Culture & Creativity
EU-Eastern Partnership Programme

INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Values and conflicts: specific examples of changes in behavior models, confidence building, reforming of institutions, ways of cooperation and mutual understanding

Introduction

Social, as well as individual development, takes place in certain cultural contexts. It is affected by culture and it affects culture. There is constant mutual interaction between culture and social development, whether it is prearranged and carefully designed or spontaneous and unintentional. The evidence of cultural impact on social development can be found in many different areas of social life. Starting from early childhood education, when art and culture play a crucial role in developing young children's creativity, basically through all levels of formal and informal education, ending with intergenerational and lifelong learning programmes. In fact, culture and creativity are necessary elements for personal development, and as such, were defined as key elements for lifelong learning. Very often culture is being used as an interface and tool to reduce social and economic differences while working with disadvantaged communities. Culture is able to create empathy, empower marginalised communities, and promote active citizenship, as well as building civil society. Arts and culture does have a significant role in changing behavior. As research shows, participation in culture can have a major impact on psychological well-being[1]. For many culture and art-based initiatives, current social affairs and sustainability are a key factor. Sustainability in terms of environmental awareness, community building and engagement, social and individual development, consumer attitudes, and behaviors of approaching to change. It is crucial to notice that there is a difference between being a culture consumer - visiting museums, theaters, concerts, etc., and direct participation in the creation of artistic and cultural events. What is more, one does not have to implicate another. In terms of individual and community confidence building and mutual understanding there is evidence that shows that active participation in culture related projects brings true and long term change in individual's behavior models. This should be an important message to the traditional cultural institutions that suffer from constant decline of visitors. On the one hand, this tendency is related to aging of once established audiences and wider cultural offers to choose from in general. On the other hand, due to the shift to digital participatory models and audiences, expectations have changed dramatically. Almost in every aspect of our lives, the transition from consumers to active co-creators has occurred, and this also applies to culture. Many cultural institutions and organisations are aware of these changes and are trying to engage their audiences by inviting them to be a part of different initiatives or even to be co-owners of the organisations themselves. Reaching for new audiences also requires a change in model behaviors of cultural organisations themselves. Many of them started as audience development programs - an approach that places the audience at the heart of everything the organisation does.

1   *E. Grossi, P. Sacco et al, The Impact of Culture on the Subjective Wellbeing,*
    http://www.fondazionebracco.com/ archivio/pdf/The_Impact_of_Culture_on_the_ subjective_wellbeing.pdf

CASE 1

Context

Since 2002, the Association of Creative Initiatives 'ę' (ACIę) has been carrying out socio-cultural projects all over Poland. They produce cultural and social projects, provide training, give grants, and publish books. ACIę promotes new models of activity in the sphere of culture, thanks to a network of animators throughout the entire country. The experience that ACIę gained during its 14 years of operating, allows it to set new trends, implement new projects, and be not afraid to experiment. ACIę outlined three main spheres of their activity:

- Young Creatives Cooperative is an alternative production studio, that creates conditions for young creatives to develop. ACIę facilitates the entire project, "from the idea to realization" by organising workshops, exhibitions, portfolio reviews, and film production.

- Citizens In Action is a laboratory of socio-cultural projects. Within its framework, animators realize their own projects in their neighbourhoods, cities, or an entire country. ACIę ran grant and micro-grant programmes in order to finance actions undertaken by animators.

- Open Cultural Sector is a think-tank whose goal is to create new solutions for culture. By carrying out participatory projects, engaging people from the cultural sector, local communities, researchers, and policymakers, ACIę makes a significant change in cultural policies.

Facts & Figures

- Tool kit 'Ideas to do' consists 87 scenarios of socio-cultural projects.

- All the scenarios of 'Ideas to do' are in open-access, based on the Creative Commons licence.

- The scenarios were created based on experience of over 100 cultural activists, social workers, and cultural animators.

- Some of the project scenarios have been translated into English, Portuguese, and Ukrainian.

- Over 1000 printed versions of the tool kit, 'Ideas to do', were disseminated among cultural centers, cultural institutions and organisations, as well as among the individual culture animators. A digital version of the toolkit was downloaded from the ACIę website over 500 times.

The Challenge

Culture can be a reason for a change. Thanks to culture-based projects, the sense of bond, social solidarity, and responsibility for the place we live can be created and sustained. Since 2002, Warsaw-based Association of Creative Initiatives 'ę', together with a network of animators, social workers, and creators, have been collecting ideas answering the question: how to build good social relationships through culture. In order to succeed, ACIę used film, photography, design, theatre, and new media, but also regular field conversation. They have analyzed programmes of cultural institutions and conducted diagnostics of the needs of local communities. They have created a dialogue platform for kids, young people, and adults to ask questions, be active, and express themselves. They have inspired cultural institutions to change their operating models, supported young creators' projects and encouraged them to work with local communities. Having all the data they collected they have tested new solutions by experimenting with new models and checking out what works and what does not. Through carrying out social projects, ACIę has built a platform for mutual cooperation, which allowed the exchange of ideas, solutions, and practical tips. The outcome of these long and complex actions is the 'Idea to do' - a toolbox of field verified ideas for cultural socially engaged projects.

Results and Impacts

'Ideas to do' is a tool kit that consists of 87 scenarios for socio-cultural projects. From short one-day actions to more complicated long term projects, all the ideas are described according to one pattern. Apart from 87 cards with ideas, there is also a navigation wheel that helps to find an idea connected with the topic chosen (such as design, history, public space, sport, local diagnosis, or with targeted groups, like kids, seniors, or adults). Each card contains a description of the goal to achieve and the way of carrying out the action. Every scenario has been carefully developed either by ACIę or by cultural animators, researchers, culture activists, or educators cooperating with the association. The next step within a scenario is a simple explanation; how a chosen action can be put into practice by developing a similar project based on ACIę's ideas and experience.

'Ideas to do' was created with cooperation of Travelling Animators of Culture, a group of experienced animators, educators, social researchers and social workers, founded in 2010 to support cultural institutions and organizations in the whole Poland. Travelling Animators of Culture bring up not only inspiration but also show real methods of work that can be used in further activities. Travelling Animators of Culture run their own initiatives thanks to support and coordination by the ACIę.

CASE 2

Shoreditch Trust - Improvements by culture

Context

Shoreditch Trust is a multiple award winning development trust and charitable community investment agency. The trust exists to partner communities in Shoreditch, maximising potential in their own lives and in their own communities. Shoreditch Trust is committed to the empowerment of local people and to their consistent engagement in the process of regenerating and rejuvenating Shoreditch. They recognised that arts and culture plays a crucial role in this. The 'dominant culture' of Shoreditch is white, however approximately 44% of the resident population is non-white, representing a diversity of ethnic groups, including significant populations of Black African, Black Caribbean, Turkish and Kurdish heritage. Despite the increasingly viable and mixed local economy, the Shoreditch area still suffers from the persistence of high levels of deprivation. Large proportions of residents are without formal qualifications, many claiming government benefits, living in poor quality housing and suffering from associated problems of poor health and well-being.

> *The average salary for 60% of Shoreditch population is less than 12 000 pounds a year. We think we see the word quite differently in terms how we engaged poorer people in their relationship with art and culture. We think that this sets the context and an environment in which those communities can behave quite differently, can have voice and can have a sense of an opinion on art.*
> — *Michael Pyner, former director of Shoreditch Trust*

The Trust has four areas of economic activity:

- 8 million community assets in a portfolio offering stability.
- A series of social enterprises like restaurants or well being centers generating revenue streams.
- A practitioner-based consultancy service generating income.
- A fundraising capacity, generating income and developing partnerships.

Income generated by the trust is invested in:

- Arts, culture, and education.
- Citizenship, social skills, and skills for living.
- Environmental and realm projects.

- Between 2000 and 2011, the trust has invested approximately 250 million pounds in Shoreditch cultural and social projects.

- Since the trust started to operate in the Shoreditch area, level of street crime has dropped by 44%, automobile crime has dropped by 32%, and burglaries by 36%.

- Local schools have noticed increases in educational results and a decrease in the number of children excluded from schools.

- The Shoreditch Festival, an annual cultural event organised by the trust between 2007 - 2013, has been attended by over 120,000 visitors. In 2009, only 22% of visitors come from Shoreditch, whereas in 2010 it was as much as 76% of district inhabitants.

The Challenge

Shoreditch Trust is a charity but also a business. They are strongly community focused on the one hand, but also commercially aware on the other, and there is no conflict in that relationship. The goal is to develop decent, effective, and sustainable projects by developing a mixed portfolio of income that supports those aspirations in a ethical way by cooperating with assets, including communities and business. Shoreditch Trust aims to support residents from different cultural backgrounds at a 'grassroots' level, to engage and interact with each other dynamically through creative initiatives. As well as creating projects that encourage intercultural dialogue, there is also a strong intergenerational focus to their work. This approach of connecting people of different ages and different cultures generates a more significant and lasting impact.

Results and Impacts

Cultural engagement projects have existed throughout the history of the Trust's delivery; activities have included literature festivals, creative mentoring, public art commissions, schools' projects, newspapers, social action projects, public realm design, workshops, book swaps, exhibitions, screenings, and performances: oject integrated to basic school lesson led by artist and teacher together.

- Shoreditch Star is a publication produced by the Trust as part of their engagement strategy, working with schools across east London. Each issue is themed by a topic, which is then explored through reportage, workshops, visits, creative writing, art, and design. The contents of each issue are developed with hundreds of schoolchildren aged in primary schools. Shoreditch Star workshops give children access to a learning community that is far wider than their own school. A key feature of the programme includes meeting professionals and specialists in industries.

- StarLit is a children's Literature Festival. StarLit was developed to encourage children to develop a passion for literature and reading, self-expression, and creative writing. StarLit's unique festival model provides children of all participating schools with copies of books to read, followed by the opportunity to meet the authors of each title at a creative event. StarLit has worked with more than 5,000 children supplying over 200 classes and reading groups with books.

I just wanted to say thanks very much for having me along to such a really great event - I've been telling people how amazing it is to go into a reading and find a child who has read the book so closely they've got a specific page reference for their query! Any author would be privileged to have such an audience, and I hope the children enjoyed it as much as I did.

— Bruno Vincent - author

- Shoreditch Festival brought communities together through engagement with imaginative cultural performances and brought economic benefit to one of Shoreditch's most historic locations.

- The Creative Mentoring project delivered by Shoreditch Trust, in partnership with the University of the Arts London. The project has developed a unique working with young people from East London and creative organisations based in Shoreditch. 2013's programme saw ten young people complete six month placements with organisations and practitioners, working within their own disciplines, in film, animation, digital innovation, tech development, fine art, graphic design, architecture, and event programming[2].

2   *http://www.shoreditchtrust.org.uk/Cultural-Engagement-Programme*

Recommendations

- Being a culture consumer is not the same as being an active participator and co-creator of culture based projects. As it was already underlined, being engaged in the process and active co-creation makes the impact stronger.

- When it comes to individual and community confidence-building, culture based projects can be a powerful tool, that brings long-lasting and meaningful change.

- Shoreditch Trust is a good example of a well-balanced organisation - part charity, part social enterprise. This operating model allowed them to achieve a self sustainability and high ethical standards.

- Engaging local communities in cultural projects very often creates a spillover effect, which can result in drops in crime or decreases in early leaving of school.

- Digital shift has caused a significant change, from culture consumers to culture co-creators and active participants of live-culture.

- This change in culture participatory models brings new expectations towards traditional culture organisations that very often suffer from a decreasing number of audiences. Implementation of audience development programmes can be a good solution, however it also determines a significant change within an organisation.

- As it was presented in the Association of Creative Initiatives 'ę' case, many ready made scenarios for cultural projects already exist. Bringing them together in the form of a tool box can effect a meaningful change.

Additional Resources

E. Grossi, P. Sacco et al, The Impact of Culture on the Subjective Wellbeing,

http://www.fondazionebracco.com/ archivio/pdf/The_Impact_of_Culture_on_the_ subjective_wellbeing.pdf

Association of Creative Initiatives 'ę'

http://e.org.pl/about-us/?lang=en

Shoreditch Trust

http://www.shoreditchtrust.org.uk/Home