

“Outdoor Education Revisited: A Practical Guide to Learning in Urban Landscapes”



Surviving in the Concrete Jungle
- Outdoor Education Revisited Through an Urban Lens



**JUGEND
für Europa**

Gefördert von:
**Jugend für Europa
Erasmus+**



**BILDEN UND
BEGEGNEN MIT
HOCH³**



About this Handbook

This handbook is a practical and reflective guide for educators, youth workers, trainers, community facilitators and NGOs who want to use outdoor and experiential education to explore the realities of contemporary life.



It was developed within the **Surviving in the Concrete Jungle** Erasmus+ project and brings together the project's educational approach, core modules, tested tools, field experience and recommendations for future use.

The handbook should be used **together with the Concrete Jungle digital platform**:

<https://concretejungle.info/>

The website is an integral part of the methodology. It contains information about the project and its partners, the digital map-based Toolkit, opportunities to contribute new or adapted tools, project stories and the project blog. The handbook explains the educational thinking and provides guidance for using and adapting the methodology; the website provides the living, searchable and continuously evolving collection of tools.

The handbook and the website work together

Use the Handbook to:

- understand the philosophy and educational approach;
- explore the four Core Modules;
- understand how to plan, facilitate and reflect on activities;
- consider inclusion, accessibility and safety;
- learn from the project's field-testing experience;
- design your own programme.

Use the website to:

- explore the **Toolkit Map** and find tools;
- filter tools by space, topic, learning outcome and category;
- read project stories and blog posts;
- learn about the project partners;
- submit your own tool, adaptation or new version;
- follow how the Concrete Jungle methodology continues to develop.

The digital Toolkit is deliberately not a closed catalogue. It is a **living system**: each use, adaptation, reflection and contribution can strengthen the methodology.

1. Purpose and Objectives

Purpose

This handbook supports educators and youth workers in turning the environments around them into meaningful learning spaces.

Outdoor education does not have to begin when a group leaves the city. A street, square, park, neighbourhood, abandoned site, market, public building, forest edge, village or rural landscape can all become places for observation, challenge, dialogue, creativity and learning.

The project therefore revisits outdoor education through an urban lens while also resisting a simple urban-versus-rural opposition.

Objectives

The handbook aims to:

- provide a conceptual foundation for outdoor education in urban and mixed environments;
- challenge the assumption that nature and outdoor learning belong only to rural or wilderness settings;
- introduce the four Core Modules of Concrete Jungle;
- provide guidance for selecting and adapting tools from the digital Toolkit;
- support experiential, place-based, critical and participatory learning;
- promote inclusion, accessibility, safety and responsible facilitation;
- share learning from the project's Exploration and Development Visits (EDVs);
- encourage educators and young people to create and contribute their own methods;
- support replication and adaptation across different communities and cultural contexts.

2. The Concrete Jungle Approach

From Outdoor Education to Outdoor Learning Everywhere

Traditional outdoor education is often associated with forests, mountains, rivers and rural landscapes. These environments remain valuable, but they are not the only places where meaningful outdoor learning can happen.

Concrete Jungle starts from a broader question:

What happens when we treat every environment as a potential learning space?

Urban environments are complex ecosystems where people, infrastructure, culture, politics and nature interact. Rural environments also contain social, cultural and environmental dynamics that can be explored through the same experiential approach.

The objective is therefore not to replace rural outdoor education with urban outdoor education. It is to **expand the understanding of what outdoor learning can be.**

The city as a classroom

Cities are not just built environments. They contain relationships between people, nature, infrastructure, histories, cultures and systems of power.

Sidewalks, public parks, housing blocks, markets, abandoned spaces, rivers, transport systems, walls and streets can all become starting points for learning.

An outdoor learning activity can invite participants to:

- observe what is normally overlooked;
- investigate how a place works;
- notice who uses a space and who does not;
- explore relationships between people and nature;
- understand social and environmental inequalities;
- tell stories about places;
- imagine alternative futures;
- collaborate and make decisions;
- reflect on their own relationship with the environment.

3. The Four Core Modules

The four Core Modules are the conceptual backbone of Concrete Jungle. They shape the project's identity, rhythm and methodology. Tools in the digital Toolkit can be connected to one or more of these modules.

3.1 Nature vs. Culture / Rural vs. Urban

Challenging the separation of nature and the city, and exploring how urban environments can also be spaces for connection with the natural world.

This module invites participants to question the binary between "nature" and "the city".

Nature is not limited to remote wilderness. Plants grow through cracks in pavements, birds inhabit buildings, insects pollinate urban gardens, water moves through drainage systems, and people create relationships with green and non-green spaces.

The module can explore:

- perceptions of nature and culture;

- rural and urban identities;
- biodiversity in everyday places;
- human–nature relationships;
- how infrastructure changes ecological systems;
- what is considered "natural";
- similarities and differences between rural and urban environments.

Possible questions:

- Where does nature begin and end?
- Can a city be part of nature?
- What do we normally ignore in our environment?
- How does our understanding of nature change when we change location?
- What can rural and urban environments learn from one another?

3.2 Surviving in the Concrete Jungle

Gaining insights into urban challenges such as homelessness, poverty, and inequality - and exploring ways outdoor methods can foster resilience, empathy, and self-organisation.

This module looks at how people experience and navigate urban environments differently.

The city can offer opportunities, but it can also create barriers. Access to housing, food, transport, green space, safety, services and social networks is not equally distributed.

Outdoor and experiential methods can help participants move beyond abstract discussions by encouraging them to observe, navigate, experience and reflect on urban realities.

The module can explore:

- poverty and inequality;
- homelessness and housing;
- access to services and resources;
- safety and vulnerability;
- resilience and self-organisation;
- empathy and solidarity;
- community responses to urban challenges.

The goal is not to reproduce hardship as an exercise or to turn vulnerable people into objects of observation. Activities should be designed ethically, with dignity, consent and reflection at their centre.

Possible questions:

- Who can comfortably move through this city?
- What resources are easy to access, and for whom?

- What happens when people do not have a stable home?
- How do communities respond to inequality?
- What forms of resilience and solidarity already exist?

3.3 The Right to the City

Examining urban design, accessibility, and environmental justice: who owns the city, who shapes it, and who is excluded?

The right to the city asks participants to see urban space as something shaped by decisions, power and participation.

A public space may legally be public while still being difficult or impossible for some people to use.

This module can explore:

- accessibility;
- public and private space;
- urban planning;
- mobility and transport;
- environmental justice;
- gender and safety;
- disability and access;
- surveillance and security;
- participation in local decision-making;
- unequal distribution of green space and other resources.

Possible questions:

- Who designed this space?
- Who benefits from it?
- Who is missing?
- Who gets to make decisions?
- What makes a space genuinely public?
- What would need to change for more people to feel that the city belongs to them?

3.4 How Do We Want to Live? The Utopian City of the Future

Envisioning just, inclusive, and sustainable cities through creative, collaborative exploration.

The final module moves from observation and critique towards imagination.

Participants are invited to design, tell stories about, draw, map, role-play or otherwise construct possible futures.

The module can explore:

- sustainable mobility;
- inclusive public spaces;
- housing;
- green infrastructure;
- community life;
- accessibility;
- democratic participation;
- relationships between people and nature;
- alternative models of living.

Possible questions:

- What would a city designed around people's wellbeing look like?
- How much nature should a city contain?
- How would people move around?
- What would public space feel like?
- Who would make decisions?
- What would make a city fair, inclusive and sustainable?

The objective is not to produce one correct vision of the future. The value lies in the collaborative process of imagining alternatives and making assumptions visible.

4. Pedagogical Foundations

Concrete Jungle combines outdoor learning with experiential learning, place-based education, storytelling, spatial awareness, group exploration and youth co-creation.

4.1 Experiential Learning

At the core is learning through experience.

A useful cycle is:

1. **Concrete Experience** — participants do, observe, navigate or encounter something.
2. **Reflective Observation** — participants describe and reflect on what happened.
3. **Abstract Conceptualisation** — the group connects the experience to wider ideas, systems or questions.
4. **Active Experimentation** — participants consider what they could do differently, test a new idea or imagine an alternative.

The facilitator should avoid treating reflection as an optional final conversation. Reflection is part of the learning process itself.

4.2 Place-Based Education

Place-based education uses the local physical, cultural, historical and social environment as a foundation for learning.

Possible starting points include:

- neighbourhood histories;
- local economies and markets;
- community stories;
- public and private spaces;
- local environmental issues;
- migration and memory;
- local infrastructure;
- everyday routes and routines.

The approach shifts the learner from passive recipient to active participant in a place.

4.3 Ecopedagogy and Systems Thinking

Concrete Jungle treats environmental questions as connected to social questions.

Participants can explore:

- energy and resource flows;
- waste;
- biodiversity;
- pollution;
- climate resilience;
- consumption;
- relationships between urban and rural systems.

Systems thinking helps participants connect a local observation to wider patterns without losing the local context.

4.4 Critical Pedagogy

The methodology encourages participants to question how spaces are organised and whose interests they serve.

Questions may include:

- Who has access to parks, clean air and transportation?
- Why are some neighbourhoods greener than others?

- Who decides what is built?
- How do surveillance and security affect different groups?
- Whose stories are visible in public space?
- Whose stories are absent?

Critical learning should lead not only to observation but also to dialogue, agency and possible action.

4.5 Storytelling and Meaning-Making

Stories help participants connect personal experiences to places and wider questions.

Storytelling can be used through:

- personal narratives;
- oral histories;
- photographs;
- objects;
- maps;
- sound;
- the Hero's Journey;
- fictional futures;
- stories collected from a place.

The Concrete Jungle blog also documents stories and reflections from the project and can be used as an additional source of inspiration.

4.6 Inclusion, Accessibility and Safety

Outdoor learning in public or semi-public environments requires deliberate preparation.

Facilitators should consider:

- physical accessibility;
- sensory accessibility;
- language;
- cultural context;
- gender and safety;
- social and economic differences;
- mobility;
- weather;
- public traffic;
- permissions;
- safeguarding;
- emergency procedures;
- group supervision.

The principle is simple:

Adapt the method to the people and the place — not the people to a fixed method.

5. The Concrete Jungle Toolkit

A Living System for Rethinking Outdoor Education in Any Environment

The **Concrete Jungle Toolkit** is a map-based educational methodology that transforms any environment — urban, rural, natural, or in-between — into a space for exploration, reflection and learning.

It is **not a fixed programme**.

It is a living system that grows through:

- practice;
- adaptation;
- reflection;
- feedback;
- contribution.

The digital Toolkit is available through:

<https://concretejungle.info/>

How the Toolkit Works

The basic process is:

1. Choose a tool from the map

Use the digital Toolkit to explore activities and methods.

2. Adapt it to your environment and group

Consider:

- Where are you?
- Who are the participants?
- What are their needs?
- What is safe and accessible?
- What local issue or opportunity can make the activity meaningful?

3. Facilitate the experience

Create the conditions for participants to explore, interact, question and learn.

4. Reflect together

Ask participants what they noticed, felt, learned and questioned.

5. Share and contribute

If you adapt a method, develop a new version or create a new tool, share it with the wider Concrete Jungle community.

Each use of the Toolkit can contribute to its evolution.

6. Finding the Right Tool

The website allows users to explore the Toolkit through several filters.

Type of Space

- Outdoor / Urban
- Outdoor / Rural
- Virtual / Online Platform
- Indoor
- Other

Main Topics

- Rural vs Urban
- Surviving the Concrete Jungle
- Right to the City
- Utopia
- Other

Learning Outcomes

- Social Responsibility & Civic Engagement
- Wellbeing
- Environmental Awareness
- Critical Thinking & Problem Solving
- Effective Communication Skills
- Creativity & Innovation
- Leadership & Decision-Making
- Research & Analytical Skills
- Strategic Planning & Goal Setting

- Digital Literacy & Technology Use
- Other

Tool Categories

- Experiential Learning
- Group Discussions & Debates
- Team Building
- Storytelling
- Role-playing & Simulations
- Outdoor / Adventure Activities
- Hands-on Workshops
- Intercultural Learning
- Collaborative Art, Music & Creative Projects
- Games & Gamification
- Other

Selecting a tool

A facilitator can begin from different directions:

Start with the topic:

What issue do we want to explore?

Start with the place:

What can this environment teach us?

Start with the learning outcome:

What do participants need to develop?

Start with the group:

What kind of experience would work for these participants?

The filters should support professional judgement, not replace it.

7. Testing, Revision and Learning from Practice

The Concrete Jungle tools are not theoretical resources only. They were developed through practice and subsequently tested and revised during the project's international Exploration and Development Visits.

EDV Testing Phase 1: Germany and Poland
26 October – 5 November 2025

The first field-testing phase took place in Germany and Poland. Participants and project partners explored the methodology in different environments and used practical experiences to test assumptions, activities and approaches.

The testing process helped the partnership identify what worked in practice, what required clearer facilitation, and where activities needed adaptation.

EDV Testing Phase 2: Georgia and Armenia

7 – 19 May 2026

The second field-testing phase took place in Georgia and Armenia.

The tools and methodology were further tested in different urban, rural and cultural contexts. The experience provided an additional opportunity to adapt the tools, compare learning environments and strengthen the connection between the four Core Modules and practical activities.

What testing means in Concrete Jungle

Testing is not only about asking whether an activity "worked".

It means asking:

- Was the purpose clear?
- Did participants engage?
- Was the method appropriate for the place?
- Was it inclusive?
- Was it safe?
- Did the activity create meaningful reflection?
- What changed when the method moved to another context?
- What should another facilitator know before using it?

This approach is essential to the project's philosophy of continuous adaptation.

8. Contributing to the Toolkit

Concrete Jungle is **not a finished system**. It is a growing educational ecosystem.

Every environment changes a tool.

Every group changes the experience.

Every facilitator can change the outcome.

Educators, youth workers, trainers and young people are invited to contribute.

Why Contribution Matters

Sharing an adaptation helps the Toolkit:

- remain relevant across different contexts;
- reflect different cultures and realities;
- improve through practice;
- offer more choices to future facilitators;
- preserve learning generated by the community.

What can be contributed?

You can contribute:

- a new tool;
- an adaptation of an existing tool;
- a translated version;
- a new reflection method;
- a different way to use a tool;
- lessons learned from implementation;
- stories from practice.

Submit contributions through:

<https://concretejungle.info/add-your-method/>

9. The Website as a Living Project Archive

The Concrete Jungle website is more than a download page. It is part of the project's methodology and a living archive of its development.

Project Information

The **About** section explains the project's mission, vision, educational approach and story.

Partners

The project is coordinated by **Hoch Drei e.V. (Germany)** and implemented with partners from Armenia, Georgia, Poland and Italy:

- **Hoch Drei e.V. — Germany** — Main Coordinator
- **ABCD Innovation Center — Armenia**
- **WIN (Women's Initiatives Network) — Georgia**
- **Świat Rozpędu — Poland**

- Sustainable Vibes APS – Italy

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The partnership combines experience in youth work, non-formal education, civic education, sustainability, gender equality, environmental awareness and community empowerment.

For the most current partner information, use the Partners section of the website:

<https://concretejungle.info/partners/>

Blog

The **Concrete Jungle Blog** documents stories, reflections and experiences from the project.

It can be used by facilitators as:

- preparation material before an activity;
- inspiration for storytelling;
- a source of examples from other contexts;
- a record of project development;
- a prompt for discussion and reflection.

The blog is available at:

<https://concretejungle.info/blog/>

Gallery and project media

The website also provides project media and visual documentation that can support presentations, reflection and dissemination.

Project Disclaimer

Surviving in the Concrete Jungle is an Erasmus+ project funded by the European Union.

Views and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.