



GENERATION IMPACT: CULTURAL ACTIVISTS HOW TO CARRY OUT LOCAL ACTIONS?

Omanovac, Croatia
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1. Introduction

This guidebook brings together the activities and experiences from our Erasmus+ youth exchange, *Generation Impact: Cultural Activists*, focused on cultural activism.

For ten days in Lipik, Croatia, the project gathered 42 young people and their group leaders from six countries—Greece, Ukraine, North Macedonia, Romania, Curaçao, and Croatia. What started as a project to explore cultural activism quickly became a journey of self-discovery, teamwork, and new friendships.

Through workshops and hands-on projects, we shared ideas, built skills, and explored ways to make a difference. Side by side, we learned from each other and connected over shared goals—whether in discussions about activism or by simply getting to know one another.

More than a collection of activities, this guidebook is a snapshot of our journey. It serves as both a toolkit and a source of inspiration for anyone passionate about cultural activism.





We hope it will inspire you to take action, build connections, and create positive change in your own community!





2. Engage, Create, Empower!

The theme of cultural activism was introduced to us in a calm and creative way, using a mix of mindfulness and storytelling.

We started with a guided mindfulness exercise, where we imagined the places we frequently visit in our community. The facilitator created a relaxed atmosphere with soft background music, guiding us step-by-step through the process. We were encouraged to reflect on questions like:

“Imagine walking through your community or a place you visit often. What do you see? What do you hear? Think about what feels good in that space, but also notice anything that doesn’t feel right.” or “Is there a problem that stands out to you? It could be something related to the environment, people’s behavior, or even something that feels missing.”

These simple prompts drew us into a deeper reflection on the everyday issues in our community, that we might otherwise overlook.

We were encouraged to observe and reflect on the people within the space we imagined:

“Now think about the people around you. How do they interact with each other? Do they seem content, or are they facing challenges? What could those challenges be?”

Next, we were invited to connect these observations to our own personal experiences:

“Take a moment to relate this issue to your own life. Have you seen this problem in your own community, or is it something you’ve learned about elsewhere? Why does it matter to you?”

“Does this issue concern you when you think about your future, or the future of those close to you?”

Finally, we were asked to envision the potential outcomes of change:

“Now imagine what might happen if nothing is done. How could this issue worsen over time? How might it affect more people, the environment, or your community?”

“And think about how it might feel if this problem were solved. What positive changes would come from addressing it?”





After reflecting, we were asked to open our eyes and start writing. Using paper and pen, we developed a story or film idea focused on the issue we identified!

Step 1: We chose an issue we wanted to explore.

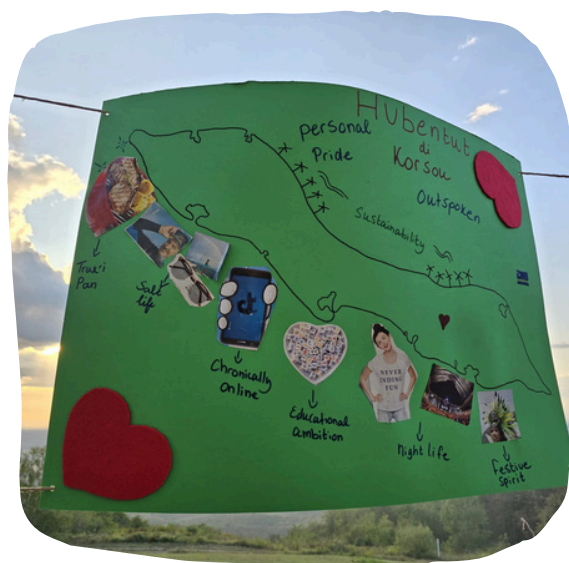
Step 2: We created our film concept — focusing on the plot, characters, and key scenes.

Step 3: We thought about the impact — how our film could inspire change and make people think differently about the issue.

Once everyone had an outline for their story/film, including the title, we were encouraged to share our ideas with the group. It was inspiring to hear about the challenges others face and see how creatively everyone approached these issues. Also, it was a great opportunity to dive into the process of creative writing and explore new ways to express ideas!

3. Picture This: Youth in Focus

In this workshop, participants were divided into national teams, each tasked with creating a collage that represented youth culture in their respective countries. The activity encouraged us to reflect on and express what defines youth culture in our communities. Using magazines, team members cut out images they felt best represented the essence of youth life—whether it was trends, values, activities, or social issues that were most relevant to young people at the time..



Then, the collages were displayed in a suitable location, giving everyone the opportunity to explore and reflect on them. This activity helped us understand how young people from different countries perceive youth culture in their own communities, including the challenges they face, how they spend their free time, and what activities they enjoy.



4. Climbing the Ladder: Where do you stand?

In this activity, we were divided into groups and given a scenario. For example, one situation involved young people being invited to attend a political event to create the illusion of widespread support for a particular cause or party. Each group was asked to create a short sketch that depicted this situation.



The foundation for developing these scenarios was Hart's "Ladder of Participation", which describes different levels of young people's involvement in decision-making and participatory processes.



After presenting their sketches, the group engaged in a collective discussion to analyze each scenario. Together, we worked to place each sketch on Hart's Ladder of Participation.

The facilitator guided the discussion, providing explanations to help us understand the different levels of youth involvement represented in each scenario.

RUNG 8 - Youth initiated shared decisions with adults: Youth-led activities, in which decision making is shared between youth and adults working as equal partners.

RUNG 7 - Youth initiated and directed: Youth-led activities with little input from adults.

RUNG 6 - Adult initiated shared decisions with youth: Adult-led activities, in which decision making is shared with youth.

RUNG 5 - Consulted and informed: Adult-led activities, in which youth are consulted and informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of adult decisions.

RUNG 4 - Assigned, but informed: Adult-led activities, in which youth understand purpose, decision-making process, and have a role.

RUNG 3 - Tokenism: Adult-led activities, in which youth may be consulted with minimal opportunities for feedback.

RUNG 2 - Decoration: Adult-led activities, in which youth understand purpose, but have no input in how they are planned.

RUNG 1 - Manipulation: Adult-led activities, in which youth do as directed without understanding of the purpose for the activities.

The workshop ended with a reflection activity where we looked back on our journey over the past year, particularly in terms of activism and involvement in social issues. We were asked to consider how much we had engaged in various causes and the impact of our actions.

Imaginary line on the floor represented a “ladder” of engagement. Each participant stood on the step that best reflected their level of involvement, from being a passive observer to becoming an active leader in creating change. This exercise allowed us to reflect on our growth and position ourselves within the larger context of youth activism.



5. Silent Walk, Loud Thoughts

As part of our project, we went on a forest walk with the purpose of immersing ourselves into our inner worlds. The walk was designed to encourage self-reflection, and we were guided to explore key questions such as:

Who are we in relation to our communities?

Who are we in this exchange?

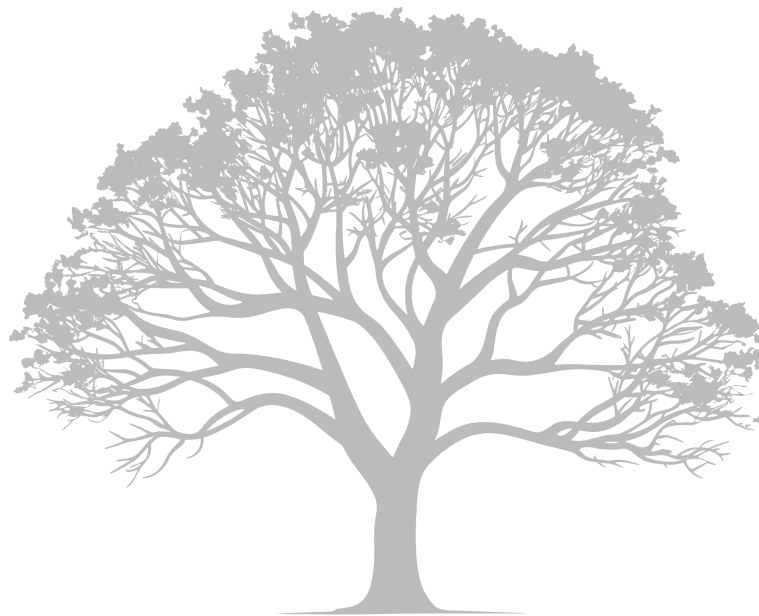
What do we believe our purpose is?

During the walk, we paused at different points to sit in silence for 10 minutes, allowing time for personal reflection. After each pause, we paired up with a new partner to share our thoughts, fostering meaningful conversations and gaining fresh perspectives along the way.





After the reflective walk and sharing, the group gathered in a circle to share what they were grateful for. Everyone took turns speaking while the others listened. It created a relaxed and respectful vibe, helping to wrap up the activity in a way that strengthened the connection and focus within the group.



6. Sparks of Change: Activism Without Borders

This activity involved our pre-arrival task. Before the project, each national group was asked to find an example of cultural activism from their country or community. The goal was to explore a real-world case of cultural activism, understand how it was implemented locally, and analyze its impact on the community or beyond. We had to research our chosen example thoroughly and then present it creatively to the rest of the group during the exchange.



Each group focused not only on the activism itself but also on finding engaging and creative ways to present it. Our presentations varied—some groups used multimedia, videos, radio drama, or photo presentations.

This exercise connected us with real-life examples of activism and helped us build teamwork and creative expression skills. Sharing our examples across cultures was especially valuable, as we could see how activism looks in different communities and learn from each other's experiences. It was inspiring to hear how these examples left a mark on each of us and sparked ideas for our own future actions!





7. Guerilla mode: Disrupt and Create

In this activity, we were introduced to guerrilla-style activism in an unexpected way: each team was suddenly tasked with joining a campaign to save Omanovac, our mountain lodge “at risk of being turned into a luxury hotel”! Each team received a specific form of activism to guide their approach, from flash mobs and green graffiti to projections on cultural buildings, climate caroling, creative (but legal) blocking and stencil activism. One group staged a flash mob, surprising the crowd with a coordinated performance that ended in a loud, collective “Save Omanovac!”

The Task was simple but challenging:

Design and Implement: each team recreated their assigned form of activism by designing a project around the theme of saving Omanovac.

Getting Creative: we were encouraged to stay true to the spirit of our assigned activism style but also to add our own unique twists, making each project relevant and impactful for the cause.

Research: we had the option to dive deeper and learn more about our activism method. This extra research helped some of us build stronger, more effective campaigns, bringing new insight into how to engage people and make a real impact.



Each group's approach highlighted the many creative ways we can engage a community and initiate important conversations. Through our collaborative efforts, we demonstrated the power of collective action in activism. The energy of the day not only raised awareness about the importance of preserving Omanovac, but also strengthened our sense of unity and purpose. By the end of the activity, we all felt a shared sense of accomplishment, bonded by our collective mission to protect something we care deeply about!



8. The Power Play: Who Holds the Strings?

The Power Play was a surprise simulation that took place during a scheduled breakfast, catching us off guard because we didn't expect it! We were divided into four groups: the government, the police, the administration, and the citizens, each with different roles to play.

The government received the best food, the administration received sandwiches, and the citizens barely got anything. The players had to roleplay a scenario where they negotiated and acted out possible solutions to the inequality.





The exercise unfolded into a scenario mirroring real-life situations of protest, where the lower class struggles for basic rights while the government and police maintain control through corruption and bribery. The group's dynamic demonstrated how power structures influence the flow of resources and the challenges faced by those on the bottom.

After the simulation, we reflected on our experiences, discussing how we felt within our roles and exploring how such power imbalances can lead to activism, protests, and societal change. This activity offered an insightful perspective into social inequality and the ways activism can challenge corrupt systems.



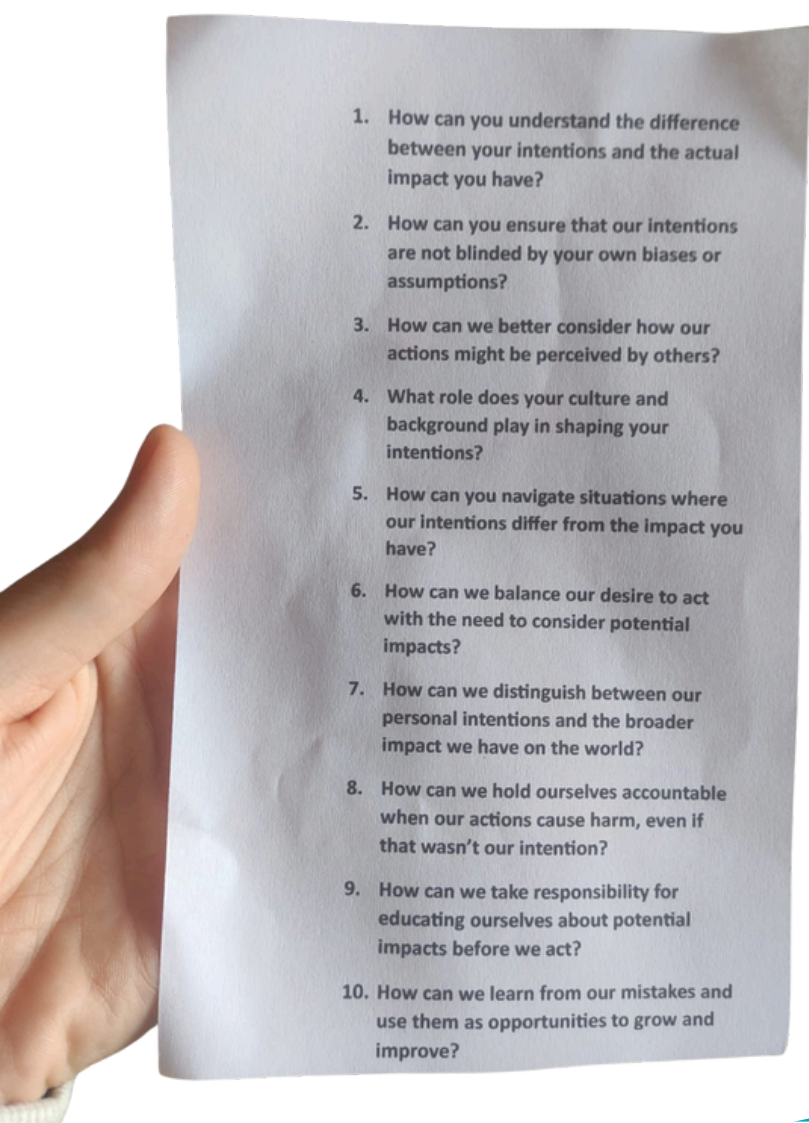
9. Intention vs. Impact: When Good Isn't Enough

This thought-provoking activity was designed to help us reflect on the relationship between intention, action, and impact. The metaphor of fishing was used to illustrate how activism often involves hope and uncertainty. Just like in fishing, you cast your line with a goal (intention), but you don't always know if you'll catch anything (impact).

For this exercise, each participant was given a DIY fishing stick, and the "fish" were actually small pieces of paper containing reflective questions related to activism. As we "fished," we drew out the questions and we were asked to individually reflect on them. The questions provoked us to explore how we balance our desire to take action with the need for rational thought, as well as how we differentiate between the actions we take and the real impact we have.

After catching the “fish” each participant wrote down their answers and shared their thoughts. This individual reflection allowed us to examine our own approaches to activism and understand how our actions can sometimes differ from their intended impact.

To wrap up, we held a short debriefing session, during which we discussed the key insights we gained from the activity. This reflection helped us understand the broader perspective of activism, highlighting the importance of balancing intention with rationality and awareness of our actions' potential impact. Ultimately, the exercise encouraged us to think critically about how we plan and carry out our local actions, ensuring they align with both our goals and the wider context.

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1. How can you understand the difference between your intentions and the actual impact you have?
 2. How can you ensure that our intentions are not blinded by your own biases or assumptions?
 3. How can we better consider how our actions might be perceived by others?
 4. What role does your culture and background play in shaping your intentions?
 5. How can you navigate situations where our intentions differ from the impact you have?
 6. How can we balance our desire to act with the need to consider potential impacts?
 7. How can we distinguish between our personal intentions and the broader impact we have on the world?
 8. How can we hold ourselves accountable when our actions cause harm, even if that wasn't our intention?
 9. How can we take responsibility for educating ourselves about potential impacts before we act?
 10. How can we learn from our mistakes and use them as opportunities to grow and improve?



10. Your Superhero: It's Time to Act

This workshop was designed to help us connect with our inner strengths and feel empowered. It began with a brief guided meditation to help everyone focus and tap into their 'superpowers' for five minutes. After the meditation, we had about 15 minutes of creative time to design our own superhero, drawing from our personal strengths and values.



Once the superheroes were created, we wore them as capes, symbolizing the power we held within. This gave everyone the chance to proudly display their superheroes for 10 minutes, fostering a sense of empowerment and self-expression.

At the end of the activity, we held a 5-minute debrief for reflection, where we shared our experiences and thoughts. Finally, we created a collective poster showcasing all the superheroes together, symbolizing the group's strength and the unique powers each individual brought to the table.





11. Unicorns are real!

The local action was the central event of the project, where we applied everything we had learned throughout the workshops! We started by forming teams based on shared interests and causes, ensuring a clear motivation for each group. Each team then chose creative approaches, using various methods that reflected our personalities and values, to address the challenges at hand. This allowed everyone to connect with the issues they cared about, while utilizing the tools and skills gained during the project.





Our main goal was to create an activity that addresses the following key questions:

Why? (Our goal)

We needed to identify a cause that resonated with us, something that we felt passionate about and that could also have a positive impact on the local community. The goal was to clearly define what we wanted to achieve through our action.

To Whom? (Our target group)

It was important to determine who would benefit from the action. In our case, the targeted group was the local community of Lipik, with a special focus on the youth.





What?

This was about the message we wanted to communicate to the community.

Where, When, and How?

We had to decide the location and timing of our action, but the most important aspect was the "how." During the exchange, we learned many creative methods for promoting activism, and we used these ideas to design our own action.





To wrap up, we hope our activities have sparked something in you and shed light on parts of the process that can lead to meaningful action in your own community, especially when approached in creative ways. Working together as a team has definitely made everything easier for us and has played a big part in our success.

A huge thank you to all the organizations that supported us on this journey – we couldn't have done it without you!



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