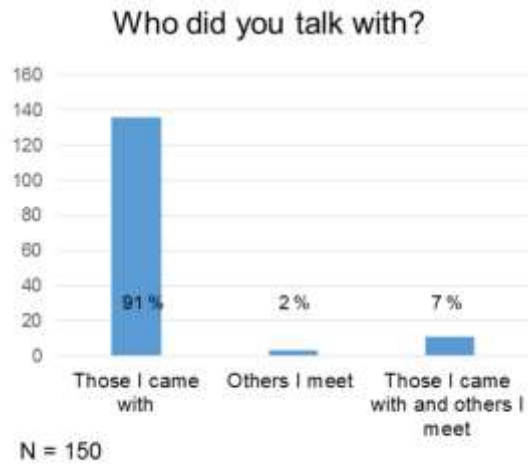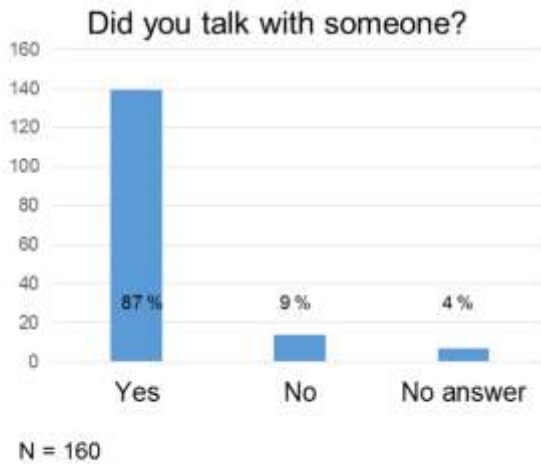Aarhus Story as a social space

Martin Brandt Djupdræt, Den Gamle By

Den Gamle By, November 28, 2017

Social interaction in Aarhus Story

87 % had talked with someone
91 % had talked with those they visited the exhibition together with
2 % with others they meet and 7 % with those they visited the exhibition together
with and others they meet
Of course a social space can take the form in other shape than talking with others
but it shows interaction between visitors are taking place in Aarhus Story.

- Museum of Liverpool - personal stories
- STAM, Gent – structure & develepment
- Maihaugen, Lillehammer – scenography & text

4 years ago we started with study trips to other European museums both city museums but also other museums – to find a common vocabularies and to study different aspect.
We noticed way of
telling personal stories in Museum of Liverpool
how to present structures and city development at STAM in Gent
scenography and texts in the Norway-exhibition at Maihaugen in Lillehammer

- ABBA Museum
- Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum
- DDR Museum

Interactivities and experiences

We looked at interactivities and the making of experiences at
the Swedish ABBA Museum and
in Germany at the ethnographical Rautenstrach-Joest-Museum in Cologne and at
DDR Museum
We also visited other museum and most important was - that we together felt the
visitors role ourselves and as visitors discussed how other arranged stories and
choose their elements and by being a visitor ourself together we notice when and
when not an exhibition worked as a social space.
After our evaluation of our study trip we launched the concept plan of Aarhus Story
in December 2014.

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  Story in December 2014.

| Atmosphere | Personal identification | Remembrance |
| Activities | Focus | The general view |

We planned a very diverse exhibition focusing on 6 elements:

Atmosphere
Personal identification
Remembrance
Activities
Focus
The general view

People should experience different moods and elements in the different room – we wanted to wake them up and make them alert in the new room and story.
We also wanted to approach different people and their different personal identity based needs by telling different stories in different ways.

Atmosphere because is something you share.

Remembrance because is something you often want to tell to others.

Activities

are social when more than one can participate or see what the acting persons do

Activities. We planned *Activities* where more than one could participate or see what the acting persons do.

In general, we thought a lot of the spatial dimension. People should be able to stand together and see and experience objects, films and stories together.
In terms of audio we also choose the ban headphone a part from two places where they have a special function. People shall hear the same thing so sound was planned to be be in the open room. For that reason, we hade been very careful in choosing elements with speak and other information sound. Our goal was only to have one informative audio element per room so it was possible for our guest to focus on the information.

We choose to use the Swedish author Magareta Ekravs principles on exhibition text.
The overall advice of Ekarv is to make the texts easy to read out and some of her
suggestion in making this possible is:
New line when there is a new meaning
Divide the text in suitable long pieces
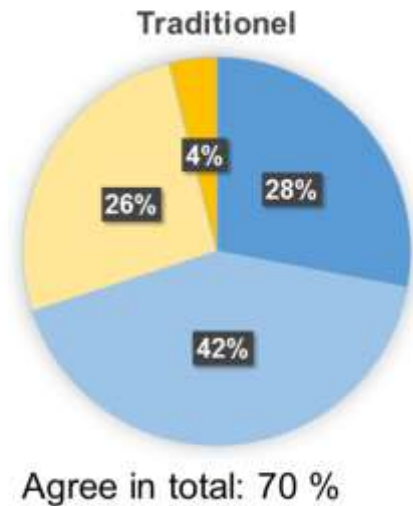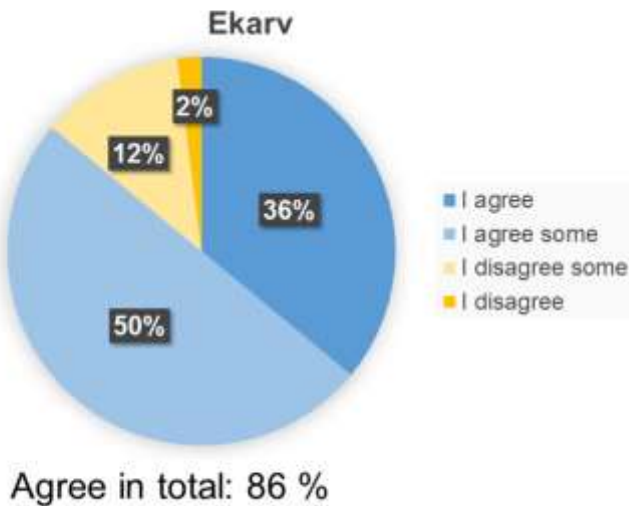Write rhythmically
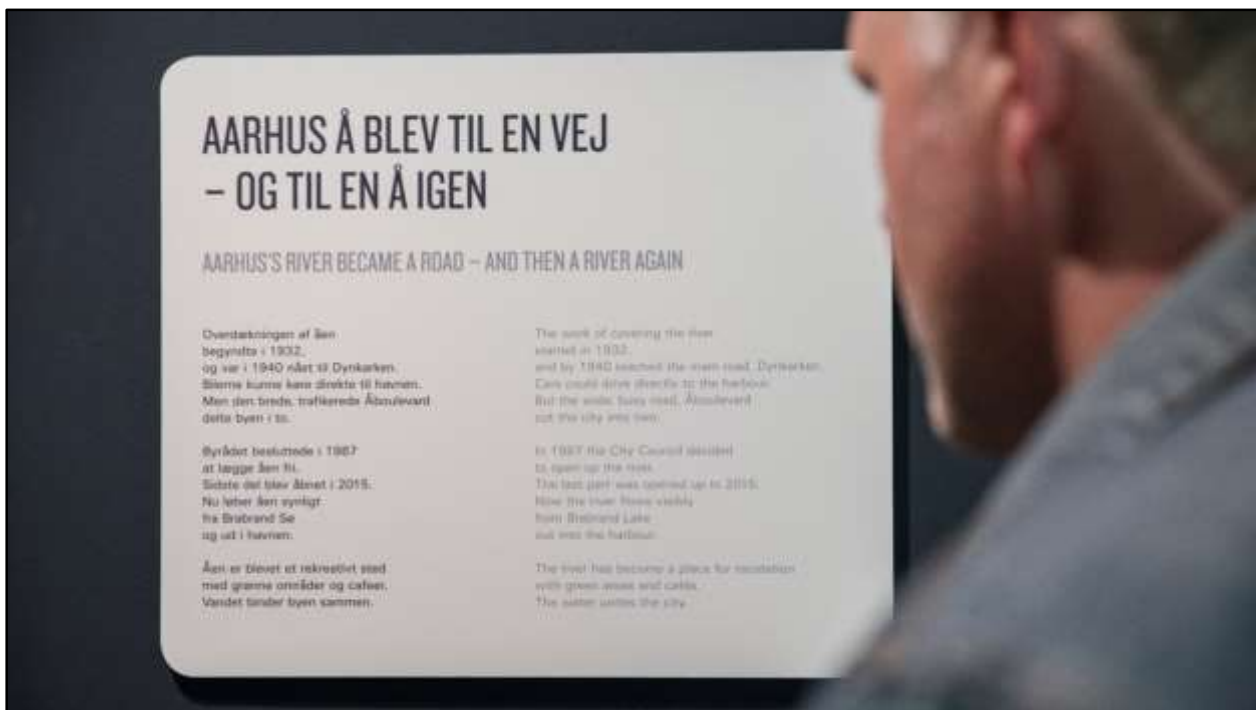
These advices make the text easy to skim and therefore it is easy to get a quick idea about the context of the text.

We believe the text of these reason is suitable in supporting the social experience:

In *family groups* you can easy orientate in the text when a child asks - What's is about Dad – and Dad can easier read out the text

In *other groups* more persons in the group will have read the text and can discuss it with each other.

I think it was a good text
(Jeg synes det var en god tekst)

N = 50

Ekarv

- I agree
- I agree some
- I disagree some
- I disagree

2%
12%
36%
50%

Agree in total: 86 %

Traditionel

4%
26%
28%
42%

Agree in total: 70 %
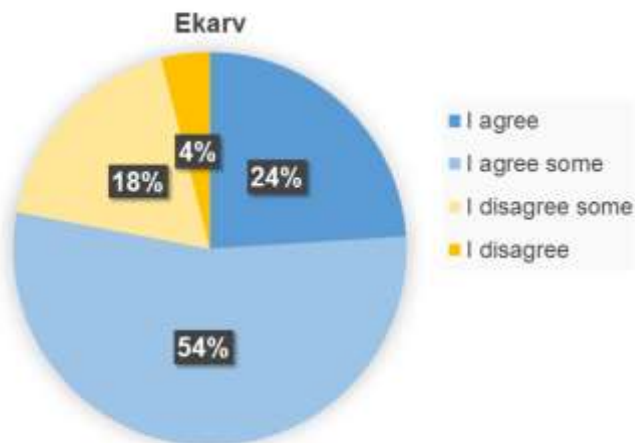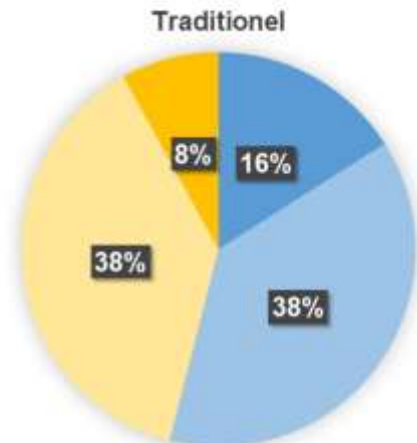
At Dansk Plakatmuseum, the Danish Poster Museum, which is part of Den Gamle By, we made a test where our visitor was presented with two texts. A usual texts written by a colleague Elsebeth Aasted who writes good and straightforward, and a text about the same poster written by the same colleague using Ekarv's principle. The visitors were, for example, asked which text they thought was a good text.
86 % agreed the Ekarv versionized text was good and 70 % liked the normal text

I would like to read the text
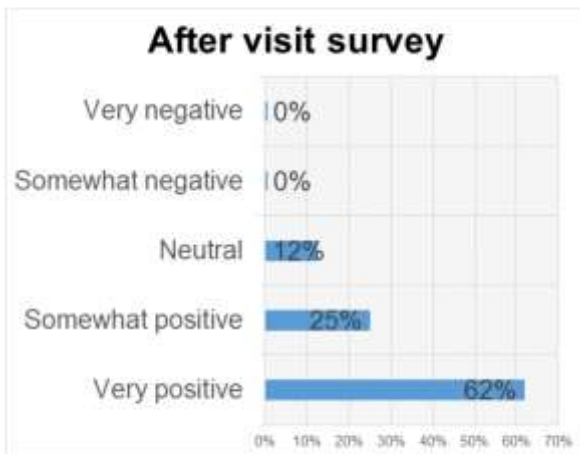*(Teksten indbyder til læsning)*

N = 50

Ekarv

- I agree
- I agree some
- I disagree some
- I disagree

Ekarv pie chart: 24%, 54%, 18%, 4%

Agree in total: 78 %

Traditionel
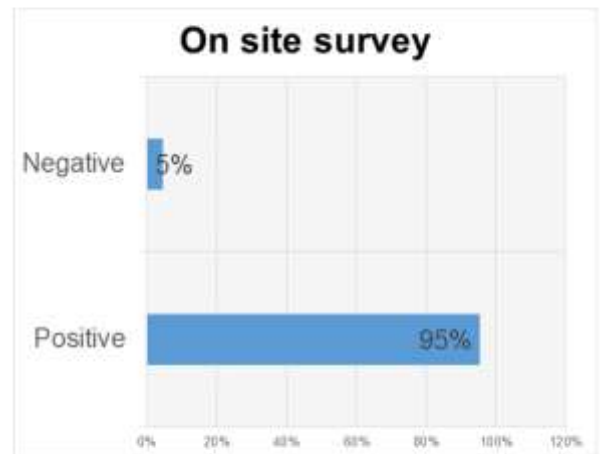
Traditionel pie chart: 16%, 38%, 38%, 8%

Agree in total: 54 %

We also asked which text was inviting for reading. 83% of the guests said it was the Ekarv text. In the traditional text, this figure was only 58%. The students also studied which outcome the guests had of the two text types - and that was almost the same. The guest learned just as much from the shorter Ekarv inspired texts.

How was your experience of the texts in the Aarhus Story

After visit survey

Very negative	0%
Somewhat negative	0%
Neutral	12%
Somewhat positive	25%
Very positive	62%

Positive: 87 %   N = 244

On site survey

Negative	5%
Positive	95%

Positive: 95 %   N = 132

In Aarhus Story we also have asked about the texts.

In one survey we did 87 % was positive or very positive about the text and in another 95 % was positive about the text.

These surveys don't tell how the text is used socially. They only tell us the texts is liked by our guest, but my assumption is they are liked because they can easier be used socially.

Making Aarhus Story a social exhibition

Elements:

Atmosphere
(to feel together)

Remembrance
(to feel and share together)

Activities
(to do and share together)

Possibilities to:

See object and film together

Hear sound and audio
information together

Read panels and text
together and make the text
easy to read out for others

Here are the main issues we have worked with in making Aarhus Story a social
experience.
We choose elements like

Atmosphere (to feel together)
Remembrance (to tell and share together)
Activities (to do or share together)

And we made room in the exhibition so it was possible to

See object and film together
Head sound and audio information together
Read panels together and make the text easy to read out for others

We followed these guidelines and do think they contribute in making Aarhus Story a
social space and therefore making Aarhus Story a better exhibition.