



SPACE PROJECT

RESEARCH REPORT

YOUTH AND PUBLIC SPACES

Participatory Placemaking in Peri-Urban and Rural Communities



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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This report presents a comprehensive overview of the participatory research conducted in six partner regions, each encompassing one peri-urban and one rural community. The principal aim is to understand how young people experience, use, and influence public spaces. Three complementary research activities have been carried out at each site: a baseline study to establish demographic and environmental context, a youth survey to gather broad quantitative insights, and focus-group discussions to explore lived experiences and aspirations in depth. Each partner's findings have been organized into a self-contained module that can be read independently, enabling local practitioners and community members to easily access the information most relevant to their own context. From this report findings, training objectives are derived for the next phases of the project.

Methodological Approach

The methodology used is a sequential mixed-methods design with participatory principles, combining quantitative data collection with qualitative interpretation to ensure a youth-centered, inclusive, and grounded understanding of public space use and preferences. To accurately capture the voices and needs of young residents, this approach was adopted across all sites. The process began with a baseline study, during which partners collected key statistics on population size, age distribution, land-use patterns, and the presence of community organizations. Standardized questionnaires were completed in electronic form during January and February 2025.

Following this, a youth survey was handled in March-April 2025. Respondents between the ages of fifteen and thirty were invited to answer a set of multiple-choice and short-answer

questions regarding their favorite outdoor places, frequency of visits, feelings of safety, and willingness to engage in community actions. Both online links and in-person sessions at schools, community centers, and public events were used, resulting in between eighty and one hundred twenty valid responses per site.

Finally, focus-group discussions were held during April 2025. Groups of eight to twelve young people from each community met with a trained facilitator to reflect on survey findings, share personal experiences, and explore ideas for improving public spaces. Sessions were structured around open-ended prompts, with notes and audio recordings taken by a neutral observer. Throughout the process, emphasis was placed on creating a respectful and inclusive environment. Questions were phrased in clear, everyday language, and participants were free to use their preferred dialect. Transcripts were reviewed to identify recurrent themes and illustrative quotations, ensuring that the final interpretation remained grounded in the participants' own words.

Modules – Site Profiles

The body of this report is organized into six distinct sections, one for each partner region. Within each section, data and insights are presented in a consistent order. First, the physical and infrastructural characteristics of the peri-urban and rural sites are described, using maps and summary tables. Second, the demographic profile and expressed aspirations of the local youth population are discussed, drawing on both the

baseline study and survey results. Third, the network of community actors—including formal agencies, volunteer organizations, and informal youth groups—is examined to illuminate how decisions are made and activities coordinated. Fourth, the survey findings are interpreted in a narrative format that highlights the most salient patterns and preferences. Fifth, the focus-group outcomes are woven into a concise account of barriers, opportunities, and suggested actions. Each module concludes with a brief synthesis of quick-win recommendations tailored to that locale. Because the same template has been applied in every region, cross-comparison is enabled without requiring the reader to navigate different layouts or terminology. Readers interested in a particular site can read its module in isolation, while those seeking to identify common threads can consult the concluding chapter, where shared themes and collective recommendations are drawn together.

Theoretical Foundations

This study has been informed by principles of community-centred design and inclusive place-making, in which public spaces are understood not merely as physical settings but as social arenas where identity, belonging, and civic agency are cultivated. By situating youth at the heart of analysis, attention has been paid to how infrastructure, social dynamics, and organizational networks intersect to shape young people's everyday experiences. Infrastructure is thus seen as more than paved surfaces and lighting; it is understood as the

material backbone through which social interactions occur, access is negotiated, and a sense of safety is fostered.

Young residents are positioned as active contributors whose insights and creativity can inform the design, activation, and stewardship of public spaces. Their voices have been solicited not only through quantitative measures but also through dialogue, thereby acknowledging that lived experience often illuminates obstacles and possibilities that written surveys alone cannot capture. Organizations—whether formal agencies, non-governmental groups, schools, or volunteer networks—have been recognized as critical mediators. These entities convene stakeholders, allocate resources, and establish channels of communication, thus constituting a stakeholder network in which power, information, and influence circulate.

It has been assumed that sustainable improvements emerge most effectively when community voices are heard at every stage of the process, from the identification of infrastructural gaps and youth priorities through to the coalescence of organizational support and iterative feedback loops. This theoretical orientation has shaped the selection of methods, the design of instruments, and the interpretation of results, ensuring that infrastructure, youth aspirations, and organizational partnerships are woven together within a cohesive networked framework.

Report Structure

The report is arranged in seven main parts. This introductory chapter sets out purpose, methodology, and structure. Chapters 1 through 6 each correspond to a partner region and present that region's module in full, organized under the headings of infrastructure overview, youth context, community actors, survey insights, and focus-group findings. The concluding chapter synthesizes findings across all regions, drawing out shared lessons and proposing overarching strategies. The modular format ensures that readers may focus on a single locale or explore the broader patterns that link peri-urban and rural experiences. Throughout, technical jargon has been minimized in favor of clear, everyday language so that youth workers, community members, and local decision-makers can engage directly with the material.

MODULES – SITE PROFILES

AUSTRIA

General Information

Partner: WONDERLAND
Country: Austria
City/Region: Vienna

A. Neighborhood Profile

1. Case Study Context & Justification

The selection includes three different locations:

- Peri Urban: Neu-Stammersdorf, a neighborhood which is the northernmost part of Floridsdorf, the 21st district of Vienna
- Peri Urban/rural: Mistelbach, a small town of 12,036 inhabitants in the Niederösterreich federal state.
- Rural: Höbersbrunn, a small village in the Mistelbach district with 300 inhabitants.

All three sites are located in north-eastern Austria, adjacent or within the wine quarter region of lower Austria and with this towards the eastern border of Austria with Czechia and Slovakia. The sites are connected through the B7 Brünnerstraße, a historically important street linking Vienna's Floridsdorf to Brno. The sites in the wine quarter are affected by emigration towards larger cities, due to a lack of opportunities and the entire region is marked by agriculture

1.1. Peri-urban site

Site Snapshot

1	Site Name:	Neu-Stammersdorf
	Location: Address or nearest town:	Northern outskirts of Vienna
	Area Size:	0.7 km ²
	Population Size:	around 14.000

Site description

Neu-Stammersdorf is an urban expansion area in the north of Vienna, close to the border of lower Austria. It is located in the district Floridsdorf. The 'Neu-Stammersdorf' urban expansion

area can be roughly characterized by the homogeneous building structure and the age of the various residential buildings. As the estate is largely surrounded by

single-family homes, it is easy to delineate the core area.

It experienced a major growth spurt in the early 1990s. Housing estates were built around the Brünnerstraße area, most of which were occupied by families with children at the same time. There is a very good infrastructure for children, but unfortunately little thought was given to young people. The Bahnfrei association set up on the site around the year 1998 to offer a place for youth in this newly developed area from early on. To this day it remains one of the only places for young people to go in the area. There are only a few cafés and restaurants in the area, which appeal to young people to a limited extent. In mid-2009, Neu-Stammersdorf was once again declared an expansion area by the City of Vienna. Around 1500 residential units and a secondary school were constructed. As in the 1990s, the main target group remained young families with children.

There are many young families with children in Vienna's expansion area. In 2009, a total of 13,481 people lived in the study area. 10-24 year olds make up 21.5% of the total population in the area. The group makes up a remarkably large group compared to other areas in Vienna. In recent years, the population in the district has experienced a steady upward trend (*5). The predominant activities in the public space among the youth in this area tend to revolve around sports, utilizing facilities such as football cages and skate parks. Young people also gather at popular meeting spots like the

B7 Mall and McDonald's. The Marchfeld channel offers a natural recreational area and people of all ages are found along the channel, sitting on benches or taking walks. The greater area of Stammersdorf is recorded to be inhabited since around 1100 and the name Stammersdorf comes from the Slavic name Stojmir (Felix Czeike, Historisches Lexikon Wien, Band 5 R-Z (Wien 2004), S. 312.)



Image 1. Neu-Stammersdorf overview



Image 2. Neu-Stammersdorf secondary view

Site description

Mistelbach is a town with 12,036 inhabitants (as of 1 January 2024) in the north-eastern state of Lower Austria and the district capital of the district of the same name. Mistelbach is located in the north-eastern wine quarter, around 25 to 30 km from the Czech and Slovakian borders. It lies at the centre of the Brno-Vienna-Bratislava city triangle. The municipality of Mistelbach is a central location in the Weinviertel region and attracts several thousand commuters every day. Not least because of its connection to the regional railway network. Furthermore, the municipality of Mistelbach is the destination of numerous bus connections in the Eastern Region Transport Network (VOR) due to its position as a school location and the site of a specialised hospital. The population of the entire district has grown in recent years. Around 4,000 pupils from all over the district come to Mistelbach every day by train or bus and attend one of the 24 different schools.*6

In the municipality of Mistelbach, individuals aged up to 14 years and those between 15 and 29 years constitute approximately 30% of the total population. On the other side, demographic projections suggest that the proportion of older residents will continue to grow, as currently, the population aged 60 years and over also accounts for 30%.

Young people's activities in public spaces are diverse and range from using parks and sports facilities to spending time near the main square. Mistelbach is on the B7 (Brünnerstraße), a historically important street connecting Floridsdorf (the first peri-urban site) with Brno in Czechia. The Brünnerstraße was built on its predecessor the Bernsteinstraße, the oldest trade route of central Europe connecting the Baltic sea to the Mediterranean sea.



Image 3. Mistelbach overview



Image 4. Mistelbach secondary view

1.2. Rural site

Site Snapshot

3	Site Name:	Mistelbach
	Location: Address or nearest town:	Weinviertel
	Area Size:	4 km ²
	Population Size:	11.665 persons (2021)* ¹

Site description

Höbersbrunn Gaweinstal is a small village located in the Mistelbach district of Lower Austria, approximately 36 kilometers from Vienna. The surrounding landscape is predominated by wine cultivation. The village is accessible via two bus stations, with one bus route passing through the village. The nearest train stations are approximately 6–7 kilometers away, and the larger town of Mistelbach is about 8 kilometers from Höbersbrunn.

The settlement comprises 389 residents, primarily residing in single-family houses with gardens. A main road runs through the village, linking it to neighboring communities and serving as the central point for development.

Höbersbrunn is located within the municipality of Gaweinstal, which has a population of 4,064 residents, with approximately 1,770 families. The area has a low population density of 78 inhabitants per km². In 2021, the average age was 43.5 years, above the Austrian average, reflecting an aging population. The municipality's population grows at an annual rate of about 0.7 percent.¹ Typical activities usually take place outdoors and in nature, as there are no freely accessible leisure spaces in the village apart from the youth centre.

People from Höbersbrunn are called Krauthasn, which translates to cabbage bunnies.

¹ Admin stat Austria - <https://ugeo.urbistat.com/AdminStat/de/at/demografia/popolazione/gaweinstal/20131708/4>



Image 5. Höbersbrunn overview (source: wiki commons: Herzi Pinki)



Image 6. Höbersbrunn secondary view (source: wiki commons: Herzi Pink)

2. Spatial Analysis

2.1. Peri-urban site spatial analysis

The chosen site is a mixed-use area in Neustammersdorf, an urban expansion area in Floridsdorf developed in the early 1990s. The site is located on the south of the Lower Austria border, surrounded by an agricultural area and a military academy and crossed by the Marchfeld canal. The riverside is a green area where the youth organization Bahnfrei is located, in the vicinity of sports infrastructure (skatepark, sports facilities and football court) and serves as a public spaces for the youth to hang out. Some landmarks are also attracting the youth population, such as B7 and McDonald's.

Further south shopping malls serve as points of attraction, such as the Trillerpark or SCN.

Walkthrough Narrative

People arrive in the area mostly from the tram on the long straight main road, with good paths and lights. The street layout is clear, forms a grid and the building form is homogeneous. The area is not very lively, and doesn't have a variety of uses. The density of the site is higher than its surroundings with modern collective apartment buildings of four stores and a big hangar-type modern supermarket, while the surrounding area is composed of single-family houses or agricultural land.

To access the riverside and the park, we pass in front of residential buildings, the B7 mall and a big modern supermarket (Billa). The Bahnfrei office is located inside the park, which is highly frequented even in evenings, especially by dog owners, even though the street lighting is poor or non-existent in some parts. At the Bahnfrei wagons in the park, youth are hanging around, playing table tennis or socializing.



Image 7. Bahnfrei Map



Image 8. Bahnfrei activity map



Image 9. Bahnfrei Wagons



Image 10. Youth



Image 11. Marchfeldkanal

2.2. Peri-Urban / Rural Site Spatial Analysis

Mistelbach is the second-largest city in the Weinviertel region, located close to Vienna and well served by regional trains for easy access to the capital. Urban development around Mistelbach's main axes consists mainly of three to four-story buildings with courtyards, creating a higher density than in the rest of the region. On the outskirts, the built environment comprises a mix of single-family homes, multi-family dwellings and terraced houses, creating a diverse urban fabric. Mistelbach is surrounded by farmland, including several recreational areas such as the municipal forest and the Trausnitzerberg. Within the town, a number of parks and green spaces offer leisure facilities, and a range

of sports facilities can also be found, including a swimming pool, tennis and basketball court.

Walkthrough Narrative

In terms of accessibility, Mistelbach station is served by two regional trains with direct connections to Vienna. Most neighboring towns are also well connected by bus to Mistelbach. It is easy to get around in the town: it is well served by public transport, bus density is high and there is a north-south cycling axis. Footpaths are well-maintained and clean, measuring between 1.5 and 2.5 meters. The main square is overcrowded with parking spaces, making it a poor place to gather.



Image 12. Mistelbach Map



Image 13. Mistelbach activity map



Image 14. Park facilities



Image 14. Indoor sport facilities



Image 15. Vacant shops



Image 16. Entry association "Youbest"

2.3. Rural Site Spatial Analysis

Höbersbrunn is located in the municipality of Gaweinstal, in the district of Mistelbach, Lower Austria. It is thirty-six kilometers from the capital Vienna, eight kilometers from Mistelbach, the largest town in the area, and six or seven kilometers from the nearest train station. A bus line runs through the village, serving two stations.

Next to growing cereals and other crops, the village's farms are mainly devoted to viticulture. The region is famous for its white wine, especially the Grüner Veltliner variety. The village has a tavern, a Heurigen (a casual bar/restaurant run by the local winemaker) and a youth center that regularly organizes social activities. For sporting activities, there's a tennis

center with two courts, which is used by its members.

Walkthrough Narrative

Höbersbrunn is structured around a main street, which is surrounded by houses of one or two stores. Although the houses are often enclosed by gardens or large green spaces, there is a lack of open space and public facilities. The buildings are mainly oriented towards the main road, while the gardens are oriented towards the rear. The village is surrounded by agriculture. The terrain is flat, and the sidewalks are well-maintained and clean, making it easy to walk around the village. To get out of the village, it's possible to take the bus or bike, but this can be dangerous at night

as there are no lights outside the town's main roads.



Image 17. Höbersbrunn Map



Image 18. Höbersbrunn activity map



Image 19. Fire station - source: wiki commons, Herzi Pinki



Image 20. Main Church- source: wiki commons, Stadler_Bwag



Image 21. Surrounding landscape source: wiki commons, Stefan.lefnaer

2.4. Comparative Snapshot

Criterion	Peri-Urban Site Notes	Peri-Urban / Rural Site Notes	Rural Site Notes
Connectivity	The main street is well served by the tram line, via four stations, and several bus lines.	The regional train line RE / S2 goes through Mistelbach and connects directly with Vienna. The train station is also served by other regional lines. 14 regional bus lines	Höbersbrunn has two bus stations, with one bus passing through. It's 6–7 km from the nearest train stations and 8 km from Mistelbach.

<i>Accessibility</i>	<i>The main street is well maintained, it connects with the inner city and is surrounded by large pathways.</i>	<i>Cycling axis with a north-south direction and well-developed network of footpaths. Very good accessibility in the city. (https://www.mistelbach.at/filadmin/bilder/vielservice/Mobilitaet/Mobilitaetskonzept_Bericht_Teil_1_Grundlagen.pdf Mobility Concept 2030 study)</i>	<i>Flat terrain with light and pavements within the village. Streets going outside the village lack footpaths, dedicated bicycle lines and lights.</i>
<i>Safety</i>	<i>Good streetlights, but only a few lights in the park.</i>	<i>Footpaths and marked cycle paths make transport safe even without a car in the evening</i>	<i>Lack of streetlights and footpaths outside and in the border of the village</i>
<i>Amenities</i>	<i>Recreational areas around the canal, with a lot of benches and a youth center. Sport facilities such as a gymnasium, a football court and a skate park.</i>	<i>Parks, green recreational areas; like the municipal forest and the Trausnitzerberg. Sports facilities: swimming pool, basketball and tennis court. Youth centre.</i>	<i>Youth centre and tennis court</i>
<i>Public Space Types</i>	<i>Park, riverbank</i>	<i>Parks, main square but used as a parking space</i>	<i>No public spaces</i>
<i>Maintenance Level</i>	<i>well maintained</i>	<i>well maintained</i>	<i>1 time per month waste service, clean surroundings</i>

Table 1. Comparative snapshot

B. Youth Perspectives & Priorities

3. Baseline Data Summary

3.1. Context, Method and Quick View of Sites

Data was collected through surveys, four focus group sessions, desk research, and site visits at different times of day. The focus group discussions were transcribed and analyzed using qualitative methods. Key excerpts were coded and grouped into thematic categories to identify core insights. The study offers a comparative

perspective on different settlement types within or near the Weinviertel region, highlighting their diverse challenges and interconnections. Limited on-site research was offset by the involvement of carefully selected local experts who helped surface relevant issues and contextual nuances.

3.2. Top 3 Insights

Insight 1:

Creating meaningful spaces for young people poses a unique challenge. While they seek “hidden” areas that offer privacy, these can also invite risky or unlawful behavior. At the same time, shared spaces with other groups are essential for learning how to interact and compromise. The ideal space needs to balance both needs—offering independence while encouraging integration.

Insight 2:

Engaging young people in participatory processes is also difficult. They are often asked to contribute ideas, time, and energy, yet receive little in return. To be more effective, discussions should connect to tangible projects that give back to the community, especially since youth are typically expected to help shape their own environments.

Insight 3:

As the population ages, connecting with the next generation becomes increasingly important. Some youth centers, like Jugendheim Höbersbrunn, have begun reaching out directly—sending personal invitations to teens as they turn 15, encouraging a sense of belonging and community involvement.

4. Survey Insights - A Holistic View

4.1. Executive Snapshot

The availability of youth-friendly leisure spaces outside of clubs and

membership-based facilities is generally limited. Where such spaces do exist, they are often restricted by noise restrictions or difficult to access due to various barriers.

4.2. What Young People Value

Survey responses from rural participants indicate that parks are the most popular leisure destinations (30%), followed by sports facilities (25%) and areas near shops and cafés (20%). When it comes to activities in public spaces, engaging in sports is the most common preference (30%), while spending time relaxing or hanging out (20%) and playing games with friends (20%) are also significant. A majority of respondents (75%) reported always feeling safe in public spaces, while one in four said they only sometimes feel safe. For young people, the ability to meet friends is the most valued aspect of public space (30%), with safety (25%) and opportunities for fun activities (25%) also ranking as top priorities.

4.3. The Role of Public Spaces

Overall, 95 % of all respondents say public spaces are ‘very important’.

Top qualities youth value in public spaces:

- Safety (25 %)
- Meeting friends (30 %)
- Fun activities (25 %)

Overall, 90% of rural youth ‘definitely’ want a say in designing these space.

2.4 If You Could Change One Thing...

Participants from rural areas expressed a desire for a greater variety of youth-oriented activities and more attractive meeting places, particularly covered or sheltered spaces that can be used in all weather conditions. They also

emphasized the importance of strengthening existing youth centres. Additional needs identified include improved sports facilities, such as volleyball courts, reduced car presence, safer infrastructure, and affordable food options—such as late-night snack bars or vending machines.

Table 2 An overlaid spider-web plot comparing Peri-Urban and Rural sites on five key dimensions.

Axis	Metric
Visit Frequency	40 % who go “a few times a week” or more (Q3)
Safety	75% who feel safe “always”
Importance	95% who say public spaces are “very important” (Q5)
Youth Voice	90 % who “definitely” want a say in design (Q7)
Event Participation	40 % who “would join” a group improving spaces (Q8) and 50% maybe if they would know more about it

Table 3 Who Took Part

Demographic	Rural
Total Respondents	20
Youth (15–30 yrs)	100 %
Gender: Female	45%
Gender: Male	45%
Other / Prefer NTS	10%

5. Focus Groups

5.1. Session Summary (Peri-Urban & Rural)

Peri-urban Area – 28 March 2025

An interview was held at a café near Bahnhof with Freya, a part-time employee and social work student, and Andreas Neidl, involved with Bahnhof since 2015. The session was facilitated by Mary Sarsam and followed a structured questionnaire. The conversation was recorded and transcribed.

Peri-urban / Rural Area – 18 March 2025

At a café in Mistelbach, Mary Sarsam

interviewed Stefan (social worker since 2020), Karina (technical manager since 2014), and Andi (team member for three years), all part of the YOU.BEST initiative. The interview was recorded and transcribed.

Peri-urban / Rural Area – 22 March 2025

A follow-up interview took place at the Youth Park in Mistelbach with youth council members Stefan Dersch and Simon Hirter. The session was facilitated,

recorded, and transcribed by Mary Sarsam.

Rural Area – 29 March 2025

Eight members of the Höbersbrunn Youth Center Association participated in an interview at the youth center. Mary Sarsam conducted, recorded, and transcribed the session.

Peri-Urban

5.2. Barriers to Participation

- **Lack of lighting (%)** - in the skate park was noted as a concern, primarily due to restrictions related to noise regulations.
- **Absence of a proper football cage (%)** - limits opportunities for structured play and engagement in sports.

- **Limited privacy in the skate park (%)** - caused by the constant presence of adults nearby, makes it difficult for young people to feel a sense of ownership over the space.
- **Prejudices against young men (%)** - were frequently mentioned, with reports of being unfairly targeted by the public and experiencing increased police monitoring in public areas.
- **Low participation in design processes (%)** - was attributed to complex administrative procedures and a lack of sufficient funding, making it difficult for young people to be involved in shaping their environments.

5.2. Key Themes & Quotes

Theme	Mentions (%)	Role	Quote
Space negotiations	2 worker participants	Barrier	Lack of light in the evening in the skate park, due to noise restrictions
		Barrier	The open skate park is not attractive for the youth, because of the proximity to the adults, who are standing around the place and due to it being a place of transit.
Amenities	2 worker participants	Barrier	No real football cage: "Sometimes they find it difficult to play football, for example or they can't play football the way they want to because there are so many younger children. Or they come later in the evening, but then there are no lights on."

Awareness	2 worker participants	Enabler	Street work to reach a wider part of the youth, the ones that are not coming to the youth center.
		Enabler	Sport competitions with prizes are a quite effective tool to engage with the youth
		Enabler	Spontaneity in planning the offers, organizing it with the youth and not using too many resources, it is important to keep a) a horizontal relation and b) adapt the effort to the impact it has

5.3. Quick Synthesis & Action

The location within a public park means various user groups share the site, which at times creates tension—particularly for young people who face limitations in fully engaging in their activities. For instance, the skate park lacks adequate lighting at night due to noise regulations, and multiple groups, restricting its usability, often occupy the football area. These challenges highlight the need for structured negotiation between different user groups. Solutions such as time-sharing schedules or the creation of dedicated youth zones could help address these issues. Young users have also voiced a desire for greater privacy in the skate park, as the constant presence of adults can feel intrusive. However, such shared environments also present opportunities for young people to learn how to engage with other community members and reach constructive compromises. Improving the football area with clearer spatial boundaries and

upgraded equipment could further support harmonious use of the space.

Rural

5.4. Barriers to Participation

- **Lack of public space (%)** - The youth don't have public spaces such as parks or meadows where they can play games or do sports.
- **Lack of offers (%)** - Höbersbrunn is a small town with limited

cultural and sports amenities. If the youth want to experience something, they often need to leave their region and visit either the next big city (Mistelbach) or travel to the capital (Vienna). Any other events they need to create and fundraise for themselves.

wanted to participate in a certain sport only a few times a year they are not able to.

- **Sports facilities only for members (%)** - The youth mentioned that most offers are limited to members of associations and that if they

5.5. Key Themes & Quotes

Theme	Mentions (%)	Role	Quote
Municipal support	xx%	Enabler	"The room belongs to the municipality, so it's actually a municipal building, we're more or less just rented in. We pay an annual rent and the municipality pays electricity, water and gas for us."
		Enabler	"So the municipality is extremely supportive. Especially when we were rebuilding the bar, the municipality covered all the material costs."
Amenities	xx%	Enabler	"It's best to go directly to the mayor, talk to him, he has his office hours. We actually know him quite well because he was our former principal at school."
		Barrier	"There's just nothing for young people, so if we didn't have a youth center, we wouldn't have anything. Well, we would have the tennis court, but none of us actively play tennis. It's just a separate club."
		Barrier	"So if you want to experience something, you go to Vienna"
		Barrier	"It does exist, but you always have to be in an association. You always have to join somewhere. You can't just say you want to play once a year."
		Barrier	"Or if we somehow say we want to play, I don't know, stupid example, flunky ball or something like that, we just need a straight surface or a meadow or something, we don't have that there anymore"

5.6. Quick Synthesis & Action

The area lacks accessible public spaces, particularly those that support informal sports and recreational activities. Establishing a well-equipped open space,

including basic amenities such as benches, could effectively address this gap and provide a welcoming environment for youth engagement.

C. Organizations & Community Actors

Jugendheim Höbersbrunn is a local youth center in the rural town of Höbersbrunn. They offer a place for the youth to hang out in a rented room of a municipal building, shared with two other organizations. The municipality pays for electricity, water and gas. The youth centre has good relations with the municipality, they support them in their project and help financially. New members are actively invited to the youth group when they turn fifteen years old.

They practice collective decision-making within their large group. They often have general meetings but also online discussions where everybody can contribute ideas.

- Church: The local church is a central meeting point
- Hunting Association
- Volunteer Firefighter Association
- Village Band

ALBANIA

General Information

Partner: Environmental and Territorial
Management Institute
Country: Albania
City/Region: Tirana

A. Neighborhood Profile

1. Case Study Context & Justification

We have chosen Bathore and Paskuqan as rural and peri-urban areas of Kamza municipality. Bathore and Paskuqan are two areas that can be considered less favored for various reasons. One of the main factors is the poor infrastructure, as these areas have had limited investments in roads, water supply, sewage, and public lighting. This has a direct impact on the quality of life and the potential for further development. Furthermore, these areas have often experienced unorganized construction and many illegal buildings, creating poor living conditions and

difficulties in providing social and educational services.

Another important factor is unemployment and the lack of economic opportunities, as Bathore and Paskuqan are located farther from urban centers, and residents may face difficulties in finding jobs. This isolation can hinder the development of economic opportunities and causes poverty in some cases. The lack of social and healthcare services is also an issue, as these areas have fewer health centers and educational opportunities, making it difficult for residents to access essential services.

1.1. Peri-urban site

Site Snapshot

Site Name:	Paskuqan
Location: Address or nearest town;	Kamza Municipality
Area Size:	4 km ²
Population Size:	30,000 residents

Site description

Paskuqan is a peri-urban area situated in the municipality of Kamëz, part of Tirana County in central Albania. Located just northwest of the capital city, positioned 2800 meters from the city center, it has experienced rapid demographic and spatial growth since the early 1990s, largely due to internal migration from northern Albania. The area is characterized by mixed land-use patterns, including dense residential developments, many of which were built informally, alongside small commercial enterprises, service-oriented businesses, and a limited presence of green or public spaces. Paskuqan lacks coherent urban planning, resulting in infrastructural challenges, uneven access to services, and fragmented open spaces. Despite these challenges, its proximity to Tirana makes it a strategic location for commuting and economic activity. The local population is relatively young, with a high presence of families and working-age adults. Recent

efforts by the municipality and community organizations aim to improve urban infrastructure, legalize informal housing, and revitalize public spaces in the area.

Paskuqan is home to a predominantly young and growing population, largely composed of internal migrants from northern Albania who settled in the area after the 1990s. The main age groups include teenagers, young adults, and families, many of whom live in self-built or informally developed housing. Typical daily activities include commuting to Tirana for work or study, running small businesses, and participating in informal trade or construction-related jobs.

Paskuqan, a fast-growing peri-urban area near Tirana, transformed rapidly after the 1990s as thousands migrated from northern Albania, creating a vibrant but unplanned suburban sprawl shaped by informal housing and grassroots community adaptation.



Image 1. Paskuqan overview



Image 2. Paskuqan secondary view

1.2. Rural site

Site Snapshot

Site Name:	Bathore
Location: Address or nearest town;	Kamza Municipality
Area Size:	1.5 km ²
Population Size:	25,000 residents

Site description

Bathore is a suburban area located approximately 8 kilometers north of Tirana, Albania's capital. Administratively, it falls under the municipality of Kamëz in Tirana County. Covering around 3 to 4.5 square kilometers, Bathore was primarily agricultural land during the communist era, utilized as a state-run collective farm.² In the early 1990s, following the collapse of communism, Bathore experienced rapid and unplanned urbanization. Migrants from northern Albania, seeking better opportunities, settled in the area without formal authorization. By 2010, the population had grown to approximately 30,000 residents, with about 8,000 buildings constructed, often without official permits.

The land use in the Bathore area is characterized by a mix of discontinuous urban fabric, surrounded by patches of green areas. These include complex cultivation patterns and pastures, particularly concentrated in the northern and central parts of the site.

Bathore is predominantly inhabited by internal migrants from northern Albania who settled in the area during the early 1990s. The population includes a high proportion of young adults and families with children, reflecting a relatively youthful demographic. Residents are typically engaged in commuting to Tirana for work or education, operating small businesses, and participating in informal economic activities.

Bathore began as an informal settlement in the 1990s and quickly grew into one of Albania's largest self-built communities, with thousands of homes constructed before any official urban planning took place.

² [\(PDF\) From Squatter Settlement to Suburb: The Transformation of Bathore, Albania](#)



Image 3. Bathore overview



Image 4. Bathore secondary view

2. Spatial Analysis

2.1. Peri-urban site spatial analysis

The area is characterized by dense, self-built housing, narrow and often unplanned roads, and limited public infrastructure. While some improvements have been made, particularly along the main roads, inner areas still suffer from poor connectivity, drainage issues, and lack of green spaces. The presence of small shops, informal businesses, and schools highlights its role as a local hub, but services and amenities remain unevenly distributed.

Walkthrough Narrative

Walking through Paskuqan reveals a mix of structured and unstructured development. The main roads are paved but frequently narrow and congested, while secondary streets are unpaved and difficult to navigate. Buildings are

self-built homes, often closely packed with limited spacing between structures. Small shops, kiosks, and occasional cafés dot the main routes, especially near intersections. Public transport stops are few and irregularly distributed, mostly located along the main roads.

Accessibility within Paskuqan is limited, sidewalks are either narrow, broken, or entirely missing along many roads, forcing pedestrians to share space with vehicles. In many parts of the area, the roads are damaged, with potholes and inadequate lighting, making movement challenging, especially in the evening or in bad weather conditions. The distance from the main roads to some inner neighborhoods is considerable and often requires traveling on roads unsuitable for pedestrians or bicycles. Accessibility to public spaces such as parks or

community centers is minimal or nearly nonexistent.

The quality of the built environment in Paskuqan is low in most areas. Public lighting is limited and unreliable, contributing to a sense of insecurity at night. Benches and other elements of

urban furniture are almost entirely absent, and there are no well-maintained areas for resting or gathering. Cleanliness is another concern, with waste scattered along the streets or near buildings.



Image 5. Road system, Paskuqan area



Image 6. Activity Map Paskuqan area



Image 7. Paskuqan landscape



Image 8. Paskuqan street view

2.2. Rural Site Spatial Analysis

Bathore faces notable infrastructure challenges, including limited public transportation, irregular waste management services, and a shortage of formal public spaces. The layout is

characterized by narrow, unplanned roads, and fragmented land use, with residential buildings interspersed with small-scale commerce and informal green areas. Many public spaces remain underutilized or poorly maintained, impacting overall accessibility and community cohesion.

Walkthrough Narrative

The area is a mix of narrow, unpaved roads and narrow alleys, with irregular street patterns. The main streets, though used frequently, are poorly maintained and often congested with parked cars, making it hard for pedestrians to navigate. Some paths are poorly lit or blocked by informal structures. Buildings, mostly self-built homes, line the streets with little uniformity.

Getting around Bathore is difficult, especially for people with limited mobility. Sidewalks are sparse, and where they do exist, they are often obstructed by cars,

vendors, or informal constructions. Most of the roads are unpaved and uneven, creating challenges for pedestrians. The distance to the main streets or bus stops is relatively short for most residents, but the lack of formal infrastructure means movement is often hazardous and uncomfortable. The quality of public spaces in Bathore is low, with very few amenities like seating or rest areas. Street lighting is minimal and inadequate, especially in the narrow side streets, making the area poorly lit at night and raising safety concerns. Cleanliness is a recurring issue, as trash is often scattered in the streets, and waste management is inconsistent.



Image 9. Road system, Bathore area



Image 10. Activity map, Bathore area



Image 11. Bathore street view



Image 12. Bathore secondary street view

2.3. Comparative Snapshot

Criterion	Peri-Urban Site Notes	Rural Site Notes
Connectivity	Limited bus stops, roads are sometimes congested	Poor connectivity, no public transport,
Accessibility	Narrow, uneven sidewalks, some areas without ramps, limited pedestrian facilities)	Dirt roads, uneven ground, limited pedestrian infrastructure)
Safety	Main road lighting	low traffic, poor lighting in secondary streets
Amenities	Few benches	limited seating
Public Space Types	Lake park	village green, informal open spaces with little infrastructure
Maintenance Level	Regular waste pickup	Low maintenance

Table 1. Comparative snapshot

B. Youth Perspectives & Priorities

3. Baseline Data Summary

3.1. Context, Method and Quick View of Sites

This baseline study examines youth-focused organizations in Paskuqan (peri-urban) and Bathore (rural), within Kamëz Municipality. Conducted in May 2025, it combines desk research and local insights to identify active initiatives and assess the conditions shaping youth engagement.

Information for this study was collected through desk research, drawing on official sources and local insights provided by partners familiar with the communities. However, some data—particularly on available facilities and youth demographics—remains incomplete, reflecting either the limited availability of public information or the informal status of certain groups.

The focus areas are Paskuqan, a peri-urban zone with increasing civic engagement among young people, and Bathore, a densely populated rural neighborhood where structured opportunities are limited. While both areas face notable challenges, they also demonstrate significant potential for youth engagement, particularly through grassroots and community-led efforts.

3.2. Top 3 Insights

Insight 1:

Youth engagement thrives despite limited infrastructure—in both Paskuqan and Bathore, motivated youth and volunteers drive local initiatives even without dedicated youth centers or consistent funding.

Insight 2:

Access to safe, inclusive public spaces is unequal—while some areas in Paskuqan benefit from partial access to communal spaces, youth in Bathore often lack safe and inclusive environments for gathering or activities.

Insight 3:

Youth organizations lack stable resources and space—Most youth groups operate without permanent venues, equipment, or structured support, limiting their ability to grow, plan long-term, or reach more young people.

4. Survey Insights - A Holistic View

4.1. Executive Snapshot

In both Bathore, a rural neighborhood, and Paskuqan, a peri-urban area, young people view public spaces as vital for social interaction, sports, and informal

a

activities. However, the accessibility, quality, and safety of these spaces differ between the two locations. Despite these variations, there is a shared demand for more functional, inclusive, and well-maintained public areas that support active youth participation and can be used consistently throughout the year.

4.2. What Young People Value

Youth in both peri-urban and rural areas make frequent use of public spaces, with 40% of peri-urban and 48% of rural youth visiting them several times a week. In peri-urban settings, mobile phone use and socializing are the most common activities, while in rural areas, walking is more prevalent. Safety is a top concern across both contexts—particularly in rural areas, where 67% of youth cite it as a priority, compared to 50% in peri-urban

zones. Cleanliness is also important in peri-urban areas, noted by 25% of respondents. Preferences for public space types vary: youth in peri-urban areas tend to favor built environments like cafés and parks, whereas their rural counterparts are more drawn to quiet, natural settings.

4.3. The Role of Public Spaces

A strong majority of youth recognize the value of public spaces, with 85% of respondents in peri-urban areas and 90% in rural areas describing them as “very important” for people their age.

Top qualities youth value in public spaces:

- Safety – 60 % in peri-urban area and 66.7% in rural area
- Cleanliness – 25% in peri-urban and 19% in rural area
- Activities – 20 % in peri-urban and 14.3% in rural area

Table 2 An overlaid spider-web plot comparing Peri-Urban and Rural sites on five key dimensions.

Axis	Metric
Visit Frequency	40 %in Paskuqan(peri-urban) and 47.6% in Bathore(rural) who go “a few times a week” or more
Safety	60% feel safe “sometimes” Paskuqan and 66.7% in Bathore and
Importance	95 % who say public spaces are “very important” in Paskuqan and 90.5% in Bathore
Youth Voice	55% who “definitely” want a say in design in Pakuqan and 81% in Bathore
Event Participation	30 % who “would join” a group improving spaces in Paskuqan and 33.3% in Bathore

Table 3 Who Took Part

Demographic	Peri-Urban	Rural
Total Respondents	20	21
Youth (18–24 yrs) (Over 30)	85%	57.1%
	15%	42.9%
Gender: Female	45%	81 %
Gender: Male	55%	19 %
Other / Prefer NTS	___ %	___ %

4.4. If You Could Change One Thing...

In both peri-urban and rural areas, young people emphasized the need for more and better public spaces. In peri-urban zones, their priorities centered on expanding the number of accessible public areas, improving basic infrastructure, and ensuring adequate shade—particularly important for comfort during warmer seasons. Rural youth echoed the call for more public spaces but also highlighted specific needs such as enhanced safety, better cleanliness, and improved accessibility. Additionally, they pointed out the lack of simple but essential features like seating and benches, which would make these spaces more inviting and functional for everyday use.

5. Focus Groups

5.1. Session Summary (Peri-Urban & Rural)

In April, ETMI facilitated two focus group discussions in the Municipality of Kamëz to gather qualitative insights on youth engagement and local initiatives. The first session brought together representatives from the Municipality and the Local Youth Council, involving three participants aged between 17 and 30. The second focus group was conducted with two representatives from the organization Global Care and was held at their office.

Both discussions followed an open format, encouraging participants to share freely, while key points were documented through note-taking.

Peri-Urban

5.2. Barriers to Participation

- **Lack of youth centers (45%)** – no dedicated spaces for youth to gather, discuss problems, or plan activities.

- **Poor accessibility of public spaces (40%)** – most spaces are concentrated in one area, leaving peripheral zones underserved.
- **Insufficient lighting (35%)** – public spaces are dark at night, limiting safe usage.
- **Limited involvement in decision-making (30%)** – youth

lack access to planning or decision-making processes about public spaces.

- **Few youth-specific projects or training opportunities (30%)** – few initiatives focus on skill-building, creativity, or active engagement



Figure Focus Groups



Figure Focus Groups

5.2. Key Themes & Quotes

Theme	Mentions (%)	Role	Quote
Inclusion	50%	Barrier	Youth do not have access to decision-making
Accessibility	45%	Barrier	They are not very accessible because they are concentrated in one area
Safety	35%	Barrier	At night they have no lighting; they are in darkness

5.3. Quick Synthesis & Action

In Paskuqan, 50% of youth identified exclusion from decision-making as a key barrier, while 45% noted that public spaces are too concentrated in one area, limiting access for those in peripheral

neighborhoods. Poor lighting was also raised by 35%, reinforcing earlier concerns about limited evening use. Despite some awareness efforts, 40% still felt uninformed or disconnected from public initiatives. These barriers reduce

youth engagement and underutilize existing spaces. A quick-win action would be to install solar-powered lights along

the areas that are in total darkness and the installation of info-board in local schools and community centers to increase awareness.

Rura

5.4. Barriers to Participation

- **Lack of public spaces (50%)** - there are not enough public spaces
- **Insufficient lighting (35%)** - There is a severe lack of lighting, at night some roads are impassable due to darkness.
- **Limited infrastructure (30%)** - existing parks lack infrastructure
- **Limited involvement in decision-making (30%)** – youth lack access to planning or decision-making processes about public spaces
- **Parental and cultural constraints (35%)** – traditional mindsets discourage youth participation.

5.5. Key Themes & Quotes

Theme	Mentions	Role	Quote
Safety	50%	Barrier	There is not enough lighting
Amenities	30%	Barrier	<i>There isn't much space to sit or games to play in the park</i>
Awareness	40%	Enabler/Barrier	No training is conducted for youth, and we are not informed about activities.

5.6. Quick Synthesis & Action

In Bathore, poor safety due to insufficient lighting was cited by 50% of participants, while 30% noted a lack of amenities like seating and play areas. Additionally, 40% of youth expressed limited awareness due to the absence of training or information on local activities. These issues reflect a

broader lack of youth inclusion and infrastructure noted in previous findings. A quick-win action would be to install solar-powered lights in key park areas and use local schools and community boards to promote upcoming events and training opportunities.

C. Organizations & Community Actors

Peri-urban site

In Paskuqan, there is limited formal organization of youth groups or active civil society engagement. While local schools occasionally involve students in extracurricular or community projects, there are no well-established youth clubs or NGOs operating specifically in the area. Public institutions such as the local administrative unit may support occasional events or awareness campaigns, but structured roles like outreach, maintenance, or planning are minimal. Coordination between stakeholders is informal and sporadic, often relying on personal networks rather than official meetings or platforms. This lack of organization likely stems from limited resources, weak institutional presence, and a history of informal urban development.

Rural site

In Bathore, there is little to no formal information available regarding organized youth groups or active stakeholder networks focused on youth engagement. This absence can be attributed to several factors: the area's rapid and informal urban development, limited investment in public infrastructure, and weak institutional presence. Without dedicated community centers, youth clubs, or consistent NGO activity, opportunities for structured participation remain scarce. Most youth initiatives, if any, are led informally by schools or individuals on a case-by-case basis. As a result, coordination, outreach, and sustained civic involvement by young people remain underdeveloped and largely undocumented.

THE NETHERLANDS

General Information

Partner: Saxion UAS
Country: Netherlands
City/Region: Deventer / Stedendriehoek

A. Neighborhood Profile

1. Case Study Context & Justification

The peri-urban areas Blauwenoord (Colmschate) and Deltabuurt (Rivierenwijk) were chosen because these have social-economic and safety issues, e.g. housing quality and environmental quality need attention. In both areas the same youth organizations are active, which made it also practical.

The rural Wijhe and Bathmen (and their surroundings) were chosen because they have different situation and approach. In Wijhe youth organization(s) focus on

activities and support for the younger youth. Unfortunately there was a lot of illness among the youth workers during the data collection phase. Bathmen was chosen because of a well-functioning rural youth organization for mainly youth over 18. They are self-sustaining and do community services, however they have challenges too.

1.1. Peri-urban site

Site Snapshot

1	Site Name:	Deltabuurt
	Location: Address or nearest town:	Deventer
	Area Size:	0,45 km ² - Part of Rivierenwijk
	Population Size:	3.088 (2024)
2	Site Name:	Blauwenoord
	Location: Address or nearest town:	Deventer
	Area Size:	0,28 km ² - Part of Colmschate-Noord
	Population Size:	1.555 (2024)

Site description

Site 1 – Deltabuurt is a residential neighborhood in the municipality of Deventer. The distance to the city center is appr. 2 km. It has a small shopping center and integrated primary school. The

distance to railway stations and motorways is app. 2 km. The area has both 3-4 level apartment blocks and low-rise housing. There are green spaces, playgrounds and small parks integrated in the rectangular neighborhood planning. Most of the houses were constructed in

the 1960s and 1970s. In the early 2000s some urban renewal took place to improve the living environment and the housing quality, including new facilities for school and community center (Huis van de Wijk). Deltabuurt has a young population. Approx. 40% is between 25-44 years old. There is a mixture of single households of young adults and families. The neighborhood has a

multicultural character. Appr. 50% of the inhabitants have a migration background. Mostly Turkish and EU. The average income is quite low. Studying and production work are the main activities. Although the Dutch have a history in water, currently foreign practices are used for water retention and climate proof planning. So called Wadi's are integrated in the public space in Deltabuurt.



Image 1. Deltabuurt overview



Image 2. Deltabuurt community center

Site 2 – Blauwenoord is a neighborhood in Deventer and is part of Colmschate-Noord district. It is a residential area and was built in 1980s with terraced houses in winding paths and courtyards. It is one of the so-called Dutch cauliflower-districts. There is a tiny shopping center, a primary school, a youth center (The Mall) an international bridging class for foreign youth. The distance to motorway is 2 km, the railway station is <1km. There are parks and green spaces including a skate park, however a lot of the public space is used for private car parking. The main groups

of inhabitants of Blauwenoord are families with children and elderly couples, who live there since the start of the construction. There is a residential care home in the area. There are fewer single households. The average income is lower than average, but higher than in Deltabuurt. Most houses are privately owned, with a comparatively low price. Raster supports music workshops for youth. The youngsters of Colmschate make great rap-songs! Some Saxion students are trained as volunteers in Impacter.



Image 3. Blauwenoord overview



Image 4. The Mall - Youth Center

1.2. Rural Site

Site Snapshot

1	Site Name:	Wijhe
	Location: Address or nearest town:	Olst-Wijhe municipality
	Area Size:	10,97 km ²
	Population Size:	12.736
2	Site Name:	Bathmen
	Location: Address or nearest town:	Part of Deventer municipality
	Area Size:	35,50 km ²
	Population Size:	10.475

Site description

Site 1 – Wijhe is a village and part of the Olst-Wijhe municipality. It has appr. 5200 inhabitants. It is located along the river IJssel, north of Deventer and has primary schools, and a secondary school, and sports facilities all (to be) located in the SPOC hub. There is a railway station and a ferry across the river. The houses are mainly semi-detached of average price, apart from the old part mostly built 1970-2000. The biggest part of the population is over 40 years old. Families

and elderly couples are the main groups. For young people it is difficult to find suitable affordable housing. There is a shopping center and a small business center. The average income is below average. The municipality plans to build >1000 houses in the near future.

The hang-out place for youth in Wijhe has to relocate because of the high water level of the river IJssel in the winter.



Image 5. Wijhe overview



Image 6. Wijhe MOP

Site 2 – Bathmen is a village east of Deventer, and is part of the Deventer Municipality. It has grown extensively in the last 50 years. It has 10.400 inhabitants. There are 2 primary schools, some shops & restaurants and sports facilities. It has a strong agricultural tradition with a large countryside with several hamlets (Oxe, Lettele, Loo, Kring van Dorth, Dortherhoek, Zuid-Loo). Houses are mainly semi-detached and of an average or little above average price. In the village people commute to Deventer, Amersfoort and Twente. The village links directly to the motorway, but does not have a railway station (6 km).

Bathmen has a relatively greying population. There is a need for affordable housing for young people. The average income is comparatively high. Most people commute for work or school to Deventer, Holten or Twente. In the countryside the agricultural sector provides employment.

PJB Bathmen organizes a large auction every year with many volunteers. With that they support other local initiatives. (So they contribute to society, this motivates them).

The cultural background in both areas is mainly Dutch.



Image 7. Bathmen overview



Image 8. Bathmen, Brink village

2. Spatial Analysis

2.1. Peri-urban site spatial analysis

Deltabuurt and Blauwenoord are both centrally located in the city of Deventer. Both have a very specific character, which give it a neighborhood-feel.

Site 1 – Deltabuurt has straight streets, a lot of green. There are playgrounds for kids and youngsters. Along the main streets there is public transport. The bridge over the road Hanzetracé forms the entry to the Deltabuurt from the city center. There are pavements available, but not always free of bicycles or trash. There are bicycles all over the place. After

the restructuring the overall maintenance has improved. There is lighting. The quality of the streets is ok.

However, the cleanliness is an issue. Not all inhabitants use the waste management system in the right way. The apartments are often rented out by absent landlords to new inhabitants, with less involvement with the neighborhood and maintenance.

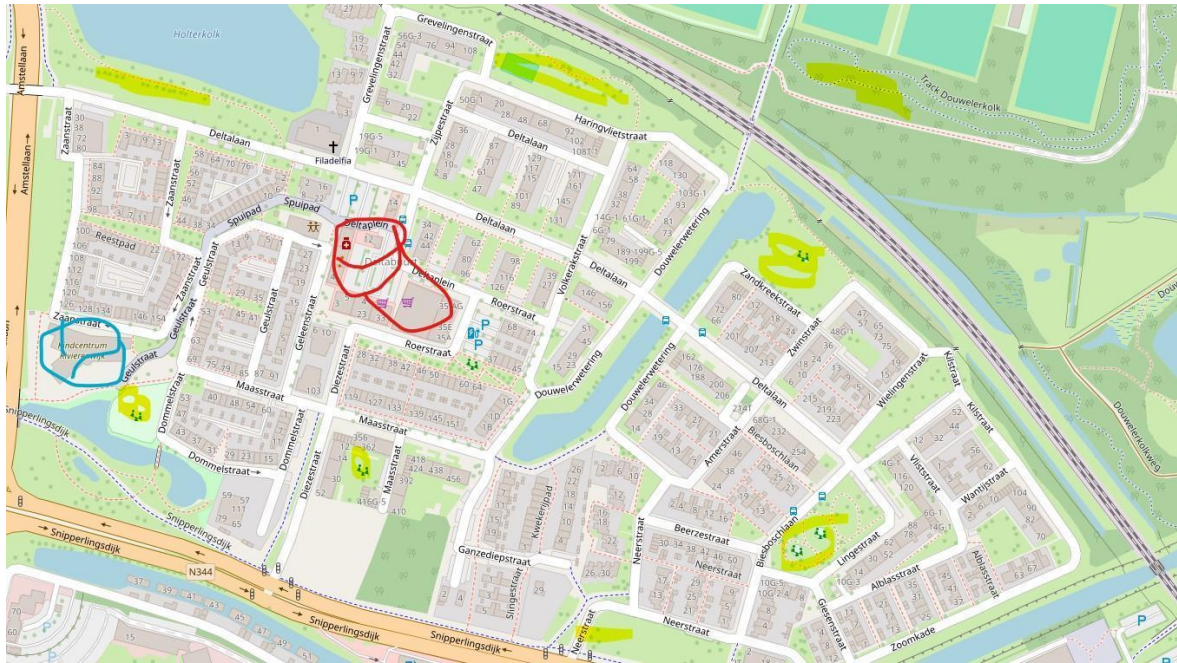


Figure 5 Deltabuurt map



Image 10. Deltabuurt housing



Image 11. Deltabuurt maintenance issues



Image 12. Deltabuurt park



Image 13. Deltabuurt playground

Site 2 – Blauwenoord has a courtyard which gives it a cozy but also a bit of a messy feel. There are playgrounds around the courtyards. Public transport is available along the main street. Oostriklaan and Zwaluwenburg form the entrance to the area.

Cars play an important role in the streets, there are car parks everywhere. Parks and playgrounds were concentrated in the last couple of years. The quality of the maintenance varies.

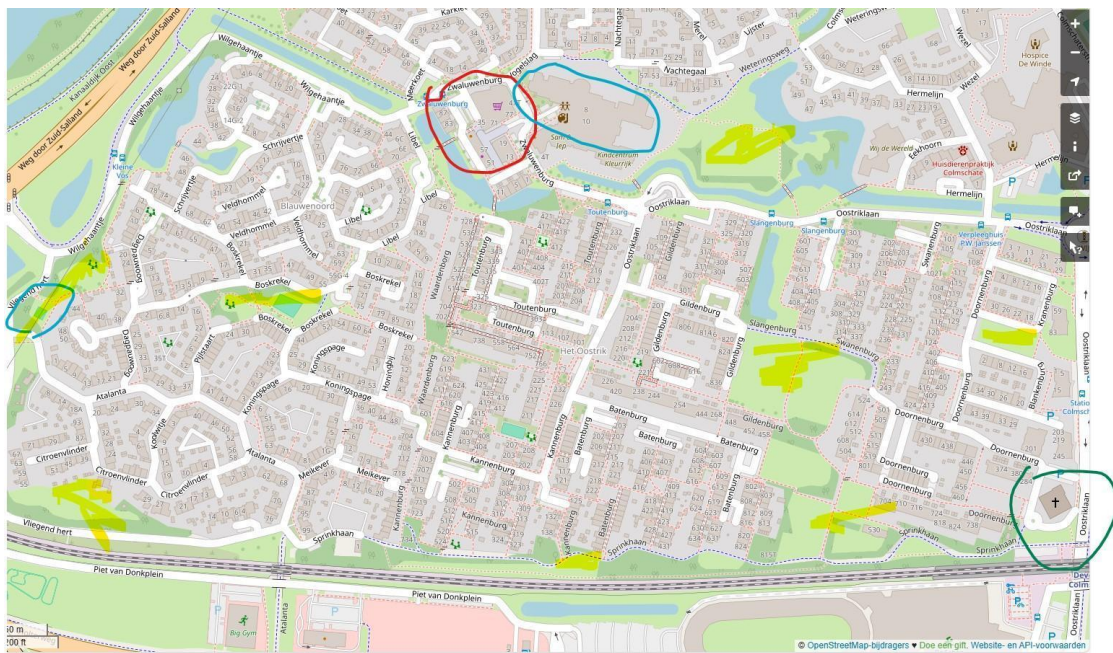


Image 14. Blauwenoord Map



Image 15. Blauwenoord skatepark



Image 16. Blauwenoord shopping center



Image 17. Blauwenoord housing



Image 18. Private playground

2.2. RURAL SITE SPATIAL ANALYSIS

Walkthrough Narrative

Site 1 – The entrance to Wijhe is the road from the river IJssel to the shopping center. There is also the industry. The main housing area is east and west of the shopping center. There is a variety of housing types, the streets and pavements are clean and safe.

In Wijhe there are few distinct areas: the business center at the entrance of the village, with some hang-out places which may not be fully safe in the evening (not sure). The train track

forms a barrier towards the eastern part of the village, where the sportscenter and schools are. The rest of the village is residential, well maintained. The river IJssel and the road along it form the western border of the village.

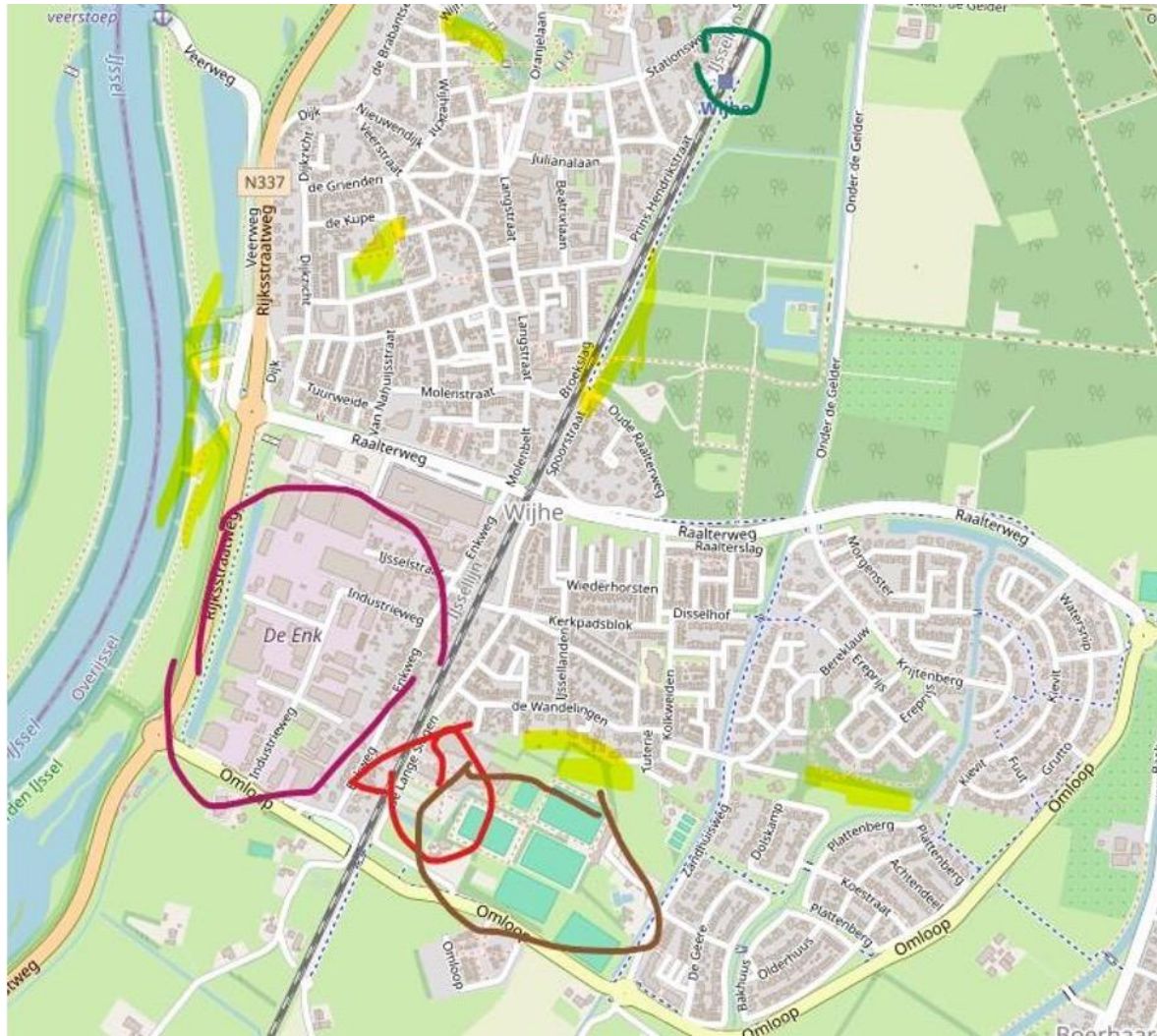


Image 19. Wijhe Map



Image 20. Wijhe Primary school



Image 21. Wijhe industrial area



Image 22. Wijhe Playground



Image 23. Wijhe near IJssel

Site 2 – Roads from Deventer, Holten and A1 motorway form the entrance to Bathmen. There is not a clear urban design, every corner has its own character. The village has a clear center De Brink, the largest public area. Green is abundant, but mainly private (much more than in e.g. Deltabuurt). There are playgrounds around the schools, the maintenance is mostly ok. Bathmen has a traditional village square (Brink), where safety and attractivity is an issue at the moment (especially for elderly). The village is quite car-based, but cycling paths are available along the main roads, as in Wijhe. In general in both villages including the hamlets around the villages have a friendly vibe. Green areas are scattered around the villages. Both private and public. In the hamlets there are no sidewalks, in some cases there are cycling paths.



Image 24 Bathmen Map



Image 25. Bathmen public green space



Image 26. Bathmen community private gardens

2.3. Comparative Snapshot

Table 1 Comparative snapshot

Criterion	Peri-Urban Site Notes	Rural Site Notes
Connectivity	<i>Bus stops in the neighborhood. Blauwenoord is close to Colmschate train-station. Cycling is important.</i>	<i>Wijhe: train every 30 min, buses North, East and South Bathmen: no train, buses East and West. Good motorway connection. Cycling is important.</i>
Accessibility	<i>Sidewalks available. In Deltabuurt not always free to use (bicycles, stuff)</i>	<i>In villages there are sidewalks. In hamlets these are missing, as walking is not common. Cycling is and car driving.</i>
Safety	<i>Well lit. CCTV is not common in NL (requires permission),</i>	<i>Well-lit villages. In the hamlets only on the main roads. CCTV needs permission.</i>
Amenities	<i>Benches,</i>	<i>Few.</i>
Public Space Types	<i>Small shopping center, skate park, basketball park, playgrounds (small), parks, small ponds.</i>	<i>Both: shopping center, ballpark, playgrounds, Wijhe: riverbank of IJssel Bathmen: rural green Brink</i>
Maintenance Level	<i>Varying levels of maintenance of houses and public spaces. Waste management needs attention.</i>	<i>Overall good level of maintenance. Some places outside the build area with waste dumping.</i>

B. Youth Perspectives & Priorities

3. Baseline Data Summary

3.1. Context, Method and Quick View of Sites

The baseline data was collected through interviews with youth workers and board members, either in person or by phone, and documented in the Baseline Study Excel. Data collection took place during the spring of 2023. Due to illness, information from Wijhe is incomplete—especially regarding youth and youth workers—so Bathmen, known for its active rural youth organization, was included as an alternative. Deltabuurt has the youngest population overall, largely students and workers over 20, while other areas are more family-oriented, with rural areas showing signs of an aging population. A shared concern among interviewees is the limited use of public space by younger youth, with surveys possibly underrepresenting those who stay at home.

3.2. Top 3 Insights

Insight 1:

One of the strengths in the areas is the strong cooperation between various stakeholders. Youth workers, those working with NEET youth, police

officers, and community center staff all know each other and work closely together. This strong network supports more effective coordination and youth engagement.

Insight 2:

Activities designed for the youngest age group (under 12) play an important role in preventing loneliness and helping youth workers gain insight into children's personal situations. However, there is an ongoing question about whether these activities should be mixed or separated by gender.

Insight 3:

Sports events, along with music and theatre workshops, are especially popular among youth. These activities are well-attended and offer valuable opportunities for connection, expression, and community participation.

4. Survey Insights - A Holistic View

4.1. Executive Snapshot

The survey gathered insights from youth in the villages of Wijhe and Colmschate, focusing on their use of public space and interest in participation. In Wijhe, younger youth are more often seen in parks and streets, primarily meeting friends but showing less interest in getting involved in organized activities—possibly influenced by the timing and context of the survey. In contrast, youth in Colmschate tend to be slightly older, with a noticeable group expressing a desire to participate in

community life, and some already doing so. In both places, public spaces are seen as safe and important for social connection.



Figure 21 Youth being surveyed, Colmschate

4.2. What Young People Value

In Colmschate (urban), 82% of youth prefer spending time near the shopping center or on the streets; in Wijhe (rural), 63% choose the shopping area and 53% go to the riverbank. Sports and playgrounds come second (63% Colmschate), with the skatepark and basketball courts as top spots. Playgrounds are especially popular among the youngest in Wijhe. Meeting friends is the main reason to visit public

spaces (84% Wijhe; 67% Colmschate), followed by doing fun activities (41% Colmschate; 26% Wijhe). Cleanliness and safety are rarely mentioned (12% Colmschate). Youth in both places want to be left alone and appreciate good maintenance. While both value social space, urban youth—often older—show more interest in placemaking, likely due to stronger connections with youth workers

4.3. The Role of Public Spaces

Overall, 89% of youth in both Colmschate and Wijhe consider public spaces important for people their age. These spaces are regularly used, with 85% of Colmschate youth and 63% in Wijhe visiting several times a week.

Top qualities youth value in public spaces:

- Meeting friends (Blauwenoord 43%, Wijhe 52%)
- Fun activities (Blauwenoord 26%, Wijhe 16%)
- Safety (Blauwenoord 12%, Wijhe 3%)

Demographic	Peri-Urban <i>Blauwenoord</i>	Rural <i>Wijhe</i>
Total Respondents	27	19
It is clean there	5 %	13 %
It is safe there	12 %	3 %
You can do fun things there	26 %	16 %
I can meet my friends there	43 %	52 %
Other	14 %	16 %

When it comes to influence, half of urban youth in Colmschate want to actively participate in shaping these spaces. In rural Wijhe, only 26% express the same,

with many unsure of their role—possibly due to their younger age and less experience engaging with adults or youth workers.

4.4. If You Could Change One Thing...

In peri-urban Colmschate, youth ask for practical improvements: waste bins where they hang out, rain shelters they're allowed to use, and better maintenance of spaces like the Vliegend Hert skatepark. They also want hands-on areas, like a spot to repair bikes or cars, and opportunities to support younger kids through organized activities.

In rural Wijhe, young people want to feel more included. They ask for gathering spots near the shopping center where they won't be sent away, more general activities—especially for girls—and less pushback from neighbors. Many describe the town as boring and want more space to simply be themselves.

Table 2 An overlaid spider-web plot comparing Peri-Urban and Rural sites on five key dimensions.

Axis	Metric
Visit Frequency	63% several times per week in Wijhe; 85% in Colmschate.
Safety	89% who feel safe “always” or “sometimes” in Wijhe and in Bathmen.
Importance	32% who say public spaces are “very important” in Wijhe; 46% in Colmschate.
Youth Voice	26% who “definitely” want a say in design in Wijhe; 50% in Colmschate.
Event Participation	11% who “would join” a group improving spaces in Wijhe; 23% in Colmschate.

Table 3 Who Took Part

Demographic	Peri-Urban Blauwenoord	Rural Wijhe
Total Respondents	27	19
Youth (15–30 yrs)		
<18	56 %	89 %
18-24	40 %	11 %
>24	4 %	0 %
Gender: Female	45 %	47 %
Gender: Male	50 %	53 %
Other / Prefer NTS	4 %	0 %

5. Focus Groups

5.1. Session Summary (Peri-Urban & Rural)

In peri-urban Colmschate, the session took place on 9 April 2025 with seven local youth (ages 17–22, mostly male) and three youth workers (ages 30–40). The group met in a relaxed setting, supported by insights from prior interviews, allowing for open conversation. A facilitator guided the discussion using icebreakers and focused questions, with notes taken throughout.

In rural Bathmen, the session was held on 4 May 2025 with seven board members from the Rural Youth organization (ages 19–30; four male, three female). The same method was used, creating space for honest, structured dialogue.



Figure 22 Colmschate focus group

Peri-Urban

5.2. Barriers to Participation

- **Banned from gathering (%)** – youth are often sent away by neighbors or shopkeepers.
- **Hangout spots poorly located (%)** – too far feels unsafe; too close disturbs residents.
- **Lack of maintenance (%)** – missing basics like waste bins make places less appealing.
- **Negative social atmosphere (%)** – without a positive group vibe, youth lose interest.
- **Inclusion for newcomers (%)** – new youth feel unwelcome without friendly dynamics.

5.3. Key Themes & Quotes

Theme	Mentions	Role	Quote
Safety		Barrier	"A safe hideaway is important — we want a space that's not seen as a problem zone."
Amenities		Barrier	"There are not enough waste bins here."
Awareness /support		Enabler	"Raster supports us when talking to neighbors and the municipality about equipment."

5.4. Quick Synthesis & Action

In Colmschate, youth proposed practical upgrades for small parks and hangout spots, but haven't yet reached the municipality. This aligns with earlier findings showing strong interest in

participation, especially among older teens. Because their ideas remain unheard, motivation to engage may drop. A quick-win action would be to organize a youth-municipality meet-up to review and prioritize their suggestions.

Rural

5.5. Barriers to Participation

- **Lack of focus on youth spaces (%)** – Youth needs are overlooked in public space planning, with attention on broader redesigns.
- **Limited youth housing (%)** – A shortage of housing options pushes young people to leave their village.
- **Low civic engagement among younger teens (%)** – Youth aged 14–16 show little interest in public matters or community initiatives.
- **Weak community connection (%)** – A fading sense of belonging reduces motivation to participate.
- **Strategic, not practical focus (%)** – Involvement stays high-level, with little input on daily-use amenities.

5.6. Key Themes & Quotes

Theme	Mentions	Role	Quote
Safety			<i>Not an issue</i>
Amenities		Barrier	<i>"Housing for young people is important to keep the village alive."</i>
Awareness		Enabler/Barrier	<i>"We have difficulties attracting younger members. They seem to be less interested in the community."</i>

C. Organizations & Community Actors

Peri-urban site

In Deventer the municipality works with a variety of organizations to support youth between 12-30 years. Raster Group is active in all neighborhoods with social work for youth and adults. In Colmschate including Blauwenoord, they work from neighborhood centers like Moonlight and Huis van de Wijk, but also do street work. They have specific activities like culture, sport. They keep a keen eye on youth who are possibly at risk (home circumstances, addictions, school/work related issues). They are in touch with maintenance teams, Youth for Christ, neighborhood organizations, police etc.

In Blauwenoord and Deltabuurt (Rivierenwijk) Youth for Christ is active in The Mall, a youth center. They focus on vulnerable youth who need specific attention to develop their talents.

In Deventer Impacter is a specific organization that works with youth volunteers to empower youth to find their place in society and support community building and citizenship development.

The organizations work closely together to support the individual youngsters in the

best way. Team Together Deventer (Voor Elkaar) coordinates the activities between the organizations.

Rural site

In Olst-Wijhe UtHuus organizes the youth activities on behalf of the municipality. They organize activities in the community centers (Kulturhus), like Teenage clubs, Supergirl's and Youth hangout, but also support the mobile meeting place (JOPs) for youth in Wijhe. They are also responsible for individual support and the relations with e.g. health organizations, police, 'veilig thuis'.

In Bathmen the structure is like in Deventer (as part of Deventer). The Plattelands Jongerenvereniging Bathmen (PJB) is a youth association for rural youth. They have a long tradition in supporting (agricultural and other) youth. They have >400 members and an active board and several committees for social cultural activities. They are involved in local, spatial initiatives, invited and uninvited.

KOSOVO

General Information

Partner:	University of Prishtina
Country:	Kosovo
City/Region:	Prishtina

A. Neighborhood Profile

1. Case Study Context & Justification

The selection for Kosovo includes three distinct locations that reflect varying degrees of urbanization and youth engagement with public spaces:

- 1. **Peri-Urban:** Arbëria Park, part of the peripheral neighborhoods of Prishtina
- 2. **Rural:** Koshtovë (village core and immediate surroundings, emphasizing traditional village dynamics)

Prishtina’s peripheral neighborhoods represent rapidly expanding urban fringes where young people face challenges related to safety, infrastructure, and inclusive design. Koshtovë, as part of the Mitrovica municipality, sits at the threshold between urban and rural life—youth there benefit from proximity to

Mitrovica’s services yet experience rural limitations in infrastructure and public programming. The village core of Koshtovë highlights truly rural conditions, where public space is constrained by a lack of dedicated youth-focused infrastructure, and where geography (cemeteries, mosque, river) shapes spatial usage. Together, these three sites offer a comprehensive view of how public spaces are perceived and utilized by youth across Kosovo’s urban–rural continuum.

1.1. Peri-urban site

Site Snapshot

1	Site Name:	Arbëria Park
	Location: Address or nearest town:	Northwestern part of Prishtina
	Area Size:	15km2
	Population Size:	Estimated 80,000–100,000 residents (with approximately 10,000 youth aged 11–24 in the surveyed sections) (2024)

Site description

Prishtina's periphery extends beyond the historical city center into neighborhoods that have developed organically over the past two decades. These areas are characterized by mixed-density housing—ranging from older single-family dwellings to newer multi-story apartment blocks—often lacking consistent urban planning. Public space infrastructure

varies drastically, with some blocks offering paved sidewalks and basic lighting, while others consist of vacant lots, informal gathering spots, and underdeveloped parks. Youth in these neighborhoods frequently congregate in parks, along main commercial streets, or in poorly maintained “pocket” squares where limited seating and lighting are available.



Image 1. Map of Arbëria Park



Image 2. Arbëria Park - View from top



Image 3. Arbëria Park - View from top



Image 4. Arbëria Park - View from top



Image 5. Arbëria Park - Paths

1.3. Rural Site

Site Snapshot

1	Site Name:	
	Location: Address or nearest town:	
	Area Size:	
	Population Size:	

Site description

Koshtovë, as part of the Mitrovica administrative region, extends along secondary roads that connect the main highway to smaller agricultural lands. The “edge” zone refers to areas where residences are interspersed with small

plots of farmland—houses typically of one or two stories with adjacent vegetable or small livestock plots. Infrastructure here is mixed: main thoroughfares are paved, but internal lanes are unpaved or cobblestone. Public amenities are minimal: a basic playground near the school, a football (soccer) field in fair

condition, and a small youth center with sporadic programming. The village core of Koshtovë is a compact settlement where most publicmissing info life revolves around the school, mosque, and small commercial kiosks. Buildings are tightly arranged along narrow lanes; gardens and

small orchards fill any leftover interstitial spaces. Public space is limited to the schoolyard, a small plaza in front of the mosque, and the unpaved riverside path. No formal park exists; the football field—though central—is often in disrepair, with uneven turf and lacking modern equipment.



Image 6. Koshtova Map



Image 7. Koshtova



Image 8. Koshtova

2. Spatial Analysis

2.1. Peri-Urban Site Spatial Analysis

Connectivity & Accessibility:

Peripheral Prishtina neighborhoods are served by multiple bus lines connecting to the city center, but frequency is inconsistent after 8 p.m. Main roads often lack continuous sidewalks and dedicated bicycle paths. Lighting is uneven: some streets have well-spaced lampposts, while others remain dark, particularly adjacent to vacant lots or undeveloped parcels.

Public Space Typologies:

In these areas, neighborhood parks with playground equipment are present, although they are often poorly maintained. Informal gathering corridors run along commercial streets and are lined by small cafés and shops. Additionally, open green patches near apartment blocks serve as ad hoc sports fields or social zones.

Walkthrough Narrative:

Residents arrive by bus or private minibus along wide arterial roads. Transitioning into residential streets, sidewalks narrow and pavement quality deteriorates. Abandoned kiosks and unpaved lots become informal meeting points. In pocket parks, youth can be seen playing ping-pong or socializing on benches damaged by graffiti. At night, only major intersections are illuminated; smaller sidewalks are dim or completely dark, heightening safety concerns.

2.2. Peri-Urban Site Spatial Analysis

Connectivity & Accessibility:

The main access route to Koshtovë—extending from the Mitrovica–Prishtina highway—is a single, paved roadway served by one bus line (with two stops within the broader settlement). From this artery, narrow lanes branch off into both the peripheral hamlets and the village core. These internal lanes are predominantly unpaved or cobblestone, without dedicated sidewalks; consequently, pedestrians and motor vehicles share confined pathways. After sunset, most secondary lanes—especially those adjacent to the cemetery and along the Ibër River—are completely unlit, heightening safety concerns for youth and other residents. Within the village core, the school and mosque lie adjacent to one another, forming a multi-use civic zone; however, the older cemetery area and riverbank lack any safe pedestrian infrastructure or lighting. The nearest health center (QKMF) is also situated beside the school, reinforcing this area as a focal point where youth, families, and elders intersect.

Public Space Typologies:

In both the edge and core zones, the schoolyard functions as a de facto playground, while the adjacent football pitch—with its uneven turf and damaged goals—hosts PE classes, informal matches, and weekend tournaments. A small plaza in front of the mosque serves as a social gathering point, especially after prayer times, although seating there

is minimal and often deteriorated. Along the Ibër River frontage, narrow dirt or gravel paths are used for walking, fishing, or resting on makeshift benches, but the absence of guardrails and lighting discourages evening use. Surrounding peri-urban residences, fallow fields and small-scale vegetable plots double as impromptu play areas whenever they are not under cultivation. Within the core village, family-run kiosks and shops offer minimal seating—typically a single bench or shaded spot—creating only limited, informal gathering areas.

Walkthrough Narrative:

Approaching Koshtovë from the Mitrovica–Prishtina highway, one first traverses a paved two-lane road. After approximately one kilometer, low-rise houses—set back slightly from the road and interspersed with orchards or vegetable plots—become visible. The local football field appears beyond these plots: fenced but with visible holes, yet still frequently occupied by youth playing informal matches. Continuing, a narrow paved lane leads to the mosque plaza. Here, a single bench under a mature tree offers minimal seating; trash often accumulates near the perimeter, underscoring maintenance deficits.

Directly behind the mosque lies the Jusuf Rexha Schoolyard: a concrete surface marked for various sports but lacking modern equipment. During recess or weekends, children spill onto this yard, using makeshift goals to play football; older youth often congregate here when no structured activities are scheduled. South of the schoolyard, a worn

cobblestone path narrows to roughly half a meter as it approaches the Ibër Riverbank. Along this riverside stretch, youth and elders walk or fish—though without guardrails or adequate lighting, the path becomes treacherous after dusk, discouraging evening visits.

Within the densest village core, cobblestone lanes wind between single-story homes enclosed by low-stone walls. The mosque and school zones remain accessible on foot, but adjacent areas—particularly near the cemetery—are pitch-dark at night. This lack of safe pedestrian infrastructure causes many youth to avoid these routes after sunset, further isolating the core from adjacent settlements. Overall, the combined peri-urban/rural and rural connectivity conditions constrain youth mobility and limit safe access to existing public spaces .

2.3. Comparative Snapshot

Criterion	Peri-Urban (Peripheral Prishtina)	Koshtovë – Edge & Core
Connectivity & Accessibility	Served by multiple bus lines connecting to the city center; sidewalks are uneven and often broken, with no dedicated bicycle lanes. Lighting is inconsistent—major roads may be lit, but secondary streets (particularly adjacent to vacant lots) remain dark after dusk. Pedestrians navigate narrow sidewalks and contend with stray dogs.	Access to Koshtovë is via a single paved road from the Mitrovica–Prishtina highway (one bus line, two stops). Internal lanes are cobblestone or dirt without sidewalks, forcing pedestrians and vehicles to share narrow paths. After dark, most lanes—especially near the cemetery and riverbank—are unlit. The school, mosque, and QKMF health center adjoin one another but lack safe pedestrian infrastructure toward the cemetery or riverside.
Accessibility (Safety & Perception)	Approximately 42.5 % of youth feel only “sometimes” safe due to poor lighting, broken sidewalks, and stray dogs; safety concerns are more pronounced among females (avg. perception score 5.5/10 vs. males at 9.25/10).	About 35 % of youth report feeling only “sometimes” safe—particularly after dark—because unlit lanes near the cemetery and riverbank pose hazards. Female youth are under-represented in public activities, citing safety and cultural barriers despite both genders prioritizing safety and cleanliness.
Amenities & Public Space Quality	Public parks exist but are under-maintained: broken playground equipment, damaged benches, and sporadic trash removal. Informal gathering spots along commercial strips and “pocket” green plots provide additional, albeit rudimentary, spaces for youth socialization.	Formal amenities are minimal and poorly maintained: the football field’s turf is uneven and goals are damaged; the schoolyard functions only as an ad hoc play area; the mosque plaza has deteriorated seating and accumulates refuse; riverbank paths lack guardrails or lighting; adjacent agricultural plots serve as informal play areas; kiosks offer only one or two benches for gathering.

Predominant Youth Uses	Resting or relaxing alone (30 %), socializing with friends (15 %), playing games or sports in local parks (27.5 %), walking or cycling along main streets (22.5 %).	Youth primarily use the football field for sports, rest near the school or mosque plaza, walk or fish along the riverbank, and gather informally near kiosks. Most activities occur during daylight, with avoidance of evening use due to safety concerns around lighting and terrain.
Maintenance Level	Under-maintained: broken playground equipment, litter in parks, and damaged benches.	Maintenance is poor across both zones: the football field's uneven turf and damaged goals are unrepaired; riverbank and plaza areas frequently hold trash; internal lanes accumulate debris; the cemetery and nearby paths remain overgrown and unlit.
Inclusivity & Gender Dynamics	Female safety concerns are significantly higher: females rate public space safety at 5.5/10 vs. males at 9/10. Limited lighting and poor infrastructure exacerbate these disparities, causing lower female participation in public activities.	Female youth are under-represented in sports and social gatherings due to safety and cultural norms. Both male and female respondents prioritize safety and cleanliness, but female participation remains low without gender-sensitive programming and infrastructure improvements.
Youth Engagement Level	77.5 % of respondents want to influence public space design; 72.5 % express willingness to participate in improvement activities.	Approximately 79 % of youth want to be included in design processes, and around 62 % would join improvement groups if such channels existed. However, no formal engagement mechanisms currently facilitate their participation, reducing actual involvement despite strong interest.
Landmarks & Attractions for Youth	Small local malls or strip-malls near main roads; informal basketball courts; university campus outskirts; occasional pop-up cultural events organized by NGOs.	Primary youth landmarks include the Jusuf Rexha schoolyard and football pitch, the mosque plaza, the Ibër Riverbank, the adjacent QKMF health center, and small family-run kiosks. These serve as key gathering points despite their limited infrastructure and lack of modern recreational facilities.

Table 1. Comparative snapshot

B. Youth Perspectives & Priorities

3. Baseline Data Summary

3.1. Context, Method and Quick View of Sites

The baseline data was collected in April 2025 through surveys, interviews, and focus groups in two sites: Koshtovë (rural Mitrovica) and peri-urban Prishtina. In Koshtovë, 34 young people (aged 11 to 24+) participated in a survey near SHFMU Jusuf Rexha, with follow-up interviews providing qualitative insights. In Prishtina, 40 youth responded to surveys, and 8 participated in a structured focus group. While representative, some limitations include the predominance of younger respondents in Koshtovë and the informal setting of Prishtina's focus group.

3.2. Top 3 Insights

Insight 1:

There is a strong interest in greater youth involvement in shaping their surroundings: 79% believe young people should definitely have a say in how public spaces are designed, while another 18% expressed potential interest, noting they would be more engaged if they had more information.

Insight 2:

In peri-urban Prishtina, a gender gap in perceived safety is evident: male participants generally reported feeling safe, with scores ranging from 8 to 10, while female participants expressed greater vulnerability, with noticeably lower safety ratings between 3 and 8.

Insight 3:

Youth in Koshtovë frequently use public spaces, with 68% reporting visiting them every day or several times a week. The sports field stands out as the most popular location, used by more than half of respondents (56%).

4. Survey Insights - A Holistic View

4.1. Executive Snapshot

The survey conducted across two distinct areas — the rural village of Koshtovë in Mitrovica and the peri-urban neighborhood of Prishtina — reveals a shared desire among youth for cleaner, safer, and more engaging public spaces. While Koshtovë youth gravitate toward schoolyards and sports fields due to

proximity and limited options, Prishtina youth favor parks and green areas, reflecting better urban access. Despite the differences in setting, both groups express a strong interest in contributing to

public space improvements and voice similar concerns about maintenance, lighting, and infrastructure. Their feedback underscores the need for inclusive, youth-informed urban and rural development strategies.



Image 9. Youth being surveyed, Peri-urban Prishtina



Image 10. Youth being surveyed, Rural Koshtovë

4.2. What Young People Value

In peri-urban Prishtina, parks are the favorite spots for 65% of youth seeking social and recreational spaces, with many using these areas mainly to rest or relax alone. Meanwhile, in rural Koshtovë, 68% of young people visit public spaces daily or several times a week, mostly engaging in sports or games. Cleanliness stands

out as the top priority for a good public space in Prishtina, valued by 77.5%, while youth in Kushtovë emphasize safety first (71%), followed closely by cleanliness (65%). This contrast reflects how public spaces serve different needs: in peri-urban areas, a balance of quiet zones and active areas caters to both solitary relaxation and social interaction, whereas in rural Kushtovë, these spaces are vibrant hubs for playing and socializing with others.

4.3. The Role of Public Spaces

Public spaces are seen as essential: 90% in Prishtina and 85% in Koshtovë consider them "very important."

Top qualities youth value in public spaces:

- Safety: 65% (Prishtina), 71% (Koshtovë)
- Meeting friends: 37.5% (Prishtina), 38% (Koshtovë)
- Fun activities: 52.5% (Prishtina), 53% (Koshtovë)

Youth voice is strong, with 77.5% (Prishtina) and 79% (Koshtovë) eager to be involved in design processes.

4.4. If You Could Change One Thing...

In Prishtina's peri-urban neighborhoods, youth called for basic improvements that would make their parks and shared spaces feel safer and more inviting—especially after dark. Their top priorities included better lighting, increased safety measures, and additional benches that would allow for more comfortable and longer stays outdoors. They also voiced enthusiasm for temporary pop-up events and youth-focused activities that would bring vibrancy to otherwise underused areas.

In Koshtovë, youth envisioned spaces that felt more like their own. They expressed a desire for a designated youth zone near the school, with proper seating and shaded structures that offer shelter during hot or rainy days. More than just a physical upgrade, they also hoped for structured sports tournaments and community events that could bring people together and foster a stronger sense of belonging.

Table 2 An overlaid spider-web plot comparing Peri-Urban and Rural sites on five key dimensions.

Axis	Metric
Visit Frequency	65 % (peri-urban Prishtina) vs 68 % (rural Koshtova)
Safety	65 % (peri-urban Prishtina) vs 71 % (rural Koshtova)
Importance	90 % (peri-urban Prishtina) vs 85 % (rural Koshtova)
Youth Voice	77.5 % (peri-urban Prishtina) vs 79 % (rural Koshtova)
Event Participation	72.5 % (peri-urban Prishtina) vs 62 % (rural Koshtova)

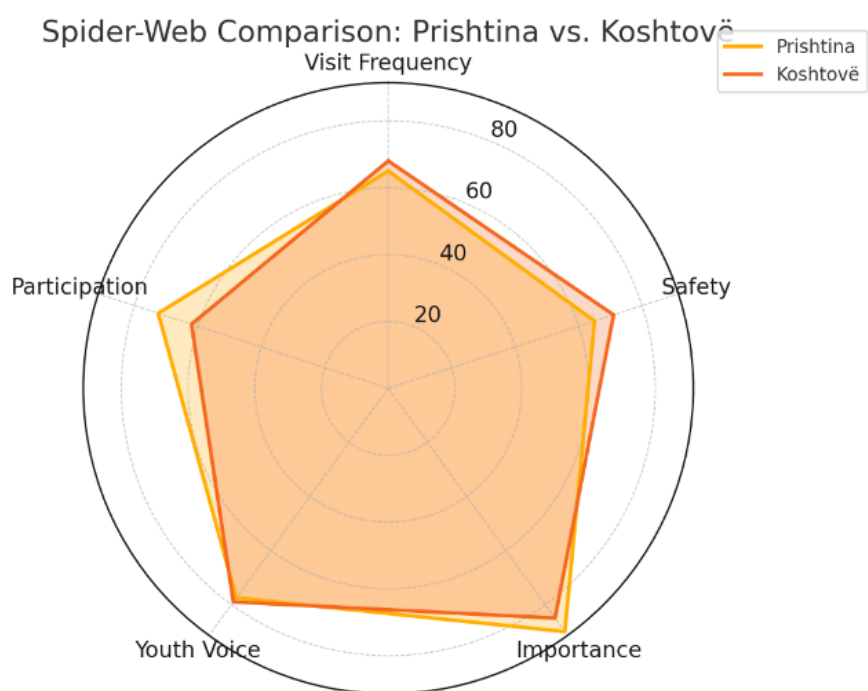


Image 11. Spider-web comparison: Prishtina vs. Koshtova

Table 3 Who Took Part

Demographic	Peri-Urban Prishtina	Rural Koshtova
Total Respondents	40	34
Youth (11–24 yrs)	80 %	87 %
Gender: Female	57.5 %	53 %
Gender: Male	42.5 %	47 %
Other / Prefer NTS	- %	- %

5. Focus Group

5.1. Session Summary (Peri-Urban & Rural)

In Prishtina, the focus group took place on 20 April 2025 and brought together 8 young people from peripheral neighborhoods, equally split by gender.

The session explored their experiences through structured thematic questions and was documented via recordings. In Koshtovë, interviews were conducted in April 2025 with 7 youth gathered near the local school. Most participants were local students or workers sharing personal reflections on everyday public space use.



Image 12. Focus Groups, Peri-urban Prishtina



Image 13. Focus Groups, Peri-urban Prishtina

Peri-Urban

3.2. Barriers to Participation

- **Poor lighting (60%)** – Unsafe at night
- **Stray dogs (50%)** – Especially impact female users
- **Lack of inclusive infrastructure (50%)** – Few shaded or comfortable areas
- **Gender-based safety concerns (50%)** – Women feel less safe
- **Underused recreation facilities (40%)** – Few active features

5.2. Key Themes & Quotes

Theme	Mentions	Role	Quote
Safety	60 %	Barrier	"I would rather say I feel 1/10 safe." - Female, Prishtina
Amenities	50 %	Barrier	"There are no benches here." - Female, Prishtina
Expression	50 %	Enabler	"We want space to express ourselves through art." - Youth

5.3. Quick Synthesis & Action

Youth in Prishtina expressed strong concerns about safety, with 60% highlighting poor lighting and stray dogs as major deterrents, especially for girls.

Lack of inclusive infrastructure, such as shaded seating, also limits engagement. Targeted improvements like solar lighting and youth-designed urban furniture could foster safer, more inviting spaces.

Rural

5.4. Barriers to Participation

- **Lack of modern infrastructure (60%)** – Poor sports field quality
- **Limited organized activities (50%)** – No structured engagement
- **Inadequate lighting (40%)** – Especially near cemetery
- **Low female participation (35%)** – Girls underrepresented in public life
- **Lack of community motivation (30%)** – Youth feel unsupported

5.5. Key Themes & Quotes

Theme	Mentions	Role	Quote
Inclusion	40 %	Barrier	<i>"Girls are rarely seen in these areas." - Male, Koshtovë</i>
Expression	50 %	Enabler	<i>"We want space to express ourselves through art." - Youth</i>
Infrastructure Gap	60 %	Barrier	<i>"The field is uneven and hard to use." - Male, Koshtovë</i>

5.6. Quick Synthesis & Action

Koshtovë youth emphasized the need for better sports facilities and structured events. Inadequate lighting, low female

participation, and minimal community motivation hinder use of public spaces. Quick actions such as shaded benches and schoolyard tournaments could re-energize youth involvement and enhance inclusivity.

C. Organizations & Community Actors

Peri-Urban Site (Peripheral Prishtina)

In the peripheral neighborhoods of Prishtina, formal youth organizations or dedicated youth centers are largely absent. The primary actor facilitating youth engagement around public-space issues is Public Space Equity (PSE), which operates under the SPACE project umbrella. PSE collaborated directly with local schools—using school facilities as focal points for surveys and focus groups—and maintained informal contacts with the municipal administrative unit to coordinate baseline studies, focus-group sessions, and survey distribution. While the Municipality of Prishtina did not establish a dedicated youth center in these neighborhoods, it provided logistical support (e.g., permission to use school premises and occasional sanitary services).

Local schools (both primary and secondary) served as *de facto* coordination hubs: teachers and school administrators assisted in recruiting participants and hosting discussion sessions. Beyond educational institutions, neighborhood cafés and small kiosks played an *ad hoc* role in youth mobilization, as they offered informal “gathering corridors” where young people convened to discuss issues raised by PSE. No registered NGOs or formal youth clubs operate exclusively in these peri-urban zones, so stakeholder communication remains largely *ad hoc*—reliant on PSE’s facilitation and the

personal networks of teachers or community activists.

Peri-Urban/Rural & Rural Site (Koshtovë Edge & Core)

In Koshtovë—encompassing both its peri-urban edge and rural core—there are no formal youth clubs or consistently active civil-society organizations focused on youth engagement. Instead, the principal “stakeholders” are the Jusuf Rexha School, the adjacent mosque, and the local QKMF health center, which together form a multi-use civic zone.

School administrators and teachers occasionally organize extracurricular clean-up campaigns or sports tournaments, but these initiatives emerge on a case-by-case basis and lack sustained support. The mosque serves as a community gathering point after prayer times and sometimes facilitates announcements regarding youth-oriented activities (e.g., informal football matches), yet it does not run structured youth programs. Interviews with young residents confirm a general absence of organized activities: most youth engagement arises through informal word-of-mouth networks, often centered on the football field near the school or adjacent agricultural plots. Small family-run kiosks and village-based restaurants also function as unstructured gathering spots, especially for those who work there. No registered NGOs or municipal youth centers exist—Koshtovë’s civic infrastructure is limited to voluntary, volunteer-driven efforts when residents (often youth themselves) organize cleanup days or small cultural events. Without formal coordination mechanisms,

communication among stakeholders remains informal, typically routed through school bulletin boards, mosque announcements, or social media chat groups.

In both contexts—peri-urban Prishtina and Koshtovë—youth participation hinges on these informal networks and the

intermittent support of schools and municipal units. The absence of dedicated youth centers or structured NGOs underscores the need for institution-building and the creation of sustainable channels for youth to contribute to public-space planning.

SERBIA

General Information

Partner:	Placemaking Western Balkans
Country:	Serbia
City/Region:	Belgrade

A. Neighborhood Profile

1. Case Study Context & Justification

Padinska Skela and Kačarevo are two settlements near Belgrade, the capital of Serbia. Padinska Skela is a peri-urban settlement, while Kačarevo is a typical rural settlement, characteristic for the Vojvodina and Banat region. Both settlements face significant gaps in providing the citizens with youth infrastructure and opportunities. The main challenges in providing the spaces for youth are limited public investment, lack of management of the existing public spaces, and declining youth engagement.

Padinska Skela, originally developed around a large agricultural-industrial complex, now struggles with social isolation and a lack of safe, inclusive areas for young people. Similarly, Kačarevo, known for its rural character and the annual well-known local food festival (The Bacon Festival), lacks year-round youth-oriented spaces and programs that would support creativity, learning, and social interaction.

The absence of opportunities for youth to have their own spaces in both communities contributes to low civic participation of youth, and limited developmental environment. Addressing

this void requires participatory urban strategies that will involve young people directly in shaping their environment. Activating underused spaces with creative placemaking could foster community pride, stimulate local economies, and offer young residents the sense of belonging and purpose currently missing in these peri-urban settings.

The selected peri-urban and rural sites exemplify the spatial and social consequences of neoliberal governance in the Western Balkans, where local public infrastructure and decision-making are increasingly co-opted by capital interests and clientelist networks. In both contexts, youth face structural exclusion: they are cut off from meaningful participation in shaping their environments, while public spaces are either neglected or instrumentalized for political or private gain. The rural area suffers from the monopolization of public facilities by ruling-party affiliates, while the peri-urban site grapples with infrastructural neglect and a lack of basic services. By working in these environments, the SPACE project addresses the urgent need to reclaim space and empower youth through bottom-up, community-based planning.

These sites offer fertile ground for testing inclusive placemaking strategies that

resist dispossession and center collective care and creativity.

1.1. Peri-urban site

Site Snapshot

1	Site Name:	Padinska Skela
	Location: Address or nearest town:	Municipality of Palilula, City of Belgrade
	Area Size:	216 km ²
	Population Size:	9263 (2011)
2	Site Name:	Blok 45
	Location: Address or nearest town:	New Belgrade, Belgrade
	Area Size:	0.56 km ²
	Population Size:	10 772 (2022)

Site description

Site 1 – Padinska Skela, also known as Padinjak, is a suburban settlement of Belgrade, located 15 km north of the city center in the Palilula municipality. Situated in the Pančevački Rit floodplain between the Danube and Tamiš rivers, it developed after World War II as part of a major land reclamation project.

Named after 19th-century Slovak settlers from Padina who reached the area by flatboat (skela), after WW2, Padinska Skela became a hub for the large state PKB agricultural company. It quickly gained infrastructure such as schools, a cinema, and sports clubs, and was settled largely by people from South Serbia and Bosnian Krajina, working for the PKB company. The company was privatized and sold in 2010, shutting down the production. This had a major impact on the life in the settlement, leaving many previously PKB-organized programmes (youth included) and communal areas

underutilized and without plan or maintenance.

Padinska Skela is a peri-urban settlement with a diverse and mixed demographic profile, including long-established working-class families, young people, and residents in social housing. The dominant age groups are teenagers, young adults, and families with children. Most young people commute to Belgrade for school or work, while others engage in seasonal agricultural jobs, informal employment, or stay in the settlement due to limited mobility and opportunities. Public spaces are few and often underused, with social life mostly concentrated around a few key gathering points such as a playground and a basketball court. It has 2 primary education schools and one kindergarten. High school age youth and generally young people are gravitating towards Belgrade, depending on 2 bus lines as the only public transport means.

Padinska Skela is colloquially known for its “Padinska Skela” penitentiary institution, on the outskirts of the town. The prison was once highly integrated into local life, in such a way that inmates maintained public spaces in the 1980s and 1990s. Today, change flows through the area, literally and culturally, via the Vizelj stream, which inspired the name of a local alternative rock band and symbolizes a new generation’s voice.

Site 2 – Blok 45, located in New Belgrade (Novi Beograd), Serbia, is a residential neighborhood situated on the left bank of the Sava River. Bounded by Jurija Gagarina, Nehruova, Dr. Ivana Ribara streets, and the Sava embankment, it was developed between 1968 and 1972 as part of Yugoslavia’s modernist urban planning initiatives. Covering approximately 62 hectares, the area comprises 45 high-rise buildings ranging from 6 to 14 stories, and 23 low-rise structures of 2 to 4 stories, designed to accommodate around 10,000 residents.

The neighborhood was designed with a mix of residential, educational, and recreational facilities. It includes schools, kindergartens, green spaces, and pedestrian promenades, reflecting the

principles of the Modernistic Athens Charter. Blok 45 earned the nickname “Sun Settlement” (Naselje Sunca) due to its orientation and layout promoting sunlight exposure. Over time, the area has faced challenges such as informal developments and underutilized public spaces, prompting discussions on sustainable urban renewal.

Blok 45 in New Belgrade is a large housing estate built during socialist Yugoslavia, home to a diverse population that includes long-term residents from the original move-ins of the 1970s as well as younger families and renters. The main age groups are older adults, school-aged children, and young families. Residents typically engage in commuting to work or school, running small local businesses, and spending time in the area’s many green spaces, markets, and riverside promenades.

Blok 45 is considered the birthplace of the first graffiti in former Yugoslavia, and today its walls have become a vibrant open-air gallery where local and visiting artists express urban creativity, making it a unique cultural hotspot in New Belgrade.

1.3. Rural Site

Site Snapshot

1	Site Name:	Kačarevo
	Location: Address or nearest town:	Municipality of Pančevo
	Area Size:	200 km ²
	Population Size:	7624 (2011)

Site description

Kačarevo is a village in the South Banat District of Serbia, part of the Pančevo municipality, located 18 km northwest of Belgrade. It was founded in 1791 under the name Franzfeld by order of Emperor Leopold II and settled by Germans in 1792. The village has a typical Austro-Hungarian structure, consisting of a regular, rectangular grid of streets. After WWII, German property was confiscated, and Serbian settlers from Bosnia, Krajina, Lika, and Dalmatia arrived, giving the place a new name. Since 1989, Kačarevo has hosted the annual “Slaninijada” (Bacon Festival), a food festival dedicated to the main activities of the village: agrarian production.

Kačarevo is a rural settlement with a mixed demographic profile that includes families, elderly residents, and a smaller number of young people. Most

working-age adults commute to nearby Pančevo or Belgrade for work, while others engage in local agriculture, small businesses, or informal trade. Youth often spend time studying, helping in family businesses, or participating in occasional community events and seasonal jobs.

The nearby town is the city of Pančevo, to which the youth gravitates to. There are 2 bus lines to Pančevo. The village has a primary school, sport club and a tiny “village hall” on the main square, a heritage building from the 18th century.

Kačarevo is famous for its annual Bacon Festival (Slaninijada), one of the biggest food festivals in Serbia, celebrating the local tradition of bacon-making with plenty of music, tastings, and community festivities.

2. Spatial Analysis

2.1. Peri-Urban Site Spatial Analysis

Padinska Skela is a typical example of the several peri-urban settlements in the periphery of Belgrade, on the left side of the Danube river, which were built in the post-WW2 period as examples of centralized, socialistic planning principles. Padinska Skela is mostly built as a housing solution for the workers of the large then state-owned agricultural production corporation, the PKB. Besides housing units, the settlement has been

provided with all the basic services such as shops, primary education and medical care, sport facilities, public green areas and public transport lines towards Belgrade and Pancevo.

With the collapse of the state-owned enterprises, many of the public spaces, infrastructure and facilities have not been maintained or expanded. The shops are in decline, some of the modern facilities (e.g. ATM machines) are not present in the

settlement, affecting the overall quality of life. Existing water and sewer infrastructure is not sufficient.

Similar to the main built structure, the natural features around Padinska Skela were also planned and managed by the state-owned PKB corporation. The area around Padinska Skela is a typical river/marshland landscape of the Danube flood plains, with a fine network of natural and artificial waterways and small lakes. The PKB corporation has set out an extensive network of canals, to help supply the production fields and regulate the rainwater catchment. Some of these canals (e.g. Vrzelj kanal) have become popular nature areas for fishing and bird watching, although the quality of its water is under constant threat of uncontrolled sewage and industrial agricultural waste spillage. Other canals are not well maintained, since the collapse of PKB corporation and the privatization of its lands. This “in-between” status of Padinska Skela green public spaces (formally on privately owned lands, therefore not in the maintenance and investment plans of the city of Belgrade) is the biggest trigger of local citizens and youth organizations, fighting for the better environment.

Walkthrough Narrative

Site 1 – Padinska Skela is moderately accessible by road and public transportation. The area is served by several bus lines, (number 101, 103, 102) providing connections to the northeast

side of Belgrade and its major public transport interchange, the Pancevo Bridge interchange, some 15 km away. Personal car dependency is therefore quite high, with major directions being towards Belgrade and neighboring city of Pancevo. The overall pedestrian and street infrastructure network has been established in the socialist times, following the standards of those times. The poor maintenance of the street network is a problem often mentioned at diverse citizens’ forums. The informal settlements around the planned city center are usually connected with half-hardened roads. In some areas outside the central core, pedestrian infrastructure is limited, with narrow sidewalks and few marked crossings, discouraging walking as a mobility mode. Although Padinska Skela lies in the flatlands, cycling is not encouraged, primarily due to car-dominated roads, unsafe for cyclists.

Overall safety and security in Padinska Skela’s public spaces can be considered satisfactory, although poor maintenance of public amenities (e.g. public lighting) is contributing to the negative image of the area. While specific crime statistics for Padinska Skela are limited, efforts to improve the area's image and safety are evident through community-driven projects. These initiatives not only enhance the visual appeal of public spaces but also aim to strengthen community bonds and promote a sense of security among residents

2.2. Rural Site Spatial Analysis

Kačarevo is a rural settlement located in the autonomous Province of Vojvodina, in northern Serbia. It belongs to the municipality of Pančevo within the South Banat District and lies approximately 20 kilometers northeast of Belgrade.

Geographically, Kacarevo is situated in the fertile Pannonian Plain, a region known for its flat terrain and rich soil, making agriculture a key part of the local economy. The settlement is surrounded by fields and farmland. Animal husbandry is also practiced, particularly pig farming, which historically played a central role in the community, resulting in the well-known annual “Slaninijada” or Bacon Food Festival.

The village is developed around the central village square, through a grid of rectangular streets with individual, low-rise households.

In terms of connectivity, Kačarevo enjoys strategic access to both Belgrade and Pančevo. Belgrade is less than a 30-minute drive away, providing residents with access to employment, education, and healthcare opportunities. The town of Pančevo is only 10 kilometers away, and serves as a key administrative services hub. Additionally, Kačarevo is not far from other Vojvodina settlements like Opovo and Kovačica, known for their cultural heritage and distinctive Slovak minority communities.

The settlement's proximity to major transport corridors — including the Belgrade–Zrenjanin and Belgrade–Timisoara routes — enhances its regional relevance.

Walkthrough Narrative

Kacarevo features a simple but functional network of roads and paths that reflect its rural character. The main road, connecting the settlement to Pancevo and other nearby towns, cuts through the village and is lined with residential houses and some small shops at the main square. Secondary streets branch off in a grid-like pattern, mostly paved, but narrow, accommodating local car traffic and pedestrians. Sidewalks do exist along most main roads, though they vary in condition, and are not equally maintained.

Buildings in Kacarevo are predominantly low-rise and residential, with a mix of traditional houses and newer constructions. Key public buildings include the local school, health center, cultural center, and several churches. Public spaces are modest but active, including small squares, playgrounds, and green areas. Special feature is the small artificial recreational lake at the outskirts of the village, a center point of social life (especially for youth) in the summer.

Public transport is limited but functional, with a bus line connecting Kacarevo to Pancevo.

Getting around Kacarevo is generally easy due to its compact size and flat terrain. Most destinations, including shops, school, and park, are within walking distance. Sidewalks are present along main streets, though their condition varies, and some lack ramps, posing challenges for people with limited mobility. Smaller streets are sometimes lacking pedestrian infrastructure altogether. Public spaces and parks are accessible but not fully adapted for wheelchairs or strollers. Despite these barriers, the short distances and low traffic volumes make walking and cycling practical for most residents.

Kacarevo offers a modest yet functional public infrastructure. Street lighting is present along main roads and central areas, however, some peripheral streets may have limited or outdated lighting. Public seating is available in communal spaces such as parks and near local institutions. The cleanliness of public areas is generally maintained,

Feeling of safety and security in Kacarevo is characterized with the low crime rate typical of smaller settlements. Nonetheless, the absence of advanced surveillance systems and limited street lighting in some areas may raise concerns during late hours.

2.3. Comparative Snapshot

Criterion	Peri-Urban Site Notes	Rural Site Notes
<i>Connectivity</i>	<i>two bus lines to Belgrade, 4 bus stops along the main road</i>	<i>one bus service to Pančevo, 2 bus stops nearby the old railway station. Railway is not used for personal transport anymore, cargo trains only.</i>
<i>Accessibility</i>	<i>In the three main neighbourhoods within Padinska skela there are planned streets with pavements, but not well maintained</i>	<i>The village has a rectangular matrix of streets, not every street has a wide enough pedestrian pavement</i>
<i>Safety</i>	<i>Streetlights are not in every street</i>	<i>Streetlights are not in every street</i>
<i>Amenities</i>	<i>Sitting arrangements are part of the school playgrounds</i>	<i>Siting arrangements are at the main village square</i>

<i>Public Space Types</i>	<i>Small park next to the school and kindergarten complex, walking pathways along the Vizelj canal, self - maintained by the community. Field edges.</i>	<i>Village square with historical village assembly hall building. Church yard. Small park and a village “beach” near the small artificial lake at the outskirts.</i>
<i>Maintenance Level</i>	<i>Low maintenance level by the city green department. Local school and the citizens organize regularly clean - up actions</i>	<i>Regular seasonal maintenance of the artificial lake and the beach together with the city of Pancevo. Local maintenance of the schoolyard.</i>

Table 1. Comparative snapshot

B. Youth Perspectives & Priorities

3. Baseline Data Summary

3.1. Context, Method and Quick View of Sites

The baseline data for this project was gathered through desk research, previous focus groups with civic organizations in Serbia, field visits, and direct observations between February and March 2025. Challenges included limited time, mobility issues due to remote locations, and reliance on earlier research not tailored to this project. Some local records were incomplete or unavailable. The study focused on two sites—one rural and one peri-urban—each with unique contexts but a shared tradition of civic engagement. The aim was to understand how communities organize, support one another, and use local resources to improve everyday life.

5.7. Top 3 Insights

Insight 1:

Strong but Undervalued Local Civic Engagement:

Both sites showed the presence of active individuals and informal groups engaged in solving local issues, but these efforts are often invisible or unsupported by broader civic networks or institutions. There is a lack of recognition and structural support for grassroots civic initiatives.

Insight 2:

Restricted Access to Public Spaces and Facilities:

A major obstacle for community organizing is the lack of access to common spaces and local facilities, many

of which are either co-opted by the local government, ruling political party, or powerful individuals. This creates a significant barrier to civic activity and public dialogue.

Insight 3:

Strong Informal Solidarity, Weak Institutional Trust:

While community members often rely on each other and show strong interpersonal trust, there is deep mistrust toward formal institutions. This distrust influences how people engage with civic life, favoring informal, ad hoc action over sustained or formal participation.

4. Survey Insights - A Holistic View

4.1. Executive Snapshot

In both the peri-urban area of Padinska Skela and the rural town of Kačarevo, young people strongly value outdoor public spaces as key sites for socializing, sports, and relaxation. In Padinska Skela, safe and clean environments with opportunities for organized and spontaneous activities are highly appreciated. Similarly, findings from

Kačarevo highlight the importance of well-maintained natural amenities—like the lake park and dock—for gathering and leisure, though issues like air pollution and stray dogs can hinder enjoyment. Across both sites, youth consistently express a desire for multifunctional, inclusive spaces that support everyday use and seasonal programming.

4.2. What Young People Value

In Padinska Skela, a peri-urban area, 54.1% of youth report visiting outdoor public spaces several times a week. In the rural setting of Kačarevo, 63% frequent the lakeside park weekly during summer. Across both locations, public spaces are primarily used for socializing and light recreation. In Padinska Skela, young people gather with friends (29.7%), cycle (27%), or simply relax (27%). In Kačarevo, youth enjoy swimming, diving, and spending time by the lake during warmer months. Cleanliness and safety, each cited by 62.2% of respondents, are

viewed as essential. Natural environments remain the preferred setting, especially in good weather.

4.3. The Role of Public Spaces

Across both Padinska Skela and Kačarevo, youth overwhelmingly recognize the value of public spaces—91.1 % in Padinska Skela and 88 % in Kačarevo say such spaces are “very important” for people like them.

Top qualities youth value in public spaces:

- Cleanliness (62.2 % in Padinska Skela, 66 % in Kačarevo)
- Safety (62.2 % in Padinska Skela , 64 % in Kačarevo)
- Fun activities and welcoming places to meet friends

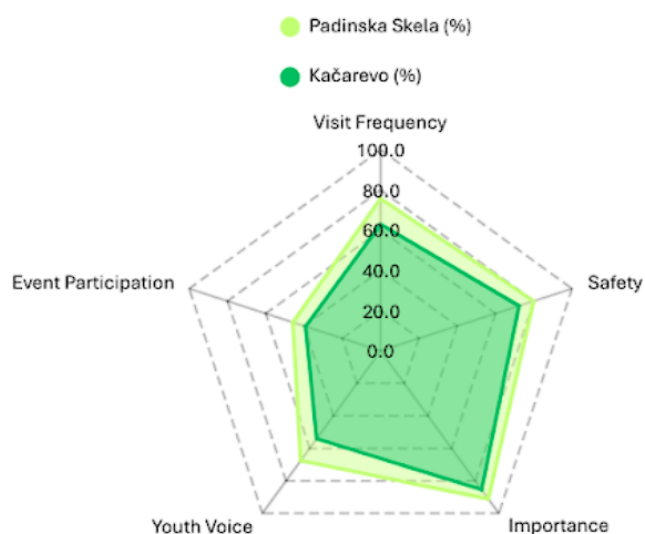
In both sites, young people express a strong interest in participatory design: 67.6 % in Padinska Skela and 61 % in Kačarevo believe youth should help shape public spaces, though some feel unsure how to get involved (27 % and 31 %, respectively). Nearly half in each site (48.6 % and 46 %) would like to contribute to improvements but lack opportunities or know-how, while a

motivated minority (45.9 % and 42 %) are ready to take part immediately. These shared findings underscore the need for youth-inclusive processes that empower local action.

4.4. If You Could Change One Thing...

Youth in both Padinska Skela and Kačarevo express a strong need for cleaner, safer, and better-maintained public spaces—especially parks, playgrounds, sports areas, and natural gathering spots like the woods and lake. They consistently highlight the importance of having more spaces for socializing, such as cafés, walking zones, and seasonal outdoor events. Across both sites, young people call for greater inclusion in local decision-making, stronger environmental responsibility, and practical infrastructure improvements, including better lighting, waste disposal, and access to health services.

Table 2 An overlaid spider-web plot comparing Peri-Urban and Rural sites on five key dimensions.



Axis	Metric
Visit Frequency	% who go “a few times a week” or more (Q3)
Safety	% who feel safe “always” or “sometimes” (Q4)
Importance	% who say public spaces are “very important” (Q5)
Youth Voice	% who “definitely” want a say in design (Q7)
Event Participation	% who “would join” a group improving spaces (Q8)

Table 3 Who Took Part

Demographic	Peri-Urban	Rural
Total Respondents	37	16
Youth (15–30 yrs)	81,1%	75 %
Youth (11- 14 yrs)	18,9 %	25%
Gender: Female	81 %	68,8 %
Gender: Male	18,9 %	31,2 %

5. Focus Groups

5.1. Session Summary (Peri-Urban & Rural)

In March and April 2025, two focus groups were held in Padinska Skela (peri-urban Belgrade) and Kačarevo (rural Pančevo) with a total of 14 participants, including youth, parents, neighbourhood activists and community members. The discussions explored everyday life, youth participation, and public space use. Both focus groups followed a semi-structured format. However, the focus group in Padinska Skela was conducted in person,



Image 2. Focus group in Padinska Skela, April 5 2025.

while the one in Kačarevo was conducted online via Google Meet. Both were audio recorded upon ensuring informed consent (written for Padinska Skela and verbal for Kačarevo). The focus groups offered insight into shared challenges and desires for greater inclusion, revealing both barriers to and potentials for youth engagement in under-resourced, often overlooked settings.

Peri-Urban

5.2. Barriers to Participation

- **Neglected infrastructure** (≈100%): Broken playgrounds, overgrown parks, and unsafe sports courts.
- **Lack of youth programs and spaces** (≈80%): Few cafés, youth clubs, or tailored activity centers.
- **Limited access to public facilities** (≈60%): Spaces often locked, restricted, or used for political events.
- **Institutional unresponsiveness** (≈60%): Unmet promises and lack of follow-up from local authorities.
- **Financial and organizational barriers** (≈50%): Lack of support, legal guidance, and sustainable funding for initiatives.

5.3. Key Themes & Quotes

Theme	Mentions (%)	Role	Quote
Infrastructure and Amenities	100%	Barrier	<i>We have a stream running through the settlement, but no one takes care of it — the water is muddy, and the surrounding plants are completely overgrown. It would be great to see it cleaned up, with a few benches, a small bridge, and a walkway alongside it where people could relax and enjoy the space. -P1</i>
Lack of Programs and Youth Spaces	80%	Barrier	<i>Here you're either a kid and go to a playground, or an adult and go to a work. There's nothing for us in between. -P4</i>
Institutional Neglect and Access Barriers	60%	Barrier	<i>The local community center is there, but we can't go in when we want. They only open it when they [local politicians] need it. -P2</i>

5.4. Quick Synthesis & Action

In Padinska Skela, the volunteer-run Volim Padinjak association similarly struggles with poor maintenance of green spaces and inaccessible community facilities. Though once-active halls and centers exist, they are locked or deteriorating. The group uses donations and personal networks to fill gaps left by unreliable municipal services. Youth engagement is ad hoc, relying on individual initiative,

such as a student-led canal cleanup or occasional film screenings. The lack of basic amenities (cafés, clubs, programs) drives young people away. Yet, the group has influenced urban planning and built partnerships with schools. Support from SPACE in advocacy, micro-funding, and public space design could help scale these isolated efforts and foster lasting community resilience.

Rural

5.5. Barriers to Participation

- **Neglected and unsafe infrastructure (90%):** Irregularly maintained parks, broken playgrounds, and hazardous conditions (stray dogs) discourage use.
- **Restricted access to public facilities (80%):** Community halls and sports centers are locked or reserved for political use.
- **Institutional neglect and unresponsiveness (80%):** Authorities

fail to address maintenance requests or support youth initiatives.

- **Funding constraints for youth events (60%):** Past efforts like

concerts were one-time due to lack of financial resources.

5.6. Key Themes & Quotes

Theme	Mentions (%)	Role	Quote
Safety	70%	Barrier	We're scared to hang out outside because of all the stray dogs." "It's not that it's not maintained or dark. We avoid it [the park] because of the dogs. – P3
Amenities & Environment Air pollution from the pig farm	100 %	Barrier	What's the point of benches if you can't breathe? It smells like a sewer almost every evening. – P1
Access & Inclusion	80%	Barrier	It's like if you don't play along politically, you don't exist. – P1

5.7. Quick Synthesis & Action

In Kačarevo, residents mobilized through the informal group Zajedno Selo to reclaim neglected public spaces despite persistent institutional neglect. Although parks and sports facilities exist, they are poorly maintained, forcing citizens to organize cleanups, mow grass, and even crowdfund new playgrounds. However, even successful grassroots efforts face obstacles—such as local authorities initially blocking community projects or failing to maintain newly built infrastructure. Despite enthusiasm, especially among a small core of women organizers, youth participation remains limited due to the absence of cultural venues or structured programs. The SPACE Project could help by offering

practical training, legal support, and low-cost infrastructure improvements to sustain their momentum.

C. Organizations & Community Actors

Peri-urban site

in Padinska Skela, civic infrastructure is limited. The only active registered civic group focused on space and urban issues is *Volim Padinjak*, a grassroots citizens' association. Local schools and sports clubs exist, but they are not engaged in wider community development or youth activism. There are no known youth centers or NGOs specifically targeting youth empowerment or public space development.

Volim Padinjak participated in official consultations with Belgrade's Urban Planning Institute, advocating for local infrastructure and spatial improvements. Their activities include organizing community clean-ups, awareness campaigns, and engaging residents in discussions on urban planning. Other institutions like schools and local government are more administrative and do not play a participatory or outreach role.

There is no formal network for coordination among civic actors. Communication is mostly informal and ad

hoc, often through social media or neighborhood chats. The limited mobility, peripheral location, and political capture of space restrict broader collaboration or initiative-building. This lack of coordination reflects systemic neglect and limited support for civic organizing in peri-urban areas.

Rural site

Youth groups and stakeholders in Kačarevo include local schools, sports and cultural centre, and an informal citizens' group called *Zajedno selo*, which focuses mainly on ecological initiatives. While formal youth clubs are limited, this groups engages in event planning, environmental activities, and outreach to involve local youth in community life. Coordination tends to be informal, relying on personal connections, occasional meetings, and chat groups. Volunteer-driven efforts dominate. This informal and ecological focus shows local commitment but also points to challenges in sustaining long-term, structured youth engagement.

MONTENEGRO

General Information

Partner: New Horizon
Country: Montenegro
City/Region: Ulcinj

A. Neighborhood Profile

1. Case Study Context & Justification

Sutomore, a coastal settlement within the Municipality of Bar, was chosen for its unique blend of urban and rural characteristics, making it an ideal representation of peri-urban dynamics. Its strategic location along the Adriatic coast and close proximity to the town of Bar position it as a key intersection between urban growth and traditional rural practices. Sutomore is renowned for its expansive sandy beaches and lively summer atmosphere, attracting a diverse mix of local residents, seasonal inhabitants, and international tourists. This influx of visitors during the tourist season has significantly shaped the area's social and economic landscape, leading to rapid urbanization and increased infrastructural demands. Additionally, the evolving identity of Sutomore as a seasonal tourism hub highlights the challenges of balancing local needs with those of transient populations. As such, it presents a compelling case study for exploring sustainable development strategies that can accommodate both long-term residents and temporary visitors.

Kraja, a rural settlement situated in the northern region, was chosen for its

distinct rural character and traditional way of life, providing a stark contrast to the peri-urban environment of Sutomore. Known for its agricultural practices, Kraja represents a region where local livelihoods are deeply connected to farming and livestock management. Its remote location and limited infrastructure highlight the challenges associated with rural isolation, particularly concerning access to basic services and modern amenities. Kraja's community-centric lifestyle and resilience in the face of socioeconomic challenges make it an insightful case for understanding rural sustainability. The settlement's commitment to preserving cultural heritage, while navigating modernization pressures, positions Kraja as a valuable study site to explore strategies that bridge traditional practices with contemporary rural development needs.

1.1. Peri-urban site

Site Snapshot

Site Name:	Sutomore
Location: Address or nearest town;	Bar
Area Size:	2.700 km ²
Population Size:	2.500

Site description

Sutomore features a mix of residential, commercial, and recreational zones. The Adriatic Highway and a railway station enhance connectivity, making it accessible for both residents and visitors. During peak tourist seasons, the town's population swells, placing strain on local infrastructure. Despite the influx of seasonal visitors, Sutomore retains a core community of young families, entrepreneurs, and hospitality workers who maintain the town's dynamic character throughout the year.

Sutomore Beach is located on the Adriatic coast of Montenegro, within the coastal town of Sutomore, part of the Bar Municipality. Renowned for its long, sandy shoreline stretching approximately 1.2 kilometers, it is one of the most popular beaches in the region. The beach area is surrounded by a blend of residential zones, vacation rentals, and small hotels, highlighting its function as a prime tourist destination. The coastline is framed by the dramatic backdrop of the Rumija mountain range, adding to its scenic appeal.

Land use in the Sutomore beach area predominantly revolves around tourism and leisure, with numerous beach bars,

restaurants, and cafes lining the promenade. During the peak summer months, the beach becomes a bustling hub of activity, attracting both local residents and international visitors. Beyond the sandy expanse, rocky outcrops and piers offer spots for fishing and diving, contributing to the diverse recreational opportunities available.

Sutomore features a diverse community primarily made up of young families, teenagers, and young adults. The town's population is a mix of local residents who live and work year-round and seasonal visitors who increase significantly during the summer months. Many residents are involved in the tourism sector, running small businesses or working in hospitality. Typical daily activities include commuting to a nearby Bar for work or education, socializing in local cafes, and participating in community events.

Many residents are involved in the tourism sector, running small businesses or working in hospitality. Typical daily activities include commuting to a nearby Bar for work or education, socializing in local cafes, and participating in community events.

During the summer, Sutomore's population can triple due to the influx of tourists, making it one of the most vibrant seasonal hotspots on Montenegro's coast!



Image 1. Sutomore Overview

Sutomore's peri-urban area is home to the unique two-altar Church of St. Thecla, where both Orthodox and Catholic rites have coexisted for centuries, symbolizing the region's rich cultural and religious harmony.



Image 2. Sutomore Secondary View

1.2. RURAL SITE

Site Snapshot

Site Name:	Kraja
Location: Address or nearest town;	Bar
Area Size:	/
Population Size:	2700

Site description

The Kraja region, situated in southeastern Montenegro between Lake Skadar and the Rumija mountain range, was selected for its rural character and traditional lifestyle. The region's focus on agriculture and eco-tourism aligns with the project's goal of understanding rural public space utilization. The area is known for its rich cultural heritage, with deep-rooted traditions maintained by local communities, especially in the village of Ostros, which serves as the social and economic hub of the region. The choice of Kraja for this study is particularly relevant as it exemplifies the challenges of

sustaining rural communities amid youth migration and limited infrastructure.

Kraja is characterized by small villages and hamlets scattered throughout a rugged landscape. Ostros, the main settlement, is divided into Veliki Ostros and Mali Ostros, where traditional stone houses are surrounded by small plots of land used for farming. The area is predominantly inhabited by ethnic Albanians, who maintain their cultural identity through language, customs, and local events. Despite its scenic beauty and potential for tourism, the region faces

challenges related to its remote location and lack of modern amenities.

Kraja is predominantly inhabited by ethnic Albanians, with a significant number of families engaged in agriculture and livestock farming. The main age groups include older adults and families, as younger residents often migrate to urban areas for better opportunities. Typical

activities include farming, traditional craftwork, and community gatherings, especially around religious and cultural events.

Despite being a small rural region, Kraja is renowned for its traditional olive oil production, with some local families preserving ancient techniques passed down for generations.



Image 3. Kraja Overview



Image 4. Kraja Secondary View

2. Spatial Analysis

2.1. Peri-urban Site Spatial Analysis

Walkthrough Narrative

Layout & Connections: Scattered villages connected by narrow, often poorly maintained roads. Public transport is minimal, with private vehicles being the primary mode of travel. This lack of connectivity isolates the region from larger urban centers, limiting access to services.

Accessibility: Most paths are unpaved and uneven, posing challenges for elderly residents and those with mobility issues. The mountainous terrain also complicates

movement between villages, especially during adverse weather.

Safety: The region has low traffic volumes, but poor lighting and limited public safety measures create concerns, especially during the evening. Community spaces lack proper seating and shelter, making outdoor gatherings uncomfortable.

Public Space Use: Public spaces are primarily informal, centered around

religious sites and small village squares. These areas are used for community meetings, traditional celebrations, and

social interactions, highlighting their cultural importance despite limited infrastructure.



Image 5. Sutomore road



Image 6. Sutomore main street



Image 7. Sutomore Park



Image 8. Sutomore city



Image 9. Sutomore beach

2.2. Rural Site Spatial Analysis

Kraja is a rural area with a distinctive landscape shaped by its proximity to Lake Skadar and the Rumija mountain range. The region's terrain is characterized by steep slopes, terraced fields, and dense forested areas, which create both opportunities and challenges for land use and connectivity. The settlements within Kraja are traditionally clustered around natural resources, such as freshwater springs and fertile land suitable for small-scale agriculture. This spatial distribution reflects the historical patterns of settlement, where access to arable land and water dictated village locations.

Layout & Connections: The Kraja region features a network of narrow, winding roads connecting small villages and hamlets. These roads are often in poor condition, with limited maintenance due to budget constraints and the region's low population density. The main settlement, Ostros, serves as a local hub, providing basic amenities such as small shops, cafes, and religious institutions. However, public transportation is scarce, and most residents rely on private vehicles for mobility. The journey from Kraja to the town of Bar takes approximately 45 minutes by car, depending on road conditions.

During adverse weather, especially in winter, landslides and road blockages are

common, further isolating the region. The community has adapted to these challenges through collective road maintenance efforts, although this remains insufficient for consistent connectivity.

Accessibility: Accessibility within Kraja is notably limited, particularly for elderly residents and people with disabilities. The hilly terrain and unpaved paths make it difficult to move between villages without a vehicle. In Ostros, where the terrain is somewhat flatter, efforts have been made to create pedestrian-friendly zones, but these remain minimal. The lack of public transportation options exacerbates the isolation felt by many, particularly young people who may wish to commute for education or work.

Safety: Safety concerns in Kraja primarily stem from poor infrastructure rather than crime. The lack of street lighting in most villages means that public spaces are scarcely used after dark, limiting social interactions and community events.

Villagers often cite inadequate lighting as a deterrent to evening gatherings, while the rugged terrain also poses risks, especially for children and the elderly.

Public Space Use: Public spaces in Kraja are informal and typically revolve around

village squares, religious sites, or community halls. These areas are vital for maintaining social ties and preserving cultural practices, especially during religious holidays and local festivals. Traditional stone benches and community-built shelters are common features, but their upkeep varies. The local community frequently organizes clean-up initiatives, reflecting a strong sense of ownership over public areas. In addition to social gatherings, public spaces are also used for seasonal markets where villagers trade local produce such as olives, figs, and honey.

Community Engagement: Despite infrastructural limitations, Kraja's residents maintain a robust sense of community, driven by traditional values and mutual support. Local initiatives aimed at improving village infrastructure often involve collective efforts, with residents volunteering to repair roads or clean public areas. There is a growing interest in revitalizing the local economy through agritourism, leveraging the region's natural beauty and agricultural heritage. Some families have begun converting parts of their homes into guesthouses, attracting visitors interested in experiencing rural life.

Environmental Considerations: The Kraja region is known for its diverse flora and fauna, particularly around Lake Skadar, a vital ecological zone. Conservation efforts are in place to protect native species and water quality,

but local agricultural practices sometimes pose risks to the ecosystem. Sustainable land management practices are being discussed within community meetings, highlighting the importance of balancing tradition with environmental preservation.

Walkthrough Narrative

Walking through the Kraja region offers a glimpse into rural Montenegro's traditional lifestyle, deeply rooted in its natural and cultural landscape. As you enter from the direction of Bar, the winding road narrows, framed by dense forested areas and occasional clearings where small villages emerge. The terrain is rugged, with terraced fields cascading down the slopes of the Rumija mountain range, creating a picturesque but challenging environment.

The villages are modest, with stone houses clustered around small community squares or religious sites. In Ostros, the region's main settlement, the atmosphere is quiet but vibrant, particularly during market days when locals gather to trade olives, honey, and handmade crafts. The village's focal point is the small church and a few traditional cafes where older residents gather to share stories.

Moving between villages often means navigating narrow, unpaved paths. The journey on foot can be strenuous, especially when climbing uphill, but the panoramic views of Lake Skadar are rewarding. Children are seen playing in open spaces, while adults tend to their gardens or livestock. Public amenities are

sparse, and community initiatives often involve maintaining paths or cleaning communal areas. Despite its challenges, the region exudes a strong sense of

community, with people warmly greeting visitors and inviting them to share a meal or a cup of locally brewed coffee.



Image 10. Kraja street view



Image 11. Kraja



Image 12. Kraja castle



Image 13. Kraja mountain road

2.3. Comparative Snapshot

Criterion	Peri-Urban Site Notes	Rural Site Notes
Connectivity	Highway, railway, frequent public transport	Narrow roads, limited public transport, private vehicles
Accessibility	Paved sidewalks, mobility ramps, easy pedestrian access	Unpaved, uneven paths, difficult terrain
Safety	Well-lit public spaces, monitored areas	Low traffic, poor lighting, safety concerns in the evening

<i>Amenities</i>	<i>Cafes, restaurants, shops, beaches, recreational facilities</i>	<i>Basic amenities, small shops, informal gathering spots</i>
<i>Public Space Types</i>	<i>Beaches, parks, plazas</i>	<i>Village squares, religious sites, natural landscapes</i>
<i>Maintenance Level</i>	<i>Regular waste collection, good public infrastructure</i>	<i>Infrequent maintenance, community-led clean-up efforts</i>

Table 1. Comparative snapshot

B. Youth Perspectives & Priorities

3. Baseline Data Summary

3.1. Context, Method and Quick View of Sites

The baseline data for this study was gathered from the Baseline Study Excel, which compiled information collected during field visits in 2025. The data collection process included surveys and direct observations conducted in both Sutomore and Kraja. Some limitations were encountered, such as occasional missing data due to participant non-responsiveness and challenges accessing remote areas within Kraja. Sutomore, a vibrant peri-urban area along the Adriatic coast, is well-known for its beaches and seasonal tourism. In contrast, Kraja is a rural settlement in the northern region, characterized by its agricultural economy and traditional lifestyle. These two sites were selected to provide a clear comparison between peri-urban and rural contexts.

3.2. Top 3 Insights

Insight 1:

In Sutomore, there is approximately 5 m² of public green space per person, compared to 12 m² per person in Kraja, highlighting a significant disparity in access to recreational areas.

Insight 2:

In Kraja, despite strong cultural traditions, 28% of local youth are not in education, employment, or training (NEET), reflecting limited opportunities for skill development.

Insight 3:

A newly established community center in Sutomore attracts over 150 young people every weekend, offering recreational and educational activities that foster social cohesion and personal growth.

4. Survey Insights - A Holistic View

4.1. Executive Snapshot

The survey examines how young people engage with public spaces, highlighting their preferences, perceptions of safety, and level of involvement in spatial planning. The findings reveal that while many youths prioritize accessible and secure environments for socializing and recreation, there is a clear and strong demand for greater youth participation in

the design and management of these areas. This underscores the importance of adopting inclusive urban planning approaches that actively involve and reflect the needs of the younger population.

4.2. What Young People Value

In Sutomore, a peri-urban area, 72% of youth visit the main plaza at least once a week, while in Kraja, an urban settlement, 68% frequent the city square regularly. Playing sports is the second most popular activity, with 45% of youth in Sutomore and 38% in Kraja engaging in it, reflecting a shared desire for active recreation.

Cleanliness (80%) and safety (75%) are the top factors that contribute to the quality of these public spaces. Although both groups appreciate social gathering spots, youth in Kraja tend to prefer more structured plazas, whereas those in Sutomore favor larger, open spaces.

4.3. The Role of Public Spaces

Public spaces are essential to the lives of young people, with 82% of respondents affirming their importance for youth like themselves. These areas serve not only as gathering points but also as places that nurture a sense of belonging and community. Whether in the vibrant urban setting of Kraja or the more open, peri-urban environment of Sutomore, young people actively seek spaces where they can relax, socialize, and participate in recreational activities. As vital hubs for social interaction, physical activity, and personal expression, public spaces play a

significant role in enhancing the well-being and social engagement of youth.

Top qualities youth value in public spaces:

- Safety: 78% Sutomore (peri-urban); 72% Kraja (urban) – Youth prioritize feeling secure, especially when spending extended periods outdoors.
- Meeting friends: 73% Sutomore; 67% Kraja – Socializing remains a primary reason for visiting public

areas, highlighting the spaces' role in community building.

- Fun activities: 69% Sutomore; 61% Kraja – Activities like sports,

skateboarding, and community events make spaces more attractive to youth.

4.4. If You Could Change One Thing...

Youth in both Sutomore (peri-urban) and Kraja (urban) express a desire to enhance their public spaces by making them more functional and welcoming. Despite differing environments, both groups highlight practical improvements that would increase their engagement and sense of safety.

Peri-Urban:

- Better evening lighting to extend the safe use of spaces beyond daylight hours.
- More benches to create comfortable spots for socializing and relaxation.
- Pop-up markets to bring vibrancy and attract diverse groups, fostering a lively community atmosphere.

Urban

- Designated youth zones to ensure that young people have dedicated spaces tailored to their activities.
- Shelters against weather to make public areas usable year-round, especially during rain or intense sun.
- More organized sports events to encourage active participation and foster community spirit.

Table 2 An overlaid spider-web plot comparing Peri-Urban and Rural sites on five key dimensions.

Axis	Metric
Visit Frequency	Sutomore (70%) vs. Kraja (65%)
Safety	Sutomore (78%) vs. Kraja (72%)
Importance	Both (82%)
Youth Voice	Sutomore (63%) vs. Kraja (55%)
Event Participation	Sutomore (60%) vs. Kraja (45%)

Table 3 Who Took Part

Demographic	Peri-Urban	Rural
Total Respondents	30	25
Youth (15–30 yrs)	84%	78%

Gender: Female	48%	52 %
Gender: Male	52%	48 %
Other / Prefer NTS	__ %	__ %

5. Focus Groups

5.1. Session Summary (Peri-Urban & Rural)

In peri-urban Ulcinj, the session took place on 11 April 2025 at the NH Office with 14 participants (ages 15–35; balanced gender), representing diverse youth organizations. The discussion was facilitated using icebreakers and guided questions, with notes taken throughout. Participants shared insights on organizational structures, inclusivity, and youth engagement in community development. They highlighted both

achievements—such as new mentorship programs and increased digital outreach—and challenges, including limited resources and rural outreach. The conversation also explored perceptions of public spaces, emphasizing the need for safer, well-maintained, and inclusive areas. The session created space for open, collaborative reflection on youth priorities.



Figure Focus Groups

Peri-Urban

5.2. Barriers to Participation

- **Poor maintenance and sanitation (%)** - in public areas reduce safety and usability.
- **Limited infrastructure and accessibility (%)** - in certain districts hinder equal access.
- **High real estate prices (%)** - restrict affordable housing and space availability for youth.
- **Commercial and tourist prioritization (%)** - during peak seasons sidelines local youth needs.
- **Lack of inclusive indoor spaces and amenities (%)** - especially for winter and diverse abilities.

5.3. Key Themes & Quotes

Theme	Mentions (%)	Role	Quote
Safety	60%	Barrier	<i>"Walking here at night feels risky."</i>
Amenities	45%	Barrier	<i>"We need more places to sit and relax."</i>
Maintenance	35%	Enabler /Barrier	<i>"Trash piles up, and no one cleans it."</i>

5.4. Quick Synthesis & Action

In Sutomore, the primary issue identified is inadequate street lighting, leading to a sense of insecurity among 65% of residents, as indicated by baseline survey data. This lack of lighting particularly affects mobility after dark, limiting community engagement. A quick-win action would be installing solar-powered street lamps at key intersections.

In contrast, Kraja faces challenges related to poor road maintenance, with 70% of residents citing difficulties in accessing essential services, especially during adverse weather. Addressing this with quick repairs and routine maintenance of the most damaged road segments would significantly improve accessibility and safety.

Rural

5.5. Barriers to Participation

- **Poor Road Conditions (70%):** Difficulties in reaching public spaces, especially during bad weather.
- **Lack of Public Transport (60%):** Limited bus routes and schedules discourage youth from visiting community areas.
- **Safety Concerns (50%):** Inadequate lighting and isolated locations make spaces feel unsafe.
- **Lack of Organized Activities (45%):** Few events or programs that attract youth engagement.
- **Limited Connectivity (40%):** Poor mobile network and internet access reduce opportunities for digital-based activities.

5.6. Key Themes & Quotes

Theme	Mentions (%)	Role	Quote
Safety	50%	Barrier	<i>"Walking home after sunset feels risky since the paths are barely lit."</i>
Amenities	45%	Barrier	<i>"There's nothing going on for young people here—no events or clubs to join."</i>
Awareness	40%	Enabler/Barrier	<i>"Most of us don't even know when something is happening in the village."</i>

5.7. Quick Synthesis & Action

In Kraja, 50% of residents identified poor lighting as a key safety concern, with many avoiding public spaces after dark. Installing solar-powered street lamps along main paths could improve safety and encourage evening use. Additionally, 45% noted a lack of amenities, especially youth-focused events, limiting engagement.

Organizing regular activities, such as sports or workshops, could boost participation. Finally, 40% mentioned poor awareness of local initiatives. Posting flyers in key gathering spots could improve communication and increase involvement.

NEXT STEPS

The findings from baseline studies, youth surveys, and focus-group discussions conducted by all six partner regions have been brought together in a structured inventory. This comprehensive overview will serve as the foundation for the project's next phase, ensuring that local realities and aspirations remain at the heart of our work.

The inventory reveals a variety of needs and priorities that change not only between the Western Balkans, Austria, and the Netherlands, but also within the four Balkan partners themselves. Local government roles differ significantly, as do the infrastructural and organizational requirements on the ground.

Comparing peri-urban and rural settings has proven especially enlightening: in rural communities, young people and their mentors face distinct challenges that call for targeted

support and training. Such training must respect the wide range of educational backgrounds, cultural traditions, and socio-economic conditions that shape each locale. Although not every insight could be fully unpacked here, the remaining findings will inform a detailed training curriculum currently in development.

Looking ahead, these collective results will guide a series of capacity-building workshops in the Netherlands. Three central themes will frame this next stage: improving physical facilities in public spaces, deepening meaningful youth participation, and strengthening the network of organizations and community actors. By aligning our training with the concrete experiences documented in this report, we aim to empower young people and their partners to co-create vibrant, inclusive places across both peri-urban and rural landscapes.