

PROJECT MID-TERM REPORT

Placemaking via street theatre and dialogues of the future

PLACETHEATRE

Connect NEB

July, 2024

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1. Executive summary

This project aims to address three neglected public areas from remote neighborhoods of Novi Sad (Serbia) and to apply innovative and unconventional art-based methodologies for helping citizens and social groups at risk regain their sense of community and belonging. The first half of the project goes according to the initial plans. Citizens' needs and urban challenges have been assessed first, with three specific parts of the city of Novi Sad identified as targets of the following actions. The "dialogues of the future" method was developed and utilized to help citizens narrate how they envision the future of these parts of the city. In these steps, 51 young adults have been engaged in the project activities. Based on findings, a script for street theatres was written and the three street theatres are being organized and will be performed in July 2024.

2. Overall progress of the activity

2.1 Brief description of the activity and challenges addressed

During the first two months of the project, activities 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 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 (Annex 1), and they also engaged in "Dialogues of the

Future” method 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 (Annex 2), with a generic motive of the 20-minute street theatre performance that will be adapted to each of the targeted areas. A number of rehearsals were held and the street theatres are scheduled for the 8th, 9th and 10th of July 2024.

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.

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 but went through months 4 and 5 also):

- 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.

2.4 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.

3. Status of the achievement of the outputs, outcomes and KPIs so far

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
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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	100%	During the activities on the dialogues of the

		problematic urban areas complemented by the participants' inputs for the dialogue of the future (contains also the dialogue of the future methodology)		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
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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	50%	This output will be finalized in the ending months of the project, the first phase is done according to the plan
OUTPUT 2.1	Social activation and non-labelled education and training activities	multi-stakeholder engagement enhancing urban regeneration in less-favored areas, including most polluted zones, degraded or dangerous neighborhoods, remote areas with poor	100%	A satisfactory number of participants and local inhabitants were engaged in the first half of the project activities

		communication		
OUTPUT 2.2	Encourage cultural understanding	Encourage cultural understanding between divergent target groups	50%	So far, the different cultural target groups were engaged in co-creative processes that are necessary for cultural understandings; in the second half of the project policy makers will be engaged which will lead to the complete fulfilment of this output

4. Overall management process, challenges faced and risk mitigation

4.1 Management process so far

The project management process is being realized according to the plan. The communication between the project team and the project participants was rich and fruitful. All the projected processes were successfully realized without significant drawbacks.

4.2 Risks register and mitigation

There were no significant risks encountered in the first half of this project's implementation. Expected number of participants were recruited. The citizen participation was satisfactory. Activities on selected locations were successfully completed. There were no procedural, economic or weather issues.

4.3 Unexpected challenges and response

Although still in the proposed timeframe of the project activities, the Dialogues of the Future and Street Theatres were slightly pushed later in the time schedule for a reason that was not taken into account during the project application process. The local elections for the city council and the provincial government were announced for June 2nd 2024, which was an important

factor for this project as there were many political activities present in the city in the months of April and May, in the public spaces and in the local neighborhoods. This situation was not ideal for PLACETHEATRE, as the political situation in Novi Sad and in Serbia in general is quite complex, with polarized voters and perception of any public event in that period as a public one, from street interviews, through promotional activities to public events. In the light of this situation, some public project activities were in risk of being interpreted as political promotion (and thus ignored by many) and were thus shifted from months 3 – 6 to months 5 and 6.

5. Changes in project and/or budget

There are not any significant changes in the project or the budget present so far.

6. Annexes

Annex 6.1 Most important issues found in each of the three targeted areas

Adice

- 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.

Petrovaradin – Novi Majur

- 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.

Grbavica

- 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.

Annex 6.2 Synopsis – generic, to be adapted for each location

PLACETHEATRE - INTERACTIVE PERFORMANCE IN CABARET-GROTESQUE FORM WITH ELEMENTS OF IMPRO AND FORUM THEATER

The "Back and forth" theater troupe arrives in certain parts of the city that are covered by this project to, ostensibly, perform its theatrical performance.

With a pompous musical announcement, the members of this acting troupe are introduced to the audience (passers-by, local residents): Mr. Boss – a high blown, arrogant quasi-gentleman, self-appointed leader of the troupe, then Miss Chic - a middle-aged actress who tries to look young, in second-hand, once-glamorous clothes , convinced that she is the star , and also Mr. Joke - a likable, good-natured, easy-going character, seemingly dull, but in fact unobtrusive, unlike these two and of a lower education and origin than them.

After the presentation, Miss Chic starts a conflict with Mr. Boss, whom she blames for bringing them to a completely unsuitable place for the performance, because there are no cultural institutions, no outdoor stages, and no adequate lighting... There is traffic noise everywhere, difficulty breathing because of the exhaust gases, cyclists bump into them,... it's too hot, and there's nowhere to cool down, because there are no parks and trees,... it's muddy, she got her shoes dirty, because the streets are not paved, ... and there are no children anywhere , because there is no playground for them, so there is no audience, etc. (the text will be adapted in relation to the specific problems of the parts of the city where the performance is performed). Mr. Boss defends himself all the time and tries to shift the blame to Mr. Joke who holds the map and gives instructions about their movement. Mr. Joke, confused by the attack, spells out the letters from the map, and asks for help from those present in the audience in the form of questions, e.g. "Where is the cultural center located here?" Do you have a stage somewhere, or any better space to put on a show? Why do cyclists ride on roadways and sidewalks? Is there a playground for children somewhere? Can we go somewhere in the shade? What does it look like when you have to pass a sidewalk with a car parked on it, come on show me" ...Etc. The townspeople, of course, answer negatively to every question asked and act out scenes from everyday life, and with each answer, Miss Chic becomes more and more furious and finally bursts with anger and tells Mr. Boss that she is leaving the theater troupe. There is a big argument between them that develops in musical form

and escalates to the end of communication so that they turn their backs on each other again.

So lonely, with their thoughts, they realize that the anger and nervousness was caused by the situation in which they find themselves and the environment with all the problems that raise tension between people, which the characters communicate in a monologue or in a dialogue with the audience. After this realization, they reconcile through a warm musical song and point out at the end that their friendship must not break because of problems in the environment that can be solved if there is unity and togetherness of the local population. Therefore, they invite the locals to give concrete proposals for solving the problems, it would be good if as many of them as possible get involved with ideas. As a reward, they perform a super short comedy, improvised puppet show, bow and leave in the hope that very soon they will perform for them again, but in a better and healthier environment.