

METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE ON CREATIVE PEACE BUILDING

Examples of Using Art in Community-Based Peace Building Work

arena:
Community Theatre & Public Art

© 2017. Peace Dialogue NGO

Address: 40 ap. 12 Myasnikyan str., 2002, Vanadzor, Armenia;
Tel/Fax: +374 (322) 21340; Mob: +374 (55) 820 632; (93) 820 632
E-mail: ekhachatryan@peacedialogue.am; mailbox@peacedialogue.am
URL: <http://www.peacedialogue.am>; <http://www.safesoldiers.am>

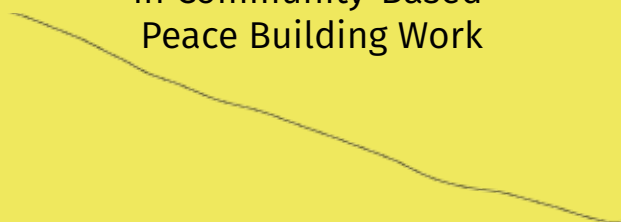
© 2017. OWEN - Mobile Akademie für Geschlechterdemokratie und Friedensförderung e.V.

Address: c/o metroGap, Lausitzer Str.10, 10999 Berlin;
Tel.: 0049 (0)30 612 88 785;
E-mail: luther@owen-berlin.de
URL: www.owen-berlin.de

© 2017. Cover page illustration by Dana Kavelina

METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE ON CREATIVE PEACE BUILDING

Examples of Using Art
in Community-Based
Peace Building Work



**For all questions please contact Armine Zakaryan at zarmine@peacedialogue.am
or Inga Luther at luther@owen-berlin.de**

Peace Dialogue NGO

40 ap. 12 Myasnikyan str.,
2002, Vanadzor, Armenia;

Tel/Fax: +374 (322) 21340;
Mob: +374 (55) 820 632; (93) 820 632

E-mail: ekhachatryan@peacedialogue.am;
mailbox@peacedialogue.am

URL: <http://www.peacedialogue.am>;
<http://www.safesoldiers.am>

**OWEN - Mobile Akademie für
Geschlechterdemokratie und
Friedensförderung e.V.**

c/o metroGap; Lausitzer Str.10
10999 Berlin

Tel/Fax: 0049 (0)30 612 88 785

E-mail: luther@owen-berlin.de

URL: www.owen-berlin.de

Editorial team:

Dana Jirous;
Edgar khachatryan;
Inga Luther;
Marina Grasse;
Mirella Galbiatti;
Armine Zakaryan;
Ani Derdzyan;
Dana Kavelina;
Otar Karalashvili;
Valentina Cherevatenko



PEACE DIALOGUE

© 2017. This publication was prepared in the
framework of the project
“Arena: Community Theatre and Public Art” of
Peace Dialogue NGO.



Project's German Partner – OWEN – Mobile
Akademie für Geschlechterdemokratie und
Friedensförderung e.V.



**Institut für
Auslandsbeziehungen**



Auswärtiges Amt

The project “Arena: Commu-
nity Theatre and Public Art”
is supported by the zivik
(Civil Conflict Resolution) pro-
gramme of the Institute for
Foreign Cultural Relations (ifa)
with means from the German
Federal Foreign Office.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

PROLOGUE 4

INTRODUCTION..... 5

What experiences are included in the guide? 5

What to expect from this guide? 6

Who are the intended users of this methodological guide?..... 7

**Chapter 1. Questioning militarism and opening space
 for alternative ways of thinking**

Revealing conflicts through street art in Ukraine 9

Promoting Civilian Service in the Russian Federation 11

Short animated videos dedicated to the anniversary
of signing ceasefire regime between Armenians and Azerbaijanis 14

Raising discussions about the impacts of war in Russia 15

What is Militarism? - an album of graphic works from Armenia 17

“Frame” - a short film from Azerbaijan 19

Facing challenges together: developing options
for action in the North Caucasus 21

**Chapter 2. Transforming relationships: dealing with the
 enemy images, prejudices and stereotypes**

Building trust and relationships between children from Russian villages 25

Exchanges within Russia between young
people from Chechnya and St. Petersburg 26

Alternative stories about relationships
between Armenians and Azerbaijanis 28

Corridor - a short documentary from Azerbaijan 30

Chapter 3. Empowering people and trying out possibilities for action

Making choices and going your own way in Armenia and Georgia 33

Challenging hierarchical subordination in the
educational system in St. Petersburg 35

Empowering people and changing policies in Georgia and Ukraine 37

Chapter 4. Concluding thoughts and recommendations

**Recommendations for planning projects and
activities with the use of art-based methodologies** 45

EPILOGUE 47

LINKS AND LITERATURE 48

PROLOGUE

Imagine a situation where the Minister of Education and Science says sentences like: "Military science teachers should teach children to love weapons and not to fear them. Weapons must be loved, cherished, taken care of; not just to be quickly assembled. [...] We live in an area where everyone is a potential soldier, and this naturally affects the educational system. Therefore, this concept should be the primary task of schools."¹

Imagine an atmosphere of fear which leads to the belief that only military strength can lead to more security.

Imagine a time and a place where the word "peacebuilding" itself becomes suspicious for some people and they consider it to be a covert strategy of enemies to dominate their country.

Imagine a situation where violence is generally accepted as a mean for dealing with conflict and where the younger generation is raised in a spirit of mistrust towards "the other". This "other" could be people of the neighbouring country, or the representatives of other ethnic groups or anyone else who thinks and acts differently.

Imagine a situation where people are deprived of opportunities to live a decent life of their own choosing.

Imagine a place where people gave up their dreams, hopes, beliefs...

Do you believe that the world we live in should look like that?

Now imagine the people who wish to live in a place where people have close relationships with others: with their neighbours, with people from other places, even with those that you are told to consider enemies...

Imagine people who believe that conflict has the potential for creating a world where people try to understand each other, support each other, and respect "the other"- no matter where he or she comes from, whom he or she loves, lives with, and what he or she believes in ...

Imagine people who want to live in a world where everyone has a place to live, enough income to have a good life, education, and a good future for their children...

Imagine people who believe in a bright future for all.

Imagine people who can imagine, can dream, and who can be creative in realizing their dreams...

Many people in the world dream about and believe in peace. They dedicate their time to come closer to their ideal image of the world. They work in their communities, neighbourhoods, hometowns, and across different borders to change a hostile environment toward a more peaceful one. Some call them heroes, some – dreamers, while others - traitors.

However, we call them peace builders.

1. See the article "Armenia: Nation-Army Plan Raises Concerns About Society's Militarization" <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/83991>

INTRODUCTION

WHAT EXPERIENCES ARE INCLUDED IN THE GUIDE?

For about 10 years, our two organizations (Peace Dialogue in Armenia and OWEN in Germany) have been working together with partners from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine towards supporting the civil society actors' efforts for peace. For many years, we have been asking ourselves the same questions: how to share our dreams with those who were told not to dream? How to talk about the violence with those who seem to accept it as a way to resolve the conflict? By working with people and communities affected by conflicts, we have found tools that help in articulating the issues that we see in our surroundings. We have been looking for methodologies that allow us to speak up about these issues in a way that will be acceptable and understandable for people who do not necessarily know what conflict is and why one should transform it, or what militarization is and why it is dangerous to live in a militarized country.

We decided to invite people from various conflict affected countries in the post-Soviet area so we could learn from each other, support each other, and jointly develop approaches that will best work in our specific contexts. Therefore; back in 2014, around 12 people from different parts of Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and Germany gathered in Tbilisi. Most of them knew each other from common activities in peace building prior to attending.

People from the Russian Federation (coming from South Russia, Chechnya and St. Petersburg) said that they feel no safe space anymore to talk and think critically about issues that they are concerned about. Propaganda has become very strong and governments or other influential groups use propaganda to keep their power at any cost. Negative energy accumulated in the society due to social injustice is directed towards external enemies. Hatred and fear in their respective societies have deepened.

Others (from Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) said that the authorities concentrate people's attention on the security issues; thereby, uniting the society against an external enemy (real or invented) while justifying their own mistakes and shortcomings by citing numerous internal problems with war and plots of the enemy.

Someone that came from Ukraine was still shocked at what has happened recently (2014) in her country. Listening to the others, she realized that the problems Ukraine faces are not new. People from the Russian Federation and from the countries in the South Caucasus have had similar experiences with war and conflict; with enemy images and political interests being more important than the well-being of the people.

One thing that the participants have in common is that they worked with different kinds of art in their societies and local communities. Some of them have had experiences with theatre, others with films, while still others used

graphic stories and comics. With the use of art, they created a space for learning from each other and opened an opportunity to look at things from different perspectives.

After thorough discussions and analysis of this regional panorama, the idea of creating a new network was born. The group decided that it will be important to have a platform for experience exchange, mutual support, and joint learning that will make stronger their respective peace-building efforts. They believe that through art they can overcome their marginalization as peace activists in their respective societies and make their critical thoughts and their dreams of a better world understandable and attractive to others. They dream of overcoming the culture of violence and to promote peace, to bring people together, and to open the space for a dialogue.

This appeared to be the start of the ARENA network; which accumulated the best practices, experiences, and lessons learned by prominent peace-building and human rights groups and individuals from various post-Soviet countries (such as Union of Don Women from Novocherkassk; SINTEM from Grozny; the theatrical project “Vmeste” from St. Petersburg, Theatre for Dialogue; from Kiyv, Peace Dialogue from Vandzor, and OWEN from Berlin). In later stages of the project, more groups joined the network and contributed to the development of project ARENA: Community Theatre and Public Art.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THIS GUIDE?

In 2015, the first activities of the project ARENA started. People that have been involved in ARENA not only want to stop the direct violence of war and military action², they also want to deal with the causes and consequences of war that they see inside their respective communities. This includes economic problems, discrimination, and marginalization of social groups as well as deeper causes of conflict rooted in culture and history.

Often different aspects of culture can be used to legitimize violence and war. ARENA activists use culture to engage more people, to question violence, and to provide space for alternative thinking and actions.

This guide presents examples of using public art and community theatre by the ARENA community members aimed at supporting peace-building processes in their respective communities and countries. The following are the three pillars of using art by ARENA in conflict-involved or post-conflict societies:

- *Questioning militarism and opening space for alternative thinking;*
- *Transforming relationships: dealing with images, prejudices, and stereotypes of “the other” and;*

2. In societies involved in war and violent conflicts one can observe different dimensions of violence. The Norwegian peace and conflict researcher Johan Galtung distinguished three general dimensions of violence; direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence. Direct and structural violence constrain the fulfilment of basic needs, whereas cultural violence is used to legitimize direct or structural violence. Therefore, the challenge that activists striving for peace often face is a broad acceptance of violence in different forms. See Galtung, Johan (1990): *Cultural violence*, in *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 27, no.3, p. 292, and “The Basic Need Approach” by Johan Galtung.

- *Empowering people and trying out possibilities for action.*

The chosen examples show a broad range of approaches and illustrate what opportunities art can offer in peace-building. It must be noted not all examples were born and realized inside ARENA. Rather, ARENA offered a space for reflection and analysis of the experiences with different kinds of art in the community-based peace-building network.

WHO ARE THE INTENDED USERS OF THIS METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE?

This guide is based on the systematization and analysis of experiences of the ARENA network members through the use of different artistic means in their community-based, peace-building work within their respective conflict-affected societies. The publication was compiled primarily to assist the staff in the organisations that work with peace-building efforts. It is also envisioned as a resource for anyone interested in community-based, peace activism. The methodological guide intends to encourage the reader to apply some of their own initiative and adapt the examples to the needs of their own communities and within their local context.

USING PUBLIC ART AND THEATRE IN PEACE BUILDING



CHAPTER 1. QUESTIONING MILITARISM AND OPENING SPACE FOR ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF THINKING

In this guide, you will get to know people from Ukraine, the Russian Federation, Armenia, and Azerbaijan who question the use of direct, physical violence as a means of conflict regulation and who raise public awareness through street art, short videos, and films.

One of the biggest challenges for a peaceful society is the dominant thinking that military is the most important guaranty for security. In societies involved or affected by violent conflicts in particular, there seems to be no alternative to having strong military forces to meet defence requirements. As a result, most societies prepare for armed defence. And those states and societal groups potentially or actually involved in violent conflicts see no alternatives to the armament to ensure security. The more the conflicts are escalated and become violent, the less it is possible to question the need for military strength and the admiration for those who fight and sacrifice their lives. This leads to an enforced conformity and to shrinking space for an alternative method of thinking within society.

Revealing conflicts through street art in Ukraine

Street art is the visual art created in public locations, usually unsanctioned artwork executed outside of the context of traditional art venues.

« I wanted to do something other people could see and I thought that the most obvious thing would be to draw and write something in the streets, then many people would read it”.

A young artist from Ukraine started to draw on walls. “It is something like the shortest form of literature you can imagine. I did this out of hopelessness. I wanted to do something which other people could see and I thought that the most obvious thing would be to draw and write something in the streets, then many people would read it”, the artist said.

The young artist usually begins with deciding the actual problems she wants to write about, it can be important news or a new law. Of course, one big topic was the war in the East of Ukraine and its impacts.

The first step is to think of something short and funny or even sarcastic. The next step is to make the sentence even shorter and shorter, more precise; a process that takes a long time. Finally, the artist writes the sentences where they fit best and where many people will see them. This might be a school or a university wall when speaking about education or it might be the police building or a monastery.

The purpose of the action:

The main purpose of writing on the walls is to overcome the silence and to express ones’ own thoughts and comments on the current situation, as well as being aimed at provoking or inviting other people to take part in the discussion of the issue.

The impacts:

After a while the artist realized that there were discussions on various topics within social media (Facebook, Instagram, VKontakte). Therefore, the next step was to take photos of the writings and to post them into an anonymous group page on Facebook. Several thousand people subscribed to this group and many people looked at the pictures and posted comments. There were angry comments as well as supportive comments. Most of the inscriptions were created in Kyiv, but the pictures on the internet can be seen everywhere in the world and were given a second life on Facebook.

The street artist from Ukraine saw that a singular activity became bigger and created a space for debate where many people got involved in the end.



Challenges and the lessons learned:

« A lot of young people do not agree with what is happening in Ukraine. They do not agree with nationalism, patriotism, and fascist sentiments and they don't know what to do. I can see that many people are afraid to say what they think and they think that they are alone with their way of thinking. But when they see something on the walls that is very close to them, they are happy. This is a small signal that they are not alone and that they could unite with somebody. Also, sometimes people write me and share ideas.”

According to the artist, the writings broke the code of silence that kept people from speaking about their doubts about the war. It gave other people the feeling that they are not alone with their critical thinking.

The challenge of course remains; how do people not only overcome their silence within social networks (anonymous groups), but also organize and find the courage to become active in a much broader sense?

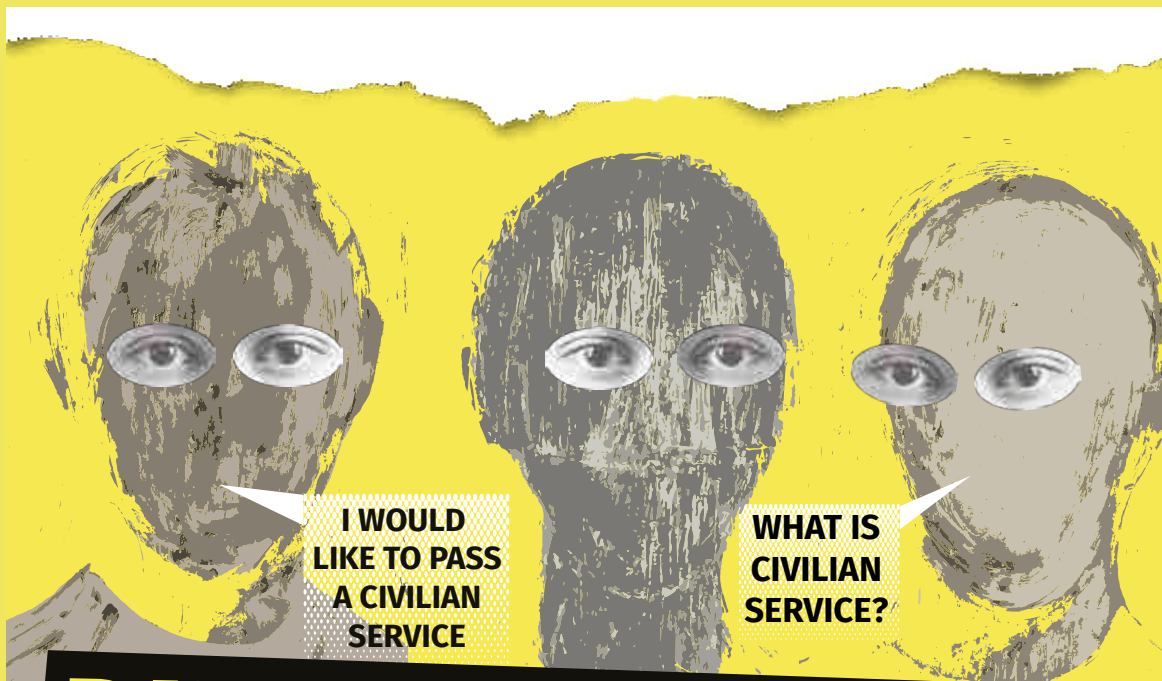
Promoting Civilian Service in the Russian Federation

« People come to the decision to pass civilian services in different ways. One – consistently follows his pacifist views. Others are brought to this decision by life itself, they must develop their muddled thoughts that are already for some time in their heads. They are all united by the rightness of their conviction which helps them to defend their right to civilian service.” - Alexey Iorsh

In the Russian Federation, there are taboos on military action and war as well. In the public, the role of the military remains unquestioned. Together with the Human Rights organization, “Soldiers’ Mothers of St. Petersburg”, artists from a cartoon project RESPECT created comics informing about the right to perform civilian service and dealt with the prejudices related to it. The right to perform civilian service is not well known in Russia as well as its exact conditions. The ideas that men must serve in the army to be real men as well as prevailing stereotypes about civilian service have become widespread.

Three very different comics deal with this issue. They provide information, deal with prejudices towards those who pass civilian service, and make young people think³.

3. These comics are only available in the Russian language.



I WOULD
LIKE TO PASS
A CIVILIAN
SERVICE

WHAT IS
CIVILIAN
SERVICE?

PATRIOT- SOUNDS PROUDLY

Патриот - это звучит гордо

В День защитника Отечества самое время поговорить о патриотизме. Вернее, о воспитании этого качества у подрастающего поколения. Ведь очевидно, что только люди, любящие свою Родину, способны по-настоящему отстаивать её интересы, защищать от любого рода посягательств. Но идея патриотического воспитания так бы и осталась лишь идеей без действенного механизма её реализации.

В Лангепасе всегда легко приживались благие начинания, и как только Правительством Российской Федерации была утверждена программа «Патриотическое воспитание граждан», в городе тут же был создан центр дополнительного образования для детей и подростков «Патриот». В 2014-м он объединился с детско-юношеской спортивной школой и стал называться Центр спортивной и военно-патриотической подготовки детей и молодежи.

Нельзя сказать, что в Лангепасе не было патриотизма. Подняты и захоронены с почестями останки 2513 бойцов и командиров Красной Армии. Кроме того, по инициативе администрации города ведется большая воспитательная работа в школах. Ветераны Министерства обороны и Министерства внутренних дел рассказывают о подвиге предков, о героизме и чести. В городе установлены памятники героям, о которых рассказывают в школах. В городе много семей, где родители воспитывают своих детей в духе патриотизма. В городе много молодежи, которая хочет служить Родине. В городе много людей, которые хотят сделать свой вклад в развитие страны.



люди



The purpose of the action:

The NGO, “Soldiers’ Mothers of St Petersburg”, uses the comics in their educational work with young men. The comics are also available to public via the RESPECT website. The comics help to create an alternative view in a country where there is little space to think differently. Based on the graphic stories, discussions have been organised by trained facilitators for young students in schools and youth clubs of St. Petersburg and in other cities in the Russian Federation. Comics offer the opportunity to raise awareness and to talk about topics related to alternative military service, that are usually difficult to talk about. Comics offer a creative approach which includes personal stories and this approach offers the opportunity to create links to one’s own life.

The impacts:

During these discussions, students were given an opportunity to read the comics and then to share their thoughts about the stories and discuss it with their peers. Moreover, with the support of the facilitators, young people would draw their own sketches related to the topic of discussions. The graphic stories made possible the initiation of discussions about the alternative military service among the future conscripts. Equipped with this series of graphic stories, organizers worked in schools, centres for secondary education, youth clubs, and with educators, youth-camp leaders, and students of pedagogical universities.

However, even as in St. Petersburg where the project was implemented, a very small percentage (not more than five percent) of the total number of recruits applied for the civilian service.

Challenges and the lessons learned:

« Our society is surprisingly uniform. People who have doubts and think critically are of big value to us. Those “nonconformist” people are confronted by the sluggish society, and face the inner resistance as well. But their irrepressible thirst for life evokes dignity and the power to change oneself. “ - Ilia Obuchov, one of the artists of project RESPECT.

The artists create comics because it is easier to break taboos using cartoons, as this type of art goes beyond a political statement. In the comics, there are stories told about people that could be like any of the readers of the stories, and the stories are easy to understand.

During their work, the organizers have learned that future conscripts are not well aware of the alternative military service and that the state does not inform future conscripts of this possibility.

According to the initiators of project RESPECT, one of the biggest challenges to their work is that in recent years it has become problematic to get permission for working in schools, especially on sensitive topics like this. According to the team, the permissions to work at a school was obtained mainly through young teachers who were interested in new interactive teaching

methodologies; while in some cases they got the access to schools through teachers' training centres and in a few cases, directly through the directorate of the schools. Another opportunity that the team found, was to work with students during the classes of tolerance. These classes are obligatory and included in the schools' curricula.

Related links:

- **Comic book “A Gift”** - <http://www.respect.com.mx/ru/comics/238/> (in Russian);
- **Comic book “Reflection”** - <http://www.respect.com.mx/ru/comics/236/> (in Russian);
- **Comic book “Three stories on ACS (Alternative Civilian Service)”** - <http://www.respect.com.mx/ru/comics/243/> (in Russian).

EXAMPLE 3

Short animated videos dedicated to the anniversary of signing ceasefire regime between Armenians and Azerbaijanis

In 2015, a group of ARENA project participants from Armenia made a series of short awareness-raising videos, dedicated to the 21st anniversary of the ceasefire agreement signed between Armenians and Azerbaijanis after the violent war over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Despite the fact that a formal ceasefire was reached on May 12, 1994, the conflict still remains unresolved.

The purpose of the action:

Thousands of hostile troops remain dug in behind formidable defensive fortifications along the contact line around Nagorno-Karabakh and the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Escalation of the conflict and daily skirmishes pose dangers to the civilian population living close by. Short clips produced by Armenian activists show how skirmishes around border and contact line affect civilians and appeal to snipers to stop shooting.

The impacts:

According to the authors, they did not organize any screening of the videos in their community. The videos were produced as an online campaign. The authors said that the videos got published by an Azerbaijani online media outlet with a capture:

«A group of Armenian young people expressed their concern over the effect of ceasefire violations to civilian population.»

Moreover, the videos were published by one international online media outlet.

Challenges and the lessons learnt:

As in Ukraine and St Petersburg, the activists in Armenia create an alternative vision and question the violence in their country that has been plaguing society for many years. Some of the young people involved in the preparation of these short videos don't even know times without military tension in Armenia, since the war started in early 90s of the last century. It is hard to even question the role of the military and to show the kind of violence that brings even more violence.

The activists from Armenia chose this form of short video clips because it can be easily distributed through social media and can have an impact on the young generation. However, analysing the effects of the videos, they stated that some of the previous videos made by the same group (for example animated film "Paradigm" in 2011) highlighting the challenges of the militarised society got larger attention within their community.

The group states that the previous products were screened by them during various events on topics of conflict, gender, gender-based violence, etc. The video that was also questioning militarism in Armenia brought important discussions on the role of women and men, on the impact of cultural and traditions in forming the roles of male and female in the conflict involved society. The group believes that the effect of the previous video and the attention they got with that material happened because of the live (offline) discussions with groups of people. They think that this type of short video product should be used as an instrument for articulating the sensitive topics, it is not enough to share the materials through social media resources, they should be screened and discussed with people face to face.

Related links:

- **Video "Stop Snipers"** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCULQu66f9g>
- **Video "Stop Snipers-2"** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LzI0BysOl7M>
- **Video "Paradigm"** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zl8BXywQsQk>

Raising discussions about the impacts of war in Russia

In Novocherkassk activists from Union of Don Women decided to invite people to watch films together and to take those films as a point of departure for facilitated discussions on issues raised in the films. The films are chosen because they deal with topics that are currently also relevant to the Russian society. Most of the chosen films deal with war and peace.

The purpose of the action:

« One of the films we have shown, has been chosen, because it is a film that does not show a romantic picture of the war. The public opinion in our country is more and

more dominated by the impression that war is not that bad. Or it is said that we are surrounded by enemies and that we will have to fight anyway. There are new public holidays with military messages and there appear cars with inscriptions that promote war and military strength. So, all this popularizes war.”

The film discussion club aims at raising discussions, but these discussions do not depart from a current issue of Russian society, instead they start with a film on a situation (fictitious) about a country or another time. The films stimulate emotions and thoughts and give an opportunity to discuss generally important issues about humanity and the consequences of violent conflicts. And usually, little by little, the current context is being discussed as well. With this strategy the organization tries to deal with shrinking spaces for alternative discussions within the Russian society.

The impacts:

According to the group in Novocherkassk, after watching the film there are usually vivid discussions.

« It is very good that this film (about a film screened during one of the discussion clubs) does not romanticize the war. Very often films show war as something that is fascinating and exciting, as a kind of adventure.” -said a participant of the film discussion club.

A space is provided where people can share their thoughts, reflect on their emotions not only concerning the film but also those associated with the topic of the film.

« At the moment we can see such things in the real light. The level of hatred is growing each day and the hatred is encouraged in the public discussion. It is awful to see that the line between patriotism and hate is very thin.” -said a participant of the film discussion club.

Challenges and the lessons learnt:

The quotes above demonstrate that films can stimulate important discussions. But it must be noted that the discussions in the club-team also face some challenges and that it is highly recommended to choose films very carefully. The experiences have shown that for many people some films were emotionally very difficult to watch. Some people in the audience were overwhelmed and had the feeling that they were not able to confront this kind of problems of war. These emotions might sometimes affect the ability of the audience to discuss their own concerns related to the problem. Therefore, it is also crucial to choose a capable facilitator who keeps in mind the aims of each sessions in order to enable fruitful discussions.

The team believes, that one interesting option to work with films could be

to analyse the aesthetic representations of war in the films, look at how the story is told and to ask what kind of emotions the films provoke and how this is linked to the design of the film.

In any case the initiators of the film club discussions achieved a unique space where issues as war, violence and individual responsibility could be discussed. They contributed to the breaking of taboos in the Russian society and opened a space where alternative voices could be heard.

What is Militarism? - an album of graphic works from Armenia

This album has been created by one of the ARENA project participants from Armenia. In that series of graphic works, the author tackled the issues related to militaristic tendencies in Armenia. To express his personal attitude to the issue, the author uses short epigrams or sarcastic statements such as: "I guess now I know what the phrase "your motherland needs you" means..."

The purpose:

According to the author, he wanted to express his concerns about the raising

**I GUESS NOW
I KNOW
WHAT THE
PHRASE
"YOUR
MOTHER
LAND
NEEDS
YOU"
MEANS...**



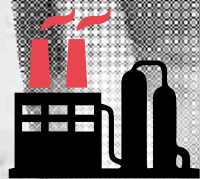


Science

Education



Love Your
Country



Industry



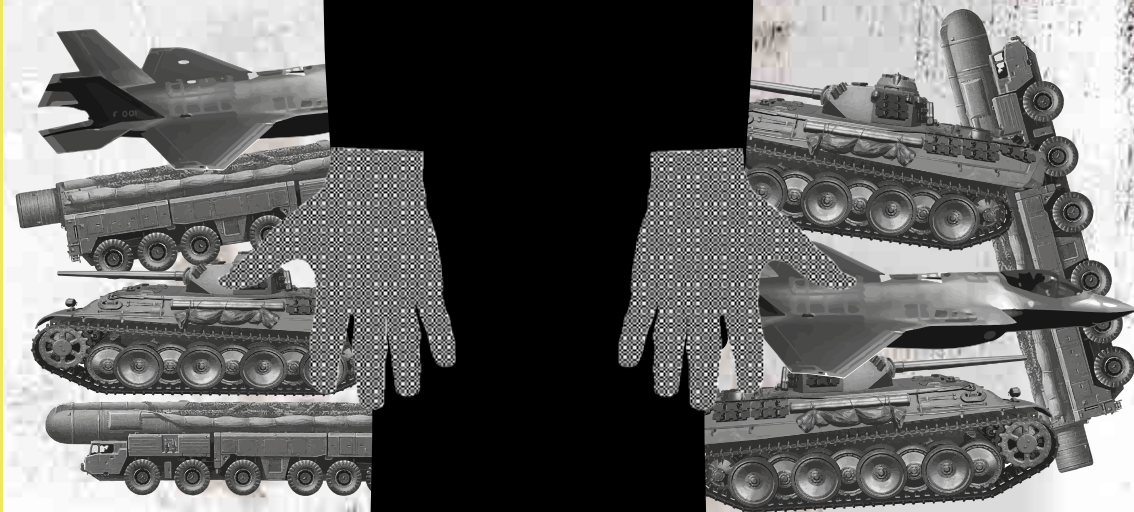
Media



Culture
& arts



Entertainment



militarist sentiments in many spheres of life in Armenia. The works targeted young people and were created mainly for distributing via social media.

The impacts:

The works have been well received mainly by young people involved in different types of arts in Armenia. The illustrations were posted by various groups of young people in social media such as Facebook and Twitter. The album is also available on Peace Dialogue's website.

Challenges and the lessons learnt:

According to the author, he did not get much negative feedback from the audience, maybe because the people liked sarcastic epigrams and appreciated the sense of humour. The main challenge with the "What is Militarism?" album was its narrow impact - it was designed for a specific group of young people and did not affect the larger groups of people in the country.

Like with the previous example of the street art wall writing from Ukraine, the challenge with the album is how to extend the discussion from the social networks to the larger offline platforms.

Related links:

- **Album of graphic works "What is Militarism?"** - http://peacedialogue.am/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/01/what_is_militarism.pdf

"Frame" - a short film from Azerbaijan

"Frame" is a film created by Ruslan Aliev, an Azerbaijani participant of the project ARENA. He made this film with the support of the Finnish NGO CMI (Crisis Management Initiative) in the framework of the EU supported program EPNK (European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict).

The purpose:

The film is inspired by the story of an experiment "Five monkeys and a ladder". In this experiment five monkeys are together in a cage where there is a ladder with a banana at the top. Each time one of the monkeys tries to get the banana and goes up the ladder, all the monkeys are splashed with cold water. After a while the monkeys start beating every monkey that starts climbing the ladder. After a while one of the monkeys is replaced. The new monkey starts to climb the ladder and immediately the other monkeys pull him down and beat him up. The new monkey does not understand what is wrong, but he learns not to climb up the ladder. When a second monkey is substituted the first "new" monkey participates in the beating...

The film is an illustration of the mechanisms that make people silent and obedient. The filmmaker attempts to engage people's thinking and hopes that the film will be used for group discussions.

A group of scientists placed five monkeys in a cage, and in the middle of the ladder with bananas on top.

Every time a monkey went up the ladder to get the bananas, the rest of the monkeys would beat it up.

After a while, the monkeys learned that if one monkey went up the ladder, the others would beat it up.

So the monkeys learned that no monkey would dare go up the ladder, no matter how hungry they were.

The scientists decided to replace the first monkey. The first thing the new monkey did was start to climb the ladder. Immediately, the other monkeys beat him down and beat him up.

After several beatings, the new monkey learned that it was not worth it to climb the ladder. He never went up the ladder again, no matter how hungry he was.

The second monkey was replaced. The new monkey was also very hungry and he started to climb the ladder.

After a few more beatings, the new monkey learned that it was not worth it to climb the ladder.

The third monkey was replaced. The new monkey was also very hungry and he started to climb the ladder.

After a few more beatings, the new monkey learned that it was not worth it to climb the ladder.

The fourth monkey was replaced. The new monkey was also very hungry and he started to climb the ladder.

After a few more beatings, the new monkey learned that it was not worth it to climb the ladder.

So the monkeys learned that no monkey would dare go up the ladder, no matter how hungry they were.

The first monkey participated in the beating of the second monkey. At the end of the experiment, the monkey was changed and the same was repeated. The fourth monkey was changed, resulting in the same, and the fifth was finally replaced as well.

FIVE MONKEYS AND A LADDER

What was left was a group of five monkeys that - without ever having

received a cold shower - continued to beat up any monkey who attempted to climb the ladder.

It is possible to ask the monkeys why they beat up all those who attempted to climb the ladder.

The most likely answer is that they know. It's just that they don't know why. Does that sound familiar?

Source: This story is a fable, but it was inspired by experiments on the cultural transmission of a

FRAME

Every chapter in the film is specifically titled. The last chapter is called “...and the grass grew out of its root” and illustrates the roots of silence, but with a small hope in the end.

The impacts:

There has been no public viewing of this film in Azerbaijan. However, the film was screened in Armenia during several events organized by Peace Dialogue, along with other media products, highlighting similar issues. The discussions after the screening of the film in Armenia went in two directions:

- the culture of silence and its causes and
- future of the relations between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the current political situation

The film is also available on YouTube and has been viewed more than 2,000 times.

Challenges and the lessons learnt:

In a society where peace activists are marginalized and discredited this film explores the mechanisms at the roots of silence and obedience, without pointing the finger at anyone. This is what art can do. In a context where the arguments and positions seem to be clear and unquestionable to everyone, it creates metaphors that unmask the mechanisms of war and violence and make them understandable.

Related links:

- **Film “Frame”** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64qlx1aQn48&feature=youtu.be>

Facing challenges together: developing options for action in the North Caucasus

Facing a very similar problem of being marginalized as peace activists in the society of Northern Caucasus, one group has chosen a different approach in showing the challenges and restrictions they have to deal with, and share their vision of possible ways to deal with the challenges. The group used the Forum theatre methodology to talk to their community about these issues.

Forum theatre is one technique of Theatre of the Oppressed developed by the Brazilian activist Augusto Boal. The general aim of forum theatre is to strengthen the oppressed who is a concrete figure that tells a concrete and real story, that comes from the group (the actors) and can represent other people with similar stories. Theatre of the

Oppressed departs from the first form singular (my story) to the plural (our).

By the help of the “spect-actors” – those who are watching the play and are invited to participate and enter the stage - it is explored, how a given situation could be changed. In the centre of the play there is a concrete conflict with a protagonist (oppressed person) and an antagonist (oppressing person). The play represents a question to the audience which is explored together during the forum. A person called joker moderates this process of discussion and tests alternatives on the stage.

The aim is to transform a given situation. Based on the transformation on the stage the aim is also to transform reality.

« The situation was the following: the headmaster of a village school that was using elements of non-formal peace education was dismissed, while we wanted to start a new project with the teachers. So, it was a very difficult situation because on the one hand, we told the teachers that there are certain laws and restrictions in our country and working with us could be risky, on the other hand, we wanted to work with them and most of them had a naive trust in us and did not think much about potential consequences. So, we developed a forum theatre play where we staged the dismissal of the headmaster and presented it to different groups of teachers.” - explained the team from the Northern Caucasus.

The forum theatre play showed the conflict between a headmaster and representatives of the Ministry of Education. Because corruption is widely spread in the country anyone who goes against it end up in a difficult situation.

The purpose:

The intention of the activists was to thematise repression and the danger of repression but at the same time to find alternative ways to deal with the shrinking spaces for common action. By showing a situation of repression and using Forum theatre they engaged the audience in search for a solution.

The impacts:

The main effect of doing the Forum theatre was that the audience (in this case colleagues of the teachers) were discussing options for various actions together. During the discussion, they developed strategies for dealing with the situation and at the same time they strengthened their cohesion.

« What was interesting to see was that the interventions were not so much about supporting the headmaster. Instead, the spect-actors tried to find alternatives, they tried

to avoid the conflict. It was difficult to watch for example how people were dragged into a situation where they were forced to cheat.

But what strengthened them was the cooperation they experienced. It was very important that they discussed the issue together and realised that it is important to have a good team. Because what could be seen in the Forum theatre play, was that the headmaster had not enough backing. Only with a very committed team you can find some space for action.”

Challenges and the lessons learnt:

Following the experience, the North Caucasian group recommends to act very cautiously. It appeared to be a good practice to first organize a test presentation of the Forum theatre plays in front of a trusted audience. This way the team can observe whether the play works at all and also to discuss further security issues. Creation of a space for debate and exchange in a secure environment proved to be successful. However, the question that remains open is how to deal with the situation without undue compromising.

The experiences of this example and many other examples of using Forum theatre in the mentioned region, show that often the power structures are either too powerful or broadly accepted that interventions of the audience do not intend to empower the protagonist but instead to lean on that power structures in order to improve the concrete situation.

USING PUBLIC ART AND THEATRE IN PEACE BUILDING



CHAPTER 2. TRANSFORMING RELATIONSHIPS: DEALING WITH THE ENEMY IMAGES, PREJUDICES AND STEREOTYPES

As already mentioned above, violent conflicts tend to polarize societies and to establish a logic of “us versus them”. In violent intergroup conflicts there is a need to establish an image of a group (“us”), to define who belongs to the group and who does not (“them”). The more a conflict escalates towards violence, the more people are forced to define their position, “either you are with “us” or you will be with the enemy (with them)”. This binary logic makes it difficult to deviate from what is considered the norm within one group. The images of us and them are nurtured by stereotypes and prejudices and when developing further into strong enemy images, they rely on the dehumanization of “the other”. Thus, in societies involved in violent conflicts there is not much space for acting or even thinking differently from the main group.

The following examples illustrate how ARENA participants deal with prejudices and stereotypes and how they work with groups that are hostile towards each other. The following examples help to understand how the art-based approaches can make people think about inclusion and exclusion in the society they live in.

Building trust and relationships between children from Russian villages

Two young teachers from St. Petersburg shared their experiences of working with children from small Russian towns and villages.

One summer they worked with children from an orphanage and children who are living in families. Although they lived in one village and attended the same school, there was no real contact between the children living in homes and the children from the orphanage who were rather marginalized. [In the Russian society and also in this particular case negative stereotypes towards those living in orphanages are widespread. As they are living in separate places they are hardly integrated in society.]

Throughout one week, during school breaks the children were spending time together, being offered an opportunity to express themselves with different kind of art methods.

The purpose:

The intention of the activists was to offer the children an opportunity to be together, be creative and to find a space where everybody is accepted.

The impacts:

At the beginning the atmosphere was very tense. When it lasted for over two days, the instructors finally succeeded to change the situation by proposing the group to watch a short film and to make their own film.

The first turning point occurred when watching the short film “The Butterfly Circus”⁴. While the children watched the film, they cried and started talking to each other. Some children shared their own similar examples. After that moment, the atmosphere in the group started to change. The next day the group was proposed to work on a short video of their own. This was the second turning point, where everybody could offer their own impact.

« The turning point was when they all together started to work on a common story for a short film. Everybody was heard. In the beginning, they were not ready to talk. But in the process, when they came together, and considered various options, they all stepped in. Another important issue was seeing their own success because we made a short film within one day and everyone contributed to it. It was a joint creative activity. Everyone was drawing flowers, the earth, human beings... Everyone was shooting, pressing the button... Everyone, everyone, every single one. At night, we worked on the material and the next day we organized a viewing. First, we showed different

4. Joshua and Rebekah Weigel, USA, 2009: <http://thebutterflycircus.com/short-film/>

kinds of animated films and at the end we showed our film. And everyone was happy! And that created a situation where they could open up even more. And after that week the children continued to talk to each other – they are still in contact.”

The joint creative work resulted in that children opening up and building up relationships with each other.

Challenges and the lessons learnt:

This example illustrates how art can be used as an alternative language to bring people together. Of course, using creativity and watching films was not the only ingredient in making different children groups come closer. The two teachers also explained that being open minded and appreciative when communicating with the children was of great importance.

Nevertheless, one very important factor of success in this example was that the children had the opportunity to occupy themselves with something interesting for them, to express themselves and to do something together. This opened space for different kinds of encounters and was the base for long-term relationships.

At first, the intention was mainly to be creative together. But by doing that, the children started trusting each other and developed relationships among themselves as a side effect to their activities. By working with art, a new space was created and emotions were channelled. In this way, the young teachers succeeded in overcoming the logic of “us” against “them”.

Exchanges within Russia between young people from Chechnya and St. Petersburg

In St. Petersburg activists from the project team of RESPECT initiated a youth exchange between young people from St. Petersburg and the Chechen Republic. The young people were invited to come together to discuss about important topics, such as inter cultural relations inside the Russian Federation, questions about work and labour law and education.

About 20 people from St. Petersburg and Chechnya came together and held discussions about their “idols”, about culture, about their common issues and those that divide them. During the two encounters of four days the group managed to write three scenarios for three different comics created afterwards by artists from Moscow, St Petersburg and Chechnya. Those comics were printed as books and shown also as posters during an exhibition in St. Petersburg and Grozny.

The purpose:

In the Russian Federation, there are not many opportunities for people from

the North Caucasus to meet with people from the north-western metropolises and to exchange ideas. At the same time, there is a wide range of prejudices towards people from Chechnya, as a sad heritage from the two Chechen wars.

« The idea was to provide a space where the young people could discuss all kinds of issues together. I think it is very important to do such work in the Russian Federation. There is not much communication between ethnic Russians and people from the North Caucasus region. There are a lot of prejudices because of the war, as well as because of the whole political situation. If there is an exchange, it is rather organized for people who work in state structures. Or there are those very big events where thousands of young people come together.”

The impacts:

The young people were very eager to come together and to learn more about each other. There were a lot of discussions.

« The first training in St. Petersburg was rather difficult. The participants did not know each other and when we were talking about our idols there was a big tension. But finally, the participants came to a mutual understanding.”

Besides from the very important processes and discussions that took place during the meetings of the young people, this project has a long-term effect because the created comics are used in educational work in schools and other institutions. RESPECT published all these comics on their website and created a methodological guideline on how to use these comics during the work with pupils and students⁵.

Challenges and the lessons learnt:

Creating art together is a very effective way of coming closer. Reaching beyond discussing different perceptions and perspectives on a certain issue, the designing of comics helps to reflect the different experiences and the experience of overcoming barriers of communication. With comics, that small project goes big as it reaches beyond the meetings, offering opportunities for students and other people to read the comics and start discussing the issues on their own.

Related links:

- **Comic book “I am a Chechen”**- <http://www.respect.com.mx/comics/49/>;
- **Comic book “First Impression”**- <http://www.respect.com.mx/comics/198/>;
- **Comic book “Birlant. The story of a teacher.”** - <http://www.respect.com.mx/comics/201/>

5. See <http://www.respect.com.mx/ru/technique/>

Alternative stories about relationships between Armenians and Azerbaijanis

Activists from Armenia and Azerbaijan challenged the mainstream image of traditionally hostile relationships between Armenians and Azerbaijanis through two initiatives. Both initiatives were implemented under the support of the Finnish NGO CMI (Crisis Management Initiative) in the framework of the EU supported program EPNK (European Partnership for the Peaceful Settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict).

The exhibition “70 years of forgotten history”, that was shown in Baku, shows how Armenians and Azerbaijanis used to live together before 1988. Especially young people were invited, including from the IDP community, to discuss the exhibition.

The other initiative, the film “House of tea” shows a tea house in Tbilisi where people of different nationalities meet and have tea together. Tbilisi is the place where representatives of different peoples, Armenian and Azerbaijanis as well, live together, forge friendships, and help each other, things that are hard to imagine in Armenia and in Azerbaijan. From the perspective of the small world of the House of Tea the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh is hard to understand and seems even somewhat absurd.

The purpose:

In the Armenian-Azerbaijani context, the escalation of the violent conflict goes back to the late 1980s. During the war the Armenian population in Azerbaijan was moved to Armenia and Azerbaijani population in Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh breakaway region were moved to Azerbaijan. Now Armenians and Azerbaijanis live in almost complete isolation from each other, unless they are living on the territory of other states such as Georgia or Russia. As a result, a new generation grew up in both countries, who has not experienced the time before the violent escalation of the conflict and which is strongly influenced by one-sided media reporting and textbooks. This new generation did not have the opportunity to make any other direct contacts with the “neighbours”, but has to rely on information received via media, learned in schools or through the stories told inside their families.

By showing historical and actual examples of peaceful interaction and relationships between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, the activists intended to offer a space for alternative perspectives on this issue. The exhibition and the film are vivid examples of what existed and what is available to offer space for a renewal of the relationships. It is also an encouragement to all those who have relationships with representatives of “the other side”, to encourage themselves not to give up and not to feel alone.

The impacts:

The exhibition “70 years of the forgotten history” was very well received by

many people in Baku. Particularly the elder people were interested in the materials and photos, mostly because they remembered the times when Armenians and Azerbaijanis used to live together in Baku. However, the exhibition was planned as a one-time event and unfortunately only limited number of people were able to attend it.

The film “House of Tea” was screened several times during the local and regional peace oriented trainings, workshops and discussions. It can be stated that it served its main purpose to trigger discussions about the future of the relations between Armenians and Azerbaijanis.

Challenges and the lessons learnt:

One of the specific virtues of visual art and theatre is that it allows a creation of something new. One can represent the world as it is, as it has been represented so far, or in a completely different way. Works of art give an opportunity to show the world in a different light, to show the world how it “should be” in your view, or to focus on issues, moments, persons and actions that give hope. By emphasizing the absurdity of war, the examples of alternative representations of the Armenian-Azerbaijani relationships provide us with the opportunity to redefine this relationships, to hope and to dream.

Related links:

- **Film “House of tea”** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrN5BYFRFco>

Corridor - a short documentary from Azerbaijan

This example is about a short film, made in the framework of the ARENA project by one of the project participants from Azerbaijan. Film “Corridor” deals with the issue of IDPs⁶ in Baku.

This documentary shows a young woman who left the conflict region of Nagorno-Karabakh as a child and still lives in a special temporary shelter for IDPs in Baku. The film shows her perspectives on the situation, while showing pictures about the living conditions in the shelter. In contrast to the dismal surroundings, the protagonist draws an optimistic picture and standing at the top of the roof of the shelter, she starts dreaming about a world without borders.

The purpose:

According to the filmmaker, he did not want to make another story of victimhood, he intended to show that many IDP people, despite their enormous losses, still dream about peace.

6. IDP - Internally displaced person

The impacts:

The film was screened several times for different audiences in Azerbaijan and in Armenia. Recently the film received first prize at the joint film festival of Imagine European Tolerance Festival, Docu Baku and the Adam Mickiewicz Foundation.

The Armenian audience of the film said that they liked the film because even though it touches upon very sensitive issues (from the perspective of Armenians), it does not promote hate. It is not about who is right or who is wrong, it's about dreaming of a better future for all.

This example also shows the power of visual art in changing the perspectives about "them" and "us".

Challenges and the lessons learnt:

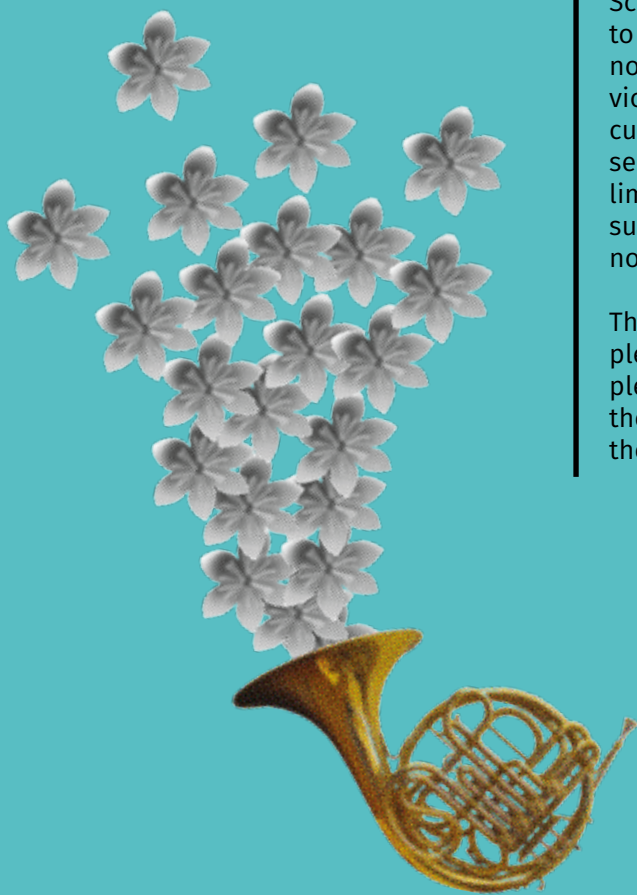
The film was also screened in Germany. During a screening, many people in the audience said that the film shows a woman without hatred, but also a woman in a stage of constant "waiting for something", this is the typical situation of refugees worldwide, being in a undefined situation of waiting. The audience said the film is also interesting in terms of raising the issue of people in refugee camps and temporary shelters in general. One of the spectators added that she sees this woman trapped between the past and the future. It is not clear if she is able to make her way, so this film can also provoke depression and despair.

Thus, this example indicates that often visual products can be differently interpreted by the audience. The visual outputs might affect the audience in different ways, depending on the context and the life experience of people watching the product.

Related links:

- **Film "Corridor"** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tVe5bJSCUo>

USING PUBLIC ART AND THEATRE IN PEACE BUILDING



CHAPTER 3. EMPOWERING PEOPLE AND TRY- ING OUT POSSIBIL- ITIES FOR ACTION

As it was already mentioned in the introduction, one of the biggest challenges peace activists are facing is the societal acceptance of violence in its different dimensions. Peace building aims at reducing violence in all its forms, depending on the stage of the escalating conflict and on the time and place where peace building takes place. Scopes of actions, the opportunities to realize one's rights and desires is not only restricted by direct, physical violence, but also by structural and cultural violence. So, one of the consequences of violent conflicts is the limitation of choices and the pressure to comply with existing societal norms.

This chapter presents several examples focusing on the struggle of people to resist violence and to broaden the scope of actions available to them.

Making choices and going your own way in Armenia and Georgia

Activists from Civic Activism and Equality Centre in Georgia and Peace Dialogue in Armenia worked in their respective communities using forum theatre to address issues important to families and communities which result from the attempt of young people to choose their own way in life.

In Georgia, the activists organized a workshop with young people addressing intergenerational conflicts between young people and their parents or other elderly people among their relatives. The participants were invited through a public announcement on Facebook and gathered together for four days. During the workshop, they exchanged their views and experiences on the issue by the help of theatre. On the fourth day, they staged a public forum performance, where people from different generations participated.

In Armenia, for several months the activists worked in a small Armenian village on the issue of domestic violence. A group of students and young social workers was meeting regularly. They were talking about domestic violence, and playing theatre. They even performed their piece of theatre in public. Topics that were raised during the discussions were concerning oppression inside the family. There was for example a conflict between the young wife and her mother-in-law. The husband had left for Russia to earn money, while his young wife lived with his parents. This is usually when conflicts and even physical violence occur in the family.

The purpose:

The Georgian and Armenian societies are both under a strong pressure to fit into the national norm with all its traditions. Being different seems to be dangerous in a society that must be consolidated against an external enemy.

« In our society there is a big problem of children and their parents not understanding each other. The daughters say: "Could it be that my mother has never been my age?" (an activist from Georgia)

« We have a lot of topics that are hard to talk about. They are tabooed or people even don't see that there is a problem, because it is part of the tradition. Many young people experience restrictions for speaking out. Many parents also try to control their children. They don't allow girls to leave the house after a certain hour. The role of elder brothers is also an issue. Physical and psychological violence is very common. Often people even do not recognize that this is violence when it happens inside the family. They say: "After all, it's my father (or brother). This is how it should be." (an activist from Armenia)

With raising discussions about these issues, the activists aim at empowering the young people, to find their own way and to oppose violence. By working

in the format of theatre workshops they provide a safe space for discussion and reflection of those very difficult topics. By staging a forum theatre scene for a selected audience they also provide an opportunity to discuss the issues important for the young people with a broader, intergenerational public. Opportunity for changes can be explored and public awareness for the issues can be transformed.

The impacts:

« After several meetings, usually the perception of what is violence changes. But one needs a lot of courage to perform these issues on stage, especially in small villages. However this is how small cultural changes can be achieved.” (an activist from Armenia)

« 12 young people aged 17 to 20 participated in our workshop. After a while they got more open and started telling about their problems and the issues that bother them. On the fourth day we staged a forum scene. It was about a girl who wanted to become an actress, but her father was a very important person, working in a ministry. As a result, the parents forced the girl to study law, because the father dreamed of his daughter becoming a famous lawyer, whereas she did not want that.” (an activist from Georgia)

The experiences of staging the scenes show that the topic is relevant to representatives from different generations. Many people participated actively in the forum theatre.

« The forum with the audience was very interesting. We invited people from different generations, so, there were young people and adults. The audience was very active. After the forum, the young girl that wanted to become an actress realised that it would be an option to talk to her mother, explain herself to the mother and try to make her an ally. Another woman said that it was very interesting for her. She would have never thought that her small daughter had so many desires and needs. That was a real discovery for her.” (an activist from Georgia)

That aspect of recognition of needs and desires of another person is a very important aspect in peace building as well. One characteristic of violence and oppression can be seen in the absence or in neglect of wishes and dreams. Usually it is mostly young people who come with their dreams of another live, because they had not internalized all the restrictions of the society yet. But they fail to realize their desires because of the adults who have lost touch with their own wishes and dreams. The activists pondered the question - Why is this kind of work considered important in peacebuilding?

« This is a dialogue between generations. I think, that if I knew at that age about the possibility of talking to my mother, maybe I would not have lost seven or eight years of my life. It would have made my life easier. Maybe I would not have married that early, if I had support of my mother in questions that were important to me.” (an activist from Georgia)

« If a young woman is not able to tell her father that she is working and I will come home only after 7 p.m., how will she be able to have and express an opinion on Nagorno-Karabakh or human rights for instance? Therefore, it is very important. If women cannot assert themselves at home, how can they raise their voices in politics.” (an activist from Armenia)

Challenges and the lessons learnt:

The examples from Georgia and Armenia show how forum theatre can be used in creating a space for discussing difficult, sensitive issues about power and power relations. The experiences of these activists illustrate that theatre work can be very useful in situations when one cannot directly communicate many issues that are taboo and when another entry point is needed. Theatre helps to establish trust and an atmosphere where people begin to open up.

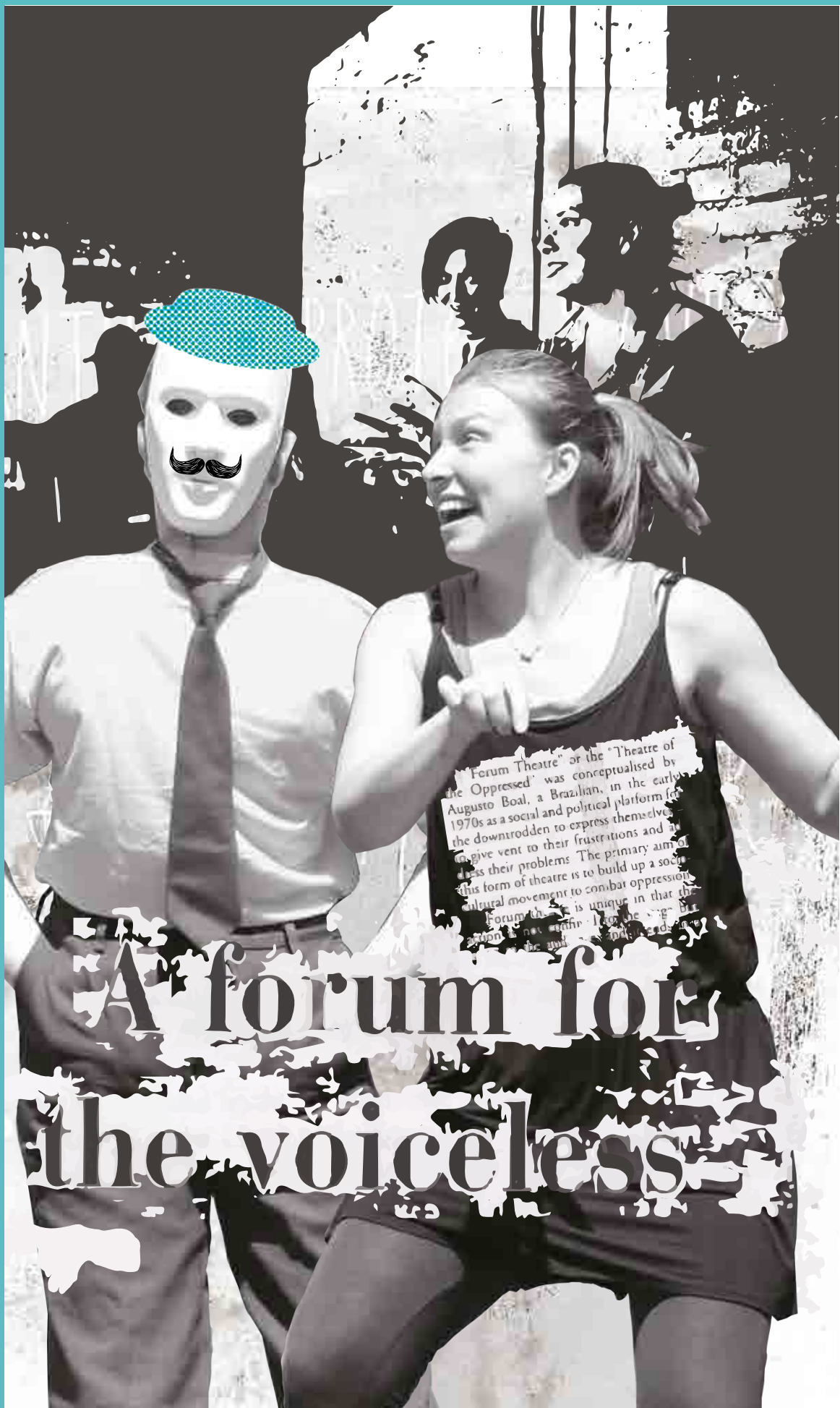
Challenging hierarchical subordination in the educational system in St. Petersburg

Using the Theatre of the Oppressed, activists from Theatrical project “Vmeste” in St. Petersburg staged a scene with the 10th grade students about a conflict they have had with the headmaster of the school. The headmaster had taken a difficult decision without consulting with the students and they did not agree with the decision-making process.

So, they decided to stage a scene about the given situation to raise discussions inside the school with the headmaster, the teachers, students from other grades and their parents.

The purpose:

The example from St. Petersburg deals with the issue of strict subordination in schools. In most schools, there are not many opportunities for students to influence the decision-making process. A certain culture of communication and the requirement of obedience from pupils towards teachers and other school workers is widespread.



Forum Theatre' or the 'Theatre of the Oppressed' was conceptualised by Augusto Boal, a Brazilian, in the early 1970s as a social and political platform for the downtrodden to express themselves and give vent to their frustrations and address their problems. The primary aim of this form of theatre is to build up a social and cultural movement to combat oppression. Forum theatre is unique in that the audience is not a passive observer but an active participant in the performance.

A forum for the voiceless

The impacts:

« During the play rehearsals the pupils were ranting and raving about the headmaster; they were very angry. When we started working on the character of the headmaster in the forum scene it became more and more clear what her motives and restrictions might have been. So, when the forum scene was finally staged, the children already had some understanding of the headmaster's actual situation.”

The staging of the forum scene led to a dialogue between the headmaster and the students and both sides listened to each other and learned more about their respective motives and limitations. Thus, it was not the classical forum where the oppressed person is strengthened in order to change a given situation. But it was a great opportunity for the students, teachers, parents and the headmaster to discuss important issues.

« What we achieved was that the headmaster started listening to the students. And all sides to the conflict started listening to each other.”

Challenges and the lessons learnt:

The challenge to work with the Forum theatre in this context was that there are not many options for the protagonists to transform the situation. As school is a very hierarchical structure (not only in the Russian Federation) it would be important to change the policy in order to really change the situation. Eventually it could be a good idea to work with legislative theatre⁷ in this case.

Empowering people and changing policies in Georgia and Ukraine

In Georgia activists from NGO Civic Activism and Equality Centre in Zugdidi used street theatre to address the issue of inclusion of handicapped people in their community. In Ukraine activists from “Theatre for Dialogue” NGO used Forum theatre for the empowerment of IDP-women in order to represent their interests and get engaged in the needed political changes.

« My friends and I have decided to build a street art group and dedicate our work to the rights of disabled people – which is a marginalized group in Georgia. So, we asked young volunteers to make a small research, to interview the people with disabilities and to ask the following question “What is the first thing that you would like to have changed? We can

7. Legislative theatre is a methodology invented by Augusto Boal. The objective of this form of theatre is to open up a dialogue between citizens and institutional entities so that there is a flow of power between both groups. Boal calls this type of legislative process a “transitive democracy,” which lies in between direct and delegate democracy.

only make small changes.” Most of them said: “We are trapped in our homes, we cannot go out because there are no facilities for us. First thing could even be parks and banks to have ramps so that we can go there ourselves and manage our money budget etc.” – said an activist from Georgia.

The group decided to stage a street performance with the title “Support me”. In this performance, the situation of people with disabilities was illustrated. The play showed a scene where disabled people could not participate in elections because of lack of ramps.

While the Georgian activists in this example raised an issue on behalf of the marginalized group, the example of the Ukrainian activists illustrates how those concerned can raise their voice and turn into agents for change themselves.

« We work with groups of IDPs. We said this is not a group for working on traumas. It is a group to work on common issues.” – said an activist from Ukraine.

The group chose the topic of the conditions under which IDPs receive social benefits from a gender perspective.

« This situation we staged in a play with IDP women from different parts of Ukraine. The play also raised the issue of working conditions of civil servants on the local level. They have many tasks, a lot of pressure on them and bad working conditions – such as old computers or broken air-conditions. So, maybe a good situation can look different on the ground from the perspective of the central government? We played the scene in different towns in Ukraine and discussed it with local politicians, journalists and ordinary citizens.” (an activist from Ukraine)

The purpose of the action:

One consequence of persisting violent conflicts are social problems for vulnerable or marginalized social groups that do remain unsolved. Transforming relationships also means to include different kind of social groups and respect their needs and rights.

« We decided to stage a street performance because we thought this would be a good way to reach out to people. In our society, which can be described as a society in a cold-war-situation, most people focus on their everyday worries. Not many go to the cinema or the theatre – there is not much room for culture, arts and leisure time.” (an activist from Georgia)

Both groups of activists wanted to strengthen the rights of a certain group by giving them a voice. The aim was to raise awareness of the issue, to enter into

a public debate but also to involve political decision makers in order to find a solution.

« Our aim was to show the officials, who are looking at the situation through the statistics, how the concrete situation of female IDPs looks like. Civil servants at the ministries focus mainly on how and when IDPs get benefits. In order to get the benefits, IDPs need many different kinds of documents. The conditions under which benefits are accessible are constantly changing. It may turn out that one of the state institutions changes a rule and other state institutions do not even know about it, while for the concerned people this is a complete mess. It takes a lot of time to go from one governmental agency to the next one to get all the required documents. It means to stand in line for hours. Mostly women deal with this issues In addition to taking care of children, earning money etc.” (an activist from Ukraine)

The impacts:

Both initiatives turned out to be very effective. In both cases, there was a vivid public debate and the concerns were even transmitted to the responsible decision makers.

« The audience was really touched by the performance. They stepped towards us and said, “thank you”, because we allowed them to see the picture from another perspective. With the help of some NGOs we wrote a petition addressed to the local government. And indeed, as a result they started making public places easily accessible for disabled persons. Some private buildings have ramps now as well – if they are interested in attracting disabled people as their clients. That performance took place three years ago. And we continue to work on this issue.” (an activist from Georgia)

« In the end we had a presentation at the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Representatives of the Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territories and IDPs were invited as well as some members of parliament. It was not so easy to get these high-level persons to enter the stage and interact with the protagonist. But finally, one intervention was made, and we had an interesting discussion. The officials admitted that they know about these issues, have read about them and got them reported, however, they said they did not know which kind of emotions were behind all those problems and what these problems really mean to people.” (an activist from Ukraine)

Challenges and the lessons learnt:

This story shows that arts combined with other instruments such as petitions

and lobbying can contribute to great achievements. Using street theatre, the group was able to get those people interested, who would not even think about this issue. The street performance helped to attract attention, make the issue very clear, evoke emotions, transform indifference into interest.

These examples illustrate how theatre can get to the heart of a concrete issue and discuss it with different audiences to change their attitude and civic position. Apart from this effect of awareness raising and lobbying, the staging of an issue that concerns women and the discussion around it also activated and empowered the participating women.

« Most of our participants were not professional activists, but just ordinary citizens from small towns. Usually they have very strong feelings about politicians. When we started working on the scene, I asked them: “What do you want to tell the officials? What do you want to ask them?” They answered: “We want to ask them, if they have any conscience.” So, they had a demonic image of people in power. After we played in the Cabinet of Ministers, the participants could see that officials are also human beings and that sometimes they have very limited opportunities for making changes and they have their own fears and difficulties.

That inspired some of the involved IDP women to become active on the local level as well. They initiated a dialogue with representatives of local authorities. They went into city parliaments and they organized groups of IDPs and even registered new organizations to fight for the rights of IDP women. They saw that something can be done, it only needs time and resources, but it is possible. “(an activist from Ukraine)

The example shows that working with theatre enables different kinds of processes. It is an opportunity to find one's own voice, to tell one's story, to raise awareness or enter into a dialogue. It can lead to empowerment and mobilization and bolster the involved actors. It also challenges hierarchies and makes the issues that are usually avoided discussable. It makes those issues visible that are usually invisible, and it challenges hierarchies by introducing another language – the language of arts.

« Democracy becomes real when we can speak to different people in their own language. Often the instruments for participation in politics are not easily accessible for many citizens. It can be very hard for people who lack appropriate education understand all these things. For example, officials might say: “On our homepage you can find the political measures and you can read it and comment on it...” But when you have no experience at all, this is very hard to do. This is pseudo openness, because officials use a different language than most people do. Through theatre we can talk to the officials in the language of the people. And with the people about their living situations.

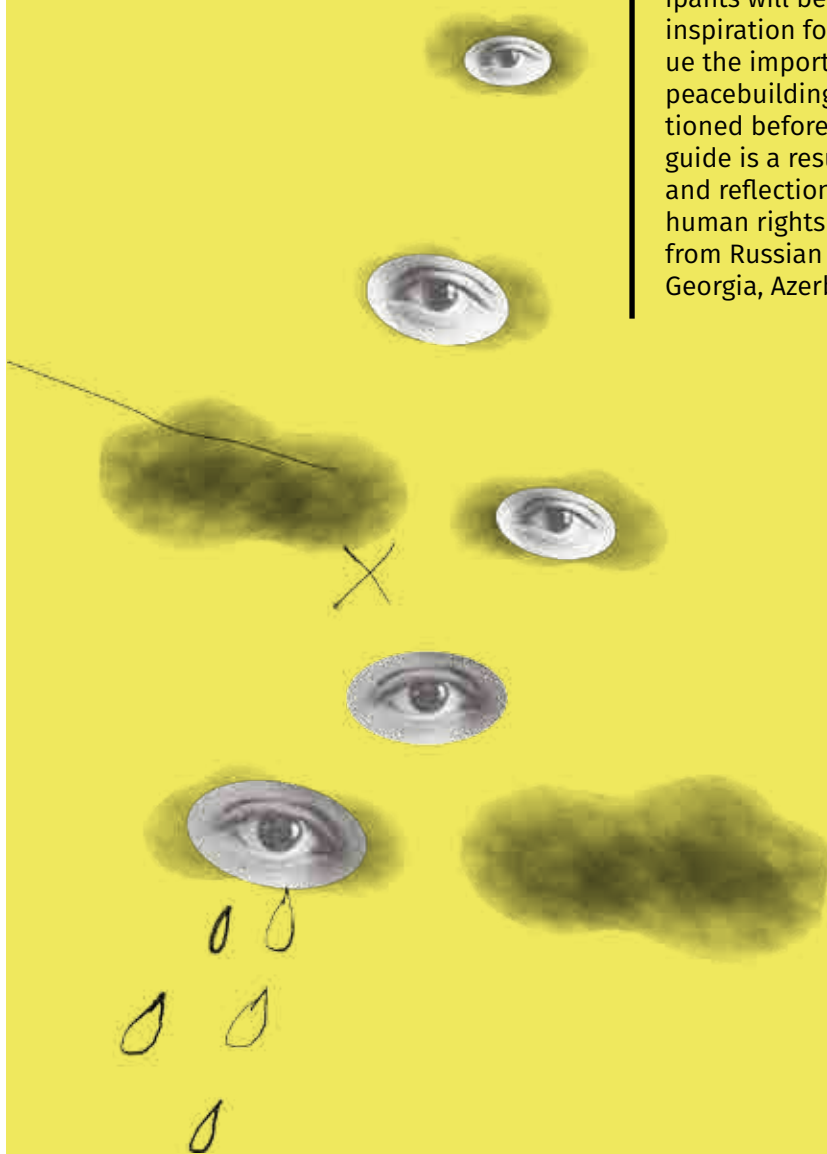
There I see the function of arts." (an activist from Ukraine)

Working with Forum Theatre and other approaches from the Theatre of the Oppressed there is an opportunity for dialogue on two levels. On the one hand, the group that is playing theatre together transforms experiences, concepts and relationships inside the group and in each member. On the other hand, the staging of a scene publicly enables to enter a dialogue with a larger audience. As a result, people in the audience also start to reconsider their opinions and to see things differently.



CHAPTER 4. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We hope the examples and experiences of the ARENA project participants will become a real source of inspiration for many people who value the importance of civil society's peacebuilding efforts. As was mentioned before, this methodological guide is a result of detailed analysis and reflections of the work of many human rights and peace activists from Russian Federation, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia.



In the guide, we have presented several forms of visual art that were effectively used by the civil society actors in their local community-based peace initiatives. For instance, as the examples brought up in the guide show, the activists in Armenia and in Russian Federation both used graphic stories in their work. In the example from Armenia (See Chapter 1, Example 5) the graphic stories were used mainly for speaking up about the issues that concern the activists. However, in the example from St. Petersburg (See Chapter 1, Example 2), the activist group used the same tool for educational purposes. Likewise, the forum theatre methodology was used differently by different groups: for instance, the group from Northern Caucasus used it as a tool for visualizing repression and creating a space for exchange of ideas (See Chapter 1, Example 7). Other activists from Georgia and Armenia used the same methodology for empowering people in their communities (See Chapter 2, Example 12). At the same time, the activists in Ukraine used the forum theatre for lobbying and advocacy purposes (See Chapter 3, Example 14). Thus, depending on the purpose of work, the intended impact or the context, the use of the same instruments may differ.

As it can be seen, many of the instruments in the mentioned examples were used in combination with other available tools. For instance, social media was used as a platform for sharing and discussing the street-art inspirations or graphic stories. Likewise, petitions and other lobbying instruments were used in combination with theatrical methods, and effectively served the advocacy purposes of activists. In general, in this methodological guide we have presented the following art-based instruments:

- Street art;
- Graphic stories and comics;
- Short animated videos;
- Film screenings and discussions;
- Documentary films;
- Different forms of theatre

We analysed the use of the instruments for the main three aims:

- Questioning militarism and opening space for alternative thinking;
- Transforming relationships: dealing with images, prejudices and stereotypes of “the other”;
- Empowering people and trying out possibilities for action.

It can be stated that all the mentioned tools have their strengths and limitations.

STREET ART

The main challenge with this type of visual art is that it is often prohibited in public spaces without official permission. However, the prohibition hardly prevents thousands of artists to speak up about the issues they are concerned about, using the language of the street art. However, this genre does not provide enough space⁸ for a feedback of the intended audience. This tool

8. There are experimental forms of street art that are involving audience into performance, thus providing direct interaction between the artist and the audience.

might be effectively used in cases of restricted possibilities for the civil society actors to express their concerns on social and political processes in their communities.

GRAPHIC STORIES AND COMICS

This is a visual art genre that is being actively used by political activists for triggering public discussion about the important social and political issues. As the previous tool, it does not provide much space for a dialogue with the audience and for using this tool for the community based peacebuilding proposes per se. It is likely to be used as a supporting element, triggering the discussions on the topics of concern for the community groups.

SHORT ANIMATED VIDEOS

This genre became popular in parallel with the development of the social media platforms and online media. In its early stages this type of art was largely used for advertisements and visualization of the materials in online media outlets. Later, it became a useful tool for political activists talking to people on different topics and issues. The animated films and cartoons can be effectively used in peacebuilding too. Like most of the previously mentioned art tools they can be very useful in visualizing problems, sharing concerns and thoughts, and can be used as visual materials for organizing public debates, trainings and discussion meetings.

FILM SCREENINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This tool is not an art technique in itself. Usually screenings are accompanying other activities such as trainings, workshops, etc. In the community based peacebuilding work this tool is often used for initiating discussions, bringing examples from other contexts, preparing the audience for conversations on sensitive or even forbidden topics.

DOCUMENTARY FILMS

It is one of the well-known standalone genres of visual art. Activists worldwide actively use documentary as an awareness raising instrument. Activists use this instrument for articulating urgent issues: making films about journalist investigations, telling silenced stories of people, etc. In peacebuilding work the documentary films are often used as triggers for discussions during the educational activities, workshops, conferences and dialogue meetings.

DIFFERENT FORMS OF THEATRE

In this guide three different types of theatre based methods were mentioned: Forum theatre, Legislative theatre and Street Theatre. It should be mentioned that the first two theatrical methods were invented by the Brazilian theatre practitioner and political activist Augusto Boal and are part of a broader philosophy called the Theatre of the Oppressed. From the antique times the street theatre was largely used by societies for criticising and mocking the behaviour of the corrupt politicians and officials. Currently these forms of Theatrical Art are used by the civil society actors during the trainings, workshops,

dialogue meetings as unique form for interaction with the audience (the communities). These forms of art can be very effective in repressive and fragile contexts where space for the civil society has been shrinking. The methodologies allow people not only to see and speak safely about the problems, but also jointly analyse the roots and causes, find possible ways for action, and develop empathy and solidarity with those in trouble.

Of course, with this analysis we do not intend to limit the creativity of our readers in any ways. On the contrary, we would like to invite the readers to be creative and innovative in using these or other forms of art in their work with their communities. These are just analysis of lessons learnt from our own experiences of using the mentioned artistic techniques in the peace work. However, as was mentioned above, the effectiveness of those instruments can be different, depending on the purpose of a work, the intended impact, the context and the needs of the communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PLANNING PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES WITH THE USE OF ART-BASED METHODOLOGIES

Further we would like to present a tool for planning activities with the use of art-based instruments. We hope it will help you in elaborating actions aimed at contributing to peace processes in your communities.

1. DEFINING THE ISSUE OR PROBLEM YOU WANT TO WORK ON

Ask yourself “what is the problem we are trying to solve?”. We recommend you do it as a team. Involving people from your communities will help you identify the issues that concern them. Be specific, do not choose broad issues that you will be unable to deal with, taking into account the limited resources. The more specific and realistic you are in identifying a relevant issue, the more chances there are that your community will support you.

2. ANALYZING THE CONTEXT

Think within your team of the environment in which your actions should be held. What are the factors and who are the actors that can positively or negatively affect your actions? What are the possible context related challenges that you expect and the risks you envision during the implementation of your activity.

3. IDENTIFYING THE ACTORS

Within the wide range of possible stakeholders, identify a group of people who you plan to target with your action or project. Think who they are, what their interests and their gender roles are, what they would expect from you and how they can help you in reaching your aim. The more you know your actors, the more chances you have to choose the relevant art-based intervention.

4. IDENTIFYING THE ART-BASED METHODOLOGY

The artistic approaches that you choose for your work in the community will very much depend on interests and needs of community that you are working with. During the selection of the methodology it always makes sense to double check it with the people that should be involved in your actions. For instance, if planned to work with the officials of the municipality, one can hardly decide to use the street art as the best strategy for interacting with them. Likewise, one should not plan (at least in short term) to work on making animated cartoons with people who do not have at least basic knowledge of computers or relevant technical instruments. However, it should be noted that if the same community group expressed an interest on making animated cartoons, one may think of a strategy on how to help people acquire basic computer skills and then work on developing simple forms of animation. Besides, when working with techniques of the theatre of the oppressed - make sure that the preconditions are met. Forum theatre requires a certain constellation with a concrete protagonist facing a concrete antagonist (a person) in a concrete situation that is generally transformable.

5. ANALYZE AND LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE

And the last but not the least - keep doing things you are passionate about and do not stop if you fail. Be reflective! Try to analyze the success and failures. Try to learn from your own experience. Try again and again.

Moreover, it is very important to have a long-term vision and strategy of what you intend to change. Using different forms of art might be one of the steps on the way to coming closer to your vision. The big challenge is not to use art only for awareness raising and mobilization but also to organize people and empower them to become engaged for their own concerns and peaceful transformation of violent conflicts. Art can help us to unite groups of people who learn and think together and who make new "inventions" in order to (re-) build society. We see art as part of the road there.

EPILOGUE

We imagine that there are many of us who can aspire, can dream and be creative in realizing their dreams.

We imagine that you join us and together we work in our communities, neighbourhoods, hometowns and across different kind of borders to change an unsafe and violent environment into a more peaceful one.

We imagine that we are all peacebuilders!

Thanks to all those who contributed to this Methodological Guide, first of all to all the peacebuilders we are working with...

LINKS AND LITERATURE

1. **Paulo Freire: Education for critical consciousness/** ©1974 by Sheed & Ward LTD, First published 1974 - <http://abahlali.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Paulo-Freire-Education-for-Critical-Consciousness-Continuum-Impacts-2005.pdf>;
2. **Paulo Freire: Pedagogy of the Oppressed/**1968 - https://selforganized-seminar.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/freire_pedagogy_oppressed1.pdf;
3. **Augusto Boal: Games for actors and non-actors/**First published 1992 by Routledge - <https://www.deepfun.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Games-for-actors-and-non-actors...Augusto-Boal.pdf>;
4. **Augusto Boal: Theatre of the Oppressed/** First published 1979 by Pluto Press, London - https://books.google.am/books/about/Theater_of_the_Oppressed.html?id=g8Zbuk6AlqsC&redir_esc=y
5. **Johan Galtung: Peace by Peaceful Means/** International Peace Redearch Institute, Oslo - http://legacy.earlham.edu/~chris/ConflictRes/pdf%20files/GaltungPeaceByPeacefulMeans_p70_114.pdf ;
6. **Johan Galtung: Theories of conflict/** Columbia University, 1958 - https://www.transcend.org/files/Galtung_Book_Theories_Of_Conflict_single.pdf;
7. **John Paul Lederach: Preparing for peace/** Syracuse University Press, 1995 - https://books.google.am/books?id=yNKOAAAAMAAJ&hl=hy&-source=gbv_book_other_versions;
8. **Banksy: Wall and Piece/** © 2005, Century - http://library.uniteddiversity.coop/More_Books_and_Reports/Banksy-Wall_And_Piece.pdf;
9. **Michael Shank, Lisa Schirch: Strategic Arts-Based Peacebuilding/** ©2008 Peace History Society and Peace and Justice Studies Association - http://escolapau.uab.es/img/programas/musica/strategic_arts.pdf;
10. **Participatory video for peacebuilding: a guide for practitioners/** ©2015, miafilmia - http://howtobuildup.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/PVP-BGuide_Final.pdf.