

From no relations to strong relations



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General introduction

Culture in Action (CiA) is 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 has evolved 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 district, one another and the institutions. A total of six municipalities contribute and take part: Copenhagen, Furesø, Herlev, Ballerup, Ishøj and Frederiksberg.



CiA Frederiksberg

In addition to the residents of Stjernen and Danmarksgården, participants in CiA Frederiksberg include the Storm P. Museum, the Riddersalen Theatre, Frederiksberg Library, the integration coordinator, the social housing coordinator, Tre Falke School and Frederiksberg Municipality Culture and Leisure.

1) Objectives

- To build strong relationships across professional competencies between Frederiksberg Library, the Riddersalen Theatre, the Storm P. Museum, the integration coordinator, the social housing coordinator and Frederiksberg residents in the social housing areas of Stjernen and Danmarksgården and young people from Tre Falke School.
- To strengthen common themes and the evolution of methodology through the development of the projects: “Digital Games”; “The Best of All Possible Worlds”; and the exhibition *PLAY*.
- To create a framework for common cultural experiences in cooperation with residents via workshops, talks and joint excursions to cultural experiences. This will enhance the work on relations for all the parties involved, providing all parties with the opportunity for insight into each other’s stories and a view of our conceptions of what culture means for each of us individually.
- The experiences are intended to contribute to new ways of meeting new users in the long term.
- Following the conclusion of the CiA project, to cement relations and leads in lasting effects.
- To concentrate on the diverse culture, which the majority of younger Danes know and are familiar with and, through interaction with users, to develop new knowledge about their use of culture, at the same time developing new communication and significance in our culture.
- To evolve new platforms in our cultural institutions, which will integrate children’s and young people’s culture in our institutions to a greater extent, so that the worldview that we disseminate reflects the actual reality, in which we find ourselves. One of the

ambitions of the institutions is to come across as more approachable and relevant for a large user group, who otherwise make very little use of our institutions.

2) Target audiences

- Local audience.
Families and children/Local mothers
- Regional audience.
Young people and other residents from Frederiksberg.
- Artists.
Artists and professionals associated with the cultural institutions, which were involved in CiA Frederiksberg.
- Partners.
Københavns Musikteater and the caravan project, a group of young gamers from the Stjernen housing development, local mothers from Stjernen and Danmarksgården, professionals in the game industry, Tre Falke School, Coding Pirates, students from the IT University, knowledge partners from cultural institutions.

3) Process

Each project was planned to underpin a joint ambition to achieve greater relevance for more people and for a more diversified clientele. By means of active processes, the intention has been to build relations and involvement with the target groups in order to learn about their needs and interests. At the same time, the target groups have acquired knowledge of the cultural institutions. The various courses and workshops created a breeding ground for the parties to develop new cultural experiences together, thus generating new, relevant platforms for communication. What all the projects, which were realised, have in common is that the museum, the theatre and the library gained experience and awareness of a field of knowledge in practice. Interaction with the participants led to a new learning environment, which can be transferred to the institutions' other practice.

4) Challenges

- It was a challenge to develop the framework for the project in advance, with a specific target group from a particular residential area. We should have examined whether there was actually a basis for developing the project with the relevant residential areas, and we should have identified and made agreements with resource persons in advance.
- Throughout the course of the project there were challenges in terms of creating lasting and committed relations. The participants from the three cultural institutions were not present in the residential area to a sufficient extent. Cooperation with the social housing staff in the area helped to open doors to the residents, so the project team decided to build on the activities, which had already been planned in the area.
- It requires a learning process and extra attention to criteria for success and "codes" if completely different professional groups are to communicate.
- The outreach element was about getting a selected target group to come up with what is relevant to them, but the project team still had to formulate a project, which was intended to reflect the residents'

initiatives. It was a challenge to keep these two processes going at the same time: building and maintaining relations and formulating a project.

- It turned out to be difficult to find a way into the residential area via the local institutions and other operators working with children and young people. The residential area is covered by 6 different schools and a similar number of day care centres, after-school centres and clubs.
- Via the social housing staff, the project team came into contact with a group of young computer-game players, who agreed to participate in 4 workshops, which were intended to teach the three cultural institutions about game culture: a culture, of which we knew far too little. It is unfamiliar but necessary to meet our target groups with a humility and facilitative approach in order for us to accommodate their wishes.

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5) Outcomes

“Games and gamer culture”

- By means of a development process with a group of young gamers from Stjernen, we developed an educational course about Computer Games based on an analytical and experiential approach. Led by game development professionals, the young people learned about computer games and their means.
- The development course led to the production of four game reviews and a process film about the overall course, all of which are part of the *PLAY* exhibition.
- The young gamers completed the course by interviewing each other.
- Astrid Myrup has written three important articles about how the work on relations extends beyond the CiA project. The three articles are available on: <http://kulturmetropol.dk/> in the article archive.
- A course was then planned for pupils from Tre Falke School, in which they would write a review of the *PLAY* exhibition at the Storm P. Museum.
- The Storm P. Museum work partly on the development of the digital curriculum and partly on digital learning with other groups of young people in schools.

“The Best of All Possible Worlds”

- The work on building relations started by interviewing residents in the Stjernen residential area. Stories and quotes from the interviews were directly included in the play, *The Best of All Possible Worlds* by Ursula Andkjær Olsen, which was performed at the Riddersalen Theatre.
- “The Best of All Possible Worlds” project led to the retention of the young people/families with children target group. The project set out to examine how CiA could hold on to people and evolve positive relations. By means of joint cultural experiences (for example, theatre trips to Riddersalen, excursions and communal meals), the project succeeded in creating positive relations with mothers in several of Frederiksberg’s residential areas.
- The relations with local mothers were reinforced by a couple of workshops facilitated by students from the IT University on the subject of prejudices about computer games and the use of digital games. Quotes from the workshop ended up being integrated into the *PLAY* exhibition as concrete statements.

The *PLAY* exhibition at the Storm P. Museum 4.9.2015 – 10.1.2016

- The knowledge produced by the above-mentioned activities was included and implemented in the Storm P. Museum’s interactive exhibition *PLAY - Digital Games*. The exhibition was developed and curated in collaboration with the user groups, with whom we established relations (Stjernen’s gamers, high school students studying game development and local mothers).

- Some of the participants have also been employed as game consultants in the actual exhibition space. As game guides and facilitators in the exhibition, they are in direct contact with the visitors.
- The Museum will include what they have learned from the work on relations in their future work, in terms of both content and methodology.

New initiatives resulting from the CiA work

- **April Festival**

In 2016, Frederiksberg Municipality will be hosting the April Festival: the largest of its kind in the world with more than 100 theatre companies, 150 different productions and 600 performances. In the course of the Festival, all children and young people in the host municipality are invited to come to the theatre. In conjunction with social housing staff and residents from 5 residential areas, our intention is to “train” a group of volunteers in each residential area as cultural organisers/cultural crews. Their task will be to organise a performance in their community centre, promote the performance for everyone in the neighbourhood and help with the whole execution of the performance. In addition they will be involved in the Festival as volunteers and have the option of taking part in backstage events together with the theatre industry, foreign guests and facilitators from all over Denmark. The core of this project is to create ownership among the residents and give them an opportunity to acquire skills to create new cultural events in the future.

- **The work done by local mothers**

One result of the CiA work is an initiative to equip local mothers for their work in the social housing areas. The CiA work built and created relations with women. The local mothers live in the municipality’s various districts. The library has got these women together and encouraged them to exchange their experiences with one another. This gives them an opportunity to get to know each other. They can also share positive stories and express the challenges related to doing active outreach work in a residential area.



6) Key points

- CiA has provided knowledge and learning about new and different ways of working, and has significantly enhanced inter-institutional work in the municipality. The parties involved have made use of each other’s expertise, while the cultural institutions involved have experienced a vertical learning curve.
- We have learned that a cultural institution should be very conscious and razor-sharp in terms of a project’s goals, but also that, despite the various artistic genres and disciplines involved, we all work within the same field and apply the same methods.
- It is important to involve collaborators from the start and to maintain cooperation through an entire process, if the relation is to be rooted in the institutions’ future work. Formulating a project should be done on the basis of a need and a problem that can be solved through cooperation. The relation should be present and sustainable. The resource persons and entry-point relations are crucial.
- We should have the courage to challenge the usual professional competency and the usual role, which cultural institutions have as disseminators, and pass on our expertise to others: in other words, a deliberate loss of control, which has proved to be very fruitful.

- The work must be rooted in the leadership and strategy of the organisation and part of its essence. Work on building relations takes an incredibly long time, so it is essential that the people at the top are aware of that.

7) Contact and links

Iben Overgaard, Director of the Storm P. Museum and the Revue Museum, Frederiksberg Museums
 Piet Bertelsen, Administrative Director of Riddersalen
 Heidi Dahl, Project Manager at Frederiksberg Library
 Heidi Denning, Frederiksberg Municipality, Culture and Leisure.

Links to film about game reviews:

<http://stormp.dk/Storm-P/aktuel-udstilling.html?Name=Value>

<http://spilfortaellinger.blogspot.dk/>

Link to processfilm about game workshops:

<https://fkb.dk/node/2888>

You can find 3 articles by Astrid Myrup about the CiA work on the KMØ website:

<http://kulturmetropol.dk/>

- The library in close contact: <http://kulturmetropol.dk/artikel/biblioteket-i-n%C3%A6rkontakt#.VkEM3rcvfIU>
- Culture must continue to be in action: <http://www.kulturmetropol.dk/artikel/kulturen-skal-fortsat-s%C3%A6ttes-i-spil#.Vi4H3yR7yUk>
- We've experienced a vertical learning curve: <http://kulturmetropol.dk/artikel/%E2%80%9Dvi-har-haft-en-lodret-l%C3%A6ringskurve%E2%80%9D#.VkEMo7cvfIU>



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