

V članku pretresam t. i. participatorni obrat v kulturi in kakšen izziv to predstavlja razlikovanju med poklicno in ljubiteljsko umetnostjo ter razumevanju vrednosti ene in druge. Pri tem izhajam iz Bentleyjeve klasične definicije gledališča in zagovarjam mnenje, da se vloga ustvarjalcev in prejemnikov spreminja, posledica tega pa so nejasnosti pri razmejevanju med umetniško in družbeno vrednostjo ter med procesom in končnim izdelkom. Na podlagi primerov z evropske prestolnice kulture Aarhus 2017 ponujam globlji vpogled v to, kako sta se združili kultura za otroke in kultura z otroki ter kakšne vrednostne sodbe in domneve se skrivajo v ozadju.

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**Ključne besede:** Aarhus 2017, otroška kultura, evropska prestolnica kulture, poklicno gledališče, ljubiteljsko gledališče, participacija

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# Otroci na odru v Aarhusu 2017.

## Participatorni obrat kot izziv razmejevanju med poklicno in ljubiteljsko umetnostjo

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Danska je mednarodno znana po visokih standardih poklicnega gledališča za otroke. Ko so Aarhusu dodelili naziv evropske prestolnice kulture (EPK) 2017, je bilo zato mogoče pričakovati, da bo del programa namenjen tudi gledališču za otroke, s čimer bi vsej Evropi predstavili eno od odlik mesta in države. Vendar pa se je nazadnje na program uvrstilo bolj malo poklicnih gledališč za otroke. V delu programa Aarhusa 2017, namenjenem otrokom, so prevladovali različni projekti, kjer so bili otroci sami tvorno soudeleženi kot soustvarjalci in nastopajoči.

V članku razpravljam o razlogih in posledicah tolikšne osredotočenosti na otroke kot soustvarjalce in nastopajoče v Aarhusu 2017. Pri tem analizo programa Aarhus 2017 navezujem na teorije o gledališču in družbeni vrednosti gledališča pa tudi na splošnejšo teorijo o participaciji in participatorni kulturi. V analizi se bom osredotočila na tri študije primerov. Pri vseh je šlo za obsežne projekte EPK Aarhus 2017, ki so vključili otroke kot soustvarjalce.

Pri tem imam namen pokazati, da lahko participatorni obrat razumemo kot izziv tradicionalni razmejitvi med poklicnim in ljubiteljskim gledališčem na področju otroškega gledališča. Takšno brisanje meja pa predstavlja tudi izziv temu, kako razumemo družbeno vrednost tovrstnih uprizoritev.

V skladu s tem bom obravnavala naslednja ključna vprašanja:

- Kdo naj bi imel korist od takšnih uprizoritev? Soudeleženci ali publika?
- Kako razumemo razmerje med procesom in končnim izdelkom?
- Kako uravnovežiti družbeno in umetniško vrednost v ustvarjalnem procesu, ki ima za cilj končni izdelek?

Naj najprej predstavim teoretski okvir za razumevanje družbene vrednosti umetnosti. Pri tem izhajam iz teoretične definicije Hansa van Maanena pa tudi iz empirične analize različnih vrednosti Edelmana in Šorli (2015), ki ju nato navežem na Bentleyjevo klasično definicijo gledališča. S tem ponazorim različna sklopa vrednosti, ki jih pripisujemo poklicnemu in ljubiteljskemu gledališču. V nadaljevanju zagovarjam stališče, da participatorni obrat v kulturi in nove, interaktivne in soustvarjene oblike gledališča pomenijo izziv razmejevanju med poklicnim in ljubiteljskim gledališčem. Na tej podlagi predstavim primer Aarhus 2017 in kako je vodilna tema »Ponovni premislek« številne kulturne producente navedla k eksperimentiranju z novimi formati in oblikami dogodkov. Nato predstavim otroški del programa in zagovarjam tezo, da so na njem prevladovali dogodki, kjer so bili otroci prej tvorni soudeleženci kot trpni gledalci. Nazadnje pa preučim tri posamične primere in analiziram učinke participatornega obrata.

## Družbena vrednost poklicnega in ljubiteljskega gledališča

Akademski in politični razprava o vrednosti umetnosti traja že leta in sem spada tudi cela vrsta akademskih prispevkov, npr. *Družbeni vpliv umetnosti (The Social Impact of the Arts)* Belfiore in Bennetta ter *Naj kultura šteje (Making Culture Count)* MacDowalla idr. Namen pričujočega članka ni končati te debate, temveč želim z nekaterimi od teh prispevkov utemeljiti razpravo o vrednosti gledališča. Za primarno izhodišče bom vzela van Maanenovo razlikovanje med umetniško, estetsko in družbeno vrednostjo umetnosti ter trditev, da prav umetniška vrednost predstavlja temeljno vrednost umetnosti. Van Maanen meni, da sta tako umetniška kot estetska vrednost v sami srčiki umetniškega doživetja, vendar estetsko doživetje potrjuje že obstoječe sheme zaznavanja (in je zato prijetno), umetniško doživetje pa le-te izzove. Estetska in umetniška vrednost naj bi predstavljali notranje bistvo samega umetniškega doživetja, druge vrste vrednosti, na primer različne oblike družbenih vrednosti, pa naj bi mu bile zunanje. Zunanje vrednosti tako lahko obsegajo družbeno kohezijo, občutek skupnosti in učenje.

Sama trdim, da je treba takšno razumevanje postaviti pod vprašaj, če hočemo razumeti razliko med poklicno in ljubiteljsko umetnostjo. To trditev sta raziskala Edelman in Šorli, ki v analizi komercialnega, subvencioniranega poklicnega ter ljubiteljskega gledališča trdita, da so te oblike gledališča »upravičene s pomočjo precej različnih sklopov vrednosti« (235). Rezultati analize kažejo, da družbene vrednosti in pa »lojalnost in družbena kohezija« (232) v očeh publike predstavljajo pomemben vidik ljubiteljskega gledališča. S tega vidika je bila vrednost ljubiteljskega gledališča tesno povezana tudi s tem, kakšen »vtis naredi nivo *dela*, ki ga nastopajoči vlagajo vanj« (214). Na podlagi teh rezultatov lahko naprej raziščem razumevanje vrednosti

ljubiteljskega gledališča, tako da ga preučim z vidika tako publike kot nastopajočih/soudeležencev.

Razliko med vrednostjo poklicnega in ljubiteljskega gledališča lahko razumemo tudi s pomočjo Bentleyjeve klasične definicije gledališča: »A se izdaja za B, pri čemer ga C gleda.« Čeprav je gledališče precej napredovalo, odkar je Bentley postavil svojo klasično definicijo, nam še vedno lahko služi kot uporabno izhodišče za opisovanje družbene vrednosti gledališča pa tudi razlike med poklicnim in ljubiteljskim gledališčem. V poklicnem gledališču je po klasičnem pojmovanju družbena vrednost gledališča tesno povezana s C-jevo, se pravi gledalčevo izkušnjo. Z besedami Hansa van Maanena ima poklicno gledališče cilj podati C-ju umetniško doživetje, ki predstavlja izziv utečenim shemam zaznavanja in utre pot novemu razumevanju. Vloga nastopajočega pri tem je, da se trudi gledalcem podati umetniško doživetje po svojih najboljših močeh. Potemtakem naj ne igralec (A) ne fiktivni lik (B), kar se nemara zdi bolj samoumevno, ne bi imela nobene koristi od tega doživetja. Z vidika kulturne politike je poklicno gledališče treba subvencionirati zaradi vrednosti C-jeve izkušnje.

Drugače pa je v primeru ljubiteljskega gledališča, kjer je družbena vrednost tesno povezana z A-jevim doživetjem, saj naj bi ta imel korist od izkušnje ustvarjanja gledališča. Seveda ima lahko tudi gledalec (C) korist od te izkušnje, vendar pa je ta manj pomembna, še posebej, kar se tiče umetniške vrednosti. Domnevno nižja kakovost doživetja naj bi pomenila, da je gledalec sicer lahko deležen estetskega, ne pa tudi umetniškega doživetja, kar je v ljubiteljskem gledališču sprejemljivo. Pri tem pomemben del izkušnje tvorijo prav družbene vrednosti, kot je občutek skupnosti in deljenje doživetja kot z družino.

Zaradi razvoja znotraj samega gledališča pa tudi na širšem kulturnem polju Bentleyjeva klasična definicija gledališča ne velja več, vsaj v tako enostavni obliki ne. Kot opisuje Ines Therese Berg, so se v zadnjih desetih do dvajsetih letih razvile bolj participatorne oblike poklicnega gledališča. To je izziv tudi za definicijo gledališča in razmejevanje gledaliških uprizoritev od drugih družabnih dogodkov.

## Participatorni obrat

Berg te spremembe v gledaliških praksah postavi v kontekst širših kulturnih sprememb, kar smo že opisali kot »participatorni obrat« (Jenkins). Splošni kulturni obrat k participatornosti predstavlja izziv jasnemu razmejevanju med družbeno vrednostjo poklicnega in ljubiteljskega gledališča. Pojav konceptov kakršni so na primer »produrabnik« (v angleščini *Prod-user*), se pravi nekdo, ki je hkrati producent (*producer*) in uporabnik (*user*), ter »pro-am« (nekdo, ki je hkrati profesionallec in

amater), je pokazatelj brisanja teh meja (Leadbeater in Miller). Leadbeater in Miller opisujeta spremembo, do katere je prišlo na prehodu iz 20. v 21. stoletje: »Ljubiteljstvo je postalo slabšalni termin. Profesionalizem je označeval resnobo in kakovost. [...] V zadnjih dvajsetih letih pa se je pojavila nova vrsta ljubiteljev: t. i. pro-ami, amaterji, ki delujejo na profesionalni ravni« (12).

Motor te transformacije so bile še posebej tehnološke spremembe, saj so omogočile lažji dostop do produkcije in distribucije. Tovrstne spremembe so močno vplivale na primer na glasbo, kako pa je z gledališčem? Kako so obsežne kulturne transformacije vplivale na gledališče, ki ga tradicionalno razumemo kot dogodek v živo? Kako so vplivale ali pa ne, na način gledališke produkcije, distribucije in recepcije? Kot pravi Berg, je tudi obrat k bolj participatornim oblikam gledališča eden od načinov, kako so te spremembe vplivale na gledališče, kar je tesno povezano s t. i. »relacijsko estetiko« (Bourriaud), po kateri je družbena vrednost umetnosti ključni element doživetja. V obratu k bolj participatorni gledališki izkušnji lahko vidimo poskus, kako izpolniti nova pričakovanja publike po tvorni vključenosti namesto trpnega opazovanja gledališke produkcije.<sup>1</sup>

V participatornem obratu lahko razpoznamo dve težnji, ki pomenita izziv gornjemu opisu vrednosti poklicnega in ljubiteljskega gledališča: 1) pro-ami pripravljajo (ali si to vsaj želijo) gledališče na visoki ravni, ki naj bi imelo za gledalca (»C«) tudi umetniško vrednost; in 2) nekatere interaktivne oblike poklicnega gledališča poudarjajo družbeno vrednost gledališkega dogodka v oblikah gledališča, kjer se razlike med »A« in »C« domnevno brišejo.

Še en izziv tradicionalnemu razlikovanju med poklicnim in ljubiteljskim gledališčem predstavlja razmah soustvarjalnih pristopov v kulturnem ustvarjanju, vključno z gledališčem. Pri tovrstnih soustvarjalnih pristopih je prebivalce mogoče umestiti kot »A« (nastopajoče, ki so povsem enakopravni poklicnim), »B« (snov za zgodbe in like, ki jih predstavljajo na odru) ali »C« (gledalce, ki si ogledujejo zgodbe o samih sebi, o svoji skupnosti ali o drugih družbenih skupinah).

## Evropska prestolnica kulture Aarhus 2017

Kako so se s temi kulturnimi transformacijami spopadli v Aarhusu 2017? Večkrat smo že lahko slišali, da so prav evropske prestolnice kulture na splošno sprožile participatorni obrat in da se zdaj bolj osredotočajo na angažiranje prebivalcev določenega mesta ali regije (Tommachi idr.). To taktiko uporabljajo zato, da bi si zagotovile sodelovanje širšega kroga prebivalcev. Tako je bilo tudi v Aarhusu 2017, še posebej med postopkom

<sup>1</sup> Dolgotrajna in zapletena je razprava o tem, ali je 'tvorna' soudeležnost boljša od 'trpne' recepcije, in kot trdi Ranciere, ni nujno v vsakem primeru tako. Vendar pa v pričujočem članku nimam namena ovrednotiti ene oblike gledališkega doživetja višje od druge, temveč zgolj analizirati in doumeti premik v oblikah gledaliških dogodkov, kar je bilo mogoče opaziti v okviru Aarhusa 2017.

kandidature (2007–2012), ko so v Aarhusu in osrednji danski regiji razvijali projekt. Med to pripravljalno fazo so vpeljali vodilno temo »Ponovni premislek«: »Ponovni premislek je rezultat procesa, ki se ga je udeležilo na tisoče prebivalcev, vsi so sodelovali pri odkrivanju tistega, po čemer Aarhus in osrednja regija izstopata v Evropi [...] Naši prebivalci so si želeli projekta, ki bi odražal družbo in njihova življenja ter naslavljal jutrišnje izzive« (*Aarhus 2017 Candidate* 12). Preden globlje raziščem, kako se je razvijal program Aarhus 2017, in se osredotočim na tri primere participatornih predstav za otroke in z otroki, naj najprej predstavim Aarhus 2017 v splošnejših obrisih. Aarhus je postal ena od dveh evropskih prestolnic kulture, ki jih je leta 2012 določila Evropska komisija. Gre za drugo največje mesto na Danskem s približno 250.000 prebivalci in z razvito kulturno infrastrukturo. Projekt evropske prestolnice kulture ni obsegal samo mesta, ampak celotno osrednjo dansko regijo, ki se razteza po Jutlandu čez celinsko Dansko od ene obale do druge. V celotni regiji živi kak milijon prebivalcev, sestavlja jo 19 občin, ki so vse sodelovale pri projektu Aarhus 2017. Tema »Ponovni premislek« so dejavno uporabili pri vzpostavljanju interdisciplinarnih in medinstitucionalnih sodelovanj v okviru programa. Na ta način je projekt izzval številne tradicionalne razmejitve. V program je bila vključena široka paleta kulturnih dejavnosti, vključno s športom in kulinariko, vendar pa so prevladovale tradicionalne umetniške oblike, kot so gledališče, vizualne umetnosti in glasba. Celoletni program je obsegal 628 dogodkov, ki se jih je udeležilo 3,3 milijona ljudi, vrhunec pa so predstavljali štiri t. i. megadogodki in pa 12 t. i. dogodki ob polni luni. Dvanajst odstotkov programa in eden od dvanajstih dogodkov ob polni luni so bili namenjeni otrokom. Regionalno odprtje za otroke se je zgodilo dan pred uradnim odprtjem. Z besedami Rebecce Matthews, izvršne direktorice Aarhusa 2017:

Otroci in mladi imajo v programu Aarhus 2017 posebno mesto. Smo prva evropska prestolnica kulture, ki jo odpiramo z dogodkom, ustvarjenim od, za in z otroki. Vse leto bomo kot evropska prestolnica kulture posvetili igrivim, inovativnim in tistim, ki imajo pogum in željo po ponovnem premisleku. Otrokom je lastna ustvarjalnost in spontanost, ki vse nas izziva, naj odkrivamo nove načine, kako delovati, biti in misliti, zato je to leto evropske prestolnice kulture v veliki meri tudi leto otrok. (*Aarhus 2017, Genfind*)

## Danska otroška kultura

V svoji izjavi se Rebecca Matthews sklicuje na običajno razmejitev pri tem, kako v nordijskih deželah pojmujejo otroško kulturo: gre za razliko med »za«, »z« in »od« otrok (Mouritsen, Juncker).

Kultura *za* otroke sta tako umetnost in kultura, ki jo otrokom predstavljajo odrasli, in ti tudi pripravijo dogodek ali umetniško delo, ki ga otroci doživljajo. V tem primeru so otroci prejemniki nečesa, kar je zanje ustvaril nekdo drug. Poklicni umetniki pripravijo

izdelek z namenom, da otrokom kot občinstvu nudijo umetniško doživetje. To lahko neposredno navežemo na razumevanje družbene vrednosti poklicnega gledališča, kot smo jo opisali zgoraj. V tem primeru so otroci »C« (tisti, ki gledajo). Kulturo z otroki prav tako organizirajo in omogočajo odrasli, vendar pa v tem primeru otroci dejavno sodelujejo pri ustvarjanju kulturnega izraza. Pri kulturi z otroki odrasli in otroci sodelujejo pri ustvarjalnem procesu, katerega namen je soudeleženi otrokom podati izkušnjo, kako se izraziti s pomočjo ustvarjalnih sredstev. To lahko navežemo na razumevanje družbene vrednosti ljubiteljskega gledališča, kot smo jo opisali zgoraj. V tem primeru so otroci »A«, ki se izdaja za »B«. Kultura *od* otrok pa pomeni, da se otroci sami udeležujejo igrivih dejavnosti. Gre za izdelek na lastno pobudo otrok (in brez vodstva odraslih), ki je pogosto spontane narave. Čeprav Rebecca Matthews v zgoraj navedeni izjavi omenja tudi to obliko, pa sama menim, da tovrstna oblika kulturne dejavnosti ni najprimernejša za tako obsežen kulturni program, ki ga je treba načrtovati več let vnaprej. To pomeni, da sta za program Aarhus 2017 v bistvu na voljo dve možnosti, kako vključiti otroško kulturo: kultura *za* otroke in kultura *z* otroki.

Danska je imela močne razloge, da je v okviru Aarhusa 2017 pripravila tudi program za otroke, še posebej, kar se tiče poklicnega gledališča. Dansko gledališče za otroke uživa mednarodni sloves po svoji umetniški kakovosti in nekatere od najbolj uveljavljenih skupin, npr. Gruppe 38, Teater Refleksion in Carte Blanche, delujejo prav na področju osrednje danske regije. Poleg tega ima Danska tudi relativno dobro razvito kulturno infrastrukturo za otroško kulturo, saj je v vsaki občini na Danskem knjižnica, ki ima tudi otroški oddelek, kjer poleg dostopa do knjig nudijo še celo vrsto kulturnih dejavnosti. Vsaka občina mora obvezno imeti tudi glasbeno šolo (ali pa nuditi glasbeni pouk) za otroke. Tako je torej povsem razumljivo, zakaj je otroška kultura predstavljala enega od osrednjih delov Aarhusa 2017, saj je bilo pričakovati, da bo prav na tem področju Aarhus umetniško izstopal in s tem izpolnil cilje sheme evropske prestolnice kulture: »Izpostaviti bogastvo in pestrost kultur v Evropi« ([https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture_en)). A kot bom pokazala s tremi spodaj navedenimi primeri, je v Aarhusu 2017 »čista« poklicna umetnost za otroke stopila v ozadje, prednost pa so dali mešanim ljubiteljskim in poklicnim predstavam in dogodkom, ki so elemente obojega združevali na nove in drugačne načine. Trije primeri, ki sem jih izbrala, niso nujno reprezentativni za celoten otroški program Aarhusa 2017, saj so bile vanj vključene tudi poklicne predstave za otroke, na primer *Hjerterumstrilogien*, ki jo je predstavil Syddjurs Egnsteater, pa tudi bolj tradicionalni pristopi h kulturi z otroki, kjer je glavni poudarek na ustvarjalnem procesu, manj pozornosti pa se posveča kakovosti doživetja publike. Med drugim je vključeval tudi premično eksperimentalno igrišče/instalacijo v urbanih prostorih z naslovom *Moje igrišče (My Playground)*, ki je nudila prostor za kulturo od otrok. Naslednje primere sem izbrala, ker so predstavljali zelo obsežen, ambiciozen in prestižen del programa in ker zastopajo novo, porajajočo se

obliko otroške kulture, ki bi jo lahko šteli za tesno povezano z lokalnimi ambicijami Aarhusa 2017 po ponovnem premisleku pa tudi z globalnim trendom participatorne kulture. Ti trije primeri so: *Sporočilo v steklenici za prihodnost* (*Message in a Bottle to the Future*), *Dežela želja* (*Land of Wishes*) in *Kultura na turneji* (*Culture on Tour*). Vsi trije vključujejo elemente gledališča, niso pa izključno gledališki projekti. Med Aarhusom 2017 sva z mlado raziskovalko Tanjo Pfaff Louring raziskovali te primere v okviru evalvacije Aarhusa 2017, ki jo je izvajal rethinkIMPACTS 2017 na Univerzi v Aarhusu (Louring and Hansen; Degn idr.). Za pridobivanje podatkov sva uporabljali različne metode, ki so se razlikovale od primera do primera, med drugim pogovore s poklicnimi umetniki in producenti, participatorno opazovanje ter formalne in neformalne pogovore s soudeleženi otroki.

## Sporočilo v steklenici za prihodnost

*Sporočilo v steklenici za prihodnost* je predstavljalo vrhunec dolgega razvojnega projekta, ki so ga izvajali na Aarhus Musikskole (Glasbena šola Aarhus) in je tvorilo ključni del otroške otvoritvene predstavitve v Aarhusu. Predstavo so uprizorili na glavnem odru koncertne dvorane v središču mesta. Aarhus Musikskole je že vse od leta 2010 razvijala načine, kako angažirati otroke v kolektivnih ustvarjalnih procesih, tako da bi lahko predstavljali kakovostne predstave, kar je zelo podoben cilj, kot si ga zastavljajo tudi t. i. pro-ami (Hansen). To so dosegli s pomočjo okvirne strukture končnih izdelkov, ki jo je sestavljala pripoved v desetih fazah (vsaka je simbolizirala določeno občutje) z dvema glavnima junakoma in preprosto zgodbo. Poleg tega so ustvarjalni izdelki, ki so jih ustvarili drugi otroci, vključeni v projekt *Sporočilo v steklenici za prihodnost*, predstavljali izhodišča za nadaljnje različice. Tako se je ustvarjeno gradivo (npr. songi, kostumi, pesmi in slike) predajalo od otroka k otroku, ne glede na starost in umetniške veščine. Tak način angažiranja otrok v ustvarjalni proces se precej razlikuje od tradicionalnega poučevanja v glasbenih šolah na Danskem, kjer še vedno prevladuje samostojno poučevanje, ki temelji na sistemu vajeništva. *Sporočilo v steklenici za prihodnost* tako lahko štejemo za strateški projekt, ki se ukvarja z izzivom za glasbene šole, kot ga je zastavila revolucija pro-amov. Nič več ni samoumevno, da so odrasli s poklici najboljši ustvarjalci glasbe in drugega ustvarjalnega izražanja. Poleg tega *Sporočilo v steklenici za prihodnost* preizprašuje tudi koncept predstave kot dela učnega procesa dijakov, ki je kot taka v celoti namenjena zgolj soudeležencem (in nemara njihovim ponosnim staršem). Cilj *Sporočila v steklenici za prihodnost* je bil ponuditi umetniško doživetje občinstvu, vključno z gledalci, ki so plačali vstopnino in niso bili nujno povezani z nastopajočimi otroki. Na odru so nastopali otroci različnih starosti in ravni usposobljenosti, pa tudi ena poklicna igralka, Bodil Alling, v vlogi pripovedovalke. Pred tem ni še nikoli



nastopala z otroki, vendar pa je potrdila vrednost formata *Sporočila v steklenici za prihodnost*. V okviru formata so pri predstavi sodelovali tudi poklicni tehniki, lučni oblikovalci in drugo osebje, ki je pomagalo, da se je lahko po tehnični plati primerjala s poklicnimi predstavami.

## Regionalno odprtje otroškega programa Aarhusa 2017

V znak prednostne obravnave participacije otrok pri evropski prestolnici kulture Aarhus 2017 se je odprtje otroškega programa zgodilo 20. januarja, dan pred uradno otvoritveno slovesnostjo. Drugače od uradnega odprtja, ki se je odvijalo samo v središču mesta Aarhus, je odprtje otroškega programa potekalo v vseh devetnajstih občinah po celotni regiji. V vsaki od občin je odgovornost za krajevno različico odprtja s skupnim umetniškim okvirjem prevzela ena ali več kulturnih institucij (npr. knjižnica ali poklicno gledališče). Odprtju je bilo naslov *Dežela želja* (*The Land of Wishes*) in določene songe in plese so pripravili in delili kot gradivo, ki ga je bilo mogoče uporabiti za odprtje. Songe so sicer pripravili poklicni glasbeniki, vendar so temeljili na gradivu, ki so ga ustvarili otroci na delavnici pred Aarhusom 2017. Tako se je ideja soustvarjanja ponovila tudi pri pripravi *Dežele želja*. Čeprav so se med seboj precej razlikovala, nobeno odprtje ni bila narejeno izključno za otroke. Vsa so vsebovala tudi element z otroki. V občini Favrskov se je odprtje odvijalo na športnem igrišču v majhni vasi. Tu so se otroci iz vrtcev in osnovnih šol zbrali in predstavili slike in risbe po lastnem izboru, ki so jih razstavili na lesenih konstrukcijah. Slike so upodabljale nabor osebnih želja, vse od novih igrac do brata ali sestrice, s katero bi se lahko igrali. Tako so otroci dobili priložnost, da se izrazijo na ustvarjalni način. Ko se je zvečerilo, so konstrukcije z risbami zakurili, kar je otroške želje simbolično poneslo po celotni regiji. Ta performativni element je sprožil različne pristope učiteljev, ki so otrokom pomagali: nekateri so jim dali navodila, naj se zaradi pomembnosti tega dogodka čim bolj potrudijo pri risanju, drugi pa so jim polagali na srce, naj se ne trudijo preveč, saj so nameravali slike tako ali tako zažgati. V Silkeborgu so otroci prav tako prispevali k ustvarjanju pisanih zunanji prostorskih skulptur, ki jih je zasnovala Ragnhild Melbye. Skulpture so bile zelo lepe, tako da so pritegovale pozornost obiskovalcev, vse dokler so bile razstavljene. Vloga otrok pri pripravi skulptur je bila bolj simbolična kot ustvarjalna: skulpture je sestavljalo na tisoče koščkov pleksistekla, na katere je vsak otrok iz občine prispeval prstni odtis s sivo barvo. Čeprav je bil vsak odtis edinstven, pa na končanem delu nihče od otrok ni mogel prepoznati svojega, tako da je šlo pri sodelovanju otrok bolj za udeležbo pri procesu kot pa za dejanski vpliv na končni izdelek.

Silkeborg tako predstavlja določeno izjemo vsesplošni težnji, da odprtje namesto poklicnega umetniškega ustvarjanja vključuje tudi otrokom dobro znane dejavnosti, kot sta petje in risanje. Nasplošje sta imela aktivna participacija in družbena izkušnja

soudeležnosti pri procesu prednost pred umetniškimi doživetjem kakovostnega izdelka, predstavljenega otrokom.

## Kultura na turneji

*Kultura na turneji* je bila del širšega projekta, ki ga je izvedlo sedem kulturnih institucij v mestu Randers. Vodilo ga je poklicno gledališče Egn's Teater iz Randersa. Vseh sedem institucij je otroke in umetnike angažiralo v soustvarjalnem procesu, na primer v pripravi glasbenih videov, skladanju nove glasbe in uprizorjanju predstav. Končni cilj je bil javnosti predstaviti končne izdelke skupaj s poklicno umetnostjo za otroke na festivalu Spektakel. Tako bi izpolnili namen projekta, da tako poklicni umetnosti za otroke kot tudi umetnosti, ki so jo ustvarili z otroki, dodelijo enakopraven položaj. Pri procesu sodelovanja s poklicnimi umetniki so otroci izkusili, kaj pomeni, če te ljudje jemljejo resno kot umetniškega ustvarjalca. Morali so trdo delati in vaditi, spodbujali so jih tudi, naj razvijajo lastne veščine. Veliko umetnikov je znalo opaziti talente otrok in utemeljiti dela na tem. To velja tudi za skladatelja Mogensa Christensena, ki je v sodelovanju z otroki ustvaril več skladb, ki so temeljile na njihovih improviziranih ritmihi. Med procesom so otroci izkazali tako visoko raven ritmičnega znanja, da je presenetilo tudi samega skladatelja. A čeprav so v procesu otroke kot soustvarjalce jemali resno, pa končna predstavitev ni poskušala postaviti umetnosti z in umetnosti za otroke v enakopraven položaj. Iz večinoma povsem praktičnih razlogov so izdelke otrok med tednom predstavljali večinoma drugim otrokom iz šol in vrtcev, program poklicnih umetnikov pa so širši javnosti predstavili ob koncu tedna. Tako projekt torej ni dosegel zastavljenega cilja, da bi poklicno in ljubiteljsko umetnost enakopravno predstavil.

## Umetnost za otroke in umetnost z otroki na Aarhusu 2017

Trije primeri, ki smo jih predstavili zgoraj, kažejo, da obstajajo različni načini, kako združiti umetnost za in z otroki, in da lahko takšni pristopi vrednost dogodka usmerijo bodisi v smer bolj »ljubiteljskega« ali pa bolj »poklicnega«. Težko je uravnovesiti proces soudeležencev in izdelek, kot ga doživi publika, ter obojemu pripisati enako vrednost (v nekaterih primerih so bili otroci postavljeni v funkcijo tako udeležencev kot občinstva). Nedvomno gre pri tovrstnih projektih za pomembne eksperimente, ki poskušajo najti nove pristope k pripravljanju in uživanju kulture za, z in od otrok, in ker temeljijo na participatornem obratu, takšni eksperimenti izzivajo predhodno (in v 20. stoletju prevladujoče) razumevanje vrednosti poklicne in ljubiteljske umetnosti.

Program za otroke Aarhusa 2017 je temeljil na domnevi, da je treba tradicionalno

zelo kakovostno kulturo za otroke v okviru evropske prestolnice kulture »ponovno premisliti« v smeri bolj soustvarjalnega in participatornega pristopa h kulturi, s katerim bi otroci postali tvorni soustvarjalci in soudeleženci. To pa pomeni odmik od prejšnjega jasnega razmejevanja med kulturo *z* in kulturo *za* otroke.

Soustvarjalni in participatorni pristop k programu za otroke Aarhusa 2017 lahko tako navežemo na tri različne elemente, ki so delovali na treh ločenih ravneh:

1. Krajevna raven: na tej je tema ponovnega premisleka spodbudila ustvarjalce k eksperimentiranju.
2. Raven evropskih prestolnic kulture: na tej sta angažma prebivalcev in soustvarjanje razumljena kot standard, kot protiutež odmaknjenosti prebivalcev od večjih kulturnih dogodkov (glej Tommarchi idr.).
3. Splošna kulturna raven: na tej participatorni obrat pomeni izziv poklicnemu umetniškemu ustvarjanju, preizprašuje vrednost »trpnega« uživanja in postavlja pod vprašaj klasično razlikovanje med poklicnim in ljubiteljskim.

Splača se razmisliti, zakaj se ti elementi niso odrazili v bolj raznolikem naboru dogodkov *za* in *z* otroki (v različnih oblikah) kot zgolj *z* otroki, ki so nastopali za druge otroke, in *z* otroki, ki so gledali druge otroke nastopati. Na ta način so otroci po Bentleyjevem klasičnem razumevanju gledališča postali tako »A« kot »C« (do določene mere so postali celo »B«, tema samih predstav – tako je bilo na primer pri *Deželi želja*, ne pa tudi pri *Sporočilu v steklenici za prihodnost*). Splača se razmisliti tudi, zakaj je do tega prišlo v veliko večji meri v delu programa, namenjenem otrokom, kot pa v tistem, namenjenem odraslim. Na kakšni podlagi in videnju otrok je to temeljilo? Umetniška vodja programa Juliana Engberg očitno šteje otroke za bolj ustvarjalne in pripravljene na tvorno udeležbo kot odrasle. A po mojem mnenju gre pri tem za redukcionistično in romantično razumevanje otrok, ki lahko morebiti ogrozi širši pristop k otroški kulturi, kot se je na Danskem razvil v zadnjih petdesetih letih, pristop, po katerem ima kultura *za*, *z* in od otrok v različnih kombinacijah enako težo. Glede na spremembe v otroški kulturi v zadnjih letih je še kako potrebno, da tako akademiki kot praktiki razmišljajo in eksperimentirajo s povezavami in razlikami med umetnostjo *za* in umetnostjo *z* otroki. A to bi bilo treba narediti tako, da bomo omogočili čim pestrejši nabor oblik in vrednosti. Nujno si moramo zastavljati nadaljnja vprašanja, na primer: Je smiselno pričakovati, da ljubiteljske predstave v izvedbi otrok gledalcem nudijo umetniško doživetje? S kakšnimi umetniškimi koncepti in okvirji bi lahko to dosegli? Ali pričakovanja, da morajo njihovi izdelki publiki omogočiti umetniško doživetje, pozitivno ali negativno vplivajo na družbene vrednote udeležencev otrok? Projekti v okviru Aarhusa 2017 so se s temi dilemami ukvarjali na različne načine, niso pa jih izrecno naslavljali. Če hočemo raziskati odnos med vrednostjo *za* udeležence in vrednostjo *za* občinstvo, bo potrebnih še več empiričnih raziskav tako publike kot udeležencev.

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*Prevedel Jaka Andrej Vojevec*



In this article, the author discusses how the so-called participatory turn in culture has challenged the distinction between professional and amateur art and how we understand the value of the two. Building on and discussing Bentley's classical definition of theatre, she argues that the role of the producer and the recipient is changing and that the consequence is a more blurred distinction between artistic and social values and between process and product. By using examples from the European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017 as cases, the author looks further into how culture for and culture with children have been combined and what the values and assumptions are behind such practices.

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**Keywords:** Aarhus 2017, children's culture, European Capitals of Culture, professional theatre, amateur theatre, participation

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# Children on Stage in Aarhus 2017: The Participatory Turn as a Challenge for the Distinction Between Professional and Amateur Art

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Denmark is internationally acknowledged for its high standard of professional theatre for children, so, when Aarhus was designated European Capital of Culture 2017, it could have been expected that theatre for children would form a part of the programme, showing all of Europe one of the strengths of the city and the country. However, very little professional theatre for children was a part of the programme. Instead, the section of the Aarhus 2017 programme targeted towards children was dominated by various projects in which children themselves were active as co-creators and performers.

In this article, I will discuss the reasons for and the implications of this focus on children as co-creators and performers in Aarhus 2017. I will do so by combining an analysis of the Aarhus 2017 programme with theories about theatre and the societal value of theatre as well as a more general theories about participation and participatory culture. My analytical focus will be on three case studies, all of which were large-scale Aarhus 2017 projects that included children as co-creators.

My aim is to discuss how the participatory turn can be seen as a challenge to the traditional distinction between professional and amateur theatre in the area of children's theatre. This blurring of boundaries also challenges how we understand the societal value of these performances.

In line with this, I will address the following key questions:

- Who is expected to benefit from these performances? The participants or the audience?
- How do we understand the relationship between process and product?
- How are the social and the artistic values balanced in a creative process that has an end product as its objective?



I begin the article by presenting a theoretical framework to understand the societal value of the arts. Here, I build on Hans van Maanen's theoretical definition as well as Edelman and Šorli's (2015) empirical analysis of different values, which I then link to Bentley's classical definition of theatre. By doing so, I demonstrate the different value sets attached to professional and amateur theatre, respectively. I then continue by arguing that the boundaries between professional and amateur theatre are challenged by the participatory turn in culture and new, interactive and co-created forms of theatre. Based on this, I present my case of Aarhus 2017 and how the theme of "rethinking" led many cultural producers to experiment with new formats and types of events. I present the children's part of the programme and argue that it was dominated by events in which the children were active participants rather than passive spectators. I then analyse the effects of this by examining three specific cases.

## The societal value of professional and amateur theatre

The academic and political debate around the value of art has been ongoing for years and has included a variety of academic contributions, such as Belfiore and Bennett's *The Social Impact of the Arts* and MacDowall et al.'s *Making Culture Count*. The aim of this article is not to settle this debate but to base my discussion of the value of theatre on some of its contributions. My main point of departure is Hans van Maanen's distinction between the artistic, aesthetic and social value of art and his argument that artistic value represents the core value of art. According to Van Maanen, both artistic and aesthetic value are at the centre of the experience of art, but, whereas the aesthetic experience confirms existing perception schemata (and is comfortable), the artistic experience challenges them. According to Van Maanen, aesthetic and artistic values are intrinsic to the experience of art, whereas other values, such as different types of social values, are extrinsic. These extrinsic values may include social cohesion, a sense of community, and learning.

I will argue that this understanding needs to be challenged when wishing to understand the difference between professional and amateur arts. Such a claim has been explored by Edelman and Šorli, who, in their analysis of commercial, professional subsidised and amateur theatre, argue that these types of theatre "are justified through quite different sets of value" (235). Their results indicate that social values and "loyalty and social cohesion" (232) were important aspects of amateur theatre seen from an audience perspective. From this perspective, the value of amateur theatre was also closely linked to "being impressed at the level of *work* the performers are putting in" (214). Building on these results, I further explore the understanding of the value of amateur theatre by examining it from both an audience perspective and a performer/participant perspective.

One way of understanding the different value of professional and amateur theatre is to employ Bentley's classical definition of theatre: "A impersonates B while C looks". Even though theatre has developed since this classical definition was formulated, it remains a useful starting point for the description of the societal value of theatre and the distinction between professional and amateur theatre. In professional theatre, the classical idea is that the societal value of theatre is closely linked to the experience of C, the spectator. In Hans van Maanen's words, the aim of professional theatre is to give C an artistic experience that challenges perception schemes and makes way for new understandings. The role of the performer is to do his or her best to give the spectators an artistic experience. It is thus neither the actor (A) nor – perhaps more self-evidently – the fictional character (B) who should benefit from the experience. From a cultural policy perspective, it is because of the value of the experience of C that professional theatre is subsidised.

This is different for amateur theatre in which the societal value is closely connected to the experience of A, who is expected to benefit from the experience of creating theatre. The spectator (C) might also benefit from the experience, but this is less important, especially when considering the artistic value. The assumed lower quality of the experience might mean that the spectator has an aesthetic but not an artistic experience, which is acceptable in amateur theatre. In amateur theatre, it is social values such as a sense of community or sharing experiences as a family that form important parts of the experience.

Due to several developments within the theatre field and the broader cultural field, Bentley's classical definition of theatre is no longer valid – at least not in its simple form. As described by Ines Therese Berg, more participatory forms of professional theatre practices have developed during the last ten to twenty years. These developments have challenged the definition of theatre and the boundaries between theatre performances and other social events.

## The participatory turn

Berg contextualises the changes in theatre practices within a broader cultural change, one that has been described as the "participatory turn" (Jenkins). This general cultural turn towards participation has challenged the clear distinction between the societal value of professional and amateur theatre. The emergence of concepts such as the Prod-user (a person being both a producer and a user) and the Pro-Am (a person being both a professional and an amateur) points towards a blurring of boundaries (Leadbeater and Miller). Leadbeater and Miller describe a change from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century: "Amateurism came to be a term of derision. Professionalism was a mark

of seriousness and high quality. [...] But in the last two decades a new breed of amateurs has emerged: The Pro-Ams, amateurs who work to professional standards" (12).

Technological changes, in particular, have driven this transformation, since they provide easier access to production and distribution. These changes have had an extensive impact on music, for example, but what about theatre? How has theatre, which is traditionally understood as a live event, been influenced by these large-scale cultural transformations? How have they influenced – or not influenced – the way in which theatre is produced, distributed and received? As Berg describes, one of the ways these changes have influenced theatre is in a turn towards more participatory forms of theatre, closely linked to the so-called "relational aesthetics" (Bourriaud) in which the social value of art becomes a key element of the experience. This turn towards a more participatory theatrical experience can be viewed as a way to meet new audience expectations of being actively involved in instead of passively perceiving a theatre production.<sup>1</sup>

With the participatory turn, we see two tendencies that challenge my above description of the value of professional and amateur theatre respectively: 1) The Pro-Ams produce (or at least wish to produce) theatre of a high standard that has artistic value for the spectator (C); and 2) some interactive forms of professional theatre emphasise the social value of the theatrical event in forms of theatre in which the distinction between A and C arguably becomes blurred.

Another challenge to the traditional distinction between professional and amateur theatre is the spreading of co-creational approaches to the creation of culture, including theatre. In such co-creational approaches, the citizens might be positioned as "A" (performers on equal terms with professionals); "B" (the material for the characters and stories presented on stage); and "C" (the spectators viewing the stories of themselves, their community, or other groups in society).

## European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017

How were these cultural transformations tackled in Aarhus 2017? It has been argued that European Capitals of Culture, in general, have made a participatory shift and now focus more on the engagement of the citizens in the given city or region (Tommachi et al.). They have done so in an attempt to secure the engagement of a broader range of citizens. This was also the case in Aarhus 2017, especially during the bidding phase (2007–2012) in which Aarhus and the Central Denmark Region developed the

<sup>1</sup> It is a long and complex discussion whether "active" participation is "better" than "passive" reception, and as Rancière has argued, that might not always be the case. However, it is not my agenda with this article to value one form of theatrical experience over another, but simply to analyse and understand the shift in forms of theatrical events noticed as a part of Aarhus 2017.

project. As a part of the bidding phase, the overall theme “rethink” was introduced: “Rethink is the outcome of a process which involved thousands of citizens, who all took part in uncovering what sets Aarhus and the region apart in Europe [...] Our citizens have requested a project which reflects society and their lives and which addresses tomorrow’s challenges” (*Aarhus 2017 Candidate* 12). Before I further explore the development of the Aarhus 2017 programme by focusing on the three cases of participatory performances for and with children, I will introduce Aarhus 2017 in more general terms.

Aarhus was one of the two annual European Capitals of Culture appointed in 2012 by the European Commission. Aarhus is the second-largest city in Denmark with approximately 250,000 inhabitants and a developed cultural infrastructure. The European Capital of Culture project included not only the city of Aarhus but also the entire Central Denmark Region, which stretches from coast to coast across the mainland of Denmark, Jutland. In total, this region has approximately one million inhabitants and consists of 19 municipalities, all of which were engaged in Aarhus 2017. The theme of Aarhus 2017, “rethink”, was actively used to create interdisciplinary and cross-institutional collaborations as part of the programme. In this way, many traditional boundaries were challenged by the project. The programme included a wide variety of cultural activities including sport and food, but traditional art forms such as theatre, visual arts and music dominated. A total of 628 events attracted an audience of 3.3 million to the year-long programme, whose highlights included four so-called mega-events and twelve so-called full moon events. Twelve per cent of the programme and one of the twelve full moon events were targeted towards children. The regional Children’s Opening preceded the official opening by one day. In the words of the Aarhus 2017 CEO, Rebecca Matthews:

Children and young people have a very special place in the programme of Aarhus 2017. We are the first European Capital of Culture to open with an event created by, for and with children. We dedicate the year as European Capital of Culture to the playful, innovative and to people who have the courage and desire to rethink. Children have a creativity and spontaneity that challenges all of us to discover new ways to work, be and think, so the year as European Capital of Culture is to a high degree also the year of the children (Aarhus 2017, 17 Jan 2017, my translation).

## Danish children’s culture

In this quotation, Rebecca Matthews refers to a common distinction in the way children’s culture is perceived in the Nordic countries: the distinction between “for”, “with” and “by” children (Mouritsen, Juncker).

Culture *for* children is arts and culture presented for and introduced to children by adults who have created the event or work of art that the children are experiencing. Here the children are receivers of something created for them by someone else. The professional artists produce a product that aims to give children an artistic experience as an audience. This can be directly linked to the understanding of the societal value of professional theatre described above. Here, the children are C (those who look). Culture *with* children is still organised or facilitated by adults, but here children actively participate in the creation of cultural expressions. In culture with children, the children and adults engage together in a creative process that aims to give the participating children an experience of expressing themselves through creative means. This can be linked to the understanding of the societal value of amateur theatre described above. Here, the children are the A who impersonates B. Culture *by* children is children engaging in playful activities themselves. This is a product of the children's own initiative (it is not guided by an adult) and is often spontaneous. So, even though Rebecca Matthews includes this in the quotation above, I would argue that this form of cultural activity is not well-suited for a large-scale cultural programme planned years in advance. This means that there are essentially two options for including children's culture in the Aarhus 2017 programme: culture *for* and culture *with* children.

The basis for producing a programme for children as part of Aarhus 2017 was strong, especially regarding professional theatre. Danish Children's theatre is internationally recognised for its high artistic quality and some of the well-established companies such as Gruppe 38, Teater Refleksion and Carte Blanche are located in the Central Denmark Region. Denmark also has a relatively well-established cultural infrastructure for children's culture, since each municipality in Denmark has a library that includes a department for children and that, in addition to access to books, offers a variety of cultural activities. All municipalities are also obliged to have a music school for (or to offer music teaching to) children. It was therefore understandable that children's culture formed one of the focus areas of Aarhus 2017, since this is one of the areas in which Aarhus could be expected to stand out artistically, thus living up to the objective of the European Capital of Culture scheme: "Highlight the richness and diversity of cultures in Europe". ([https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture_en)).

However, as the three cases below demonstrate, in Aarhus 2017, the "pure" professional art for children faded into the background in favour of combinations of amateur and professional performances and events that combined the values of the two in new and different ways. The three cases I have chosen are not necessarily representative of the Aarhus 2017 children's programme. The programme included professional performances for children such as *Hjerterumstrilogien*, presented by Syddjurs Egnsteater, and more traditional approaches to culture with children

in which the creative process was in focus and only limited attention was given to the quality of the audience experience. It even included a mobile and experimental playground/installation in urban spaces, *My Playground* that made room for culture by children. I selected the three cases both because they were large scale, ambitious and prestigious parts of the programme and because they represent a new and emerging form of children's culture, one that could be seen as closely linked to the local ambition of Aarhus 2017 to rethink as well as to the global trend of a participatory culture. The three cases are: *Message in a Bottle to the Future*, *Land of Wishes* and *Culture on Tour*. All of these cases contain elements of theatre but are not solely theatre projects. During Aarhus 2017, research assistant Tanja Pfaff Louring and I researched these cases as part of the evaluation of Aarhus 2017 conducted by rethinkIMPACTS 2017 at Aarhus University (Louring and Hansen; Degn et al.). The methods used to gather data varied from case to case but included interviews with the professional artists and producers, participatory observation, and informal and formal interviews with the participating children.

## Message in a Bottle to the Future

*Message in a Bottle to the Future* was the culmination of a long development project carried out by Aarhus Musikskole (Aarhus Music School) and was the key part of the children's opening show in Aarhus. The performance was presented on the main stage of the concert hall in the centre of the city. From 2010, Aarhus Musikskole had been working to develop a way in which children could engage in collective, creative processes in order to present high-quality performances, an ambition very similar to that of the Pro-Ams (Hansen). This was achieved by creating a framework for the productions, which consisted of a narrative with ten phases (each symbolising a feeling), two main characters and a simple storyline. In addition, the creative products produced by other children engaging with *Message in a Bottle to the Future* functioned as input for new versions. In this way, creative material (such as songs, costumes, poems and pictures) was passed on from child to child regardless of age and artistic skills. This way of engaging children in creative processes differs considerably from the traditional way of teaching in music schools in Denmark, in which solo teaching based on the principle of apprenticeship is still dominant. *Message in a Bottle to the Future* can thus be seen as a strategic project dealing with the challenge to music schools that the Pro-Am revolution constitutes: It is no longer a given that the professional adults are the best creators of music and creative expressions. In addition to this, *Message in a Bottle to the Future* challenges the idea that the performance is a part of the pupils' learning process and thus entirely done for the sake of the participants (and perhaps their proud parents). The ambition of *Message in a Bottle to the Future* was to give

audiences, including members of the paying public that were not necessarily affiliated with the performing children, an artistic experience. On stage were children of different ages and skill levels as well as a professional actor, Bodil Alling, who functioned as a narrator. She had never performed with children previously, but she acknowledged the value of the format of *Message in a Bottle for the Future*. As a part of this format, professional technicians, light designers and other crew members contributed to a presentation that, on a technical level, could match any professional performance.

## The regional children's opening of Aarhus 2017

As a sign that Aarhus 2017 prioritised children's participation in the European Capital of Culture, the children's opening took place on 20 January, the day before the official opening ceremony. Unlike the official opening, which only took place in the city centre of Aarhus, the children's opening took place in all 19 municipalities across the region. In each municipality, one or more cultural institutions (for example, the library or the professional theatre) assumed responsibility for the local version of the opening within a shared artistic framework. The children's opening was called *The Land of Wishes*, and a song and a dance were produced and distributed as material that could be used for the opening. The song was produced by professional musicians but based on input from children who had participated in a workshop prior to Aarhus 2017. As such, the idea about co-creation recurred in the way *Land of Wishes* was produced. Despite being very different from each other, none of the opening events were solely *for children*. They all included an element of *with children*. In Favrskov Municipality, the opening event took place on a sports field in a small village. Here children from kindergartens and primary schools gathered to present paintings and drawings of their own wishes, which were exhibited on wooden beacons. The drawings depicted a range of personal wishes – everything from a new toy to a sibling to play with – and the children were thus given an opportunity to express themselves creatively. The beacons with the drawings were burnt down at the end of the day, symbolising the distribution of the children's wishes across the entire region. This performative element evoked different approaches from the teachers helping the children: some instructed the children to endeavour to make excellent drawings because of the importance of the event, and some instructed the children to limit their efforts, since their drawings were going to be burnt anyway. In Silkeborg, the children also contributed to the creation of colourful outdoor spatial sculptures designed by architect Ragnhild Melbye. The sculptures were beautiful and thus attracted visitors during the period they were exhibited. The role of the children in the production of the sculptures was more symbolic than creative: the sculptures consisted of thousands of Plexiglas elements on which every child in the municipality had added his/her fingerprint in grey paint. However unique, it was impossible for

a given child to identify his/her own fingerprint on the finished work, so, here, the children's contribution was more about taking part in the process than influencing the final product.

In this way, Silkeborg was somewhat of an exception to the general tendency that the children's opening involved creative practices familiar to the children, such as singing and drawing, rather than the professional production of arts. In general, active participation and the social experiences of taking part in a process were prioritised over the artistic experience of a high-quality product presented to the children.

## Culture on Tour

*Culture on Tour* was part of a large project carried out by seven cultural institutions in the city of Randers. It was led by the professional theatre in Randers, EgnsTeater. Each of the seven institutions engaged children and artists in a co-creation process, such as making music videos, composing new music and staging performances. The ambition was that the results should be presented to the public alongside professional art for children at the Spektakel Festival. In this way, the intention of the project was to award equal status to professional art for children and art created with children. In the process of working together with professional artists, the children experienced what it was like to be taken seriously as creators of art. They had to work hard and practise, and they were encouraged to develop their skills. Many of the artists were good at spotting the children's competencies and building the work on these skills. This was the case with the composer Mogens Christensen, who made compositions in collaboration with the children based on their own improvised rhythms. In this process, the children demonstrated such a high level of rhythmic competencies that it even surprised the composer. However, whereas the children were taken seriously as co-artists during the process, the presentation did not attempt to award equal status to art with and art for children. Mainly due to practicalities, the productions by the children were presented to other children from schools and kindergartens on week days, whereas the professional programme was presented to the public at the weekend. In this way, the project did not succeed in its ambition to present professional and amateur art on equal terms.

## Art for and with children in Aarhus 2017

The three cases presented above show that there are different approaches to combining art for and art with children and that such approaches can push the value of the event more towards the "amateur" or the "professional" side. It is difficult to balance and



award equal value to the process of the participants and the product experienced by audiences (in some cases, the same children function as both the participants and the audience). There is no doubt that these projects are important experiments in the effort to find new approaches to the production and consumption of culture *for*, *with* and *by* children – and, based on the participatory turn, such experiments challenge preexisting (and dominant 20<sup>th</sup>-century) understandings of the value of professional and amateur art.

The Aarhus 2017 programme for children was based on the assumption that the way in which the traditional high-quality culture for children should be “rethought” as a part of the European Capital of Culture was to move towards a more co-creational and participatory approach to culture in which children should be active co-producers and participants. This departs from the previously clear distinction between culture *with* and culture *for* children.

The co-creation and participatory approach to the children’s programme in Aarhus 2017 can be linked to three different elements occurring on three different levels:

- 1) The local level: here, the theme of rethink encouraged producers to experiment.
- 2) The level of European Capitals of Culture: here, citizen engagement and co-creation is seen as a norm to counteract the disengagement of citizens in large-scale cultural events (see Tommarchi et al.).
- 3) A general cultural level: here, the participatory turn has challenged the professional production of art, questioned the value of “passive” consumption, and challenged the classical distinction between professionals and amateurs.

It is worthwhile reflecting on why these elements did not manifest themselves in a more diverse range of events “for” and “with” children (in various forms) but rather in children performing for other children and children watching other children perform. In this way, children became both the A and the C in Bentley’s classical understanding of theatre (to some extent, they were even B, the subject matter of the performances – this was the case in *The Land of Wishes* but not in *Message in a Bottle to the Future*). It is also worthwhile reflecting on why this occurred to a far greater extent in the parts of the programme targeted towards children than in those parts targeted towards adults. What was the underlying norm and view of children that caused this to happen? The programme director, Juliana Engberg, clearly views children as more creative and keener to be active than adults. However, in my opinion, this seems like a reductionist and romanticised understanding of children that has the potential to endanger the broad approach to children’s culture that has been developed in Denmark over the last 50 years – an approach in which culture for, with and by children in various combinations are equally important.

Given the changes in children's culture these years, there is a need for academics and practitioners to reflect upon and experiment with, the connections and differences between art for and art with children. This should be done in a way that makes a variety of forms and values possible. It is necessary to ask further questions, such as: Is it fair to expect that amateur performances produced by children should give the spectators artistic experiences? Which artistic concepts and frameworks can make this happen? Are the social values of the participating children influenced either positively or negatively by the expectation that their product should provide an audience with an artistic experience? These dilemmas were tackled differently in the different projects in Aarhus 2017, but they were never explicitly addressed. Further empirical audience and participant studies need to be conducted to explore the relationship between values for participants and values for audiences.

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