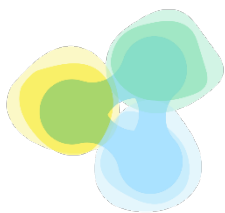




PLACETHEATRE

DEL01 Report on dialogues of the future outcomes

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Activity	240123 Placemaking via street theatre and dialogues of the future
Project acronym	PLACETHEATRE
Task	240123-A2400 OS - Placemaking via street theatre and dialogues of the future
Description	A structured report depicting the outcomes of problematic urban areas complemented by the participants' inputs for the dialogue of the future (contains also the dialogue of the future methodology).
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Changes log:

Version 02: Figure 01 modified.

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 Objective 1 of this project, it was intended to help at least 50 young people (18-30 years old) 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. At least 50% of the participating youth were expected to come from selected social groups at risk (Ukrainian refugees, other refugees, minorities, people with disabilities, LGBTQ, other local representative groups at risk). Overall full gender equality was to be ensured. This objective was to be achieved by supporting the selected young people to take charge of:

- a) identification of problematic urban areas from Novi Sad (3 areas),
- b) engaging in dialogues of the future with citizens to imagine how that public space could look in the future (an ideal situation covering inclusion, sustainability and aesthetics),
- c) (*in progress*) scripting, designing and delivering short (20 mins) street theatre plays depicting how current urban challenges can be solved in the future.

During the realization of this objective, in Month 2 of the project 56 young people were recruited for the DotF activities, where snowball sampling technique (personal peer recommendation) was predominantly used in order to scout for genuine youth groups of enthusiastic individuals. However, 5 of the recruited individuals have dropped off during the initial stages of this task, leaving the final number of 51 young adults participating at this stage. It was planned to reach at least 50% of participating youth to come from the above-mentioned social groups at risk, and the following statistics were reached, according to the self-proclaimed individual properties (it should be noted that some persons placed themselves in more than one group):

- a) 28 participants (51%) were females;
- b) 30 participants (59%) came from selected social groups at risk (11 with economic obstacles; ethnic minorities such as Roma 9, Hungarian 3, Romanian 1, Jewish 1, Croatian 2; LGBT identified persons 4; physical disabilities 3; economic migrants 3; refugees 1).

Although the project proposal also identified Ukrainian refugees as one of the targeted groups for this action, there were no young people from this cohort participating due to the following practical

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reasons: a) the Ukrainian refugee youth that the project personnel was able to reach were all allocated in the city center of Novi Sad, thus not being a part of any neglected public area; b) the Ukrainian refugee youth did not demonstrate knowledge of Serbian language well enough to qualify for conducting dialogues of the future with local inhabitants.

2. Dialogues of the future methodology

This part describes the participatory methods used to obtain citizen's inputs about the projected future states of the selected urban areas of the city. The presented methodology can be adapted and replicated in any context and location, since it is topic and place agnostic. Module A had two purposes: to train young participants for the dialogues with the general public in the selected parts of the city, and to assess their own perspectives on these parts of the city. Module B then employs what the young adults have experienced in the previous module on the dialogues with the citizens.

2.1 Module A: Session for the Youth Participants

Materials Needed:

- Flip charts or large paper sheets for each group
- Markers, pens, and sticky notes
- A projector or screen for the introductory presentation
- Comfortable seating arranged in a way that facilitates small group discussions. Ideally, the venue is situated in the targeted urban context.

Facilitator Tips:

- Ideal group size should be 12 – 16 persons.
- Ensure that all voices are heard, especially from participants who are from the identified at-risk social groups. Identify if there are any participants from the identified at-risk social groups that need help in expressing their thoughts.
- Foster an environment of respect and open-mindedness, sustaining from any critique or pessimistic comments.
- Be flexible and ready to adapt the session plan based on the dynamics of the group.

1. Introduction (10 minutes)

- **Welcome and Overview (5 minutes)**
 - Briefly introduce the project context, the session, its objectives, and the importance of imagining the future of public spaces.
 - Explain the structure of the session, what participants can expect, and what are the desired outcomes.
- **Icebreaker Activity (5 minutes)**
 - Conduct a quick icebreaker to help participants feel comfortable and to get acquainted: in the case of this project, ask each participant to share one word describing their ideal public space and to describe how that word relates to their own ideals.

2. Setting the Context (10 minutes)

- **Presentation of Current Challenges (5 minutes)**

- Provide a concise overview of the what constitutes a problematic urban area, mentioning some of the issues that are targeted by the project, but suggesting the participants to come up with their own ideas also.
- Bring the context of the specific city or region (Novi Sad in this case) into the equation, highlighting the current challenges in terms of inclusion, sustainability, and aesthetics. Mention any specific potentials (in the case of Novi Sad the recent title of EU Capital of Culture).
- **Vision for the Future (5 minutes)**
 - Introduce the concept of "daydreaming" about the future state of spaces in the city: ask participants to remember how they used their imagination in their childhood, explain that there are no boundaries set. Encourage participants to think creatively and freely about how these spaces could be transformed.

3. Small Group Daydreaming and Discussions (45 minutes)

- **Formation of Groups (5 minutes)**
 - Divide participants into small groups, ideally 4 persons each, ensuring a mix of different backgrounds and perspectives in each group. Participants of these small groups should briefly introduce themselves to the others.
- **Facilitated Discussion (40 minutes)**
 - Each group identifies and discusses one of the problematic areas.
 - In each group the participants then individually daydream about the possible futures of the identified area.
 - Each group should appoint a note-taker and a presenter.
 - Each group establishes an imaginary dialogue of the future, creating specific personas that talk about the possible future. For example, taking roles as imaginary villains and superheroes that want to turn the identified area of the city into what they please.
 - Each group discusses and synergizes individual daydreams and imaginary dialogues.
 - Guiding Questions:
 - What kind of activities and interactions are happening in this space?
 - How does this space promote inclusion, sustainability, and aesthetics?
 - What does this space look like in the future?
 - Identify most prominent challenges present now and think about how these challenges could be solved in this future state?
 - Try to visualize the future of this space and try to creatively describe it?

4. Group Presentations (15 minutes)

- **Sharing Visions (10 minutes)**
 - Each group presents their vision for the future of their assigned space.
 - Encourage creative presentations: storytelling, sketches, or role-playing.

- **Feedback and Discussion (5 minutes)**

- Open the floor for questions and feedback from other groups.
- Encourage positive and constructive feedback, focusing on how each vision could be improved or made more inclusive.

5. Conclusion and Next Steps (10 minutes)

- **Summary of Key Points (2 minutes)**

- Summarize the main ideas and visions shared by the groups, highlighting common themes that are identified in all selected areas and unique solutions proposed.

- **Next Steps (3 minutes)**

- Explain how the ideas generated in this session will be used.
- Provide information about future street sessions with the citizens.

2.2 Module B: Conducting Dialogues of the Future with citizens

Materials Needed:

- A list of locations in the targeted city area in which the participants will conduct dialogues of the future with the citizens. Special attention should be put to define locations that are safe to conduct such interviews on the streets (not close to automotive traffic, well-lit and not obscure), accessible (for persons that have limited mobility and the elderly population), and without major distractions (such as traffic noises, construction works, any other loud noises or visual distractors).
- Writing pad and a simple form for writing down main points given by the citizens.

Facilitator Tips:

- Conduct a briefing for the participants about how they should approach the citizens on the streets and how they should conduct the dialogues.
- Define the routes and meeting points to collect the written materials afterwards.

1. Dialogues of the Future

- **Approaching the citizens (2 minutes)**

- Briefly introduce yourself and the reason you are approaching the individuals. State the desired outcomes. Inform individuals about their anonymity and protected privacy.

- **Identifying current issues (5 minutes)**

- Ask individuals to state main challenges in the observed area, especially regarding inclusion, aesthetics and sustainability.

- **Identifying current issues (5 – 10 minutes)**

- Ask individuals to state main challenges in the observed area, especially regarding inclusion, aesthetics and sustainability.

- **Daydreaming about the desired future (10 – 15 minutes)**

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- Ask individuals daydream about desired future of the area in which they reside, especially regarding inclusion, aesthetics and sustainability. Encourage them to let their imagination run freely and to think creatively.
- If needed, help them with suggestions such as:
 - *“If you were a superhero that was to revive this place, what would you do, and with what superpowers?”*
 - *“If you were a king/queen that had their every wish fulfilled, what would you order in this place?”*
 - *“If you had a golden fish that makes three wishes come true, what would you wish regarding this area of the city?”*
- Write down the main points raised by the citizens, being as precise as possible.
- Thank the individuals for their cooperation and inform them about the possibility to follow-up on the project progress and communication channels.

3. Outcomes of the problematic urban areas' identification and the dialogues of the future

In the first instance, approximately 220 persons, young and other citizens, from Novi Sad were surveyed on the streets of Novi Sad – close to the university campus and the main city market – about the most problematic and neglected urban areas of Novi Sad such as: waste, citizen engagement, racism, women harassment, violence/racism, pollution, infrastructure degradation, infrastructure adequacy for disabled people, economic decay. Three areas of the city were most frequently identified: Adice, Petrovaradin – Novi Majur, and Grbavica. These three areas are presented in Figure 1 in red circles; additionally, blue circles identify two areas of the city where approximately 90% of cultural activities are held.

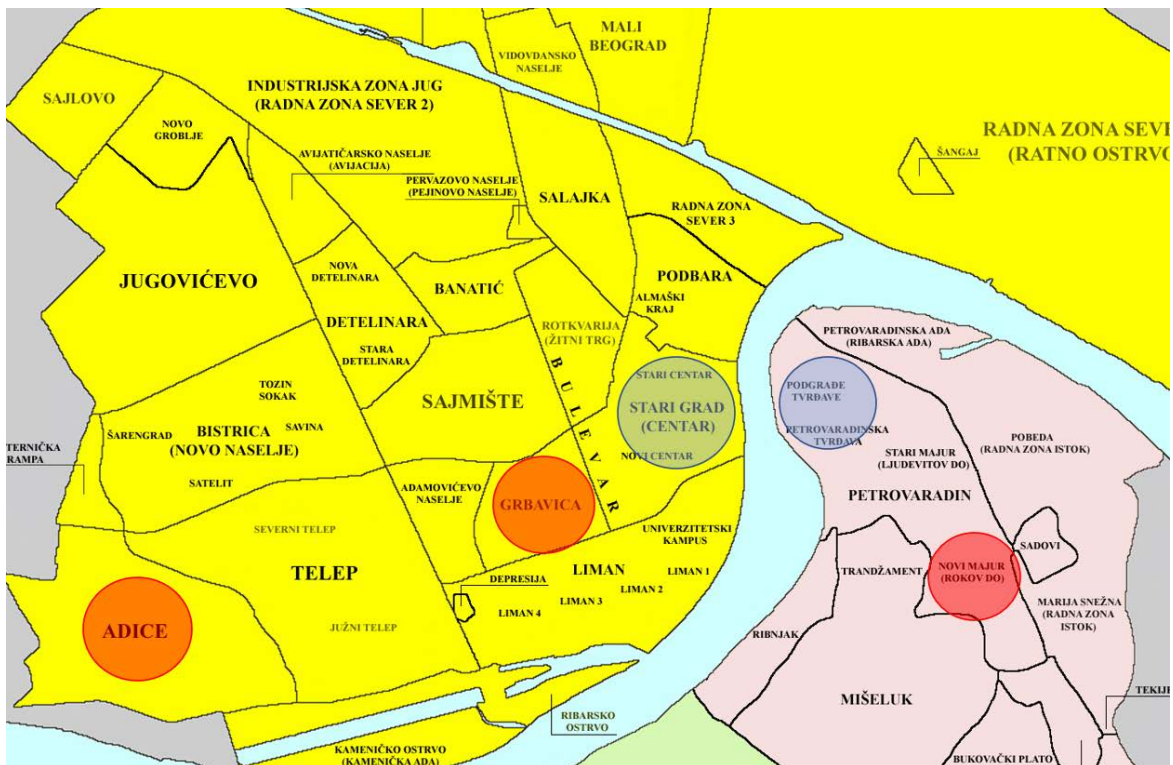


Figure 1: Identified neglected urban areas of the city are marked with red circles

After this, Module 1 was employed in public spaces, where the youth participants practiced the methods and explored daydreaming on their own.

Then, Module 2 was employed on the city streets of the three identified areas, with 115 citizens interviewed in total by individual youth participants or in pairs. Individual answers were summarized with most prominent thematic areas and insights presented below.

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A few photos from youth-led events in Module 1 are next presented. Due to privacy issues of local citizens, Module 2 was not photographed.



3.1 Adice

The western-most part of Novi Sad, comprised of family houses, many of them with small gardens and small family business. One part of Adice is a slum area mostly comprised of unregulated makeshift dwellings with ethnic Roma people as predominant inhabitants. Poor infrastructure and communal services are observed across this area, with a multitude of identified topics such as:

- Waste management problems, lack of sanitary conditions;
- Racism towards Roma people that reside in one part of the area;
- Women harassment;
- Infrastructural problems such as unpaved roads, lack of bicycle lanes;
- Economic decay;
- Complete lack of any cultural capacity and events: citizens do not meet here for any public happenings;
- Lack of both indoor and outdoor facilities for the children and the youth;
- There are buildings of a cultural center and a library present, but they do not function.

Inclusion: A revival of the cultural center is predominantly observed as a possible future focal point of urban events. The citizens daydream about enriching this institution and restoring it with the help of the municipality, imagining their youth and the elderly population utilizing these premises for various cultural happenings, which could be both local and easily accessible. Older inhabitants reminisce about this cultural center being alive and active decades ago, and wish that they could have that space up and running again in the future. Playgrounds and sports facilities are envisioned as beautiful spaces for the youth to meet and spend quality time playing. Since there are a lot of small family-owned business operating in this area, a local market would be a great contribution to both local economy and social life of Adice.

Sustainability: This part of the city should benefit from much more green spaces, parks and trees besides the roads and other public spaces. Sanitary conditions are managed by the local municipality with better garbage disposal, installed trash cans and recycling centers at main crossroads. Automated recycling stations should be placed in order to encourage inhabitants to engage in waste separation. Solar charging stations for mobile devices with benches are seen as both an encouragement for sustainable thinking, and as places to bring out social life of the streets of Adice.

Aesthetics: A central park, next to the cultural center, is imagined as a beautiful place that could greatly enhance the quality of life for citizens in this area. This park should also have a square and a stage for cultural events. Since there is a quay next to the Danube River present, this space could be enriched with recreational facilities and leisure spaces. Besides the roads that should be paved, public lightning should be installed in smaller streets, preferably powered by solar energy. Pedestrian walkways and bicycle lanes should be improved and decorated with greenery.

3.2 Petrovaradin – Novi Majur

One part of Petrovaradin, the area on the southern bank of the Danube River across the city center of Novi Sad, has frequent cultural events and a large music festival happening in the iconic Petrovaradin fortress. However, other parts of Petrovaradin share the destiny of some Novi Sad areas which are culturally neglected, and the area known as Novi Majur is one of them. This part of Novi Sad is filled with densely built both family houses and multi-story buildings. It is divided in two parts by a major road which is heavily saturated with car, bus and truck traffic. One of the good aspects of this part of the city is a significant percentage of green spaces and fully grown trees in this part of the city. Still, numerous troublesome topics were identified, such as:

- Lack of cultural center or other public facilities for cultural events;
- Complete lack of any cultural events;
- Poor aesthetic and unpleasant appearance of older buildings and houses;
- Heavy motor vehicle traffic in close proximity;
- Lack of parking spaces for cars;
- Due to the uneven terrain in this part of the city, the streets are quite narrow and almost completely inaccessible to individuals with mobility issues;
- Lack of open public spaces.

Inclusion: Petrovaradin – Novi Majur is envisioned as a part of the city which will, above all, utilize its greenery potential much more than what is now present. Children playgrounds will be frequent in the parks close to the residential buildings, and will connect with the trees and bushes seen all around. A few of the empty spaces between the residential buildings, now seen just as flat ground covered with grass, will be adapted to small public squares in which the residents will be able to spend quality time. Streets are adapted to individuals with mobility impairments, with accessible alleys. Streets that are occupied with individual houses are much more urbanistically managed: power lines are put below the ground, street lights are adequate, collection of atmospheric water is hidden from the eyes of passers-by. An informal education center for children and younger adults acts as a focal point for local youth.

Sustainability: Heavy traffic is bypassed by a ring-road, significantly reducing the noise, air pollution and traffic jams. Garbage collection is better managed. Recycling stations are present on significant places, allowing school children to think about their environment. In the parks behind the buildings there are benches for the elderly to socialize. Bicycle lanes are present throughout the area. Parking lots have many trees present, allowing natural shades and cleaner air. Solar panels are present on buildings' roofs and provide electricity for the street lights. Roco's stream, the local stream is kept free from pollutants and trash, and its banks are kept in order.

Aesthetics: Instead of having graffiti on buildings, there are inspiring and aesthetically pleasing murals on the walls. Sculptures with symbolic meanings to the locals decorate the public spaces. There are museums and art galleries present, which also serve as venues for music concerts, theatre plays, and public debates. The part with the family houses shows well-maintained front yards and access roads that are unison. Public lighting keeps the streets well-lit, but also pleasing to the eye. Open public spaces allow people to gather in informal groups, and are built in the manner of the other, historical part of

Petrovaradin, also serving as spaces for public performances. The public greenery is well kept and “tells a story of connection between man and nature”. The area around the train station is more open to general public, while the old building of the trains station is restored and also acts as a museum for the old trains that went through the narrow streets before.

3.3 Grbavica

Although this area of Novi Sad is geographically centered, it is significantly neglected both in cultural capacities and in urban regulation. Three decades ago, this part of the city comprised of small family houses with gardens. Since then, this area witnessed a major urbanization with most of the houses being replaced with multi-story residential buildings that were crammed in narrow streets without proper urbanistic strategic plans. This led to over-population in this part of the city due to being close to the city center, the main market in Novi Sad, and major traffic junctures. Major issues such as: infrastructure adequacy for disabled people, architectural and aesthetical deprivations, lack of any cultural activities are witnessed. Numerous troublesome topics were identified, such as:

- High density of residential buildings with inadequate pedestrian walkways and narrow pavements that are inaccessible for people with disabilities, bicycles, and baby strollers;
- Nonexistent public spaces, playgrounds, parks, and sports facilities;
- Only one cultural center is operating in this area, focused only on youth activities in the context of eventual projects – adult population and the elderly are not entertained with any content;
- Suboptimal atmospheric drainage creates frequent floods during the more increasing thunderstorms and heavy rains;
- Parking spaces for cars is insufficient which leads to frequent parking on green areas and pavements, making it more difficult for the citizens to walk on the streets;
- High traffic frequency and lack of green areas leads to poor air quality;
- This area witnessed construction of many individual residential buildings which were not stylistically harmonious and standardized, which led to aesthetically unpleasant impression which led to the reputation of Grbavica as an eyesore of Novi Sad.

Inclusion: New parks are envisioned across this part of the city as a remedy for the current urbanistic illnesses. In these green spaces benches for relaxation and small squares for public life are seen as micro-focal points of the urban living. Open public spaces are something that inhabitants in this area daydream about, where individuals from different backgrounds and needs can meet and exchange their thoughts, being able to getting acquainted with their neighbors which are invisible to them in the current setting. The existing cultural center can become a place where people from different age groups could meet and enjoy in various events; additional cultural centers should be built allowing more opportunities for interpersonal exchange. Open public spaces such as a stage or an open amphitheater should be built to bring closer theatrical, musical and film manifestations. The pedestrian lanes and traffic intersections are adapted to people with special mobility needs and visual impairments, allowing them to fully enjoy the part of the city in which they reside.

Sustainability: An underground public parking should be built to facilitate transportation problems and to ease off the congestion on the streets and other public areas with parked cars. Bicycle lanes are present, allowing the citizens to transport with carbon-neutral options.

Aesthetics: When the present buildings need to be restored, they are to be decorated in more unison colors and styles. Street lighting should compliment the surroundings, going beyond their most trivial function. New green spaces and public open spaces will be pleasant to the eye of the observer.

4. Conclusion

The employed methodology named “Dialogues of the Future” was greatly successful in tapping the hidden wishes and imagination of the inhabitants of the targeted areas of the city. Both the youth and the elderly participants were somewhat shy and restrained at first when asked to daydream about their urban surroundings, but after some encouragement gladly opened up and participated. Interviewed participants mostly focus on specific issues that are present in their neighborhoods, and the interviewers need communication skills to steer the conversation.