

# PLACEMAKING Workshop Report

AZM UNIVERSITY



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**March 10th – 11th, 2018**

# Placemaking – Training Workshop

## *A Workshop about Placemaking as a methodology to engage the community in improving their public spaces*

### **Introduction:**

As a part of “Urban and City Planning” course conducted by Francesco Polesello at AZM University in Tripoli, and in order to promote Placemaking as a participatory concept that could be used to evaluate a place and improve it in a way to respond to community needs and aspiration, a workshop on Placemaking took place in Tripoli on March 10th and 11th in Collaboration with UTOPIA organization.

The workshop was facilitated in an interactive approach covering different parts such as lectures, tools preparations, field assessment and design studio. Hands-on experience were provided through a real project where students were able to test the different tools and to mobilize the local community in assessing its needs and aspiration in order to involve the people in reshaping their public spaces.

The field work focused on a neglected public garden, in Darawish neighborhood in Tabbaneh area, where UTOPIA is trying to activate this place and transforming it into an inviting common realm which can gather people from different community group.

This report summarized the main parts of the workshop and the students activities based on preparation of the field assessment tools, primary data collection and formulation of the proposed interventions.

### **1- Workshop Objective:**

The workshop objective was to open new horizons for 14 students enrolled in “Urban and City Planning” course through exposing them to new research tools and approaches based on the concept of participation.

This workshop was an opportunity to leverage the students’ skills in communication through conducting survey and interviews as well as to consolidate their knowledge on participatory design through encourage them to network with local actors and stakeholders. The Students explored how placemaking, as the process of designing good public spaces can help create encounters between people, help engage conversations and mutual use of a space.

### **2- Students Learning Objective (SLO):**

- To Conduct evaluations of public spaces and to involve community in improvement process.
- To consolidate their knowledge on how Placemaking can be used to create good public spaces to promote community well-being.
- To experiment the different phases of a participatory approach through hands-on experience.

## SATURDAY MARCH 10<sup>TH</sup> - DAY ONE.

The workshop started with a presentation of the agenda and the objectives of the workshop. Then the students were asked to share their expectations on small posted. Here are their expectations as expressed by themselves: Understand how Culture affects Urban Planning; How can we create good public spaces; Relation between buildings and city/ surrounding; Produce Map to help me understand and describe any place; Discover new methods to analyze urban maps; Change our vision, Understand urban context; How we can work or use the urban planning system and why; Methodology of knowing what the city needs and Importance of urban planning of the city.

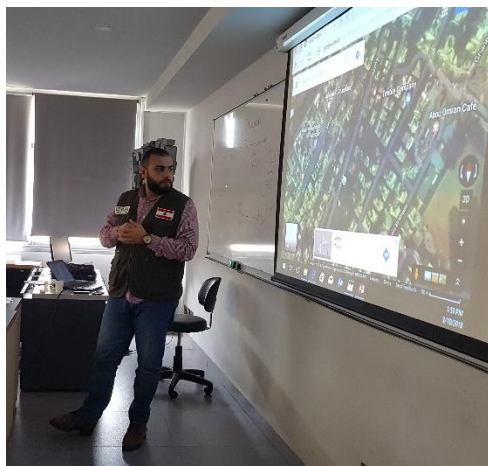
The first lecture: **Transforming City and Public Spaces through Placemaking** aimed at introducing Placemaking as a participatory approach supporting people in reshaping their public spaces in order to promote community well-being and to improve their socio-economic situation.

The lecture included, definition of Space and Place, highlighting the importance of Public Spaces in SDGs and in the new urban agenda. It provided as well an historical background of the participatory urban planning theory and the main researchers and activists.

The second lecture untitled What makes a Great Place? Was an introduction to the tools for evaluating places. Various Placemaking techniques and tools were introduced to the students such as Self-assessment, Facility Assessment and Stakeholder Identification, Direct observation, interviews.

The third presentation aimed at introducing other techniques and tools that the students will be able to use during the field assessment. The tools were using the following tools: focus group, community workshop and different visioning activities.

After the 3 presentations, Shafik Abdelrahman UTOPIA Program manager, introduced to the students the site location where the field assessment will be focused giving a brief background on the neighborhood, challenges and community needs. Shafik presented as well the mains sectors of UTOPIA interventions. UTOPIA is active into protection programs, distribution of food and non-food items, waste management, water and sanitation and some infrastructure projects. UTOPIA offers also advocacy programs to improve the municipality's responsiveness to the needs of the locals. It was a great opportunity to enhance volunteering spirit within the students.



Introduction of the Site by UTOPIA



Work Site: The public garden in Darawish area



Due to the demonstrations of the Parents of the Islamic prisoners, the Lebanese army closed the main entrances leading to our site neighborhood. Thus the field assessment work was postponed to the next day for security reason. The students were divided into 3 groups and were asked to start preparing the needed material and tools that they will be using with the local community while assessing the needs and challenges.



**The three groups preparing needed tools and material for the field work**

## SATURDAY MARCH 11<sup>TH</sup> - DAY TWO

The kickoff of the field work started at 10.00 am after being sure that all the needed material was prepared. We visited first the football court located in Darawish neighborhood infamously known as the previous demarcation line that separated the two marginalized neighborhoods Bab Al Tabbaneh from Jabal Mohsen during the violent rounds of clashes from 2011 to 2014.

Sign of fights between Bab Tebbaneh and Jabal Mohsen are still visible and many ruins and bullet-hollow buildings are still there. We moved then to our site which is in the same street. As mentioned previously the site is a neglected area where Utopia is planning to rehabilitate a public garden to increase green public space provision in Darawish Neighborhood and provide a free space for the children severely affected.

Utopia initiative to renovate and to provide full equipment for the site aims at creating a peaceful atmosphere between the two different communities by engaging its children and youth in joint activities and increasing the connectedness between rival community groups to foster greater communal understanding and cooperation try overcome the cultural and religious divisions.

Since Placemaking is a participatory approach, the students were encouraged to talk to the local people and involve them in the assessment process. Split into three teams, the students started their field assessment walking around the whole area and exploring it together with their team. They were asked to involve the different categories of the community through using the adequate tools provided during the lectures. The needs assessment focused on the following questions:

- 1- What is the analysis of the current situation?
- 2- Who are the main users of the site?
- 3- The ambition and aspiration of the locals?
- 4- The rating of the site according to the criteria of the Place Evaluation form.
- 5- Things that help improve the situation immediately, but don't cost much money or time.  
(quicker lighter cheaper like cleaning up, putting in a crossover path, benches, trees and such.  
Think of activations, programming, quick wins in physical improvements).



**Students conducting Interviews and Street Surveys**





**Participatory Mapping**



**Voting Board - Activity Ranking**



**Participatory design**



**Wish Objects**





**Model making**

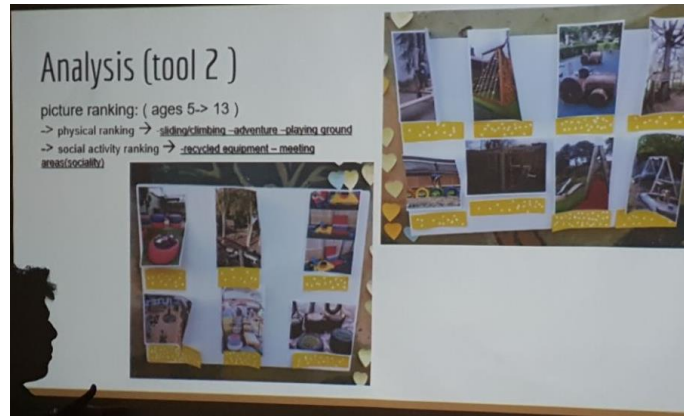


**Scavenger Hunt**

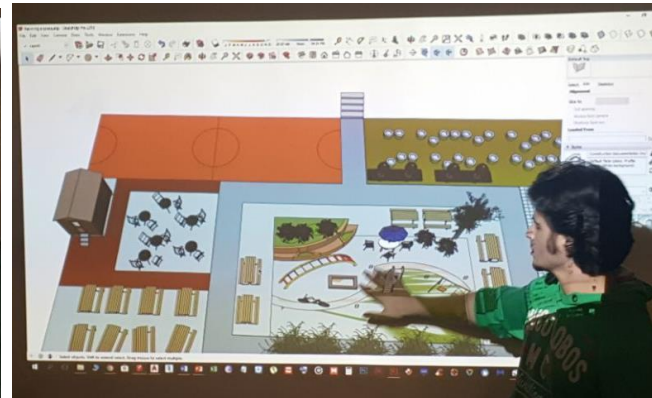
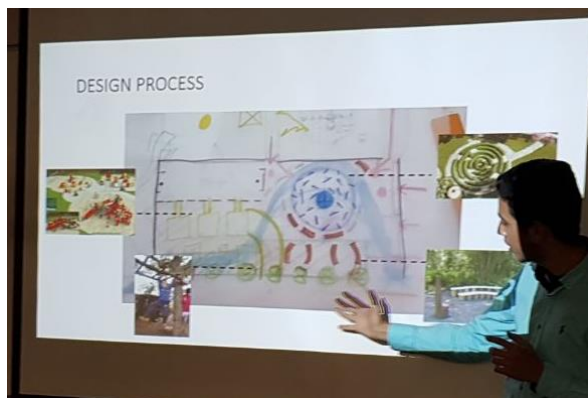
At 12.30 pm, we moved back to AZM university with all the data collected by the students throughout different approaches and tools. At 1:30 pm, **Studio on Designing, Activating and Managing Public Spaces** started with the compilation and the analysis of the collected data. During the whole afternoon, the students were translating the field work data into insights and actions. Using all the layers, tools, strategies and information collected till there, the groups were asked to discuss innovative ideas and propose potential projects and actions plans that can improve the quality of the proposed site and make it an attractive public space that could be used by the community.



**Data Analysis**



**Finding Presentations**



**Projects Visual Concepts Presentations**

At 5:30 pm the 3 teams presented their projects' concept, highlighting the evaluation and ideas that were generated, the main findings and the tools used during the participatory process. They presented their ideas through a vision, proposing specific recommendations and creating a visual concept using Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper (LQC).

At the end of the workshop an evaluation sheet was filled by the students. The following scores represent the average of the ones rated by the students as per: **1-2-3-4-5 (<--Disagree – Agree-->)**

**1- Learning Objectives were met: 4.46**

**2- Content of Lectures: 4.38**

**3- Field work: 1-2-3-4-5: 4.69**

**4- Tools used: 1-2-3-4-5: 4.07**

**5- Facilitation: 1-2-3-4-5: 4.53**

**6- Interaction and Participation: 4.84**

**7- Guest Speaker: 4.76**

**8- Other comments/suggestions as written by some students:**

- Hope this workshop can be in other vacation not in the weekend to give it more time and to achieve a lot of works and designs that can be more and benefits.
- I learned a lot about public spaces and how to involve the local community.
- You should expand and visit more places, could be out of Tripoli.
- This should also be a course taken in universities.
- I learned a lot from this workshop.
- It was an amazing experience, seeing other people and helping them to be more flexible in their city.
- Great experience.
- It should be presented in 2 weends not only one to have more time through design process.
- I wish that the workshop would take much more time to learn more and could give more results as such.
- Great instructor! Very active and interesting.
- Great experience.
- It is a beneficial workshop but time scheduled to manage the task was a bit short.