Compendium.
Arts and Culture on the Nordic Edge



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Preface

Bente von Schindel, Secretary General

The National Association of Voluntary Cultural Councils

There is throughout the EU a tendency to the fact that people in the last decades have fled from rural areas to stow together in big cities. Thereby, many villages and sparsely populated areas have been drained for residents and the areas are not an attractive place for new residents, businesses or tourists.

Therefore people should consider in actions that make the areas more attractive for residents and businesses, and there is no doubt that NGOs in the field of art and culture can play a major role in these efforts. Arts and culture are helping to create community and unity that can save a village or an area from being rendered meaningless.

Inclusion in art and culture gives new life and creates responsible citizens. A vibrant cultural life and an enhanced community can create a sustainable society in which all citizens are prepared in binding communities to take responsibility for their own and others' lives and to society as a whole.

This could be to build a common culture centre which creates a framework for cultural activities, and thereby creates community and a breeding ground for more activities. Or it can be to get individual residents of the area - as cultural guides - to inspire others to participate in cultural activities such as amateur choirs, amateur theatres and the like, or it can be an annual recurring event such as a festival, where local residents year round are involved in the preparations.

Marginal areas is not simply due areas. They also represent an opportunity to build a community and create an identity through artistic and cultural activities. Community in cultural and artistic activities will also contribute to strengthening democracy and thus create a strong civil society in which citizens are free to develop their communicative and expressive rationality and develop as people and active citizens.

The most important thing is that it is the citizens who themselves are entrepreneurs so that they feel ownership of the activity. The idea is to create a local identity as an alternative to the big city.

In the compendium the partners in the project Arne, gives examples of the artistic and cultural activities launched in the partner countries to ensure cultural sustainability in sparsely populated areas - all located in the West Nordic region.

The goal is to inspire others to use art and culture to support community bonding and local identity and create as much interest in the area, so that businesses, new residents and tourists are attracted to it.

Introduction to the compendium

Hans Jørgen Vodsgaard, Head of Institute
Interfolk, Institute for Civil Society

This Compendium is part of the pilot project, Jan 2016 – Dec 2016, entitled "Amateur art and voluntary culture as suppliers of arts and culture in sparsely populated areas in the West Nordic Region".

The pilot project has been supported by the Nordic Culture Point's Culture and Art Programme/Capacity development. The partnership circle consists of nine Nordic and Scottish associations, working in the area of amateur arts, voluntary culture and heritage as well as liberal adult education.. The partners are:

- Interfolk, Institute for Civil Society from Denmark
- KSD - The National Association of Voluntary Cultural Councils in Denmark
- AKKS – The Joint Council of Amateur Arts Associations in Denmark
- NUKAKA - Association of Museums in Greenland
- MAF - The theatre association of Faroe Islands
- FISOS - The Icelandic Museums Association
- Voluntary Arts Scotland
- Arts, Museums and Heritage Department of Orkney Islands Council
- GlobalYell Ltd trading, Centre for Creative Industries, Shetland

The aim of the pilot project has been to exchange experiences and compile ideas about new methods and competences for voluntary art and culture agencies to provide cross-disciplinary arts and culture opportunities in sparsely populated communities in the West Nordic region with an added value for civic participation, community bonding and local identity. For more information about the project – see the website: **www.arne.com**

The partnership completed its first idea seminar, 16 – 21 April 2016 in Tasiilaq, East Greenland, where Carl-Erik Holm, chairman of NUKAKA and director of Tasiilaq Museum was host. During the seminar, the partners presented and discussed examples of good practice in their field. The articles of this compendium are edited editions of these presentations.

1. Background and need

During the last years, we have seen more political and public interest in the West Nordic region as well as in the archipelago for reviving the rural and sparsely populated areas, and to counter the current trend, where citizens are moving from rural to urban areas. [1]

In the Danish context as an example, thousands of people move every month into the country's largest cities and empties slowly the smaller municipalities for citizens. The outcome is hereby that the rural areas have 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

This trend creates a more unbalanced country. It weakens the social equality and inclusion, the cultural cohesion and the economic sustainability and living conditions for major groups in the society.

1.1 The lack of culture and leisure time opportunities

There are in our point of view not only economic, but also cultural reasons for this trend. Especially, well-skilled and higher-educated younger people seek to the bigger cities, not only due to lack of well-paid job opportunities in the rural areas, but also due to lack of culture and leisure time opportunities.

Likewise, most companies and businesses opt out to establish new activity in these areas, not because of logistic problems, but because it is difficult to attract employees with the needed competences despite the lower living costs here.

Cause and effect are self-reinforcing. The remote areas have fewer young well-educated and skilled workers, more with a short or no education, especially a surplus of young men,

[1] The key figures for the global trend for urbanisation / internal immigration are the following:
In 1950:- 29% of the world population lived in major cities. In 2012: 50 % of the world population lived in major cities. In 2050: 75% of the world population will live in larger cities. (UN estimate).

and a lot of pensioners. The well skilled don't wish to live there, because it seems as boring places with few leisure time activities and available arts and culture opportunities. The countryside, the province gets low status. A place to leave.

A few steps to revive the villages and remote areas have among other countries already been taken in Denmark, but progress is slow, and the models for how it is done, is not described. In general, the main focus has been on improved economic conditions, better transportation and infrastructure, relocation of government jobs from the centres to the periphery, etc, while there haven't been done much to provide better and more available arts and culture opportunities. But this is short-sighted:

> *"Culture is the modern industrial policy (..). The transformation from industrial to knowledge society is on-going. One of the prerequisites to attract skilled labor is well-functioning cultural and recreational opportunities".*
>
> Development Manager Rune Larsson, Hjørring Municipality

In truth, some municipalities in the rural areas have tried to improve the culture and leisure time opportunities, but their focus have mainly been on the public services and new market offerings and less on the involvement of the civil society associations in the cultural field.



One of more ways to counter this trend is in our point of view therefore to promote better culture and leisure time opportunities, and here new initiatives in the third sector by voluntary culture associations and culture volunteers can make a difference.

2.2 Culture makes a difference

Sparsely populated areas face stark challenges to revive the local communities and promote housing and employment, but they also represent an opportunity to rebuild a community and strengthen local identity through artistic and cultural activities.

A splendid example of what makes culture strong and sustainable in remotely populated areas has been documented in the report by Francois Matarasso "Stories and Fables - Reflections on culture development in Orkney" (The Highlands and Islands Enterprise, January 2012), where a strong ethos of volunteering and working together combined with the natural archaeological and historical assets of the islands have helped to revive the local communities.



Andrew Motion poetry reading St. Magnus Festival, 2009

This and other examples - as presented in the varied articles in this compendium - indicate that voluntary art and culture associations can play an important role to make our marginal areas more attractive to new residents, tourism and businesses, because:

- Art and culture help to create the community and unity that can save a village or area from being emptied of content.
- Inclusion in art and culture gives new life and creates responsible citizens.
- A vibrant cultural life and an enhanced community can create a more sustainable society, where all citizens are ready to take responsibility for their own and others' lives and for the local community as a whole.

To secure cultural sustainability in these areas, we need to strengthen the “citizen help citizen" or "peer to peer approach", where civil society associations from the cross-cultural sector of amateur arts, voluntary culture, and heritage develop their capacities and competences to provide more available and involving arts and culture with an added value for civic and democratic participation, community bonding and local identity.

2. Links to programme objectives

The Nordic Culture Point's Culture and Art Programme/capacity development provides support for development of competences, sharing of knowledge and expertise, and provision of critical discussions and debates. The activities can be in form of seminars, workshops, master classes, courses, etc. within all fields of culture and art.

Overall, our pilot project meets the programme's criteria. The idea seminars intend to exchange experiences and present new approaches by amateur arts, voluntary culture and heritage associations to help to revive communities in sparsely populated areas.

Furthermore, the pilot project includes an International co-operation interaction between the Nordic countries and other regions, in this case partners from Scotland and Orkney and Shetland from the Northeast archipelago of Scotland.

2.1 The Nordic dimension

An important objective of the Nordic Culture Point's Culture and Art Programme is to support the strategy for Nordic cultural co-operation 2013-2020 that the Nordic Ministers of Culture adopted on 31 October 2012. [2]

The strategy emphasises that fundamental to Nordic cultural co-operation is the principle of Nordic dimension, i.e. that the co-operation involves areas where the Nordic countries have common interests and challenges, and that cooperation at Nordic level increases the efficiency of development work. Greater experience and skills, and formation of networks, will develop and strengthen the Nordic region.

The pilot project has a clear focus on the cross-Nordic dimension. The partnership circle includes national/regional voluntary arts and culture associations from the West Nordic area: Denmark (with activity also in West Jutland), Greenland, Faroe Islands, Iceland as well as the Scottish Highlands and the Northern Isles of Orkney and Shetland.

This new cross-over cultural bonding and shared experienced about conditions in the remotely populated areas in the North Atlantic region brings an enhanced Nordic dimension to the network. As our Scottish partner, Jemma Neville, Director of Voluntary Arts Scotland mentioned in the preparation of the application, January 2015:

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[2] The strategy for Nordic cultural co-operation 2013-2020 can be downloaded at: http://www.norden.org/en/nordic-council-of-ministers/council-of-ministers/the-nordic-council-of-ministers-for-culture-mr-k/strategy

"On a personal level, I'm extremely interested in the Scottish revival of our Nordic cultural heritage and the way in which we come together in the long, dark winter to tell stories, make music, and dance .(..). Voluntary Arts Scotland and partners in Orkney and Shetland are delighted to be involved. There is huge potential to learn, collaborate, and communicate more together. Both colleagues from Orkney and Shetland have a high-level, cross art-form overview."

2.2 The Nordic benefits

As a pilot project supported by the Nordic Culture Point, the project must utilize specific Nordic competence or alternatively transfer knowledge from or to the Nordic countries. It must provide Nordic benefits.

We think, the project will create "Nordic benefits", as far as the term doesn't refer to specific ethnic-cultural features, but to specific social-political features. Not to Nordic values as Ethnos, but as Demos. [3]



Characteristic "Nordic benefits" in this sense are the welfare society, a strong civil society and a free public opinion. The Nordic countries have a huge sector of voluntary culture associations providing lifelong learning with added civic and democratic values. Here the activities have a tradition of clear bottom-up impetus with democratic organised associa-

[3] The terms has reference to the doctoral thesis presented by Ove Korsgaard: Kampen om Folket, Et dannelsesperspektiv på dansk historie gennem 500 år. Gyldendal, 2004

tions, working as grassroots in an independent civil society context. Here the state has to support, but not to control the activities.

This arm-lengths principle is not as impregnable as it has been. Because new top-down processes have also gained ground in the Nordic countries, during the so-called "modernisation" of the welfare state by means of New Public Management, where the voluntary associations and volunteering to a high degree are incorporated in new performative strategies, defined by public authorities.

This project will provide exchange of experiences between countries with different civil society models, which will be useful for the non-Nordic as well as Nordic partners. A major challenge not least for the Nordic countries will be to strengthen the cooperation between the public institutions, the market and the civil society, and at the same time avoid undermining the independent learning capacity, the arm-length principle and the democratic self-organisation of the voluntary associations.

We expect that this project can bring valuable knowledge and new examples of best practise and pathfinders as well as worst practise and detours, which the ongoing contradictory "modernisation" in the Nordic countries can learn from.

2.3 A sustainable culture

More specific, the strategy for Nordic cultural co-operation 2013-2020 emphasises five topics: the Sustainable Nordic Region, the Creative Nordic Region, the Inter-cultural Nordic Region, the Young Nordic Region and the Digital Nordic Region.

The main aim of our project has a clear link to the first strategic objective of a “Sustainable Nordic Region” that intends to improve sustainability in the Nordic societies by promoting a more accessible and engaging cultural life.

It is mentioned that “a vibrant art and cultural life is necessary in a modern society. Cultural experiences and activities are important for social development, identity and inclusion, and help to establish trust, respect and social bonding between people. Art and culture challenge and develop us as individuals and as a society, and thereby help to promote a sustainable society.”

Furthermore, the need for participatory arts and culture opportunities is recognised, because “accessibility to a wide variety of art and cultural experiences is important, and everyone must be able to express themselves through art and culture.”



In accordance with this strategic objective, the main aim of our pilot project is to promote voluntary and participatory arts and culture activities, where “everyone can express themselves through arts and culture”.

2.4 Cultural sustainability by “citizen help citizen”

The most innovative part of our pilot project may be the intention of promoting “cultural sustainability” by applying the "citizen help citizen” approach. The “citizen help citizen” or “peer to peer” approach has of cause a long tradition in the NGO sector and civil society associations. However, it is quite new to transfer the idea to the field of “amateur arts and voluntary culture”.

It was to some degree introduced in the by the Nordic Council of Ministers’ strategy for Nordic cultural co-operation 2013-2020, in relation to the first objective of “cultural sustainability”, but it still haven’t been applied much in specific political initiatives or systematic development work, and especially not in relation to sparsely populated areas.

A mapping of the granted European projects since 2010 in the Lifelong Learning Programme, including the former Grundtvig and now Erasmus+ programme, also indicate that there haven’t been any development projects in relation to arts and culture activities in a civil society context in sparsely populated areas.

3. Aim and objectives

The sector of voluntary arts and culture is next to amateur sport the largest civil society sector in the West Nordic region, and it is the voluntary sector with the current highest rate of expansion in members and new associations.

Here a vast number of cultural and educational associations provide learning activities for about 20 to 30 per cent of the populations.



3.1 The need for engagement in the common good

However, the voluntary arts and culture associations could improve their engagement in the common goods of the local communities. Several studies indicate a wide-spread lack of social values and political attitudes and engagement among associations in the voluntary arts culture area, contrary to most other civil society associations.

The studies conclude that the associations have a low engagement in political and societal issues, because they are typically not linked to values of ideological, spiritual, political or social nature. Very few organizations are concerned about what their activities can bring the wider society or feel a responsibility for the common good. The study gives the impression of a myriad of small democratic, but self-sufficient reserves for persons with interests in a specific area of art and culture, but without any greater interest and vision for the wider community. In the associations "they fiddle while Rome burns". [4]

[4] Such as the Survey of the voluntary cultural sector, published by the Danish Ministry of Culture, May 2006 (Undersøgelse af det frivillige Kulturelle område) and the Survey of volunteering and non-profit in Denmark, published by the Social Research Institute, 2006 (Frivillighed og nonprofit i Danmark), which was a part of the international survey of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project.

These studies may not be quite fair and they neglect the many associations and groups that in fact are engaged in local community work and apply arts and culture to include and empower marginalised areas and groups in our communities, as the many good examples in the articles of this compendium document. Anyhow, the tendency to self-sufficiency cannot be explained away, and an underlying objective of this project is also to reverse this trend.

3.2 The project objectives

As mentioned, the overall aim of the pilot project is to focus on the "citizen help citizen" approach within voluntary art and culture to help to provide sustainable communities also in the sparsely populated areas. The focus will therefore also be on how the culture associations can strengthen their organizational capacity and competences to promote such a mission.



The overall aim of the 1-year pilot project is to present examples of good practice and to outline new useful methods and competences in the voluntary arts and culture associations to provide more arts and culture opportunities in sparsely populated societies in the West Nordic Region.

The objectives of the pilot project are:

1. To exchange experiences with focus on best practise in the field by completing two thematic vision seminars: May 2016 in Tasiilaq, Greenland and Sept 2016 in Askov, Denmark.
2. To transfer best practise and compile innovative ideas in the field, by publishing two seminar compendia, PDF-editions for wide dissemination.
3. To clarify the needs for improved working methods and competence development in the cross-cultural sector of amateur arts, voluntary culture and heritage, by

providing a need analysis with recommendation for succeeding development work in the field.

4. To initiate dissemination of the preliminary results to the main target groups in the West Nordic Region, including upstart of a Web Portal and leaflets, news-mails, social media, articles, presentations at meetings, and dialogue with decision-makers and other multipliers.

4. Concluding remarks

Even though the partners all share a common interests in the topics and objectives of the project, they at the same time represent different backgrounds and approaches and can involve diverse competencies, skills, experiences and networks in the field.

These differences will pulled together bring more knowledge and experiences on the common challenges and possibilities. We think the issues addressed will benefit from the contributions of partners from different areas of amateur arts, voluntary culture, and heritage especially from the exchanges of experiences of organisations across borders providing different national approaches.

We hope this multilateral compendium can provide new knowledge and give inspiration for other stakeholders to involve the voluntary culture in reviving the local communities in the sparsely populated areas.

Enjoy.

I. Scotland – support to voluntary arts

Jemma Neville, Director, Voluntary Arts Scotland

@VAScotland
http://www.voluntaryarts.org/basic-page/scotland-/
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZT_YjJt3lw

Voluntary Arts Scotland, as part of the UK and Republic of Ireland registered charity Voluntary Arts, promotes participation in creative cultural activity and is the national strategic development agency for voluntary arts groups.

We advocate for the right enabling conditions to sustain local cultural infrastructure and we provide developmental support, in the form of briefings, training events and networking opportunities, to the people that set up and run voluntary arts groups across Scotland and in all art forms from choirs to ceramics and digital to dance.



In 2016 – 2017, Voluntary Arts Scotland is funded by Creative Scotland (the national arts council in Scotland) and the Spirit of 2012. We have a volunteer Advisory Group to inform our operational work in Scotland. The Chair of this Advisory Group is a Trustee on the UK and Republic of Ireland Board. Voluntary Arts Scotland is not a membership body but, rather, seeks to influence, connect and develop creative cultural activity.

1. Co-operation with the West Nordic regions

Through working alongside our counter-parts in other West Nordic regions, we want to better understand the importance of creative cultural activity in sparsely populated communities in remote areas, including in Orkney and Shetland, so that we can best promote and protect those initiatives. Who are the creative citizens initiating arts participation, what connections are there between different communities and how can national agencies like Voluntary Arts Scotland offer strategic support?

Scotland is a relatively small country in North West Europe with strong historical, linguistic and cultural ties to Nordic countries. There is a growing, and ageing, population of about 5.5 million, with most people living in the central belt areas of Edinburgh and Glasgow.



The Scottish Parliament has devolved legislative responsibility for most policy areas concerning the voluntary arts, including Culture, External Affairs, Regeneration, Education, Health, Local Government, and some Fiscal Policy.

Data from the Scottish Household Survey suggests that there are over ten thousand voluntary arts groups in Scotland. The Orkney and Shetland islands to the north of the country are especially rich in culture and heritage.

It is timely for Voluntary Arts Scotland to build strategic relationships in the West Nordic region as the Scottish Government and civil society is increasingly adopting policy models from Nordic countries concerning different approaches to local democracy, community participation and cultural policy. For example, Scotland has 32 local authorities (municipalities) covering very large geographic areas. The next session of the Scottish Parliament

(2016 – 2021) will likely consider legislative proposals for further land reform, community ownership of land and assets, and the subsidiarity of decision-making at local authority level.

In turn, we think that there are examples of good practice in Scotland that could be of interest to other countries.

2. Good practice examples from Scotland

2.1 Voluntary Arts Week

http://voluntaryartsweek.org/
@VolArtsWeek

Voluntary Arts Week is an annual festival that takes place each May and promotes opportunities to take part in creative cultural activity. The festival began in Scotland and while now taking place across the UK and Republic of Ireland, it is still coordinated by our small staff team in Scotland.

Last year, there were over 400 different events in the festival including 'taster sessions' to try something new, signposting to regular meet-ups, and mass participation initiatives such as the Woollen Woods (decoration of woodlands with knitted crafts), Craft Bombs (surprise installations of craft in public spaces) and Flash Mob performances (often spontaneous singing).



Inspiration for coordinating an annual festival came from similar 'week of amateur arts' in the Netherlands and Belgium. The dates are chosen to coincide with Festival of Museums

in the UK so that volunteer-run heritage groups and venues can list their participation opportunities under both festivals. We have a searchable map showing where events are taking place and several toolkits on everything from media to organising an event, produced in partnership with other national organisations such as The National Trust, Museums at Night, Culture 24, NODA, and Making Music,

Since 2015, with the support of our funders Spirit 2012, we have run a micro-grants scheme of awarding grants of £100 to groups looking to put on a new event. Our experience has been that this very modest amount as enabled groups to secure other funding, to pay for publicity material, or to offer basic hospitality to welcome to participants. In May 2016, a swing dance group event managed to construct a dance floor made from old crates and other materials bought out of £100!

Voluntary Arts Week creates a motivating energy for our small but dynamic staff team and shines a spotlight on everyday arts that often gets over-looked.

2.2 Epic Awards

http://epicawards.co.uk/about-us/
@EpicAwards



Voluntary Arts (UK and Republic of Ireland) also hosts an annual awards scheme to recognise innovation, participation and imagination in the voluntary arts sector. Started in 2010, the awards scheme celebrates the unsung achievements of the volunteers, or 'creative citizens' that initiate and organise voluntary arts activity.

It has proven a very useful way for us to connect with a diverse range of groups across the UK and Ireland, to introduce new groups to Voluntary Arts Briefings and training, and to highlight the many benefits of regular arts participation (health and wellbeing, regenera-

tion, lessening social isolation, development talent, and much more) to policy makers and funders. The Epic Awards include a national winner and runner up from each part of Voluntary Arts, as well as a Peer Award for excellent (shortlisted groups vote amongst themselves) and a Peoples Choice Award (a public vote). Further, the judging process allows us to invite representatives from the arts councils to learn more about the voluntary arts sector. In 2016, we introduced judging visits to allow for relationship-building with the groups and participants involved. Some recent examples of Scotland 'Winners' may inspire similar groups in other west Nordic regions to try something new.

2.3 Barra Bunting

http://www.barrahebrides.com/barra-bunting



The Barra Bunting project began as an idea for decorating the village hall on the Hebridean island of Barra. Like many Scottish islands, Barra lost much of its population during the highland clearances of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and then emigration to North America and elsewhere after the First World War.

As a result, there is a large diaspora across the world with family lineage to Barra, the Gaelic culture, language and arts traditions. Barra is also a popular tourist destination due to its idyllic setting and white, sandy beaches.

The decoration of the village hall became a worldwide appeal for contributions of bunting (triangular flags) from anyone that had ever set foot on the island of Barra, or neighbouring Vatersay. Since 2012, over 200 individual piece of bunting have now been collected, each with a personal design and accompanying story. It is a simple model that could be replicated in other rural communities with a dispersed diaspora.

Barra Bunting won the 2013 Scotland Epic Award.

2.4 Alter:nativity

www.facebook.com/PLAY-2015-1172823069401066/

When the people behind Christmas show alter:nativity talk about 'community spirit', they're not just paying lip service to it. Ninety performers from four rural villages in Aberdeenshire (Birse, Ballogie, Finzean and Strachan) came together to stage this modern day nativity, ranging in age from 4 months to late 60s, plus two sheep and a donkey.

Inspired by recent events in Syria, the show paralleled the traditional nativity story, likening Joseph and Mary to today's refugees fleeing their homeland in search of a safe haven. While the performers rehearsed, the backstage crew built a stage – aided by two farmers who created seating from 120 straw bales – and a professional sound and lighting engineer was hired to mentor the amateur techies.

Open days were held, to give newcomers to the community a chance to engage with neighbours, and 'rusty' musicians dusted off their instruments and formed the show band.



Alter:nativity was the 2016 Scotland Epic Award Winner.

From the start of the performance, the audience was engaged with the refugee theme – tickets stated that people should arrive in shared transport, carry sufficient bedding and hot drinks, and be prepared to complete paperwork. On arrival, they were made to queue, given 'rations' and marched to their seats after being 'processed'.

"The audience was given three labels, with 'hope', 'love' and 'fear' written on them. They were asked to write their dearest wish on the first one – which was then read out during the performance. They were encouraged to pass on the 'love' label to their nearest seated neighbour – and then throw the 'fear' label in a fire on the way out.

"This was the first time in local memory that an outdoor play had been performed, and was about much more than the two actual performances – it was as much about the preparation and residual positive impact it had on the local community". (Guy Haslam, alter:nativity)

II. Iceland - To be or not to be a volunteer

Björg Erlingsdóttir, board member
The Icelandic Museums Association

The article discusses participation in formal voluntary work in Iceland with a focus on cultural activities in the South-East of Iceland; and why Icelanders experience themselves more like informal or accidental volunteers in their voluntary work, why they consider themselves to be participants rather than volunteers?

1. The understanding of volunteer work

If Icelanders are asked if there is strong tradition of voluntary work in their community or if they themselves do voluntary work the answer might be “No” followed with a complicated explanation. Maybe we should talk about the informal voluntary work in Iceland rather than the formal one or to address the voluntary workers in different terms f. ex. as participants.



Young volunteers in Reykjavík, selling their own toys and collecting money for the RedCross.

In Iceland, studies show, that around a third of the Icelandic population aged 18 years and older is involved in some kind of unpaid voluntary work. Around 75% are members of voluntary organizations, but if you would ask them, if they are volunteers they would probably answer “NO – but I am a member of this organization, I participate in the sports club, the local choir or help out here and there”.

Icelanders are most likely to do voluntary work for sports- or recreation associations. These results are in accordance with international findings. However Icelanders themselves' seem to value their voluntary work, not as voluntary work but rather as a participation or a helping hand. In Icelandic the meaning of the word voluntary is *sjálfboðaliði* "a person that gives his/her work, by their own free will" and is accurate to the meaning of the word voluntary.

Here in Iceland we are familiar with the term and know many volunteers, but they are for the most parts from other countries, visiting Iceland and helping us preserving the nature or Icelanders going abroad to work as volunteers. We do not consider ourselves to be volunteers when we are doing volunteer work within our own community – when located somewhere else you are a volunteer.

I myself, have, for the first time at the age of 46 signed on as a volunteer even though I have for many years participated in various activities, been a member of organizations, even been a board member, participated in events and organized without ever thinking of myself as a formal volunteer. The same goes for my friends and family, when asked if they are volunteers or if they have ever been the usual answer is "NO! But I have helped out here and there and I am a member of this organization that does…."

The fact is that we are all volunteers without knowing it and often we start at a young age, helping out in one way or the other.



This even comes evident in the fact that we do not have any statistics concerning voluntary work and cultural activities and in Iceland we do not have any organizations that focuses on the role and importance of the volunteer.

We have many examples of Icelanders volunteering, working for no pay, offering their time and skills willingly for the greater good. We have a long tradition of women partici-

pating in social organizations or fighting for a better community, racing money for hospitals or helping their community but also organizations where cultural activities and progress were the main focus. We have a long history of women and men joining forces in prevention and rescue work in Iceland, where thousands of volunteers dedicate themselves to work for the rescue teams.

Groups of volunteers are always available, night and day, year round but most of them do not consider them selves' to be a volunteer, they are first and foremost rescuers even though we are all well aware of the work they deliver free of charge in the mission to prevent and rescue.

2. Example of best practice

As best examples on best practices I have chosen to focus on a town in the South-East of Iceland where the cultural life is based on participation and voluntary work, even though the inhabitants would describe their participating as anything but voluntary work.



Few years ago, I moved to the South-East Iceland, which is one of the most remote places in Iceland, and where this Icelandic mentality was obvious at the same time as the participating mentality was the bearing force of the community.

Hornafjörður is a blooming community in the realm of the greatest glacier in Europe, Vatnajökull. It is a geographically large municipality, covering 260 kilometres of the south-eastern shoreline, but the population is just over 2200 inhabitants. The southern part of Vatnajökull National Park is located in the community and the scenery from the town Höfn and the countryside is breath taking. The inhabitants in Höfn are just over 1500 and the main industry is fishing and in the rural area agriculture and tourism.

This remote area where there are 200 km to the nearest town in the west and 180 in the east is an active community with theatre groups, choirs, music groups, blues-festival, town festival, a nationally well-known music event, craftsmen, painters, designers and international collaboration regarding arts and crafts.

My job was to be in charge of the local cultural centre and the focus of my work was to give the volunteer organizations room to perform their magic, assist and help them in every way possible without the municipality taking charge or taking over a project. Too much interference or participation from the municipality would not benefit the thriving cultural live where you as an inhabitant, either were a participant/volunteer or showed up to enjoy the show.

2.1 Humarhátíð – the lobster festival

Every year the town festival, Humarhátíð or Lobster festival is held and consists of numerus events and festivities. Every street and neighbourhood has its own colour and is decorated in accordance to the specific colour, the inhabitants participate in a parade and the streets compete for the best decoration. Everyone participates in one way or the other; some invite visitors to stop by and meet the locals, some participate in specific events, some sell local products, some have art exhibitions, have a fashion runway or invite the guests to a musical event.

The women's choir has its own event where they invite guests to enjoy a musical event where music from a different country is in focus every year and the food they offer reflects on that. One year they were focusing on Sweden and the food they offered was typically Swedish, one year it was the USA and the next Germany. Organizations and individuals participate offering a variety of activity for every age group and the family as a whole. Young musicians are given an opportunity to play for the guests and form bands, participate in a parade or play in a venue.

The last 4 years the festival has had its own part time employer and local businesses invest in the festival but the inhabitants volunteer during the festival and all the preparation is made by volunteers. The guests are the locals themselves, those who have moved away and are revisiting and other guests. Local food, local entertainment, local traditions are the main attraction and the people of the area show what they have to offer.



Locals dressing up at the Lobster festival parade

2.2 Cultural diversity – the global village

The town festival strengthens local identity but it is also important for the local identity to celebrate the different origins of its inhabitants, to see that the little village of Höfn is a cosmopolitan village with connections to different corners of the world.

The municipality founded an event where representatives of all the diverse nationalities living in the area where asked to participate in an event where their culture would be in focus and introduced to others – the Icelanders were no exception. The municipality pays for the cost; the participants make their local food and offer it to those who visit. This has been a major event, where the emphasis on the little local village as a partner in a global world has worked wonders.

Economuseum and SlowFood

The municipality participated in a project where representatives from small communities in Norway, Ireland, Faeroe Island, Quebec Canada, Greenland and Northern Ireland were working on implementing the ideology of the Canadian model of Economuseum to artisans and handcrafters. The municipality had been focusing on small businesses and entrepreneurs making their own products with the help of the municipality through collaboration with others in the community, from Reykjavík and even further away.



In the Economuseum-project entrepreneurs were participating in the project with the aim of building their studios or workshops, where they would receive guests, telling them about their craft and local history. This resulted in two artist studios in Höfn, a designer's studio and a painter's studio and a small business where a tailor opened up a studio.

The same function was in the SlowFood project where we were working with small local businesses in trying to promote local tradition, methods and taste. The underlying agenda was to make more opportunities where local knowledge and traditions created job opportunities and enhance local tradition and identity.

The Cultural Center participated in various projects, where we were trying to enhance design and arts in the area, importing knowledge and methods to enhance the entrepreneurs in the area. One of these projects was to promote a local tradition where a local fisherman fishes a local specialty, handles it with old methods and introduces his product with a connection to the local history. Another project involved designer of accessories

using reindeer leather, fish skin and other local products in the designs, giving the products a local flair and a unique quality.

ÞORRABLÓT

Every year the locals celebrate the old tradition of Þorrablót, where they eat traditional food, dried meet, shark and various sheep products. One Saturday evening between 19th and 26th of January the locals meet in the biggest local-the sports arena, around 400 guests show up for a dinner, a show and a dance.

In the Þorrablót it is revealed, which inhabitants will be in the next year's committee preparing for the Þorrablót. So in a way you are not a volunteer by definition and you can expect to be once every ten years in the committee.

In the end of October the committee begins to prepare for the event, making songs for a program that is in a way a musical where the local life, politics and last year's scandals are the target and often it is considered to be a great honour, if they make fun of you in the musical.



The volunteers fix everything, they change the sports arena into a nightclub, they organize rehearsals and make produce and perform a musical, they serve as servants while the guests are eating and fix everything afterwards. This event is not just held in Höfn but in every town in Iceland and rural areas around the country, always done by volunteers and often the best entertainment you will find where young and old sing together, dance and enjoy the fun this year's committee offers its guests.

The quality of the singing or acting is not the main focus but the participation and to belong to the community, takes part and to be surprised when you see your neighbour suddenly bloom as an actor or singer. During the first weekend in June the locals celebrate the fisherman's day in a similar fashion where they meet during the day with their families, participating in a variety of activities prepared of and run by volunteers.

WE CAN!

The cultural centre in Höfn participated in a project run in collaboration with the Nordic countries and the Baltic countries, where the aim was to connect rural and often isolated areas to the word stage through dancing.

International dance groups were invited to stay for 2-3 weeks at Höfn and other communities during the winter time, when f. ex. in Höfn tourist had not arrived. The dancers had a training facility that the municipality fixed for them and in return they were running seminars for kids and youngsters in the area.



The main focus was not just to bring contemporary dancing to the rural areas or to open the eyes of the dancing groups for the fantastic training opportunities in an area as Höfn, but also to give the inhabitants the sense that they were a part of the rest of the world, that they were a part of the international art scene and that Höfn as well as Reykjavík was a place of interest for the creative mind. This project resulted in two artist residencies in the area and a great collaboration with the local schools, where modern art and dancing in particular got a new audience.

SKEMMTIFÉLAGIÐ

Every autumn a small group of young people in the area start their training for that year's show. The director and the group chose the songs they are going to perform chose the theme, design the costumes and start their preparation. The show is run for 6-8 weeks, guests are arriving from all over Iceland and they stay at the local hotel where the goes on stage.

This is collaboration between the local hotel and the group but the members of the group are volunteers, participating in an event that they give all their time and energy for. The evening starts off with a dinner, and after the guests have finished their meal the show kicks off. The group often refers to popular music, and every performance is a victory for the members, who many of them have no formal training behind them, either singing or

acting. “Everyone can” is the key word here, and in a small community like Höfn it is important that everyone fits in and participate.

3. Conclusion

These few examples from one of the most remote towns in Iceland, where the cultural life is so unbelievably versatile, show that even though the inhabitants do not consider themselves to be volunteers they are. It also shows how important it is for a small community that the inhabitants are willing to participate and have the understanding that you have to do things yourself, with the help of the municipality or local companies you can be a do’er and live in a culturally strong community, even though it is not New York or London. The fun starts at home!



Locals dressing up for the Lobster festival parade

III. Denmark, AKKS – seeing possibilities

Susan Fazakerley, Secretary general

The Joint Council of Amateur Arts Associations in Denmark

Denmark is a small nation consisting of a peninsula, Jutland, and two relatively big Islands, Zealand and Funen, and besides that more than 400 small islands of which around 70 are inhabited. As such, Denmark is not just a nation of bacon and butter producers, but also a nation with a long maritime tradition. Many of the small inhabited islands around Denmark are, however, today struggling with challenges such as depopulation, the closure of public institutions and transport (like crucial ferries) and a lack of job opportunities.



The three projects, I have chosen to illustrate best practice from the amateur world in Denmark, are all examples of ways to challenge that development, of seeing possibilities instead of dead ends. Two of them spring from idealistic artistic dreams and one of them from a more commercial point of view, but they all arise from local initiatives and they have all made a lasting contribution to their communities.

1. Good practice at the Islands

1.1 Visens Skib (The ship of songs)

www.visensskib.dk
http://www.amakult.dk/VISENS_SKIB/visens_skib.html
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATrNn0fxhpo&list=PL35026482DFA94899&index=1 (film)

The first demonstration of best practice is an all inspiring example, which links a much loved, but dying, Danish song tradition, with the need for a sense of community, and infuses them both with new energy and visibility.

Thirteen years ago a Danish singer songwriter, Niels Skouby, had an idea while sailing around the small, often desolate, Danish harbours in the summertime with his sailboat. In the evenings he would pull out his guitar and sit on the quay and sing a couple of old Danish songs. To his surprise he found that people gathered around him and started singing along.



Niels Skouby, the captain of Visens Skib.
Photo from the homepage

Niels Skouby is a man of action and infectious energy, so after his holiday, he and a few others created the idea of a "sailing song tour" - not just for fun, but also as an artistic protest against what he calls:

"*mass-produced and meaningless pop and rock music and the lack of political interest in the Danish song tradition*".

The first tour proved to be a great success and has taken place every summer since in the archipelago South of Funen, with a crew of mature amateur singer songwriters and a repertoire of everything from sailor songs to songs by popular modern songwriters.

Each year, the tour has berthed at more and more harbors reaching 29 in 2016. For some of the harbors, the visit from Vises Skib is a much anticipated yearly event with beer tents, media publicity and a proper stage. For others it's more of a cosy evening of sing-a-long with the added benefit of a turnover in the ice cream parlour.

In any case, the tour has some 20,000 people turning up for the concerts and even the crown prince of Denmark, a keen sailor himself, has been known to join in.

A 100 % voluntary association

Today, Visens Skib is organised as a 100 % voluntary association. None of the crew members are paid professionals, but spend their summer holiday on the project and the relatively few funds raised are from private sources, only covering touring expenses and royalty payments.

The official aim of the association is to keep the Danish and Nordic song tradition alive, and the crew performs both traditional and modern songs, defined as lyrics that "*tell a story a little bit deeper than Oh baby, I want to fuck you…"* as Niels Skouby bluntly puts it. But besides that, he is convinced that Visens Skib plays an important role in keeping the small harbours alive, and that one of the reasons for its success is a deep longing for the sense of community, once created by the now desolate community centres and small harbours all around Denmark.



The crew of "Visens Skib" performing

1.2 Den Lille Kunsthal (The Small Gallery)

http://www.amakult.dk/DEN_LILLE_KUNSTHAL/den_lille_kunsthal.html

The second project, I have chosen to demonstrate best practice, is an example of how a local enthusiast with the help of a whole community, and without artistic prejudice, can create a lasting cultural contribution to a small community.

The example is from Avernakø, a small Danish Island with 114 inhabitants of which many are creative and artistic newcomers seeking a cheap and beautiful sanctuary to live in. During the summer a lot of tourists find their way to Avernakø, but it is quite desolate during the winter. In 2003 a couple of German newcomers, an architect and a painter/designer, suggested creating a gallery in an old stable as a window to the world. In the eyes of the newcomers, there was a lot of creativity among the people of Avernakø that ought to be shown to the world and could attract visitors, with the added bonus of creating a sense of pride among the inhabitants of Avernakø.



Getting ready for the exhibition. Photographer: Hans Müller.

The idea was well received by the islanders, and an association "Avernakø-Korshavn Kunstforening" was created solely based on voluntary input, but with a mix of professional artists and amateurs with an interest in painting, architecture and design involved. The association was gifted the old horse stables by the local church and rebuilt it with practical help from just about all the 114 islanders.

In the summer of 2004 the gallery opened with an exhibition themed "Island-inspirations" and every year since it has displayed at least one exhibition by the local artists. One year the local school children from Avernakø and the surrounding islands created an exhibition called "Islands from a child's perspective". The yearly exhibition is often supplemented by one or two professional exhibitions and more recently by landscape architects creating outdoor installations, thus becoming a real artistic force.



Den Lille Kunsthal ready to receive quests. (Photo: Hans Müller)

Den Lille Kunsthal is first and foremost a living and inspiring example of an open minded, cooperation between professionals and amateurs and of how to engage a whole community in a project. With a combination of a professional vision, backed by a wide and very idealistic network, it has – on voluntary terms – succeeded in creating a project that unites high artistic quality, spaciousness and a strong local anchorage. As one of the members of the association puts it:

> *"On a small island you need all possible resources, when a project has to be lifted. So our association is open for everybody without distinguishing professionals from amateurs. Here it is alone the will and the motivation that counts".*

1.3 Nordisk Korfestival (Nordic Choir Festival)

http://www.amakult.dk/KORFESTIVAL/korfestival.html

The third example from the Danish amateur world is slightly different from the two previous. In this case, the initiative didn't come from the world of arts. It came from the local tourist agency "A/S Team Bornholm", a commercial firm that rents holiday homes and arranges a vast range of customized holidays and events on the island of Bornholm, a much loved holiday destination in East Denmark.

The idea of a Nordic choir festival sprung from successful events like "Bornholm Rundt", a yearly cyclist tour with 1200 participants and choir concerts in the round churches of Bornholm, famous for their acoustics. The first festival was held in 2008 and the festival has now taken place every year since in the month of May. During the festival 300 singers from the Nordic and Baltic countries and 10-15 choirs meet for three days and give a series of concerts in, among other places, the round churches, culminating with a concert with over 1000 spectators in the famous ruins of an old fort, Hammershus.



The big concert in the ruins of Hammershus.

The festival is, in the tourist directors words: Only for amateur choirs, who pay for travel and accommodation themselves, and he makes no secret of the fact that the whole idea behind the festival is to get tourists to the island *"out of season",* by giving them what he

calls *"a reason to go"* and thereby prolonging the tourist season on Bornholm, which is normally very short, only lasting from July to August.

In his view this creates business as well as activities for local people and perhaps even jobs to an island suffering from depopulation. Besides participating in the festival, the local amateur associations and the local music school participates in the festival in cooperation with the tourist agency and even though they are critical of the impact of the festival on Bornholm's already very rich cultural life, they acknowledge that the festival does create hotel nights and revenue to a community deeply dependent on tourism.



Photo: A/S Team Bornholm

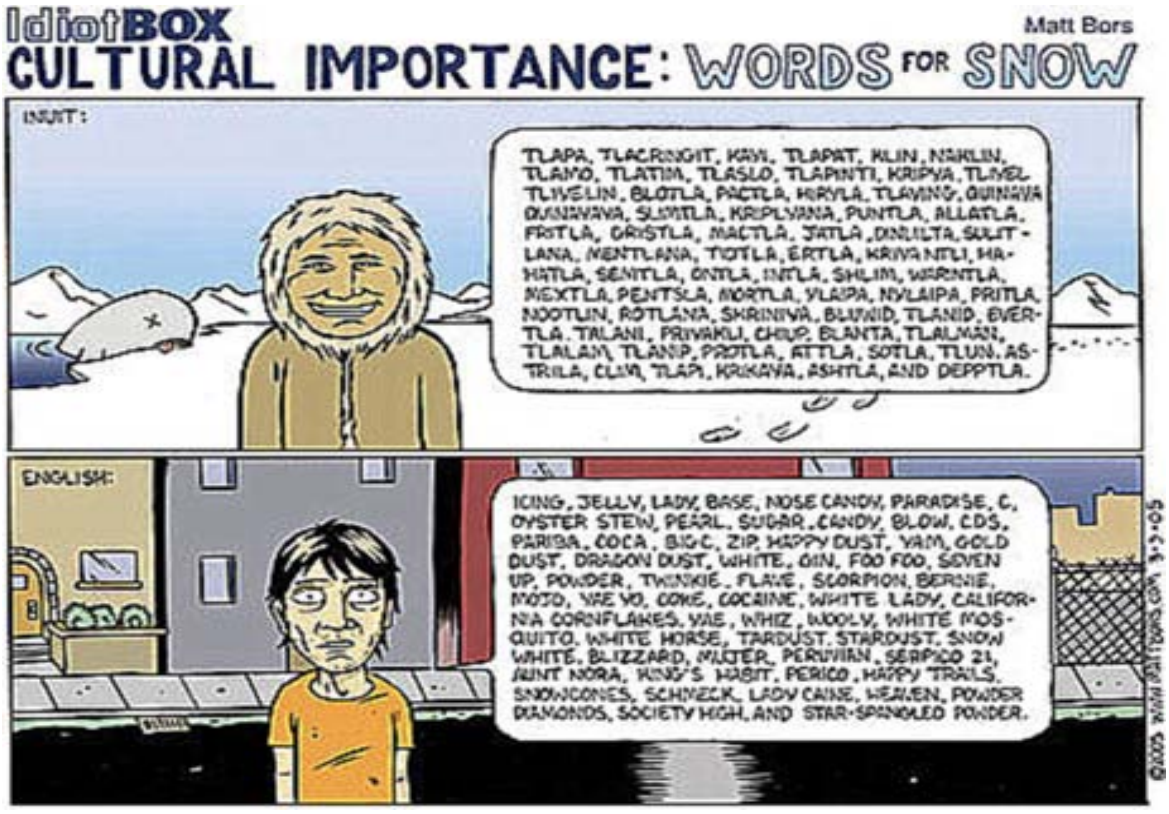
Nordisk Kor Festival is, in other words, an example of cooperation between the voluntary and the commercial world, contributing to the survival of a local community and a testimony to the fact that ideas that involve amateurs and volunteers can spring from many places when you choose to see possibilities without prejudice.

IV: Greenland – challenges for volunteering

Carl Erik Holm, chairman
Association of Museums in Greenland

Greenland is known as the biggest Island in the world. Yes, Greenland is a big place and very sparsely populated. But its size depends on how the projection is made (Mercator Projection). Greenland is actual just about four times the size of France with some 56.000 people. There are 18 towns and 60 settlements. No two inhabited places are connected by road. Boats, planes and helicopters are means of transport. On shorter distances dog sledges or snowmobiles are used.

Peter Høeg's book "Miss Smila's sence of snow" has created the belief that Inuit (singular: Inuk=human) have many words for snow. The former vice principal (eastgreenlander) at Tasiilaq School knows more words for snow in Danish than in Greenlandic.



No doubt many Greenlanders want to be considered a modern country, and at the same time maintaining its traditional values (2x Robert Holme: Now and then+ICC-drum).

Greenland has been part of the Danish Kingdom since year 1721. First as a colony, then as a municipality followed by Home rule and since year 2009 with Self-rule. In many ways Greenland has a great autonomy. Most mattes on everyday life are decided in Inatsisartut (the parliament). On international matters (defense, foreign affairs and monetary policies) the final decisions are still made in Denmark. One example of the autonomy of Greenland is its decision to leave the European Common Market (now EU). (Qallunat Nunaat)

1. Practice examples from Greenland

Volunteer work in Greenland can be a challenge. The recent Arctic Winter Games in Nuuk was the biggest event with volunteers playing an important role. The Capital Nuuk is also the wealthiest place in Greenland with incomes comparable to Denmark, whereas the East coast in average may have 1/3. Arctic Winter Games had problems with drop outs, when it came to the actual work. It is said, an evaluation will take place, so others may learn from the largest volunteer project in the history of Greenland.

1.1 Ammassalik Museum

Ammassalik Museum has tried several times and realized it can be difficult to involve volunteers. Some of the examples at the museum and also in the town as such will be described. The challenges have been discussed with colleges at the other museums, some of the reasons why it sometimes may be difficult to engage people in unpaid volunteer work will be mentioned. All is from practical experience.



An important reason why it is difficult to get locals to work for free at shorter projects at the museum is that East Greenland is one of the poorest regions in Greenland. Some people struggle, depend highly on subsistence by hunting and fishing, sometimes people

do not have money to keep their house warm. The region has a high degree of unemployment or sub-employment. Basic necessities must be covered first. This combined with the lack of tradition for unpaid work. Fortunately some people do have the resources to contribute with volunteer work. But as I will show, it may also be some of the people with very few resources, who see an opportunity helping the museum.

The museum has tried several times, and the best experience is with people from the 'closed institution for inmates', the prison. Some of them can come out and does community work. These fellows are often people with very few economical means. The advantage is that the inmates show up on time and enjoys doing something different. The museum pays lunch and coffee. The museum has tried with people from abroad and locals. The experience is also that coordinating volunteers can be confusing.

We lack funding

As such these renovation projects have been done with volunteers, mainly because the museum lacks funding: One time with young people from Boholt Collage in England, another year as work camp in collaboration with a Danish NGO (Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke). There had though been done some wood work behind the turf wall by professional carpenters.



Making soap stone lamp

A couple of years ago a woman, Tukkumeq originally from Qaanaaq in the Thule region wanted to show how the soap stone lamp was used in the old day. We had a great evening at the home for elderly. When the old folks were told it was my birthday they stood up on their old skinny legs and sang for me.

One important factor is to find the local people who want to join in. As in many small places a lot of things depend on the personal relationships. For many years the school has had a “clean up the town” day. But after Nuuk has stopped sponsoring the hot dogs, apples and soft drinks for the kids at the end of the day, the school has stopped the project. The secretary at the municipality building also invites people to help clean up the town, normally at the end of May, when the snow is melted and all the trash from the winter reappears.

Another important factor is how well it is grounded in the community and whether it is fun. Winning the dog sledge race gives status. The money for the prizes is collected by having Bingo- evenings.



One of the probably most success full examples of volunteer projects is the “Gør maj sund” (make Maj healthy). It has the aspect of fun, competitions prizes for the winners. Here the kids run around town and the volunteers organizing.

International day of mother language

In February UNESCO commemorates international day of mother language. The museum invites people with language skills to give a small example of their language: Here the East Greenlander Adolf who works with a Frenchmen Pierre Robbe on an Eastgreenlandic dictionary. Adolf is talking with Søren Basbøll who is married to a French woman and therefor explains in French about the work Adolf and Pierre.



Adolf and Søren in Museum

www.Roots2Share.gl

The www.Roots2Share.gl is an example with less local participation than expected and hoped for. It is a website with many historical photos. The intention is that everybody can tell stories and ad information to the photos. The website is multilingual in English, Danish, East- and West Greenlandic. For many reasons the local participation has been low.



First and foremost internet is very expensive in East Greenland. Especially East Greenland has an oral culture writing is not something people do very much and then a cultural component of discreteness.

2. How to make volunteering in Greenland more successful

- It must be fun to do.
- It must be very short termed. With projects longer than a couple of weeks, the engagement tends to decline.
- Prizes as with the running competition are motivating factors.
- It must be really volunteers. The museum has had young people, who 'had' to do it as part of their adult vocational training. Some of them did not enjoy the participation.
- People must have had their basic needs in order. If you struggle to pay your bills, it can be difficult to contribute.
- Most of the people participating at Mother Language Day are resourceful people
- When the museum has had people from the 'prison' to help, lunch was paid and a small gift when the job was done. Some small token of appreciation should be given. For the inmates it was more fun to get out and work, their friends could come by and talk. It is also encouraged by the warden from the prison.
- It can be a good idea to give people some kind of uniform. At the Arctic Winter Games nice green down jackets were seen all over Nuuk that week.



Volunteers at the Tasiilaq Museum

V. Shetland – benefits of volunteering

By Andy Ross, Creative Director
GlobalYell Ltd trading, Centre for Creative Industries, Shetland

1. Shetland and the arts

Living as I do in Shetland and working here, the following two examples of best practice are highly personal views of activities that take place in the islands, one of which I have no involvement in except the enjoyment of experiencing live music and the other being my own charity and companies. It may seem idiosyncratic to present one's own work as an example of so-called Best Practice, but I am proud of the work we do and what we achieve and I present the concept on behalf of our volunteers, supporters and well-wishers.

Shetland is long and thin; over one hundred miles from the island of Fair Isle, famed for its knitting, to the North of Unst, the furthermost inhabited island in the United Kingdom. With stretches of ocean between the islands, getting around is via ferry and car, or, in some of the outermost isles, small aeroplane. It is a romantic and eccentric place to move to with a strong sense of community between the 23,000 people who live here as well as an individual sense of self and identity. We are proud of our islands and, just like in all families, there are disagreements and arguments but the benefits of living in this part of the world, perceived as remote by others, far outweigh the problems.



One way we have dealt with isolation and geography has been through the arts; bringing people together to celebrate at mid-Winter (Up Helly Aa Fire Festivals run across the islands from January until March) or visiting each other to play music or tell stories, which has traditionally been popular. It is less so nowadays for the latter because of the advent of television, electricity and all that is modern, but community events still attract audiences and participants from across the world.

2. Good practice examples from Shetland

2.1 The Shetland Folk Festival – making great use of voluntary effort

The first example of best practice I am going to use is the Shetland Folk Festival. I do so without permission from the Festival, these are my personal observations. Shetland Folk Festival is world-renowned.

The event takes place in the early spring each year, and is a long weekend of music from visiting bands and acts, mixed together with local acts. The logistics of organising transport, accommodation, food and the like for everyone are considerable but each year the Festival manages to attract superlative groups, hailing from every continent. The concerts are scheduled across the islands with visiting bands making their way to the more remote islands and back in one night. At a price of £16 per ticket, the chance to see quality bands in your home area is a privilege! Tickets are sold by online booking or by telephone, and a membership to the Festival gets advance booking for tickets and discounted prices.



The unique aspect of this Festival is the way in which it is run. A committee takes all the decisions for the event each year, choosing acts from recordings sent in by bands, and sometimes, I believe, inviting musicians they have heard about. This means that anyone can apply to perform as part of the Folk Festival and the screening process will take care of who actually does get to perform.

While this is not unique in itself, the important fact is that this committee is made up of volunteers, and the Festival itself is run by voluntary effort. Galvanising support for doing something like this, which requires enormous effort and logistical expertise is a huge undertaking, and it is testament to the people involved and the model that it works so well.

The last night of the Festival has to be planned like a military mission. Every visiting band performs a slot of fifteen minutes in each of three venues across Lerwick. Getting fifteen or sixteen bands to their gigs in a timely fashion is complicated! It must be with a great sense of relief as well as pride that the volunteers for the Shetland Folk Festival say goodbye to their guests and take a well-deserved rest before the planning for the following year starts again.

More information can be found on the website for the Festival, now in its 36th year – at **https://www.shetlandfolkfestival.com.**

1.2 GlobalYell Ltd – innovation and a charity

My organisation, GlobalYell Ltd, which I established in 2001 as a music charity, limited companies with charitable aims being a recognised structure in the UK, has recently branched out into production, but not of music. The studio is producing textiles for sale and export.



The reason is this slightly off-kilter turn of events is that, in 2005, we were gifted a weave studio and brought it up to Shetland to work with the textile community and to support the industry in the Isles. In Yell there is a small population – around 900 people live here – and so any employment is vital to keeping people living and working in the isle. Our idea was to support the community by basing the studio in the island on which I live, so that people could visit and stay, and learn to love Yell as much as we do.

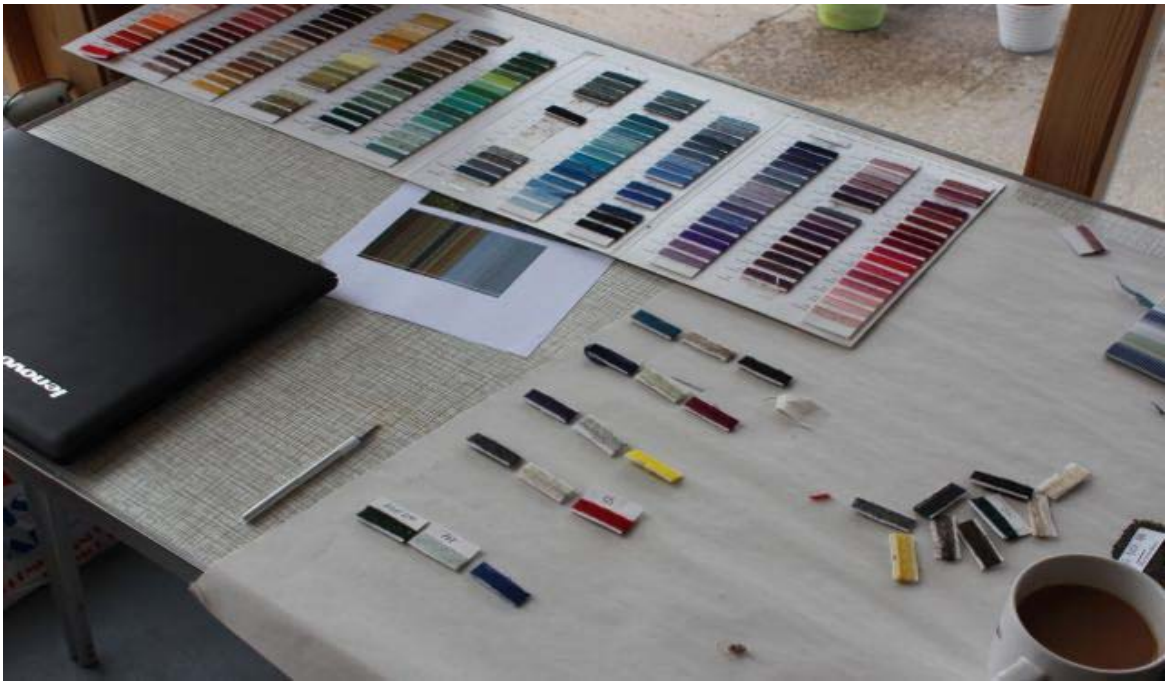
We are now celebrating our tenth anniversary and the past year has been a significant one. Since 2007 we have run artist residencies whereby weavers and other textile makers can stay with us for four months, living and working in the community. Of those four months two is allocated to developing ideas for GlobalYell Ltd and the other two is for the maker's own work. From those residencies a significant amount of sampling has been done resulting in robust and quality fabrics for different purposes, firmly rooted in the traditions of Shetland and yet with a contemporary edge.

For a number of years the difficulty has been in the reproduction of these fabrics. We know that the textiles work and are desirable; everyone tells us so, but we have not been able to make enough of the fabric to sell to others. This has meant that we have been sitting on a collection of fabrics which we cannot readily exploit.

In 2015, we were lucky enough to be funded through the Coastal Communities Fund, money for the peripheral areas of the UK to provide employment and financial opportunities. Our funding has allowed us to purchase new equipment including a production loom to make the cloths we have in greater lengths than we could before, and at wider widths. In addition we have started the process to purchase our business units in Sellafirth which will relieve the charity of the burden of leasing costs, and we have also purchased additional equipment to go with the new space and loom. It is not, however, the purchase of the new equipment which is the best part of this funding. The money has been provided for a new member of staff and this has had a huge effect on the charity. Now we have new skills and new energy at work and this has meant that the continual struggle to achieve is shared. We have a new lease of life, a new direction and a shared vision for creating a successful organisation.

The charity, of course, has to continue with its charitable activities and so the residencies and stays are planned to continue, as well as the other educational activities that GlobalYell undertakes such as textile tours across the islands. The manufacture of cloth, however, cannot be considered a charitable activity by any stretch of the imagination and so we have set up a new company, 100% share owned by GlobalYell Ltd, which can make

the cloth for us and for others. GlobalYell Production is a limited profit-making company with representation on its board from the board of trustees of GlobalYell Ltd. This ownership of the company means that any profit can be handed over to GlobalYell Ltd to support the aims of the charity.



An unexpected benefit of this development is that I have gone into a partnership with the new member of staff in a commercial company making cloths for the fashion industry. The partnership now has the means to manufacture cloth through GlobalYell Production and we also now have the expertise to design that cloth. So GlobalYell's residencies will focus on fabrics for interiors (blankets, throws, curtaining, etc) and the new company, The Shetland Tweed Company, will focus on fashion. Everybody wins in this situation.

Of course we could not achieve all that we do without the help of volunteers, from those on our Board of Directors to those who run our various events and activities such as the sewing group and those who help us with the administration and curatorship. We are immensely grateful to everyone who has a hand in helping GlobalYell to become the best it can be.

For more information about the charity, GlobalYell Production or The Shetland Tweed Company, please visit the websites for each where you will also find contact details.

http://GlobalYell.org
http://globalyellproduction.co.uk
http://theshetlandtweedcompany.co.uk

VI: Denmark, KSD – a lovely summer

Bente von Schindel, Secretary General

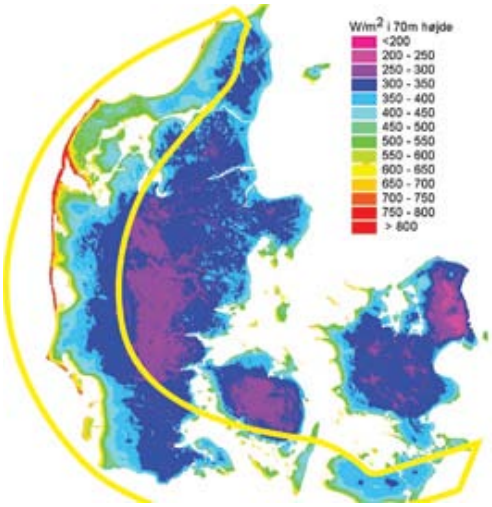
The National Association of Voluntary Cultural Councils

1. It was lovely summer weather in the country

“It was lovely summer weather in the country " the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen initiated his fairy tale "The Ugly Duckling", but the factual things, one in recent years has seen in the countryside of Denmark - in rural areas, in sparsely populated areas, in the villages – are as told by the village researcher Jørgen Møller - 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."

Jesper Samson from the Danish newspaper “Information” writes in an article that "A common feature of peripheral areas is that they are mostly located relatively far from the major urban centres in Copenhagen and Jutland. This means that “peripheral Denmark” in many views is going in a gentle curve through the Northern, Western and Southern Jutland over the island communities in the South, Lolland-Falster and Bornholm. Often there are also included some municipalities in Funen and Zealand”.



“the rotten banana”

It is a gentle curve also known as “the rotten banana”, which together with other negative words stigmatizes the areas that are less populated. And when the media today tells about life far from the big cities, it's mostly about decay, unemployment, closure of schools and shops as well as lack of traffic opportunities.

There have therefore been initiated many actions to change this. Among other things The Danish government has moved 3,900 state jobs out to the province in the hope that it can help so people don´t escape from the villages.

But if these actions will help, remains to be seen. Professor Flemming Just, director of the Centre for Rural Research at the University of Southern Denmark says, that "There are clear doubts about which buttons must be pressed. Various solutions are proposed without any proof of what works. It is also my impression of the political debate at the moment that politicians are facing the same problem."

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 two stories are examples of that.

2. Good practice examples from Denmark

2.1 The old library in Ejby

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 centre in cooperation with residents of the city. It became a cultural meeting and gathering place that would 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.



Ejby Medborgerhus

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, theater 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 theater 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.



Meeting in Ejby Medborgerhus

2.2 Horbelev School

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

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.

Refuses to surrender

It is now known beyond 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. The 587 residents of the city 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 experiences and community. 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

Horbelev School was closed 10 years ago and was until 2009 run as an independent school. But as the independent school also closed, a group took the initiative for a public meeting, where they wanted to take action in relation to the boring development. Here about 250 interested joined.

Subsequently there has been held workshops, setting up 10 different interest groups: The

Elderly, Tourism & Business, Sport, Nature & Outdoors, Arts, Culture, Hesnæs Port & Beach, Children & Youth, Village Centre 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. Through the Investment Fund the school building was purchased and “The Association of the Future of Northeast Falster” established in 2011 a village centre in the former school. In the village centre was room for the association of theatres, the associations of art clubs, exercise association, kids club, thrift store, pizzeria and much more.

An ambitious conversion of a closed school

The facilities in the old school were far from optimal for the variety of activities and users. Therefore “The Association of the Future of Northeast Falster” tried to search for money for the village centre in order to be considered a development project on the conversion of closed schools for new purposes.

The project could on the selected criteria not compete with the other three buildings that were selected to proceed in the planned course, but the center got some money anyway as residents themselves had taken the initiative and created a number of activities with a fine blend of art, culture and other activities in the old school. It is even possible to integrate various local companies in the project, which is a fine example of an ambitious conversion of a closed school.



The old school of Horbelev turned into a culture centre. Photo: TV Øst

3. 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 farm 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, village death and the rotten banana in our part of the country!



Torben Stjernholm,
chair of “The Association of the Future of Northeast Falster”

Mission

The purpose of northeast Falster Futures Association is:

- To safeguard common interests of Northeast Falster internally and externally, including social and cultural activities
- To place great emphasis on children and youth work outside the sports club, including creating and supporting activities for children and youth
- Creating and supporting a vibrant community
- To attract active and engaged residents to our area
- Attracting businesses to the area
- To convene the members to discuss the activities and developments in the area at least twice a year
- To create service
- To participate in municipal working groups or ad hoc committees



VII: Orkney – world class stories

Clare Gee, Service Manager
Arts, Museums and Heritage Department of Orkney Islands Council

1. Stories & Fables - A report by François Matarasso

In 2011, François Matarasso, a freelance writer, researcher and consultant, with a thirty-five year career in socially engaged arts practice, was commissioned by Highlands and Islands Enterprise, to undertake a study to look for the long-term reasons for Orkney's success in culture, so as to identify transferable lessons for other areas and communities. François spent a number of months visiting Orkney, researching, speaking to people, testing his theories and visiting arts events and activities in Orkney. His report was published in January 2012.

Whilst the primary purpose of the commission was to see if there were transferable lessons for other areas and communities, it has to be said that the report has also been incredibly useful to those of us working in the arts in Orkney, at a time when the cultural landscape is changing, and – as François comments – a generational shift is taking place.

A vibrant, culturally rich and beautiful place

Orkney is an archipelago of approximately seventy islands, which is about seven miles north of the far North-East coast of Mainland Scotland. Around twenty of the islands are populated, and the majority of the around twenty thousand residents live on the largest island – called Mainland – and again the majority of them live in the city and Royal Burgh of Kirkwall.

Orkney is a vibrant, culturally rich and beautiful place, with some of the most important archaeology to be found anywhere in the world. A World Heritage Site – the Heart of Neolithic Orkney – sits alongside important Norse, Viking and Pictish monuments, and even the 20th century wartime and maritime archaeology is unique and internationally recognised.

Also well known for its rich cultural traditions of music, song, dance, dialect, traditional craft, storytelling and creative writing, Orkney is still a place full of artists, writers, musicians and storytellers. Festivals, such as the Orkney Folk Festival and St Magnus Interna-

tional Festival are held all through the year and reflect the rich diversity of cultural life on the islands. The small town of Stromness is home to an internationally recognised collection of 20th century modern art, on show alongside temporary exhibitions at the Pier Arts Centre.



The Story and the Fable

It is no surprise that Highlands and Islands Enterprise wanted to explore what it was about Orkney that had created such a rich cultural climate, to see if transferable lessons could be shared with other places in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. François Matarasso took the Orcadian writer Edwin Muir's autobiography as his starting point. Called The Story and the Fable, Muir identified the two elements as being significantly different. François' interpretation is that ***The Story*** is the identifiable, objective account of the current state of Orkney's cultural life. ***The Fable,*** on the other hand, is a subjective exploration of some of the factors that explain that development.

The key message from the study is that:

> *"Whilst Orkney is outstanding, it is not unique in developing a strong cultural sector… the answer lies in looking at what has happened in Orkney, in the wider context of arts and cultural development practice, to identify **how** people have created a strong cultural life, rather than focusing on **what** they have created"*

François states:

> *"Geography, history and culture have played determining roles, as have individual people – neither the conditions nor the people exist elsewhere… It is possible, however, to identify patterns – and crucial is the place of volunteers – taken for granted they will stop volunteering... Draw these behaviours in to principles and they can guide future cultural development in Orkney and elsewhere"*

As highlighted above, François identified The **Orkney Principles of cultural development**. They are a set of principles which François believes enabled Orkney to have the environment and opportunity to become, and sustain, a creative heart.

The main premise of this article is to share these Orkney Principles, as I believe that they are essential if any place, remote, rural, or otherwise, is going to be conducive to creative development, and therefore encourage community cohesion, sustainability and be a place worth living or visiting.

I am simply sharing François vision, and would recommend reading his entire report in order to get the background and context of these principles, as well as a more in depth explanation of the current position in relation to culture in Orkney – The Story.

François' Orkney Principles are:

- Leadership with a clear vision
- Demonstrating value
- A sustainable economic model
- Valuing volunteers
- Open, democratic governance
- Flexible and responsive
- Confidence and humility
- Cooperative and competitive
- Always positive
- "Dig where you stand"

I have taken the main points about each principle directly from François' study below:

Leadership with a clear vision: Successful projects need leaders with a strong idea of what they are trying to achieve and the ability to communicate that clearly to others – it may be quiet and unobtrusive, as it is in Orkney. Good leadership builds trust and commitment, even love.

Demonstrating value: Cultural initiatives attract broad support when they are seen to benefit the community – those benefits may be social, economic, educational or a combination of all three. The most successful initiatives not only have a real and complex social value – they are able to tell the story of that value in ways that people who have little or no involvement in it can appreciate

A sustainable economic model: There is no single economic model for cultural organisations: the financial needs vary according to purpose, programme, ambition, location and many other factors. At a time of economic contraction and sharp cutbacks in public spending, developing initiatives that are not dependent on any single source of income is perhaps more important than ever.

Valuing volunteers: Very little cultural activity would be possible without this gifted work… through them, Orkney's arts and culture are inextricably woven into the social fabric of the community. Volunteering works well… when time, skills and other resources given are genuinely appreciated and when volunteers are treated not as unpaid workers but as small scale philanthropists who share the values of the organisations they support.

Open, democratic governance: Transparent governance and management processes that are seen to be fair by everyone involved are enabling. They build internal and external trust and make organisations reliable partners; they also reduce the incidence of disputes. They take time, but much less than resolving the problems they deal with as matters of everyday governance.

Flexible and responsive: Cultural organisations work in a field – art and culture – whose results are unpredictable. Consequently they do best when they can flex in response to changing circumstances, adapting to the needs of others, while never losing sight of their own purposes. It is the difference between seizing a good opportunity and being opportunistic. With a strong vision, one can adapt the route without losing site of the destination.

Confidence and humility: Successful organisations – and this is true of most of Orkney's cultural sector – thrive on a curious balance of confidence and humility. The result, at its best, is that groups have the courage to do things they have never tried, often in the face of practical difficulties, but without becoming arrogant or complacent. It's a subtle line, but one that the best organisations tread with instinctive sensitivity.

Cooperative and competitive: The idea of mutual assistance is very important in Orkney's society and to its culture. Cooperation between individuals and organisations has enabled

them to do more than they could have alone. There is room for rivalry, but the sense of being all in the same island together is very real and focuses the mind. Competition can also be productive…striving to achieve more than last time and not to rest on laurels of success helps keep work fresh, aspirational and interesting. Cooperation with others and competition with oneself can be a good combination.

Always positive: Orkney's cultural organisations have been good at creating a positive culture that draws people towards them. Their success is rooted in somebody deciding to say yes rather than no. There are times when resistance or standing one's ground are right, but a readiness to look for how something might be done, rather than for justifications as to why it cannot, is a powerful, enabling habit.



"Dig where you stand": This is the motto of the Living Archive in Milton Keynes, a new city built on old towns in the English Midlands. It remains the simplest expression of a

basic tenet of good cultural development: to find the value in existing cultural assets. The St Magnus Festival exists because Sir Peter Maxwell Davies made his home on Hoy. A jewellery industry exists because Ola Gorie chose to create a workshop in her home rather than moving to a city after graduation. Other dimensions can be brought in and interact with what is there, but understanding, sometimes even recognising, the qualities of local people, traditions and environments is always a good starting point for development

François states that it works in Orkney because:

"Individuals working together to fulfil their enthusiasms make creative, resilient and flexible artistic development… Public authorities have a vital supportive role to play, but it is an **enabling** not a **directing** one… By providing sufficient and appropriate support, they can foster a strong, independent and diverse cultural ecology that plays a central role in every aspect of local life"

"The problem, of course, is that Orkney's cultural achievements cannot be replicated, because they are the outcomes of its unique experience. The St Magnus Festival, Ola Gorie jewellery and the Pier Arts Centre… have flourished because of specific local conditions. Imitation of the forms of this success – for instance, by establishing a classical music festival in Argyll or Shetland – would be most unlikely to succeed. Like transplanting a rare tree with no thought of its native climate or soil, the result would be only expense and disappointment. If there are lessons to be learnt from Orkney's cultural achievements – and there surely are – they touch on the conditions that have produced those achievements, not the forms that they have taken"

"It will be evident… that Orkney's current varied and complex cultural scene is not the result of any central planning or policy directive. It is essentially the product of individual enthusiasms finding local support, though this can be obscured by high ambitions… At its best, this has given the county a cultural landscape as individual and as attractive as Stromness on a sunny day. It might look untidy, but it works: more than that, it is because it is unlike anywhere else that it delights visitors and residents alike. Of course, one should be wary of romanticising this. As anyone who has driven in Stromness will appreciate, idiosyncrasy does not always sit easily with speed; but then, people in a hurry tend not to want to live on islands."

"Orkney's culture is an important economic asset, both in terms of the employment and wealth it creates directly, and as an attraction for the tourists crucial to the local econ-

omy. It is also a vital social asset, bringing people together in small and large gatherings, developing skills, experience and knowledge, fostering common purpose, and building social capital. And it is perhaps most important of all for its cultural functions: in opening up imaginations, building shared memories, raising aspirations, giving hope and delight – and simply making Orkney a place where people want to live. And Orkney's future depends absolutely on that."

Challenges for Orkney, and the future ahead

"There is a generational change underway in many of Orkney's cultural organisations. The post-war Orcadians and the people who came to Orkney in the 1970s and 1980s… are reaching or have reached retirement age. All are leaving gaps… This is always happening, on one level, but Orkney without some of the figures that have dominated its cultural life in the past 30 years looks like a very different place. It is also true that the loss of a few key people is likely to have a much greater effect in a small community than a city… There is good reason to think that Orkney's culture will change more in the next ten years than in the last twenty"

It is: "Difficult for new leaders as they are working in a mature landscape with less freedom of movement"; And everyone has to cope with the: "Financial crisis, with unpredictable consequences that may go far beyond economics"

François' final thoughts are: "Orkney is a prosperous, united community, used to doing things for itself: if a way to pool and grow resources for culture cannot be found here, one wonders where it can. It has the resources – economic, social and above all cultural – to unite and show what a difference a strong, curious and lively cultural life can make to the vitality and viability of island communities. Orkney has achieved exceptionally in its cultural life during the past 30 years. It has every opportunity to do more in the next 30 and to be a beacon for similar places across the UK, Europe and perhaps further."

He left the last word to the incredible poet, and good friend to Orkney, Seamus Heaney:

> *"Orkney's future, as far as I'm concerned, it to maintain itself – and trust itself – as a locus of ongoing possibility"*
> Seamus Heaney, "Winds Freshening' (2009)", Peebles & Watts, 2009:5

2. Good practice examples from Orkney

2.1 St Magnus International Festival

www.stmagnusfestival.com

St Magnus International Festival is Orkney's annual celebration of the arts. Founded in 1977 by a group including Orkney's distinguished resident composer Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, the Festival has grown from small beginnings into one of Britain's most highly regarded and adventurous arts events. The 40th Festival will take place in 2016.

The unique combination of world-class performance, community participation of the highest quality and the magic of Orkney at midsummer attracts audiences from throughout Britain and further afield: many return year after year. Though musical events are at the heart of the artistic programme, the Festival also encompasses drama, dance, literature and the visual arts.

Each year the Festival brings a full scale Orchestra to the islands together with leading ensembles and soloists. They perform in various combinations and in different venues to present shows that are unique to the Festival.

ST MAGNUS
INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Always a number of World Premieres

The Festival has a long reputation for commissioning and nurturing new work. The Festival always features a number of World Premieres: ranging from work by well-established composers through to a concert with up to eight pieces of music created as part of the Orkney Composers Course.

Specially-commissioned work has also been created for visual arts, drama, film and dance projects. The Festival makes use of various venues around Orkney, from the Romanesque grandeur of St Magnus Cathedral to the poignant intimacy of the Italian Chapel; from a converted games hall to the new purpose-built Theatre at Kirkwall Grammar School; from shore-side churches to the Stromness Town Hall.

Over 400 members each year

Through education and community projects the Festival has built up active participation by adults and children from all parts of Orkney, often devised in collaboration with visiting orchestras, ensembles and artists. Typically over 400 members of the local community perform at the Festival each year.

This includes events such as the Festival Chorus performance with the Orchestra, the Johnsmas Foy which showcases local drama and writing, music workshops with leading professionals, large-scale community drama productions and regular 'Side by Side' events where young local musicians join the professionals in full-scale Festival concerts. Through 'Festival on Tour', the Festival send musicians to take part in concerts and workshops in the outer islands, schools and care homes and over the years the Festival has provided a platform for the rising generation of Orkney music stars to have their first taste of large scale performance. In addition over 250 people volunteer to help make the Festival happen, either behind the scenes or front of house.

The particular reason for including St Magnus International Festival as an example of good practice is primarily due to their approach to, and significant use of, volunteers.

Run by volunteers

Without volunteers the festival simply could not take place. Whilst during its history the festival has moved from being entirely run by volunteers to having a very small paid team of staff, the majority of delivery is still by volunteers. In the areas of box office/ticket sales, front of house and the technical crew, huge numbers of volunteers take part, and many more open up their homes to visiting artists and musicians, who often stay with local folk rather than in hotels, ensuring that visiting performers have a very personal and unique experience of Orkney. Many local volunteers also perform in the Festival Chorus and in other events.

The Technical Crew is an amazing part of the Festival infrastructure. A core group of local folk who take a fortnight off work every year to deliver all the technical elements of the Festival. They are also hired by other events and festivals, so professional is their work, with any hire fees ploughed back in to the St Magnus International Festival. All the volunteers are hugely proud, dedicated, and a significant asset to the Festival, including in their ability to promote the Festival locally and in their positive, welcoming approach to visitors. They certainly ensure that audience members are welcomed in the proper Orkney way!

2.2 Papa Westray

For more information visit:
http://papawestray.co.uk and
www.papaygyronights.papawestray.org/

It may seem strange to include a whole island as an example of good practice, but I feel that Papa Westray – or Papay as it is known by Orcadians – is a very strong example of good practice, where a community has come together with a huge motivation to ensure the sustainability of the island and the quality of life of its residents through innovative and creative events, activities, festivals and residential workshops which encourage visitors to come and stay and share in the vibrancy and energy of the community.

Papa Westray is one of the smallest islands in Orkney. A short distance from Westray in the North of the archipelago, it has approximately 80-90 residents. Rich (as is all of Orkney) in archaeology and history, Papay has the earliest known dwellings in the North of Europe – Knap of Howar – which date back to 3800BC. It has other Neolithic monuments, a medieval chapel, and the beautiful restored kirk of St Boniface, with a wonderful Viking hogback grave stone in the kirkyard. It also has the World's shortest scheduled flight, fantastic flora and fauna, and traditional dance, dialect, music and rituals which are specific to Papay.



Hard work to ensure survival and positive future

A thriving island now, it's population was as low as 54 in the 1990's, and the community have had to work hard to ensure its survival and positive future. It now has approximately 90 residents, a busy and active school, post office, community run shop and other facilities. It is just about to open a new heritage and craft centre in the old Kelp Store, which has been renovated through major capital grant funding.

A Coastal Communities Grant has recently enabled the (entirely voluntarily run) Papay Development Trust to employ a Ranger for the Island, who runs tours for visitors, organises events, activities and workshops, and has also been responsible for the development of the Old Kelp Store renovation.

Became better known

Many visitors have been encouraged to visit – and most importantly stay for several days – due to exciting and innovative residential workshops run on the island. These have included artistic and craft workshops such as Pinhole Photography, local knitting traditions, archaeology field walking and others. All events and workshops have been run by local Orcadian residents and Papay has become better well known locally. I know Orcadians born and bred who had never visited Papay before, but now go regularly for events such as the Muckle Supper, or arts workshops.

Also run on Papay every February by local residents who moved to the island a few years ago is Papay Gyro Nights. A challenging and exciting visual and performing arts festival which brings the avant garde, strange and bizarre to Papay from all corners of the World, as well as providing a platform for local performers and artists. The festival has also had archaeologists in residence and local storytellers collaborating with international performance, video and sound artists to create new works in local buildings.

2.3 Orkney Arts Forum

Visit the Orkney Arts Forum at: **www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/orkneyartsforum**

Orkney Arts Forum supports the development of arts and culture within Orkney. The forum consists of voluntary representatives from art forms including music, visual arts, literature, drama, dance, storytelling, craft, architecture and new media, and film as well as key organisations and community groups. The forum meets quarterly to discuss the priorities for the arts in Orkney and acts as a consultation group for the arts development service within Orkney Islands Council.

Strategic approach to arts development

The Arts Forum was originally set up in 2001 by Orkney Islands Council, under the chairmanship of Councillor Roderick MacLeod. The Council and other members of the Forum were keen to establish a strategic approach to arts development in the county. Forum members, Orkney Enterprise and the Scottish Arts Council (now Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Creative Scotland), commissioned a major piece of work to audit activity and the state of the arts in Orkney at that time.

The Orkney Arts Audit was undertaken by Bryan Beattie of Creative Services, and was published in 2002. This was quickly followed by the creation of the Orkney Arts Strategy 2003-2006, again by Bryan Beattie. The strategy included over 100 recommendations over a variety of areas such as improved facilities, opportunities for artists, increased opportunities for participation and new staff posts.

The strategy included a recommendation to establish a post of Arts Development Officer and when the strategy was published the Arts Forum ceased its work. The council worked with Orkney Enterprise and the Scottish Arts Council to establish the post for an initial three years, a post which continues successfully to this day.



Orkney Arts Forum re-established

At the time that the arts development officer came into post in May 2004, the Orkney Arts Forum was re-established in its present form, in order to advise the arts development officer, and take a key role within the Orkney Community Planning Partnership.

Alongside its work to move forward and advocate for the arts in Orkney, the Forum has managed several specific projects such as the Highlands 2007 music commission of the poems of Robert Rendall, "Winterings" performed by the St Magnus Festival Chorus in

December 2007, and several showcases for the arts including Tullimentan in 2005, Orkney Out There (OOT) in 2010, and the Orkney Creative Conference in 2015.

The Forum continues to work closely with the Arts Officer, communities and organisations under the chairmanship of (volunteer) visual arts representative Rik Hammond, and throughout 2016 to will identify the opportunities and challenges for the arts – primarily the voluntary and amateur arts – going forward, and use this information to develop a vision and arts development strategy to support Orkney's arts and wider cultural landscape in to the future.

Compendium.

Arts and Culture on the Nordic Edge

This Compendium has been made in the framework of the 1-year pilot project, Jan – Dec 2016 that are supported by the Nordic Culture Point's Culture and Art Programme / Capacity development.

The project idea is to exchange experiences and compile ideas, how voluntary art and culture agencies can provide more available and involving arts and culture opportunities in the sparsely populated communities in the West Nordic region with an added value for civic participation, community bonding and local identity.



norden

Nordic Culture Point

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