

Presentation:

European Forum on Music 2013, Friday, 19 April, Glasgow, Scotland UK

Community Building through Music:

A Network for Music from the Elbe Islands

Katja Scheer, Bürgerhaus Wilhelmsburg/Hamburg

Introduction:

Music has no borders;

it creates identity,

offers easy access.

Music is kind of ageless and each culture has its own musical tradition ...

For the „Network for Music from the Elbe Islands“ we use these and other different aspects of music to bring people together, to help them communicate, to contact each other and finally work together on slowly improving their neighborhoods, their home.

That`s basically our perspective on Community Building through music.

Contextualization:

The Neighborhood „Elbe Islands“

Located in the southern part of Hamburg, the Elbe Islands, which is divided into the districts of Wilhelmsburg and Veddel, is Europe`s largest inhabited river island. (The worlds largest is Manhattan Island)

The average number of people living on Elbe Islands and coming from an immigrant background is higher than anywhere else in the city. The number with immigrant background is 55% in Wilhelmsburg and 70% in Veddel, The citywide average is only 29%. Wilhelmsburg is also a very young district. More than one-fifth of the population is under 18 (21.7%), of which 73.3% have an immigrant background.

Wilhelmsburg has also always been home for mostly blue collar workers

Today almost a quarter (23.8%) of the population is living in so-called "communities of need" supported by government help (Hamburg average: 10.8%).

Cheap rent and high vacancy rates have also contributed in recent years to Wilhelmsburg becoming home to more and more young students and creative people.

Currently, the Elbe islands are attracting the attention of the Hamburg City Development which developed programs such as "Leap across the Elbe" designed to help the socially disadvantaged neighborhoods of Wilhelmsburg and Veddel.

**Community Building through Music:
A Network for Music from the Elbe Islands**

Since 2007, with 2013 actually being the big presentation year, two International Events started their businesses in our neighbourhoods: The International Garden Festival (IGS) and the International Building Exhibition (IBA) in order to boost the city development in Wilhelmsburg and Veddel.

The Community Center „Bürgerhaus Wilhelmsburg“

Shortly before the IBA and the IGS started, a change of management took place in the Community Center *Bürgerhaus Wilhelmsburg*. Founded in the 1980's the Bürgerhaus had until then basically been a place that targeted a predominantly white middle class group.

With the beginning of IBA and IGS, we saw the need to strengthen the neighbourhoods' identity and to search for ways to build a powerful structure to support and foster it.

Facing the fact that Wilhelmsburg and Veddel are home to people from more than 130 nations, being more or less in separate and parallel communities, and expecting fast city development, we refocused our work and defined ourselves as a community center, meeting place, cultural forum and House of Arts Education. Following the slogan „Participate in actions, decisions and changes“ we invited people of every culture, every religion, every age and sex from Wilhelmsburg and beyond to take advantage of the house in order to come into contact with each other.

Our main goal is to effect intercultural communication at all levels. We develop our services in close contact with our target groups to function as a kind of network engine, to respond to the needs of the district and to empower the people living there. Our work is aimed at genuine participation processes.

But how do we actually achieve this?

Looking at these very diverse target groups ..., we actually realized that they all have something in common: Their access to music. We realized that music can create international understanding beyond language and we founded „The Network for Music from the Elbe Islands.“ Participants are professional musicians as well as schoolbands and choirs, agencies, companies for technical equipment, booking agencies, festival organizers, music teachers and therapists and many others .. basically everybody is invited who is in any way „addicted“ to music and the Elbe Islands and who is interested in redefining cultural life in the neighborhood.

Does this work?

An example: 48-hour-Wilhelmsburg

From June 7th to 9th we will offer a kind of musical marathon with global sounds from all over the district.

The network 'Music From the Elbe Islands' invites kitchens, churches and kiosks to turn into stages. Music from and in all corners of Wilhelmsburg! 48 hours long:

Community Building through Music: A Network for Music from the Elbe Islands

On balconies, in living-rooms, Afroshops, bakeries, in the hall that renowned Hamburg filmmaker Fatih Akin used to shoot his film “Soulkitchen”, in churches, in the garden or on the ferry, in the restaurants and cafés, and in many other different places in the district.

The goal is to make Wilhelmsburg sound off its music for 48 hours. With indie music, choir singing, Gipsy Swing, amateurs or professional musicians, Turkish wedding music, funky Groove power, Punk, Soul or wild electronic beats – to hear how varied Wilhelmsburg’s cultural life really is.

We started with the event in 2010 and presented 30 concerts and approx. 100 musicians. In this year we will present 82 events and over 400 musicians, including Bulgarian traditionals, Turkish wedding bands, Reggae-High Life from Ghana, young indie bands, the women’s choir Inseldeerns and the famous Wilhelmsburger Bandonion Orchestra.

And it’s actually not only about presenting the music, which might already be very special, since we are presenting only local music in an extremely diverse range.

It’s about people from one neighborhood but different social and cultural backgrounds planning and realizing together their own event.

It’s about the people from the neighborhood standing on stage, presenting their music, standing backstage, organizing the event, and celebrating each other.

It’s about a bottom-up process in contrast to the City Developments Top-down-process.

Yes, it works.

www.48h-wilhelmsburg.de

How did we get there?

In 2008 „Music From the Elbe Islands“ began with taking stock and composing a musical topography of Hamburg’s Wilhelmsburg district. We registered semi-professional bands and professional artists as well as existing music education projects. We collected information and contacts to organize the “1. Day of Action: Music From the Elbe Islands!“ featuring more than 100 musicians on stage and providing valuable networking opportunities.

After this kick-off, we have been meeting on a regular basis with interested people from the local music scene. A vibrant network has grown connecting the varied institutions and artists from the Elbe islands. Since then, together and in constant exchange, we developed several projects: first focusing on different target groups, eg youth projects, and established monocultural and intercultural events which finally emerged in the overall, inclusive concept of 48 Hours.

Community Building through Music: A Network for Music from the Elbe Islands

Here are some of our highlights:

For the youth

Wilhelmsburg & Veddel are very young neighborhoods with lots of kids who don't finish school, due to a lack of visions for their lives.

Thus, we organize several projects about work in the music industry.

e.g. the "**Daughterville Festival**" where we cooperate with the MS Dockville

Festival, an international music & arts festival, that takes place in Wilhelmsburg each August.

Daughterville is a career oriented project for teenagers from ages 15 to 18 years old.

The goal is to provide thorough insights into the professional field of event organization and to cultivate independent work in teams.

Learning booking, public relations, production and financing the 15 teens are charged with organizing their own youth Festival program themselves. They are encouraged to research relevant bands, contact the respective agents and initiate negotiations, as well as develop communication strategies, write press releases and push their project. Daughterville is scheduled for June 8th. I'll be glad to send you an invitation, if anyone is interested.

www.daughterville.de

Monocultural

Elbe Islands Gipsy Festival

It was the first outcome of our Kick-off Day. Last weekend for the 5th time the festival took place in close co-operation with the Musicians of the Weiss family a well-known Sinti family living on the Elbe islands. They team up with other nationally renowned Sinti musicians and together they presented their music. Opportunities for an intercultural exchange were provided before and after the event.

intercultural

ExTra! Exchange Traditions Hamburg-Wilhelmsburg

We used the ideas of the European-wide EMC project to present local music communities in an intercultural event.

Sound Ateliers workshops and concerts with Musicians from the Elbe Islands introduced themselves and their musical world. Turkish wedding music, young Saz talents, Nigerian Spirituals, dance from the Black Sea Coast, finest Gipsy Jazz, Shanty's from Hamburg and international kids tunes, that are sung right on the doorsteps of the neighborhood - to hear what the district has to offer. The artist's music was explained in sound ateliers and workshops and the event was rounded off and ended with an inspirational collective jam session.

Community Building through Music: A Network for Music from the Elbe Islands

How does it work?

It's basically all about **continuous relationships**, strong relationships born in daily life - focussed on local values and specific cultural needs, it's all about asking what the people need!

Contact:

Katja Scheer
Network for Music from the Elbe Islands
c/o Stiftung Bürgerhaus Wilhelmsburg
Mengestraße 20
21107 Hamburg

katjascheer@buewi.de

0049/40/75201714

www.48h-wilhelmsburg.de

www.facebook.com/musikvondenelbinseln

www.daughterville.de

**Community Building through Music:
A Network for Music from the Elbe Islands**