

# Let's heal our cities

Tapping into placemaking  
and active recreation



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
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Placemaking for  
Active  
Recreation  
Kit

# Influential Factors

TO PRACTICE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN PUBLIC SPACE



# Gender, Identity & Masculine Dominance

## MOTIVATING FACTORS

Public space is political, whether this be in obvious manners or through more subtle and pervasive mechanisms. We know as urbanists, geographers, and as well as for physical activity - that match the needs of POC, non-gender conforming, queer, poor, and differently abled persons.

*“There is space for all individuals in our public realm, and physical activity is a human need. Period.”*

10 placemakers that the access to safely and easily enjoy high quality public space is unfairly allocated; so often, the rich, white, abled-bodied, classically educated and hetero-normative persons access public space facing less inconveniences or threats than those many people who do not fit into these categories. We need to facilitate and motivate public spaces - in general,

There is space for all individuals in our public realm, and physical activity is a human need. Period.



# Harassment

## MOTIVATING FACTORS

Results show that women experience significantly more harassment than men when taking public space. In this line of thought, we also see disproportionate harassment (and assault) interacting with gender in public space for physical

activity as well. For example, a study examining runners' experiences found that **58%** of women have been harassed while moving in public space compared to only **4%** of the men in the sample.

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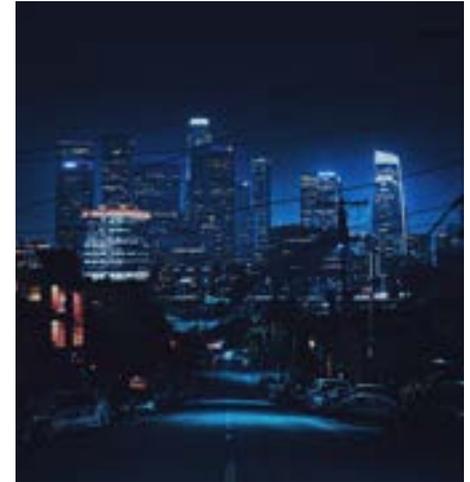


This negative experience - ranging from heckling to downright threat and fear - is almost **15** times more prevalent for women than men working out in the outdoors.

# Time & Routines

## MOTIVATING FACTORS

Time and routines are closely linked to the privileged categories that aid a person to use public space for their desires. Finding time to practice recreational physical activity is a luxury for many, and perhaps an unrecognised advantage for others. Women, POC, refugees, migrants, and the poor are significantly at a time disadvantage.



## Recommendations

Seek out innovative and sensitive styles of 'sport' that are not rooted in masculine hegemony, colonisation, or gender norms. For example, football is fraught with hyper-masculine norms, and further, numerous sports teams have - until recently - been represented by appropriating mascots.

In your context, with your stakeholders, what are the different strategies to welcome all identities to feel safe and enjoy moving together and across different work and care giving schedules? Does this mean adopting more flexible uniforms or 'sport kits' for each person to choose what they are most comfortable wearing? Or even finding creative ways to include child care in your activation?

# Pedestrian Infrastructure

## MOTIVATING FACTORS

Through our PARK research, we have identified a series of infrastructural factors that can - if at high quality - motivate physical activity in the public environment. These include:



### • Safe

*Do all the users feel secure, and is the environment perceived positively regarding crime?*

*This is important for vulnerable populations- such as children, POC, women, and the elderly.*

### Physically barrier free

*Is the user able to traverse across without impediments?*

*This is important for those who use wheelchairs, the handi-capped, and those less agile.*

### • Close proximity

*Is the physical distance within a manageable proximity on foot?*

*Inherently, routes and destinations must be reachable for the users, especially those with vulnerabilities.*

### • Pedestrian infrastructure

*Are the sidewalks, signs, and seating options present and in good condition?*

*This is a basic need for users to be able to rest if they become fatigued - especially for the elderly, pregnant, or ill.*

### • Cosmopolitan features

*Are there seductive, leafy, and creative qualities to the streetscape and plinth?*

*This directly relates to creating an environment for the eye level and while also deeply considering human scale.*

### • Additional trigger words:

*crowdedness, width of sidewalks, protection from sun, wind, rain, snow and finally, fear of cars.*



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# Benefits

TO PRACTICE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN PUBLIC SPACE



# Benefits

## TO PRACTICE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN PUBLIC SPACE

As human settlements become increasingly more urban, our blueprint and inner physiological need for movement remains untouched. As lifestyles and jobs become more sedentary and digitally based, especially since #workfrom-home due to the pandemic, and also considering the increasingly more drastic social inequities facing our world, the ability to recreationally practise physical activity in our urban environments becomes more symbolic of our human “right to the city” and need for organisational systems that protect and motivate people’s access to high quality movement.

Multiple and countless benefits from physical activity contribute to mental, functional and social wellbeing.

*Did you know that physical activity and physical play in our built environment, across ages, cultures, and genders, has been shown to:*

- Widen mindset,
- Help problem solving abilities
- Boost creativity
- Support cognitive attention
- Relieve feelings of anxiety and depression
- Bring heart rate and physical stress back to baseline
- Manage heart and organ health, such as visceral fat or cholesterol levels

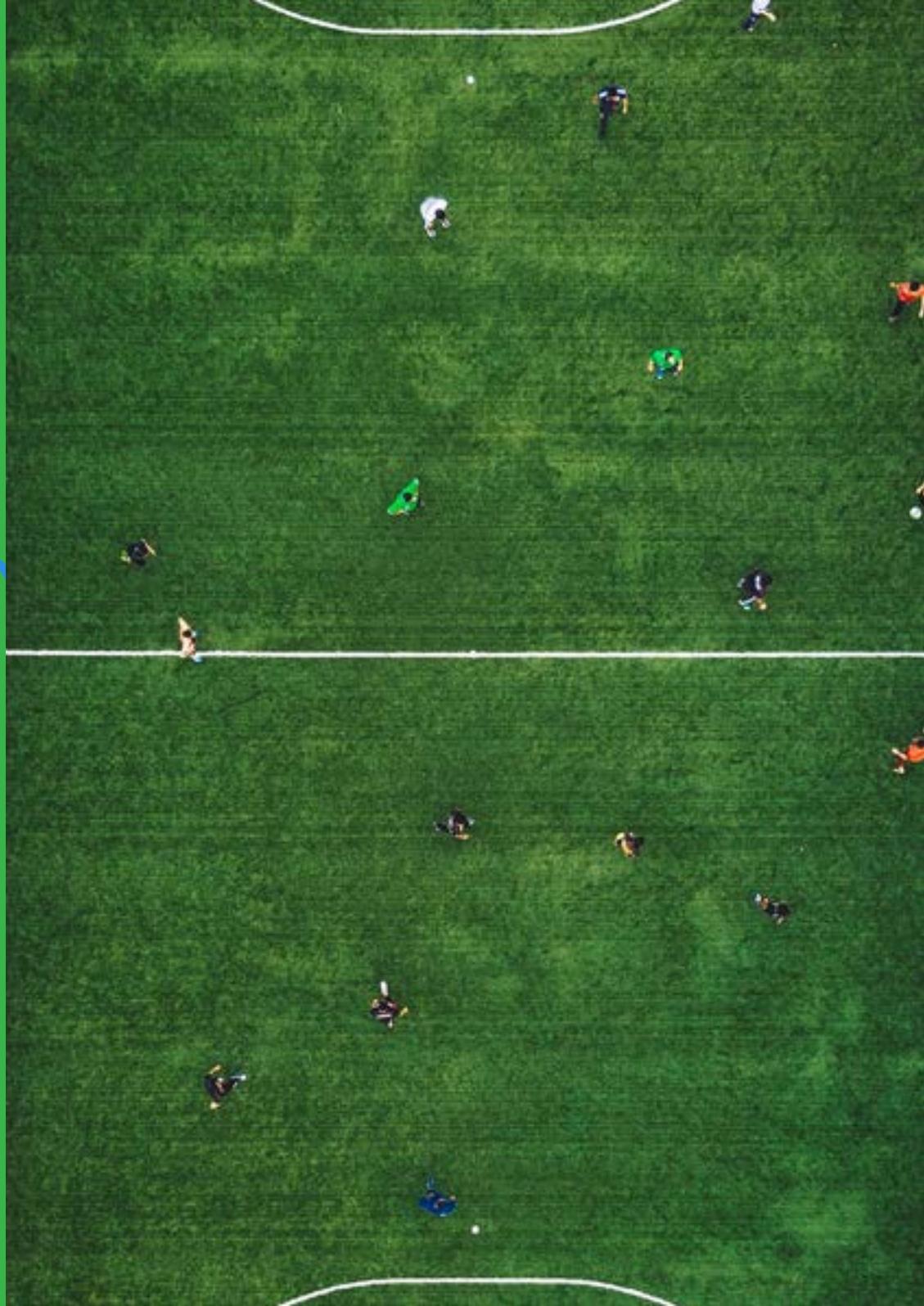
## Recommendations

Use community based social marketing methods to nudge your stakeholders. For example, tap into social norms, “We applaud this community and their work to take part in 20 minutes of physical activity per day”, and risk aversion messages, “by getting rid of X negative behaviour, you are saving yourself from Y negative consequence,” are highly effective to alter human behaviours.



# Correlations

PRACTISING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & EXPERIENCES  
IN PUBLIC SPACE



# Belonging & Embodied Movement

## CORRELATION

Intuitively, by physically being in an environment, a user is able to gain more stimulus and take in more characteristics about the surroundings. This could be recognising the building decorations of a storefront, admiring leafy trees overhead, or alternatively, alerting oneself to threat, such as harassment. Although an experience can vary from positive to negative (subjective to the user at hand), research suggests that the more routine and longer

*“...research suggests that the more routine and longer duration of time a person spends in a space, the more linked their identity becomes with the environment.”*

duration of time a person spends in a space, the more linked their identity becomes with the environment.

- 16** This can be seen with litter, trash, and maintenance behaviours, as well as with self report correlating a sense of belonging with using the space routinely for recreation. Research shows that when a community is emotionally connected to a space, they take care of it and litter trash less often. In our questionnaire surveys, users report a stronger sense of belonging when using a space for active recreation and movement. This is also supported in other studies on embodied movement in the public realm.

# Feelings of Agency & Sense of Inclusivity

## CORRELATION

Survey research shows a positive correlation between user's perception that they can use the public space for their own recreational needs and their perception that others are able to do so as well. This could indicate that users promote new social norms that motivate inclusivity by practising physical activity in public space, however, this could also mean those who practise physical activity are perhaps ignorant to the challenges and barriers that many face to be able to play outside safely without consequence.

Optimistically, we can interpret this that if people feel they are able to go out and use public space for movement, this means they also support their neighbour doing the same. As grassroots sport organisers and placemakers, we can use this result by tapping into existing 'sporters' local networks to invite those they know out to move in other programme events.

Pessimistically, we can interpret this that in general, only the privileged or ignorant practise physical activity in public space. As grassroots sport organisers and placemakers, we must critically consider who is missing from this resource and how we can support them to feel welcome and safe to appropriate space for their own physical activity needs. This can be achieved through in depth stakeholder mapping and spending time in the area to observe and get to know the surrounding communities.

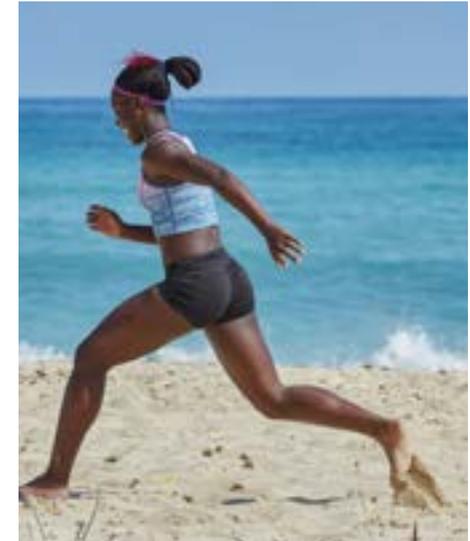
# Types of Sport

Interestingly, and perhaps not surprisingly, certain users often practise sports correlated to one another. Research finds that runners are more likely to also participate other individual and what are perceived as “intense” sports - in this instance, using a private gym

sport may directly overlap (a football pitch is almost always outdoors), this is not always the case for all types (tennis courts, basketball for example).

they are somewhat adaptive to other types of movement (positive correlations, although not all are significant).

Now, it is important to investigate and capture information on those who are averse to physical activity and understand this specific group’s trends.



*“...these correlations show the trends that we as sport and community organisers can tap into to strategise engaging target groups.”*

17 for training - but walkers are more likely to engage in what are perceived as “lighter” sports - in this instance, cycle outdoors.

Additionally, those who practise organised sport - such as football or basketball - are significantly likely to also practise physical activity outdoors and engage in strength training. While the location of organised

Overall, these correlations show the trends that we as sport and community organisers can tap into to strategise engaging target groups. And it also reveals that those who move their bodies - across types or public/private - are positively correlated with some other movement in one way or another; this means that most of the respondents do move their bodies, and that



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[team@placemaking-europe.eu](mailto:team@placemaking-europe.eu)

Sept 27 -30

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