

Participatory Design & Placemaking

Practice: Participatory Toolkit & Trust Radar

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Participatory Design Booklet

Designing Participatory Spaces:
Innovation in Placemaking and Capacity Building
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Foreword
By STPLN & Ankara Aks

This booklet captures the outcomes, reflections, and future directions of a year-long collaboration between STPLN (Malmö, Sweden) and Ankara Aks (Ankara, Türkiye), supported by the Swedish Institute's Creative Partnerships Program.

At its heart lies a shared belief: that cities become more livable, equitable, and inspiring when they are shaped together. Our work explores participatory design as a means of enabling such collaboration — not as a technical exercise, but as a cultural practice rooted in empathy, creativity, and collective imagination.

The project's title, *Designing Participatory Spaces: Innovation in Placemaking and Capacity Building*, points to two intertwined goals: developing new methodologies for civic engagement and strengthening capacities for social change through design. Throughout the year, we gathered designers, researchers, artists, and community members in both countries to experiment with participatory tools particularly our own method, *Dream It, Walk It, Order It and Trust Radar*, a playful, structured approach to community co-design.

This booklet is both a record and a provocation. It offers insights from our workshops in Malmö and Ankara, alongside reflections from our partners and contributors. Together, they form a mosaic of perspectives on how we can reimagine public space as a site for dialogue, trust, and shared authorship.

In spirit, this project aligns with the New European Bauhaus movement — integrating aesthetics, sustainability, and togetherness. Like NEB, it seeks to bridge art, technology, and community, offering creative and participatory responses to the challenges of our time.

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Introduction to the Toolkit

The Purpose of This Toolkit

This booklet is a practical guide for facilitating participatory design processes in public space, cultural, educational, and community contexts. It translates the methods developed during the Designing Participatory Spaces project into clear, repeatable steps that anyone can apply.

While Booklet 1 explores the theory and reflections behind participatory design and placemaking, Booklet 2 focuses on action. It is designed to help facilitators move from ideas to practice, from conversation to collective imagination, observation, decision-making, and trust-building.

At its core, this toolkit supports:

- Inclusive participation
- Shared authorship of space
- Dialogue across differences
- Creative civic engagement



How to Use This Toolkit

You may use this toolkit in different ways:

- As a full workshop sequence using all methods
- As a single activity (for example, just Dream It)
- As part of a longer urban or community project
- As an educational exercise in classrooms or studios

Each method stands alone, but together they form a complete participatory design cycle:

Who This Toolkit Is For

This toolkit is intended for:

- Teachers and students
- Municipal staff and planners
- NGOs and community organizers
- Designers, architects, artists
- Cultural institutions
- Informal neighborhood groups

No technical design knowledge is required. The most important skills are listening, curiosity, and care.

Method Overview

DREAM IT

Purpose

Dream It is an activity designed to unlock imagination and create a safe space for participants to express personal visions, desires, and emotional connections to a place. Rather than focusing on practical constraints or immediate solutions, this step invites participants to think freely about how a space could feel, function, or inspire in the future.

The activity encourages storytelling, speculation, and creative thinking. By giving participants the opportunity to speak, imagine, and listen to each other, Dream It helps build a shared emotional understanding of the place being discussed.

This stage is particularly important at the beginning of a participatory process because it shifts the conversation from problem-solving to possibility-making.

Materials Needed

- A small stage, rug, or clearly marked speaking area
- Chairs, benches, or cushions arranged in a semi-circle
- Prompt cards to inspire ideas
- Paper and markers for note-taking or drawing
- A large sheet, board, or wall for documenting ideas
- Optional microphone or small speaker (for larger groups)

The atmosphere should feel welcoming and informal, encouraging participants to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts.

Facilitation Steps

1. Welcome & Framing

Begin by explaining the purpose of the activity. Emphasize that there are no correct or incorrect ideas and that imagination is encouraged. The facilitator should create a supportive and open atmosphere.

2. Introduce Prompts

Present two or three prompts to inspire participants. Prompts should be open-ended and encourage reflection on feelings, experiences, and possibilities.

3. Sharing on Stage

Invite volunteers to step forward and share their ideas briefly. Each participant can speak for approximately 30–60 seconds, allowing many voices to be heard while maintaining a dynamic rhythm.

4. Collective Listening

Encourage the audience to listen actively and respectfully. Applause, nodding, or small gestures of encouragement help create a supportive environment where participants feel safe expressing ideas.

5. Documentation

As ideas emerge, facilitators document them visually by writing keywords, drawing simple sketches, or clustering ideas on a board or large sheet. This helps participants see their contributions becoming part of a shared vision.



Roles & Facilitation Tips

One facilitator hosts the session and maintains a welcoming tone

A second person documents ideas and keywords

Encourage participation gradually, beginning with volunteers and later inviting others

If the group is large, small group discussions can be used before speaking publicly

Facilitators should emphasize curiosity and appreciation rather than evaluation.

Example Prompts

“If this place had a voice, what would it say?”

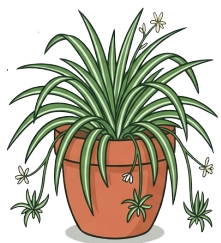
“What is missing here that would bring joy or comfort?”

“Imagine this place in 2050 — what happens here?”

“What kind of stories could unfold in this place?”

“What would make you want to spend more time here?”

These prompts help participants reflect on both emotional experiences and imaginative futures.



Outputs Expected

A collection of visions, ideas, and keywords related to the place

Emotional themes that reveal how participants perceive the space

A stronger connection between participants and the environment

Initial inspiration that can feed into the following steps of the process

The results of Dream It often serve as the **creative foundation** for later activities such as Walk It and Order It.

Troubleshooting

If participants feel hesitant or shy:

Begin with small pair or group conversations before speaking publicly

Allow participants to write or draw ideas instead of speaking

Share an example yourself to model openness

Encourage collective responses (for example raising hands or voting)

The goal is to create a space where participants feel comfortable exploring ideas without fear of judgment.



WALK IT

Purpose

Walk It is intended for people who move through a space and do not have the time to participate in an exercise that will take them too long. It ensures ease in explaining ideas and adding input by allowing participants to have the freedom to practice idea creation on their own.

In Walk It, rather than discussing a space from a distance, participants examine it and engage with its qualities. Through this method, participants begin to notice not only what exists in a place, but also what is missing, what could change, and what should be preserved.

Facilitation Steps

1. Gather

Gather around a wall or a panel of a large printed map.

2. Prepare Panel

Place notes, sketches, and photos onto the map or board.

3. Ask Questions

Ask participants to briefly explain their observations.

4. Identify

Identify patterns and repeated concerns that appear across different groups.

4. Highlight

Highlight opportunities for improvement, intervention, or further exploration.

This synthesis stage helps transform individual observations into collective knowledge about the space.

Mapping Tools

Participants document their observations in simple and accessible ways.

- Sketching spatial elements or experiences
- Writing short observations or keywords
- Pinning sticky notes directly onto the printed map
- Taking photos of important moments, details, or problems
- Marking routes or points of interest

Encourage participants to focus on experiences rather than technical analysis.

Example Mapping Categories

To guide observation, facilitators can provide thematic categories such as:

- A place I love or enjoy spending time in
- A place that feels unsafe or uncomfortable
- A place full of potential for change or improvement
- A place where people naturally gather
- A hidden or overlooked detail
- Something missing here

These prompts help participants reflect on both emotional and spatial qualities.





ORDER IT

Purpose

Order It helps participants move from imagination and observation toward prioritization and decision-making.

Using a playful and familiar metaphor, the activity transforms the process of prioritizing ideas into a collaborative exercise. Instead of voting in a formal or hierarchical way, participants “order” their desired changes as if they were choosing items from a menu. This encourages discussion, negotiation, and collective reflection while keeping the atmosphere open and creative.

The goal is not to reach a single perfect solution, but to reveal shared priorities, recurring needs, and collective aspirations.

The Menu Metaphor

Participants imagine the future of a place as a menu of possibilities.

Different types of changes are categorized as menu items:

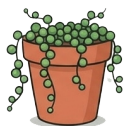
Starters – small, quick improvements that can activate the space immediately

Mains – larger transformations that require planning, resources, or collaboration

Desserts – joyful or playful additions that make the space memorable

Drinks – elements that shape the atmosphere, mood, or social interaction

This metaphor helps participants think about both practical interventions and experiential qualities of space.



Facilitation Steps

1. Introduce the Menu Concept

The facilitator explains the metaphor and the different categories.

2. Distribute Menu Sheets

Each participant or group receives a menu template where they can write their ideas.

3. Participants Fill in Their Orders

Participants reflect on the previous activities and write their preferred interventions.

4. Collect and Share Orders

Some participants are invited to read their “orders” aloud, encouraging dialogue.

5. Group Similar Ideas

Facilitators cluster similar suggestions together on a board or wall.

6. Discuss Priorities

The group reflects on recurring themes and discusses which ideas resonate most strongly.

Templates

The following materials support the activity:

Menu sheets for individual or group use

Order slips that participants can submit anonymously

An idea clustering board or wall where suggestions can be grouped visually

These tools help transform individual contributions into a collective overview.

Turning Orders into Action

The final step is to translate ideas into possible directions for future action.

Facilitators can guide this process by:

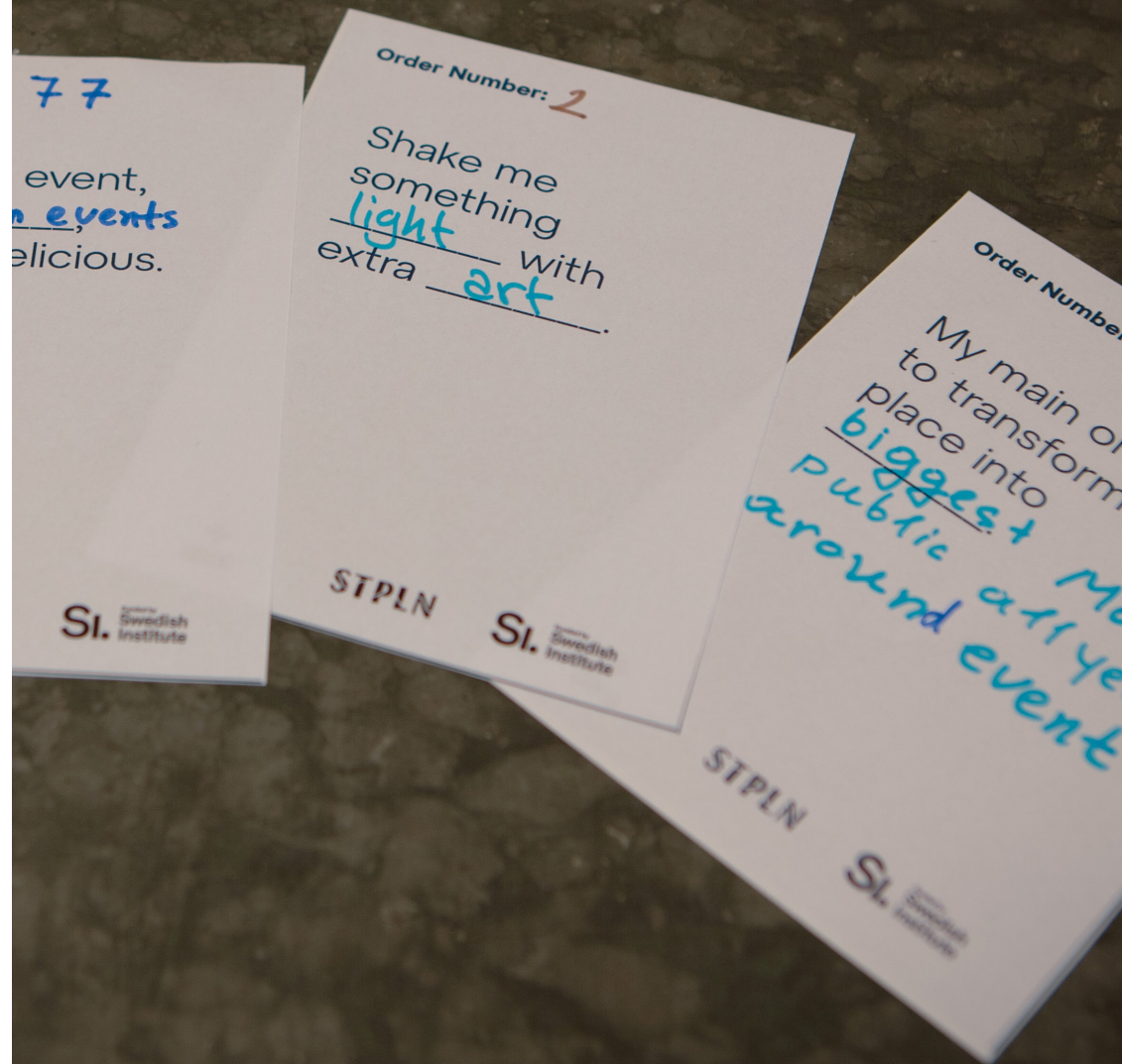
- Identifying recurring ideas that appear across different menus

- Grouping suggestions into thematic categories (for example: social, spatial, ecological, cultural)

- Highlighting ideas that could be implemented quickly versus those requiring long-term planning

- Discussing potential actors or stakeholders who could support implementation

This stage connects participatory imagination with practical next steps, helping participants see how their ideas might influence real change.





STPLN

A HUB FOR INDEPENDANT CREATORS & ARTISTS.

A CO-CREATED SPACE TO FLY HIGH & LAND SOFT.

- WORKSPACES
- EVENT SPACES
- COMMUNITY MEETUPS
- LECTURES & WORKSHOPS

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR DISCRIMINATORY BEHAVIOR.

Case Studies

Malmö

A two-day public event where the toolkit was tested in cultural and civic space. Playfulness increased accessibility and participation.

Ankara

Workshops combined participatory design with Trust Radar to deepen dialogue on collaboration and shared responsibility.

Adapting the Method

- Scale activities to group size
- Adapt prompts culturally
- Use indoor or outdoor environments

Combining Tools

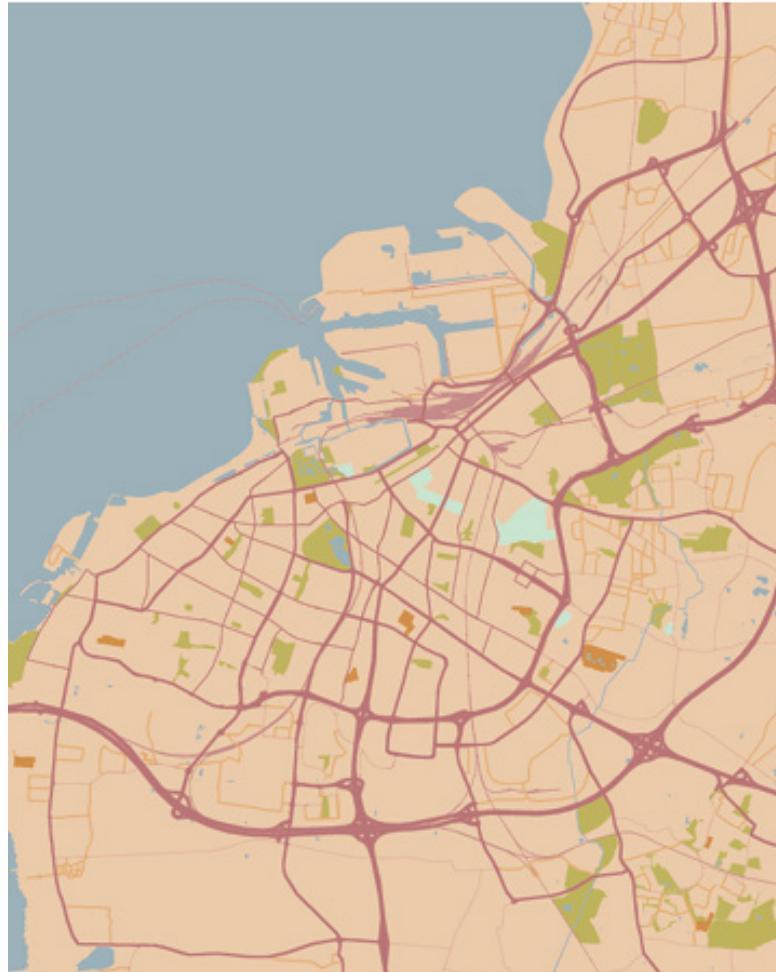
Dream It - Walk It - Order It creates a full design cycle. Trust Radar strengthens the group before or after.

Scaling Up

- The toolkit can inform:
- Urban design processes
 - Community-led initiatives
 - Cultural programming
 - Policy co-creation

Participation is not a single event, it is a continuous practice of care, dialogue, and shared imagination.





Malmö, Sweden

Needs Analysis

The Malmö phase began with a joint exploratory process to identify potential urban environments suited for participatory prototyping. The STPLN team developed site-selection criteria prioritizing accessibility, social diversity, openness to community activation, and proximity to civic infrastructure. Based on these conditions, the area surrounding STPLN was selected as a testbed for participatory design interventions.

A contextual mapping process followed, charting local cultural ecosystems and networks — including community initiatives, creative labs, public institutions, and grassroots movements. This research aimed to understand where democratic dialogues about urban life were already emerging and to identify gaps where new tools and practices gathered could strengthen civic participation. A parallel needs and risk analysis gathered insight into social dynamics, spatial challenges, and opportunities for engaged cultural practice in Malmö.

Implementation

In August 2025, Malmö hosted a two-day participatory design program that brought together designers, artists, architects, educators, and active citizens, alongside the visiting Aks team from Türkiye. The event combined workshops, community walks, public presentations, and a panel discussion, transforming the space around STPLN into a collaborative learning environment.

Three experimental stations — Dream It, Walk It, Order It — acted as micro-laboratories for testing participatory methods. Each offered playful, tactile modes of engagement, using maps, prompts, visual markers, and scenographic tools to activate imagination and dialogue. The approach encouraged spontaneous participation, lowering access barriers and inviting contributors of varied backgrounds and abilities.

↑ beginning of theatre outside (parking lot?) to connect places through movement.

"inside" castle: ~~stage~~ outdoor stage for theatre

Today STPLN is an isolated spot or just a passing point.

flamenco music stage

Wir waren hier - Größe aus Deutschesland -

Public ping-pong tables are great but Malin is windy so they might not get much use. I'd love to see this get solved.

open up towards the water!! There is a big block towards the area across the canal. (PARKING AREA)

a farmers Market

CEMETERY

GRILLPLATS

I want to see "surprise" space!

Today STPLN is an isolated spot or just a passing point.

open up towards the water!! There is a big block towards the area across the canal. (PARKING AREA)

Public ping-pong tables are great but Malin is windy so they might not get much use. I'd love to see this get solved.

It looks like a place for horses! 😊

When I saw the STPLN for first time I curious about inside.

Bench

↑ beginning of theatre outside (parking lot?) to connect places through movement.

"inside" castle: ~~stage~~ outdoor stage for theatre

connect / reflect outside / inside } the castle + water

It would be cool to have art installations you can interact with.

Speakers for public use
People can spontaneously connect and listen to music and dance.

A complete outside gym that could attract people to do sport, meet, exchange ideas and create culture.

↑
It's really nice but feels you might miss it unless you go off the main path

FLOW!!
Increase the flow direction around street

TRAILS
(not not authorised?)

STOP!
(no access)

WILDLIFE
"DESIGNED"

More sitting areas and art by the water - good balance of nature and art

TRACES
(previous life & use)



Order Number: 15

Why not just do nothing?
(But anyone are allowed to do anything)

+ aKS STPLN Si. Swedish Institute

Order Number: 11

Sprinkle some music on this space, especially bridges.

+ aKS STPLN Si. Swedish Institute

Order Number: 27

Sprinkle some music on this space, especially the park
↳ Pildammsparken

+ aKS STPLN Si. Swedish Institute

Order Number: 29

Mix one part of art objects with two parts _____ and a dash of _____.

Sign - sign to welcome people in
e.g. coffee or glogg & info-cho + big sign.
- welcoming people to school
- welcoming people to open up + mingle

+ aKS STPLN Si. Swedish Institute

Order Number: 22

Can I order better lighting at The tree!?
Outside

+ aKS STPLN Si. Swedish Institute

Order Number: 2

• Attract people from the universities, have information at the universities about the space, about the events
• Creative associations, have info. about the space and events at the associations

+ aKS STPLN Si. Swedish Institute

Order Number: 13

My main order is to transform this place into a "SIDE" WHEN WALKING ALONG THE CANAL - MIKROINIKEN THE OPPOSITE SIDE, BUT WITH ITS OWN "PARKSIDE" TOUCH.
(alt. route to road + bike lanes between STPLN + Museum)

+ aKS STPLN Si. Swedish Institute

Order Number: 1

More art (and better walkways) to observe when walking - create people with better mood :)

+ aKS STPLN Si. Swedish Institute

Order Number: 8

I'll take a skatepark, plus Makerspace please.

+ aKS STPLN Si. Swedish Institute

Order Number: 39

I'd like a space where different people come together to connect over public art
welcoming people w/ kids; and everyone

+ aKS STPLN Si. Swedish Institute

Order Number: 24

I'll have one extra bench with a side of a table & space / surface for people to connect

+ aKS STPLN Si. Swedish Institute

Order Number: 25

I'll have one extra bench with a side of participation & openness and shelter from wind/rain/sun/cold/heat

+ aKS STPLN Si. Swedish Institute

Order Number: 42

At the tree doors, a hanging
signe with info and name.
Info: For who?
Cost?
To connect people?
→ ~~the less info~~
Needs a hook!

+ STPLN SI. Swedish Institute

Order Number: 28

Mix one part
Signes with two
parts historic info and
a dash of
Entertainment
x scene for theater, music,
poetry battles

+ STPLN SI. Swedish Institute

Order Number:

I'd like a creative
outdoor / indoor space
w/ open stage for
artists / poets / ...

+ STPLN SI. Swedish Institute

Order Number: 1

Malmö stads kalender!
• When events are booked here
they should be announced at
the Malmö Stads Kalender.
• Many people love creativity
and would come if it's
announced at relevant places.

+ STPLN SI. Swedish Institute

Order Number: 32

One small upgrade
that would make
my day here is
Big "signes" that bring
people in. Feels a bit
closed off → For certain
people, but not me.

+ STPLN SI. Swedish Institute

Order Number: 37

I'd like a full plate
of public art, plus
community gathering or
networking event.

+ STPLN SI. Swedish Institute







Community Insights

The Malmö phase highlighted a central insight: trust is the foundation of participation. Meaningful civic engagement does not emerge from instruction or formality, but from listening, shared experiences, and acts of mutual care. Small gestures — walking together, sketching ideas, or verbally imagining futures — created powerful moments of connection and fostered a sense of collective ownership over public space. This process affirmed that building relationships is the first step in building democratic cities.

These learnings directly support the project's target group, cultural and creative professionals such as designers, architects, artists, and urban practitioners in Sweden and Türkiye — who play a crucial role in shaping public life and advancing democratic values. By strengthening their participatory skills, reflective capacity, and community-oriented design methods, the project empowers them to champion inclusive practices, amplify underrepresented voices, and create environments where residents feel seen and involved.

To deepen this learning, a curated panel brought together practitioners whose work exemplifies socially driven urban and cultural transformation:

Kayenna Kirchhoff Holst explores community agency and spatial democracy through collaborative architecture and public engagement.

Jenny Grettve advances systems-level cultural innovation, highlighting care and creativity as tools for societal transformation.

Abbas Sbeity activates place-based cultural programming and participatory research to build community-rooted cultural spaces.

Zeynep Ünsal bridges architecture, sustainability, and civic participation through transdisciplinary placemaking initiatives.

Together with participants, the panel explored how trust-building, co-creation, and cultural leadership can reshape cities from the ground up. The discussion served as a living model of the strategies and values this project aims to cultivate.



Ankara, Türkiye

Urban & Cultural Context

Ankara, as Türkiye's capital, embodies a complex relationship between history, governance, and civic identity. Its cultural landscape reflects both formal planning traditions and emerging grassroots creativity.

The Ankara phase builds on these dynamics, bringing together academics, designers, and community actors for a discussion to support participatory transformation in local contexts.

Open Lecture

With the open lecture "Where Are We at the Ladder?", Assist. Prof. Dr. Duygu Cihanger Ribeiro led the participants through an insightful discussion on citizen participation. The participants explored the Ladder of Citizen Participation and saw how Lisbon and Turkey compare in shaping inclusive, participatory cities.

Workshop Journey

The Ankara event also featured Trusting the City – Building Connection Through Participation, a workshop developed by STPLN that explores how trust can be measured, built, and sustained in collaborative urban projects.

The workshop extends the project's participatory toolkit by addressing questions of social resilience, cooperation, and collective responsibility in city-making. During the session, participants tested Trust Radar – A Tool for Building Trust, a structured method for reflecting on how trust is perceived and experienced among different stakeholders in socially engaged, cross-sectoral, and creative processes.

Trust Radar helped participants identify trust levels across six core dimensions and facilitates dialogue around alignment, expectations, and areas for improvement. Rooted in Nordic principles of transparency, inclusion, and mutual recognition, the tool can be applied at various phases of a project – from initial planning to mid-point reflection and final evaluation.

Through individual reflection, collective mapping, and guided discussion, the workshop supported participants in understanding trust as a foundational component of effective collaboration and resilient communities.

**Designing Participatory Spaces:
Innovation in Placemaking and Capacity Building**

**OPEN LECTURE |
Where Are We
at the Ladder?**

5 Nov. 2025, 14.00
UNITE
Çankaya, Cinnah Cd.
No: 7A, Ankara, Turkey 06680

Duygu Cihanger Ribeiro
Asst. Prof. Dr. City and Regional Planning
Faculty of Architecture
Middle East Technical University

Open to all participants.



**Designing Participatory Spaces:
Innovation in Placemaking and Capacity Building**

**WORKSHOP |
Trusting the City
Building Connection
Through Participation**

5 Nov. 2025, 14.00
UNITE
Çankaya, Cinnah Cd.
No: 7A, Ankara, Turkey 06680

**Farhia Nur
Sanna Lille
Enes Musa**
STPLN
Malmö, Sweden

Open to all participants.



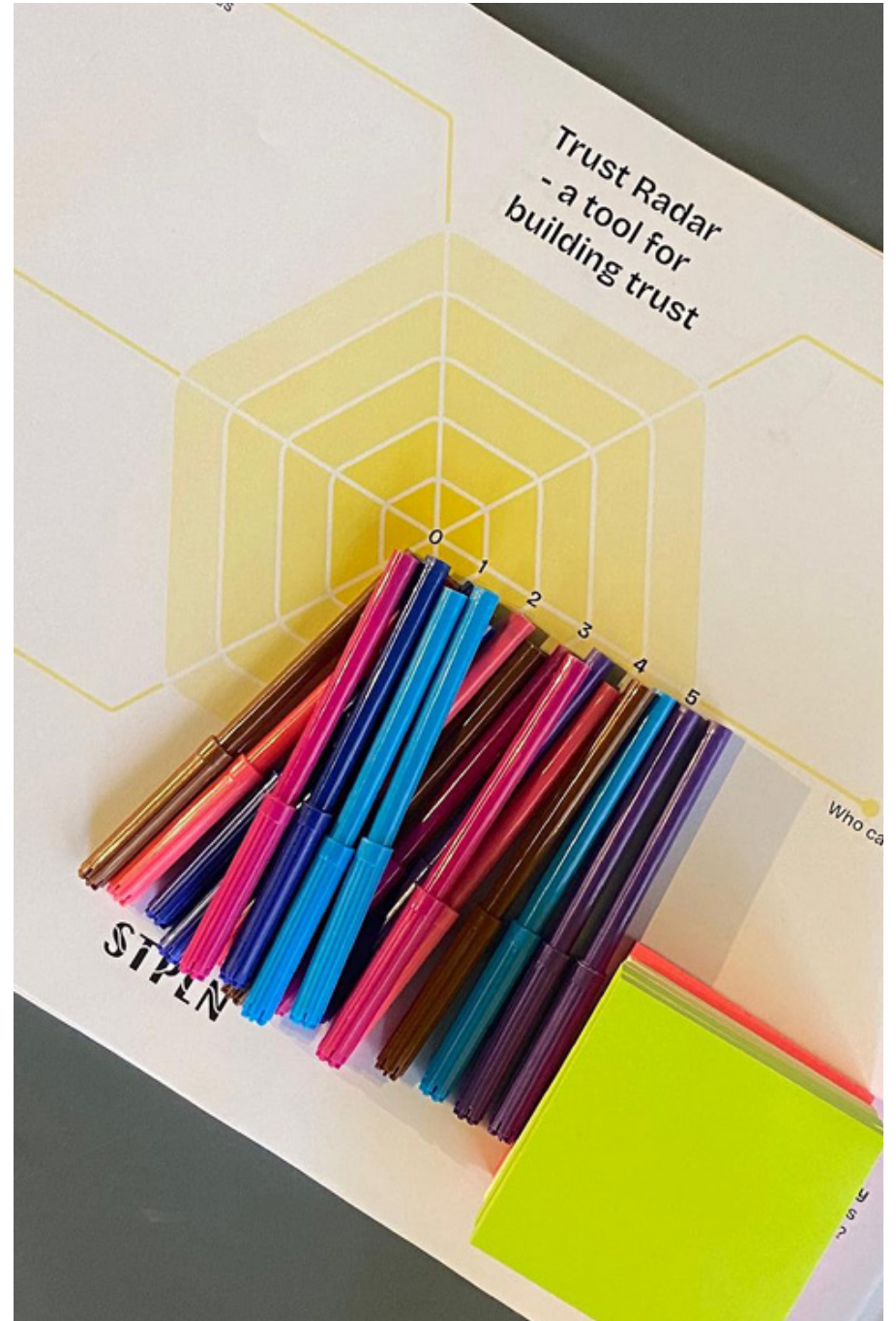

Outcomes

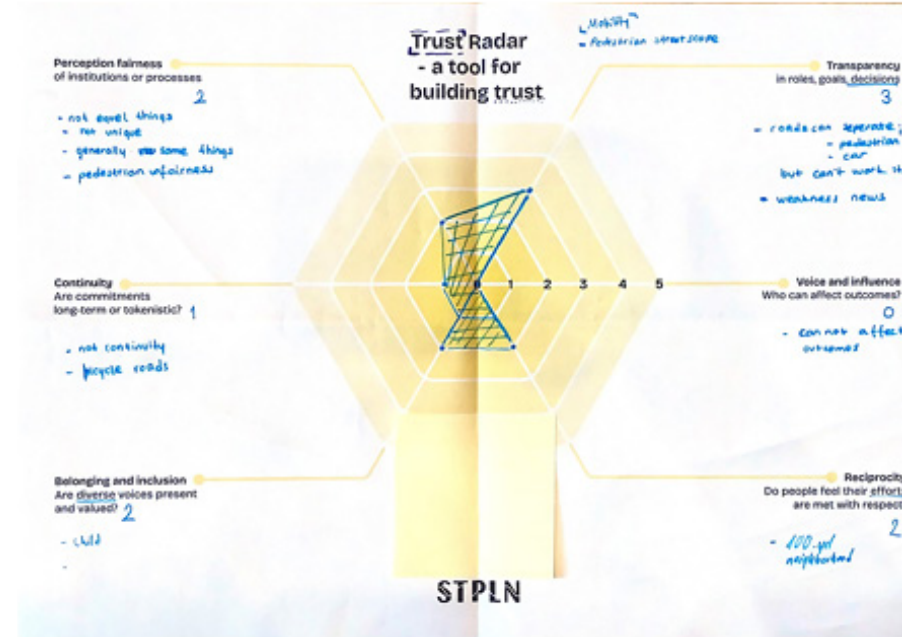
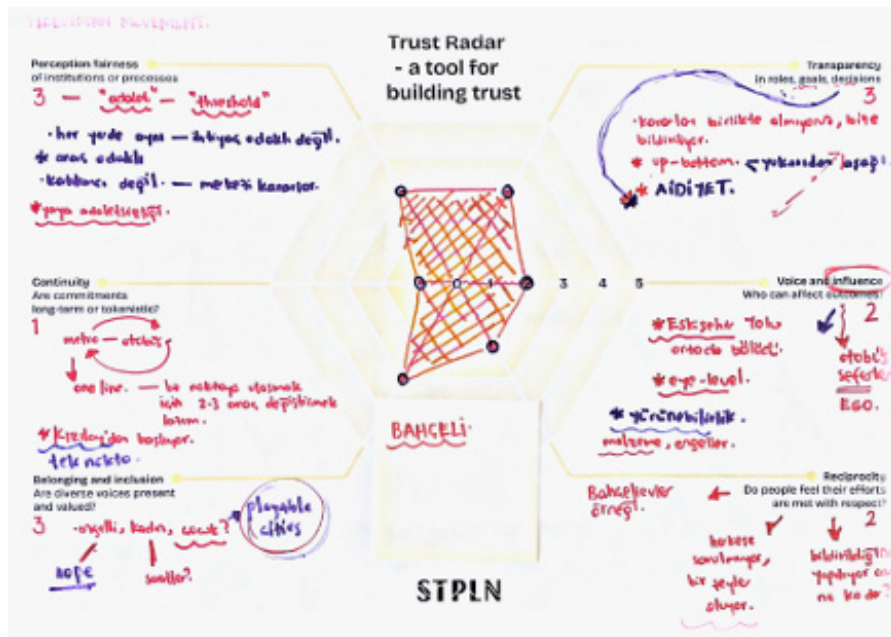
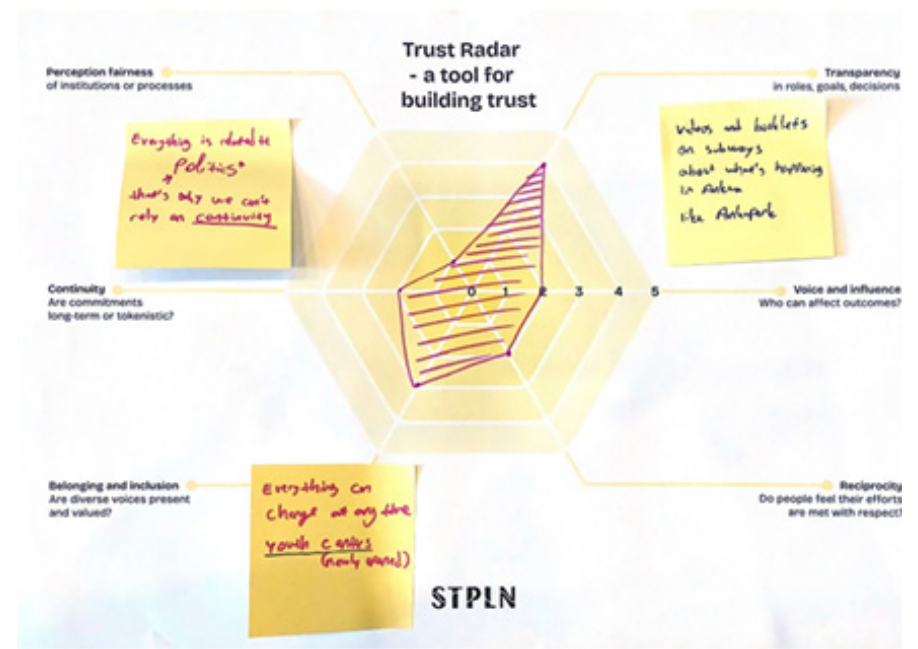
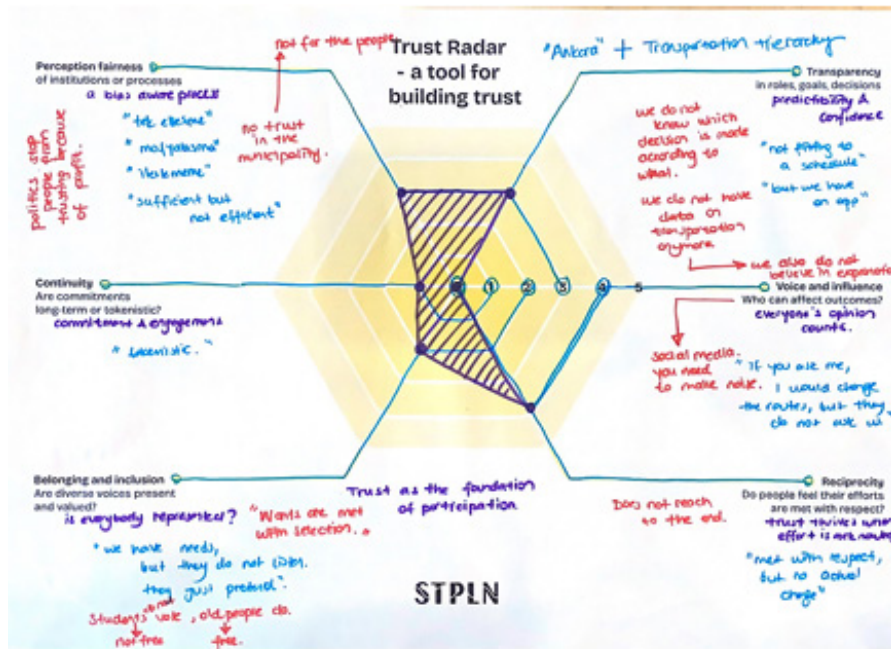
Together, the Malmö and Ankara phases form a cyclical learning process, bridging theory and practice, North and South, method and reflection.

Through this two-city exchange, participants experiment with tools, test assumptions, and co-develop new approaches to cultivating trust and participation in urban processes. Insights gained from both contexts will create a richer, more adaptable knowledge base.

The results will feed into future iterations of the Participatory Design Toolkit and deepen cross-sector collaboration between cultural actors, municipalities, universities, and civil society in both countries. In the long term, this shared learning aims to strengthen participatory urban development practices and foster new models of cooperation and social resilience.







Trusting the City – Building Connection Through Participation

Exploring how trust shapes belonging, collaboration and transformation in the city

Essay by Enes Musa

Organizers / Facilitators

Organised by; STPLN, Malmö, Sweden & **Ankara Aks**, Ankara, Türkiye

Facilitated by; Enes Musa (STPLN)

With support from Sanna Lilie (STPLN), Dilara Güney and Naz Şerife Özcan-Cengiz (Ankara Aks)

The workshop was part of the project Designing Participatory Spaces: Innovation in Placemaking and Capacity Building funded by The Swedish Institute.

Objective

The goal of the workshop was to introduce the social phenomena ‘trust’ as a foundational aspect of fostering participation in processes dealing with urban development at a human and individual scale, and participatory design. The vehicle for this was pilot testing of a participatory tool designed to map and build civic resilience – the ‘Trust Radar’.

Aims

- Explore how people relate to their city through the lens of trust
- Reflect on how trust influences participation and collaboration
- Co-create ideas for more connected and inclusive urban environments

Expected outcomes

- Deeper understanding of trust in participatory processes
- Insights into how trust builds belonging in the city
- Shared ideas for collaboration, openness, and engagement
- A sense of connection between people, process, and place

Context and Systemic Intent

The “Trusting the City” workshop was conducted in Ankara in collaboration with the Aks Creative Hub, aiming to pilot a participatory tool designed to map and build civic resilience. Differing from a standard placemaking exercise, the workshop was conceptualized as an intervention into the urban system’s “deep” leverage points - the social phenomena trust. According to Meadows (1999), the most potent places to intervene in a system are the mindsets and paradigms from which it arises. By focusing on trust—an often invisible but foundational social infrastructure – the Trust Radar served as a visual diagnostic that made these invisible sentiments tangible, allowing participants to identify the specific gaps and misalignments that hinder collective action (Abson et al., 2017).

The Practice of Urban Commoning

The workshop’s structure moved participants through three levels of reflection: individual, group, and community mapping. This progression operationalized the concept of urban commoning, which Stavrides (2016) defines not as the management of a static resource, but as an ongoing social process of establishing shared agency through the negotiation of difference. This was vividly illustrated by the workshop’s dual-language environment. Navigating the nuances of trust between English and Turkish required a form of “productive friction,” where the effort to understand one another became an act of relational care. Supported by the Aks crew, participants transitioned from “othering” to “understanding,” performing what Singh (2013) refers to as affective labor – intertwining people’s sense-of-self and their environment.

Refinement and Future Application

The Ankara pilot has directly informed the next phase of development for the “Trust Radar”. To stabilize the efficiency and potential of the tool, future iterations will feature expanded printouts with explicit step-by-step guides and visual examples to reduce cognitive load during high-intensity mapping phases. Furthermore, the inclusion of structured icebreakers will be prioritized not as a social courtesy, but as a methodological necessity to curate a sustainable atmosphere – to establish immediate rapport and a tactic to diminish the dynamic of workshop facilitators as experts and participants as passive informants. These refinements ensure the tool is robust enough for use across various stages of participatory design, from the radical “idea space” of initial brainstorming to the evaluative stages of user engagement.

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participatory design booklet

Designing Participatory Spaces:
Innovation in Placemaking and Capacity Building

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This booklet reflects a collective effort—and a shared belief that public spaces are strongest, most inclusive, and most meaningful when they are created together.



How can we dream, walk, and design together?

The Participatory Design Booklet reflects a year of collaboration between STPLN (Sweden) and Ankara Aks (Turkiye) supported by the Swedish Institute.

It introduces Dream It, Walk It, Order It and the Trust Radar, a playful yet practical method for collective imagination and community action in public spaces. Bridging art, design, and dialogue, the booklet embodies the spirit of creating together, offering essays, case studies, and creative tools that turn participation into tangible change.

A guide, a reflection, and an invitation to design the future collaboratively.



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