



USER

Changes and conflicts
in using public spaces

—
**WORKING
TOGETHER
TOWARDS
BETTER PUBLIC
SPACES**
—

INDEPTH IN THE
USER PROJECT

NOVEMBER 2014

DIR : GRENOBLE-ALPES MÉTROPOLE - CONCEPTION GRAPHIQUE : WWW.LA-MINE.COM - NOVEMBER 2014



Connecting cities
Building successes



WHY PUBLIC SPACES?

General framework and focus of the USER project

Public space is essential to the functioning of democracy. It is the place of citizenship and it allows people to interact and have a sense of identity and community. It provides vivid examples of a more egalitarian society than we normally experience, enabling very diverse social exchanges on both individual and collective issues.

To see people different from oneself creates a temporary bond. But at the same time, public spaces satisfy people's needs for comfort, relaxation, active and passive involvement, and discovery.

Furthermore, interacting with unfamiliar individuals would allow urban dwellers to broaden their horizon in terms of experience. The best places to encounter difference and the unfamiliar are public spaces, where all segments of society can cross paths, mingle and be observed. Without this observation and engagement with "difference", we are in danger of becoming increasingly prejudiced and narrow-minded, as we only choose the company of like-minded individuals in our increasingly confined daily routines.

USER starts from the concept of "convivial public space", which is more than just an arena in which people can have a good time. Public space is at the heart of democratic living and is one of the few remaining

focuses where we can encounter difference and learn to understand and tolerate other people. New urban configurations, the arrival of new inhabitants, new visitors and tourists, new social and generational relations in the neighbourhoods and communities, the incompatibility/compatibility and conflicts of how public space is used in different urban areas, are becoming a current phenomenon in our European cities.

Without good urban public spaces, we are likely to drift into an increasingly privatised and polarised society, with all its concomitant problems. Despite some improvements in urban development over the last couple of decades, we still produce many tracts of soulless urban fabric that may deliver the basic functional requirements of shelter, work and leisure but are socially unsustainable and likely generators of future problems. Such places should consist of a rich, vibrant, mixed-use environment that does not die at night or at weekends and is visually stimulating and attractive to residents and visitors alike.

It entails going beyond the quality of the physical form of public space and focusing on the intensity and quality of the social relations it facilitates, in its potential to make groups and individuals interact, and in its capacity to encourage symbolic identification.

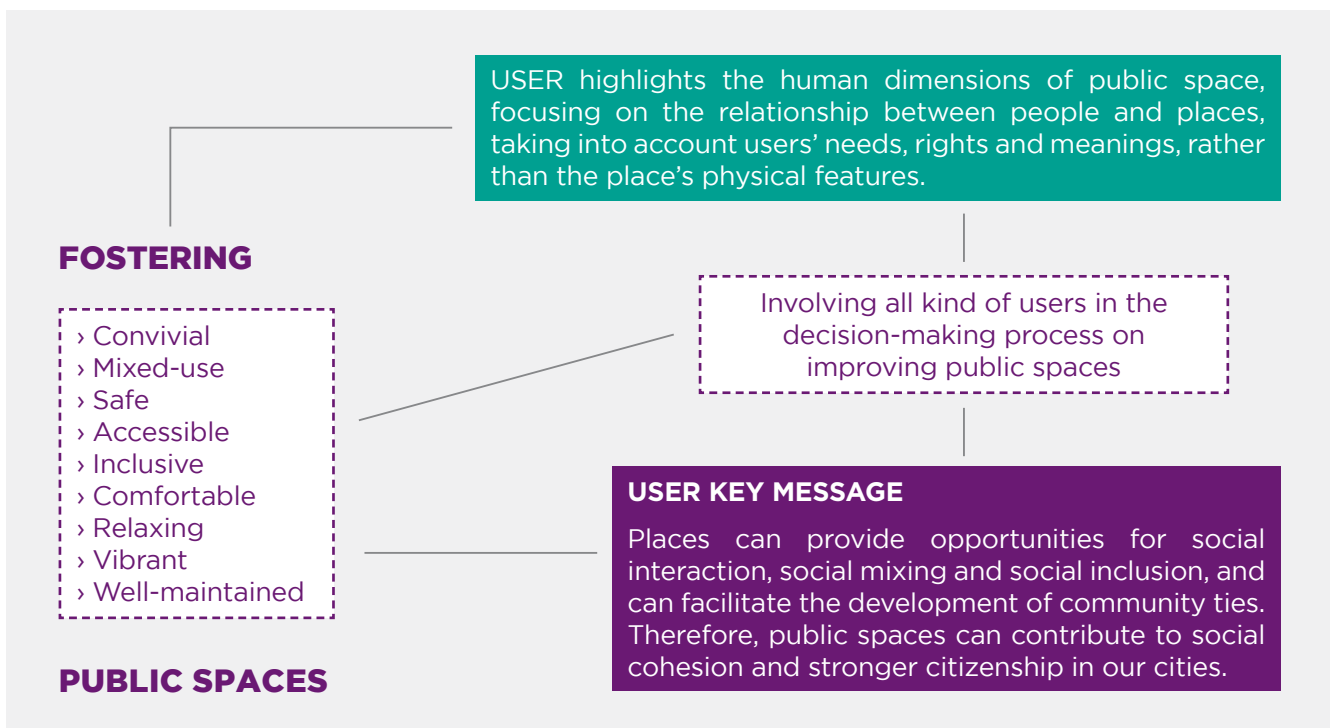
1. USER's partners gathered in the kick-off meeting in Malaga



WHAT IS AT STAKE?

Focus, issues and challenges covered by USER

USER focuses on the relationship between people and public spaces, taking into account users' needs, rights and meanings. Our network fosters the improvement of public spaces by taking into consideration different ingredients and dimensions that should allow good public spaces.



"There is a previous political choice: Public space is the society space and where citizenship takes place and can be exercised, where people should not be excluded and rejected. We have to highlight that conflicts in using public spaces are not always negative, they provide an opportunity to make changes, to question current uses, to avoid social exclusion of vulnerable groups and to find new solutions to ensure conviviality and mixed uses in public space. We need to look at problems and dysfunctions, but also consider the potential and assets that exist in all public spaces."
Extract from the report of the 1st thematic seminar on "Changes, dysfunctions and conflicts of uses in the public space" held in Copenhagen on 18th and 19th April 2013

A core USER assumption is that the design of urban public spaces and the main goals of urban planning are challenged by the rapid changes taking place in cities' uses.

Thus, the process of users' involvement becomes a crucial dimension of the whole process because "users' practical knowledge" is one of the main inputs to understand how the spaces are used and what kind of conflicts are taking place.

The concept of "users" is a major dimension of our network: regarding public space, the focus of USER cities covers a wide variety of users. Usually, cities are concerned with a combination of spaces, uses and users. So, the users' consideration is not isolated from other dimensions. Cities cope with different types of users: residents-neighbours, socially-excluded groups, tourists, the homeless, elderly people, youths, women, men, children, shopkeepers, associations, workers residing outside the area, people in charge of security, temporary students, car drivers, cyclists, pedestrians, street artists and musicians, etc.

This is why each city participating in USER is building a local partnership with the "community of users" and a local experimentation to evaluate uses, to propose improvements in uses, and to link this evaluation of uses with the daily maintenance and the designing and planning of public spaces. This cycle entails a new and renovated approach to ensure coherence between the real life of public spaces through the practical knowledge of diverse users, the daily management and maintenance and the public space design.

Spaces that support sharing cannot be created by designers and architects alone. Public space works better and is more efficient when it is "co-produced" with the people who manage the space and with those who use it. The involvement of all the

city users is needed to make progress in the interpretation of public space uses and to reinforce urban management. Basically, it deals with taking users' practical knowledge into account.

We need to be aware that the increasingly complex city is also the city where the production of knowledge is diversified, diminishing the possibility of controlling processes from a central planning authority. The knowledge city is characterised by the fact that a growing number of stakeholders also have increased knowledge. We must recognise the limits of prediction and control in the city as well as the necessity to adapt the city to increasing frequent changes in uses.

A participatory process is needed whereby community members work together to create spaces accommodating strong social relations. In order to be successful, planners and designers must care how people express themselves in and interact with public space. There is no single blueprint for a convivial public space, but there do seem to be some common elements, which may be broadly categorised under the headings of physical (including design and practical issues), geographical (location), managerial (considering users' needs), sensory (meaning how a space directly affects one or more of our five senses) and psychological (how the space affects our mind and spirit).

That is why a relevant dimension of the collective learning process that USER wants to consider is the impact of uses in the management and design of public spaces. One of the main assumptions of USER is that the proposed approach has to demonstrate that a better understanding of how public spaces are used and what challenges have to be faced, should improve the management and daily maintenance of public spaces and reduce its costs. Likewise, this process will generate new inputs to change the way public spaces are designed.

"Security should not be the basis of the discussion: it should instead be a discussion on the basis of inhabitants' uses/needs. Security is the crystallisation of the tensions of uses. Even the focus on security issues could frighten people and have a counter-productive effect. The security issue brings up the dilemma between animated spaces and calm spaces. Several dimensions are crucial to facilitate secure public spaces: sense of belonging, mix of functions and activities, density of population, visibility and night lightening, social mix, and good public space maintenance."

Extract from the report of the 2nd thematic seminar "Towards safer public spaces" held in Riga on 4th and 5th July 2013

LOCAL CONTEXTS, PRACTICES & CHALLENGES AMONG *USER* CITIES



Regarding the urban areas where USER partners are focusing their local experimentation and their participation in transnational exchanges several types are included: suburbs (Lisbon), blocks in residential-peripheral areas (Cracow and pilot sites of Grenoble-Alpes Métropole), historical centres (Lublin and Riga), inner-city areas (Dresden), neighbourhoods with social exclusion concentration (Copenhagen and Malaga) or deprived areas with new planning processes (Pescara). This diversity gives a wide panorama that facilitates a real experimentation and comparison. Different elements are chosen within each sub-theme, depending on the features of the urban area. Conflicts between residents and tourists are a focus for historical centres, while unused or abandoned

spaces are more usual in peripheral areas and conflicts between excluded groups and other residents is a main issue in some USER cities.

Regarding the dimensions of the public spaces dealt with, a wide variety of typologies is considered among the partner's cities: central squares, sidewalks, spaces between buildings in residential neighbourhoods, urban axis, "patios", abandoned or vacant plots, greenery, forecourts (bus or railway stations), non-places or places devoid of life, etc.

**WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES THAT USER CITIES ARE ADDRESSING?
WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS THEY ARE TRYING TO OVERCOME REGARDING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF BETTER PUBLIC SPACES?**

COPENHAGEN

Copenhagen is working on Sundholm, which is a neighbourhood historically marginalised. It housed prisons, psychiatric hospitals, drug addicts, etc. Today, the municipality would like to give it a more welcoming image to attract new people, while strengthening a vocation of welcoming homeless people.



1. Shared urban garden in Sundholm

2. Furnitures for homeless in Sundholm

Historic use of Sundholm has been changed from being a place mainly for disadvantaged groups. But now other types of uses and users are entering the area. It is expected that newcomers will question the use of public space in the

area, especially the uncivil behaviour by homeless groups. New conflicts may arise: many families are interested in the garden and they will now use the area. They might not like the homeless behaviour. In Sundholm, the most important target is to create urban spaces and social organisations that can overcome the conflicts that will continue to be there due to the particular institutions in the area. These conflicts will not disappear, but public space planning and social organisation can maybe make living this close a bit easier.



CRACOW

The Azory district is one of the largest residential areas of Cracow built after 1945. It is located near the city centre and houses more than 15,000 inhabitants. Azory is facing major problems related to the lack of development, readability and accessibility of public spaces. These public spaces, low-skilled and with unclear ownership, hold great potential (large areas, green spaces, good adoption by inhabitants), but it is not exploited.

In the Azory housing estate, use of shared areas is chaotic and incoherent: no city squares, no areas for local events, no identity of the place. There is a failure to adapt the transport layout to real needs (road sections, technical parameters, traffic management). The housing estate is not currently connected to a collision-free cycle path from the city centre. There is a lack of sufficient parking places, which results in common and green spaces being taken over

for this purpose. A lot of social problems arise from public spaces and the lack of infrastructure: spatial barriers (exclusion of elderly and disabled people), no place for young people, poor location of benches and lighting, dark corners, desolated places giving a feeling of insecurity. The fragmentation of various public spaces' ownership forms is also an issue.



3. Wide greenery in Azory

DRESDEN

Dresden has launched a major urban renewal programme. Historische Friedrichstadt and Wilsdruffer Vorstadt districts are part of it. Several public spaces from these two districts have been targeted as specific pilot sites for the USER project.



1. Mitte railway station's forecourt

2. Schützengasse neighbourhood

Mitte railway station's forecourt is challenged by the status of being a no-man's-land. Considering the fact that there are a lot of people passing through, it was obvious that no-one was really sitting or staying in the forecourt.

Schützengasse neighbourhood is an area generally recognised as being well designed,

but is not seen or used as a place to stay and linger. The number and total area of public (green) spaces is increasing steadily, as well as awareness and sensitivity regarding dirt and litter pollution. Given stagnating or even decreasing public resources, the maintenance of these public spaces clearly represents a major challenge.

The spaces between residential buildings typically consist of semi-public green spaces. These spaces, although featuring a rather good design quality, are seldom used for socialising and communication.



RIGA

In Riga, tourism is among the key priorities for development. Consequently, it has been decided to focus on finding the right balance between the growing tourism industry and the local users in public spaces within the historical centre of Riga. After a long process of consultation, two pilot sites have been chosen: the Spikeru Street and the Latvian Riflemen Square.

In these public spaces, the main challenges are that nobody should be excluded, new users should be attracted and mutual agreements between stakeholders have to be achieved. In the Latvian Rifle Square, the following problems should be addressed: the architecture of the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia creates a depressing impression/atmosphere, unclear urban functions, low accessibility, tourist bus parking, bad and divided maintenance (diverse ownership), inadequate lighting, this space is not a destination, lack of

attributes of an inclusive place, not enough garbage bins, etc. In Spikeru Street, a very well situated place, the main problems are the lack of security, maintenance, urban quality and functional uniformity. A lack of separation between the different functions of the street and lack of communication among different types of traffic is one of the main challenges.



3. Latvian Riflemen Square

GRENONBLE-ALPES MÉTROPOLE

Grenoble-Alpes Métropole is a local government composed of cities. As a matter of fact, it is not in charge of socio-urban management of public spaces: this role falls to the cities. Two pilot sites have been targeted: Iles de Mars/Olympiades in Pont-de-Claix and Renaudie in Saint-Martin-d'Hères. They are so-called "priority neighbourhoods": those that contain the greatest economic, social, and urban difficulties.

PONT-DE-CLAIX

With 11,600 inhabitants, Pont-de-Claix accounts for nearly 30% of social housing. The Iles de Mars/Olympiades neighbourhood has about a quarter of the city's population and is characterised by mixed housing types, largely dominated by aging collective housing. It has economic and social features similar to sensitive urban areas (young population, high unemployment, dilapidated and sluggish commercial areas, etc.). Iles de Mars/Olympiades neighbourhoods' diagnosis reports numerous public spaces that are inconsistent with each other and have significant qualitative differences due to a multiplicity of property. Pedestrian links do not allow fluid connection from one place to another, contributing to a sense of confinement. Parking is usually organised as "pockets" that use a lot of space and are difficult to blend into the landscape. There is also poor waste management. The neighbourhood suffers from a negative image that discourages population renewal.

SAINT-MARTIN-D'HÈRES

Renaudie neighbourhood contains almost 500 dwellings built in the early 1980s by the architect Jean Renaudie. It was designed as a large housing estate, but in a spirit of individual suburban habitat.

Despite the initial ambition, Renaudie has not had the expected development and has faced various social and urban problems: presence of pedestrian back alleys between buildings, serving individual entrances, small pedestrian squares on the ground floor, stairways accessing public terraces. Its specific shape consequently generates a number of problems, such as groups of people at building entrances and in back alleys, motorcycle traffic in pedestrian areas, dumping of bulky waste, etc. Ground-level private gardens are not maintained, and there is a growing presence of illegal activities and a negative image, creating a feeling of insecurity for inhabitants.

1. New arrangement of Iles de Mars / Olympiades' public space

2. Renaudie neighbourhood



LISBON



Bairro Horizonte and Quinta do Lavrado neighbourhoods are located in the suburbs and are identified as BIP/ZIP (Bairros e Zonas de Intervenção Prioritária - Neighbourhoods and areas of priority intervention). It is based on supporting local projects that contribute to strengthening social and territorial cohesion in the neighbourhood.

Bairro Horizonte and Quinta do Lavrado are suburbs with no basic public spaces in the surrounding neighbourhood (sidewalks, street lighting, gardens, etc.) and a total absence of commercial stores in the neighbourhood. There is little access to sporting and leisure public amenities, as well as a lack of social and territorial connection with the city as a whole. It is an urban island or a non-place socially and territorially speaking, used by some residents for drug trafficking, dominating space management for consumption

1. Bairro Horizonte and Quinta do Lavrado neighbourhoods

and sale of drugs. The lack of safety creates a bad image for the residents. Additionally, conflicts of uses between generations are obvious through a feeling of monopolisation of public space by small groups of “young people” (often young, unemployed people, out of the school system). The expected uses of the public spaces are not clear and the public space is badly designed, which seems ambiguous.



LUBLIN



For the USER project, Lublin decided to focus on Rybny, Kochanowski and Łokietka Squares situated in the city centre. Due to their central location, these public spaces have a high potential to become focal points but are currently not sufficiently attractive to locals and tourists. Their primary function is to be a place of transit or of lingering on rare occasions.

In the Lublin historical neighbourhood, urban functions and its endogenous value should be recovered to become an attractive destination. Public spaces should increase its integration in the city. In this perspective, a “system of public spaces” should be created. New public activities (culture, leisure, art, etc.) have to be reinforced and pedestrian mobility has to be prioritised. Main challenges are linked to unused public spaces, boring spaces where nothing happens, without places to sit and to stay. The problem is not the conflict between users but the absence of users.

2. Kochanowski Square

Among others, there are current problems that should be faced: lack of neighbours-residents in public spaces in the old city, too many cars, chaotic commercial advertising, outdoor cafes restricting pedestrian passage, unattended urban landscape, closed spaces: people should know where they go, etc. Former soviet countries inherit the lack of social responsibility regarding common spaces and public life.



MALAGA

Trinidad-Perchel neighbourhood is mainly populated by low-income inhabitants in the centre of Malaga. Historically, this area enjoyed an important cultural activity (flamenco) structured around semi-private courtyards surrounded by houses («Corralones»). Nowadays, Trinidad-Perchel presents a gradient development (streets, squares, arrangement), which has deteriorated in step with residents' social conditions.



pedestrian traffic exclusively), lack of green areas and open spaces for collective use, little private investment to promote new incomes, and proliferation of empty plots and undeveloped urban spaces, generally in bad condition.



One of the main detected problems is the use of streets, squares and empty plots as illegal parking spaces by people coming from outside the neighbourhood. This case appears throughout the paper, as it is the source of many of the problems and conflicts mentioned above. Regarding the plots, the proliferation of vacant, unused fields is creating problems. There have been identified 137 plots, of which 69 have no uses, and 68 are used as parking.

1. Vacant plots in Trinidad-Perchel

2. Corralones in Trinidad-Perchel

Structural problems of Trinidad-Perchel neighbourhood are various: lack of regulated parking, limited commercial use on the ground floor, low permeability to other parts of the city due to natural barriers (river) or architectural barriers (bridges /

PESCARA

Situated near Pescara's airport, Fontanelle-Sambuceto district covers 100 hectares. It has a wide variety of activities (residential, transport infrastructure, industries, brownfields), but they are not organised in a coherent way. Partly due to the proximity of residential areas and industries and the lack of public spaces, inhabitants see this district as one of the city's least developed. That is why Fontanelle-Sambuceto is concerned by a major urban renewal programme. For the USER project, the focus is on the creation of public spaces for recreation included in a green path crossing the area: the "Green Backbone". In Fontanelle-Sambuceto neighbourhood, public spaces do not exist. There is a system of private green areas very often uncultivated, marginal with respect to the axes of pedestrian flow, or forecourts of businesses that have closed down. Some of these areas are very large and their potential is obvious, but their current condition prevents public use. An important element

to consider is that ownership of these spaces is mostly private so each regeneration project of these spaces for public use must necessarily be conducted through a public-private partnership. The situation is further aggravated by some frequent problems such as: lack of a feeling of belonging for inhabitants, lack of feeling safe, especially at night, insufficient pedestrian access, lack of urban quality both in public and private parts, such as public streets and sidewalks, poor maintenance of green areas, etc.



3. Fontanelle-Sambuceto district

DRIVING THE LOCAL ACTION PLAN IN SOME USER CITIES

Three examples of Local Action Plans (LAPs) in USER cities are highlighted. In USER, LAPs are now progressing from diagnosis to definition of goals and actions.

DRESDEN

The overall goal of Dresden's LAP is to make public spaces more convivial. It is focused on the improvement of two public spaces located in the pilot site and in cross-cutting issues concerning different places within Historische Friedrichstadt and Wilsdruffer Vorstadt districts.

The first urban space addressed is the **Mitte railway station's forecourt and underpasses**. The proposed strategy to improve this space is focused on enhancing the attractiveness and welcoming qualities of the station forecourt, fostering liveliness and conviviality by adding new functions related to the neighbourhood and enhancing the identification of residents and users with the urban plaza. In order to achieve these objectives, several actions are planned: temporary "arts container" for exhibitions and events, stage temporary art events on the forecourt, "mural artist café" to be organised by the "Riesa efau" association. The railway arches and the station entrances could also host an art gallery (graffiti, local photo exhibits, etc.), open-air eateries, weekly market (organised by a private operator and not by the municipality) with (minor) local trade and commerce fairs.

The public space addressed is **Schützengasse**. The LAP wants to reinforce the attractiveness and welcoming qualities of this street where a low-speed traffic zone has recently been set up. Likewise, it wants to foster liveliness and conviviality by adding community-based and neighbourhood-related functions and implementing further traffic-reducing measures. Actions defined

to reach these objectives are as follows: temporary art exhibits, creating a permanent art installation in the public space, Wi-Fi hotspot, video performances using the concrete wall of the College of Music, opening up the existing eatery, extending facilities by including the available open space, setting up deck chairs, outdoor air



music events, etc.

A specific cross-cutting objective is **maintenance of public spaces**, setting priorities regarding the feasibility and affordability of specific measures, create real partnership relations between the administration and the users of public space and promoting a sense of responsibility. The LAP wants to set up model approaches aimed at involving residents and volunteers in maintenance tasks in order to relieve the overworked technical staff.

Finally the LAP is focused on **semi-public spaces**. The spaces between residential buildings typically consist of semi-public green spaces. Dresden's LAP wants to enhance conviviality, communication and diversity in those spaces.

LUBLIN

The overall goal is to restore the former functions and artistic values of the squares by creating conditions for their development on the basis of their endogenous characteristics, by stopping their marginalisation and increasing their role in the city as important public spaces, by improving their residential and economic conditions, by providing spatial order and ensuring a high level of aesthetics, thereby increasing activities of inhabitants in those public spaces.



A “matrix of changes” organises Lublin LAP’s actions according to whether they relate to organisational changes (in the work processes or in cooperation between the stakeholders), or whether they involve the introduction of material changes in the space or if these changes can be accomplished in a short time or if they are long-term in nature. In its detailed section, the LAP is separated into three specific local LAPs for Rybny Square, Łokietka Square and Kochanowski Square.

In **Łokietka Square**, long-term actions are focused on a new arrangement of the square using the benches and greenery, replacing paved surfaces (as part of broader changes in the promenade) and drafting rules on advertisements’ aesthetics used in the surrounding area. For short-term actions, it proposes several variants of the square’s arrangement through moveable greenery elements and benches, creation of “Green Zones” in chosen spaces like the “Life Zones” used in the design of Market Street in San Francisco by Gehl Architects and installation of a temporary neutral “landmark” (ultimately it can be a tree, a work of art or a lighting installation).

In **Rybny Square**, LAP proposes a spatial integration of the square by restricting or eliminating parking and/or a reconstruction or rearrangement of the square and construction of a fountain or other object redefining the space of the square. The following are some examples of short-term actions: beautifying the square with gardening works performed together with the neighbours, installation of a temporary observation tower or a bowling area in a private part of the square, introduction of new attractions into the offer of the square such as a new type of permanent flea market and summer cinema, temporary installation of a public art object and installation of seats, dust bins and lanterns and a playground for small children.



In **Kochanowski Square**, the strategic goal is the integration of the square with a courtyard in front of the Church, and with the entrance to the building housing the Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology at the UMCS University. In the short term, several actions are envisaged: sowing grass in empty parts of the plot, adjusting parking rules on the street behind the building of the UMCS University (e.g. posts or bike racks to prevent parking in prohibited places), creating a passage from the entry door of the University building to the monument of Kochanowski (with threshold in the form of elevation at the intersection with the alley), highlighting (e.g. with temporary lighting elements) the square potential (neglected Grunwald monument and the corners) and the square itself (such as illuminations during temporary activities), and creating a new cultural offer for the square enticing passers-by to visit.

1. Temporary green walks in Rybny Square

2. Kochanowski Ephemeral users in Square

PONT-DE-CLAIX

Regarding the USER project, the municipality of Pont-de-Claix, together with Grenoble-Alpes Métropole, chose to focus on the first phase of the project (the pedestrian link), especially on the support to uses once the redevelopment is complete. The main challenge of this first phase was to break down barriers between the two neighbourhoods of Iles de Mars and Olympiades by creating a pedestrian link that facilitates pedestrians' and cyclists' movements, and optimise the use of space by removing existing barriers to create a park accessible to all covering the entire perimeter and offering facilities adapted to users' needs.

The aim is to support the Iles de Mars/Olympiades neighbourhood opening up as well as the appropriation of the new public space, this in order to maintain qualitative spaces and prevent the problem identified during the diagnosis from reoccurring. Indeed, the public spaces' rehabilitation will not permanently solve uses' problems.

THE LAP IS CONFIGURED AROUND **FOUR SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:**

1. Making public space with users
2. Organising ongoing monitoring (problems, maintenance, etc.)
3. Animation of public spaces
4. Expanding the approach for the next phases

Different actions are envisaged to achieve the mentioned objectives. We simply highlight some of them: supporting vegetable garden creation, supporting Adounia association to produce the artistic bench with inhabitants in the public

space, identifying and discussing growing problems and adjusting the management forms according to uses, developing co-construction with inhabitants, observing and monitoring through the working group Iles de Mars/Olympiades.

1. Workshop in the vegetable garden



INITIAL FINDINGS FROM DISCUSSIONS, WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS



Discussions and deliberation through seminars and workshops elicited initial ideas and knowledge that were drafted as “provisional outputs”. These findings do not suppose that all USER cities share the same problems and solutions. Some of these learnings and new knowledge affect USER cities in different ways. In any case, through the process of drawing up the Local Action Plans, priority issues for the cities searching for successful public spaces have been mapped out by comparing different dimensions, themes and methodologies.

It should be pointed out that the main shared dimension is the participation engagement of users, inhabitants and citizens involved in the use of public space. It is assumed that a crucial success factor to achieve convivial, accessible and inclusive public spaces is the capacity of local authorities to build effective partnerships with civil society and the different stakeholders.

The following findings are just a sample of the reflexion and learning that are appearing in USER

DESIGNING PUBLIC SPACES ADAPTED TO USERS' NEEDS: THE COMPLEXITY OF IDENTIFYING USERS' NEEDS

Do users know their needs? Do municipalities look for this user knowledge? Do municipalities usually take users into consideration when dealing with public spaces? Age, ethnic background, gender, customs and tradition are key dimensions that shape users' needs, difficulties in maintaining the space and security (quiet), etc. Are we aware of these different needs in our public spaces? There are several tools to do that: inquiries, mapping (un-)comfortable places, surveys, focus groups, meetings, “diagnosis by walking”, observations and research. Well-diagnosed uses and users of public spaces are the starting point for designing public space that is adapted to users' needs and avoiding divided and unclear places.



ANIMATED PUBLIC SPACES: INCREASING ACTIVITY AND USE OF PUBLIC SPACES

Efforts to increase activity levels in a public space should use the existing resources, experience and synergies bound up in the identity of the city or even the district. If the focus is on local practices, both users and operators will be more inclined to get involved in bringing public spaces to life. Before this kind of initiative can be taken, any areas of conflict must be identified and resolved: ownership of the public space, accessibility and the various needs (of inhabitants, visitors, and environmental protection). It is essential to make a distinction between permanent and passing users in order to avoid the NIMBY effect (Not In My Back Yard). Urban open spaces should be lively places with activities, those that facilitate conviviality, contact and social interaction. The animation of public space is a historical component in European cities. But should we always try to liven up public spaces? Cannot public spaces be quiet places without social interaction? What role do ecological considerations play here? Shouldn't we sometimes avoid overcrowded places that threaten ecosystems?

1. Easter feast in Azory (Cracow)

2. Touristic use of the public space in Riga

RESPONSIBILITIES OF DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS IN THE MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC SPACES

Several activities are concerned: lighting, cleaning, upgrading, waste collection, traffic, etc. New ways of urban management are required. Cities tend to adopt a more comprehensive and integrated management system based on users' needs. Public space management is a cross-cutting issue among the different municipal departments, and a strong challenge for local partnerships. There are important questions at the starting point: Who is the owner? Who is responsible? To activate public spaces, a multidisciplinary team should be involved. We need clarity about a framework for "what to decide". We need to facilitate responsibility (taking responsibilities has strong links with the decision-making process).



DEALING WITH CONFLICTS AND DIVERSITY OF USES, DIFFERENT USERS AND MIXING FUNCTIONS

We have to consider several dimensions: unexpected, monopolised, illegal, absent, everyday, occasional uses, uses at different times or overuse. Sometimes public spaces are multi- or mono-functional, sometimes users are crossing or lingering in these public spaces, these situations could be seen as a problem. Due to inappropriate urban design and layout, or because of a misunderstanding of users' needs or a poor urban management, or because of users' behaviours, several distortions and problems affect the uses of public spaces. The challenge for local stakeholders and local authorities is to manage public space differently, to better take uses in consideration and to adapt the spaces and the maintenance to temporary changes of uses. A monitoring and observation system is needed to observe uses and users. Crossing and lingering entail "eyes on the streets". Public spaces should mix urban functions, not excluding existing users and uses.

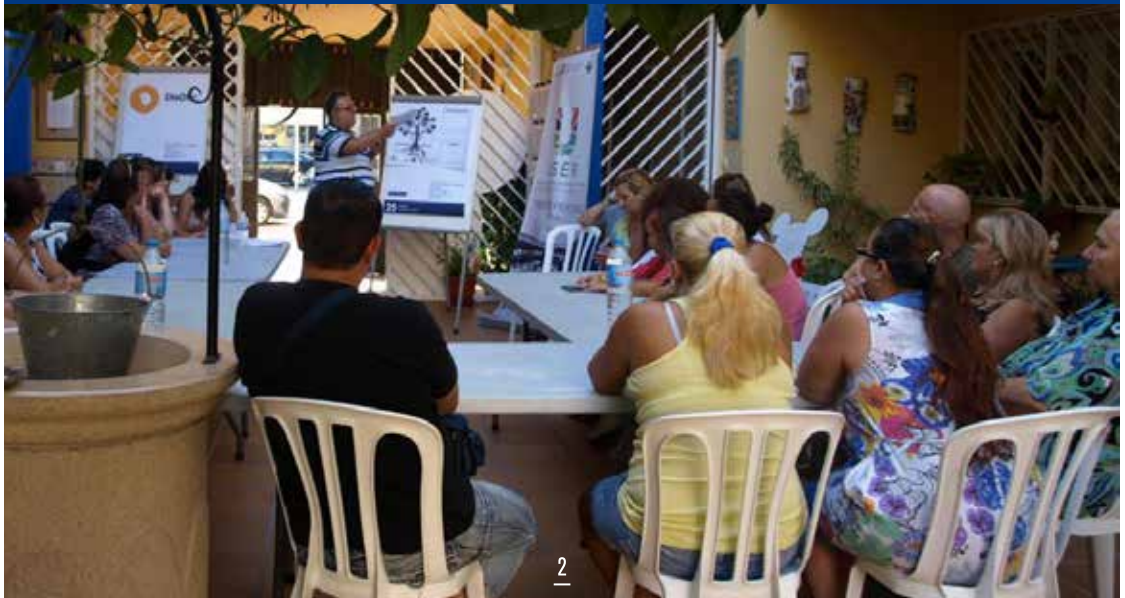


TEMPORARY USES

Why is public space unoccupied? Is it a problem? Should we design a new use, or do nothing? Municipalities can become temporary users with a view to building innovative, strategic developments. They are an opportunity for urban planners and inhabitants to get to know what the various groups think, and learn to accept each other. They are a source of inspiration and motivation that can make people want to use the public space. This is because temporary uses make it possible to demonstrate the various needs and possibilities for using public spaces, and show how enjoyable a public space can be. Collective projects such as these can also be an opportunity to change development policies and mentalities. The choice of materials and architecture is guided by the principles of flexibility, low cost, recycling, reusing, etc. Temporary uses can, however, run up against a variety of obstacles, the main one being cleanliness (sometimes private/public). Decision-makers can be afraid of losing control, especially if the project has little structure or organisation.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIP TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SPACES

Resident involvement, in itself, is no guarantee that public spaces will be developed in the best possible manner. Building a partnership with the various local stakeholders has proved to be just as vital. From the workers involved in its upkeep to local shopkeepers, and from associations to social landlords, all of these stakeholders have their own specific expertise in the use of public spaces. Given the wide variety of USER pilot sites (type of public space, institutional organisation, etc.), there is no one-size-fits-all way of building this type of partnership. However, the partners have agreed on a number of basic principles. The municipality has a role to play as mediator. It has to deal with a variety of interests and perspectives, and try to find solutions that will draw people together in agreement.



1. Inspiration to create temporary installations in Fontanelle-Sambuceto (Pescara)

2. On-site meeting in corralones in Trinidad-Perchel (Malaga)

CHALLENGING THE PUBLICNESS: CONFLICTS BETWEEN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC USES OF PUBLIC SPACES AND BETWEEN PUBLIC-PRIVATE OWNERSHIP

Increasing privatisation of public spaces, such as malls, commercial activities, outdoor bars and markets, are occupying the public domain. Coexistence between private and public activities and properties becomes a relevant challenge. Distinction between legal ownership and common use should be highlighted. One of the basic principles is that public spaces should be open and usable for everyone. Ownership should be identified and a sound balance between private and public uses should be established. The limit between private and public properties should be very clear and provide privacy for owners/

inhabitants by creating soft but clear limits. The challenge is how to bring private uses (cafés and restaurants) into a public space without creating conflicts with the initial uses. We need to make a distinction between different forms of privatisation: private car parking, outdoor restaurants, etc. What justifies each form of privatisation? In shopping malls, users are mainly consumers and sometimes certain users are not allowed to stay (they are made to leave by security staff). We have to bear in mind the economic sustainability of public spaces. It requires coexistence between public and private activities and properties.

SURROUNDINGS GIVE SENSE TO PUBLIC SPACES: PUBLIC SPACES IN THE URBAN FABRIC

Surroundings could be a barrier or a positive component for public spaces, but they always have a clear influence on public space functions. Solving problems in a restricted area is not effective if the problem is still active in the surroundings. Even the best public space will have problems if the surroundings are inhospitable. There could be vandalism or the space might not be used. We have to treat public spaces and their surroundings as an urban fabric. If the place is cut off it

is not really a public space. Public space is not just a single area; it forms a system with other spaces. Public space does not work for itself, it works for surroundings. If we improve public spaces for surroundings it will become attractive also for others. Surroundings are physical but also social. Sometimes public spaces are themselves the surroundings of a central space, such as a railway station. They should be regenerated as surroundings of the station.

INVOLVING USERS IN IMPROVING PUBLIC SPACES: LEVERAGING USERS' PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE

The objective is to move towards a community-based approach, promoting co-production, volunteering, involving individual real users, and organising platforms of shared monitoring of changes in public space uses. How to do this? We should listen to all voices. An on-going dialogue is needed with mixed group meetings during the whole process. We should let people take advantage of the resources in the area. They can take care of public spaces and carry out their own actions. There are several differences between urban planners and citizens in their time, experience and knowledge. Disillusions appear due to these differences. We need to learn and use a common language through the function of NGOs, which have the ability to communicate with local people.