TOOLKIT OPEN CITY

Created by VT EVENTS part of

Open City Project

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Contents:

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INTRO

In this Toolkit the team of VT Events Organization is sharing information collected by the process of working with the local community of Varusha South Neighborhood in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria.

The shared information in this tool could be implemented in the work of other organizations who want to work with local communities.

OPEN CITY is a concept inspired by the idea of empowering local communities, and focuses on local residents as the most important participants in the change of neighborhoods and cities. The project researches and promotes innovative models of community development in 5 European countries.

In Veliko Tarnovo, the initiative is coordinated by the TaM team and the VT EVENTS association and focuses on **revitalizing the Varuša South quarter with the help of 40 local participants**. The project is implemented in partnership with Zentrum für interkulturelle Bildung und Arbeit (Germany), Project School (Italy), LEVDM (Greece) and Creative Ideas (Latvia), supported by the Erasmus+ program.

PROCESS
January 2021 The TaM team sent an open invitation to the residents of the "Varuša South" quarter to get involved in the "OPEN CITY" project.responded to the invitations, spread in our online channels and through posters in the quarter **42 souls**

participants were divided into five thematic focus groups: *Crafts and business; History and society; Experience and Public Wednesday; Entertainment venues*

and events; Architecture and Public Wednesday. Discussions in the focus group, led by Marijana Georgieva and the TaM team, identified important zones for the quarter:***Main street; Flatten into quarters; Kraybrezhna str..*** next step was the **mapping of the three zones**, which *gaps, potential and their attributes*.

During the whole time, the participants were encouraged to **dream together about events and minimal interventions for the improvement of the environment in the quarter of Varuša South.**

Starting in 2022 the team of TaM invited the participants to apply with their concrete and "Ideas for Varusha South" facilities. We collected 14 projects that the TaM team supported in various forms. 3 training sessions and meetings with experts were organized to help the participants realize their ideas. Topics include design thinking, history and experience told, placemaking.

1.Open Call for participants

What is Open City like?

"Open City" is a project that collects, analyzes and shares knowledge related to values and practices, helping to bring together the inhabitants of a given place. The initiative gives the participants the opportunity to acquire social and civic skills, important for the creation of sustainable systems for mutual assistance on a micro scale: a residential block, a street, a specific area of a selected quarter.

The goal of the project is to build/create a collective system for sharing physical spaces and skills, which will lead to the activation and/or re-organization of the social and cultural life of the chosen location. This sharing system includes artistic interventions in the form of real, long-term projects in aid of the quarter, created by project representatives (artists + social innovators, working together) for and in collaboration with local residents.

Why should I participate?

As a participant in the "Open City" project, you will be able to get involved in the process, which aims to actively involve the maximum number of residents of the Varuša South quarter, but also residents of other quarters of Veliko Tarnovo, who have an affinity and curiosity towards old town The collected information will be summarized in a visual-descriptive map, which will eventually be used to plan the next steps in the program.

In the period June - December 2021, the second stage of the project will take the form of lessons and workshops, led by professionals from various fields. During this meeting, the participants will have the opportunity to acquire new skills that will be useful to them both personally and in solving specific challenges in the quarter. The lecturers and topics of the lessons will be adapted to the interests and spheres of development of the participants.

The third and most exciting part will give you the opportunity to actively work on a series of cultural and social events, which are in direct response to the needs and wishes of the community, defined during the research of the quarter or mapping.

Questions you can use for the open call. Asking questions can help with a better selection of participants.

What is your name?

How old are you?

In which neighborhood of Veliko Tarnovo do you live?

In what area are your skills and interests?

What is your hobby?

Do you feel better working alone or in a group?

Do you prefer physical or intellectual activities?

Do you prefer to take responsibility in making management decisions or to work on specific tasks?

Do you feel more productive when working in a dynamic environment or in a calmer and more predictable environment?

What is your favorite place in the Varusha South neighborhood?

What is the place you would change in the Varusha South neighborhood?

Why do you want to participate in the project?

What do you expect to happen in this program?

What questions would you like to ask our team about this program?

How did you find out about the open invitation?

OPEN CITY - Part I

What is mapping (field studies)?
Open city begins with a field study. This is one very exciting and fundamental process, which regardless of the place in which I live, the sphere in which I work, or the causes to which we dedicate our free time, it is extremely important to know and apply.

Each of our actions, which we undertake based on an informed choice, has a relatively high chance of successfully realizing the set goals. It has been proven that, due to our geographical latitude, we tend to act emotionally and quickly, as we often fail to first listen and look around us. Let me promise each other that during the Open City I will take the time and learn from each other the subtleties of gathering information. Varuša Yug, people who visit the quarter or live there, will need it.

The purpose of the mapping (field study) is to identify existing resources in the quarter, to familiarize myself with its history and spirit, to listen and analyze the needs of the people who live there, to recognize the potential of the place. This is the foundation, on which I will step in the next stages of Open city. Research methods include observation, surveys with local choirs and visitors, document research, collection of archival footage, filming and mapping at important points (e.g. magazines, children's playgrounds). Depending on whether we are researching architecture or local businesses in the region, we can use other methods.

Principles of work
Voluntary
commitment
Informed
Follow
Respect

Fun
How will the process go?
Field studies in 6 different thematic areas. A working group will be formed for each topic. The choice to participate, in which it is from the group, is voluntary. Formed teams will have a meeting with the facilitator once a month. During the rest of the time, the group members will work on the topics of their study. The members of the group are free to assign the tasks themselves and to specify whether they are doing the group or each individual part of the research. There will always be a mentor available to the group.

The process will be divided into 3 steps.
1. Getting to know the group and the resources within it, creating rules for communication and interaction between members - 1-day training with a game for getting to know and forming the team. (March)
2. How to map the district and agree on roles for everyone when creating it - ½ day training. (April)
3. Our dream/vision for the quarter - ½ day training in attendance. (May)

Thematic groups and mentors
1. **Architecture and the public environment**
   Mentor: …..
   Research on the building stock of the quarter and the public environment.What are the needs of the people living in the neighborhood? . What can I change through informing the residents of the quarter?

2. **History and community**
   Mentor: …..
   General history of the quarter, interesting facts from the personal history of the residents of the quarter, what kind of history are we leaving for the future?

3. **Trades and business**
   Mentor: ….
   Mapping for local tradesmen and small businesses. Researched on technical models and accents. What is necessary in Varuša South to turn the quarter into a cluster zone for creative and entertaining business initiatives?

4. **Art in Urban Space**
   Mentor: ….
   Galerii, art in public Wednesday. What good practices are there in the quarter and how can they be better popularized?

5. **Education and work with children**
   Mentor: …..
   Studying the needs of a choir of all ages. Investigating places, observing knowledge, and the way in which we pass this knowledge on to younger generations. Where is knowledge hidden and who needs it?

6. **Entertainment places and events**
   Mentor: ….
   Varuša South neighborhood with its attractions in the past was an attractive place for meetings and social life. What attracted people to this part of the city and what is the current potential for consumption of food, drinks, dancing and other types of social events?

Expected results:

The work in the Waruša South quarter under the Open city project is a public process, which is directed to the greatest extent by the participants in it and by the results obtained during the mapping of the place. However, at the end of the project, the TAM team envisions the results to include:

- **The architecture of the quarter** to be carefully studied, rethought and concrete recommendations to be made, according to which every one of the residents of the quarter can help to preserve its authentic appearance.
- **Art in Public Space** to make it more welcoming by improving the unused area and informing the public how to use the hidden wealth more effectively, which all the residents of Varuš South have at their disposal.
- **Crafts and other small businesses** to get important knowledge about online and offline tools, with which they can attract more clients. Even more **artists** to recognize quarters and to find the right places and formats to show their products in the context of the city.
- That there are many **educational initiatives** aimed at all age groups.
- To establish a **regular cultural program** from a number of chamber events, which enliven the quarter all year round. To agree on the beginning

of the work process for the creation of one or more large and significant cultural formats, which will be a well-known brand of the Varuša South quarter and serve for it to popularize and attract a crowd that will come specially to earn them.

- **To be better neighbors and to have fun together**.

Mapping

MARIYANA GEORGIEVA

Mapping the need of the comunity:
encourages you to identify your community strengths

For example, it is possible that there are strong social ties in it, there may be many community organizations, probably there are many public buildings such as art galleries or sports halls, etc.

Some of the information may be collected from local authorities or other organizations and agencies. The mapping of the advantages is more than the counting of facts and figures, however important they are.

Through this process, you will discover the resources, activities and assets that already exist in the community that you wish to develop. You will learn more about what other members of your community (such as location, interests or topics) are looking to create and change. You will discover how to form new and expanding relationships that will allow you to make this change happen in ways that are more inclusive and democratic.

Creating a map is more than just collecting data and information. It is an instrument for development and empowerment. The process of discovering the hidden and potential advantages in the community creates new connections and new opportunities.

Advantage mapping is most effective when done by a group with an agreed upon goal. For example, if you want to increase support for families who pass away due to certain pregnancies, various organizations and individuals who have the possibility of support can clearly respond to this need. In this way, your community will heal its relationships and will multiply the existing resources and thus will help for better inclusion.

Proposed activities

In the ideal case, the mapping of assets begins with the settlement of volunteers, who map the assets of the community and individual individuals. Through this process, you will discover the resources, activities and assets that you already have.

You will learn more about what other members of your community (such as location, interests or topics) are looking to create and change. You will discover how to form new and expanding relationships that will allow you to make this change happen in ways that are more inclusive and democratic.

Creating a map or inventory sheet is more than just collecting data and information. It is an instrument for development and empowerment. The process of discovering the hidden and potential advantages in the community creates new connections and new opportunities.

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Here are the steps to conduct a community-led asset mapping exercise:

Step 1. Contact individuals or groups active in your community – from formal and informal networks and organizations. That's how you identify people who you can help with mapping.

Step 2. Through personal conversations and other contacts such as oral interviews and gathering stories, you can gather the resources and talents of individuals in your community. The choirs that are involved in the process, on their part, need to find another choir to help, and on their part - a third one, and map it in such a way that it covers as many choirs as possible.

Step 3. Identify the resources and strengths of local organizations, clubs and volunteers.

Step 4. Map the organization's strengths, including the services they offer, the physical space and funding they could provide, and the personnel and connections they have. Depending on the vision of the local community, these

resource maps can be expanded to include physical, economic and cultural resources.

Categories of advantages

The mapping of advantages - actual and potential - can be divided into six "levels":

1. Advantages of individuals: these are technical skills, knowledge, relationships, time, interests and passions. These can be described as arts of the heart, mind/head and hands. The members of the community were asked about what is beautiful in the place where they live and what they could contribute to make life in their community better;

2. The advantages of associations: this includes not only formal organizations in the community or voluntary groups. It also includes all informal networks and ways in which people gather together: soccer teams, sharing organizations, workplaces, etc. For example, a quiz committee at a local pub has members based on interests, but can also suggest fundraising, networking and human resources;

3. The benefits of organizations: this includes not only the services that organizations offer at the local level, but also other resources that they control, for example parks, community centers and religious buildings. This includes everything that could be put to the benefit of society and improve its well-being. This includes the personnel and their influence and expertise, which they can use to support new ideas;

4. Physical advantages of the populated place: what kind of green areas, unused land, buildings, streets, stores and markets, transport is there in the area? Mapping these advantages helps people to assess their value and realize their potential productive use;

5. Economic advantages of the region: economic activity is at the heart of the coexistence of a community. What skills and talents are not used by the local community? How do local organizations and associations contribute to the economy by attracting investment and generating jobs and income? Is it possible to use public spending in the area to ensure the work of the local choir instead of hiring specialists from abroad? How can local residents spend more of their money in local stores and businesses and increase local economic activity?

6. Cultural benefits of society: everyday life is full of creativity and culture. This includes mapping talents in music, theatre, art and the ability to express oneself in a way that reflects one's values and identity, improves understanding and overcomes the lack of a "voice" to be heard.

OPEN CITY PART 2

Open call for projects

Here you can share with us what you want to work on in the coming months, related to the Varuša South quarter. We are looking for an idea for activities that give you pleasure and do not overload you. An important criterion for us is how realistic your idea is for implementation! It's not the amount of work and the results that matter, but the love and enthusiasm you put in.
And on a competition-by-competition basis, we add what our leading criteria are:
- To be implemented in Varusha South
- To be held in 2022
- Implementation of the idea to be realistic to
  - place
  - financial means
  - Human Resources
- To involve the local community as audience and/or participants.
- Have fun while realizing the idea!

Questions:

E-mail address?

Your Name?

Which place in Varusha South did you like?

Tell us more. What is the end product/outcome you expect?

Who are you doing it for? Who do you imagine participating/visiting/reading/viewing your idea?

When do you want to implement your idea and in what time frame? Do you imagine it happening once or regularly?

How possible is the realization of your idea in 2022

Are you going to work on it alone or do you have a team and partners? If so, who are they?

Do you have a plan to spread the word about the upcoming event/initiative? What kind of people do you want it to reach?

Why is it important to realize your idea? What is your personal motivation?

What assistance do you need?

Are funds or other resources required?

Want to add something we haven't asked you?

Training ideas for the Open City project

A series of trainings aimed at developing the ideas that the participants had during the mapping. Lecturers are invited who are actively involved in the topics they will talk about.

In addition to the trainings, lectures and tours are planned in the neighborhood, which aim to better acquaint the participants with the history and potential of the neighborhood "Varusha South"

Topic: How to collect personal stories and transform them into art work?
Duration: 6 hours

Information about the training: Varusha South district houses some of the oldest houses in Veliko Tarnovo, and they hide the stories of the locals, which are still untold.
The participants in the training will learn how to do a good interview, select the information and turn it into an interesting story. The stories collected during this training can become an interesting material for artistic interventions in the neighborhood.

Topic: Digital marketing for artist craft makers.

Duration: 8 hours

Information about the training: Craftsmen live and work in the Varusha South neighborhood, some of them are participants in the Open City project. During this training, they will learn how to more easily sell their works using the Internet. Many of them rely on tourists during the summer and we hope that we will be able to help them have a steady income by using other places to sell their products.

Topic: Revitalization of areas around the river. Sharing experience and knowledge.
Duration: 4 hours

Information about the training: The organizers of the festival will share their experience with the participants in the Open City project and will give them practical advice related to the revitalization of the area around the Yantra River, which passes through the Varusha South neighborhood.
The participants in the training will start working on creating a festival program, communication with the media, communication with institutions and will take a walk that will help choose locations for a future festival around the river.

Topic: Visual communication for festivals

Duration: 4 hours

Information about the training: In their training they will set several directions in creating a common visual communication for the neighborhood. Varusha Yug is a tourist place with many different locations that would be interesting for visitors to the city. Creating a map that collects these locations would help make neighborhood locations more recognizable.

The participants in the training will have to collect ornaments and details from the neighborhood in the form of photographs and drawings, which will then be used to create the vision of the map of Varusha South

Topic: Artistic neighborhoods. What makes a neighborhood attractive and how to take care of the public space in it?

Duration: 6 hours

Information about the training: In this training the participants will meet with some of the members of the association Taliana. One of the main achievements of the association is the establishment of the artistic district of Taliana in the city of Varna. They will share their experience from the work on the artistic district with the participants in the Open City project. Questions will be discussed about how to create a network of active places in the neighborhood, how to work together on a vision and how to develop public spaces in their neighborhoods.

Topic: Placemaking in Varusha South

Duration: 6 hours

Training Information: Placemaking is a comprehensive and practical approach to improving our environment.

It motivates people to collectively (re) think and (re) create public spaces that will be the center of any community. Placemaking is more than just promoting a better design of the urban environment - it facilitates the use of creative interventions in space, paying special attention to the physical, cultural and social

resources of the territory and stimulates its development based on available potentials.

Results of the work in the Varusha South district:

What's new in Warusha South from January 2021 until now (December 2022)?

40 people committed to living in Warusha South

27 empty spaces have been identified in early 2021

10 are the empty spaces as of August 19, 2022

15 collapsing houses were identified at the beginning of 2021, and 1 of them collapsed in the last year

11 new businesses started their operations in the neighborhood

4 studios opened their doors

3 new galleries opened

3 abandoned public spaces in the neighborhood have been brought back to life

1 theatrical tour route inspired by the stories of the residents of the neighborhood presented in summer 2021

1 online neighborhood news platform FB:varushasouth IG:varushasouth

With the help of volunteers, a day care center for Ukrainian children "Clean Sky" was created

Neighbors in the neighborhood got to know each other and started running their own initiatives

The main street becomes a pedestrian zone for three hours on August 20, 2022

The community celebration 48 Hours Warusha South takes place