INCREMENTAL INNOVATIONS in CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

Report on the methodologies and results of implementing cultural innovations in different waterfront environments.

Developed by **Laimikis.LT** on the base of the materials provided by the I_Improve partners

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I_IMPROVE
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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this report is twofold: (1) to present a methodology that might be instrumental for cultural organisations in (co)-developing and launching new methods with the communities, and (2) to overview the results of implementing arts-based methods in cooperation with the waterfront communities.

The presented materials are based on the "I_Improve" (Erasmus+) project, launched in 2019-2021. It is based on the experience of 6 European organisations, experienced in conducting cultural and educational programs and activities: SPÖ Wiener bildung (Austria), Stad Oostende (Belgium), Venti di Cultura (Italy), Laimikis.LT (Lithuania), River//Cities foundation (Poland), Intercult (Sweden). The framework of the project was announced as "promoting audience engagement through culture, especially in waterfront areas. Its priorities are social inclusion, open and innovative practices in the digital area, and adult education".

This report combines the description of the **creative tool for mapping the resources of cultural organisations and exploring new methods** that could be used in their practice, and the analytical review of the innovative approaches (case-studies) that were adapted by the organisations that took part in the "I_Improve" project.

IMPROVING THE PERFORMANCE OF CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

Essential characteristics of cultural field

While typically organisations are oriented toward stabilizing and routinizing their work, cultural organisations usually find themselves in the position of catalyst of social innovations. This happens because of the fundamental characteristic that most cultural organisations share despite the difference in environments they operate at and different audiences they address their activities to. Being at the crossroads between sectors (science and technology, healthcare and protection of environment, arts and business, etc.), cultural organisations combine different approaches, adapt various epistemic and management models, synthesise and test new methods in various environments.

Openness for new experience and knowledge (zest for learning) is a fundamental characteristic of the cultural field. The joy of learning and implementing new skills is a

part of cultural work. It is usually led by **sensitivity** to the social, environmental, political, intercultural, and other contexts. As partners argue in the presentation of the "I_Improve" project, "while the cultural sector has the ability to engage with citizens, both established and newly arrived in the community, through cultural and creative interventions, there is a need for new practices and formats to develop this work within a changing European context". Many cultural organisations have built long-term relations with local communities, and it helps them to tackle the most vulnerable topics.

Openness to the new experiences and sensitivity towards changing contexts and societal challenges contribute to the **adaptability** to internal and external challenges, which is a crucial characteristic for any organisation or institution. It requires constant reflection and analysis, flexibility in adjusting the models of work and cooperation, ongoing analytical work and quick yet sensitive response to the challenges. It also involves experimenting with new approaches adapting them in the ongoing practice of the cultural organisations.

However, an experimental mode in which cultural organisations find themselves, requires a lot of energy and resources from the members. A position of the innovator brings a number of **insecurities**. This is also what most cultural organisations and practitioners in the cultural field share, despite the different environment they operate in. Some creative experiments may fail, while a development of participatory processes consumes a lot of personal energy and time, and sometimes with a small result. Besides inspiring shared purposes, **psychological safety** within organisation and in cooperation between organisations is an extremely important condition for driving the process of social innovations. Creators and innovators need time for researching, experimenting and testing the methods or other products.

We encourage the actors in the cultural field to look upon the developed methods as upon the products and services, which may help cultural organisations to sustain financially. **Sustainability** is crucial for small cultural organisations and to the whole cultural sector. It must be based on **respect towards intellectual properties**. Cultural and social innovations not only help to improve quality of life in communities and societies, they also may ensure financial sustainability of cultural organisations that develop and implement innovative solutions. It is useful to discuss within cultural organisations which develop and launch innovative methods and tools, the Creative Commons license -- for choosing methods of licensing creative work (there are six main types), depending on the product and the conditions you want it to keep it available for use and share. This discussion may raise awareness and sensitivity towards the

intellectual and creative inputs and solutions that other organisations, practitioners and artists make.

Cooperating with the artists and experts

In the context of the “I_Improve” project, although 6 participating cultural organisations operate in different environments and address their activities to different groups, they share the goal of learning and implementing creative approaches to their practice, by widening the range of their usual methods. Also, as it is pointed out in the description of the project, they seek to “foster the engagement in the arts and culture” in the communities. The project was announced as oriented towards the implementation of the participatory approaches in cultural organisations.

Within the project, the organisations cooperated with their local partners and “changemakers” -- the artists or professionals, experienced in the fields, which could deepen the understanding of social processes and to extend the range of methods within participating organisations. In the framework of “I_Improve” a changemaker was described as “an external creative practitioner who utilises innovative processes to heighten the audience's participatory engagement in the co-creation of artistic products that will be identified in each partner’s surrounding environment”. There are many ways of how cultural organisations learn from the changemakers: from the presentation and workshops to the active cooperation in co-developing a cultural product; the latter leads to the actual implementation of the new methods and approaches in practice.

In the framework of the “I_Improve” project, Venti di Cultura has cooperated with the developer of the board games “Studiogiochi” and with the artisan and Venetian cultural animator Marisa Convento; City of Ostend with Public Library of Ostend cooperated with Bruge-based “Foton” center that specializes in supporting people with dementia in a home-environment; River // Cities has cooperated with the experts in storytelling methods, Iwona Zając and Agata Gorska; Urban games and research Lab Laimikis.LT cooperated with the illustrator Inesa Jarkova to extend the possibilities of the story-telling; SPÖ Wiener bildung worked closely with the artist Karl Kilian for the co-design initiative; Intercult cooperated with the feminist art group Livet Bitch!, also inviting women artists and practitioners Liz Gardiner, Ts Beall, Dina Abu Hamdan, Gülbeden Kulbay, and an expert in the field of cultural planning, Lia Ghilardi, to present their approaches and insights about socially engaged art.

While for some of the mentioned organisations the cooperation with the artists / the expert was driven by the needs of the communities (people with special needs, communities leaders), for the others it was driven by the task to learn and adapt new approaches (story-telling, socially engaged art, co-design) or to bring transform the perception of the place (Venice Arsenal, banks of Danube canal). So, the innovation within the organisation may be driven by different motives; in the examples above we mentioned several ways of how re-examination of the typical methods and a need in adapting new methods occur:

- New audience (community) → search for a new method;
- New goal (change of environment) → search for a new method;
- Seeking for new resources of the organisation (its skills and methods) → search for a method;

Explore and adapt well-known principles and models

While seeking to improve their performance, the organisations that took part in the "I_Improve" project, have explored and adapted various principles and models, which can be inspiring in many contexts. These principles appeared to be useful for conceptualisation of the activities of the organisations, some of them may be applied for rethinking the role of cultural organisation and for deepening the understanding of the groups of people it works with. For example, while conceptualising the co-design process of "BenchMarking - Colours of ♥" initiative, during which everyone could become a designer of the bench and the place, a changemaker of SPÖ Wiener Bildung drew upon the principles of the artist Joseph Beuys:

> "Every human being is an artist who – from his state of freedom – the position of freedom that he experiences first-hand – learns to determine the other positions of the total art work of the future social order." (*For more see action blog at the partners blogs at "I_Improve" site, http://river-cities.net/river/in_action/8*).

City of Ostend and the Library of Ostend have explored the Business Model Canvas (by Alexander Osterwalder), helpful in analysing and further developing enterprises.
As they put it in their blog at the "I_Improve" site:

> "This method is quite straightforward really. You put yourself in the shoes of your customers. Try to visualise their daily routines,

> this way you create clear customer profiles. You try to map which elements in their life cause obstacles. Where could they use some support? You focus on the product/services your organisation offers and figure out how these could be a pain reliever or a gain creator for your customer. How can these pains be turned into gains? The more links / fits you can detect, the more potential your project has to succeed". (*For more see action blog at the partners blogs at "I_Improve" site, http://river-cities.net/river/in_action/7*).

The important step towards the innovation in the organisations is to apply the well-known models to the practice, which needs certain "translations" or adjustments. For the Library of Ostend, the "client" from this model are people with dementia, from the perspective of whom the partners seek to rethink the environment of the library.

In their turn, both River // Cities and Laimikis.LT examined the theory of narrative and storytelling techniques, adapting the ideas of Joseph Campbell and Alex Herring to the description of the journey of cultural organisations. According to A. Herring:

> "With the customer as hero, the brand's role is usually that of the "mentor" [...]. Think Yoda to Luke Skywalker, or Gandalf to Bilbo Baggins. The mentor's message is meant to encourage or empower the hero, to help him achieve something he didn't believe he could." (A. Herring "Using the Hero's Journey to Share Your Brand Story", 2015).

On the basis of these principles some useful practical exercises can be developed, which could help the members of the cultural organisation to deepen and synchronise their understanding of the processes they take active part in. Adaptation of the well-known principles and models for describing and discussing the context you and your colleagues are working with is already a creative experience, which can be fun to use in your organisation!

Play and experiment

Among the activities, which lead to cultural and social innovations and support the adaptability of the cultural organisations, are play and experiment. Hands-on approach is crucial for gaining new skills, as being involved directly in the creative process provides the understanding of the dynamics of the creative process and useful insights of how artists and other creatives work. Moreover, it usually provides lots of joy and other

positive emotions! Here are some exercises that “I_Improve” partners used at the partners meetings:

• To provide the understanding of how music connects to the memories (which was crucial for the project of the City of Ostend and Library of Ostend, in the center of which were people with dementia), our partners from the Library of Ostend proposed us *to recollect the music, a song, which associates with some vivid emotions (for example, with happiness), and to share the biographical episode, connected to that feeling*.

• To have an experience of co-designing the public space, SPÖ Wiener Bildung have *invited partners to sketch a design of a standard bench and then to color the actual bench,* which afterwards was installed in the public place.

• To provide the insights of how urban games can be used for promotion of the cultural heritage, Urban games and research Lab “Laimikis.LT” *has arranged an urban game in the cultural heritage site in Vilnius* for the Venti di Cultura team, who was in the process of creating a board game for the Arsenal in Venice. And in their turn, Venti di Cultura has arranged *a board game evening*.

These and other exercises in creativity work especially well when applied in small groups. For learning by doing, games, prototyping and playful exercises are the best way to gain new experience.

PARTICIPATORY APPROACH IN CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

Nowadays actors in the cultural sector share the idea that the development of participatory approaches are instrumental in cultural innovation as they create conditions for positive social change through creative activities. The involvement of the local communities or various groups of people, who are directly concerned by the result of the cultural work, into the co-design processes provide new perspectives to the

cultural work. However, it also brings many practical questions and challenges into the cultural work. And usually the most basic ones are less discussed. One of the most challenging questions is how to build a communication and trust relationship with the community you as a cultural practitioner or organisation cooperate with. Open cultural events themselves serve as a platform for the meetings.

To mention some of the formats for the events, used for the participatory processes, which are broadly used by the cultural organisations; most of them require a moderating practitioner:
- public picnics, collective cooking,
- co-design process, art installations,
- walks, photo-walks and audio-walks,
- sketching and drawing, also creating shared maps,
- collecting artifacts and objects related to the area,
- open air exhibitions, open improvisations (“open mic”).

This list, of course, is not finalized, and can be expanded, drawing on the experience of the concrete organisations. For example, urban games (Laimikis.LT experience), board game evenings (Venti di Cultura), music sessions (Library of Ostend) widen the list of participatory activities.

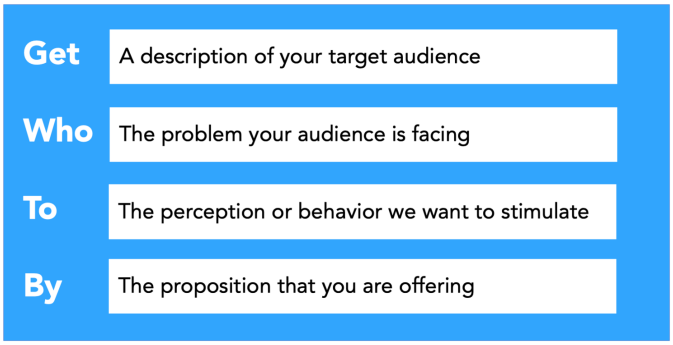
WORKSHOP FOR MAPPING CREATIVE POTENTIAL IN CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

At the late stage of the project, when partners already tested and implemented their local projects with their changemakers, we organised the workshop for innovative tools aiming to find a common structure for their methods.

The initial problem (which later proved to be an opportunity) was that each of us were dealing with a completely different set of given resources, target groups and goals.

To find a common ground for 6 different organisations and their methods we used a modified structure of **Get-To-By template** proposed by advertising agency BBDO.

Originally **Get-To-By** serves as a concise one line statement of customer-centric marketing strategy converted into a brief for advertising creatives.



Get(who) To By template served as an inspiration for our workshop for mapping creative potential in cultural organisations.

It starts with an insight from the target audience and cascades into the idea:
e.g., ***Get*** *2-3 years old children* ***who*** *don't like brushing their teeth,*

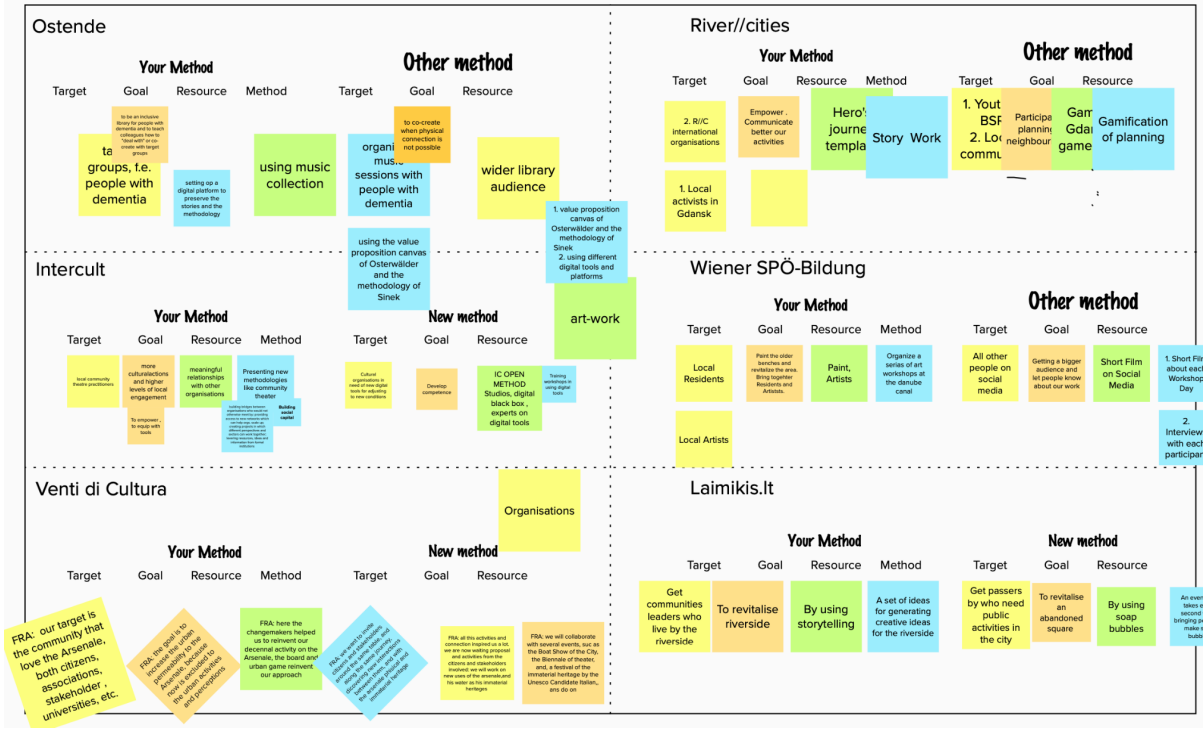
Define desired behaviour: ***to*** *use a toothbrush in the morning and the evening voluntarily.*

Describe your proposition: ***By(using)*** *a toy-brush that plays a tune while the kid brushes the teeth.*

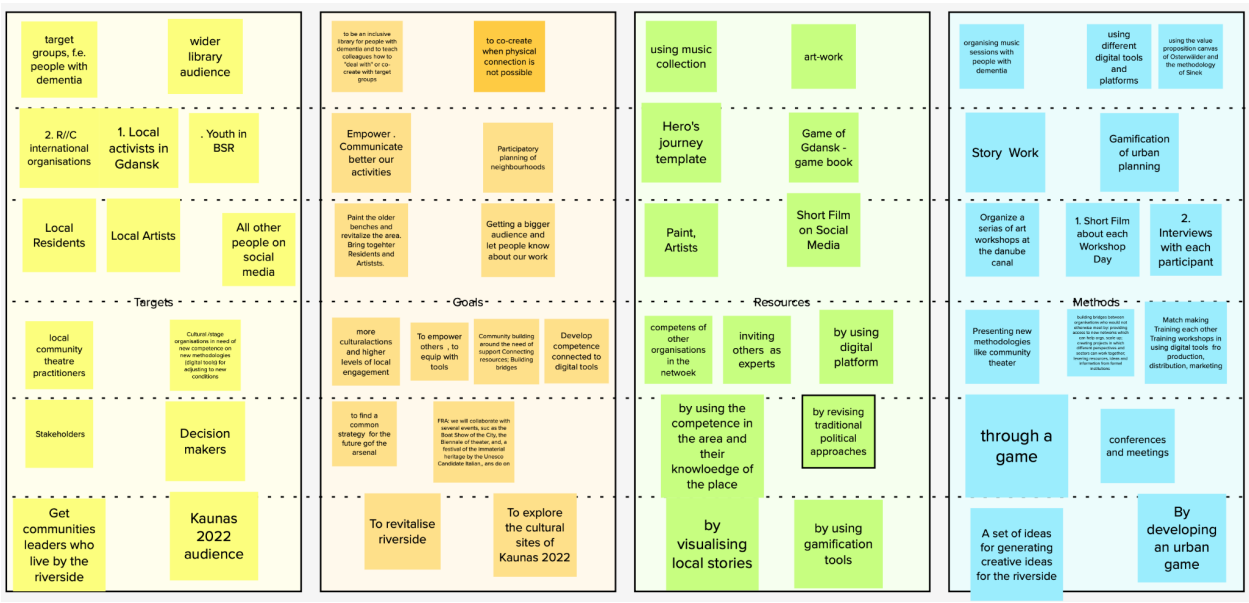
In the workshop.

The task for organisations was to deconstruct their methods into four blocks:

In the first stage of the workshop partners were sticking answers to the board divided into 6 sections. One for each partner. The variety of the answers was broad and emphasised the truth – we are all different and we work differently.



Later the blocks were grouped into sections by the blocks: targets, goals, resources and methods.

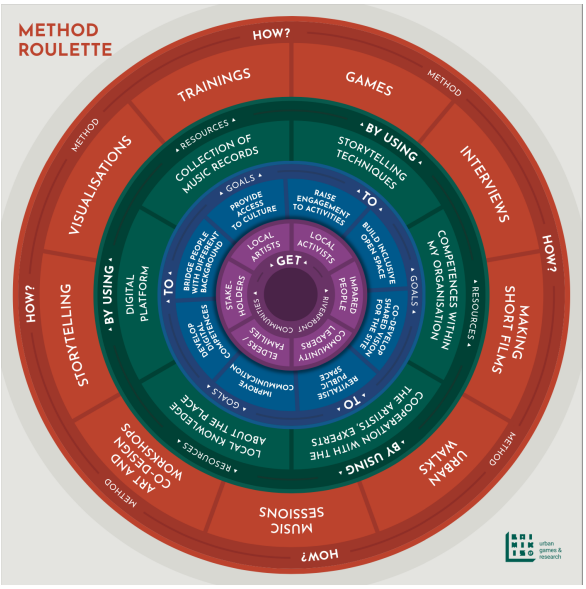


The final phase of the workshop was the test. We tried to imagine what would be if we used a different mix of target, goal, and resource.

This part proved that using at least three of the given elements e.g., target, goal and

resource you can brainstorm various ideas for the method.

METHOD ROULETTE -- A SIMPLE TOOL FOR CULTURAL INNOVATIONS



On the basis of the materials collected through the workshops with the partners, Laimikis.lt has developed a tool for mapping the potential of cultural organisations. It exists as a printed version, but also can be used as a diagram for the workshops with cultural organisations.

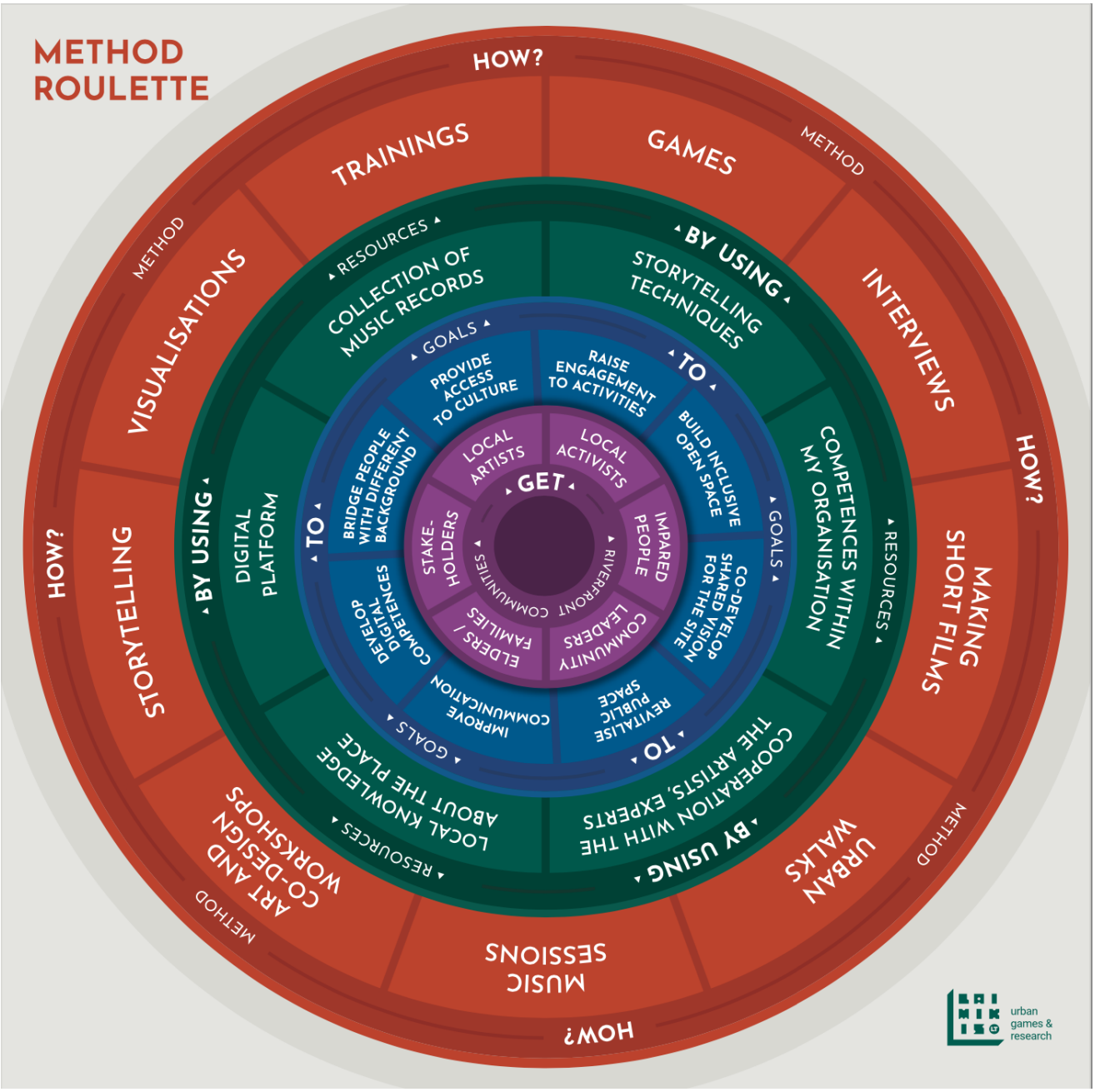
Method Roulette is a tool for cultural innovations that enables organisations to find out their hiddens resources and to create methods for cultural interventions. It helps to define targets, goals, and resources.

How does this innovative tool work?

It's like a game where you construct your own method by turning the roulette's wheels. Place a wheel on a flat surface in front of you. It's better to work in a team so everyone could contribute to the creative process. Try different combinations of wheel sections:

1. Choose your target audience (whom you address your activities as organisation).
2. Pick a goal (what you want to achieve in your activity).
3. Define the resources needed for this task (and find out hidden resources).
4. Lastly, test a new method in your practice.

Or you can start by defining your resources. Then picking a goal and the audience. And finally, finding out a method. The content of the Method Roulette can be adjusted according to the experience of the organisations that use it,



Idea

The innovation of the tool is a result of two radically different concepts blended together into one. 1) **Get-To-By** – A creative brief template commonly used in advertising was used as a structure for organisational method description. 2) and **Discomic,** a cardboard game from probably the 19th century, which works as a set of illustrations divided into 3-5 wheel segments and offers plenty of combinations.

Discomic: A solitary jumble game. Two discs that spin on a cardboard base and 500 combinations of figures to create.

Reference from "The art of pop-up and animated book" by Jean-Charles Trebbi.

CONCLUSION

Openness to new experiences, sensitivity to the changing contexts and societal challenges, and adaptability are among characteristics that most cultural organisations share, despite the different environments they operate in, and different audiences they address their activities to.

REFERENCES

In the report the images of the following designers and photographers are used:

1. Inesa Jarkova - cards designed for the "UPĖ - stories flow" game (Laimikis.lt), 2020
2. Vytis Vasiliūnas - design for the "Innovations wheel" (Laimikis.lt), 2021

Other useful links:

Author Rights and Copyright: Creative Commons Licenses // Bernard Becker Medical Library - https://beckerguides.wustl.edu/c.php?g=299583&p=2000864 (last check: 2021-06-24);

Appendix

The materials for the report were collected through the “I_Iprove” project, in several stages:

1. Reports of the partners on the development of the local projects;
2. Partners self-analysis on the base of provided profiles;
3. Questions-and-answer series;

Organisation	Community	Methods
City of Ostend in cooperation with Public Library of Ostend	People with dementia	Music based sessions
Venti di Cultura	Stakeholders and visitor of the Arsenale in Venice	Board game
Intercult	Theatre practitioners, wide audience	Webinars
SPÖ Wiener bildung	Users of public places	Co-design
River//Cities Platform	Local activists in Gdansk, members of local communities	Storytelling
Laimikis.lt	Communities leaders	Visualisation of the stories / ideas game