POST PROCESS

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**Urb
Cultural
Planning**

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The Post-process booklet is a selection of reflective discussions carried out by Trevor Davies and Liva Kreislere late 2021. In total, 28 stakeholders and partners were interviewed from Riga, Gdansk, Kiel, Pori, Kaliningrad and Guldborgsund.

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Graphic design: Reflect

Trevor Davies

We invited 28 people who had been deeply involved in this project to have conversations with us in an effort to engage in an informal reflection on how they see the process now and what they will take with them in the future.

We have chosen 11 conversations in this publication as these cover most key perspectives. In addition, we have graphically highlighted some reoccurring themes. For example, the *project framework* highlights reflections on how successfully cultural planning may be practised as part of an international EU project. Furthermore, the *cultural planning method* highlight addresses conclusions on cultural planning methodology as such. *Post-project action* highlights concrete plans regarding the future implementation of the method in the various cities. These conversations certainly fostered numerous self-critical learning perspectives.

Overall, the projects demonstrated the adaptability of the cultural planning process and the possibility for practitioners to find other concrete tools to sustain public engagement throughout difficulties, for example, the COVID-19 pandemic. This demonstrates an advantage when working within an informal framework and underlines that any process must be continually recalibrated to ensure they align with current world contexts. The ability

to plan in challenging realities is a feature that generally needs to be accepted. We should be alive to how cultural planning processes are advantageous when working with artists who often work with cyclic creative processes rather than simple timelines and rigid deadlines.

Secondly, the ten cases are incredibly different. This variety of specifics underlines that knowing the local situation and the community is key to finding a culturally relevant approach and a method that attracts and engages participants. So whilst there are many similarities in the organizational process, the curating was highly individual and points to an understanding of working in a s*ite/situation-specific* manner. So, for example, the choice of a community newspaper, a festival, a drop-in community think-tank and working with schools are not just preferences but are designed for specific situations.

Thirdly - the cyclic process proposed for the cultural planning approach was used in all cases, and whilst allowing interpretation and adaptation in varying time frames, the logic of the process is robust. It delivers value at each stage, which again underlines that the process in itself is the key to the methodology.

In Kiel, Riga, Pori and Gdansk, the methodology is currently being transferred in connection with other cities'/regions' plans, which is hugely encouraging. The approach suited to small scale neighbourhoods of up to 10,000 inhabitants seems to underline that this scale of actions does have an impact as a game-changer, and that upscaling would require a process with several neighbourhood programmes.

Lea from Gaarden begins our talk by underlining how important it is that the project and the process are real and integrated into the real needs of the city and community. This also means being visible in the public realm. Otherwise, the project cannot connect with the community as a whole, and it must be authentic and not just an exercise to tick boxes of inclusion. There has to be a will and a need in the local community, thus pointing out that legitimacy is a pre-requisite. She says that the choice of *language* is crucial to ensure the situation and the people involved, thus pointing out that an arts-led approach requires the right choice of artist and artistic language and is vital to connect and translate in the local context. This reflection would be backed up by many.

Many mention the importance of working with local municipality departments as vital if the project is to succeed as a project and as a strategic action. The projects in Guldborgsund and Pori were essentially run and managed by the cultural departments. In Riga and Pori, a creative partnership was designed with

independent cultural actors. There is no wrong or right, but the competencies and the authority of each situation must be made clear for all and whatever the model, the role of the city department(s) must be visibly supportive throughout the process if there is to be a delivery which can eventually feed into existing formats and strategies. The theme of the *creative bureaucracy* is touched on many times and remains a relevant issue.

When looking at specific success criteria, it is interesting to see how these align with the different actors in the process. One of the most difficult challenges in these *soft* processes is that change is not always immediate or easily accountable but often changes attitudes, which then triggers awareness, which then triggers engagement, which then triggers relationships which then triggers community action. So it is a process of transformation.

Local departments will often want to have a concrete list of *wants and needs* as deliverables, such as *playgrounds and street lights* and whilst these are obvious and can be delivered, many of the factors which play into the notion of healthy, creative and resilient local communities, have to do with relationships, values, identities and the will to connect and share. Translating these results into programmes needs careful work and openness so that they may actually not become a part of the planned systemic approach. This begs the question as to whether it is possible to only use cultural planning to scoop and scan communities to inform existing practice – or whether it needs to have its *own field* to play on?

The learning perspectives in these interviews suggest that this approach might be counter-productive as it may once again confirm that participation is just something at the start of urban revitalization processes. Still, it rarely leads to real empowerment or socially anchored creative processes. This is a general comment and, whilst often difficult to counter, must be reiterated that the *third* position of the cultural actor between the citizens and city departments offers a position which should be treated as a partnership and not purely used and exploited as consultancy. In particular, the experiences of Kiel, Gdansk and Pori offer clear prototypes for the prolonged and extended role of the cultural actor(s), but this, again, requires ongoing mentorship and resources but could certainly form creative bridging between the cultural/activist sector, neighbourhoods and the city in a balanced dialogue over time. The take-up of responsibilities is something cultural institutes could certainly evolve. In this respect, interviews with Alija in Riga and Lea in Kiel are particularly interesting.

Kiel is establishing a new unit in the city under the Heinrich Böll Foundation to work on this. Pori is creating a strategic plan for the city centre by using the methodology of cultural activism. In Gdansk, City Culture Institute has an ever-developing role as an independent platform for interfacing cultural planning. All show a will to further the potential of maturing cultural planning as a permanent factor and asset in cities' continual cultural and urban reprocessing.

Time has been mentioned consistently throughout the project and also in these conversations. Things take time, and change is gradual. Cultural planning is a slower transformative process in frail communities where respect and empathy are key and the ability to listen is imperative. Fragile communities are easy to marginalize, and this aspect of morality and human connectivity is often mentioned in interviews, such as in Nowy Port, Gdansk, with youth groups. Whilst normative approaches might risk alienating or ignoring these voices, the approaches exampled here take these voices as indicative of *the state of mind/place* and as serious starting points for developing common narratives. Thus, finding the specifics, the individuals, and the extraordinary is encouraged and working with the concept of liminal spaces/places *on edge* should be a point to underline.

One of the most impressive commitments post-project has been to see a wholehearted commitment to a new strategic approach to city planning in Riga in line with this philosophy, with the discussion to take a neighbourhood perspective in the future. Although many other factors are pointing in this direction, statements by Jānis Ušča and Guntars Ruskuls from the Riga City Development Department and by Alija Turlaja, now a member of Riga City Council and a founder of Riga Neighbourhood Alliance, underline the potential of the approach on a city scale and underline that this

approach seems to fit perfectly with the need to redefine the concept of livability and sustainability. Similarly, in Gdansk and the Pomerskie region, opportunities to use these as prototypes for a regional programme also signal that a human and cultural approach resounds in such times.

Thus the future of this approach will, in many ways, be determined by how we upscale the process and how we frame these micro-cultural processes at neighbourhood levels. At the same time, this also requires a downscaling or an inverted approach to the concept of the current long-term *master plan* approach, which often builds on simple logistic models of what the future *brings*. We stand perhaps at a crossroads or at a point of rethinking our societal model. We are in a meltdown situation in regards to natural resources and climate change

and there are uncertainties as to whether our systemic model of capitalist drivers and social welfare compensation can cope with the increasing overload of social, cultural, and economic malaise.

In this context, we can only humbly point out that these ten cases show that change may come from within our communities and perhaps must come from within, and that a cultural approach offers an alternative that builds on existing human and creative capital more than on financial capital drivers.

We hope these conversations help map out a path you may want to undertake in your community or city. We are sure that all the people mentioned here as well as all the others who contributed to this project will only be too glad to act as your guide if you choose this path.

Veera Korhonen

GDANSK, POLAND

MAGDALENA ZAKRZEWSKA-DUDA

Artist residencies and exchanges coordinator, Gdansk gamification activity coordinator

Organisation:
Baltic Sea Cultural Centre

Neighbourhoods engaged in:
Nowy Port and Stare Przedmiescie, Gdansk, Poland

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TD/LK: We have been discussing that the international aspect hasn't been promoted sufficiently. It was diluted because of budgets and also the pandemic. Looking back at the exchanges part of the project, we think that if the pandemic hadn't disrupted this, it would have helped to strengthen the network and keep more energy and momentum. You have been leading the artist residency programmes. What role have the artist residencies played in the project?

M: We have an overview of the residencies. We can see that residencies were interesting for the mapping phase of the projects. Artists and creatives were there to identify the community's needs, which is useful at the early stage of the project. One of the results is a database of artists working with social and urban issues.

TD/LK: Some projects noted that artist residencies came too early at a point where local partners were unsure of what they were doing and, on top of this, one has to facilitate the artist, so it becomes almost an added task

rather than a tool. One of the factors at play here is that the projects were generally delayed in the mapping process, so residencies took place too early and were not synced perfectly.

M: The whole picture was blurred by the pandemic, but the idea was that the artists would help identify the community's needs at the beginning of the cultural planning process. That is why they came so early. The problem was that many of the projects hadn't gotten into their process far enough to welcome an artist. We planned to have a second round of residencies, but this was, in many cases, not possible because of the budgets. It would be a good lesson for other projects to always plan a return residency. The factors in play also include how well the artist was introduced to the local context and how close was the collaborations. Some projects seemed to have a disconnect between what the artist did and the course of the project. Perhaps some local partners could have used the findings more or communicated them more in the neighbourhood.

TD/LK: Some of the artists were very sensitive to the local contexts and the needs of the demonstrator partners. Some artists, however, choose to keep a distance and the outside view and not dive so much into the local relationships. This is also fine. These are the different ways of working.

M: We have an overview of the residencies. We can see that residencies were interesting for the mapping phase of the projects. Artists and creatives were there to identify the community's needs, which is useful at the early stage of the project. One of the results is a database of artists working with social and urban issues.

TD/LK: The kind of role of the residency, which is usually an opportunity for the artist to develop their thoughts and ideas, but to put them into a more challenging environment, but still have that reflective nature without having to deliver something completely specific is interesting.

M: Yes, if the artists could return, their contribution would have been bigger.

TD/LK: In Kiel, that artist was present all through the project. In Pori, they returned several times and were kept as part of the team, and those are very positive examples. This is an interesting model because the artist and the organisation are both researching, and both are in a dialogue and eventually creating a piece of work. It is interesting how it flows together under the name of a creative residency. It is a really good way to address touchy subjects because one is coming from outside. It creates a certain trust for locals to share their thoughts.

M: It could have been interesting and perhaps more fruitful to have a team with a local artist and an international artist, but the match-making could be too artificial. Ideally, the artists would find each other. At least there could have been a built-in process where the international artists would have the chance to meet local artists. This happened in Pori.

TD/LK: Over the last 5-10 years, the number of international calls for the model of artist residencies has risen hugely. More and more, one is finding out that the artists are working in new ways. Having an artist in residence should be looked at from the development and accumulation of knowledge perspective. It is also about finding new prototypes of working and having the freedom of not knowing the finished product. One also notices a shift from the residencies being organised in rural, desolate, often scenic locations to more urban settings, where one has to work with links and networks of people.

M: The typology of the pop-up space, pop-up office or shop is becoming more popular as that is a way for artists to establish their ties with the community, since it is very hard otherwise, as well as showcase their messages and works. I have suggested this tool to some other cases here in Poland.

TD/LK: Do you think this project was international enough? Or not enough? In terms of intercultural

linking and understanding. Did you feel it worked and was well balanced?

M: It could have been more linked, but again, is it the fault of the pandemic or the organisation of the project.

TD/LK: If you would be able to carry on with this project, what would you do in the next phase? Given that we have delivered, what we have delivered. What is worth working on in the future.

M: I would try to lobby the methodology and integrate it into other processes going on locally and internationally. Locally I would advise one Erasmus project to use this methodology and refer them to the toolkit and experts. We have created a database of artists, but it would be good to create a database of experts, people who can organise and facilitate the workshop etc.

We are consulting the Baltic Cities and Regions of Culture and introducing the Toolkit and Policy Roadmap to them in the form of a mentoring

program, with the idea that it could be embedded in the working models of the network cities and towns. In this way, we can continue promoting our tools and outputs.

KIT: Which is quite unusual. I don't know many projects which have developed that many outputs and tools.

M: These are very practical tools, and it would be sad if they stayed on a shelf. I talked to Dorota Kamrowska-Załuska about introducing Cultural Planning as a general course or series of lectures in universities. Dorota works at Gdansk Technical University, but another colleague of ours works at Gdansk University. We also think that it would be interesting to explore the idea of summer schools for cultural planning. This would be a good idea also for the transnational exchanges of youngsters.

TD/LK: In Roskilde University centre, there is a course on cultural planning, led by David Pinder. It is a very popular course, overrun with applications. And

in Vilnius we have Vilnius TECH University and Jekaterina Lavrinec. It is interesting to think about where would cultural planning fit best. Is it a social studies course or a planning course, perhaps it could be even in an arts academy? In Latvia, this is discussed in the social studies programmes and Riga Technical University's planning department. It is interesting to think at which level it is appropriate to take this integrated view. Perhaps it is a master's level course that draws students from different fields.

M: Yes, but I think it could also be just a series of lectures or one lecture. For example, in a creative industries programme. In Poland, we also have these post-graduate studies, which are one year long.

TD/LK: In Gdansk, one of the successes in the process was that you really involved many different people. You used this project to develop a network here in Gdansk. You worked with City Culture Institute. The team was very interdisciplinary.

M: Yes, and normally in INTERREG programmes, it's common that if you have a partner from one country, it is better not to have a second one. Perhaps it's not ideal if the organisations have the same profiles, but it is quite rare that there are organisations with the same backgrounds. We work with different aspects and audiences than City Culture Institute. And we also had Pomorskie regional authority, which has many links none of us has. They are the ones who can promote the Policy Roadmap to the smaller municipalities.

TD/LK: It was overall good that in the UCP project, the partners were very different institutions. There were institutes, foundations, NGOs, universities, and municipalities. Regarding gamification, what are the take-aways for you from the process?

M: For such activities, you need good support, and I lacked it as it is not easy to find it outside of the project network. None of us was an expert in this field. But we will work more with gamification, I am sure. What I found

interesting was the link between local stories and the game. We worked with Jacek from the Storytellers association and a local school.

TD/LK: There are many institutions in Gdansk working on similar issues, who work formally for different structures, but they keep their informal networks alive. It is almost a pre-requisite that things are moving because otherwise, one can stagnate.

M: Yes, exactly. We have meetings and work together, but not formally because then everything would get politicised and weighted and limited.

TD/LK: Do you feel you have found more common with other cultural institutions now?

M: UrbCultural planning project was a big eye-opener for me, and the learning curve for me was double because I was working parallelly on a similar project in the Gdansk former shipyard area, so I was able to extend my knowledge and network across both projects.

Rafał Mroziński

Natalia Brylowska

Urban Toolkit coordinator, Nowy Port and Stare Przedmiescie demonstrator project team leader

Organisation: City Culture Institute

Neighbourhoods engaged in: Nowy Port and Stare Przedmiescie, Gdansk, Poland

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TD/LK: The project has set out to generate and collect knowledge. You worked with the Urban Toolkit.

Looking at what you have - are there methods that surprised you, which are novel or just re-circulating existing thought?

N: I think some methods are new in how they are used in certain situations. What was surprising was that we used the same tools in different places, but they were not always the same tools that we were discussing in our labs. So many people had the same ideas simultaneously. For example, the neighbourhood mosaic was done in Sarkandaugava and Nowy Port.

TD/LK: What is your opinion about choosing the tools. We have seen how different these organisations and the people are who are executing them. It is hard to say this works and this doesn't work. We went into this project with the idea to test what works in the Baltic Sea Region, generally in smaller communities. Still, it is impossible to do that as the contexts are so varied that what works in one context might not work in another.

N: I think the best part of the toolkit is the section about what to look out for and what could go wrong. The idea of mapping is one thing, but knowing how to do it in one or another community is different always, and this has to be kept in mind.

TD/LK: We discussed today how interesting your Open CCI process is. None is positioned as a loser, and there is an incentive to work towards one goal, which is described in the Compass document compiled beforehand collectively.

N: Yes, the Compass is great not only for visioning but also for evaluation. See if your process has met those emotions, needs, and places. It was satisfying when we went back to this after the process and confirmed the things we did aligned with Compass.

TD/LK: You mentioned that you wished the process was more collective. The project was structured in a way where everyone had their responsibilities and had to deliver their part. Perhaps we could have made the whole project more collaborative. In this case, you were very dependent on others.

N: I think it was a shame that we couldn't do the exchanges because when I saw what Jonas has done in Pori and how it has changed his experience, I think it would have been good to visit each project. And learn and work on certain parts of the process together. That could have been much more educational and also integrating for the team. I know the pandemic is used a lot as an excuse, but I think this project suffered the most compared to others I am in. We still could do something in other projects, but here it was a bit frozen. I think that took the team spirit out of it. However, I would also like to add that the project was extremely complicated. From the start, we struggled to understand our roles and our outputs that we were to deliver. The easiest to understand were the demonstrator projects because they were so visible.

TD/LK: We noticed a change in partners' enthusiasm over time, which was reflected in participation in labs, conferences and meetings. Do you think it was the fault of the pandemic or something else?

N: I can only speak for myself. In terms of the labs - the topics were very familiar to me and were repeating a lot, but I still tried to participate, not to lose the spirit. On the other side, I can say that it was a lot of additional work for me here at City Culture Institute, and the project didn't feel as close to home as my other work just because of all the projects being scattered across Europe. It's always harder to devote one's time to something not local. And thirdly, I believe that somewhere, in the beginning, there was some chaos in communication and management, and I started to sort things out for myself. There were times in meetings I was unsure what we were aiming to achieve with the discussions.

TD/LK: It didn't feel like there were a lot of discussions, though, as we were always pressed with time, but the project was so large that there wasn't time to go into discussions.

N: But I understand that there wasn't much space to discuss things because we had written an application and we ought to implement the project. At this

point, I think we needed some more leadership and help to process things and not only be checked on the status.

TD/LK: The management was kind of split into three. There was Danish Cultural Institute, and then the work package leaders, who sometimes didn't get involved with the work packages at all and then there is our role, KIT, a soft intermediary, which is flying in between. Our role sometimes also created unnecessarily complex situations. Because we didn't have enough time in the meetings, we could never go to the level of the actual content, so our role also diminished because we weren't able to suggest, steer and challenge content ideas and directions. So an over management on one level and under management on another.

N: I felt like the responsibility was too split. Now that you explain the three levels of management, it's the first time I understand the full picture. Being in it, I couldn't see it. But I must say that talking to you both during the process was most useful because I knew that you have an overview of everything that is going on in the different places

and what people are doing, how they are finding themselves in the different situations and with different regulations and also giving inspiration to us, it was really good. But sometimes, it was really hard to implement those ideas here because we have different legislations. I am so devastated that the project with the markings on the streets couldn't go through. We had so many discussions with the authorities, and at the last point, they said that this was dangerous. If we were an NGO, we would probably do it, just go with it. But we are a public institution.

TD/LK: The City Culture Institute is a public organisation, and in a way, this UCP project fits your organisation the best, perhaps, because its a unique structure, and if you found it difficult to work with the different dynamics of the project, that means other inexperienced organisations and individuals must have had an even harder time. Because the project was so ambitious and complicated, it led the people on the ground to interpret processes as they saw them. We might have had that reality check much earlier.

N: Yes. Also, to understand what resources do people have. At some point, it was very helpful here that we had Krystina and Magdalena, so in some cases, we were stronger together to convince officials and district leaders of our ideas. It was also good mental support, that somebody else is doing the same thing and that they also believe in it, but in some places, only one person was doing this.

TD/LK: Yes, learning that these processes take a team and allies is really important. There needs to be a critical mass of people.

N: It is the same with the local community. You need a person within the community who is trusted. You have to have strong relations with stakeholders. As City Culture Institute, we wouldn't be able to do the projects in Nowy Port without Kasia Werner. When we worked in Stare Przedmiescie, Jacek Gorski, who has great connections in Dolne Miasto, didn't have the same ties in a neighbouring district. Even though he knows it very well, it takes a lot of time to build that level of trust.

TD/LK: You mentioned in your documentation that the project pushed you into these new ways of working — a team of different partners and departments and individuals. You weren't working like this before.

N: I work in the City Culture Institute research department, so I am not strictly responsible for doing on-site projects in city spaces. This was the first time we did everything together based on the knowledge I provided by the research. And this is something we have discussed with my colleagues, that this is great and we should continue doing it. This is not the usual way how we organise events and festivals. For example, our biggest festival - Narracija, is an art festival. We do it with the Gdansk gallery. We always want it to be site-specific, but more in terms of the space, but if the people working with us, the galleries etc., are not social workers, they don't do community work as part of their work. So I think the methodology of cultural planning, in the case of the planning of cultural events, makes it less like community work and more like research work, where you get the base of what is the

place is about. You don't have to do a participatory art project in the end, but you can still deliver something relevant to the place. It doesn't have to be.

TD/LK: We might be calling it the wrong name. It could be called cultural research or mapping, feeling the pulse or whatever. It gives a different feel to it. People often have already set ideas about what community projects are like.

N: I think you can do things less thoroughly in the case of cultural projects. Because if you do the official planning process, if you do the public consultation process, there is always this thing at the back of your mind that you are not reaching everybody, you are not including everybody. You haven't done it thoroughly enough like in research, where you have to interview 1000 people living somewhere. But with cultural planning, you can still have some parts of it, like visioning, mapping is done with a certain community, around a certain topic that is important to them, without worrying about having reached everyone about everything.

TD/LK: It is a question of representation. Do people have to represent a certain type of community? But it is the question of a collective voice. How many people do you need to represent a collective voice? Maybe this normative about including everyone neutralises everything. The median opinion is not critical or radical at all. Going for extremes is also an interesting point. The aim isn't to legitimise a political decision, but it is actually about getting a framework to understand what is there and understand that complexity.

N: Yes, you don't have to land with one voice. You are allowed to land with conflicts and differences and bring those to the table. It is very visible in the case of Nowy Port. Some people want the change. Some people don't want the change. Your aim is not to create a common voice in the art project. You just need to make those differences visible.

TD/LK: There is a difference between whether you want to put this artistic research before decision-making or to see it as a parallel thing, which is always a point of reflection in

the formal process. There could be counterbalancing with these voices always coming in without it necessarily being written as a diagnosis in an emotional language, then taken over by political discourse. And then you end up legitimising decisions that you have no control over.emotional language, then taken over by political discourse. And then you end up legitimising decisions that you have no control over.

N: It also takes a lot of stamina to do it because for a public institution, like ours, to give voices to people, who are not happy with the decisions of the city, we are going into conflicts of interests because from one side people would come to us and ask to change something in their environment and we actually cannot change anything. People always see us as someone who can change things because we represent the city. On the other hand, the city is looking more closely at our actions and what kind of opinions we are raising. We see a lot of resistance

at the administrative levels of the municipality as people are afraid to create real dialogue. They are afraid that there might be something they promise and cannot deliver, but they are also worried about criticism and aggression towards them. They are not ready to take risks. That is why our street marking project in Nowy Port couldn't happen eventually. We are increasingly trying to create spaces for these discussions. We communicate more with bureaucrats, informing them of our actions and inviting them to participate in discussions and meetings. For example, in our Wałowy square event in Stare Przedmiescie, people asked the municipality about the abandoned buildings right around the square, which will be reconstructed, and they said they were not allowed to say anything. There is a real fear of going out of line and saying the wrong thing. This is especially visible in the type of meetings, which are organised by the municipality, where they normally would just stand at a safe distance and present something. It is different to be on the same level, joining the people and doing things together.

TD/LK: Have you noticed any change in Stare Przedmiescie since your actions there?

N: I have noticed people caring more about the place's future. Even after the event, people ask us about what is happening and what will happen. Many people from around the square noticed that this was an important place. I also think that the art academy, which is neighbouring the square,

is becoming more open to doing something in the place. I hope that this doesn't wear off until the refurbishment of the whole structure. Also, in Dolna Brama, right next to the square, there will be the Social Hub, which we will also participate in, so we will be there in the future. The one thing that I am worried about is whether we will be allowed to do anything after the square is new and shiny next year. We don't know, but we will try.

Kasia Werner

Nowy Port and Stare Przedmiescie demonstrator project team member

Organisation:
Gdansk Development Office Revitalisation Unit, NGO 180 degrees, Nowy Port local guide

Neighbourhoods engaged in: Nowy Port and Stare Przedmiescie, Gdansk, Poland

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TD/LK: You have had experience in working as a neighbourhood activist and as part of an NGO, and now in the Gdansk development office, in the revitalisation unit developing new programs, which in a way are trying to do the same thing - to activate and improve the social inclusion and social innovation aspects. You have followed and worked on both of the demonstrator projects in Gdansk. How do you think projects like these fit in this structure? Do you see them as extra activities and initiatives which have their own lives and their management? Do you see them potentially being linked to a more strategic approach?

K: The tool we created in the UCP Nowy Port project - a call for proposals for informal groups and NGOs based on Compass. It is a very good practice, and we should adopt it in other districts. In the meantime, other NGOs asked me for a short contract to diagnose another city in another region, and I used this method there.

TD/LK: Do you see that the City Culture Institute, who you worked

with on this project, could be a stronger ally to you now that you are in the municipality? Who would be the ones to work on the Compasses?

K: Yes, for example, in the form of a think-tank or an advisory. I am not sure if they have the capacity because I know how this team works, and they have a lot of work. But CCI has always been my ally, and we've been working together a lot. I wanted to say this on behalf of my colleague from the regional development office, who was an expert in the Stare Przedmiescie project. She told me that it was a lesson learned, that locals wanted mainly the same as the architect working on the square. Maybe it is not so new for you, but you should know that, especially in Gdansk, there is not such a strong participatory culture. We are still learning how to speak to locals, and for her, it was the first step beyond her fear of local anger because we, civil servants, don't have a good reputation because of the press. We are constantly scrutinised for what we have done wrong and never praised for the successes. We have a strong fear of public meetings.

TD/LK: This issue has been brought up multiple times in our interviews in Gdansk. We were trying to figure out the middle meeting place for everyone. You also wrote in the documentation document that *there is a great need for officials' involvement in social dialogue.* How do you see that could be fostered?

K: Starting with small steps, regular meetings on planning. We have a new position in the city, the city architect, and two days ago, he had an online discussion with leaders from districts. They proposed that materials about planning about changing places should be presented more communicatively. It's very obvious, but we need to take those steps because the formal language is very restrictive. They propose changing the meetings' place because we have the obligatory meetings on planning in our municipal office, this is according to the law. They propose to meet in the districts. These are basics, but we still need to

do them. We also need feedback about the participatory process. We, as locals, don't know about the consequences of these processes and meetings.

Our participatory budgeting process also is not designed well as people submit ideas. They find out if the idea has gotten the finances, but then it is out of the people's hands, the city is realising the projects themselves, and one cannot find information about how the process is going.

TD/LK: This sounds like a manipulation of a participatory process. We have discussed with many Poles that sometimes it is better to collaborate in an informal way between institutions so that it doesn't become part of the system and that there is more flexibility so that it doesn't become politicised. So keeping local initiatives and NGOs alive is a better strategy than trying to integrate everything into a system

as suggested first. It's best to keep it diverse and separate, working on multiple levels. You could in-cooperate it into your strategy to de-franchise various aspects of your work.

K: I decided to apply for my current unit because the process was communicative, and for me, it was a very good position because I know the needs of the NGOs.

TD/LK: Have you seen changes in Nowy Port in the last years?

K: Statistical changes are really weak if you compare to infrastructural change, you can see walls and roads being built, but still, the addiction and drug problem prevails. However, people are moving to the area. I have 20 new neighbours. I see that they want to change Nowy Port. They don't want the dog poo on the pavement, and they don't want to have damaged bus stops. So the social pressure is changing. This might be because of the revitalisation, but the public communication of Nowy Port is very good, and the press is getting better. Open House is also a very good project to show the

district's potential. I knew those 20 new neighbours from the guided tours I led.

TD/LK: That is another interesting aspect. The guided tours usually seem like they are for the people from outside, who come and want to know about the place, but it is also a meeting place for the locals and newly arrived people. It is a first introduction, a first formal network, where to get contacts. This way of working, which is based on individual contacts, and social opportunities through activist or artistic or cultural activities - do you believe it has a real relevance? Not on statistical levels, but the first signs of change and the level of self-awareness of the people. Do you think more funding and more support should be directed towards these kinds of activities? How does one look at this from the revitalisation point of view?

K: My approach is always to go with small steps and create change through small actions. We have worked on an idea to give money to backyard projects. A large NGO is now getting all the projects and spending money creating events, getting machinery for making

the backyards nicer. Still, I propose that maybe we could try to ask local NGOs to give money to locals to decide how they want to change the area. Like microgrants. Because I see that this umbrella approach is too grandiose and is not as helpful as it could be, the power of locals is big. Small steps.

TD/LK: Yes, in a way, they are small steps, but actually, it is just the scale. It is not a small step. It's the decision to keep the actions local. So these changes don't change the reality as much, but they change the appreciation and understanding of reality, the mindsets.

K: It is also important for people to learn how the city works. Who do they have to contact in terms of a trash can? Who to contact about a light installation in the yard? This is civic education, and it can help people make more informed decisions about

the environment. I hope we can do the street marking project, which couldn't happen in Nowy Port - somewhere else. The excuse was that the cars would misinterpret them and confuse the traffic.

TD/LK: In Copenhagen, they are doing something interesting. Before they rebuild a street or an area, they invite artists to redecorate the streets before they close it down. So they get a 100 m of the street and say *do something*. And the motivation is to confuse the car drivers, make them slow down and think about *what is happening here. Something is changing. Should I drive here?* It is a new kind of sign language. They look at how the shop owners react, where they park the bikes, and where they cross over to get a sense of how the place works. It becomes a shared space for a while. So the first thing you said about these experiments and these processes where administration and citizens can meet

is very interesting. These test grounds for the administration to learn that it is not so dangerous and scary. That is an important lesson. And then your proposal of generating more confidence by starting on these micro levels and letting that develop naturally. So you develop a kind of responsive eco-system in the local neighbourhoods to adapt and react and engage, also if there are more formal processes around. We are all just focusing on the current issues and

pushing things forward, but change is also happening due to things you had done five years ago. It has its change cycle, and it is not what you did but what you just connected, and that also releases a lot of energy. So even if you are leaving these projects for three years, if you've connected the right people and got them into the right frame of mind, that change will probably continue. That project doesn't have to continue, but it's more the processes that have to continue.

GULDBORGSUND, DENMARK

DIANA GERLACH

Guldborgsund demonstrator
project team leader

Organisation:
Guldborgsund municipality

Neighbourhoods engaged in:
Lindholm, Guldborgsund, Denmark

PROJECT FRAMEWORK
SUCCESSES AND LEARNINGS
CULTURAL PLANNING METHOD
POST PROJECT ACTION

TD/LK: The project in Gulborgsund has been particular in many ways. It is the only one working exclusively with children and youth as a point of departure. The second particularity is that your whole approach has been about integrating this into the way the local authority has an interface with creativity. The third aspect is that you have been very much on your own in this. In most other cases have had a team of people working on the projects. You have had many loosely affiliated partners, but no one you have entrusted to do this. You have had all the roles - the planner, the enabler, the producer on the ground. So looking at the project now and looking back at when you started, what are the significant achievements? How far have you come from what you expected the project would be? Did the project go as you imagined it would be? And does it feel like you have arrived, or is it just a beginning?

D: First, In many ways, I ended up standing on the mapping phase because so many of those projects were mapping projects. It takes so much time to get to an ending point. For example, I have been working on one very small and specific design discussion with the artist Camilla Berner and the architect to have children's ideas implemented in the cityscape, which will be implemented in the summer of 2022. That is one example of what can this project actually lead to. Another important observation is that when you create steps along the way, the project can easily be adapted to many different new paths. Now we are discussing if the project's title, Here Where We Live, could be passed on to other stakeholders who want to use it. We are also trying to sum up the experiences from the project and create a vision for a new festival centred around the youth and children. My experience is that you start in a small and specific area, which can develop on a strategic level, so cultural planning develops into a new way of thinking in different departments in the municipality.

TD/LK: So, instead of working towards defining the project and moving from mapping to designing and creating, you have actually gone the other way. You have started with some projects that have branched out. This

branching out could still be called an engaging mapping process as you are mapping out concrete situations and the potentials around these situations by using artistic methods. That is the reality, which is important for you because it has given you a chance to build a practice of diverse actions and approaches within this concept of cultural planning. The change is also coming through the mapping exercise and practical exercises. That is an interesting way of looking at it. From your point of view, what could have strengthened the project? One of the issues is that generally, very few of the artists took part in the labs and conferences of the UCP project, and they weren't actively involved in the process. You had many artists associated and involved with the project. Also, the stakeholders in the project, the culture house, library etc., probably didn't sense that they were a part of a large international project and weren't benefiting directly from the experiences other projects are gaining.

D: We had one exhibition in the library some years ago, and I also presented

the project at a local conference. In the beginning, we had this artist residency program. It could have been nice to have two rounds of residency programs because they only happened initially, and it would have been nice to have the artists return.

TD/LK: The project is successful because it has anchored itself in many local points, like the schools, the intermediaries, the library etc. But it wasn't anchored so well internationally.

D: It could have been nice if we had more 1 on 1 dialogue with other demonstrator projects partners. We could have done it more on our own initiative, but it could have been built into the project design.

TD/LK: This project has the best engagement of citizens if we are looking at qualitative and creative work. You had hundreds of citizens actually involved in workshops. The interesting thing here is that you did that by working with the institutions responsible for this: the schools, cultural centres, and the library.

D: I tried to finish all our activities with a communication event, like an exhibition. But because of COVID-19, larger meetings and presentations couldn't happen. So what we will do next is actually to create an exhibition of Camilla Berner in the shopping mall.

TD/LK: Your approach to this is to link the activities with public space and, in that way, inform and engage the wider society.

D: Yes, public space is a strategy. It is often hard to have each activity reach a wide audience. Another strategy is to try to reach specific groups. This can be done, for example, through schools or senior clubs.

TD/LK: How do you think this might then be expanded? Cultural planning and the concept of social innovation. Do you think this can be expanded to become a factor in the municipality? Can this change the collective understanding and will to influence the community's future? The Friheden park future development case tests whether the municipality is actually ready to take on the ideas that came out of the cultural planning processes.

D: Right now, we are working on developing the possibilities in different areas because we have Friheden park as one space. Then my colleague is organising a learning lab about using a cultural approach in city development. So we have a co-creating perspective in the municipality. However, the approaches are sometimes still old-fashioned, and right now, I want to make a toolkit catalogue, and hopefully, I can add to that co-creation perspective. So there is a possibility to develop the harbour front in a meaningful and integrated way.

TD/LK: So, instead of having one particular focus on how these experiences could influence the future of a particular neighbourhood, it is even broader than that. It becomes both a perspective, which is looking at particular schools and opportunities and looking at other areas and methodology of engaging citizens on a more strategic level in the local authority.

D: In many ways, we are also creating solutions because, in Guldborgsund, we have a strategy called the mindset of Gulborgsund, the overall strategy - finding new ways of co-operating. So within this framework, I have started

on a new project combining culture and some of our cultural institutions, theatre and museum Lolland Falster. That is also a way of planning culturally.

TD/LK: There are a lot of outcomes and future projects and collaborations which have seemingly come out of this project. Critically looking, are these because of the UrbCultural planning? How has this process and experience affected what you have been doing yourself locally?

D: I always believe it is good to have worked on one common project for some years and secure volume. Our international office is quite good at taking these specific projects and creating new strategies and tools for working within the municipality. So I feel like we have the support, and it is very useful to have one specific project and have communication material around that. And have a lot of partners around the project and be able to refer back to the project. So I believe that it created some kind of change. But with a lot of ideas, we didn't get as far as we would have wanted.

TD/LK: A lot of partners have touched upon this time issue. Firstly, even if it is a two-and-a-half-year - project, it's

not really two and a half years because of the start-up time and the reporting period at the end. So the operational time is actually two years. You have mentioned that such complex projects take a lot of time. That is an issue with these process-driven activities, which are very individual. We are finding more and more that, for example, the timeline for involving kids is not 3 years. It is actually a week! It also depends on who you are working with and the timeline of the school years and classes. So the timeline needs to be built on the premise of who we are working with. So the timelines of the municipality and the children are not synced at all. The ideas of some kids might be realised in 3 years when they are already grown, and there are new kids for whom it would feel like they have been left out, so the projects around them have to be much faster paced.

D: That is also why I think Camilla Berner's project is so inspiring because there is an example of how a project that can be condensed into 4 weeks can actually be a whole lifetime project. They were planting trees in the public space, and they will be there for their whole lifetime. So the idea of a period is quite interesting.

GULDBORGSUND

TD/LK: Yes, accepting temporality also is a value. Even if the timeline is 3, 10 or 20 years because the actions one is doing are limited, they have a trace, an imprint, and an impact. The traces are, for example, the red posters, which are still hanging in the public space, but the imprint might be that one might have something, which is structured, an exhibition, which leads to something else, and the impact might be that some overall change might happen.

Thinking that way might be better than in a framework of years. The kids have to see an immediate response. They need to see their work represented. One interesting aspect is the regularity and tradition. So if one does something every spring, the change might accumulate over time. You also mentioned the risk of oversaturating the community with projects. Perhaps an annual action each year with a new generation of kids is a good strategy. This is interesting as a strategy to launch something to be repeated annually. That is why we love festivals because they

are annual, and each year we are waiting for an updated manifest, responding to the issues at hand. It is interesting to look at change as a cyclic action.

D: In a way, this will happen when we develop the festival for children and youth. Here Where We Live name signals that the project includes kids. I really believe that we can have parallel actions in many different city neighbourhoods and therefore bring it down to the neighbourhood level. It could also be in the countryside. Another cycle, which I really like, is the action of the artist Marika Seidler, who will work with the daycare children for the third time next spring. It started in 2020, and it will be done every year, including the new kids. It would be great if this action was manifested into an artwork in the public space. This is one way of anchoring these projects, making them visible and communicating them.

TD/LK: The idea of annual cycles is very interesting, combined with the fact that the artist could come back and connect to the place more and more.

D: The new leader of the Guldborgsund education department is interested in bridge-building for when kids go from pre-school or kindergarten to school. I really believe that Marika Seidler's project is a great example of this practice.

TD/LK: One thing, which is interesting to note as learning, is that you started off with quite a clear brief of working with two schools and the specific situation - merging of the two schools. It gave a clear problem or brief, clear boundaries and a clear group of people and a concrete location. This has perhaps contributed to the success of this project. It has made it more focused. Other projects didn't have so many certainties.

D: One challenge, though, is how to reach children and youngsters outside of their school and institutional contexts - in more informal situations. One thing is to have the kids join in the art classes because they have to be there as it is part of their curriculum, and another is to have them participate on their own initiative. We can look at what the Museum Lolland

Falster is doing as a good example. Yes, the overall question is how to connect kids and youth with culture outside of their formal learning environments.

TD/LK: If you look at the groups as classes, you have the public space. But doing the projects in the public space is perhaps a bridge between the children's formal life and informal life. They can revisit it as part of their class and as individuals with friends and family. So you create this meeting place, which helps broaden the definition of a community. It becomes interconnected. It expands the sense of community. Where it's part of the school, part of the kids, part of the elderly. These are very interesting places. Normally these places are very programmed, where people are disconnected. One place is for the basketball players, this place is for the 3-6-year-olds, this place is for football only. These artistic practices can generate common spaces or meeting places, which are then initiated by the kids, and they are the ones inviting in.

KIEL, GERMANY

LEA LEUKEMEIER

Kiel Gaarden demonstrator
project team leader

Organisation:
Project company Kiel-Gaarden GmbH.
(Kiel Gaarden district regeneration office)

Neighbourhoods engaged in:
Gaarden, Kiel, Germany

TD/LK: Looking from your point of view and your career. Was this project how you thought it might be when you started? Or did you expect something different?

L: Everything was a bit new to me. I had worked in some participation processes, and I knew I didn't want to do it as it was done before, so I saw opportunities, but at the same time, I didn't know how it would evolve. I was learning together with the project. I hadn't worked in the arts, but I knew how to organise an event. I never worked in a team with an artist on a project. I already had good connections with the city, but not to the art scene. Now I would be able to say which artists I would like to work with, but I didn't know, so we made an open call. But this was good as it helped us also get to know artists from other cities, not only from Kiel.

My expectations were relatively high, and I thought that we would be able to involve lots of people. One of the significant learnings is also that there must be a need. You cannot include people who don't want to be involved.

TD/LK: Sometimes, people might not want to be involved in a certain way. Maybe they want to be involved more passively. For example, you wrote in the report that some people didn't want to write but liked telling stories. Some didn't want to tell stories but wanted to draw.

L: That is how we managed to reach many groups - by differentiating the tools. Not only for me but also the regeneration unit, it was also good to change the points of view of how you can create processes. Usually, we start with a designing phase, asking people: what is your idea and then jumping to implementation. Usually, visioning is missing in our normal process. Now, we are discussing that we don't even have a vision for our Office. The notion of mapping has also helped us to look at processes differently. Now we know to step back first and look at what is there.

TD/LK: So, the difference was perhaps, that the scale was different, and the challenges were more than you expected? So, what have you learned from the project? Is it the methodology? Are you more confident

about going into complex situations?

L: The key for me is working with artists and using different languages. The city administration didn't ask what the process was. They only ask what the result was. I saw how the artist works, and I knew it was hard to get clear results, but I also saw why the city asked for concrete results.

In our unit, we have worked with many actors and stakeholders for many years, so maybe we are sometimes too set in who we work with, always choosing the easiest partners and excluding the more challenging partners. You often asked us if we have a steering group, and because there are so many existing steering groups and networks in Kiel, I didn't think at the time that this would be helpful, but now, looking back, I think it would have made sense. Suppose I had used the first 6-9 months to engage people and organisations as actors. It might have changed the situation because now we concentrated on the inhabitants and not as much on possible partners. At the time, I wasn't able

to sell the process. Now I have more examples, and I have the vocabulary.

TD/LK: If the project remains within the remit of an organisation, one tends to feel that it is done for the organisation. So, if the project wants to be more than a project, it has to be separate, independent and visible. The idea of the steering group is not to control it but to anchor it in different places in the city. To make it more sustainable and to make it more visible. It can also position itself against the existing institutions, against the artist collective, against the city. The goal is to give the project its anchor and decentralise it. It is important to identify yourself as part of the project, and you are not as working on a project. You are the project, one might say. That is why it is so easy for an organisation like Free Riga to say we are the project, but for a city institution, it needs an extra push to get it out there without losing the connectivity.

L: This was hard for us because we didn't have a mandate from above nor from the community. We have

the capacity and knowledge to do participation processes, and I wonder if Gaarden was the right place in Kiel to do the project because there is so much going on here. There are so many existing participation processes, so many networks. You must have good arguments - about why you are doing something here.

TD/LK: One of your primary roles was to balance this famous triangle – city – citizens -artists. Were you conscious of being that in-between person and having to link these three positions?

L: There was a lot of connection between the community and the artists, but the city was in the position where they wanted to stand back and only look at results. They weren't following up. It was just one of many cultural and participation processes for them. They wanted to have quick results. They have, over the years, tried a lot of methods in the area, and it is always linked to certain people in the administration. There isn't one department that says, we support you, and we are interested in introducing cultural planning in the city. Sometimes they came to

activities, but it felt more like they were checking if it was valuable or not.

TD/LK: You are the key person who has been through this process. Do you think there is potential for cultural planning as a methodology?

L: Yes, for example, our Cultural Department has a new director, and she is very interested. Some years ago, the City of Kiel defined cultural areas in the city - one of the five districts is Gaarden. Our director is asking how we might work with a clear identification of this policy and if there is a real potential for cultural planning as a way to define these cultural areas. Also, in the area of Wik, there is now a budget for community development and cultural planning could be adopted.

TD/LK: And what about the Social and Planning Departments? Supposedly there are more limitations, but they have been more reserved to pick this methodology up.

L: The Planning Department is tough to communicate with - and to involve. Public participation in their work is

minimal, and cultural planning is far from reality. There is silo thinking. We are much more connected to the Social Department because the Regeneration Unit is dependent on them, and they follow our activities.

TD/LK: Many cities have a quality of life index because it opens up how you evaluate a good quality of life, whether it is visual, social, etc. But it demands a new way of thinking. It is another way of looking at the same documents. So it might be an idea to do something like this. So that the thinking goes beyond the statistics of demographics or income, but it can talk about culture, walkability, social action, creativity and other values and qualities.

L: This could be interesting because there has been a survey in the municipality about which is the most creative neighbourhood of Kiel, and most people voted for Gaarden. This is also because artists like to live there, and it seems there is more freedom, or at least people feel freer to express themselves.

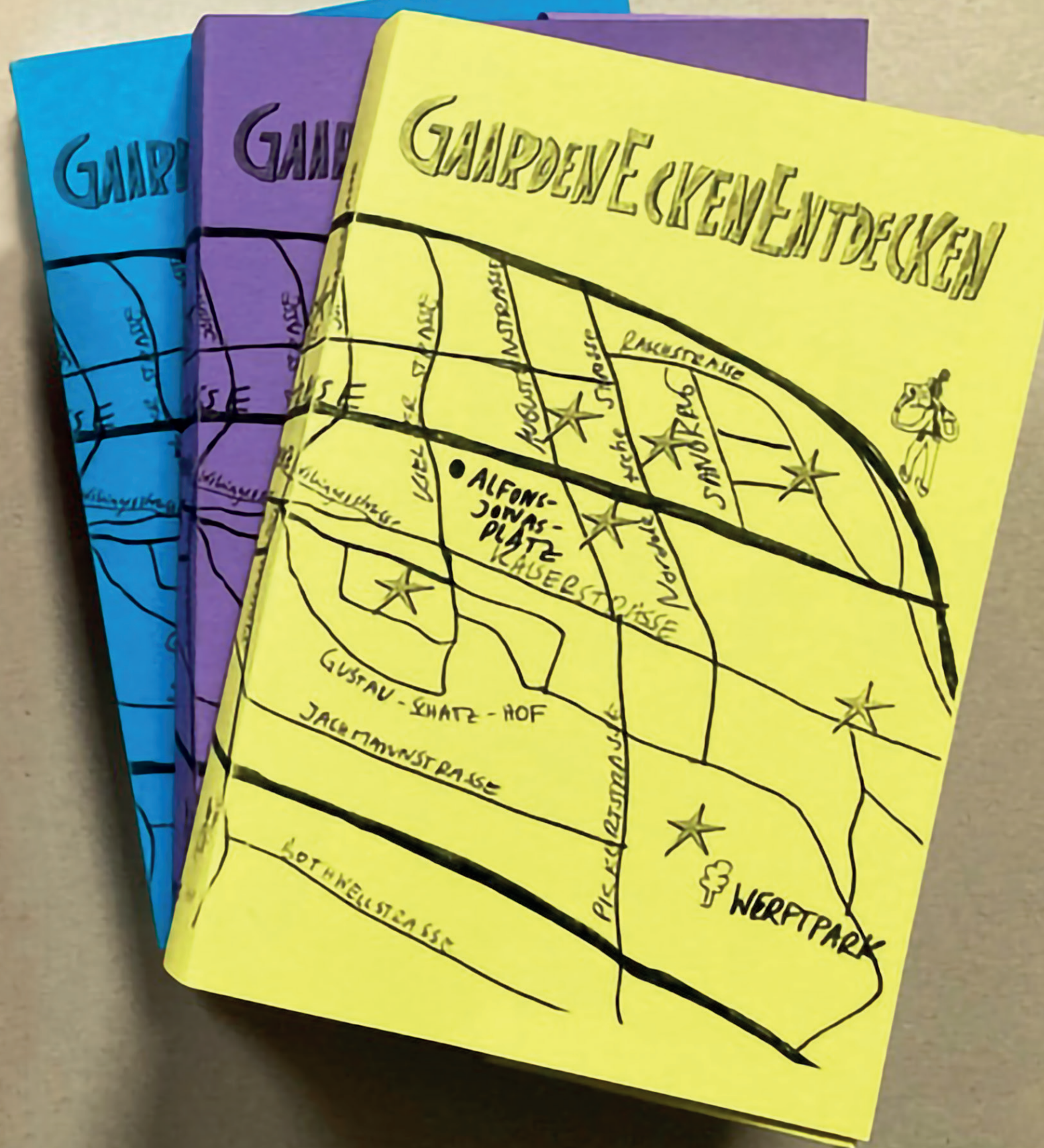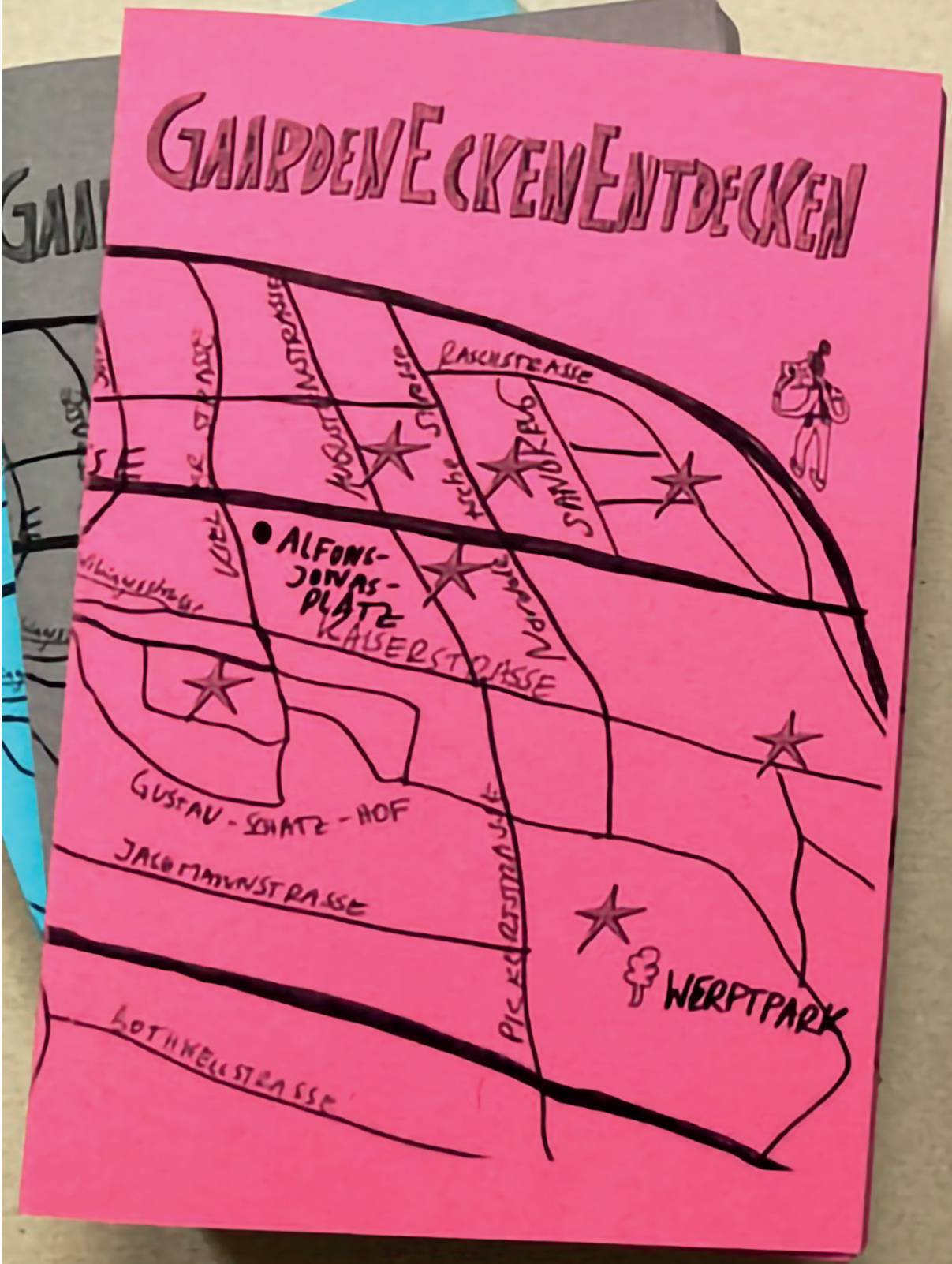**TD/LK:** Looking at the future, how

would you work with this method differently? How would you structure processes - for example – in these five cultural neighbourhoods of Kiel.

L: Maybe I wouldn't be working so artistically initially, but working a lot with mapping. Maybe each area has its idea of how they want to identify, so trying to find each neighbourhood's identity and then creating a vision for the place.

TD/LK: So, the concrete results for you are that there are opportunities like this opening up in Kiel? Opportunities linked to the UCP process and where you might be involved and opportunities for Boell Foundation, which might see the possibility of expanding this concept and perhaps using it in other cities.

L: I am working for Gaarden, but also for Boell foundation now. The idea is that I re-cycle the knowledge in other areas of the city. So we have created a network in the city encompassing many urban activists and people engaged in the neighbourhood – a grass-root city makers network.

TD/LK: This is interesting because it shows that in that way, having

access to different environments and structures, as you do, because you are an intermediary, creates legitimacy and knowledge flow. What do you think about the project structure with the demonstrators as the practical layer, but also with a layer of labs, conferences, the road map etc.? How was that balance, you think?

L: I think the labs were quite important because they were inspirational. It was very important for me to see examples. For Kiel, it was very important to host the creative bureaucracy lab. It was a good way to make people interested, and people have good memories of this. It would have been nice if we could have built on these connections. I have met several people from the Kiel lab, and they asked me if there was any continuation.

TD/LK: Did you create any internal relationship with any other partner? Have you thought about collaborating with anyone from the project in the future? Was there any other project particularly inspiring for you?

L: I have been in contact with Kati from Pori because I wanted to present also

her case to our city. For me, the Pori case was also very clear. When we had the demonstrator project meetings, it was in the format of presentations and not using the resources of each other to develop the projects. It was always constructive when we had the talks with KIT because you gave a lot of input, and I could take some ideas.

TD/LK: It was the idea, and we might have facilitated those meetings better. The idea was that partners would give reactions and input. Time was an issue – it takes time to go over ten projects. COVID-19 also impacted our process, as labs were also supposed to be a meeting space. It is much harder to achieve this online.

L: Our lead artist, Nadine, wants to continue working in the district with these methods. If she finds funding, she is thinking of moving back to Gaarden.

I now think one must brand the project - the first step of letting the process go and continue as a separate entity. Now I see that other people use the *GaardenEckenEntedecken* brand for their processes. When it has its name, it gets an identity, a soul.

TD/LK: Can you tell a bit about the last part of your process? Would you have liked to end it in another way? Or was it a natural ending?

L: We somehow ended with the last action we made on the theme of togetherness. It feels a little bit like we opened up more possibilities, where one can work on these themes, and the people, who were involved, were empowered, and they might take something and use it in their neighbourhood. So there is a lot of learning for the people who participated, but now I have the feeling that it could have been nice if we continued working on this.

TD/LK: Are there concrete things you now see that you could still do?

L: There are five themes we focused on in the project - five different ways of dealing with the future. From the beginning, I imagined that there would be something major at the end. But now I don't know if this is necessary. So now, we have all this knowledge and experience, and somehow, we cannot continue.

TD/LK: Might there be a way to get these five key values embedded into what the Regeneration Office is doing anyway? The way you structure your projects. It can be seen as a curatorial approach - recreating a narrative of how one talks about something. This may help other initiatives to see themselves in the narrative and link to it.

L: The challenge is that usually, our Office is not actively offering cultural activities. We are supporting others who are offering them. This would require us to have a new role.

TD/LK: But could you create a grant and a brief to lead. For example: "we want to have an exhibition on a certain theme". It might be a good strategy; the Office would be stepping outside of total neutrality, but it would connect you to the locals and create a structured dialogue. The major challenge is, as you say, to change the usual formats, which are generally in the themes of youth, sports, minorities, seniors, physical space, leisure etc.

The challenge is to signal a change that has a cultural narrative, not a

political one or a capitalist/investment narrative. The project's change may not formally be large-scale, but it is clear that it has generated several changes, strengthening some points of view. So what is important - has it changed how your Office is working?

L: If you asked others, for them, the success story would have been people pointing out three spaces where people don't feel well and where there are opportunities for changes and then changing those places. It is about fixing things. It has to be visible, physical.

TD/LK: Do you think having more physical focus would have strengthened the project?

L: Yeah, I think what Nadine did now with the follow-up project in the public space. That is more visible. She made a presentation about the movie she made about Gaarden. Sixty people came because it was in a space where nothing ever happens. It was under a bridge. People are curious. It showed them that something could be done in those spaces. The problem is, when you put something up in Gaarden, it is gone in a few hours. Anything we put up physically

in the space was demolished and vandalised. That was another learning.

TD/LK: Perhaps another action would be to add GPS to the items you put up in public space and map out where they travel to.

L: Yeah, it's part of one of the values we identified - respect. It's been a problem we've been fighting with for years.

TD/LK: It would be interesting to understand the motivation behind taking things. One way to look at it - people are thinking - this is valuable, I want this. Maybe it is not only motivated by anger and destruction. Social departments always look at the negative aspects and areas that need fixing and suggest: "there is something wrong with you/this." The cultural perspective is a positive counter-perspective when one maps out resources.

L: If we want to concentrate on the positive aspects, we should have started entirely differently. We started cultural planning there because we saw some lacks in the area or some non-spaces. So it was the wrong approach from the beginning. The

problem is that we always start the conversations with what is not working.

TD/LK: It is natural for people to want to change things in their environment, and we are trying to encourage that and empower people to demand change and create change. Of course, there needs to be a balance between passive complaints and complaints with actions. It is also essential to understand what one wants instead.

L: It is much easier for people to express what they don't want rather than what they want.

TD/LK: Your slogans are also saying *more respect, more green,* which indicates a lack of respect, a lack of green, but it is a more positive way to do it. You mentioned in the documentation that there were writings on your office window saying not good enough. It would be an exciting art project to start a dialogue in this way. You could try responding in a written *What is not good enough? How can we be better?* There could be works of art or projects developing into dialogue boxes. Maybe there is something with 100 small items one can take for free. Poris shop comes to

mind, where there was the fake public restroom space with small drawings and profanities written there, and it was inviting for people to come and join with their raging writings. Perhaps one could think of an anonymous hotline or a Gaarden chatroom...

L: ...And everybody complaining there! We just have to look for leads and financial resources.

TD/LK: So, how do you see the future of your District Regeneration Office?

L: We can always continue with our district festival, music festival, and other activities, but we can also rethink our actions. I am always a big fan of innovation, but I am not the only one in the Office.

TD/LK: In a way, continuing to do the district festival and the music festival is at the same time taking away the possibility for other new actions to come in. Perhaps it is an idea to outsource the organisation or curation of the district festival or music festival. To give out grants for organising parts of the festivals.

L: That is a very interesting thought.

PORI, FINLAND

KATI FAGER

Pori demonstrator
project team leader

Organisation:
Pori City, Cultural Department

Neighbourhoods engaged in:
Pori city centre, Pori, Finland

████ PROJECT FRAMEWORK
████ SUCCESSES AND LEARNINGS
████ CULTURAL PLANNING METHOD
████ POST PROJECT ACTION

TD/LK: Your process was quite specific and unique, as were most of the projects. Your position was also to bridge the local authority and an external/ public event. Looking at the project in retrospect, what are the significant changes between what you expected it to be and what you ended up with? Or did you end up with a project close to how you envisioned it to be?

K: We couldn't imagine what this could be at the start of the process. We were pleased to find the shared goals with Pori City Planning Office. The common goal was to develop the Pori City Centre, and they specifically needed a city centre development plan. The Poris concept and how it developed was a big surprise. The Poris pop-up shop was a success in how many people visited it. All the artistic activities that grew out of that can be seen as a success. The Pori city centre development plan was always at the back of our heads as a goal during those activities. The plan is in process in the City Council now, and they have decided to give a green light for it, and we are pleased about it. Our actions had a significant role.

TD/LK: What are the biggest successes for you in that document? Some points which you managed to integrate wouldn't have been integrated otherwise.

K: The plan has an attachment, which is all about participatory processes and participatory urban development. This is, of course, just a paper and has many good elements, but it also has many wishes, I would say, too many wishes even, but this is supposed to trigger an action plan. So, hopefully, Harri will continue working with this in the IPLACE project.

TD/LK: In a way, it is pretty clear that there is a change in the mindset of the local authority.

K: It was very encouraging to have a good response from the whole City Council.

TD/LK: In the beginning, you said that you agreed with the city planning office on the shared goal. It is crucial to find a shared goal. It is important that the project is real, not constructed.

You take part in a real need. Often cultural sector projects are self-initiated, something that one would like to do, fun, engaging, etc. It is crucial to integrate more with the city's social, political, and urban needs.

K: In the beginning, we discussed the other project in Pori being the riverfront exploration. The city planning department didn't see it as a real need, they weren't motivated, and It would have been so hard to try and develop a project around that.

TD/LK: These projects indeed often work only if one time them right. One has to build a sense of energy and flow. The city centre project had the right timing.

K: It wasn't only the Planning Department that focused on the city centre. It was also the NGO PoriKorttelit, combining businesses in the city centre. There was hype around that, and it helped the process.

TD/LK: Yes, this shows the importance of doing projects in partnerships
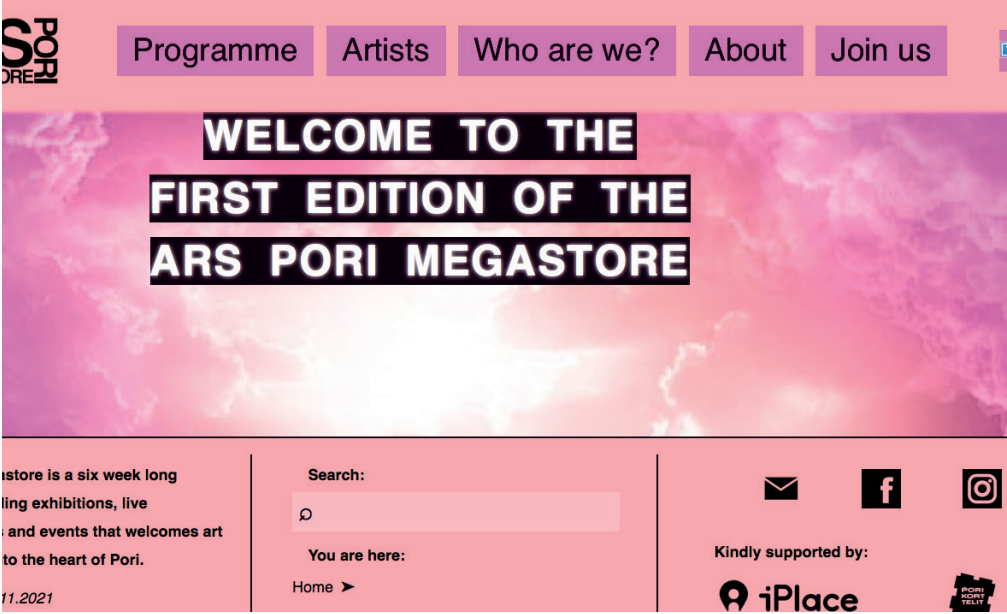
because if you are doing it on your own, you generate something, but when you leave, you take the energy with you, and there is a vacuum. You must ensure that there are partners.

How do you think the methodology of Cultural Planning has furthered in Pori?

K: I think the methodology will appear more clearly in the action plan. It is important to have the method there so that people understand how things should be done.

TD/LK: Do you think it is easy to integrate these methodologies into documents? They are so dependent on who is doing it, when, the place, the season, the length, the tools etc. It is, in the end, a creative and artistic process that has to have a lot of freedom.

K: That's true. We quietly supported a large event called ARS PORI MEGASTORE, born during the UCP project. You can see the methodology in practice. The artists working in UCP have grasped the method, for example, how to use empty spaces and how to involve people through arts.

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WELCOME TO THE
FIRST EDITION OF THE
ARS PORI MEGASTORE

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...ing exhibitions, live
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The audience has taken it very well. There have been over 10 000 people there. We also had an event in November, where we shared the results of this project and shared the methodology. We tried to discuss the Poris shop method, how we did it and why we did how we did it, so it also got an excellent response from people.

TD/LK: Looking back at the project, which was local but was also international, we all know that the pandemic situation restricted things but also, in a way, focused things. How do you feel about the international dimension of this project? Was it strong enough? What did it give you? Will you build on any of the connections in the future?

K: The international aspect was important to us in many different ways. The most important were the artist residencies when Jonas and Abdul were here and the Urban Lab that we had here. It was important to have outside people commenting on our work, but also to have a feeling that we could share our experiences and knowledge. But of course, the corona pandemic

dropped the flow of co-operation. Overall the lead of the project could have been structured better. To have a clearer idea of who is doing what and when people should cooperate. There could have been smaller meetings on different subjects. We could have had more support from each other, but it wasn't facilitated enough.

TD/LK: We are also wondering if we should kickstart small meetings or not to interfere with the natural flow. Maybe we didn't connect with people enough. It is hard when it is unclear who is responsible for what and who is allowed to take the initiative.

K: At the beginning of the project, we should have thought about who is responsible for what and if one is a work package leader, what does that entails. As a work package leader, I feel like I haven't done my share. The work package leader roles were unclear.

TD/LK: These structures might look good in an application, but they are not the ones you want to keep through the three years. The concepts of cultural planning were alien to the majority of

the people involved. Perhaps if we did it again, we would know much better how to design the project, knowing the parts that go into the process and the skills necessary. People couldn't know where to utilise each other's strengths because they didn't know what components go into cultural planning.

K: When we started, we should have had more planning meetings in the work packages. Perhaps there was a lack of general communication in the first part of the project when we would have needed it more. The project partner meetings were about going through the talking points but not discussing them. I think we would have benefited from more free form discussion.

TD/LK: I would like to look at the notion of creative bureaucracy. How one can change the methodologies of organisations, particularly governmental organisations. How do you think that the staff in the Cultural Department have interacted and supported you? Has the project impacted their way of working and thinking?

K: The Cultural Department is very small, there are only 3 people. They

haven't been very active in the project, but they have been following it. We had more impact on the City Planning Department because they were involved in the Poris process. So the changes have been on a personal level. Some people we collaborated with before, who were part of the planning department, are now in the construction department. So the project has impacted certain people from different departments and fields of work.

TD/LK: You are saying that learning has to be by participating and not by learning about it, reading about it. What could one do to strengthen the project's legacy and strengthen the way things work in the authorities.

K: We should have told more about the process all the time. We should have been more persuasive and talked more to the City Council and the politicians. But unfortunately, there was a lack of politicians involved in our process. Generally, having more stakeholders involved would have been good. For example, we didn't cooperate enough with local cultural institutions, such as the Satakunta and Pori Art Museum. It would have been good to have them involved in the urban labs.

TD/LK: If the relationships only depend on a few people in different departments, they might change jobs, so it has to be anchored in more places to survive.

K: Yes, it is excellent learning to note because it doesn't come automatically. We need to do so many things when we are inside the process. So this stays in the background, and it needs to be planned. For example, the role of the associated partner was very unclear in the project. I feel like we should have involved them more somehow. If you haven't established the right way to communicate initially, it is hard to establish it later in the project.

TD/LK: We have asked this many people, but what does cultural planning mean to you? Can you describe it in a couple of words?

K: The most important thing is involving the people and meeting them genuinely, having genuine conversations so that it is not formal. It has to be the same level of conversation where both parties are benefiting. The culture component is a way to engage people on a deeper level of communication, to engage emotions rather than just the mind.

TD/LK: One of the things you generated in Pori is a heightened sense of community. There are a lot of participatory processes where people still participate as individuals. Still, your process was creating more of a shared space, a graphic community on a map — finding out what the community thinks is not the same as finding out what most people think.

KALININGRAD, RUSSIA

YULIA BARDUN

Kaliningrad demonstrator
project activity coordinator

Organisation:
Baltic Branch of the National Centre
for Contemporary Arts (part of
Pushkin State Museum of Fine Art)

Neighbourhoods engaged in:
Kronprinz, Kaliningrad, Russia

PROJECT FRAMEWORK
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TD/LK: One interesting perspective on your process is that you took part in the project later, have experienced COVID-19 restrictions, and have a relatively strict working methodology. You work in a large institution, which is quite complex. Despite that, you have done a tremendous amount of work. One of the questions that come to mind first is how did you manage to do this? The project was often quite distant to you. Interestingly, in difficult situations, some organisations have thrived in this process. We could always sense some energy and purpose from you. Where does it come from?

Y: The project had considerable relevance for us because of the international cooperation and involvement. Because of the climate of our country and the specific geographical location, we are constantly striving to retain professional relationships. We have always found this kind of international exchange very inspirational. It is important to be part of the Baltic sea region. Kronprinz as a place also had a huge relevance locally. We had been working on that

site for many years. This is where the sense of purpose came from. The project allowed us to continue working and exploring the site in-depth - something we always wanted to do.

TD/LK: Some project leaders in the UCP project kept the process closed and focused on a few individuals, and some have managed to create a network around it. Did you feel like you have a team that supports you and the project?

Y: There was a lot of energy within the team around the demonstrator project because people understood it and its relevance. It was quite hard for the team to understand other aspects of the UCP project.

TD/LK: Yes, it's understandable because there weren't as many international relations as there might have been. What were the main results, the main conclusions for you? For you personally, but also for the organisation and the local community.

Y: It was very important to collaborate with other local actors and activists. We were aware that our local team and the institution wouldn't be able to respond to all the project elements. At the same time, it was clear that there are very relevant actors on a regional level. I am very happy to have involved Anna Alimpieva and Park Ring community. Strategically and content-wise, it was a very good decision, but for me personally, it was hard to balance the institutional and activist approaches. In the demonstrator project, we managed to do a few very important things: research and writing the area's history. It is not only an achievement for us as an institution but also for the city. The area didn't have a voice before and written history. The historical performance walk was a challenge for the team. The artists hadn't worked in a participatory way. We tried, and it worked. It is a success story. People working on the walk are very inspired to continue organising those walks in the area. This is where the cooperation with the institution will hopefully continue next year. We are also thinking of applying the methodology to other areas of the city.

It was very important to include regional players in the process. The travelling exhibition of the different UCP demonstrator projects was met with a lot of support from local communities, and we found it very inspiring.

TD/LK: Re-writing or writing of the history and the story of the place, giving it a voice, is actually a quite radical thing to do. Finding the place's DNA and undoing some stereotypes is quite radical. You have taken this perspective, which is very aligned with the method of cultural planning, which manifests that there doesn't always have to be a forward-thinking, result-oriented approach. You have represented the existing, talking about "what is", but in an artistic way. It is great groundwork, which mentally frees up space for what might be. You are one of the more successful projects regarding how you connected to the locals. Is this because the place as such is so symbolic?

Y: This place isn't relevant for everyone in the city. During the performances, locals came out naturally because it was happening near their houses.

Some people were quite repelled when they heard that the performance has elements of pre-war history because this memory issue is still quite toxic in terms of public communication. Others, people from other parts of the city, even tourists, were impressed by the performance format. There were two motivations - curiosity and appreciation of the format.

TD/LK: Yes, the performance has a soft approach, and it doesn't pretend to be an answer to anything.

Looking back at the achievements, are you thinking about furthering the method in the workflow of your institution? Will it lead to something specific?

Y: There is an appreciation of the project within the team. We are hoping the walks will continue. The large amount of information collected is a good basis for further artistic interventions in the area. This all depends on the overall strategy of the institution. The headquarters might not be interested in working with Kronprinz. Even though we are in the same institution, the motivations might differ.

TD/LK: Yes, but you will continue doing curated exhibitions. Do you think it has opened up a different perspective of what new formats you might try and how you might define programs?

Y: The whole process gave an understanding that we shouldn't be fanatic about the value of the exhibition hall. Even though the idea is still to go back to our location in Kronprinz, the responses from people and the audiences indicate that there is relevance in what we are doing even when we don't have a permanent exhibition space.

TD/LK: Looking critically at the UCP project, what do you think could have been done to strengthen the project?

Y: Because of COVID-19, we didn't have a lot of elements. For example, a real, live artist residency. Our weakness is that we didn't manage to involve the authorities, but it was quite clear from the beginning that that would be the case. Much more time is needed for communication with the policy and authorities level. These ideas need to be translated into a language that is understandable for the local and national bureaucracies.

TD/LK: Yes, we have seen this quite clearly in the process, that some places require more attention for translating the ideas into bureaucratic/political language and system. It has been one of the most difficult aspects and one of the weakest ones in the project.

Y: It is not that the local context doesn't demonstrate any need or demand for those practices, but rather that they are described in a bit different language. We just need to invest more time into talking about it so that it doesn't require us to lose ourselves.

TD/LK: Do you think you will keep some of the international contacts?

Y: The Danish Cultural Institute office in St. Petersburg is very supportive. We got very strong motivation to connect to Visaginas. We did have contact with Gdansk partners before, as well as Jekaterina Lavrinec from Lithuania. The project helped to further those relationships.

TD/LK: You created huge documents from your research. Your methodology was solid and thorough, ensuring that the details

were right. What was the reason for going so deep into the research?

Y: In the early stages of the project, we were discussing how we ourselves don't know much about the area, and this was the first project where thorough research was possible because it is quite time-consuming, and we normally cannot afford to contract people to do that. The future is very much unclear, and creating a common base is what we can build on.

TD/LK: It makes a lot of sense because it is also about where we are on these timelines. How does time impacts how we act now. Some projects are driven by the hope to find a future vision, using the future as a resource. Some are based on this new philosophy, experience philosophy and the social aspects. Some societies are still very much rooted in the concept of the past and are unclear about the past, which stops them from making the right choices about the future. It is interesting to think of the different time scales we choose when we think about our projects and where we put our efforts. Perhaps without a thorough investigation of the past,

one cannot make informed decisions about how the project should develop.

Y: I think this is specific to the Kaliningrad region because, in the Soviet times, it was not allowed to learn the pre-war history. In schools, we were taught that history started in 1945, and then in the 90s, it became possible to look beyond. So it was a very natural interest. We call it memory politics.

TD/LK: Have you speculated on the vision for Kronprinz? What do you imagine Kronprinz will become?

Y: There are a lot of discussions. A utopian vision for Kronprinz is to become a creative industries quarter,

a mix of public and private functions and owners. Ideally, the courtyard is a public space. This project has strengthened that vision. We have a lot of evidence that people living nearby need a cultural and educational offer within their area. Creative and cultural industries are becoming a focus of the National policies in Russia. They understand within the bureaucracy that this brings benefits to society and the economy, but it needs spaces and resources. Politically quite often, those creative industries are seen as a tool to channel young people's energy. On a regional level, the creative industries are expected to jump higher on the list of priorities.

LATVIA

PSOT PROCESS

RIGA, LATVIA

**KASPARS KONDRATJUKS,
DĀVIS KAŅEPE,
MADARA ENZELE**

Festival Komēta
demonstrator project team

Neighbourhoods engaged in:
Bolderāja in Riga, Latvia

Organisation:
Festival Komēta

━━━━ **PROJECT FRAMEWORK**
━━━━ **SUCCESSES AND LEARNINGS**
━━━━ **CULTURAL PLANNING METHOD**
━━━━ **POST PROJECT ACTION**

TD/LK: So maybe let's start by looking at how processes often require change. You started with one concept, one vision and then it changed. What were the main aspects that forced that?

K: First of all, of course, there were external challenges, but we also had to adapt quite a bit internally. When the project started, and the mapping process started with Jānis Ķīnasts, Liene, the key person in this project, moved to Berlin. So that was an internal breaking point.

D: I also think from the beginning, we focused on working with and for the local community, looking into the redevelopment of the tower. It took us a while to understand that Bolderāja is not our organic focus community, but ours is the community of interests. In fact, we were wondering what could happen if Bolderājas Grupa (the local NGO working on improving the fortress) had been the project partner instead of us.

K: We invited Bolderājas Grupa (BG) to collaborate when we agreed to take part in this project. We said: let's do it

together. However, it was not easy to co-create the project with BG because Komēta was in contract with the Riga City Development Department, with which BG was often in conflict. This created some scepticism on their side.

TD/LK: It was important for the overall project to have as diverse partners in the project as possible. As a typology, it was clear that a festival, which is an independent arts organisation, coming to a new neighbourhood with an activity, brings a particular perspective to the project which no one else could. Ideally, there could have perhaps been clearer communication as to the different roles, that festival Komēta wasn't favoured over BG. You mentioned before that there was a lack of a mediator in this process. Perhaps that was a role Riga City should have taken more actively. There was a stakeholder meeting held every half a year, and BG came to those meetings, so at least there was an outlet to lay concerns and criticisms.

M: I think we should have had more private critical discussions earlier in our process. Our usual talks were

limited to technical aspects and specific needs for the festival. We did have conceptual discussions only after the events, which was too late, and the emotions were too heightened.

D: Through these talks, BG realised that what they thought of us wasn't entirely true. We feel like there were high expectations of us, almost viewing us as the saviours of the fortress. But, at the core, we are cultural professionals who want to make a festival, and the target group is likeminded people.

TD/LK: You have very different working paces. The festival is cyclic - you go through phases of raising funds, marketing, organising, a very fast-paced producing stage etc., but BG are there every day and have a different pace, so it is harder to find the space and time when you can meet.

D: If we are looking at the relationship with the Riga City Development Department - I think it could have been closer and stronger. We had hoped that a formal project relationship with Riga City would help solve some of the area's ownership and maintenance

issues. For example, there is no light on the street leading to the fortress, so it is very dark at night. It is not on them, it is also on us, but we hoped we would develop a relationship where we could discuss these issues and how they could be solved.

TD/LK: One conclusion might be that it is always relevant to involve political stakeholders, as keeping connections only on the administrative level might not be sufficient in cases where there are issues of ownership/investment.

D: Another conclusion is that stakeholders' meetings are essential but might benefit from a more hands-on approach rather than a passive listening-talking approach. The stakeholder's meetings could have worked on the real issues at stake and thus encouraged stakeholders to feel stronger ownership. We had a feeling that the people in the stakeholder meetings gathered to learn from the demonstrator projects.

TD/LK: To some extent, that must have been true, and some stakeholders did mention that they have not seen such projects and were there to learn.

RIGA

This is also a positive factor, in fact, that one dares open up real cases to follow and thus generate learning. And what about the financing of the project? Do you think you used up all opportunities that the collaboration with Riga City could present?

K: I don't know how it was in other cities, but in Riga, the demonstrator projects combined got 20% of the total budget of the Riga partner. Of course, they had to organise the conference, lab, etc., but on our side, we constantly had to calculate how much time someone could invest in writing reports etc. Mostly we were invested in the tiring and vicious cycle of the ownership issues. We didn't have any legal rights to do anything with the fortress or attract any money. For us, it has always been important to make some permanent space in the fortress, which can be really useful for communication within the fortress and communication with the local community.

KIT: Did you feel like the project was limited because of its bureaucracy?

D: The reports we had to provide were too specific and too professional.

We don't have that background.

M: If one is calculating how much time it takes to write these reports, it truly takes time away from us doing the actual project, and this is because the funding is so limited. We would suggest that in the future, the time spent in preparation for stakeholder meetings, time spent in the stakeholder meetings and writing reports should also be calculated in the budget.

K: When we talked to you (TD/LK), we always had great support, at least emotionally. But in these stakeholders' meetings, we didn't have any feedback, except if there was someone from you or Jānis Ušča. So there are these professionals, department heads, who are listening, you are telling about the issues, but there is no response.

TD/LK: We also considered if the project might have been strengthened with the involvement of the Cultural Department, rather it being rooted solely in the Development Department. This might be relevant to consider in the future. Although it may increase the bureaucracy, this may also lever an opening up of

cultural management and support to other types of cultural agencies. A lesson is that cross-department collaboration can be important. In places where it is more rooted in the local government model, such as in Finland, it can contribute to the success of projects where cultural and planning departments work together.

K: Our experiences with the Cultural Department are very good. Through the year 2020, they were very supportive of the changes we were making because of the pandemic. We are just an NGO, and we don't have the full picture of how the administration works, who can affect what.

D: One thing that came out of this is that the Komēta festival is known across all departments now, and we feel that the ice has broken, and we have more personal relationships with people.

TD/LK: Let's look at the future. In Riga, you are in a very strong position because you have the Danish Cultural Institute based here and the Riga City Development Department has had a great learning curve with this project. The Hubs of Cultural Planning will

also have a hub in Riga. An obvious future scenario could be that the new financial tools of the city could foster the merging of social, cultural and urban actions and there may be an open call for projects. It is evident from this project that there is a lack of resources for renovating and inhabiting spaces. Cultural funding cannot cover such costs, and this is essential for organisations like Komēta and Free Riga. Lengthening funding periods should also be considered.

So the question is whether continuity is on the shoulders of Riga City or is it up to Free Riga and yourselves?

K: The biggest need moving forward is the need for a mediator, and here there is a potential role for Riga City as a mediator, but the communication remained on a formal level, and the stakeholder group didn't serve this mediation purposefully either. We are ready to focus on activities or visioning. We unconsciously took the role of mediation, but we failed. This should be done by a professional.

TD/LK: Yes, these complex relationships are often with owners,

communities, stakeholders, and local competing interests. Parallels can be drawn with Free Riga and the mediation process they often required when entering new "territories". There are future possibilities within the local neighbourhood centres, which are being created now. Perhaps they could have a facilitator role. But how do you see your own role in the fortress? Are you looking at another way of structuring your own organisation?

K: At the moment we are really considering the future of the festival as an organisation. What kind of events we can do and in what way. Because we started all of that in 2016 to create attention around the fortress and help BG. But we need to get some kind of space there to make it more sustainable.

D: We have reached a point where we feel like we need to take a break from the logistical efforts we have to take every year to make the festival happen.
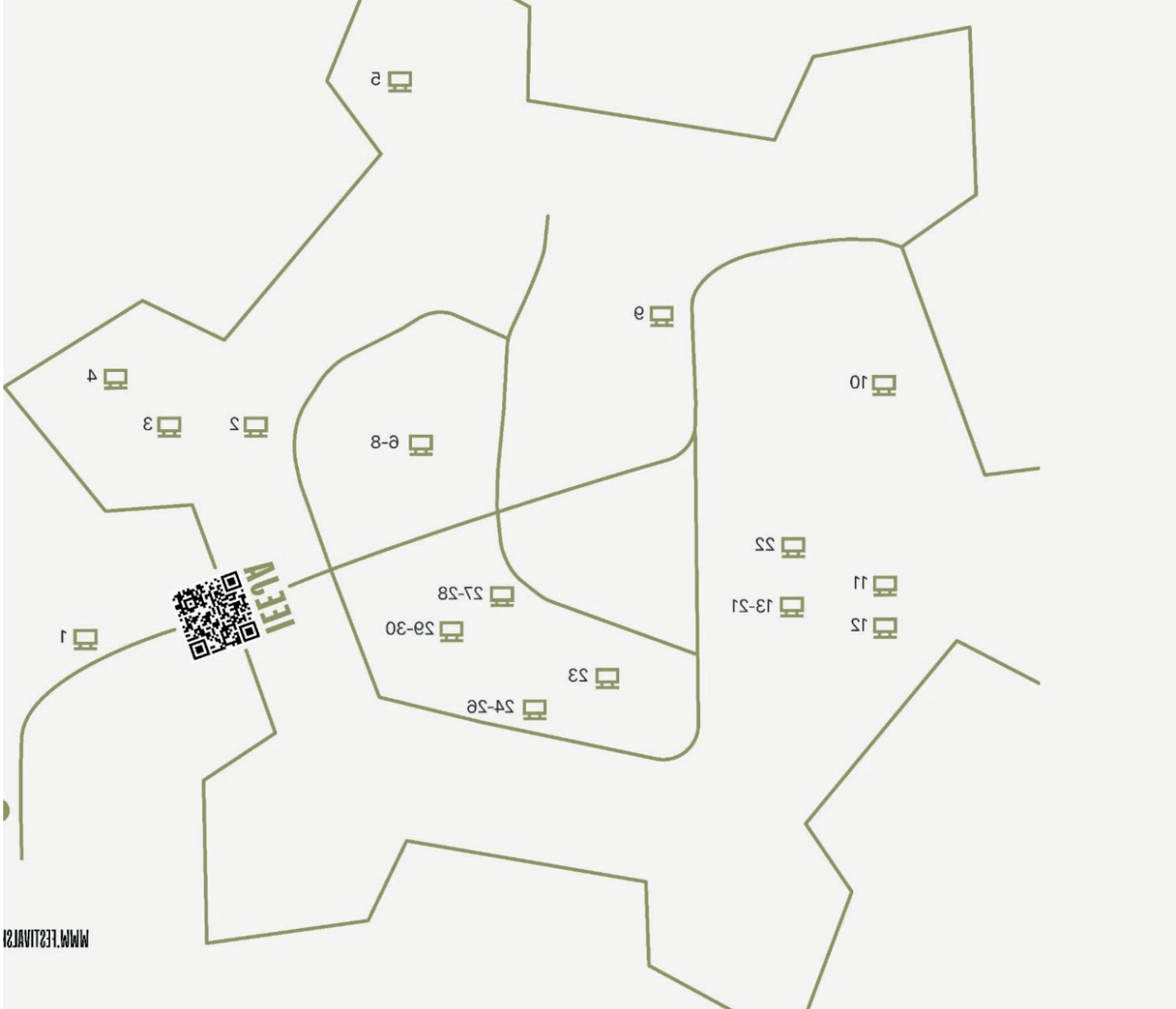
M: One also needs a 10-year plan of the project one is working on. If we are always unsure of the next year, it is very draining, and it is hard to plan. It feels like every year, we have to knock

on the same doors and convince the same people that this is valuable.

K: In terms of Komēta as such, there have been different ways to go. We could have also gone a more commercial route, agreeing to put up sponsor's banners, but that was not the way we wanted to go, and it wasn't appropriate for the fortress.

TD/LK: The overload of commitment on your side is clear. There is an overload of structural, political, environmental, community and cultural commitments you have taken on. There are so many stakeholders and ideas around this fortress. You have tapped into a public issue, and a public response is absolutely necessary. What you should do now is to take a step back, say ok, guys, we have gone as far as we can go with the support we have had. We have invested this much. And now we have to talk about another contractual relationship. Or we just find another interesting site to work in.

D: We are going to publicly discuss this. We will make this photography exhibition of 5 retrospective years. We will announce that we are stopping and will list the reasons.

TD/LK: You have so much evidence that there is potential and possibilities in your actions. Perhaps it is good to say that you don't mind being part of a partnership in the future. You can say that you can afford to take a year off because you are investing money rather than profiting. There is huge respect for what you are doing, and maybe not many people understand what it takes.
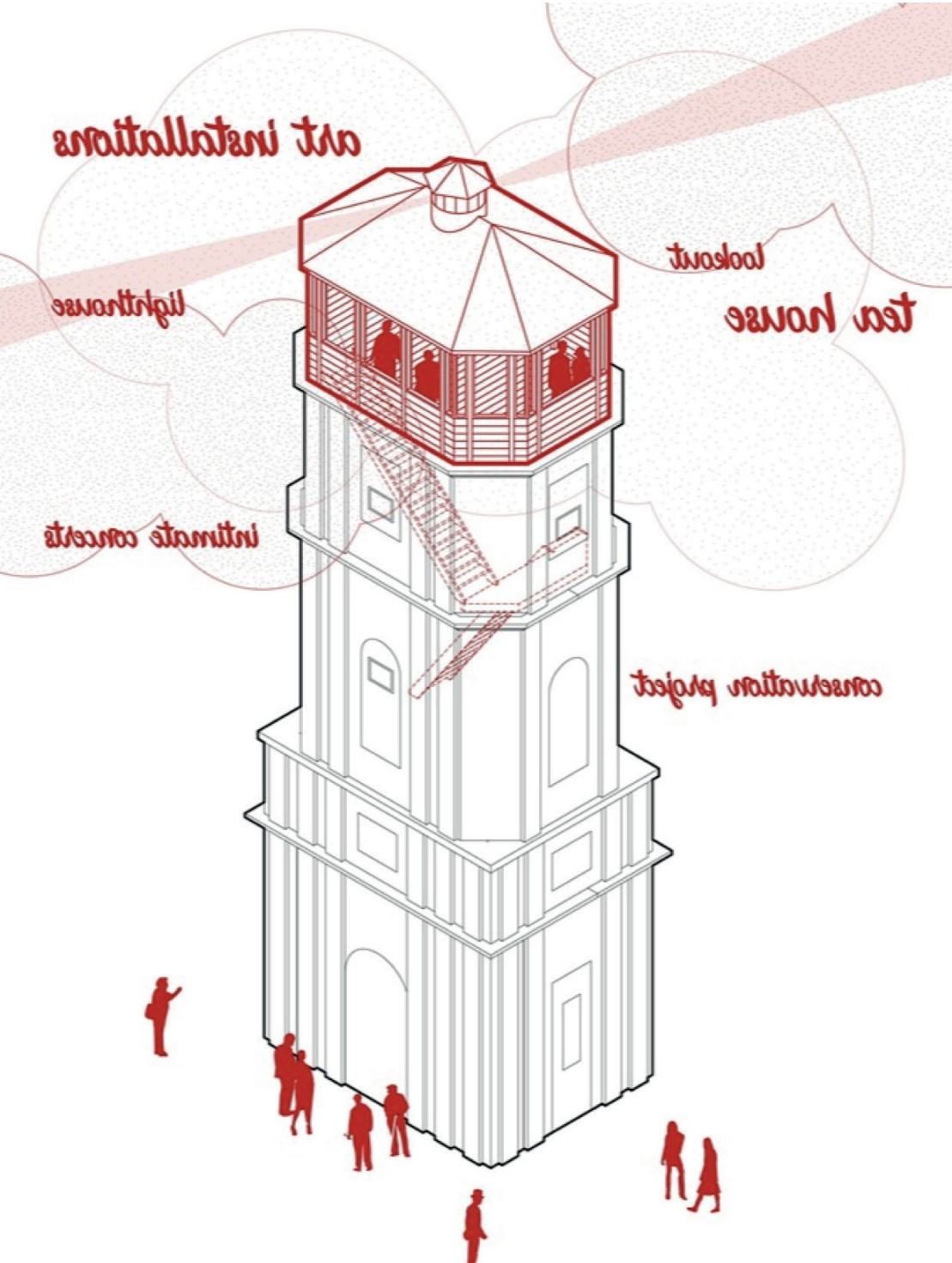
K: We have had calls from Possessor, the real estate company temporarily in charge of the fortress, asking us if a certain event would fit in the fortress. We were quite confused about why we were asked about this, but I guess for some people and organisations, Komēta is the key stakeholder in the fortress for some people and organisations.

TD/LK: If you formulated a new manifesto, which would include your needs, what would it include? We have agreed that the first aspect is that long-term funding tools are important, so you can plan at least a little bit ahead. A second aspect could suggest that the city could separately fund an open day where there are lots of activities around

the public spaces and social interaction, which would show a clear partnership.

K: One of the biggest needs is a clear ownership status, and we could urge Riga City to take over the fortress. If the fortress were owned by the state, then the municipality would have difficulty investing anything in the state-owned properties. Furthermore, the neighbourhood level activities might suffer because of that. The fourth aspect is the need for permanent space for Komēta in the fortress. The fifth is the call for action from Possessor because BG currently cannot even apply for funds to renovate or stabilise some parts of the fortress, because Possessor will not give them the permission to do this, but at the same time refuse to act themselves. Finally, some fortress buildings have asbestos in the roof, which is actually toxic and should be removed by law.

TD/LK: Interestingly, many basic things need to be done there before anyone can do something there sustainably. This isn't only about you and festival Komēta.

KASPARS LIELGALVIS

Team leader for
the Sarkandaugava
demonstrator project

Organisation:
Free Riga/ Totaldobže

Neighbourhoods engaged in:
Sarkandaugava in Riga, Latvia

PROJECT FRAMEWORK
SUCCESSES AND LEARNINGS
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TD/LK: It was unusual for Free Riga (FR) to work without a space in this project, as they usually inhabit an empty property and then create a community around it.

K: It was unique for FR to work without a space within a community. Usually, the space would be an anchor. We didn't have a practical interest to work with the community as we weren't stakeholders. We came in as moderators and had a neutral position. We also weren't viewed as the municipality. Alija Turlaja, a former local community leader, was a huge help and opened many doors for us. Because of her, we weren't regarded as complete aliens who were not to be trusted. It was also important that we had a mandate from the municipality.

TD/LK: This change of perspective, the shift from managers of property to managers of process. It was probably a challenge, but has it strengthened you?

K: Definitely. There was also a shift of scale. We had never worked on a neighbourhood level.

TD/LK: We expected that the larger organisation of FR would be involved in this project and help FR formulate their working model better. However, the process unfolded differently. Only a part of FR was engaged in this process and learned the methodology. However, you have successfully created a formula that could help future matchmaking processes between spaces and people. This methodology has also spread around Europe through the temporary use network STUN, but do you think FR will also adopt it?

K: I don't know about FR. I am not formally part of the organisation anymore. But because of the STUN network, which FR is part of, I think it will mirror back to them anyway. The last meeting we had with the stakeholder group was a step forward to engage City Council in this methodology.

TD/LK: Yes, it would be helpful for them to find out who is out there and who needs what.

K: Within the project, the methodology we developed around a cultural

newspaper could potentially lift FR operations generally and act as a service, which could be offered to the City or developers. A service of "feeling the pulse of the city". Mapping people's needs and resources through an open community newspaper, gathering people, facilitating idea generation, creating pilot projects and eventually gathering a community that has ideas and is ready to inhabit and appropriate a space – a solution to a problem FR has always been facing, which is how to gather active and interested people to inhabit an empty property.

TD/LK: Do you believe in this methodology? Would you continue working with it?

K: Yes, I believe in it, but I still don't have sufficient proof or concrete evidence that this neighbourhood newspaper method can work every time. I don't have the resources to document how it works as the second questionnaire and newspaper were not completed. So the next step would be to really test the model with resources, which would allow us to understand if and how it works as a format.

I don't mind who does this, FR, Urban Institute, Totaldobže or Riga City itself, and I would be open to a consultative role for the city. But unfortunately, there are no current programs that apply for this kind of process.

TD/LK: For FR, two scenarios can be sketched out in the post process. One is the property-based approach, and the other is a socially and network-based approach. Perhaps the organisation can have both arms and work parallel.

K: There is thus a competition format for financing cultural activities in Riga. One needs typically to tailor the application to the theme and brief of the city, but this project experience with Riga City Development Department offered a new way to work together. Normally open call processes have a heavy bureaucratic burden, and one has to account for every receipt. This 3-year contract was built differently and gave organisations more freedom and flexibility. So instead of an open call for cultural activities, a procurement process for a product or service which organisations can deliver would be great.

TD/LK: A format of microgrants could be tested out when sending out the newspaper(s) and creating the first citizen forums. This would fit very well with the new participatory budgeting structure in the city because there are often problems with people not knowing that it is happening, not knowing how to apply and not having the right ideas. This could help prepare the ground for higher engagement and more integrated projects.

K: For example, Irina's mosaic doesn't demand much money, but it does need some! And very often, people cannot write the applications.

TD/LK: And here, the cultural facilitator would help with that.

K: And that was the initial idea. We described it in the newspaper. The idea was to create a cultural platform through which people could realise their ideas. So I am really happy to have been part of this project because this cultural activation of the neighbourhoods is much more interesting and valuable. We are now starting mappings in Jugla, Čiekurkalns, Teika and Mežparks

districts. Riga City Cultural Department is funding this process. One could say that the UCP project results helped us secure this funding. We plan to publish a newspaper with a map of Jugla with all cafes, hairdressers and other local cultural facilities. We will put the questionnaire centre page, so everyone can take it out and put it on the wall.

TD/LK: This is undoubtedly a service that the private sector also needs. Also, it is interesting to think about how to connect this to the newly created neighbourhood centres.

K: There is also Realto, a property development agency developing a former industrial site in Jugla. We would like to start a process where the Riga City Council is not the only source of income for such activities. I wish that local entrepreneurs would also engage.

TD/LK: It is a good approach, but it is also essential for you and the city to acknowledge that you are doing the city's work. It is not a contribution to a private enterprise, but you are taking a public role.

K: But I want to give the private sector an emotional attachment and feeling of being part of the local community.

TD/LK: You could also do that in other ways. You could ask for support for specific elements, such as access to a printer, meeting space, paper, etc. if the city is serious about the 58 neighbourhoods and about identifying people to their communities and the narratives. It would be a massive shift to be able to engage in just a few neighbourhoods every year in the same way. These activities signal the importance of engagement, participation, a democratic process, etc.

Let's look at relationships in the process. Did we meet your expectations? Was the project what you expected it to be? Is there anything you hoped for and was not achieved?

K: I liked the freedom, freedom to work out our ideas. I appreciated that you listened and didn't try to change but helped us find out the best way forward. You really dived into what we proposed, making us believe that we were on the right track. The length of the project

was great. The artist residencies were great. I feel like we have closer and closer relations with Institute for X, and I really want to develop this in the future.

TD/LK: What about the city? Did you get the connections and the support you thought you would?

K: I was expecting to have more consultancy. I was expecting more interest in what we are doing. The support from Jānis Ušča and Guntars Ruskuls individually was great, however. I did like the structure of the project. I liked that it was separated into stages, such as mapping, visioning, designing etc. It was tiring to do the reports, but actually, it helped a lot. The same goes for the presentations for the stakeholder group. I did three different presentations, really trying to explain everything. It helped me to structure my own thoughts. But the ideal situation would be that when you present something you have put so much effort into, there would be some constructive response.

JĀNIS UŠČA

UrbCultural planning project
Riga work package manager

Organisation:
Rīga City Council City
Development department

Neighbourhood engaged in:
Sarkandaugava and Bolderāja
in Riga, Latvia

▬▬▬ **PROJECT FRAMEWORK**
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TD/LK: You were the link between the operative (in our project, these have been the artists, NGOs, museums and individuals) and the administrative (in this case - Riga City). Riga City was the only one that formally outsourced the demonstrator project production. Some of the places used their structures, for example, in Kiel, but you chose to outsource this.

J: At first, there was a perspective that our role would be different. We thought we would drive this process, choose the neighbourhood, do the cultural planning and develop new competencies in the department, and have a learning process within the department. We understood that we are talking about social innovation, and the basis of that is the co-operations between different sectors and giving functions to other sectors. It was very much inspired by the 3-way model of the municipality - cultural drivers - citizens. We knew we had to find new ways to co-operate in not a top-down manner. Because of procurement processes, we decided to have one contract over the three years with the organizations. The organizations

were free to decide on how to use the resources. This was much easier than employing the experts in our team and creating procurement procedures for every production position.

TD/LK: It is excellent you have avoided unnecessary bureaucracy, have given obvious responsibilities to the actors in the process and built new relationships.

J: We didn't build the contract around one fixed result. It was designed around the process methodology we set out - mapping, visioning, designing, implementation and anchoring stages. We didn't ask them to deliver some specific results or aims. It was more process-related.

TD/LK: That is interesting. It is good that the result isn't fixed, but only the stages they have to go through in terms of methodology are fixed.

J: The negative aspect is that to keep our idea of the contract simple, we had to make just one contract. COVID-19 impacted the situation, and we couldn't be flexible.

Other negative aspects – our roles were as co-ordinators of the process, and we passed the ownership of projects to the NGOs. We would have wanted to be more strongly involved, but, on the other hand, we fully supported them in any way possible. We perhaps would have been more involved if we had a clearer idea of the final product, but we didn't have that knowledge as the project has also been a learning experience for us.

TD/LK: It was interesting that the "cluelessness" helps keep the processes open in many cases. The Riga City Cultural Department wasn't so active, and you didn't have many links, was this disappointing for you?

J: Formally, they were part of the project, they were invited, and they participated, but we didn't push them to be fully engaged. It is important how to frame it. I would do it differently the second time and try to find ways to involve them more. To do that, we need to understand that the departments might have specific roles and responsibilities. I would try to

understand how this method can help reach a certain organization's aims and only then approach. The general understanding of cultural planning is there. Departments in the City are referring to this project - the welfare and cultural departments are referring to this project. The value of this is that the negative term of instrumentalization of culture is now being understood as a broader understanding of culture.

TD/LK: One of the difficulties with this process approach is that there is no key activity or product. Maybe in those situations, if one is outsourcing it, there needs to be a more curated approach to what the possibilities are.

J: Perhaps. None of them had experience working directly with Riga City Development Department before, so we spent some time building trust. But, on the other hand, we were in a position where we also didn't want to be too demanding and directing. We wanted to be more like partners so that the operators don't feel like we are pushing our agendas.

TD/LK: It is interesting because you come from a department that focuses on a physical product. Do you think it is also the question of whether a Development Department is the one to work with this approach?

J: We are dealing with quite a lot of processes as well, not only with infrastructure. It was a very valuable experience for me how to work with different fields. From the perspective of social innovations, I see myself and the department as part of the project.

It would have been really good if also the mentoring from the KIT side would been more active.

TD/LK: We could have followed a bit closer, but the ideal is a balance because we have received feedback that it was great not to have someone watch over every move. However, since we didn't meet so often, during the meetings we did have, we concentrated on the large concepts, like relationship with the city and strategic policy questions, which then again is a bit too abstract for them if they are at that time dealing with project

production problems. If COVID-19 didn't happen, the dynamics would have been completely different. Would you advocate for this process in other social/urban situations? Do you feel like you have more and stronger evidence, or has it opened up more weaknesses?

J: We have gained some experience. This project gave us time to explore this from many perspectives. Yes, definitely, there are ways we can use it in Riga. It is not a universal method. There are some specific situations where you can use it, for example, when you need to redefine or reinvent a place or neighbourhood. Then this method is very good from that perspective because it goes through the stages of mapping of cultural resources, looking at the local values, and that is the really important part of the method. We wouldn't use it in places where the direction of development is very defined. It is more applicable in places where the identity is unclear and the community is not that active. What we are thinking, we have the initiative to develop a new concept, "Community-led neighbourhood development", and we are discussing including cultural perspectives within that. Regarding

the format, I am not sure about outsourcing. To do that, one needs a strong collaborator. This project gave us time and resources to experiment. Still, to do that systematically, we need to know that the partner and us can deliver a consistent value together. I am not sure that the municipality would drive the process. My colleague has been working with rural communities before. They are using community-led development a lot. We had the idea that she could integrate this into the work of the city of Riga.

TD/LK: There is another take on this question. These 2 NGOs who participated in UCP were already working on these kinds of projects before. One could imagine inviting other cultural institutions that work with social and urban issues in their own projects. It is about finding out how cultural NGOs can be supported in being more active in civil society so that they don't think that their cultural responsibilities are just within their own institutions. Still, every platform offers the possibility to talk about social and urban benefits. It is not

about outsourcing projects but seeing an organization's activities as benefits in urban transformation and sharing the responsibility with them. In a way, it might stimulate the participation of strong, anchored institutions in society to take public responsibility. It is a different perspective, rather than outsourcing a project. It stimulates strong organizations to continue their work and take on a more socially oriented role.

J: I agree. From the Mid-term City development programme's perspective, we are thinking about it as well. We are rethinking the financial instruments we have at the moment, for example, extending funding from one year to two-year projects or updating grants so that these kinds of activities are supported. Within that, bringing different social groups together could be supported by cultural activities.

Another aspect is that we could certainly work with our existing institutions within the neighbourhoods in the future, such as libraries, schools, and cultural centres. For example,

Līva Kreislere

we have 30+ libraries in Riga. These institutions could certainly open up more. Here comes to mind the good experience from Guldborgsund, where the municipality involved the local schools. I see potential in those kinds of activities here as well.

TD/LK: One redefines the public sphere, you do what you know, but you go outside your remit. This fosters the creation of new typologies for cultural institutions, which is definitely needed.

J: Yes, more functions for them, involving and giving spaces to NGOs and the third sector. I like this idea, and it is actually very needed for us.

TD/LK: Do you think we managed to harness the international potential as a project? Did we maximize the flow and links between places and people?

J: All of the partners were very informed about different local contexts, but if we actually look from the perspective of creating networks that work and support each other - I am not that positive. We were building a Baltic Sea Region integrated community, which Interreg aims for, so I believe we did that. But, on the other hand, if we look from the demonstrator project perspective, I don't think a real network was developed.

TD/LK: It is probably very individual. Post project meetings show encouraging signs that people want to continue working together and carry on.

J: Regarding Bolderājas Grupa, they were not that active before the project. However, they have become the real owners of the place. They are active, and we involve them in various planning meetings regarding the area. In Sarkandaugava, the model Kaspars has developed has real value, and I will support it to my best possibilities. However, I think it should be tested on a larger scale and with bigger

intensity. A big outcome of this project is how we understand the culture. It was new for me. I actively put those perspectives into the administrative work as well. We put that perspective in a mid-term development program. It is the basis to rethink the grants and financial mechanisms we have. The cross-sectorial approach was highlighted in this project, and it has value. We are actively looking into how to bring that more into our work.

ALIJA TURLAJA

Sarkandaugava neighbourhood
activist and a member of
Riga City Council

Organisations: Rīga City Council,
Sarkandaugava neighbourhood group,
Riga neighbourhood alliance

Neighbourhood engaged in:
Sarkandaugava and Bolderāja
in Riga, Latvia

PROJECT FRAMEWORK
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TD/LK: The neighbourhood level was the absolute premise for the project. This concept of neighbourhoods is also very key for you. Is that still a central element and perhaps even more so during these times? Or is it the central element in rethinking how cities might be transformed, maintained, and created and how one can create a stronger participatory element? Is it still as important? And when you define neighbourhoods - what is a neighbourhood for you, and did we find in this project relevant neighbourhoods, or should we have looked in other places?

A: It is a very good sum-up of the situation where we are at the moment regarding the notion of neighbourhoods. Do we understand neighbourhoods as formations of activist groups demanding a change, or are we passed a threshold where we are giving services to the city? Because when I started with the neighbourhood movements, it was mostly about putting ourselves on any kind of map and saying hello, we are here. Still, now since the city has noted neighbourhoods as a crucial part of the territorial plan and is

active, including neighbourhood groups in discussions, we ask ourselves: Did we achieve what we wanted, that we are included? Are there still some gaps that these processes couldn't fulfil. Yesterday we, as Riga City, approved the territorial plan. This plan took 6 or 7 years to complete. When I was still a neighbourhood activist, I remember meetings where I could write a work plan for this kind of plan. Yesterday, some people were invited from other neighbourhood organisations, and they said that they asked around on the street if anyone knew about the public hearings on the territorial plan. Only one of 30 people responded that they knew anything. For those working close to the city – the information level is high, but if we look at the general public, it is really hard to reach them. It is a difficult subject to engage people in. If six years ago, the capacity of the neighbourhood organisations had been as strong as it is today - we would have more involvement generally. The territorial plan would be on a different level. We (as neighbourhood activists) would be on the middle level, translating the hard-legal language.

But due to limited resources, what ends up happening is that activists are directly engaging with the city rather than translating the language, gathering information and then feeding it to the city. Neighbourhood organisations are now questioning themselves and understanding that they want more. Riga City understands that they cannot invite every organisation to all the meetings because activists are volunteers and have their own professions. Hence, start understanding that this is almost a profession. We ask ourselves if this active community work should be funded. This has been an ongoing discussion for the last four years, and now it's just becoming more and more real, because now we have six paid people as city neighbourhoods' organisers (leaders of the six new neighbourhood centres), but they are not coming from grassroots. They have good process practices, and they are engaged, but their background in working with and in communities is just not there. This shows that these positions should be paid, and this is where we are heading, but I wonder - when it will be enough for these neighbourhood activists?

TD/LK: Now, there are several new formalisations and integration of these communities in the official political structure. Still, it allows you to review and update and reformulate what kind of competencies and roles these people might have. It's really good to put together new teams and retrain and reequip these people to take a new role all at one time. You have a chance to create a new generation of thinking. This could be a good time to strengthen these new intermediaries. It could be a great program to put them through some kind of learning courses experiences.

A: Last summer, the neighbourhood alliance organised a round table discussion about *what does it mean to be active*. The activists said they need counselling, as often they feel like they are burning out. We participated in a conference about citizen involvement, and one of the key outcomes was understanding that involving citizens costs money. So we cannot just say *we want to involve citizens, and neighbourhood activists will help us*. Rethinking activism and rethinking cooperation strategies. Are we ready to

pay for a process of citizen involvement? Currently, we put an x amount of money in participatory budgeting to fund neighbourhood improvement projects. Still, we need to put the same sum of money towards getting these ideas materialised and involving people. But now we don't do it. We expect that people with their jobs and salaries will be doing this on their own initiative. To create a real participation process, one needs to spend as much on the processes as one gives to implement the projects. Are we ready to pay for this? Moderators costs, organising round tables cost etc. We cannot just rely on active neighbourhood activists.

TD/LK: This middle ground between the professional sector and the formal political system and what we call neighbourhoods, which are based on volunteerism, activism and so on, is interesting because the neighbourhood activists are taking over some tasks from the city. Activists also need to learn about the city's new systems and navigate them. This is a middle ground where the questions arise - who is paying for what and who is taking on responsibilities. Are we calling activists professionals? Are activists

paid? Are you aiming at this being the third sector? Or is it just something to fill the gap between the voluntary, the civil, the political, the paid, the experts. Are you developing a new model of how we are organising society?

Because at the moment, the pressure on these new neighbourhood structures is coming both from the political system (they want you to do something). It is also coming from the activists (they are fed up with using their time and are tired and want to be valued and recognised). It creates pressure from both sides, which might block the whole process and come to conflicts instead of finding solutions. In this transitional phase, you might risk that this becomes counterproductive because, as you said, you will have to use twice as much money on the programs. The other model we talked about in this project, UCP: We tried to look at communities rather than neighbourhoods and disassociate communities from neighbourhoods because neighbourhoods became very territorial and representative. But here, we tried to look at communities around a festival, a university, an

interest, a theatre, likes, and projects. This is another way of looking at this. So there are two ways of working with this idea of engaging people. One is the sense of community, and one is the sense of neighbourhood. One is not better than the other one.

A: We, neighbourhood activists, who work with territories, acknowledged that we tend to work with large social groups, and we tend to exclude minor social groups, seniors, youngsters etc. It depends on what the leader thinks and likes. If they are into sports, they will do a lot of outdoor activities. If they are into culture and arts, they will concentrate on that, but forget other things. So some groups within the territorial approach might be left behind.

TD/LK: It is understandable if it is an add-on if it is over and above the normal concerns, the programs, but if it is the main point of departure, one has to think transversally, very inclusively, which again is an issue. Regarding the scale, it is interesting

because if we are talking about 58 neighbourhoods, we are talking about 10 000 people in a neighbourhood approximately, which is quite small.

A: Territorial approach is good for pride and connection to Riga, but the neighbourhoods are different in their shapes, sizes, and resources. Each neighbourhood has a different core issue.

TD/LK: That is also good because that is how you create an inclusive and very diverse city. If you are thinking of neighbourhoods, they have to be organic neighbourhoods. And you cannot have everything in each neighbourhood, which is also about having enough synergy within the city that people move for services and resources, events etc., which creates a healthy mix.

A: I see gaps in youth involvement. We don't tackle the loneliness issue in our society. But this territorial discourse speaks to me very much.

TD/LK: In this picture, you are painting. Is there a role for the kind of programs this UCP project is proposing? This might be a methodology or approach, which builds on this, but it is different. It is based on opportunities that some people have formulated. In this case, it can be festivals, cultural institutions, activists, and cultural projects. Is there space for this kind of initiative in your kind of model? How do you see the current Riga City models in relation to these kinds of initiatives?

A: I would divide it into two parts. One would be that the cultural planning I see used on a specific issue, in a specific part of the neighbourhood, for example, a territory where it is hard to use other tools. CP could be a good tool to start a discussion and link people from different interest groups. For example, a territory which is still very central, everybody knows it, but no one knows what to do with it, then we use CP and suddenly people, who always thought about it, start to relate to it. More concentrated approach to resolving a complex territorial or social issue.

TD/LK: The risk of this approach is that you only delegate culture or creative

approach to marginal situations, where the integrated social and political approach doesn't work. One could look at it in another way, which we thought was quite obvious in this project regarding the festival Komēta, which wouldn't want to see itself as a nomadic bubble with people from Riga centre who want to have a good time for five days. But to have another impact on the community. Can it strengthen the sense of building and revitalising the community without becoming instrumental in a political way, but where is the interplay, and where is the potential? This is not because one says it is a neighbourhood approach, but there is certainly a neighbourhood dimension to what they were doing anyway, so there needs to be a guiding hand to link the neighbourhood to them. It is the same for the Free Riga approach with doing the newspaper. How do we not just do our own bubble activities, but how do we open up and be useful to the community. There is a huge potential to look at that dialogue - as positive actions. They are surplus energy ideas and not anchored not only in their own organisations but how can they be more anchored locally. And how to link them is the biggest opportunity we see in Riga.

On the one hand, you have quite a vibrant cultural scene. But, on the other hand, you have a great understanding of neighbourhood activism as such. So there is a great potential to connect these two ways of working.

A: The question is if local people recognise themselves in these activities. I think this link becomes more evident and obvious. I think it's a whole discussion about arts education, how we teach our children about art and how to see art. The New Theatre Institute brought Willy Doner's performance to Sarkandaguava. They asked us to get neighbourhood people to open their flats. People were so curious about how other people lived. This art was the basis to open up flats and get to know one another in an unusually intimate setting. The cultural planning tool is great for connecting people in new ways.

TD/LK: This kind of new interface where you deconstruct what you think of the neighbourhood, of private and public spaces, it all becomes meshed up, and you put new narratives onto a place, you reposition things. It builds trust and a sense that change is possible. These are the things

that the projects were hoping to do. Your example with the New Theatre Institute shows that there is a potential to create a new dialogue with other cultural institutions to view the public as a paying consumer and look at the neighbourhood as the stage. So this again is a question: how do you get the cultural and neighbourhood layer to interact. That kind of thinking would suit the times as more artists think like this. They have a more social, environmental, and humanistic approach and sense of responsibility.

A: It was good in our case in the Sarkandaugava demonstrator project when we did these walks. I organised the first walk. I already put the second and third ones on the calendar without great planning. I was surprised by how many people came. I guided the first walk. The rules were that there was no guide. We start from one point, and whoever knows anything about that place can speak up and then you continue in any direction anyone wants. After the first walk, people actively participated and guided the walks. I saw that it made them happy to be able to tell about their little local house. After that, every walk, the group became bigger and bigger.

TD/LK: As you said, it's important to go from following the walk to leading the narrative, and that is what we need as a society - new narratives. We need to be invited to do this, we need a process that allows it to happen, and we need to believe that it can happen. This project is about walking, but it might also be about other skills and resources, for example, making food or repairing houses. How to use that methodology of making something fun and inviting people to transfer that to become a workshop of ideas and possibilities to be a production of social innovation. This is the process. Central in this is the concept of time because it is a performative thing, a dynamic thing. We don't have time calculated in many of these equations. We lose this sense of change because from day 1 to day 10 of activity, there is a change, and that is basically what artists do. They start with nothing and end with something, so this idea to start with nothing and end with something is important.

A: Especially now, with COVID-19, this tool is great for coming back to people and building trust.

TD/LK: Looking at the model, which Free Riga tried, the newspaper. That was also something, which was really interesting, which asked if we could create a new kind of newspaper. This idea of getting people to trust. Do you think anything in that project learning is useful for you? Useful for how you might connect with people in neighbourhoods, creating a sense of wanting to work together, take something on, and take over.

A: The newspaper and the questionnaire definitely were great. A neighbourhood newspaper is something that I wanted to do myself when I started. It is great because one reads a lot about what happens in Riga, but not so much about the happenings in the local neighbourhood. What was new in this project was that no one had asked people what they liked and what they would like to have before. And then suddenly there is someone with these 100 questions, and one might think, oh, actually, I like collecting dolls. Then, of course, one doesn't think much about what will happen with that information later, but at least they feel like someone cared to ask.

TD/LK: It might also inspire people to dream. It might inspire them of what they might want.

A: The first forum we did was at the beginning of the pandemic, and I was sceptical. I thought that nobody would come, but even though four times fewer people came than we wanted to come, still, there were some people with whom we are in contact to this day. So I was surprised that this questionnaire raised an interest for them to come and talk about their interests. What we are lacking and what is not working - people cannot self-organise that well. So even though they want to do it, they still need someone who organises their hobby. Otherwise, the method was great.

TD/LK: Does that show a need for that kind of counselling? Or could this be a service someone needs to provide – counselling on setting up Facebook events, getting approvals for something, writing projects, and making budgets. The project we see submitted for participatory budgeting is only the tip of the iceberg from the ideas that were not materialised and submitted. So we need to understand that cultural enablers are needed to enable artists to work with more integrated approaches and how to help the community formulate and visualise their ideas and projects.

A: In the Netherlands, a city allocates a little grant to help people develop ideas, which are submitted for CITY LAB grants. It's a grant that helps you formulate the idea you have and put it in a formal structure, which you can actually hand in.

TD/LK: Another example from Gdansk is where they created a grant and invited people to come together, not as competitors. Each group was developing an idea, but they could drop their ideas and merge to work on others. In the end, they would continue working with one idea. What is important is that they created a neighbourhood Compass before this process. Through workshops SWOT analysis, they formulated for themselves what the brief is, what they wanted the local neighbourhood to be about, their values, etc. Then all the individual projects have to be responding to that Compass (brief). Then it is much easier to link projects down the line.

A: It is important how you ask the question. How we fail as a city - we don't ask what people want or what they think. We ask what exactly could be improved. And people have a hard time answering this question.

Everything? Or nothing? Now we have data, that 80% of people leaving the city is "not enough greenery". Next slide - what do you like about your neighbourhood - 82% answer - greenery. This is the fault in how we gather data. There needs to be a deeper conversation.

TD/LK: In Copenhagen, at the beginning of planning projects, they never ask people - what do you want. They know they will get the same answers. They say that they don't build anything permanent for the first five years, but they play around with identities, places, and symbols. Usually, these projects are negotiated so much that they lose a lot of character, but what is very interesting is the extremes, the differences. When you test something out for five years, people can start to defend that identity and idea, so it becomes permanent.

A: This reminds me of something we already did. I never realised this. In our first workshop for the square in Sarkandaugava in 2013, we didn't ask people what they wanted, but we asked what they wanted to experience. Then the designer translated not the ideas but the

feelings and references. People from outside don't know that the typeface references the neighbourhood's history or why we used a certain colour.

TD/LK: These built-in personal connections are beautiful. The artist working on the project in Denmark suggests a park near a school, where local school kids can choose their own individual trees to plant that reference them. These personal references create an intimate connection to the place and eventually a higher sense of belonging or ownership.

One of the criticisms of these kinds of projects is that they always end. Do you see that these two specific projects developed here? Do you see them as having any chance of survival? Can they be turned into something that is more sustainable?

A: It is a valuable process, connections, ideas, and tools someone could copy. For example, the newspaper. Kaspars left those five post boxes, so my neighbourhood organisation can do another questionnaire. We could take on this, or other neighbourhoods could take it on.