Paris Action-plan

Feedback overview

In this feedback I will mainly focus on the future and will not spend too much effort reviewing the process of the days in Prague.

The first things I want to say that it was fascinating to work with you as a group, your energy and dedication.

My idea of the goal of this weekend is to make you a bit more familiar with the processes, values, complications, possibilities and responsibilities working in public spaces brings. I think this worked as it seems to be an eyeopener that brought both new potential to the group as also new questions.

As I mentioned to focus mainly on how what has been created can be developed and brought to Paris I do want to mention that the essence of creating a diversity of activists and insights being involved in an ongoing process of discovery was and is the essence of this kind of research. What this means is that the understanding of the process and finding your place, for every individual but also for the group, in how to work in this context was the main goal. However during this brief investigation a great deal of workable content has been created and in my understanding also a master plan for the Paris action.

My proposal for the Paris action
This proposal is build out of all the elements that where already set or have been created by you in Prague and is not in any way a new idea.

General idea
What happened in Prague was that three groups, existing of people with a variety of skills, created a diverse range of experiments form sincere interviews to a provoking action and engaging and animating the public in gaming. It is exactly this diversity that is where the quality of you as a group starts to connect with the content relating to the understanding of the "European" in all its diversity.

Imagine Gare du Nord as a place where this diversity can be felt, how do you as a group tap in to this. The only way to do this is also having a diverse approaches that appeal to a variety of people.

Island Europe
Lets start with the idea (technical prescription) of a central island at Gare du Nord. Especially as this diversity of ideas and investigations is a quality, there needs to be a place of origin where a clear message can be communicated. This island can be the basis, the root of all experiments where a couple of objects create a setting that visualises your ideals around Europe and living in Europe. This for example is the perfect setting for the Bleu team to operate.

Playing Europe
From here we move to the Yellow team that created a great idea about how to inform people about their connection to Europe.

Choosing Europe
The Bleu team in this whole focussed on having people make choices. Making choices through standing or walking in a certain way. A non vocal communication and support for people to become aware of a choice they are facing and take a stand.

Europe
All together these events / actions and situations created give a great energy to Gare du Nord. What they also do is appeal to a big audience, but still form a big picture to communicate a clear message to the media.

What to pay attention to:
Value what you have created, don't jump to quickly to a new idea, but try to go in depth. The quality of an action does not lie in its idea, but in its development.

- Process
This means that the process is still the most important. But how can the process of continuous research and experiment can keep having a central role in the preparation for Paris?

- Content
The most confusing part of the Prague meeting was the absence of content. What is necessary is that the groups (the network) starts to create its own content, message. In this way you can operate as a group in any situation without loosing why you are there and who you are.

Noticeable was that the different groups all had their own dynamics. Important is to realise that these differences don't make the one group more successful than the other. But create a good basis to actually understanding each partner of the network as all the people bring in their qualities. This action demands form the network to make best use of all of these qualities!

Action needed
What action is needed to develop the proposed actions into professional action that together form a whole or experiences through Gare de Nord?

How to do this?

Every team needs to think for them selves how serious they are about taking part in the Paris event.

This is the moment where the group can really create something that is bigger than the sum of its parts.

Team proposals

The current handed in proposals from the teams developed in Prague

Green Team

The experiment in the proposed action is in creating the right setting. How can you create a setting that on a fixed location, but still is flexible and can fit everyones needs t of feel comfortable.

- What is it that people need to feel comfortable?

- What reason would people have to take place in your setting?

- If you want to make people feel comfortable, what role do you give yourself in this situation?

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Qualities of this proposal
- Valueing the simplicity of asking a question

- Support the rest of the interactions as a solid basis where a sincere conversation can take place.

What to work on
- What is the topic of the conversation?

- Can you create a topic that is also, like the situation you want to create is comfortable and perhaps from there leads into …

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What is the Action about? (How does it work?)
- Friendly conversation
- Share a moment
- Positve experience
- Giving something

Why do you want to do this interaction?
- To get as many points of views as possible on European issues
- Natural interest in opinions
- Natural interest in feelings
- Making people aware of the richness of their European life

What do you want to learn?
- How to successfully approach people
- How to address European issues without naming them European

How would you see this interaction developed in Paris?
- Build a more cozy place
- Invite people more to come
- Offer a valuable coversation
- Offer possibility to exchange on European citizenship, Europe today, European Identity + things that come up
- Paper boats
- Message in the bottle
- Living room

Through experimentation team Blue found out that a gentle action more suits their personal needs and values.

The qualities in this proposal
- Playing with a physical situation that claims space, and when played creates a certain energy and concentration that involves people form distance.

- Playful way to talk about Europe in consumable steps.

Creating a game is a great invention to engage with the public that allows to both create a time to talk to people for a reason and creates palace and context for this to happen.

What to work on
- Where would it take place in Gare du Nord, Outside, or somewhere inside?

- Is it possible to develop a mobile version that can be played on the move, while the team provides the context for people to resound to?

Yellow Team

THE EuroCzech-In

What is the action about?
The idea is to get passers-by to play a EuroCzech-In, which is a kind of Eurobarometer expressed as a „snakes and ladders" game . Passers-by start on box 1 and answer a simple question about European identity. If they answer "yes" they progress through the game, if they say no they "snake" out of the game. The more they progress through the game, the more they show to share European values and the idea of a united Europe. Depending on their final position on the board, their Europeaness is ranked into the following levels corresponding to their profile: Eurosketpic, Europtimistic, Europositiv, Euroenthusiast, Eurolover, True European. They receive a description of their profile and are invited to engage in conversations about their answers.

Why do you want to do this interaction?
It is a fun way to build a sustainable social interaction with people in order to make them reflect on Europe. Purpose is to have them learn that even when they do not think they have European values, they still possess varying degrees of belief in Europe.
An advantage of this game is that you don't have to approach people and "stress" them wih questions about Europe. On the contrary, it brings people to you and makes them eager to ask questions.

What did you learn?
People are easy to be involved in such an activity if you manage to make them curious about it. They are also willing to engage in conversations and express their opinion if they are provided the right platform to do that.
Peolpe from outside the European Union and living here tend to be more positive about the European project than Europeans themselves.

How would you see this interaction developed in Paris?
Similar game, with clearer and more precise questions and a better design (meaning better „game board"
follow-up interviews by other people of the team
video documentation
provide instructions so that people can also play independently
create a more comfortable setting for post-game conversations
fake demostrations by the team now and then to attract attention of the passer-byes

Choices about Europe made by the people walking through the train station.

The qualities in this proposal
- The form of posing choices to the public in a physical (human body) and non verbal way is a ver interesting approach in a space where there is a reasonable amount of visual and audible noise.

- The body as a tool in this context is a nice metaphor and usually works well.

- It feels like a very playful and flexible approach that can really use the station and play with all the corners the space has to offer with our obstructing or annoying anyone.

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What to work on
- Do not shift your idea to much, in this way your starting something else instead of developing your idea into a workable method. You have a great experiment with many qualities. Please do not go into creating new ideas but use the things you have learned to make an intelligent and engaging mobile experience in the station.

- Simplify the questions and the setting even more.

- What are you looking for, quantitative results of people choosing or creating a scene around the question, a real performance.

- Desing the tools better. If you are using a body to make people make choices

- Choose the locations more carefully, you mentioned blocking the stream is not working so where sous it work and how can think about what you need to make the question (content) and the way of asking the questing are line.

- Be creative in what way you can make people make choices. Instead of left right a choice can e.g. also be made through claiming "If you stand here you are a…"

- Instead of asking one question can you develop a series of questions that give you an insight over the day.

- Don't take the questions to serious, its good to pose important questions, but how can you make them more fun, less heavy, its about having a good time there too and making people laugh often has a greater impact. How can al this framed differently.

Blue Team

POST-PRAGUE FINDINGS

What was the action about (system)
Non verbal action intended to force people to make a choice between a national or european future.
One person attracting the attention of public with a sign reading "choose your path".
Behind her, two persons creating the path with their own signs (EU / Cz).

There was a development of the action in which we realize that the amount of information was
1) too much
2) too complicated
3) not clear to the passengers

So we reduced both the amount of information, and the number of steps of intervention. We wanted to do an evaluation (how many people chose european diversity over czech nationalism) on a board but realized we couldn't (too many things to deal with). Same for thank you cards, too complicated to hand out. This was supposed to give back something to the people, but they couldn't see the connection with the intervention. Nevertheless, we noted that some people started discussing at that point (after getting a thank you card). Which made us think that, even though it was not good for our action, it could be an interesting thing to do if we ever wanted to start a conversation. In this case somebody should have explained what the card means. Each person should have 1 task and not more so that the group is not disturbed from the inside and every action has a clear responsible.

We tried the system in three different settings :
Below the departure sign (with a vertical human line intended to redistribute the flow of people standing below the sign.)
In front of the mecanic path leading people out of the station (with a horizontal human line intended to make people pass right or left)
In a tunnel (blocking two side lanes with tape, to redirect people into the main lane, and prompting them to make a choice there).

Why did we want to do this ?
This was the logical outcome of the five steps (brainstorm solutions) we completed before, the logical outcome to answer our research question (research question: "How can I recognize opportunaties of a space to hook on 'average Joe's' interest to create an interaction with non-verbal tools"). We also wanted to keep the action simple even if it was still a bit complicated. At some point we had talked about taking pictures of passers by, and sending them by sms, for exemple. For that action we made, we just needed people, paper, pencils and tape.

What did we learn ?
- We learned that you need to stick to one role per person and not get distracted. Try to have as few interaction with each other as possible. Whatever happens, stay in your role.
- We discovered how important it was to have an extra 'undercover' person who is not taking an active part in the intervention, but has the responsibility to explain or get in conversation with passengers who get curious and interested. In this way, the intervention is not being disrupted while the audience are getting the attention they need at the moment. You need to have different people, each with a specific role, for the different situations and tasks in the flow of the action.
- We learned how crucial eye contact is. It is a very useful tool for getting attention of passengers.
- We learned how small changes (in the action) can have big impact.
- We learned how important "regie" is. If you want your action to look spontaneous, you need to have a tight action plan, with clear roles and positions for all the members of the group (even for the 'undercover' group member) . By using a storyboard you can make the flow of the action more visible (?? Don't remember this point anymore).
- We learned a thing or two about the flow of people : it dosen't work to block the flow, instead try to redirect it by becoming part of the flow. As you go with the flow, you get a chance to bend the flow.
When people were blocked by material rather than us (blocking some access routes with tapes rather than standing on the way) , they accepted it better (avoided it). Because it was not human and they didn't have to interact with tape. By blocking the two side lanes (designed by two walls) we made the main flow stronger, and focused it. So we could better 'play' with it and redirect it.
- We also learned that tape in the space was more respected than signs on the floor. People eyes focus further away on a higher level, they rarely look down to their feet.
- we learned that if you want to understand what people spontaneously comment on the action you need to understand their language. Also if you want to start conversations with them.
- It is important to create a 'break' in your interaction. This moment gives you the possibility to reflect on the action and adjust if needed.

Summary : rules for the future
- Work with eye contact
- Work with the flow to influence it without people recognising it.
- Use the potential of space
- Keep it simple : less is more.
- Small changes = big impact
- Content : make it linked to the situation the people are in : « Welcome to Cz / Welcome to Eu », rather than « European diversity / Czech nationalism »
- Be prepared, not distracted : plan who does what, when, where and how.
- Include extra persons for talking to people and observing.
- Remain a group (not being distracted).

How would you see this interaction develop in the future ?

The last tryout made us think that if we had blocked the flow in the middle with material such as tape, we could have done anything we wanted (any performance) there in the middle. Let's go and try that (set a zone for performance and let people go by on the sides ?) ! Maybe it could be just one person sitting there reading a book. Or someone watering a plant. Or putting up clothes (like clothes you've just washed) on the line around the performance zone.
We feel now that content doesn't really matter. Do we always have to say something with an intervention? Couldn't we just attract attention, awaken people minds to something unusual ?

To me (Cathy) : Such performances could very well fit into a collective proposal built on ideas that were thrown in the air after the tests at Prague station.
One of those ideas was : setting a european living room where waiting people could sit, have English tea, french baguette, italien coffee, cheese /weed from holland (just kidding here about the cheese ;). They could also warm up with scottish blankets, see the work of european painters hanging there, etc… Which could work well with the interviews Green Team seemed willing to conduct in a confortable environnement. And why not imagine a euro board game by Yellow Team there as well ?

If such a path for action was chosen, Blue Team could then be mobile, and engage in performances that could trigger curiosity, pave the way to the european living room, or add some more surprises for people passing by Gare du Nord.

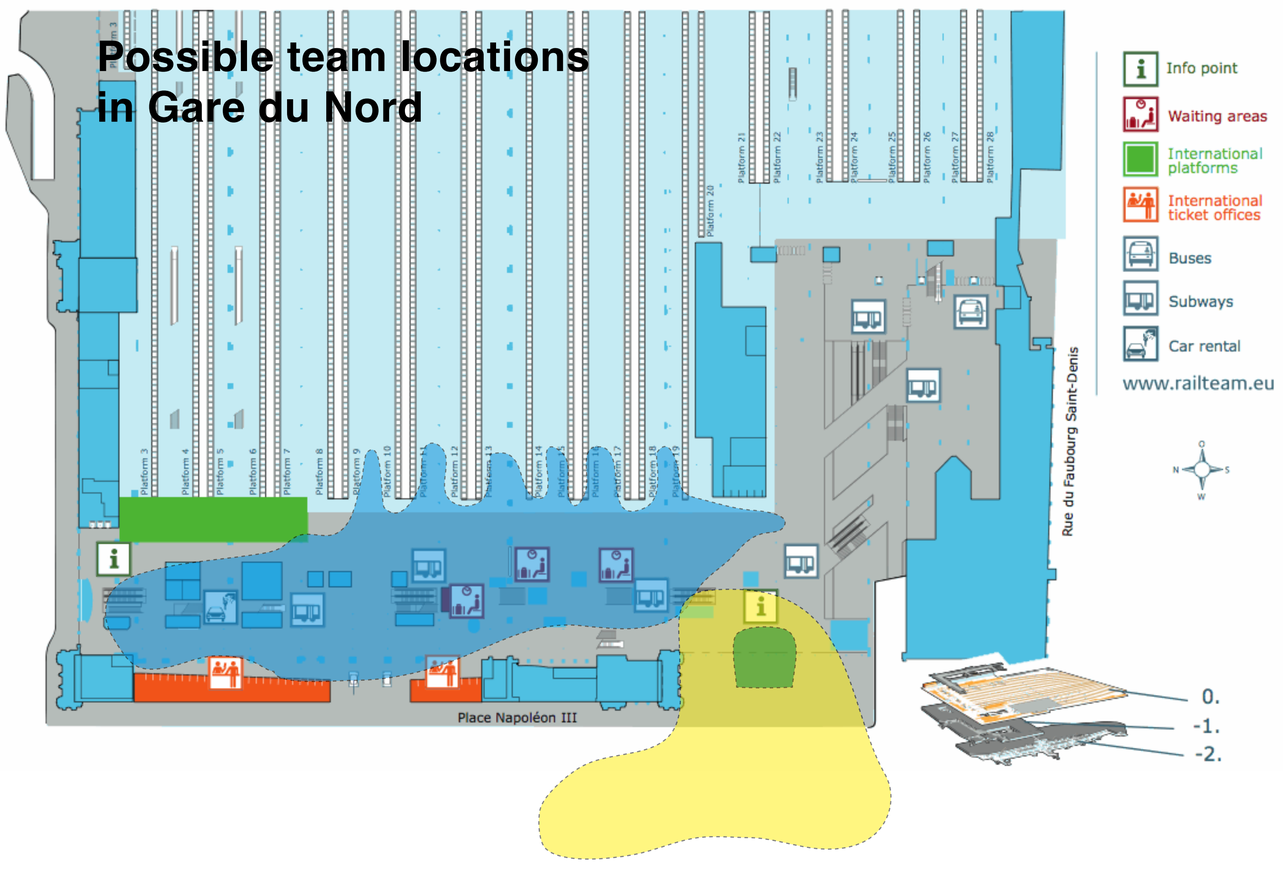
To me (Valentina): I agree with Cathy's proposal and I see the possibility to converge the three actions in one flow.

To me (Inga) : being mobile and adapt the non-verbal action to different settings in the train station seems to be a good thing. Also to combine our non-verbal « make the people think of » action with a more complex action like interviews. By this we can go deeper with those who want to. I would prefer to have a content link to Europe. E.g. in stead of putting any clothes on a line we should chose typical clothes from different countries in Europe. Or as you suggested Cathy eating different specialities...

Performance suggestion by Tanja
At the moment I am very fascinated by the absence of the debate on European solidarity, one of the essential building stones of Europe. So I came up with a 'Laundry Compass' idea, a performance in the form of a compass: four axes pointing North, South, East, West made out of laundry baskets some with clean, other with dirty laundry. Each of us is standing at one of the ends of the axes. At a certain moment we all pick up one of the baskets and make the move to the next axe (1/4 of the whole circle) where we drop the basket. Than we take another basket from the line and bring it to the next axe.
As some of us are holding 'dirty' and other 'clean' laundry, we are spreading dirty and beauty all around Europe/world. But also bringing it back as well! As a clock, we keep on going around for at least 15min. Very repetitive, focused and tight movements. The message might be a bit too moralistic only…. Illustration:

Paris Gare du Nord (Paris, France)

Possible team locations in Gare du Nord



Questions for the Network

Designing Interactions in Public space at Gare du Nord

Preparing for Paris

Paris

Her are the questions that need to be ansred!

- Topic → How can you decide on a communal topic as a leading question for the event apart form the USE artwork.
- Actions → The actions that each group has worked on make a great combination but is everyone still enthusiastic about the event in Paris?
- Interaction with USE → How does everyone feel about the USE and the art object that will be in the Gare du Nord. Just to inform each other about your opinion to know how we all stand in this.
- Organisation → A great deal of local organisation but also of organisation of each interaction will have to be done.
- Time spend → - How and by who can this be organised? - How do the team organise their action? - How sous the organisation of the big event and the smaller actions come together?
- Preparation
- What are the results that you want as a group? → Publication / Documentation
- Gained skills → Hoe does the network deal with the differences in time spend on organising and making the action happening?

Or differently put, how do you share the workload evenly?

- What needs to be organised
- What needs to be build, printed, glued, etc…
- Timeline, a first step towards a model for preparing the Gare du Nord action.
- What do you want to learn form this event, what do you want to take away on a personal level?
- A Plan needs to be created to what needs to be done and by who this is done?

Timeframe

November
- Create a proposal that everyone agrees with

December
- Inform each other of the developments of each individual team
  - Al technical details are known.
  - A core team should organise the outline of the event, best to have a person in there form every team.

January
- Is there a need to come together before the actual action takes place in February
- By this time most organisation should have happened and the physical preparations should have started

February
- Timeline of the days in paris
  - Timeline of the day of action

  This day can be planned out, starting with building up, needs, time everything takes and what is neccecry to make it happen
  - How do you want to prepare for the action on location? Does this go tighter wit hotter network events or is there enough to work on wit just the day of action?