PS-U-GO and AESOP TG PSUC International Conference 2026

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

# *Youth as Agents of Hope:*

## *Urban Living Labs and Community-Engaged Learning*

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**Larnaka, Cyprus, 29 – 30 October 2026**

University of Cyprus

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Larnaka 2030 EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE CANDIDATE CITY

AESOP

## Youth as Agents of Hope: Urban Living Labs and Community-Engaged Learning

Book of Abstracts of the PS-U-GO and AESOP TG PSUC International Conference 2026, Larnaka, Cyprus, 29 – 30 October 2026

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# Introduction

Involving young people in public space and urban governance brings immediate concerns into long-term urban development agendas. Urban Living Labs (ULLs) offer a framework for inclusive urban decision-making and for situated learning that bridges formal higher education with engagement in everyday urban space. The conference addresses the following questions:

- **How do young people gain a meaningful role in public space and urban governance?**
- **What role do Urban Living Labs play in bridging formal education with real-world urban contexts?**
- **How can participatory methodologies support civic responsibility among students and young urban professionals?**
- **What pedagogic frameworks best support situated, experiential learning through ULLs?**
- **How can students and young people contribute to urban change by co-creating urban solutions and imagining hopeful urban futures?**
- **What institutional, spatial, and relational practices make ULLs with young people effective?**

The conference is a combined effort of the Erasmus+ project PS-U-GO – Education in Living Labs: Participatory Skills for Sustainable Urban Governance and the AESOP Thematic Group on Public Spaces and Urban Cultures (TG PSUC). It is hosted by the Society and Urban Form lab (SURF), Department of Architecture, University of Cyprus, and supported by Larnaka2030, European Capital of Culture 2030.

This book gathers the abstracts of the keynote lectures and of the interventions presented in the four roundtables, in the order in which they appear in the programme.

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# Keynote Lectures

## Community-based Art Practices

**Kelly Diapouli** Thursday 29 October, 9:45 – 10:45

*[Keynote abstract to be added]*



**Artistic Director, Larnaka 2030 European Capital of Culture**

Kelly Diapouli is a curator and cultural manager based in Greece and Cyprus. She has been an international cooperation manager in the Hellenic Culture Organisation – Cultural Olympiad (2004 – 2008) and the artistic director of Eleusis 2021 ECoC (2014 – 2020) in Greece and since 2022, she is the artistic director of Larnaka 2030 European Capital of Culture (CY). Her work focuses on international cooperation and networking, participatory design processes and community-based work. She holds an MA in European Cultural Policy and Administration from the University of Warwick (UK) and a BA in Theatre Studies from the University of Athens (GR).

## Watch Out for Affects: Youth Participation in Places of Concern

**Tihomir Viderman** Friday 30 October, 9:00 – 10:00

*[Keynote abstract to be added]*



**Research associate at BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg, Germany;**
**Representative of the AESOP Thematic Group Public Spaces and Urban Cultures.**

Tihomir Viderman is a research associate at the Chair of Urban Management at Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg. His work engages with public space, urban cultures, patterns of spatial appropriation, and the everyday politics of urban transformation, bringing spatial and social theory into dialogue with the practice of urban design and planning. In research and teaching, he develops the concept of affective urbanism, an approach based on thick analysis of material urban forms, affective relations between unequally positioned bodies, and representations of continuously unsettled urban space. It offers an analytical perspective on how socio-spatial and biographical trajectories unfolding across different scales and temporalities interact to produce unequal spaces of possibility. He is co-editor of *Unsettled Urban Space: Routines, Temporalities and Contestations* (Routledge), *Public Space Unbound: Urban Emancipation and the Post-Political Condition* (Routledge), and *Urban Conflicts and Peace: Everyday Politics of Commons* (Tracce Urbane 17). From 2024 to 2026, he coordinated the AESOP Thematic Group Public Spaces and Urban Cultures.

# Roundtable One: How do young people gain a meaningful role in public space and urban governance?

*Thursday 29 October, 11:15 – 13:00*

## Youth Claiming Urban Space: Lived Experiences, Everyday Practices, and Urban Governance in the Exarcheia Neighbourhood

**Katerina Konstantinidou**
*Former Master's student, Panteion University*

My aim is to present at the conference part of the findings of a qualitative research study that I conducted. The findings concern young residents' connection to their neighbourhood (Exarcheia), their response to its urban regeneration projects, and the political initiatives they themselves undertook regarding the neighbourhood's space. The presentation of the findings will be followed by a brief analysis of young people's connection and engagement with urban practices, as well as some proposals for Urban Living Labs.

As part of my master's thesis, I conducted qualitative research with fourteen participants, investigating Exarcheia residents' lived experiences of contemporary urban regeneration interventions and their own initiatives concerning the neighbourhood's public space. Data were collected through semi-structured walking interviews, documenting both participants' narratives and their interaction with the neighbourhood. The findings were analysed through the theoretical frameworks of Lefebvre, Harvey, and de Certeau, highlighting residents' attachment to place, everyday spatial practices, the political dimension of urban space, and the socio-spatial dialectic. In particular, the study illustrates how and why young residents claim a meaningful role in public space through everyday practices and political initiatives in response to urban regeneration.

Thirteen of the fourteen participants were aged 19-32, documenting young people's lived experiences and the ways they negotiate and claim urban space. The findings demonstrate the consequences of long-term urban development agendas that exclude local communities, particularly young residents, from decision-making processes. Furthermore, the theoretical framework emphasises the use value of urban space as expressed by the participants, while the findings provide an empirical basis for proposals on Urban Living Labs that could strengthen youth participation in urban governance and contribute to more collaborative and hopeful urban futures.

**Keywords:** socio-spatial dialectics, gentrification, collective action, youth, Exarcheia

# Girls & the City: An Urban Living Lab with Adolescents in Parma's Ducal Park

**Renata Boeri[1], Florencia Andreola[2]**

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Across Europe, adolescent girls progressively withdraw from parks, squares and open space from around age ten, a pattern documented since Vienna's pioneering work on gender mainstreaming in urban planning, and produced by defaults that assume an implicit adult, male, productive user. Four recurring barriers underpin this exclusion: a lack of belonging, an insecurity distinct from measurable danger, restricted mobility, and comfort accessible only through consumption. Together, these barriers render girls' presence in public space systematically marginal at a phase of life when outdoor autonomy is decisive for identity and health. Participatory methods that treat adolescents as competent subjects, rather than passive users, are among the few tools able to make this invisible exclusion visible and actionable for local government.

This paper presents Girls & the City, a participatory project developed by Sex & the City with a class of fourteen-year-olds at the Bodoni Institute in Parma, Italy, using the city's Parco Ducale as a living laboratory. Building on the Milan Gender Atlas (2021) and Free, not brave. Women and fear in public space (2024), the project applied the four-phase Girls Make the City! methodology (engagement, exploration, co-design, restitution). Students mapped their daily mobility, conducted field interviews in the park, and produced strikingly different visions of the same space: girls envisioned a park to inhabit - with platforms, hammocks and lighting on secondary paths - while boys imagined one built almost entirely around sports facilities. These findings were formalized into ten guidelines for the Parma municipal administration. Beyond its immediate outcomes, the project advances a transferable methodology for converting a school into a durable Urban Living Lab, one where adolescents co-produce urban knowledge rather than merely receive urban space.

**Keywords:** Adolescent girls; public space; participatory co-design; Urban Living Lab

# Young People Don't Seek Community: Theatre of the Oppressed as an Urban Living Lab

**Steffen Hehn**

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In recent years - accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic - "community" has regained ubiquity in media and political discourse as both an antidote to acute loneliness and a projection screen for belonging and identity. Young people are increasingly depicted as the primary casualties of isolation, a trend underscored by sociological analyses, state monitoring reports, political appeals for a national "we," and contemporary popular culture of music and film. While "community" is presented as a universal remedy, what does this concept mean materially, and do young people truly desire such an idea of community?

This paper offers a historical-materialist critique of community, contrasting it with the actual activities and concrete needs of children and youth. Drawing on Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (Leontiev/Vygotsky) and Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, the empirical basis stems from an intensive three-week theatre workshop conducted with children in Hamburg. Methodologically framed as an Urban Living Lab (ULL), this practice centers young people's spatial appropriation of their built environment. From an urban planning perspective, this approach opens pathways to genuinely recognize youth needs without reducing young people to symbolic participants.

The theatrical process reveals that the desire for community and belonging only becomes foregrounded when competitive pressure dominates daily life and physical space is structurally constrained. As access to recreational and natural spaces shrinks, communities lose their spatial foundation and practical purpose, filling this void instead with defensive identity attributions. The theatre practice highlights how difficult it is for young people to recognize structural deprivation and translate it into spatial claims. Addressing these structural barriers, the paper presents a framework fusing urban planning with the Theatre of the Oppressed to enable youth to collectively learn about and negotiate their spatial needs within public space - freeing themselves from the pressure to conform to top-down imperatives of community.

**Keywords:** Theatre of the Oppressed, Activity Theory, Spatial Appropriation and Needs, Identity Communities

# Roundtable Two: What pedagogic frameworks best support situated, experiential learning through Urban Living Labs?

*Thursday 29 October, 14:45 – 16:15*

## From Classroom to City: The EPIC_LAB Course as a Situated Urban Living Lab

**Maria Karagianni[1], Evie Athanassiou[1], Georgia Alexandri[2], Aysegül Can[2], Georgia Pozoukidou[1], Amy Stamatopoulou[1], Panos-Arion Hatziprokopiou[1]**

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This contribution presents the EPIC_LAB course as a pedagogical experiment in Urban Living Labs (ULLs) that positions students as active agents in housing governance and urban transformation. Developed within the EPICUR alliance and implemented at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the course integrates community-engaged learning with applied research on housing affordability, social rental models, and urban regeneration. It combines interdisciplinary teaching with field-based collaboration involving municipalities, civil society actors, and housing initiatives, situating students within real policy and planning contexts.

The paper argues that EPIC_LAB operationalises ULL principles by bridging formal education with situated urban practice, enabling students to co-produce knowledge and contribute to ongoing local debates. Drawing on recent course iterations, it reflects on the methodological design (problem-based learning, stakeholder engagement, and co-creation formats), the institutional constraints of embedding ULLs in higher education, and the conditions under which student participation becomes meaningful rather than symbolic. The contribution addresses how such pedagogical frameworks can foster civic responsibility, critical spatial awareness, and actionable skills among young urban professionals, while also highlighting the limits of short-term academic interventions in structurally constrained housing systems.

**Keywords:** Urban Living Labs; Housing; Climate adaptation; Participatory planning; Experiential learning

# Education and Engagement of Youth for Urban Futures

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As a teacher of an urban anthropology course at the University of Zagreb, I will present and discuss approaches and projects that I have been implementing in recent years to combine ethnographic fieldwork, futures literacy, and service-learning. The course focuses on critical contemporary themes, including public spaces, social justice, inclusivity, urban sustainability, and climate-neutral cities. A core component of the curriculum requires students to conduct ethnographic research - a methodology that is inherently participatory, immersive, and experiential, designed to deeply engage students with local communities. However, despite its transformative potential, I have noticed that fieldwork alone is insufficient to inspire long-term, sustained civic engagement once course requirements are fulfilled. Discussions with students reveal that while they theoretically recognize the importance of civic and public engagement, they are often reluctant to act due to many reasons, some of them are distrust towards formal institutions and a sense of futility. To address this disillusionment, I have introduced techniques that foster imagination and anticipation as important and fertile ground for a shift in perspective, perception, and action. This approach is oriented towards empowering and mobilizing youth, nurturing their inner motivation ('capacity to aspire'), and cultivating the agency required to co-create future change. Furthermore, in collaboration with civil society organizations and community activists, a service-learning model is promoted. Anthropology students are invited to research local community needs within urban and spatial planning processes. This involvement allows students to acquire applied skills and competencies, while the practical application of their research in shaping public policies serves as a powerful motivator for ongoing engagement. In sum, this presentation showcases how innovative combining these diverse conceptual and practical, research and pedagogical approaches can empower young people toward community-driven change, socially responsible public action, and ongoing critical civic engagement.

**Keywords:** urban anthropology, ethnographic fieldwork, futures literacy, service-learning

# What Might Regenerative Education Look Like? Cultivating Continuity, Participation, Belonging and Care in the Feed4Food Urban Agriculture Living Lab

**Dr. Chrystalleni Loizidou[1], Katerina Televantou[2], Dr. Chrystalla Antoniou[2], Emmanouela Christofi[1], Dr. Vassilis Litskas[3]*, Dr. Dimitris Sarris[1], Myria Nikolaidou Tzioni[2]**

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This research work examines how an Urban Living Lab can support regenerative, community-engaged learning by creating sustained relationships between children, a shared public space, and living ecological processes. The study draws on the Apostolos Varnavas-Strovolos Regenerative Education Pilot, implemented within the FEED4FOOD project at the Strovolos Urban Living Lab in Acropolis Park, Cyprus, from March to June 2026. Thirty primary school pupils aged 9-11, two teachers, and an interdisciplinary team of researchers and practitioners participated in regular garden-based sessions. Rather than applying a fixed pedagogical model, the pilot developed through cross-pollination between regenerative agriculture, permaculture, outdoor education, arts education, agronomy, biology, and conventional primary education. Activities included planting and caring for vegetables, sensory and ecological observation, land art, learning about pollinators, measuring soil temperature, and plant-growth experiments. The programme was continuously adapted to place, seasonality, children's interests, and ecological change. Findings indicate that continuity was a key pedagogical resource. Repeated encounters with the same living environment enabled pupils to observe change over time, build on previous experiences, care for a shared space, and witness the cumulative effects of their actions. Teachers reported exceptionally high engagement, while pupils expressed a strong desire to return and distinguished the experience from classroom learning. Beyond environmental knowledge, the pilot supported richer observational practices, peer collaboration, responsibility, connection to place, and confidence in contributing to ecological change. The study proposes continuity, participation, belonging, and care as four interconnected resources through which Urban Living Labs can cultivate social-ecological stewardship. It suggests that community-engaged, place-based learning can transform public green spaces into inclusive environments where young people participate meaningfully in the everyday making and care of sustainable urban futures.

**Keywords:** Urban Living Labs; Regenerative Education; Place-Based Learning; Social-Ecological Stewardship; Community-Engaged Learning

# Roundtable Three: What role do Urban Living Labs play in bridging formal education with real-world urban contexts?

*Thursday 29 October, 16:45 – 18:15*

## Education-Based Urban Living Labs as a New Venue for Transdisciplinary Collaboration and Engagement: COCO – Commoning Cottbus as a Prototype

**Hendrik Weiner**
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Engaged Learning (Chmelka et al. 2023) and Live Projects (Harriss et al. 2014) use Challenge-based Learning (Gallagher, S. E.; Savage, T. 2023) to involve engaging with real-world issues and developing students' own perspectives or proposed solutions. Organising our own Urban Living Lab – an open, free space in the heart of the city or region – together with and through students takes things a step further to self-organised, transdisciplinary collaboration.

In October 2024, the 'COCO – Commoning Cottbus' project was launched in Cottbus (COCO 2026) as such a new space. It forms part of the EU project 'Participatory Skills for Sustainable Urban Governance' (PS-UGO).

COCO embeds students in the urban environment, opens up new contacts and relationships, and fosters self-efficacy: Students become independent, learning agents who work together in teams through open processes, aiming to organise a communal space as a laboratory. They engage with citizens, civil society and institutions, cooperate and implement new formats. Through this new public space, the students, as active participants, take a publicly visible stand for democratic values and an open society.

Through the interplay of theory and practice, the education-based Urban Living Lab offers a novel space for experience and training in collaboration, new pathways to civic engagement, and the opportunity to train transdisciplinary working methods and co-design processes. This input reflects on the framework conditions, attitudes and roles, co-design processes, opportunities and challenges of the project for those involved, for teaching and research, and for urban society. It discusses the project as a new, prototypical approach to engaged learning in higher education.

**Keywords:** Urban Living Lab, Engaged Learning, Collaboration, Transdisciplinarity

# Cultivating Young People's Participatory Habitus between Inclusive Ideals and Institutional Expectations

**Tihomir Viderman, Rafael Maximiliano Flores de Leon**
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Strengthening young people's say in urban development is increasingly required by public funding programmes. Yet participatory processes are structured through particular representations, roles, expectations, and understandings of what constitutes a competent contribution. They therefore nurture a particular participatory habitus that patterns how participants respond and what they come to perceive as appropriate and actionable within a given setting. This argument draws on three workshops for young people within the Urban Living Lab Commoning Cottbus (CoCo), Germany, part of PS-U-GO (psugo.eu). Centred on the structural effects of the phase-out of lignite coal on the city, the workshops combined knowledge acquisition with discussion of participants' concerns through direct exchanges with stakeholders involved in shaping policy. Three tensions are identified: discursive structuring, normative attunement, and role reproduction. The first tension arises from young people's own acknowledgement of their limited familiarity with institutional terminology and policy processes. Acquiring this knowledge, however, also meant adopting the categories through which the issue was already framed. Young participants tended to formulate their concerns around issues already foregrounded in policy publications and by political actors. The second tension concerns the relation between growing confidence and normative attunement. Participants who became more vocal across the workshops also tended to align more closely with institutional discourse. Their proposals drew on familiar participatory responses, such as calls for additional platforms and mechanisms. The third tension is evident in interactions between young participants and stakeholders, as both sides tended to reproduce roles familiar from formal participatory settings. Young people articulated concerns, while institutional actors responded from within established responsibilities and capacities, even where the workshops sought to encourage more open exchange. These three tensions provide a basis for reflecting on how efforts to strengthen young people's capacities to act can simultaneously cultivate a habitus oriented towards institutionally recognisable forms of engagement.

**Keywords:** Participatory skills, disciplinary formats, participatory habitus

# ULLs as Situated Configurations of Practice: A Reflexive Analytical Perspective on Youth Empowerment

**Tomislav Augustinčić, Dafne Berc, Layla Munitić**

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Urban Living Labs (ULLs) are increasingly employed as experimental spaces for participatory urban development and youth engagement. Yet, understanding their transformative potential requires moving beyond the treatment of ULLs as fixed technical or procedural models with predefined intervention formats or containers into which a methodology is inserted. Drawing on the qualitative research conducted across four ULLs within the PS-U-GO project, this paper conceptualises ULLs as situated configurations of practice: socio-spatial arrangements that emerge through the interaction of actors, institutional relations, territorial conditions, problematiques, and situated forms of learning and participation.

Adopting a reflexive analytical perspective, the paper examines how the specific configuration of each ULL shapes both the possibilities and limitations of youth participation and empowerment. Rather than operationalising empowerment as a measurable outcome or a linear progression from participation to increased capacity, we approach it as a relational, situated, and contingent process. Empowerment emerges through participants' engagement with concrete situations of negotiation, collaboration, knowledge production, institutional interaction, and spatial action, generating forms of agency, competence, confidence, reflexivity, and relational capacity. At the same time, these possibilities are conditioned by existing institutional structures, territorial inequalities, participant constellations, and the degree of agency afforded within the ULL.

The paper argues that participation should therefore not be equated with empowerment, nor should differences between ULLs be understood simply as variations in implementation quality. Instead, such differences reveal how ULLs are constituted through and responsive to their specific contexts. This perspective shifts analytical attention from asking whether ULLs "work" towards examining how particular configurations create, constrain, and transform opportunities for youth agency. In doing so, the paper contributes to a more situated and reflexive understanding of ULLs and to conceptualising youth empowerment as an emergent property of participatory practice rather than a predetermined project outcome.

**Keywords:** urban living labs; situated configurations of practice; situated knowledge; empowerment; youth

# The Architectural Design Studio as an Urban Living Lab: Co-Creating Urban Commons through Situated Learning

**Marina Pasia, Nadia Charalambous, Giorgos Kyriazis, Michalis Psaras**

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Architectural design studios are often criticised for reproducing a gap between academic learning and the complex social realities of practice. This paper examines ARH 201 Architectural Design Studio IV at the University of Cyprus as a community-engaged studio embedded in the Agioi Anargyroi II refugee housing estate in Larnaca. Structured through an Urban Living Lab framework, the studio positioned students not only as designers but as listeners, facilitators, and co-producers of situated urban knowledge.

The pedagogical process integrated architectural design with staged co-creation involving residents, users, and local partners: walk-along interviews, collective identification and prioritisation of neighbourhood challenges, discussion of emerging design scenarios, and creative documentation. Acting as co-experts, residents introduced students to everyday practices, memories, appropriated spaces, and overlooked conditions that conventional site analysis may not capture. The studio documentation shows how situated testimony was progressively translated into prioritised themes and subsequently into a design agenda.

The paper evaluates this approach through workshop documentation, student design processes, and a post-workshop questionnaire completed by 21 students. Survey responses point to particular strengths in encouraging participation and discussion, surfacing neighbourhood challenges, and offering perspectives beyond conventional site analysis. Qualitative responses consistently identify direct interaction and walking with residents as the most significant element of the learning experience, while also exposing limitations around stakeholder representation and the role of external participants.

The paper argues that the Urban Living Lab can function as a pedagogical framework in which architecture students negotiate disciplinary expertise with lived knowledge—not participation added as consultation to an otherwise autonomous design process, but co-creation built into the formation of the design problem itself. In doing so, the studio reframes architectural agency as a collaborative, situated, and civic practice.

**Keywords:** Urban Living Labs; architectural education; co-creation; situated learning; community engagement

# Roundtable Four: What institutional, spatial, and relational practices make Urban Living Labs with young people effective?

*Friday 30 October, 10:30 – 12:00*

## Who Can Participate? Rethinking Sensory and Cognitive Inclusion in Urban Living Labs

**Raquel Guerra Aragonés, Larissa Ribeiro Cunha**
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Urban Living Labs (ULLs) can offer young people meaningful opportunities to shape urban futures through situated learning, co-creation, and engagement with real-world challenges. However, bringing diverse participants into a participatory process does not necessarily ensure that the conditions of participation are inclusive.

This conceptual paper shifts attention from the question of who is invited to participate to a related one: what does participation require from those who take part? ULL activities are organised through specific spaces, formats, and social interactions. These may involve navigating unfamiliar environments, coping with sensory stimulation, processing information within limited timeframes, dealing with uncertainty, communicating in expected ways, or participating in established group dynamics. Such conditions can unintentionally rely on an idea of the "standard participant" and overlook differences in how people perceive, process information, communicate, and interact.

The paper introduces sensory and cognitive inclusion as a lens for examining the spatial, social, and relational practices of ULLs involving young people. Rather than viewing inclusion primarily as a matter of providing accommodations once an individual has identified or disclosed a particular need, it asks how the design of participatory conditions can create less visible barriers from the outset. From this perspective, withdrawal, silence, or non-participation should not necessarily be understood as a lack of interest or willingness to engage.

ULLs can also become spaces for learning about human variability. Open discussion and reflection on the experience of participation may help young people recognise neurodiversity as an ordinary part of human diversity, while also questioning dominant assumptions about what participation should look like. In this sense, ULLs may support not only more inclusive forms of participation, but also collective learning about inclusion itself.

**Keywords:** Urban Living Labs; sensory and cognitive inclusion; neurodiversity; youth participation; human variability

# What Spaces, Tools, and Conditions Enable Younger Generations to Shape the City? Two Practice-Based Projects in Milan and Rome

**Emma Loi, Cristiana Luciani**

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This contribution analyses two practice-based projects centred on youth participation in public space and implemented by Avanzi - Sostenibilità per Azioni, a research and consultancy company working in the field of urban policies.

The analysis explores the role of Urban Living Labs and other urban devices as social infrastructures capable of strengthening people's capacity to reflect, aspire and act to transform their living environment (Aernouts et al., 2023).

The first project, We-Z - emotional WEllbeing of Generation Z: reconnecting communities and spaces through imperfect health is a three-year programme (2024 - 2027), funded by the European Urban Initiative - Innovative Actions and implemented in Vigne Nuove, a public housing neighbourhood in Rome. We-Z is an experimental project combining urban regeneration and youth mental health. Through an ULL, Generation Z youth, residents, institutions (including local public mental health services) and local organisations are involved in co-creating, experimenting with and implementing new services for the neighbourhood.

The second project, Open Casello (since 2024), is promoted by the Municipality of Milan through its Youth Promotion and School-to-Work Transition Office. It turns a former toll house into a meeting place for young people and a reference point for the city's youth policies, offering a dedicated public space, reinforced by a co-realised tactical square, working as both an institutional service and a space open to self-organisation and youth-led experimentation.

Despite different contexts, both projects experiment with forms of participation that go beyond consultation. The Vigne Nuove Living Lab and Open Casello become spaces for co-creating and experimenting with new services and initiatives, building on diverse knowledge, ideas and experiences, while strengthening the relationship between institutions, young people and the neighbourhood itself.

The publicness of these projects thus proves to be a key component in building young people's identity and sense of belonging, where youth agency is no longer confined but becomes visible to all.

**Reference:** Aernouts, N., Cognetti, F., & Maranghi, E. (Eds.). (2023). Urban Living Lab for Local Regeneration: Beyond Participation in Large-scale Social Housing Estates. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-19748-2

**Keywords:** Youth participation; Urban Living Labs; Public space; Youth agency; Social infrastructures

# From an Ordinary Parking Lot to an Autonomous Circus Space: The Skate Park Parking Space of Larnaca as a Weekly Juggling Gathering

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Juggling Cyprus is a grassroots initiative that transforms an underutilized urban space—a public parking lot adjacent to Larnaca's youth-built skate park—into a vibrant weekly meeting point for play, movement, and community-building through juggling and flow arts.

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the habitus, this intervention demonstrates how embodied artistic movement fractures ingrained social conditioning. By reclaiming spatial autonomy and actively reshaping the environment to serve personal and collective human needs, the project disrupts daily routines and challenges passive spatial design. What began as a simple weekly practice has evolved into a dynamic social hub, offering a blueprint for reclaiming the public sphere as a living, community-driven commons that fosters adaptability and shared ownership.

This panel highlights how small, authentic gatherings can spark broader youth-led urban activation. By sharing our experience in Larnaca, we advocate for the vital need for safe, accessible spaces dedicated to circus and flow arts—dynamic practices suitable for all ages. Ultimately, the project underscores the urgency of cultivating fantasy, play, and artistic movement within public spaces, particularly during times of systemic crisis.

**Keywords:** Public space, art, street art, circus, movement

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