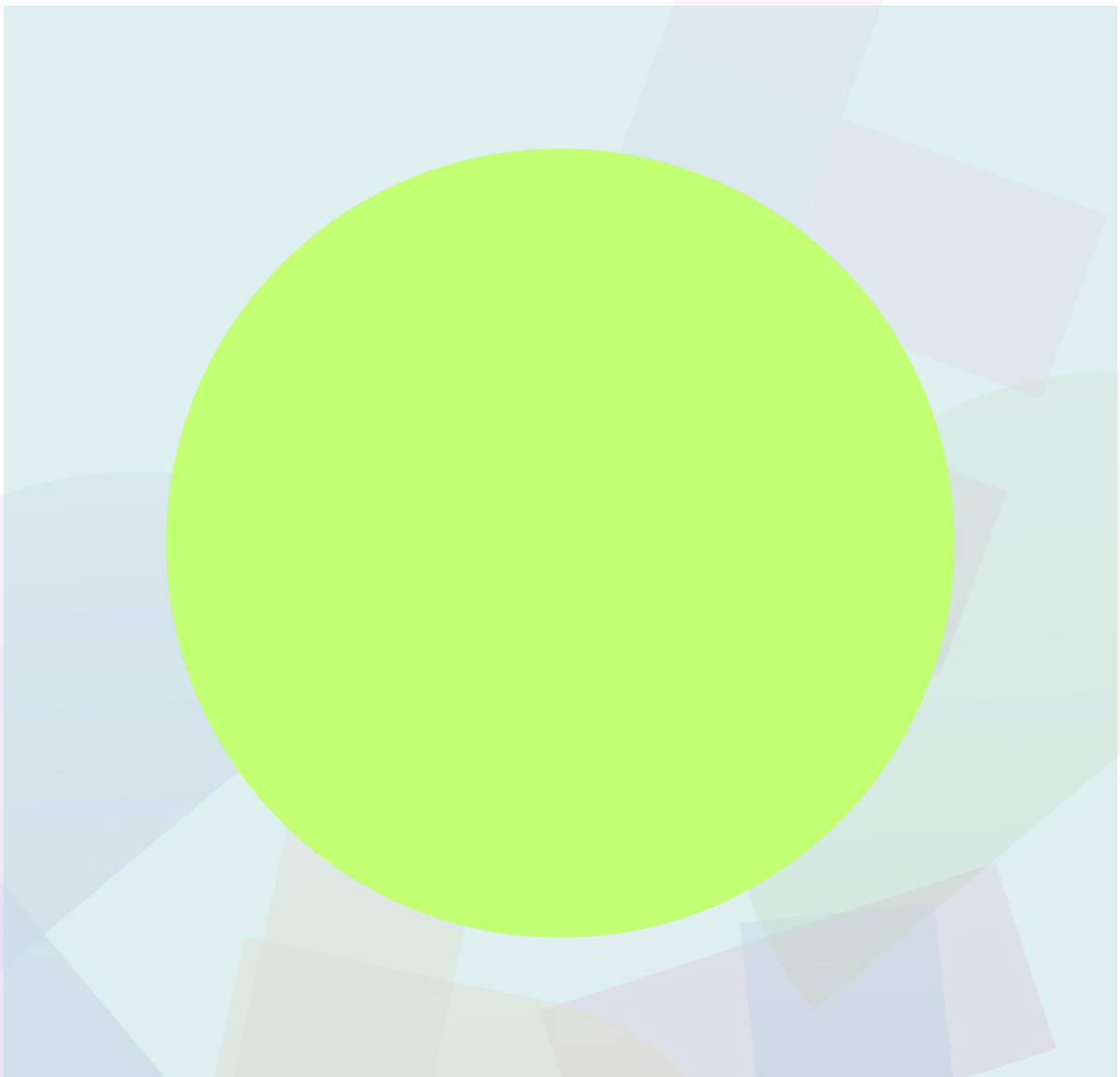


# SITE SPECIFIC



## About Europefiction and the Academy

**EUROPEFICTION is an association of 10 youth theatres from 6 European countries. In a network of five theatres for young audiences from the Ruhr area and five European partner theatres, we want research transnational encounters and develop new aesthetic forms together with young people and other partners.**

Every year a group of young theatre people come together a summercamp for an encounter and exchange with performances, workshops, conversations and firetalks. Encountering creates the basis of our society: community and solidarity. We want to develop an artistic utopia for a common future through art.

After two years of working together on the project of Europefiction, the Europefiction Academy is a next step to strengthen the partnerships between the co-working theatres, their local networks and to reflect on innovative methods in collaboration between the professional group leaders, talented ex-participants and students from a variety of theatre minded studies.

With this academy we want to develop new artistic and communicative strategies to convey the value of a democratic future with an interplay of political issues and art to a wide professional public of formal and non-formal youth-education.

***Want to know more about Europefiction and the Academy?***

**<https://europefiction.org>**



## INTRODUCTION

### What does it mean to work on a Site specific project?

- work **IN** a place
- work **WITH** a place
- work **ABOUT** a place

Throughout, it's all about the journey. Firstly in preparation for this workshop. You need to ask yourself a lot of questions to determine the framework.

Secondly, in creative work, which will require you to explore the places to be occupied.

### Step 1: "IN" and "WITH"

Working in a specific space means adapting to its technical conditions. In this way, you can determine the form your creative project will take.

- **Relation to the audience:** where is the audience? Is the positioning of the stage frontal or bi-frontal? Another way?
- **Surrounding:** is it indoor or outdoor? What kind of building? Is it a street or a park?...
- **Time:** will it be in the daytime or during the night? So, will you need extra lights or not?
- **Sound:** how to implement music? Is there already an imposing sound environment (traffic, passing trains, roadworks, etc.)? And what to do with it, maybe use it !?
- **Furniture:** use what is already in place! Street furniture, structures...

Working with a specific venue means thinking about the direction your creative project will take.

- **About theatrical performance, you can choose:**
  - Street theatre
  - Walking performances, and bringing the audience to different places
  - Using different places in the same building
- **About sound/musical creation, you can create:**
  - An audio walk
  - A fictional audioguide
- **About video creation, you can create:**
  - An enhanced reality video clips
  - Projections on a building like mapping

## Step 2: "ABOUT" this place

Now, you see clearly what is your framework, what is possible and what could be complicated to implement. Once you've studied the technical conditions, you can begin the creative work with your participants.

There are 2 ways to do this:

- historical and/or geographical
- emotional

Your choice depends on the result or the aim you purchase.

## Two approaches

We imagined two ways to work on the site-specific subject:

- Historical/geographical
- Emotional

You can choose to follow one way, to do both or to mix them. We recommend you to read both methods in order to gather the maximum pieces of information.

## Historical/Geographical

**This method answers to a tourist or educational aim.**

We recommend using it if you are in one of those situations:

- You want that your participant imagines a playful visit to this place and learn more about this place at the same time.
- You need to create a show for the anniversary of the town, for instance. For that, you want to draw a historical fresco.
- You work with another town or another country (twinning, pen pals...) and you're looking to create a link between these two places.

## I. Investigation

We gathered three ways to introduce the investigation process to your participants. You can use only one, or all of them.

### Looking outside

Ask the participant to track down all the little details that seem interesting and that may not be apparent at first glance: a strange shape on the tarmac, a peculiar tree, a house that seems abandoned, an old advertising sign that has almost disappeared, a commemorative plaque, etc. Collect all the pictures and comments.

### Ethnological observation process.

Ask the participant to stay a couple of hours at the same place and take notes on everything they observe: the people who pass by, their activities, their relationships with each other, the population density according to the day...

## Interviews

### Site-related interview

Invite the participants to interview local residents, shopkeepers, or even passersby. They can ask questions about the history of the area or its present.

- Are there any amusing anecdotes? Have there been any tragic events?
- How has the neighbourhood's population changed?
- How has the town changed architecturally?
- ...

And more personal questions such as:

- What do you like best about this town?
- What is your fondest memory?
- Why did you choose to live and work here?
- ...

### Personal story interviews

By collecting personal stories, conducting interviews, and then, exploring their patterns we write stories and tales that make personal experiences generally understandable and processable in a metaphorical form.

The participants can ask these questions, and let the conversation guide them:

1. *Do you have a favourite place and why is it your favourite?*
2. *Do you have a place you don't like and why?*
3. *Do you go to your favourite place a lot?*
4. *If you can choose, do you go with multiple people or alone?*
5. *Do you go to your unpleasant place often?*
6. *How do you get to your favourite place?*

- 7. *How much time do you spend at your favourite place?***
- 8. *Does anyone know about your favourite place?***
- 9. *When will you go to your favourite place again?***
- 10. *Since when, and why it is your favourite place?***

These questions determine the main topics and directions of the conversation. Apart from these, the interviewer lets the subject create the narrative of his story according to his own logic and network of associations. Because ultimately this is what we are looking for: in what personal narrative does the subject embed his personal story, the framework of which is provided by his relationship with the spaces? The interviewer encourages the interviewee to expand on certain details with the help of additional, previously unrecorded questions. These details foreshadow the later stage of the research, related to coding, so the interviewer should ask his questions in the knowledge that later on he will have to uncover the set of motifs of the interview text, along which the artistic adaptation can be realized.

## II. Documentation

To make your results even more interesting and complete you can propose to your participants some documentation. It will allow them to go deeper into their research, add new ideas and complete their first ideas about the chosen place.

### Texts and research

You can propose to your participants a list of texts to read for inspiration or let them find their own.

You can look in:

- other interviews collected on the web (famous people, politics dealing with the subject...). Also, texts that have nothing to do with interviews
- texts of public declarations
- extracts from a trial
- a law
- a report...
- the text of an advertisement
- of course, materials from the participants (letters for instance)

### Visits and inspiration

Every place and subject can be studied with a new eye thanks to already existing activities.

You can have a typical touristic visit to the place, even tho you live in this area. Try to find a playful way to visit it so it allows you to see it in a different way.

As a Paris-located theatre company, we tried to find new ways for us to rediscover the city in order to create something new inspired by it.

**Here are the activities we proposed:**

**The Cemetery of Père Lachaise** - Inspiration on how to create an artistic performance inspired by a place and by the tales related to it

Goals :

- Visit the Père Lachaise cemetery and enter an unfamiliar dimension, where life and death meet, where time seems to stand still and the souls that haunt the labyrinths of the largest Parisian cemetery reveal their secrets
- Be accompanied by a passionate guide who slips into the skin of her character, Marie-Anne Lenormand: the Great Sibyl of the Revolution, to tell you about the history of the place.

**Cité des sciences, "Crowds" exhibition** - Inspiration on what to observe in a crowded place that could feed our imagination

A modern vision of the crowd. In the popular imagination, crowds are frequently seen as something negative, like strange creatures that may even cause concern. Based on the most up-to-date interdisciplinary research, Crowds aims to deconstruct this longstanding negative image. Through an ingenious path design, the exhibition invites visitors to experience a more positive crowd immersion from within or to better understand how crowds function by observing from the outside. Switching between player and observer, the visitor becomes a true "crowdologist".

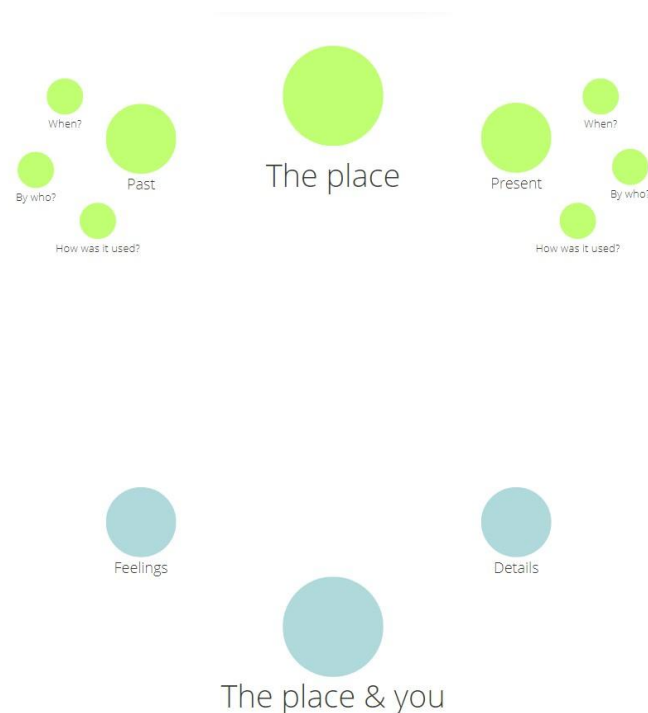
## How to take notes while exploring a place?

Taking notes can be overwhelming, especially when you don't know where to start. And sharing notes between a group can also be a big task. We prepared some tools to help you organize all of these. It will help you, and your participants, to focus on the creative aspect.

### To take notes:

You can provide a sheet with some topics. It can be used as an indication and help focus on the things you think will be interesting.

*Here is our example:*



## Site-specific Method

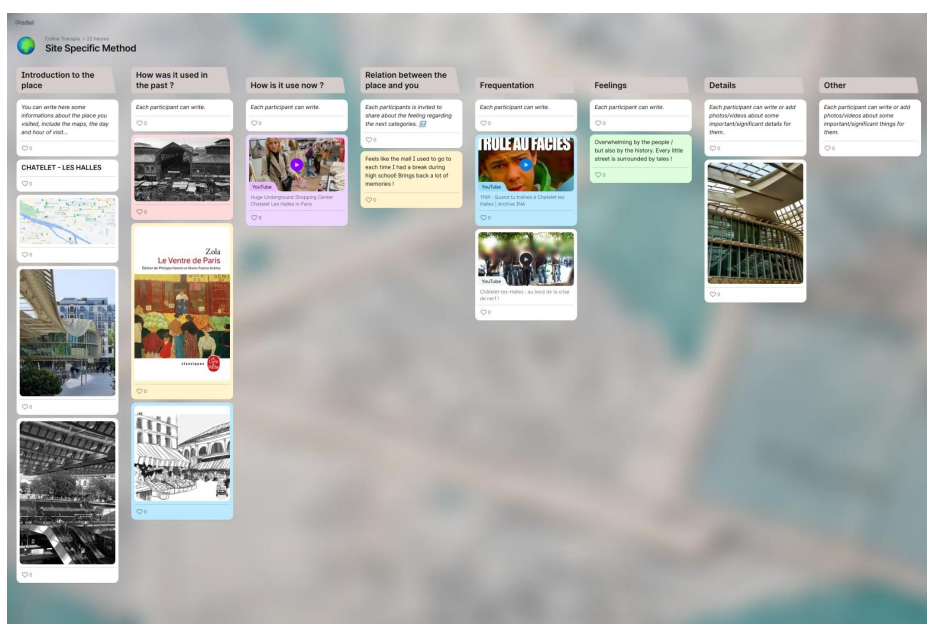
Take an overall photo of the place and a photo of each detail that is significant for you.  
Place the place on the map.

### To share notes:

You can create a virtual blank space in order to harvest everyone's research. We used Padlet. With this tool, the leader can create categories and let your participants fill each one of them, or you can choose to let everyone put their findings freely. You can ask your participants to fill it not only with texts but also with audio, videos, drawings, etc.

The categories we used or these ones (you can change them if wanted):

- Information about the place
- How was it used in the past?
- How is it used now? Frequentation
- Relation between the place and you
- Feelings
- Details



Link to access the padlet: <https://padlet.com/colinetranspla/site-specific-method-s25pirtvdfacocng>

*If you want to use it as a template, you can duplicate it!*

### III. Writing process

Now that you collected the material, you can begin the writing process. The different elements

(investigation, interviews...) are a base for your stories.

To create something bigger than your experiences on the field, you can try to find a correspondence with historical figures and use tales and legends. Here's our methodology on how to do that.

### Methodology

When we choose fairy-tale writing to process the topic, the first step is to understand the function and operation of fairy tales/myths. For this, we start with the work of Joseph Campbell.

**Fairy tales - and by that we primarily mean folk tales/myths - can have the following functions:**

- **World-explanatory function:** it looks for an explanation for the phenomena of the functioning of the physical world, it usually finds this explanation in some magical or transcendental way.
- **Value-transmitting function:** it defines the hierarchy of the things present in our physical world and the actions taking place, starting from the worthless/despicable things to the valuable/appreciated things.
- **Normative function:** it records the patterns of action and behaviour that can be said to be desirable in the given community.
- **Function of belonging to a community:** knowledge of the stories themselves is a condition for a person to consider himself part of the community, to be accepted (most stories related to religion are like this):
- **Wish-fulfilling function:** it records a life situation (or a series of them), a life path that seems unattainable for the given society or a part of it, but becomes relatable in the course of the story.

In addition to the functions, the theory of Campbell's HEROIC PATH is important to us. This theory starts from the fact that the most significant stories of humanity - completely

independent of culture and the previously detailed functions! - they are structured according to a well-definable logic/scheme/dramaturgy, i.e. if we clean up the specifics of the given story and examine the function of the events included in the plot, we discover unquestionable identities in the structure of the stories.

### **These identities in the structure are:**

- 1. Call to adventure:** At the beginning of the story - the unworthy hero - receives the call to adventure. You have to leave your home and foreseeably have to perform actions that will radically change your life and those around you. There is a lot of uncertainty regarding the still unworthy hero's abilities - either on his own or on the part of the environment - whether he can complete his mission
- 2. Trials:** A series of physical, human, and mental trials during which the "hero" can prove his mettle. Encounters usually take place within this section.
- 3. Encounters:** The "hero" meets other characters, and actors who help or hinder his journey - becoming a real hero. These characters can be classified into some well-defined archetypes (e.g.: knight, rogue, sage, witch, fool, love)
- 4. Hellwalk:** During his journey, when the "hero" is quite confident about his abilities, he finds himself in a hopeless situation, a trap. At this point in the story, the "hero" usually loses or greatly limits his abilities. Symbolically, he comes into conflict with himself and during this "fight" he has to question his own personality and then recreate it.
- 5. Rebirth:** In this stage, the "hero" makes the decision or does the thing that re-establishes the unity of his personality. It often involves serious sacrifice, but it is essential to replace your previous, undeserved confidence with humility and a real commitment to your mission. This elevation is intertwined with the understanding of values. This is what qualifies him to be a hero.
- 6. Becoming a hero:** The reborn hero can do what he is called to do: he creates new value and thus becomes a real hero.

It is characteristic of both theoretical foundations (The Functions of the Tale, The Hero's Path) that it builds on the importance of archetypes according to C. G. Jung in an unquestionable way, both in form and content. In Jung's formulation, the archetype denotes those pictorial schemes whose common motifs are the same in the mythology of peoples living in different areas and which can be derived from the collective subconscious. Archetypes enable communication between cultures far apart in time and/or space. In other words, since they have a universal meaning, messages from other cultures can be received with their help. He pays attention to permanence and works with fixed reports.

### **The practical realization of story writing**

Based on these ideas, during the coding of the interview texts, we do nothing but unique codes, which are unique to the specific interviewee, and we place great emphasis on using Jungian archetypes and the motifs of Campbell's theoretical foundations as codes. We check the results of the artistic coding done in this way in small group work, re-code if necessary, and then as a first step we create the adaptation, i.e. the fairy tale, with a sketchy and literary sophistication. Finished works - we hope - move away from the original stories, and instead of the simple substitute/motif matching writing technique, we create complex, fabulous metaphors based on archetypes, which in their "poetry" are able to record some general human experience in relation to the changed spaces.

### **Emotional link**

This approach is valuable if you want to work on testimonies and autobiographical storytelling. It's a creative way to help youngsters to express themselves about what they are living or what they lived, as a person or as a generation. They could share

memories, give a little of themselves to others, and tell their stories.

## I. Warmup

In order to let your participants share about themselves and their reflections, you need to create a safe place where all the participants feel comfortable and confident.

These warm-ups will let them get to know each other in a playful way while opening up.

- **Be together:** Common points
  - In a limited time, find the most common points among the members of the groups.
- **Create together:** Desert Island
  - Alone, choose three items you would bring to a desert island. Then, in groups of 7 or 8, create something new thanks to all the objects.
- **Sharing:** The two of us

Share a personal story in groups of two. As a team, select a story. Each of you will need to tell the rest of the group. The goal for them is to discover the actual owner of the story. The liar must be very convincing to make everyone believe it's their story.

## II. Investigation

Like the first approach, the participants will need to gather information in order to create. The historical/geographical investigation process can also be used in this approach.

### Testimonial object

Beforehand, the participants are asked to find an object (photo, toy, jewel, piece of

clothing, kitchen utensil, etc.) that is dear to them, that has a story behind it or that represents them.

The participants will all place their objects on the stage at the same time, wherever and however they like. And they all return to take their place as spectators. Then, in turn, each pupil goes on stage to choose the object that appeals to them. They then tell the story that this object might inspire them. The owner then joins in to tell the real story. The experience is filmed and recorded to keep a record of these imaginary stories and testimonies.

### **Favourite Tales**

Contemporary artistic creations are often based on old ones. We can easily look for inspiration by reflecting on stories, movies, songs, etc. and linking them to subjects that are important to us today.

By using this method, your participants will express themselves and their interests while bonding around artistic creations that are important to them.

First, ask everyone to reflect alone about:

- A tale/mythology/movie etc.
- A fictional character
- An actual society issue

Their response needs to be developed : they need to explain why they like it, why they think the subject is interesting, etc.

Then, gather everyone and start writing all the ideas while letting the participants discuss. They need to decide, as a group, which ideas they want to add to their creation.

Writing by using the emotional link is easier when you have a subject. So, the major thing they need to agree on are the contemporary problematics. The number of problematics needed will depend on the number of characters. As for the tales and characters, it can be interesting to incorporate them by using small references.

### III. Writing process

The participants use their testimonials to write down their stories. They must try to integrate the imaginary story that was drawn from the investigation (the fictional stories about the objects, the contemporary issues and inspirational tales). You can do this in small working groups.

For group work, even large groups, it is interesting to give as much importance to multiple characters rather than having one main character. In this way, all participants can be involved in the creative project on an equal footing. Hyperlink stories\* can be a good call in order to let everyone enjoy the process.

*“A Hyperlink Story is any work that, at first blush, seems to be made up of several separate, unconnected, and unrelated storylines that gradually, over the course of the work, slowly merge into a single overarching storyline. It is only after the merge that the audience realizes that it was all one big story all along.”*

#### Basics

For this kind of performance, working on feelings is important! It takes priority over the plot. From our point of view, this is an excellent way of getting young people to

integrate an open mind. As far as the result is concerned, it is an effective way of reaching the audience that needs to be active. Indeed, it makes an effort to see the link between the stories. The audience is satisfied when they understand the puzzle that interweaves the different plots.

#### Important elements for the development of a hyperlink story:

- You'll need a multiplicity of main characters, of relatively equal importance.

Each must be related in some way to the others. However, three protagonists may suffice.

- **You'll need at least two storylines.**
- **Each of the characters needs to have the same number of adventures.**
- **The ending is open-ended, leaving much to the viewer's interpretation.**

While writing the story you need to keep in mind that:

- ***A plurality of protagonists in a choral work implies a plurality of intrigues and narrative plots.*** The link can also be made through the theme. By alternating scenes between the different characters, we can then create connections, contrasts, echoes or links of cause and effect.
- ***The performance doesn't need to be too demonstrative:*** the construction of the narration here will aim to disguise this theme, letting it hover gently over the multiple stories
- ***You need to determine a common temporality*** to the different plots.
- ***The finale is not an end in itself.*** We're only here to observe fragments of life. The spectator is left free to form an opinion and to project himself on what the characters might become afterwards.

## Narrative construction

### 1. Index

We advise you to list the different characters and map out their journeys with milestones. You can draw up the geographical route and specify along the way the adventures and emotional development of each character.

### 2. Meeting points

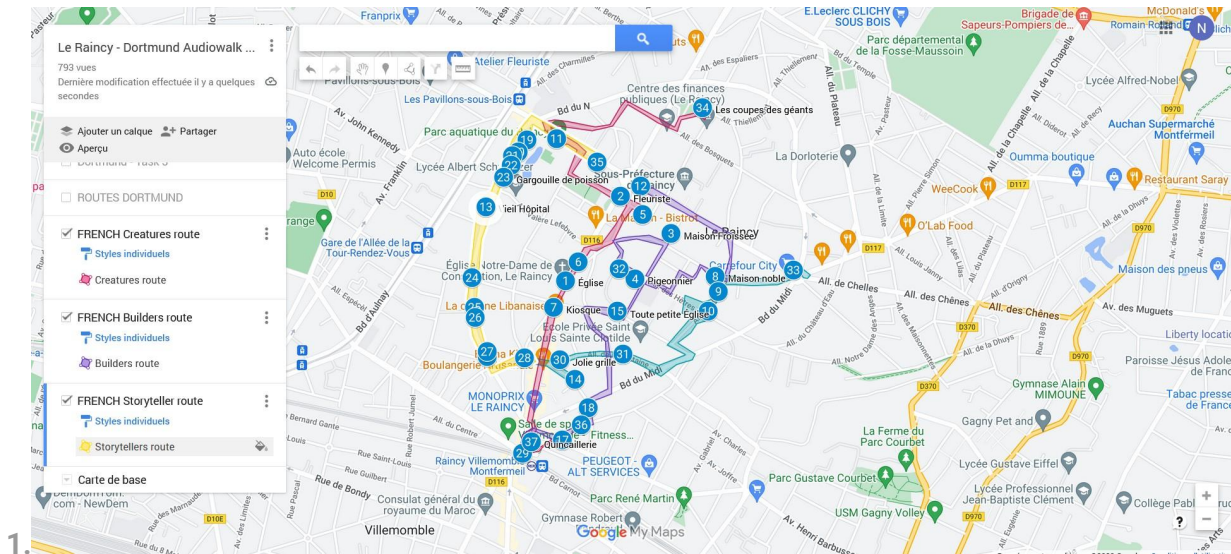
You should find the meeting points between the different characters in order to determine where the plots will intersect. It can be **a place** (a railway station, a hotel, a building, a border checkpoint, a university, a company, a hospital...) or **an event** (a car accident, a party, a demonstration...).

These meeting points can be common to all the characters or they can be multiplied to concern only certain characters at a time.

The goal is to have a match between the mind map (the story) and the physical map (the place)!

Here are two examples of maps:

1. **A geographical map:** from the audio walk *The Dream Paths* produced as part of the Europefiction 2021 project.
2. **A time map:** from the 2022 Europefiction production *DEUS : A (human)fiction* with the list of characters and the narrative pattern, which also corresponds to the movement of the audience.

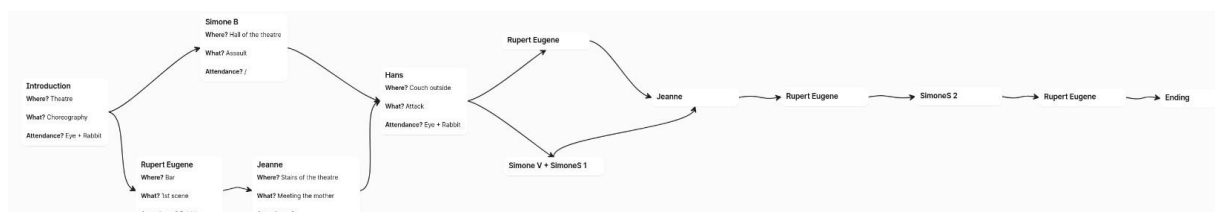


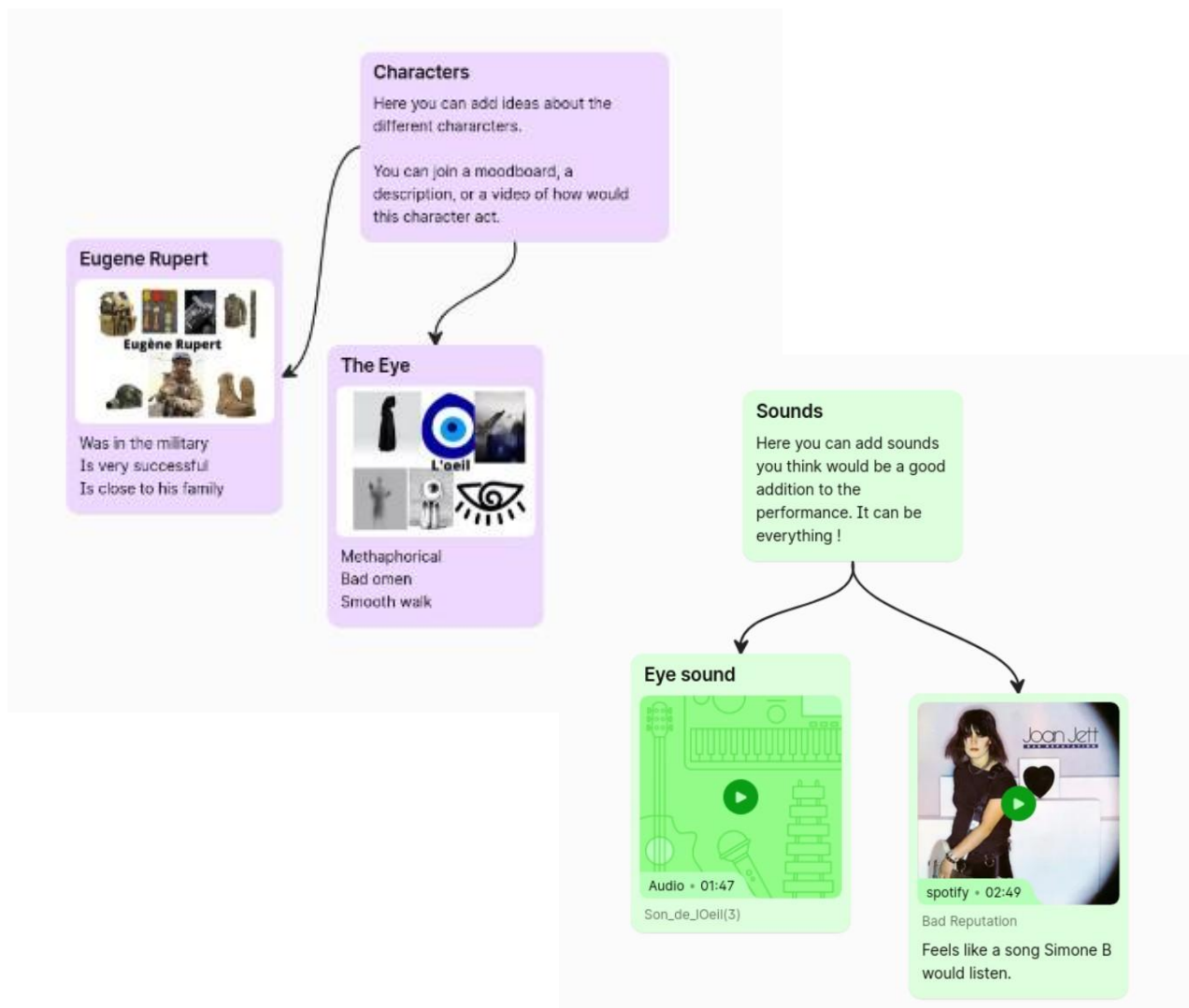
2.

## Tools

This performance will be created by a group. So, in order to have a common creative space, you can use an application called Padlet. It will allow you to have a shared blank space where everyone could add text and other resources.

Here are examples of how you can use it :





## DEUS Synopsis

Here's what we wrote in order to promote our own hyperlink performance.

Notes on the 2022 Europefiction performance:

*We wanted to work on several areas with the participants. First of all, the theatre, or more broadly the notion of performance in the performing arts. How to be on stage, in the sense*

of existing; and how to rethink the relationship with the audience? Recent times have prompted us to question the place of live performance, both in its relationship to the physical space and its social *raison d'être*. We then decided to impose the framework of a so-called *in situ* performance, i.e. one that takes place in a given space that is not necessarily a theatre or conventional performance space. In our relationship with the audience, we also opted for an immersive creation, which takes us out of the frontal relationship between the stage and the spectators.

*The immersive performance format aims to engage the spectator emotionally in the logic of the Theatre of Cruelty theorised by Antonin Artaud: we seek to play on the senses of the audience to invest them in the performance. For DEUS, not all spectators see exactly the same show, although they attend the same performance. The aim was to create a dialogue between the spectators at the end of the performance, so that the performance could open up communication on the subjects we have chosen, but in a playful way: the spectators are first curious to know what the others have seen, then they enjoy expressing what they have felt, and they have the possibility to push their reflection by comparing their understanding of the performance and how they have experienced it.*

*The writing of this choral work was a collective effort. We started with the tales and legends that marked our childhood. They were our references and our sources of inspiration. Then we re-read them in the light of social issues that were dear to the participants. Thus, *The Little Match Girl* resonates with the situation of migrants. *Aisha and the Ogre* and *Donkey Skin* refer to the female condition. *Bluebeard* echoes political and religious extremism. *The Princess Peony* and *John the Bear* are about ecological values and the animal condition. You can also have fun finding references to *Alice in Wonderland*, *Chihiro's Journey*, but also to some sinister current events...*