

pArt of Valby



Still from *The Lie Detector*, 2014 ©Tina Enghoff

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Introduction

pArt of Valby was Copenhagen's contribution to the Culture in Action (CiA) project: a cultural development initiative under the auspices of the Regional Cultural Agreement, KulturMetropolØresund (Find out more here www.kulturmetropol.dk). The project is a unique interdisciplinary collaboration between 22 cultural institutions and social housing initiatives. Together with the target group of children, young people and their families in selected social housing areas, the project sets out to evolve new provisions for an audience, in whose lives cultural institutions do not normally figure. By means of a variety of activities, residents get involved in creative/artistic, social and knowledge-generating relationships with the neighbourhood, one another and the institutions. A total of six municipalities contributed and took part: Copenhagen, Furesø, Herlev, Ballerup, Ishøj and Frederiksberg. In Copenhagen's Culture and Leisure Department, Education and Leisure, Kultur Valby (libraries and culture centre) and Nikolaj Kunsthal collaborate with the social housing master plan and neighbourhood strategy project SURF Valby, administered by the housing associations 3B (on behalf of PAB) and residents of Folehaven, Hornemanns Vænge and Valbyejendommene.

General objectives

Overall, the CiA projects sought to:

- Launch inclusive, co-creative processes and initiatives to develop relevant experiences of art and culture for both children and young residents in the selected areas of social housing and other citizens.
- Base the form and content of the project directly on the preconditions and needs of the residents, their stories about themselves and their environment.
- Develop social, cultural and organisational experiences and perspectives, which enhance the relationship between cultural institutions and the residents.
- Create practical learning communities across disciplines, institutions and municipalities, which contribute to new knowledge about how to organise and lead outreach work with the greatest possible mutual benefit for users and institutions.

Objectives of pArt of Valby

From the start, the project in the City of Copenhagen, with the participation of Nikolaj Kunsthal, chose to concentrate on the subject area of contemporary art and the opportunities for socially committed co-production of artistic expression: an important field within this art form. The artist, Tina Enghoff was recruited to coordinate the project, holding film and photography workshops for the residents who took part. Via the project, pArt of Valby wanted an inclusive and interdisciplinary concept to trigger realisation and "life learning" in the residents who took part: not just a temporary artistic event.

For example, the project made use of Nikolaj Kunsthal's annual video art festival *FOKUS* as a recurring platform for a public, professionally curated presentation of the art works, which resulted from the project. Nikolaj Kunsthal's Education and Schools Service has previous experience of outreach projects and social and aesthetic educational processes for children and young people, so were a vital professional resource for the educational objectives of the project. The professional educational skills of the local personnel in SURF Valby formed an important foundation and guideline for the project's goals for the residents' social welfare and development. Meanwhile, Kultur Valby framed goals for local activities and helped raise the profile of process and products in the eyes of the public in the local cultural institutions (library and culture centre).

The specific objectives of pArt of Valby were:

- By means of interdisciplinary collaboration between local social-working experts in SURF Valby, professional educational, outreach-oriented and curatorial experts in Nikolaj Kunsthal, Kultur Valby's professional library and culture centre experts, the coordinated expertise of the Culture and Leisure Department and, finally, the artistic expertise of the chosen artist, to work strategically with an 'underserved' neighbourhood and the narratives and expression, which a special target group, who live here, can contribute.
- In terms of Nikolaj Kunsthal, a sub-objective involved outreach work. Meanwhile, in terms of the institutions involved, a general sub-objective was to develop new relations with audiences and users. These sub-objectives engendered inreach perspectives for the institutions' own learning.
- Through co-creative artistic practice, focusing consistently on film and photography and working with various groups of children and young people, to investigate and process issues about identity and communities, which the actual participants identified as relevant and then worked on in a socially committed and professional artistic context (process).
- Via the same process, defined equally by critical, empathic and aesthetic methodology, to create a number of high-quality video art works (product), which would be of interest and importance to people other than the actual participants, thereby supporting a polyphonic artistic statement.
- In events aimed at creating debate in the local institutions and forums (Vigerslev Library, Valby Kino, local schools etc.), to screen and present films and photos from the project for local residents and stakeholders, and to foster debate on the issues raised by the films. The sub-objective of the events was to use personal narratives to profile another image of the areas.
- Via private view events and talks, and official inclusion in the programme of the *FOKUS* video art festival, to invest a co-creation-based artwork with substantial importance in the context of an art institution and, specifically, for an art audience in the art gallery.
- To develop and train a young team, giving them their own experience of working with art as a catalyst for change of identity and communities, which can be part of the dissemination and

educational work of the art gallery's schools service.

- To develop a methodology and some obvious tools based on the intersection between art, culture, museology, learning and social housing work, which mutually benefit the three residential areas in the district and could serve as a matrix for future initiatives elsewhere in the country.
- To contribute to the development and expression of cultural democracy and citizenship both for the individuals involved and for the institutions.

Target audiences

Local audience

- The primary target group was defined as 13- to 19-year-old residents and their families.
- The actual participants in the project were young men and boys; to a lesser degree girls and young women. A total of 52 children and young people actively participated in the artistic and professional learning processes.

Regional audience

- The secondary target group was the local environment of residents in Valby: in other words, other residents, families, schools, local after-school and youth clubs, the local library and culture centre, other local institutions and Nikolaj Kunsthal in central Copenhagen. In this case, approximately 350 children and young people were involved.

Artists

The artist, Tina Enghoff was consistently involved. She was chosen, because she works in a reflective, socially committed area. Her methods are collaborative, empathic and improvisatory, and she has a strong and original visual understanding of her primary medium: photography and film/video.

Funding

pArt of Valby was dependent on external funding, because the funding from CiA was insufficient. The project regularly applied for, and received funding from the Valby Local Committee and 'Kulbanepuljen', while the respective collaborative partners mainly co-funded manpower and provided resources in the shape of materials and specific smaller amounts of money.

Partners

As mentioned before, the project's primary partners were (from the City of Copenhagen): Education and Leisure, Kultur Valby (libraries and culture centre) and Nikolaj Kunsthal. There were also: the social housing master plan SURF Valby, residents of Folehaven, Hornemanns Vænge and Valbyejendommene and the artist Tina Enghoff.

Process

- Photo/film work with alternating groups and topics (identity, neighbourhood, lies, friends, role models and confidence).
- On-going artistic/social supervision of the participants from the artist and the social housing operators via workshops, meetings and events.
- Involvement/training of young people through the educational and training work in Nikolaj Kunsthal for other young people and other target groups.

Challenges

- The generally limited funds, which we could not supplement using obvious government funds and pools, because of clauses relating to the project's roots in the region.
- Organisational issues (including replacement of resource persons in the working group) related to mandates and anchoring of the project in terms of organisational commitment (inreach) to the project in the institutions involved.
- Negotiating between the inter-municipal ambitions (both explicit and implicit) of the regional cultural project and pArt of Valby's own objectives. This included balancing the use of time and resources for tackling the assignment with maintaining a joint, longer-term commitment.
- The unpredictability and consequently major need for improvisation and constant adaptation, to which the frequently difficult living conditions of residents in the social housing areas gave rise along the way.

Outcomes

The project made art available to residents in the area and the area to art. The following results were achieved during the project:

- Five original video artworks about neighbourhood, friends, lies, role models and confidence: *Do You Know Who I Am?* (2012), *Can You Hear Anything?* (2013), *The Lie Detector* (2013), *The Seven Choices* (2014) and *7 Dialogues* (2015)
- Five existentially and socially sustainable development processes for participants focusing on both personal and cultural identity and the various communities under the leadership of Tina Enghoff and SURF Valby's staff in the form of workshops and meetings relating to the production of a total of five video projects in the three residential areas.
- The project was a catalyst for SURF Valby's work on building relations with residents and their identity work aimed at neighbourship in the residential areas. It also generated high quality artistic

expression.

- Premieres of all the video works in Nikolaj Kunsthal as part of the annual *FOKUS* video art festival in 2013, 2014 and 2015, and, we expect, in 2016.
- Well-attended public opening events in Nikolaj Kunsthal with the participants, their families and friends from the local area in rented coaches.
- A large collection of still photographs presented, for example, at the local Vigerslev library, in Valby Culture Centre, SURF Valby's network office in Folehaven and as part of the 2014 Folehave Festival.
- The project's films were presented at several annual events at Vigerslev Library, in Valby Cinema, as part of the Folehave Festival, and at SURF Valby's voluntary evenings etc.
- Production of a DVD of the project's first film *Do You Know Who I Am?* in 2013 and the production of a DVD of all the films from the pArt of Valby project, when the project concluded in 2015, with a text about the films and the project. The DVDs are included in Copenhagen Libraries' collection of material and loaned on an equal footing with the other library materials.
- In autumn 2015, the loan of Nikolaj's mobile art gallery (an existing truck with a model of the art gallery with built-in video playback equipment from the artist group, Parfyme) to Vigerslev Library with daily screening of, and information about the project's films for library users and other interested parties.
- Positive attention and response to the projects from the participants, their families, local police, neighbours, library users, schools, nursing homes and other institutions in the local area, and from visitors to Nikolaj Kunsthal.
- Established experience in the social housing work in the neighbourhood with art as a valuable social work tool that can cross generations, languages and ethnic divisions.
- The project helped the young people taking part, who are vulnerable to crime and anti-social environments, to find their voice, reflect and make better decisions regarding their 'now' and their future.
- Training and appointment of 4 young participants in the new learning format in Nikolaj Kunsthal under the title *Young People Show Their Own Art Films in Your School*, which will be launched in autumn 2015. Several local schools in Valby and in other districts of Copenhagen booked courses in 2015 and 2016.
- A brochure on role models and artistic learning processes distributed widely at the local level with a recipe on how you can get yourself a role model and then make the project.

- A local exhibition in Folehaven with outdoor film screenings and ‘election posters’ with portraits of actors in the films *The Seven Choices* and *7 Dialogues* in December 2015.
- The project presented in *KUNSTEN.NU* and *Valby Bladet* and also mediated academically in the publication *Rum for Medborgerskab* (2013) and at various conferences and seminars: *Arts & Audiences* (2013 and 2015); *Inclusive Museum* (2013); *ARKEN* (2014); and the Danish Arts Foundation’s annual seminar (2015).

Key points

- The inclusive interaction between professional social work, artistic, curatorial and educational expertise creates the best results.
- Outreach work requires and develops an interdisciplinary sensitivity, which also relates to the new users/participants in their community and staff in their organisations.
- The allocation of roles and responsibilities in the project organisation should be made clear from the start.
- Outreach work takes a long time because it is based on social and personal relations. Therefore these efforts should be incorporated into cultural agreements and master plans, and in the strategies and operation of the institutions.
- Well-organised, participative art processes can facilitate people’s ability to express their views about very personal and difficult topics in competitive/performance-related process.
- Not all artists can work on outreach projects. Rigorous recruitment and curating are required.
- There is a need for evidence-based research that indicates how active art processes and resilience are related.
- We risk losing momentum and may have to start all over, due to a lack of continuity in funding and organisation of these initiatives. Most importantly, we need clear managerial decisions and cooperation about strategies for audience development via art-based outreach projects in social housing areas as an important element in an overall audience development plan.

Contact and links

School and Leisure
Culture and Leisure Department
The City of Copenhagen
 Nicolas Kragekjær Jespersen
BU7K@kff.kk.dk

Nikolaj

Hilde Østergaard

Head of the Education and Schools Service

hoe@nikolajkunsth.dk

SURF Valby - the social housing master plan for Folehaven, Hornemanns Vænge and Valbyejendommene

Mich Collins: mico@3b.dk

Malene Sakskilde : mals@3B.dk

Camilla Rosenkilde: caro@3b.dk

Mette Svendsen: mesv@3b.dk

Kultur Valby**Vigerslev Library**

Pia Svanholm

piasvh@kff.kk.dk

Links to films from pArt of Valby on Vimeo:

Do You Know Who I Am?

<https://vimeo.com/61298131>

Can You Hear Anything?

<https://vimeo.com/73690891>

The Lie Detector

<https://vimeo.com/77934004>

The Seven Choices

<https://vimeo.com/121667145>

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