

# Culture in Action Herlev



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## Introduction

Culture in Action Herlev is part of the Culture in Action (CiA) project, which is a cultural development initiative under the auspices of the Regional Cultural Agreement, KulturMetropolØresund, [www.kulturmetropol.dk](http://www.kulturmetropol.dk).

The project is a unique interdisciplinary collaboration between 22 cultural institutions and social housing initiatives. Together with children, young people and their families in selected social housing areas, the project sets out to evolve new cultural provisions for residents in the residential areas. A total of six municipalities are involved: Copenhagen, Furesø, Herlev, Ballerup, Ishøj and Frederiksberg.

## General objectives

Overall, the CiA project sets out to:

- Launch involving, 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, and 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

Herlev Municipality is a suburban municipality 13 km northwest of Copenhagen. In the 1970s the northern part of the municipality was expanded with large residential areas. The site for the project is Hjortegården, a residential area of approximately 2,600 residents in a larger housing complex with a total of about 5,000 residents.

The starting point for Culture in Action in Herlev comprised the questions:

How can we get better at creating relevant cultural experiences for, and with residents in the large housing complexes of the 1970s, which are often located outside the cultural centre of towns?

And how can cultural institutions reshape their provisions, so they appeal to target groups, who do not seek out those institutions?

The aim of the project:

- To create new cultural experiences in the Hjortegården neighbourhood in co-creation with residents and on the basis of their desires.
- To develop and raise the profile of the provisions offered by the cultural institutions, so they inspire new target groups to flourish creatively and musically.
- To create and support networks for cultural activities in order to develop and anchor activities in the neighbourhood.

# Target audiences

## Local audience

The project's primary target group was children and young people in the neighbourhood. Contact with the target group was made via participation in activities in the neighbourhood: for example, communal meals and via the school and library, both of which are located in the area.

## Regional audience

The project's secondary target groups:

Adult residents/parents.

Staff in the cultural institutions.

## Artists

Some of the artists taking part (visual artists, street-art artists and musicians) were associated with the cultural institutions as teachers, while others were hired for a period in the workshops or for specific events. Artists involved throughout the process were Susan Lüth Hedegaard (visual artist), Brandon Lewis (graffiti artist), Al Agami and Mizgin (musicians). Amateur bands and rock bands from the music school also took part.

## Funders

Nothing besides a permanent grant from the CiA project.

## Partners

Residents

Hjortespring Library

Herlev Music School

Herlev Art School

Culture Caravan (a caravan with artists, musicians, film and audio equipment)

The residents' committee of the housing association.

The projects Sundt Venskab [Eng. Healthy Friendship], Tunnel Visions and Subkult.

Herlev Municipality's youth culture coordinator and culture coordinator.

Dildhaven, a local institution for children and young people.

# Process

It was essential to find the right "entry point" to the residential area:

The chairman of the local housing association was a great help. A health project with a communal meal facilitated contact with young families of different ethnic origin and the local library was invaluable in terms of creating contacts in the start-up phase. The project was presented to the residents' committee of the housing association, who welcomed it.

The project team was composed of representatives from the participating cultural institutions and residents from the residential area.

The cultural institutions translated the residents' proposals for family activities in the neighbourhood into small workshops in the community centre, while residents in the project team set up their own residents' clubs: for example, knitting graffiti and genealogy for the whole family.

The coordinators attended meetings of the residents' festival committee to organise a joint market day, in which all cultural institutions took part.

The Culture Caravan was present in the area during all holidays, and the excellent contact, which the staff created with both younger and older residents very much paved the way for a positive reception of new cultural activities in the public space. The concept of “the mobile workshop”, in which artistic activities pop up in unfamiliar places, later inspired the Art School to design an “Art School Car”, a mobile workshop bus.

It was a broad-based process with emphasis on creating networks and involvement.

## Challenges

Creating relations with residents at the start of the process was extremely time consuming. The area had no full-time social housing representative, but a health project had done something to pave the way.

The first small workshops were not well attended, despite all households being informed. Visibility is created by repeated presence and work to build relations.

A positive challenge was creating willingness amongst cultural staff to take on tasks outside of classrooms and familiar contexts. The challenge was tackled with mobile workshops etc.

Future challenges will involve incorporating the presence of the cultural institutions in the residential areas in the cultural institutions’ annual programmes, making it a natural element of their work. It is above all a financial challenge.

## Outcomes

### The workshops

Basis for the project was the residents’ wishes for family activities in the area. The Art School and the Music School moved into the community centre, facilitating workshops for children with puppets and singing games.

The Culture Caravan was a regular visitor to Hjortegården during the school holidays. The graffiti-painted caravan with sound and film studios settled in the area - fully staffed by professional street-art artists.

Young people shot film sessions, created rap lyrics and music and, in tandem with the graffiti artists, started to decorate the countless grey tunnels in the area.

The concept of a mobile workshop works well in terms of visibility, because the immediate presence arouses curiosity. In the course of the project the Art School also established a mobile workshop, the “Art School Car”, offering *raku* firing, screen printing and acrylic painting.

### New cultural events in Hjortegården

In 2013 all the projects in the area organised a market festival in co-operation with the residents’ festival committee. The programme was large and diverse. Rock bands from the Music School, local orchestras and Kurdish folk musicians provided the entertainment on the stage. The Art School offered communal painting and the Culture Caravan organised a photo competition and jam sessions. There was also soccer with professional soccer players and a treasure hunt with the health project. The festival committee of the local housing association were responsible for the logistics and the dance band that closed the event. Many residents participated in the event.

The following year the residents’ festival committee took their own initiative for the market festival, and now every year they invite the cultural institutions to the Hjortegården market festival. This part of the project has become anchored as a recurring event.

In just a few years, the “Subkult” event (a collaborative project between the Library and the 10th form of the local school) has developed into an annual underground festival. In 2013 the theme was “Burning Art”.

Together with 20 pupils, the sculptor Søren Cip created sculptures out of straw and wood. After a torch parade through Hjortegården, the pupils transformed their works into beautiful fire sculptures. In 2014 the

theme was “Light and Sound” and in autumn 2015, in conjunction with the composer Anders Monrad, the pupils will launch “Herlev Ambience”, an app that will present the town in an entirely new way, using sound and images.

### **Experience Relay**

On Saturday the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2014 the cultural institutions invited people to a family day in Hjortegården. The “Experience Relay” moved through Hjortegården. It was led with energy by the Slagkraft drumming band.

In the tunnels young people told tunnel stories, and the new graffiti art created by young people in the neighbourhood together with the Culture Caravan’s street-art artists was admired. In the Library, the residents met the spoken word poet, TJ Dema from Botswana, before the tour proceeded to Gammelgaard Art Centre, which is located just opposite the residential area. Here the Art School presented a vernissage, and the Music School’s “Street Band” played their hearts out. The Relay concluded with a circus for the youngest members of the audience in the courtyard of the art centre.

## **Key points**

Local collaborators are essential, if we are to create meaningful cultural experiences in the residential areas.

The necessary work of building relations takes time.

Mobile workshops and cultural activities in public spaces work well. They arouse curiosity and residents can take part in creative activities without having to commit. It makes it easier for cultural institutions to connect with new audiences.

The recurring cultural activities, which have been created by the project, create positive experiences and positive press coverage and, in the long run, they help to tell new stories about the area.

## **Contact and links**

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