

# LA PÈRGOLA IN LA MARINA DE VALÈNCIA

A MANUAL FOR PLACEMAKERS

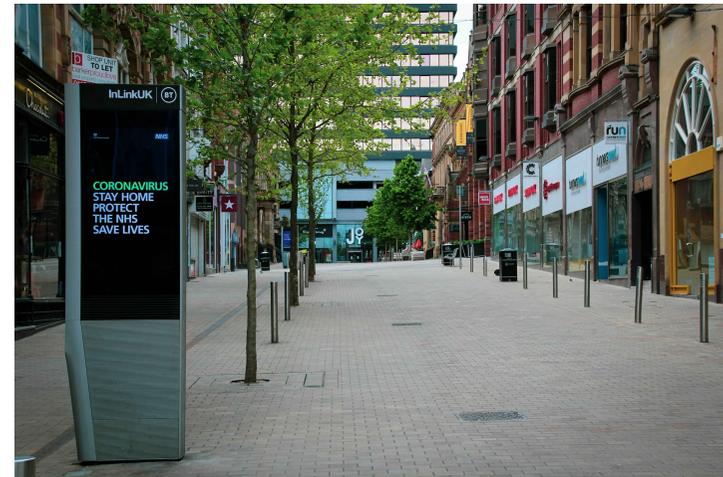


# INTRODUCTION

Neighbourhoods of today's cities often experience an underuse of public spaces which do not offer many possibilities for leisure activities, relaxation or meeting of people in any way. They tend to be boring, monotonous or simply without any elements which invite people to the public space to spend their time there, not only to pass through.

We have been encountering this phenomenon for decades and various representatives of urban public space well-being, either professionals or civil activists, have been trying to find a satisfying solution. But the complexity of urban public space is too big to offer only one overall solution for all the issues - every particular issue, usually related to a certain place in a certain city, needs to be precisely observed, analysed and evaluated before coming up with a solution.

However, problems associated with public space in the cities usually have similar basic contours not dependent on the setting of the area. This manual will illustrate how a concrete project of La Pèrgola, a cultural pavilion situated in a marina in the Spanish city of València, which was realised at a certain time and place, can serve as a learning opportunity for other underused places around the world, when we extract important and essential secrets behind it. This example will teach us lessons which can be used further in placemaking processes around the world - transformation of underused public space, community inclusion, quality programming or raising awareness among the public.



## WHO IS THIS MANUAL FOR?

If you are a municipal civil servant wanting to improve the urban environment in your city in a way beyond the standard procedures or you are a local resident or placemaker dissatisfied with the current condition of public space in your neighbourhood, this manual is for you. We believe that transformation and improvement of public space should be a matter of all the stakeholders using it.

## HISTORY

La Marina de València, the marina and waterfront of Poblats Marítims in València, used to be a large underused place with not many possibilities to spend time at until recently. This waterfront area is surrounded by five working class neighbourhoods with a rich maritime history. The neighbourhoods were connected to the water through their residents who were working in shipyards or harbours, but unfortunately in the 90s a lot of them lost their jobs because of a shipyard closing during a deindustrialisation process in the area. Despite that, the connection to the harbour, fishery, and the sea in general remained strong and present among the residents.





## BACKGROUND

The area of La Marina and its surroundings was not very well-planned and was underutilised for decades, mostly used in summer with a few fancy nightlife businesses and restaurants. These businesses were creating an atmosphere of exclusivity, expensiveness and caused an unwelcoming feeling for regular middle class visitors, until La Marina de València initiative came with a general strategy of reusing, reactivating and improving the waterfront. The general idea was to reconnect the area with people both emotionally and physically through a placemaking approach, by first implementing small-scale tactical interventions like a basketball court or La Pèrgola pavilion, and to achieve this with the use of the existing qualities of the area. Thus, an undermaintained roofed stage - a pergola - from the 80s in the middle of an empty concrete lot, but with a lot of open space around, came in very handy.

The main idea for this pavilion was to both renew it physically with the use of available funds and to create a regular program of events which would attract people to visit and activate the space.

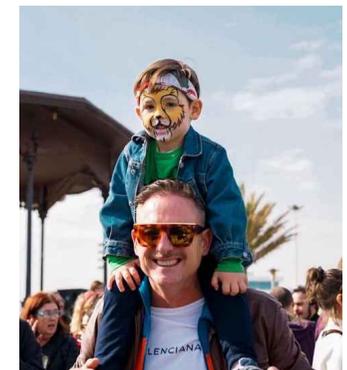
These ideas proved to be very effective since the program has been on the run consecutively for over two years from the initiation in January 2018 in spring and autumn cycles, together 5 cycles to date. The main objective for now, is to build from the current success which means keeping the great programming and advertising and preserving the place and the surroundings in a tidy and appealing state.

## ● MAIN ACTORS

Given that València is a place with the highest density of musicians in Europe with an orchestra in every neighbourhood and a lot of music schools, NGOs and other institutions connected very well with these orchestras, it was a natural move not only to include them in the programme, but to base the program on their live music performances.

La Marina de València joined forces with the accomplished communications and production team at Agència Districte, and started to organise classical music concerts for these neighbourhood-based orchestras on Sunday's. This attracted many locals, who did not have many opportunities for spending leisure time in the area before. The concept acquitted itself very well and there came another idea to broaden the music range and include also rock, reggae, electronic and other genres bands on Saturdays so people with different music taste would be attracted.

- local performers
- communication teams
- production teams
- organiser



# SPACIAL ELEMENTS YOU NEED TO CONSIDER

- **DISTINCT LANDMARKS**

This tool can be implemented in any underutilised public space with a presence of a distinct landmark(s), while this landmark would act like a main facilitator of the idea behind utilisation of the place. It does not have to be a pavilion as in La Pergola's case, there are many other possibilities: an open green space in a park with interesting vegetation, a statue on a square or unused tables and benches on a river bank. Important aspect is to have a clear and apparent element, standing out in a place which is going to be activated, with sufficient capacity for the visitors - La Pèrgola with its surroundings usually accommodates around 500-1500 people.



- **SUPPORTING AMENITIES**

Variety of elements contributes to the place being more enjoyable and for a wider audience with different options for activities - in La Marina de València, possibilities besides the musical performances in La Pèrgola include an old neglected boardwalk along the water, which is nowadays attracting a lot of people, or an educational training workshop for kids which allows parents to leave the kids with a supervision.

In the case of La Pèrgola, a gap of leisure and cultural opportunities within the city was identified at a certain place and time - there was no competition with other events or places on Saturday morning. Thanks to a preliminary assessment the final concept hit the spot, showcasing that a quality observation and analysis of the place and context is a base for a favourable result.



# SPACIAL ELEMENTS YOU NEED TO CONSIDER

- **GEOGRAPHICAL CONDITIONS**

A big role in the success of the La Pèrgola case was played by the mild climate of the Valèncian region which allows to organise events all year long, including autumn and winter which were the seasons without any public life present in the La Marina area. This is an example showing that the regional location can be a crucial factor which needs to be taken into account.



# TIME MANAGEMENT

- **CHOOSING THE RIGHT MOMENT**

There are some logical guidelines which can help with implementation of the tool in a timely manner. When talking about organising events connected to the particular place of choice it is important to consider the schedule of the residents and adapt to this schedule. Think of when do the people have free time to spend, but also keep in mind not to intersect with other existing or potential events happening within the neighbourhood or in the city because simultaneous events can and would cut the numbers of visitors of each other. Try to fit the unoccupied terms of the month and week, find empty times in the weekends or even in the evenings of weekdays. The idea in La Pèrgola case was that the events should take place during the daytime to be attendable for everyone, especially families with children and also for the generation eager to watch live musical performances but not in the late hours.

- consider the locals' schedule
- mind the other events in the area
- try to fit the unoccupied terms

- **PAYING ATTENTION TO THE SEASON**

When you are realising a project in a country with different seasons and changing climate throughout the year it is also important to think of a right time period of the year for the happenings, especially when the place is not protected against unfavourable weather conditions. La Pèrgola is situated in València where the weather is mild, so it is possible to organise events throughout the whole year, but this does not have to apply in every case.

## ● CREATING A NETWORK OF PARTICIPANTS

Essential thing which needs to be present to launch a successful activation of an urban space is quality social networking and cultural programming which will ensure a broad network of participants, visitors or business stakeholders. To achieve the best result, it's recommended to collaborate with professional communication and production teams or social networking agencies who help build momentum for the project through traditional and social media channels.

Engage the professionals in your community who are willing to participate: include a local band or a street artist, events programming and artists bookings can be handled with the help of an event manager, contacts on a local restaurant businesses may come in handy - many great opportunities arise from the direct surroundings of the project area.

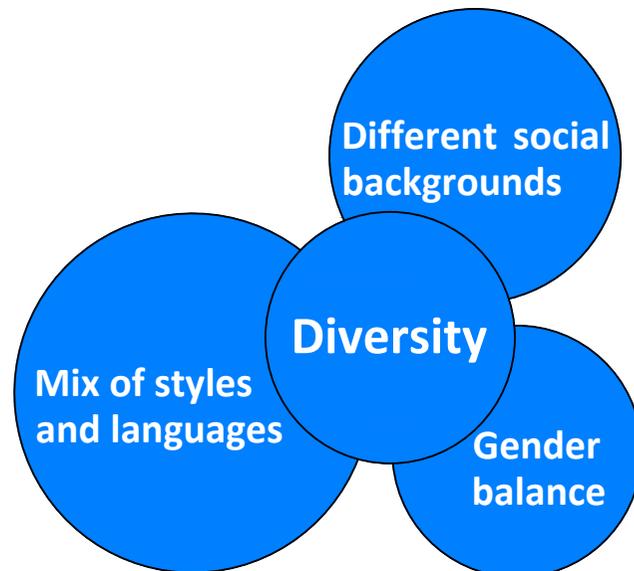


*"Engage the professionals  
in your community!"*

In the La Pèrgola case, a professional music programmer was on board and thanks to the contacts in his branch a lot of different artists from the neighbourhood were booked. At first, artists were a bit sceptical about both time and place of performances, which were indeed unusual, and about the general viability of the proposal. But in the end they were happy to have an opportunity to perform and be recognised by the visitors and in the present time, not only Spanish, but also foreign bands are calling and demanding to be on the list of performers knowing that La Pèrgola performances are a great opportunity to get into the broader awareness of the audience.

## PROGRAMMING TIPS

When creating a program for the events, the importance of diversity should not be neglected, because with activating public space any placemaking intervention should be open and inviting for each member of the community, whether it is a mix of styles and languages, performers with different social backgrounds or gender balance on stage. Line-ups of the bands in La Pèrgola case are different in every cycle, similarly to a music festival, which makes an opportunity for unexpected events and performances, but still under a promise of quality. This thrill factor also makes the visit to the place more interesting.



## IMPORTANCE OF SCHEDULE

With the diversity of programme it is important to have a regular schedule of activities for the audience to get used to and look forward to.

Musical programming of La Pèrgola is structured in two days every week, on Saturday and Sunday. Each one of these days is dedicated to a different types of performances, Saturdays from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. are reserved for orchestras playing classical music and Sundays from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. are reserved for rock, reggae, electronic and other genre music bands. This key was determined very naturally - the first idea of the project was to include local orchestras to play on Saturdays, but then the music bands were added. They were chosen to play on Sundays, not only because it is another day of weekend, but also because it is a “family day” and then the whole family can enjoy a variety of musical styles which are more likely to appeal also to the youngest generation. Daytime concept of performances also allows bands to continue with their usual agenda in the evenings and nights of the same day elsewhere.

Musical events at La Pèrgola are not happening during the weekdays because keeping them on the weekend was a part of the main idea, and despite this fact the place is keeping its popularity and growing in it. People got used to the concept of regular weekend performances persistent in their quality.



## FINANCING

All the events taking place at La Pèrgola are open air and free for all visitors, which means there is no entrance fee income, but they could not be happening without proper financing from other sources.

Financing of the project is a delicate subject and it is important to consider options of funding partners and their influence on the project in general. Choosing the right sponsors does not only mean a stable income but also not damaging the good name of the whole initiative by associating it with unrelatable companies.

The La Pèrgola pavilion underwent a refurbishment for around €40.000 from the funds of La Marina de València and is currently financed from multiple resources - the main part of funding (around 80 percent) is provided by sponsors, which are the brewery selling beer at the events or food trucks. Own investments from the institution are kept at a maximum of around €30.000 a year. The non-commercial character of the events creates a unique opportunity to make them more experimental - it is possible to invite less known bands which can grow famous afterwards.

# FUTURE

The La Pèrgola project in La Marina de València is a very successful example of activation of public space in a relatively short time, and although there seems to be very little of what can be improved or enhanced since the project is ongoing with very good results, there is still an important task of maintaining the current situation. The project built up its name within the whole community not only throughout the city, but also Europe-wide. Now is the time to keep the quality programming by inviting various famous or underground musical ensembles and good organisation, and generally to keep attracting people who built up trust in the project and visit the concerts regularly even when they do not know the artist because they know it would be a guarantee of quality.

There is always space for some more partial improvements - whether it is making the use of surrounding space more effective and comfortable for the audience, improving the waste management or expanding the area for children. Another ambition for La Pèrgola is to start making audiovisual recordings of the performances to keep all the unforgettable moments.

La Pèrgola has helped La Marina to get on the map of unique music venues in Europe, and nowadays a lot of private businesses or programmers are eager to organise concerts at the pavilion. The income generated with renting out the pavilion can be used to sustain the impact of La Pèrgola. There is also an opportunity to strengthen La Pergola's position as a desirable music venue and export the concept to other cities in Europe. This can be a challenge for the next years of the project.

