BLOCK BY BLOCK™

James Delaney
Chair, Block by Block
3rd December, 2021

building stronger communities block by block
building confidence block by block
building equality block by block
building connections block by block
building peace block by block
building hope block by block
building economic opportunity block by block
building sustainability block by block
building ownership block by block
building accessibility block by block
building pride block by block
building trust block by block
building communication block by block
building identity block by block
building safer neighborhoods block by block
building inclusion block by block
building global change block by block

Our purpose:
To transform lives by revitalizing urban neighborhoods, block by block

AN
INTRODUCTION TO

BLOCK BY BLOCK

Block by Block uses Minecraft to empower communities to turn neglected urban spaces into vibrant places that improve quality of life for all.

An innovative collaboration

MOJANG

Licenses Minecraft for Block by Block Workshops; ongoing financial support from the sale of licensed merchandise

Microsoft

Additional financial / technical support and organizational oversight

UN@HABITAT

Pioneered Block by Block Methodology in 2012; oversees implementation of funded projects
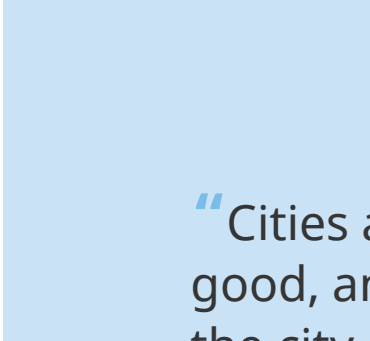
BLOCK BY BLOCK™

The **Block by Block Foundation,** a registered 501c3 nonprofit, funds and activates public space projects worldwide, mobilizing communities and influencing policy in the process.

Why public space matters

50%
of the world's population lives in urban areas.

"Cities are about people and the common good, and public space is the backbone of the city. It's the interface between different groups in the city, and the most crucial factor when it comes to creating sustainable cities for all."

Thomas Melin, Block by Block

Why youth engagement matters

60%

of urban dwellers will be under the age of 18 by 2030.

"We found a language that kids enjoy and understand, which is important because they are the majority in many places and will grow up to be the adults in the city. Minecraft is not just a game. It is a co-creation tool to build better cities and better communities with more equal societies."

Pontus Westerberg, UN-Habitat

We believe in technology as a catalyst.

"Minecraft inspires people to be creative. For some, they have never been able to express that side of themselves before. You can take a complex idea, and easily create a virtual world."

Lydia Winters, Mojang

We believe in power through participation.

"I remember watching a presentation from these 14-year-old girls in Hanoi, and how powerful it was to see them realize that people were listening."
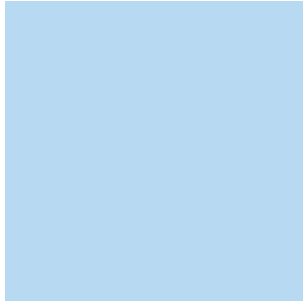
Vu Bui, Mojang

We believe in cumulative impact.

"Block by Block can start with small things like parklets and community toilets that really aren't very expensive or threatening to those in power. Lots of these little projects can slowly create the basis for empowering people to negotiate for the bigger, more difficult things."

Celine d'Cruz, Block by Block

How we do it:
The Block by Block Methodology

1. Model

Select the site to be redeveloped and create a Minecraft model of the existing site using images, plans, Google maps, and other inputs.

Physical space

Minecraft model

Crowdsourcing Public Space Ideas: Plaza Tlaxcoaque, Mexico City

2. Mobilize

Identify 30-60 people living and working near the site who are interested in improving their urban environment. Ensure broad representation of the community, including women, youth, older people, and people with disabilities.

Building a New Model for Refugee Resettlement in Kalobeyei, Kenya

3. Organize

Organize community workshops (2-4 days; 30-60 participants; 1 computer per 2-4 participants).

Building Green Spaces for a Future Megacity in Wuhan, China

4. Introduce

Brief participants on public space basics and general design considerations for the selected space, and begin shared dialogue on relevant issues.

Building Community Ownership in Mumbai, India

5. Observe

Walk through site as a group and document with images. Share reflections and observations.

6. Teach

Train participants in the fundamentals of using Minecraft.

Building Space to Gather and Garden in Niamey, Niger

7. Team Up

Break into teams of 2-4 people to develop ideas in Minecraft.

Building Safer Streets for Teenage Girls in Hanoi, Vietnam

8. Present

Teams present models and advocate for their ideas to stakeholders and professionals including urban planners, architects, and local policy makers.

Building an Accessible, Sustainable Waterfront in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

9. Prioritize

Workshop participants and stakeholders discuss how to improve the public space and collaboratively prioritize the proposed improvements.

RAJNAGAR PARK

Priorities	Groupe 1	Groupe 2	Groupe 3	Groupe 4	Groupe 5	Groupe 6	Groupe 7	Groupe 8	Groupe 9	Groupe 10	Total
Closed Gutter	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	10
Keep Stage	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	10
Trees and flowers	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	10
Light in the public space	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	10
Bench	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	10
Green area	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	10
Path to walk	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	9
Trash bins	■	■		■	■	■	■	■		■	8
Other play field (Rugby, etc)	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■		8

Other Considerations	Groupe 1	Groupe 2	Groupe 3	Groupe 4	Groupe 5	Groupe 6	Groupe 7	Groupe 8	Groupe 9	Groupe 10	Total
Sign (Name of the place)	■	■		■	■		■	■		■	7
Human presence	■	■	■		■	■	■				7
Fence			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	7
Gate	■			■	■			■		■	6
Toilet		■	■	■						■	5
Camera	■	■		■	■						5
Guard	■	■		■	■						5
Slide, Swing..	■	■			■			■	■		5
Lights on one street	■		■		■	■					5
Keep shops		■	■			■		■	■		5
Signage (information, direction..)		■	■								5
Drinking Water		■			■					■	3
Easy Access (Wheelchair, old people)	■		■	■							3
Lights on two streets	■		■		■						3
Cricket field	■										1

New Delhi, India

10. Plan

Minecraft models from workshop inform cost estimates, budget allocations, and professional design work.

Building Peace in Kosovo

11. Build

Continue momentum by actively engaging the community in final design, construction, and maintenance. Engage with the community to resolve conflicts or address issues.

Building Space for All Ages in East Java, Indonesia

12. Advocate

Expand impact by advocating for continued investment in public space transformation and more forward-thinking policies at the local level and beyond.

Building Vibrant Community Gathering Places in Lima, Peru

IMPACT

49 COUNTRIES

87 CITIES

Completed **135** public spaces interventions

By 2021, more than **2.3 million people** enjoy safe access to more than **135 upgraded public** that were co-designed in Minecraft.

UN◉HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

Conducted **105** Minecraft workshops

30,000+ Engaged in Minecraft workshops from which **14,000** are women and girls

Conducted **20** Online Minecraft workshops during Covid-19 while ensuring physical distancing

1,000+ Trained on the use of Minecraft

Supported **5 emergency responses** in Nepal, Mozambique, Kenya, Ethiopia + Covid-19 response

Reached **15M** people in outreach through Events (UN-Habitat assembly, Habitat III, WUF, MineCon, etc)

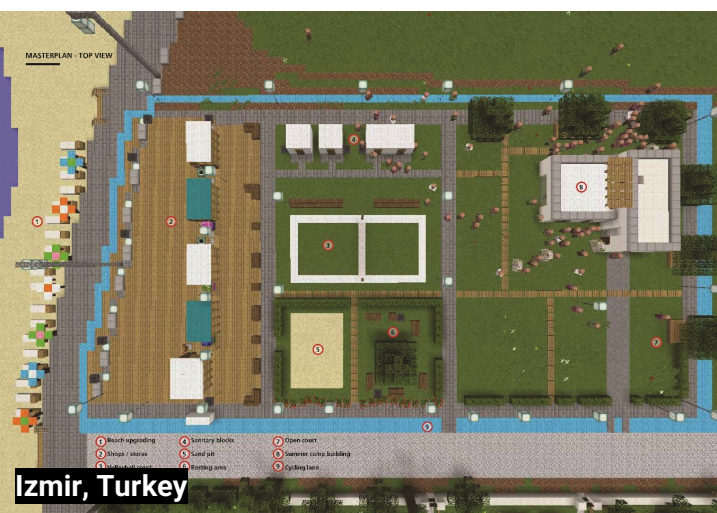**40** Local governments used the Block by Block methodology in their cities

Produced **100+** Normative outputs toolkits, policy papers, technical reports, flagship, annual reports, etc.
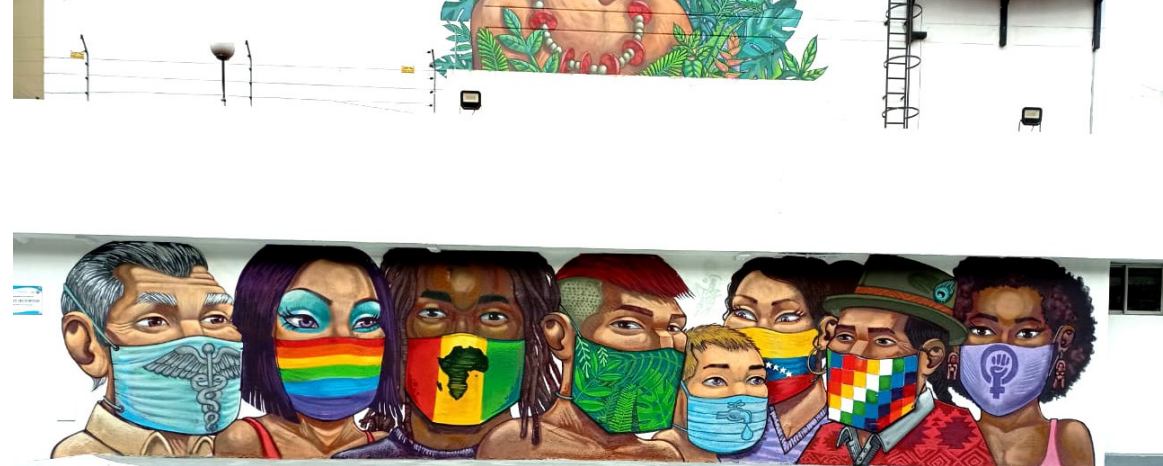
Niamey, Niger

Conakry, Guinea
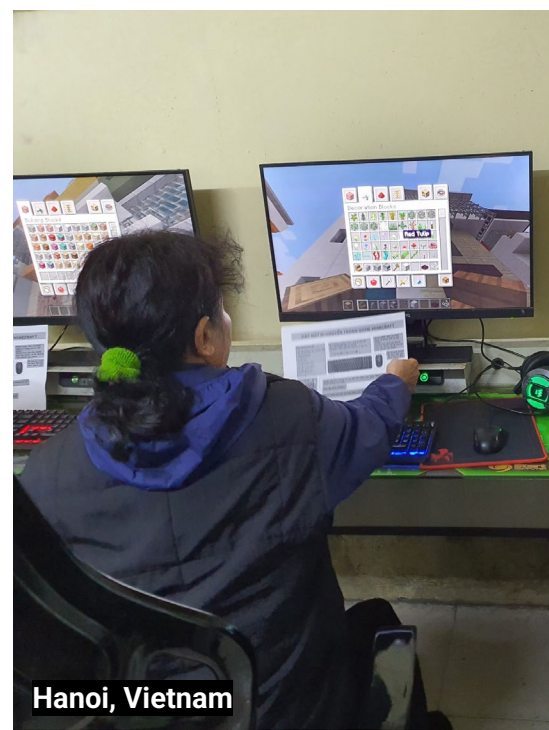
Izmir, Turkey

Beirut, Lebanon

Working with LGBTQI+ in Quito, Ecuador

Kisumu, Kenya

Port-au-prince, Haiti

Hanoi, Vietnam

Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

BRIDGING DIFFERENCES THROUGH DIGITAL DIALOGUE

Minecraft becomes the mediator.
Through the workshops, people from different backgrounds come together to reshape their built environment.

LGBTQI+ community

Religion

Refugees/migrants

Decision-makers

Experts

Mumbai, India

Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Kalobeyei, Kenya

ENGAGING WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

FOR THE FIRST TIME, PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES WERE ENGAGED IN DECISION-MAKING AND CO-CREATION PROCESSES USING MINECRAFT IN VUKUHAMBE, SOUTH AFRICA

Vukuhambe, South Africa

MINECRAFT HELPED WHEELCHAIR USERS TO DESIGN MORE ACCESSIBLE SP ACES

Amman, Jordan

MINECRAFT BECOMES A COMMON LANGUAGE BETWEEN DEAF AND HEARING PEOPLE

In the beginning we were concerned with accessibility and lack of sign language. We found a a third group member and we communicated through technology. This was the enabling environment for us.

NAMA ISMAIL

SHARJE MINECRAFT PROJECT
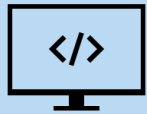
UN@HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

wuf

Sharjah, UAE

INCREASE DIGITAL LITERACY AND BUILD SKILLS

Through the Minecraft workshop, participants acquire both soft and hard skills

Comupter
(coding, building)

Technical

Leadership

Communication

Management

Gaza, Palestine

Prizren, Kosovo

Hanoi, Vietnam

Kalobeyei, Kenya

VOICES MATTER!
PEOPLE DECIDED, CREATED AND MAINTAINED

'' BEING HEARD AND LISTEN TO IS ONE OF THE BEST FEELINGS THAT WE CAN FEEL ''
VESA, PARTICIPANT

"They came together and they used Minecraft to design it. They did it!"
Almaz Mekonnen, State Minister, Ministry of Peace
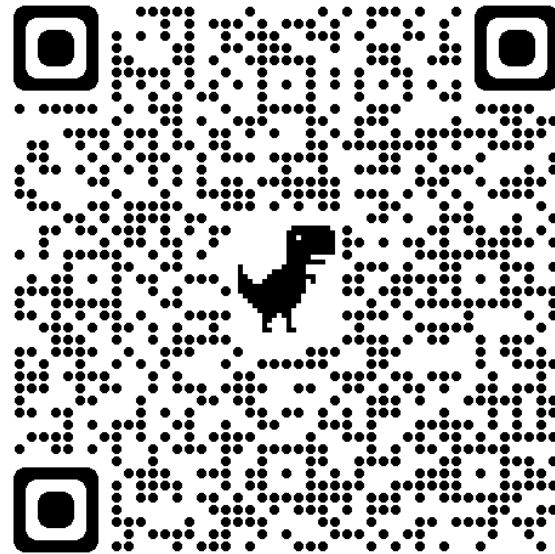
Beit Lahia, Palestine

Sao Paolo, Brazil

The Block by Block playbook

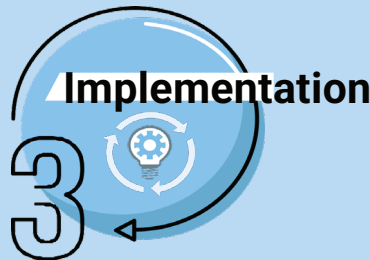Using Minecraft as a participatory design tool in urban design and governance

UN⊕HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

BLOCK BY BLOCK

Download the Playbook today:

The Playbook Structure

1 **PLANNING**

2 **Minecraft workshop**

3 **Implementation**

ACTIVITIES | TOOLS

- Activity 1 | SITE SELECTION
- Activity 2 | FINANCIAL PLANNING — Budgeting excel sheet example
- Activity 3 | TECHNICAL PREREQUISITES — 3D minecraft modelling
  - How to document a public space
  - How to upload the 3D Minecraft Model
  - Hardware and Software Requirements
- Activity 4 | OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS — Stakeholders mapping
  - Representative sample of participants
  - Agenda sample
  - Powerpoint presentations sample
  - Certificates of completion

- Activity 5 | OPENING SESSION — Participants list - registration template
  - Consent form
  - Sexual harassment and rules of civility
  - Powerpoint presentations sample
  - Agenda sample
- Activity 6 | EXPLORATORY VISIT AND WALK — Site base map template
  - Site visit questionnaire
- Activity 7 | SETTING A SHARED VISION — Brainstorming session
  - Cards of values
- Activity 8 | LEARNING MINECRAFT — Create an empty Minecraft world
  - Minecraft Troubleshooting
  - Minecraft commands and controls
- Activity 9 | CO-CREATING AND DESIGNING
- Activity 10 | GROUP PRESENTATIONS — Intervention list sheet
- Activity 11 | PRIORITIZATION OF IDEAS — Priority list sheet
- Activity 12 | CLOSING OF THE WORKSHOP — Post-workshop survey sample
  - Certificates of completion

- Activity 13 | EXPERT DESIGN STUDIO — Expert design studio agenda
  - Budget - Bill of quantities
- Activity 14 | VALIDATION MEETING
- Activity 15 | INCLUSIVE IMPLEMENTATION
- Activity 16 | MONITORING AND EVALUATION

PHASE

ACTIVITY TITLE

DESCRIPTION:
A brief description guides the users and provides key concepts.

REQUIREMENTS:
Time, participants and materials

STEPS:
A list of simple steps to follow linking with specific tools to facilitate the activity execution.

GUIDANCE TIPS:
A useful piece of information or advice about how to do something or about how to deal with problems connected with your activity.

TOOLS:
User-friendly tools are attached at the end of the publication. Not all the tools are mandatory and some tools support different activities. The technical team can select which are the most adequate tools to use.

PLANNING

Activity 1 | SITE SELECTION

Select a site to develop or upgrade, based on cities' priorities and capacities. This can be an existing public space that needs upgrading and improvement or a vacant land for public space development. It is important to make sure that construction permission is granted from the onset.

Time required: 2 weeks

Participants: Organizing team, Technical team, Local government

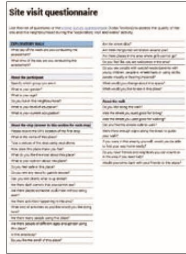**Materials:** Title documents

Steps

01. Review political agenda, future development plans, and cities' priorities
02. Understand the gaps and the distribution of public spaces at the city level
03. Shortlist and select two to three potential sites
04. Make sure the site(s) is for public use and review legal restrictions and zoning laws
05. Consult with local authorities to secure political willingness to transform the site
06. Select a site that has a clean title and secure a letter of commitment from local authorities and/or construction permit
07. Collect relevant information about the site and assess its current quality using UN-Habitat Public Space site-specific assessment guidelines

GUIDANCE TIPS:
- Ensure that the site's location and entry points to the site allow for safe physical access to the site
- Avoid a site that has serious and/or substantive political disagreements/challenges
- Select a challenging site, with issues like safety, accessibility, under-used, social segregation, to increase impact of the project
- Ensure that the site is strategically distanced (At least five minutes walking distance) from other spaces to ensure a good network of public spaces.

TOOLS:
- City-wide public space assessment
- City-Wide Public Space Strategies: A Guidebook for City Leaders
- Public Space Site-Specific Assessment Guidelines

TOOLS 04.

Site visit questionnaire

Brainstorming session

Join us

🐦 @blockbyblockorg

f /blockbyblockorg

in /block-by-block-foundation

blockbyblock.org

James Delaney
Chair, Block by Block Foundation
james.delaney@blockbyblock.org