

Kosovo, located in the Balkans, has a long history of conflict between its Albanian and Serb populations. Kosovo's cities have experienced rapid growth in recent years, and there is a growing need for well-designed public spaces that can be enjoyed by everyone. The Municipality of Pristina was the first in Europe to be selected by UN-Habitat to test the Block by Block methodology for upgrading public spaces. The initial project focused on revitalizing a former green market in Sunny Hill, one of Pristina's largest and most populous neighborhoods. The site's temporary market structures had been removed, leaving an abandoned, concrete-covered space that was rarely used by the community's 4,000 residents.

In September 2015, more than 70 Pristina residents participated in a Block by Block workshop to redesign the former Sunny Hill marketplace. A Facebook page was created to share information and mobilize residents. After initial discussions on urban design and the importance of public space, the participants divided into small teams to model different solutions. The participants

then co-created the final design on a multiplayer Minecraft server, based on the ideas generated by the teams. The designs were presented to a wide audience of urban professionals, including the mayor of Pristina. The final concept featured a range of facilities addressing the needs of various groups, including gardens, comfortable resting places, a playground and one of Kosovo's first skateparks.

Following the participatory process, a detailed design was drafted by the Municipality with support of UN-Habitat and after a process of development control and procurement, the construction of the new public space could be completed in 2017. The experience demonstrates the possibility to do large-scale civic mobilization by using innovative engagement tools, and an opportunity to strengthen municipal capacities for inclusive project development and community outreach. The previously deserted former green market is now a multi-functional and appealing public space accessible to all the people of Sunny Hill.

Following the success of the Sunny Hill project, UN-Habitat has been working with the Municipality of Pristina to carry out a public space profile of the city. The profile has provided an overview of public spaces in Pristina and is being used to develop a city-wide public space policy.