

Dreams of Junk

Idea, Aims:

The idea of the Dreams of Junk was born on a clearance day. On these days the inhabitants can put on the street their goods they don't need any more. The streets become full of valuables – or ugly wastes as most of the people regard it – and 'lomis', people who collect and reuse the goods in an informal way – evil strangers in the majority's opinion. We thought that there is no better space for the social inclusion, as here in the same place there are groups with very different social background, whose image about each other is very far from positive. However one part of the objects thrown out – beside that thank to the 'lomis' not all of them goes to the landfills, but someone will reuse them instead – can be wonderful materials for monumental fine art creations made by the children of the 'lomis' and the local youngsters together. The common creation from pre-owned materials in the street ensures a good opportunity for the members of the different groups to get to know and like each other better, and also the eco-awareness, and the community art genres, which ensures the joy of creation. The products created together mean a common success, which proves that the waste can be value and that the people with different background can study and create together.

Our aim was to realize such actions, in which 'lomis' and passers youngs and olders can find their place learn something about the other one, the eco-awareness, the fine art based on recycling, where can create something together and celebrate its result by the end of the day with the new fellows, and also can communicate all these to the world with the tools of the citizens' media. Our aims were to prove that the people with different background can be partners, that the art and art education can be brought on the street, that the people can own the public spaces and make them more beautiful, and the informal education can be effective even for children, with whom the school hasn't reached any success. We believed that the real interaction, cooperation among different groups and common success can be much more effective tool of inclusion than the impersonal sensitizing campaigns and the theoretical trainings without real meetings.

Our target group are the people who get on by informal collection and reuse of waste – who have a very negative image (around 50,000 people in Hungary), who wasn't targeted by any social project before. Beside them we want to focus on the local inhabitants who haven't been reached and activated or just partly by the cultural and social institutions.

Activity, Method:

In the first step in the fall of 2011 we looked for the initiatives and researches focusing on the 'lomis'. We learnt that this group wasn't targeted by any developing project, and also the researches related to them are very few. Their media representation and the opinion of the majority about them is negative, although most of the 'lomis' wouldn't have other possibility to subsist just the criminality, their activity reduce the ecological footprint and doesn't need any investment from the state.

After getting contact with the „lomis” we experienced that they open hard towards community activities, as they have mostly just negative experiences, but with our active presence we managed to get their interest, and after a while we were able to involve their children in our community work.

We got in contact with such art trainers who handle the disadvantaged children as partners and who can bring closer to them such cultural forms, which are suitable for street community art and which are attractive for the young people. Beside the fine art based on pre-owned materials (Re/Public Art) the community dramatic plays (flash mob) the tools of the citizens' media (photo, interview, blog writing), music, jewelry fabrication, juggling got in focus. Till the end of 2011 we realized three series of street actions related to clearance days and other events in public spaces. There were many youngsters who participated enthusiastically in all of the events. We made a Facebook profile and own blog (www.szemetalmok.postr.hu) in order to make wider our network and to be able to communicate to the world.

We started an indoor training series for the very enthusiastic youngsters involved during the street actions from the February 2012. When making a group of them it was an important focus that young people with different background can study and work together. The participants dealt with Re-art, flash mob and citizens' media week by week. The trainers started their work with a professional plan reacting on the needs of the youngsters and on every occasion a quality assurance sheet and interview helped us to make the trainings more effective and attractive. It was an important point of view that the youngsters were able to create on every occasion some products (eg. badge, guerrilla gardening installation or blog entry) because the experience of success ensure very important power for motivation for the activity of disadvantaged kids. In order to afford personalized development for each youngster usually more trainers worked with the group of 10 kids at once. The high rate of trainers-youngsters was also important during the outdoor actions, too. By the end of the 13-week-long indoor education process the youngsters planned the spring street action and involved other kids in each activities on their own. The education of peer trainers was very important, because for the other kids they were the most attractive and genuine reference points. The fact that the management and the communication were also led by the youngsters and they were also able to teach some workflows to their peers was a big progress for them.

From the spring of 2012 we have got more business orders for realizing Dreams of Junks workshops, flash mob actions, performance, which was a serious feed-back for the professional quality of our work, as such services haven't been sold by other initiatives earlier. The fact that beside the clearance days we were able to present our work on other events (street festivals and events) is also important, because this way it was proven that the Dreams of Junk can function not just on clearance days. The future of the clearance days is uncertain, in Budapest the district wide clearance days are to be abolished. In case it will happen, we want to work on such public spaces (landfills, slums) where the 'lomis' present, too. Right now the institution of the district wide clearance days still works, so we fight with our activity and communication to maintain their existence in the future.

We published a methodology about the results and methods of the first year of the 'Dreams of Junk' in Hungarian and English in order to help the work of the teachers interested in our topics (eg. environmental education, community art) as they can build on our experiences. Since the summer of 2013 we have presented our methods and results on more international forums, too. We received very positive feed-back also from the international socio-cultural professionals, and many of them got inspiration for developing their own work.

Relationship with the wider society:

The Dreams of Junk beside starting two own blogs (www.szemetalmok.postr.hu, www.szemetalmok.blogspot.com) and making viral videos about all of its actions (e.g. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dKaALwW-1fc>) receives high media attention. In the last one and half year many mediums have reported about our activities, and interviewed our colleagues related to the topic of the clearance days. Unfortunately in most of the report about the clearance days only the parts related to us show positive image about the 'lomis' and the clearance days beside the dominant stereotypical messages. However it's also an important progress that we managed to make the reports a bit more different that one positive line can show up in the summaries (e.g. http://liveinfo.blog.hu/2011/10/28/szegyen_hogy_a_szemetbol_kell_elnunk)

The kids activated by us were able to learn the bases of the citizens' media (photo, interview, blog writing) and started to edit their own blog, where they were able to show such topics and points of view, which don't appear at all in the mass media (e.g. <http://szemetalmok.postr.hu/oldal/3#commentsDiv>).

In our external communication we have always focused on getting in contact with the local NGOs and municipality institutions, schools when organizing an action in a district. This way we were able to reach more kids and the local professionals were also able to get to know our methods and enrich our activities with their own knowledge.

During our work many social scientist researcher have looked for us, and reported about our work, and we were able to put the social and cultural aspect also in the discourse of the green organizations, as our activity focuses on the complex handling and developing of the different fields.

Management, Financing:

Support (2011-2012): OSI Roma Initiative: 24 890 USD = 5 861 790 HUF

Own contribution (2011-2012): 14 391 USD = 3 389 224 HUF

Business turnover (2011-2012): 776 700 HUF

In 2013 we want to use at least 500,000 HUF own contribution and 2 million income from supporters and customers for developing our project. Till now 1 million HUF is ensured for the Dreams of Junk in 2013.

The management of the project is led by the directorate of the Multikulti 2009 Bt., and the trainers and youngsters involved in our former work have also important and regular tasks in the management and the planning.