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## FESTIVAL DAYS OF URBAN CULTURE CASE STUDY

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**Abstract:** *The festival Days of Urban Culture in Čačak, Serbia, is an initiative that started in 2015 as a grassroots festival without any official support from the city or from the state. However, this festival managed to survive a whole decade on voluntary work, random sponsors and donations in a city without cultural policy or any strategy for cultural development. This makes its contribution all more impressive and admirable. In 2023, Days of Urban Culture produced its 100th mural and put the city of Čačak on the map of Serbia as the city with the largest number of murals. This paper will address the mechanisms of the festival's development, its relations with the local government and the reception of its opus among the citizens of Čačak. Moreover, we will attempt to showcase the contribution of the festival to the project Serbian Capital of Culture 2023 as well as the ever changing relationship with the city government.*

**Key words:** *muralism, street art, festival, cultural policy, community, Čačak, Belgrade*

### Introduction

Festival Days of Urban culture (Dani urbane kulture, DUK) is the first international street art and music festival in Central Serbia and it takes place in Čačak. From its inception in 2015 it was dedicated to the promotion of hip-hop music, extreme sports and art in public space. Now the festival's focus has changed and the dominant art form is murals. Over the course of 9 years over a 100 murals had been painted, with the 100th mural being inaugurated in 2023.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Anonim. (2023) *Čačak, kao nacionalna prestonica kulture, dobija stoti po redu mural u okviru festivala Dani urbane kulture*, 16. May 2023., 03. July 2024, <https://www.danas.rs/kultura/cacak-kao-nacionalna-prestonica-kulture-dobija-stoti-po-redu-mural-u-okviru-festivala-dani-urbane-kulture/>.

Čačak is the 12th most populated city in Serbia with 105.840 people, including the rural area.<sup>2</sup> As many other cities in Serbia, it is dealing with the problem of “brain drain”, with many young people leaving the city to go to bigger cities, or abroad.<sup>3</sup> Cultural institutions in the city are the National museum of Čačak, the City library “Vladislav Petković Dis”, the art gallery “Nadežda Petrović”, inter-municipal Historical archive, the Cultural center and the City theater.<sup>4</sup> All these institutions were founded by the municipality, and there are other actors such as NGOs and festivals<sup>5</sup> enriching the cultural life of the city.

Even with all the cultural institutions and activities, the city of Čačak never had a strategy for the cultural development until 2023. The strategy was finally introduced during the first National capital of culture through a project “Čačanska rodna”.<sup>6</sup> The cultural strategy of the city will be followed by an action plan with concrete actions needed to reach the goals, which mainly focus on developing the cultural institutions and activating the youth in the field of culture.<sup>7</sup>

It is important to note that Serbia, as well as Čačak, is a country that deals with many problems related to democracy and that in recent years the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) has steadily eroded political rights and civil liberties, putting pressure on independent media, the political opposition, and civil society organizations.<sup>8</sup> This situation also has an impact on the cultural life and, as Vesna Trifunović stated: “Any kind

2 Profil (2024) Official census of citizens by National bureau of statistics, [http://devinfo.stat.gov.rs/SerbiaProfileLauncher/files/profiles/sr/1/DI\\_Profil\\_Cacak\\_EURSRB002001004001.pdf](http://devinfo.stat.gov.rs/SerbiaProfileLauncher/files/profiles/sr/1/DI_Profil_Cacak_EURSRB002001004001.pdf) (accessed 03. July 2024).

3 Anonim. (2022) Čačak za 10 godina ostao bez 8000 stanovnika, 03. July 2022, 03. July 2024, <https://www.ozonpress.net/drustvo/cacak-za-10-godina-ostao-bez-8-000-stanovnika/>.

4 Official website of the Čačak municipality: <https://kultura.cacak.rs/ustanove/> (accessed 03. July 2024).

5 Other festivals in the city include “Karusel”, festival of ambient and ethno music, rock music festival “PRiČa”, craft beer festival “Cug fest”, international folklore dance festival “Etnofest” organized by the Touristic organization of Čačak and literature festival “Dis’s spring” organized by the city library.

6 The programme “National capital of culture” was first introduced in 2023, with the aim to decentralize culture in Serbia, and the cultural institutions of the City of Čačak were the project holders. “According to the stated decisions, the events of special significance for Čačak are “Dis’s Spring,” “The Nadežda Petrović Memorial,” “The Animated Film Festival – ANIMANIMA,” “Photography Days in Serbia,” the Flute Players’ Gathering of Serbia in Prislonica – ‘Oh, Morava,” “Summer Culture Days in Čačak,” “The International Folklore Festival Ethnofest,” and “Days of Urban Culture – DUK Festival.” *Strategija razvoja kulture grada Čačka 2023 - 2027*. Gradska uprava Čačak. Službeni list grada Čačka 4/2023: [http://demo.paragraf.rs/demo/combined/Old/t/t2023\\_05/CA\\_004\\_2023\\_002.htm](http://demo.paragraf.rs/demo/combined/Old/t/t2023_05/CA_004_2023_002.htm).

7 Anonim. (2023), Predstavljena strategija kulture Čačka za narednih pet godina, 21. March 2023, 03. July 2024, <https://moravainfo.rs/predstavljena-strategija-kulture-cacka-za-narednih-pet-godina/>.

8 Anonim. (2024), Freedom in the world 2024: Serbia, 03. July 2024, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/serbia/freedom-world/2024>.

of discussion about culture in the Serbian society, today, turns into a discussion about politics, even the cultural one, and the pursuit of money flows in the budget treasury redistribution”, adding that in redistribution of authority and power, “care for culture” is reduced to allocation of grants for culture which in Serbian society is less than percent of gross national income.<sup>9</sup>

This paper will show the specifics of this festival and how the traditional conveying of muralism<sup>10</sup> doesn't apply to it, by analyzing the main idea and development of the DUK festival, collaboration with municipality, funding, gaining permits for the murals, the impact the festival had on the community, artist's experience as well as media coverage.

### *The main idea and development of the festival*

Festival Days of Urban Culture was started in 2015 by the organization “Alternativa za Čačak”.<sup>11</sup> The beginning of the festival is tied to the construction of a skate park in Čačak, when the magazine Tramvaj, issued by the Alternativa za Čačak<sup>12</sup> wrote about the issues of skate culture in the city. Through a project “Together for the community” by NIS company, they got the funds needed for the building of the skate park. “When NIS sent their team to monitor the skate park, the Trag Foundation came to our aid and approved a project for the opening of the skate park in the amount of 300,000 dinars (about 2.500 Euros). This was the initial spark that led us to start planning a three-day festival” said Strahinja Babić in an interview for one of the local papers.<sup>13</sup> As Vuk Đurić stated, since the start they had sponsorship from Montana cans, and the next years continued in the same course as the first one, although the idea switched from graffiti to murals, and many of local muralists in Serbia, such as Wuper, did their first mural on DUK festival.<sup>14</sup> Strahinja Babić said that during the first 5 years all of the people involved

9 Trifunović, V. (2012) *Kulturna politika u Srbiji - problem centra i periferije*, Univerzitet u Kragujevcu, Učiteljski fakultet, p. 4.

10 Muralism as a movement is connected to initiative from the government, leaving little or no space for artist's expression. See: Souter, A. (2017) Mexican Muralism Movement Overview and Analysis, 22.1.2017, 03. July 2024, <https://www.theartstory.org/movement/mexican-muralism>.

11 Alternativa za Čačak is a non-profit organization founded in 2011 by Strahinja Babić as the director and Milorad Obradović as a member, see: <https://neprofitne.rs/organisation-info?org=7671> (accessed 03. July 2024).

12 Magazine Tramvaj was a magazine for youth and it was first published in August of 2012, with 8 editions being published until October of 2013. It wrote about Čačak and things that are happening concerning young people. See: Anonim. (2016) Tramvaj ponovo vozi, 01. August 2016, 03. July 2024, <https://www.ozonpress.net/hronika/tramvaj-ponovo-vozi/>.

13 Anonim. (2015) Festival DUK otvara skejt park, 29. April 2015, 03. July 2024, <https://www.ozonpress.net/zabava/festival-duk-otvara-skejt-park/>.

14 Vuk Đurić discussed the development of the festival in a panel discussion with Street art walks Belgrade, together with Croatan colleagues who lead the festival “Grafiti na gradele” in Brač. More at: Street Art Belgrade (2023) Razgovori - Grafiti na gradele i DUK, 17. January 2023, 03. July 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eoLhXla6ZSw>.

contributed to the festival in their own way, from fashion shows to dance and skate competitions, but at one point these additional contents were left behind, in order to focus on muralism. As he said:

*The year 2020 was a turning point, as gatherings could not be organized due to the circumstances with the Covid virus. That year, DUK focused solely on mural painting, in collaboration with Gornji Milanovac. The following year saw a similar situation, while in 2022, the musical part of the program was not held because the musicians involved had disbanded. The musical program returned to focus in 2023, when the separate program called festival Uzlet emerged within the organization, which gained a new identity and featured more well-known performers, while DUK continued its musical component independently, remaining true to its original concept of underground music and artists. This evolution transformed the festival idea from a social movement of people interested in urban culture into one of the recognizable festivals focusing on street art.<sup>15</sup>*

The festival changed its legal entity from Alternativa for Čačak to Days of Urban Culture<sup>16</sup> in 2017, and today it is referred to as “the most significant muralism manifestation in the country and region”<sup>17</sup>, bringing each year over 10 street artists from Serbia, Europe and the world, to paint large scale murals, while also enriching the “open gallery” which today counts over 100 murals. The organizational structure of the festival in 2024 consists of Strahinja Babić as the director, Vuk Đurić (Endo) as the artistic director, Marko Jozović as the designer, Maja Stojanović (Zmaja) and Irena Jevtović (Kusha Chiks).

### *Collaboration with the Municipality*

The cooperation between the DUK Festival and the municipality has been described by Strahinja Babić as diverse and initially challenging. “Until the festival’s fourth year, the municipality of Čačak did not financially support the festival, but after we presented our achievements, we sought and received their support. In subsequent years, the municipality provided partial funding, although it remained a small part of the overall budget”<sup>18</sup>.

The city of Čačak has a city council which is constituted of the mayor, deputy of the mayor and 9 members of the City council which are elected by the City Assembly for a period of 4 years. One of those city counselors is a counselor for the department of education, culture and science<sup>19</sup>, and all of the manifestations in culture fall into this department. This is the reason why for this paper we have conducted interviews with two of the

15 Jevremović, J. (2024) Interview with Strahinja Babić, Belgrade, 30.3.2024.

16 See: <https://search.bisnode.rs/rs/1081482/dani-urbane-kulture/> (accessed 03. July 2024).

17 Anonim. (2024) Uskoro počinje 20. DUK festival, 28. May 2024, 03. July 2024, <https://www.oblakodermagazin.rs/uskoro-pocinje-10-duk-festival/>.

18 Jevremović, op. cit.

19 See official website of Čačak municipality: [https://www.cacak.org.rs/Gradsko\\_vece-57-1](https://www.cacak.org.rs/Gradsko_vece-57-1) (accessed 03. July 2024).

city counselors from this department to see in which way they supported the festival and what is their general opinion on DUK.

During the time the festival first started, this position was held by Dušan Radojević, who was a city counselor for youth and culture in the period 2016-2020.<sup>20</sup> “As a member of the City Council responsible for youth and culture, I dealt with initiatives coming from young people. I collaborated with representatives of the DUK association during the development of the Local Action Plan for Youth, and with that document, we defined priorities in the area of youth policy development. One of the priorities was that the social and entertainment life in the city needed to be enriched”. When asked about the cultural scene in Čačak, Dušan stated that he remembers the time when the only event was New Year’s celebration at the city square, and that now the cultural life is much more enriched, although presented with a new problem- many of the events take place on the same day, and the citizens are deprived of the opportunity to attend each activity they enjoy.<sup>21</sup>

This issue was also mentioned by Strahinja Babić, although he stated that:

*Significant collaboration with the municipality and other cultural entities in the city began in 2023, when Čačak was the national capital of culture. This period saw dialogue, information exchange, meetings, and networking among cultural actors in the city. However, once the capital of culture year ended, this practice ceased, and communication and collaboration returned to previous levels.<sup>22</sup>*

The current counselor for education, science and culture, Miloš Papić stated that contrary to the general opinion, for the financial aspect he thinks that “in addition to free space, energy, and the other services, all the festivals have commercial content and sponsors, yet they still expect greater support from the City. Therefore, I believe that the financial support is more than adequate.”<sup>23</sup>

Miloš Papić also stated that “There remains regret that the Cultural Incubator was not formed during Čačanska Rodna, but this is something I would address in the next mandate.”<sup>24</sup> Formation of the Cultural incubator was one of the goals of the National capital of culture project, where it’s stated that analysis of surveys and focus groups has shown that there is a need to provide civil society organizations in culture with space for functioning and programs. This space would be especially intended for young people.<sup>25</sup>

20 Anonim. (2021) Dušan Radojević biografija, 29. March 2021, 03. July 2024, <https://032info.rs/dusan-radojevic-biografija/>.

21 Jevremović, J. (2024) Interview with Dušan Radojević, in Čačak, 26. 6. 2023.

22 Jevremović, Babić interview.

23 Jevremović, J. (2024) Interview with Miloš Papić, in Čačak, 26. 6. 2023.

24 Jevremović, op.cit.

25 *Strategija razvoja kulture grada Čačka 2023 - 2027*. Gradska uprava Čačak. Službeni list grada Čačka 4/2023: [http://demo.paragraf.rs/demo/combined/Old/t/t2023\\_05/CA\\_004\\_2023\\_002.htm](http://demo.paragraf.rs/demo/combined/Old/t/t2023_05/CA_004_2023_002.htm).

Another important aspect is collaboration with the Tourist organization of Čačak,<sup>26</sup> which listed the DUK festival as one of the manifestations in the city on its website, although it does not offer any touristic guidance when it comes to murals.<sup>27</sup> Skinner and Jolliffe gave examples of the impact murals can have on development of tourism, one of them being a small town called Chemainus in Canada. After the industry of sawmill the town depended on went into decline, their response was to develop art tourism. “They saturated the town with forty-two community history images on the sides of buildings, developing the blank canvas of a side or gable end into an attractive eye-catching feature. This “al fresco gallery” gave the town some 400,000 annual tourists, sustains over 300 small businesses and points to the town’s sobriquet: “The Little Town That Did”<sup>28</sup> Citizens of Čačak have the opportunity to see the murals and hear about their origin through bicycle tours led by local artists. Activists from the local Youth office started organizing these tours in 2019 and since then they are organized annually, although the organizers frequently change.<sup>29</sup>

In conclusion, the collaboration between the DUK festival and municipality has improved since the festival first took off, and the views on this collaboration are different between the organizers and representatives of the municipality. Although challenging and from the above mentioned could be deemed as complicated, this collaboration is existent and seemingly improving.

### *Funding of the festival*

The DUK festival is funded through projects, municipality, sponsorships and ticket sales, as well as merchandise. Project funding is in the base of the festival, with different foundations such as the aforementioned Trag and NIS<sup>30</sup>, to other NGOs, such as Center E8<sup>31</sup> and RYCO<sup>32</sup>, as well as many others. Project funding is different each year and follows the open calls for project proposals.

On the other hand, collaboration with the municipality, as discussed in the previous chapter, has developed and grown until 2023, when it reached its peak with the project Čačanska rodna. That year also marked the growth of interest in the festival, so many other sponsors joined:

26 For the purpose of this paper we tried to get in contact with the director of the Tourist organization in Čačak, but he did not reply to our emails, calls and messages

27 See official website of the Tourist organization of Čačak: <https://www.turizamcacak.rs/> (accessed 03. July 2024).

28 Skinner, J. and Jolliffe, L. (2019) *Murals and tourism: Heritage, Culture and Identity*, New York: Routledge, pp. 3-4.

29 Anonim. (2019) Okreni pedalu kreni ka muralu - akcija koja je obeležila dan mladih, 16. August 2019, 03. July 2024, <https://www.regionalnevesti.net/?p=39362>.

30 See the section “Main idea and development of the festival”.

31 Anonim. (2024) Proglašeni pobednici Pop culture challenge-a, 04. March 2024, 03. July 2024, <https://rc.gradjanske.org/proglaseni-pobednici-pop-culture-challenge-a/>.

32 See official RYCO website: <https://www.rycowb.org/ryco-announces-winners-of-2nd-open-call-wbycf/> (accessed 03. July 2024).

*Early sponsorships came from friends, companies connected to friends, and local firms. As the festival grew, national companies also became involved. Revenue also came from ticket sales, beverage sales, merchandise sponsorships, and sales. In 2023, the funding structure shifted with increased support from Čačak as the national capital of culture, and participation from the French Institute, Austrian Cultural Forum, A1 Foundation, and Quantox company. Until 2023, all festival organizers worked on a volunteer basis, but that year marked the first time organizers received compensation. Many murals were created by artists who recognized the festival's energy and offered their services for free, given the festival provided large surfaces and invested in equipment.<sup>33</sup>*

As seen from above, the funding of the festival is changing every year, depending on the project proposal, sponsors and involvement of the municipality.

### *Obtaining permits for mural painting*

The city of Čačak has no urbanistic rules for obtaining permits for mural painting, so the only thing needed for a mural to be legal is the permission from residents or the owners of the building.<sup>34</sup> Exploring the role of urban cities and street art, Alison Young argues that graffiti and street art have moved from relative obscurity to a prominent cultural position due to influences such as market forces, criminal law decisions, intellectual property, local government politics, and commodification in fashion, music, publishing, and architecture.<sup>35</sup> A similar path was followed in Čačak, with the DUK festival having trouble obtaining permission for the first mural on an elementary school Vuk Karadžić.

Strahinja Babić said that initially the principal of the school rejected the idea to have murals painted on it, connecting it with graffiti, but after a few meetings they agreed and once the painting started the principal showed great appreciation and now this school has 6 large scale murals.<sup>36</sup>

“Now we just tell them we are from DUK, they give us the wall, we show the sketch and then we thank each other” stated Vuk Đurić showing how easily attainable the permits are once the festival has developed.<sup>37</sup>

### *Impact of DUK festival on community*

For the purpose of this paper a survey was conducted among the community in Čačak through a Google survey during March of 2024. The sample was accidental and

<sup>33</sup> Jevremović, Babić interview.

<sup>34</sup> On the official website of the department for urban planning no permits for painting on the facades are listed or required, see: <https://www.cacak.org.rs/212-1-1> (accessed 03. July 2024).

<sup>35</sup> Young, A. (2014) *Street art, public city: Law, crime and the urban imagination*, New York: Routledge, p. 151.

<sup>36</sup> Jevremović, Babić interview.

<sup>37</sup> Škodrić, T. (2024) Svet kakav želiš u Čačku zahvaljujući Udruženju “Dani Urbane Kulture” - “Gradske priče”, UNA TV, 22. January 2024, 03. July 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ll4OZhbh0Yo>.

the survey was shared on social media, as well as in schools through professors. Of the respondents, 71% were aged 15-25, 19% were 26-35, 6.5% were 36-50, and 3% were over 50. Considering the aforementioned brain drain problem the city of Čačak is dealing with, the fact that the majority of surveyed are young is precisely important. As the DUK festival concentrates on urban culture, which derives from youth culture, it is no surprise that young people are the ones recognizing its work the most.

Both male and female interviewees were almost equally represented in the survey. Even though general opinion has it that there are less women in street art, DUK festival has two women in the organization (Zmaja and Kusha Chiks), as well as many street artists that have participated in the festival, such as Hellga (Olgica Terzić, also one of the festival's co-funders), TKV, Jana Danilović,<sup>38</sup> Marv, as well as international artists such as Indonesian street artist Yessieow.<sup>39</sup>

The survey indicated that 192 respondents regularly notice murals while 183 have a wholly positive opinion of them. Despite this positivity, 43% of respondents were unfamiliar with the DUK festival specifically, recognizing murals as separate phenomena.

#### *Favorite murals of the citizens*

Contrary to expectations that realistic murals would be the favorite theme, it turned out that citizens almost equally prefer abstract murals and illustrations — 21% prefer abstract, 24% prefer illustrations, and 25% prefer realistic murals.

More than 70% of respondents have a favorite mural in the city, with notable mentions being the murals at Vuk Karadžić Elementary School, the silos painted in 2023, the mural featuring Nadežda Petrović, and the boy eating a cherry tree next to the city park.

School Vuk Karadžić has 6 murals painted by Endo, Artez, TKV, Jana Danilović, Erol Sjajni, Tužni Marin, Chez, Sarame and Stom500.<sup>40</sup> Concentrated on one place and visi-

38 TKV and Jana Danilović painted the 100th mural together with local artist Endo. See: Anonim. (2023) U Čačku se oslikava jubilarni 100. Mural u okviru Dana urbane kulture, 15. May 2023, 03. July 2024, <https://www.ozonpress.net/kultura/u-cacku-se-oslikava-jubilarni-100-mural-u-okviru-dana-urbane-kulture/>.

39 Forbes Srbija (2024) Indonežanska umetnica sa liste Forbes 30 ispod 30 oslikava fasade u Čačku, 05. June 2024, 03. July 2024, <https://forbes.n1info.rs/vesti/indonezanska-umetnica-sa-liste-forbes-30-ispod-30-oslikava-fasade-u-cacku>.

40 News about these murals: Anonim. (2022) Mural zasadi drvo na čačanskoj školi sastojaće se iz digitalnog i umetničkog dela NOSI VAŽNU PORUKU, 18. August 2022, 03. July 2024, <https://biznis.kurir.rs/zasadi-drvo/3993011/mural-zasadi-drvo-na-cacanskoj-skoli-sastojace-se-iz-digitalnog-i-umetnickog-dela-nosi-vazu-poruku>; Ratković, V. (2023), Dani urbane kulture: Hrvatski grafiteri Chez i Sarame oslikali fasadu Osnovne škole u Čačku, 26. June 2023, 03. July 2024,

<https://www.beforeafter.rs/drustvo/dani-urbane-kulture-hrvatski-grafiteri-chez-i-sarame-oslikali-fasadu-osnovne-skole-u-cacku/>; Ratković, V. (2023), Tužni Marin u čizmama i Erol Sjajni oslikali fasadu u Čačku, 26. June 2023, 03. July 2024, <https://www.oblakodermagazin.rs/tuzni-marin-u-cizmama-i-erol-sjajni-oslikali-fasadu-u-cacku/>; Anonim. (2023) Francuski street art umetnik Stom500 na DUK festivalu, 03. July 2024, <http://www.institutfrancais.rs/francuski-street-art-umetnik-stom500-na-duk-festivalu-u-cacku/>.



ble from a nearby pathway, it is no wonder that citizens are fond of these murals, as well as that they referred to them as a group.<sup>41</sup> All of the current murals were done in 2023, covering some of the earliest murals done by the festival.



Figure 1: Mural by Stom500 on the school “Vuk Karadžić”, 2023  
(photo: Irena Jevtović)



Figure 2: Mural by Atelje Šoln depicting Nadežda Petrović, 2023  
(photo: Bojan Pajić)

The mural depicting famous Serbian impressionist Nadežda Petrović, upon whom the city gallery has been named, was done by Marija and Stevan from Atelje Šoln. It took the attention of the community and the director of the gallery expressed his gratitude for the realization of this mural.<sup>42</sup>

Another notable example is a mural called Boško by Wuper Kec, depicting a boy eating a cherry. Located next to the city park, this mural was referred to in the survey as “peaceful” and “calming”.

41 Many of the answers in the survey referred to them as “murals on Vuk Karadžić school” with only a few of them separating Stom’s mural of the red panda.

42 Anonim. (2023) Mural sa likom Nadežde Petrović u vinari nova kulturna tačka u gradu, 30. May 2023, 03. July 2024, <https://moravainfo.rs/mural-sa-likom-nadezde-petrovic-u-vinari-nova-kulturna-tacka-u-gradu/>.



Figure 3: Boško by Wuper Kec, 2018  
(photo: Srđa Čvorović)



Figure 4: Murals on Silos in Čačak, from left to right painted by Endo, Sobekcis, Kartel, 2023 (photo: Irena Jevtović)

One of the biggest projects done by the DUK festival was painting of Silos in Čačak, an old mill (mlin) factory, which is no longer used. Many young people spent their teenage years at Silosi, so it is no wonder that the murals done on them are one of the most mentioned favorites. Three batteries of Silos were painted by Vuk Đurić endo as a local artist, duo Sobekcis from Belgrade and Kartel from Germany.

*On each of the Silos we have one (mural). On the middle one there are line landscapes of houses and villages, as well as a plum in pixels - as a connection between traditional and modern. Plum represents Čačanska rodna, because our city is the capital of culture this year.<sup>43</sup>*

Citizens mostly view murals as works of art, with 70% considering this to be the case and believing that creating murals requires special skill. About 60% of respondents think that murals can initiate social discussions on certain topics. Surveying the perception

43 Kuzmić, J. (2023), Na čačanskim silovima osvanuli murali šljiva u pikselima, 07. June 2023, 03. July 2024., <https://www.agroklub.rs/agro-hobi/na-cacanskim-silosima-osvanuli-murali-sljiva-u-pikselima/87241/>.

of murals created during the festival among Čačak citizens, a Google survey found that murals remain a significant and positively viewed part of daily life.

### *DUK artists and their experience*

Some of the artists that painted murals on DUK festival over the course of 9 years include: Corte (Spain), Stom500 (France), Baki Baki (Japan), Suiko (Japan), HNRX (Austria), Wandart (Czech Republic), Kartel (Germany), HRVB (Germany), Yessiow (Indonesia), as well as artists from the region - Chez, Sarne, Lonac, Tužni Marin, Erol Sjajni from Croatia, and Serbia, such as Sleš, Artez, TKV and Jana. Interviews with three artists who participated in the DUK Festival were largely positive. Carl Kenz, Slash, and Quam reported satisfaction with the festival's organization, food, accommodation, and community interactions. According to Carl Kenz:

*One thing I will never forget, there was this old man coming at me talking in your language I really don't understand. So I tried to thank him for showing up and apologize for not understanding. He was talking with his hands then and showed me thumbs up and that I should wait here, he will be back. So after a while he came back with some cake and his wife who was able to speak a bit of english, she translated that he was loving what I am doing and we had a little talk about the intention and idea of my artwork. This was a mind blowing experience.<sup>44</sup>*

Experience from the festival itself confirms the satisfaction of the artists by the organization, with many of them stating that they would like to participate again in the upcoming editions.<sup>45</sup>

### *Media coverage of DUK festival*

Media coverage of the festival evolved from primarily local coverage in its early years<sup>46</sup> to national attention by 2023, coinciding with Čačak's status as the national capital of culture (the same year that the festival employed a PR manager).

Using press clippings and Google search tools, texts were analyzed for this study. Initially, local media focused on the construction of the skate park<sup>47</sup> and later shifted to cover specific festival activities, particularly murals, starting to refer to Čačak as "the city

44 Jevremović, J. (2023) Google survey on artist's experience of DUK festival, March 2023.

45 We know this from personal conversations with the artists.

46 One of the local media is Ozon press, which has followed the festival from the start: <https://www.ozonpress.net/?s=dani+urbane+kulture> (accessed 03. July 2024).

47 Examples: Anonim. (2015) Otvoren skejt park, mladi iz regiona u Čačku, 03. May 2015, 03. July 2024, <https://www.ozonpress.net/zabava/otvoren-skejt-park-mladi-iz-regiona-u-cacku/>; Anonim. (2021) Arhitekta Milorad Obradović: Izgradnja skejt parka u Čačku delovala je kao borba sa vetrenjačama, 20. 11. 2021, 03. July 2024, <https://morvainfo.rs/arhitekta-milorad-obradovic-izgradnja-skejt-parka-u-cacku-delovala-je-kao-borba-sa-vetrenjacama/>.

of murals”<sup>48</sup> While some texts relayed direct announcements, journalists often wrote independently,<sup>49</sup> occasionally interchanging terms like “graffiti” and “murals.”<sup>50</sup> Čačak’s cultural capital designation, with DUK festival as one of the leading programmes, increased media interest, with both local and national outlets expanding from news articles to features and interviews, and TV coverage leaning towards documentaries.<sup>51</sup> This shift illustrates growing media interest in comprehensive reporting on the festival.

### *Conclusion*

The DUK festival developed from a social movement connected with skate park, extreme sports and street art, into one of the leading muralism manifestations in the Western Balkan region. The city of Čačak has since improved its cultural policy, but it is still in development and the first cultural strategy for the city is yet to be implemented.

The festival’s collaboration with the municipality has been challenging, with the notable lack of collaboration with the Tourist organization of Čačak. During the years this collaboration improved in many aspects, such as financial one, which was missing for the first four editions. Obtaining permits for mural painting in Čačak is reduced to permission from the residents and/or owners of the building, making the community’s opinion on murals important for the work of the festival. Surveying the public opinion on murals, we found out that 183 out of 200 citizens questioned have a positive attitude towards murals in the city.

Artists who painted the murals also point out the positive experience they had with the organization, as well as with the community, which expressed interest in what they were doing. The media coverage of the DUK festival has vastly improved since the beginning, spreading from local media to national ones.

Considering the analysis of these factors, we can conclude that the DUK festival falls into a different category than the traditional muralism. Run by an NGO with challenging collaboration with the government representatives, but a positive relationship with the community, this festival is different from what was muralism led by the government, and has a different impact. This leaves room for future studies on these types of festivals and defining a category under which they could fall upon, as well as broader research on the way the DUK festival has impacted the community in Čačak.

48 Anonim. (2019) Čačak postao grad murala, 15. June 2019, 03. July 2024, <https://www.info-press.rs/drustvo/cacak-postao-grad-murala/>.

49 Nikitović, V. (2016), Svetski umetnici ulepšali fasade u Čačku, 05 June 2016, 03. July 2024, <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/srbija/svetski-umetnici-muralima-ulepsali-fasade-u-cacku/xem-ckr5>.

50 Anonim. (2016) Čačak dobija nove grafite, 19. June 2016, 03. July 2024, <https://www.ozonpress.net/zabava/cacak-dobija-nove-grafite-foto/>.

51 Example at: TV Nova (2023) Oslikavanje murala na 30 metara iznad zemlje - Čačak dobija novi ogromni mural na silosima, 07. June 2023, 03. July 2024, <https://nova.rs/emisije/oslikavanje-murala-na-30-metara-iznad-zemlje-cacak-dobija-novi-ogromni-mural-na-silosima-industrijske-zone/>.

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### ДАНИ УРБАНЕ КУЛТУРЕ

#### СТУДИЈА СЛУЧАЈА

**Сажетак:** У раду су представљене специфичности фестивала *Дани урбане културе* који се од 2015. године одржава у Чачку. Овај фестивал је фокусиран на сликање мурала. Муралистима се уступају велике површине за сликање, али циљ фестивала је и промоција хип-хоп музике и екстремних спортова. Са намером да се разумеју специфичности овог фестивала, ова студија случаја анализира културну политику у граду Чачку, развој фестивала, сарадњу са Општином, административне поступке: добијање дозвола за сликање мурала, утицај мурала на свакодневни живот грађана, искуства уметника и медијско покривање фестивала. За потребе овог рада коришћене су методе интервјуа и анкета. У интервјуима су учествовали директор фестивала Страхиња Бабић и два претходна градска већника за културу, науку и образовање у Чачку, Душан Радојевић и Милош Папић. Сарадња са Општином се показала као изазовна, али се с временом побољшава, док је медијско покривање фестивала расло како се ширио. У оквиру рада спроведена је и анкета чији је циљ био да открије на који начин грађани Чачка доживљавају мурале, а попунило ју је 200 грађана различитих старосних доба. Резултати су показали значајан утицај мурала на свакодневни живот грађана који су анкетирани. Грађани су навели своје омиљене мурале, њих 70% доживљава мурале као уметност. Финансирање овог фестивала углавном је организовано преко пројеката и спонзорстава, док део финансира Општина. *Дани урбане културе* смештени су у специфичан теоријски оквир који се разликује од традиционалног схватања мурализма.

**Кључне речи:** *улична уметност, мурализам, фестивал, културна политика, заједница, Чачак, Београд*