Square

Green and Inclusive Public Square

Keywords:

public space, community, greenery, biodiversity, accessibility, rainwater collection, natural shading

Target group:

primary school pupils (ages 6-11)

Objectives:

This activity introduces pupils to the importance of public squares as multifunctional spaces in urban environments. Pupils will learn how sustainable design can transform these areas into green, inclusive, and vibrant places that support community life.

Through collaborative model creation and discussion, they will explore how natural elements, accessibility, and smart urban planning contribute to healthier cities and stronger social connections.

General Guideline on Time Allocation:

The duration needed to carry out this activity may vary depending on the specific group of children. Teachers are encouraged to adapt the implementation according to the needs, interests, and dynamics of the group.

In the preparatory phase, teachers may use a variety of activities to introduce and contextualize the chosen topic. These can include discussions, videos, drawings, storytelling, or even a field trip, depending on the age and background knowledge of the children.

The main construction phase, during which children plan and build their urban element using LEGO bricks, should typically not exceed 45 to 60 minutes. However, this phase often stimulates further curiosity and questions among the children, potentially leading to extended engagement or follow-up activities. For more detailed instructions and pedagogical support on how to implement activities of INNO–kids project, please download the Teacher's Methodological Guide.

Materials and Resources Needed:

- LEGO bricks of various types
- Cardboard, paper, and recycled materials (for constructing the square layout and features)
- Natural elements such as twigs, leaves, pebbles, or dried moss (for representing greenery and biodiversity)
- Markers, crayons, glue, scissors, rulers (for drawing, decorating, and assembling)
- Printed visuals or diagrams of real-life public squares and sustainable urban spaces (for inspiration)
- Optional: coloured paper or modelling clay (to create people, benches, fountains, trees, etc.)

Note: Encourage pupils to repurpose materials creatively and include elements that promote both environmental and social sustainability. If LEGO bricks are not available, pupils may use basic craft supplies to bring their ideas to life through drawings and handmade models.

Introduction:

Begin by asking pupils what comes to mind when they hear the word “square.” Discuss the role of public squares as places where people gather, relax, play, and interact with others. Use images of real-life squares to illustrate different designs — some focused on concrete and traffic, others full of greenery and inviting spaces.

Guide pupils to think about how squares can support sustainability and well-being. Highlight elements such as trees that provide shade, water-permeable surfaces, green spaces that reduce heat, and areas where all people — including children, elderly citizens, or those with limited mobility — can feel welcome and safe. Explain that in this activity, pupils will redesign a typical urban square to make it more inclusive and environmentally friendly.

Procedure:

Preparation

- Introduce pupils to the current state of many urban squares — large paved areas with limited shade or vegetation. Discuss challenges such as heat, lack of biodiversity, or inaccessibility for some community members.
- Support pupils in identifying key functions a square should serve: providing space to rest, play, meet, and interact, while also contributing to climate resilience and biodiversity. Ask them to think about how the square could become more welcoming through the use of plants, natural shade, seating areas, open space for activities, and access for people of all ages and abilities.

Construction
Distribute the prepared materials to each group and instruct pupils to begin designing their model square. Ask them to start by outlining key features: walkways, green areas, shaded zones, seating, and open space for activities. Remind them to consider who will use the square and how they can make it inclusive and welcoming for everyone.

Encourage pupils to incorporate environmentally friendly elements such as trees and plants for natural shade and cooling, rainwater collection features, and materials that support biodiversity (e.g., insect hotels or flower beds). As they work, support their decision-making by asking guiding questions like: “Where will people rest?”, “How can nature be part of this space?”, or “How will rainwater be managed?”

Details
Once the layout of each square is complete, invite pupils to refine their models by adding small details that reflect real urban life. This could include benches, pathways, play zones, a community stage, flower beds, drinking fountains, or quiet spaces for reading or resting.

Encourage pupils to ensure accessibility — such as ramps instead of stairs, smooth pathways, and shaded seating for elderly or people with disabilities. Pupils should also think about how nature is integrated: native plants that support pollinators, permeable surfaces to reduce flooding, or shaded resting areas that reduce heat.

Stories
Invite each group to imagine a typical day in their redesigned square. Ask them to tell a short story from the perspective of a visitor — this could be a child playing, a senior resting on a shaded bench, a bird nesting in a tree, or a person attending a community event.
Through these stories, pupils reflect on how their design choices shape people’s experiences and how the space supports nature. Encourage them to describe how different users feel in the square, how they interact with others, and how the space changes throughout the day or seasons.

Presentation
Each group presents their model square to the class. Pupils should explain their design decisions—how they addressed community needs, ensured accessibility, supported biodiversity, and integrated sustainable solutions. Encourage classmates to ask questions and offer constructive feedback.

Tips:

- Remind pupils that small elements like shade, greenery, or resting space can significantly improve the quality of urban life.
- Reinforce the idea that even public infrastructure can support both social inclusion and climate action when designed with care.

Additional Considerations:

Differentiation:

Provide additional support or simplified instructions for pupils who may require extra assistance. For advanced pupils, offer extension tasks such as researching further sustainable practices or designing more complex models.

Assessment:

Assess pupils based on their participation and engagement during discussions and hands-on activities. Evaluate the creativity, effort, collaboration, depth of understanding demonstrated in their models, critical thinking, ability to provide constructive feedback and presentation skills.

Extension Activities:

- Invite a local architect, urban planner, or municipal representative to speak to pupils about sustainable urban development and the role of public spaces.
- Organise a field visit to a nearby public square and evaluate its accessibility, green elements, and community-friendliness. Let pupils identify what works well and what could be improved.

Curriculum Connections:

This activity integrates:

Civic Education *(community living, shared spaces)*

Social Studies *(urban life, cooperation, inclusion)*

Art *(creative design, model making, visual expression)*

Language *(storytelling, critical discussion, oral presentation)*

Mathematics *(spatial planning, shape and proportion, estimation)*

Environmental Studies *(urban biodiversity, climate adaptation, sustainable planning)*

SDG Connections:

- **SDG 11:** Sustainable Cities and Communities – Pupils explore how thoughtful design of public squares can improve urban life for all.
- **SDG 13:** Climate Action – The activity highlights how green spaces reduce urban heat and support climate resilience.
- **SDG 15:** Life on Land – By integrating nature into urban environments, pupils promote biodiversity and healthier ecosystems.

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