

ART AS A MEDIUM FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES



Research Analysis

*Christina Azopoulou
Elina Azopoulou*

Interviewers

*Christina Azopoulou
Merima Bećirović
Aleksandra Schindler Ljutak
Aya Elhusseiny
Milena Šćepanović
Blertina Koka*

Photographers

*Elina Azopoulou
Yannis Tsilsou
Merima Bećirović
Mirjana Tomašević Dančević
Matej Kožić
Aleksandra Schindler Ljutak
Ana Marija Mileusnić*

*Aya Elhusseiny
Mia Stankovic*

Graphic Designer

Panos Skepadianos

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Contents

Introduction.....	1
Getting to know the organisations involved in the research.....	2
General context of local and European policy.....	5
Promoting environmental awareness through art in local communities....	9
Environmental awareness through art in local communities.....	12
Artist & Creative Methods.....	15
Successful Examples.....	23

Introduction

This booklet explores the impact of community engagement and artistic methods on the success of environmental initiatives. It involves a diverse selection of organizations addressing environmental challenges, ensuring broad representation across sectors. The data collection includes in-depth qualitative interviews, offering valuable insights into how community-driven participation and creative approaches intersect to create impact. These findings are used to provide actionable recommendations for organizations, local authorities and communities.. Additionally, photographs are displayed throughout the booklet to raise awareness and visually communicate the importance of environmental sustainability

Objectives

The proposed research has several overarching objectives, each contributing to a holistic understanding of the impact of community and artistic methods on the effectiveness of environmental initiatives:

- Explore Community Engagement Strategies:

Objective: Investigate diverse community engagement strategies employed by environmental organizations, aiming to understand the mechanisms that contribute to success.

- Investigate Artistic and Creative Approaches:

Objective: Explore the variety of artistic and creative methods used in environmental advocacy, aiming to disc-

ern their effectiveness in raising awareness.

- Investigate Perceived Effectiveness:

Objective: Explore how organizations perceive the effectiveness of their environmental initiatives when integrating community engagement and artistic methods.

- Generate Good Practices/ Recommendations:

Objective: Draw conclusions from the data analysis and generate actionable recommendations for environmental organizations seeking to enhance their capacity building and effectiveness of their initiatives through community engagement using artistic methods.



"Homo Plasticus"



Getting to know the organisations

Montenegro

PRONA organization focuses on the promotion of science and innovation. Among other things, a part of our work is related to environmental protection and ecology. This is one of the most enjoyable aspects of PRONA's work, and we strive to present it as interestingly as possible to children and young people.

NGO "**Eco – Association for Environmental Consulting**", initially focused on campaigns in the Skadar Lake area. Additionally, since that year, they have been a member of the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) and have implemented several programs across Montenegro, including the "Blue Flag," the Young Reporters program, "Green Key" certification, and others. They are also actively involved at the national level as a board member and director of the foundation, as well as the president of the jury for young eco-reporters.

Albania

Aarhus Information Center in Shkodra is an NGO founded on 05.03.2009 which aims to contribute in the sustainable development and healthy environment through the promotion of the implementation of Aarhus Convention by the local government in Northern Albania. In this context, they offer different services and consultancy in environmental issues to the interested stakeholders as the public institutions, NGO's, community, business, etc) and

they have the focus on citizens awareness through direct involvement in decision making processes related to the environment and health protection.

All Green Centre focuses on promoting a clean environment and improving public health through initiatives related to energy efficiency, climate change, and environmental journalism. The Centre empowers women, girls, youth, and citizens by raising awareness and encouraging active participation in environmental policies. It also runs EkoSkaner, Albania's first digital platform dedicated to environmental and climate news, offering science-based content to promote sustainable choices. Additionally, All Green Centre has published reports and a fact-sheet on energy and climate issues. More details can be found at All Green Centre.

Croatia

Greenpeace focuses on topics such as energy, fossil gas and renewable energy sources, and on the topic of plastics.

Green Istria's programs are: Resilient communities and climate change, sustainable waste management and good governance and citizen participation in decision-making. Through Green Phone, they cooperate with a lot of civic initiatives every day, which they support and do joint activities with. In the program with resilient communities, they have a repair workshop Re-gepetto and a community garden which they influence adaptation to climate change with. Currently, this is their favorite part of the job because they work directly with volunteers and citizens.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Majski Cvijet is an organization exclusively dedicated to environmental protection. Their primary focus is raising awareness about the importance of having a healthy environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They strive to educate and inspire people to understand the significance of environmental conversation and take actionable steps toward a sustainable future.

Citizens Association Nesto Vise is a non-governmental organization established in 1997 by a group of young people experienced in working with organizations from the civil society sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Their mission is to encourage positive change in society by giving individuals and groups the opportunity to build through formal and informal education, networking, work, shared experiences, and help others to become competent and responsible leaders who believe in themselves and others for openness and belonging to their society.

Egypt

Rawad: An initiative launched online in March 2023 and then they started their collaboration with the Ministry of Sports, which aims to highlight the importance of E-waste. There are 22 governorates in Egypt. Our passion for the initiative comes from when we decided to get rid of one old unworking computer and sell it to a man who buys old things; however, what was found out was that it is unregulated, and not controlled by supervised regulations or laws. Thus, it was decided to read more about E-waste, its impact on us and the environment, and the recycling circle which contains 3 things: collection, sorting, and recycling.

Tram Alwan: The initiative started in 2021 after the coronavirus pandemic. In Tram Alwan, they recycle reusable solid waste such as wood, plastic, cardboard, glass and cloth residues. They focus on spreading awareness about preserving the environment and recycling through art. Moreover, they focus on women's empowerment by recycling items by art like bags and clothes and later on selling them in bazaars. The women involved can also gain some money through that. They have established partnerships with a lot of organizations, and run workshops and activities in many public places and public gardens in Cairo.

Greece

Sporos Regeneration Institute was founded in 2019 by four activists to deliver educational activities to children, as they strongly believe that children are our planet's only hope and feel great responsibility towards future generations. Through its forest schools Sporos strives from day one to reconnect children with nature and develop their environmental identity. They also deliver courses on permaculture, regenerative farming, organic gardening, natural building and more.

The Hives Project: Good environmental practices and sustainable design are topics that they focus on every day. They practice permaculture and composting, use solar energy, make their own natural cleaners and cosmetics and work to live as low-waste as possible. They are committed to protecting and bettering our environment. Furthermore, they specialize in non-formal learning, and share their knowledge with a hands-on-approach.

Apano Meria: The SCE Apano Meria was created in 2015 through an open assembly of Syros citizens, which recognized the need to prevent excessive touristic development through the encouragement of mild activities, especially in the protected areas of the island (Natura 2000). It was officially founded in 2017, in order to promote, protect and preserve the northern part of the island (Apano Meria) and until today it supports the actions of the Municipality for the promotion of geotourism. From 2020 they work to support the sustainable activities of the local population, such as primary production and the development of forms of tourism that respect the land and its inhabitants (e.g. hiking, environmental, geological, archaeological, rural tourism, climbing or diving, etc.).



"Trash Art"



"Waste rooting in our lives"

General context of local and European policy

This section presents the axes and categories that emerged from the analysis of the survey's participants' responses.

In this axis, the participants' thoughts on the alignment of local and European policies were developed. On the one hand, the lack of alignment from domestic/local policy with European policies is evident in some countries while others stated the opposite. On the other hand, the voice of the participants highlights the course of the actors they represent and how they try to align with European policies as they consider them to be particularly important. In addition, they cited examples of how local initiatives are influenced or guided by broader European policies.

State policies

According to the participants from Greece, the policies are not aligned in all cases, resulting in shortcomings in terms of informing residents about the legislation related to their land, feelings of insecurity and lack of confidence in the concept of the state, lack of systematisation of the management plan for areas under protection. It also highlighted a gap in the implementation of major European programmes such as LIFE, with minor exceptions relating to administrative responsibilities. Despite the gap between local and European policies, there is also a sense of hope for the near future and for policy convergence. This

is also explained by the attitude of citizens, who are reportedly pressing, asking questions and asking the com-



"On my way home"

petent bodies to implement decisions taken years ago that have not yet been implemented. Also, there are cases, for example, for the waste management plan, that although there is a European directive that has passed down to the national and local level, there are problems that pop up relating to a not complete system.

As **Green Istria** (Croatia) mentioned, the influence of the European directives is felt through huge fines that local authorities are called to pay, as the related goals until now have not been achieved. According to a **Majski Cvijet (Bosnia-Herzegovina)** participant, the alignment and interaction between local and European policies on environmental sustainability in their community face substantial obstacles. Despite the existence of sustainability policies and frameworks, the gap between policy and practice continues to hinder genuine environmental sustainability in their community. A **Citizens' Association Nesto Više (Bosnia-Herzegovina)** participant mentioned that local laws and regulations in Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding single-use plastics and environmental protection are gradually aligning with European directives, although this process can be slow and complex due to various administrative and political challenges. There are ongoing local projects and growing awareness indicate potential for better alignment with European benchmarks through enhanced funding and stricter enforcement. According to the participant of **PRONA (Montenegro)** organization, Montenegro, as a candidate country for EU membership, is obligated to harmonize its legislation with the EU acquis, including regu-

lations related to environmental protection. This is reflected in the laws and regulations that Podgorica must implement at a local level, such as waste management, pollution control, water and air protection, and the sustainable use of natural resources. Local initiatives in Podgorica that have been influenced or guided by broader European policies often focus on key areas of environmental protection, energy efficiency, and sustainable development. Here are a few specific examples: One of the projects influenced by European policies is the "Podgorica Smart City" project. This project involves the introduction of innovative technologies to improve energy efficiency, waste management, and public transport. Inspired by European policies on smart cities, the goal of this project is to reduce CO2 emissions, improve quality of life, and make better use of resources. Through this project, Podgorica aligns itself with EU strategies that promote sustainable and smart cities as part of a broader climate action plan. Recycling and Waste Management Podgorica has undertaken initiatives to improve its waste management system in line with the EU Waste Directive. The local government has introduced selective waste collection in certain parts of the city, established recycling centers, and launched awareness campaigns among citizens about the importance of recycling. These activities are directly guided by EU policies aimed at reducing waste and increasing recycling rates. Introduction of a Biking System Podgorica, influenced by European policies on sustainable urban transport, has introduced the public bike-sharing system "Biciklo.me". This initiative is part of a broader strategy to reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, which aligns with EU goals for

reducing greenhouse gas emissions in urban areas. A representative from **Eco – Association for Environmental Consulting (Montenegro)** noted that local government and residents prioritize their own interests, frequently overlooking the wider community's needs. Construction tends to be motivated by private interests, while the planning system and local authorities often fail to adequately protect the universal values that have earned Kotor its UNESCO designation. Kotor has faced the threat of losing its World Heritage status multiple times, and that risk continues to exist.

With the acquisition of the candidate status to enter in the European Union an important part of Albanian legislation about environment has come close to EU policies, which are also reflected at the level of local policymaking as a participant from Aarhus Information Center stated.



"Trash knows no boundaries. Our negligence is spreading beyond the fences"

According to the **All Green Centre** the alignment between local policies in Albania and broader European policies, particularly regarding environmental sustainability, has grown stronger as Albania progresses toward European Union (EU) membership. European policies, such as the EU Green Deal and the Circular Economy Action Plan, have been instrumental in shaping local environmental initiatives. Local policies and programs in Albania, especially in areas like waste management and renewable energy, often reflect EU directives, such as the Waste Framework Directive. For instance, Albania's efforts to improve waste recycling and reduce reliance on landfills are largely influenced by EU goals for a circular economy. One prominent example is the EU Green Campaign in Albania, which raises awareness among citizens, policymakers, businesses, and civil society about the country's environmental challenges. This campaign reflects EU priorities and aims to foster a stronger environmental consciousness aligned with broader European sustainability targets. Similarly, local environmental projects often receive funding through EU mechanisms, which promote the alignment with EU standards and help Albania meet pre-accession requirements for environmental protection.

Policies of operators/ stakeholders

According to the participants of Greece, the bodies they represent are concerned with aligning their operations and policies with those of the European Union. In particular, according to the participants, these common policies concern both environmental protection and human rights. Furthermore, the highlighting of mismanagement, e.g. of recycling, has been done by institutions and groups rather than by the state, often without the support of the state in such initiatives that highlight the bad practices. The effort on the part of the actors is highlighted through the relevant examples they gave of local initiatives that have been influenced by European policies and are related to the recognition of needs through comparison with other places and through the experience that other people bring to the place of the inhabitants. For example, the volunteer projects under the Erasmus umbrella create a network of communication, knowledge exchange on environmental management issues and the development of people-to-people relationships. According to the participants of **The Hives Project (Greece)**, all this interaction has been the trigger for young children in Northern Greece to participate in local elections and get elected. The importance of this can also be recognised in the hope that electing young people who have worked in environmental institutions and through public discourse are likely to be better able to advocate for the environment. Furthermore, the use of social media promotes the information of citizens in the local community as to the ways of environmental management in other e.g. European countries. For example, the need of citizens for a bicycle lane was high-

lighted as it exists in other European cities. Either on the ground or through social media, citizens can see the differences in projects that also concern the environment, in their own place and in other European destinations, making their demand for policy alignment more direct.

According to the participants of **Greenpeace Croatia**, the adoption of the EU directive on single-use plastics, and its transfer to the national level through the law on waste management, was something they were working on from their beginning. Eventually, EU and national regulations banned certain single-use plastic products (e.g. single-use plastic plates, cutlery, straws).



"The day plastic out-eats nature"

Promoting environmental awareness through art in local communities

Under the axis Further promoting environmental awareness through art in local communities the following categories emerged: local environmental challenges, awareness raising, artistic & creative methods, community involvement, support & resources and successful examples.

Local environmental challenges

Croatia

According to **Green Istria**, a crucial problem for the local community is the one concerning waste management. Increasing hotel facilities are creating plastic waste, which ends up in the sea. Another growing problem is illegal waste disposal sites, construction waste is also a problem of illegal landfills, because companies should pay for the removal of this waste to designated places. But they excavate soil on agricultural land and fill it with construction waste while someone makes money from it. According to Greenpeace the biggest challenge with plastic is that it is thrown into the environment, it ends up in river courses, and from rivers into the sea, affecting marine life. It was also mentioned that another problem is when business, but also often legislators, impose recycling as the main solution to single-use plastic, when it is known that a

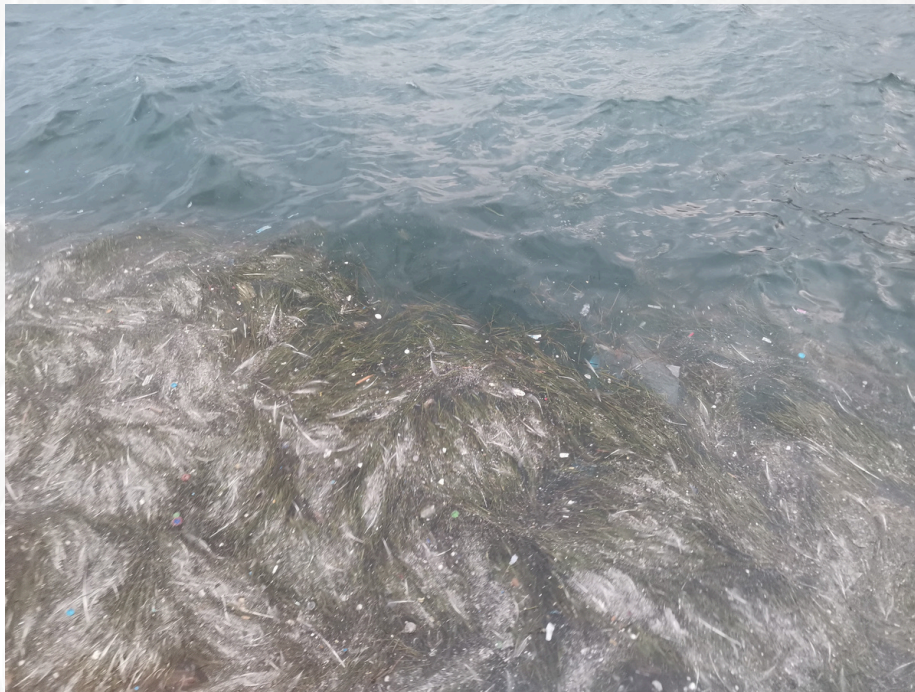
very small percentage is actually recycled and that its quality decreases during recycling, and some types of plastic cannot even be recycled.



"We turn our back to the problem but the future is facing us"

Greece

The common denominator in terms of environmental challenges was the problems that arise in relation to water, be it water scarcity or water pollution. Other important problems are related to the increasing drought, which is both a consequence and a by-product of the change in ecosystems. Soil erosion is itself a worrying picture for the future of nature. Furthermore, the use of wind turbines in areas that are also protected seems to exacerbate rather than solve potential problems. In addition, the pollution of water by operations such as shipbuilding or mining creates pollutants in harbours and seas, especially when there is no relevant pollution management plan. In particular, heavy



"I am suffocating" The sea is speaking, but are we listening?

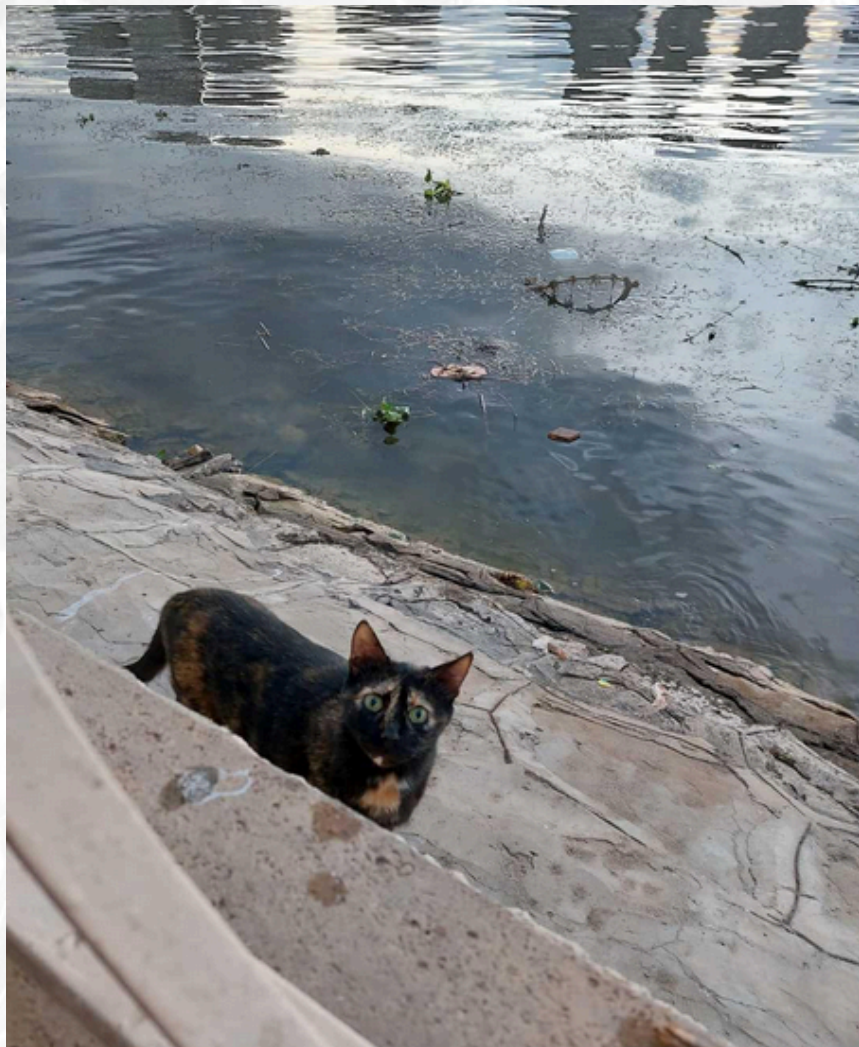
metals were detected in water, as well as spraying too many nitrates which polluted groundwater. Another major water-related issue is water interruptions during the day on a daily basis, which in a sense is also affected by the lack of good hotel management. The hotel systems have not been upgraded to reduce their environmental footprint to the maximum and as a result all of this works as a burden. The direct consequences of the lack of water can be seen in living beings such as bees, which will soon be unable to find food, as the cycle of flowers has been altered due to climate change.

Bosnia Herzegovina

The participants from **Majski Cvijet** and from **Citizens' Association Nesto Više** noted that the local community grapples with several major environmental challenges, with single-use PET packaging—especially plastic bottles—being a primary concern, along with other forms of plastic waste, which end up in the sea and landfills. There are few recycling centers and waste separation containers available, complicating effective management of plastic waste and limited awareness and education as many residents lack sufficient knowledge about the environmental impact of plastic and the correct methods for recycling.

Egypt

According to the participants, one of the challenges they face is that they have found out that factories could not collect waste, due to the lack of awareness among the people in society.



"Every discarded item tells a story of neglect"

Montenegro

Podgorica faces several key environmental challenges that significantly impact the quality of life for its citizens and the sustainability of the environment. Here are some of the most important: air pollution, inadequate waste management, pollution of the Morača River, urbanization and loss of green spaces and climate change. A representative from **Eco – Association for Environmental Consulting** pointed out that the primary issue in Kotor is traffic, due to limited space and reliance on a single route—the Adriatic Highway, the environment in the bay is at risk from the high number of cruise ships.

Albania

According to the participant from the **Aarhus Information Center** the main environmental challenges that local community is currently facing are: lack of information and community awareness about the environment, lack of community feeling, lack of national and local budgets for the implementation of environmental policies, lack of human and specialist resources in the field of environment in institutions, lack of institutions to ensure the necessary logistics for the implementation of policies on the ground, lack of real involvement of specialists and affected communities in policy-making and decision-making on environmental issues. However, the climate degradation is often perceived only as an environmental problem and remains unintegrated in the other policies in Albania (e.g., agriculture, transport, tourism, health), while these are the affected sectors. A more synergic and integrated approach to the application of the climate policies and measures is

needed in all the development sectors. In addition, according to the representative of **All Green Centre**, Albania faces major waste management challenges, despite a 2011 strategy to align with EU standards. Recent investments in waste incineration plants have raised concerns about health and environmental risks from toxic emissions. The lack of transparency in their planning has drawn criticism from environmental experts, civil society, and the European Commission.

Awareness

Croatia- Green Istria

Green Istria has a lot of public campaigns that they carry out, such as the "I love Pula" campaign, which was conducted against beach concessions. They recorded short video materials in the market with ordinary people, sellers, as well as famous people who said why they don't want private beaches, which was widely shared on social networks. Likewise, a song was made that was sung at the protest ("don't happy, be worry"), and in the background of the song they explained all the complicated things related to concessions, the new law and the like. In this way, they invited the citizens to the public forum that they organized, because the city did not organize a public consultation with the citizens, so they organized it in a large gallery at the Pula forum. The video they recorded clearly communicated their message to the citizens. It was fun and the response was huge, so much so that not all people were able to enter the public hall. In the end, they held a protest in the form of a performance where they came with beach props, balloons, towels and beach chairs and all lay

down in front of the assembly in the middle of winter. The photos turned out great. They also remember the collaboration with the world-famous band Tame Impala in Arena Pula, who often collaborates with local environmental organizations, where they were invited to perform at their concert. On that occasion, they printed a huge postcard from the promenade on which they wrote "last free recreational zone in Pula" and sent the collected signatures from the people on those postcards from the concert to the mayor. They also remember a much earlier collaboration on a campaign against single-use plastic bags called the "plastic is not fantastic" bag, where they hired designer Robert Severo to create a design for the bags. It was a total hit because he dressed his models in those bags at a big fashion show, and they appeared in famous life-style magazines in Croatia, where many "famous" people wore bags by designer Robert Severo.

Over the years, **Greenpeace** has frequently collaborated with artists, particularly musicians, in their campaigns. A notable example is the SOS for the Adriatic campaign, which featured the song "More" (translated as "Sea") and included various Croatian artists, both well-known and lesser-known. As an international organization, Greenpeace also utilizes artistic props from abroad; for instance, they showcased a sculpture of two whales rising from a sea of plastic in Zagreb's main square, created by an Italian artist, before touring it through Istria. Additionally, they mentioned the six-meter sculpture "Art Reef," symbolizing the submerged "Ivana D" gas platform in the Adriatic, for which the Croatian national oil company INA is responsible. While the actual gas platform has remained

untouched for over three years, the sculpture was removed just hours after being placed in front of INA's headquarters. Art is an effective medium for raising awareness and encouraging public involvement, as it offers a unique channel beyond traditional announcements or social media posts. Art can captivate and engage people in ways that standard communications may not. For instance, while you might pause at a CSO stand if the topic that interests you, an art installation—whether experienced in person or online—tends to grab attention more readily. Additionally, the installation or song can resonate emotionally, inspiring and motivating individuals in profound ways. **Greenpeace Croatia** also embraces art competitions that promote creativity, particularly among younger generations, allowing them to express their views on nature and environmental protection. A notable example is also Zelena Akcija, which, through its Environmental Film Festival, has partnered with artistic secondary schools for several years. This collaboration includes brief educational sessions, providing guidance

and the freedom for students to create posters and narratives that reflect themes of environmental and climate justice.

Greece

According to the participants, art can help to bring people together, raise awareness and gain a personal view on issues related to the environment and its protection. In particular, awareness seems to be enhanced by exhibitions, documentary screenings, the art of photography, performances, collaboration with artists during workshops, such as upcycling, as these art forms and art as a whole can act as a bridge of communication between environmental problems and awakening people to take action. **Apano Meria** representatives stated: "art is a great way to help a personal connection and on this connection, we are trying to build an environmental consciousness. Because if you don't know the wealth that exists or the beauty that exists somewhere, you don't care about protecting it." Similarly, the representative of **The Hives Project** referring to the actions of their organisation and the interaction of the participants said "There was a great empowerment of the participants. It was self-evident that we enter the process of caring, caring about all that surrounds us, about our environment essentially and taking a stand in our daily lives. Because it is possible, what is possible is empowerment." Participants from Green Istria believe that the artistic approach in their actions or activities attracts the audience more and therefore they prefer to work in that way because people react better, emotional feedback occurs and the response of the audie-



"It's time to say #SOS"

nce is greater, thus influencing a larger number of people. A lot of them come back for the next workshop or get involved in some other way.



"Do not leave trash behind"

Bosnia Herzegovina, Albania & Montenegro

Participants from Bosnia Herzegovina, Albania and Montenegro noted that art has a unique ability to raise environmental awareness by emotionally portraying ecological issues, highlighting beauty, and encouraging reflection on our connection to nature. It captivates a wide range of audiences and inspires sustainable actions through its distinct mode of communication and inspiration. Artists can highlight the beauty of nature while also addressing the challenges and threats it faces due to human activity.

It was also stated that organisations such as **Majski Cvijet**, can primarily appeal to local and state authorities, applying pressure and raising awareness among the community through workshops, training sessions, and campaigns.

“ the connection with nature emerged, and the presence in nature was defined as an art form, in a way that involves silence, meditation, hugging a tree trunk. ”

Greece

“ Their goal is not only to create artistic pieces but also to reuse old items effectively, maximizing their utility. ”

Egypt

Artist & Creative Methods

Greece

The participants in the survey presented various art forms that go hand in hand with their efforts to protect the environment. In particular, group exhibitions of local artists and their presentation in a central place within the community can be reinforcing as more people become aware of the work of the institution and perhaps through art they can more easily connect to the meaning and purpose of the struggle for nature protection. Other forms that emerged were that of music, which as the representative from the **Hives Project** stated "music is a very beautiful language spoken internationally and very similarly. So, it also puts us in a process of finding the similarities, of caring not only about our own geographical boundaries, local, national, but about a whole condition more extended". In the same spirit of connection with people, the connection with nature emerged and the presence in nature was defined as an art form, in a way that involves silence, meditation, hugging a tree trunk. More specifically, the above-mentioned actor mentioned that he had worked on a project entitled "Mother Earth", which was also about respect for nature, the earth, this life-giving energy and human society. There were various workshops that were held, some of them had to do with storytelling, nature walks, collective dances, archetypal re-enactment and rituals. Some installations were done in nature with materials found there e.g. shells, leaves, skulls. (The Hives Project). Another project concerning the connection between nature and art invol-

ves the use of photography, as the Sporos representative said "in this grass project we will go out in the field, when it rains, with the citizens and take photos. Wild grasses that are edible, that we know have some use. So they will use the tool of photography. I believe that a portion of the people will feel a little closer to nature through this action." Furthermore, the same operator mentioned that they run "the forest school that ran and had some art tools, storytelling and generally facilitates the conditions for a plethora of creative experiences from which the children get to choose for themselves". In addition, the Apano Meria agency reported that they operate a plastic recycling workshop "we have some machines and we can only manage two of the types of plastic. . they crush the plastic and then some others that process it. To show that plastic is not something that dies. The cap from a bottle can be processed into something else that actually has value, e.g. a souvenir, a carabiner.

Croatia

In 2019, Green Istria launched a campaign focused on the detrimental effects of the fast fashion industry. The initiative featured a documentary screening and a performance art fashion show that highlighted the issue of plastic waste. Artists created large public sculptures that appeared to be "knitting" with plastic, drawing attention to its ubiquity. The event concluded with a round table discussion where local designers shared their views on fast fashion and discussed their approaches to promoting sustainable fashion. This dialogue underscored their commitment to ethical practices in the industry. Additio-

nally, Re-gepetto, their repair workshop where community members can bring items to be fixed, has always incorporated an artistic element, reinforcing the connection between creativity and sustainability. They created a large mural focused on upcycling, collaborating with artists from the School of Applied Arts and Design. During the European Week for Waste Reduction, they launched the initiative "Repair Cafe Re-gepetto: Circular Community and Art," emphasizing that artists serve as modern climate activists by using their work to raise awareness. They described art as a lighthouse that guides and motivates action. The psychology of public engagement indicates that visual storytelling and other artistic narratives help people absorb, process, and respond to information. This provided a theoretical basis for their emphasis on the role of art in their efforts. The previous year, they staged an activist performance in collaboration with the local initiative "Clean Air Long Love." Participants donned white suits and gas masks, distributing leaflets throughout the city to invite residents to a protest they planned to hold ten days later. They also hosted a performance called "Pula Chainsaw Massacre," which addressed the issue of illegal tree cutting along the "Lungomare" (seaside walkway). The event creatively incorporated elements of a "crime scene," with tape marking off the area and the word "crime" written on it, while participants acted as inspectors searching for culprits. This performance took place in front of the town hall and is typically organized in collaboration with local citizens and initiatives. They organize various events e.g Sound Re-Garden, a magical evening featuring a concert

of plants. During this event, they constructed a vertical garden from reclaimed pallets in the yard of Rojc. They later collaborated with an artist from Split, who hosted a "concert of plants," using a system that allows plants to produce sound when connected. Since acquiring this device, they frequently incorporate it into educational activities with students, although sometimes the plants produce sound and sometimes they do not. They also organized a competition called "Art for Change" aimed at designers, artists, and illustrators focused on themes of climate change, reuse, and repair. A total of 22 artists submitted 29 pieces, and from these, they selected the top three works for an ongoing online campaign. They are currently hosting upcycling activities with artists, where old objects are transformed and recorded in videos for publication. The finished items are then donated to public spaces. Artist Suzana Desnica created three chairs: one covered in eggshells, treated for regular use; another painted with Venetian lace; and the third adorned with world maps. This initiative aims to showcase the daily work at the Re-gepetto workshop and to give it greater recognition. A sizable mural themed around upcycling, developed in partnership with artists from the school of applied arts and design, is now showcased in a public space at the community center Rojc. They share their work on social media to inspire people to change their habits, but unfortunately, they don't always achieve significant reach and visibility. When creating promotional or educational materials, they partner with a designer to produce visually appealing items such as flyers, publications, and brochures. They partnered with illustra-

tors to create comics and developed a picture book with students. They also produced two animated films, one of which won several awards and focuses on the challenges posed by the "Plomin C" thermal power plant.

According to **Greenpeace Croatia's** participant, it's important to collaborate with well-known musicians who create songs about environmental issues and participate in interviews and videos. Working with these prominent artists helps Greenpeace reach a new audience that follows them for their art, thereby introducing those individuals to Greenpeace and its causes. Additionally, Greenpeace partnered with a local artist to create a five-meter dolphin on the beach of island of Cres, crafted entirely from plastic waste collected from the area, which had gone uncleaned for years. At the same time, Greenpeace set up an information booth in the city, providing educational materials and a petition to raise awareness about the problem of sea pollution caused by single-use plastics. The involvement of artists further raises the awareness of new groups of people.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Majski Cvijet's participant mentioned that at their camp on the Buna River, they extensively use artist methods, focusing on workshops where recyclable materials are creatively transformed into new items. In collaboration with the Act Foundation from Sarajevo, they recently organized a performance that showcased how waste can be turned into fashion accessories, highlighting the power of imagination and creativity. In addition to these initiatives, they engage in various artistic practices, including resto-

ration projects, mural painting, and sculpture-making. These activities serve not only as forms of artistic expression but also as meaningful contributions to the local community, aiming to raise awareness about environmental issues while fostering pride and responsibility towards their surroundings. Looking forward, they advocate for incorporating ecological topics into elementary and secondary school curricula to engage children in environmental education from an early age. By fostering an understanding and appreciation of ecological principles through art and hands-on involvement, they aspire to cultivate a future generation committed to environmental stewardship and sustainability.

According to the participant of Citizens' Association Nesto Vise, they organize exhibitions and workshops that highlight the effects of plastic pollution and other environmental challenges. Additionally, they leverage digital art and social media to disseminate powerful environmental messages, creating a multi-faceted approach to advocacy.



"Mostar's Stari Most: A symbol of endurance in the face of nature's challenges."

Egypt

Participants of **Rawad** have committed to raising awareness in youth centers, aiming to foster connections between the private sector, government, and civil society. They are also promoting e-waste recycling initiatives in youth centers and universities, conducting workshops on the topic. Their approach incorporates artistic methods in the recycling process, which is tailored based on the items they collect. For instance, they can repurpose materials into mobile phone covers. The recycling process includes the following steps: 1) Idea design, 2) Collecting electronic waste, 3) Sorting items by type and size, 4) Utilizing materials in the design according to their shape and size, and 5) Adding color based on the design. They also ensure the removal of harmful components to protect both people and the environment. Recently, they hosted a recycling workshop at Cairo University in collaboration with "Tram Alwan," where participants created artistic designs.

According to the participant of Tram Alwan, they have participated in numerous events, workshops, and activities, including a three-day camp in Luxor during the African Film Festival, where they learned self-expression. Additionally, they organized the "Hawadit Qmash" event and conducted several recycling workshops for children in Manshia Nasr. In Quseir, they hosted a camp for children in partnership with "Ruqya." In Cairo, they ran a workshop at Horya Garden in collaboration with the Nubian Association and also held an event at the Faculty of Mass Communication at Cairo University.

They use art to address e-waste issues based on the specific location where they work or volunteer and the ma-

terials they collect, which may include items donated by individuals. Their process involves the following steps: 1) Collection, 2) Sorting, 3) Idea design, and 4) Incorporating the materials into designs based on their shape and size. Their goal is not only to create artistic pieces but also to reuse old items effectively, maximizing their utility. Examples of repurposed items include bags, wallets, and pens. In some instances, they may need to add new materials to enhance the quality of the recycled products. They value feedback from participants after each workshop or activity. Interestingly, participants consistently express that they feel they have a safe space to share their thoughts without judgment, and they appreciate the opportunity to repurpose old items.



"In the foreground of the Pyramids"

Montenegro

A representative from **Eco – Association for Environmental Consulting (Montenegro)** highlighted that art and creativity hold significant potential to deliver messages in an emotional and impactful manner, which can inspire changes in behavior and awareness. In the Young Eco-Reporters program, they employ a methodology that involves investigating issues, analyzing their causes, and presenting the findings through journalistic efforts, such as articles, videos, and photographs. This approach allows young people to engage creatively while sharing information with their peers and the community. Their work often carries a hint of cynicism, reflecting their mentality and perspective, but this distinctive voice helps them stand out and contribute to the global conversation.

Albania

A representative from the **Aarhus Information Center (Shkodra- Albania)** noted they have employed various methods, including creating paintings, organizing photo exhibitions, producing photo albums and calendars, and integrating environmental themes into numerous crafts. They also engage in activities like songs, theater, poetry, dance performances, flash mobs, and performances by actors. The representative from **All Green Centre** noted that art holds immense power to raise environmental awareness and inspire action, and they leverage various activist methods to address these issues. Their approach includes short films, podcasts, Femme Salons (storytelling sessions), and interactive installations like Walls of Connection.

For example, in the Artist Stafetë – Dibra Project Cycle, **All Green Centre** engaged youth through a bootcamp that taught how art can serve as a non-violent tool to challenge societal stereotypes and address environmental concerns. Participants explored different mediums, such as podcasts, storytelling, and film, learning how creative expression can provoke thought and spark change.



"Nature strives to live through waste"

Community participation

According to Greek participants the participation of community members can be made more direct and active through the dissemination of information, such as through meaningful public consultation, through connection with the place and its history, which can be initiated from childhood through both oral history and education, as mentioned by representatives of **Apano Meria** (Greece). Furthermore, environmental awareness festivals are a synthesis of both people who have something important to say and show about nature and the people who go to visit them, as this creates a sense of belonging to the community. These activities also offer networking between actors and activation of local youth as mentioned by a representative from **The Hives Project** (Greece). The element that enhances community participation is the concept of group and therefore people who recognize the individual good through the collective, as mentioned by a representative of **Sporos** (Greece).

Among other ways of participation in **Green Istria** (Croatia), is the Civilian Supervision initiative, which exerts pressure on any actions that may be detrimental to the environment on the part of the waste management center, through its open procedures and its representatives participating in the centre's meetings, and also by commenting to the environmental impact assessment studies.

It should be noted that before this initiative no media informed the citizens about the actions of this centre and no relevant material was uploaded on the centre's website. A good example of this is when the City of Pula did a feasibility study of a compost facility, it called them sepa-

rately to a meeting to present the feasibility study to them and to hear their comments and opinions. So, they are considered as corrective of local authorities when they notice that something is wrong.

According to the participants from Bosnia Herzegovina (**Majski Cvijet & Citizens' Association Nesto Više**) and Croatia (**Greenpeace**) community members can play an active role in tackling environmental challenges by engaging in advocacy (e-consultations for new regulations, attending protests, and writing to ministers and political bodies), organizing impactful initiatives, and employing effective marketing strategies to raise awareness. According to **Majski Cvijet** participants, engaging local media by incorporating short environmental clips or snapshots before television news segments aims to continually remind citizens of the importance of environmental conservation and encourage them to prioritize this issue. On a daily basis, people can make simpler changes, such as carrying a reusable water bottle or tote bag can make a difference. Also, they can properly separate and recycle waste and inform themselves and others about the importance of environmental protection. Both participants from Montenegro found that it is essential to continue discussing and disseminating information about issues and possible solutions. People need to come together and collaborate, as collective energy is key to driving change. According to the participants of Egypt (**Tram Alwan**) and Albania, engaging local communities allows for collaboration and partnerships with various stakeholders, including residents, local businesses, schools, and community organizations.

They possess valuable knowledge about the environment, including its ecosystems, resources, and challenges. To enable this, the community needs to be provided with the right information, at the right time and with the right tools, in order to be included in environmental activities or decision-making.

Support & Resources

According to Greek participants the key support, which is directly linked to the resources to enable community members to actively participate in efforts to address environmental challenges, is correct and responsible information in order to disseminate correct information and avoid fake news, as all participants noted. Furthermore, direct access to the community councils so that citizens more specifically can learn about their local area from the relevant authorities and in this way be able to propose solutions to environmental issues in their area, as representatives of **Apano Meria** (Greece) point out. An important role is played by the state, which should accompany citizens in their work for a more sustainable environment through the adoption and implementation of environmental legislation. According to a representative of **Sporos** (Greece), the relevant legislation is crucial to be mutually enforced for the good of the country and by which both citizens and companies are required to follow ways of reducing environmental pollutants e.g. plastic. The same view carries the representatives from **Green Istria** who believe that companies, especially large tourism businesses and facilities, should comply with the law by properly disposing of their organic waste instead of mixing

it with municipal waste.

Major concert events could also advocate for zero waste initiatives and encourage the community to reduce plastic usage. Additionally, municipalities and cities could improve their practices by eliminating plastic bottles, cups, and excessively packaged food during events, opting for more sustainable alternatives instead. An example of how plastic impacts tourism is a beach that gets inundated with plastic debris every winter, brought in by sea currents. Each year, community cleanup events are organized, allowing people to see firsthand just how much plastic accumulates in the sea. The manual "How to create less waste" was among the first to deal with that topic and was downloaded many times from the website.



"A postcard we didn't dream of"

Participants from the **Citizens' Association Nesto Više** (Bosnia -Herzegovina) believe that local governments and businesses can enhance community support by improving recycling infrastructure—such as adding more containers and recycling centers. They also suggest backing and funding local environmental projects and organizations, as well as implementing stricter regulations to decrease the use of single-use plastics and strengthening the enforcement of current laws. Finally, no matter how many ideas community members have, if there is no financial support, they may be fruitless. Hence 'a financial instrument is needed to enable planning and then implementation', as a spokesperson from **The Hives Project** (Greece) puts it.

Participants from **Rawad** (Egypt) have partnered with the Ministry of Sports and will soon begin collaborating with the Ministry of Environment. Additionally, they have garnered media attention and conducted interviews with various TV channels and embassies. On the other hand the participants from **Tram Alwan** mentioned that they face several challenges, with the primary one being the lack of sponsorship for their initiative, which forces them to fund their workshops and activities out of their own pockets. The competitive landscape is also quite tough, and they sometimes struggle to find certain materials needed for the recycling process. They have not sought support from the government. Currently, their focus is on creating a safe space for children and youth to express themselves freely, without any restrictions.



"The sea tries to reject our waste as much as we do"



Successful Examples

The participants gave specific examples of the work of groups active in different communities that successfully combine environmental actions with the use of various art forms. According to the representatives of **Apano Meria** (Greece), an interesting work was presented by Messolonghi By Locals, for whom they mentioned that it is a successful example that combines both art forms and environmental education and has now managed to reach more and more residents of Messolonghi. They also offer this in schools and at the same time they do a lot of cultural activities that are always combined with the environment and throughout the year they offer, I think, cycling tours around the lagoon. They also have a place where they do different courses such as handcraft art courses for children, as well as a festival for the locals, that takes place every year. This festival includes concerts and events, among other activities. (Link: <https://messolonghibylocals.com/en/about-us/>). The representative of **Sporos** referred to an initiative that started from abroad and one that concerns the island of Lesvos. Precious Plastic was started in the Netherlands, it is open source and you can take it for free and build a production line, upcycling the plastic. This has now gone all over the world. An idea that is essentially about reusing plastic and not throwing it into the environment and therefore, polluting it.

Also, reference was made to Mosaik, which is based in Lesvos and deals with, among other things, reusing materials such as broken plates with which you can make a mosaic or a cereal box with which you can make a wallet and anything that someone would normally throw away. Their activities involve the whole community and they also work directly with schools. (Link <https://www.lesvossolidarity.org/el/ti-kanoume/kentro-ypostiriksis-mosaik>). Finally, the representative of **The Hives Project** referred to the importance of the festivals and specifically referred to a local festival in Pyrgos Iliia (Greece), where there was the promotion of local artists, local products, discussions, presentations, active waste management, nice artists who had something to say, connection with tradition, a confluence of people and a chance for a nice socialization through art and interest in the environment. Furthermore, she mentioned eco-communities, where all activities include art because the way of expression is also non-typical, that is, they use rhythm, constructions from natural materials, there is a strong creativity that is, recycling that they all do together, a walk can be developed that will evolve as a dance, it can be a song, it can be fire and the sea and activities around them, acrobatics, it is something that organically happens. An old and well-known eco-community in Europe is Tamera in Portugal, where the environment is linked to art and general expression for a new way of seeing life (Link: <https://www.tamera.org/>).

“ hosted a "concert of plants," using a system that allows plants to produce sound when connected. ”

Croatia

In Croatia- **Green Istria** mentioned that the civic initiative "Clean air, long love" is the best example and it concerns the influence of the county center for waste management. Likewise, larger organizations with headquarters in Zagreb also work in the area of Istria, such as Greenpeace, BIOM, WWF. They have a lot of cooperation and share local events and news on their networks, and through a radio show where they invite local initiatives to share their activities. One of the good examples is the clothing, book and toy exchange fair that they organize under the name "I give - You give", which is an example of good practice in many local communities because it is easy to organize even without a budget, and the goal is to socialize, exchange your surplus, reduce the practice of buying new things and promote reuse, which is always a lot of people and they are very successful. As well as various free practical workshops, from making natural cosmetics, to wrapping "foil" for food based on beeswax, or workshops on sewing, repairing bicycles, reuse practices, repurposing and restoring old furniture, changing wardrobes, cooking, and the like. These are all examples of practices that spread easily.

One of the most striking examples, as the participant from

Greenpeace Croatia mentioned, is the installations related to plastic during the global agreement on plastics, featuring a massive ten-meter-high faucet that symbolizes the need to "turn off the plastic faucet," with disposable plastic pouring out. Land Art—ground installations captured from the air—where people sometimes form messages like "no plastic" with their bodies, or create large drawings and banners visible from drones, skyscrapers, or hills, which are quite impressive from above, where also mentioned. On a global scale, Greenpeace and various organizations involved in Break Free From Plastic (BFFP) engage in these impactful efforts.

The participant from **Majski Cvijet** (Bosnia Herzegovina) noted that local community can gain valuable insights from successful initiatives in other regions that blend environmental concerns with art. Organizations like Eko Forum from Zenica, Sarajevo's Fondacija ACT, and Eko BiH in Tuzla have demonstrated effective artistic approaches to environmental protection. For example, the project "Steps towards the Protection of Neretva Tributaries: Buna, Bunica, Bregava, and Trebižat," led by the Center for Environment and Ecological Association **Majski Cvijet**, represents a holistic effort aimed at preserving the biodiversity of these rivers while educating local communities about the importance of these protected areas. One effective strategy is using art as a means of advocacy and awareness. Projects like "Putujuća škola" by Fondacija ACT engage young people in workshops along the Buna, Bunica, Trebižat, and Bregava rivers in Herzegovina, demonstrating how hands-on experiences can enhance their understanding of environmental issues. These initiati-

ves not only highlight the beauty of these natural environments but also address the challenges they face, fostering a sense of responsibility and stewardship among participants.

“*These activities serve not only as forms of artistic expression but also as meaningful contributions to the local community.*”

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Eko HUB Mostar, backed by the EU, aims to enhance local communities' waste management and recycling skills through educational workshops, awareness campaigns, and hands-on activities. Additionally, the City of Mostar has launched pilot waste separation projects funded by the EU, which include installing containers for various waste types and educating residents on effective waste separation. These initiatives not only support environmental preservation but also motivate citizens to engage in sustainable practices, fostering ecological awareness and responsibility, as the participant of **Citizens' Association Nešto Više** noted Global exchange of ideas. Monitoring global innovations in artistic activism can provide inspiration for new ideas and approaches that can be applied locally. The Plastic We Live With: A project carried out in London where artists used recycled materials

to create large sculptures depicting the damage that single-use plastics can inflict on nature.



"Restoring beauty to our surroundings, one bag of trash at a time."

“ This initiative focuses on beach clean-ups and creating art installations from the collected waste. ”

Bosnia-Herzegovina

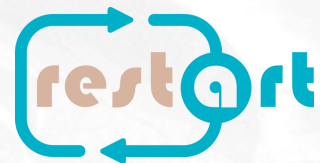
This project was highly effective in raising awareness about the plastic issue and motivating people to change their consumption habits. **Washed Ashore Project:** This initiative focuses on beach clean-ups and creating art installations from the collected waste. The aim is to raise awareness about the impact of plastic on marine life and coastal ecosystems. The project has traveled through various communities along the United States' coastlines, inspiring many local cleanup efforts. **The Climate Ribbon:** Originating as an art installation at a climate march in New York, where people wrote their thoughts and feelings about climate change on paper ribbons that were then displayed. This interactive art encouraged people to reflect on the impact of climate change on their lives and take action accordingly. **Artistic Action:** One significant action could be organizing an exhibition like "Faces from the Streets of Mostar," which through artistic representation of life in Mostar's streets, could include elements raising awareness about pollution. Such an exhibition could use photos, installations, and interactive elements to educate visitors and motivate them to take action.

The partnership



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