

"INHABITANTS AND EVENT CONTRIBUTORS" IN THE CITY OF ANGERS



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social citizenship
diversity **cultural network**
intergenerational public space **creativity**
participation cooperation

1. Context

Today, the city of Angers is home to 150,000 inhabitants, while its metropolitan area is comprised of 33 communes and 283,000 inhabitants. 32% of its residences are social housing with an average income lower than the national average. The city is also characterised by its rich, lively, cultural and artistic landscapes and a diverse provision of culture. The city is mastering the art of working together by means of a cultural policy that creates links and encourages artistic discovery. To this effect, its inhabitants are often encouraged to participate in cultural events and to become contributors when working together during meetings with artists or workshops, which are scattered through the area. This enables Angers citizens to be involved in the organisation of its city's events.

This interaction and participation combines artistic practices, creativity and human encounters and provide sources of wealth and openness for the population (especially young people), but also bring the city into the limelight.



Cellograff at the Garden Promenade



Choir © City of Angers — Thierry Bonnet

2. Project origin and objective

The city of Angers' cultural policy has started to focus on sharing and exchanging. In this regard, different participatory approaches have been carried out among the population for several years, in order to involve them in creating vibrant cultural highlights coordinated by the community and its partners. This is certainly the case with the Accroche-Coeurs Festival, which has been a cultural highlight every September for street and circus artists since 1999; and Artaq, an urban art festival, which was held for the first time in 2010. These two emblematic events, now rooted in Angers' cultural landscape, are creating more and more links with local cultural partners, but also with associations and the citizens of Angers who work within the framework of participatory workshops and community initiatives.

The project's objective is to encourage participation in cultural highlights from citizens of Angers and to make them real contributors. The city is strengthening the unifying character and identity of such events by narrowing down the various modes and forms of involvement and appropriation. In terms of Accroche Coeurs, the main obstacle that the establishment of these projects is expected to face is finding integral artistic propositions for participation from residents while maintaining their interest.

Thanks to a partnership with the University Hospital and prison, active work is being carried out to increase and diversify participation, especially from those who are unable to access the provision of culture.

3. Content and development

Whilst upstream of cultural events, mediation activities and participatory workshops with artists are being organised all over the city; during cultural highlights, Angers citizens are encouraged to take a direct role in the festivities and proposed activities. In terms of Artaq, the citizens of Angers are involved in intergenerational workshops open to all citizens in order to prepare pieces of art (knitting in 2012 and origami in 2013) to decorate public spaces for the duration of the festival, under the direction of artists. Workshops for artistic practices, also known as resident projects, are organised during the Accroche-Coeurs festival (musical and visual creations, calls for contribution to create shows or exhibitions). In this

regard, citizens of Angers are encouraged to contribute to Accroche-Coeurs through the introduction of an annual theme, associated dress code, flash-mob reunions, Sunday picnics, encounters with artists and even voluntary work. In addition, the network of associations is involved through its management of the 'Village des Saveurs' (Village of Flavours'), which uses a public space to let people taste various different dishes from Northern France.

Around 1,400 Angers citizens gather to put together these emblematic events. Residents are also encouraged to choose musicians, film screenings and write poems within the context of specific highlights (Tempo Rives festival, Open-air cinema, *Printemps des poètes* (Poetry springtime)).

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4. Main contributors

In addition to the local partners who are customarily associated with this type of event, participation from Angers citizens in certain events has mobilized inhabitants, associations, leisure centres, community centres and even schools and retirements homes into adopting an active approach towards artistic creation and cultural mediation.

The city of Angers is encouraging this participatory dynamic and is coordinating it through calls for contribution upstream of these events. Artists are also actively involved with local residents during mediation activities and participatory workshops. This partnership between these different contributors allows them to actively participate in the organisation and programming of upstream events during such highlights.



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Slow Slugs – Florentijn Hofman © City of Angers — Thierry Bonnet

5. Assessment

This participation encourages cultural diversity, exchanges with artists and a social network between residents from different generations, cultures and neighbourhoods. It encourages artistic and cultural discovery, but also showcases the city, because these participatory workshops and mediation activities take place in a variety of locations. Year after year, citizens of Angers have shown interest and a real anticipation for future editions of these events. Thanks to a partnership with the University Hospital and Prison, active work is being carried out to increase and diversify participation, especially among those who are unable to access the provision of culture.

In order to encourage real involvement from residents in terms of the construction of cultural events, it is necessary to offer them a real, concrete opportunity to participate that will be well valued during these highlights. Such participation should be based on topics that are easy to relate to. Upstream, a working partnership with local contributors is essential for mobilizing various people and for anticipating and preparing actions among inhabitants for these events. This is possible through coordination, management and support from the community, in partnership with local contributors, neighbourhood structures, associations and artists.



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6. Relative information

Website: <http://www.angers.fr/accrochecoeurs>

<http://www.angers.fr/vie-pratique/culture/les-evenements-culturels/artaq/artaq-2013/index.html>

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