



# **A GUIDE FOR THE EXPANDED GARDEN PROJECT**

**Participatory processes in education**

During the Interreg project DANUrB, working with local communities was a key issue. We focused on processes which can be adapted to small towns and provide knowledge and tools for people to value their heritage and improve their environment. In this guide, we introduce The Expanded Garden workshop, one of our activity related participatory processes in education.

The Expanded Garden works with art interventions, called micro-laboratories, which focus on the interrelations of critical education, contemporary art practices and urban environmental policies. Interventions take place in different schoolyards and their surroundings. Based on the assumption that education can take place in every moment and everywhere, the micro-laboratories constitute an expanded territory of performative learning, a place of playful reflection about urban-rural space, aimed at reflecting on our daily ecological behaviour.

## WHO IS IT FOR?

For visual artists, scholars, citizens or institutions who want to think and act around the idea of the “Cooperative City”:

People who want to reconnect the schools with the city, through the perspective of young people and through interventions on semi-rural and semi-public spaces.

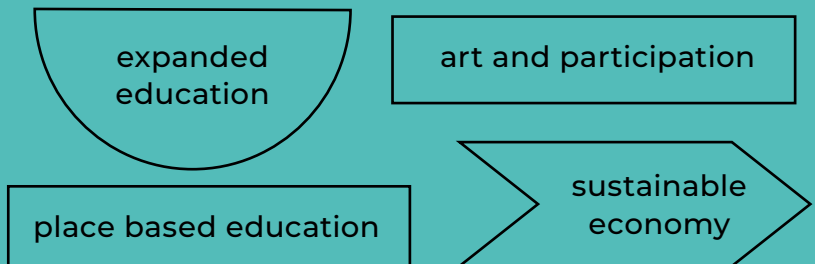
People who are interested in creating new spaces for knowledge exchange and cultural production between schools, visual artists and community initiatives on alternative models of a sustainable economy

People who try to visualize different agricultural heritage systems  
And artist-researchers who focus on research about participatory methods through techniques of cooperatives games, similar sociomimetic exercises and new media pedagogies.

## WHY DO WE DO IT?

The micro-laboratories consist of punctual interventions forming a mobile laboratory, which can be displayed and positioned on various sites. It is transportable to various places and thus makes education an issue that takes place everywhere. In the expanded garden being a more specific issue on the environmental conditions and about food and food culture, artists and teachers offer space to students for experimental production based on knowledge exchange among themselves. This action can also be used to connect public schools with local enterprises in the food and agriculture sector and thus increase the students' identification with local products and foods.

At the heart of these artistic interventions are interdisciplinary investigations of public space and its continuous transformation. Emphasis is put on the critical articulation of actual urban and rural/urban landscapes including food production and retail. Working on the assumption that every place constitutes an open system, the expanded garden helps to detect and put under scrutiny the potentials of symbolic and social/political interference in such spaces.



## OUR STORY

The Expanded Garden project derives from the artistic project “Corridor Breaks” that Irene Lucas and Christoph Euler designed for the Manifesta 8 (2010) exhibition in Murcia, and that they have also carried out in Vienna in adapted version.

Starting from the concept of the art device of Brian Holmes, the main idea was to realize artistic interventions in courtyards of different schools to develop a photo-installation - diagram as a comparative network of series of photos developed through group dynamics and interactions at the school and outside the school.

The Expanded Garden micro-laboratories use the schoolyard as the starting point for a route that links the school with civic initiatives in a 2km radius of the school in the form of a sustainable route. Following local projects or initiatives in each community and connecting them

the playgrounds of the schools is the strategy, which allows to open up an interdisciplinary space of co-creation and knowledge exchange.

It is decisive to contact initiatives around principal movements on sustainable matters such as Permaculture, Slow Food, Biodiversity, Bike Community, Coworking Spaces, Urban Gardening, Food Coops, Community Seed Banks ... During the research period, it is important to have a wide angle to give space to specific local projects which are perhaps grounded in global movements, such as the network of transition towns.

Essential ingredients of our methodology are dynamics dealing with cooperative games, mappings, collaborative visual production through drawings, video and photography and at the end the celebration of a collective lunch.

## OCCURRING PROBLEMS

## SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

Kids and students don't have the knowledge to reconnect with their environment.



Involve community members to start educative dialogues. Investigate the cultural, social and economic environment of the community and initiate discussions.

Lack of community-based practices (like planning and sharing ideas in teams)



Encourage kids, schools, communities and local stakeholders to connect and collaborate.

Difficulties in the communication among local initiatives.



Include our contacts to define the intention of the project and to visit the place of interest and possible collaborators.

Horizontal collaboration with local partners need time and similar interests (so far, only on one occasion did we have difficulties with the collaboration with paid assistants)



Define clear roles and capabilities.

# SOLUTIONS

ities and dialogues. current environment-community vision.

school community stakeholders collaborate.

acts to define the project spaces of inter-cooperation

roles and spaces

# TOOLS/METHODOLOGY OF THE SOLUTION

## **PARTICIPATORY PLANNING:**

Discussing problems and opportunities reveals new information that leads to better results.

## **MENTAL MAPPING:**

It provides an opportunity to develop a dialogue about certain subjective and objective topics, thereby, participants can create a new social environmental “map”.

## **COMMUNITY DIALOGUE:**

In many cases, the dialogue itself leads to a solution without further actions taken.

## **PLACEMAKING:**

Rethinking and redesigning unused or underused places by the Danube or in their cities through temporarily using them for social, cultural or environmental purposes.

## **INCREASE TRUST AMONG LOCAL PARTNERS AND PROFESSIONALS**

## **FACE TO FACE COMMUNICATION**

## WHY SHOULD YOU DO IT?

- Applying an Expanded Garden project in your community can bring each partner/participant several benefits such as:
- opening new perspectives for the local community and school community
- creating intersubjective production of meaning through artistic events
- improving relationships between different partners
- creating moments of co-creation between the different partners

## WHAT WILL YOU NEED?

In order to carry out a successful project, you would need at least:

- Contact with one or two local groups that know each other through other contexts (association, work relationship)
- A translator and researcher or artist assistant
- A cooperation with a school
- A solar cooker or organisations with solar cookers
- Video and photography equipment



# HOW SHOULD YOU DO IT?

In DANUrB we followed four steps:

- 1** Research on the internet and site-specific research
- 2** Meetings for exchange of interests with our local partners, defining mutual interests on common ground and seeds
- 3** Integration of the local partners in the workshops at the schoolyard and intersection of trans-disciplinary approaches, working, eating, drawing, solar cooking and talking are taking place at the same time.
- 4** Develop a format for the representation of results for participants and potential visiting groups (especially schools, etc.).

## GENERAL GUIDELINES:

- The expanded garden is a laboratory on collaboration and cooperation on territory practices, interventions are used as a situation for co-production and knowledge exchange
- Close collaboration needs time and face to face communication
- Respondents need support (e.g. technical support)
- Research on site and direct exchange of interest
- Consider necessary language skills
- The project should result in interactions between local partners and the schools

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If you are interested and would also like to organise an expanded garden project, please contact us.

Web:

**CHRISTOPHEULER.AT/VISUAL-ARTIST/**

**CARGOCOLLECTIVE.COM/IRENELUCAS**

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