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LANGUAGE ENCOUNTERS IN AARHUS 2017

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Ushma Chauhan Jacobsen

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Preface

rethinkIMPACTS reports are an important outcome of the cooperation between Aarhus University and Aarhus 2017 in contributing with new knowledge on many different aspects of being European Capital of Culture. The reports will convey the results of the different research - and evaluation projects that will be conducted in the upcoming of, during and after 2017 as a part of rethinkIMPACTS 2017. The aim is to make these new findings and insights accessible to a broad audience.

The report focuses on language encounters in the European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017 and its overall theme 'Let's Rethink'. Focusing on the extensive use of English, which tames and syphons Europe's plurilinguistic reality into a bilingual practice, the report demonstrates how this practice secures wide participation, accommodating intercultural communication, and significant branding of Aarhus as 'international'. However, it does so at the expense of silencing other major European languages, and all the richness and diversity of knowledge, artistic and cultural expression that other European languages embrace. In the end of this report, Ushma Chauhan Jacobsen asks if we can *Rethink* using the complex combinations of different forms of knowledge and expression that all European languages possess? Moreover, if that could be an outcome of rethinking language in the European Capital of Culture.

1.0 Introduction

The opening ceremony of Aarhus 2017 as the European Capital of Culture on 21st January 2017 was held the day after the inaugural ceremony of the 45th president of the United States of America. The difference between the two grand events was striking. While the inauguration was saturated with a restorative nostalgia, the opening ceremony of Aarhus 2017 expressed the optimistic language of the future and the dense webs of interconnections and contact between people, places and ideas within and beyond the city of Aarhus. At its heart lay the power of expressions of art and culture to spark reflections, move sentiments, and instigate change to address urgent necessities of sustainable, democratic and inclusive living.

The programme presentation held at Aarhus Theatre, a hundred days before the opening ceremony, included a speech given by the Mayor of Aarhus. He spoke evocatively - in Danish - of Aarhus and the Central Denmark region as an attractive place of dwelling and working and a source of local pride and identity. Culture and creativity could significantly brand the city and region to unleash potentials for visibility, growth and development for the benefit of citizens, companies and organizations. Aarhus 2017 was a unique moment to "*sætte spor langt langt ud i fremtiden*" (to set footprints into the future). Then, in the middle of this eloquent act of cultural diplomacy, something interesting happened. The Mayor was interrupted by a young boy who walked onto the scene:

Boy: "Jacob... *det går ikke*" (Jacob... that won't do)

Mayor: "Hva' så?" (What is it?)

Boy: "Please let me have your speech... (Jacob hands him the speech)
thank you... (the boy approaches the podium)

This is the European Capital of Culture, you need to speak English so the children and Europe will get the message

(loud applause from the audience).

(Programme presentation, 12.27-12.52, my translation)

This report draws attention to the phrase “*you need to speak in English*” and focuses on language encounters in Aarhus 2017 with its overall theme ‘Let’s Rethink’. It constructs the European Capital of Culture as a space of different forms of encounters: material, artistic, lucrative, fleeting, sustainable, interdisciplinary, spiritual, musical, dramatic, sensory, and deeply personal. All these encounters are subtly supported by languages and the practices and ideologies surrounding them and their speakers. The impact of language is largely absent from the list of the 45 evaluation criteria formulated by rethinkIMPACKTS 2017, and yet language is an essential ingredient in collaborative and expressive processes. Language - performing in curiously paradoxical ways - participates in the legitimization and delegitimization of identities; it textures or erases authenticity; it includes as well as excludes speakers; and it enables cooperation as well as conflict. It is language that lies at the heart of human creativity and cultural meaning-making; and it is language, which allows rethinking and ‘newness’ to emerge.

Aarhus 2017’s Strategic Business Plan (2015-2018) makes one concrete reference to language:

To create visibility and brand Aarhus and the Region, we will: Produce merchandise, print and marketing material etc. in Danish, English German, French, Norwegian and Swedish. (2015: 39)

Despite this scant formal reference to language, the Strategic Business Plan is otherwise full of verbs that silently imply language in vibrant practice and action: exchange, learn, develop, mobilize, participate, connect, build, rethink. **These verbs lie central to my inquiry that aims to examine the ways and extents to which different languages, language practices and perceptions circulate within Aarhus 2017 encounters and what the impacts and implications of these are.**

The report presents a brief outline of the conceptual and methodological background of the inquiry. This is followed by a presentation of key findings arranged in four themes:

- 1) The bilingual nature of Aarhus 2017
- 2) The articulation of art, music, performance as universal languages

3) Other languages used as markers of authenticity or for technical interlanguage communication

4) Danish as "*hjerterets sprog*" (language of the heart)

The final section unpacks these four themes through a discussion of impacts that draws from data comprising spoken and written statements or direct observations. Some of the discussion is admittedly based on interpretations of the implicit, the things that were not said by people spoken with or seen, but nevertheless lingered in the air. It is often the subtleties that form the materials of rethinking that can "*sætte spor langt langt ud i fremtiden*" (to set footprints into the future) as the Mayor of Aarhus wished for.

2.0 Background

The conceptual framing of the inquiry on language encounters in Aarhus 2017 was embedded in approaches that explore the creative language conditions that exist across contemporary spaces and at the borders of culture, history and politics. Research concerning metrolanguages and metrolingualism examine the fluidity and fixity of different languages in contemporary urban environments and is highly attentive to language ideologies, practices, resources and repertoires (e.g. Maher 2010, Seargeant 2012, Pennycook and Otsuji 2015). The inquiry was further informed by current research in the fields of language, globalization and superdiversity (e.g. Arnaut et. al 2016) to appreciate language in its dynamic forms in transnational and transcultural encounters that are characterized by movement and mobility: there are “*mobile* resources, *mobile* speakers and *mobile* markets” (Blommaert 2010: 28). Such approaches attempt to capture the lively and shifting sands of *translingualism* described as “a shuttling between languages” (Canagarajah 2013), and insist on viewing language *as practice* to observe how “linguistic resources, everyday tasks and social space are intertwined” (Otsuji and Pennycook 2010: 2). This lens forms the conceptual background for examining how different people *did* multiple language(s) in Aarhus 2017, and what the outcomes of this *doing* - both immediate and in the future - were or could be.

Aarhus 2017, which culminated after negotiations already started in the late 1990s, has produced what a member of the Aarhus 2017 Foundation secretariat describes as “*a monstrous amount of data*”. This report adds further material to this by generating data using multi-sited ethnographic methodology (Marcus 1995, Falzon 2009). This allowed a shuttling between multiple sites to follow and understand the interrelationships of people, languages, sentiments, texts and objects that are entangled and “caught up in each other” (Deleuze and Parnet 2002: 54). The selected data was gathered and produced over the course of 2017. It comprises interview and correspondence materials primarily generated with individuals specifically involved in roles of strategic management, project management

or event facilitation. Data also includes written information available in the programme handbook; the official Danish, English and German websites; a short questionnaire made available at the Randers Museum of Art and the Museum of Religious Art in Lemvig; and exhibition/installation texts. The material is supplemented by observational notes produced after my personal interactions or visitor engagement in events and performances. The Danish to English translations in the report are my own.

The 21 sites referred to were selected on the basis of their proximity and recognizability to both explicit and implicit reference to *language, international, communication, expression*, and the names of specific nations. Furthermore, a conscious effort was made to secure the inclusion of sites that embraced the diversity of artistic domains (theatre, art, multimodal installations), different geographical settings in the Central Denmark Region (events in Randers, Favrskov and Lemvig), and audiences (youth exchange projects and museums visited primarily by older people). A list of observation and interview sites is given in the appendix.

3.0 Language encounters

The findings of the inquiry focus on four themes. The first is that despite the plurilingual nature of Europe and the translinguistic practices of the citizens of Europe, Aarhus 2017 was a strikingly bilingual event. International collaborations, interactions, exhibitions and performances, and the enticing and captivating paratexts of information material were primarily expressed in two languages: Danish and English. The second finding is that art, music, dance and theatre were commonly referred to as “*universal languages*” capable of transcending the limitations of oral and written nation-, region- or culture-specific languages. Third, languages *other* than Danish and English were primarily used as emblematic markers to reinforce the trueness or authenticity of people/things/events or to secure efficient technical interlanguage communication. The fourth finding relates to the sentiments and status given to Danish. One interviewee referred to Danish as “*hjerterets sprog*” (language of the heart) and this imagining often echoed in the words of many other people I spoke with. Danish was seen to provide a poignant resource to effectuate meaning-making for the individual as well as between people.

3.1/ A bilingual event

The use of Danish can be naturally expected in Aarhus 2017. The use of English may also be seen as naturally expected in a European Capital of Culture given the status of English as an international language. However, the bilingual nature of Aarhus 2017 where “*the two languages are made equal*” (Aarhus 2017 Foundation Secretariat member) points to a marked absence in the display and use of the other 22 official European languages that texture the linguistic and cultural diversity of Europe’s people¹.

The evidence of the bilingual nature of Aarhus 2017 and the privilege given to English is plenty and identifiable in three domains: 1) English used as the *de facto*

¹ See Kristeva (2016) for a discussion on the reduction of Europe’s plurilinguistic space to the bilingualism of ‘global’ English.

language of international project collaborations, workshops and conferences, 2) Danish and English as the primary languages of interlanguage translation, 3) English words and phrases as integral parts of significantly showcased artworks, exhibitions and performances.

Aarhus 2017 embraced numerous and ambitious international project collaborations and workshops with the 'big eight' cultural institutions in Aarhus² as well as with other major players within the arts and cultural industry in Aarhus itself and throughout the Central Denmark Region. It hosted an array of renowned artists and performers that all responded in unique ways to 'Rethinking' - and this was done by using English as a common lingua franca. Using English to bridge different language backgrounds was not considered problematic as such by the manager of an art institution:

"It is very natural that everything happens in two languages today - in communication terms - it's a form of backbone and naturalness".

This '*natural*' condition seeped into collaborations and the hosting of international guests in different organizational contexts that varied in scales of experience with international activities as well as in the bilingual proficiencies of the individuals involved. For example, scales ranged from the Aarhus 2017 Foundation secretariat that was populated by people with extensive international experience, to 'glocal'³ organizations such as Aarhus Jazz Orchestra and Kunsthall Aarhus with long traditions of collaboration with musicians and artists beyond Denmark, to institutions with lesser experience such as Kastali'a Theatre School or Favrskov Municipality that focus on the local.

The primary products of interlanguage translation emerged in combinations of English and Danish, and German (to a significantly lesser extent). The Programme Handbook - overwhelming in its size, weight, kaleidoscopic content and curatorial language - exemplified this. The handbook was replicated in the more dynamic, ever-changing website, which attempted to tame additions to the programme

² ARoS Art Museum, Den Gamle By, Moesgaard Museum, Aarhus Theatre, Aarhus Symphony Orchestra, Musikhuset Aarhus, Den Jyske Opera and Aarhus Festival.

³ The term frequently used to describe phenomena which reflect both local and global considerations.

and last-minute changes in a complex universe of hyperlinks to other written and audiovisual information. It became clear that part of the website dynamic was due to cultural actors being drawn into the programme with activities that were already in the pipeline as the year proceeded. Many events were appropriated by Aarhus 2017 and made relevant (sometimes forcefully) to the themes of the European Capital of Culture. But in order to qualify, translations to English became an imperative.

There is little clarity on the overall interlanguage translation processes. Many different paths were taken to secure bilingualism. Some translations were outsourced to professional translation agencies; some institutions used professional freelance translators that were already affiliated to them; and in many other cases, translations were performed in-house by those who had 'native speaker like' or 'good' competences in written English. Such variation was reflected in the different forms of written materials in English for the general public.

English was also integral to significantly showcased 'international' events in Aarhus 2017. The interweaving between English and Danish appeared in the online version of Aarhus Stories (FilmbyAarhus, 2017) that showed images from the installation accompanied by Danish statements such as "*med en helt særlig historie*" (with a very particular story) and backgrounded by a song softly sung in English. Such weaving became necessary to spread information and understanding and to signify the 'international-ness' of the year.



Note: Photo from Aarhus Stories by FilmbyAarhus 2017

English appeared at the theatre (e.g. Complexity of Belonging), in films (e.g. Julian Rosenfeldt's 'Manifesto'), and in exhibitions (e.g. Barbara Kruger's 'Gluttony' that actively displayed English slogans pasted on the ceiling, walls and floor of the exhibition room). Other considerably highlighted multimodal installations that used the English language included 'For Aarhus' (Jenny Holzer's and other writers' prose poems in English that explored global crises projected onto Aarhus theatre façade in a continuous string of complex words) and Nathan Coley's 'fairy-light' installation of the phrase "the Same for Everyone", which appeared at ten locations throughout the Region bringing attention:

"to one of the most treasured of Danish values, namely 'equality for all'"

(Nathan Coley, online programme description).



Note: The Same for Everyone by Nathan Coley (Friland)

3.2/ Universal languages: art, music, dance and theatre

Art, music, image, opera, jazz, film, dance, multimodal installations and theatre were commonly referred to as “*universal languages*”. These forms of language were seen to have the capacity to transcend the limitations of oral and written national-, regional- or culture-specific languages. Universal languages were able to reach out to, speak with and involve audiences despite recognizable differences in national, ethnic, class, gender or age of the performers.

A view expressed by a programme manager at Aarhus Jazz Orchestra, engaged in the Global Jazz Explorer project involving collaborations with musicians from India and South Africa, articulated English as an instrumental “*tool that unlocked the real language*” to perform - the real language being the language of music itself. Similarly, the Chinese artist Song Dong who exhibited ‘The Centre of the

World' at Kunsthall Aarhus stated that his lack of English proficiency was compensated by the universal languages of art and body - both powerful languages that allowed 'rethinking' - the theme of Aarhus 2017 - to emerge where:

"1 + 1 should be bigger than 2, there are many different answers".

3.3/ Other languages: markers of authenticity and technical interlanguage communication

Other languages emerged in Aarhus 2017 in sporadic ways. Some German text appeared in the exhibition 'Lust' at the Randers Museum of Art; Japanese greetings were spoken at the opening of the 101 Friendship park commemorating 150 years of friendship between Denmark and Japan. Literature readings were given in Norwegian, German and French at 'On the Edge', Aarhus' annual festival of literature. Chinese characters figured in Song Dong's 'Collaborations'; and Hindi accompanied the ragas sung at Bollywood Beats as part of the Global Jazz Explorer project. In all these cases, these languages served to articulate the authenticity and realness of places, origins and belongings of the people involved in the event or the interaction⁴.



Note: Photo from Bollywood Beats and Big Band

German was the only other European language that received a little more attention but this too was limited to informational materials such as a German website and programme handbook. Both products were seen as a form of recognition of

⁴ See Coupland (2003) and Jaworski *et. al* (2003) for discussions of the relationship between language and authenticity.

the historically extensive political and commercial relationship that Denmark has with Germany, its language and its people. Other languages were also used in written material aimed at giving practical information, for example a press release translated to Polish about the opening of an air route between Aarhus and Warsaw. Other press releases and tourist brochures were produced in Italian, French, Japanese, Swedish and Norwegian. These forms of language encounters can be characterized as technical interlanguage communication, which provides instrumental solutions to transferring practical information between speakers of different languages.

3.4/ Danish as "*hjerterets sprog*" (language of the heart)

Danish remained at the heart of Aarhus 2017. First, and literally, communication processes at numerous local events only involved Danish - it would be an error to overlook these. For example, the '2017 Inhabitants of Aarhus' project based at the Aarhus City Archives did not receive testimonies or narratives in other languages. Second, at a few events, Danish was used with other Nordic or European languages (other than English). The Nordic Language and Culture Festival (organized by Nordic Language Coordination⁵) as well as 'On the Edge' (Aarhus literature festival) celebrated Danish, its Nordic cousins and other prominent European languages. Not only would these annual festivals have taken place irrespective of the European Capital of Culture, but the attention and focus on Danish, Nordic and European literature were also perceived as politically symbolic statements that contested the hegemony of English.

Aarhus 2017 coincided with the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation. The moment was captured in 'Rethink Reformation' that provided an important umbrella theme to cover numerous events, lectures and debates. The majority of these were held in Danish and organized by local clubs and associations throughout the region. Hadsten Kirkehøjskole hosted a lecture on '*Hvorfor taler vi dansk?*' (Why do we speak Danish?) that delved into the historical relationship between the Reformation and the construction and spread of Danish as a national lan-

⁵ The Programme Book translated 'Nordisk Sprogkoordination' as Nordic Language Coordination but the organization has no official English title.

guage - all aided by the zeal of priests, the affordances of printing press technology and the distribution of the Christian III bible⁶. At the interaction that followed the lecture, a reference was made to Danish as *"hjertets sprog"* (language of the heart). When probed further about this expression, I was told that no language could replace a mother tongue:

"A mother tongue can do something that other languages cannot... it gives free access, it is spontaneous, it gives spheres and meaning, it's energy preserving, ..."

This list of mother tongue attributes was given with passion and concentrated engagement. The sentiments associated with the mother tongue appeared in different ways - but consistently - among those I spoke with. 'Hjertets sprog' was critical to expanding horizons of understanding and constructing new meanings. The sentiments associated with this transcended instrumental communicative concern and instead captured spaces which were difficult to describe and explain using words. They could only be felt.

⁶ See Nielsen (2016) for an extensive discussion of the Reformation and Language in Denmark.

4.0 Impacts

4.1/ Privileging English

The bilingual nature of Aarhus 2017 is explicitly related to the privilege and centrality given to English. The gradual integration (or infiltration depending on ideological position) of English in Denmark is well investigated and rich in informing us about the resulting transformations of the Danish language and its contemporary use in connecting Danes to the world beyond⁷. Watching the tourist read the exhibition texts of 'The Chinese are Coming' at Strandsmuseum in Thorsminde, or the theatregoer read the English subtitles of Ludvig Holberg's adaptation of the otherwise deeply Danish play 'Erasmus Montanus' at Aarhus Theatre - it becomes difficult to imagine how Aarhus 2017 could have unfolded without English.

Four convincing explanations are given to support the use of English. First, the 'common sense' argument proposes that English is a 'logical tool' for communication. A panelist at the Nordic Language and Culture Festival emphatically stated that although languages were crucial parts of aesthetic expression, the instrumental communicative dimensions were just as important. In response to my probing, she replied: "*you cannot get me to say that it is bad to use English*". Second, the 'intercultural' explanation asserts that using a language familiar to many allows desirable flow in the processes of accommodation, interculturality, inclusion, appreciation, flexibility and adjustment⁸. The 'Euroinvasion' project at Kastali'a theatre school had articulated a "*one metre rule*" where participants were obliged to switch to English as soon as a non-Danish speaker entered the situation. Third, the '*Vi er et lille land*' (We are a small nation) explanation - deeply engrained in the Danish psyche - is incessantly stated to justify the use of English. Denmark and the

⁷ See for example Hjarvard (2007), Jørgensen *et al.* (2011), Haberland and Preisler (2015) and recent findings from The Danish Language Council's project "Yes, det er **coolt**" available at <https://dsn.dk/vi-arbejder-ogsaa-med/pavirkning-fra-andre-sprog/pavirkning-fra-andre-sprog>.

⁸ See Aiello and Thurlow (2006) for a discussion of visual discourse and intercultural communication in European Capitals of Culture.

Danes need English to participate in the global economy and politics; English is a necessity to secure commercial, cultural and technological contact in a globalizing world. Fourth, a series of 'market' explanations are offered to legitimize its use: English is efficient, productive and profitable. In all four convincing explanations, English is not the serpentine monster 'hydra' that it has sometimes been described as⁹.

These explanations resonate well with a conception of humans as *Homo Pragmaticus*: "a being seeking solutions through transactional strategies. The transaction involves an interaction between two or more actors, based on a fair exchange of mutual services, by which none of the partners loses out" (Giordano 2005: 29). In the light of the four explanations given above, **the impact of taming Europe's plurilinguistic reality and syphoning it into a bilingual practice secured the widest potential participation of actors with differing biographies and language backgrounds.**

The impact of English in the act of inclusive participation cannot be denied as stated by an international project manager:

"That's where the English language is great because that's a platform where we are all not 100 percent in our comfort zone".

However, having the *potential* to participate does not necessarily guarantee participation and neither does it guarantee understanding nor comfort. Thus, **the impact of English as promoting acts of exclusion or discomfort that troubled individuals must also be considered.** A director of a cultural institution described English as a "7-eleven language" characterized by a simplicity and superficiality when spoken between non-native speakers. The simplicity blocked the ability "*at komme ned i kernen fordi det kræver en native speaker*" (to reach the core as this would require a native speaker). Sentiments of linguistic inadequacy, especially in conversations with native English speakers, were frequently expressed:

"you become so conscious when you speak a different language and you can hear your own mistakes...but as soon as you let go and not focus too much on the barrier, it becomes easier for everybody. I find it mainly intimidating to speak with native speakers because they are obviously so much better". (member of the Aarhus 2017 Foundation secretariat).

⁹ See Rapatahana and Bunce (2012).

Although the idea of the 'native speaker' is critically debated today (e.g. Davies 2013, Rivers 2018) and there is much research focusing on the discomfort that the 'native speaker' complex provokes among non-native speakers (including Danes who have an otherwise strong perception of being proficient users of English), **the impact of using English at the strategic and operational levels textured the branding of Aarhus 2017 as a significantly international event.** English enabled the municipality and secretariat to write the successful ECOC bid, publicize and market Aarhus 2017 internationally, act as gatekeepers to the international media, and facilitate the identification and negotiations of local spaces that could host international art and culture. It was widely accepted that every ECOC needs its 'international' celebrities - or "*circuses that come to town*" to succeed (director of a cultural institution). English as an international language allowed the steady flow of email communication before events and the endless struggles of deals and compromises behind the perfect orchestration of international projects that lie invisible to the outsider. English as emblematic in symbolizing 'creativity' and 'internationalness' allowed the international capacity-building of the region's cultural institutions.

The 'Welcome Future' publication (in Danish, 2018) presents the preliminary effects of Aarhus 2017. The following statement is given in the section titled 'An invitation to the world':

"The world was highly present in our year. First and foremost, the Aarhus 2017 programme reflected a strong affiliation to the European community. 79% of Aarhus 2017 projects were developed in cooperation with international partners or consisted of cultural exchanges within Europe, and 1,200 European artists contributed to the programme. Actors from 64 different countries spread over five continents were part of Aarhus 2017, which made our year largely global"

(2018: 58, my translation).

To support the statement, a map tracing the lines of connections between places in the world - similar to a route map that is often available in airline magazines - shows the extensive geographical scale of international engagement. The porous

line between the 'European' and the 'international' can also be seen in the Strategic Business Plan (2015). The section on 'International engagement' states:

"The European Capital of Culture concept exists to:

- *Highlight the richness and diversity of cultures in Europe*
- *Celebrate the cultural features Europeans share*
- *Increase European citizens' sense of belonging to a common cultural area".*

(2015: 23)

The acts of enumeration and the rhetorical articulation of the importance of Europe silence the complex nature of engagement where the distinctions between European, international and global frequently collapse. Furthermore, in the alternation between perceiving Aarhus 2017 as both 'European' and 'international', significant language choices are taken to privilege English at the expense of other major European languages. Given that the ECOC concept exists to embrace the richness and diversity of European cultures, the silencing of other major European languages in Aarhus 2017 becomes a puzzling issue.

Languages are always entangled with ideologies. Language ideology refers to "the values, practices and beliefs associated with language use by speakers, and the discourse that constructs values and beliefs at state, institutional, national and global levels" (Blackledge 2009: 29). Woolard (2008) distinguishes between two types of language ideologies. The first refers to an ideology of 'authenticity' where the value of a language is related to its explicit relationship to a particular community. The second type relates to an ideology of 'anonymity' where the value of a language lies in its capacity to be 'socially neutral' and 'universally available'. Languages of anonymity appear as if they are "*from nowhere*" - or perhaps everywhere, like English. In contrast, the majority of other world languages like Danish, German, Norwegian or Japanese are deeply associated 'from a specific somewhere'.

The four explanations given earlier to justify the use of English in Aarhus 2017 (these were English as a logical tool for communication; a resource for intercultural communication; a necessity to participate in the global economy; and a language that secured efficient, productive and profitable outcomes) are well-aligned with

perceiving English as the language of ‘anonymity’ that is ideologically perceived to be universally available and socially neutral. However, this can be contested. Historically, English has always had an ability to construct powerful hierarchies of difference between peoples. Currently, English continues to play a significant role as a critical commodifiable resource to secure international profit and prestige¹⁰. Significant research on the ‘commodification’ of language draws attention to the presence of markets where “languages and language varieties, like other tradable commodities, have an economic exchange value” (Cameron 2012: 352). Although the ambitions of the European Capital of Culture concept were to highlight and celebrate Europe’s richness, diversity and shared cultural features, Aarhus 2017 had equally ambitious plans to amplify the regional tourism industry, draw foreign investment to Aarhus and the Central Denmark Region, and brand their images in international metropolises. The ‘linguonomics’ (Hogan-Brun 2017) of English secured this.

Events where other European languages circulated certainly contributed to authenticating visitor experiences as genuine ‘cultural encounters’, as well as provided visitors with information in languages they felt comfortable with. Seen in this light, the appearance of other languages as either markers of authenticity, or resources by which respectful technical interlanguage communication occurred, subtly participated in reinforcing the ideology promoting English as the language of ‘anonymity’ and other languages as texturing the ‘authenticity’ of belonging to something and somewhere specifically. However, **the significant impact of the ideological privileging of English to signal the ‘international’ resulted in the silencing of ‘European’ language richness and diversity.**

4.2/ Driving rethinking through universal languages and “hjerterets sprog”

Professional actors engaged in cultural spheres and creative industries are powerful advocates of the capacity of ‘culture’ to drive human reflection and ‘rethinking’ when culture is expressed in its colourful, embodied and sensuous forms. Art was said to lend itself well to misunderstanding that provoked rethinking as the artist Song Dong reflected:

¹⁰ See Heller and Duchêne (2012) for a discussion of the shift from language as national ‘pride’ to language as national (and corporate) ‘profit’.

"Misunderstanding is very interesting... you said this way, I say that way, we think same way but we have not gone the same way. But that lets us re-thinking... what happened between us? there is the space, that is the thinking space".

Two girls from the Czech Republic and Greece participating in Euroinvasion through their dance and the rhythms of striking plastic buckets and wooden boxes stated: *"If we don't understand, we make language with our bodies"*. Similarly, a comment gathered from the questionnaires distributed at the 'Gluttony' exhibition described the installation as: *"Sætter mange nye tænker i gang"* (raises many new thoughts).

Rethinking, like learning, perhaps happens best when people are confronted with the unknown, with differences, or with alternative practices or approaches to what is known. Embodied and profound aesthetic experiences of individuals were seen as vital in opening new forms of understandings through rearrangements of the already known. It was, however, difficult to trace and distinguish the contours of rethinking, how old thought was rethought, and what the outcome of such rethinking could have been. The difficulties of grasping the outcomes of rethinking however should not undermine the sentiment expressed by project makers, users and audiences that **Aarhus 2017 impacted the wide availability of artistic spaces using 'universal language' that could potentially secure deep intercultural communication processes that nourish our ability to rethink.**

Recognizing that universal languages are important facilitators of thought-provocation and perception-change as they use differences and alternatives to what is known, equal recognition has to be given to the crucial detail that universal languages *always* co-exist in symbiotic relations with traditional spoken and written languages in their proximity. The theatrical language of Erasmus Montanus, a performance where *"Lollike rethinks, discusses and challenges Danish values in a global context, delivering an observation on manners, belief and new thinking"*¹¹ (Erasmus Montanus, online programme description) works impressively when performed in Danish. However, recognizing how language, culture and thought are

tightly interwoven, and that languages are full of “*finurligheder*” (peculiarities) as expressed by an interviewee, then to what extent would the English subtitles provided on two occasions “*to accommodate non-Danish speaking audiences*”¹² succeed to capture the cultural nuances and the historical knowledge that was implicitly embedded in the Erasmus Montanus script?

In terms of international showcased events, rethinking happened within complex language encounters where universal languages circulated with English among Danish and non-Danish people. Although the curatorial statement accompanying Nathan Coley’s ‘The Same for Everyone’ states “*It is in the space where the words and their surroundings meet that magic happens*”, it may be valid to ask how the *magic* could happen when the words were written in the language of someone else? Similarly, according to the curatorial text, Barbara Kruger’s ‘Gluttony’ created a “*forhandlingsrum*” (space of negotiation) boldly comprising English words, but to what extent can a person negotiate and rearrange their thoughts in a language *not* of their heart? Jenny Holzer’s “For Aarhus” project communicating “*tremendous humanity*” certainly came close to the ‘artist’s voice’ - but it also required immense cognitive effort to crack the meanings of the prose poems in the first place.

The processes of “*at gentænke*” (to rethink) - an indirect loanword from English that first appeared in the Politiken newspaper in 1989 and entered the *retskrivningsordbog* (Danish Spelling Dictionary) in 2014 may deeply require the language of the heart to work. Responses to the ability to rethink in other languages pointed in opposing directions. One member of the public had translated Nathan Coley’s “The Same for Everyone” as “*som det der skilt med ‘they are not one of us’ eller hvad det er der står*” (like that sign with ‘they are not one of us’...or whatever it says)¹³. A theatre professional expressed: “*når det er på dansk så går fortællingen et andet sted hen i mig*” (when it is in Danish, the story travels to another place in me). A visitor to ‘Lust’ who had been impacted by the universal language of art wrote: “*Tænker at det ville have påvirket mig endnu mere, hvis teksterne havde været på dansk*” (I think it would have affected me more if the texts had been in Danish).

¹² Aarhus Theatre. Retrieved from <https://www.aarhusteater.dk/english/welcome-to-aarhus-teater/international-performances/erasmus-montanus-with-surtitles/>

¹³ The quote was shared by Nina Skriver from her data used in her report. See Skriver, N. (2018).

One question remains interesting: to what extent can a person '*gentænke*' (re-think) in another language (and in this case, English)? And why should many languages be excluded from having fruitful relations with the universal languages of art and culture to enable rethinking? The sentiment of the Croatian artist Mladen Stilinović (1994) "An artist that does not speak English is no artist" is poignant. Seen in this uncomfortable light, Aarhus 2017 **impacted the reinforcement of an unfortunate linguistic complacency that seems to be emerging in European/international arts and culture events.**

5.0 Conclusion

Clocks cannot be unwound. English is far too entrenched in the global communicative pipelines of politics, economies and culture - but this does not necessarily make it a good idea that can escape critical scrutiny. In the event 'The Overheard', which featured sound sculptures and experiments in Mindeparken, the project creators had explicitly used multiple meanings that language enables: To overhear means to hear contrary to the intention or knowledge of the speaker. It also means to disregard or *not* listen to. Universal languages of the arts do provide fertile grounds for rethinking; English does facilitate wide participation and intercultural communication - but why stop at two languages given Europe's plurilinguistic reality? Could we not *Rethink* using the complex combinations of different forms of knowledge and expression that all European languages possess? Such could be an outcome of rethinking language in the European Capital of Culture.

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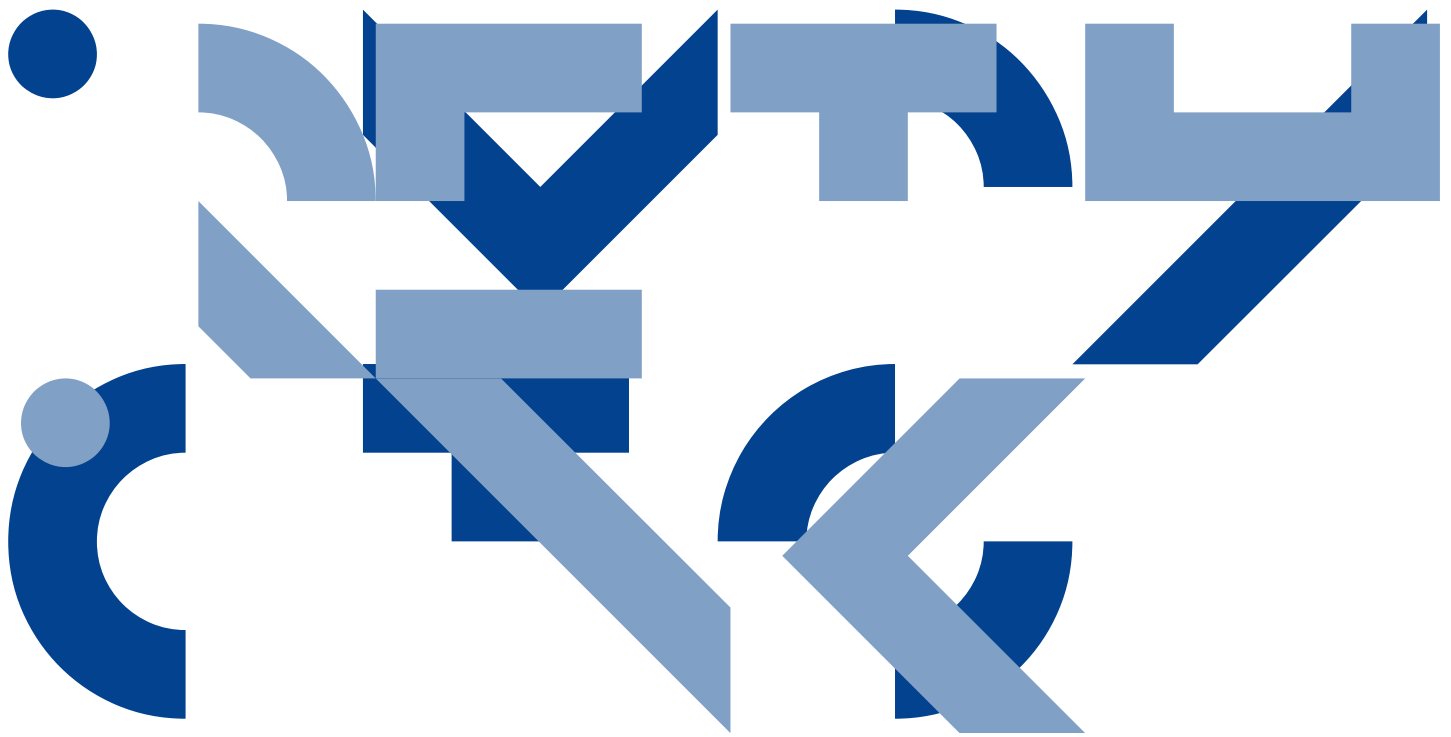
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7.0 Appendix: List of sites

1. 101 Friendship Park, presented by Aarhus 2017 and the EU-Japan Fest
2. 2017 Inhabitant of Aarhus, presented by Aarhus City Archives
3. Barbara Kruger 'Gluttony', presented by Museum of Religious Art, Lemvig
4. Complexity of Belonging, presented by Chunky Move, Anouk van Dijk and Falk Richter with Aarhus Festival and Aarhus 2017
5. Erasmus Montanus, presented by Aarhus Theatre in cooperation with Sort/Hvid
6. Global Jazz Explorer, presented by Aarhus Jazz Orchestra
7. Hvorfor taler vi dansk? Reformation og Sproget, presented by Hadsten Kirkehøjskole
8. Jenny Holzer 'For Aarhus', Aarhus 2017 Commission
9. Jenny Holzer and Christian Lemmerz 'Lust', presented by Randers Museum of Art
10. Julian Rosenfeldt 'Manifesto', presented by Coast to Coast
11. Nathan Coley 'The Same for Everyone', Aarhus 2017 Commission
12. Nordic Language and Culture Festival, presented by Nordic Language Coordination
13. On the Edge (På Kanten), presented by Mad about Words, Aarhus Literature Festival 2017
14. Rethink the Village, presented by Favrskov Municipality
15. Seven Deadly Sins Euroinvasion, presented by The Kastali'a Theatre School
16. Song Dong 'The Centre of the World' and 'Collaborations', presented by Kunsthall Aarhus
17. The Chinese are Coming, presented by Strandingsmuseum St. George, Thorsholm
18. The Overheard, presented Marie Koldkjær Højlund, Morten Riis & Aarhus University
19. World Translation A/S, Aarhus
20. Aarhus 2017 Foundation Secretariat
21. Aarhus Stories, presented by Den Gamle By, Filmby Aarhus and Aarhus 2017



The report focuses on language encounters in the European Capital of Culture Aarhus 2017 and its overall theme 'Let's Rethink'. The inquiry is built upon 1) examining the circulation of different languages, language practices, and the ideologies surrounding languages and their speakers within Aarhus 2017 encounters, and 2) discussing the impacts and implications of these encounters. By using data generated through multi-sited methodology that includes textual, interview, audio-visual and observational material, key findings are explained using four themes. These are 1) The bilingual nature of Aarhus 2017 (the extensive use of English and Danish, 2) The articulation of art, music, and performance as universal languages, 3) Other languages used as markers of authenticity or for technical interlanguage communication, and 4) Danish as "*hjerterets sprog*" (language of the heart). Focusing on the extensive use of English, which tames and syphons Europe's plurilinguistic reality into a bilingual practice, the report demonstrates how this practice secures wide participation, accommodating intercultural communication, and significant branding of Aarhus as 'international'. However, it does so at the expense of silencing other major European languages, and all the richness and diversity of knowledge, artistic and cultural expression that other European languages embrace.

Ushma Chauhan Jacobsen is an associate professor at the Department of English, Aarhus University. Ushma has earlier worked as a curator and project manager within museums and INGOs in Tanzania, Denmark and Nepal. Her research areas include professional and intercultural communication, English as an international/global language, cosmopolitanism and media geographies.