves multiple purposes: it helps build capacities within target groups, assesses the feasibility and community acceptance of proposed solutions, and generates enthusiasm for active participation in subsequent, larger-scale hard intervention deployments. It also allows for early testing against issues like vandalism.
 - **Maintain flexibility and adaptability:** Be prepared to continuously adjust plans in response to emerging community needs, unforeseen circumstances (such as an influx of refugees impacting target groups), external factors (e.g., inflation affecting material prices, climate conditions impacting planting schedules), and ongoing community feedback.
- ### 2. Foster participatory implementation and ownership
- **Engage directly in physical tasks:** Actively involve community members, volunteers, and local stakeholders in the physical

deployment of hard solutions. This includes organizing volunteer days to prepare intervention areas, coordinating tree-planting initiatives, and involving community members in constructing elements of hard interventions. Corporate social responsibility programs built around employee volunteering can involve wider public. Such direct participation is crucial for fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for shared public goods.

- **Prioritize local expertise and labour:** Where feasible, aim to hire local enterprises and residents, particularly from vulnerable communities, for construction and implementation tasks. This strategy not only creates economic opportunities but also integrates valuable local knowledge and skills into the development of the solutions.
- **Leverage "Do-it-Yourself" (DIY) culture:** Include DIY elements and allow for flexible iteration of low-barrier, visible interventions with aesthetic and functional appeal. Encourage and integrate community-led "do-it-yourself" approaches, especially for components that can be built or refurbished by volunteers and local activators using waste or recycled materials. Examples from Nitra include the refurbishment of a yurt for a community kitchen and building DIY Café structures from repurposed shipping containers.
- **Provide ongoing capacity building:** Continue to offer practical training and workshops during the deployment phase, focusing on skills directly relevant to the implemented solutions. In Nitra,

this included involving students, volunteers and community in planting meadows and trees while providing practical horticultural training for community gardens and urban orchards by a subcontractor (local landscape architecture company).

3. Embrace innovative materials and design for resilience

- **Experiment with sustainable and resilient materials:** Explore and test experimental materials that are both sustainable and resilient, such as concrete canvas, plastic terrazzo, waste wood and biodegradable alternatives for urban furniture and other interventions. This aligns with environmental goals and helps address challenges like vandalism.
- **Prototype and test solutions rigorously:** Before committing to large-scale deployment, develop and test prototypes of urban furniture, outdoor exhibition systems, and other elements to ensure their functionality, durability, and suitability for the specific urban environment. This can involve simulating environmental conditions, such as river flow for floating flower beds, as was done in Nitra's Botanical Garden pools.



- **Design for reversibility and multifunctionality** (REMOULD Concept): Implement solutions in line with the "Reversible Multifunctional Open-source Urban LanDscape" (REMOULD) concept. This flexibility not only enhances replicability but also allows elements to be moved and adapted for use in different parts of the pilot area or even beyond, maximizing their utility and impact.

4. Navigate administrative and procurement challenges

- **Anticipate lengthy approval and procurement processes:** Be aware that implementing innovative and experimental solutions, particularly in sensitive or restricted areas (e.g., inundation zones or historical areas), will likely involve extensive permitting procedures and can lead to significant delays in public procurement. Factor these delays into project timelines.
- **Explore social procurement methods:** Actively investigate and utilize social procurement methods in accordance with national legislation to ensure that social, gender, and inclusive aspects are embedded into contracting processes, such as by hiring local companies or those from marginalized communities.
- **Leverage in-kind contributions:** Seek and integrate in-kind contributions from local stakeholders, which can include materials, specialized equipment, or volunteer labour. This

approach can help mitigate budgetary limitations and foster broader commitment and collaboration.

5. Ensure sustainable co-management from the outset

- **Develop detailed co-management plans:** Formulate clear co-management rules and procedures for each intervention early in the process, involving relevant IN-HUB members and stakeholders in negotiations and formal agreements. This is critical for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the deployed solutions beyond the project's lifespan.
- **Explore innovative business models:** Encourage IN-HUB members to develop sustainable business plans for the co-management and maintenance of deployed solutions, such as catering facilities in public green spaces, bike-sharing initiatives, multifunctional community kitchen in a community garden. This helps ensure financial viability and community ownership.
- **Formalize agreements:** Where appropriate, pursue formal agreements, such as contracts with relevant public authorities to secure long-term commitments for the operation and maintenance of deployed solutions.

Key lessons that can be replicated:

- **Early wins matter:** Small, visible outcomes (e.g. co-hosted events, visible prototypes) helped legitimise the IN-HUB in the eyes of both public and community actors.
- **Start small, iterate often:** Design with low-stakes experimentation in mind.
- **Learning happens when doing, not explaining:** Workshop participants understood public space planning better while building benches than during PowerPoints.
- **Trust grows through continuity:** Keeping core people involved throughout phases (planning, implementation, reflection) built long-term collaboration.
- **Combine artistic and ecological approaches** to foster imagination and ownership: participatory site-specific artist residencies for public green space interventions are particularly replicable
- **Prioritise modular, and multi-functional elements:** e.g., movable benches, planters, community gardens, shading elements
- **Plan for reversibility:** Modular and mobile designs lower risk for municipalities and invite future adaptation.
- **Use recycled or natural materials:** preferably with local sourcing or DIY practices, to lower entry barriers and increase replicability
- **Allow time for iteration and adaptation during use:** do not expect a one-time launch.

- **Make room for informality:** Allow spaces to serve multiple spontaneous functions, not just planned ones.
- **Facilitate long-term handover to capable local actors:** e.g., through capacity building and formal agreements.
- **Support informal maintenance networks:** e.g., NGOs, youth groups, school partners, and embed co-responsibility in the use phase
- **Encourage programming of the space** through events, learning activities, and resident-led improvements.



EVERY CITY HAS ITS OWN RHYTHM – THE METHODOLOGY PROVIDES THE STEPS, NOT THE CHOREOGRAPHY.

Adaptation Framework

To ensure meaningful replication, several **core elements** should be **maintained** across contexts. **Co-creation must be approached as a continuous, iterative process** rather than a one-off consultation, allowing relationships, ideas, and trust to evolve over time. Interventions should strive to **integrate both “soft” components** – such as cultural activities, social relationships, and local narratives – and **“hard” components**, including spatial infrastructure and material improvements. The **use of local materials and context-sensitive design approaches** reinforces both ecological and cultural relevance. Moreover, **shared governance mechanisms**, such as IN-HUBs or equivalent cross-sectoral platforms, are key to ensuring transparency, long-term engagement, and community ownership. At the same time, **flexibility should be preserved** in how these principles are implemented: the choice of artistic media (e.g. land art, music, photography), the types and rhythms of public events, and the structure of partnerships may vary depending on local capacities, traditions, and opportunities.

The following are the steps of the replication process that are best followed and suggested methods and tools that one might use to go through these steps as tested in Nitra pilot.

STEPS	Phase 1: Context Assessment		
	1	2	3
	Spatial Identification	Community Landscape Mapping	Asset and Needs Mapping
TO DO	<p>Scan the city for vacant, underused, or transitional spaces (e.g. floodplains, informal parks, disused green corridors, schoolyards).</p> <p>Focus on locations that already show spontaneous or informal use but lack investment or visibility.</p>	<p>Identify active local actors: NGOs, civic initiatives, cultural centres, informal leaders, youth collectives.</p> <p>Pay attention to marginalized or migrant communities, even if they're not formally organized.</p>	<p>Combine observational methods with participatory engagement to understand: Current uses and barriers to access, Perceptions of safety and ownership, Values and aspirations for public space</p>



Method/Tool	Purpose	Suitable For
Transect Walks	Observe and discuss spatial dynamics with residents on-site	Exploring contested or ambiguous urban spaces
Cultural Events	Gather residents informally, encourage storytelling, identify connectors	Building trust and visibility early on
BioBlitz	Engage people through nature observation, uncover overlooked ecosystems	Revealing ecological value and potential
Photovoice	Allow vulnerable groups (e.g. refugees, Roma youth) to express views visually	Understanding lived experience and barriers
Social Network Mapping	Identify who knows whom and who mobilizes whom	Detecting informal influence and entry points

Guiding Principles

- **Listen before designing:** Resist the urge to plan solutions before understanding local narratives and tensions.
- **Informality is not a weakness:** Engage through music, food, and storytelling before forms and surveys.
- **Diversity is strength:** Welcome conflicting uses and groups as part of a layered public space.

- **Start small, visibly:** Low-cost events and temporary signs of change can foster curiosity and legitimacy.

Good Practices from Nitra

- **Dražovce district:** Instead of approaching Roma communities through formal meetings, researchers initiated **creative workshops with schoolchildren** to build rapport and surface ideas for outdoor learning spaces.
- **Hidepark site:** Engaged city officials, NGOs, and youth informally during **Sunday Chill events** and later **nature walks**, which helped develop trust before any formal co-design.
- **Riverbank floodplain:** Identified not as a problem area, but as a space with ecological value and social activity already occurring “under the radar.”

		Phase 2 Establishing Co-design Infrastructure		
		1	2	3
STEPS		Set up a cross-sector coordination platform	Develop participatory design infrastructure	Support ongoing, low-threshold engagement
	TO DO	Involve municipal departments, NGOs, cultural actors, educators, and researchers. Ensure regular meetings and an evolving, open structure that allows new actors to join as the project progresses. Keep the platform rooted in existing local dynamics - avoid creating parallel structures.	Create or embed a co-design process that includes both creative input and technical review. Consider involving students or young professionals under expert guidance to generate contextual proposals. Establish review spaces (e.g. public forums, expert panels) to ensure ideas are feasible, inclusive, and aligned with local plans.	Offer both structured and informal opportunities for participation. Work with trusted local figures (e.g. educators, artists, NGO staff) to reach underrepresented groups. Use civic or cultural venues as low-barrier spaces for workshops, exhibitions, or discussions.

Method/Tool	Purpose	Suitable For
Local coordination body	Align actors and manage co-creation processes	Sustained, multi-actor collaboration
Co-design studio or track	Generate design ideas rooted in context	Creative input, permit-ready proposals
Public forum or review	Provide space for feedback and discussion	Expert input, alignment with city strategy
Local facilitators	Act as bridges between institutions and residents	Inclusive outreach and trust building
Communication ritual	Use familiar spaces/events to hold engagement activities	Visibility, accessibility, legitimacy

Guiding Principles

- **Think in networks, not hierarchies:** Allow collaboration across roles and disciplines.
- **Design the process, not just the space:** Participation needs structure and flexibility.
- **Make expertise visible and accessible:** Involve professionals without excluding lay input.
- **Create multiple access points:** People engage in different ways—through art, dialogue, making, or institutional channels.

Good Practices from Nitra

- **The IN-HUB** included actors from city departments, civil society, academia, and community representatives, forming a collaborative but lightweight coordination structure.
- **The Co-Design Atelier** engaged university students under expert mentorship to develop inclusive concepts and functional proposals.
- **The Forum** enabled constructive feedback from experts and policymakers, including national NEB representatives and current/former city architects.

Phase 3: Co-Design, Coffee and Capacity Building			
STEPS	1	2	3
	Develop inclusive co-design methodology	Tailor engagement to diverse needs	Link co-design with learning opportunities
TO DO	Combine creative methods (e.g. drawing, modelling, storytelling) with technical input from experts.	Use age-appropriate and culturally sensitive formats for children, youth, older adults, or migrants.	Involve students or youth in real-life design challenges, mentored by professionals.
	Host participatory workshops in welcoming, non-intimidating settings—indoors and outdoors.	Include underrepresented groups as co-creators, not just consultees.	Build basic ecological, design, or technical skills through hands-on workshops.
	Use iteration: start with idea generation, move to concept testing, and refine through feedback.	Work with schools, NGOs, and informal leaders to organise co-design sessions in trusted spaces.	Foster learning by doing: let people create, test, and revise together.

Method/Tool	Purpose	Suitable For
Model-making or drawing	Translate ideas into visual or physical form	Visualising concepts with limited technical vocabulary
Storytelling and mapping	Capture narratives, memories, and aspirations	Grounding design in local experience and emotion
Expert mentoring	Provide technical support without dominating the process	Guiding students or early-career practitioners, developing technical documentation for permit process
Skill-building sessions	Teach basic planning, planting, or design techniques	Empowering residents with practical competencies
Participatory phytosociological analysis	Co-identify plant species and ecological functions on site	Connecting ecological literacy with public space co-design
Embedded educational formats	Link co-design to formal learning environments	Sustaining youth engagement and professional pathways
Schwarzplan sketching and collage	Redesign familiar environments through	Fostering empathy, imagination, and collective

Method/Tool	Purpose	Suitable For
	collaging interventions on a blank map	input, suitable for younger participants
In-situ workshops	Explore and adapt ideas directly in the target location	Ensuring grounded and responsive spatial proposals
Literary and art contests	Collect imaginative and expressive input from children	Inspiring spatial design through artistic interpretation, suitable for engaging with children
Paper-based Maptionnaire	Map emotional or practical feedback manually	Involving those without digital access or digital skills and inclusive for low-literacy or older populations
Questionnaires and interviews	Gather preferences and expectations on specific features	Informing design details through structured feedback from larger populations
Kuula & drone-based 3D mapping	Generate virtual site models and tour environments remotely	Designing in hard-to-access or sensitive areas

Guiding Principles

- **Lower the barrier to entry:** Avoid jargon and professionalised formats – use drawing, walking, making.
- **Co-design = co-learning:** Make space for learning, questioning, and experimenting.
- **Respect all forms of knowledge:** Lived experience is as important as technical expertise.
- **Process over perfection:** The goal isn't a polished plan, but a process that builds trust, capacity, and ownership. Make space for iteration, mistakes, and evolution.
- **Design in context:** Embed co-design in everyday places and rhythms – schools, civic hubs, cultural events – so it feels natural and accessible.
- **Small steps, visible progress:** Celebrate incremental outcomes – sketches, mock-ups, contests – as tangible signs of change and shared authorship.

Good Practices from Nitra

- **Roma children in Dražovce** participated in creative activities using **schwarzplans** of their schoolyards to reimagine inclusive spaces, later merging their designs into **collaborative collages** that encouraged shared vision and empathy.
- **Participatory phytosociological analysis** involved residents and experts in jointly selecting planting schemes and exploring ecological suitability.
- The team used **maptionnaire (paper-based)** for analogue participatory mapping, especially with communities that may face digital or literacy barriers.
- For inaccessible riverfront locations, **Kuula software** and **drone-based 3D scanning** were used to create virtual tours for remote co-design and feedback.

- The **Co-Design Atelier** involved landscape architecture students co-developing technical design proposals under the mentorship of urbanists, ecologists, and designers.

Phase 4: Prototyping and Co-Deployment			
STEPS	1	2	3
	Begin with visible, low-risk prototypes	Facilitate inclusive co-deployment activities	Integrate soft and hard interventions
TO DO	Use temporary, movable, or reversible elements (e.g. planters, seating, signage).	Organise participatory events like volunteer days for building, planting, or assembling interventions.	Blend physical changes (e.g. paths, structures, planting) with programming (e.g. events, education).
	Select sites and materials that allow for testing, feedback, and change.	Combine formal and informal participation: mix workshops with celebrations or walks.	Use artistic and ecological approaches to activate space and stimulate imagination.
	Make early results visible to sustain interest and trust.	Provide counter-value for active participation	Provide tools or knowledge for long-term community maintenance.

Tool/Material	Purpose	Suitable for
DIY & recycled materials	Foster ownership, reduce costs	Communities with limited budgets or strong craft/local culture
Artist residencies	Co-create functional and aesthetic elements	Engaging youth and underrepresented groups
Social procurement or direct employment	Embed inclusion in contracts	Ensuring economic benefits for local or vulnerable populations
Reversible furniture and installations	Allow for testing and repositioning	Sites with legal, environmental, or seasonal limitations, like flood-prone areas or shared-use space
Volunteer programs	Involve people in constructing or planting together	Strengthening ownership and visibility, lowering costs
Activation events	Encourage use of space through programming	Sustaining engagement beyond installation

Guiding Principles

- **Stay flexible:** Adapt materials, locations, or features in response to community feedback and contextual change (e.g., plant hardier species due to drought).
- **Think like a caretaker:** Build for stewardship, not just installation. Plan co-management mechanisms from day one.
- **Use visibility strategically:** Early wins build political and social legitimacy – create “showcases” for broader adoption.
- **Make failure safe:** Small-scale trials make it okay to learn and iterate without major risks.
- **Volunteers are not free labour** – by engaging in co-deployment they should receive some kind of counter-value

Good Practices from Nitra

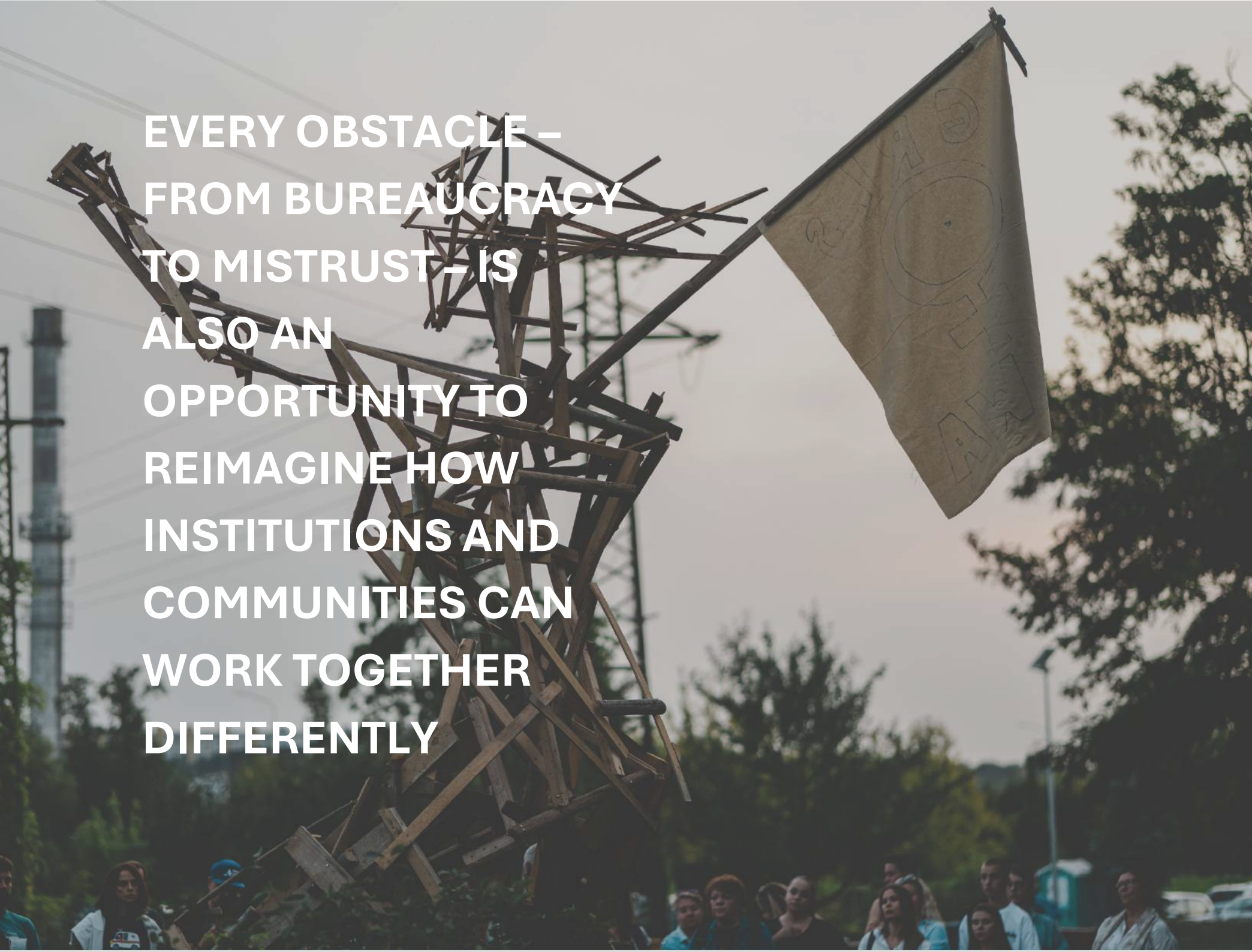
- **Blend art, ecology, and function:** Land-art installations doubled as shade, seating, and conversation starters. Artists lived and created within the pilot area.
- **Celebrate milestones:** Events like tree-planting ceremonies and prototype exhibitions helped maintain energy and attract media attention
- **Blend art, ecology, and function:** Land-art installations doubled as shade, seating, and conversation starters. Artists lived and created within the pilot area.
- **Celebrate milestones:** Events like tree-planting ceremonies and prototype exhibitions helped maintain energy and attract media attention.
- **Build-in iteration time:** Projects like the expansion of the community garden and new green public spaces were developed incrementally with time for adjustments.
- **Combine expert support with volunteer input:** Technical feasibility was ensured without excluding lay participants.

- **Volunteers engaged** in co-deployment received professional training and advice from experts they could use in their own garden

Potential barriers:

- **Low trust in public institutions:** In contexts where past engagement has been tokenistic or extractive, communities may be sceptical or reluctant to participate, especially in marginalised neighbourhoods.
- **Institutional silos and fragmentation:** Weak cooperation between municipal departments (e.g. environment, culture, education) can limit the integrated planning required for inclusive green spaces.
- **Rigid procurement and legal frameworks:** Public procurement rules often favour conventional infrastructure over small-scale, reversible, or co-created solutions, making implementation and experimentation difficult.
- **Lack of flexible funding:** Budgets tied to pre-defined outputs or rigid timelines may not accommodate iterative, adaptive processes, especially when community engagement takes time.
- **Unequal access to participation:** Without intentional outreach and accessible formats, participatory processes risk being dominated by already-empowered groups, leaving out migrants, low-income residents, or youth.

- **Burnout among local actors:** Over-reliance on a few committed individuals (e.g. NGO staff, civic leaders) without long-term support can lead to fatigue and undermine sustainability.
- **Limited technical capacity for nature-based design:** Municipalities and communities may lack knowledge or tools to develop context-sensitive green interventions, especially when ecological goals are complex.
- **Lack of long-term governance structures:** In the absence of sustained platforms like IN-HUBs, interventions may lose relevance, maintenance, and community ownership over time.



EVERY OBSTACLE –
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DIFFERENTLY

Stakeholder engagement strategy

The stakeholder engagement strategy should begin with the identification of **trusted local actors**, such as grassroots NGOs, educators, and cultural organisers, who can serve as entry points into the community. From there, mapping should expand to include **key institutions** – such as schools, municipal departments, and cultural or social service providers – as well as **underrepresented groups**, including migrants, Roma communities, and youth. Effective engagement relies on **low-threshold, accessible activities** such as music events, shared meals, open workshops, and informal outdoor gatherings that make participation easy and welcoming. **Skill exchange and symbolic acts of gifting**, such as providing cameras in photo-based projects, can strengthen emotional investment and a sense of ownership. Engagement should not be one-off but **iterative**: seasonal and recurring events are essential to build familiarity and trust over time. Participatory methods must extend beyond consultation to **active co-creation**, involving stakeholders in design, implementation, and even monitoring processes.

Communication should be **consistent and multi-channel** – using both offline tools (e.g. posters, flyers, exhibitions) and online platforms (e.g. social media, community pages). **Visual outputs** such as illustrated maps, photo displays, or student artwork make the process tangible and inclusive. **Publicly celebrating small wins**

boosts morale and visibility and helps maintain engagement momentum. It is also critical to **translate the results of community engagement into policy feedback loops**, ensuring that co-created ideas inform planning decisions and are not lost after project implementation. Finally, **public visibility and celebration** through exhibitions, festivals, or participatory monitoring events reinforces collective ownership and pride in the outcomes.

Measurement & evaluation

To assess the success of implementation, a mixed-method approach combining **quantitative indicators** and **qualitative insights** is recommended. **Baseline and follow-up surveys** can track changes in perceptions of inclusivity, safety, and well-being, while **participatory methods** such as photovoice, storytelling, or community mapping help uncover less visible impacts. **Simple observational checklists** and **usage counts** can monitor how public spaces are used over time, including shifts in user diversity and activity types. **Participatory monitoring**, involving residents in data collection (e.g. biodiversity counts, event attendance, space cleanliness), builds ownership and improves data relevance. Feedback loops should be embedded in each phase -for example, using quick reflection tools during workshops, or public exhibitions where visitors can leave comments. Where feasible, more structured approaches like **Theory of Change, contribution analysis**, or **Most Significant Change (MSC)** techniques can help evaluate long-term or transformative outcomes. Triangulating



these methods ensures a holistic understanding of both tangible and intangible impacts of inclusive, nature-based public space interventions. Where feasible, **Social Return on Investment (SROI)** can be applied to estimate the social value created relative to the resources invested. This involves identifying stakeholder groups, mapping intended and unintended outcomes, and assigning **monetary proxies** to social, environmental, or health benefits (e.g. increased outdoor activity, improved mental well-being, or reduced isolation). SROI makes it possible to express the impact of inclusive green space interventions in terms understandable to both funders and policymakers.



Policy recommendations

To enable the successful implementation and replication of inclusive, community-led green space interventions, several policy areas require targeted support and adjustment:

- 1. Regulatory frameworks:** Adopt flexible planning and design regulations that allow for **temporary, small-scale, and reversible interventions** in public space. Current building and land-use codes often present barriers to creative, community-driven uses. Regulatory innovation – such as adaptive permitting schemes for experimental or seasonal structures – can support low-risk prototyping. Encourage integration of **social and green criteria** into public procurement and investment decisions, including **social procurement** practices that generate local employment or training opportunities. E.g. subcontractors entering public procurement for green space delivery may be required to involve local communities directly, or to have a certificate in facilitation.
- 2. Governance and institutional support:** Promote **cross-departmental collaboration** between urban planning, environment, education, and culture sectors to overcome siloed decision-making. Formalise participatory governance structures like **IN-HUBs** that include municipal actors, NGOs, local institutions, and citizens. Support the institutionalisation of co-creation processes by embedding them into local development strategies and spatial planning frameworks.
- 3. Policy integration and coherence:** Ensure that inclusive green space interventions are recognised and aligned with broader urban agendas – such as **climate adaptation, health promotion,**

youth engagement, and social cohesion. Foster **horizontal policy coherence** between city-level planning and national or EU-level strategies, particularly around nature-based solutions and the New European Bauhaus.

- 4. Addressing policy gaps:** Bridge the divide between **formal urban planning procedures and informal community engagement practices** by creating intermediating tools, such as co-design frameworks or simplified participation protocols. Address the lack of **long-term support for stewardship** by creating legal or financial mechanisms that enable community co-management of public space. Finally, strengthen policies that support **capacity building**, especially for vulnerable groups, by linking spatial interventions with education, employment, and health programming starting with schoolyards all the way to the open green public spaces. Delivery mechanisms through specific municipal policies could include:

URBAN AND SPATIAL PLANNING POLICY: Urban and spatial planning policies should explicitly incorporate inclusive green and open spaces as critical infrastructure in both urban regeneration and new developments. Spatial frameworks should allow for the integration of flexible-use plots, enabling co-designed spaces to emerge on temporarily available or underutilised land (e.g. former industrial sites, vacant lots, riverbanks). Zoning regulations should be adapted to support multifunctional use and temporal flexibility, including spaces for culture, recreation, and food growing. However, for the successful implementation construction, land use and asset management policies are crucial:

CONSTRUCTION AND LAND USE POLICY: Construction and land use regulations should be updated to allow for lightweight, modular, and reversible interventions that do not require full building permits. Municipalities (where possible) should introduce simplified permitting processes for temporary and small-scale community-led constructions (e.g. mobile garden beds, wooden stages, seating installations) on public land. Land use policy should also support negotiated access agreements for civic initiatives on municipally owned plots, particularly in areas lacking green infrastructure. To comply with both regulations and general negotiated aesthetic considerations for public space public space design manuals could serve as tools for communities to be involved in the co-creation of these spaces.

ASSET MANAGEMENT POLICY: Asset management strategies should classify community-managed green spaces as socially productive assets. Municipalities should adopt tools like temporary use agreements or civic leases that allow communities to access and adapt municipal plots with legal clarity. Asset policies should include procedures for transferring underutilised or marginal lands into community stewardship under clear, time-bound conditions, with periodic review mechanisms to ensure accountability and flexibility. This should be accompanied by **FINANCIAL POLICY MEASURES** that enable mixed funding models for inclusive green spaces, including recurring municipal support, targeted grants, and partnerships with philanthropic or private-sector actors. Asset management frameworks should also adopt valuation tools that reflect social and environmental returns, not solely economic ones. Budget lines should cover not only initial investments but

also minimal ongoing support for coordination, maintenance materials, and inclusive programming. This could be integrated with the **CULTURAL POLICIES**, specifically by supporting the use of green public spaces for inclusive and participatory cultural programming. Municipalities should introduce micro-grant schemes or in-kind event support tailored to informal, community-driven cultural activities in parks, gardens, and open spaces. Cultural institutions should be encouraged to collaborate with grassroots actors to animate green areas through workshops, exhibitions, and temporary installations, particularly in underserved neighbourhoods. Recognising green spaces as cultural venues can enhance their value, increase community engagement, and build broader coalitions for stewardship and funding.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY: should promote small-scale, community-managed green infrastructure as a valid tool for climate adaptation and biodiversity enhancement. Cities should encourage localised rainwater retention solutions (e.g. bioswales, rain gardens) and pollinator-supportive plantings in co-designed green spaces. Funding schemes under environmental protection programs should explicitly include grassroots greening actions and local stewardship models as eligible activities.


SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT POLICIES: Social development policy should prioritise inclusive access to quality green spaces in socially disadvantaged and spatially marginalised areas. Funding programs should support long-term community engagement strategies, including resident



workshops, capacity-building for local facilitators, and support for neighbourhood-based associations. Policies should also promote intergenerational programming and actively include marginalised groups (e.g. seniors, migrants, Roma communities) in co-creation and management processes.

EDUCATION POLICIES: should foster partnerships between schools, universities, and local communities in the co-creation and maintenance of urban green spaces. Outdoor learning initiatives should be integrated into school curricula, using local green spaces as educational environments for topics like sustainability, biodiversity, and health. Policy frameworks should allow educational institutions to initiate and host community gardens or outdoor classrooms with shared access and co-management structures. This is especially effective as a “foot in the door” in more marginalised and vulnerable neighbourhoods, where public schools are often the major, or only contact local authorities have with the community.

GOVERNANCE AND PARTICIPATION POLICIES: Governance frameworks should formalise participatory mechanisms for co-designing and co-managing green public spaces. This may include establishing local working groups or with representation from residents, civil society, and municipal staff (municipal staff should also include participation officers, or facilitators). Policy should encourage the integration of participatory budgeting processes specifically earmarked for green infrastructure and community gardens. Municipalities should also develop protocols for long-term shared maintenance responsibilities between city services and local stakeholders.



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