

Aesthetics and culture
Institute for Aesthetics and Communication

Case study about **"Art on the move"**

by

Silje Marie
Anne Sophie Damgård Birknes
Rasmus Ott

Contact

Silje.maries@hotmail.com

asyding@hotmail.com

ottrasmus@gmail.com

Case study about "Art on the move"

As Aarhus will be the European capital of culture in 2017, a number of related projects have already been initiated.

We have chosen to base our study on the project "Art on the move", and focus on how this project is related to the objectives of "Rethink2017" and ACOC with special focus on the international aspect.

Interviews with project manager, Birgit Vinge and the manager of visual art, Steen Rasmussen are part of our preparations. The interviews and the articles related to "Rethink2017" will in this study be the empiric base for our answer to the above problem statement.

Factual presentation of the case

The project "Art on the move" was initiated by the association "Kulturremisen" in Brande and has the slogan "Art on the move – the international in the local and the local in the international"(1). It is an international visual art project based on social interactions created through art, and is part of a cultural agreement between the Ministry of Culture and the Culture Region Middle and West Jutland. It will cover a period of three years (2012 – 2014) and involve 18 villages / city areas (2). In 2013, the villages will be Thyholm, Vandborg, Staby, Sinding-Ørre and Hoven.

The purpose of the project is described in six main statements:

1. Create new meetings between professional visual artists and the local population
2. Bring qualitative art to new locations and untraditional areas in the communities
3. Create new locations for foundation of experiences and relations for the individual citizen when confronted with art
4. Create international relations while local citizens meet foreign artists
5. Network, platform for new networks and cooperation between the artists and among the villages in the municipalities / the cultural region
6. Talent development in cooperation with the manager of DTA Art and Design (3).

Each of the six villages will have a visit by four professional artists, who are selected by an artistic jury. All together, eight visual artists are involved and divided into two teams of four. Each team visits three villages and stay for five days in each village. The local population will take care of accommodation and meals. Prior to the visit, briefings will be held in the villages and a blog is established to stimulate the network philosophy (4).

The visual artists are selected based on two conditions by an artistic jury: the project must be of high professional quality and half of the artists must come from foreign countries. Together with the visual artistic managers from Kulturremisen, Steen Rasmussen and Felix Pedersen, the artists will enter into a dialogue with the local population and create new spaces for foundation of experiences and relations. The artworks are not finally defined when the artists arrive to the villages, and the results are thus very different. The result might be a physical artwork, or the actual process will be the artwork itself and function as an eye-opener to how you can observe daily surroundings in new ways.

In Kibæk (2012), the artist Yoshihisa Sano from Japan created a huge lightning sculpture in the sports arena made by plastic bottles supplied by the citizens, who also cut the bottles into the right figures according to instructions from the artist.

Also in Kibæk, a new village archive was established at the local library including the citizens' everyday stuff, which have been put into opaque jam pots. The pots will be opened in 2050, and give future citizens an idea of Kibæk in year 2012. The artwork was prepared by the Dutch artists Bertine Bosch and Bert Meinen along with the citizens (6).

Being part of "Rethink2017", "Art on the move" is a strategic project based on the overall platform "Rethink the city" with focus on "Rethink the outskirts" (7), and the project has been supported with DKK 48,750 (8).

The project is very versatile in relation to the central concepts presented by ECOC. Focus is on both participation culture, development of new social spaces and creation of long-term perspectives (9). At the same time, the project is based on a local, but especially also on a regional and an international platform. In the following paragraphs, the relation to both ECOC as well as "Rethink2017" will be elaborated.

How does the project relate to Palonen's presentation of ECOC?

Emilie Palonen presents four levels of interest for the European capital of culture in her text "Multi-level Cultural Policy and Politics of European Capitals of Culture": the local, the regional, the national and European/international level (10). The interesting thing about the European capital of culture is to investigate how the different projects are represented at various levels, as the European capital of culture actually can be interpreted at several levels (11). "Art on the move" was initiated before Aarhus was selected as the European Capital of Culture in 2017. The project has though been included in "Rethink2017" as it firstly rethinks the villages and secondly, it fits into more of the levels of interest. The project deals with local villages and how cooperation with international artists can be established. Development at local level is also of great importance for contact in between the 18 villages, which is emphasized by project manager Birgit Vinge during the interview.

"The villages we worked with in 2012 follow the project also in 2013. They keep the interest and become part of a network, a big family – all the 18 villages in total".

Working local with the international artists also creates relations among and between the villages, as all 18 villages have a common frame of reference experiencing the process with the artists. At the national level, this might not be visible, but you can stress that the region West Jutland will be a national role model for strengthening the relations among the villages. Additionally, the project is also an advocate of the European and the international cooperation, as half of the artists invited to the local environments have European or international roots. This creates some very interesting processes as all parties bring in new perspectives. Project manager Birgit Vinge elaborates:

"The international aspect and the cooperation are not "just" to invite the artist to Denmark. It also involves US being in contact with the places they come from. I can mention a funny thing; Tabathi, an Indian visual artist living in Calcutta, and she is now connected to a school in Staby with 500 citizens – can you imagine ? That is so amazing! Misa comes from Kobe with 10 million citizens – and she worked in Hoven with 500 citizens. It is very transcendent for both parties".

Especially, the fact that there might be a remarkable difference between the local environment and the international cities creates interesting and transcendent projects for both parties. The international cooperation leads to trends within both universalism and particularism, as both differences and similarities between the local environment and the background of the international artists are underlined. The same situation takes place between the local environments and European artists, as we see a trend gathering us as a European continent and an underlining of the diversity in the different countries. Except dealing with the levels of interests mentioned by Palonen, the project also contains some of her key words; universalism, particularism and European connection (12). The project perfectly fits into the tradition for the European Capital of Culture by touching four levels of interest. Thus, parts of the explicit cultural politics for ECOC are covered and the determined effects like eg. universalism and particularism are part of the project. The question is now whether you can mention an implicit effect of the project; something influencing “the whole way of life”.

In the local environments being part of the “Art on the move”, you can see an educating effect. The local citizens are presented to art in a new way, and as mentioned by Steen Rasmussen, responsible for the visual art part of the project:

“In reality, you can communicate complicated and conceptual art to them (the villages) in order for them to understand and have a great experience, without talking down to them at any point in time”.

These projects might have presented a new approach to art, which will in the future give the citizens a feeling of understanding when confronted with conceptual and complicated art, and thus the interest in art will be even more intense. Further to this, the project has shown that it is possible to communicate art in a way that it becomes interesting for the ordinary citizen. Many of the participants experience that the project has influenced their interest for art, and that they have become more open towards new and abstruse art. Hopefully, this information can be communicated and useful in more local environments, regions and even also at a national level.

How does the “Art on the move” project live up to the overall “Rethink project” ?

The “Rethink2017” application contains a number of strategies and targets for the project in total. Please find the most essential statements below:

1. Strengthen the long-term development and importance of art and culture in Aarhus and the region, and contribute to strengthening the diversity of the European culture
2. Increase awareness, visibility and attraction of Aarhus and the region nationally and internationally, and contribute with a higher degree of cultural cooperation and dialogue with Europe
3. Human and economical growth
4. Active citizenship and social involvement
5. Development of multiple city environments
6. Interdisciplinary cooperation about a sustainable future

How does the project “Art on the move” fulfil these or some of these requirements ?

“Art on the move” strengthens the long-term development of art and culture in the villages as it is a project not only serving as a single event with a limited timeline, but aiming to contribute to a long-term breeding ground for cultural development in the villages.

“We do not force the culture and the art into the villages and leave the area as a ruin. Our goal is to leave a “scene” giving room for the culture and art to further develop (14)”.

When the artists and the citizens have created an artwork to the village, it does not mean that the project is finalized. The administrative manager of the project, Birgit Vinge, defines it as an invitation to the citizens to demystify the art and create spaces for the art to develop (15). When culture develops locally, the smaller villages become more visible to the surroundings. Hopefully, this attention will increase activities in the villages, and they will at the same time become more attractive to potential visitors. More projects and more visitors are similar to economical and human growth.

Further to this, “Art on the move” is also an inclusive project requiring an active citizenship and social involvement. The project is to a high degree depending on the participation of the citizens and the positive effects connected to this. Steen Rasmussen and Birgit Vinge experience that some of the citizens, who have never been familiar with art before, now are actively involved in the culture (16). Thus “Art on the move” works with a kind of “audience development” involving the culture audience.

“Rethinking” is part of the “Art on the move” project at several levels. The villages are being rethought at the same time as rethinking of the communication of culture to an audience, who are normally not taking part in cultural life is taking place. As mentioned earlier, the project does not impose culture and art on the citizens, but includes them to a very high extend in order to make them feel that they are part of creating both the artwork and the conditions for creating it. Steen Rasmussen and Birgit Vinge also experience that the citizens rethink their own institutions and uses the public spaces in a new and innovative way. Having this in mind, you can argue that the project even calls for multiple city environments at a local level.

The interdisciplinary cooperation about a sustainable future is visible in the citizens’ cooperation with each other. They must secure that the project can work out practically (materials, locations, organization, etc.) and like this, the citizens are made aware how much they can achieve when working together across professional competences. Consequently, both knowledge, network and know how are developed (17).

Conclusion

The project “Art on the move” affects both local, regional and international parts of Palonen’s levels of interests. Indirectly, you can also argue that the project might show an effect nationally. Additionally, the project deals with both universalism and particularistic effects, which will influence the European way of thinking, co-founded by ECOC. An implicit effect from the project is educating processes for both artists and citizens. Overall, the intentions of the “Art on the move” project are close to the central targets and strategies of the Rethink application, and several of these intentions create great value in the villages. It is a dynamic project and changes according to the villages. Thus, the results become very different, but generally, Steen Rasmussen and Birgit Vinge have the opinion that the villages

experience a remarkable benefit from the project, both during the process and after the artists have left.