



LEARNING & MEDIATING - learning how to improve the environmental quality of public abandoned spaces in the city through an interdisciplinary & participated approach

(Resource ID: 275)

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This teaching resource is allocated to following University:

U_POLIS - POLIS University

Institution:

POLIS Univeristy

<http://www.sustainicum.at/en/modules/view/275.LEARNING-MEDIATING-learning-how-to-improve-the-environmental-quality-of-public-abandoned-spaces-in-the-city-through-an-interdisciplinary-participated-approach>



Group work



5 to 10 students



up to 1 semester



English, Shqip

Please note: module with excess length - more than 7 lecture units required!



Introduction of a new approach to the Urban Landscape Design Studio that offers a more practical and realistic method to strengthen the learning effect of the students in terms of

responding to environmental, social, managerial and economic aspects of the landscape projects in complex and fast growing urban environments. The new learning material and related methods will focus on Instructing students on sustainable practices and on a sustainable approach towards abandoned and underutilized urban green spaces in the city, while promoting cooperation between private stakeholders, local government, local community and NGO's. The proposed method will help the students discover and evaluate the best implementable strategies to regenerate abandoned and underutilized areas of the public realm.

The teaching resource will make use of a series of new teaching methods that will improve the engagement of the students with the landscape project as they will be experiencing a real life problem and relating to different clients/subjects, having to act as mediators among them, and they will be required to find compromises between the needs and priorities of multiple subjects.

The main aim of the guidelines is to offer best practice examples of how to improve the environmental quality and the energy efficiency of in between and abandoned spaces in the city by operating permanent/semi-permanent or temporary interventions that benefit the environment and the community. The students will interact with the real life actors and work on a concrete project promoted by the Municipality or by a private business. By promoting the cooperation with private stakeholders, who can invest in renovation and extension projects, private investments and projects can contribute to the community and the environment

In the first stage (2 hrs. lecture) the students will be instructed on the concrete case study of an abandoned or neglected area - private or public - (Annex 6 - CASE STUDY EXAMPLES); they will be informed about the climatic, biophysical, legal and social context. At the end of the lecture they will receive handouts in the form of a pdf summary description report and digital drawings of the area. The first phase will be concluded with a site visit and some fieldwork to collect additional information on the site.

In the second stage (approx. 5 hrs.) the students will be divided into 4 groups (5-10 students per group), each group will represents one of the stakeholders involved in the project:

Private stakeholder (ex. Owner of a commercial activity close to the project area) meet with the stakeholders

Local authority member (representing standards and regulations and public interest)

Local Non-Governmental Organization representative (organized around specific issues relevant to the project such as, environment or health.

Residents (individual or organized in a consortium)

Each group of students will meet with the stakeholder they represent and gather information about the needs and the requirements of the respective stakeholder. At the end of the meeting they will discuss and elaborate a list of priorities based on the ones highlighted during the meeting with the stakeholder. The priorities will be grouped under the headings: Environmental – Functional – Economic – Aesthetic. (Annex 2 - PRIORITIES TABLE_template)

The next step will be sharing the list of design priorities and the information with the other groups. This will be done in class through a group presentation and a discussion/comparison of the list of priorities (approx. 3 hours). This open discussion will expose the groups to other points of view and make them start evaluating the complexity and conflicts of interest in design issues and sustainability.

At the end of the Phase 3 session the students will define a list of objectives, a list of performance requirements and provide recommendations and design strategies for a sustainable landscape project (Annex 3 - PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS-OBJECTIVES-RECOMMENDATIONS_LIST).

The rest of the term (approx. 4 weeks of class) will be dedicated to the development of concept Projects with the definition of multiple options in terms of vegetation cover, paving systems, furniture elements and materials. The project will also include a cost estimate and a report on how the project will be built and maintained (assigning also the responsibility of maintenance), where the materials come from etc. Since it will be a temporary intervention the report should also explain how the structures will be eventually disassembled and the materials reused or recycled (Annex 5 - DRAWINGS LAYOUT_explanation). During this stage the students will receive a *manual with guidelines for temporary landscape interventions* [\[1\]](#), with a set of general indications and case studies [\[2\]](#). The students will also need to comply with the Local Policy Framework.

At the end of the term the students will present the proposals on the project site where all the stakeholders will be invited to participate and vote for their favourite option. A round table will follow up where all the subjects will interact with the project and express their opinion. (Annex 4 -

The most successful project might be implemented and become a pilot project that will serve to perfect and classify design guidelines for similar interventions in the future.

[1] **DESIGN GUIDELINES/MANUAL** for the students will be elaborated and adapted to the Local Policy Framework (an example can be found at <http://pavementtoparks.sfplanning.org/parklets.html#parkletmanual> - Copyright: Pavement to Parks, City of San Francisco)

[2] Case studies and examples: Pavement to Parks, City of San Francisco: <http://pavementtoparks.sfplanning.org/index.html>

Teaching Tools & Methods



Excursion Mini-project Written material

Integration of Social Stakeholders

The stakeholders will be integrated in the teaching resource process in multiple ways depending on their societal role. In more general terms the stakeholders will be involved in different ways and different phases of the process: they will be involved during the preparation phase of the course module and informed of the procedures and the schedule of meetings and presentations; secondly they will meet with the students to discuss needs and the requirements for the project and exchange ideas contributing to the definition for the main design requirements and strategies; finally they will be invited to take part in the final phase of the module, at a public presentation on the project site where students will describe their proposals and they will be asked to vote for their favorite option. At the end of this phase the stakeholders will take part in the round table where all the subjects will interact with the project and express their opinion. In the cases where the project is implemented some of the stakeholders (depending on the case) can be directly involved in the development of the extension or renovation project.

In terms of benefits for the stakeholders they will vary for each stakeholder involved:

- Private stakeholders like owners of commercial activities in the area will have the possibility to receive assistance in the design and implementation of the project and will have an easier communication with local authorities. They will receive external, fresh and creative perspectives on their activities by the students and recommendations about their sustainability management processes.
- Local authorities will benefit from the possibility of developing and improving standards and regulations learning from the practical case study.
- Local Non-Governmental Organizations will actively contribute in their field of interest and expertise.
- Residents will be able to contribute to the process and influence the decisions and by doing so they can guarantee that their needs too are met.

Strength

- Active and practical learning experience for students
- Mutual learning for students and societal stakeholders
- Community and municipality will benefit from the implementation a concrete project that improves the comfort and the sustainability of public/private outdoor spaces in the city
- Students learn to develop a sustainable project for an outdoor space
- Private Stakeholders benefit from the design assistance received and operate within the legislative framework
- Strong transdisciplinary approach

Weakness

- Coordination between private stakeholders, Planning Department, Department of Public Works and community might cause some delays
- Private stakeholders must agree to invest money in the regeneration projects;
- In terms of teaching material, it might require time and resources to put together the design guidelines and to collect enough explicative case studies
- Best practice examples will need to be analyzed in order to define a general set of guidelines that will be adapted to the local climatic, legal and social context.
- Deep knowledge of the planning regulations is needed

Learning Outcomes

- Students can apply the knowledge they learn in school to concrete projects and acquire skills that they will apply in their professional career.
- Students learn to collaborate with stakeholders and appreciate different fields of expertise; they learn to plan, assess, reflect and cope with societally relevant, complex real problems.
- Businesses are provided with practical support in relation to the design and construction of outdoor extensions to their activities and to operate temporarily in public spaces.
- Businesses contribute to the regeneration of intermediate and /or underutilized areas of the city and they do it legally and guaranteeing the environmental sustainability of the new project.
- The pilot projects could become best practice examples for similar interventions in the future.
- Local authorities/municipalities have the possibility to temporarily test new ideas in the public realm.
- Capacity building for stakeholders and future professionals (students)
- Residents will acquire environmental awareness and knowledge on issues related to outdoor spaces and this could also affect their personal attitude toward the environment; if they feel more responsible for it they can help managing common spaces.

Relevance for Sustainability

- Implementation of sustainable public open spaces in the urban context
- Increase in green/permeable surfaces in the city
- Use of sustainable materials and local vegetation in the landscaping and paving project
- Reuse of materials and equipment
- Integration of passive and active energy efficient techniques in outdoor spaces
- Financial sustainability: low-cost regeneration of intermediate and/or underutilized public spaces at the expense of private businesses.

Related Teaching Resources

Specific previous knowledge required: the students need to have architectural drawing skills and to have knowledge about outdoor landscape design and bioclimatic and environmental analysis. They will acquire the above mentioned skills and the information in the pdf handouts delivered at the beginning of the teaching module (containing a description the climatic, biophysical, legal and social context) and during regular lectures; in the design phase they will also receive guidance and support by instructors and through the design guidelines (overview of the

design standards) and case study presentations.

Preparation Efforts

High

Preparation Efforts Description

-Identify a concrete project where there is an actual demand for a design service where it is possible to work with local communities and/or private businesses to temporarily test new ideas in the public realm. -In depth study of local building regulations and meeting with Planning Department, Department of Public Works: 6 hours; -Analysis of case studies around the world: 20 hours; -Compiling the guidelines: 20 hours; -The meetings/visits/surveys to identify a set of possible pilot project sites: identification of suitable private stakeholders that are seeking to improve the outdoor space in front of their store and are willing to implement an open space regeneration project; they should provide a list of requirements and must be open for cooperation with students: 40 hours; - Preparation for the lecturer and handouts: 10 hours.

Access

Free

Assessment

Yes

Case study teaching can be assessed through multiple assignments, such as presentations, project reports, or contributions to discussions. Following questions will be of relevance:

- Have students understood the case challenges?
- Are students able to apply their learning?
- Are students actively engaged in team work and can they successfully contribute to the decision-making?

Credit/Certification Description

If students have successfully passed the assessment in this module they gain credits recognized under the Module Name Sustainable Urban Landscape Design

Sources and Links

Case studies and examples of design guidelines: Pavement to Parks, City of San Francisco: <http://pavementtoparks.sfplanning.org/index.html>

Attachments:

Annex 2 - PRIORITIES TABLE_template (for the first meeting between students and Stakeholders).

learning&mediating_prioritiestable.docx

Annex 3 - PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS-OBJECTIVES-RECOMMENDATIONS_list.docx (for the students to use in the first group presentation and a discussion/comparison of the list of priorities)

learning&mediating_recommendationslist

Annex 4 - ROUND-TABLE_handout.doc (to be distributed to all stakeholders during the public presentation at the project site).

learning&mediating_roundtablehandout

Annex 5 - DRAWINGS LAYOUT_explanation

learning&mediating_drawings layout

Annex 6 - CASE STUDY_examples

learning&mediating_casestudies.pdf

(More can be found at "Pavement to Parks, City of San Francisco" -<http://pavementtoparks.sfplanning.org/index.html>)

The "temporary landscape interventions" DESIGN GUIDELINES/MANUAL:

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The manual will consist of a set of guidelines (process/procedures) that include analytical methods (for evaluating the bioclimatic and anthropic characteristics of the site), choice of materials, definition of active technologies and vegetation use for regenerating neglected public spaces. The students will have to apply these guidelines in a concrete. At the end of this course, the pilot projects will be included in the guidelines; this will allow for a periodic update of the study material as every year students will work on a new pilot project and the information derived from monitoring and evaluating the project implemented during the previous year will be

available

The guidelines will help students to learn how to operate in public open spaces and use urban design as a tool to improve the microclimatic and social conditions of a site. Local government will benefit from guidelines that show how to operate low cost public space regeneration and business owners will benefit from a tool that gives them the opportunity to temporarily or semi-permanently occupy public space operating within the legislative framework and therefore complying with the urban regulations.

The guide will contain:

- Analytical methodology for evaluating the environmental condition of the site (Strengths and Weaknesses)
- Evaluation of active and passive techniques that can be implemented
- Case studies as applicative examples
- Design & Design Development guidelines
- Material choice guide
- Fabrication and Installation guidelines

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