

CULTIRIDER - THE CASE STUDY OF A MOVING COMMUNITY SPACE CREATING INTERCULTURAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN LOCAL AND MIGRANT YOUTH IN HUNGARY.

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ABSTRACT | CultiRider is a moving community space that has been bringing intercultural workshops to several villages in Hungary in the form of a redesigned camper van since 2020. CultiRider is also a case study illustrating a collaboration of urban and rural NGOs, communities, and artists. The paper explores how design might take a role in community building by creating a shared place and shared language. The authors are both doctoral candidates, practising designers, and social activists whose aim is to support creating common values by connecting two very different target groups: youth with refugee and migrant backgrounds living in Budapest as well as their underprivileged Hungarian peers living in the rural area of Hungary.

First, the paper introduces the diverse challenges of the involved groups, highlighting the dimensions of the insecure physical environment and the barriers of language. It also discusses the significant roles of “flexible place attachment” (Dúll, 2009) and visual communication (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020; Radtke, 2021) in the context of intercultural encounters (Kapitány 1996). In the case of migration, besides the transformation of cultural identity, separation from home entails a multiple loss. In the new society, the migrant loses the gestures and codes that help the problem-solving ability in social contacts (Horvát-Militity, 2011), and by losing their home, they face the challenges of grieving the old environment and rebuilding a new one (Dúll, 2009). The group of underprivileged Hungarian youth living in rural areas of Hungary face the challenges of rural segregation and lack of intercultural encounters, leading to closed communities and discrimination (Halász, 2020). While the ability of “flexible attachment” can support effective adaptation to changing environments (Dúll, 2009), visual communication, as a global language, can be a tool for intercultural communication, storytelling, and self-expression. The opportunity to work in intercultural teams develops new competencies and creates shared ownership and community. (Murdoch-Kitt, 2020)

In the second part, the paper introduces the case study of CultiRider, a community-created project using collaborative design methods. Following a democratic decision-making process from the very beginning, the project of CultiRider developed through the steps of community brainstorming, redesigning and rebuilding a van through co-creation, conducting intercultural creative workshops focusing on language barriers and sharing different cultural views as well as creating common values such as a commonly owned flexible space and a common visual language. Non-formal evaluation methods and half-structured group interviews were

Conducted to monitor the process of co-creation and understand the learnings of the project. Results show that by joining CultiRider, migrant youth raised their motivation to learn about the local culture and the Hungarian language, enabled them to create new friendships, and offered them a chance to share their culture with others in a respectful environment. Hungarian youth became motivated to learn foreign languages, which helped them to dismantle stereotypes and xenophobia. Both target groups benefited from gaining intercultural and collaboration skills. The moving community space created a flexible but still stable environment in multiple places, raising the feeling of security and belonging in the participants.

1. Introduction

The bottom-up project of CultiRider is initiated by an interdisciplinary group of activists in the frames of a Hungarian NGO, Útilapu Hálózat, emerging as a dynamic and innovative moving community space aimed at fostering intercultural dialogue and cooperation. The NGO itself is home to the Open Doors working group - a diverse and proactive community open for Hungarians, foreigners, refugees, volunteers, and activists, or anyone who is engaged in building an inclusive society by opening spaces (physical or metaphoric) for intercultural dialogue which enables us to learn from each other through a co-operative design process (planning, designing and realising) by workshops, pieces of training, and events since 2013. The inception of CultiRider during the COVID-19 pandemic was the result of an online collaborative design thinking process involving the NGO community members. Since 2020, CultiRider has been delivering intercultural workshops by a redesigned minivan to various rural locations in Hungary, serving as a case study that illustrates intercultural collaboration among urban and rural NGOs, communities, and artists. The project focuses on how design can play a pivotal role in community building, bridging the gap between youth with refugee and migrant backgrounds living in Budapest and their underprivileged Hungarian peers in rural areas. The collaborative efforts involve three rural partner organisations.

The paper examines the role of flexible place attachment and visual communication in fostering intercultural encounters, drawing on theoretical insights from Dúll (2009), Csíkszentmihályi and Halton (2011), Roberts (2018), and Gustafson (2013). It highlights the importance of creating safe spaces for encounters among underprivileged groups and explores the complexities of belonging in disrupted environments. The necessity of acquiring intercultural competencies for effective communication and understanding is emphasised by Hidasi (2004), while visual communication, as advocated by Neurath (1936), serves as a universal language facilitating dialogue across cultural boundaries. The collaborative approach in design, as discussed by Radtke (2021) and Murdoch-Kitt & Emans (2020), fosters innovation and inclusivity, promoting problem-solving skills and a sense of shared ownership and community. Visual tools outlined by Manzini (2015) play a vital role in facilitating intercultural teamwork, serving as conversation starters and storytelling aids, ultimately enhancing intercultural dialogue and promoting inclusivity in diverse cultural contexts.

Based on the theoretical background and the case study, the paper states that collaborative design methods can be effective tools for creating a common space and common language to bridge together underprivileged youth from different cultural backgrounds. By transforming a minibus into a multifunctional space, CultiRider seeks to address the challenge of lost connections exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and provide opportunities for intercultural encounters. Through a series of collaborative workshops, camps, and community-based projects, the project facilitates dialogue, skill-sharing, and the co-creation of meaningful experiences among participants. Commonly owned tangible results such as workshop materials and a renovated van, combined with improved social and language skills, can boost participants' confidence in their creativity.

2. Bringing Together Underprivileged Hungarian and Refugee Youth

CultiRider brings together two very special underprivileged groups who do not have many opportunities to meet in the Hungarian context: (1) young refugees from the Middle East and Africa living in Budapest and (2) disadvantaged Hungarian youth living in the rural areas of Hungary.

The global rise in asylum seekers and refugees, particularly in transit countries like Hungary, presents significant societal challenges. Integration barriers are compounded by xenophobia and stereotypes, leading to conflicts between host society members and newcomers (Gyulai, 2014; Sik, 2016). "In every case, we consider migration as an unexpected, so-called accidental crisis, which is an important task of the individual to process it" (Hautzinger et al. 2014, 69). This crisis alters interpersonal relationships and can lead to learned helplessness, isolation, and depression due to communication difficulties and cultural differences. Migration involves more than just a shift in cultural identity; it encompasses multiple losses,

including the loss of familiar gestures and social codes crucial for problem-solving in new environments (Horvát-Militity, 2011). Additionally, migrants face the challenge of grieving their old surroundings and rebuilding new ones after leaving home (Dúll, 2009). This study focuses on unaccompanied minor refugees and young migrants who arrived in Hungary between 2013-2023. These minors face unique challenges, as their experiences are shaped not only by refugee status but also by their protection under the childcare system. Their arduous journeys and uncertain asylum processes exacerbate post-traumatic stress disorder stemming from the trauma of displacement. Cultural disparities and language barriers further complicate their social integration, necessitating new tools such as cultural knowledge and language proficiency (Hautzinger et al., 2014).

The group of underprivileged Hungarian youth living in rural areas of Hungary face the challenges of rural segregation and lack of intercultural encounters, leading to closed communities and discrimination (Halász, 2020). When speaking about the underprivileged Hungarian target group of this project, similarly to many other underprivileged families in Hungary (Bányai & Kelemen, 2022), each of the participating youngsters has parents who were raised in state care. Families living in extreme poverty experience material deprivation, one-sided diet, intermittent or even regular hunger, shortage of proper clothes, and disconnection of utilities, which can force families in winter to move in together to reduce the number of apartments or houses to be heated (Husz-Marozsán, 2014). Because of their insecure situation, these families might have to face debts and family conflicts, which can lead them to hide or change their place of residence. These families have less chance to develop supportive relationships in the local community, and they often have to face prejudices from the majority of society. Children raised in families facing these problems live in a “culture of poverty” (Lewis, 1968; Solt, 1998; Kozma, 2003, cited by Bányai & Kelemen, 2022, 8).

The challenge of bringing together these two very special groups has different layers but might have one main source: the challenge of cultural differences. Nothing is more proof of the multiple layers of culture than the fact that it covers and influences countless areas of our lives. Without wishing to be exhaustive, we must mention here the most striking aspects of culture, such as the material environment, time management, the dominant worldview, religion, celebrations, and communication. However, culture also affects many more elementary details, such as the way we help others, human relations, the way we experience conflict, appropriate behavior, our main ambitions, the boundaries of the private sphere, the use of space, attachment to the material environment and the concept of power (Kapitány & Kapitány, 1996). It is understandable, then, that our culture influences our most basic habits and can determine our most fundamental values and behavior (Kapitány & Kapitány, 1996). Socialisation and culture go hand in hand (Hidasi, 2004) since “it is only through the medium of culture that man can act meaningfully and relate to others” (Hall, 1987, 251). Connected to this, both Hall (1987) and Schütz (1944) point out that our culture-based knowledge is incoherent and only partially clear. Since we socialise in this knowledge system, it gives the members of a group coherence, clarity, and consistency to understand each other. Still, it creates huge confusion and conflicting points for outsiders (Schütz, 1944).

In conclusion, we can see that the main challenge of the CultiRider project is to facilitate two culturally very different groups towards a commonly accepted set of rules, including a shared place and common language. On one hand, “one’s culture determines how one perceives the world” (Hall, 1987, 251), which can lead to deeply rooted conflicts among different groups. On the other hand, culture can also be seen as a major integrating and socialising force of a group since the set of rules and norms are correct and accepted by its members (Haviland, 1987). To use cultural differences as an empowering resource, intercultural competence needs to be developed. According to Radtke (2021), intercultural competence is a trainable skill which refers to the ability to effectively navigate and communicate across different cultures, understanding and appreciating diverse perspectives. (Radtke, 2021)

3. Co-created Place and Language

It is not easy to decide which should come first: creating a common language for a transnational and intercultural dialogue or creating a safe place for the encounter of differently underprivileged people. The

Paper has no intent to prioritise these needs but rather raise awareness about the importance and opportunities offered by flexible place attachment (Dúll, 2009) and visual communication (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020; Radtke, 2021) in the context of intercultural encounters (Kapitány & Kapitány, 1996).

3.1 Safe Place

As we have made clear above, both target groups have their sense of belonging and place-based security disrupted: refugees are uprooted from the communal and physical connections of their home that provides security, while young Hungarians living in poverty are anchored in a distorted conception of home that cannot provide security. If the primary territory is (burned down) or psychologically (receives a negative charge) destroyed or damaged, "this causes the same grief as the loss of important companions." (Tuan, 1974, cited by Dúll, 2009, 131). By this damage, the person leaves the familiar, intimate, protective, and autonomy-providing environment, the personal sphere and territorial behavior are violated, and the possibility of control is also lost. In this case, the person faces a double task: "to deal with the grief of the lost place and to create attachments to a new environment at the same time" (Dúll, 2009, 238).

While several studies of environmental psychology state that place attachment has countless advantages, such as the sense of security, belonging, control, and ownership, as well as experiencing social connections (Dúll, 2009). Still, others conclude that mobility is associated with development and personal growth (Gustafson, 2013). What is for sure is that place attachment is the emotional bond between person and place, and it has different dimensions (Dúll, 2009). With Dúll's (2009) summation, it becomes obvious that knowledge of a place and its usage together create place attachment, social actors, ownership, a sense of security, and self-determination play an important role as well. Maybe it is not surprising that the highest manifestation of place attachment is the place called home.

As we discussed earlier above, we can see that cultural differences reach not only material dimensions but also habits, social connections, values, and perceptions, which also leads us to the point that the concept of home as well depends very much on cultural dimensions. If the sense of home has a cultural context, it can also mean that changes in the home environment do not have to be a traumatic event in every case. The Eskimos, the North American forest Indians, the nomads of the Inner Asian steppes, have no permanent homes (Csíkszentmihályi&Halton, 2011). By this, we can conclude that the idea of an irreplaceable home has been created not as a universal human concept but as a culturally influenced definition "created in certain places at certain times and neglected in others" (Csíkszentmihályi&Halton 2011, 181). Even though this change can burden everyone and can be a source of many conflicts, it does not result in a negative effect only, as it also promotes the formation of "flexible attachment" (Dúll, 2009, 239). A growing body of research suggests the advantages of a lifestyle based on mobility and that even highly mobile people may develop strong bonds to place (Gustafson, 2013; Roberts, 2018). Marshall (2018) states, based on his research, that participants who live a modern nomadic lifestyle put down roots instead of passing through locations; the homes of these participants became multi-sited, and still, they needed strong and embedded connections. According to his findings, people on the move can develop belonging through multiple grounded practices, such as gardening, cooking, and finding familiar landscapes. Active homemaking practices create connections between people and their environment, and by this act, "remembering also becomes an active process and constitutes a motion of attachment" (Roberts, 2018, 40). Sense of belonging involves tangible resources, everyday embodied practices, as well as memory and emotion (Roberts, 2018).

Studies also point out that it is not only stable physical environments where we can develop strong place attachments and that emotional bonds can be developed towards different scales of settings (Dúll, 2009;

Gustafson, 2013). Gustafson points out that vehicles and infrastructures for travel may become meaningful places for mobile people: they may develop an attachment to such places of mobility. Studies of mobile workers show that they can even try to make themselves at home in settings that theorists stated before as liminal places or places of transition, such as cars, train compartments, airports, and hotel rooms (Gustafson, 2013). Speaking about different scales of attachment, immigrants in Denmark expressed a sense of belonging to their new hometown and residential area but not to the country of Denmark. According to Gustafson, immigrants suggest that their belonging was based upon everyday positive interactions, while their national belonging was limited by negative representations of immigrants in national Media (Gustafson, 2013). These findings mean that research about place attachment “needs to go beyond its common focus of Home places and examine other important places as well, including non-residential settings” (Gustafson, 2013, 45).

Concluding we can understand that mobile people may develop and sustain attachment to several different places, multiple attachments are potentially enriching since “flexible attachment” can support effective adaptation to changing environments, and the “settlement identity” can mean effective adaptation also to the pace of modern life and this flexible bond can develop spontaneously in the case of immigration (Dúll 2009). However, it needs to be highlighted that these advantages mostly come when positive experiences are associated with these journeys and changes, which is not the case in either of the target groups of this study. This leads us to one of the sub-questions of the project of CultiRider: Are temporary setups able to create (and if so, how) a supporting environment where vulnerable people can cooperate and grow?

3.2 Intercultural Competence Through Visual Communication

The issue of social integration and its relationship with culture concerns a much wider audience than refugees and asylum seekers since not only does cross-border migration involve an encounter with a new culture but in case of small geographical movements within national borders or movements between different social groups also entail interaction between different cultures (Hidasi, 2004). Even though we no longer need to cross a national border to encounter another culture, in the era of globalization and during migration processes, there is a growing need for intercultural competencies related to both transnational encounters and encounters among the citizens of the same nation. According to Hidasi, “intercultural communication is nothing other than the interaction of people from different cultural groups” (Hidasi, 2004, 33). Learning culture is as essential to successful interaction as learning a language, and it cannot be avoided in our everyday conversations and work. About intercultural competencies, Hidasi states that.

"To have an effective and smooth conversation with a foreign partner, or to read a foreign novel, or even to understand an advertisement, or to be successful in marketing, these are all essential skills" (Hidasi, 2004, 25).

Culture is, therefore, not an innate quality but an acquired and learned set of knowledge and norms. This fact makes it possible to learn culture and acquire intercultural competencies.

As Otto Neurath (1936) states, "Words divide, pictures unite." (Neurath, 1936) Visual communication is the language of images and has the potential to bridge language barriers and promote intercultural understanding. Visuality speaks to a much more ancient layer; it skips a stage in the process of the mental image becoming a verbal concept, and it connects to reality more directly than words (Mitchell, 1986). While the perception and recognition of images is indeed a universal ability, reading them and decoding their meaning is far from being so. Meaning in images is often negotiated through cultural and social contexts, requiring an understanding of semiotic codes (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2020). Understanding the pictorial signs that make up visual language is a social process, one that presupposes a social, historical, and geographical context and one that requires prior experience and knowledge. Just as spoken language conveys a shared understanding of the world within a specific community, images also reflect this collective comprehension among members of the same group. Consequently, the interpretation

individuals derive from an image often hinges on the common knowledge they share with others in their group (Kostelnick, 1993). According to Kostelnick (1993), three levels of social context influence the perception of images: (1) the cultural context includes the shared worldview and values of the group members, (2) the conventional context means that members of the group share a particular discipline or a visual language of a particular discipline or a special topic, while (3) immediate context is the situation in which the participants use the particular image.

Therefore, we can say that images are universal and culture-specific at the same time, they have an important role in both bridging cultural differences and sharing cultural specifics and values. Visual communication as a global language can be a tool for intercultural communication, storytelling, and self-expression, and it is an extremely important tool when the participants of the communication process do not share the same language or culture.

In the context of design, intercultural collaboration fosters innovation and creativity by bringing together diverse perspectives. Problem-solving competence, social competence, professional competence, and self-competence can be seen as the four cornerstones of intercultural competence that enable participants to work in teams, overcome difficulties, share skills, and act self-reflectively and responsibly (Radtke, 2021). By integrating various cultural insights, collaboration becomes a catalyst for developing more robust, inclusive solutions that cater to a broader audience (Murdoch-Kitt & Emans, 2020). The opportunity to work in intercultural teams develops new competencies and creates shared ownership and community. Visual tools can be effectively used in intercultural teamwork, as conversation subjects, conversation prompts, or experience enables the starts of social dialogues. They can be tools for mapping and amplifying, mapping and placemaking, amplifying and dynamizing, creating stories, reconstructing local identities, digital storytelling, hybrid realities as well as building scenarios (Manzini, 2015).

4. Cultirider - a Case Study of Collaboration through Design

CultiRider is the outcome of an ongoing bottom-up movement started four years ago: the developers of CultiRider (also the authors of this paper) did not articulate the goal to bring the project into academic discussion. Instead, they are members and coordinators of a creative community aiming to open (physical and metaphorical) places for intercultural exchange using the tools of participatory design, visual communication, and placemaking. Therefore, the introduced process, methods, and structure used through the project were developed based mainly on their own experiences complemented by the relevant literature on participatory design (Armstrong & Stojmirovic, 2011; Simonsen & Robertson, 2013; Duarte et al., 2018; Bustamante Duarte et al., 2021). These methods ensured that the often-neglected target group had a say on the design of Cultirider (both its physical and program development), and their needs were at the center of the project.

During the ongoing project of CultiRider, collaboration happens on different levels, such as collaborating between (1) different organisations, (2) participants representing different cultural and social backgrounds, (3) professions, as well as (4) urban and rural locations. On the level of organisations, the project so far involved three different NGOs and a child-care center based in different parts of Hungary. Collaboration with locally operating NGOs ensures the link between the different stakeholders and provides the base of knowledge for new ideas. The program involved participants coming from more than ten countries as well as underprivileged Hungarian youth. Cultirider used an interdisciplinary approach involving different stakeholders in the co-design process from the very beginning. Designers and artists coming from different fields (visual communication, media, architecture) worked together with local community leaders, social workers, psychologists, local and international volunteers coming from different professions, and local and international youth. Cultirider, as a moving community space, connects urban and rural communities, giving a chance for dialogue about local issues and finding common interests in global values. Through these connections, a network was born - the involved places are no longer isolated entities but part of a larger network.

4.1 Creating a Common Space

In 2020, just like everywhere in the World, the intercultural community of a Hungarian NGO had to face an unknown challenge: COVID-19 reached Hungary as well, and suddenly, all public indoor places had to close for an unknown period. Like many other collectives, this organisation also tried to hold together its community through online events and meetings, but the members slowly started to fade away due to a lack of motivation and a sense of distance and isolation. The core members of the community accepted the invitation of the two authors of this paper to join a series of sessions on the online design thinking process to analyze together these new challenges and try to find solutions somehow. The main design challenge of this process was: “How might we strengthen and rebuild the lost connections for our community after COVID-19?” This joint online process took six weeks, including problem-mapping workshops, user and expert interviews, brainstorming, and rapid prototyping sessions, followed by voting on different ideas from different perspectives and expectations. We could conclude several insights from the problem-mapping workshops and the interviews. First, our community is not motivated to socialise through online platforms, they rather stay isolated or take the risk of real encounters. Second, food is a key element in motivating people to join activities. Third, our refugee members have high motivation to visit the Hungarian countryside since the rural environment reminds them of home. Fourth, our intercultural community is active only in the capital, while people living in rural areas have much less chance to experience intercultural encounters, which leads to prejudices. After several brainstorming sessions, the final two most supported ideas were (1) developing a series of intercultural cooking events after the lockdown and developing a structured task-sharing system among the community to give roles and responsibilities to the members and (2) transforming a minibus into a moving community space to be able to bring intercultural values to new locations, to give infrastructure for outdoor activities and by that, to serve the community even at times of lockdown.

After the decision to dedicate our energies to creating a moving community space, we have learned by desk research that the idea of reconstructing a minibus reached other creative initiatives as well: there are examples of vans upgraded into a photo machine, a climbing wall for refugee children, or a warming space for street workers. The Inside Out Photobooth project (Insideoutproject, 2023) mobilizes portable printers, allowing participants to instantly receive black and white posters of their portraits, which are then displayed as public art, fostering connection and expression. Wapikoni Mobile's 40-foot studio (Evenementswapikoni, 2023) offers intervention services and dialogue spaces for the Aboriginal community living on the streets, promoting inclusivity and skill development among youth through audiovisual and musical creation. Fantastic Norway (Fantasticnorway, 2013) utilizes a bright red caravan as a mobile platform for architectural discussions and workshops, engaging communities in inclusive design processes that enhance public awareness and participation in urban development. ClimbAID's "Climbing for Peace" project in Lebanon employs "A Rolling Rock" (Katherinechoong, 2020), a mobile climbing wall, to bring joy and promote mental health among over 2,000 disadvantaged youth, showcasing the diverse possibilities of reconstructed minivans in fostering community engagement and well-being.

Designing and creating the minivan of the CultiRider project has also been a joint effort, from ideating its exact functions and creating a crowdfunding campaign through learning about the renovation process and obtaining materials until the last step, the realisation itself. For the first ideation sessions, different visualization tools were used, such as paper mockups, small-scale physical prototypes, and 3D models, which allowed community members to discuss priorities concerning the main functions and appearance of the moving community space. As a next step towards realisation, participating community members collaborated on a short narrated animation. The collaboratively written script and the tangible 3D paper models provided an opportunity to use storytelling to make decisions, set goals, and visualize and communicate ideas to others.



Figure 1. Frame from a crowdfunding video - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yy12bPRFdeA&ab_channel=OpenDoorsHungary November 2021.

The short animation was used as a base of a crowdfunding process, which created the financial opportunity to turn ideas into reality: our association bought an old minivan, and the construction work could begin. Even if some parts of the minivan are still under construction, CultiRider already served its main purposes for two years. The minivan, on the one hand, needs to involve in itself the functions of a huge storage, a kitchen, a meeting room, and a small workshop space, on the other hand, thanks to its several doors and the foldable items of furniture and accessories it carries as a storage, CultiRider can open up to create the outdoor environment of a community space, a workshop space, an open-air kitchen or an outdoor cinema. After the event is over, the outdoor space can be folded again into the minivan and taken to the next location. Not only its inner functions but also its appearance needed to be characterised: by decorating the minivan through co-creational painting sessions, CultiRider became a common landmark for the communities of different locations. The purpose of creating such a moving space was to take community events outdoors, gather people, attract new participants, and facilitate connections with diverse communities. The mobility of the van addresses the challenges of lost connections and diversification by reaching people from different locations, including those who may be hesitant to attend large indoor gatherings.



Figure 2. Decorating the minivan through co-creational painting sessions. September 2022.

4.2 Creating a Common Language

In 2022, the minivan of CultiRider started to fully operate, visiting different communities in the rural area of Hungary. During the two full seasons of the project (2022 and 2023), several team-building meetings and five short (two to five days long) camps were organised in different locations to enable intercultural creative collaboration between underprivileged participants from different backgrounds and creative professionals. The team building events happened outside of the communities' original location to meet all together in a neutral environment where we could create our common safe space from zero. The aim of team building meetings has two levels: one is to support participants to get to know each other, and two, to give space for them to plan their local programs, share ideas through facilitated participatory design workshops, and create a network based on shared experiences. By this approach, youth were involved in all stages of the design process, starting from research through ideation until the realisation itself. Through their involvement, they could design the program according to their interests and needs, which ensured a common understanding of each result and design product. The programs of local short camps were built based on the ideas of the team building meetings, implementing the concepts on site. Besides the participants who were involved in the preparation, the short local camps were joined by new local and international participants as well.

All (two to five days) camps used participatory design methods and followed the same structure:

1. *Preparatory site visits:* The one-day-long site visits allowed participants to meet and get to know each other informally. The international CultiRider team from Budapest visited all the venues (Ágasegyháza, Fót, Tiszadob) during several site visits. The visits involved icebreaker games, playful brainstorming sessions about future programs, and usually, a community cooking event that allowed participants to get to know each other informally. These site visits served as a main foundation for long-term collaboration.

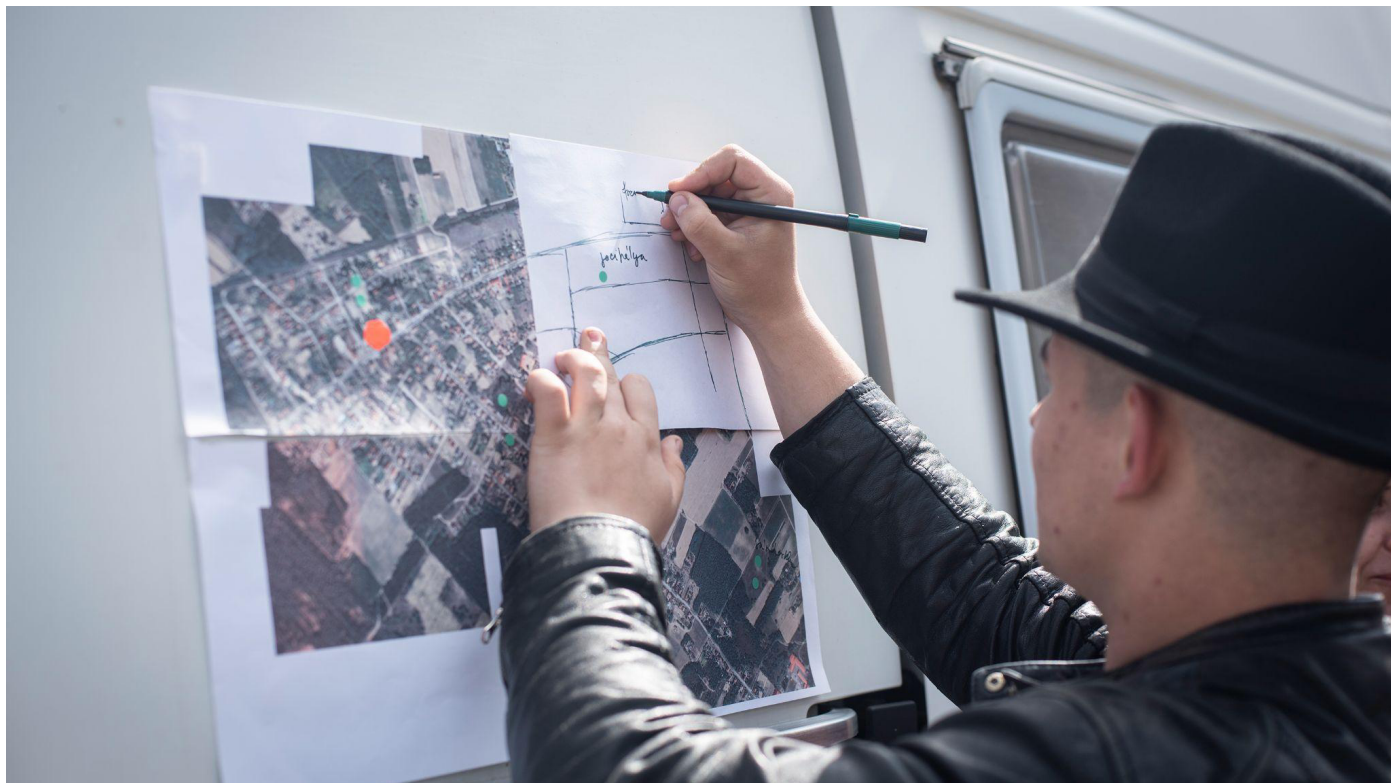


Figure 3. Creation of a common cognitive map about one of the involved rural locations. April 2022.

2. *Getting to know each other & team building:* non-verbal and visual tools such as drawing collaborative portraits or “rapid date” using visual signs ensured that participants could learn each other’s names and basics about each other and enabled them to talk to each other even though they do not share a common language. Participants also created a community-based memory game, working in pairs and creating matching cards about their shared interests. They also created a common cognitive map of their village, which gave the structure of an afternoon bike tour.



Figure 4. Drawing collaborative portraits during a summer camp. August 2023.

Short creative workshops in pairs or small groups: The creative workshops aimed to actively involve all participants in mixed groups, facilitated by experienced designers and workshop leaders. Through participatory photo workshops, local participants had the chance to guide their international teammates through their hometowns, map and analyse their environment, point out problems, and look at their known environment with a new perspective. Through a zine workshop, participants were able to share ideas about the topic of “help” from the perspective of a local donation shop. Through screen-printing workshops, participants used and personalised already prepared visual symbols and templates for self-expression and self-representation. Refugee participants - who have been part of the Open Doors community for a longer time - have stepped up as workshop facilitators themselves: Afghan paper kite workshops were organised for the local children using the format of participatory design workshops. This gave a chance for participants for intercultural learning and exchange.



Figure 5. Discussion of a photo workshop. August 2023.

3. *Community-based project work:* In each camp, participants had the chance to form messages together and create common products based on shared values. In Tiszadob, through a community-based design workshop, participants collaborated to design a mural for the facade of the local donation shop, which plays an important part in every local's life. The participants of the process were local and international youth, the workers and managers of the donation shop, and the designers leading the program. As a first step, each participant created their designs, which they shared and combined in pairs, then in groups of four, and later in groups of 12. The final two designs were discussed by the whole group, and the elements were synthesized into one design with the help of the designer. The community actively participated in the realisation process of the mural as well: the design was projected and masked on the wall of the donation shop, and stencils were created from the drawing of the participants, which allowed all participants to participate in the painting process but keep the result clean and visually pleasing. In Ágasegyháza, participants - aged between 6 - 15 - created a community-based stop motion inspired by the topic of “magic.” Each participant was asked to use their creativity with the given prompt - make it appear or disappear, grow, transform into something else - using different visual tools and random objects. We created stop motion clips of 8-12 frames by each participant and edited them into one single video, merging everyone's creative trick as a common visual result.



Figure 6-7. Design and co-creational process of the community mural. August 2023.

4. *Evaluation and follow-up* - As a closure of each camp, participants were asked to share their experiences verbally and in a playful form as well. Visual aids were used to help the intercultural understanding of participants, such as picture cards and large-scale diagrams, that provided opportunities for youth to reflect on the learned tools, give feedback, and have ideas about the possible continuation.

5. Results

The bottom-up project of CultiRider aimed to create a common space and common language to be able to connect two very different vulnerable groups and their supporting NGOs, as well as to create a bridge between the urban and rural areas of Hungary. The results and learnings of the project are based on non-formal (participatory-based) evaluation methods and half-structured group interviews with the target groups, NGO members, and professionals. We could recognize that both the tangible and the non-tangible results of the CultiRider project led to positive changes in the target groups as well as the collaborating NGOs.

According to the target groups, results show that by joining CultiRider, migrant youth found the motivation to learn about the local culture and the Hungarian language, which enabled them to create new friendships and offered them a chance to share their culture with others in a respectful environment. At the same time, Hungarian youth became motivated to learn foreign languages, and by joining these activities, they dismantled stereotypes and xenophobia. Based on our observations and the interviews with the NGO leaders, both target groups benefited from gaining intercultural and collaboration skills. The moving community space created a flexible but still stable environment in multiple places, raising the feeling of security and belonging in the participants. One Russian participant, who joined the collaborative process from the very beginning of the online ideating process, expressed her surprise since she “would not have thought back then that such an idea could come to reality.” Both the tangible (such as the results of the workshops, like posters, memory games, zines, photos, murals, as well as the commonly renovated van itself), the non-tangible results (such as the improved social and language skills) and the whole collaborative process led the participants to gain confidence in their creativity. The participatory methods contributed to the sustainability of the project by ensuring the sharing of responsibilities: participating youth are motivated to continue the collaboration and take on different roles in the future.

The ongoing project brought positive changes into the life of the collaborating NGOs as well. On the one hand, some of the members of their involved target group became inspired by the developed intercultural community of CultiRider to take a step towards being a community organizer in their local environment as well as being a bridge person of the ongoing CultiRider project. By encouraging these young participants to take on new roles and more responsibility, NGOs can gain more capacity in the long term. The other main change, on the other hand, for NGOs is connected to the motivation to learn the used collaborative and creative methods in the next stage of the project. By mastering these new methods, both the members and the staff are going to be enriched with a creative toolkit supporting their community with visual and spatial tools. NGOs also gained and strengthened their partnerships with each other, which brings new ideas and project opportunities.

6. Conclusions

The ongoing project of CultiRider illustrates a bottom-up movement aiming to create a bridge between refugee and Hungarian underprivileged youth, involving designers, artists, international volunteers, and NGOs, bringing together the rural and urban areas of Hungary by a moving community space. In the paper, practice is supported by theoretical background to explain how it is possible to create a peaceful common platform for such extreme diversity with the tools of participatory design. In the long-term, by owning shared values through commonly created space and language, youth living in disadvantaged rural areas may find new perspectives through intercultural inspirations, migrant youth may start rooting through their new senses of belonging, and grassroots organisations may reach sustainability through their newly engaged members.

The main limitation of the project comes from the challenges of time and scale. Community-based processes need time to find engaged members, to support each other, build partnership and trust, as well

as to learn the local context of each community and location. In the sense of mobility, traveling is also time- and energy-consuming, especially if we consider that every involved person (designers, facilitators, coordinators, builders, and project writers) is a volunteer. The refurbishment and operation of a minibus seems to be a scale that challenges the capacity of bottom-up initiatives: in the context of voluntary-based engagement, it takes a lot of time and cooperation - more than an average funded project - to learn and rebuild such a complex construction.

The project of CultiRider highlights several takeaways for the future: the importance of tangible results and flexible roles. Tangible results of the participative design process fostered confidence among participants by providing concrete evidence of their contributions and the value of their input. It boosted their confidence in their ability to influence outcomes and encouraged further engagement. We acknowledge the nature of participative design processes, where roles are often flexible, allowing for a dynamic and collaborative approach. The designer facilitates the process, providing a design framework and technical support while ensuring that participants' voices are heard and valued. Participants actively contribute their knowledge, insights, and creativity to the design process. The importance of changing these roles lies in promoting inclusivity, empowering participants, and fostering a sense of ownership.



Figure 8. Group picture of a team building meeting. May 2023.

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