DeRadicalisation
in Europe and Beyond: Detect, Resolve, Reintegrate

Spatial aspects of de-radicalisation processes

D.9.2 Synthesis Report

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About the Project

D.Rad is a comparative study of radicalisation and polarisation in Europe and beyond. It aims at identifying the actors, networks, and wider social contexts that drive radicalisation, particularly among young people in urban and peri-urban areas. D.Rad conceptualises this through the I-GAP spectrum (injustice-grievance-alienation-polarisation), with the goal of moving towards the measurable evaluation of de-radicalisation programmes. Our intention is to identify the building blocks of radicalisation, which include the person's sense of being victimised, of being thwarted or lacking agency in established legal and political structures, and of coming under the influence of "us vs them" identity formulations.

D.Rad benefits from an exceptional breadth of backgrounds. The project spans national contexts including the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Finland, Slovenia, Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Israel, Turkey, Georgia, Austria, and several minority nationalisms. It bridges academic disciplines ranging from political science and cultural studies to social psychology and artificial intelligence. Dissemination methods include D.Rad LABs, D.Rad hubs, policy papers, academic workshops, visual outputs, and digital galleries. As such, D.Rad establishes a rigorous foundation in order to test practical interventions geared towards prevention, inclusion, and de-radicalisation.

With the possibility of capturing the trajectories of 17 nations and several minority nations, the project provides unique evidence base for the comparative analysis of law and policy as nation states adapt to new security challenges. The process of mapping these varieties and their link to national contexts is crucial in uncovering the strengths and weaknesses of existing interventions. Furthermore, D.Rad accounts for the problem that processes of radicalisation often occur in circumstances that escape the control and scrutiny of traditional national frameworks of justice.

Executive Summary

This report synthesises the city reports of the “Spatial aspects of de-radicalisation” work package from the D.Rad project. Within this work package, we studied mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in public spaces to relate these dynamics to de-radicalisation processes and issues of social cohesion. We conceptualise public spaces as spaces that are characterised by unequal power relations, and as a realm in which people from different backgrounds have daily encounters. These spaces are not merely physical locations but arenas where societal norms, values, and power structures are negotiated. Public spaces are therefore an important sphere for primary prevention programmes that target society as a whole, which is why we conceptualise policies targeting social cohesion in public spaces as implicit de-radicalisation policies.

Following previous research, we argue that public spaces can either foster belonging and inclusion, or exacerbate marginalisation and alienation, meaning that they are potentially drivers of radicalisation but that they can also prevent the alienation of individuals. Within this work package, we focused on five very different European cities—Florence, Helsinki, Tbilisi, Prishtina, and Vienna—each facing unique challenges related to public spaces. The data collection followed three main steps: a literature review, interviews with experts in the field, and the organisation of two participatory focus group workshops in each of the five cities, focusing on one neighbourhood in-depth.

This synthesis report presents a comparative analysis of the empirical findings from the city reports and gives insights into each city context and the in-depth case study as well as examples of best practices and contested areas and contrasts the perceptions and approaches of stakeholders with the perceptions and proposed solutions of young users of local public spaces. Based on the empirical insights, this synthesis reports argues that planning procedures, governance systems, and research should strive to involve a wide range of stakeholders to recognise the varied needs and vulnerabilities of different user groups. Furthermore, the availability of resources and public infrastructure is crucial, as a lack of public spaces or the neglect of them often intensifies conflict and competition among users. The report concludes with a discussion of how inclusion, exclusion, and social cohesion within public spaces can influence broader de-radicalisation processes, outlining how public spaces hold significance as part of primary prevention efforts. The inclusivity or exclusivity within these spaces can impact feelings of belonging and social cohesion, which are integral to countering radicalisation and which contribute to creating environments where individuals feel accepted or at least tolerated.

1. Introduction

This study explores public spaces as forming part of comprehensive de-radicalisation approaches, focusing on the potentials of public spaces in nurturing community resilience to counter extremist ideologies. The report is built on the concept of implicit de-radicalisation policy (Kuokkanen et al., 2023), referring to policies that affect de-radicalisation and the prevention of radicalisation and extremism without them being explicitly labelled as such. These include welfare, education and cultural policies and policy initiatives targeting local inclusion and citizen involvement, in the de-radicalisation literature often framed as primary prevention. Rather than drawing on literature on de-radicalisation and extremism, which usually targets a small number of people raising concern (also labelled as secondary and tertiary prevention), the approach of this study draws on the scholarly literature on public spaces, inclusion, and exclusion. This is relevant in the framework in which feelings of injustice, grievances, alienation, and polarisation, potentially strengthened in exclusionary public spaces, are defined as possible roots of radicalisation. We analyse the role, the potential, and the lines of conflict regarding public spaces and identify both best practices of inclusionary local public spaces, as well as examples of exclusionary spaces and socio-spatially segregated areas.

Central to our approach is to see public spaces as targets of policies conducted by public authorities, such as planning and zoning policies, social policies, and cultural policies, which can both increase and decrease inclusion (e.g., Madanipour, 2023). Public spaces are also sites of neighbourhood-level projects conducted by a multitude of actors (Kuokkanen, 2016) and of citizens' own activism and protest (Carlier, 2020; Iveson, 2013). However, when studying local-level policies and agency, it is important to bear in mind that broader structural-level issues related to class, race and ethnicity are not necessarily solved through local-level initiatives (e.g., Madanipour et al., 2013, p. 4; Ye, 2019). In this study, we examine the insights and experiences of the citizens and local stakeholders of development or a lack of development of urban spaces in various contexts of policies of local participation. This is not a smooth process; we are aware that urban space is contested by different groups, and even the contestation and the unevenness in places co-constitutes its diverse users into a people and the place as space (Massey, 2005).

In the "Spatial aspects of de-radicalisation" work package of the D.Rad project we focused on the city level and were able to put together a highly interesting and diverse set of cities, namely Florence, Helsinki, Tbilisi, Prishtina and Vienna. These cities are embedded in different geographical regions of Europe and have different trajectories and challenges. Florence is a city that suffers from over-tourism, which is why public spaces have become a scarce commodity for urban residents. In Helsinki, creative solutions are needed that meet the weather conditions and that can also function during the cold and dark winters. Tbilisi is characterised by strong differences between the touristic centre, where large and prestigious parks have been created, and outlying districts that are neglected when it comes to the issue of public spaces. Prishtina, as a city in transition, must negotiate how to deal with cultural landmarks that reflect the lines of conflict stemming from the war period, while the basic infrastructure of the city still has to be developed. Finally, Vienna, as a rapidly growing city, is confronted with the effects of increasingly scarce public spaces.

The data of this study were collected through three empirical steps, each building on the previous one. The five teams contributing to the data collecting process, from Finland, Austria,

Kosovo, Italy, and Georgia, first worked on the literature review, then conducted interviews with experts, and finally organised participatory focus group workshops with stakeholders and local young adults, concentrating on carefully chosen public spaces in specific neighbourhoods in the five cities. In this synthesis report, we present a comparative analysis of the empirical work that was carried out in these five distinct city contexts. Through our comparative lens, we aim to gain insights into the nuanced complexities of urban life that go beyond singular case studies, exploring commonalities and disparities that shape the identities and trajectories of these cities.

The next section presents the theoretical and conceptual framework of this study, highlighting implicit and explicit de-radicalisation policies, local resilience, and the effects of public spaces on inclusion and exclusion. In the following section, we outline the methodology and data used in the study by introducing the two LABs compassing the participatory focus group workshops. After that, we give insights into the cases and empirical findings. The section contains three subsections; in the first, we discuss the best practices and contested areas from the perspective of infrastructure, resources, and resident participation, and in the second and third, we introduce the perceptions and approaches of stakeholders and young adults in local case study areas. The report ends with a discussion and conclusion section.

2. Theoretical and conceptual framework: implicit and explicit de-radicalisation policies

Preventing and countering radicalisation has been classified as primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention. According to this divide, primary prevention targets the whole society, secondary prevention focuses on people who are noticed as being at a risk of becoming violently radicalised or affiliated with extremist groups, and tertiary prevention is implemented with already-radicalised people (Haugstvedt & Bjørgo, 2021). In policy measures targeting local-level radicalisation, focus has mainly been on secondary or tertiary prevention and communities deemed “at risk”, which may be stigmatising, and could increase social polarisation (Grossman, 2023; Spalek, 2013). The existing research also often focusses on secondary and tertiary prevention (e.g., Brouillette-Alarie et al., 2022; Koehler, 2016). To avoid the problematic practices in preventing and handling violent radicalisation, there is a need for expansion of a comprehensive conceptualisation of de-radicalisation and social relations in the research.

In this report, we provide a new perspective on the study of the local level and radicalisation in two ways. First, instead of using the classification into primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention, originally taken from epidemiology and health studies (see, e.g., Johansen, 2020), we take the perspective of “implicit” and “explicit” policies, drawn from the field of policy studies (Ahearne, 2009; van den Berg et al., 2009). According to Kuokkanen and others (2023), implicit de-radicalisation policies, as opposed to explicit de-radicalisation practices, are not designed to target individuals or groups at risk of radicalisation. Instead, the prevention of radicalisation occurs as a side effect of these broad policies targeting the population as a whole. Examples can be found from welfare and education policies, but also from other measures to tackle inclusion and participation. These policies can decrease polarisation and feelings of injustice, grievance, and alienation, and potentially diminish the risk for radicalisation (Kuokkanen et al., 2023).

Second, we highlight the role of public spaces in contributing to inclusion and exclusion at the local level, and more specifically, we see the governance of these spaces as a form of implicit de-radicalisation policy. As we see it, publicly owned, non-commercial, open and accessible spaces, such as parks, squares, playgrounds, or libraries (Madanipour, 2023; Ye, 2019, p. 478) allow mundane encounters as well as "rubbing along" (Watson, 2006, p. 8) and "forced propinquity" (Clayton, 2009) between people from different backgrounds. However, public spaces are never neutral, as they are affected by relations between social groups and reflect power structures in society (Carlier 2020, p. 243). Consequently, public spaces function not only as sites of conviviality, community and social encounters, but also as those of fragmentation, marginalisation and hostility (Watson, 2006; Ye, 2019). Public policies can amplify exclusionary mechanisms in public spaces by strengthening segregation and gentrification, displacing population groups and employing security measures perceived as disproportionate. On the other hand, they can also contribute to inclusion through various measures in fields such as planning, social and cultural policies.

In the following sections, we provide an overview of the existing research. We address first the literature on the role of local governments and neighbourhood communities in contributing to processes of de-radicalisation, which has only lately shifted from "communities at risk" towards emphasising more the impact of local resilience. Second, we delve into the effects of public space on processes of inclusion and exclusion, and discuss groups often excluded or displaced from public spaces, and exclusionary and inclusionary processes and policies.

2.1 Radicalisation, de-radicalisation and the local level: from "communities at risk" to local resilience

The role of space – particularly at the urban and neighbourhood levels – has been central to studies and policy initiatives addressing social cohesion and security (e.g., Atkinson & Helms, 2007). However, it has been relatively little addressed in the existing de-radicalisation studies per se. This is interesting, because as Goede & Simon (2013) have highlighted, it is at the "local level where the radicalisation signs can be perceived, and actions can be implemented in order to stop the process" (p. 328). This section will synthesise the existing research on the topic and the various currents in it.

The local spatial structures, processes and activities, in connection with the societal and (trans)national context construct a "milieu of social elements" which can lead to the emergence of radicalisation in neighbourhoods (Hüttermann, 2018, p. 2). Studies and policy initiatives highlighting "*neighbourhood effects"* are often based on a socio-ecological approach (cf. McNeil-Willson & Triandafyllidou, 2023), and they partly overlap with approaches focusing on the role of communities (Dalgaard-Nielsen & Schack, 2016; Gunaratna et al., 2013). While the concept of *community* in this context is ambiguous and often covers aspects of shared culture, ethnicity or political ideology, it also has a geographic and local dimension (Spalek, 2013, p. 60). Community-based approaches can be empowering and based on respect for the community members, but in the worst cases, they can be stigmatising, increasing tensions in or between communities, and/or posing a risk to community members (Grossman, 2023; Spalek, 2013). Moreover, even such approaches that emphasise inclusion rather than securitisation and the labelling of "communities at risk" have been criticised for being based on a white, middle-class view about "normality", and downplaying issues such as social class or ethnic and cultural specificities (Grossman, 2023).

A second strand of literature has emphasised the role of *local governments* both in preventing radicalisation and, in some cases, in amplifying it. Lid (2020) has particularly underlined the role of municipalities in welfare provision, control and surveillance, acceptance of minorities and reconciliation in conflictual situations, as well as in the coordination and cooperation in multi-agency initiatives. However, the challenges of the municipalities in this context include some minority groups' mistrust of public authorities, finding an adequate balance between social- and security-oriented approaches and discrepancies between state-level and local policies (Lid, 2020). Municipalities "translate" international and state policies to the local context (Andersson Malmros, 2019). They have also created their own models in the field of de-radicalisation and the prevention and countering of violent extremism, some of which have gained international attention, most prominently the Danish Aarhus Model (e.g., Bertelsen, 2015). At a more general level, trust in local government is seen as crucial for local minority communities (Dalgaard-Nielsen & Schack, 2016).

Recently, studies have also taken up the issue of *resilience* to radicalisation or violent extremism as a crucial factor in the prevention of radicalisation, combining it with the above-mentioned socio-ecological approach (McNeil-Willson & Triandafyllidou, 2023). Although resilience also covers the more macro (systemic) and micro (individual) levels, at the meso level, it has often meant the strengthening of communities and relating resilience to social cohesion, social integration and social capital (Dalgaard-Nielsen & Schack, 2016; Grossman, 2023, pp. 34–35).

2.2 The effects of public spaces on inclusion and exclusion

Public spaces can both contribute to processes of inclusion by creating joint spaces and embracing diversity and amplify exclusionary processes (Clayton, 2009; Watson, 2006, p. 8). They are important for marginalised groups, particularly for homeless people or undocumented migrants, who do not necessarily have access to other spaces (e.g., Carlier, 2020; Doherty et al., 2008). Another group highlighted in the research as a central user group of public spaces is young people (Litscher, 2013), who do not necessarily have access to or resources for gathering as a group in commercial spaces (such as bars or restaurants) or private spaces (such as homes). For instance, the Zürich-based study by Seeland and others (2009) showed that parks, playgrounds and urban forests are sites where young people can socialise and make friends across their divergent cultural backgrounds.

Public spaces are nevertheless not automatically accessible to everybody. Both visible and invisible barriers are created by architecture, infrastructure and topography (Bricocoli & Savoldi, 2013; Madanipour, 1998), formal and informal norms addressing "appropriate" and "disruptive" behaviour (Johnstone, 2017; Litscher, 2013), policing and controlling by public authorities or private security companies (Carlier, 2020; Litscher, 2013), more subtle forms of social control (Madanipour, 1998), and the risk or fear of violence or harassment (Carlier, 2020). These barriers tend to concentrate on the above-mentioned youth and marginalised groups (Ostanel, 2020).

Public spaces are not necessarily evenly distributed across neighbourhoods, which also affects their accessibility. For instance, the study by Seeland and others (2009) showed that children and young people residing in a working-class neighbourhood with a high number of people with an immigrant background, did not have equal access to urban forests compared

with their peers from an upper-class neighbourhood. Women and minority groups are also more likely to fear crime and violence in public spaces and consequently, they might withdraw from it (Madanipour, 2023, pp. 140–141). However, the requirements of inclusive, accessible, and safe public spaces are not necessarily identical for say, homeless people, substance users, migrants, youth people, the elderly, the poor, disabled people, or women.

Since the 1990s, legal and administrative measures to exclude "unwanted" groups from public space have been strengthened (Johnstone, 2017). While people excluded from public spaces represent various ages and origins, particularly young people (Litscher, 2013), the homeless (Doherty et al., 2008; Toolis & Hammack, 2015), convicted offenders (Schuilenburg, 2015), skateboarders (Németh, 2006), alcohol and drug users, sex workers and people otherwise seen to challenge the "public order" (Johnstone, 2017) are often controlled in public spaces or displaced from them. The privatisation, commercialisation and securitisation of public spaces (e.g., Atkinson et al., 2017, p. 445; Madanipour, 2023; Musterd, 2020, p. 15; Ostanel, 2020), visible in phenomena such as the rise of gated communities, the strengthening role of shopping malls as sites for hanging out, or the operation of private security companies in public spaces, are likely to contribute to further exclusion in public spaces and increase the divides within it (e.g., Doherty et al., 2008; MacLeod & Johnstone, 2012). These developments are also closely related to the processes of gentrification and policies of urban regeneration, often targeted to attracting tourists and the middle classes (Johnstone, 2017).

At the same time, public authorities roll out policy measures through which they intend to increase the inclusivity of public spaces. These include planning and zoning policies that target segregation (e.g., Söderberg & Fjällborg, 2024) and the availability and accessibility of public spaces (Madanipour, 2023). In the best cases, processes of participatory planning can increase inclusion by integrating the residents' knowledge about the spaces that they use into decision-making and increasing their sense of being heard (cf. Kuokkanen & Palonen, 2018). Many local-level projects, including those funded by the European Union, address the issue by creating encounters at the neighbourhood level through a range of small-scale events and gatherings of various kinds, often implemented by civil society organisations and other grassroots-level actors (Kuokkanen, 2016). Urban cultural policies can also increase inclusion and encounters between various population groups (Quinn et al., 2020).

In addition to the policies implemented by public authorities or closely related actors, we highlight the agency of residents in using the public space for their purposes, sometimes referred to as micro-activism or do-it-yourself urbanism (Iveson, 2013). Asylum seekers have occupied public spaces to get visibility for their cause (Carlier, 2020), skateboarders have protested about the closure of skate parks (Németh, 2006), resident activists have conducted community and guerrilla gardening, created cooperatives and organised flashmobs (Iveson, 2013), and marginalised groups such as the homeless have contested the narratives about them (Toolis & Hammack, 2015). Moreover, a central question in both government- and resident-led initiatives concerns the right scale of action, as broader structural-level problems such as poverty, unemployment and structural racism are not necessarily solved through neighbourhood-level measures (e.g., Madanipour et al., 2013, p. 4; Ye, 2019).

The unevenness of urban space implies that some groups are always prioritised, better included than others, and even excluded from the "public" emerging through the spatial activities, in intentional and unintended ways (cf. Harvey, 2005). Public space also offers a concrete

point to express these inequalities, and the place for manifesting it. This unevenness can be at the heart of the forms of radicalisation and thereby also as part of the de-radicalisation solutions and the radically more inclusive and engaging urban spaces. In this report, we see that literature on public spaces can complement the studies on radicalisation and de-radicalisation in considering the role these spaces in processes of inclusion and exclusion and seeing the governance of these spaces as an implicit de-radicalisation policy.

3. Methodology and data

Regarding the methodology, we pursued a stepwise approach consisting of three empirical steps, with each step building on the previous one. The methodology was designed to capture the nature and spatial characteristics of five cities, to identify best-practice examples and contested public spaces, and to zoom in on one specific neighbourhood and a specific indoor or outdoor public space through an in-depth case study.

In the first step, all partners conducted a literature review focusing on the city level and the policies governing the distribution, design, and availability of public spaces of the chosen city. This included the academic literature as well as policy papers, newspaper articles and other publicly available studies and statistics. The research teams collected information on spatial, demographic, and political characteristics, on (historical) urban development, and on the role of the city administration and other key actors working in or on public spaces.

In the second step, all partners conducted five to ten interviews with experts who were defined as having specialised knowledge and/or experiences regarding public spaces and the policies related to them. The identification of interview partners was based on the insights from the first step and potentially included people working in the city administration or local governments, as well as social workers, urban planners, activists, researchers, or community workers. The work package leads provided all partners with semi-structured interview guidelines, which were translated by the research teams to their respective languages. After an introductory question about the work field and expertise of the interviewee, the guidelines covered the following thematic blocks: “General information about public space”, “Role of the municipality”, “Role of other actors and citizens”, “Identification of contested and good practice areas”, and “Securitisation” and “Privatisation”. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for the analysis.

The interviews formed the basis for the identification of best practice examples of public spaces and contested areas and for the selection of neighbourhoods and public spaces for the in-depth case studies, which were implemented as the third step in the research process. The core of the case studies (see Table 1) was the organisation of two D.Rad LABs; one with local stakeholders who have professional and/or experiential knowledge of the chosen spaces, and another with young adults living or studying in the area. Prior to the LABs, all partners visited the spaces and engaged in participatory observations. During these visits, the research teams took photos and made notes, and familiarised themselves with the environment and local conditions (see Verloo, 2020; Yin, 1982).

The D.Rad LABs were organised in the form of participatory workshops for which we designed game cards to steer the group discussions (see, Chambers, 2012). Cards can be used as a tool in qualitative research to guide group discussions, providing stimulating input and creating

a welcoming environment (see, e.g., Aubert et al., 2022; Sutton, 2011). It is possible to use cards to illustrate key concepts, hypotheses, or themes or to print questions on them as we did. In the workshops, the participants had the opportunity to choose freely between the cards and read the questions out loud, which helped to facilitate an engaged dialogue among them. Members of the research teams acted as facilitators, keeping the discussions on track by being aware of the time and creating an inclusive atmosphere. They also gently intervened if the discussion was stalling, if questions were not understood, or if people were not getting their say, while being careful not to dominate the discussions.

All research teams were asked to invite participants who would bring different perspectives to the discussions, aiming for approximately eight to ten participants per LAB. While the recruitment for D.Rad LAB I did not meet with any difficulties, the recruitment of young people for D.Rad LAB II proved to be a difficult and lengthy process in almost all cities. Ideally, the workshops would take place in the vicinity of the public spaces under study, but some were also held at the premises of the research institutions. After a general introduction, the participants were divided into small groups (a maximum of four people) to give every participant enough space and time to contribute to the discussion. Each group had one full deck of cards and was accompanied by a member of the research team who took notes to keep track of the themes and additional questions arising from them. Interestingly, each group had a quite different dynamic, with discussions moving in several directions.

In D.Rad LAB I, we had two sets of thematic cards (“space and locality”, “actors and processes”) alongside “open cards”, “challenge” and “solution cards” to give participants the opportunity to add themes, challenges and solutions. The first set focused on the environment and the characteristics of the public space under study, while the second focused on the power relations of the various actors who used or governed the space. In D.Rad LAB II we had the additional theme of “inclusion and exclusion” which covered questions that were used in all work packages in the D.Rad project conducting research with young people. The two-sided game cards were designed to have the theme printed on the front, and a leading question and several sub-questions for clarification on the back (see, Appendix for examples of game cards).

All research teams were provided with a toolkit for facilitating the interactive workshops, as well as a deck of cards in English. Each team translated the cards into their respective languages, adapting them slightly to local contexts, if necessary. Furthermore, we prepared consent forms and informed all participants about the research project, the purpose and the usage of the data collected. The data were then anonymised and prepared for analysis.

4. Presentation of the cases and empirical insights

4.1 Cities and case studies

In this work package, we brought together the cities Florence, Helsinki, Prishtina, Tbilisi and Vienna. The cities vary not only in their geographical position, size, and climate, but also regarding their historical and socio-economic development, the population diversity, and the role of the city administration (see, Table 1). These differences are inscribed in the urban landscape and define the challenges that cities face today. With Vienna and Helsinki, we included two national capitals in the EU that are both characterised by a highly differentiated administrative apparatus that allocates significant resources to public spaces and that emphasises

participatory planning. However, while Vienna has been confronted with a rapid population growth that resulted in a scarcity of public spaces, Helsinki has a lot of public space at its disposal but has to consider Nordic weather conditions. Prishtina and Tbilisi are both capital cities outside the EU; both have faced conflict and war, as well as regime changes in recent history, which has left marks in the urban landscape. Both cities are still in the process of developing basic infrastructure and services and depend – on external funding, at least partially. While Prishtina is characterised by its cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity, Tbilisi showcases a mix of ancient and modern elements, shaped by its post-Soviet history and has recently rebuilt several parks that now serve as representative landmarks. Florence is the only regional capital in our set and a city that is suffering from over-tourism. The contrast between the well-established administrative structures of Vienna and Helsinki, the historical richness and mass tourism in Florence, and the post-conflict rebuilding of Prishtina and Tbilisi highlights the complexities of urban development and the variety of contemporary urban struggles.

City	Case Study	Particularities & Challenges
Florence (Italy)	San Frediano	• Over-tourism, particularly in the city centre • Commercialisation and privatisation of public space • Lack of public spaces and public services
Helsinki (Finland)	Maunula House	• Nordic welfare state; a city-level model for resident participation • Cold and dark winters putting pressure for creating indoor public spaces • Large green areas, some of which affected by infill construction • A relatively safe city with some recent concerns regarding youth violence
Prishtina (Kosovo)	University of Prishtina Campus	• Post-conflict city with ethno-political tensions • Historical legacies and cultural landmarks of the Kosovo war • Lack of infrastructure and services
Tbilisi (Georgia)	Deda Ena Park	• Historical post-Soviet city with recent investment on public green areas • Neoliberalisation of policies addressing public space • Recent influx of Russian migrants after the war in Ukraine
Vienna (Austria)	Reumannplatz	• Rapid population growth • Welfare state setting with abundant social engineering • Lack of public space in densely built-up districts • Complex bureaucracy and sectorised administrative structures

Table 1: Overview of cities and in-depth case studies

In the following, we describe the characteristics of the cities under study and introduce the public spaces that were chosen as case studies in each city. These parts are a summary of the respective chapters of the city reports[1]. The case studies all reflect on the main challenges that were identified in the cities and provide insights into how different socio-political contexts influence the ownership, usage, and development of urban areas and public spaces.

Florence & San Frediano

Florence, a city that is branded for being rich in history and culture, is grappling with the negative impacts of over-tourism, which has led to the gradual displacement of residents due to rising rental prices in its city centre. The historical and cultural heritage that defines Florence has thus become both an integral part of the city's identity and a risk because it is exploited economically. As a result, many locals relocate away from the tourist-heavy centre to other parts of the city. Consequently, although Florence as such is a medium-sized city, its metropolitan region is quite large and constantly growing. Tourism not only limits broad access and enjoyment of public spaces but also alters the cityscape's aesthetics. Public spaces have been reallocated to tourists and commercialised, reducing opportunities for local civil and social interaction. For instance, cafes and their seating areas are reserved for paying customers, occupying parts of the already scarce public spaces and thus contributing to the erosion of accessible public spaces. The privatisation and commercialisation are thus key challenges that are connected to the negative impacts of over-tourism, and that keeps residents from enjoying the UNESCO World Heritage-listed historic centre and the vibrant cultural landscape of Florence. The municipality does not actively resist these trends of privatisation and commercialisation through tourism, instead informal associations have emerged as crucial in combating social fragmentation and preserving public spaces.

San Frediano was chosen as a site for the in-depth case study because it experiences a large concentration of migrant residents, gentrification, mass tourism and is home to several community associations and local social services. It is a multicultural neighbourhood that is embedded in the socio-economically weaker parts of Florence that used to be inhabited by craftsmen and labourers. Today, the district is characterised by its cultural richness, with a well-balanced mix of community services, social housing, and sports facilities, coupled with residents' awareness of preserving authenticity. It is located close to the city's tourist core and embodies strong resistance against gentrification while promoting inclusivity, as can be seen in Picture 1. San Frediano's central location and historical identity have fostered solidaristic networks for decades, maintaining a cooperative structure separate from tourism dynamics. This district has become a site of successful confrontation and challenges, especially concerning social composition and identity.

[1] For a more detailed information on each of the cities, see Federico, Gatti and Spano (2023) for Florence, Kuokkanen and others (2023) for Helsinki, Elshani (2023) for Prishtina, Kakabadze (2023) for Tbilisi and Haselbacher, Reeger and Stiegler (2023) for Vienna.

Picture 1: Football ground in San Frediano. "Il leone non si arrende, il quartiere si difende" ("The lion does not give up, the neighbourhood will be defended"), © Veronica Federico, Andrea Gatti and Giovanna Spanò

Helsinki & Maunula House

The Finnish capital Helsinki reflects the Nordic Welfare State model, with extensive publicly funded services. In 2017, its administration was streamlined into four divisions (social services, health care and rescue services; education; urban environment; and culture and leisure) and the central administration. The city introduced a participation model that includes participation plans for each division, participatory budgeting, online tools for resident feedback, institutionalised councils for the youth, the elderly, and the disabled, and local participation coordinators. Helsinki's socio-economic spatial distribution shows some noticeable divides, albeit less pronounced compared to other European cities. The prevention of segregation is central in the housing and planning policies of the city, which promote social mixing, and in the allocation of resources in social, educational, cultural, and leisure policies. With 10.3% of the population being foreign citizens and 17.3% having a mother tongue other than the national languages in 2021 (with the Estonian and Russian populations being the biggest groups), Helsinki's diversity is growing (see, Mäki & Sinkko, 2022).

Although the city is relatively safe, the post-pandemic era has been characterised by a growing concern regarding youth and gang violence. Helsinki is a green city, with parks, urban forests, the seaside, and islands, which grew in importance during the COVID-19 pandemic but some of which are currently affected by infill construction. One of the points of contestation in the city has been the preservation of the green areas. The usability of outdoor public spaces is also influenced by Nordic weather, necessitating indoor spaces like libraries and youth centres, which are found citywide.

Picture 2: Maunula House, © Emilia Palonen

The Helsinki research team focused on a community space that included both indoor and outdoor facilities. Maunula House (see Picture 2), situated in Maunula, a suburb in North Helsinki, serves as a multifunctional hub integrating a library, youth centre, adult education facility, cultural venue, café, and yard. The area is characterised by a mix of socio-economic backgrounds, with a population of 9,030 and a 58–42 ratio of rental to owned housing as at 2018 (Helsingin kaupunki, kaupunginkanslia, kaupunkitutkimus ja tilastot, 2020). Maunula is slightly above city averages in terms of age, unemployment, and rental dwellings, and slightly below in population density, dwelling size, household income and tertiary education attainment. The neighbourhood has a history of active community engagement, with residents advocating for a youth house in the 1960s and a cultural centre since the 1980s. The collaborative planning process of Maunula House was a part of "democracy pilots" funded by the City of Helsinki, and it involved residents, municipal officials from several units, and the architect. Today, the building's advisory board includes resident representatives, ensuring ongoing community involvement, and residents can use the premises and organise events in them. In the daily activities, several user groups interact with each other inside and outside the building, leading to collaboration but also tensions.

Pristhina & the University of Prishtina Campus

Prishtina, the capital of Kosovo, is a rapidly growing city with an urban landscape that bears the historical imprints of conflict. The urban fabric of Prishtina is a testimony of several political overturns, starting with its Ottoman origins, preserved in mosques and cobblestone streets that are juxtaposed with the Yugoslav era's socialist modernisation marked by collective housing blocks. The modern urban development of the city can be divided into three phases: The era preceding the 1999 Kosovo war, the war itself, and the post-war era. Post-war expansion brought about massive chaos and demographic shifts due to internal and external migration, leading to uncontrolled sprawl in all directions. Today, the city is comparatively young, with 60% of the population being under the age of 35. Urban growth was not supported with adequate technical, public, and social infrastructure, creating challenges for the city up until today.

The annual programmes for public space development and maintenance provide the direction, resources, and coordination of urban planning agendas. Administrations at both municipal and national levels together manage the development of public spaces. The national administration allocates funds for infrastructure projects, landscaping, and amenities throughout Kosovo, while local actors engage in the implementation of such projects. Local bottom-up initiatives are usually funded externally, through the private sector or international organisations. Despite these efforts, Prishtina grapples with issues such as poor air and water quality, inadequate waste management, and traffic congestion. Insufficient lighting in public spaces affects safety and usability, and the dominance of cars and the encroachment of businesses onto footpaths restricts pedestrian access.

These tensions and challenges also define the space that was chosen as an in-depth case study. The University of Prishtina Campus (see Picture 3) is located at the heart of the city, among some of the city's renowned landmarks, such as the National Library of Kosovo and the National Gallery of Art. The whole area, spread over 15 hectares, serves as a link between the central areas of Prishtina and surrounding neighbourhoods like Ulpiana and Muhaxher. The campus is a vibrant hub of social, cultural, and political activities, hosting various events from student initiatives, to protests and being frequented by diverse user groups, with students as the main occupants, alongside residents, business owners and passers-by. Yet, like many public spaces in Prishtina, it grapples with issues of maintenance, lacking essential amenities, and proper infrastructure.

Picture 3: Part of the University of Pristhina Campus, © Donika Elshani

The campus is also home to the Serbian Orthodox Church of Christ the Saviour, which serves as a contentious landmark of the Kosovo conflict. Its construction commenced during the 1990s and has remained unfinished until today, symbolising the unresolved conflict between Kosovo and Serbia. The church occupies a significant spot of the campus and serves as a stark reminder of past ethno-political tensions and the appropriation of public space by the Serbian regime. The church’s presence has sparked prolonged contentious debates, including

a lawsuit filed by the University of Prishtina against the Serbian Orthodox Church, contesting the church's occupation of the land.

Tbilisi & Deda Ena Park

Tbilisi, the capital city of Georgia, is located at the crossroads between Asia and Europe and at the heart of the Caucasus. Its rich history is evident in the diverse mix of architectural styles, ranging from medieval to Stalinist to modern structures. While Georgia has suffered from a declining population due to emigration which is driven forward by economic hardship, Tbilisi is experiencing a population influx with currently one-third of the country's population residing in the capital (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022). Most recently, due to the war in Ukraine, over 100,000 Russians have migrated to Georgia, driving up rent and real estate prices and thus increasing the risk of gentrification. Modern Tbilisi is characterised by neoliberal reforms that started after the Rose Revolution in 2003, which has led to chaotic urbanisation and the transformation of the city into "concrete jungles." The neoliberal turn aimed to cause economic growth to thrive, and modernise Tbilisi. However, these reforms lacked consistent urban policies, resulting in top-down decision-making that prioritised economic interests over sustainable development. One of the consequences of these reforms was the significant loss of green spaces, reducing them from 13m^2 per person in the 1980s, to 3m^2 in 2020, (currently around 5m^2), which is significantly below international standards (see Zakashvili, 2020). These top-down approaches further reinforced the already existing disconnect between the administration and the population due to the Soviet legacy and economic hardship, and has created an environment in which residents have low levels of trust in politics.

The national government plays a significant role in urban development, with initiatives such as the 2009 General Plan for Tbilisi aiming to provide regulatory frameworks. However, these plans are often violated, reflecting the ongoing politically determined urbanism that continues with each change in government. Urban development projects were mostly realised in the central and touristic parts of Tbilisi, where parks have undergone massive renovation and transformation. These urban development projects are characterised by uniform design choices, the lack of citizen involvement, and neglect of the outskirts of the city. The unequal distribution of green spaces across the city is reinforced by the mountainous topography, which hampers the accessibility of many recreational areas at the borders of the city.

Picture 4: The skate park in Deda Ena Park © Tbilisi City Hall (2021)

The case study Deda Ena Park (see Picture 4) is situated in a touristic area of Tbilisi. The name of the park means “mother tongue” and holds historical and symbolic significance, as the park was an important place in the 1970s, when Georgians were protesting against a proposed Soviet amendment threatening the language's official status. This historic moment marked by massive and ultimately successful protests later led to the park's renaming and the erection of a monument celebrating the Georgian language. Throughout the Soviet and post-Soviet era, the park had endured neglect, mirroring the city's general challenges with safety and the quality of public spaces. However, a revitalisation project in the late 2010s transformed Deda Ena Park into a vibrant gathering spot for locals, tourists, and is particularly attractive to young people. The renovations, completed in 2021, included the construction of the city's first-ever skate park and the park borders one of the city's largest flea markets, known as the "Dry Bridge Market". Its location, attractions and the mere availability of green spaces make it a popular place for crowds from various social and economic backgrounds.

Vienna & Reumannplatz

Vienna, the capital city of Austria, is often renowned for its high quality of living. The city has just recently surpassed the 2 million inhabitants mark, and has grown by 300,000 inhabitants since 2015. This rapid growth was driven largely by immigration and has presented the city with new challenges in urban development, impacting the housing market, social services, and public spaces. One of the main challenges identified during the research was the growing pressure on public spaces, exacerbated by multiple crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, the war in Ukraine and the accompanying inflation. Vienna boasts a range of green spaces, from historic representative parks in the city centre to smaller parks in densely populated residential areas (so-called *Gründerzeit* areas) and large recreational areas like the Vienna Woods or the Danube region. However, the distribution of green spaces across the city is unequal, with many recreational areas being located on the outskirts, creating disparities in access. The city also grapples with issues of privatisation, gentrification, and securitization, leading to the displacement of certain groups. Although there are noticeable differences across districts, Social Democratic social housing policies have mitigated urban segregation.

Picture 5: Reumannplatz and a police sign informing about the video surveillance, © Ursula Reeger

Governance of public spaces in Vienna involves a complex network of actors, including around 23 municipal departments responsible for the planning, maintenance, and supervision of public spaces as well as several actors at city and district level who are involved in the implementation of planning agendas. The City Development Plan (STEP 2025) guides urban development, emphasising the role of public space with regard to social cohesion. Vienna furthermore offers a thick network of social work services in public spaces, addressing issues from youth work to addiction and homelessness. The city's approach reflects an inclusive understanding of public spaces, but the unequal distribution of public spaces, recent crises and the politicisation of certain places have highlighted the need for more public spaces, more resources and climate adaptive measures.

Reumannplatz, the in-depth case study, is located in one of the most densely populated areas of Vienna. The place was established in 1872 and has a quarter-circle layout, deviating from the typical grid development of its surroundings. The area is primarily composed of 19th century buildings in the private rental market, attracting people who have recently moved to Vienna and who do not yet meet the criteria for social housing. In the 1970s, Reumannplatz underwent modernisation with the construction of a metro terminal station and the conversion of adjoining Favoritenstraße into a pedestrian zone. A pivotal shift occurred in 2017 with the extension of the metro and the removal of tram rails, initiating a comprehensive redesign of the square by freeing it from traffic. Reumannplatz is an interesting case for several reasons; It is located in a neighbourhood characterised by high population density, a high proportion of immigrants, and low household incomes. The square has recently been transformed and it became a vital meeting point bringing an array of stakeholders together, including several city departments, researchers, social workers, the area renewal management, local initiatives, citizens, and local businesses. Reumannplatz has also been a spot for political activities like protests and has been politicised and labelled as potentially dangerous, which led to the introduction of video surveillance in 2021 as a response to security concerns. These cameras, mounted on light poles, oversee Reumannplatz and surrounding alleys, aiming to be preventive measures, as can be seen in Picture 5.

4.2 Best practices and contested areas: Infrastructure, resources, and resident participation

In all cities, the task of identifying contested and best practice public spaces has proven to be difficult, as interview partners were reluctant to use these labels for the local spaces. There is no dichotomy that can be used to differentiate spaces into “good” best practice spaces and “bad” contested areas, given that the urban reality is much more complex. While a particular public space may have been identified by one expert as problematic, another may have identified it as best practice, or a place may have been identified as both problematic and best practice. Here, the aspect of time and temporal development is important, as public spaces and their dynamics are constantly changing and places have multiple identities (Massey, 2005). So, what are the elements in the five cities that make public spaces attractive, functional, vibrant, and inclusive? In the following paragraphs, we summarise the elements that were identified by interview partners as contributing to the successful or unsuccessful governance of inclusion and exclusion in public spaces.

The first element we want to outline is *citizen involvement and participation*. Top-down approaches often fail to meet the needs of residents and are therefore not considered to be best-

practice, as they often fail to accommodate local particularities. The form and modes of participation are also crucial. In some cases, there was criticism that although public participation is strongly promoted and advertised by city administrations, the decision-making competencies of citizens are limited in practice. In other words, the fundamental decisions have already been made, and the participation process is merely cosmetic, meaning that e. g. people cannot decide whether and where they want additional seating, but they can decide what kind of bench they want. In addition, it is often the same people who participate in such processes, which is why many voices remain unheard. In any case, examples from all the cities show the outstanding role played by residents of urban neighbourhoods in shaping their surroundings, not only in terms of the built environment and infrastructure, but above all, in social terms. The ever-changing environment requires a high degree of flexibility and lateral thinking, with those who live in the neighbourhoods often knowing best what is going on and where action is needed, which is why residents should be included in planning processes.

As outlined above, the cities analysed differ greatly regarding their *governance structures*, which defines the framework conditions for participatory planning initiatives. While social engineering in public space plays a prominent role in Helsinki and Vienna, and the city authorities deliberately organise participatory planning procedures, Tbilisi and Prishtina are examples of cities where the authorities pay much less attention to public space which may result in neglect, but which also opens opportunities for bottom-up approaches. It is precisely there, where outstanding examples of public spaces that have undergone positive changes that were driven from below can be found. A compelling case of a community-driven initiative is Termokiss in Prishtina. The building was originally the base for the central heating factory, but it had long been abandoned and associated with drug abuse. Subsequently, it was transformed into a social and cultural hub through a community driven initiative. In Tbilisi, the former hippodrome is owned by the city of Tbilisi, which has neglected the space, converting it in the absence of design and planning regulations into a space of open and unspoilt nature that allows for multiple uses.

Best practice public spaces are characterised by their ability to serve a *multitude of purposes*, catering for diverse activities and user groups. These spaces prioritise barrier-free accessibility, ensuring that everyone, regardless of ability, social and economic background, age, or gender can fully participate. Ample space and expansive green areas provide room for recreation and relaxation, promoting physical and mental well-being. Sustainability is a core principle, with eco-friendly features and practices being integrated into the design and maintenance. Residents want to feel safe in public spaces to enjoy spending time there, but the challenge lies in ensuring safety without creating an oppressive atmosphere. The cases outlined in the reports as best practice also underline the important role of community work and community centres that are identified as being a driving force to transform spaces into hubs for various social and cultural activities. Finally, best practice examples ideally provide essential public services and infrastructure free of charge. For example, Oodi library in Helsinki is a free-of-charge indoor space for all residents, offering activities like language courses, programmes for children, and freely accessible infrastructure such as sewing machines and 3D printers.

Contrary to the best practice examples, contested areas tend to be areas where different groups compete for resources, resulting in conflict, tensions and the displacement of individuals and groups. A lack of public space increases these tendencies because groups can no

longer avoid each other and carry out their activities side by side. Frequently mentioned examples about contested areas are transportation hubs, which are prone to a mix of problem situations. They are often chaotic and disorganised, there are lots of people, many of them passing through to change public transport, there is usually little green space but a lot of concrete, and they tend to be a magnet for marginalised groups because they provide basic services and a roof over their heads. This is also the reason why transport hubs are often places where substances are consumed. These are also good examples of public spaces that are constituting the public as heterogeneous, and they are also spaces for negotiating inclusion, mutual respect, and interaction.

Urban planning can further drive the exclusion of certain groups, for example by designing benches in such a way that people cannot lie down on them, by charging for certain services such as public toilets, by prohibiting sports activities such as cycling or playing ball games, or by installing security measures such as CCTV. This echoes the academic literature presented above, in which trends such as gentrification, securitisation, or privatisation are identified as phenomena that set in motion the displacement of various individuals and groups. Socio-economic inequalities play an important role in that context, as economic barriers can limit accessibility or price out long-term residents, which can be observed through gentrification and overtourism. Social dynamics and cultural norms exacerbate these dynamics when discrimination based on age, race, gender, ability, or sexual orientation makes individuals withdraw from public spaces. Poor design can also create exclusionary mechanisms and can partially control the distribution of spaces, for example by dedicating certain places for specific uses or by using so-called hostile architecture that limits the ways in which a space can be utilised. In addition, as some cases illustrate, the lack of representation in public monuments, landmarks and historical narratives can further alienate marginalised communities. In contested areas, these issues usually tend to intersect, creating environments where different groups compete for space, its distribution, and purposed usages.

4.3 Perceptions and approaches of stakeholders in local case study areas

In the following, we describe the input by the stakeholders in the participatory focus group workshops (D.Rad LAB I). It is important to point out that this is not an objective, complete discussion of all the circumstances in the case study areas, but rather perceptions of the participants who represented municipal officials from the fields of social and youth work, urban planning, cultural, education and participation policies, voluntary organisations, local decision-makers and resident activists. Many of them were active daily in the case study areas through their work, voluntary commitment or as inhabitants.

A central theme in the workshops *was the importance of various groups of people feeling included* in the area or in the specific public space inside it. Often, inclusivity was related to a long-term solidaristic or community-based tradition of the area, combined with municipal services, such as in the San Frediano area in Florence or in Maunula in Helsinki. However, a tight-knit local community could also be exclusive. The stakeholders from San Frediano particularly emphasised a shift from social exclusivism towards more inclusive practices and saw that the area had been successful in maintaining a solidaristic core while evolving and adapt-

ing to changes. Alongside inclusion, the participants also highlighted the importance of resident involvement and participation in such a way that in practice, they could have an impact on their neighbourhood and the local public space, as had been the case with Maunula House in Helsinki. In Vienna, the complex and complicated administrative structures were perceived as slowing down participation processes, which is why the workshop participants stressed the need to simplify administrative structures.

The spaces chosen as case studies *differed in the diversity of the user groups*. Deda Ena Park (Tbilisi) was described as a space of encounter mostly for young people (under 25) and tourists, and other segments of the population such as elderly people and families were largely missing. Particularly in the case of families with children, this could partly be due to the pollution of the city's main river, Mtkvari, close to the park. The renovations of the 2010s had alienated many users from the local population, and the park had lost its role as a local community site. After the renovation, spaces for groups such as skateboarders or dog owners were clearly separated, and the renovation led to less space for unplanned, spontaneous activities. However, Deda Ena Park was still a space of inclusion and encounter among young people from different neighbourhoods and with a diverse socio-economic background, with a peaceful coexistence between the user groups. Reumannplatz, in turn, gathered various kinds of user groups. The design of the area with various separated areas and niches allowed for diverse groups to co-exist and occupy different corners of the space. In Maunula House, the existence of diverse public services and a supermarket in the building targeted to different user groups contributed to their interaction, with a non-profit café in the lobby acting as a central meeting point.

Common at the workshops was that the stakeholders saw that *people with an immigrant background were hard to reach* and often remained outside participation processes. Also, *girls and (young) women* have different needs regarding public spaces and sometimes withdraw from using them, as could be observed at Reumannplatz, where men occupy proportionally more space. This was also the case at the Prishtina University Campus, where particularly women perceived the space as unsafe due to lacking lighting, for instance. In the case of Maunula House (Helsinki), the workshop participants saw that the dissemination of information in various minority languages could be improved.

The workshops also revealed *conflicts or tensions* between various user groups in the public spaces. For instance, young people could be perceived as noisy or disturbing, or there had been racist incidents or conflicts between young people and local alcohol users, as in the case of Maunula House (Helsinki). More long-term tensions could occur around historical symbols in public spaces. A central topic in the case of the University Campus in Prishtina was the unfinished building of the Serbian Orthodox Church. However, the workshop participants in Prishtina were divided on the topic, some unwilling to discuss the topic, others wanting to demolish the church and seeing that religious elements in a university campus contradicted the idea of a secular and inclusive space, and a third group willing to convert the church into a museum dedicated to wartime history, contributing to a collective national memory.

The issue of *safety* was addressed in many of the workshops as a factor that could directly contribute to the inclusion and exclusion of certain groups. In the case of Reumannplatz (Vienna), the workshop participants saw that although drug use and selling had become a problem in the area, it could hardly be separated from the stigmatisation of racialised young men

whose presence in public spaces was perceived as being undesirable and disturbing. In the case of Reumannplatz, the workshop participants particularly mentioned the lack of opportunities, offers, and incentives for young, socio-economically marginalised male migrants, such as young (illegalised) refugees from Syria and Afghanistan. At the University Campus in Prishtina, the participants highlighted the lack of overall safety in the campus area, related to the presence of stray dogs, lack of adequate lighting and previous drug use in some parts of the campus, which all contributed to the avoidance of the area at night, especially by women. In Maunula House (Helsinki), the workshop participants emphasised the lack of a homogeneous definition of safety, as middle-class safety concerns could have an impact on the vulnerability of groups such as drug or alcohol users. A general finding from the workshops was that a safe space meant different things for different users. A result from several places (such as Reumannplatz and Maunula) was also that a (current or former) media image of a certain area as “rough”, a “social hotspot” or even as a “no-go area” was inaccurate, stigmatising and exaggerated, and it influenced the people living in the area negatively.

In addition to drugs and the fear of abuse or harassment, the workshop participants in many of the cities also mentioned alcohol consumption, littering and noise pollution as factors contributing to whether a certain space was perceived as safe or welcoming. These phenomena were often interrelated with current pressing issues such as inflation and poverty and homeless persons and people in very cramped living conditions increasingly frequenting public spaces, as in the case of Reumannplatz in Vienna. The workshop participants in the cities were divided in whether they supported the installation of security cameras (as in the case of the Prishtina University Campus) or saw it as a populist and repressive measure (as in the case of Reumannplatz). In the case of Maunula House in Helsinki, the participants underlined the importance of trust and a low level of supervision for the users of public spaces. However, the balance between control and freedom was a delicate one in the case of spaces with social problems that needed interventions.

A joint theme in the workshops was the *importance of investing in public spaces with adequate infrastructure and services*. Maunula House in Helsinki was an example of a big public investment in a multifunctional indoor public space, which combined several public services and an adjacent supermarket in a locally central place, but many of the spaces had been renovated in recent years. Deficits in infrastructure, on the other hand, affected the usability, accessibility and safety of public spaces. Examples of such deficits concerned lighting, furniture, waste management and the maintenance of green areas (as in the case of the University Campus in Prishtina) or public toilets (in Vienna), but also insufficient shade during the summer months in both cases. At a more general level, the participants of the workshop in Vienna underlined the need for social investments in creating opportunities for groups that are currently excluded from all social safety nets.

However, public spaces needed *not only be governed by public actors*. Instead, activities in the spaces could be co-organised and governed by voluntary organisations, by looser citizen groups or by individual citizens. A central theme in many of the cases was *collaboration* among various actors and groups present in the area, including administrative units, local organisations and networks, and residents and users, which was perceived as being key to accommodating the diverse needs of different user groups. In San Frediano (Florence), the workshop participants emphasised the importance of formal and informal cooperation among the local networks and the solidaristic tradition of the area. Despite complicated bureaucratic municipal

structures, participants in the Vienna workshop highlighted the well-functioning local cooperation which regularly brought together different stakeholders from the local, district, and municipal levels. In Maunula House (Helsinki), the planning process of the building had included collaboration between residents and several municipal units (as well as the architect), and the same applied to the current governance model of the house. The Deda Ena Park (Tbilisi) acted as territory where young people could get organised on issues which they felt the major political parties either completely ignore or do not pay enough attention to, with demonstrations or events related to environmental issues or to celebrate the end of the COVID-19 curfew.

The workshop participants had an *ambivalent view of private services in public spaces*. At the University Campus of Prishtina (Kosovo), some workshop participants saw that commercial coffee shops could strengthen coffee culture, an integral part of the social fabric and an essential social activity bringing people together. They perceived cafés and restaurants as potential catalysts for revitalising the area, creating gathering points for students, residents of various socio-demographic backgrounds, and visitors alike. However, other participants advocated for maintaining the university campus as a strictly public space, as such transformations often result in limited access and exclusion for low-income and marginalised groups, creating a sense of alienation and detachment from what was once an open space for public use. In Maunula House (Helsinki), a café in the lobby of the building had been the most crucial demand from the residents at the planning phase of the house, currently run as a non-profit service by the youth department, employing young people at the risk of marginalisation. The Maunula House workshop participants also appreciated the combination a supermarket and public services in the same building, seeing that it made it easier for people from different backgrounds to visit the building.

The workshops also showed the *importance of place-making* and a certain amount of local pride. Together with the concept of local and community-based resilience, this was particularly underlined in the San Frediano (Florence) case, where the workshop participants highlighted the deep territorial roots of the local activism, but also its capability to include newer social groups and its combination with social policy measures. Consequently, this deep-seated social cohesion also created resilience in times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. In the case of the University Campus in Prishtina (Kosovo), the workshop participants stressed the characteristics of the place as a site of popular resistance, resilience, and emancipation, partly due to its historical legacy. In a similar tone, Reumannplatz (Vienna) was perceived as an iconic place and the district's landmark, and the participants of the Maunula House (Helsinki) workshop highlighted the communitarian roots, diversity, green areas, and historical architecture of their neighbourhood. In Tbilisi, the Deda Ena Park is a central gathering place for young people and tourists.

The workshops also included several cases of *successful interventions or developments*. For instance, in San Frediano (Florence), this meant a combination of public and voluntary sector investment and a renewal of the local communitarian tradition, so that the formerly violent football turned from a divisive practice into a means of social inclusion. In the case of Maunula House (Helsinki), the multifunctional public space had been built in a park which had been perceived as unsafe, a gathering place for substance users. While a group of alcohol users currently gathered outside the building, they interacted with the staff and the other users of the building. A recent redesign of Reumannplatz had been successful, with several positive

features of the inclusion of marginalised populations instead of a mere displacement of groups such as homeless people or drug users. Also, the lighting concept and resting facilities had been improved and traffic was calmed. In Tbilisi, the renovation of Deda Ena Park in the late 2010s had led to more mixed results: while the park was made more attractive to young people and tourists, it had also partly lost its role as a community park.

Our research highlights those involved and included in the planning and governing of the public spaces as being vital when considering the root causes of radicalism and implicit de-radicalisation practice. In the processes of creating access to the spaces, co-living, co-design, and co-governance, we reflect on ways in which limits have been set. Any group would necessarily only be a fraction of those involved in the space-bound interaction, but in many ways, it can represent the users as a community. Resources vary from case to case, but there are some basic practices that could break with the issues of administrative traditions and resources, such as widening access. Involvement as a (legitimate) user generates horizontal ties through the public space and enables the forming of the public.

4.4 Perceptions and proposed solutions of young users of local case study areas

Young people are a particular user or stakeholder group. In the second part of the workshops (D.Rad LAB II), young adults discussed their experiences and thoughts about local inclusion and exclusion using the game cards designed to evoke conversation about the cases chosen for the study. The conversations covered issues connected to the specific indoor or outdoor public space, the neighbourhood in which it was located and, the city in which the young people resided (to some extent). Since the cases were located in culturally and geopolitically diverse places, the experiences of the young people differed from each other, but there were still some common perceptions and solutions that were raised in the conversations.

The workshop participants *felt included at least at some level* in the chosen public space and their neighbourhood. In San Frediano (Florence), although describing their neighbourhood as a “poor part of town”, the participants lauded the community spirit of their neighbourhood and emphasised the encounters in Piazza Tasso and the streets surrounding it between homeless people, young people, couples and families with children, either Italian or with a migration background. They highlighted that many of the migrant people living in San Frediano were residents, as opposed to tourists, and saw the neighbourhood as a micro-city with a community and everything needed for living. Despite perceiving a slight stigma attached to being from Maunula, the young people residing there saw their neighbourhood as a welcoming and relaxed place where people could be accepted for who they were, fostering diverse identities and lifestyles away from the bustling city centre. However, the young people saw that negative prejudices against a place sometimes made them not want to be associated with it, even if the stereotypes were only partly true.

In some cases, the participants did not feel they belonged to a specific public space, as they described *the space as belonging to someone else*. In Tbilisi, the young people perceived that many parks were used by child families and dog owners, leading the youth to gather in Deda Ena or Mziuri Park. In the case of Maunula House (Helsinki), the young people saw that the building was primarily an inclusive place for children and elderly people. Even if the building includes a youth centre, the young adults felt that they lacked a space for casual socialising,

open for newcomers. In the neighbourhood, they referred to dynamics related to the ownership of public space, with ethnic, age- or activity-related groups “reserving” certain spaces for themselves. At the Prishtina University Campus, the “occupiers” were stray dogs. Alcohol and drug consumption in public space was connected to the ownership of space, particularly in Vienna and Helsinki, where the participants saw that addicts occupied certain public spaces such as parks with their presence, making it hard to share the space. In Vienna, the participants said that they mostly went to the city centre and to the inner districts or visited commercial spaces where they felt safer instead of using Reumannplatz in their free time. However, they emphasised that not all people could use commercial spaces.

In some places, the workshop participants perceived *differences in inclusion between linguistic, ethnic, and social groups*. For example, in Tbilisi, while the young people perceived Deda Ena Park as inclusive, they noted the exclusion of people with disabilities in the city and mentioned the separation of foreign students from India playing cricket on small local football fields. In Maunula (Helsinki), the young adults stressed the differences in the opportunities for children residing in rental housing as opposed to owned housing, which also affected their use of public space. Moreover, while they had friends from various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, they saw that local Swedish speakers largely remained distinct, despite the Finnish- and Swedish-language schools sharing the same building and yard.

The young adults in most workshops raised *issues connected to the built infrastructure* and to development projects that had already happened or were needed for future development. Although the participants in Vienna appreciated the renovation of Reumannplatz, they saw the need for further development and did not want to spend time in the area. The participants emphasised the effects of climate change and perceived public spaces in the neighbourhood as being concrete jungles in urgent need of shade and greenery. Young adults in the workshops of Reumannplatz and the University Campus in Prishtina also emphasised the need to improve the lighting of these spaces, perceiving it as a safety issue. In Deda Ena Park (Tbilisi), the participants mentioned the lack of public toilets and a facility at which bicycles could be left. All these issues were seen to make it harder to use specific public spaces, and the lack or low quality of infrastructure made the participants spend their free time further away from their homes or schools. At a general level, the young people had a range of suggestions for making the spaces more inviting to young people, ranging from a botanical garden, an open-air cinema and an information centre in the case of University Campus of Prishtina, to sofas in Maunula House.

Gender and gendered safety issues were highlighted during some of the workshops, especially in Vienna, where most of the participants were young female students. Reumannplatz was not perceived as accessible for girls and (young) women, as the participants had had unpleasant experiences there. The female participants in Prishtina said they preferred not to spend time at the Campus after dark and demanded security cameras and the presence of police to increase the safety of these spaces. In Maunula (Finland), the young adults, irrespective of their gender, perceived drug users as being scary. However, they emphasised that they knew the local alcohol users and sometimes talked with them, and they felt the suburb was safe when compared to certain inner-city areas. The participants of San Frediano (Florence) saw their neighbourhood as being safe, possibly partly because of its community-oriented atmosphere.

The participants saw *the diversity of people living in the area being connected to the development of the infrastructure and the services*, such as in the case of Maunula, where Maunula House was seen to play a crucial role in ensuring that the neighbourhood remained a vibrant mix of people. Nevertheless, this development also concerned people, such as in the case of San Frediano (Florence), where the participants were worried about the gentrification and touristification of the area. The increasing prices of housing and living costs were slowly modifying the population of the area, driving the poorer families away. The workshop participants perceived this as a threat to the diversity of the area. High-quality public spaces in other parts of the city could also attract users from other neighbourhoods, as the participants of the Deda Ena Park workshop in (Tbilisi) said that they used the park as a space of encounter because of lack, low quality or overcrowding of public spaces near their homes.

In San Frediano (Florence), the participants found that the neighbourhood offered equal *opportunities to participate* in and contribute to the local community, regardless of cultural or ethnic background. In San Frediano and in Maunula (Helsinki), the young people nevertheless perceived the political action, such as community meetings, demonstrations or the demands of the resident association, mostly concentrated on local political demands, but not international political issues, such as the climate crisis, the war in Ukraine or the economic recession. Even if the young adults felt societally engaged, the feeling of not being represented by politicians was present at both workshops. In San Frediano, the young people trusted private sector actors and volunteers more than the public sector. They saw the public enthusiasm towards tourism, also prominent in the city administration, as a threat to the local people and family-run businesses. A similar concern about over-touristification was not present at the Deda Ena Park workshop (Tbilisi), despite the park being a tourist attraction. However, the participants in the Deda Ena Park workshop (Tbilisi) described the approach of the city administration towards urban planning as being top-down in such a way that the local population and the users of public space did not have a chance to have an impact on the planning processes. Even in Helsinki, lauded for its participatory approach, the young people saw the city as “a bigger instance” working independently of the demands of the residents, and they perceived that this attitude was even sometimes visible in Maunula House despite its participatory governance model.

Recognising the right to use the city, as Lefebvre (1968) and Harvey (2008) have theorised, and the involvement in the planning and governance by young people are vital, as they reinforce the sense of belonging in the local community and in society at large. The research highlighted the need to listen to the voices and concerns of young people related to the different practices taking place in public spaces, and also governing and shaping them. Critically, the conversation with young people offers insights to the established stakeholders from the perspective of the younger users of the space, and also recognises that the youth is not a unitary category but a linguistically, culturally, and socially diverse one. The use of public spaces by young people may differ from the older groups and offer new opportunities for generating inclusive spaces.

5. Discussion and conclusion

This study, based on five highly diverse cities that are currently facing different challenges, is strong proof that *context matters:* the context of cities, the context of neighbourhoods, but also the political, administrative, economic, historical, and legal contexts. For example, the detrimental effects of gentrification, commercialisation and privatisation on public spaces were an issue in all five cities, but in very different ways. While in Vienna, Florence and Helsinki, commercialisation has progressed to the point at which it is hard to disentangle public from private spheres, in Tbilisi and Prishtina, due to the lack of comprehensive public strategies and in light of a disillusionment with institutional actors, local stakeholders considered privately funded initiatives and commercially driven urban development as an alternative to bring forward transformations. Many of these issues are connected to the question of resources and the local framework conditions but also to (historical) lines of conflict. Issues of access to resources, such as housing, education, and healthcare, often reflect deeper societal divisions based on race, class, and ethnicity. Some of these divides and historical legacies are visibly inscribed in public spaces, reminding the population of the conflicts and suppressions of the past, as was outlined in the case of Prishtina. Policies and approaches should therefore be context-sensitive and identify the challenges and prerequisites of a given neighbourhood and a locality in order to develop tailored approaches.

However, the development of local solutions is only possible if the *economic, administrative and legal framework conditions at city level* are conducive to accommodating local needs. These frameworks should equip local authorities with the autonomy to enact policies that respond to the needs of their communities. Furthermore, well-functioning cooperation between different policy levels and stakeholders is necessary to develop comprehensive policies that take the whole city into account. Urban planning, the provision of infrastructure and services can help to level out inequalities, but it is not possible to solve structural problems like poverty or racism locally, as these issues need to be addressed at higher political levels as well (Madanipour et al., 2013; Ye, 2019). This involves, inter alia, the creation of legal and political opportunity structures that provide local level actors with adequate instruments to find local solutions. In Vienna, for example, stakeholders reported that they are unable to make offers to some groups because they do not qualify for certain programmes due to their irregular residence status and because they lack access to the labour market. In other cities, there was no framework at all for organising participatory planning processes, meaning that the administrative structures that could guide such processes still need to be developed and funded. In summary, irrespective of the context, in multi-level governance arrangements, both vertical and horizontal networks are necessary to connect stakeholders from various political levels and to connect local stakeholders with each other, mediating and translating between these actors and policy levels.

Finally, in times of *multiple crises*, it needs to be acknowledged that there are issues that can only be marginally addressed at city level, even though they impact the daily life of urban residents (see, Frantzeskaki et al., 2018). Global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, or the climate crisis, transcend the boundaries of individual cities. Cities are only able to react and alleviate the individual problems connected to these crises, but are not able to solve them. The effects of these crises are felt at local levels, impacting the cost and quality of living for urban residents and change the role of public spaces as more people depend on public goods and services in times of crises. While some of these issues are temporary, others like the need for climate adaptive measures will accompany cities for a long time

and change the cityscape. These multifaceted issues outline that some of the contemporary urban dilemmas, while being nuanced by unique city contexts, are linked to each other and simultaneously come to the fore in one way or the other in cities around the world. This is closely connected to trends of urbanisation, globalisation, and the neoliberalisation of cities, and shows that cities today have to navigate a complex web of interconnected challenges that partially lie beyond their sphere of influence.

Our findings show that measures and actors should distance themselves from approaches targeting specific communities (religious, ethnic, or otherwise defined), to not lose sight of the *power relations* impacting the space. Also, as studies on the UK Prevent Strategy have shown, specific spaces and neighbourhoods should not be labelled as sites of risk, because this reproduces essentialising and racialised notions of criminality (Heath-Kelly, 2017). Previous research proves that public spaces can both be sites of conviviality and social encounters as well as sites of marginalisation and hostility (Massey, 2005; Watson, 2006; Ye 2019). Or as Jabareen and Eizenberg (2021) have put it: the city is conceived as being comprised of spatiotemporal configurations where social spaces have social and political relations ranging from harshly antagonistic to inclusive and equivalent (p. 211). Recognising public spaces as social spaces means understanding their role in negotiating power relations, as these spaces often reflect and perpetuate societal hierarchies and inequalities.

Some current urban developments, such as gentrification, the privatisation of goods and services, or the loss of publicly available spaces due to commercialisation and other trends, result in displacement mechanisms and reduce *publicly available infrastructure*, as some of our case studies prove. Infrastructure is not limited to certain goods, like public toilets, playgrounds, benches or drinking water, but also comprises social infrastructure (see, Latham & Layton, 2022; Tomaney et al., 2023). Social infrastructure can foster feelings of place attachment and (local) belongings (Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2013). Hence, “place attachments, place identity, sense of community, and social capital are all critical parts of person-environment transactions that foster the development of community in all of its physical, social, political, and economic aspects” (Manzo & Douglas, 2006, p.347). While Manzo and Douglas saw that such place attachments make people care for their community and motivate residents to protect and improve their neighbourhood in participatory planning agendas, they also highlight how place attachments and emotional commitment help to resolve conflicts within communities and strengthen feelings of togetherness, which is a relevant aspect of de-radicalisation work. A key challenge here is to identify and respond to the diverse needs of different user groups, while recognising the power imbalances that exist between these groups. Or, in other words, how can we include the perspectives of those who withdraw from public spaces and/or participation processes?

Through the methodological approach in this work package, we were able to *include different perspectives in the analysis*, and to approximate the space from the angle of stakeholders who work on or in public spaces and from young users of these spaces. While in some cities, both groups presented rather similar views on the public spaces chosen for the study, in others, the perspectives differed. For example, the young participants in Florence and Helsinki perceived their own opportunities to influence the design and constitution of public spaces as being more limited than was presented at the stakeholder workshops. In some cases, the young adults could take up more fine-tuned forms of inclusion and exclusion on the basis of their own experiences as users of these public spaces. While stakeholders formulate their views based on their professional background and mostly focus on the structural level, and

are aware of inequalities and power imbalances, young users primarily formulate their arguments based on the own needs and preferences. In some cities, the differences between the LABs were striking, as in the case of the University Campus area in Prishtina, where the unfinished Serbian Orthodox Church provoked a heated discussion in the workshop with the stakeholders, while the young people wanted to discuss their perspectives and desires for the campus area, identifying what was lacking in the space and brainstorming ways to develop it to meet their needs better. In Vienna, young people repeatedly raised the need for climate adaptation measures such as shading and the creation of green spaces, a topic that was not addressed at all in the other workshop.

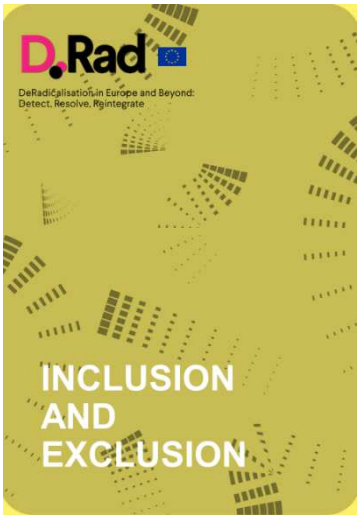
Young people represented a group that, according to stakeholders, was often hard to reach for them. This was an issue that also impacted us as researchers, as all research team faced difficulties in recruiting participants for the D.Rad LAB with the young people. It is crucial to recognise the heterogeneity among young people, understanding that they are affected and marginalised by a multitude of factors and circumstances. The LABs with young people provided valuable insights into why young people may refrain from using certain spaces. It was especially security concerns, a lacking sense of belonging or gendered insecurities and catcalling that kept young people from taking to these spaces. While this often results in girls disappearing from the public and withdrawing to private spaces, other groups of young people are perceived to be a nuisance due to their socio-economic status and appearance (like young people who are economically deprived or have an immigration background) or due to the activities they carry out (like skateboarding or partying in public). These issues highlight the complex interplay between formal and informal social norms, policing practices as well as subtle forms of social control, alongside the fear of violence or harassment that all contribute to shaping perceptions of "appropriate" and "disruptive" behaviour in public spaces (see Carlier, 2020; Johnstone, 2017; Litscher, 2013; Madanipour, 1998).

Discrimination based on these factors underscores the need for *intersectional approaches* in research and policymaking alike, to be able to understand and address the varied challenges young people face in urban spaces (see, Vallée & Lenormand, 2023). Hence, policymakers and researchers have to be creative to address the diverse user needs and power imbalances. Innovative strategies may involve speaking to professionals who act as representatives of specific groups, like social workers helping people suffering from addictions, or by asking people to take up the perspectives of other groups, or by employing grassroots approaches and going to the field to ask people on-site to bring in their perspectives and to directly involve the public.

As we have argued, the local level is not only a sphere in which radicalisation signs can be perceived (de Goede & Simon, 2013, p. 328), but also a sphere that adds to *de-radicalisation policies* and that can have preventive effects. Thus, investments in public spaces aimed at the local population are highly likely to pay off. These investments can be of a social or structural nature. User-friendly zones for different types of use, a mix of offers and other structural measures on the one hand, and social work on the other, are among the methods that can contribute to successful coexistence or even togetherness in urban public spaces. As implicit measures, they contribute to social cohesion or at least to a peaceful coexistence of groups with different requirement profiles for public spaces. Tackling societal inclusion and participation can decrease feelings of injustice, grievance, alienation, and counter polarisation. With this study, we offer a reading of measures and policies tackling urban spaces as adding to the

net of primary, and partially also secondary prevention. De-radicalisation is an issue that concerns society as a whole. If the goal is to reduce feelings of injustice, grievances, alienation, and polarisation, there is a need to create spaces in which people feel accepted, places where they feel they belong to, then they can become sites of de-radicalisation.

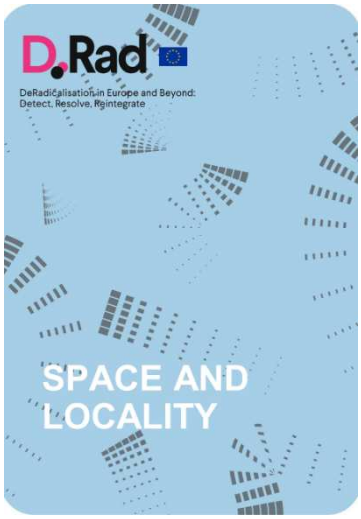
Appendix: Examples of game cards



2

Discuss and describe public urban space in your neighborhood: Who uses it? Is it easily accessible?

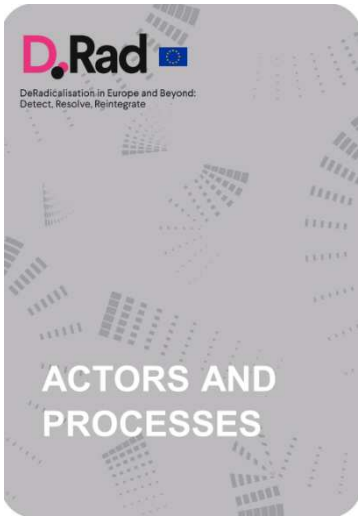
Is there enough public space for young people in your city/ in your neighborhood?



2

How could this public urban space be improved?

What is missing? What would you wish for this place?



2

What does the city/municipality do to improve or change this public space and common spaces in the neighborhood?

Please, give positive and negative examples of such processes. Whom do these have an impact on?

You can also have a look at the map and discuss where changes have happened and what their effects were.

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