

The route to Naesboe (Nesbø) and the village of humour

Introduction:

Performance

Script: Hjelmåsrevyen (Hjelmås theater group)

Photographer: Christer Steffensen

Director: Lars Voss Sørhus

I would like to present the film “Nesbøruto». The film lasts 21 minutes and will be introduced with a 9 minute talk about how it came about, followed by 10 minutes of discussion or question and answers, altogether 40 minutes. And I also present the village Hjelmås, also known as the village of humour.

My name is Inger Helen Midtgård, and I live in this little village named Hjelmås, the village of humour. I am a social worker, have my master degree in community work and work at det « Western Norway University of applied science”. I have been part of the process from 1991, live in this “village of humour”, and I am a community worker and an action researcher. But, in my home village I am a citizen like all others and also one of them we call eldsjel, a name not easy to translate to English. If I try the nearest I can come is an enthusiast. Enthusiast «burn for», in a positive way, their community, their NGO organisation etc.

For the last years I have also been aware of seeing this community development for a research view, living in it myself. 1500 people is living in this little village, on the countryside in the west coast of Norway, living by the fjords about an hour drive from Bergen the second largest town in Norway. Hjelmås is, 10 minutes driving from, the community center in our municipality, Knarvik.

Community development

The film is an example of the use of humour in community development. According to the International Association for Community Development, Community development is defined as: “Community development is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice, through the organisation, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings”(IACD, 2017)

The script for the film, was made by a local community theater group from the Hjelmås village. During the 26 years of the theater group, the focus has been on humour to mobilize the community for changes. Social change requires that people believe they have agency and can achieve change. The film is an example of the use of humour in building community, building togetherness. Humour can build community, make us proud of the place we live, include and connect people and give quality of life to both individuals, groups and families.

It all started in 1989, our community hall was in a bad condition and a group of 20 people started to rehabilitate the hall, raise money and then we had a big opening party the next year. We had a house of our own again, and then we decided to start the community theater, and in 1991 our

community theater «Hjelmåsrevyen» had its first play. We had an autumn feast with play, dinner and dance into the next day. And this party, we have every year since then

We started with the local community theater group, then this group and their organization, ungdomslaget, made the first humor festival in 2007. The national paper "Nationen" first then called our village the village of humor. In 2008 we have our first Bygdelivsverkstad. And there the idea came up, and we decided to rename Hjelmås "the village of humor". An official request was sent to formally change the name of the village. The village had made three Humor festival in 2007, 2008 and in 2010, and one Humor conference. All based on what we are good at, playing this theater and having fun of ourselves and our community. Goffman (2004) writes about status, Hjelmås has a status as the humor village, in our municipality, and outside the municipality.

The community theater called «revy» in Norwegian is a Scandinavian phenomenon, derived by the French Burlesque and Revue and the English Vaudeville and Variety Show. It combined dance, singing, monologue, dialogue, tragedy and comedy, political satire, small video clip, and music videos, all seen together in one show with a theme as a red line through the show. We write the pieces ourselves. We are becoming very good at laughing of ourselves, and of our politicians, and the municipality leaders, our prime minister, the princess of our kingdom and so on. We have also developed a great deal of self-irony. Hjelmåsrevyen has also participated in the national championship Norsk Revy festival.

Community theater as a social glue in local communities, and in a survey by Norsk Revy in 2010, this was consolidated. Developing identity and belonging, is one of the most important health promotion factors in modern society. Socio-cultural self-image and identity are important factors in order to develop good quality of life and health promotion in all stages of life, regardless of sex, education and religion. Local meeting places like the community theater, that develop and convey cultural pride in the local community become an important social actor.

Community theater has an important intellectual value as it works in local communities as the "people's voice chair"; it is the ability of the community to reflect on itself and its environment.

Hjelmås could easily, like other small villages, be a place just to eat, and sleep, while living all your social life elsewhere, but it is not. We have a blooming cultural life, and it has impact on our well-being and our public health. I think that what we are doing all by ourselves is one of the keys to why we have developed our community.

According to ideological positivism, humor strengthens interaction and negotiation, where laughter is seen as attractive and good, and negative consequences like having fun of others is being ignored.

The film « Nesbøruto »

I'm sorry to say that this film is not translated to English and it needs no subtext. But I think you will understand what happens.

The characters in this film are characters in our play this year and previous years.

But the bus driver is the man who was driving this bus when it was route traffic, and the bus side man is from our play earlier years. He has one thing he is saying a lot. « The route to Naesboe is the route to Naesboe, even if the roads are full of holes, yes yes. This is the remark he has been saying in early plays to.

The two old ladies is ount Ragna (me with the red coat) and ount Olga. The ount Ragna has been a character in Hjelmåsrevyen for about twenty years, ount Olga is quite a new one.

The Captain is a funny drunk man, from a true story about captains at our ferry, really get drunk and crashes into the ferry port, the Captain have been with us for some year.

The hedgehog is new in this film. The hegdhog been over driven in our roads is really a big problem. Driven over by a car, and become a halv hegdhog. Getting half an bus-ticket.

Then there is this sheaps dansing at this lightpole dancing near our woolen mill, trying to get attention, also figures who having their own piece in our show last year.

The hens have a «hens- up» their kind of «stand-up», two years ago. And the young boy, 10 years old, playing the policeoffiser controlling the ticket, are new in this film.

In Ostereidet we meet the man who really is the man doing the senior exercices at the senior senter. And he is is really driving this old people hard, we are joking about that according to health promoting advices in Norway old people have to stay fit so the save the government for money.

Then there is the churchchoir, coming on singing at the bus.

And at last comes the preacher in the one of three house of preach in our small neighbour village. He is talking about that Jesus is with you and that the end is near. You can also see the text at the preach house in the back ground. It stands « Jesus is alive», but you can not the ironic text on the neighbours house « I am also alive».

In the end they come to the place Nesbø. Ount Olga says. « So this is the end» and the preacher says « The end is near». Then Olga says « Nice place». Look to the fjord and says « No, we have to drive home».

Discussion

So what can this film and this village tell us about thogetherness?

I do belive that this village had and have create thogetherness buy making this film. From the planning, to the end of the road of Nesbø, and afterwards.

The people who are included like singers in this Church choir, Osterklang, keep saying «This was really something, this was so crazy, and so fun to be a part of». This thogetherness build social capital for the village, and in the film we expanding our village Hjelmås, and include our neighbor villages; Knarvik, Gjervik, Eikanger, Ostereidet og Stranda/Nesbø.

Maybe this can be a good way of making community in our time of individualism?

Community development begins in the everyday lives of local people. This is the initial context for sustainable change. It is founded on a process of empowerment and participation. Empowerment involves a form of critical education that encourages people to question their reality: this is the basis of collective action and is built on principles of participatory democracy. In a process of action and reflection, community development grows through a diversity of local projects that address issues faced by people in community (Ledwith, Campling, Ledwith, & British Association of Social, 2011).

Participation is a key word in community development. What can this film tell us about participation: We have to ask this words, who is participating , why, how, when, where? In what and for what benefit?" (Cornwall, 2008).

And then what about non-participation? The ones not invited? The ones not interested? The ones how find «The village of humor» not so humourous. The ones who do not want to be a part of this.

References:

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