



Culture driving innovation, socio-economic change and sustainability

Study visit report

18-20 July 2018, Leeuwarden



Why a study visit in Leeuwarden?

The focus of the study visit was how culture drives innovation, socio-economic change and sustainability. A special focus was on greening festivals. Links between culture and nature are a strong focus of Leeuwarden-Friesland European Capital of Culture (ECoC) 2018. The city proposed to host this event bringing together city representatives developing cultural policies and/or organising large scale events.

Representatives from the European Festivals Association also joined the visit. The format of this study visit is inspired from the series of 15 thematic study visit we organised as part of our Culture for Cities and Regions initiative (see the visits' reports [here](#)).

Main initiatives presented

Introduction to Leeuwarden, its culture policy, ECoC 2018 and its legacy - Sjoerd Feitsma, deputy mayor

Highlights of the Leeuwarden-Friesland ECoC 2018 year include:

- 50% of the year's events take place in the city, the other 50% take place in the countryside, mainly in summer
- Focus on arts, social inclusion, economy, ecology and multilingualism
- A long-term vision: the bid book was prepared with the horizon 2028-30 in mind, with the following objectives:
 - o developing the regional artistic ecosystem (temporary spaces, exhibitions, festivals) through cooperation with other cities in the region ('We the North'). An example is a new professional dance school in Groningen to retain talents in the region.
 - o strengthening cultural tourism, also through investing in the local artistic life
- Everyone is talented: various projects for children under the poverty line in Leeuwarden (see below 'Look what I can do')
- Culture and nature: creating awareness on how we use the land
- Foster multilingualism, and the use of the Frisian language

Expected (KPI's):

- 3 million visitors, 90% stating they would come back to the region, 30% of them could imagine living in the region
- 60% of all children in poverty participate
- 60% of citizens say that ECoC developed more pride, joy, social cohesion and optimism
- 75% of citizens embrace ECoC as "their" project
- 50 million people worldwide have heard of Leeuwarden
- 20.000 volunteers involved

'Leeuwarden European Capital of Culture, change through cultural events - Claudia Woolgar (If2018 artistic producer)

Leeuwarden-Friesland 2018 tackles its Capital of Culture year by sticking its head above the parapet. It aims to bring about change in the province, country and Europe to go from a sense of community to a shared community. This translates in the Dutch word 'Mianskip'.

The choice was made not to invest in new buildings but in people and in ideas. Most events taking place during the year are produced by grassroots organizations.

More info [here](#) (you need to log in).

Welcome to the village, an eco-friendly festival

The festival taking place in the rural outskirts of Leeuwarden is a village where one can explore what the world will look like in 5, 15 or 50 years' time. It is a green, spacious

environment where big festival names perform, but also a place to discover emerging talents. It is a festival of theatre, innovation, art, dance, food and design.

The festival teams up with local caterers and farmers, works with volunteers to build its own stages and, for the festival design, works with people in a day-care program and senior citizens.

What works at a festival, can be applied to the real world! The festival location has a line-up of artists, musicians, chefs, and start-ups, encouraging discussion and thinking outside of the box, showcasing the festival as a provisional society, a mini-community.

During the innovation project DORP and later at the festival, entrepreneurs work on solutions for the future. This process is based on the idea that if an idea or a new prototype works at a festival, there's a possibility it will work in the "real world". Each year during the festival, hundreds of students, musicians, artists, volunteers, designers, scientists and festival visitors are working on a better world and a completely circular festival for 2022.

More info [here](#).

Innofest, festival driven innovation - Anna van Nunen, CEO

Innofest is a regional organization that uses festivals as living labs for innovation and helps startups to test their prototypes in festivals. Its funding is 80% public (including from ERDF). It started 2,5 years ago because 90% of innovations fails within 5 years as they are not tested enough before their launch in the market.

8 regional festivals provide their infrastructure to entrepreneurs and startups to test their innovation. So far it helped 70 entrepreneurs with their prototypes. Examples of new products include insect fries or new generation disposable glasses.

The system is based on networking and good relationships between Innofest and the festivals as festivals don't get paid to host innovators and Innofest doesn't pay to bring them. The Innofest model can be expanded to other cities/festivals.

More info: <http://innofest.co/en>

Other initiatives and presentations

Culture and Inclusion, best practice '[Circus Adje- Look@me](#)' - Sabine de Jong, Onno Spreij, producers Kunstkade

'Look what I can do' is a Circus 2.0 multi-disciplinary initiative that stimulates creativity and self-confidence and enhances the interest in culture and arts to all the fifty primary schools in Leeuwarden. It is implemented by Kunstkade, the city matchmaker/coach for cultural education. 12 coaches work with all kind of institutions and on cultural programmes for elementary schools (2 500 children involved). It works like a menu: schools can choose what they want.

Children were asked: what are you proud of, and what do you want to show to others? Responses were taken seriously and the project ended with a festival: children had to do and learn things, could see a professional performance.

More info: <https://bit.ly/2v7oDQO>

King of the Meadows & the Great Black Tailed Gotwit Theatre exhibition - Tom van Slooten, CEO of the nature museum

The nature museum combines innovation, knowledge and culture. Its 2018 programme includes:

- [Conference of the birds](#), a musical and theatrical production telling the story of how the birds of the world come together
- [king of the meadows](#): outside on-site performances that are odes to Friesland's natural diversity
- [the Great Black Tailed Gotwit Theatre exhibition](#), a children-friendly installation to raise their awareness on the environmental challenges (32 000 visitors so far).

For more info: <http://www.natuurmuseumfryslan.nl/>

Culture/Nature: Silence of the Bees project presentation and discussion - Jan Willem van Kruijssen (artistic producer)

[Silence of the bees](#) is a project using image, language, music, art, culture, food and lectures, to put bees in the spotlight. It is funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) INTERREG VA.

Policy cooperation on culture between local governments at regional level - WetheNorth

WetheNorth is a grouping of cities from the North of the Netherlands that includes a cooperation programme on culture and the arts. The objective is to strengthen the artistic climate in the north of the Netherlands, stop the artistic brain drain and invest in local regional programmes, thus strengthening cultural tourism.

For more info: <http://www.wethenorth.org/>

Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor - Valentina Montalto and Francesco Panella (European Commission, Joint Research Centre)

The Monitor is a benchmarking tool developed in 2017 by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission. It helps national, regional and municipal policy makers to identify local strengths and opportunities and benchmark their cities against similar urban centres, using both quantitative and qualitative data. 168 cities are classified according to 29 criteria.

More info: <https://composite-indicators.jrc.ec.europa.eu/cultural-creative-cities-monitor/>

The Festival Academy - Laure Verbruggen and Inge Ceustermans, the Festival Academy

The Festival academy was launched by the European festivals Association in 2012 to empower a new generation of festival managers and share knowledge. The Festival Academy is currently developing a toolkit for festival organizers to make their festivals as sustainable as possible, covering the fields of sustainable finance, ecology, volunteering programmes, relations with artists, funding bodies, audiences, community etc.

More info: <https://www.thefestivalacademy.eu/en/home/>

Learning points and recommendations

When asked their main learning points from the study visit, participants respond:

- The focus of ECoC 2018 around 'Mienskip' and the community and bottom up approach
- The mix between activities taking place in the city and outside the city, including in nature
- Innofest as a catalyst for entrepreneurship and innovation through festivals and festivals as test bed to test new products
- The importance of the legacy of 2018

Presentations and documents

Documents and presentations from the study visit can be found on the EUROCITIES website (you need to log in) [here](#).

List of participants

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