

Right to Green: Building parks through Community Engagement.

Case Studies from Barranquilla, Essen, and Fortaleza

In the framework of IURC Latin America, a technical session to share experiences on greening strategies between Essen and Fortaleza was organised on February 08th 2023. It was followed by the presentation of an open IURC-LA webinar on March 22nd that included a representation of Barranquilla to share the award-winning "Todos al Parque" programme. The main objective was to provide a technical discussion about inclusive access to green areas in cities through the promotion of micro parks. Three international experiences explored the creation of micro-parks and the implementation of greening strategies, with strong participatory methodologies and community engagement.



BARRANQUILLA

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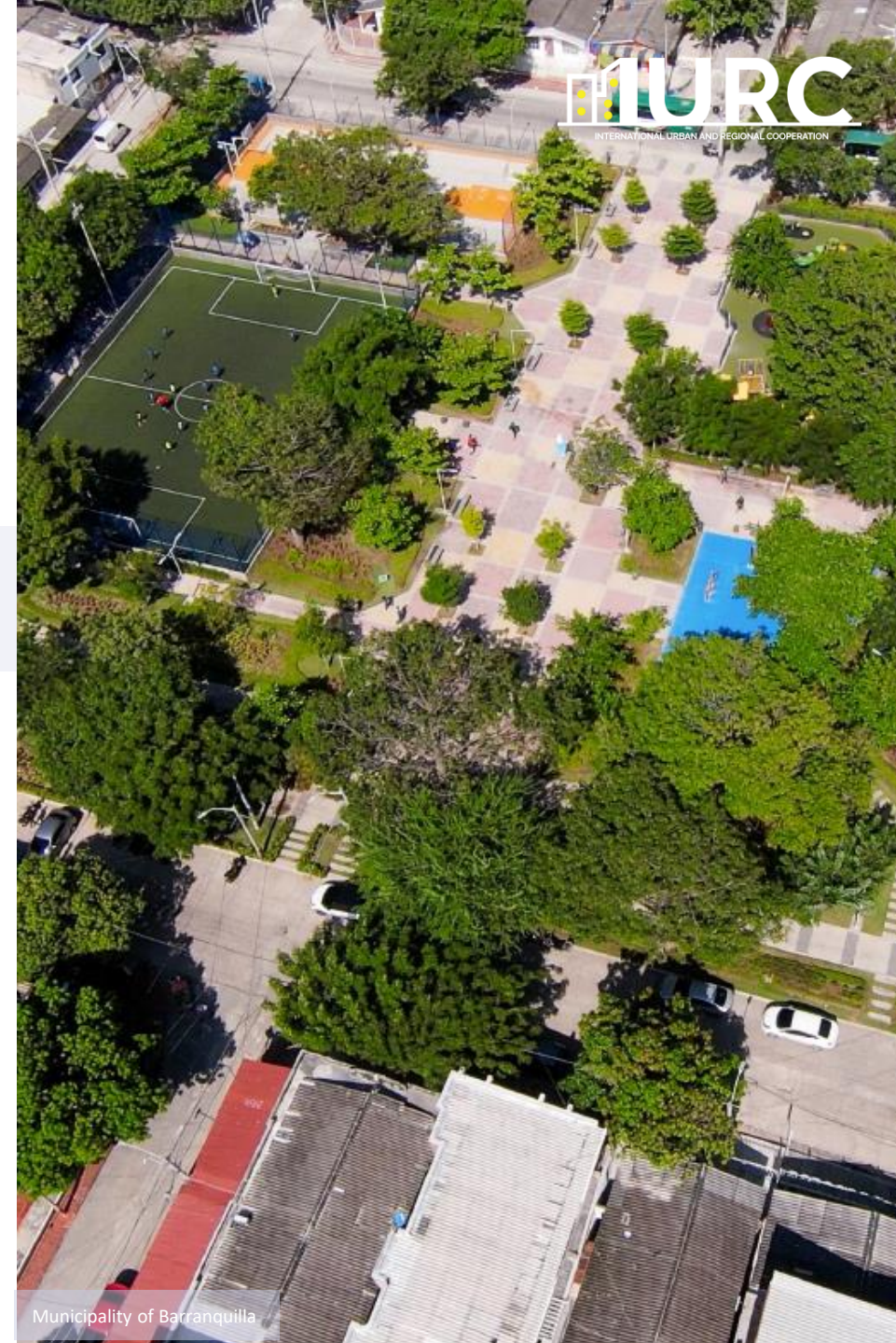
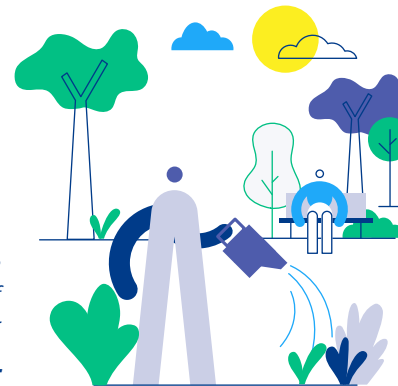
The famous German-British economist Schumacher in 1973 coined the phrase "small is beautiful". Exactly half a century later we have mini, micro, tiny parks and forests. He would have been proud of all of the work that has been done, especially for its human scale and decentralised nature.

- Ronald Hall (Senior Advisor, DG Regio)



Watch the recording of the webinar

[HERE](#)



Municipality of Barranquilla

Todos al Parque:

Learnings from Barranquilla (Colombia)

Ten years ago, Barranquilla faced **challenges of health, poverty, low connectivity and flooding**. There was an important need to recover spaces into **"green hubs for progress"**. In 2011, Barranquilla launched the **"Todos al Parque" programme** with the objective of **restoring public spaces** through an **equitable process of citizen participation** into urban design.

Since then, the programme achieved that 93% of residents live within 800 meters of a park. Barranquilla have implemented **288 green area interventions**, with a focus on poorest areas.

The creation of these new public spaces promoted economic development, **environmental sustainability** and public safety, as well as **improved physical and mental health for citizens**. In addition, the effectiveness in public investments have led to increased tax payment culture amongst residents.

These achievement enabled Barranquilla **to win the WRI Ross Cities Award**. It was the only Latin American city from 260 applications amongst finalists. "Todos al Parque" was recognised as the

most sustainable and innovative urban transformation project.

"Siembra Barranquilla", a **"public and private entity"** was born as a result of the renovation of green spaces, which is in charge of **planting and taking care of trees** to be inserted in green spaces. Barranquilla's public lightning company has also been a key actor for improving public lightning with **LED technology** in parks since 2017, and thus providing more safety.

The programme formed a **coordination team** with district's infrastructure agency, acting as a technical coordinator and bringing together relevant municipal agencies to ensure that parks are properly **maintained**.



Public parks have empowered citizens and public administration to work together, to co-create development plans for their community. Their impacts can be seen beyond the parks, with complementary interventions.

Design guidelines:

1. Playgrounds for younger children.
2. Multiple sports fields.
3. Open gyms.
4. Anti-impact foam zones.
5. Designs with wide visuals and flat areas.
6. Security cameras.
7. Green areas, gardening and tree planting.
8. Park rangers (Guardaparques) and coordination with the public cleaning company.
9. Cultural and sports agendas.



Land identification

Review and legal normalization. On site recognition.

Diagnostic

Topographic survey and digitizing. Model digitizing process. Preliminary park design.



Preliminary Design review

First meeting between ADI and community representatives. Design adjustments & final park design.

Local Visits with community

Socialization with the community for approval of construction plans.



Executive Project

Construction works, final community approval, and inauguration events.

Maintenance and sustainability

Preventive maintenance. Cultural, sports and leisure events agenda. Corrective maintenance.



Municipality of Barranquilla



Municipality of Barranquilla



Municipality of Barranquilla

Microparks:

Learnings from Fortaleza (Brazil)

Micropark are new public green areas built in **areas used for illegal waste disposal or former degraded sites**. They seek to increase access to green spaces for the population, improve walkability and neighbourhood infrastructure.

Microparks were developed, to allow citizens fostering contact with nature, movement and interactions,, playfulness, and relaxation. It They integrate water and other **natural features and resources, such as wood**, as well as traditional elements.

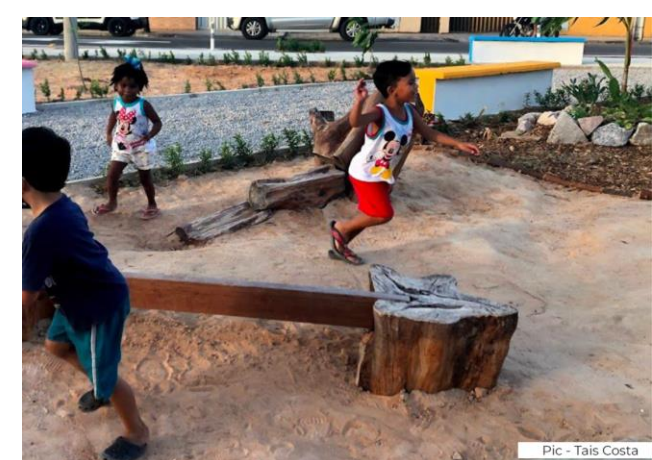
Citizens engagement is ensured in both the conception of the park, its implementation, and its maintenance (watering, etc.).

The **project is multisectoral**, as it involves different departments and secretaries from the municipal governments, universities, private investments, and the civil society.

For now, **2 microparks have been implemented** as pilots, to test the concept, methodology, economic viability, and engagement methods.

The goal is to scale up the project to the whole city in the next two years.

As of today, **300 areas (400 ha in total)** have been identified with potential for micropark development. Currently, the World Bank is supporting the creation of **of 30 microparks to be completed in 2023**, as part of a wider programme for sustainability in Fortaleza. It is expected that external sponsor or companies will see the positive results of Microparks and therefore invest in their expansion, allowing to complete 300 potential Microparks in the future.



Pic - Tais Costa



Pic - Fortaleza's City Hall



Pic - Tais Costa



Land identification

Conversation with Secretaries and other actors that are in contact with the communities for land definition.



Elaboration of Preliminary Proposal

Presentation to local community and collection of perceptions, necessary adjustments, listening moment..



Local Visits with community

Engagement of the local community in the project.

Executive Project

Engagement of the local community in the project.

Interventions

Stage 1: Hard construction work. Stage 2: Soft layout construction works.

- 1 Citizens engagement to learn how to take care of public spaces, take ownership and responsibility for the project.
- 2 Multi-stakeholders allow more sustainability in time. Electing a citizens representative to facilitate communication with municipality.
- 3 Challenges linked to maintenance and watering of plant due to warm climate.
- 4 Microparks inspired similar experiments with inclusion of naturalised elements in private residential condominiums and kindergartens.

**Lessons
Learned &
Recommendations**



Tiny Forests:

Learnings from Essen (Germany)



Tiny Forest are a concept introduced in Japan by the ecologist to Akira Miyawaki to accelerate plant growth by integrating high density and high diversity vegetation in a limited-size area. They **foster biodiversity, increase greenery and nature, and improve quality of life**. They include **native vegetation and trees** chosen for low-watering requirements and **adaptation to heat, cold, and climate change**. They have a size of 200 to 400 square meters and a vegetation density of 3 to 7 plants per square meter. Trees limit needs for fertilisation and follow the concept of **natural forest plantation with grown vegetation**.

Implementation of Tiny Forests in Europe is recent (10 years). Essen is part of a network of neighbouring cities in the region that are exchanging experiences and indicators to **strengthen the tiny forest methodologies**. Essen was the first city in the network to start with the **implementation of 2 tiny forests**.

The layout is concentric: high trees in the centre surrounded by middle sized trees, bushes, and fruit plants, and then ground vegetation. **Fruit trees and food producing vegetation** increases acceptance from neighbours. Paths built with **natural materials** and benches are designed around planting zones for **neighbours to observe and enjoy the forest**.

Participatory methodologies facilitate citizens' engagement, through **events and workshops**, to raise awareness about the project, increase a sense of ownership. Citizens thus participate in the design, **planting**, and maintenance of the tiny forest in the long term.

There are also **place-based educational initiatives** to involve public schools and kindergartens.



Land identification

Public land with low density of vegetation and close to schools.

Diagnostic & socialization

Consultations with communities and organisation of events.

Elaboration of Proposal

Design of layout of the forest, definition of trees and vegetation.



Planting events

Engagement of the local community in planting activities and educational campaigns.

Executive Project

Building of fences and other materials.

Lessons Learned & Recommendations



- 1 Well designed, small areas transformed into parks can bring great added value to local residents.
- 2 Democratisation of public green spaces can improve security and curb illegal waste dumping.
- 3 Tiny forests need to be protected with fences against invasion for the first 5 years.
- 4 Involvement of citizens in the planning process increases acceptance and willingness to maintain the space.
- 5 Importance to not only consider costs but also benefits: attraction of new companies considering added value for employees.
- 6 Stable political conditions enable planning into medium- to long-term projects.