

HOW TO ENGAGE YOUTH

- A best practice report
from MEeting YOUTH

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Abstract

MEeting YOuth was a project where four libraries and four youth NGOs worked together in order to find out how to engage young people in the development of society. The young people partaking were aged between 15 and 25.

The project consisted primarily of three meetings. During these meetings the aim was to let young people express their ideas and recommendations of how young people could be engaged in society. As part of the project a number of workshops were facilitated and the participants worked with different methods in order to get a good dialogue between the young people from the four countries.

We found out, that a good, clear and respectful communication and process is as essential as the specific tools. User driven methods have provided a wide range of interesting tools for involving users, but it takes a lot of work to adjust the theories to working with youth. During the project the young people were engaged, motivated and felt that they made a difference. The project concludes that various user driven methods can be way of engaging youth in the democratic process.

In this report we have gathered our experiences from the project – we have gathered recommendations on "what is hot and what is not" when working with young people. The experiences can be used when wishing to hear young people's ideas and perspectives on the society they are a part of. The publication reflects only the view of the project; the Commission and Cirius Denmark cannot be held responsible for any use made of the information contained herein.

The partners in the project

The Main Library, Århus, Denmark

Skjoldhøj Ungdomsklub, Århus, Denmark

Deichmanske Bibliotek, Oslo, Norway

Stovner Rock Factory, Oslo, Norway

Stockholm Public Library, Stockholm, Sweden

The Literary Association Ponton, Stockholm, Sweden

J.U. Niemcewicz Public Library, District Ursynow, Warsaw, Poland

Shooting Volunteer Emergency Formation, Warsaw, Poland

The project was funded with support from the European Commission's YOUTH Programme.

Project history

All around Europe libraries work on developing good youth libraries, which can support young people's lives, needs, informal learning and education. In spring 2006 The Main Library in Aarhus contacted local youth organizations. We asked them, what the young people need and how we could get in contact with the groups, which does not normally use the library. The youth organizations made it clear, that they, too, had difficulties getting in contact with the unorganized adolescents. Also, several young people expressed their wish to be heard and involved in the society, but they expressed a lack of interest in participating in long meetings and they pointed out, that they only want to get involved in things they find really interesting.

In the light of this, four libraries decided to invite four youth NGOs to partake in a project where the focus was to investigate how we could get in contact with young people and how we should involve them. The project primarily consisted of three meetings, where young people from NGOs and adult staff from the libraries met, discussed and worked with the question: How do we engage young people in development work?

The aims of the project were to develop new tools for engaging young people in development work. In order to do so we considered the communication between the young participants and between the young and adult participants to be very important. The meetings were facilitated by interaction designer Signe Klejs and project coordinator Louise Overgaard.

The meetings consisted of get-together-activities, discussions, workshops, competitions, cultural inputs. All three meetings were intensive processes lasting three days; at the kick off meeting, where half of the young people were present, we worked on the material for the workshops at the transnational meeting in Stockholm. At the transnational seminar 19 people worked intensely in workshops in order to present the best way to engage young people in societal development work. At the evaluation meeting the library staff met to sum up the essence of what we had found out during the project. The libraries concluded that the young people partaking learned a lot, that the libraries partaking learned a lot about what to do and what not to do when engaging young people. It was also concluded that specific tools are not the most important thing when working with young people, but that the way one communicate with and think about young people is essential. It was also concluded that young people like to be heard and engaged and that they have a lot of thoughts and perspectives on the society they are a part of.

22 people have been directly involved in the project, the young people were 15 to 25 years old.

For further information about the project:

See www.aakb.dk/meeting_youth

Contact project coordinator Louise Overgaard mlo@bib.aarhus.dk.

Engaging youth – Why?

The first question to raise is why it is important to engage and involve young people? In libraries the opinion often heard is that we should leave them be and focus on children and the adults. In the public opinion one often hear about how difficult the teenagers are – that they are lazy and unfocused. Would it be easier not to involve the young people? Definitely! Is it okay not to make library services or other public services for the young people? Definitely not! Could we create the services without involving the young people? Yes, but then we would make the mistake often made – we would try to guess their needs and the guesses would be wrong.

There are a lot of reasons why it is important to involve young people in the development of services, products and society. First and foremost the young people are the coming leaders of our countries and we need them to partake in society as active citizens – it is the adults' duty to interest the youth to be and becoming active citizens. Involving young people in the development of e.g. services is a very concrete way to invite the young people to become active citizens, because it can show them that they are heard and that they obtain something from partaking. If they see that a service or a product is changed because of their inputs they see that it matters to speak up.

Involving some young people can make other young people interested too and a dialogue between generations can make the gap between generations smaller. The young people have a lot of energy and drive – we can use this and their need for change in a positive and innovative way – they can challenge us and ask the questions that we do not ask enough.

For the developer there is the advantage that the young people can sharpen and target the products and services for their own target groups, because there can be a lot of patterns, wishes and needs that one as a developer cannot see. At the same time the involved users can become ambassadors for the services or products. The best way to get in contact with young people is by letting young people spread the word.



User driven innovation

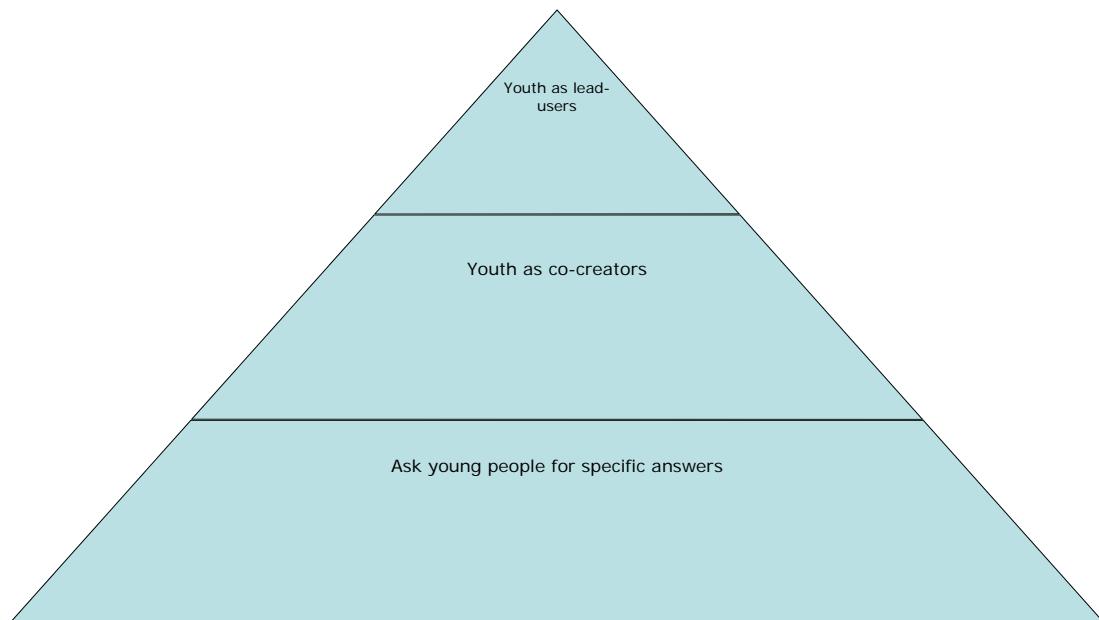
MEeting YOUTH was based on a user driven approach to development work, because we believe that combining the user driven methods with the possibility to be heard in a societal context can give us knowledge about how young people can be active citizens in an untraditional way.

User driven innovation is a systematic process where you design products and services based on knowledge about the users and their needs. User driven innovation is a method to ensure that innovation actually meets the users' needs. Users can be involved with different purposes:

- As co-creators
- As lead-users

In MEeting YOuth the young people were the co-creators of ideas about how to make young people engage in society and the co-creators in doing this report. We have involved the young people in this work, because we believe, that if we should be able to create relevant services and a democratic society, it is important to create a shared "design space" where the professional staff and the young people can exchange points of views. One way to do this is to meet on neutral ground or to use proto-types / scenarios / drawings while working with young people – these artefacts ensure that we have a common ground and a shared "language frame". During the project we have realized, that communication is a primary thing when doing development work.

In this report there are examples of different ways of involving young people. In order to get knowledge about young people's needs all institutions should be able to work in the bottom of the pyramid with questionnaires or other ways of asking direct questions (be aware that the right answers only are obtained by posing the right questions). To invite youth to be co-creators demands more from the institutions, but it also gives the institutions more insight into the young people's thoughts and needs; methods are activities where youth can influence the agenda and activities. The most complex and for some most difficult way of working is to let youth be lead-users, because the adults must let go of the control and invite young people to take over the agenda. When it comes to motivating youth and involving them in a democratic process the institutions must invite the youth to be co-creators or lead-users.



The young people want to be involved

In the European Commission White Paper *A New Impetus for European Youth* the young people express very clearly, that they want to be heard and be looked upon as fully-fledged members of the society. However the paper also states that the young people live lives, which are very different from life experienced by earlier generations. Despite the fact that the young people want to be heard, many statistics from the western countries show that fewer adolescents organize themselves in traditional organizations and that many young people in the western European countries care less about democracy now than earlier generations did. A Danish report "*Libraries and young people – do they want us and do we want them?*" states, that the young people want to be involved, but that they want to be involved in concrete activities at the time and at the place of their choosing. The young people do not seem to be interested in long meetings and long development phases.

Long meetings are not the primary problem; instead it is the long development phases that demotivate the young people. In order to make young people engage in the society it is essential to involve them in smaller contexts and projects, because here they get the opportunity to see quick results. MEeting YOUTH believes that if the young people feel they are taken seriously and feel that they are doing an important work they can be involved in alt of different contexts, but remember that most young people have less patience than the adults – they are not young for ages.



A schism

The fact that young people do not involve themselves and the fact that they actually want to be heard and involved shows a schism. Why does this schism emerge and how do organizations and public institutions secure that young people are heard and that they feel, that they are being taken seriously? How do we secure that young people leave their finger print on the development of society?

First and foremost it is important to remember, that young people are a lot like the rest of the human species – they too need to be respected and to feel liked, but as an organization, that has only limited contact with young people, one has not got many changes to show them respect and tolerance.

They also need rewards for engaging, they do not do anything for free. They do not necessarily have to be paid, but they need to see that there is something in it for them. This could for instance be some kind of social network – most young people today are networking all the time.

Organizations should quite easily be able to provide these things, so maybe the schism hides somewhere else. The problem may be that the organizations – libraries and other traditional organizations – are not ready to cooperate with young people. Accepting to involve young people is to accept doing things in a new way, where everything cannot be controlled, where staff need to be ready to receive input from the young people and make the inputs visible, where traditions are challenged and where responsibility is handed over to the young people.



Engaging youth – How?

One of the issues discussed over and over again in the project was: What does it take to motivate young people to get involved. Here are some of the key points that the young people pointed out.

The personal contact

- A good personal contact is absolutely essential
- They need acceptance and space.
- It is easier to get in contact with young people through people they trust
- The easiest way to get in contact with young people is through other young people
- The young people should not be left on their own – they need to know where to ask and receive answers
- Most young people are very social – they communicate all the time and prefer to stay in groups



Young people are not another species than the rest of us

- Young people are not – as some think – another species than the rest of the human race
- It is important for them to know that there is a result and that their work results in something meaningful
- They need to feel needed and useful in an interesting way – they don't want to waste their time
- They want to be treated with respect
- What may differ is that they are more impatient, that they want results now and that it is more important for them how they are seen and evaluated by their friends



Let the young people gain something

- Give the young people partaking prestige for their effort – it could be something that they can only gain by partaking – a special power, things to put on the CV's etc.
- Give the young people rewards. It could be objects, fun experiences, something that "tastes" of exclusivity and visibility
- Give them the feeling that they are doing something really important and that they are useful
- Give them the possibility to learn new things, meet new people and get inspired
- Give them responsibility

Youth-to-Youth

- Let youth motivate youth
- Focus on strengthening or start friendships, motivate togetherness, networks
- The strong youth makes the rest come



The involvement process

- The process should be fun, inspiring and engaging even if the subject is serious
- Have short time frames with specific goals
- Hand out power – decisions, money etc.
- Be concrete, practical and specific in all communication
- The school is not always a good channel for communication, because then one gets associated with "school-things"
- They need to be able to see the fun factor, the gain, the necessity
- Make them personally responsible

Paying the youth

Payment for involvement may be a difficult thing. On the one hand it can motivate the process, because the young people feel that they are being taken serious – "we are so interested in your work that we are willing to pay you". But on the other hand the payment can attract people who are not as engaged as they should be – money should not

be the motivation but the reward. Payment can be a good thing but one should be very careful when one is recruiting.

In MEeting YOUTH both paid youth and volunteers participated. It turned out that both some of the volunteers and some of the employed young people were not sufficiently motivated, while others – both volunteers and paid youth – worked hard and motivated. Be careful both when one recruit volunteers and employees, but one can expect more from the employees.

One could raise the question whether it is a problem, if young people are paid or in other ways gain from being active citizens. Once again the answer is, that it depends on the motivation – if they are prepared to make an effort and are fully motivated, then why not reward them? It is often heard from adults that young people should partake in society for free, because it has a societal importance. But if one thinks about it, how many adults spend their spare time on being active citizens without getting some kind of reward back?

Working with young people from start to finish

Involve your target group!

A lot of good and interesting projects and initiatives have been made in a lot of different places, but quite often it turns out to be a failure even though the intentions were good. MEeting YOUTH believes that one of the reasons this happens is that we forget to involve our target group in the process. We forget to ask the target group whether the initiative is actually relevant to the target group. One should always remember to ask the target group and not only when working with teens. These recommendations were found by the project when working with teens:



- Involve the young people from the beginning to the finish, but only in the things relevant for them
- Remember to ask the young people beforehand – if they want to partake, and if it is relevant to them
- Do not assume that it is interesting for them – know that you can motivate them
- Remember to tell them about their rewards and their goals, and know that you should explain them about the project several times
- Remember to keep the young people's motivation / ownership high through the project. Spend time on the motivation part!



- Trust that the target group – with your help – may be more creative than you. You have to stimulate their creativity
- Don't defend your own ideas and don't convince
- You must be clear about the project and the goals – you need to be motivated before being able to motivate

others

- You should pull back as much as possible and make the young people step in front. Hand out power
- Let them run the show when it comes to PR, invitations etc. Give them opportunity to show, what they can do
- Clear communication is good, confusion drains energy. Don't avoid confrontations. Make clear decisions.



And the things that just does not work!

When keeping in mind what not to do start reversing the above mentioned, but there are also other unsuitable things:

- Do not just take without giving anything in return to the young people
- Do not boss, convince, decide, assume, push
- If they don't feel that you like them, you can just forget about it!
- It is not possible, if the project is too large, too long, unclear and not coordinated
- Do not assume that they find it exciting if you do not find it very exciting yourself

Working with youth

During MEeting YOUTH we tried out a number of different ways of workshopping – both mixing between youth and adults and keeping the two groups separate, web 2.0, cultural probes and did a lot of activities in order to get a good social contact. In the following the recommendations are gathered.

Workshopping with youth



It is always a challenge to create a good and useful result from a workshop, but MEeting YOUTH believes, that there are even more challenges, if you workshop with teenagers. Teenagers are used to working together, they want to have a good time while working, they want new experiences and for many teenagers it does not take long time before they are bored. When planning a workshop the facilitator must choose, whether it should be a school project or a spare time project. The facilitator will gain or be challenged in different ways depending on the choice. If it is possible to get a school to partake, it will be easier to plan and find the young people, since it is part of the school task, but the project will be branded as a

school-thing. If the facilitator chooses to do a spare time project, it takes time and energy to find the young people and the workshop must be more exciting – the young people must feel that they gain something when partaking, but the facilitator also gets in contact with motivated young people, who have chosen to be there and the project will be branded as something they did for fun.

Recommendation

Rules for workshopping:

- Respect: disregarding the differences
- Time: have enough of it
- Bonding, socializing and gaining trust may be a hidden agenda in the workshop
- Structure goals and frameworks, but hand out power within it



- Mixed groups are more fun, but remember that teenagers can be very vulnerable and shy - make them feel safe
- Have clear cut tasks, but believe that the participants are able to take responsibility
- Spend a lot of time on playing "get-to-know-each-other" games – spend more time on it than you expect – you gain the lost time in the end
- Be aware of the fun factor – it is necessary that it is fun to participate



- Create a good atmosphere
- Make the young people feel that it is important - Take their work seriously
- If you do the workshop as a spare activity it should not be school-like
- Ask them questions that suits their age groups and competences

- When facilitating workshops it takes different methods for different people – not two persons are alike

Specifics from MEeting YOUTH

- The more complex the group of participants is the more important the workshop is and the more difficult it gets to facilitate. In MEeting YOUTH we had four nationalities, different age groups and young people with different interests
- The young people found it easier than the adult group to be in a workshop
- The adults love to take charge and therefore they should leave the room as often as possible
- At the transnational seminar in MEeting YOUTH the workshops ended up in a competition. It turned out, that winning was important and not the prizes – it is a clear bonding factor. The presentation and a jury from "the outside world" were important
- Workshops can make people see how they work and behave in an international environment
- People workshopping become aware of the cultural differences and gain tolerance
- Remember the language – it can be a barrier for the participants. It is important that all use the same language



Cultural probes



Cultural Probe Packages are small boxes, which are handed out to individual persons or to a group. In the box there will be a question e.g. "how would you like to be involved in the development of the European society?". To answer this question there are a number of assignments and tools in the box like a camera, a postcard, tools for making a collage. By doing the assignments the test person gives material for answering the question in a creative way.

In MEeting YOUTH each country handed out 15 packages and wanted to use them as the background material at the following workshops. The packages consisted of a camera, a pen, a map of Europe, a paper doll and some questions:

Who are you? (Write about yourself or draw on the figure)

Take pictures of your home, your family, your friends, your interests and the place where you hang out.

Go to <http://meetingyouth.blogspot.com> and write down your 5 favourite websites.

What would you like to change in your society or country?

If you could not live in your own country, which European country would you then prefer to live in? Why?

Do you have friends in other countries in Europe? Where?

Do you have anything that you would like to share with other young people from Europe? (Bands / music, sports, poetry, songs, knowledge, videos, pictures etc)?

<http://meetingyouth.blogspot.com>

Recommendation

- The results from the probes can give an introduction to a group of people, but it might work best with concrete and small questions. E.g. Tell me about your hobbies
- It takes time to formulate the right question and to analyze the results
- It has to be made in a funny and understandable way
- The probe product should be handled with care in terms of the protected use of the material – and that any public presentation out of the context should be agreed upon explicitly in advance



- MEeting YOUTH believes that the main effect of the cultural probes is the way it establishes (a reason for) social contact, exchange, curiosity and honesty
- The question can make the teens recognize themselves – they connect to other teens and to the subjects
- The cultural probe is not a tool for precise analyses



Perspectives and ideas

- It could be a school project – homework or at school

Specifics from MEeting YOUTH

- Maybe our goal was not clear enough: be absolutely clear why you are using the cultural probes
- The cultural probes worked best in Poland, because the Polish young participant, who handed them out and recollected them, was particularly interested in working with these probes: If the young ambassador is very engaged it works better
- It should be fun in a serious way: take it seriously, both when handing them out, "selling" the idea and recollecting them

Getting to know each other

As mentioned MEeting YOUTH spent quite a lot of time on creating an atmosphere where the participants felt secure and where everybody could talk to everybody. We did a lot of different things in different environments – we found it important to change milieu from time to time and to get to know each other in different situations.

We did presentation games, name games, who likes what games (who prefers Burger King and who prefers MacDonald's); we went to the theatre, to a youth festival, to restaurants, to the park, sight seeing etc. We believe that it paid off, because we saw young people communicating in spite of differences as language and all of them managed to communicate with each other. The young people worked hard and had a lot of discussions. It was very obvious that we made the young people feel seen, heard and taken seriously.



Get-together-games

- Games are a good thing, but be careful not to make them too childish – teenagers do not like childish activities
- When playing avoid that the adults take control
- Be careful not to make people embarrassed by exposing them
- Games done in groups function best
- Respect the personal sphere
- Games should be simple, quick and easy to understand
- Games must be funny

Recommendation



- Leave lots of room in the programme to the getting-to-know-each-other-part, you will gain lost time in the end
- Consider letting the young people meet on neutral ground. If some of them are hosts, be careful that they are prepared and agree to be hosts
- Be careful when you create groups – if you mix groups of young people, you can

get other perspectives and maybe the young people step out of a role, but it can also make shy teenagers even more shy

- When working transnationally be sure that all understand each other all the time
- Make various kinds of get-together-arrangements
- Eating together is always a good way to get to know each other



Specifics from MEeting YOUTH

- In MEeting YOUTH we did a lot of different get-together activities, because we hereby hoped to reach all the participants and in different ways. We believe, that we succeeded
- In MEeting YOUTH we decided not to have a professional interpreter. Instead one of our young participants spoke fluently Polish. He helped a couple of times, but generally the young participants managed without help

Blogs and homepages

As part of the project we had a project homepage, a Flickr account and a blog. We wanted to use all three things in order to be able to communicate better with each other, and as a part of the evaluation we have discussed if we could have made this project as a virtual project e.g. in Second Life.

The library staff placed their pictures on flickr and we used flickr to exchange pictures from the cultural probes. But none of the young people uploaded their photos to our flickr account and we did not get the impression that the young people watched the pictures on flickr.

Before meeting in Stockholm all participants were asked to present themselves on the blog in order to get the communication going beforehand. We had hoped that the blog could be a good way to communicate during the project, but only a few of the participants actually used the blog. As part of the cultural probes we asked the respondents, which homepages they prefer, because we would like to see, if we could find indications on what makes a good homepage – several respondents made a list of their favourite web pages on the blog.

MEeting YOUTH believes that the virtual services can be a good working tool, but it is not a good way to get to know each other beforehand. It is better to use the network systems which are already a part of the young people's everyday life and to wait using them until people have met in person. We believe that the social interaction was essential for our project and that the project could not have worked as a virtual project.

The answers from the cultural probes show that the favourite web pages for teenagers are search engines, e-shops where the favourite things can be bought cheaper, networking sites where they communicate with the friends from the physical world.

Recommendations

- It takes time to keep a blog active
- It takes a lot of motivation to make young people write on the blog, place pictures on flickr, to spend time on web pages
- The project's virtual services can easily drown in the richness of services in cyberspace
- Young people are not fascinated by technology – they just use it when it has a useful purpose

Specifics from MEeting YOUTH

Find our flickr account and blog through the webpage www.aakb.dk/meetingyouth

Examples of involving youth

Sweden

Ung08



Ung08 is a teen festival arranged by the City of Stockholm's department of culture and have been up and running for several years. It takes place the last week of the summer holidays and is a melting pot for teens that seldom meet each other since they live in different parts of town. In that sense the festival have an integration purpose. Stockholm is very segregated. The festival also gives an opportunity for many different organisations and

some commercial companies to show meaningful spare time activities. The festival is situated in a large park in the very centre of Stockholm, where organisations rent tents and have workshops. There is usually a very large range of different activities such as street basket, pin making, open mic, make a short movie, paint a pair of sneakers and dancing. In the evenings there are concerts with young unestablished bands mixed with popular



professional bands. Later at night there are discos with thousands of visitors. The disco is monitored so that there is no drinking, which makes some parents more willing to let their young ones go to city centre. This whole festival is relying on the 40-50 teen volunteers that work for free during the festival and some of them to different extent all year around. They help putting up tents, they guide people round the festival area, and help the staff to plan the festival. It's very

desirable to be a volunteer, and it is not without pride they walk around in their special designed T's. Accept for a week of fun at the festival they also get an after party by themselves and some other freebies.

<http://www.ung08.nu/default.asp?id=10511>

En Snabb Slant

En SnabbSlant (ESS) translates to something similar to Fast Cash, and is a scholarship program for teens that want to make their own culture program. The applicant has to be between 13 and 20 years old and have to live in Stockholm. The program should be open to other teens and be public somewhere in Stockholm. The projects can include many



different activities such as art exhibition, sewing medieval costumes workshop and hip hop concerts. There are coaches for the scholarship in over a hundred different meeting points for teens around Stockholm – among them PUNKTmedis.

<http://www.kultur.stockholm.se/default.asp?id=1695&PTID=&refid=1660>

Poland

Before our access to The European Union cultural institutions and sport institutions decided which services they would offer youth without giving the young people a possibility to choose or to give suggestions. Now Poland is opening up and the young generation has obtained various possibilities in form of e.g. foundations and associations. This movement has taken place in order to give the young people space for creating ideas and initiatives, because young people become more original and innovative, when they feel that their interests and necessities are taken seriously.

The Polish youth is willingly engaging in the following kind of activities:

- All kinds of sports activities
- Ecology: teenagers take part in cleaning the environment and planting trees (a lot of schools deals with this topic)
- Education
 - young people partake in formal and informal groups
 - journal workshops, where participants get acquainted with principles of creating magazines and news papers
 - creative workshops like dancing workshops, theatre, painting, sculpture
 - touristic and recreation associations
- Culture (cinema, movies underground festivals, street art, creativity workshops, music groups)
- Charitable work
 - The Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity is the biggest and most prosperous charity organization in Poland. Its objective is to collect money for saving children's lives, health promotion and education in the field of preventive treatment. Besides humanitarian work, the foundation also works hard on spreading the ideology of kindness, friendship and tolerance. One day a year (The Great Final Day) people all around the country are invited to set up concerts, creative happenings and parties during which teenagers volunteer to collect money. The Great Orchestra has collected and spent loads of money on saving lives
 - Teenagers from many associations assist and take care of old ill people
 - Religious organizations
 - Politics (young people act in youth councils)

Norway

Norway is traditionally giving the young people support through classical offers such as sports facilities and training of different variations, scouts, school bands etc.

The recent years have shown that there exists a demand for a more varied offer – to keep kids happy, inspired, and “off the streets” – to a degree general youth clubs and specialized offers such as Rockefabrikken is successfully engaging young people. We still observe that campaigns to “recruit” youth to voluntary work, ideal organizations etc. has little effect – and must conclude with a “change in climate”.

It is clear that initiatives generated by adults, and defined and run by adults have less chance of succeeding than when the youth are the initiators. There are many such positive specialized local initiatives like hip hop & rap clubs etc. but they tend to be short lived – as support of such initiatives and their own ability to administer themselves are not properly organized.

We do however have some long lived and inspiring initiatives:

The youths own book prize

Youth are the best to judge youth-literature. That is why the organization Les! (Read!) has established a book-prize based on the taste buds of the youth. In cooperation with the festival of literature 5 schools are challenged to read and judge and proclaim the winner of the best of youth literature of the year.

Between the lines

This is the youths own poetry-forum. In periods the Oslo public transport leaves their poster-space for youths to fill with their own statements. This is meant to be a special offer for the young travellers.

Anti drug demonstration

Following several overdose – deaths in Elverum, the youths had a demonstration in the streets, demanding action from the politicians. This resulted in two assigned youth contacts working only on the purpose of preventing the use of drugs, leading to more deaths

The Norwegian Youth Festival of Art

Ungdommens kulturmønstring (UKM), or The Norwegian Youth Festivals of Art, is a cultural initiative for children and youngsters from the age of 10 to 20. The objective of the initiative is to stimulate young people to be creative and



active, and to develop and make their cultural activity visible.

All young people between the ages of 10 and 20 are welcome to participate in the UKM, whether they sample beats & loops, dance the halling (a traditional folk dance) carve huge wooden sculptures with chainsaws, play classical music on the piano or make 3-D animated films on their PC.

The UKM is designed to be flexible and informal; it aims at tickling the participants' curiosity, titillate their creativity and broaden their cultural horizon. The UKM is open to all young people, but has a special responsibility for youngsters that are not members of any one organization.

The UKM is one of the Government's most important priority area on the field of youth culture and the festivals has been an annual event since 1987. There has been a tremendous growth in participation over these years and in 2002, more than 26 000 young people took part in all the local Youth Festivals of Art.

The UKM is divided into three levels: the local festivals, the regional festivals and the national festival. Everyone who registers for a local festival is included. The UKM is not a talent show. The jury's selection is based upon elements such as originality, creativity, the performers' ability to create contact with the audience as well as quality. The selection is to reflect the scope of the local festivals both as to modes of expression and age.

The management system of the UKM is made up of network that consists of county councils, local councils, regional music councils, youth councils and a number of associations and organizations.

The UKM has the ambition to form a part of the development of the cultural expressions of young people. The mobile Internet editorial office of the UKM imparts and documents the activities of young people. The technical equipment facilitates the production of multi media material from the individual festivals. The editorial staff reports live from the festivals by presenting the news from the concerts and the shows continuously on the Web.

The UKM wants to include the work of the Internet editorial staff in the specter of expressions with which young people may participate and therefore the staff mainly consists of young people.



Denmark

A wide range of NGOs working with young people are present and active in Denmark. About 70 of these NGOs are members of The Danish Youth Council, that works on improving children and young people's conditions in Denmark. However it is clear that many of the traditional organizations are challenged by a decreasing number of members, so new activities are launched in order to find out, how to get in contact with and engage young people. For instance a youth city council (for 13 – 17 years) has been established in Aarhus in order to create a dialogue between the city council politicians and the young citizens of Aarhus. Following are a couple of examples on activities where young people's interests and ideas are at focus.

C:NTACT, a way forward for successful integration and a way of communicating

C:NTACT is founded at the Betty Nansen Theatre in 2004 developed as a platform for mainly adolescences to communicate their own personal stories through theatre, radio, journalism and documentaries regardless of religious and cultural backgrounds. Every year C:NTACT produces theatre plays, film documentaries, newspaper articles and radio programmes made by young Danes who all have a common interest in sharing their personal experiences on racism, family issues and cultural dilemmas etc. with a large number of audiences.

All the participants in C:NTACT's projects are recruited from local schools and youth clubs. They represent a diversity of culture which results in an interesting mix of personal stories. The participants invest a lot of energy in transforming their own stories into products, guided by professional directors, actors, singers and choreographers who train them toward a product containing both touching storytelling and a professional, artistic expression.



We believe that integration of minorities is about focusing on our shared values rather than defining differences. However we also believe that differences such as religion, language and culture are what vitalizes our work. We believe that we can encourage the understanding between people by uniting them in a project with a shared idea and goal.

About Taskforce



Taskforce is a group of young Danish people of various backgrounds and offers on-site performances and inviting the audience to challenging debates afterwards. Taskforce is founded at C:NTACT and offer theatrical performances and discussions with the audience about personal dreams, thoughts, challenges and dilemmas performed countrywide. It is a new untraditional contribution to the debate on integration of minorities, with equal shares of humour, seriousness and reflection and with a keen focus on integration, diversity and cultural issues.

Taskforce performs internationally as well as all over Denmark at schools, conferences, workplaces etc., and a performance includes, beside storytelling, music, dance and rap.

The Frontrunners – a workspace for a creative and active youth

The Frontrunners is a youth association with the main purpose to create and realize cultural projects in Aarhus, Denmark. The beautiful side effect is the personal development of the users that most of the time come out wiser and stronger due to the responsibility, trust and challenges they meet. The organization provides work spaces, IT facilities and material resources as well as non-material support like network, guidance and a friendly smile.

The basic principles of the Frontrunners focus on the direct involvement of the users which mainly are young volunteers or young people on external payment. The users are mainly in the age of 16-25 years old. All activities at the Frontrunners are based on the ideas and initiative of the users. The users are directly responsible and involved with all aspects of the projects, from brainstorming ideas to funding, planning, realization and evaluation. In addition to this, users also administrate an amount of money for initial project funding. In-house project groups can apply for this money.



The Frontrunners is organised as an association with an elected board of 7 members mainly from outside the organisation. The board consists of high profiled and/or experienced 'adults' within different fields of interest (i.e. journalism, politics, business, arts, etc). This way the Frontrunners can easily access inside information and expertise when needed, and most importantly a wide spread network. There is an employed leader on a full time regular basis and at present time also a part time administrator.

The cultural projects of the Frontrunners manifest themselves in different things such as music concerts, festivals, street performances and art, art exhibitions and so forth. The Frontrunners takes part in the annual Aarhus Festival, The Cultural Night, SPOT-Festival and dozens of other more or less spontaneous events.



The Frontrunners is basically all about the local cultural community. The organization serves to engage people, other organisations, as well as the local business life, as long as the aim is to create a meaningful and multi-various cultural life in the city of Aarhus.

The Frontrunners are funded by the local municipality with an amount of app.

135.000 Euro annually.

Libraries and youth

The following is a presentation of the four libraries who participated in the project and of the way they plan to use the experiences from participating in the project.

J. U. Niemcewicz Public Library. District Ursynow, Warsaw

The Warsaw-Ursynow Municipality came into existence in 1994, but the actual area had been incorporated into Warsaw as early as 1951. Until 1994 Ursynów was part of Warsaw's largest district, Mokotów. The creation in June 1994 of an independent Warsaw-Ursynów Municipality marked the beginning of Ursynów's transformation into an urban complex striving to provide its inhabitants with a high quality of life. Since then many new streets, residential buildings, shops and service points have been built. A natural ensue of the industrial and economical expansion as well as increase in the number of residents is continuous development in the fields of education, culture and sport. The municipality's greatest wealth, however, are its inhabitants: young, well-educated and energetic people. To fulfill their cultural and educational needs, the J. U. Niemcewicz Public Library was established in December 1994 as the one of different culture institution. Since that the library still increases the number and the quality of its services. Our motivation to partake in MEeting YOUTH project was to gain more knowledge about youth and their needs, because we have a plan to create a new, modern library with teens and young adolescents as a target group. The partaking in the project (especially the meetings) gave us the possibility to experience working with young people in an international environment. Thanks to this we learned how to work with the young people, how to plan work with them to make them creative and clever. Many kinds of activities, opportunities and interesting solutions which were shown us during the meetings will be an inspiration for planning and reflecting on youth development in our libraries and preparing an attractive offer for the new youth library. The results of the meetings, workshops and discussions made clear that the young users of the libraries need:

- more access to technology and more training in using it
- more welcoming spaces
- more professional, helpful and friendly staff
- opportunity to work with professionals and connected with this prestige

Some of the conclusions were already known to us and we use them in our environment, but the others need to be implemented. It is a task for us for the future strategy: how to deconstruct the stereotype about libraries (just books, nothing more), how to make the library more of a place to hang out instead of thinking that library is just a place where people should have a mandatory visit.

Our current offer for youth is the following:

- journalistic workshops (twice a month)
- young artist's music concerts, recitals
- author's evenings (we invite writers who are writing for youth)
- once a year we organize in cooperation with one of the schools a competition for teens writing poetry; the best poems are published in a small volume of poetry which is financed by the J. U. Niemcewicz Public Library; the poems are read aloud by a professional and famous actor during the formal ceremony at which the prizes are given to the winners
- once a year in the library we have an evening of poetry in the library with discussions between the adults and young members of literary association; the young writers can also present their poems in front of the audience
- we have also a "youth stage" which is an open space for presenting a valuable art in all of its trappings (mostly ever: music, writing, small performances forms)

Oslo public library

The library serves the county of Oslo and is Norway's largest public library. Our services are available to everyone - individuals, institutions, students in the public school system and at the university level, the business community and public administration.

The library has approximately 300 employees spread over fifteen branches/departments in the city. In addition, there are several specialized departments, such as The Multilingual Library, which serves the entire country with its collection in approximately forty languages. The collection includes fiction, non-fiction and other media, in addition to a wide selection of children's literature.

The library's activity is based upon a testamentary gift from the estate of Chancellor Carl Deichman (1705-1780). Through this gift, the library was bequeathed a collection of handwriting and approximately 6,000 books, nearly all of which are preserved today. The library building from 1933 is much too small for our current level of activity, and plans are now underway for a New Oslo Public Library in the vicinity of the Oslo fjord and City Hall. The library places great emphasis on the 24-hour Library, web-based services that are available around the clock, in addition to our traditional on-site services. This focus will continue to be important as we move into the future, and into our new home.

The Oslo public library has general services of literature and media, and have arranged for typical youth literature in a collection with a separate display with a Youth heading. We support the school libraries with media, yet we see a great challenge in strengthening a special offer to teens.

The Norwegian partner believes the conclusions we arrived at through the MEeting YOUTH workshop may well prove a valuable instrument in pointing out the way to how one better may engage the youth.

The report may well be used as a handbook on how to and not to front a project-initiative for the young. It is easy to go wrong without such a "roadmap" – and youth are rarely polite and steadfast, they just stop showing up...

We will definitely use the MEeting YOUTH evaluation as a guiding document in our upcoming initiatives for youth.

PUNKTmedis in Stockholm

The Library at Medborgarplatsen is the largest branch library in Stockholm, rebuilt and reopened in 2005. Since then the library has a special department for teenagers: PUNKTmedis, open 70 ours a week and meant to be a meeting-place for teenagers. The library has a lot of activities such as writing courses, presentation of authors, homework help.

When the target group (13-19 year olds living or going to school in Södermalm) of PUNKTmedis was decided the staff immediately started to recruit teens to focus groups interviews. It's been a fundament for the building up process. At the beginning it was more essential since the staff did not meet engaged teens on a daily bases. When the library opened there were more spontaneous meetings.



Since august 2007 6 teens are employed to develop the library's program and media investments. They were handpicked so that they would represent a large segment of the teen population. They all go to different schools and have different interests. That makes it a quit a dynamic group to work with. The ambassadors meet every second week with their coach and plan both for the future and what to do right now. Between the meetings they work with the library staff. Each of the ambassadors works approximately a total of 4 hours a week. Then they host programs themselves or give a hand in the daily library work. It's very important for

the library to get input and ideas from the target group, but it's also important that the teens get some real work experience. The whole group has been to London to visit idea stores, libraries and other teen hangouts. Focus have been transferred from more expensive programs with established author to self produced programs such as book reading groups, demo band concerts and open mike events. The project is up and running and will be reported in July 2008.

The experiences from Meeting YOUTH have been useful when working with the ambassadors, for example the importance of very good communication. And the people who took part in the transnational meeting teamed up and worked really great together.

The Main Library, Aarhus

Aarhus Public Libraries focus very much on innovation and development of the library services. The Main Library is studying which services users expect to find at the library and what demands and expectations they have to the library. Improving the traditional library services and developing new library offers, that consider the needs of the users are both on the agenda. The library is a public space, where personal growth is stimulated through many kinds of activities: via media and digital information channels, poetry recitations and concerts or through exciting surprises on the shelves.

The space also constitutes the framework for many planned and unplanned meetings between people, who already know each other – or who have not yet met. The library is a democratic place that can be used by all citizens with different needs and demands.

At the Main Library there are always a number of different projects running and we both aim at developing the library here and now and we seek interesting experiences for our new large library that is planned to be finished in 2014. The projects derive from ideas from the staff. Recently we have worked with projects as The Interactive Children's Library, The Info Gallery, The Transformation Lab and Hybrid Learning Environments.



Now we focus primarily on user driven innovation in the project Unleash the Library User and with developing a better library service for the teenagers. MEeting YOUTH is a part of the focus on the teenagers – another part is the project Mindspot for the 14 to 20 year olds. Mindspot is both a physical part of the library, co-operation with schools as well as a



road show where we move the library out in the open space – on squares, to city festivals etc. To help develop this new library services six young people with different backgrounds and competences are employed to work together with the library staff on developing a relevant and interesting library service for the target group. The work in Mindspot is primarily based on a networking and user driven approach and the MEeting YOUTH project has given us valuable ideas about how to communicate and involve the young people. Furthermore the international exchange of ideas has given us a larger perspective on how to develop the library.

NGOs and youth

The following is a presentation of the four NGOs who participated in the project and their outcome of the project.

Stovner Rockefabrikk, Oslo

We run a house where youth may practice, enjoy and perform music, and socialize. It is first and foremost a qualitative offer, where youth can practice and play rock and work with other forms of musical expression. We are also an important part of the idealistic part of the Norwegian music industry, through affordable renting of studios, seminars, workshops and concerts etc. We cooperate with local institutions supporting culture and education.



The Stovner Rock Factory arrange for seminars, concerts and beginner courses to attract new users. Our offer is generally very popular, and being a specialized youth offer – for the many that love music, we are generally very busy and popular by word of mouth only.

Specialist Voluntary Rescue Formation – SOFR, Warsaw

SOFR is a volunteer Fire Brigade Unit operating in Warsaw-Ursynow, formed in 2002. SOFR was created by people, who want to help others. The main aims are: health and life protection (especially in cases of life threatening situations), as well as education at the area of first-aid and healthy living. We all know that helping people is not only directly participating in rescue action, but it is also to give people knowledge, to give our members courage to teach people about health care and to save lives.

SOFR activities:

- Medical security at mass performance
- Conducting first-aid courses
- Demonstrations of rescue
- Cooperation with different local and international professional institutions
- Integrating all members of the SOFR by initiating social meetings and trips, etc.



SOFR was created 5 years ago by people with a passion and the opinion that the most important things in our lives are friendship and trust. This is the reason why our organiza-

tion consists of people who want to be professional rescuers in the future. SOFR could not exist if it did not have these people, this passion, knowledge, effort and hard work. SOFR is a volunteer organization and all members participate voluntarily. Instead of payment we give our members adventure, knowledge, chance to overcome personal weakness, new friends and much of fun.

For the moment SOFR has 40 members, 15 of the members are youths, who want to be professional rescuers in the future. SOFR has created a new candidate group, that we teach in all the areas connected with our activities in order to improve the young people's skills. They have classes of professional first-aid, base mountaineering skills, civil protection and behaviour in case of: car accident, mass casualty incident, natural disasters, terrorist attack. SOFR's aim is to educate the young people to be highly trained individuals, who will use their knowledge to help other people the best possible way.



The young people who partake in our activities know that they have to work very hard and give themselves 100%. They have classes, exams and grades. Despite of the school similarities we have much of fun. We organize classes in different and interesting places so it is full of adventure and at the same time it has an element of exclusivity, because it is not everybody has got what it

takes to take part. It is very interesting for the young people to be a part of SOFR. They feel needed, responsible, wiser and strong.

The participation in MEeting YOUTH has given us a better understanding of how to talk and encourage young people to stand up and do something. Thanks to working in the transnational atmosphere with a lot of interesting people the participants from SOFR now feel ready to create and take charge of our own candidate group for youth. This is the reason why participating in MEeting YOUTH will have an impact in Poland - it already has an impact. Thanks to working with the cultural probes we gained insight in the Polish youth's interests and more importantly what young people want to change. The lessons in MEeting YOUTH were instructive and it was very interesting to work with young people and to create something. We saw the participants' hard work and pieces of good ideas; it is a good idea to give young people the chance to show what they have to offer.

Ponton, Stockholm

The Literary Association Ponton started in 1998 and is an organisation for young people. The aim is to support free writing by the publication of a magazine called Ponton four times a year. The members also arranges programs and work shops.

The magazine PONTON is written by young people, for young people. Young in this case means from the age 15 up until 21. The magazine has a chief editor and around 20-25 members, none older than 22. The magazine receives financial support from several official and private contributors.

The main focus in the magazine is on poetry and short stories sent in by young people from the whole country. The other part of the content is articles about writing, about writers and about literature written by the young board members.

The editorial meetings are held at PUNKTmedis. Once a month Ponton have open mike events where anyone can read texts of their own. These events are also held at PUNKTmedis. A librarian employed by PUNKTmedis also spend 8 hours a week working for PONTON, editing texts, attend editorial meetings and planning upcoming events.

Skjoldhøj Youth Club – SUK, Aarhus

SUK is an organization primarily aimed at youth aged between 13 and 18 years. It is a meeting place for friends; an alternative to just hanging around in the streets. The members of Skjoldhøj Youth Club have diverse backgrounds, and as Skjoldhøj is located close to one of Denmark's largest estates, the club is frequently being visited by immigrants – or sons and daughters of immigrants.



According to us – the staff of the club – the participation of every club member in decision-making processes and various projects is of great importance – after all, the members are the very reason why the club exists. Skjoldhøj Youth Club is a one hundred percent voluntary undertaking, and the young people only show up if they feel like it. This is why it is pivotal that we are able to offer them attractive and up-to-date activities, and what could be better than involving the young themselves in planning and doing these activities?

However, it is often hard to motivate or persuade the club members to do something for the club; the time they spend there is their spare time, and as a consequence, the club is



highly valued as a place, where they can relax and hang out! Still, we sometimes succeed in getting the members to participate in cooking, film-making, contests, sports, overnight arrangements or excursions – and quite often it is great fun!

SUK's participation in the project is supported by Ungdomsringen, Den Lokale Udviklingspulje and Søren Christian Sørensen's Foundation.

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Youth



ponton

