Empowering Youth: Identity, Belonging and Migration

1. Presentation by Séverine Lenglet, European Media and Communications Officer, Citizens for Europe (Berlin, Germany)

2. Presentation by Emily Mason, Senior Project Manager, and Amena Amer, Project Coordinator, Maslaha (London, UK)

3. Q&A moderated by Kim Turner, Cities of Migration, Global Diversity Exchange, Ryerson University (Toronto, Canada)

Webinar recording will be available on the website: www.citiesofmigration.ca
Séverine Lenglet

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(Berlin, Germany)
NICER
EMPOWERING REFUGEE AND LOCAL YOUTH THROUGH PERFORMING ARTS WORKSHOPS
KEY FACTS

- Funded by the European Commission

- Result of a collaboration between seven partner cities across Europe: Rome (Italy), Sevilla (Spain), Berlin (Germany), Molenbeek (Belgium), Timisoara (Romania), Liverpool (UK), Nicosia (Cyprus).

- In each partner city, 15 young refugees and 15 local youth created within four months a musical (from January to April 2017).

- Final performances took place in May 2017
In 2015, Germany received about half a million new asylum applications. In 2015, 59% of the newcomers were under the age of 24.
WHAT NEEDS DO NICER ADDRESS?

- In Europe, refugees are accommodated in refugee shelters and reception facilities where the **opportunities for interaction and exchange with locals are very limited** and very often language and cultural barriers can be a major obstacle.

- On the other hand, **Europe faces a rise of right-wing populism, racism and a generalised anti-immigration sentiment**.

There is a need to identify and implement innovative instruments to counterbalance this situation.
• To overcome language barriers, prejudices and discrimination
• To provide creative spaces of creation and expression of identities
• To foster intercultural dialogue
• To allow the expression of challenges, both refugees and the local youth faces
• To encourage team building and collective work
• Artistic expression creates a level play field where the contribution of each of the participants is equally important.
IMPLEMENTATION: THE STAFF

The young people need a regular and committed staff so they can feel secure:

- 2 vocal and music coaches
- 2 dramaturgy/creative writing coaches
- 2 theater directors/drama teachers
- 1 language coach
- 1 social worker who promoted cohesion and the empowerment of every participant
IMPLEMENTATION: ACTIVITIES

• Separated **Theater and orchestra trainings**
  - During 3-4 months, outside of the school hours
  - Each activity: once a week 2-3 hours
  - Acting, singing, dancing, playing a music instrument

• **Dramaturgy workshops:**
  - every second Saturday, always after a collective breakfast buffet.
  - **Group discussion** on identity, discrimination, migration and right-wing ideologies.

• **Cross-cultural language training:**
  - 2 hours per week.
  - Different from the traditional frontal teaching approach
  - Interaction between locals and newcomers facilitated by a language coach.
  - Role playing, language choir, storytelling, songs
A PARTICIPATIVE APPROACH

- **Co-creation:** The young participants take complete ownership of the project and are involved in all aspects of the production of the play.

- The professional coaches are mostly there to support and guide the young participants in creating the musical, in getting skills such as acting, dancing, creative and song writing, sound and lightning...

- The young people **choose their own role**

- The young participants **develop and write the dramaturgy together**.
„The main instrument of the teacher is the question, not the answer!“
IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

• The participants developed their **creative skills, self-esteem and socialisation** (new friendships; the theater: a safe space where they “feel home”)

• Developed their **language skills**: were able to perform on stage complex texts in German

• developed a critical and analytical mind on complex political issues, learned how to speak out - **Multiplicators in their communities**

• Awareness about the life of refugees and their difficulties

“After the project, the majority of them continued to take part in the activities of the theater.”
IMPACT ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

- The audience of the final performances in Berlin: about 600 persons
- Activities in schools (about 70 children)
- Raise awareness on the life and problems of refugees, on the dangers of right-wing populism
- Tackle the prejudices on youth and on refugees
TIPS FOR REPLICATION

- Be flexible
- Build a trustful relationship
- Avoid asking for ID documents
- Treat the young refugees as equal with the local youth
- Create a safe space where they feel as a young person not as a refugee
- Work with staff with migration backgrounds
- Be aware of the risks of acting on a neo-colonial and paternalistic perspective
- Avoid top-down methods: Co-creation
Thank you!

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MUSLIM GIRLS FENCE

maslaha
Identity Workshops
Fencing/Self Expression
Creative Output
Public Imagination
British Context
Confidence and Solidarity
Changing School Culture
Expansion of Project:
5 UK cities – London, Birmingham, Doncaster, Bradford, Glasgow
Working in Schools and Communities

Lessons Learnt:
Understanding school culture
Working within existing community cultures
Practice
creating systemic change at a grassroots level

Public Imagination
influencing and shaping public debates and media narratives

Policy
influencing policy at a strategic level based on our work at a local level
Acknowledgments

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Cities of Migration

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