SHORT PROJECT REPORT (Short version)

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Figure 1: The European network created by the recorders’ journeys in RECCORD

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1. Introduction: Why explore participation in cultural centres?

*Rethinking Cultural Centres in a European Dimension* (RECcORD) is a research and action project about citizen participation in European cultural centres. It is motivated by a double challenge. The first challenge is to explore – and also create – alternatives to the declining engagement in democratic and societal institutions across Europe. In the wake of the political and economical crisis of the early 21st century, many traditional institutions seem to be losing legitimacy. Partly as a reaction to this, new participatory repertoires are evolving. Public institutions attempt to engage citizens and turn users and audiences into active “participants”. Simultaneously, we witness a bottom up response where citizens demand to be involved and expect that their contributions make a visible difference. This expectation is present in do-it-yourself initiatives, in civil attempts to solve current societal challenges, as well as in new demands to more traditional institutions. But we still lack a thorough understanding of how and why citizens participate, and how civic participation can revitalise the democratic engagement in societal life. This challenge is at the core of RECcORD.

The second challenge and motivation for RECcORD is the lack of knowledge about cultural centres in Europe. Even though Europe has thousands of cultural centres (3000 of which are represented by the European Network of Cultural Centres, ENCC) that have many millions yearly visitors and actively involved citizens, the understanding of the ways in which they engage citizens and the impact of the activities on society is limited. The lack of research on the societal impact of the cultural centres can partly be explained by the diversity and variations of the European cultural centres. Cultural centres are institutions that exist in multiple forms and without a consensual name. In various countries and languages, they also appear under names that can be translated into houses of culture, centres for socio-culture, citizen houses, activity centres etc.

The cultural centres have historically combined a variety of aims. These include promoting active citizenship through cultural and artistic activities, revitalising abandoned industrial buildings and developing neglected urban areas, enhancing creativity, community, networks, entrepreneurship and innovation. A cultural centre, in general, is thus a particular cultural institution that often combines *art and creative activities* (with spaces and technical facilities for exhibitions, rehearsal, performances, workshops) with a *focus on diversity* (a variety of activities, users and user groups), *civic engagement, involvement of volunteers* and *openness to bottom-up initiatives*. The centres are normally closely tied to the local neighbourhood, they often run on a rather low budget (with a mix of public and sometimes private funding and
tickets/fees), they offer open and flexible spaces and combine professional and amateur as well as cultural and social activities.

Figure 2, 3 and 4: Cultural centres exist in multiple forms across Europe.

The characteristics above entail that the cultural centres can be difficult to compare – but also that they have a specific role in the cultural landscape. They are or have the potential of becoming important arenas for everyday cultural, social and democratic citizen participation. Despite variations in organization, size, economy and facilities, cultural centres share the aim of involving citizens as participants in (voluntary) socio-cultural activities. This aim is at the very heart of the centres and it makes it particularly interesting to enhance the knowledge about the centres and not least how they manage to engage citizens.

The European Network of Cultural Centres (ENCC) emphasises the importance of participation in cultural centres (see figure 5) and defines its core values as:

“cultural equality, interculturalism, democratisation and active citizenship through participation in cultural and artistic activities. The outcome of active participation in arts and culture on an individual level is personal development as well as development in society” (https://encc.eu/about).

This aim, creating socio-political impact through cultural and artistic participation, is ambitious, and in order to explore how it plays out in the cultural centres we need a thorough understanding of participatory forms, processes, and modalities. In RECcORD we meet this challenge by investigating cultural centres as arenas for civic engagement and participation, but also by experimenting with participation as an important part of the research process itself. Participation is the object that we study when we research the participatory activities, the understandings of participation, and the potentials and challenges of/to participation in cultural centres across Europe. But participation is also an important part of our method.
2. Project partners

RECoRD is funded and developed as a collaboration between Aarhus European Capital of Culture 2017, European Network of Cultural Centres/ENCC (Creative Europe), the Danish Association of Cultural Centres (Kulturhusene i Danmark/KHiD), Aarhus University, and The Cultural Production Centre Godsbanen (GB).
Figure 6: Godsbanen hosted two of REcCORD’s event. The participants found the place inspiring, and many of them shared impressions on Facebook. A participant said, “this is how I would like to develop my cultural centre”.

3. The participatory method of Reccord
RECCORD was carried out via a “research through exchange” model and an experimental collaboration between researchers from Aarhus University, 38 cultural centres across Europe and two cultural centre organizations (ENCC, KHiD). In the project 20 fieldworkers (also referred to as “recorders”), already employed at cultural centres across Europe, produced empirical material about their own cultural centres, but, more importantly, also individually carried out fieldwork trip of 10 days at 18 other cultural centres spread across Europe (referred to as “hosts”).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recorders</th>
<th>Hosts</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meta Dalby, Nicole Kultan, Kolding, Denmark</td>
<td>Farm Cultural Park, Favara, Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Kivus, Ebroonens hus - Sølysgade, Aarhus, Denmark</td>
<td>Culture Palace, ZIEMELBLAIZMA, Riga, Latvia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eva Garberova, Prostajov, Czech Republic</td>
<td>Laboratorio Culturale, FM, Abano Terme, Italia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michel Galline, Cultural Center la Venerie, Brussels, Belgium</td>
<td>Cultural Centre Vokaria, Chios, Greece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene Pezzella, Casa Della Culture, Arezzo, Italy</td>
<td>Mestskoe kulturno-istoricheskoe Tsenov, Tbilisi, Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linde Franklin, Square Chapel Centre for the Arts, Halifax, England</td>
<td>Die UFA Fabrik, Berlin, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Zaharkin Pardisan, Kans Minde Kulturhus, København, Denmark</td>
<td>Kulturfabrik, Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth Van Tendeloo, Cultuurcentrum Zwaneberg, Heiligen-der-Berg Belgium</td>
<td>Le Portzla, Marcie, Spain</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melina Soltanacos, Cultural Centre Vokaria, Chios, Greece</td>
<td>Volkmose Kulturhus, Odense, Denmark</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hannah Vallis, Tate, London East Street Arts, Leeds, England</td>
<td>Elbenhof, Brussels, Belgium</td>
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<td>Vassiliki Stishkova, Global Libraries - Bulgaria, Sofia, Bulgaria</td>
<td>Neu Côdes, Girona, Spain</td>
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<td>Nuria Rives Zanaza, Civic Center Delicias, Zaragoza, Spain</td>
<td>Nicolai Cultural Centre, Kolding, Denmark</td>
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<td>Trine Sarensen, Godtfaden, Aarhus, Denmark</td>
<td>Pracownia Duży Pieką, Warsaw, Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nina Ajdukovic, Youth center Ribnija, Zagreb, Croatia</td>
<td>Tuchtshir Trier, Trier, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie Bichweiler, ROXY, Ultm, Germany</td>
<td>Centar za kulture Trebnjevka, Zagreb, Croatia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiara Organini, CAOS, Torre, Italy</td>
<td>HausDrei e.V., Hemburg, Germany</td>
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<td>Sighted Ditter, Wiska Haus, Potsdam, Germany</td>
<td>Zéphiro, Castelfranco Veneto, Italy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charlotte Ansens, zentrumewelt, Mannheim, Germany</td>
<td>La Haninka, Ciudad Real, Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna Kravets, Visual Culture Research Center, Kiev, Ukraine</td>
<td>Plunk Yard, Malovice, Czech Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabine Engelhart, Kulturhaus Dehnhaida e.V./Kulturpunkt im Basch, Hamburg, Germany</td>
<td>Centro Puertes de Castilla, Murcia, Spain</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total (Hosts/Recorders)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>3 (2/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>3 (1/2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>5 (3/2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>2 (0/2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>2 (1/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>5 (4/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>2 (1/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>7 (3/4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>1 (0/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>1 (0/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>1 (0/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>1 (1/0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>1 (1/0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>6 (3/4)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Region (UN defined) | Total (Hosts/Recorders)**
--- | ---
South (Greece, Italy, Spain, Croatia) | 14 (9/5) |
North (UK, Latvia, Denmark) | 9 (3/6) |
East (Poland, Czech, Ukraine, Bulgaria) | 6 (4/2) |
West (Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany) | 11 (5/6) |

**Figure 7, 8 and 9: Recorders and hosts and the countries/regions involved**
Before the field trip, the 20 recorders visited Aarhus in June 2016 for a “five methods seminar” in order to be introduced to the methods of interviewing, observation, document analysis, participatory mapping and autoethnography, which were then deployed to study the participatory practices of the host centres. During the exchange five types of qualitative data about 20 very diverse cultural centres were created: from Warsaw in Poland to Murcia in Spain, from a tiny centre in the island of Chios in Greece with 200 visitors a month and no employees to UFA in Berlin, Germany, with 20,000 monthly visitors and several hundred employees.¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data form</th>
<th>Data task</th>
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| Produced data | • 4 interviews on citizen participation at the centre with one centre manager, one volunteer/staff and two users. Transcribe the passages of the interviews that you find most interesting  
• Observations (incl. visual documentation) of participatory activities at 3 spots/events at the centre |
| Found data | • 10 documents about the centre (from calendars to mission papers). Find help to translate and write a short description of the chosen documents. |

¹ Two individual/centres were, for practical reasons, both recorders and hosts: therefore, the total sum of 38 centres.
Creative data

- 1 participatory map of centre and its stakeholders (done together with a staff member)
- 3-5 subjective autoethnographic texts of the recorders’ bodily experience of wanting/not-wanting to participate at the centre (uploaded onto the Facebook group during the fieldwork period)

Figure 10: Data forms and tasks

The purpose of the five methodologies was to create a diverse set of data that could provide an overall impression of the participatory profile of the centres (cf. through the documents) and their local network (cf. the maps), but also of the ways in which their users and staff members practice and understand participation (cf. interviews and observations). The goal was also to have a broad range of methodologies in order to capture the sensory aspects of participation that might otherwise be overlooked (e.g. through autoethnography).

Figure 11 and 12: At the five methods seminar in Aarhus, Denmark, June 2016, the recorders participated in the development of the research design, got hands on experiences with the five methods and developed networks and friendships while for instance interviewing or making structured observations at Godsbanen

By inviting the recorders to become co-researchers, a vast – and quite heterogeneous – amount of data was produced (e.g. 68 transcribed interviews, more than 50 field notes/observations, 392 pages of documents, 26 mappings and more than 1000 photos – to mention just some of the material). The researchers at Aarhus University analysed this material with a particular focus on the types of centres and the different forms and effects of participation presented in the material (see below) and later discussed the results with the recorders in a Facebook-group and at a final conference.
Figure 13 and 14: At the final conference in Aarhus, May 2017, the researchers and the recorders presented the project and the results. In different workshops the recorders facilitated discussions of the typology and the cultural centres role in developing stronger platforms for participation.

The heterogeneity of the material would often be approached as a problem within traditional research practices, but focusing more on its content – and less on the very diverse ways of using the methods – the material is rich and gives a multidimensional impression of the various cultural centres, which were visited.

Figure 15: After the conference many recorders shared their pictures in the Facebook group. Here one recorder shares a picture from the “Drum club event” and writes “participation has so many faces – hope we meet again soon”.
4. Outcomes

In terms of creating knowledge about participation in the cultural centres the project was designed to answer the following research questions:

- To what extent do the 20 cultural centres understand themselves as arenas for citizen participation?
- What kinds of participatory activities are present/lacking in the 20 cultural centres?
- Which understandings of participation are expressed through these activities?
- Which potentials, dilemmas or challenges characterize these participatory practices?
- What are the relations between different types of participation and different organizational/funding models, regional contexts/histories and material/spatial frames?

Figure 16: Initial research questions

Rather than predefining participation, we asked the 20 recorders to help us investigate what participation is in the context of a cultural centre. Despite the fact that there are many (different) theoretical understandings of participation, which for instance informed the conceptualization of the project’s “participatory method”, we chose a more open approach and asked the recorders to identify what they perceived as “participatory”. The reasons for this was to allow for disagreement and to understand participation in cultural centres through its uses and everyday practices. Our focus was on how participation is defined and understood in the material provided by the recorders. As a consequence of this, we changed the typology along the way: In June 2016 we suggested a preliminary typology of participation based on surveys and textual and audiovisual material about the recorders’ own centres. In the spring of 2017 we revised the typology based on a thorough study of all the data from the recorders’ fieldwork. The research into the recorders’ collected data allowed us to develop a definition of participation in cultural centres and to identify different types and effects of participation.

A definition of participation in cultural centres

Participation is crucial for cultural centres. The investigated centres understand themselves as important arenas for citizen participation. But participation is understood and practiced more inclusively and broadly than what we see in most current theories of participation. Based on our analysis of the empirical material we suggest the following definition:
“In the investigated cultural centres participation is practiced as actions where centres and citizens relate in order to create specific or imagined communities and to facilitate (the potential of) change or “something larger” through cultural activities”

In this understanding participation is “more” than just joining cultural or social activities at the cultural centre. In our material, the observed activities and the way people (professionals, volunteers, artists and citizens) talk about them and add an important dimension to the cultural experiences and social encounters at the cultural centres. Activities at cultural centres are not isolated, self-contained events that exist for their own sake. Instead, they are, implicitly or explicitly, practiced and understood as elements that create or facilitate various forms of progressive transformation – in and among individual citizens and local communities and sometimes also in societies at large. We will exemplify this below where we present the forms and effects of participation that we have identified in the cultural centres.

**Key forms of participation in cultural centres**

Based on the data, and in dialogue with the recorders, we have identified *six key forms of participation in cultural centres*. Based on the numerous cases described in the dataset, we define these forms as follows:

1) **Attention**: Attending and paying attention to cultural activities together with (imagined) others (e.g. going to a concert, an exhibition or an outdoor cinema)

2) **Education**: Taking part in learning activities (e.g. language, dance or art classes)

3) **Co-inhabitation**: Sharing spaces together with other citizens or cultural agencies (e.g. making ceramics with others of the same interest, sharing space with artists in residence)

4) **Co-creation**: Making specific objects, events or processes together (e.g. a festival, a performance or a wall of memories)

5) **Publics**: Engaging in collective verbal or discursive interaction (e.g. a public meeting to discuss issues relevant to the neighbourhood or a conversation with someone you might not have met elsewhere)

6) **Co-decision**: Engaging in equal and shared decision-making (e.g. co-deciding what to do in a specific centre space or how to use other resources)
Figure 17: Six key forms of participation in cultural centres

The forms 1-4 are most salient in the material. In almost all the centres we find numerous examples of these forms. Form 2 and 3 (education and co-inhabitation) indicate a broad understanding of participation. This designates that we have not evaluated some of the six forms as being better, stronger or truer forms of participation than others. Rather, based on our inductive approach, we have acknowledged that they are understood and practiced in a way that requires a broad definition of participation. Further, we recognize that the two forms often link to the other forms of participation; i.e. that participation in cultural centres often combines two or more of the participatory forms. For instance, that informal education often includes processes of co-creation and a sense of collectivity and that co-inhabitation also means sharing a multi-functional space that enables one to join an event, use a wooden workshop, meet others in the cafe and so on. The physical space of the cultural centre is thus important, because it enhances the potentiality and imagined communities. This is emphasized in our material and it therefore became necessary for us to expand the preliminary typology and derive from traditional understandings of participation. This broad understanding of participation is a central element in the above definition of participation in cultural centres.
Form 5 and 6 (publics and co-decision) are likewise present in the material. They manifest in deliberative publics, but more often in more or less formalized forms of democratic decision-making. Thus, publics and co-decision are in the cultural centres less salient than in the academic literature about participation – and also less salient than we expected. However, interpreted broadly – as conversations with strangers and as implicit but inherent elements of co-inhabitation and co-creation – they are central. For instance, “openness” is repeatedly highlighted in the data as an important quality of cultural centres, and this quality is linked to co-inhabitation as well as to discursive interaction and co-decision (often in co-creative processes). Compared to other types of cultural institutions, cultural centres seem more open to various forms of engagement in conversations and other interactive processes and this makes them important arenas for publics and co-decision.
The forms of participation and the frequent intersection and criss-crossing between these vary significantly to most ordinary parameters for analysing participation. They differ in levels, temporalities and intensities from micro to macro, from long to short-term, and from deep to wide participation. In one example, a few citizens are continuously deeply involved in co-creating and co-deciding the life of a centre; in another, a whole village is involved in a festival; in a third, various groups of citizens participate in specific art classes once every week; in a fourth, people primarily use the cafe or garden and meet other people there. This entails that participation in the cultural centres are both occurring because of an invitation to participate in organized workshops or events and because of bottom-up initiatives when people define and create their own participatory activities. In both cases, however, there is a crucial sense of “orientation” – an im- or explicit sense of directedness towards communities, towards change, towards “something larger”. We will describe these potential effects of participation below.

**Key effects of participation in cultural centres**

Based on our material, we have identified the following *nine positive key effects of participation in cultural centres*:

![Diagram showing the nine positive effects of participation in cultural centres](image.png)

Figure 23: Nine positive effects of participation in cultural centres
1) Aesthetic intensity: Sensory stimulation of the body, feeling affected, art as a promise of a better world

2) Feeling of togetherness: Emotional and cognitive sense of bond to various others

3) Social inclusion: Moving persons/groups from a marginalized to an included position

4) Wellbeing: Physical/mental positivity/vitality (e.g. having fun or feeling that you do something for others)

5) Learning: Achieving certain skills or competences (e.g. learning to perform or to collaborate with others)

6) Empowerment: Feeling of (shared) agency regarding certain self-defined goals

7) Cultural/political reflection: Stimulating critical analysis of society and thinking about or experimenting with possible alternatives (e.g. sharing economies)

8) Local development: changing the centre and/or surrounding environment (neighbourhood, city, region) for the better

9) Sustainability: Stimulating positive green/environmental changes (e.g. through repair cafes or recycling initiatives)

These nine positive effects of participation happen at different levels and with various strengths. They are not prompted automatically or in a one-to-one relationship with the forms of participation, but they are very prominent in the data. Some effects, like for instance well-being, learning or empowerment, may at first sight be a personal experience, but they are often also shared in cultural centres through communities, publics and co-inhabitation. Some of the effects directly make the individual a part of something larger (e.g. through social inclusion or a feeling of togetherness or aesthetic intensity). And some, like cultural/political reflection, sustainability or local development enables social change.

In our material, the forms 1-6 are the most salient, but 7-9 also occur frequently. It is worth noticing that our analysis is based on five methods that in different ways represent the centres and their professionals, volunteers, artists and users. And while the forms of participation were easy to deduct from the material, the typology of effects necessarily depends more on the interviews and observations and thus on the (self)understanding of the people involved in the cultural centres. The effects are, to put it short, harder to see than the forms. Nevertheless, the typology is not only based on the good intentions of informants who may have a professional interest in the centres, but also on autoethnographies, interviews and other information from ordinary users. This means that in identifying the effects we have not just taken the words of the recorders or the hosts for granted, but attempted to find patterns between the
different kinds of data and between the different cultural centres: It is in these patterns that the nine different effects of participation emerged.

In addition, two points are important: First, participation may also have less positive effects. Participation may cause conflicts when different participants have different goals, expectations or means. It may be frustrating, time-consuming or disappointing, when the participants have different priorities, tastes, energies or resources. Or it may just simply be exhausting, because the ambitions often are higher than the resources at hand. The dark side of the cultural centres’ volunteers, amateurs, civic engagement and bottom up-initiatives is that the centres depend on a lot of unpaid work, and that sometimes participation is rather a demand than a possibility. Secondly, the connection between the six forms and the nine effects is not a clear and single-valued causality linking one form to one effect. On the contrary, one form can and will often have multiple – or sometimes even lacking – effects. One case of co-creation can have the effect of for instance social inclusion, well-being or empowerment for one participants and none or completely different effects for another participant.

Figure 24: A single form of participation may result in many different effects

When participation succeeds at all parameters, it makes people feel that they are stronger, that they are not alone but part of something larger, and that they can transform their local environment for the better. However, participation does not automatically succeed on all parameters. This is due not only to the cultural centres’ different practices, but also to the fact
that people participate for various reasons: Some may want to improve their own life by learning or experiencing something new or doing something fun, while others may want to meet other people, join a community, do something together and feel less alone. Some may want to transform society or the local environment – by experimenting with alternative forms of living, by making life more creative or more sustainable.

Participation needs to fulfil the meaning that people ascribe to it. A specific quality of cultural centres is, as our data shows, that they actually are able to include people that have different motivations for participating. Cultural centres organize cultural activities that people can be involved in for various personal, social or political reasons. As multi-purpose spaces and institutions they are open for a variety of activities and forms of participation – and thereby also for various motivations, meanings and effects. The openness and inclusivity means that cultural centres become an arena for active citizenship and this active citizenship, very concretely, depends on spaces for co-inhabitation: “Without access to a hall or a room many collective activities would simply not happen. The spaces that provide access to a range of activities and people allow pathways and connections to be established that support sustained participation”. Cultural centres provide this access to physical spaces and to a range of activities. Thereby they enable pathways and connections. This does not mean that they design forms of participation with predictable and unilateral effects. Involving citizens as participants also means opening the cultural centres for their bodily presence, their motivations, energies, experiences and norms. Forms can be designed but are often transformed by the participants who use, perform and ascribe meaning to them. Effects can be facilitated but are always co-created and depending on the specific motivations of the participants. Nevertheless, the openness and variety of the forms of participation mean that cultural centres have the potential of meeting very diverse motivations and experiences, of creating specific or imagined communities and of facilitating change or “something larger” for the participants and the communities involves.

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A typology of cultural centres

Participation is at the very core of the activities of the cultural centres. It is crucial for what they do and how they understand their own identity and role in culture and society. Cultural centres are, however, highly diverse. Our initial research questions did not concern the cultural centres in themselves, but when we analysed the data it became evident that it was necessary to understand the difference between different forms of cultural centres more accurately. Based on our empirical material we therefore developed a typology of cultural centres in which we identify four types of cultural centres that each has different organizational and participatory challenges.

We identified each of the cultural centres in RECcORD according to the typology and asked the recorders whether they found the typology meaningful and, if so, if they would characterise their own centres as well as the centre they visited according to the model. The recorders found the model meaningful and, as us, acknowledged that some centres had traits from different types of cultural centres. It is important to keep in mind that there are often overlaps and many of the centres have traits from more than one type. Nevertheless the typology serves to identify challenges and opportunities inherently tied to different types of cultural centres. The typology is meant to highlight that when it comes to participation different types of cultural centres can benefit from engaging with each other cultural centres, because different types of centres have different strengths and challenges.

1) The one-(wo)man centre:
This centre is based on the initiative, work and activity of one key person. The centre has one or a few core activities, which often have a rather strong artistic profile. This type of centre is flexible, quick to act, but economically vulnerable. The level of formalized organization is low and much depends on the key person in charge and on getting funding for the next specific
project. In our data it became apparent that the organisational strengths and challenges of the one-(wo)man centre are:

| Organizational strengths | • Flexibility  
|                          | • Creative space building / local development through art  
|                          | • Creativity and independence  
|                          | • Combines non-ellitism and contemporary art |

| Organizational challenges | • Economically vulnerable  
|                          | • Low level of formalized organization  
|                          | • Much depends on one person and on getting funding  
|                          | • Work overload  
|                          | • The temporal and/or social sustainability of the projects can be at risk |

| Participatory Strengths | • Participants can engage, co-create and learn about contemporary art in a fun way  
|                         | • Equality in the participatory publics  
|                         | • Shared decision-making is essential for the existence of the center and for its activities |

| Participatory challenges | • Attention problems due to uneven level of activity  
|                         | • Clashes between needs of different participants e.g. cultural meeting point vs. art space  
|                         | • Problems with engaging the local neighborhood e.g. bridges between contemporary art and neighborhood  
|                         | • Participants tend to be in a rather closed community |

Figure 28: Organisational and participatory strengths and challenges in the one-(wo)man centre

2) The artist/activist group centre:

This centre is larger than the one-(wo)man centre and based on the work of a group of people (maybe friends) collaborating on a limited amount of activities – often with a rather strong artistic and/or political focus or on offering open platforms and development opportunities to individuals and groups. This type of centre is often relatively new, growing and under constant development and often based on a level of non-employed work. In our data it became apparent that the organisational strengths and challenges of the artist/activist group centre are:
### Organizational strengths
- Flexibility
- Local development through art
- Strong aesthetic and innovative profile
- Creativity and independence

### Organizational challenges
- Economically vulnerable
- Often unclear organizational structure
- Overload with work
- Often based on non-employed work

### Participatory Strengths
- Bottom-up citizen initiative
- Fulfill participants' needs
- Hosting young artists
- Often offers open platforms, decision-making, learning and development opportunities to individuals and groups

### Participatory challenges
- Attract audiences for art events
- Involve the neighborhood
- Clashes with the neighborhood
- Distance to the non-artist neighborhood
- Conflicts between participants' freedom, decision-making and responsibility

Figure 29: Organisational and participatory strengths and challenges in the artist/activist group centre

3) **The neighbourhood centre:**
This centre has a strong focus on its immediate surroundings and on helping solve social challenges through cultural activities - often in collaboration with the municipality or other local authorities. This type of centre often, but not always, has a longer history (founded in the 60s and 70s) and a rather well-developed and professionalized organization and a clear vision and mission. It stresses the importance of community activities and of local cultural forms. In our data it became apparent that the organisational strengths and challenges of the neighbourhood centre are:
4) The new creative city/regional hub:
This centre is often created within the last 15-20 years as part of local authorities’ focus on the role of culture and creativity in urban and regional development. It has the ambition to serve as a key creative hub for cultural activities in the city/region and as an important part of creating a vibrant and entrepreneurial city/region. It is often situated in renovated and up-scaled industrial buildings.
| Organizational strengths | • Professional administration & (more) stable economy  
• Professional staff e.g. managers, directors and technicians  
• Urban and regional development  
• Strong focus on leadership |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Organizational challenges | • Workload  
• Shifting demands from local authorities  
• Getting people in, not necessarily a need |
| Participatory Strengths | • Key hub for cultural consumers  
• Large program for education, attention and co-creation  
• Co-Inhabitation and wellbeing |
| Participatory challenges | • Attention for “avant-garde” artistic events  
• Creating room for non-professional initiatives and unstructured ideas  
• Making volunteers and participants take responsibility and ownership  
• Conflicts between neighborhood development and gentrification  
• Might marginalize different types of participation |

Figure 31: Organisational and participatory strengths and challenges in the new creative city/regional hub

These four types of centres have very diverse traditions, conditions and sometimes motivations for participation and this means that different forms of participation sometimes can be related to different organizational (e.g. funding) models and to the spatial and material framework. Furthermore, it became apparent that the four types of centres have different degrees and modes of autonomy, and that the question of autonomy influences how participation is understood and practiced in the cultural centres.

The distinction between the different kinds of cultural centres is important because it helps us understand how different organizational structures facilitate different forms and effects of participation and because it helps us understand what makes civil life beneficial for the individual, the culture centre and the surrounding community. But it also poses other questions namely how the different cultural centres’ institutional forms are tied to matters of autonomy and how different types of autonomy are often pulling in opposite directions. We could in fact stipulate that the essence of any cultural centre is that it must always navigate between different participants and different types of autonomy. Therefore it is necessary to understand how different notions of autonomy interact and sometimes clash in the cultural centres and that an increasing understanding of this might help us articulate challenges and overcome them.

In the cultural centres, our data reveals, at least four different types of autonomy emerge: Artist autonomy, participant autonomy, institutional autonomy, state autonomy.
The first type, artist autonomy, can be understood as focusing on artistic integrity, mobility, independence and freedom. The ideal is freedom, quality art, knowledge and commitment. The challenge when a cultural centre is focusing on artistic autonomy is however often that it often defines itself in opposition to the state and local authorities and lacks funding and organisation and thus also tend to rely on precarious labor. In relation to participation the focus on artist autonomy entails a focus on experiments and experimental art, on co-creation and publics/conversations. It also entails that decision-making is understood in terms of the artists and the people who invest themselves in the management of the centre, and not necessarily in relation to the ordinary users. And finally it often entails that attention from and education for the general public are lacking.

The second type, participant autonomy, entails that the cultural centre emphasise the autonomy of the individual and his or her independence, needs, well-being and decision-making abilities. This kind of autonomy emphasises that the state and sometimes the institution/cultural centre should not interfere with the individual’s choices for the good life. The challenge is, however, that different participants have different desires and that the institutional autonomy might be compromised.

The third type, institutional autonomy concerns the institution’s relative freedom in defining goals and controlling the means by which goals can be reached. Institutional autonomy has the self-relying and strong institution as the ideal. It does not rely on an opposition to state control, but it can potentially be compromised, when state or local authorities do not adhere to the arms-length principle. Cultural centres that emphasise institutional autonomy are often challenged by diverse forms of participation that does not adhere to the institutions’ norms.

Finally, state autonomy plays a crucial role for the development of cultural centres, because the centres often rely on state defined goals and state control of means. This often results in a focus on creative and smart cities and again entails that non-organised forms of participation can be perceived as problematic if they do not fall under the overall framework and goal. State autonomy might marginalize forms of participation that are difficult to control.

By raising the awareness on how the different forms of autonomy are at play and potentially clash in the cultural centres, it is possible to highlight how institutional structures interact in the individual cultural centres and how this impact the forms and effects of participation.

5. Recommendations
There are several lessons to be drawn from RECcORD and these lessons do not only concern the cultural centres and researchers, but also other institutions. Participation is namely in high demand across Europe and, as RECcORD has shown, the cultural centres are important, and unique, arenas for participation.

Across Europe, cultural institutions are increasingly met with the demand of creating citizen participation as a way of contributing to the solution of various social challenges (political disinterest, exclusion of minorities, increasing inequality, lacking social cohesion). The concept of “participation” is often used in broad and imprecise ways, and very little is known about how cultural institutions conceptualize, design and evaluate participatory processes. As documented in this report, RECcORD developed a typology of forms and effects of participation and types of cultural centres that can be useful in the processes of designing, developing, understanding, evaluating or prioritizing among various forms of participation at cultural centres and other institutions.

RECcORD has shown that it can be fruitful, e.g. for institutions and networks such as ENCC and KHiD, to consider the significance of fostering networks and collaborations and that this is most likely to be successful when the participants feel that they are connected and have ownership. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind, when working with participation, that the cultural centres engage people the most when they do not automatically expect people to be interested in art, but rather shows that they are interested in them, in their agendas and motivations. This means that the cultural institutions are not only important due to their cultural activities, but due to their ability to foster personal and social bonds. This also means that when working with citizen participation in cultural centres, or elsewhere, you cannot plan the effects. But you can organize participatory activities that enable and often also create some very important effects: e.g. individual empowerment, a sense of collectivity and a (sense of agency regarding) local development. Cultural centres are often successful in this regard and other institutions can learn from the way that they create this kind of collectivity.

The typology of participatory forms and effects can also be used when designing future participatory research projects and when designing participatory activities in cultural centres (or elsewhere). In the table below (figure 32), we have outlined our recommendations for how to use the terminology in different phases of the participatory processes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Use typology to decide what kind of activity/effect to aim for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Use typology to debate/develop new visions or missions for the centre</td>
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<td>-------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Use typology to explain relevance to funding institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Use typology to critically clarify and analyse the activities of your centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td>Use typology to inspire other cultural centres/institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Use typology to debate forms and effects of an activity with participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>Use typology to compare your own practice with other cultural centres/institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmation</td>
<td>Use typology to confirm that you work with participation in multiple ways with a strong potential of multiple positive effects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 32: Recommendation for uses of typology in relation to participatory projects in CCs

After these recommendations, we will end with quoting another recorder: “At this point I think a lot has been told and that the project has been matured (as a good whisky or wine). I am ready to involve myself in the next part of the project!”

**More about the RECcORD project**

A more detailed report:

A video documentation of RECcORD and its results:

Academic presentations:
RECcORD has been presented at academic conferences in Denmark, England, Spain and Greece. Academic articles about the project are forthcoming and can be found at the websites of Birgit Eriksson, Camilla Møhring Reestorff and Carsten Stage at [www.au.dk](http://www.au.dk).