

Denmark, Copenhagen / In Copenhagen I belong / I København har jeg hjemme

AUDIE
NCES
EUROPE
NETWORK

Summary of project intent

On Monday the 12th of August 2013, Copenhagen Music Theatre drove six caravans manned with artists into the streets of Copenhagen. Until the 21st of September 2013 they were placed in different communities in Copenhagen. Here the meeting between artists - a mixture of actors, playwrights, directors, musicians, choreographers and composers - and citizens who normally do not use the cultural institutions was set to determine the shape and content of a number of performances throughout town.

DIFFICULTIES MET

- ▶ It proved more difficult than first thought, placing caravans in the community and establish a dialogue with the residents. It took a while to create the necessary trust between artists and residents.
- ▶ The need to act based on trust was also reflected in the artistic interactions and productions, which was given back to the community. Time, trust and dialogue were three essential learning elements, which both artists and residents pointed to in the evaluation of the project. In an otherwise very results-oriented reality it is interesting that we so rarely create space for a recessed procedural learning phase. It was also the reason why the project initially had difficulties in moving the political level to support it.
- ▶ To have so many different players to play together in a project with so many different fields and places required a lot of coordination and stressed the staff doing it to the limit.

RESULTS

- ▶ More than 600 Copenhageners have generously shared their stories with the artists in the caravans, and double that number have shown an interest and had a chat outside. It has surpassed all of our expectations. During the project, the artists have gathered inspiration for other works of art and have found other and new methods of creating a performance. An interesting fact is that the interpersonal meeting and the shared experience 1:1, which, basically, is what theatre is fundamentally about, became more interesting for us as artists than to insist on giving the stories our own artistic filter. Many of the artists also chose to give the stories back to the citizens in a very pure form.

"We are after all a project among many fantastic ones, which this neighbourhood has seen. Which means it's not uncommon for people to get a visit from someone who wants to do good. But then a year passes where it is once again a concrete desert. So, in that respect we are quite different, because we are already considering how to return."

(Morten Nielsen, Actor)

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"In Copenhagen I belong" has turned out to be more than just a project on creating stage art on street level. We experienced that the caravans in certain areas became a much needed point of social gathering, a form of refuge, where you were allowed to meet and greet people whom you, at best, used to nod at when passing by. All of a sudden we and art became the rallying-ground in the neighbourhood and were often given the role of catalyst through our presence. In this way, the project had two functions. An artistic and a social. There were groups for whom theatre is further from their mind than we had expected. We had to meet those people in a different way. Which we did – much appreciated by everyone. In this case, the job turned out to be more about creating a positive social spirit of community centred on art, e.g. music, provisional language schools, wishing trees, cooking and amazing tales.

(Anne Rasmussen - Director)

LEARNINGS

- ▶ There are so many stories out there! Lots of people are carrying amazing stories around that just need a little help to be part of a backdrop of stories for any local theatre. Through the project Copenhagen Music Theatre got invaluable knowledge of the city of Copenhagen, its people, their backgrounds and dreams. For a cultural institution living by producing relevant ideas for a diversified audience the project was goldmine of experience. Particularly in relation to creating some real contact, the various solutions used in different vehicles a valuable benefit for all stakeholders. The cultural - anthropological approach, dissemination of results, the many small performances, local engagement and response, and not least the artists engagement was important for relationship building between citizens and the participating artists. That it was important people understood with a headline from a local newspaper in one of the districts that read: "You have made our hearts to cry!" In which an elderly woman described her gratitude of being included in the project.

FUTURE / TIPS

- ▶ The project has just finished its 2.0 phase with another three caravans in different areas of Copenhagen and the outcome of that is being collected and structured as of May 2014. The organizers are negotiating with different partners on how to go on with similar activities in the city in the near future and at the same time an inter-Scandinavian project on creative cultural dialogue will be launched in September 2014 building on the experiences from the project and similar initiatives in Norway and Sweden. Two of the participating local groups have continued their engagement in the areas on their own behalf after the project. One of them have left their building for a year to play in different public places in the area instead. One tip to pass on is the necessity to let the 'new' narratives find a form, which can be given back to the communities as part of the relation building process.