

FINAL ACTIVITY PERFORMANCE REPORT

Placemaking via street theatre and dialogues of the future

PLACETHEATRE

Connect NEB

December, 2024

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Activity details

Project ID and acronym: 240123 PLACETHEATRE

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Performance reporting

Level of completeness (from 0% to 100%): 100%

1. Executive summary

The PLACETHEATRE project successfully fulfilled all its planned activities, focusing on collaborative exploration of urban transformation in Novi Sad. Using the "Dialogues of the Future" methodology, the project engaged young participants, including many from at-risk groups, in reimagining three city neighborhoods. This approach helped citizens reflect on the potential of their public spaces and shifted their perceptions of the areas around their homes. Insights from these dialogues were creatively expressed through three street theatre performances, which further engaged local communities in envisioning inclusive, aesthetic, and sustainable futures.

In addition to these activities, the project conducted two NEB Lab workshops to foster deeper collaboration and policy-oriented discussions. These labs brought residents and stakeholders together to co-design potential strategies for revitalizing their neighborhoods. While no direct transformations were made, the project succeeded in inspiring citizens to rethink their relationship with public spaces and consider new possibilities for improvement. Key performance indicators were met.

2. Overall progress of the activity

2.1. *Brief description of the activity and challenges addressed*

First two months of the project were spent on activities that were focused on recruiting participants, young adults aged 18 – 30, that would be willing to participate in improving the parts of city of Novi Sad in a sustainable, socially-inclusive and circular manner following the New European Bauhaus principles of inclusion, aesthetics and sustainability. The interest shown was good, and 51 participants remained in the project activities.

During the recruiting process, potential participants were surveyed about the most neglected and challenging parts of the city that also carried a significant potential for improvement, and three city areas were identified as most appropriate for the next steps. These three areas showed a multitude of issues in current settings, as well as significant potentials for improvement.

The selected youth formed a desired sample: 28 participants (51%) were females; 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). These young people participated in one of the three separate workshops about identifying most important issues in each of the selected areas of the city, and they were also educated about organizing and conducting the “Dialogues of the Future” methodology for imagining a desired future for the selected neighborhood. The results of these activities are presented in deliverable code 240123-D01, entitled “DEL01 Report on dialogues of the future outcomes”.

This deliverable was then forwarded to an experienced acting organization (which specializes in educating youth about the art of acting and frequently performs in urban settings). This organization produced a synopsis/scenario for each of the three targeted city areas, with a generic motive of the 20-minute street theatre performance that was adapted to each of the targeted areas. A number of rehearsals were held and three street theatre performances were staged in public spaces on the 8th, 9th, and 10th of July 2024, bringing dynamic cultural engagement directly to the neighborhoods of the three targeted parts of the city. The results of these activities are presented in deliverable code 240123-D03, entitled “DEL03 Street theatre reporting package”.

During the second half of the project, the focus shifted toward envisioning the implementation of the insights gained from the earlier stages in the city’s policymaking. Central to this phase were the two New European Bauhaus (NEB) Labs, which served as participatory platforms to explore

sustainable urban transformation. These labs, conducted on the 31st of October and 18th of November 2024, brought together representatives from the three targeted neighborhoods, young citizens, and local stakeholders. Using innovative methods such as LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® and open dialogue forums, participants co-designed actionable solutions to urban challenges, emphasizing inclusivity, sustainability, and aesthetics. These activities and the resulting comprehensive policy recommendation are presented in deliverable code 240123-D04, entitled “DEL04 Policy recommendation”. This report also proposed the establishment of a permanent NEB Lab in Novi Sad, envisioning it as a hub for ongoing citizen engagement, cultural innovation, and sustainable urban planning.

2.2. *Methodology of engagement with local target groups and the co-design process*

The selected youth participants were themselves residents of the targeted locations and were as such engaged in identifying current issues and future potentials in their living locations. Apart from this, they were trained in conducting “Dialogues of the Future” with other local residents, who were approached on the streets of the selected city areas. During the informal interviews, the local residents were motivated to imagine and daydream about their desires of their urban areas, and were motivated to think beyond the obvious improvements. This led to a multitude of ideas and perspectives about the selected areas, which were then combined into coherent lists of issues, needs and wants. In the following steps, these lists will, through the three street theatres and workshops with local policymakers, further support the co-design processes.

During the street theatre performances, local engagement was further deepened by bringing creative narratives directly to the communities in the three targeted neighborhoods. The performances transformed public spaces into stages where current urban challenges were dramatized and future possibilities were vividly imagined. Each play was tailored to reflect the unique characteristics and needs of its location, incorporating themes such as accessibility, inclusivity, and environmental sustainability. Residents were encouraged to participate actively, not only as spectators but also as contributors to the performances, through discussions and feedback sessions held immediately after each play. These interactions provided a platform for the community to share their thoughts, reinforce a collective vision, and explore how their input could shape urban revitalization efforts.

The Living Lab pilots built upon the momentum created by the street theatre performances, transitioning from artistic exploration to structured co-design workshops. These labs brought together residents and youth participants to collaboratively develop actionable solutions to the challenges highlighted during earlier activities. Using LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® and guided brainstorming sessions as tools of engagement, participants explored practical interventions for urban regeneration while adhering to the principles of inclusivity, aesthetics, and sustainability. The outcomes of these labs included detailed policy recommendations and the conceptualization of new initiatives, laying a foundation for sustained collaboration between citizens and local authorities.

2.3. *Work plan of activities compared to proposed workplan*

There were slight detours from the planned activities in the first half of this project, none of them critical for the success of reaching the set milestones.

Months 1 and 2 were focusing on (no detours):

- identification of citizen needs and urban challenges in the city of Novi Sad;
- targeting three most appropriate areas for further interventions; and
- recruitment of youth participants.

Months 3 – 5 focused on (planned for month 3 originally):

- the design and testing of the “Dialogues of the Future” method; this activity was planned only for one month, but time allowed additional testing and pilots to be performed in order to ensure that this critical method was appropriately developed.

Months 5 and 6 were focused on (planned for months 4 – 6 originally):

- designing the synopsis/screenplays for the three street theaters;
- organizing the three street theatres and obtaining needed licenses from the local municipality;
- promoting the street theatres.

Month 7 was focused on (planned for month 6 originally):

- staging the three street theatres.

Months 8 and 9 were focused on (planned for months 7 and 8 originally):

- policymaking and staging two living lab pilot workshops.

Month 10 was focused on (planned for months 9 and 10 originally):

- Follow-up on citizen mindset change, policy actions & reporting.

2.4. *Project changes*

There were no significant changes in the project implementation compared to the proposed objectives, timeline and the budget.

2.5. *Role of partners involved and their integration into the project's implementation*

Deep Tech Balkans NGO was the sole performer of the activities in this project. As such, it was responsible for the project implementation.

2.6. *Achievement of the objectives*

The first objective, OBJ1 has been fulfilled. It stated that the project should 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. Although this objective is not easily measured, the documented activities showed that:

- The young participants demonstrated passionate identification of problematic urban areas from Novi Sad;
- Engaged in dialogues of the future with citizens in order to imagine how that public space could look in the future;
- Paid much attention to inclusion, sustainability and aesthetics;
- More than 50% of the participating youth came from selected social groups at risk (refugees, minorities, people with disabilities, LGBTQ, other local representative groups at risk) – the only deviation here was that no Ukrainian refugees were engaged, as the project team was not able to locate any of them in the selected areas of the city;
- Overall full gender equality was ensured.

The second objective, OBJ2 has also been fulfilled. It stated that the project should 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) and issue 1 policy recommendation serving local public authorities with regards to NEB initiative implementation (at least 5 policy makers).

This was operationalized under a pilot of a local NEB Lab which served as a living lab structure to engage citizens and policy makers (2 engagements/pilots) for placemaking actions.

2.7. *Gender, diversity and inclusivity*

The PLACETHEATRE project placed a strong emphasis on honoring gender, diversity, and inclusivity throughout its implementation, ensuring that these principles were not only theoretical goals but also deeply embedded in every aspect of the project. From participant recruitment to the design of activities, the project prioritized the representation of marginalized and underrepresented groups, including women, ethnic minorities, refugees, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with poor economic status, and persons with disabilities.

In the "Dialogues of the Future" sessions and street theatre activities, careful attention was paid to creating an environment where everyone felt welcome and empowered to contribute. The scenarios and discussions were designed to challenge biases and foster mutual understanding among participants from different backgrounds. The street theatres incorporated themes of equity and accessibility, dramatizing issues such as gender-based harassment, the lack of facilities for people with disabilities, and the marginalization of minority communities. These performances highlighted systemic challenges and showcased the transformative power of collective action and inclusivity. These activities provided a unique space where participants from varied demographics, including youth and community elders, could collaborate as equals. The inclusion of underrepresented groups was particularly impactful, enabling grassroots voices to influence future decisions that affect their daily lives.

The project also adopted specific measures to ensure accessibility and equity in its engagement methods. Materials used during the workshops and street theatres were designed to accommodate diverse needs, including subtitles for videos, colorblind-friendly visuals, and consideration for individuals with mobility challenges.

2.8. *Financial sustainability (if applicable)*

The project was financially sustainable and to a point relied on in-kind support for some of the activities.

3. Overall management process, challenges faced and risk mitigation

3.1. Overall management process, risk mitigation and unexpected challenges

The overall management process of the PLACETHEATRE project was smooth and well-coordinated. Clear communication channels and a well-defined structure enabled efficient collaboration among team members and stakeholders. Tasks were systematically organized, deadlines were slightly modified but without significant delays, and the team demonstrated adaptability to challenges that arose during the project.

The risks foreseen in the project proposal were mostly not observed during the project implementation. Weather and other unforeseen disruptions for the outdoor events were not a problem. The expected number of attracted participants was met. There were not any overspending or costs increase present. Permits for use of public space were obtained from the municipality officials, and there were no constraints or restrictions met. Slight implementation delays were results of a number of significant local events that had an impact on the project timeline, such as local elections and large-scale street protests; however, these delays were not significant.

The most significant issue that was not foreseen but did influence the project implementation was the absence of local city officials in the role of policy makers at the pilot labs. Due to complex political issues in Novi Sad, these participants canceled their participation just days before the first workshop, but still, their absence was compensated with other subjects relevant to the policy recommendations and city's culture events and aesthetics.

3.2. Role of partners involved and their integration into the project's implementation

Deep Tech Balkans NGO was the sole performer of the activities in this project. As such, it was responsible for the project implementation.

3.3. Project changes

Apart from the minor rescheduling of certain project events, there were no significant deviations from the project plan. The team maintained a steady focus on achieving the objectives, ensuring consistency throughout the project's implementation. Moreover, any unforeseen issues were swiftly addressed, allowing the project to progress seamlessly and stay aligned with its goals.

4. Achievements and impact

4.1. Status of the achievement of the outputs, outcomes and KPIs compared to the project workplan

KPI code	KPI title	Target value (as per original proposal)	Actual target value	Explanation of achievement and justification in case of deviant
EITHE08.1	Participants in (non-degree) education and training	50	51	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
KSN02	Demonstration/pilots/living labs within a project that actively involve citizens and/or local associations ²	2	2	In months 8 and 9 two living lab pilot workshops were held with inhabitants from

				the three targeted city areas, other young adults and students of the study programme “Scene Architecture, Technique and Design”. From these two workshops a detailed set of policy recommendations were drafted.
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DEL code	DEL title	Description	Completeness (0%-100%)	Explanation of achievement and justification in case of deviant
240123-D01	DEL01 Report on dialogues of the future outcomes	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)	100%	During the activities on the dialogues of the future, a number of young adults were engaged in multiple activities needed to investigate current states in three targeted areas and to envision the desired future states
240123-D02	PROJECT MID-TERM REPORT	Report presenting activities implemented during the first half part of the project, including challenge description, initial	100%	The report on current activities and achievements in the first half of the project.

		outputs according to the submitted work plan, progress so far, applied methodology, stakeholder involvement, identification of potential risks and mitigation measures if required.		
240123-D03	DEL03 Street theatre reporting package	Street theatre methodology, street theatre recordings, scripts and participant testimonials.	100%	Provides a comprehensive overview of the street theatre activities undertaken during the project, highlighting their creative concepts, execution, and impact. It documents the community engagement achieved, the challenges faced, and the innovative approaches used to foster interaction and participation. The report concludes with key insights and recommendations for integrating street theatre into future urban cultural initiatives.

240123-D04	DEL04 Policy recommendation	A policy recommendation following the outcomes of the action and linked with the local and regional urban development priorities.	100%	The project successfully stimulated the dialogue on cultural engagement and urban development by presenting actionable strategies for revitalizing neglected public spaces. It fostered greater awareness among city inhabitants about the importance of inclusive and community-driven approaches to urban transformation. The resulting recommendations are expected to contribute to shaping policies that prioritize sustainable cultural practices and citizen participation, ensuring a long-term impact. Additionally, the document helped bridge the gap between cultural initiatives and policy frameworks,
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				aligning them toward shared goals of urban regeneration.
240123-D05	FINAL ACTIVITY PERFORMANCE REPORT	Report presenting activities implemented during the whole period of the project and final conclusions, incl. overall progress of the activity, KTI workshop results for future exploitation and research, outputs and outcomes, potential impact on local policies, conclusions and evidence of the KPIs.	100%	Full report on the project achievements.

OUT code	OUT title	Description	Completeness (0%-100%)	Explanation of achievement and justification in case of deviant
OUTPUT 1	Co-design and co-stewardship	Co-design and co-stewardship of: public realm and commons with civil society and other stakeholders to favor diversity while strengthening inclusivity and equitability	100%	Inhabitants of the three targeted city areas have been actively engaged in a number of activities that brought their attention towards issues of their public realms
OUTPUT 2.1	Social activation and non-labelled education and training activities	multi-stakeholder engagement enhancing urban regeneration in less-favored areas, including most	100%	A satisfactory number of participants and local inhabitants were engaged in

		polluted zones, degraded or dangerous neighborhoods, remote areas with poor communication		the first half of the project activities
OUTPUT 2.2	Encourage cultural understanding	Encourage cultural understanding between divergent target groups	100%	In the first half of the project, the different cultural target groups were engaged in co-creative processes that are necessary for cultural understandings; in the second half of the project they were engaged to co-create policy recommendations.

4.2. *Impact of activity on target group, public space etc.*

The activities carried out during the project have had a profound impact on the target groups and the revitalization of public spaces. By engaging local communities in creative processes, the project empowered citizens to reimagine their relationship with their surroundings and to take an active role in shaping their urban environment. Through participatory workshops, performances, and policy dialogues, the initiative fostered a stronger sense of ownership and belonging among residents. These efforts not only bridged cultural and social divides but also demonstrated how collaborative approaches can transform overlooked urban areas into vibrant hubs of activity and connection.

The project's holistic methodology has set an example of how artistic and cultural practices can align with sustainability and inclusivity, showcasing a model for human-centered urban development. By integrating innovative ideas and fostering dialogue between citizens, experts, and policymakers, the initiative has enhanced the aesthetic and functional value of public spaces. It has created a framework for addressing societal challenges through creativity, inclusion, and ecological awareness, reflecting the aspirations for a more sustainable and harmonious urban

future. These achievements highlight the potential for art and design to inspire meaningful change and elevate the quality of life in cities.

4.3. Impact of activity on local policies: feedback from local authorities and impact on their strategy

The absence of local policymakers during the pilot NEB labs resulted in a lack of direct feedback from local authorities, which limited the immediate influence of the project on existing policies. Despite efforts to engage decision-makers, their non-participation highlighted a gap in collaboration that could have further enriched the project's outcomes. This underscores the importance of creating more accessible and compelling pathways for policymakers to participate in similar future initiatives, ensuring their perspectives and support are integrated into transformative urban and cultural projects.

Nonetheless, the project holds significant potential to impact the local strategy of Novi Sad, particularly as the city continues to build on its legacy as the European Capital of Culture in 2022. By demonstrating how public spaces can be reimaged through citizen-driven, creative interventions, the project aligns with the city's broader goals of fostering cultural vibrancy and sustainable urban development. The methodologies and insights generated could serve as a model for integrating cultural practices into urban planning, helping Novi Sad to further establish itself as a leader in innovative and inclusive urban regeneration. This synergy between cultural initiatives and strategic planning offers a path for long-term improvements in the city's public spaces and community engagement.

5. Conclusion, lessons learned and recommendations

5.1. Lessons learned

This project provided important insights into the dynamics of community engagement, cultural practices, and urban transformation. One key lesson was the significance of participatory approaches in city of Novi Sad. By involving citizens directly in creative processes and encouraging their input, we saw how communities can develop a stronger connection to their local spaces. Their contributions shaped the outcomes in meaningful ways, underscoring the value of inclusive methods in addressing urban and social challenges, especially from the viewpoints of young adults and groups at risk.

We also learned the importance of remaining adaptable, especially as a small NGO working with limited resources. The lack of participation from local policymakers was a notable challenge, but it pushed us to refocus our efforts on the areas where we could make the most immediate impact. This experience reinforced the need to balance ambition with pragmatism while maintaining a clear vision for long-term change.

Finally, the project emphasized the potential of cultural initiatives to inspire shifts in perception and use of public spaces. While not all stakeholders were involved to the extent we had hoped, the groundwork laid by this initiative has demonstrated a model for how similar projects can influence local strategies in the future. These lessons will guide our approach as we continue to work toward creating more inclusive, sustainable, and culturally vibrant communities.

5.2. Recommendations for the replication and/or upscaling up of the realized activity

By centering gender, diversity, and inclusivity, PLACETHEATRE not only achieved its immediate goals of fostering community engagement but also set a precedent for future similar initiatives. The project demonstrated that meaningful inclusion is both a moral imperative and a practical necessity for sustainable urban transformation. It reaffirmed that when diversity is embraced, communities become stronger, more innovative, and more resilient.

The activities carried out in this project could be replicated in other cities in Serbia and elsewhere in order to activate other communities for similar cause – the deliverables which resulted in this project provide specific information on the Dialogues of the Future and Street theatre methodologies. Another recommendation is to apply similar methodologies in other areas such as rural areas, which are also frequently culturally neglected.

6. Use of resources

The resources for this project were used efficiently by prioritizing activities with the highest potential for community impact and leveraging local partnerships to minimize costs. Careful planning and a focus on achievable goals ensured that every element of the project contributed meaningfully to its objectives.

7. Annexes

No annexes attached.