

**Japan SDGs Innovation Challenge for UNDP Accelerator Labs  
[Turkey] ACCELERATOR LAB INNOVATION CHALLENGE**

<b>Target SDGs</b>	11
Sustainable development challenge that A-Lab is working on.	<p>One of the components of achieving sustainable urbanization is ensuring we create livable cities. This requires citizens to be involved in decision making processes regarding planning and design of public spaces. They need to be open and accessible to people. This encourages collectivism and discourse creation via interactions, it also creates a common ground for art, well-being, and innovation while strengthening collective identity and historical roots.</p> <p>Despite various attempts participatory urban design and planning practices have not been widely adopted in Turkey. The absence of such practices often leads to situations where public spaces end up being underutilized, or worse, abandoned and dilapidated – also referred to as a ‘ghost space’.</p> <p>Our challenge is to create conditions for participatory urban design (both form and function) and planning where residents of an area can share their views, experiences, wishes, and skills with the municipality and other stakeholders who are responsible for building public spaces.</p>
Learning questions that A-Lab is trying to answer related to this challenge.	What would it take to design a truly participatory community project whereby a neglected public space is revitalized to create an inclusive and vibrant community hub through placemaking?
Target beneficiaries and stakeholders that A-Lab is serving related to these learning questions and the development challenge.	The process requires strong local partnerships, participation of residents, diverse relevant communities, businesses and NGOs working collaboratively that results in enriching the value of identity, public demand, and recognition. All these stakeholders will be served by this initiative.
Description of the problem to Japanese partners who may wish to work with A-Lab.	<p>Our challenge has unique characteristics in terms of context, time, and scale. The problems of poor design and planning stem from a top-down approach to decision-making by local authorities. The current political climate is not helping the situation either, more and more citizens feel disempowered. The gap between decision-makers and residents is widening which leads to disjointed policy making at different scales. Moreover, local knowledge, memory and talent are not sufficiently utilized; using them could improve function, ownership and sustainability.</p> <p>It is possible to address these problems by increasing citizen engagement in decision making and one way to do that is to create an environment in which communities can take part in designing something – in our case, a public space – in collaboration with a local authority.</p>

	<p>We need collaborative design expertise which can help solve the abovementioned problems by creating a community project to design a public space around citizens’ needs and desires. Revitalizing a dysfunctional public space would be the perfect way to show how co-creation can lead to better places and subsequently policies.</p>
<p>Research done on current market solutions that informs this work as needing innovation.</p>	<p>Globally, new models of urban transformation and revitalization have created tremendous positive effects on urban life. These include new partnerships, approaches, financing and maintenance models that are not only innovative but inclusive and sustainable.</p> <p>In Turkey, however, there is a traditional model of creating public spaces that has been around for a long time. Functions of public spaces are decided by municipalities and construction companies are commissioned to build the structures without tapping into diverse sources of knowledge and talent.</p> <p>There are rare examples in Turkey (e.g. Umut Evleri which were residential houses designed in a collaborative way following a major earthquake) which are mostly residential. Applications of placemaking for public spaces are limited despite various research activities carried out by academic institutions in this area.</p>
<p>The way Japanese science/technology/ methodologies could advance A-Lab’s work on this problem.</p>	<p>Japanese technological expertise in design, engineering, and ICTs is well known. For this project, we would like to work with a Japanese company which has urban design, architecture, and/or design (product, industrial, etc.) expertise and uses collaborative methods in these.</p> <p>Cultural exchange reflecting collective heritage via collaboration would be the most appealing opportunity in this context. This would bring depth and a unique understanding to present an outstanding prototype of participatory design and partnership.</p>
<p>Experimental and/or exploratory component.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testing out the placemaking methodology</li> <li>• New communication tools to be used between a municipality and residents</li> <li>• Creating a multifunctional public space</li> <li>• Crowdsourcing (of ideas and resources)</li> <li>• Foreign expertise and perspective in design and collaboration</li> </ul>
<p>Description of A-Lab portfolio.</p>	<p>A-Lab Turkey’s frontier challenge is sustainable urban development. Our experiments are shaped around understanding and promoting the concept of urban commons. Recently, we conducted an experiment in which we worked with a multidisciplinary design studio (located in one of the local universities) on a highly visible public space in Ankara. The said space is hugely underutilized due to poor planning and design. The conceptual output will be presented to the local administration in the next few weeks.</p> <p>Another piece of work we are working on is to do with future of cities. The COVID-19 pandemic has led us to rethink how we can be more resilient as communities in crisis situations. We held 3 workshops with a local initiative during which we focused on emerging signals and how to interpret them with a view to create possible future scenarios.</p>

	<p>In our current portfolio we have designed a couple of experiments on food security (urban farming) and environmental protection (reducing single use plastics, waste management, increasing recycling rates). Revitalization of underutilized public spaces through a participatory approach would complement this work by creating another layer and instrument for developing urban commons.</p>
<p>Information publicly available on A-Lab’s work on this. And previous or ongoing experience country office have working with Japanese partners.</p>	<p>A couple of our blogs on relevant topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <a href="https://www.tr.undp.org/content/turkey/en/home/blog/2020/05/ghost-spaces-future.html">https://www.tr.undp.org/content/turkey/en/home/blog/2020/05/ghost-spaces-future.html</a></li> <li>- <a href="https://www.tr.undp.org/content/turkey/en/home/blog/2020/04/acclab-metu-cooperation.html">https://www.tr.undp.org/content/turkey/en/home/blog/2020/04/acclab-metu-cooperation.html</a></li> </ul> <p>Previous UNDP Turkey Projects with Japanese Partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strengthening Social Stability in Southeast Anatolia – funded by Government of Japan (completed)</li> <li>- Resilience Building via Increased Livelihoods Opportunity - funded by Government of Japan (completed)</li> </ul> <p>Current UNDP Turkey Projects with Japanese partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employability Entrepreneurship and Social Cohesion (Syria Portfolio) – funded by Government of Japan</li> <li>- COVID-19 Resilience &amp; Response Projects on Socio-economic Impact, Inclusive &amp; Integrated Crisis and Health Systems Strengthening - funded by Government of Japan</li> </ul>