

# New Business Models for Digital Art & Culture Organisations



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KONTEJNER

# Introduction



## KONTEJNER-Experiments with sustainable venue management

Zagreb pilot is about experimenting with economic sustainability and community engagement for KONTEJNER's new venue — a small centre for contemporary art practices.

Main objectives of the Zagreb pilot are: creating more sustainable and diversified funding to support the new venue, and fostering community development — reaching new audiences and partners, and converting them into supporters of the venue. To achieve this, we are developing and testing a series of experimental actions, including launching a new company, monetizing spatial resources, designing membership packages for citizens and partners, and collaborating with architectural experts to explore new uses for the venue's outdoor space. The vision is to turn these innovative actions into a catalyst for a new organizational ecosystem that favors circular economy models and social entrepreneurship, generating new benefits for the broader cultural sector.



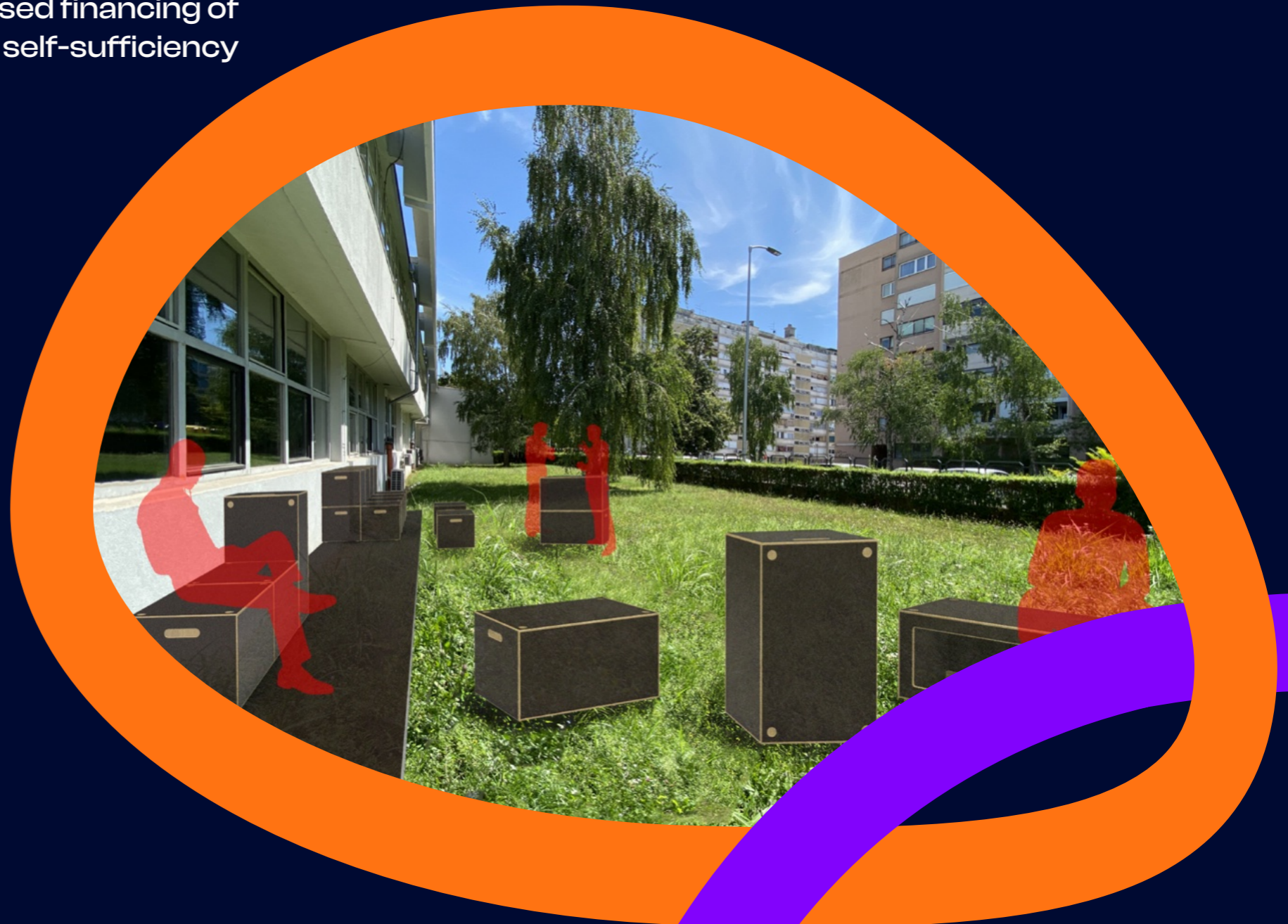
"Brainwaves & Brand Stories — Neuroscientific Storytelling" workshop at KONTEJNER, Zagreb; organized by HURA - The Croatian Association of Communication Agencies.  
Photo: Marko Mišćević

# KONTEJNER - Experiments with sustainable venue management



KONTEJNER is an NGO with core activities in production of artworks and cultural events such as festivals and exhibitions, educational programmes and publishing. Through DI/S pilot project, the NGO created its own company named Izvan kontejnera d.o.o. as a new business extending the existing organizational model. It enables us to experiment with moving away from the grant-based financing of the venue infrastructure towards achieving more self-sufficiency and economic sustainability.

The new venue + new company combination also opened the door for creating new relations with audiences and partners. Instead of working with “usual suspects” from the cultural/creative, academic and scientific sector, in this pilot we collaborate with new partners from the business sector such as private companies, professional associations and corporations. We work with new partners that share our values and experiment with collaborations going beyond sponsorship and asset exchange. At the same time, we create new ways for audiences to support the new venue, from standardized ticketing and merchandise, to more engaging and innovative memberships and subscriptions packages.



The purpose of this pilot was to gain more economic agility and sustainability, and accompany the growth in resources with innovative and experimental actions widening our circle of partners and audiences. The organization becomes more ready to adopt circular economy models and transform its newly founded business into a social entrepreneurship endeavor - where income is invested back not only to the activities of the organizations, but to the wider cultural and creative sector.

Our main target groups are international and local companies, corporations and new partner organizations with values and development strategies similar to ours, such as support to the contemporary artistic and cultural sector, entrepreneurial projects, integration of new technologies and science, repurposing and creating new values in the existing products, and engagement in the civil society area. We also target our neighbours and local citizens as specific segments of our audiences, since our newly established venue needs to build its identity, attract attention and give new purpose to the renovated industrial location where the venue is situated.

# DOBRO DOŠLI U KONTEJNER / WELCOME TO KONTEJNER

Future  
DiverCities

Projekt uređenja interijera / Interior design project

## SKROZ

Program podržali / Supported by



Co-funded by  
the European Union



VLADA REPUBLIKE HRVATSKE  
Vlada za učenje



Uređenje i opremanje KONTEJNER izložbeno-izvedbenog prostora podržali su / The renovation and furnishing of the exhibition-performance venue KONTEJNER is supported by

SAMSUNG



ŠPINA



KNAUFCEILING  
Solutions



EGLE  
lights

iverpan

Sponzori / Sponsors



presscut



"Welcome to KONTEJNER" entry screen provided by partners Samsung, showcasing the new visual identity by studio Kuna zlatica.  
Photo: Sanja Bistričić Srića.

# Defining our target groups:

<p><b>Private companies</b> - from SMEs to corporations, local and international</p> <p>Usage of space and resources, mutual promotion and visibility, new collaborative activities for artists and curators, sponsorships</p>	<p><b>Professional associations and alliances as head structures/networks, local</b></p> <p>Usage of space and resources, mutual promotion and visibility, dissemination of information, cooperation on educational modules</p>	<p><b>Other cultural and creative organizations - local</b></p> <p>Usage of space and resources, mutual promotion and visibility, new collaborative activities</p>	<p><b>Audiences with focus on the neighbourhood and city of Zagreb, local</b></p> <p>Participative actions, new usage of space, support through purchase opportunities (ticketing, branded merchandise, books), new benefits and access through membership and subscription</p>	<p><b>Artists, local and international</b></p> <p>New revenue streams provide additional funding for the production of artworks and events; new partners and audiences give new visibility to the artists</p>
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Design for multipurpose outdoor furniture at KONTEJNER, Zagreb, by Jakov Habjan and Hrvoje Spudić.





## Key partners supporting the project:

- \* 200C company and communication expert Jadrana Ćurković (Zagreb): business sector partnership, branding strategy, strategic planning, marketing and business expert consultation through the entire project.
- \* Production collective consisting of SME's Kolot obrt by industrial designer Jakov Habjan, Sto osamdeset by Maxime Wein, and designers William Linn and Hrvoje Spudić (Zagreb, San Francisco) - technical support for guest programmes at KONTEJNER, upgrade of equipment and general space conditions, design of the multipurpose outdoor space furniture.
- \* Samsung corporation (international): new sponsorship for the venue and potential new partnership for collaborative activities (digital art commissions for Samsung products)
- \* Kuna zlatica design studio (Zagreb): authors of the visual identity for KONTEJNER venue awarded with European design award in 2024 for company logo. Partners for custom merchandise, design of tickets, publications and other sellable items to activate the on-site shop.
- \* HURA - The Croatian Association of Communications Agencies, leading industry association with 62 agencies as members, one of the first and already a potential long-term client for KONTEJNER's new company.

# COMPETITION and UNIQUENESS

Competitors: cultural centres, creative hubs open for public, art galleries, multipurpose studio spaces for sub renting, concert venues.

Points of differentiation: offering turn-key solution for guest clients working in the space, high quality design interior and facilities, integrated sustainability practices (revitalized abandoned industry space, reused materials and upcycling in interior), edgy and exciting profile of the venue, good location and easy access from different city areas, quality tech equipment and expert tech support team, different functional zones in the space (bar, shop, central area), good advertising opportunities in the space (digital screens).



# Strategic approach

For this pilot to happen, we needed to establish, renovate and open the new KONTEJNER venue - a process that was done through the project **Future DiverCities**. In parallel, we were doing the following DI/S pilot actions:

## Company set-up

- Budget planning and financial strategy: income, costs and balance projections for a period of 3 years for the new company
- Founding the company as a new legal entity - admin and legal procedures, work permissions, legal documentation
- Establishing selling and payment procedures, permissions, billing devices and staff, card payment procedures, invoicing, stocks and inventory
- Initiate new bookkeeping for profit organizations and new banking procedures

## Reaching clients to host in the space

- Creating a curated address book with contacts within specific targeted segments: event agencies, production and media houses, advertising and PR agencies, sponsor companies and existing partners, freelance creatives, design and fashion brands
- Establishing a price range for the services on the basis of research and communication with over 40 subjects having a similar business endeavour as ours
- Doing the campaign: contacting everyone from the address book, sending newsletters, direct e-mailing, promoting on-line and in social media
- Writing a contract template for the clients with an integrated tech-rider check-list
- Organizing booking calendar and the team - redistribution of management tasks and coordination with KONTEJNER's own programmes in the venue
- Kick off with first clients using the space for their programme
- Feedback, analysis and reflection, pivoting (price range, type of activities hosted in the space, visibility and promotion etc.)

## Plans for driving Community Engagement

- Design of multifunctional furniture for outdoorspace of the venue to interconnect the inside space with the neighbourhood: working with architects and designers, production of mock-up pieces, acquiring permissions from landlords, pitch presentations
- Design of paid membership and subscription packages for citizens offering new access and participation opportunities
- Design of B2B project for a corporate partner based on their products and used as a vehicle for digital art dissemination
- Design of new KONTEJNER-branded merchandise for audiences and visitors.



New visual identity for the KONTEJNER venue by studio Kuna zlatica from Zagreb - outdoor signalization. Photo: Sanja Bistričić Srića.

# Sustainability

Economic sustainability - a key pillar in our pilot project. It is based on achieving circular economy principles in our company and growing the social entrepreneurship approach that brings benefits to both the organization and wider cultural sector.

Ecological sustainability - reuse of materials and equipment, sustainable technological solutions and design in upgrading the space conditions and in the work with clients (event set-ups, custom furniture and design etc.). This is achieved through collaboration with a production workshop/collective located near the venue - a team with a strong sustainability-driven, upcycling approach.

Sustainability-oriented partners - we prioritize collaboration with sustainability-oriented businesses, giving booking priority and pricing flexibility to agencies and companies committed to sustainable solutions in their fields. At the same time, we actively seek new collaboration opportunities with private companies and enterprises that align with our values, particularly those that incorporate social responsibility into their core strategies.

# Lessons learned

- \* The true extent of internal challenges: understanding how demanding the first year is on team dynamics and resource allocation helps the team to better prepare for internal communication and workload distribution.
- \* The importance of diversifying revenue streams early on: exploring innovative funding models and partnerships from the outset alleviates financial pressures during the initial phase.
- \* Insights into the local community: deeper knowledge of community needs and expectations refines the approach to curation, programming and engagement activities.

# RESULTS OR FINANCIAL PLANNING

## Already reached:

- First income for the company coming from the new services (hosting events, tickets, publications and merchandise shop)
- First year of company concluded in positive financial balance
- New and diversified financial resources: services, material goods, monetized bar area, sponsorship deals

## To be achieved:

- Company income covers the infrastructure expenses, with surplus being invested back into cultural programmes and artworks
- Audiences contribute more through membership, ticketing and merchandise
- Collaborative projects with corporate partners bring new money to the organization



KONTEJNER team photo:  
Mario Gracin, Olga Majcen  
Linn, Sunčica Ostoić, Jadrana  
Čurković, Tereza Teklić, William  
Linn, Davorka Begović, Ana  
Bedenko and Ena Hodžić.  
Photo: Sanja Bistričić Srića.

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