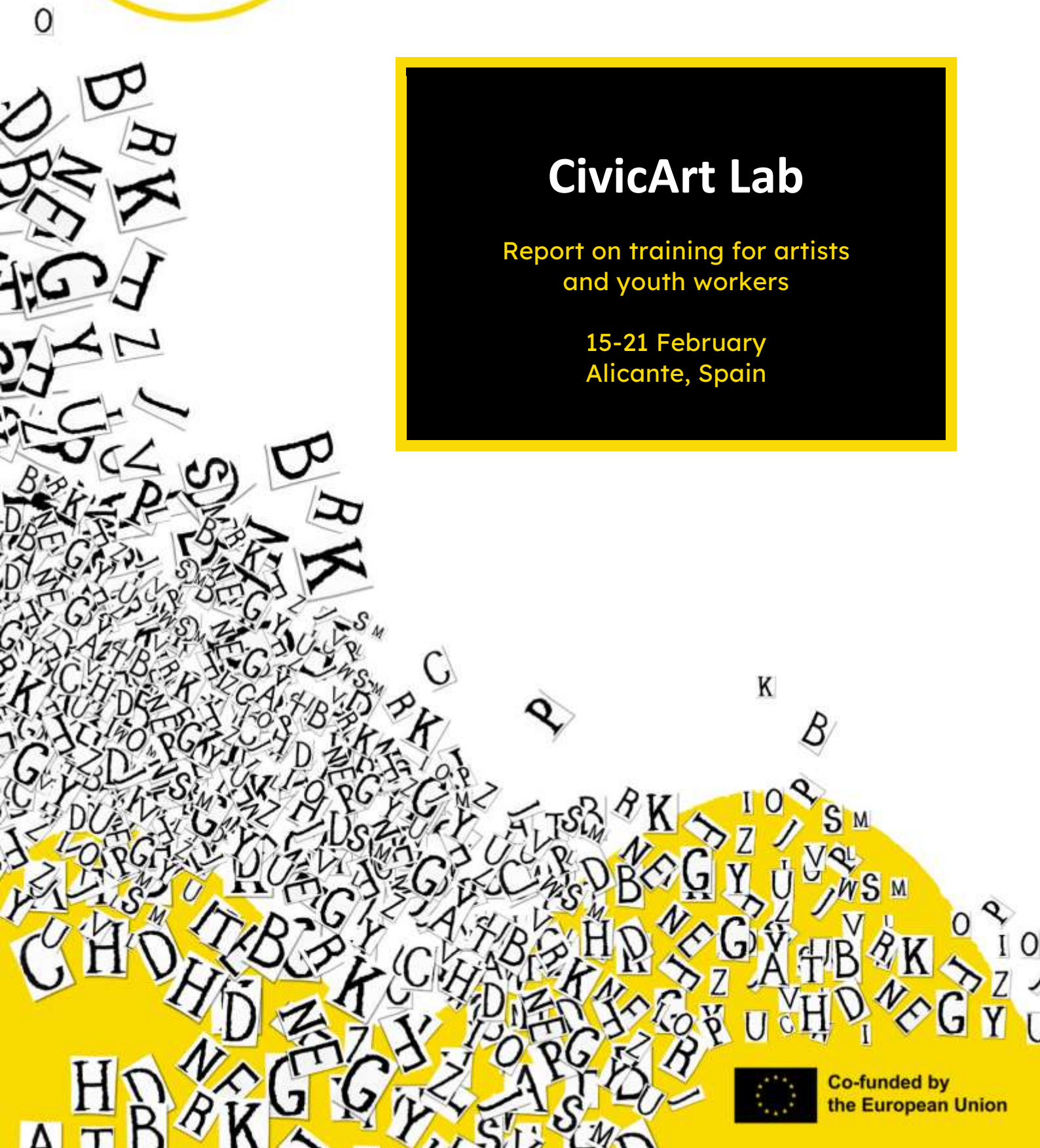




# CivicArt Lab

Report on training for artists  
and youth workers

15-21 February  
Alicante, Spain



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*Project Consortium:*

- *Resonance Foundation (Ukraine)*
- *Gergart (Georgia)*
- *KulturNest E.V. (Germany)*
- *Asociacion International initiatives for cooperation Letur (Spain)*

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Project overview

The CivicArt project is designed to enhance the capacity of youth organizations in Ukraine and Georgia to deliver high-quality, innovative, and artistically enriched civic education activities for young people. This initiative integrates art-based methodologies into civic education, fostering active citizenship and democratic engagement. The project will employ European best practices, drawing on the experience and expertise of European partners from Germany and Spain, to create an impactful educational experience, both online and offline. These practices will be adapted to the local contexts of Ukraine and Georgia, ensuring that the educational tools are relevant and effective for the target groups. The project will aim to reach a diverse group of young people, youth workers, artists and educators, promoting intercultural exchange and collaboration across borders.

The core objectives of the CivicArt project are as follows:

1. To enrich methodologies for non-formal civic education through the integration of artistic practices.
2. To enhance the competencies of 26 youth workers from Ukraine and Georgia in using art as an educational tool for civic education.
3. To foster cooperation among youth NGOs, artistic unions, and formal education institutions, promoting cross-sectoral collaboration.
4. To expand the networks of partner organizations, facilitating international cooperation and exchange of best practices.
5. To ensure the multiplier effect of project activities, reaching at least 5,000 stakeholders across various sectors through the dissemination of innovative educational materials.

The project is structured into three distinct stages:

1. **Stage 1 (WP2):** This stage focuses on analyzing and adjusting European best practices for civic education through art to suit the Ukrainian and Georgian contexts. It includes assessing the current gaps in youth work related to civic education and exploring innovative approaches to art-based civic engagement. The stage culminates in the creation of the Collection of Best Practices in CivicArt and will be the base for development of a Methodology Guide and training course for youth workers in the next stage.
2. **Stage 2 (WP3):** In this stage, the capacity of all partners will be strengthened to develop and use modern, non-formal educational tools for civic education. Based on the Collection of Best Practices from Stage 1, partners will collaboratively create the Methodology Guide on Civic Education through Art, which will then be used in a training course for youth workers. This stage ensures that the partners are equipped with the tools to apply innovative art-based practices in their educational activities.
3. **Stage 3 (WP4):** This stage strengthens the ability of youth workers in Ukraine and Georgia to engage stakeholders in civic education activities. It includes the

implementation of local, artistically enriched civic education activities, supported by a social media campaign. A key component of this stage is the creation of the CivicArt Alliance network, bringing together youth workers, artists, and educators to ensure the sustainability of the project outcomes and to foster ongoing international cooperation and knowledge sharing. The stage will also ensure the dissemination of the project's outcomes, reaching at least 5,000 stakeholders across different sectors.

In addition to these stages, the project will maintain a strong communication and dissemination strategy. This includes producing four videos promoting activism and civic education and ensuring the accessibility of all materials via Creative Commons licenses. Translations of the project deliverables into multiple languages (Ukrainian, Georgian, German, and Spanish) will ensure the wide-reaching impact of the project.

## 1.2. Training course description

This training course brought together 26 youth workers from Ukraine and Georgia (13 participants from each country) in Alicante, Spain, for five intensive working days. We came together with one shared intention: to explore how art and activism can become a powerful and practical tool for civic education.

### Our team

#### Facilitators:

- Katya - IICL
- Dagna - KulturNest
- Levan - Gergart

Reporter: Olena - Resonance

Our amazing support team from IICL - German & Quintina

The social media voice of the CivicArt - Niko (Gergart)



### COMPETENCIES LANDSCAPE FOR CIVIC EDUCATION VIA ARTS



The learning design was grounded in three resources developed within the CivicArt project over the preceding year.

The CivicArt Facilitators Competence Landscape – a framework built around five interconnected areas:

- Creating and Holding Space for Expression;
  - Facilitating Learning through Creative Practice;
  - Supporting Young People's Agency and Voice;
  - Connecting People, Ideas and Contexts; and
  - Co-Creating Impact and Reflecting on Practice
- shaped the design logic of every session.



The training space was also, from the very first day, a space of genuine exchange between practitioners. Participants came not only as learners but as professionals with their own tools, projects, and ideas. They presented their organisations, shared methodologies, and distributed promotional materials.

More than just a training, the week in Alicante became a shared space for experimentation, dialogue, and imagining how art can help young people engage more actively, critically, and creatively in shaping their societies.



## Day 1 – Getting to know each other and Ecology of communication

After a brief introduction to the CivicArt project, the venue, logistics, and the week's programme, facilitators and participants moved straight into the learning experience — no standard icebreakers, no name-round-the-room. Instead, the group was invited into a small creative experiment.

### Exploration: Who Is Who? — Zine Self-Presentation

Each participant created a mini self-zine based on selected letters of their name. A zine (short for fanzine or magazine) is a small, self-published DIY booklet — rooted in authenticity, artistic freedom, and personal voice rather than polished perfection. Zines typically combine art, politics, poetry, and niche interests, prioritising honest self-expression over mainstream conventions.

Through words, symbols, drawings, and short reflections, participants expressed who they are — as youth workers, artists, activists, and educators. The zines were then shared through a speed dating format, allowing participants to meet many people in a short time while exchanging stories, energy, and first impressions. The atmosphere quickly shifted from "strangers in a room" to a dynamic, curious, and



creative group. The exercise already embodied the spirit of the whole Lab: experimentation, vulnerability, artistic expression, and dialogue.

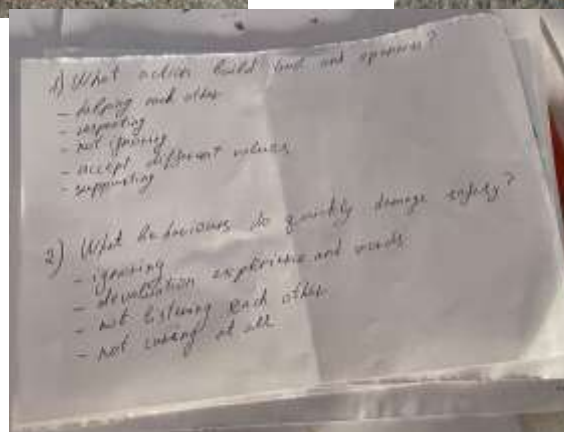
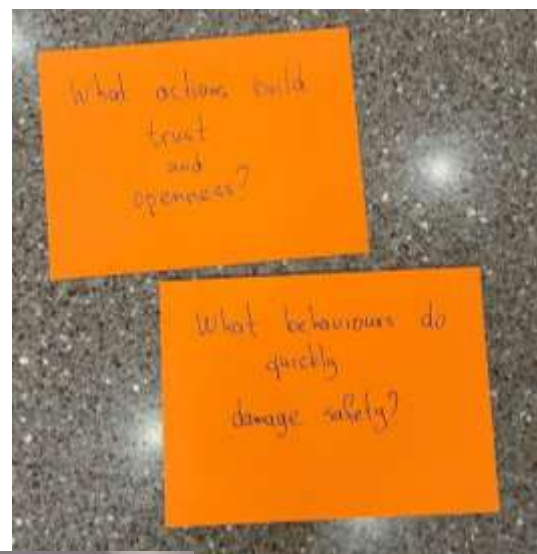
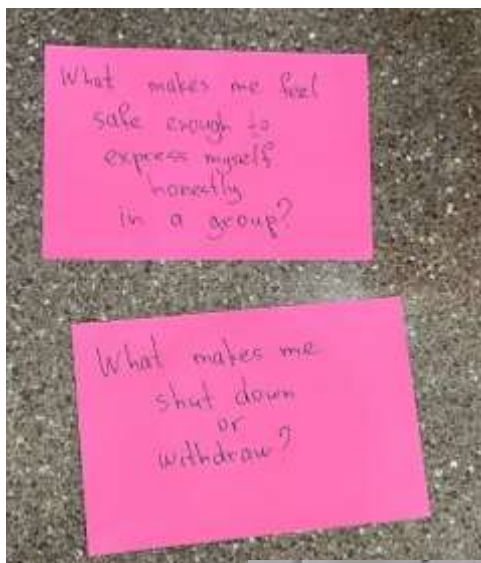
## Creating a Safe Space

Before going deeper into activism and the four missions, the group consciously co-created the space they wanted to work in together. Two core messages framed the process:

1. *This space belongs to all of us.*
2. *Discomfort can be part of growth.*

Participants first reflected individually on two questions: what makes me feel safe enough to express myself honestly in a group? and what makes me shut down or withdraw? They then expanded the conversation in small groups, exploring what actions build trust and openness, and what behaviours quickly damage safety.

This wasn't about writing a formal contract — it was about awareness, naming invisible group dynamics, and understanding that safety is not automatic but something we continuously create together. The discussions were honest and sometimes intense. Participants spoke about listening without interruption, respecting different experiences, not judging artistic expression, allowing space for mistakes, and being mindful of cultural differences. They also named behaviours that close space quickly: sarcasm, domination, dismissiveness, and hidden competition.

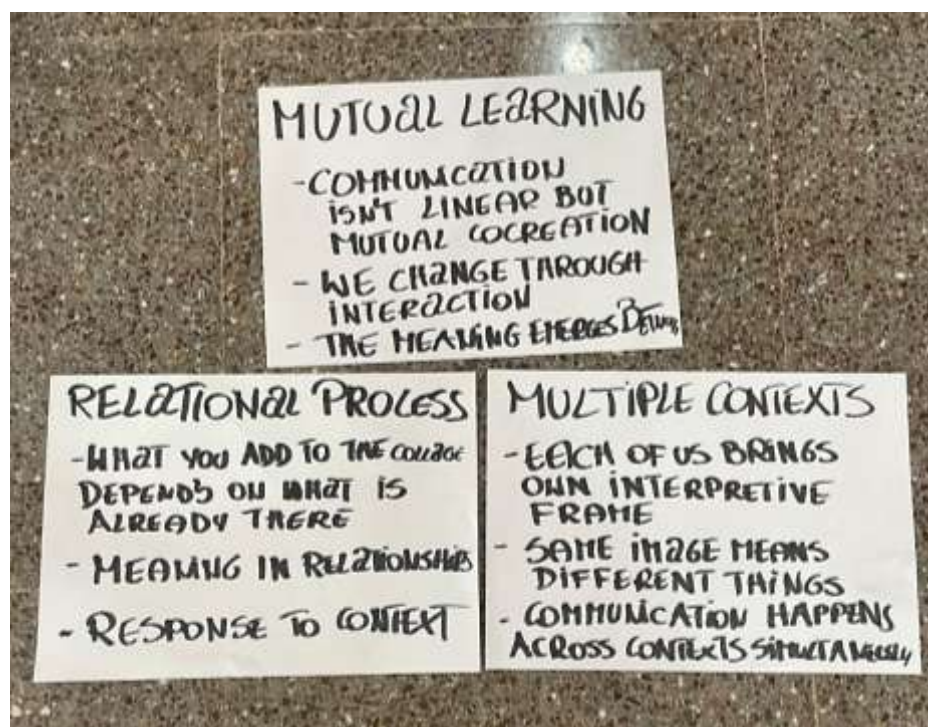
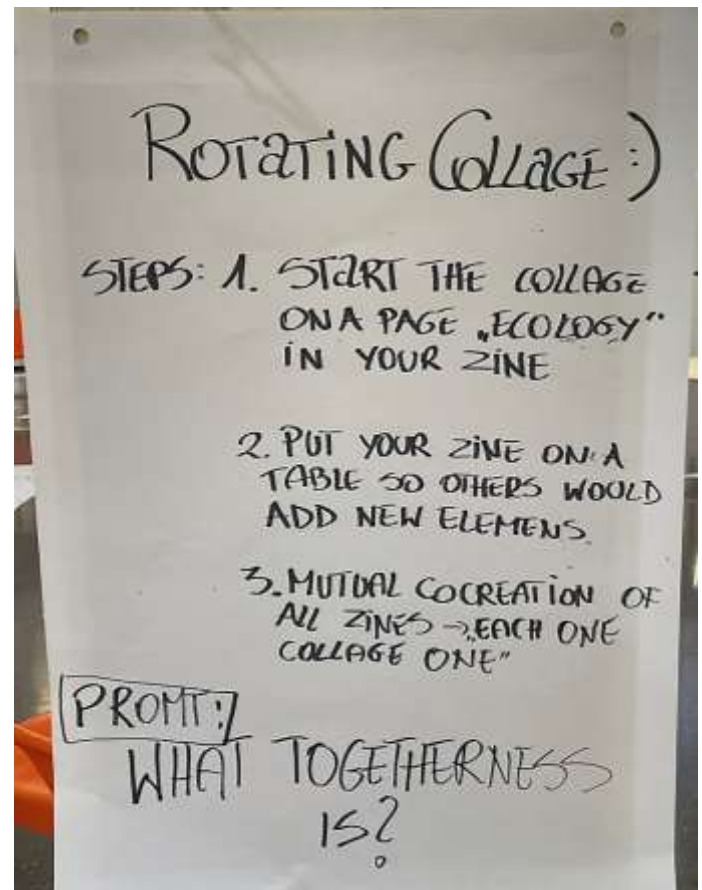


## Rotating Collage — Ecology of Communication

After the safe space discussion, participants moved into a creative collective activity — a rotating collage exploring the ecology of communication, inspired by Nora Bateson's concept of *symmathesy* (mutual learning). The core idea: communication is not a linear transmission but a mutual co-creation, where meaning emerges between people rather than from individuals alone.

The prompt was simple: *What does relationship look like?* — but participants could not answer it alone. Each person added to a shared page, with every contribution shaped by what was already there, and in turn shaping what came next. As the pages rotated around the room, the group experienced in real time how each mark changes the context for everyone who follows.

The debrief invited reflection on moments of surprise or redirection, unexpected coherence across pages, and the ways others' contributions opened or constrained one's own response.



## Group Agreement

The main findings from both the safe space discussion and the collage debrief were collected into a draft group agreement. This was then discussed using sociometry: each statement was voted on by participants physically moving around the room to corners marked "agree," "strongly agree," "disagree," and so on, making the group's collective positions visible in the space.

The final group agreement included ten shared commitments, co-created and adopted by all participants:

1. We build trust through active listening.
2. We speak with respect.
3. We practise non-judgment — be curious, not judgemental; judge ideas, not persons.
4. We value each person's experience.
5. We reject aggressive or harmful behaviour.
6. We respect personal boundaries and consent.
7. We accept diversity without conditions.
8. We communicate mindfully.
9. We take shared responsibility for time and participation.
10. We act with solidarity and care.

We intentionally did not ask participants to share expectations at the start. In line with non-formal education principles and the Lab format, the invitation was simply to be fully present — to take as much as possible from each moment, without limiting the experience through pre-set expectations.

## Afternoon — Group Building Walk: Reading the City

After lunch, participants stepped outside the training room entirely. The city of Alicante became the learning space for an experiential group-building activity that connected directly to the training's first mission: Environment.

Participants formed groups, each assigned a different lens through which to read the urban environment:

Group 1 — Walls & Street Messages explored the city as a speaking subject. Their premise: *the city speaks through its walls*. They walked through Alicante observing murals, stickers, street art, and public visual messages — photographing full artworks and meaningful details,

writing down exact quotes and words, noting how the messages made them feel, and creating



visual notes on A4 paper combining quotes, keywords, and small sketches. Their guiding questions: What social or civic messages are visible? Who might be speaking, and to whom? What emotions do these messages provoke? What could they change in people? They returned with a set of A4 visual notes and one shared sentence: *"This message could transform people by..."*

Group 2 — Bookshops & Civic Voices explored books as carriers of civic ideas and bookshops as civic spaces. They visited three to four bookshops, looking for Spanish civic or

socially engaged authors and contemporary writers with strong social messages — collecting author names, book titles, quotes, and key themes. They also found manhole covers (*alcantarillas*) near the bookshops and made rubbings on A4 paper, then created a small handmade book combining tracings with authors, titles, quotes, or themes. Their guiding questions: Which civic voices are present in bookshops? What themes repeat? How are these books positioned or displayed? They returned with one handmade civic book and one shared sentence: *"Civic ideas in this city travel through..."*

Group 3 — Nature, Trees & Self approached nature as a civic actor. Their task was to listen to nature and notice how they relate to it. They started with a particular invitation: to visit a specific tree on Asturias Street, between Boyero Street and Astrónomo Comas — to listen to the story that tree has to tell, and begin their journey from there. They walked through green spaces, observing how nature is treated and how people interact with it, attending to their own emotions, bodily reactions, and pace. They took photographs and created messages from nature to the city — written on paper or on fallen leaves found on the ground. Their guiding questions: What stories does nature carry? How does being near nature change you? What would nature like to say to the city? They returned with written messages and one shared sentence: *"Nature would like to tell the city that..."*

When all three groups gathered together, they reorganised into mixed trios — each trio containing one representative from each group. This structure ensured that every small conversation held three entirely different urban perspectives at once. Within these trios, participants exchanged their findings and wove them into shared stories — narratives that combined trees, street art, and the hidden cultural life of bookshops and city surfaces into something none of the groups could have created alone.



## Day 2 – Mission: Human Rights. Warm Data

### Morning – Debrief: Stories from the City

The day opened with a debrief of the previous afternoon’s city walk. Before the mixed trios presented their woven stories, the full group paused to reflect on the experience itself – not just what they had found, but what it had felt like to go looking.

The notes were honest and varied. Participants spoke about seeing the city from entirely different perspectives depending on which lens they had been given. Those who had walked with trees said they now saw them differently – not as backdrop, but as presence. Others noted that the task had been tough at the beginning: navigating an unfamiliar city with an open-ended brief felt uncertain. But the difficulty became part of the value – they had overcome it as a group, building trust through problem solving rather than through an icebreaker. There was laughter about the discovery of siesta – all the bookshops closed, the street suddenly quiet, plans needing to adapt. There was excitement. And there was simply the pleasure of having gone out into the city together, away from tables and flipcharts, and come back with something made.

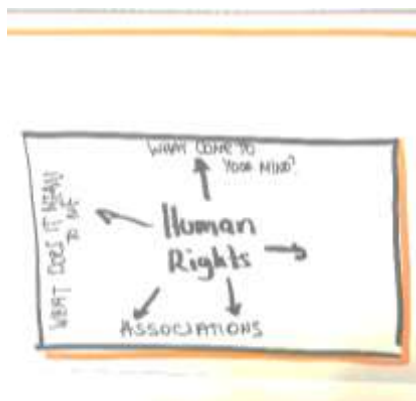


From this grounded opening, the mixed trios took the floor one by one, sharing the narratives they had woven together from three different urban perspectives – trees, street art, and bookshops. The room listened as the streets of Alicante were retold through layered eyes: roots and walls and hidden texts becoming a single, collective reading of the city. It was a meaningful transition into the day – a reminder that meaning always lives between perspectives, not within any single one.

## Mission: Human Rights – Exploration and Theory

The first half of the day was dedicated to the second mission: Human Rights. The session began with individual reflection. Each participant was invited to sit with a simple but weighty question: *What does Human Rights mean to me? What comes to mind? What associations does it carry?*

What followed was one of the most emotionally significant discussions of the entire week. With participants from Ukraine and Georgia in the room – two countries where





the violations of human rights are not abstract concepts but lived, ongoing realities – the conversation quickly moved beyond definitions. People shared personal experiences of injustice and loss, spoke about historical and present-day violations in their countries, named the obstacles they face in their work, and offered each other something rarer than information: solidarity and recognition. The discussion was heavy at times, and the facilitators held the space carefully, allowing emotions to be present without rushing toward conclusions.

From this lived starting point, the group moved into a theoretical frame. The flipcharts introduced the journey of human rights as a concept – from the quote attributed to Léopold Sédar Senghor, "*Human rights start with breakfast*," through the evolution from natural rights to universal rights, and the dual nature of human rights as both values and legal provisions. Four generations of rights were mapped: civil and political rights (first generation); social, economic and cultural rights (second generation); collective and solidarity rights

(third generation); and internet and digital rights (fourth generation) – all understood as interdependent.

The group then explored the Human Rights Based Approach, examining the relationship between duty-bearers – those who must respect, protect and fulfil rights, and who are accountable for doing so – and rights-holders – those who are enabled and empowered to claim rights through participation. Three modes of civic action connecting them were named: awareness raising, activism and mobilisation, and advocacy action.

## Creative Group Task

Working in small groups, participants were asked to create a short creative presentation responding to two questions: *What do I own?* and *How can I support the action?* The task grounded the theoretical framework in personal and professional reality – each group drawing on their own contexts, communities, and resources to imagine concrete forms of engagement.





## Afternoon — Warm Data: The Tree and the Seven Dimensions of Care

The afternoon shifted in register. Before moving into Warm Data conversation, the group gathered around a shared creative act: together, they drew a tree. The question was open and unhurried — what kind of tree is this? Where does it begin, where does it end? What is it made of, what does it carry, what does it give? The drawing became a collective meditation on rootedness, growth, interconnection, and the invisible systems that sustain living things. It also prepared the group for what was to come.

**Warm Data** — a concept developed by Nora Bateson — invites exploration of the living relationships *between* the parts of complex systems, rather than focusing on the parts themselves. It resists the isolation of variables and instead asks: how do things touch each other? How does context shape meaning?

Participants gathered in small, rotating groups to explore a single question across seven dimensions of human experience: *What does care mean to us?* The seven dimensions were family, culture, identity, ecology, law and governance, education, and economy. In each constellation of voices, the same word — care — revealed entirely different textures and tensions depending on which lens was held up to it. Care in the context of family looks different from care as a legal obligation, or care as an ecological relationship, or care as something passed down through culture.

The conversations were intimate, sometimes surprising, and rich with the kind of complexity that does not simplify into bullet points. What emerged was not a definition of care but a sense of how deeply entangled it is with every dimension of how we live together.





Spanish festival marking the end of carnival through the ceremonial burning of a large papier-mâché sardine. Crowds, music, costumes, fire, and the peculiar mix of mourning and festivity that defines the ritual filled the waterfront.



It was a full immersion in local culture – a reminder that civic life is also expressed through collective ritual, shared symbolism, and the kind of belonging that a city performs for itself in public space. For a group spending the week exploring togetherness, environment, and active citizenship, watching an entire city enact a centuries-old tradition together was its own kind of lesson.

And in the spirit of care for shared space that the group agreed upon on Day 1 – Dagna quietly watered the plants in the venue foyer. Some things don't need a session plan.

## Day 4 – Mission: Intersectional Dialogue and Art Lab Show

### Morning – City of Sustain: A Simulation

The fourth day opened with the third mission: Intersectional Dialogue. To explore how different social actors negotiate shared challenges – and how power, values, and resources shape those conversations – the group entered a simulation called *City of Sustain* from the [CivicArt Methodology Guide](#).

The premise is the following: a city facing multiple simultaneous crises – water scarcity, energy choices, migration, media pressure, and decisions affecting future generations – with limited resources and no single actor powerful enough to solve anything alone. Participants were divided into five groups, each inhabiting a distinct civic role: Local Authorities, Businesses, Youth Organisations, Environmental Activists, and Social Services / Human Rights Defenders. Each group carried its own mission, values, starting resources, and constraints.

Learning Objectives and Outcomes	
<b>Title of activity:</b>	City of Sustain
<b>Duration:</b>	1.5 - 2 hours
<b>Group size:</b>	15-20 participants
<b>Aim of the Session:</b>	To simulate decision-making on sustainability and human rights issues with limited resources, encouraging youth participation, intersectional dialogue, and democratic negotiation.
<b>Competence landscape areas of facilitator:</b>	Connecting people, ideas and content; Co-Creating impact and reflecting on practice; Facilitating learning through creative practice; Supporting young people's agency and voice
<b>Learning Outcomes of the Session:</b>	By the end of the session, participants will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the complexity of balancing environmental, economic, and human rights priorities.</li> <li>Practice democratic decision-making and negotiation skills.</li> <li>Explore the role of youth participation and intersectional collaboration in sustainability processes.</li> <li>Reflect on the impact of decisions on different groups and</li> </ul>



Groups rotated through a series of stations, each presenting a realistic dilemma with two or three decision options — a water crisis, an energy dilemma, a social justice and migration challenge, a media and transparency question, and a scenario involving the rights of future generations. At each station, the group had only minutes to read, debate, and commit to a decision, knowing that every choice carried consequences — for resources, for rights, and for other groups.

The simulation was designed to be uncomfortable in productive ways. Decisions that gained energy lost social points. Options that protected rights cost resources. Alliances shifted. Interests clashed. The dynamics that play out over years in real civic life were compressed into a single morning.

In the final assembly, all groups brought their accumulated decisions and resources to a shared table to negotiate a joint City Declaration — covering resource allocation, human rights guarantees, youth participation mechanisms, and sustainability commitments. The negotiation was tense, honest, and at moments genuinely difficult. By the end, the group reached consensus: a city plan agreed democratically, with rights respected and youth participation ensured.

At the debriefing participants discussed the questions that matter beyond the game: Where was it hardest to agree? Which rights were most at risk? What alliances emerged, and why? How does this reflect what participants experience in their real communities and organisations?



## Afternoon — Art Lab Show

After lunch, the space transformed. What had been a learning room became a stage, a gallery, and a screening room. The Art Lab Show brought together everything the creative groups had made since previous day — works born from the theme of Togetherness, shaped by six different artistic languages.

The programme unfolded as follows:

- Farewell — a performance presented outside, opening the show in the open air
- No Name — a combined performance and exhibition, presented inside
- Rhizome — a video work



- Loneliness — a stop motion film
- Arlo the Penguin — a visual art piece and interactive game
- Farewell — a closing video



Each work carried its own tone and form — some tender, some political, some playful, some searching. Together they made visible what the week had been building toward: that art is not decoration added to civic engagement, but one of its most honest and effective languages.



## Day 5 – Local Action Planning and Evaluation

### Morning – Planning Local Interventions

The final morning was oriented entirely toward what comes next. The energy of the week – the ideas, the tools, the connections, the artistic experiments – needed to land somewhere concrete. Participants gathered in their national groups, Ukrainians together and Georgians together, to design local interventions: art-based civic education activities they would bring back to their own communities, organisations, and contexts.

The planning was grounded in everything the week had offered – the four missions, the CivicArt methodology, the practices explored in the Art Lab, the frameworks from human rights and intersectional dialogue sessions, and the good practices from the CivicArt collection. But it was also grounded in something more personal: the specific realities, constraints, and possibilities of each participant's home context.

Working in national groups allowed for the kind of frank, contextually fluent conversation that cross-national groups cannot always reach – where references are shared, obstacles are known, and planning can be genuinely strategic rather than hypothetical.



### Afternoon – Evaluation: One Object, One Message

The closing evaluation took a form consistent with the spirit of the whole week: creative, personal, and embodied rather than abstract.



Each participant was given a single task: find one object – from the room, from their bag, from the building, from outside – that represents their experience of the training. Not a summary, not a report. An object. Something that holds the week in a way that words alone cannot.

Participants then gathered in a closing circle, each bringing their chosen object and one message – something they were taking with them, something they wanted to leave with the group, something the week had clarified or opened. The objects and messages that filled the circle were as varied as the people holding them: something small and ordinary made meaningful by the week's context, something found on the street during the city quest, something made during the Art Lab, something borrowed from the training space. Together they formed an

unofficial, unrepeatable portrait of what the week had been — not as a programme, but as a shared experience.

As a final gesture connecting the training to the wider world, each participant combined their object or image with their message and sent it to the group WhatsApp — image and text together, a message from the CivicArt Alicante Lab to the world. These contributions will continue to appear on the CivicArt social media channels — [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) — carrying the voices, images, and insights of 26 practitioners outward from the training room and into the communities they work with.

The training closed not with a formal ceremony but with the quiet weight of a circle that had genuinely become a group. And then — because some things can only be said through the body — the circle became a dance floor. Participants from Ukraine and Georgia taught each other their folk dances, and for a while the training room held something that no session plan could have designed: 26 people moving together, carrying their own traditions into a shared rhythm.

They left Alicante with new tools, new alliances, new questions, and a clearer sense of how art can help young people engage more actively, critically, and creatively in shaping their societies. And the memory of a dance that belonged to everyone.





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