
THE RESEARCH-BASED EVALUATION OF AARHUS 2017 (ECOC)

Design and results
Experiences and recommendations

EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE AARHUS 2017

Short introduction to Aarhus 2017:

- ▶ Not just a local project within the city of Aarhus, but throughout the **entire Central Jutland Region**
- ▶ Start in 2007, nominated in 2012, closing in 2018
- ▶ Total budget of 461.3 million DKK / **61.5 million Euro**.
 - ▶ **628 events** with an estimated total of **3.3 million audience visits**.
 - ▶ **80% of the programme** produced by artists and institutions in the region – 20% by the foundation itself.
- ▶ **Research-based evaluation** carried out by rethinkIMFACTS 2017
 - ▶ A strategic partnership, 2013-2018.

RESEARCH-BASED EVALUATION

Research-based evaluation:

- ▶ **Strategic partnership** between the **ECoC** foundation and the **University**
 - ▶ Establishing a project organisation; rethinkIMPACTS 2017. Staffed with **university employees**.
- ▶ Partnership **suggested in bid-book**. Established 2013, (shortly) after the nomination.
→ This timing is seen much worse elsewhere – but it could have been even better
 - ▶ A challenge regarding **baseline** data. A lot of things had already happened, eg. regarding:
 - ▶ Civic engagement
 - ▶ Collaboration between sectors and institutions
 - ▶ A challenge regarding **evaluation criteria**
 - ▶ Bid books are full of **dreams**...
 - ▶ **Fluffy goals**, very much open for interpretation → what is to be hold accountable for?

RESEARCH-BASED EVALUATION

- ▶ Two main focusses:
 - ▶ The research-based **evaluation** – independent, but somewhat in collaboration with the foundation
 - ▶ And also... 15-20 **research projects** (independent, not included in this presentation)
- ▶ The evaluation itself had two strategic purposes:
 - ▶ **Formative** – help and inspire to the ECoC foundation (during the programme development phase)
 - ▶ **Summative** – ‘what happened; were the goals and ambitions met; was it worth it?’
- ▶ Split responsibility regarding data gathering:
 - ▶ **Monitoring data** → the **ECoC** foundation, need ongoing day-by-day figures (eg. economy)
 - ▶ **Evaluation data** → the **University** (eg. audience and citizen questionnaires, interviews)

DATA SOURCES

- ▶ 'Mixed methods' design:
 - ▶ Quantifiable patterns
 - ▶ Qualitative data elaborating, explaining and giving examples

- ▶ Primary sources: **Questionnaires** and **interviews** among the key participants and stakeholders

- ▶ Data gathering 2015-2018

Population	Before the year	During the year	After the year
Audience		X	
Cultural institutions	X	X	X
Politicians	X	X	X
Civil servants	X		X
Citizens	X	X	X
Sponsors	X		X
Aarhus 2017 Foundation	X	X	X
Volunteers		X	X
Media	X	X	X

EVALUATION REPORTS

- ▶ The **main evaluation report** (available in English)
- ▶ Seven **thematic** evaluation reports
 - ▶ Programme and audience
 - ▶ Cultural institutions
 - ▶ Political/administrative perspective
 - ▶ Citizens perspective
 - ▶ The media coverage and debate
 - ▶ Business community perspective
 - ▶ The ECoC organisation perspective
- ▶ And a variety of **scientific articles, conference papers** etc.

RESULTS

- ▶ Today, I will present few selected (or random) results...
- ▶ To inspire
 - ▶ What to evaluate and how
 - ▶ What's to be expected, what would seem to be realistic outcomes and impacts

NETWORKS AND COLLABORATIONS

TRANSVERSE COLLABORATIONS

- ▶ Some of the most **significant** and most positive **impacts**
- ▶ Aarhus 2017 was intended to be **a collaborative project among a variety of participants**
 - ▶ Between all the 19 **municipalities** in the region (now continued as 'European Cultural Region')
 - ▶ **Public involvement** and participation
 - ▶ **Preparing** the bid for the title
 - ▶ Participating in **specific events**, e.g. the opening ceremony.
 - ▶ In the **volunteer programme**, the so-called 'ReThinkers' (now continued – e.g. as **city hosts**) (Volunteer Capital 2018)
- ▶ Collaborations with **sponsors** etc.
- ▶ Projects and content for the cultural programme
 - ▶ 80% of the programme was **produced by local artists and institutions**. Often in **collaborations** between several local operators.
- ▶ **International collaboration** (60% of the projects)

MEDIA COVERAGE

AWARENESS AND MEDIA COVERAGE



14.000 news articles (print & online)



4.300 posts on Facebook



37.000 posts on Instagram

Citizens' awareness of Aarhus as ECoC

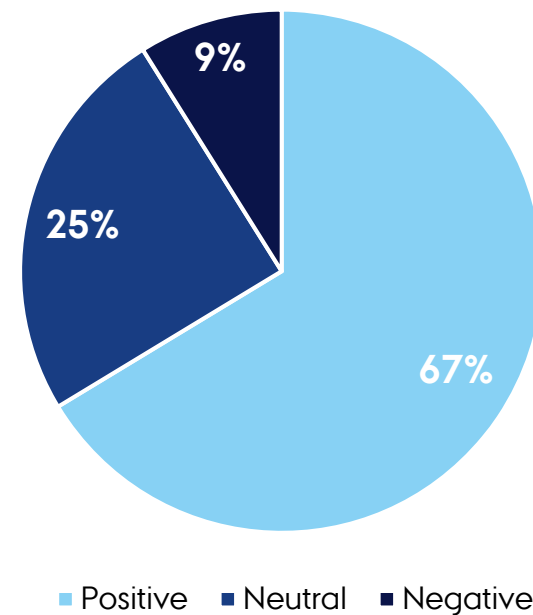


- ▶ **Extensive coverage** in news media – primarily local and regional media though
- ▶ Aarhus 2017 related **hashtags** frequently used on Instagram
- ▶ **Broad awareness/knowledge** among citizens (unaided recognition)
 - ▶ Citizens in general were able to name Aarhus as ECoC 2017.

POSTIVE MEDIA COVERAGE

- ▶ Generally a **positive tone/attitude**
 - ▶ 58% positive, 2007-2015
 - ▶ 67% positive, 2016-2018
- ▶ When **criticism** was expressed, it was often about
 - ▶ **Organisational** turmoil
 - ▶ Economical questions – ‘**is it worth it?**’
 - ▶ **Provocative** cultural **events**

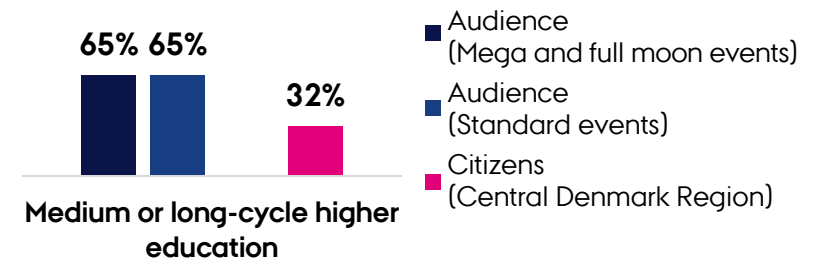
Media coverage (2016-2018)



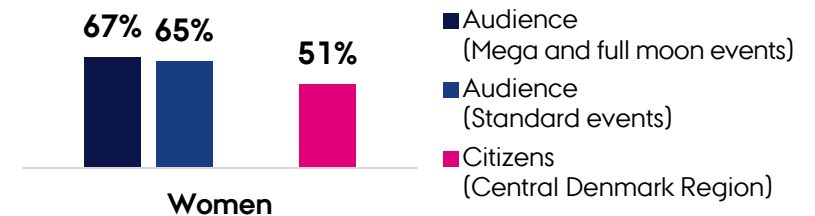
PROGRAMME AND AUDIENCE

COMPOSITION OF THE AUDIENCE

- ▶ Overrepresentation of the **well educated** compared to the population in the region



- ▶ Overrepresentation of **women** compared to the population in the region



- ▶ No significant bias regarding age groups.
Just a small overrepresentation of audiences aged 55 or above

ACCESSIBILITY

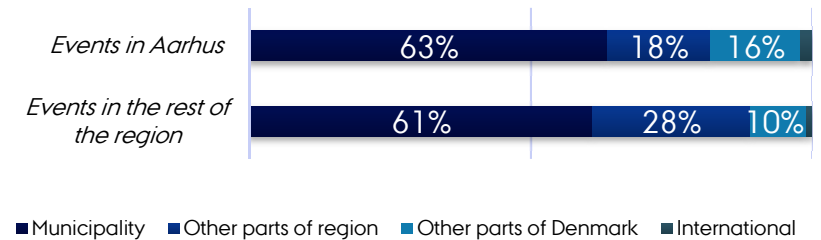
▶ Geographic accessibility

- ▶ 59% of the events took place in Aarhus, 23% in eastern part of the region, 16% in the western part.
- ▶ Almost **2/3 of the audiences were from the local municipality**
- ▶ Remarkably **low share (10-16%) of audience** from the other parts of Denmark (**outside the region**)

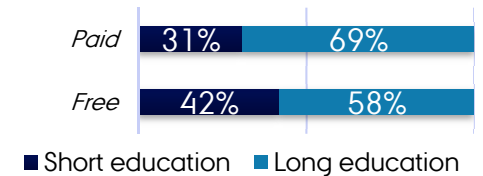
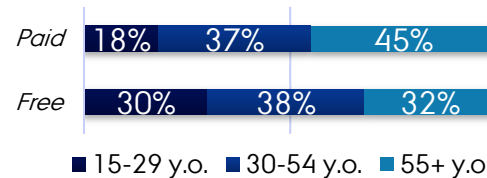
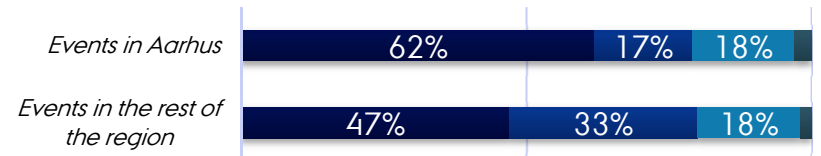
▶ Economic accessibility

- ▶ 52% of the events were **free of charge**
- ▶ Effect: Attracting **young and less educated**

Mega and full moon events



Standard events

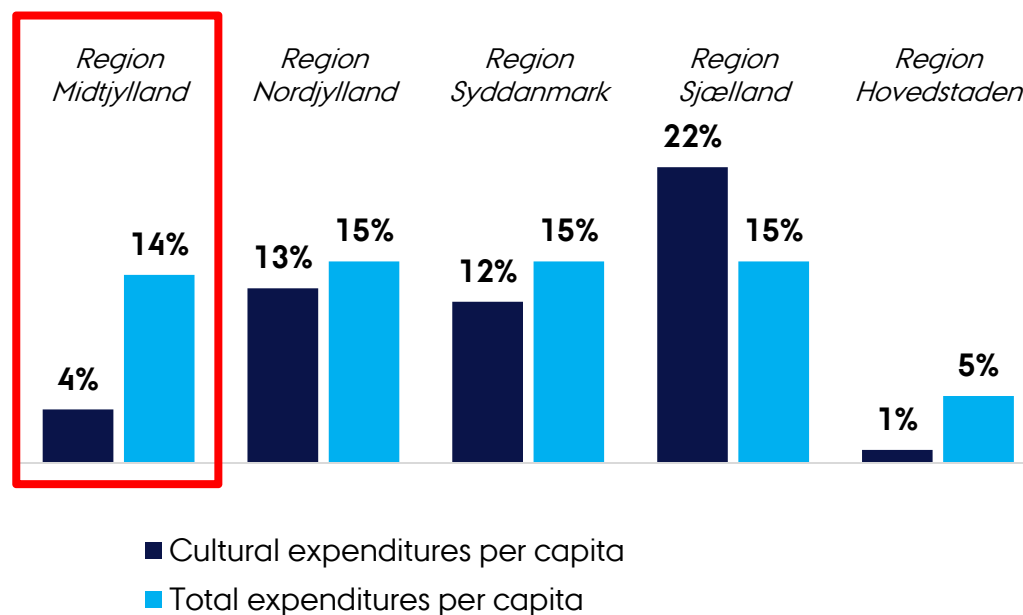


THE ROLE OF CULTURE

ECONOMIC PRIORITISATION OF CULTURE IN THE MUNICIPALITIES

- ▶ **No increased prioritisation** of culture.
- ▶ The **increase of cultural expenditures** is **lower** than the increase in the total expenditure per capita.
- ▶ However, more money is being spend on culture now.

Expenditures per capita (2007-2018)



THE ROLE OF CULTURE

- ▶ Aarhus 2017 strengthened the prioritisation of culture – especially in Aarhus Municipality and in the regional administration
 - ▶ ¾ of the **politicians** in Aarhus and in the regional council agree that **the prioritisation of culture has increased**.
 - ▶ 35% of the politicians in the other 18 municipalities agree on this. 1% believes it has been weakened.
- ▶ Culture has become a **strategic component within other policy areas**. The collaboration between the cultural administration and other parts of the administration has been strengthened.

"The perception of culture and how culture can contribute has changed"

(Politician, Aarhus Municipality)

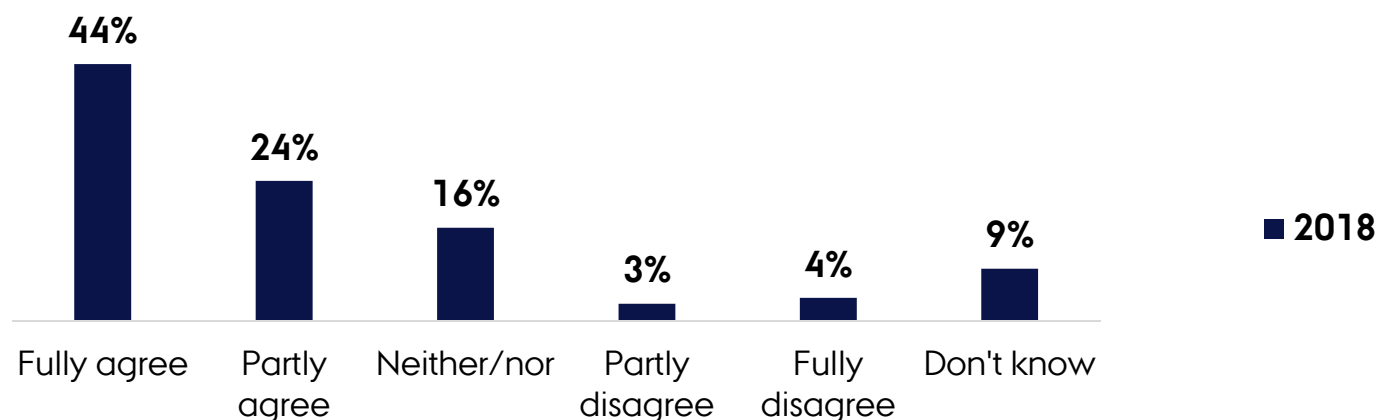
"We will incorporate culture in other policy areas. We have to think about culture in another way now"

(Politician, western part of the region)

'AARHUS 2017' WAS A GOOD DECISION

- ▶ The citizens perspective - after the ECoC year
→ 68% positive

"Being capital of culture in 2017 was a good decision for Aarhus and the region"



FOR MORE RESULTS...

The main report in English:

- ▶ Google:
rethinkIMPACTS 2017 main report

- ▶ Link:
http://projects.au.dk/fileadmin/projects/IMPACT_2017/Aarhus2017_before_during_after.pdf

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

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- ▶ Don't forget/neglect to **incorporate the evaluation perspective from the start** (bid-book)
(The EU Commission seems to emphasize evaluation more and more.)
 - ▶ Who's responsible for the evaluation? (University? Private organisation? The ECoC body itself?)
 - ▶ How should it be organized? (Distribution of tasks/responsibility between ECoC body and evaluator)
 - ▶ What are the main evaluation criteria?
- ▶ Dream big – but set up some **realistic evaluation criteria** (measurable, achievable)
 - ▶ For instance, being an ECoC may very well put you on the map internationally and attract tourists – but don't expect the audience for the cultural events to be international
- ▶ **Get advice** from someone who's done this kind of evaluation before
 - ▶ We ourselves gained a lot from consulting with Liverpool '08 – and other former ECoCs

FROM CAPITALS OF CULTURE TO CULTURAL CAPITAL

▶ Legacy strategy!

- ▶ Don't rely on legacy 'just happening'.
- ▶ The cultural year should not be the completion of a project
But the beginning of something long-lasting.
- ▶ Habits don't change overnight. Or during just one year.
But the events and projects make people curious for more – build on this!



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