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Intellectual Output - Booklet



Index

1. Introduction	3
2. Objectives	7
3. Methodology	8
3.1 Phases of the Methodology	10
Phase 0 - Call for participants	11
Phase 1 - Selection of the participants	12
Phase 2 - Group creation/introduction	14
Phase 3 - Exploration	17
Phase 4 - Experimentation	20
Phase 5 - Artistic project	23
a) Selection and discussion	26
b) Final exhibition	28
4. Impact	30
5. General recommendations	31
6. Conclusions	32



1. Introduction

This booklet describes a methodology that aims to empower LGBTQI+ youth by making visible and denouncing situations of discrimination that they face daily and promoting their inclusion through visual arts.

It emerges from an Erasmus+ project developed in 2022 by three entities from Spain, Italy and Portugal, working with three different LGTBIQ+ youth groups through visual arts, giving them safe spaces to learn, create and express themselves while improving their capacities and abilities in artistic methodologies.

The methodology that resulted from this project can be adapted to different groups of LGBTQI+ youth in vulnerable situations. Here we describe the tested methods that have had the most significant impact on youth LGTBIQ+ and their communities.

Exploring and creating their pieces helps to express themselves and opens possibilities to make their voice heard and to reach visibility within the community. Therefore, it has a transformative role by contributing to social inclusion and change.

Working through art LGTBIQ+ youth empowerment grows on two levels:

- **Individual and group:** self-esteem and self-knowledge
- **Community:** visibility and empowerment





As Lothwell, Libby and Adelson (2020) discuss in their study about mental health in youth LGTBIQ+, young people within LGTBIQ+ communities are more likely to experience challenges with their mental health. This is due primarily to the oppression and discrimination they may encounter at school, at home, and in various situations in their daily lives.

LGBT youth have identical developmental needs to the general population. In addition, physicians providing care to LGBT youths should consider this population's specific needs in three main developmental domains that influence physical and mental health: sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity.

Individuals exposed to adverse reactions about their gender or sexual identity from peers, family, or society are at increased risk for psychological distress. The rates at which LGBT youths experience depression, anxiety, and substance abuse are higher than the general population and include a two-to-fourfold increased risk for suicidality (ideation and behaviour).

Exposure to interpersonal stigmas, such as family rejection and harassment from peers, has been associated with a greater risk for suicidality. Fear of rejection or risk of physical or emotional harm because of divergence in sexual or gender development can often lead pediatric patients to hide their feelings, such as experiencing same-sex romantic attraction, variation in gender expression, and gender dysphoria.

Hiding one's identity and the dilemma over whether to come out (reveal one's identity) to peers and family are experiences unique to the emotional development of LGBT youths. Moreover, transgender youth has specific medical and mental health needs related to the distress they may experience because of discordance between their gender identity and their assigned birth gender (*Lothwell, Libby and Adelson, 2020*).

Through this methodology, it's possible to work on **social exclusion and visibility** of LGTBIQ+ youth in their local communities.



The LGBTBIQ+ community faces social exclusion in all spheres of life. The young LGBTBIQ+ people who experience estrangement from family and friendship networks, harassment at school and invisibility are particularly vulnerable. These difficulties can lead in some cases to underachievement at school, school drop-out, mental ill-health and homelessness. young LGBTBIQ+ people are at risk of being discriminated against and excluded because of their sexual orientation. They are also vulnerable to social exclusion because of their age. This is why it is important to examine how young people in general experience social exclusion briefly.

“For young people, the risk is particularly strong due to the transition from education to employment and from dependence to independence. This is a period of vulnerability for young people until they gain a firm foothold in employment and can depend on an adequate income. But youth is also often a period of dissatisfaction. Young people can feel alienated by society, by education systems and by the conditions in which they live” (Orr 2004:83)

The exclusion could take different ways, not always visible to everybody, and those are the most difficult to identify but also the most challenging exclusions:

- **Invisibility:** as is the case for LGBTBIQ+ people in general, young LGBTBIQ+ people are (usually) not marked by their bodies and, therefore, are not recognisable at first sight. When personal invisibility is transformed into personal visibility, it can be accompanied by claims for (more) social visibility, recognition, equality, acknowledgement and respect for LGBT people. Researchers have emphasised that if the social environment is disapproving of their emerging sexual orientation, LGBTBIQ+ adolescents may experience profound isolation and fear of discovery, which then interferes with achieving the main developmental tasks of adolescence related to self-esteem, identity, and intimacy (Frankowski 2004)
- **Mental health:** the fact that young people who are open about their non-heterosexual behaviour and identity are likely to experience homophobia and heterosexism from friends, family and society at large, may encourage them to keep their identity and behaviour secret, and to avoid seeking out services that they might need (Campbell - Aggleton 1999). This in turn means that they are not provided with appropriate mental and sexual health services, because of the perception that there are not enough young LGBT people who need them.



- **School environment:** the school environment of LGBT youth is often described as a “*strictly heteronormative space*” that force them to hide their feelings and sexuality. Adolescence is a period during which young people learn about social and cultural attitudes regarding gender. It is a time when the boundaries of gender expression as well as the social regulation of gendered behaviour are strict and strictly enforced by significant others, including peer group members, friends, teachers, and family members. In recent years, much attention has been focused on documenting and explaining the high rates of health risks among LGBT youth. One key factor believed to be associated with this risk is atypical gender expression, or gender nonconformity.

Through this project and methodology, we focus on empowering the LGTBQ+ youth community, working on their capacities, competencies and knowledge, making them protagonists of their lives and in their community and ensuring them safe spaces where their voices will be heard.





2. Objectives

The general objective of this project was to create a new methodology that uses art to make it easier to see the everyday challenges the LGBTQI+ youth face.

As a result of this objective, this methodology also achieves the following specific objectives:

- 1** Empowering the LGTBIQ+ youth population in the expression of their experiences and the reporting of discriminatory situations through art
- 2** Providing innovative tools for LGTBIQ+ youth to implement future art actions and develop capacities and abilities to express themselves
- 3** Create a safe space and new bonds within youth LGTBIQ+ in their community
- 4** Promote the social and cultural inclusion of the LGTBIQ+ collective, especially youth, and combat the proliferation of hate speech





3. Methodology

The methodology of this project is based on **Photovoice**, focusing on the empowerment of the youth involved.

Photovoice is a process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique. It entrusts cameras to the hands of people to enable them to act as recorders, and potential catalysts for change, in their communities (*Wang and Burris 1997*). By utilising photographs taken and selected by participants, respondents can reflect upon and explore the reasons, emotions and experiences that have guided their chosen images.

This project has been developed using participatory methods. Using such methods ensures the empowerment of the participants through their control of the processes while having the support of a professional that creates a safe space for them.

Participatory methods (PMs) include a range of activities with a common thread: enabling ordinary people to play an active and influential part in decisions which affect their lives. This means that people are listened to and heard; their voices shape outcomes. As a result, the participant is more likely to feel engaged and own the results.

Creative and participatory methods allow different views and perspectives to be captured in specific locations and times.





Different creative tools can be used for people who may not respond well to interview situations, a questionnaire or who may need more narrative skills. Also, participants can be more independent and less restricted by criteria set by the facilitator.

(Throughout this document, the word “facilitator” refers to the person who will organise and implement the project and activities)

While using these methods, the project was developed in two stages:

- **Pilot test:** through different artistic and social methodologies, a new methodology was created to work with LGBTBIQ+ youth on their empowerment and social visibility. The methodology was tested with a youth group, and its impact was evaluated.
- **Final project:** after evaluating the initial methodology, some improvements were included to ensure the impact and the achievement of the objectives. Each entity developed the methodology adapting the activities and art disciplines to the needs and interests of the youth group and the social and cultural situations in their countries.

Each stage was finalised with an evaluation to assess the impact of the methodology and establish grounds that can be replicated by different professionals or groups.

The final methodology is described below, structured by phases that ensure the achievement of the objectives, the development of the plan and the involvement of the youth and the community. This methodology must be adapted to the needs, interests and situations of the target group and the community involved.



Methodology

3.1 Phases of the Methodology

The methodology comprises six phases, each specified with a **description**, **goals**, and **activities** to facilitate its implementation and ensure the achievement of the objectives.

The phases are described following the evaluation and the measured impact resulting from the development of the methodology, establishing the most viable actions and procedures.

The several phases have been planned to structure the project effectively for the youth and the community, but the actions within each phase can be adapted to a different target group and the community.

Phases:

0. Call for participants
1. Selection of the participants
2. Group creation
3. Exploration
4. Experimentation
5. Artistic project





Methodology

Phase 0 - Call for participants

Initially, to disseminate the project and encourage LGBTQI+ youth to participate, the facilitator or organisation must prepare a Call for Participants with information about the project, its actions and aims.

The call for participants should include the following information about the project:

- Title
- Description
- Target group
- General aims
- Deadline to apply
- General timeline for the project

To make sure that the target group is reached, the facilitator should analyse and select the proper dissemination channels to promote the call and optimise its reach.





Methodology

Phase 1 - Selection of the participants

After the call of participants closes, the following step of the project is to select the participants.

The selection of the participants must be made following different criteria established before the selection:

- **Number of participants:** the group has to be formed by a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 10 participants
- **Ages of the participants:** between 16 and 30 years old
- **Location:** they must live near the area where the project will be taking place to facilitate and ensure their presential participation
- **LGBTIQ+:** the participants have to identify as LGTBIQ+ or questioning

The criteria described above are based on the pilot test and its evaluation. However, each organisation/facilitator that wishes to implement this project can add more criteria to the selection process to adapt the participants to the activities developed.

The facilitator should contact everyone who has registered and meets the eligibility criteria and schedule an interview according to their availability. The interviews can be virtual or presential, depending on the needs and possibilities of both parties.

The interview's primary focus is to understand the youth's availability and motivation to participate in the Project. The Project's background and main objectives must be explained to the interviewee as well as their rights and responsibilities as a potential participant.





Selection of the participants

During the interview, the facilitator collects specific information to assess the viability of including the potential participant in the project. All the details of the project (timetable, activities, specific aims of the phases, etc.) are presented to the potential participant so that they can express their thoughts, questions and fears.

The elements to evaluate the selection of the participants are the following:

- The motivation to participate
- The commitment to the project
- The disponibility to participate and to be involved to the activities
- The proposals they made

The facilitator and all the professionals involved in the project must evaluate these fundamental elements, following the aims, lines of action and project proposals.

The information regarding the interviews of all potential participants should be registered in a document. Later on, the data is transferred to other professionals from the project to evaluate the selection together.

Once the selection has been made, the facilitator contacts the youth to inform them of all the details regarding their participation in the project.

Commitment plays a vital role in this phase; all the youth must participate in all the phases to create a safe space, to be able to develop work at an individual, group and community level and to strengthen the link to the project.

Role of the facilitator

The facilitator has to work in line with the project's aims, considering the criteria for selecting the participants. Their role is not only to choose the project's participants but to set the foundation for a safe space that makes them feel comfortable expressing themselves.



Methodology

Phase 2 - Group creation/introduction

Phase 2 consists of a two-hour session where the group participants meet each other and share their expectations and needs.

The facilitator should arrange a date that allows for everyone in the group to attend. The session should be held in person to promote the creation of bonds within the group.

At the beginning of the session, the facilitator explains the project's phases, its aims, and the activities that will happen. While informing the youth, the facilitator must ensure they understand everything and encourage their input so that the participants themselves can suggest activities and adaptations to the current plan.

Once the initial explanation is finished, the facilitator starts a round of questions, doubts or fears so that the group can confidently move forward to the next phase.

During this session, the facilitator develops different **ice-breaking activities** to get to know each other and **expectation activities** so that the youth can express themselves and their needs, motivations, and fears. All the information is registered in a document and sent to the participants through a shared folder that will be used throughout the project.

It is essential to establish **rules** to be followed by all the participants (*including the facilitator*). The members create these rules so they feel empowered and heard, creating their safe space tailored to their specific needs and circumstances.





Goals

Participants:

- Understand the project
- Get to know each other
- Create initial bounds
- Co-create rules of respect during the project

Facilitator:

- Present the project to the participants and answer questions
- Identify possible challenges from the group
- Establish a connection with the group
- Promote bond and interaction within the group
- Create a safe space for everyone

Activities

- **Icebreakers:** activities to allow the youth to know each other. The idea is to make the participants feel comfortable whilst meeting and interacting. It will be helpful to privilege informal and methods based on body language, eye contact, and occupation of space through expressive activities, gradually introduced by the facilitator.
- **Expectations and fears:** the youth express their worries and expectations through a participatory dynamic (*written, spoken, etc.*), and the facilitator addresses their answers to solve any doubts.
- **Rules:** through a participative and discussion dynamic, the youth propose different rules for the project's development. These rules have to be related to the attitudes of the group. The facilitator will write down the common rules and share them with the group so that everyone feels welcomed and respected during the project.



Evaluation

At the end of each phase, the facilitator chooses an activity to evaluate the impact of the activities and whether the objectives were achieved. The methodology has to be participative, involving the group in the process so they can feel confident and contribute to the project's success.

The key information that has to be analyzed to evaluate the impact of the first session is the following:

- What were the participants' expectations about the project?
- Did the participants understand everything? Was it clearly explained?
- What is their motivation to participate?
- Do the participants feel like they're in a safe environment?
- What can each of the participants bring to the project? How can they contribute to the group?

It is also essential to evaluate the phase from the facilitator's perspective, so the project is assessed through all the variables included. The facilitator should analyze this phase according to the following criteria:

- Did the group feel comfortable in the session?
- Did everyone participate equally?
- What are the participants' specific needs (*if any exist*), and how can the phases be adjusted to meet those requirements?



Methodology

Phase 3 - Exploration

In this phase, the artistic process begins. It will allow the participants to build self-confidence and to start learning and developing different creative capacities.

This phase is significant due to the self-reflection processes that each participant will go through. Respecting the youth's times, moments and feelings and supporting them with empathy and by providing safe spaces is imperative. The exploration of significant spaces aims to determine what they want to express through this project, how they feel about their sexuality/gender roles/etc., in their community and context.

The facilitator plans different activities to encourage the group to explore significant moments and spaces (physical, emotional and temporal). There is no limit on time or exercises in this phase. It should be adapted to the group's needs. The participants must reflect on their life's timeline and, if willing, share their important moments with the group.

Each person will work on this process individually with the facilitator's guidance. It is vital to be aware that working on this subject can bring up difficult moments/emotions related to specific moments of the participant's life.

The focus of this phase is to learn to express and work through the emotions and express themselves through those selected spaces.

During this phase, the participants use different art mediums and techniques to express their emotions and spaces, to practice and learn how to work on the emotions through art. The facilitator collects the participants' proposals and selects, according to the expressed needs of the group, the artistic methods to experiment with for the next phase.



Goals

- To explore the meaning of spaces (*physical, temporal and emotional*)
- To explore the relationship within the group
- To promote self reflection and empowerment processes individually and within the group

Activities

Here are some suggestions on how the facilitator can achieve this:

- **Temporal spaces**
 - The facilitator divides the youth into smaller groups of three. Each participant creates their life timeline and shares with the group the five most important moments of their life.
- **Emotional spaces**
 - To get the participants to reflect on the sense of belonging, the group should discuss the last time they felt they belonged somewhere, something or someone.
 - They can also think about the spaces where you can feel safe; it could be a place from home, the school or somewhere around the city they live in.
- **Physical spaces**
 - Participants are encouraged to reflect and share their favourite place with the group and what makes it unique.
 - Youth explores the city and the safe spaces. The facilitator accompanies them by walking to those places, so they can express why they feel safe and how.

Participants should be encouraged to visually illustrate these crucial moments and memories preferences in every exercise through drawings, photos, or even objects.

**During this phase, the facilitator has to be aware of the emotional processes of the youth to ensure they feel safe to express their emotions and that the group is supportive of them.*



Evaluation

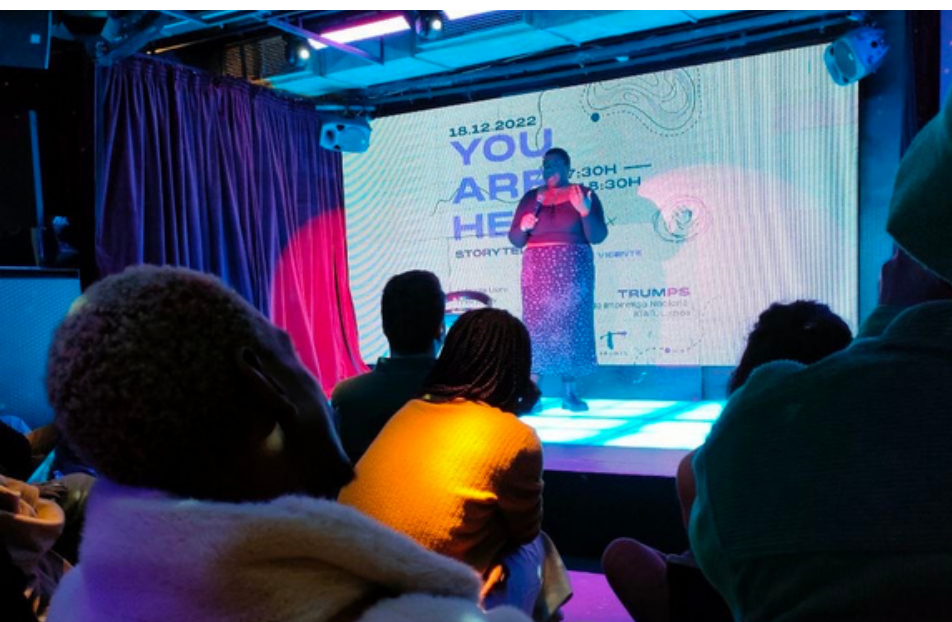
In every project phase, the evaluation is made from the participant's and the facilitator's perspectives, assuring that both sides are considered. In this phase, the participants need to reflect on following aspects:

- Has it been hard emotionally?
- Did you feel safe sharing your moments?
- How did you feel? - Saying one word at the beginning of the session and one at the end and writing it down and talking about it.

It is crucial to choose dynamic activities for the participants to express their thoughts on the process differently.

For the *facilitator's* evaluation, the questions focus on the perception of the processes that the group have experienced and shared.

- What challenges have surfaced?
- Did the group feel comfortable during the activities?
- Did the participants express everything, or were they holding back?
- How do you evaluate the effectiveness of the dynamics chosen? Did the activities selected for this phase make it possible to achieve the goals? Does anything need to be improved or changed?





Methodology

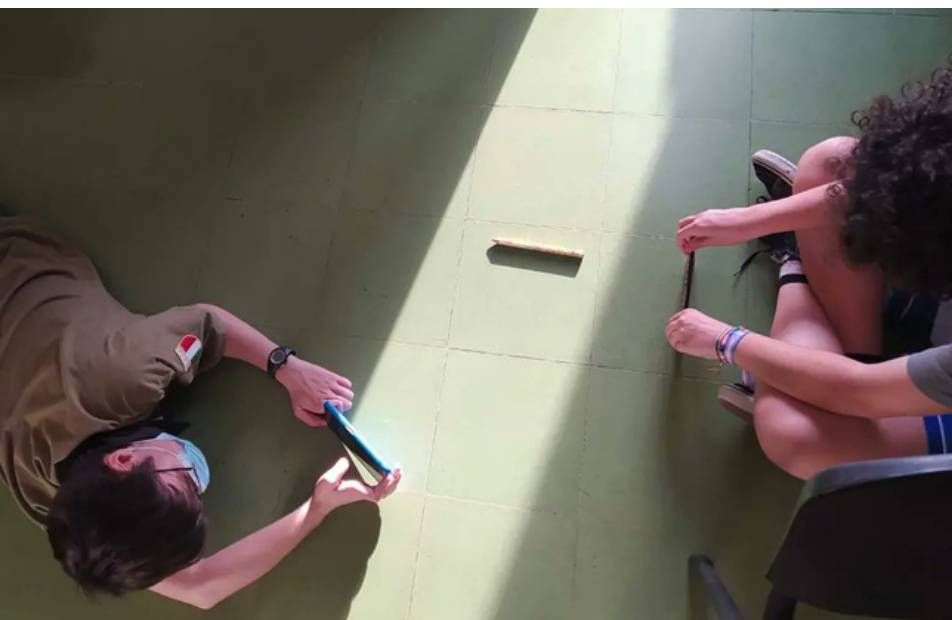
Phase 4 - Experimentation

The focus of this phase is to give the group the technical tools and knowledge to execute their creative projects. After selecting artistic mediums, the facilitator evaluates the possibility of developing different workshops to promote the participants' learning and practice so that they acquire the knowledge to plan and build their artistic project.

The artistic mediums can be selected for each participant individually/by small groups or for the entirety of the group. This phase may include one or more artistic disciplines. It will depend on the interests and needs of the group. It's equally important to consider the organisation's or professional's possibilities regarding access to these different disciplines and specific materials and resources.

This phase is divided into:

- **Technical sessions:** through a professional or expert in the specific art discipline, the youth will participate in technical sessions to acquire knowledge. They will learn several techniques and practices of each artistic medium and their aims. The facilitator and the professional will plan the work sessions to tailor them to the needs and interests of the group.
- **Practical sessions:** after the theoretical sessions, the facilitator conducts sessions for the youth to experiment and practise what they have learned in different spaces.





Goals

- To learn about several art mediums.
- To experiment individually and practise the techniques learned.
- To practise what they have learned in the technical sessions.
- To share experiences and learn from each other.
- To empower themselves through an active participation and control several art techniques.

Activities

The activities from this phase will be divided into two parts:

- **Technical activities:** with the group's input, the facilitator plans workshops that better fit the participant's needs and interests. The professional (*or facilitator*) will prepare and conduct sessions to explain and inform the group about the art methodologies they can use to express and explore their artistic intentions.
- **Practical activities:** workshops where youth can practise what they have learned. The facilitator and professional prepare the specific material so the group can practise with it (*cameras, paintings, music, physical spaces, etc.*). The youths propose the methods they want to experiment with, and the facilitator accompanies the group to practise it, accommodating the material to their needs and facilitating their processes.

The youth could feel unsafe in some spaces they want to explore, so it's an obligation of the facilitator to accompany the youth and ensure a safe space where they can practise and express themselves through art.



Evaluation

The evaluation of this phase is related to the learnings that the youth have achieved. As with all phases, the evaluation must be carried through with participative dynamics. Still, it should be analysed by objective inputs through specific data collected from participants, facilitator and professional linked to the sessions.

These are some questions that can be done to *the participants* to extract accurate information about the impact of the activities:

- What have they learned?
- Will they use these techniques?
- Did they feel inspired/motivated to use them?
- Were their expectations met?
- Were there enough materials and activities?
- Was it too long? Did it need to be longer?
- Did they feel they learned everything they wanted to?
- How was the balance between theoretical and practical knowledge?

For the *facilitator* and professional evaluation, the questions will focus on the participation and learnings of the group:

the participation of young people, if they have participated a lot or not, motivation, if the materials/space, etc. were suitable for developing the workshops, etc.

As always, it's important to analyse if the goals have been achieved.



Methodology

Phase 5 - Artistic project

The purpose of this phase is to allow participants to develop their artistic projects by themselves, with the help of the facilitator or art professionals when necessary.

This process is tied to the previous phases. The youth will practise and create their art piece, working on the **artistic methods** they learned, intending to express thoughts and emotions related to the **spaces and moments** explored during the third phase of the process.

The facilitator will provide resources and strategies to direct the individual or group processes and pieces.

Each idea is developed to present a final work by each group member. The support of the facilitator can be provided online or in person, depending on the needs of the youth. It is important to analyse the needs of the youth related to the artistic discipline they chose to create their piece: if they need a specific material, a particular place to practise or prepare, professional support, etc.

The facilitator will prepare, plan and implement the project with the youth to provide all resources needed to make their pieces come to life.

During this phase, the facilitator should prepare informal group meetings about the creative process. These meetings offer a chance for the participants to share their creative approaches, gather opinions and learn from each other. The group feedback is fundamental for the participants to gain confidence in the pieces they are building.

This phase ends when all the participants finish their piece and share it with the group, explaining their intentions and the process of building their artwork.

The final session is a group discussion about the process, the learnings during the creation of their artworks and the difficulties faced on the emotional front.



Goals

- To acquire abilities / skills of abstract thinking and critical thinking
- To strengthen the bonds between the group
- To analyse the common themes present across all artworks.

Activities

During this phase, the youths will propose, plan and develop the activities. There are no specific activities but the artistic methods they already chose.

The youth can work individually or in a group, depending on their chosen art pieces, and the facilitator will follow up on their process.

Evaluation

This phase's evaluation focuses on the processes and learnings acquired by the youth, the group's work and the interactions between participants. Evaluating the facilitator's support of the piece-making processes is also necessary.

The evaluation is made in the final session of this phase, where the facilitator, through a participative dynamic, analyses all the necessary information.

Through a participative dynamic, the *participants* should answer the following questions:

- Have you been motivated to create / experiment?
- Have you found the time to experiment?
- Have you had the resources / tools to do so?
- Have you learned skills with your experimentation?
- How did you feel during the creation of your piece?
- Did you find it helpful to share with the rest of the group? Did it help you connect with the group?
- What were your main learnings from this part of the process? What else did you need?



Artistic project

The facilitator can extract modifications from these questions to introduce in the second part of the project.

For the *facilitator* evaluation, the information that should be explored to evaluate this phase will focus on the participation and learnings of the group.

- Ensure the youth have access to specific resources to learn artistic methods
- Promote the development of art skills in youth
- The learnings and capacities developed by the youth
- The outputs from the youth and their processes





a) Selection and discussion

In this part, the group focuses on the selection and discussion of the artworks that will be included and displayed in the final exhibition. This is accomplished during one session where each participant (*or group of participants*) shows their piece and explains its objectives and intentions.

During this session, the participants share their processes during the creation of their artwork, what they learned with it and the challenges they had to face. It is a space to share their emotional process and feelings during the creation of the piece, taking into account the important spaces and the self-reflection processes that happened in order to express their emotions through art.

With the facilitator's support, the group chooses the pieces that will be shown, how they should be displayed, and the exhibition's objectives. The facilitator gathers the group's suggestions and creates a doable proposal, considering the organisation's capacity, their resources and contacts, and the project's principal aims.

Objectives

- To share the artwork with the group
- To promote the empowerment of the youth in their own artistic process during the project
- To reinforce a safe space for the youth
- To promote the bond between participants
- To share experiences and feelings within the group

Activities

Activities in this phase focus on group discussion and participatory methodologies that could be developed through different strategies adapted to the group's needs and interests.

The facilitator has to ensure that the participants share their piece and feel safe, and everyone participates in the evaluation with positive and constructive opinions and ideas.



Evaluation

The evaluation for this phase is based on the process of sharing the work and explaining their processes during the development of the project. It is also important to focus the evaluation on the support of the facilitator during the process. It is done after the session of sharing and discussing the pieces and the final exhibition through a participatory methodology.

Through a participative dynamic, the participants should answer the following questions:

- Did you feel safe sharing your work with the group?
- Has your perception of your process changed?
- Has your relationship with the space you explored changed?

The facilitator's evaluation is focused on the participation and individual processes in this phase as described below:

Group perception/group dynamics

- Has everyone been able to share everything? How is the connection of the group?
- Did every group member have the same time to participate?
- Does the group support each other?
- Do the activities chosen help the youth feel comfortable expressing themselves?



b) Final exhibition

All the participants contribute to the preparation of the final exhibition to promote their sense of ownership of the project and the exhibition. It is imperative to involve the youth in the preparation to empower themselves and create a space in their community where they are the protagonists.

During this phase, the youth are also involved in the dissemination process, proposing the channels, ways and material to disseminate the exhibition, selecting them by the target audience and the project's aims.

The group chooses the dates of the inauguration and exhibition so that everyone can attend, reinforcing the importance of making them visible in their community.

Goals

- To promote active participation in the preparation of the exhibition
- To develop a community exhibition to give the participants visibility
- To empower youths through the development of planning capacities and abilities
- To disseminate the project and the final exhibition to the community
- To create a safe space for LGTBQ+ youth in their community
- Interact with exhibition visitors and make them step out of their comfort zone.

Activities

In this phase, the facilitator plans several group sessions to organise and discuss the preparation of the final exhibition. The facilitator will disclose the resources and location of the exhibition, and the youth will offer input on the exhibition's preparation, dissemination and presentation.

The facilitator must ensure the participation of all participants, considering those who wish not to expose themselves and respect their needs. The participation in the exhibition's preparation has to be adapted to the needs and interests of the youth whilst always encouraging them to participate actively.



Evaluation

After the inauguration day, the facilitator will do a group meeting to evaluate the impact of the preparation and participation in the exhibition.

This evaluation aims to assess the exhibition's impact on the youth, their sense of belonging to the project, and their feelings about being visible and involved in their community through art.





4. Impact

The project's impact is focused on three different levels, which all three entities have evaluated after developing the project and evaluating it with the youth group.

The impact has to be considered with the social and cultural characteristics. It will depend on the local community's situation and the level of exclusion youth face there considering social, cultural and political axis.

At an individual level, participants:

- Develop new capacities and abilities in art and cultural factors
- Feel included in a safe group
- Develop more self-confidence and self-awareness about their emotions and feelings
- Feel listened to and safe to express themselves
- Feel motivated to create
- Report improvements in their mental health through working on their emotional processes in a safe space
- Feel improvements in self-esteem and coming-out processes

At a group level:

- The creation of a new LGBTQI+ group, where the participants feel safe and establish new boundaries
- The participants create an environment of shared learning that fosters bonds
- Participants find a safe space to express themselves and share their experiences, fears, and knowledge

At a community level, this methodology helps:

- The creation of new spaces for LGBTQI+ in the community
- Change the vision of LGBTQI+ youth through an art exhibition
- Creating awareness in people who have never been interested in the LGBTQI+ community to the project
- Including LGBTQI+ perspectives in the art field
- Promoting a new image and reducing stereotypes relating to the youth LGBTQI+ in their community



5. General recommendations

Every organisation or professional that wants to apply this methodology has to consider different things to prepare and plan its implementation.

During the project's development, especially on the pilot test, there were different moments when the youth needed emotional support. Through empathy and group work, the participants felt the help they needed, but in some cases, they required the individual attention of the facilitator. In that case, the facilitator has to know how to deal with youth LGBTQI+ vulnerabilities and processes, so they can create a safe space and be aware of emotional indicators to attend to the needs of each person.

Moreover, due to the project's specificity, the facilitator should have artistic knowledge or capacities to explore the interests and facilitate the resources and material to the youth and their artistic goals. Otherwise, involving other professionals or experts in different creative methodologies is mandatory so the participants can learn and practice artistic techniques to develop their projects.

For the final exhibition, there are no specific needs for the space or place to develop it. It will depend on the needs and interests of the group and the purposes of their projects. In our project, the exhibition took place in different spaces (*youth centre, LGBT nightclub, art gallery*), always considering the impact and acceptance it would have in the community.

Finally, it is essential to promote the active participation of the youth in the exhibition or the inauguration. Still, it is necessary to know each participant's situation and interests and respect their intimacy if they don't want to be known in their community. The facilitator should prepare the exhibition attending to the group's real needs and letting the youth present their works in the way they want (*anonymously, with artistic name, etc.*). It is also vital to establish a day for the inauguration where the youth themselves or the facilitator can give a speech and create a dialogue with the visitors.

The group can collectively prepare a description to put on display at the entrance of the exhibition (*if it lasts more than a day*) to contextualise and explain the objectives of the exhibition and the situation of youth LGTBIQ+ in that community with an inclusive language that will not promote existing stereotypes or prejudices.

It is also important to disseminate the exhibition within the local LGBTQI+ groups or community associations to encourage participation and give visibility to the group and their work. The facilitator has to elaborate a dissemination plan to promote the inauguration and the exhibition to the community and the LGTBIQ+, feminist and diversity groups (*social media, posters, contacts, etc.*).



6. Conclusions

The LGBTQI+ youth faces unique developmental and psychosocial challenges that enable their exclusion due to their non-normative identities. The focus of this project was empowering youth development and expression, creating safe artistic spaces where they can express themselves and share it with their communities.

With this project, the three organisations (Arcigay Napoli, rete ex aequo and TACC) created new groups with LGBTQI+ youth and safe spaces for them, most of which continue participating in non-formal activities.

Art is a powerful tool that provides creative spaces to safely express and promote creativity, empowering youth in their vulnerabilities through developing capacities and abilities in artistic methods.

Through art, the visibility of different vulnerable collectives changes allowing them to break cultural stereotypes.

It is a powerful tool to express and make visible the social exclusion and invisibility they face daily in their community through an artistic methodology that can reach all of the community, regardless of their situation, cultural context and stereotypes.

To conclude, through this methodology, youth LGTBIQ+ can find safe spaces and processes to empower and learn how to express themselves and work on their individual and social circles, promoting their visibility in the community by deconstructing the stereotypes and prejudices around them.





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