COMMUNITY-BUILDING GUIDE

Cedos

Cedos

is an independent think tank, an urban bureau, and a community that has been working on social and spatial development issues since 2010. We believe that every person is entitled to a dignified standard of living. Therefore, Cedos's goal is to identify the systemic causes of social problems and develop options to solve them. Our approach is research-based. We study social processes and public policies, spread critical knowledge, promote and implement progressive changes, and educate and empower a community of supporters for these changes.

www.cedos.org.ua

UMAEF

Ukraine-Moldova American Enterprise Fund (formerly Western NIS Enterprise Fund) is the first regional private equity fund in Ukraine and Moldova with capital of USD 285 million, founded with funding from the U.S. Government through the Unites States Agency for International Development (USAID). The Fund has over 29 years of experience successfully investing in small and medium-sized enterprises. In total, the Fund has invested USD 190 million in 143 companies employing 27,000 people, and has enabled the mobilization of USD 2.4 billion into companies in Ukraine and Moldova.

www.umaef.org

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Community reBuilding

is a joint project by Cedos and Ukraine-Moldova American Enterprise Fund which provides financial and expert support for creating or updating community-building centers, which are accessible physical spaces where people from various social groups can come together for leisure, community development, cooperation, and comprehensive realization of their human potential.

In 2024 the Community reBuilding project received the New European Bauhaus Prize 2024. The project became a winner among initiatives from all European Union and Western Balkan countries in the Rising Stars nomination in the category Prioritizing places and people who need it most.

Cedos

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Introduction

This Guide continues the public education program of the Community reBuilding project. As part of this program, ten online seminars were held, dedicated to various aspects of the work of community and cultural centers.

Within the Community reBuilding project, we use the term "community-building center" to refer to accessible physical spaces where people from various social groups can come together for leisure, community development, cooperation, and comprehensive realization of their human potential.

Community and cultural centers, or community-building centers, play a key role in the process of community development, as they provide the physical space for interaction among community members. Through the organization of cultural, educational, and social events, such centers help develop social ties, form shared values, and increase trust among people. Strengthening communities is an important aspect of community development during the full-scale war.

The guide begins with a section on bringing communities together through cultural programming. This section helps understand how to engage and develop communities within community-building centers. The second section focuses on the types and possibilities of adult education. The third section explores the topic of sustainability and the functioning of community-building centers during wartime and uncertainty. The fourth section addresses issues of inclusivity and accessibility, including physical, informational, digital, social, and educational aspects. The fifth section discusses the communication tools and methods used by community-building centers to engage different audiences. The sixth section focuses on approaches to involving and interacting with veterans. The seventh covers how community and cultural centers can work with young people. The eighth section highlights the role of community-building cen-

ters in addressing environmental issues. The ninth section is dedicated to engaging older people in active community life. The final section of the guide provides information on how community-building centers can work with the youngest members of the community.

Each section of the guide consists of the subsections What to consider, Checklist, and Useful materials. The What to consider subsection presents specific aspects of working with each topic and provides practical advice. The Checklist includes questions that are important to ask yourself if you plan to work more closely with a particular topic. The Useful materials subsection contains publications and other resources that can help expand your knowledge of each topic. Some sections include case descriptions, particularly the experiences of creating the first wave of community-building centers within the Community reBuilding project, which illustrate the section's topic.

Cultural programming
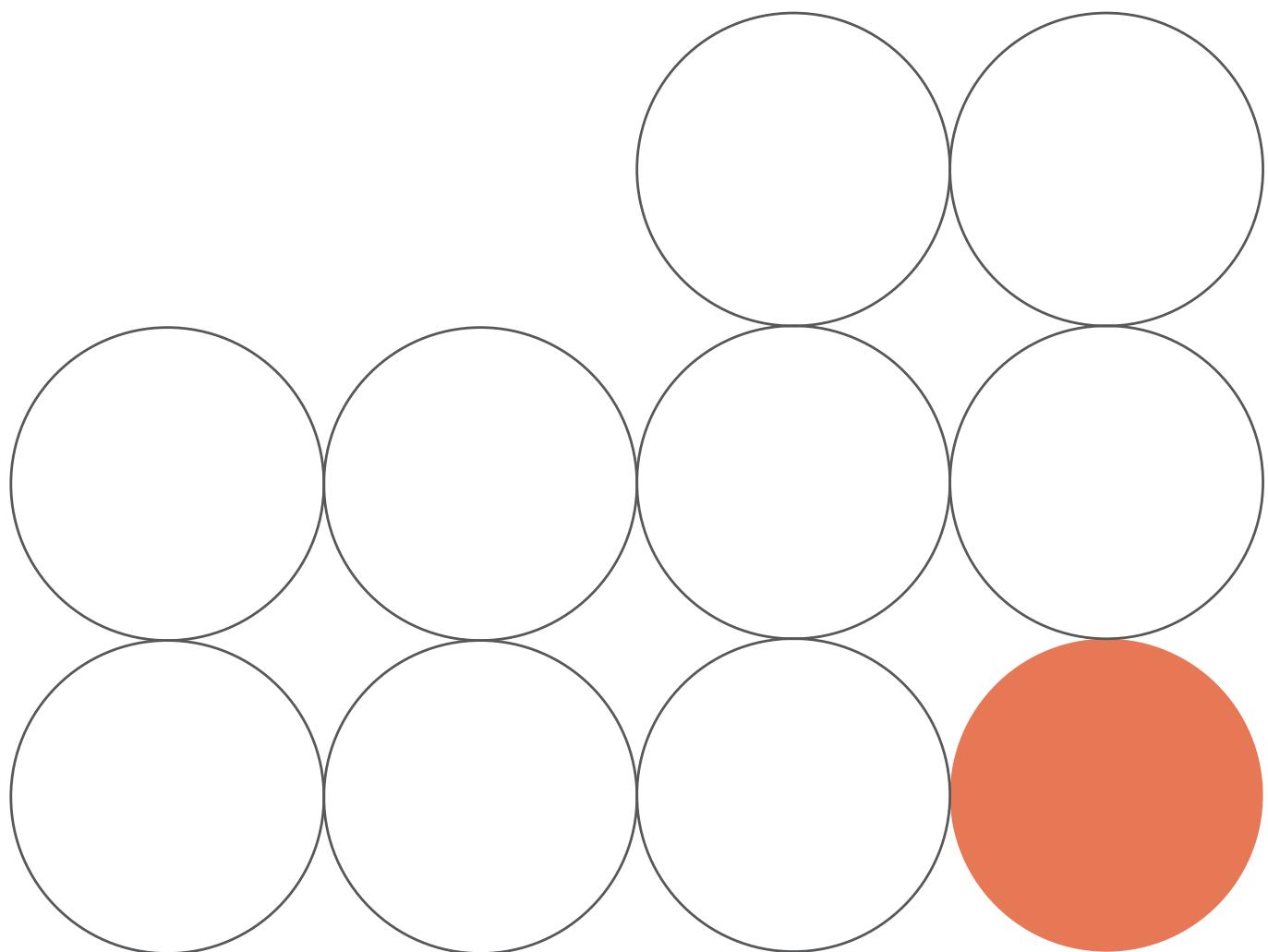
What to consider

The cultural program of a community-building center is one of the tools for uniting the hromada, and for creating and developing communities. It can help overcome social and cultural differences, create a space for interaction and exchange of experience, and influence the formation of solidarity and collective identity.

A community is a group of people united by shared interests, values, goals, or place of residence. It can form around a physical space or in a digital environment where people interact, exchange ideas, and support one another. Communities are created and developed based on social connections, trust, and interaction among their members. One of the important elements of a community's existence is people's ability to come together to achieve common goals. Since the beginning of the full-scale war in Ukraine, communities have become centers of support, solidarity, and collective action[1].

Iryna Starovoit

Associate Professor at the Department of Cultural Studies of UCU, writer, member of the Ukrainian PEN, and visiting researcher at St. John's College, University of Oxford

Community-building is when we create something as a community, as a collective of authors. Community-building is when we create a community — but is it possible to create a community without also creating something else in the process? I have a feeling that it's not. Because a community is really connected not only to a place of residence, not only to the neighborhood, but to the fact that we want to do something together.

[1] Read more about the development and strengthening of communities in hromadas during the war in a video lecture by Karina Fursa-Levytska on How to Strengthen Communities in Hromadas.

We want to move somehow from point A to point B. This problem-solving process is very important; it has contributed to our cohesion and community-building. This was also facilitated by the decentralization reform, when financial flows and decisions about local budgets began to return to the local level. People themselves could, during public discussions, decide what to do with our annual development budget, with our budget for change, including for cultural needs[2].

The cultural program of a public or cultural center is usually a series of public events aimed at developing cultural life and uniting communities. It may include art exhibitions, theater performances, film screenings, concerts, festivals, art residencies, masterclasses, educational events, discussions, and literary readings. A well-planned cultural program gives a community-building center the opportunity to become a platform for the creative development and education of hromada residents, for critical discussion of social and cultural issues, and for fostering dialogue and understanding among different groups of people and communities.

When planning your community-building center's program, it is important to focus on:

- understanding the interests, requests, and needs of various communities and hromada residents—this understanding can be improved using surveys of hromada residents, strategic sessions involving various audiences, informal communication with visitors of the space;

[2] This section includes quotes from the Cedos seminar Cultural Programming: How Public and Cultural Centers Can Unite Communities, which featured Iryna Starovoit, Anastasiia Nechyporenko, Vladyslav Chabaniuk, and Iryna Kats.

participatory approach, namely the hromada's participation in the process of planning cultural events;

- establishing cooperation and partnerships with other non-governmental and cultural organizations in your hromada and elsewhere;

- combining tradition and modernity, because programs must adapt culture to modern needs while also preserving its essence.

NA BELEBNI CLAY HOUSE

Iryna Kats

Head of the Department of Regional Policy and Coordination of Reform in the Field of Culture at the Ukrainian Center for Cultural Studies, Head of NGO Cultural Di@logue, about Na Belebni, a community-building center based in a 100-year-old clay house in the village of Cherneshchyna, Krasnokutsk Hromada, Kharkiv region, created within the first wave of the Community reBuilding project

What kind of events should community-building centers organize?

It is important that the events are not just interesting, because interest can fade quickly, but that they respond to the community's needs as a living practice. The collective work gatherings and plastering in the Krasnokutsk Hromada are about the fact that knowledge has not stopped in the past; knowledge is being practiced now. And if knowledge is practiced now, it is alive and dynamic, it develops together with people and with this community. This means that such knowledge is influenced by technological progress, modern approaches and technologies.

When we talk about social cohesion, we do not mean leisure alone. In fact, social cohesion is also about building trust between people and fostering trust in institutions. This project is based precisely on cross-sectoral, multi-level partnership, meaning the involvement of many people and organizations. Partnership is built

because it is impossible for a single organization or person to have such a far-sighted vision and support such strategically important directions. It is based on participation, with an inclusive foundation taken into account, as this is important for social integration and for ensuring that the needs and accessibility of this space for all social groups are considered.

Photo: Zoia Dolia

Checklist

- Which population groups is your cultural program aimed at? Does your program reflect the interests, requests, and needs of different age and social groups? How can you learn more about these interests, requests, and needs?

- Does the hromada have the opportunity to actively participate in planning the cultural program? What tools do you use to engage different audiences?

- Does the cultural program contribute to establishing dialogue between different population groups?

- Which civil society and cultural organizations are you already cooperating with? And which ones would you like to cooperate with? How can you establish this cooperation, and what ideas or projects could you propose?

- How are traditional and modern elements combined in your cultural program?

Useful materials

01. Video and written summary of a thematic Cedos seminar Cultural Programming:How Public and Cultural Centers Can Unite Communities.

02. Diatel, O., Karavai, A., Fursa, K., Burkovets, V., & Skrypnyk, Y. (2021). What Do You Mean, Community? Community Glossary. Insha Osvita.

03. Khelashvili, A., Miloserdov, V., Khassai, Y., Fedorova, L., Hryshchenko, M., & Polishchuk, O. (2023). How to Engage Residents in Decision Making in Hromadas: An Overview of Examples. Cedos.

04. Heritage for Social Cohesion during the War: Cases of Ukrainian Cultural Figures. (2024). Prometheus.

Adult education
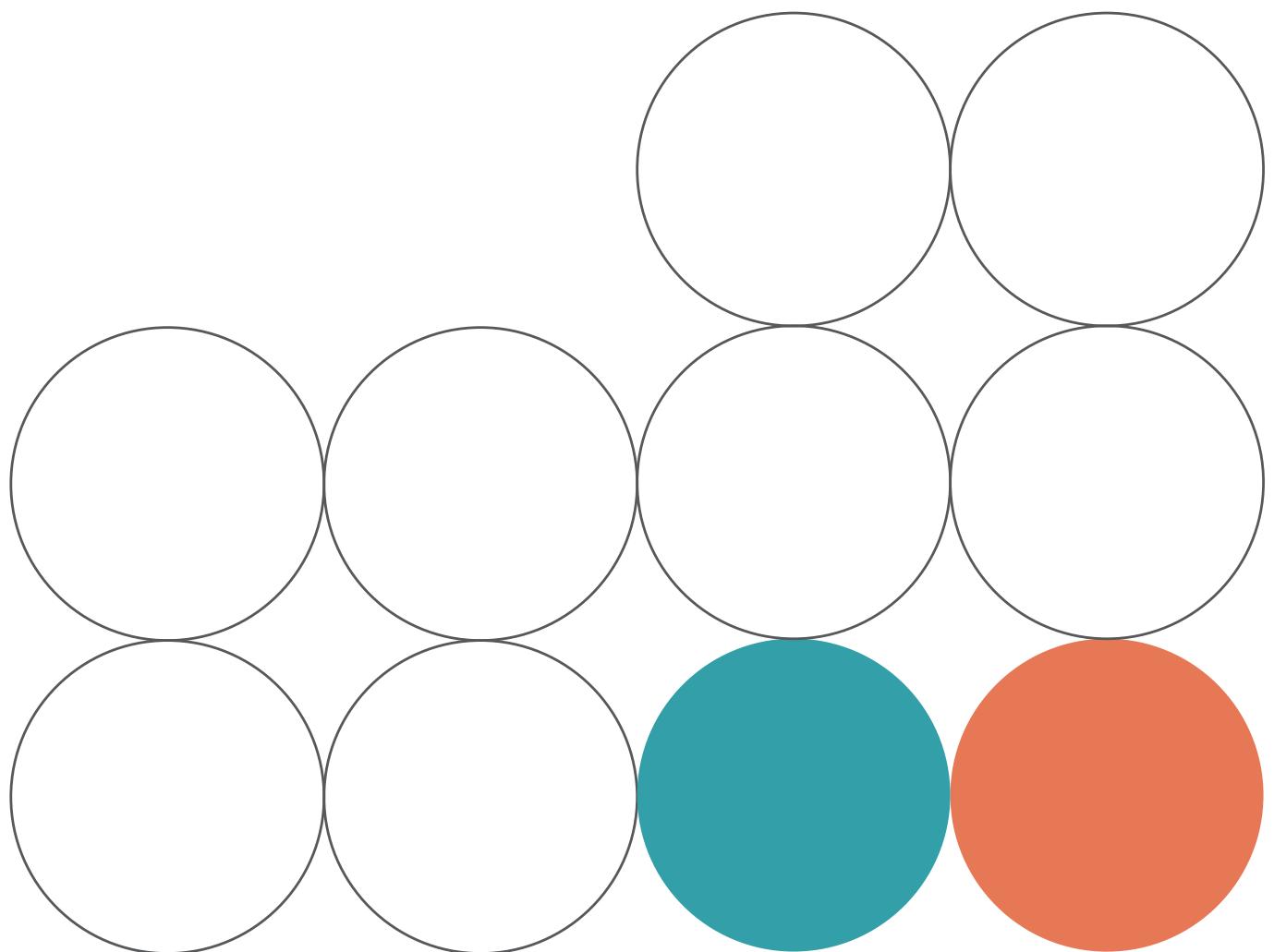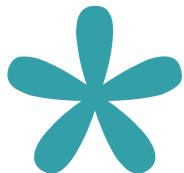
What to consider

UNESCO defines adult learning and education as a key element of lifelong learning. It encompasses all forms of education and learning aimed at enabling all adults to participate in the life of their communities and in the world of work.

UNESCO identifies the following goals of learning and education:

- to develop the capacity of individuals to think critically and to act with autonomy and a sense of responsibility;

- to reinforce the capacity to deal with and shape the developments taking place in the economy and the world of work;

- to contribute to the creation of a learningsociety where every individual has an opportunity to learn and fully participate in sustainable development processes and to enhance solidarity among people and communities;

- to promote peaceful coexistence and human rights;

- to foster resilience in young and older adults;

- to enhance awareness for the protection of the environment.

According to the Ukrainian Bill "On adult education," passed by the parliament in the first reading in January 2023, the components of adult education are:

- additional individually oriented education and learning aimed at forming and developing competencies, qualities, and values of an individual in accordance with their interests, needs, and abilities, ensured by unhindered access to diverse educational services and resources, carried out intentionally or spontaneously;

- civic education aimed at forming and developing civic competencies that enable an adult to

exercise human and civil rights and freedoms, actively participate in public life, be aware of personal responsibility for the development of the state, territorial hromadas, professional and other communities in all fields of life;

- continuous professional development, including postgraduate education, aimed at the ongoing learning of adults, the improvement of their general (key) and professional competencies based on the level of education attained, at supporting and/or enhancing the effectiveness of their professional activity, continuing throughout their entire period of employment;

- compensatory education aimed at enabling individuals who have not completed full general secondary education to attain the learning outcomes provided by the state standards of full general secondary education (primary, basic secondary, and specialized secondary education) at some or all of its levels;

- formational education aimed at obtaining professional (professional-technical) education, an educational-professional degree of professional pre-higher education, higher education degrees (junior bachelor, bachelor, master) by individuals whose break after completing the previous level of formal education was at least five years, or at obtaining such education in another profession, specialty, or educational program (other professions, specialties, educational programs).

The educational process in non-formal adult education is organized in the form of educational and awareness-raising activities, including seminars, practical sessions, trainings, webinars, masterclasses, courses, and educational projects for adults.

According to the Council of Europe definition, adult learning can be:

- formal, namely organized learning at education institutions which follows a clear syllabus and

emphasizes learning outcomes, measured by tests and other forms of assessment;

- non-formal, which takes place outside formal institutions but within organized projects which need not follow a formal syllabus or be governed by external accreditation—this can include learning at workshops or trainings, classes, reading clubs, sports clubs;

- informal, which takes place outside education institutions and is associated with everyday actions and experiences without a clear learning purpose in mind.

Your public or cultural space will typically offer the processes of non-formal and informal learning.

EDUCATION SPACE OF THE NIKOPOL ADULT EDUCATION CENTER

Olha Pastushok

Director of the Nikopol City School of Arts Municipal Institution, Head of NGO "Cossack Alarm. Adult Education Center of Nikopol", on creating an educational space for adults in Nikopol.

Adult education is all around us, it is everywhere and nowhere at once.

During our childhood and youth, we were taught to believe that one should study well once at school, get a higher education, and then obtain a position. However, now there is a need to learn new things regularly in order to have up-to-date skills and knowledge. The audience of educational programs was predominantly women, although 30% were men. Free courses were available for vulnerable population groups, while others attended courses at half price or for full payment. During the period of operation, the youngest participant in the educational programs was 18 years old, and the oldest was 87.

In 2020, the Nikopol City Council purchased a two-story building of about 2,000 square meters for the Adult Education Center, which was renovated and equipped thanks to partners. Certain rooms in this facility were designed for specific courses, including landscape design, interior design, computer courses, English and business Ukrainian languages, among others. Sewing and tailoring courses became very popular. At first, these were adults who

simply wanted to learn how to use a sewing machine and make something for their small children.

A separate course You Can Do It! was created for parents and children who do not attend any educational institutions due to health conditions or disability. On the one hand, it provides social-ization for children through singing, dancing, and art therapy; on the other, it gives parents the op-portunity to take a course that allows them to earn money even while staying at home to care for their child[3].

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[3] This section includes quotes from the Cedos seminar How to Implement Adult Education in Public and Cultural Centers, which featured Oleh Smirnov, Viktor Sikalenko, Tetiana Odnoroh, and Olha Pastushok.

Checklist

■ If you organize non-formal education events, including for adults, do you have basic facilitation skills?

■ Is the goal of the educational events clearly defined? What practical skills will their participants gain? Do these events influence the development of critical thinking, the ability to act independently, and responsibility?

■ Are the participants in the non-formal adult education process engaged in active participation through practice and interaction? Are there opportunities for exchanging experience among representatives of different audiences?

■ How do you involve more vulnerable population groups of the population—for example, people with disabilities, elderly people, Roma, LGBTQ+, or internally displaced people—in educational events? Does your institution hold events that address the educational needs of vulnerable groups of people?

■ How do you collect feedback from participants in adult education events?

Useful materials

01. <u>Video and written summary</u> of a thematic Cedos seminar How to Implement Adult Education in Public and Cultural Centers.

02. <u>DVV International, Institute for International Cooperation of the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V. (DVV), the German Adult Education Association.</u>

03. Ebner, D., & Motschilnig, R. (2019). <u>Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21st century: The Power and Joy of Learning.</u> European Adult Education Association (EAEA).

04. Fahrun, H., Skowron, E., & Zimmermann, N.-E. (2014). <u>Diversity Dynamics: Activating the Potential of Diversity in Trainings. A Handbook for Facilitators in Active Citizenship Education.</u> MitOst.

05. Trambovetska, N. (2017). <u>Tobto: Facilitation ABCs.</u> Insha Osvita.

06. Trambovetska, N., Ivanik, O., Gavinek-Daharhulia, M., Karavai, A., Yatsyk, V., & Diatel, O. (2015). <u>Ideas, Inspirations, Solutions... Handbook for informal education coaches II.</u> Insha Osvita.

Sustainability
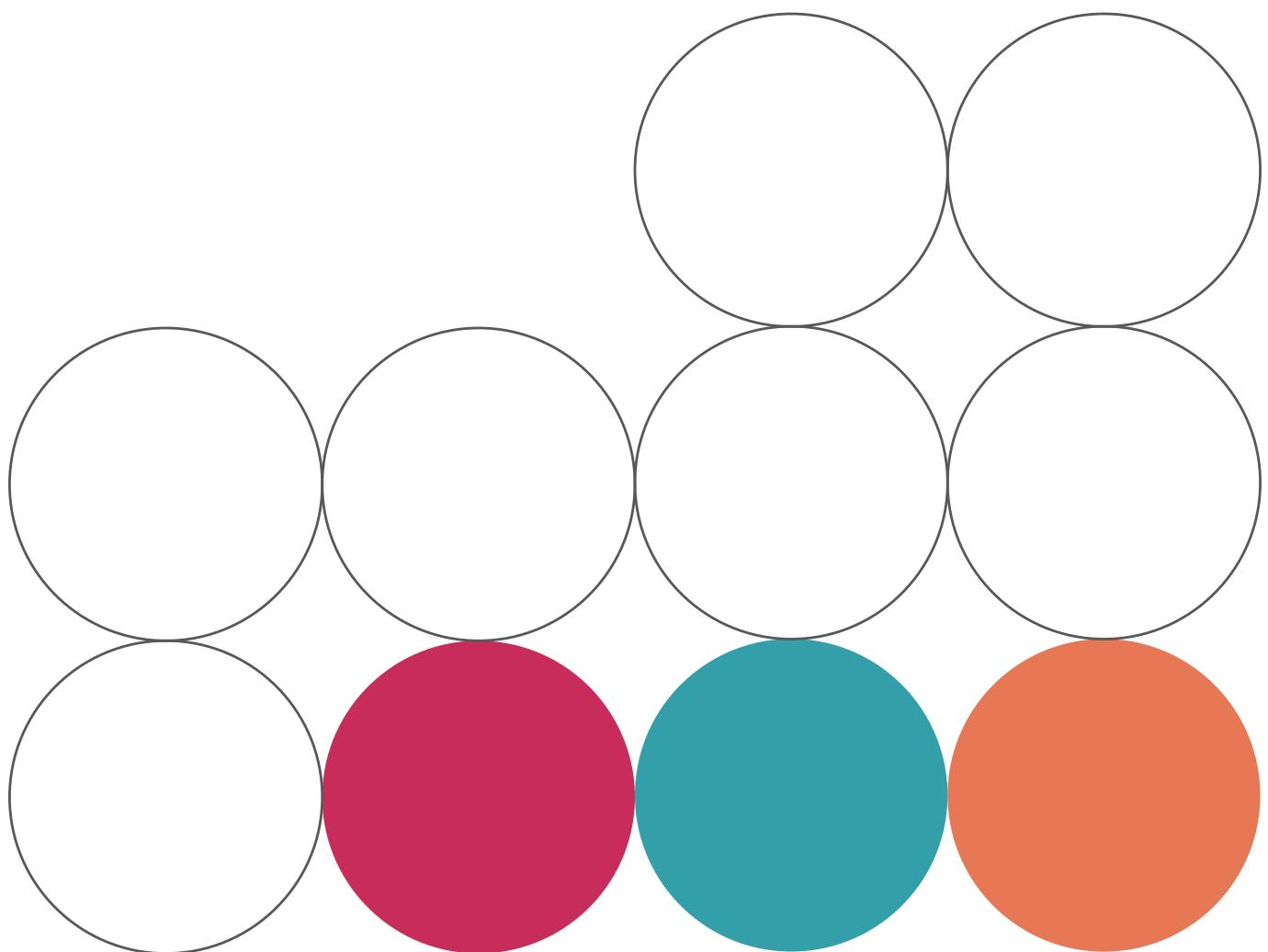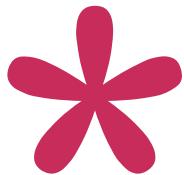
What to consider

Financial stability is one of the key elements of sustainability. Public and cultural organizations need to create financial reserves, attract additional resources or co-funding, and diversify their sources of funding.

Flexibility in approaches is a necessary precondition for ensuring sustainability. It is important to adapt to new circumstances and change plans according to the current situation, audience needs, and available resources. In addition, you may need to establish practices for online interaction. Under the conditions of full-scale invasion, it is essential to ensure the functioning of the space during security threats or power outages. This includes, for example, the ability to move to a shelter or the availability of alternative power sources such as a generator or charging station.

Support from the hromada and communities, as well as the development of strong connections, increases the level of support and engagement. Building partnerships with other civil society organizations, local self-government bodies, or businesses will contribute to the development of the institution and the establishment of sustainable networks.

Liana Mytsko

Director of the Lviv Municipal Art Center, founder of NGO Liniya Vtechi, specializes in creating spaces and events for community-building in the city

> We were building a map of organizations and people who would hold their events in our space, collaborate with us, and help make this a community-building center for our city.

They usually represent cinema, music, and social sciences, they try to communicate and create new organizations. Our goal is to give them a space and the opportunity to tell people about themselves. Almost all our events are documented on YouTube, and in this way, we strengthen the community around us and become stronger as an organization[4].

GARAGE

Iryna Brunda

Director of the Chortkiv Public Library of the Chortkiv City Council, cultural manager, on the Library Garage, which is a community-building center created within the first wave of the Community reBuilding project, a modular pavilion in the court-yard of the library in Chortkiv, Ternopil Oblast

We arrived at the vision that the library should no longer be just a place for books but should become a space for people.

The most remarkable project of 2023 is the Library Art Garage, a friendly space open to everyone, which we are implementing with the support of UMAEF and Cedos. The Art Garage building is a modular house that will have no stairs or barriers, so anyone will be able to access it. The library building has three floors, and it is difficult to climb even to the second floor using the old stairs, not to mention the third floor, where our art gallery is located.

[4] This section includes quotes from the Cedos seminar Sustainability in Difficult Times: How Public and Cultural Centers can Survive and Strive, which featured Olha Diatel, Liana Mytsko, Iryna Brunda, and Iryna Ozymok.

This was the main reason we applied for this grant. We were looking for resources to make the library even more open and accessible to our community. This space is also meant to become a cozy and comfortable environment so that the social groups in our hromada can transform into communities. They will have a physical space and a high-quality environment to come together, develop, and move forward.

Photo: Public Library of the Chortkiv City Council

Checklist

- How are roles distributed within your team? Are the responsibilities of team members defined in writing? What are these responsibilities?

- Will the work continue effectively if someone on the team is temporarily unable to perform their duties? Do you have instructions that would help transfer tasks to another person if needed?

- Do you have a reserve fund? Do you have additional sources of funding? Where can they be found?

- Do you have an action plan for a crisis situation? For example, is there a possibility for your visitors to move to a shelter during an air raid alert? Do you have alternative power sources in case of power outages?

- How do you engage local residents? What tools do you use? Do you organize regular events to involve the hromada?

- Do you maintain an open dialogue with the hromada?

Useful materials

01. Video and written summary of a thematic Cedos seminar Sustainability in Difficult Times: How Public and Cultural Centers can Survive and Strive.

02. Examples of grant programs and donor institutions that can help ensure your center's sustainability:

- Ukrainian Culture Fund

- National office of the EU program Creative Europe in Ukraine

- House of Europe

- Programs and projects of NGO Insha Osvita

- Programs and projects of IZOLYATSIA Foundation

Inclusivity
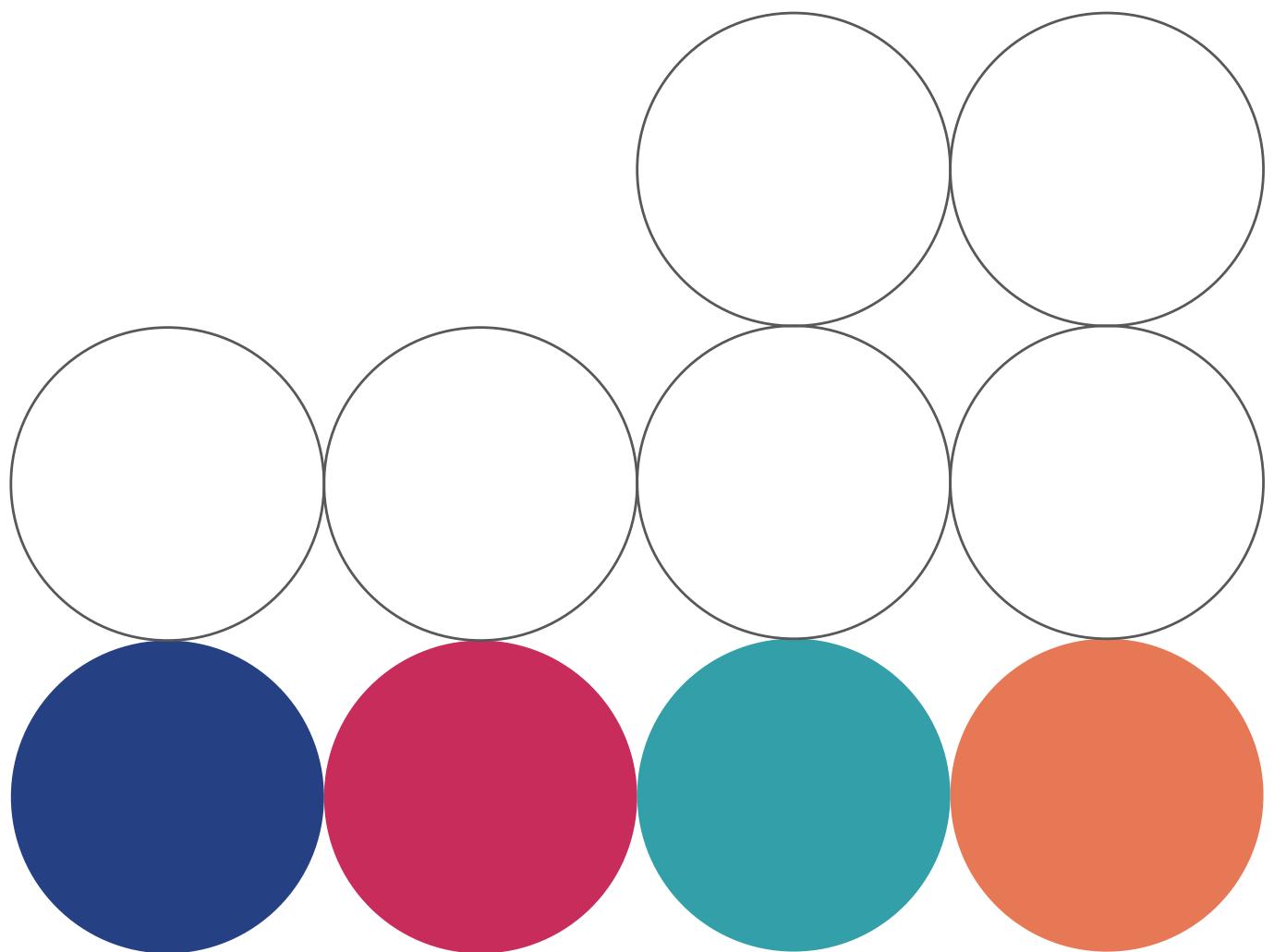
What to consider

Inclusivity in public and cultural centers is key to ensuring equal access for all hromada residents, regardless of physical, social, or cognitive barriers. Accessible and barrier-free spaces promote community development, cooperation, and social integration of its residents.

Ulyana Pcholkina

Public activist, leader of NGO Active Rehabilitation Group

Disability is the barriers that exist in the environment; it is not a person's problem.

Today, disability is not seen as the result of illness, injury, or something that happened to a person. Disability is understood as the barriers that prevent a person's full integration into an inclusive society and their participation in ordinary life processes. When I come to an establishment in a wheelchair and face stairs, that's when I experience disability. If I can enter the place without obstacles, I don't have a disability.

Accessibility and barrier-free design of a cultural or community center can be physical, informational, social, educational, and digital.

Physical accessibility means ensuring access to buildings, facilities, and information for everyone, including people with disabilities and those with limited mobility.

Informational accessibility means using different formats of information, including Braille, large-print materials, audio description, sign language interpretation, and subtitles to ensure equal access to information.

How to adapt a space so that it becomes physically and informationally accessible or barrier-free:

- Install ramps and automatic doors to ensure easy access for people in wheelchairs or people with limited mobility. Ramps must comply with current State Building Regulations and have a slope of no more than 8% (a 1:12 ratio of the sides). The clear width of a ramp for one-way traffic must be 1.2 m, and for two-way traffic it must be 1.8 m.

- Ensure sufficient maneuvering space inside the premises, including wide passages and corridors. Doors are sufficiently wide if they have at least 90 cm of clear opening. Corridor width must be at least 1.5 m for one-way movement and 1.8 m for two-way movement.

- Check for thresholds in your premises. Interior doorways should not have thresholds or floor level differences. If thresholds need to be installed, their height or the difference in floor levels must not exceed 0.02 m (2 cm).

- Separate restroom facilities must be equipped with handrails, have sufficient space for wheelchairs, and include special sinks. In addition, the restroom should have a changing table for people with children.

- Add tactile indicators and tiles, Braille text, and

use contrasting colors in informational messages or announcements.

Digital accessibility means ensuring access to digital services, including high-speed internet, public services, and public digital information, for all social groups of the population.

Social and civic accessibility means involving and ensuring access for all population groups—including members of national and religious groups, gender and sexual identities, and people with limited mobility—to the shared life and activities of the center.

Educational accessibility means ensuring equal opportunities and free access to education, including lifelong learning, professional development, and the acquisition of additional competencies.

Nina Matsiuk

Trainer, expert on inclusivity and accessibility

Proper communication is important, as the use of words or expressions that may offend or demonstrate bias, stereotypical, or discriminatory attitudes is unlikely to help build an inclusive, barrier-free society. There are two simple rules for correct communication:

1. Person first: a people-centered approach.

2. Call things by their real names. When we don't know how to say something, we start to invent or obscure it, and that only makes things worse.

Also, don't forget to use feminine word forms and pay attention to which pronouns a person uses for themselves (she, they, it, he). If you don't know how to address someone, it is always appropriate to ask what is most comfortable for them.

Some researchers and activists criticize the established and internationally recognized practice of using approaches in language about disability that emphasize the term "special needs" or place the person before the disability[5]. At the same time, when you speak or write about people with disabilities, you should always listen to individuals or communities of people with disabilities and take into account their wishes and comments regarding the use of certain words or expressions.

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[5] Find out more about this criticism in the publication Inclusive Language and Accessibility Tools: Guide for Cultural and Art Workers, in the section Feminist Crip Approach to Disability.

Accessibility Glossary

Best avoid	Use instead
Alcoholic, alcohol addict, junkie, drug addict	People addicted to psychoactive substances, people addicted to alcohol, people addicted to narcotic substances or narcotics
Autist	Person with autism spectrum disorder or with ASD
Bum, tramp	Homeless person
Homosexualism, homosexualist	Homosexuality, homosexual
Down, sun person or child	Person or child with Down syndrome
Disabled chair	Wheelchair
Disabled person	Person with disability
Inclusive child, child with inclusion, special child	Child with special education needs
Person of elegant age, person of respectable age	Elderly person
Person with amputation, amputee	Person with a prosthetic
Deaf interpretation	Sign language
Blind, deaf	Person with vision or hearing impairments (wherever we have the word "person," we cannot use the word "defect," because a person cannot be defective or faulty)
Gypsy	Roma

Checklist

Physical accessibility

- Are there accessible entrance doors, ramps, and elevators?

- Are restroom facilities accessible for people with limited mobility?

- Is there enough space for wheelchair maneuvering?

Digital accessibility

- Are digital resources accessible for people with limited internet access?

- Are trainings on how to use digital services conducted for older people?

Informational accessibility

- Is the information duplicated in Braille?

- Is there sign language interpretation at events?

- Are alternative formats of information available?

Social accessibility

- Are different social and age groups involved in the work of the center?

- Are the needs of various national, religious, and gender groups taken into account?

Useful materials

01. <u>Video and written</u> summary of the thematic Cedos seminar How Public and Cultural Centers Can Be Inclusive.

02. <u>Accessibility Guide.</u>

03. <u>National Strategy for Creating Accessible Space in Ukraine for the Period until 2030.</u>

04. geo, Pahulich, L., Serdiukova, Y., Tantsiura, I., and shevchenko, oleksa (2024). <u>Inclusive language and accessibility tools: Guide for cultural and art workers.</u> Filma: Feminist Film Festival.

05. Ladyka, I. (2018, September 7). <u>Not refugees and not separatists: How the media should write about internally displaced people.</u> Detector Media.

06. Livin, M. (2017, November 10). <u>How to call people with disabilities.</u> Village Ukraine.

07. Sokha, M. (2020, January 29). <u>Bums and tramps: Why people who have no homes always have nicknames).</u> MediaLab.

08. <u>How to talk about disability</u> (2016, March 25). MediaLab.

Communications
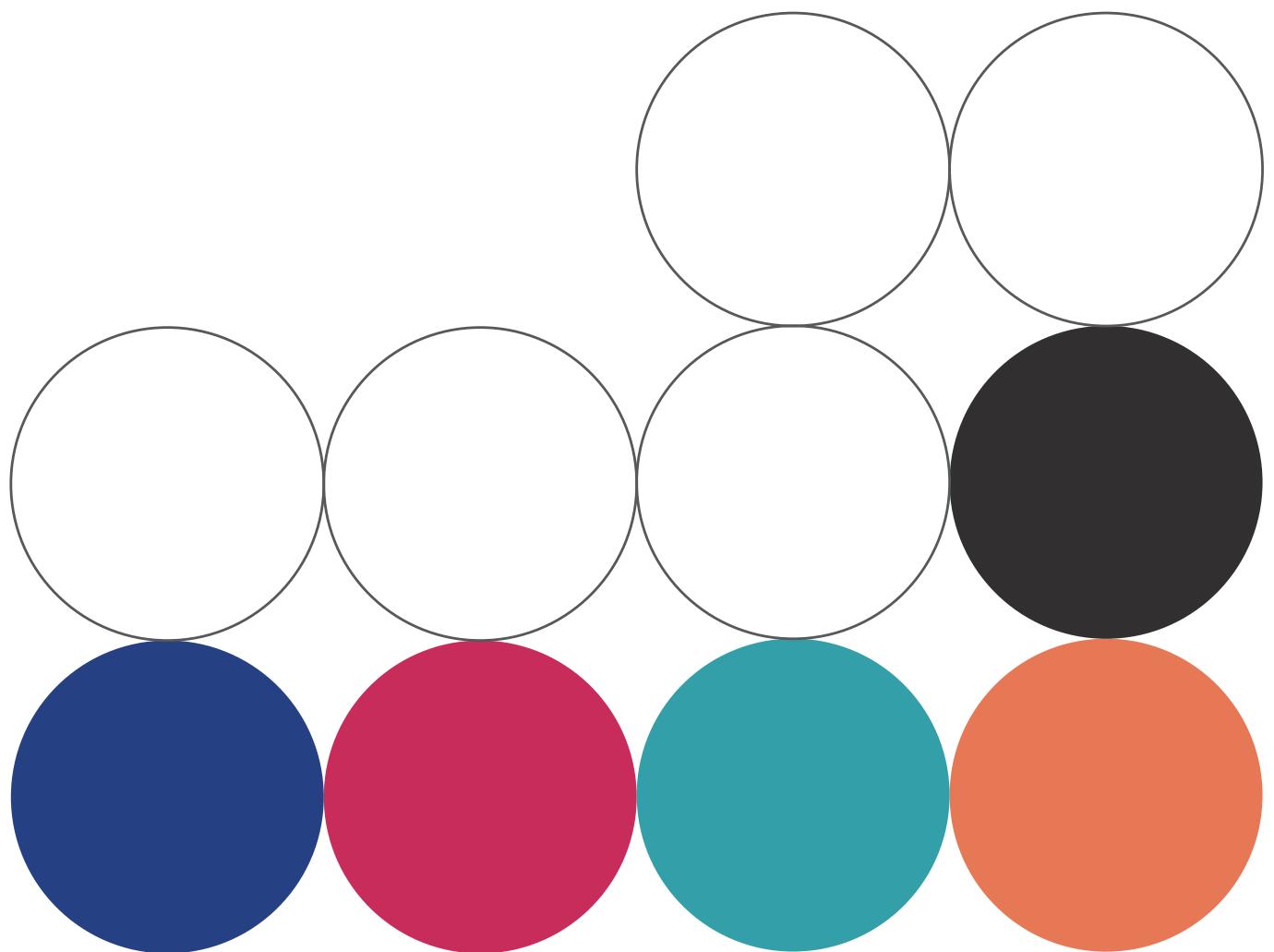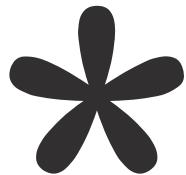
What to consider

Communication comes from Latin for "doing something together." A communal apartment, a commune, transport communications all refer to the same idea. Every time we say something out loud and someone hears it, we make that thought or idea shared. When we say we want to communicate an idea, we actually want others to hear it and join in. We want thoughts, calls to action, values, and projects to become shared[6].

Anastasiia Pustova

Co-founder of the SUPERWISE Bureau for Strategic Support, Director of Strategic Communications at Your Family Doctor project

To create effective communication in public and cultural centers, it is important to first identify the target audience.

This means understanding their needs, values, interests, and the problems they face. For example, young people, elderly people, or parents with children may have different expectations from communication.

The next important aspect is choosing communication channels. The channels you choose depend on your needs and the audiences you plan to engage. For example, young people may be more active on social media, while the older generation may prefer traditional media or meetings in public spaces.

[6] This section includes quotes from the Cedos seminar Community-Building: Communications of Public and Cultural Centers in Hromadas, which featured Anastasiia Pustova, Nika Babkova, Maryana Baran, and Kateryna Muts.

The most common communication tools and channels:

- social media (Facebook, Instagram);

- mailing lists;

- websites;

- local media (local paper, radio);

- offline events (meetings, workshops);

- in-person communication and invitations;

- public space (posters).

Overcoming barriers in communication is another critical aspect. These barriers may be physical, such as the lack of internet access in certain regions, or social, such as distrust of information from certain sources. It is important to identify these barriers and develop strategies to overcome them, which will help increase the effectiveness of communication.

It is very important that the people you invite feel comfortable. At first, when we were using new activity formats with MetaLab, we didn't invite people to come to us, we went into their environments... When you go into someone else's territory, you show respect for the spaces that already exist.

Maryana Baran

Project manager of the
Umbrella Maker Space
in Ivano-Frankivsk
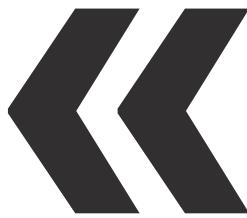
Developing a communication strategy involves comprehensive planning of activities aimed at strengthening connections within the community. This may include regular meetings, media campaigns, and the involvement of volunteers. This strategy should be flexible and take into account changes in the needs and interests of the community, which will allow the center to remain relevant and effective.

During the full-scale invasion [...] the role of local channels has increased, because people read more news about what is happening nearby, due to security concerns, including the need to unite for collective action. These channels can and should be used—however, it is important to understand the context. You cannot go on Facebook into a district or hromada group where people are currently discussing and planning the funeral of a fallen soldier and suggest joining a cultural activity—even if it is important, it is contextually inappropriate. When we think about creative materials or texts, we must remember that they are read by very different people. It is important to be aware of the words we use, because they can retraumatize people.

UMBRELLA MAKER SPACE IN IVANO-FRANKIVSK

Anastasiia Pustova

Co-founder of the SUPERWISE Bureau for Strategic Support, Director of Strategic Communications at Your Family Doctor project

« **For our purposes, we divided communication tools into practical and technical ones.**

Practical communication tools include physical interactions through events of various formats: collective work gatherings, fairs. Through mass events, we attract the attention of a broad audience. This allows us to spread a new culture —for example, in the use of space—or new approaches to project-making. We organize large events to let everyone "pass through" the project, model, or theme. A small portion of people stays with you afterward, and that already forms a quality audience.

Technical communication tools are social media management, commonly referred to as SMM. Social media allows us to stay visible, to remind people of our existence and show our activities. Different social media attract different categories of the population. We choose a particular social media accordingly as a communication tool to meet the need to stay visible. [...]

Word of mouth works great when combined with events that bring together many people interested in what is happening here and now. A friend or a parent heard about it, came to a workshop, liked it. The second time, they came back with colleagues from work. Word of mouth is a tool of trust. When people like you, they will

pass on the word about you if they hear a need for that information. Our observation is that in smaller towns and communities, word of mouth is a more active and effective communication tool than social media.
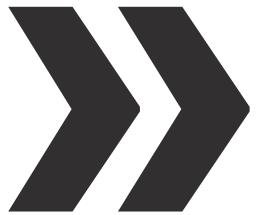
	Communication tool	Goals
Practical communication tools	Events, including joint work, networking, fairs, festivals	Quantitative audience (building a network of connections)
	Training workshops	Qualitative audience (developing a professional community)
Technical communication tools	Social media of the project and partners	Being visible
	Media	Education function, immersion in the topic
	Word of mouth	Forming a loyal audience
	Website of the project and partners	Presenting the project

Source: Maryana Baran's presentation at a Cedos event

Checklist

- ☑ Who is our audience? Which groups of people do we want to engage?

- ☑ Which communication channels are most suitable for our audiences?

- ☑ How can we engage more people or communities in interaction?

- ☑ Which groups of people might be more difficult to engage? How can we engage them?

- ☑ Are we receiving enough feedback about our activities and events? How do we use it?

Useful materials

01. Video and written summary of the thematic Cedos seminar Community-Building: Communications of Public and Cultural Centers in Hromadas.

02. Video lecture by Cedos on Communication in Communities during the War: How to Preserve Trust.

03. Hovorukhina, M., & Tymchenko, O. (2022). Effective Communications Guide for NGOs.

04. Dovzhenko, O., & Krylevskyi, V. (2023). How to make an NGO's communications effective and humane.

Engaging veterans
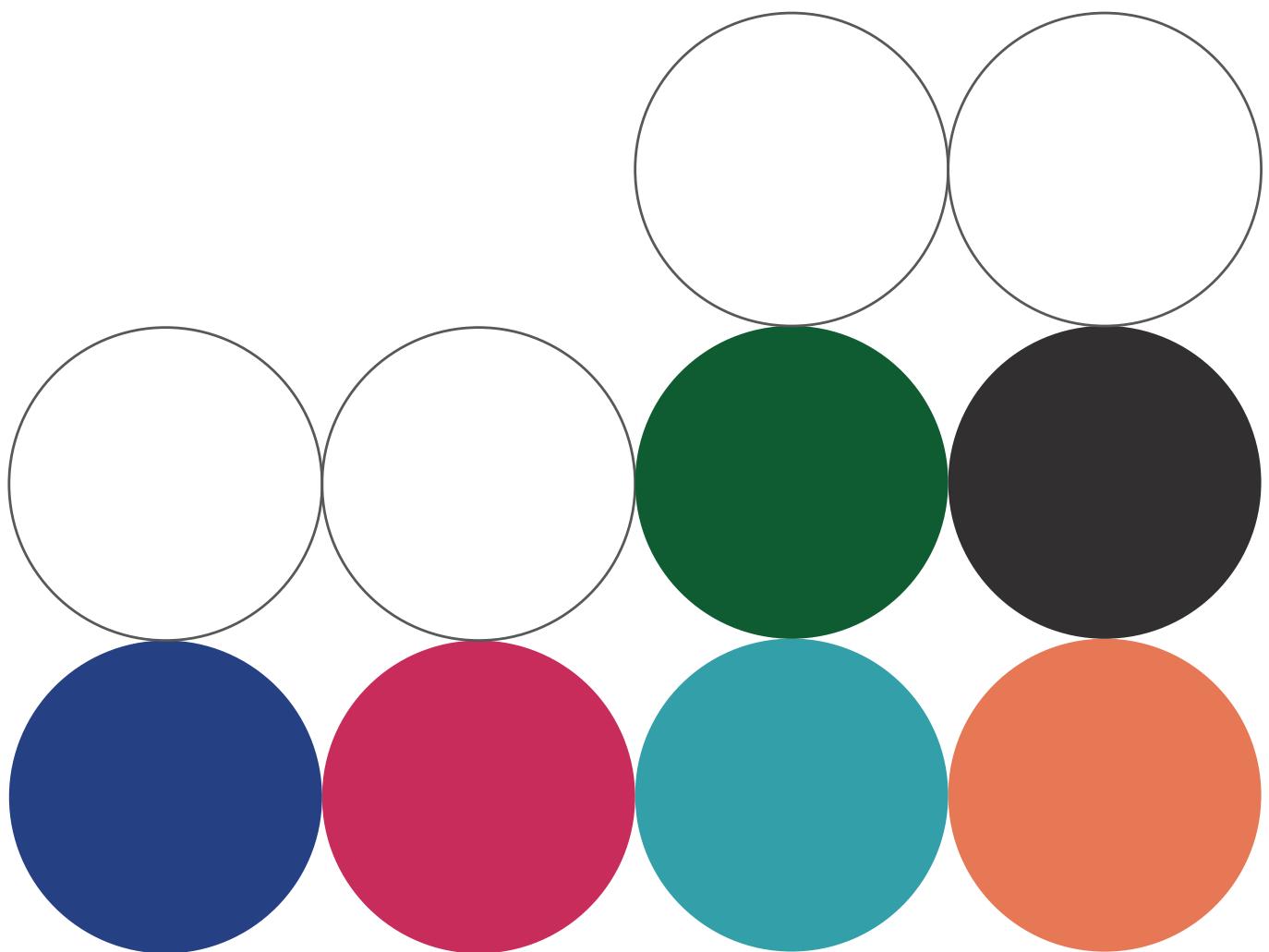
What to consider

Public and cultural centers, including veteran spaces, can become key venues for supporting physical and psychological rehabilitation, providing social and legal services, and organizing support groups.

It is important to promote the involvement of veterans in social and economic life through educational programs and professional training. Veteran programs focused on employment or business development allow veterans to be financially independent and actively integrate into society.

It is important to understand that before a large number of veterans return, the target audience is their families. These include different families: those waiting for the return of a service member home; families of the fallen; families of those missing in action; and families of those in captivity. The wife of one service member we worked with said that "when the state mobilizes a defender, it mobilizes the entire family."[7]

Oksana Koliada

Chair of NGO Space of Opportunities, Coordinator of the Coalition of Veteran Spaces, Minister for Veterans Affairs in 2019–2020

Every public or cultural center can implement activities or programs to help and support veterans and their loved ones. To engage this audience, one can organize:

- medical and psychological assistance measures, including the implementation of rehabilitation programs for restoring the physical and mental health of veterans;

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[7] This section includes quotes from the Cedos seminar What Public and Cultural Centers Can Offer to Veterans, which featured Oksana Koliada, Kateryna Lutsyk, and Mariia Petryshyn.

- **legal support programs,** such as consultations on rights, benefits, and social payments for veterans and their families;

- **support groups,** namely creating platforms for communication among veterans, as well as their relatives and loved ones, where they can share experiences and receive mutual support;

- **educational and professional programs,** including training and support for employment or starting a business.

NEEDS OF MILITARY PERSONNEL AND THEIR FAMILIES[8]

01 Health recovery, which includes both physical and psychological rehabilitation through the provision of medical services, such as sports programs. It is important for hromadas to have appropriate infrastructure and qualified specialists to provide these services. Mental health is a shared responsibility of both the state and non-state sectors, as the recovery of veterans and their families requires broad support at all levels of society.

02 Reintegration includes a range of social and economic needs following health recovery. This encompasses education, retraining, vouchers for professional development, as well as support for employment or starting one's own business. Cultural and political reintegration are also important aspects. Such services are provided by veteran spaces, institutions, and centers. Hromadas often bring together different audiences, creating spaces that are both youth and veteran-oriented, or integrating a veteran component into cultural initiatives.

03 Respect and dignified treatment: it is important to recognize the need to honor both those who have fallen and those who have returned from the war alive. Traditionally, more attention is given to the fallen, while living veterans often remain overlooked. Recognition of their contributions should take place at all levels, from families and work teams to hromadas and regions.

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[8] Based on Oksana Koliada's speech at a Cedos event.

Checklist

- Does your space provide access to social services and mental health support, including for veterans?

- Do you provide legal consultations for veterans?

- Do you have platforms for support groups for veterans, their families and loved ones?

- Do you offer training and employment programs for veterans?

- If your center is not a veteran space, do you know where such services are provided in the hromada?

Useful materials

01. Video and written summary of the thematic Cedos seminar What Public and Cultural Centers Can Offer to Veterans.

02. Veteran Hub Knowledge Database.

03. Kostyna, I., Denysov, A., Aliomova, H., Skorokhod, K., Kucher, O., Timakina, K., Stryzhko, H., & Bunych, A. (2024). The ethics of interaction and communication with veterans and the loved ones of warriors. Veteran Hub.

Engaging youth
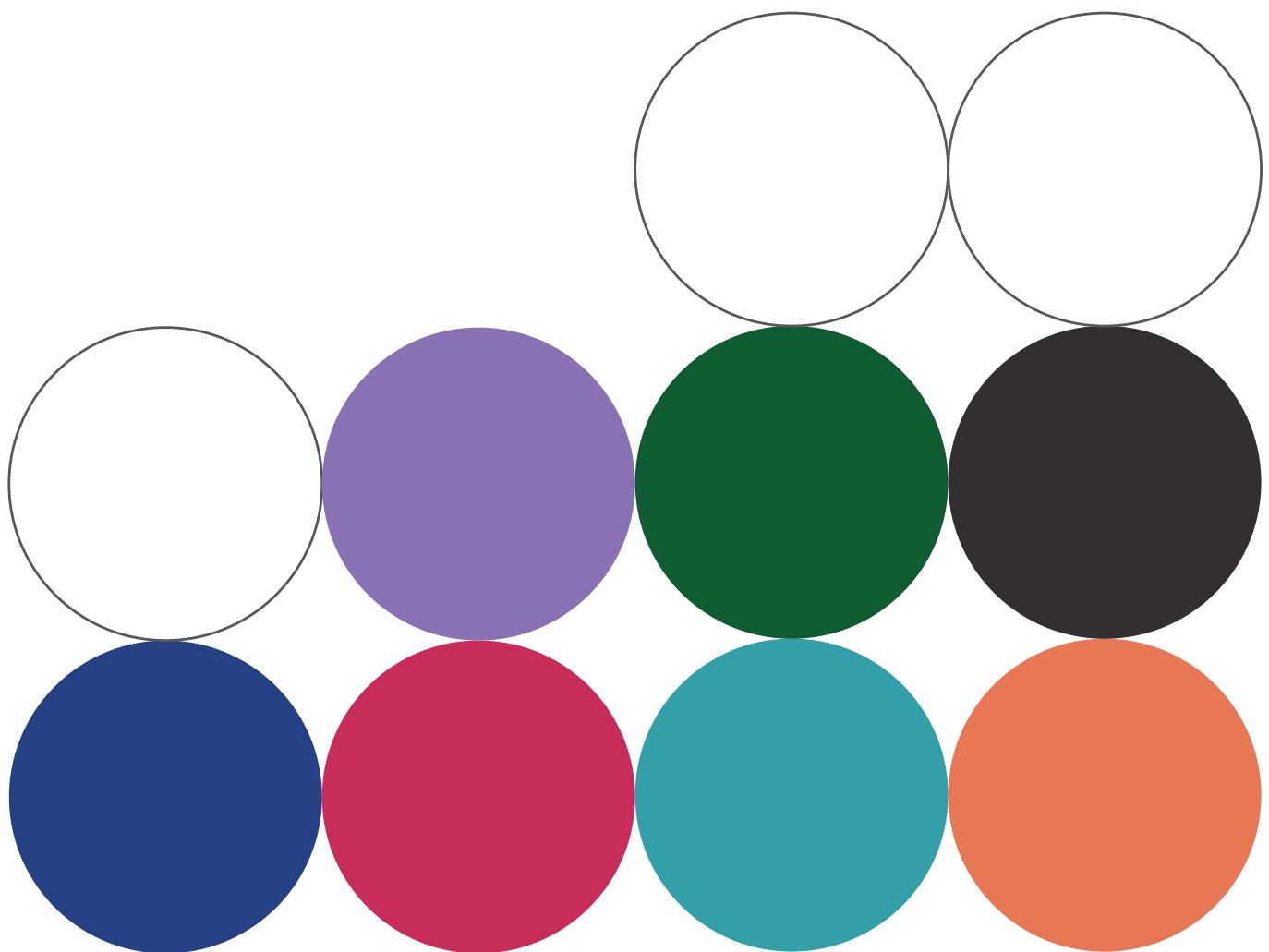
What to consider

Youth policy can be compared to a special dish that everyone can "taste" differently. It is a set of measures aimed at supporting young people regardless of their field of studies or work. Youth policy is about civic responsibility and creating opportunities for the development of the younger generation.[9]

Yeva Korytna

Chief Specialist of the Department of Project and Investment Activities of the Ostroh City Council, communications officer of the All-Ukrainian Youth Forum WE WILL LIVE in Ukraine, held as part of the event program of the Youth Capital of Ukraine

In Ukraine, those aged 14 to 35 are categorized as youth. Youth policy exists to protect their rights, create opportunities for development and the realization of ideas, as well as to involve them in decision-making within society. The development of young people, providing them with equal opportunities, and including them in the decision-making process are important components of civil society that contribute to the support and development of democratic principles and institutions in society.

An important component of an active hromada is the ability to influence decisions made in a city, town, or village. When young people are involved in public hearings, working groups, or local initiatives, they feel responsible for their community and become its driving force.

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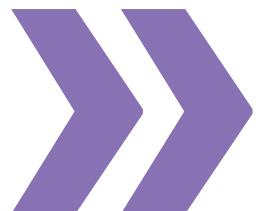
[9] This section includes quotes from the Cedos seminar How Public and Cultural Centers Can Work With Youth, which featured Yeva Korytna, Iryna Ozymok, and Nataliia Liuklian.

Nataliia Liuklian

Civic activist, volunteer, co-founder of various initiatives and startups, urbanist at Cedos, event manager at NGO Building Ukraine Together (BUR)
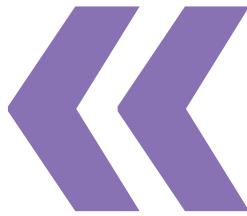
Which actors are involved in implementing youth policies?

- Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine

- Local governments

- Youth centers

- Civil society organizations

- International partners

In large cities such as Lviv or Kyiv, young people have a wide range of clubs, hobby groups, and free educational programs, but in smaller hromadas such opportunities are limited, making the challenge of engaging youth even more difficult. Therefore, one important aspect is communication between young people and local authorities.

This interaction is often underdeveloped, which leads to a sense of isolation among young people and a loss of motivation to participate in community development. At the same time, young people possess creativity and ideas that can significantly improve the city if they are given the proper tools and opportunities.
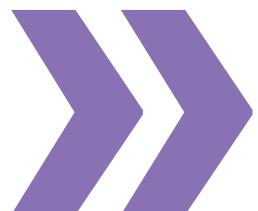
Iryna Ozymok

Director of the Local Economic Development Program at UMAEF, founder of the International Mayors Summit, founder of the City Has Me Urban Movement
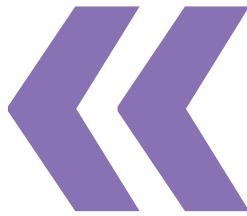
For young people to develop, access to development spaces such as youth centers, hubs, and volunteer camps is a very important component. In these places, young people can meet, build new connections, generate ideas, and share them. However, to bring their ideas to life, young people also need resources: grant programs, financial support for volunteer projects, access to materials and tools.
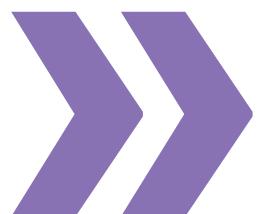
URBAN MOVEMENT

Urban Movement is a project that engages teenagers in active participation in urban change and community life. It emerged as a response to the need to provide young people not only with knowledge about how cities function but also with practical tools to influence the space around them.

The initiative began with the publication of the book The City Has Me, which explains in anaccessible way how the urban environment works. With the beginning of the full-scale war, the project expanded and turned into a full-fledged educational platform for teenagers in hromadas.

Urban Movement demonstrates how, even under the difficult conditions of war, teenagers can take part in real changes in their cities and implement

projects that improve life in their communities.

Key components of the project:

- Forming local hubs in hromadas that take responsibility for organizing meetings.

- Developing an educational program on urbanism, civic activity, ecology.

- Training mentors who work with participants.

- Weekly meetings where young people discuss urban challenges and look for solutions.

- Practical implementation of ideas proposed by the teenagers themselves.

Results:

- 16 active hubs have been created in hromadas.

- Teenagers from 55 Ukrainian cities joined the first and second waves.

- A number of local changes in urban spaces have been implemented.

- Horizontal connections have been established between teenagers from different regions.

BUILDING UKRAINE TOGETHER (BUR)

NGO Building Ukraine Together (BUR) is an example of how volunteering, space, and support can engage young people in active participation in community life. The organization works both in large cities and small towns, creating an environment where young people can initiate change, receive support, and feel their importance.

BUR's experience shows that young people remain

active when they have space for action, support, education, and the opportunity to be heard.

Key elements:

- Accessible space: BUR creates youth hubs, volunteer camps, and educational platforms where young people can work on joint initiatives, share ideas, and build connections.

- Education and resources: young people not only gain knowledge through trainings and workshops but also have access to funding, materials, and mentoring support for implementing their own projects.

- Participation in decision-making: by engaging in local initiatives, public hearings, and working groups, young people develop a sense of influence over their hromada.

- Community: non-formal education, travel, cultural events, and exchanges between hubs foster an atmosphere of trust, support, and mutual motivation.

How a BUR hub works:

- A hub consists of coordinators who organize activities and communicate with partners.

- Volunteers take part in camps, renovations, educational, and cultural initiatives.

- The educational branch ensures the development of soft skills and project-based thinking.

- Partnership with the hromada allows for scaling the impact and attracting additional resources.

- The cultural component supports cohesion and sustained motivation among young people.

Results:

- Active BUR hubs operate in various parts of Ukraine.

- Young people implement their own initiatives,

influencing the quality of life in hromadas.

- A generation of leaders is being formed, ready to responsibly take part in building society.

Checklist

- Does your center have an open, accessible space for young people (a youth room, hub, volunteer space)?

- Do young people have the opportunity not only to be in the space but also to initiate their own activities?

- Does your center create an environment for meeting new people, communication, and forming horizontal connections among young people?

- Do young people have the opportunity to influence the center's program and activities (through participation in planning, working groups, advisory formats)?

- Does your center involve young people in public hearings, strategic sessions, or hromada initiatives?

- Do young people have access to grant or other financial support for implementing their own projects?

- Do young people know how to obtain such support, and does the center provide assistance with submitting applications?

- Are there mentors, coordinators, or trainers in the center who accompany young people in the process of implementing their ideas?

- Do young people have access to non-formal education in the center (urbanism, civic engagement, ecology, project management, etc.)?

- Does the center conduct trainings, workshops, or other educational events for developing soft skills and leadership?

- Does your center record the achievements of youth initiatives and present them publicly to the hromada?

- Is there a practice of intergenerational knowledge transfer (archiving, mentorship, meetings with program alumni)?

- Do young people remain active after the completion of a specific project or event?

Useful materials

01. <u>Video and written summary</u> of the thematic Cedos seminar How Public and Cultural Centers Can Work With Youth.

02. Tena, R., & Slajute, A. (2021). <u>Empowering Youth: Guidelines for Human Rights Education, Democracy, and Civic Participation for Local and Regional Authorities, Civil Society Organizations, Youth Coaches, and Teachers.</u>

03. Kindrat, L., Pavlyk, N., Chernykh, O., & Eskamilia, A. (2023). <u>Collection of Experiences in Working with Youth, Based on the Approaches and Standards of the Council of Europe, During the Russian Federation's Armed Aggression against Ukraine.</u>

04. Boyarskyi, N., Yelfimova, Y., Makiyenko, N., & Chernykh, O. (2022). <u>Handbook for the Educational Course on Trauma-Informed Youth Work.</u>

Working with the environment
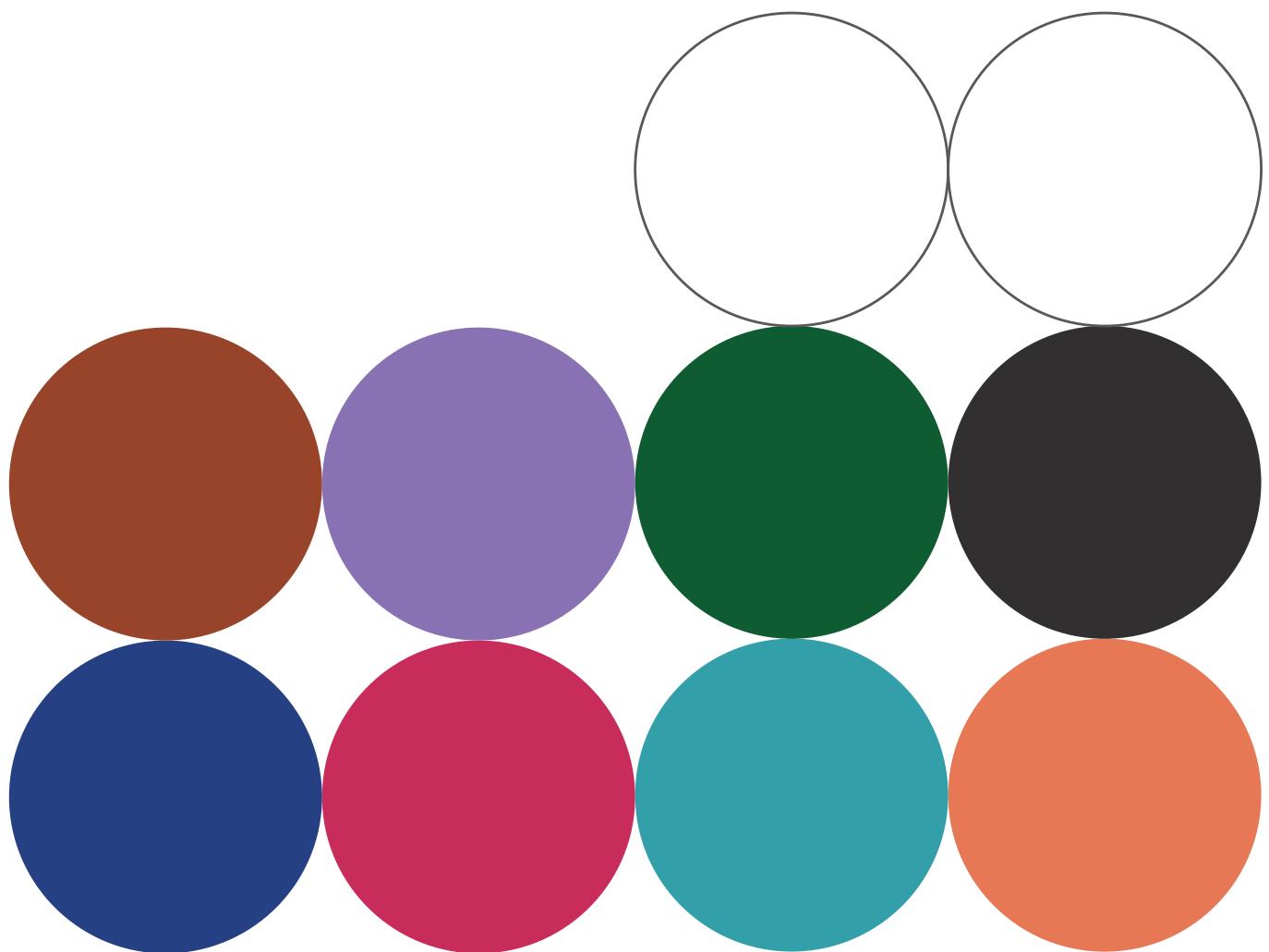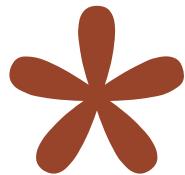
What to consider

Climate change poses a serious threat to the sustainable development of hromadas, affecting people's health, the economy, the environment, and quality of life. Therefore, it is extremely important for hromadas to actively participate in countering these changes at the local level.

As hromadas that are being built for decades to come, we must remember that one of the most difficult tasks will be reconciling short-term recovery decisions with strategic, long-term requirements. That is why it is very important to unite our efforts and remember that sustainable, nature-oriented development is the direction for the entire world.[10]

Iryna Ozymok

Director of the Local Economic Development Program at UMAEF, founder of the International Mayors Summit
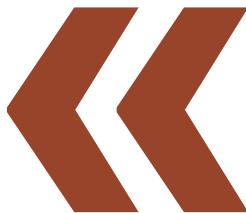
Hromadas often face problems such as water and air pollution, as well as disappearance of water from wells, which are consequences of climate change. These phenomena are interconnected and require a comprehensive approach, since local solutions, such as raising a dam, do not solve the problem of the entire ecosystem. Therefore, in their work, hromadas should follow 5 principles of sustainable development:

- Consider natural resources when planning development.

- Think about the fair distribution of resources to reduce social inequality.

- Take into account the needs and interests

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[10] This section includes quotes from the Cedos seminar The Role of Public and Cultural Centers in Addressing Environmental Issues, which featured Iryna Ozymok, Mariia Smirnova, Diana Popfalushi, and Kateryna Rabana.

of all members of society.

- Affect nature in a way that allows it to remain available for society in the future.

- Respect the needs and values of different cultures.

To use the limited resources of hromadas more effectively, it is necessary to anticipate risks and respond to them in advance. Legislation provides for residents' participation in planning. This means that residents can engage with documentation, monitor its quality, demand environmental assessments, and influence decision-making. In this process, active community participation is the key to real environmental change.

In addition to official documents, hromadas can influence the state of the environment through:

- environmental passports;

- programs and research;

- civic initiatives and hearings;

- nature-oriented solutions.

Nature-oriented solutions can be simple to implement yet have a significant impact, combining environmental relevance with the needs of spatial development. Their advantage lies in the fact that a single small intervention can have a comprehensive positive effect, simultaneously improving the ecosystem, public health, and environmental quality.

Idea	What it affects
Mixed grasses belts	Increasing biodiversity, reducing allergies, reducing the spread of ragweed
Limited mowing areas	Preserving natural environments, maintaining local flora and fauna
Seed bombing[11]	Greening city and town spaces, popularizing local species
Meadows restoration	Improving the condition of soils, increasing biodiversity, moisture retention
Creating nature reserves and eco paths	Preserving natural heritage, developing environmental tourism
Protecting small rivers and streams	Restoring water balance, drought protection, improving water quality
Including nature-oriented solutions in strategies	Engaging donor funding, strengthening the hromada's capacities
Auditing greenery	Transparent management of green spaces, effective planning of urban greening
Maintenance of natural areas in the city	Prevention of overgrowing, fighting invasive species
Switching to cargo bikes for urban transportation	Reducing emissions, improving urban mobility
Creating "green islands," or recycling, repair, and reuse centers	Reducing waste, supporting sustainable consumption, developing public spaces
Creating spaces and events for free exchange of goods	Supporting social cohesion, help in crisis circumstances, development of the local economy
Adherence to the zero waste principle	Minimizing the amount of waste that ends up in landfills or the environment, reducing the costs of packaging and waste removal, saving resources

[11] A sowing method in which seed balls (so-called seed bombs) made of soil, humus, and plant seeds are scattered on the ground.

Zero waste principle

The zero waste principle and sorting help not only reduce the amount of garbage that ends up in landfills but also rethink our attitude toward resources, consumption, and responsibility. Sorting is the first step toward environmental preservation, but without awareness and behavioral change, the system does not work effectively. Zero waste is a holistic approach that combines ecology and community development through simple daily actions and long-term educational work.

Zero waste is not just about sorting but about how to build a circular economy and change the way we think about resources.

Kateryna Raban

Zero waste and permaculture trainer, head of NGO Zero Waste Lutsk, waste management specialist
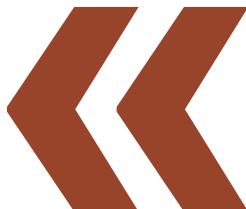
Avoid greenwashing

Greenwashing is a practice in which individuals, companies, or organizations create the impression of being environmentally responsible while having no real impact on the environment.

Here is what greenwashing can look like:

- planting trees without maintenance, especially non-native species or in unsuitable conditions;

- installing sorting containers that are then not serviced or from which waste ends up in a regular landfill;

- greening spaces with decorative plants that do not support biodiversity (for example, boxwood or thuja instead of native species);

- mass image campaigns such as "green days" that do not change approaches to consump-

tion, resource management, or systemic waste handling;

- marketing that promotes "eco-products" without real environmental benefits (for example, "eco" plastic bags).

Why is this a problem?

- distracts the community or consumers from real environmental solutions;

- discredits environmental initiatives by creating distrust;

- encourages the reproduction of harmful practices under the guise of "green" intentions;

- is often used for political or business PR rather than for real change.

Real environmentalism requires:

- long-term maintenance;

- adaptation to local conditions;

- supporting natural processes.

SEEDBED IN LVIV

NGO Plato has been operating in Lviv since 2019, promoting nature-oriented solutions and combating climate change at the local level. Their team has implemented a number of environmental initiatives, including popularizing the use of rain gardens and urban meadows instead of lawns, which allowed the city to save 6 million UAH. Through public campaigns, podcasts, and analytical work, they have consistently made climate issues a priority for the community.

One of the most well-known examples is the creation of the Seedbed space, a community garden and educational-social platform located on the site of a former flower farm. The 1.3-hectare space was restored through the efforts of NGO Plato and partner organizations in cooperation with the city authorities and volunteers. Over three years, more than 200 events have been held there, engaging about 5,000 participants and forming a stable volunteer team.

The project combined practical environmentalism with inclusivity and community-building: in Seedbed, a spontaneous dumpsite was transformed into fertile soil using compost made from Lviv's food waste, educational zones were created using remnants of the old infrastructure, and therapeutic gardening practices were introduced. The space became a refuge for newly arrived residents after 2022 who were seeking support and a way to integrate into a new environment.

NGO Plato actively shares its experience: it runs the Green Leadership School, pilots urban gardening formats, and cooperates with environmental and social services. Through workshops, tours, and participatory planning, residents not only gain knowledge, they become agents of change.

The story of the Seedbed demonstrates how a small team can transform an abandoned area into a full-fledged environmental, social, and educational center.

Working with the environment

Checklist

- Does your space or hromada have nature-oriented solutions (urban meadows, limited-mowing zones, rain gardens, eco-trails, etc.)?

- Is the environmental component part of the center's strategic development vision?

- Is there a practice of adapting greenery to local conditions (for example, avoiding green-washing)?

- Are there initiatives for restoring soil, rivers, streams, or creating nature reserve areas?

- Is there a public space for learning gardening or permaculture practices?

- Are residents involved in environmental planning (public hearings, discussions, working with documentation)?

- Are there spaces for free exchange of items or reuse of resources (for example, free markets or repair workshops)?

- Does your center have waste sorting or composting systems?

- Is there educational activity on conscious consumption, resource use, and waste management?

- Do you have partnerships with environmental organizations, local authorities, or activists to implement eco-solutions?

- Is there an opportunity to attract funding for creating environmental initiatives in your center?

Useful materials

01. Video and written summary of the thematic Cedos seminar The Role of Public and Cultural Centers in Addressing Environmental Issues.

02. Wanderley, T., McQuibban, J., Mörsen, T., Favoino, E. (2022) How to best collect bio-waste: Guidance for municipalities on the best performing methods to separately collect bio-waste.

03. Vyhovska, I. (2022) Environmental habits that should be restored during the war. Village Ukraine, 2025.

04. Dmytryshyn, L., Khmyz, V. (2024) Transition: Perennial Plants in Urban Planning and Urban Design.

05. Dmytryshyn, Y. (2025) Returning Nature to Cities: Historic Landscape. Mistosite.

06. Zozulia, A., Rubakha, N. (2023) DIY Solutions for Urban Gardening.

07. Zozulia, A., Riabyka, M. (2021) Catalogue of Green Solutions.

08. Liashchuk, O., Huzenko, A. (2023) Climate Change Adaptation: Brief Guide for Hromadas.

09. Rubakha, N., Zozulia, A.., Popfalushi, D., Riabyka, M. (2023) Garden Power: Ideas for Garden Therapy.

10. Smirnova, M. (2025) City Rivers. Part I. Mistosite, 2025.

11. Smirnova, M. (2025) City Rivers. Part II. Mistosite, 2025.

Engaging elderly people
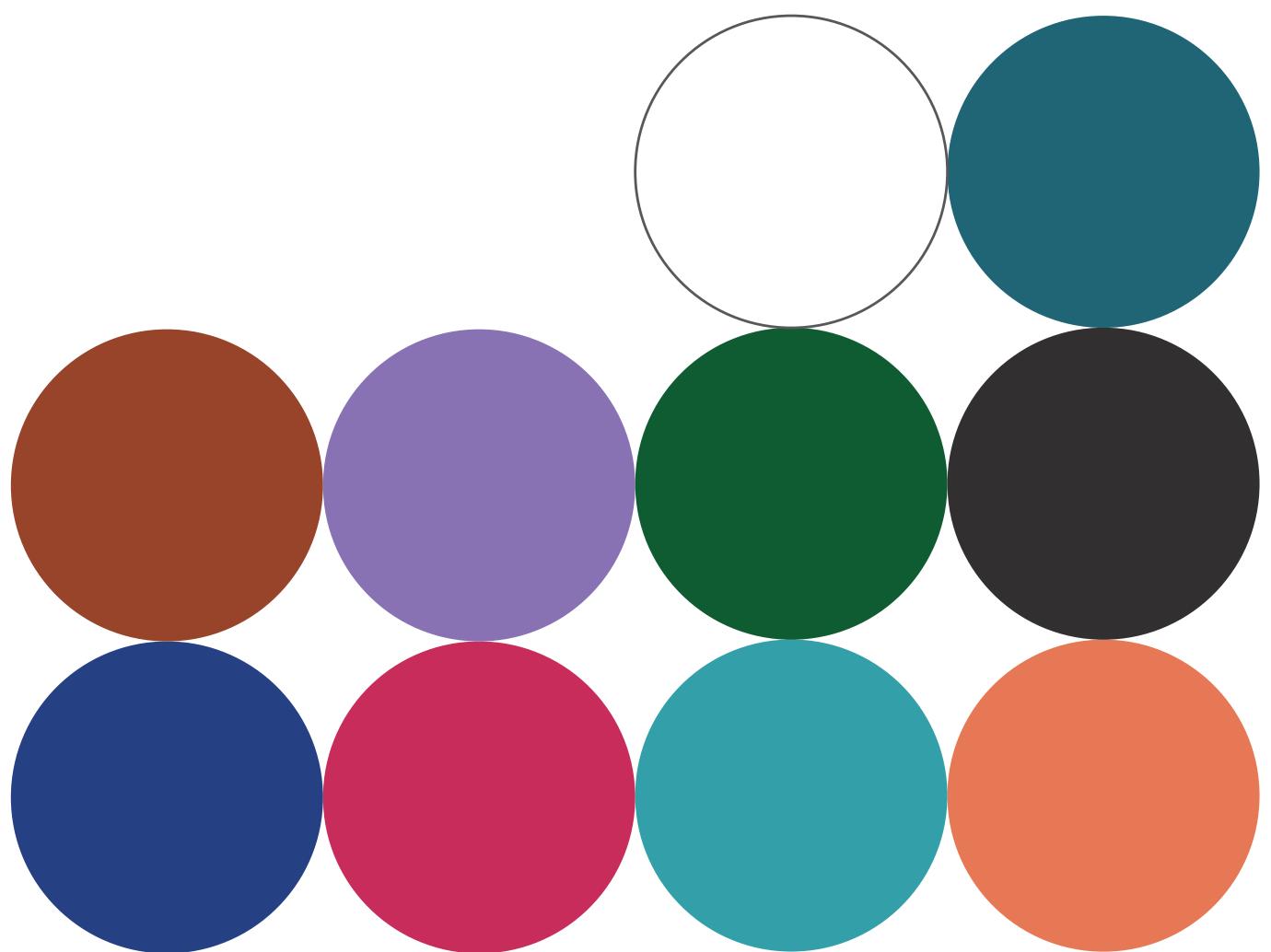
What to consider

Currently, almost one-third of people living in Ukraine are over 60 years old. They represent one of the largest population groups, which is also among the most vulnerable. Older people often experience isolation, face age discrimination, and have limited access to development opportunities.

This problem can be addressed through systemic approaches that can be implemented at different levels, changing perceptions of aging. Older people can be volunteers, initiative leaders, and cultural creators if the community recognizes their potential and creates conditions for full inclusion.

NGO ENJOYING AGEING AND THE VBRANI SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

NGO Enjoying Aging has been working with older people for over 7 years, mainly with residents of geriatric care homes. The organization is changing perceptions of aging by creating conditions for a dignified, active, and involved life.

A key innovative component of the initiative's work is the social enterprise Vbrani, within which older people from different regions knit socks, gloves, and accessories and receive payment for their work.

What has been implemented:

- Conducting mental health, cultural, and educational activities in geriatric institutions: concerts, clubs, lectures, celebrations, art and dance therapy.

- Developing educational initiatives: English, com-

puter literacy, chess.

- Engaging volunteers and students in joint activities (design, logistics, communications).

- Organizing public events with the participation of older people (fashion shows, tours, intergenerational lectures).

- Creating the Vbrani social enterprise, where older people can express their creativity, socialize, and receive payment for their work (4,000–5,000 UAH per month).

Why it works:

- Restores agency to elderly people who felt excluded from social life.

- Connects generations through shared creation.

- Builds emotionally warm connections even within closed institutions (care homes).

CARE CENTER IN CHERNIVTSI

The Care Center is an example of local social infrastructure that systematically creates conditions for an active and involved life for older people. Educational, cultural, health, and social programs are available within the day-care department for seniors. It is not only a form of support, it is a community that grows together with the people.

A key component of the model is the Third Age University, an educational program that allows elderly people to develop, communicate, and maintain their interest in life. The center also actively organizes emotional inclusion events that recognize and highlight the value of every

person, regardless of age.

- Work of the Third Age University: courses in foreign languages, history, religious studies, digital literacy, health basics.

- Holding hobby clubs: cooking (Recipes of My Friends), film club, handicrafts (Golden Needle).

- Organizing workshops, meetings with artists, tours, and visits to theaters and museums.

- Conducting symbolically important events: fashion shows, anniversaries of internally displaced couples, band concerts.

- Creating a support space for people aged 80+, displaced people, and people with disabilities.

Why it works:

- The educational approach allows older people not only to gain knowledge but also to affirm their agency.

- The diversity of activities takes into account different interests, levels of mobility, and experiences of participants.

- Symbolic recognition (fashion shows, celebrations, concerts) restores a sense of significance, influence, and emotional presence within the community.

- Institutional sustainability ensures the program's continuity and reliability: it is not about one-time events but about long-term accompaniment of life.

Checklist

- Does your center or hromada offer opportunities for learning, development, and acquiring new skills for elderly people (for example, hobby clubs, courses, or a Third Age University)?

- Does the center's program include diverse cultural, creative, and wellness activities accessible to elderly people?

- Are there spaces that are comfortable, inclusive, and accessible for leisure, communication, and rest for elderly people?

- Are there opportunities for self-realization and social entrepreneurship for elderly people (for example, paid creative work, as in the Vbrani project)?

- Are there intergenerational interaction formats in which young and elderly people can work, create, or learn together?

- Does your activity take into account the needs of particularly vulnerable groups among elderly people (displaced persons, people aged 80+, people with disabilities)?

- Do elderly people have the opportunity to take part in public events, celebrations, forums, and lectures as participants, not only as "spectators"?

- Are elderly people invited to participate in community decision-making (consultations, strategic sessions, advisory bodies)?

- Does your center have practices of symbolic recognition of elderly people (fashion shows, exhibitions, concerts, anniversary celebrations, etc.)?

- Does your center conduct educational activities to overcome ageism and stereotypes about aging?

- Are activities for older people regular, sustainable, and diverse rather than one-time or nominal?

Useful materials

01. <u>Video and written</u> summary of a thematic Cedos seminar Engaging Elderly People in Active Participation in Community Life.

02. Levkina, H., Kononchuk, A., Mykoliuk, N., Rudenko, B., & Ulko, N. (2023) <u>Practical Guide for effective organization and implementation of non-formal education events and active longevity.</u>

Engaging the youngest community members

What to consider

Children are not only the future of the hromada but also an important part of it today. In many Ukrainian hromadas, children are still perceived only as participants in celebrations rather than as carriers of ideas or agents of change. At the same time, practice shows that if children are given a voice, space, and trust, they are capable of offering unconventional solutions and influencing community development.

Engaging the youngest community members is not only about leisure but also about developing responsibility, empathy, self-confidence, and a sense of belonging to the community. It is also an opportunity to see the hromada through a child's eyes and to build an inclusive environment where every voice is valued.

Work with children can take place both within school initiatives and outside formal education. Children can become an active part of community life through activities such as:

- **Student self-government:** creating school parliaments where children learn to make decisions, plan initiatives, and work as a team.

- **Interest-based clubs:** simple formats that grow out of what children are genuinely interested in (board games, robotics, art, etc.).

- **Educational play camps:** role-playing or story-based camps that model social interactions, develop critical thinking, and foster teamwork.

- **Participatory design of the environment:** involving children in creating public spaces.

- **Cultural initiatives:** photo projects, festivals, podcasts, and exhibitions as tools for children's self-representation and rethinking reality.

OUR PLACE IN THE VILLAGE OF MAKARIV

Our Place is an initiative aimed at revitalizing public spaces. The project team involves children in creating public spaces as co-authors in their own right, working at the intersection of architecture, play, education, and community-building, creating conditions in which a child can explore different roles: designer, builder, curator, or creator of the urban environment.

Through workshops, collective work gatherings, children's events, and installations, children not only express their opinions but also shape the environment around them, influencing its appearance, functions, and atmosphere. This changes their experience of community participation, fostering a sense of belonging, co-ownership, and responsibility for the space.

The Our Place project demonstrates that even in small hromadas, it is possible to start a process of cultural transformation through collective creation, where children are co-participants in change.

Formats that are used:

- joint workshops for adults and children to create elements of the space;
- architectural solutions based on children's ideas;
- collective work gatherings that integrate educational elements for children;
- separate children's events (for example, on screen printing, photography, or making vinyl records);
- creation of flexible installations and spaces that remain after the events.

Key goals of engagement:

- to give children experience of influence,

responsibility, and action within the community;

- to engage children in creating public space as co-authors;
- to build dialogue between generations through joint work;
- to inspire adults to reconsider their perception of children and their own experience of play.

Why it works:

- recognizes children as creators of the space in their own right, not merely "guests";
- provides real experience of collective action rather than symbolic participation;
- is implemented in cooperation with hromadas and takes into account their rhythm;
- activates both children and adults through shared successful action.

GEEKWORLD CAMPS

GeekWorld is an initiative that immerses teenagers in role-playing games as a way of social learning, self-realization, and community building. Participants of the camps create their own "state" — with politics, economy, social structures, and internal rules. Within the framework of the game, they learn to make decisions, resolve conflicts, take responsibility, communicate, and influence events.

The team does not impose a rigid scenario but instead gives teenagers complete freedom to change the course of the game, propose new solutions, and model complex life situations in a safe environment. Here, the game becomes a space of experience where one can make mistakes, experiment, and grow up.

A role-playing game is the perfect microcosm for testing out adult things and the reality a child will have to deal with for the rest of their life[12].

[12] This section includes quotes from the Cedos seminar How Public and Cultural Centers Can Work With the Youngest Community Members, which featured Dmytro Demyanenko, Ostap Ukrayinets, Natalka Sosnytska, and Andrii Batin.

Ostap Ukrayinets

methodologist and creative director of the game system for GeekWorld children's camps, military serviceman

Formats that are used:

- role-playing camps that simulate society;

- game-based simulations on communication, ethics, and decision-making;

- adapted scenarios developed in cooperation with hromadas and with Ukrainian Railways camps;

- joint activities that include both adults and children as equal players.

Key goals of the project:

- to give teenagers space for action, not imitation;

- to develop critical thinking, initiative, and empathy through play;

- to build communities in which everyone has value and a voice;

- to foster inner confidence and experience in influencing the environment.

Why it works:

- is based on respect for the child as a full subject;

- does not imitate life but provides tools for living it;

- opens the possibility for independence rather than mere "business";

- involves not only children but also adults.

BEHIND BLUE EYES

Behind Blue Eyes is an initiative that gives children from de-occupied and frontline territories a camera as a tool for self-expression, documentation, and reflection. They capture their everyday life, feelings, and surroundings on film cameras. Each frame holds a child's unique perspective on war, daily life, or dreams.

The project team does not interfere in the process, they do not edit or "improve" the content but create a safe space of support where children can be sincere, see, and be seen.

Formats that are used:

- photography workshops in schools and centers;

- photo exhibitions in Ukraine and abroad;

- podcasts and video stories based on children's testimonies;

- festivals of children's creativity.

Key goals of the project:

- to give children a voice in the public space;

- to preserve the testimonies of war through children's experiences;

- to rethink the role of creativity, seeing it not as a hobby but as a tool for self-realization;

- to strengthen children's belief in their own power and significance.

Why it works:

- works with what already exists within the child: experience, emotions, perception;

- does not impose a format but simply opens space and provides support;

- respects the child as an author and a subject of experience.

Checklist

- Does your center or hromada offer opportunities for children to express their ideas and be heard (for example, through children's councils, school self-government, or collecting ideas for space development)?

- Are there participation formats that go beyond celebrations and entertainment, allowing children to show initiative and independence?

- Are there children's clubs, groups, or workshops that reflect children's interests (board games, technology, art, etc.)?

- Does your activity include play-based or story-based educational formats that develop empathy, responsibility, and teamwork (camps, role-playing games, quests)?

- Are children involved in creating or reimagining public spaces (participatory design, ideas for courtyards, play areas, street art)?

- Are there formats for children's creative self-representation (photo exhibitions, podcasts, videos, public presentations of children's projects)?

- Is there support from adult facilitators or mentors who accompany children?

- Does your team recognize the child as an author, a subject of experience, and a member of the community in their own right?

- Does your center preserve testimonies of children's experiences, especially in the context of war or crisis (through exhibitions, archiving, memories)?

Useful materials

01. <u>Video and written summary</u> of the thematic Cedos seminar How Public and Cultural Centers Can Work With the Youngest Community Members.

02. UNICEF (2018) <u>Children- and Youth-friendly Community: Handbook for implementing initiatives at the local level in Ukraine.</u>

03. UNICEF (2023) <u>Upbringing Without Stereotypes: Methodological Recommendations for Professionals.</u>

04. UNICEF (2023) <u>Overcoming Stereotypes: Methodological Recommendations for Children Aged 3–5.</u>

05. UNICEF (2023) Sex Education Basics: <u>Guide for Professionals Working with Children and Families.</u>

06. UNICEF (2023) <u>Strengthening the National Ecosystem for the Provision and Use of Assistive Technologies/Alternative and Augmented Communication for Children with Disabilities in Ukraine.</u>