

BRIDGING

CO-CREATIVE CULTURE AS
A BRIDGE TO SOCIAL BONDING
AND MUTUAL TRUST



Compendium I: Inter-Social



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Colophon

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Foreword

By Damien McGlynn, Communications & Partnerships Director,
Voluntary Arts

The unique power of creativity to unify disparate groups of people is something commonly recognised by those actively involved in the field. There are, for those who are willing to look, countless stories of co-creative projects and activities that have helped to bridge social divides while offering something that is – above all – fun. Perhaps it is not at all surprising. The act of creating and sharing together, expressing ourselves and sharing in the effort, output, sorrow and joy that all of this entails is intensely personal. Our individual approaches to creativity can often – even unintentionally – belie our personal perspective, preconceptions and prejudices. This helps us to learn about others' points of view – their experience of the world we live in.

As the world has, in many ways, become better connected than ever before we have seen some traditional structures and means of seeking community and identity start to disintegrate. Many states and local governments are now reporting a growing crisis of loneliness and isolation.¹ Coupled with increasingly polarised public discourse and the spread of extremist views, this has contributed to a fragmentation of contemporary society that threatens our ability to live, work and convene effectively as a civil society who understand, respect and celebrate our differences.

“The capacity of a country to support peaceful collective decision making involves multiple factors including the quality of institutions, intergroup relations, and the effectiveness of channels for resolving conflicts. [...] Trust refers to the extent to which individuals have confidence in people whom they know personally, including family and neighbors. It can also refer to trust in people met for the first time and in people of different religions and nationalities. [...] Civic engagement relates to social capital, participation, and the agency that motivates individuals to be part of collective action.”²

Trust is built on familiarity and understanding and each of these characteristics is crucial in a thriving, cohesive community of any scale. Locally, nationally, or across the broad landscape of the European Union, the need to understand our

¹ Public Health England, Dec 2015, <https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2015/12/08/loneliness-and-isolation-social-relationships-are-key-to-good-health/>

² World Development Report (2013) <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/11843>

neighbours and fellow citizens is a common requirement for a happy, peaceful civic society.

“Higher income, better health of mind and body, and a high degree of trust in one’s community (“social capital”) all contribute to high life satisfaction; poverty, ill health, and deep divisions in the community all contribute to low life satisfaction.”³

At a time when there is a perceived decline in social cohesion across Europe and the wider world, it is important to interrogate the ways in which people of different backgrounds come together and create shared experiences and find common ground. Our communities are now much more diverse, transient and digitally-connected than in the past but traditional, local connections within communities have not developed as they have in the past and the effects of this are starting to become clear in areas such as crime, mental health and civic responsibility.

This is the context in which the BRIDGING project proposed to investigate the methods through which participation in co-creative activities can help to bridge social capital. The project has focused on those projects and activities that have brought together people from different backgrounds to create together as equals. We have sought to uncover the best approaches and environments which are conducive to bridging existing divides and preconceptions, whether those be cultural, generational or otherwise. The opportunity provided by this partnership between organisations in seven different countries is significant and, in itself, presents some clear commonality in our experiences of culture and social bonding in nations with very different cultures and contexts.

Over two years, the BRIDGING project team are looking at how these creative activities can have an influence on bridging social capital in five thematic areas: inter-cultural, inter-European, inter-generational, inter-regional, and inter-social. Each area has been explored through research, surveys, interviews and case studies. In each area, we have sought out examples of projects, activities and groups that have involved people from across the various divides and asked some key questions about the nature of these activities. How have they been organised? What were the primary goals of the activity? What were the motivations of the participants? Was a welcoming and social atmosphere cultivated, and how? What were the particular logistical considerations for the context of the project?

³ World Happiness Report (2012) <http://worldhappiness.report/ed/2012/>

Through the research conducted, the State of the Art report⁴, and the case studies presented in these thematic compendia, we hope to articulate some common threads and key characteristics of those projects and activities that have been most successful in bridging these divides. Sharing these findings will, we hope, assist other organisers and practitioners to develop new and improved cultural activities that can offer participants a rewarding, enjoyable, creative experience but also allow for personal connections to be made and the social bonds that are so crucial to our communities to flourish within these activities.

Each of the five areas of investigation present their own unique challenges but have been identified as areas where more can be done - across Europe - to bridge divides and help people to learn more about each other through creativity. Whether it is an inter-generational group or one that brings together people of different cultures, the atmosphere cultivated by participating as equals in a creative activity offers a strong platform for personal exchange. It connects people to themselves and, in turn, those around them.

"Higher life satisfaction is correlated with having a more intense relational life in general, such as socializing frequently with friends and relatives, attending social gatherings and cultural events, participating in sports, performing volunteer work, and pro-social behavior..."⁵

There are many things that can be considered when devising and delivering the activities to ensure that a more diverse mix of people can feel included, and the case studies expand on these considerations to show different approaches that can be adopted by others. These are presented not as guaranteed methods of success, but demonstrations of the ways in which a variety of potential barriers can be overcome in different circumstances.

The findings of the survey emphasise that those participating are usually driven, first and foremost, by the desire to do something enjoyable and creative. The social benefits are often clearly evident afterwards but these are secondary in the minds of most participants. This is by no means a negative finding. In fact, it marks out the unique appeal of these creative activities to people of all walks of life. They come together in pursuit of creative expression and pleasure and this, in itself, helps to create the environment in which the many beneficial social outcomes can be reaped. In this compendium, we aim to present numerous examples of how this formula has worked well and, from our findings, suggest ways that others can learn from these approaches.

⁴ BRIDGING: State of the Art report (2018) http://bridgingsocialcapital.eu/?page_id=434

⁵ World Happiness Report (2012) <http://worldhappiness.report/ed/2012/>

This is the first in a series of five thematic compendia. This edition examines inter-social bridging. The editor of this edition is Damien McGlynn, representing Voluntary Arts (UK & Republic of Ireland), and the co-editors are Hans Jørgen Vodsgaard of Interfolk (Denmark) and Hans Noijens and Ingrid Smit of LKCA (Netherlands).

Introduction

By Damien McGlynn, Communications & Partnerships Director,
Voluntary Arts

Inter-social bridging, as presented here, concerns the building of trust and bonds across different socio-economic demographics. Following the State of the Arts survey report, we present a six case studies examining ways in which co-creative activities can encourage inter-social bridging. Case studies come from the UK, the Netherlands and Denmark and demonstrate a diverse range of approaches. Each offers us a unique perspective on addressing the divides which can easily grow between groups of different socio-economic backgrounds, particularly in countries with growing income inequality. A recent OECD report states:

*"First, the higher the level of economic inequality, the higher will be the "social barriers" between groups and the less individuals will feel familiar with and connect to other people. Second, inequality may generate a perception of injustice: it is difficult to develop trust in others if they are seen as having unfair advantages. Finally, unequal communities may disagree over how to share (and finance) public goods, and those disagreements can in turn break social ties and lessen social cohesion. Broken trust can lead to intolerance and discrimination and there is growing concern across European countries and more globally over the association with political instability"*⁶

This publication seeks to demonstrate the ways that co-creative activities can and do facilitate this improved inter-social bridging but, in addition, to look at the characteristics of those projects that evidence greater success in this area and highlight what we can learn from these and what can be taken, adapted and used as models for the future and for other locations and countries.

The issues of inequality and social barriers resulting from economic divides are familiar to many countries. In the UK, the recent *Panic!* report⁷ outlined the long-standing class divide between the cultural and creative industries and the general population. The authors make an interesting point that the analysis "shows the taste patterns of cultural workers are substantially different from those of the rest of the population". In many ways, community-driven co-creative activities are already a step ahead of the professional-led sector in this respect.

⁶ 'Understanding The Socio-Economic Divide in Europe', OECD (2017):
<https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/cope-divide-europe-2017-background-report.pdf>

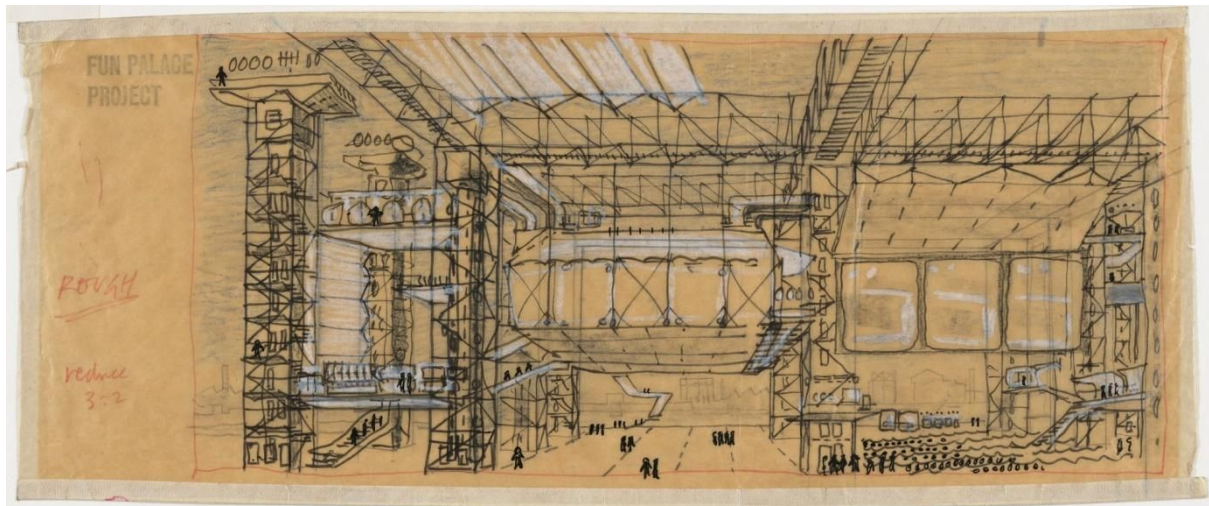
⁷ 'Panic! Social Class, Taste and Inequalities in the Creative Industries', Brook, O'Brien, Taylor (2018):
<https://www.barbican.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/2018-04/Panic-Paper-2018-FINAL-18.4.18.pdf>

The activities that are instigated and supported by people outside of the traditional, funded cultural sector are the kinds of things they themselves want to be involved in, as opposed to something being prescribed for them from above.

Case Study: Fun Palaces

By Damien McGlynn, Communications & Partnerships Director,
Voluntary Arts

Fun Palaces, as an idea, originated in the early 1960s with theatre director Joan Littlewood and architect Cedric Price. They dreamt up the idea of a 'laboratory of fun' and a 'university of the streets'. They wanted to build a place that was a home to the arts and sciences, open and welcoming to all. For various reasons, their vision never really came to fruition – although small scale projects such as the Stratford Fair in 1975 tested the idea.



Cedric Price, Fun Palace for Joan Littlewood Project, Stratford East, London, England (Perspective), 1959-61 - <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/842>

The original design for the Fun Palace said: “Choose what you want to do – or watch someone else doing it. Learn how to handle tools, paint, babies, machinery, or just listen to your favourite tune. Dance, talk or be lifted up to where you can see how other people make things work. Sit out over space with a drink and tune in to what’s happening elsewhere in the city. Try starting a riot or beginning a painting – or just lie back and stare at the sky.”

In 2014, to mark what would have been Joan Littlewood’s 100th birthday, a new campaign was launched to reimagine the original vision. Led by Stella Duffy and Sarah-Jane Rawlings, Fun Palaces aimed to create a whole series of spaces that anyone could create, wherever they live. Rather than aim to build new buildings, they focused on making the best use of the buildings and spaces that were already there. It is described as an ongoing campaign for cultural democracy.

In October 2014, there were 138 Fun Palaces made by 3,183 local people and enjoyed by 40,000 participants. By 2017, there were 362 Fun Palaces made by 13,750 people and with 126,000 participants and there were also Fun Palaces in Australia, Germany, Norway, New Zealand and the USA.



Map of Fun Palaces across the UK in October 2017

The model of Fun Palaces puts responsibility and control in the hands of local people to create their own events. This is “culture for, with and by everyone”. The Fun Palaces weekend each October offers a single banner and platform for them to operate under, but each local event is devised by the people that live in the area so that it is suited to their locality. This ethos is a key part of how Fun Palaces is run and how it recruits organisers and participants.

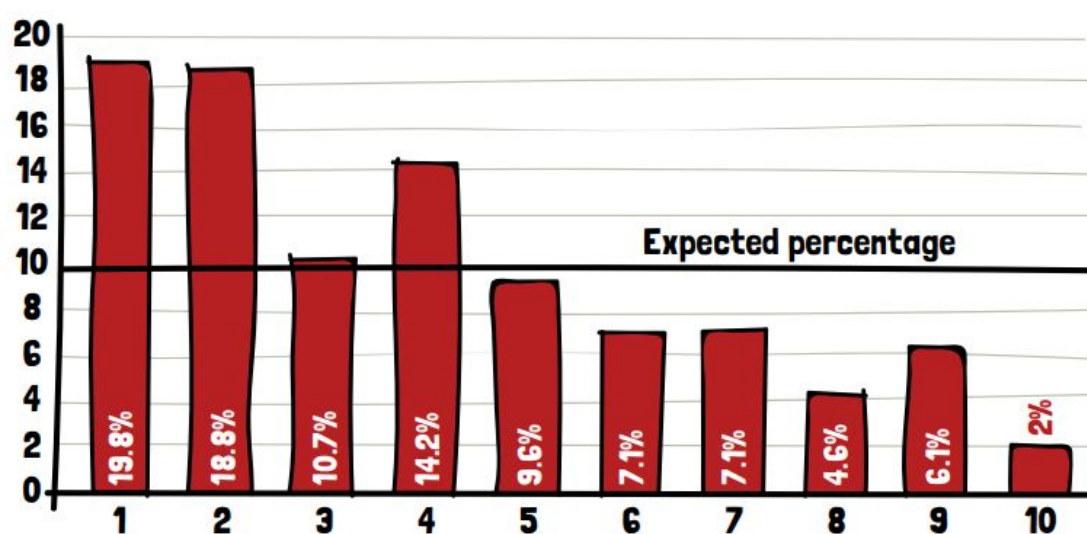
The combination of arts and sciences is somewhat unique also. Placing these two disciplines together as equally important, enjoyable, creative activities does not happen often. But this plays a crucial role in bringing new audiences to these activities even if they don’t feel they are knowledgeable or skilled in these areas. Fun Palaces Co-Director, Stella Duffy, describes the approach of asking people what their “something else” is. Through workshops with existing arts organisations and venues, they explore what other activities arts professionals enjoy in their spare time. These are often totally secret from their colleagues, hidden partly because they feel they’re not an expert in the activity.

Fun Palaces are presented as a hands-on experience where everyone comes to learn and share. It is made clear that nobody is expected to be an expert. This open approach makes routes into the event more open and welcoming. The

events are presented as egalitarian gatherings with a range of activities to try in a supportive environment. The focus is on enjoying the activities, not becoming highly-skilled or presenting yourself as highly-accomplished in a particular area. As Duffy says, “the clue is in our name: Fun”.

Though the small central organising team who coordinate the annual festival make it clear that the aim for Fun Palaces is to be inclusive, the evaluation of the events has shown exceptionally high levels of engagement among those demographics that are often cited as being excluded from professional, funded arts programmes. Duffy cites their willingness to be open, inviting and appreciative of what everyone has to offer as key factors in this outcome. Having Fun Palaces take place in those communities that are often underserved by public cultural investment and being led by the people who live in those communities means it is much more likely that the participants (or attendees) are an accurate reflection of the local demographic.

Venue locations mapped by level of deprivation



1 is the most deprived, 10 is the least.

*Data in this graph from Fun Palaces in England only. The Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks all postcodes in England by deprivations. Each decile is 10% of the population, with decile 1 being the most deprived, and decile 10 being the least deprived.

The graph above shows the spread of locations where Fun Palaces events took place in England during the 2017 festival. These locations are compared to the Index of Multiple Deprivation which ranks every postcode in England into ten equal brackets based on socio-economic factors. As the graph shows, a much

higher proportion of Fun Palaces events happened in locations in the lower-ranked areas - being the most deprived in the country.

These events are being instigated by people in their own local areas and this data shows us that the people choosing to take on this task are more often based in economically deprived areas. There can be a number of potential reasons for this: addressing a lack of funded cultural provision in these locations for one, or a lack of engagement or distrust of what is provided through formal structures. It can also be attributed to a 'can do' attitude and a 'tightly-knit' community in areas of economic deprivation. The Fun Palaces team put this down to their own openness in who they work with and how clear it is that everyone's ideas are equally valid regardless of professional expertise.

The organisers and participants at Fun Palaces are similarly spread across the indices of multiple deprivation with above average weighting across the more deprived half of the demographic. There is a high proportion of organisers in the 7th decile but otherwise there is a significant tail off towards the least-deprived end of the scale.

INDICES OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION DECILES (NB- 1 is the most deprived, 10 is the least)

1	10.00%	12.37%	11.76%
2	10.00%	11.29%	13.51%
3	10.00%	11.83%	11.61%
4	10.00%	10.22%	12.08%
5	10.00%	11.83%	11.92%
6	10.00%	9.68%	9.86%
7	10.00%	13.44%	7.79%
8	10.00%	6.45%	9.22%
9	10.00%	7.53%	6.20%
10	10.00%	5.38%	6.04%

Proportion of Fun Palace organisers (3rd column) and participants (4th column) in 2017

The motivation for people being part of Fun Palaces, as either organisers or participants, links with the research done in the BRIDGING project's State of the Art survey: they are motivated by the enjoyment of doing something creative with others, rather than an explicit aim to bridge across socio-economic divides. "The clue is in the name", says Duffy. "People want to have fun." The language used in promoting the project focuses on creativity, fun and experimentation, rather than "the arts" or "culture" which can be off-putting for many. It's also crucial that Fun Palaces are free to attend, removing the potential barrier of cost.

Many free cultural events and activities don't attract a diverse audience though. This is often because of an inability to reach those who are not engaged. With

Fun Palaces, the event planning and delivery is embedded in the local community from the start and the awareness that it is free, open and welcoming is built within the local community over a long period of time. “You can’t retro-fit diversity”, explains Duffy. Having this open, community-focused approach from the very beginning, instead of years of baggage related to exclusivity, means that people from all backgrounds are excited to take part.

Building new projects in new areas often relies on the one or two people who are already well connected locally. Many of these people self-identify themselves and approach Fun Palaces via social media. Facebook is seen as incredibly useful for local connections while Twitter is great for wider national or international links.

The average Fun Palaces organising team has 38 people involved. Where it’s possible, the Fun Palaces team provide planning workshops in advance to help bring together the organisers and work through their ideas without being instructional. The ownership and responsibility still lies with the local team. It’s clear that this all depends on them taking a risk. A library staff member who had previously been involved said in one workshop, “the best thing to know is nothing ever goes to plan, and when it doesn’t, you’re the only one who’ll know”.

The workshops help to get past the obvious problems (eg. risk assessment) by pointing organisers to existing support and guidance like toolkits and resources from Fun Palaces’ website, Voluntary Arts and the British Science Association.

There are often two types of workshops: “one bringing people in who aren’t the usual suspects, but the other is more circular within a group and brings more people in as that circle grows bigger”. These two different approaches aim to welcome those who previously wouldn’t have thought of taking on an organising role in a community or cultural event before.

The Fun Palaces model of engaging with communities is a real departure from traditional audience development models of established cultural venues. These types of venues sometimes take part in Fun Palaces, but they tend to be more ‘top-down’ in their management approach. The baggage that comes with years of traditional public engagement work means they are usually slower to come around to the idea of letting go and offering up control to the public.

One way this model is being adopted is that some venues have started to think of how they recruit learning and participation staff. Instead of sticking with the traditional mindset of what this staff member would be like, they have aimed to bring in people with community worker or social worker backgrounds. This type of background brings a different perspective to how to interact with the local community. Instead of seeing attendance at the venue as the main goal, the

emphasis is on community and connection and how this can be facilitated through the resources the cultural organisation has to offer.

Duffy believes the difficulty for these larger organisations is that “they put their artform first, not the connection”. Over the past few years, the Fun Palaces campaign has demonstrated a new, innovative model for bringing together diverse local communities and encouraging them to lead in creating their own culture that is, through its development, more relevant and welcoming to the community in which it was built.

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Case Study: The Create Course

By Damien McGlynn, Communications & Partnerships Director,
Voluntary Arts

Battersea Arts Centre is one of London's best known cultural venues and has a reputation for being ambitious and innovative in their approach to working with the local community. Artistic Director, David Jubb, has taken a keen interest in the development of 'co-creation' in recent years and this has informed their programming and strategy. The Create Course was established as a pilot at Battersea Arts Centre in the winter of 2015.



The Create Course offers a free weekly meet-up where people try new and different things over a six-week period. The course is managed by Marina Sacco, who initially approached Battersea Arts Centre as part of research into creative participation for her masters at King's College London.

The main goal for the organisation in running this kind of activity is to be more than *just* a theatre, but a place for the community. The Battersea building is a former town hall so it is seen as important that this is a place for everyone.

The course aims to demonstrate that creativity is not just 'the arts' but a much broader spectrum of activities that are welcoming to everyone. This is why the course is not promoted as being artform-specific. It takes a very different approach than a standard theater workshop or painting course.

A decision not to advertise what was happening in any particular week of the course was important to ensure participants didn't simply select the things they were more familiar or comfortable with. This approach does mean that some people could be put off by the ambiguity but that there is an element of bravery in signing up. The first session in the Summer 2018 course was called "Getting

creative with Fear”, acknowledging the difficulty people face in going somewhere unfamiliar or trying something they think they are not good at.

The course includes activities as varied as dance, cooking, gardening, beat-boxing and painting. The weekly sessions are managed by two facilitators and feature guest speakers who talk about specific activities but do not act as formal teachers.



The Create Course at Battersea Arts Centre

The facilitators tend to open the sessions with a quote, perhaps from a famous artist, to stimulate discussion. They also use simple questions and games to get participants to share something about themselves. This might be what their favourite food is and then they are invited to expand on why this is their favourite and elaborate with some personal stories. The aim is to gently get the participants to open up and think about their own tastes, opinions, background and creativity. The second hour of the course usually builds on this with the help of the guest speaker who would talk a bit about their own work and suggest different techniques and experiments to the group.

The energy provided by having two facilitators is key to the course. This, along with the guest speaker, helps to create a lively atmosphere where the focus is not always on a main teacher or educator, but more spread around the room in multiple conversations and activities. This decentralised approach works at this

scale, with about ten participants usually committed to attending throughout the six-week course.

The Create Course takes place each Thursday morning with lunch and crèche facilities provided for participants. The timing and the accommodating nature of the course means it is more appealing to people who may be unemployed, struggling financially or raising young children.

The course is promoted on the Battersea Arts Centre website and on social media, but putting flyers in local shops and community venues is more effective and attracts people who may not otherwise come to the venue for cultural events in the evening. Word of mouth is how most people hear about the course, either from past participants or from family and friends who have seen the promotion. More recently there have also been many referrals from social and care workers.

All of these factors (promotion, timing, regularity) have resulted in strong take up among locals rather than those travelling from farther away. The changing nature of the local area in Battersea means that there is a diverse mix of socio-economic groups on the venue's doorstep. The vast majority of participants are also between about 40 and 65 years old. This course is intended to reach that age group that are seen as underserved by the organisation. There are lots of activities already in place for young people and some specific events for older people, but this bracket is often underrepresented. Many who attend are recently retired, unemployed or single parents. A small number of participants - about one or two per course - have been freelance, self-employed or working late shifts.



The Create Course at Battersea Arts Centre

The outcomes the organisation is most interested in are the personal impact and the relationship with the venue. Participants report greatly improved self-confidence and wellbeing, while they are also usually much more comfortable in dropping into the venue at other times just to hang out.

Though it is not something the organisers have monitored, anecdotally there are several cases where participants have established friendships and continued to keep in touch after the course has ended. This has sometimes been due to living close to each other, having children the same age or similar interests.

In planning the course format, it is designed to allow plenty of time to interact and get to know each other. The small breakfast at the beginning and the lunch at the end are included in the advertised times of the course. Naturally, some individuals are less outgoing than others so may not have engaged with others socially during this time but the availability of experienced facilitators helped to offer those who were more shy routes to get to know others.

This social aspect is recognised as a major motivation for participants in advance of the course. The course is seen as an opportunity to get out and do something different. After the course, when asked about the outcomes, participants identify their own improved perception of themselves and their abilities. They feel less of a sense of loneliness, with a stronger bond to the venue, feeling that they will be welcome there any time. Recent events at Battersea Arts Centre to celebrate renovation works have seen some of these people, who would previously have been too shy to attend, coming along and mixing with the wider community connected to the venue.

One question posed at the end of the course asks participants to rate, on a scale of 1-10, how much they connected to a new social group. The average score is usually about 7 or 8, which is obviously high. Other questions, for example about how their confidence has improved, can often get higher average scores of 9 or 10. This could be explained by a readiness to identify those personal, internal effects more easily and quickly than recognising an expanded social group or connection that may take more time to flourish. Respondents state that they were significantly happier during the course, which would indicate that they enjoy the time spent there in the company of a new group of people. Some have answered follow-up questions by saying the social time having lunch together was the highlight for them, so that personal connection is clearly valued by the participants.

“It works because it’s local”, says Sacco. There’s an element of trust based in localised cultural offer and the availability of something regular on your doorstep is crucial to some of the participants who would struggle to travel further afield.



The Create Course at Battersea Arts Centre

Sacco also feels the course is contributing a lot to the evolution of the organisation and cites the change in their mission from “to shape the future of theatre” to “to inspire people to take creative risks to shape the future”. It is significant that the new mission statements does not have the word theatre in it but instead focuses on inspiring people as creative individuals. As part of this kind of cyclical approach, the Create Course is both an outcome of this evolution and is helping to shape the next phase. The course has helped to broaden the organisation’s community and, in turn, informed them of gaps in their programming and what kind of things different people find challenging about coming to the venue.



Battersea Arts Centre's mission

Sacco sees Battersea Arts Centre as being extremely receptive to this kind of learning and feedback and they display a willingness to change (using a 'Scratch' methodology to their work) that means this kind of course can make a significant impact on the wider organisation. She believes it's changing the way the organisation thinks, in particular about creativity.

The Create Course is clearly not just about audience development for Battersea Arts Centre. The course is part of a wider movement to involve a wider demographic of people in creating and contributing to culture in the nation's best known venues and establishments. The benefits for the venue and the participants are clear in the short term, but the long term benefits of encouraging greater social integration and creative expression across traditional socio-economic divides can be transformational for everyone involved.

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Case Study: Musicon The Hague

By Hans Noijens, Cultural Participation Specialist,
LKCA

Musicon is a place where young people develop a mutual interest in each other through music; a place with a wide diversity of social and ethnic backgrounds; a melting pot of characters that can create an enormous richness of encounters, impressions and ideas; a place where new works and new styles are created and developed; a place where, for example, the encounter between pop and classic exciting and special things arise! A place where everyone is welcome and where exclusivity is doomed; a place where talented musicians are prepared for a future in the professional circuit.

Participants are young people in the age from 15-25 from different backgrounds, making music in various genres and disciplines, but they each have to add something personally. They must already be able to show some skills, to show a personal talent. Coaches are involved to guide the young people and the bands and ensembles; they must be capable to recognize talents and develop them to high levels; it is necessary that they should be able to appeal to the ambitions of the young people.



Everyone can participate, Musicon wants to be accessible and not exclusive, but its main goal is to let the talents of young people develop and prepare them for a future as a professional musician. If someone does not pass through an audition, the assistance of the local arts center is called in to continue their development.

Failure to meet the requirements of an audition does not mean that there is no talent, that talent is perhaps still too young or latent and unconscious.

Musicon has access to well-equipped and inexpensive training rooms, excellent and experienced coaches who can handle differences well and make a strong appeal to the social component of making music together. In addition to the lessons and playing together, Musicon has an open stage, organizes public workshops with top artists and the annual talent festival Kaderock.



Through the space for experiment, the presence of musical talent and good guidance, quality and involvement are created in a very natural way. Quality not only in the form of high-level music, but also the creation of new forms and styles, and not at least: new bands and ensembles emerge. The youngsters have their own voice in the choice of ensembles but are also challenged to play in different combinations and receive advice on which combinations form a good 'match'. We could regard the so created new ensembles as the result of a successful synergy in both musical and social fields. Young people have developed their social skills in addition to their musical talents; without the social skills, it is not possible to make music together at a high level.

It is interesting to see that focusing on talent, quality and experiment works as a pioneer and removes barriers. When agreement is reached around these three artistic aspects, participants feel at home and create an atmosphere of good cooperation.

Accessibility for everyone who wants to be accessible (central place in the city, cheap, different ways of learning) makes Musicon and its activities an ideal place for bridging capital from different social levels.

Case Study: Kinderen Aan Zee

By Hans Noijens, Cultural Participation Specialist,
LKCA

A group of fifty children and fifteen accompanying artists, technicians, teachers and welfare workers work together for a week in a unique, multifunctional location for a unique, artistic challenge. Creativity is central, because within the current, rapidly changing society creativity is the decisive factor for success.

The children (and their parents) discover their talents and the possibilities to further develop them in their own city. Including the local (funding) possibilities for people on a low income (such as the local youth sport and culture fund). In the meantime, a solid network is being created, allowing children to move on together to a follow-up offer in the city.



We know that children will soon face major cultural, social and material challenges. At the same time, technical developments bring opportunities within reach that we could only dream about in the past. In a unique atmosphere, in collaboration with artists and social partners, children are challenged to come up with their own solutions for large and small issues. This method prepares the children for an active and independent position in society.

Kinderen Aan Zee was implemented in 8 cities in the Netherlands in 2018 and is different in every city. However, always is being worked from the same starting points: discover, play and learn.

The project involves a group of fifty children (per city) aged 9-12 years whose parents have no money to go on holiday. They are accompanied by fifteen artists, technicians, teachers and welfare workers in their discovery of creativity and they spend a week together to work together on a creative challenge: a performance, an installation, a performance, etc. There is a national coordination office with four people working.



Next four aspects are leading in the work and guarantee for a qualitative learning outcome:

- they work from co-creation where the choices and decisions of the participants (the children) are leading;
- the creative process is central;
- the activities are intended for newcomers (immigrant children) and children whose parents can not afford a holiday;
- sustainability: always there is much attention for suitable follow-up programs in education or beyond.

The combined formation of the supervisors (artists, teachers and social workers) guarantees attention for both the creative and the social learning process of the children and ensures connection to education.

Children from different social classes work together in a creative and social process and the guidance focuses on the different forms of learning: it is about

learning individual skills but also learning how to use it in a joint creative way making process. That results in a double learning yield.

References: www.kinderenaanzee.nl

Case Study: A New Culture Centre in Holeby

By Hans Jørgen Vodsgaard,
Interfolk

As told by the Danish village researcher, Jørgen Møller, we have in recent years in the countryside of Denmark, in the rural areas and the villages seen that "education, cultural offerings, prices, public service, health - in many parameters are ... far behind." Jørgen Møller sees the development as a clear step away from the idea, that everyone should have equal opportunities: "We have had an idea that one should be able to live a good life everywhere in Denmark, but it seems to have been somewhat difficult".

Locally, some villages - often led by local enthusiasts – have tried to select another way, by working together in self-managed communities with art and culture as the focal point. The following story is an example of that.

Art and culture as development potential

The Municipality of Guldborgsund already has found that better cultural and leisure activities, according to many in the group of relocations over 50 years could have helped to maintain in the municipality.

Likewise, a survey by Oxford Research demonstrates that when seniors reach a certain age and become less mobile, the beautiful scenery and the quiet surroundings are not enough in everyday life. For this group there is a demand for cultural and recreational activities.

Other analyses, including an analysis by *Center for Culture and Experience Economy* in Denmark and *Wonderful Co-gen* show that it is central to people that "something is happening", where they live, so that the city they live in, is not just an empty frame.

Events and cultural activities help both to strengthen the feeling of belonging to a city or a local area and to create commitment and identity in order to want to spend time in the city and the area you live in. When you have been involved in a cultural event, this city or area gets a positive value added, and it may ultimately contribute to resourceful citizens and businesses remaining in the place.

In North-eastern Falster, an area 125 km south of Copenhagen, is a small town, Horbelev, which only has 587 inhabitants. The nearest big city, 16 km away, is Nykøbing with 16,500 residents.

Horbelev was previously like other villages in the area marked by emigration and decline. But the development has turned. Previously there were 33 unsold houses in the city. Today there are only 10, and the population has increased by 37 inhabitants since 2009.

The barely 600 residents of Horbelev have for many years acted as enthusiasts who will struggle to hold on to a lively and varied city life with the energy to create new possibilities. An example is the transformation of the city's former elementary school to a new rallying point for the entire city.

The Association of the Future of Northeast Falster

The turning point came with the transformation of Horbelev School to a new Culture centre. The school had until 2009 in many years been run as an independent school (after the public school closed); but as the independent school also closed, a group took the initiative for a public meeting, where they wanted to use the buildings for new culture services.

Here about 250 interested joined. Subsequently there has been held workshops, which has set up 10 different interest groups: the elderly, Tourism & Business, Sport, Nature & Outdoors, Arts, Culture, Hesnæs Port & Beach, Children & Youth, Village Center and Urban Renewal. There were a myriad of ideas in each group and coordinators for all groups are subsequently appointed. Also "The Association of the Future of Northeast Falster" and "Northeast Falster Investment Fund" was formed.



The closed Horbelev School before the change

Through the Investment Fund the school building was purchased and “The Association of the Future of Northeast Falster” established in 2011 a new village center in the former school. The village center provides room for the association of theaters, the associations of art clubs, exercise association, kids club, thrift store, pizzeria and much more.



A local arts exhibition at Horbelev Culture House

So no more talk

Torben Stjernholm, who chairs “The Association of the Future of Northeast Falster” says:

“We look forward to moving forward with the development of the village center. We have many local users at the center today and expect to create a true culture centre that will mean that far more from Northeast Falster and the surrounding cities will find their way to Horbelev. The expansion of the village center allows us to create more events and exhibitions, than we have been able to accommodate. We already see now that there are several newcomers who are attracted to our project and we are aiming to stop the exodus of Northeast Falster.

We want to develop our beautiful area and the social community to the benefit of all residents in Northeast Falster. We will bring together the residents about various activities and make it a very attractive place to stay. We want to get as much interest in the area, that businesses, new residents and tourists find their way here. Northeast Falster must be a role model for rural development in Denmark”.

So no more talk of peripheral Denmark and village death in this part of the country!

The citizen initiative in Horbelev shows that the aim of reviving a sparsely populated area in a sustainable manner can be implemented by applying the “citizen help citizen” or “peer to peer approach” also in the culture field, where civil society associations and their volunteers from the cross-cultural sector of

amateur arts, voluntary culture, heritage and cultural centres are engaged to provide available and involving arts and culture activities with an added value for civic and democratic participation and community bonding.

The activities can be many, such as in this case to build a common culture centre, which creates a framework for cultural activities and thereby creates community and a breeding ground for more activities. It may be getting individual residents of the area to be involved in entrepreneur activities such as providing a local theatre, where citizens are actors, stage people, ticket sellers, administrators, and so on.

As defined in the foreword of the State of the Arts Survey: “The term *co-creation*, in the context of this project, refers to co-creation in a free, civic context, where different citizen groups work and create together. It aims to promote social capital, mutual trust and recognition as being part of the same democratic community.”⁸

Genuine co-creative forms of cooperation with a high level of social capital strengthen - as mentioned in the State of Arts survey, page 51 - the “cultural capability” of the involved and the “cultural democracy” by promoting the freedom of creation and everyday cultural participation to citizens”.

The case study of the Culture Centre in Holeby indicates in general that a strong participatory culture is based on and promotes civic participation, community bonding and local identity that strengthen the social capital and mutual trusts in the community.

It is now known beyond the municipality's borders of Guldborgsund, that the citizens of Horbelev on the northeast Falster refuses to surrender to the development that otherwise offers many dramatic stories of village death and inhabitants escaping from peripheral Denmark.

References:

State of the Art Report. Overview of co-creative and participatory activities in the sector of amateur arts, voluntary culture and heritage. EDUCULT, June 2018. Published in the context of the 2-year Erasmus+ strategic partnership, Sept 2017 – Aug 2019, entitled: Bridging social capital by participatory and co-creative culture”

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⁸ State of the Art Report. Overview of co-creative and participatory activities in the sector of amateur arts, voluntary culture and heritage. EDUCULT, June 2018.

Case Study: A New Community Centre in Ejby

By Hans Jørgen Vodsgaard,
Interfolk

Thousands of people move every month into the country's largest cities and empties slowly the smaller municipalities for citizens. At the remote areas they stand with a declining number of inhabitants, and often worse, fewer people of working age.

"We get a breakdown of Denmark, where **the winners** are the big cities with their education, good job opportunities and attractive culture. **The losers** can look forward to closures of schools and other welfare institutions. They have fewer resources to maintain the level of service we know today. There are more holes in the roads, and a longer time before they are repaired" (Lea Louise Holst Laursen, Associate Professor at the Department of Architecture, Design and Media Technology at Aalborg University).

Locally, some villages - often led by local enthusiasts – have tried to select another way, by working together in self-managed communities with art and culture as the focal point. The following story is an example of this engagement.

Ejby Municipality

The president of Cultural Council of the Municipality of Køge lives in a small village with 3,200 inhabitants 9 km outside the town of Køge - a city of 37,000 inhabitants. Køge is situated 45 km from Copenhagen.

It has for many years been possible for the residents of Ejby to make activities within art and culture since Denmark has a law according to which groups all over the country, who starts an association with a democratically elected board, can get local support and have designated rooms for their activities.

But in March 2013, there was a big improvement for residents in Ejby, as the president of the local cultural council succeeded in acquiring the disused library and created a community centre⁹ in cooperation with residents of the city. It

⁹ Ejby Medborgerhus: <http://www.ejby-medborgerhus.dk/>

became a cultural meeting and gathering place that have cultural and educative activities in order to strengthen the community in the small town and in order to make residents remain in the city and perhaps even attract new residents.

The municipality was interested in the idea and agreed to cover the cost of improvements to the building, cost of idle operation and maintenance of the alarm system. In addition, the municipality would be responsible for all exterior maintenance. The library agreed to let most furniture and books stand in order to continue to be able to borrow books. The collection of books was also supplemented with books from a disused library nearby.



The old library in Ejby

A trusting community

All citizens of Ejby are welcome in the house. You draw a – cheap - membership and receive a key to the house. This means that you can use the house during business hours, but also during evenings where the last person to leave the house is responsible for closure. By thus giving all responsibility for the house the residents themselves also feel as members of a trusting community.

As a member you can engage in various activities that are mostly initiated and controlled by the members themselves, and they consist for the most part of artistic and cultural activities such as the following:

- Changing art exhibitions, theatre performances, concerts and lectures on a variety of topics throughout the year. Theatre performances and concerts are often for the whole family so the children get used to visiting the house.
- Courses in genealogy and IT.
- Throughout the summer workshops with theatre and music for children.
- Throughout the year you as a member can borrow all the books you want. There is no control of the loans. It is up to the members themselves to arrange for the return. This part of the function is based on mutual trust that makes

everybody feel it's their house. It may also be this confidence that many leave their own books on the library shelves, so others can benefit from them.

In addition to the things mentioned there are meeting rooms, reading rooms and kitchenette available to members and all associations in the city can free book a place in a meeting room.

Most importantly, however, is that the existence of the house means that arts and cultural activities in the city have grown and that the community has strengthened people's identity as Ejby citizens.

The launch of the arts and the cultural activities here described consisted of forming a democratically structured association. There is more than a 150-year-old tradition of forming associations in Denmark. It is said that every Dane is a member of at least 3 associations, and it is probably not entirely wrong. The association structure is very well respected in Denmark - and in general across all five of the Nordic countries.



Meeting in Ejby Medborgerhus

The associations are what we call "small democracies". There are places where people, using the rules of democracy, can develop new activities and this is where the main democratic learning takes place and where you learn to take control over your own situation in everyday life.

Increasing engagement and influence is equal to a reduced feeling of powerlessness. This also applies to the activities referred to in the above example.

When you can act on a problem, you remove the feeling of impotence. You become one of the owners of the project that is built up jointly and in a democratic spirit. Therefore, it is perhaps precisely activities like art and culture in associations, where everyone is involved and where people can create a positive and coherent community that is needed to solve the depopulation problems in Denmark.

This example shows that something is done to keep life in sparsely populated areas. As an organization, we can facilitate the process for other cultural associations that want to make an effort. We can from the known examples find out what has to be the strength of the process and what the volunteers lack of skills to succeed with a project like the ones mentioned.

As defined in the foreword of the State of the Arts Survey: “The term *co-creation*, in the context of this project, refers to co-creation in a free, civic context, where different citizen groups work and create together. It aims to promote social capital, mutual trust and recognition as being part of the same democratic community.”¹⁰

Genuine co-creative forms of cooperation with a high level of social capital strengthen - as mentioned in the State of Arts survey, page 51 - the “cultural capability” of the involved and the “cultural democracy” by promoting the freedom of creation and everyday cultural participation to citizens”.

“Ultimately, the co-creative activities are the ones with the most effects on participants’ networks. They foster the creation of a group (one interviewee presented “a village”, another “a family”). Participants are more likely collaborating after having created something together, reached a goal, than by simply being in the same class, following a same lesson.” The Survey page 54:

The case study of the Ejby Community House indicates in general that a strong participatory culture is based on and promotes civic participation that strengthen the social capital and mutual trusts in the community; and it indicates furthermore that culture volunteers in the field of arts, culture and heritage really can help to promote the community bonding and local identity in a sparsely populated area.

¹⁰ State of the Art Report. Overview of co-creative and participatory activities in the sector of amateur arts, voluntary culture and heritage. EDUCULT, June 2018.

References:

State of the Art Report. Overview of co-creative and participatory activities in the sector of amateur arts, voluntary culture and heritage. EDUCULT, June 2018. Published in the context of the 2-year Erasmus+ strategic partnership, Sept 2017 – Aug 2019, entitled: Bridging social capital by participatory and co-creative culture"

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Essential Findings

By Damien McGlynn, Communications & Partnerships Director,
Voluntary Arts

From the six case studies presented here, we can draw out some common factors and considerations - if not definitive conclusions. Three key issues could be identified in considering inter-social bridging: value, integration and fun. Firstly, looking at the concept of 'value'. This is to be considered both in terms of the value of the individual and their contribution or creative input. With many European nations experiencing growing economic inequality¹¹ and dealing with the resulting division and anxiety (among other things), it is valuable to think about the personal need for validation. A person needs to feel of value and, in a neoliberal system with a rapidly evolving job market, this need can often go unfulfilled within a day-to-day existence which is focused on productivity and profit.

Understanding this unfulfilled need is a crucial ingredient in successfully approaching inter-social bridging. Activities and projects which are devised in a *co-creative* method, thereby involving - and valuing - the input of all participants, is likely to see a greater level of lasting interest from those who are often marginalised by activities which are delivered in a traditional, hierarchical format. This can be characterised as 'investment' by the participants. Allowing for co-ownership, rather than simple participation, places importance on the ideas of each individual and encourages greater 'buy-in' than other models. The process of creating together and having each individual's ideas valued as equal is an important step in bridging social capital.

All of this is valid in itself, but when considered as a means of bridging inter-social divides, then the process of integration is an essential addition. In recent decades many models have been demonstrated which instrumentalise creative practice in order to address the perceived societal problems caused by poverty and inequality. Aside from other issues with this approach, the fact that it is regularly aimed only at those classed as experiencing socio-economic deprivation means that it neglects to address the issue of integration.

What we have seen in the case studies presented here are numerous successful models which have brought together participants from across these socio-economic divides to create together, thereby sharing the social benefits

¹¹ Understanding the Socio-Economic Divide in Europe, OECD (2017):
<https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/cope-divide-europe-2017-background-report.pdf>

and deepening their connections and trust for each other. The projects demonstrate the need for careful consideration of approaches from start to finish to effectively enable an environment that promotes inter-social bridging.

As noted in the survey report, some of the key practical considerations around costs, location and transport are decisive in the field of inter-social bridging. These common barriers are often overlooked in the planning and budgeting stages of new and existing creative activities. Consultation with a range of people from different backgrounds can help to identify and address these concerns at an early stage. Too often conversations like these happen among an existing homogenous group that can be blind to the obstacles faced by others.

Finally, fun remains an integral part of the equation. As the State of the Arts survey report explained, the desire to do something enjoyable and creative is the main motivation for participants. Though this may seem like a simple basis for any creative project, it is important to consider what it is that any target groups might commonly view as being fun, exciting and enticing. As some of the case studies have demonstrated, it is necessary sometimes to question our preconceptions about what is the correct way to plan and deliver these activities. More listening and consultation can lead to important realisations about how to effectively plan, promote and manage creative activities so that they take into consideration potential barriers to participation and are as inclusive as possible.

Work with the Conclusion

We hope that the case studies included here have proven to be informative and inspirational in thinking about how you might develop co-creative activities in your own community. The contexts, challenges and people are different in every location, but the many benefits of bridging social capital and the power of creative activities to enable social bonding are common across borders, cultures and languages.

Having shared these projects and approaches, the questions that follow can hopefully help others to consider managing more inclusive creative activities.

- 1. Do we need co-creative activities with inter-social bridging in our community?**

No

Are you sure? If so, thanks for reading!

Yes

Continue with the workbook...

- 2. What would we like to achieve for our communities through these co-creative activities and inter-social bridging?**

- 3. What groups do you think are currently not engaged with your activities or would you class as 'hard to reach'?**

4. What steps could you take to improve the promotion of these opportunities to increase awareness among target groups?

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5. What could potentially be preventing or discouraging some individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds from participating?

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6. Have you considered the potential financial barriers posed by your:

Location?	
Timing?	
Activity?	
Equipment?	

7. What people or organisations could you approach for support and advice to make the activity more inclusive?

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- 8. What else can you provide or facilitate in order to make the activity more welcoming? Food? Transport? Childcare?**

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