



# PLACETHEATRE

## DEL04 Policy recommendation

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Activity	240123 Placemaking via street theatre and dialogues of the future
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**New European Bauhaus**  
beautiful | sustainable | together



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## 1. Introduction

PLACETHEATRE aims to use the public realm of Novi Sad (Serbia), particularly several neglected public areas from remote neighborhoods and apply innovative and unconventional art-based methodologies – street theatre (ST) and dialogues of the future (DotF) – for helping citizens and social groups at risk regain their sense of community and belonging in a sustainable, socially-inclusive and circular manner following the New European Bauhaus principles of inclusion, aesthetics and sustainability.

During the first phase of Objective 1, three neglected areas of Novi Sad were identified, and then “Dialogues of the Future” (DotF) methodology was used to help young people in these neighborhoods envision better futures of their city areas and thus regain their sense of community and belonging in a sustainable, socially-inclusive and circular manner by bringing them closer to the physical spaces of the city they live in (results presented in deliverable DEL01).

During the second phase of Objective 1 findings from these DotFs were transferred by a qualified play writer into a synopsis that served as basis for 3 different short theatrics plays representing (educationally, emotionally and socially) the future state of the three targeted areas of Novi Sad. Three street theatre (ST) plays (20 mins) exploring how current urban challenges can be solved in the future were conducted in three consecutive days in the second week of July 2024 at three distinct locations. The aim of these three street plays was to enhance the public realm by boosting cultural exchange in a non-conventional location and format, providing the citizens with a unique experience of witnessing a street performance in their neighborhood, whilst collecting their thoughts and perceptions on the areas in which they reside (results presented in deliverable DEL03).

Based on findings from Objective 1, Objective 2 was pursued in order to strengthen transdisciplinary, intergenerational and intersectoral collaboration by convening diverse youth stakeholder groups through citizen engagement activities in line with NEB initiative & existing local strategies (city and or district/regional level). The project proposal envisioned two Living lab pilot workshops with 5 policy makers at the local (Novi Sad) and regional (Vojvodina) levels. However, the local policy makers unfortunately declined their participation in these workshops without further explanation. As an alternative, two workshops were realized on October 31<sup>st</sup> 2024 and November 18<sup>th</sup> 2024 with young citizens of Novi Sad together with representatives of inhabitants of three targeted city areas, to secure the sustainability of the PLACETHEATRE project, to build upon the outcomes of the implemented activities, and to discuss the possibility of opening a NEB Lab in the city of Novi Sad. The first workshop summarized the findings of the project and tested the starting assumptions posed by the participants of street theatres, while the second workshop explored possible solutions in the three targeted neglected city areas. The second workshop was held in the ScenLab space, a Novi Sad University laboratory for Scene



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Architecture, Technique and Design (Figures 1, 2 and 3), and utilized LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® methodology to explore possible solutions and policy recommendations.



*Figure 1, 2 and 3: The second workshop was held in the ScenLab space, a Novi Sad University laboratory for Scene Architecture, Technique and Design*



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This deliverable serves as a policy recommendation serving local public authorities with regards to NEB initiative implementation. It summarizes the results of the two Living Lab pilot workshops as well as the previous project findings from this project. It provides specific recommendations for the three targeted parts of Novi Sad, then proceeds with a proposal for a local NEB lab, and ends with more general recommendations.

## 2. Inclusion

Novi Sad's designation as the European Capital of Culture for 2022 underscored its potential to serve as a future beacon of inclusivity and culture. Addressing the neglected neighborhoods of Adice, Petrovaradin – Novi Majur, and Grbavica in this project, inclusive strategies must further prioritize creating spaces and opportunities where all residents can feel a sense of belonging and cultural consumption at their local level.

In Adice, the revival of the dormant cultural center could serve as the cornerstone of community engagement. This space can be transformed into a vibrant hub that hosts diverse events, from cultural exhibitions to workshops for underrepresented groups such as diverse ethnic groups, people with disabilities, and people with economic difficulties. Its programming should be tailored to meet the needs of all age groups, ensuring that the elderly have spaces for socialization and the youth have opportunities for creative exploration. Complementary to this, the introduction of a local market can strengthen ties within the community by promoting small businesses and creating a space for economic exchanges by day and shared cultural open-air space in the evenings.

For Petrovaradin – Novi Majur, the establishment of informal education centers and public gathering spaces can counteract the current lack of cultural activities. These centers could provide children with after-school programs and workshops focused on arts, environmental awareness, and digital skills, fostering both inclusion and personal growth. At the same time, public spaces in this area can be designed to encourage interaction among residents of diverse backgrounds, as current playgrounds behind the residential buildings are not enough. Including more accessible and content-rich playgrounds, outdoor fitness areas, and even community gardens can create shared spaces where neighbors connect and collaborate.

In Grbavica, inclusion can be reinforced through the integration of multipurpose spaces that cater to diverse demographics. The single cultural center in this neighborhood should be reimagined to offer intergenerational activities, such as storytelling nights, film screenings, and music performances, to bridge the generational divide. The few open public squares could be adapted to stages that could provide platforms for community-driven cultural programs, fostering dialogue and interaction among residents.

Efforts to increase inclusion must also address physical accessibility, as this is one of the most frequently observed problems across Novi Sad. Streets and walkways across all three neighborhoods should be restructured to ensure universal design principles are met, allowing individuals with disabilities to move freely and safely. Street-level interventions such as tactile paving, accessible ramps, and widened sidewalks can dramatically improve mobility for all, particularly for those with visual or physical impairments. Addressing systemic issues such as discrimination and social exclusion is equally critical. Regular dialogue forums, modeled on the successful "Dialogues of the Future" methodology described in DEL01, can bring residents together to discuss local issues and develop collaborative solutions. These



discussions can highlight and address challenges faced by marginalized groups, such as the Roma community in Adice. Engaging trusted community leaders to moderate these dialogues can ensure that the conversations remain inclusive and constructive.

Inclusive policy initiatives should also capitalize on Novi Sad's international and cultural profile. Campaigns promoting cultural diversity, supported by events like international food fairs and art exhibits, can celebrate the city's multiculturalism while actively involving its minority communities. These efforts can further be amplified by partnerships with educational institutions, encouraging students to explore and document the cultural richness of their city. To sustain inclusion, governance structures should include residents in decision-making processes. Creating neighborhood councils that represent diverse demographics ensures that every voice is heard – currently there are neighborhood councils around the city, but their role and impact are rarely observable. These councils can act as liaisons between residents and municipal authorities, advocating for the community's priorities and overseeing the implementation of inclusive projects. By fostering belonging through vibrant cultural spaces, accessible infrastructure, and proactive dialogue, Novi Sad can transform its neglected neighborhoods into inclusive, cohesive communities that exemplify the principles of the New European Bauhaus initiative.

A number of more specific ideas arouse from the workshops:

- School of inclusivity could be founded, to teach local inhabitants about mutual understanding and communication with disabled people, through the means such as sign language, communication with the visually impaired.
  - Organizing events such as tactile events, sports competition for the disabled, musical concert for the deaf.
    - Specific cultural events targeted at the senior population.
    - Content-rich dog parks and asylum for the stray dogs within the neighborhood.
    - Outdoor furniture that attracts public gatherings and small-scale cultural events.
    - Cultural events targeted at the marginalized social groups.
    - Designing functional disability ramps that are either fixed or portable, depending on the context of the physical space and cultural event.
  - Redesign old houses, kiosks or ground-level collective spaces at residential buildings to offer places where locals from socio-economical challenged groups can meet and experience cultural events.



### 3. Aesthetics

The visual and experiential qualities of Novi Sad's public spaces hold immense potential to strengthen the city's identity and enhance the quality of life for its residents, beyond the Austro-Hungarian architecture present in the city center. Radically revitalizing Adice, Petrovaradin – Novi Majur, and Grbavica with aesthetic improvements aligned with the New European Bauhaus vision can and should bridge the gap between functionality and beauty.

In Adice, the development of a central park adjacent to the revitalized cultural center can become a focal point for aesthetic transformation. This park should be designed as a multifunctional space with lush greenery, walking paths, and artistically designed seating areas. Incorporating public art installations, such as sculptures and murals that celebrate the area's cultural diversity, can elevate the visual appeal of the park while fostering community pride. Moreover, the quay along the Danube River can be enhanced with recreational and leisure spaces featuring innovative design elements, such as floating platforms or eco-friendly pavilions, to create a visually striking and sustainable riverside attraction.

In Petrovaradin – Novi Majur, integrating art into urban infrastructure can redefine the neighborhood's aesthetic character. Walls of older buildings can be transformed into canvases for large-scale murals that reflect the area's cultural narratives. Public spaces, currently underutilized, can feature contemporary sculptures and interactive art installations that invite engagement and exploration. The preservation and restoration of historic structures, such as the old train station, can further enrich the neighborhood's aesthetic value. Adaptive reuse of these buildings for cultural or educational purposes can blend tradition with modernity, creating spaces that are both functional and visually inspiring.

Grbavica, with its haphazard architectural development, requires a cohesive design strategy to enhance its aesthetic harmony. Establishing design guidelines for building renovations can standardize the use of colors, materials, and façade treatments where possible, ensuring a visually unified streetscape. Adding green elements such as vertical gardens and rooftop greenery can soften the dense urban environment and improve air quality. The inclusion of pedestrian-friendly zones, with creatively designed lighting and street furniture, can transform the neighborhood into a visually engaging and welcoming environment.

Across all three neighborhoods, street lighting can be designed not only for functionality but also to contribute to the area's aesthetic charm. Incorporating artistic lighting installations in public squares and parks can create atmospheric environments that encourage evening activities and gatherings. Seasonal installations, such as light festivals or themed decorations, could also draw residents and visitors to these areas, reinforcing their role as cultural and social hubs. A focus on aesthetics must also extend to the smaller details of urban life. Well-maintained pavements, visually appealing bus stops, and thoughtfully designed trash bins and recycling stations can elevate the everyday experience of the city's





residents. Similarly, introducing elements of playfulness, such as colorful pedestrian crossings or interactive public benches, can make urban spaces more inviting and engaging.

A number of more specific ideas arose from the workshops:

- Establishing a “collective gallery” where local inhabitants can exhibit their creative outputs such as paintings, sculptures or other static art installations.
- Green murals on residential buildings, preferably painted together by the local inhabitants rather than commissioned artists.
- Connecting rooftops of adjacent buildings with green bridges.
- Establishing a cultural center and a municipal coffee shop at the top floor of residential building, furnished as a living room.
- An open-air cinema, concert, and theatre stage as part of a local park.

## 4. Sustainability

Sustainability is at the heart of the New European Bauhaus initiative, and Novi Sad's efforts to revitalize its neglected neighborhoods must prioritize environmental resilience and resource efficiency at the local level. Through innovative urban planning and community-driven sustainability initiatives, the city should create neighborhoods that are not only functional but also ecologically responsible. Throughout all three neighborhoods, integrating climate-resilient infrastructure is essential to mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events. Permeable pavements, green roofs, and flood-resistant urban designs can address issues such as stormwater management and heat island effects. Public awareness campaigns, combined with incentives for adopting sustainable practices, can ensure long-term engagement and success.

In Adice, addressing waste management issues is paramount. Introducing accessible recycling stations and automated waste collection systems can encourage residents to adopt sustainable habits. Complementing these efforts with community workshops on waste reduction and composting can foster a culture of environmental awareness. Expanding green spaces with native vegetation and implementing rainwater harvesting systems in public parks can enhance biodiversity and promote water conservation. Solar-powered charging stations and benches can also serve as practical and educational tools for demonstrating sustainable energy solutions, but it is suggested to include local inhabitants in designing and installing these stations and benches in order to minimize future vandalization.

In Petrovaradin – Novi Majur, reducing the environmental impact of traffic congestion is critical. Constructing a ring road to divert heavy vehicle traffic away from residential areas can significantly improve air quality and reduce noise pollution, which is already underway. Promoting sustainable transportation options, such as bike-sharing programs and expanded bicycle lanes, can further support the transition to greener mobility. Retrofitting existing buildings with energy-efficient technologies, such as solar panels and insulation, can reduce energy consumption and lower the carbon footprint of the neighborhood.

Grbavica, with its dense urban fabric, offers opportunities to implement vertical and rooftop gardens that not only enhance sustainability but also contribute to urban cooling. Establishing automated parking facilities can reclaim some surface spaces for greenery and pedestrian pathways. Incorporating green roofs and solar panels into the design of new developments could set a standard for sustainable urban living. Community-driven initiatives, such as tree-planting campaigns and neighborhood clean-up days, could also foster a sense of collective responsibility for the environment.

A number of more specific ideas arouse from the workshops:

- Creating an eco-friendly public stage for performances, one built from recycled materials brought by the local residents.
- Instead of standard maintenance of green areas, organize a garden club for the locals and conduct yearly contests for the best neighborhood gardens.



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- Organize a competition for recycling but at the neighborhood level, where the more residents recycle the more their street or a building block makes points which could later be used to improve the same area.
  - Combine recycling centers with children informal education so that the local recycling centers can act as awareness-raising points in the new generations.
  - Organizing green waste disposal that will be locally composted and utilized for public green spaces.

## 5. Opening a NEB Lab in the city of Novi Sad

**Vision:** the “Urban Renaissance Hub” can become a New European Bauhaus-inspired living lab designed to address the intertwined challenges of aesthetics, inclusivity, and sustainability in Novi Sad. Situated strategically to serve as a connector between neglected neighborhoods and the city center, this hub will function as a testing ground for innovative solutions, a participatory platform for citizens, and a showcase of sustainable urban living principles. The living lab will embody the essence of the New European Bauhaus by blending cultural richness, environmental stewardship, and design excellence. Its activities will focus on transforming urban spaces into environments where beauty meets functionality, inclusion fosters belonging, and sustainability ensures resilience.

**Location:** The proposed site for the Urban Renaissance Hub is Grbavica, a neighborhood that encapsulates the challenges facing Novi Sad: lack of cultural infrastructure, poor urban aesthetics, traffic jams, and environmental degradation. This location could provide a perfect testing ground to pilot projects that can later be scaled to other parts of the city.

**Governance Model:** The “Urban Renaissance Hub” will be co-managed by a coalition of stakeholders, including the local government of Novi Sad; representatives from local communities, ensuring inclusivity in decision-making; educational and cultural institutions such as the University of Novi Sad; private sector partners, including local businesses and social enterprises; experts in urban planning, architecture, and sustainability from across Europe, facilitated by the New European Bauhaus network.

**Proposed Activities:** The living lab will host a variety of activities to activate its spaces and engage the community such as art and design residencies (artists and designers from Novi Sad and beyond will collaborate with residents to create site-specific projects); seasonal events and festivals (celebrating cultural diversity, sustainability, and creativity with themed festivals and public performances); participatory urban planning (workshops where residents contribute to the planning of their neighborhoods, testing ideas in real-time); pilot projects (testing renewable energy technologies, sustainable construction materials, and urban mobility solutions in the neighborhood).

**Components of the Urban Renaissance Hub:** The living lab will consist of several interconnected components to ensure a holistic approach.

### *1. Cultural and Co-Creation Pavilion*

*This pavilion will serve as the heart of the hub, hosting workshops, art exhibitions, and performances that engage local residents. Citizens will co-create murals, sculptures, and other art installations, incorporating their ideas and cultural narratives into the aesthetics of their surroundings. The pavilion will also be home to a “design thinking” studio where residents can collaborate with architects, designers, and urban planners to reimagine their neighborhood.*



## 2. Inclusive Public Spaces

*The living lab will transform vacant lots and underused spaces in Grbavica into vibrant, accessible public areas. This includes the creation of multi-purpose parks with playgrounds, outdoor fitness areas, and shaded rest zones. Special attention will be given to accessibility, ensuring that these spaces are usable by people with disabilities and the elderly. Public art and green infrastructure will be seamlessly integrated to enhance the aesthetic quality of these spaces.*

## 3. Green Innovation Corridor

*A key feature of the hub will be the development of a green corridor that connects neighborhoods through bicycle lanes, pedestrian pathways, and green walkways. The corridor will include urban gardens, renewable energy installations (like solar charging benches), and water-sensitive landscaping to manage stormwater. This will create a visible and functional symbol of sustainability, fostering a sense of pride and environmental awareness among residents.*

## 4. Sustainability Incubator

*The hub will host a small-scale incubator for sustainable practices and local businesses. Entrepreneurs will be supported in developing projects that align with circular economy principles, such as upcycling workshops, eco-friendly marketplaces, and zero-waste cafes. Educational programs on composting, recycling, and renewable energy will also be held here to build community capacity for sustainable living.*

## 5. Social Innovation and Dialogue Center

*Building on the success of the "Dialogues of the Future" methodology, this component will focus on community engagement and social inclusion. Activities will include regular forums for residents to voice concerns, storytelling events to bridge generational and cultural divides, and support groups for marginalized communities. The center will prioritize engaging the disabled, the elderly, and other vulnerable groups to ensure their needs are addressed in the hub's development.*

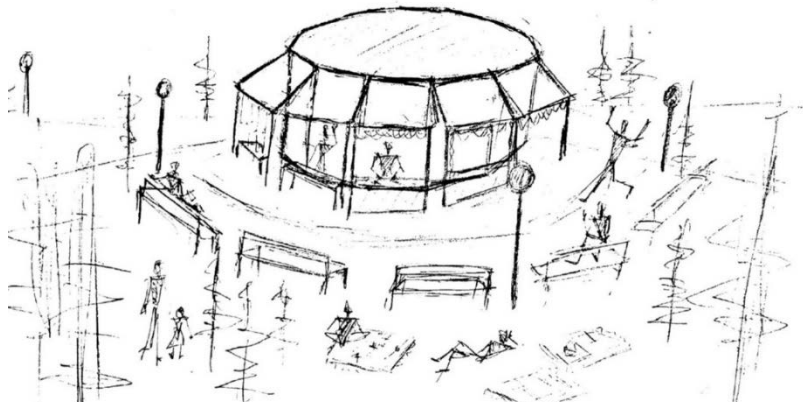
Expected Outcomes: the "Urban Renaissance Hub" can aim to demonstrate how neglected areas can become vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable. Key outcomes will thus include: improved quality of life for residents, with access to beautiful and functional public spaces; increased social cohesion and a sense of belonging across diverse demographic groups; enhanced environmental resilience through green infrastructure and sustainable practices; replicable models for urban regeneration that can inform city-wide policy and planning.

## 6. PLACETHEATRE idea contest winning idea

During the open contest within the PLACETHEATRE project, a youth idea about a multi-functional pavilion “Lumin” in Adice was awarded. This idea is presented with the following description.

As a response to one of the main issues in the Adice neighborhood — namely the lack of gathering spaces, gallery areas, and cultural venues — the multifunctional exhibition pavilion Lumin has been conceptualized (Figure 4). The improvement plan focuses on enhancing and expanding the green spaces in this part of the city. Beyond inviting citizens to gather, Lumin interacts harmoniously with the surrounding greenery. The pavilion’s potential uses include an exhibition space, cinema, bazaar, educational workshops, and other cultural activities, making it accessible to users of all ages. Located outside the urban center, this space offers a natural ambiance, standing apart from noise pollution and creating opportunities for citywide engagement. Access to the green space is marked by paved concrete paths that curve towards the park’s central feature — the Lumin pavilion. The structure is hexadecagonal, allowing approach from all sides. The glass-wall construction supports both enclosed and semi-open gallery setups that invite visitors inside. By utilizing semi-transparent one-way mirrors, the park’s vegetation is reflected, integrating seamlessly into the design and preserving the dense natural atmosphere.

The pavilion transforms by raising these reflective panels into canopies, opening up the gallery during summer months. To achieve complete darkness necessary for exhibitions, opaque curtains slide along the steel framework of Lumin. This skeleton consists of circular columns connected by beams supporting the roof. A key feature of such open architectural structures is the void intended to be filled by events.



*Figure 4: The award-winning idea for the multi-functional pavilion “Lumin” in Adice*

In line with this, the interior contains no fixed furniture, allowing for adaptability based on the users and organized content. Aiming to provide a venue for diverse cultural activities, the pavilion accommodates numerous scenarios. When enclosed, it functions as an art gallery with exhibition panels suspended on wires. This setup is suitable for hosting workshops, conferences, and indoor cinema screenings. During summer, when the glass panels are raised, the structure’s floor transforms into a stage. The surrounding greenery, along with benches, becomes an audience area unified around the central activity. In this configuration, the Lumin stage hosts performances, bazaars, and open-air cinema screenings. In addition to its architectural design inviting passersby to attend events, Lumin offers Adice residents a platform to exhibit their handmade crafts and small artisanal products.

## 7. Conclusion

The recommendations envisioned in the PLACETHEATRE project for revitalizing Adice, Petrovaradin – Novi Majur, and Grbavica represent a comprehensive approach to urban renewal that intertwines inclusion, aesthetics, and sustainability in line with Novi Sad's identity as the European Capital of Culture 2022 and the principles of the New European Bauhaus initiative. However, the transformation of these three areas should serve not merely as isolated interventions but rather as a blueprint for addressing challenges across the entire city. By taking lessons from these targeted efforts, Novi Sad could extend its vision of harmonious, inclusive, and sustainable urban development to other parts of the city.

The inclusion strategies proposed for the three neighborhoods highlight the importance of accessible cultural spaces, meaningful community engagement, and intergenerational activities. These elements can be replicated in other areas of Novi Sad, particularly in neighborhoods facing similar challenges of social exclusion or insufficient community resources. Programs fostering dialogue, such as the "Dialogues of the Future" and the "Street theater" can be scaled citywide, encouraging all citizens to participate in shaping their urban environment. Additionally, neighborhoods with significant immigrant or minority populations could benefit from initiatives that celebrate diversity and promote cross-cultural understanding, ensuring that Novi Sad's cultural identity reflects the richness of its communities.

The emphasis on aesthetics demonstrates that beauty and harmony in urban design can enhance not only the visual appeal of neighborhoods but also their functionality and livability. This principle can inspire citywide initiatives to prioritize architectural cohesion, creative public art, and the thoughtful design of public spaces. For instance, other parts of Novi Sad could adopt mural programs that engage local artists, transforming blank walls into vibrant expressions of identity and culture. Similarly, lighting and landscaping strategies can be extended to create a consistent visual identity for Novi Sad, making the city more welcoming and attractive to both residents and visitors.

Sustainability, as a cornerstone of the proposed recommendations, offers an opportunity to make Novi Sad a leader in ecological urban planning. While the three targeted areas present specific environmental challenges, many other parts of the city also face issues such as traffic congestion, inadequate green spaces, and waste management inefficiencies. Expanding green infrastructure, promoting renewable energy solutions, and encouraging sustainable transportation can benefit all neighborhoods, enhancing the city's overall resilience to climate change. Initiatives such as tree-planting campaigns, solar energy adoption, and improved stormwater management systems can be implemented across Novi Sad, creating a city that is both environmentally responsible and socially equitable. These recommendations also highlight the value of participatory processes and community-driven approaches. By involving residents in decision-making and implementation, Novi Sad can ensure that its urban renewal efforts are rooted in the needs and aspirations of its people. This model of citizen-led urban development can be a guiding principle for the city's future planning efforts, fostering a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility.