



If trees can walk, humans can change

Bosk: a giant art installation of 1,000 walking trees



(NL)

LEEUWARDEN



561,000



Cultural heritage
for sustainable development



Challenge

Leeuwarden was the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) in 2018, with 'iepen mienskip' (open community) as its central theme. Driven by this experience, Leeuwarden adopted a [new culture policy](#) (2021-2028). To match the energy and make the most of the investments for the ECoC the city created [Arcadia](#), a 100-day arts festival occurring every 3 years. The festival challenges inhabitants and visitors to reflect on the future of mienskip, the local landscape and heritage. Bosk was one of its main events in 2022, raising awareness of nature and climate change through art.



Solution

Bosk told a relatable story to connect, enchant, and broaden horizons. Humanity and nature both stand to benefit from rewriting the story of the Earth. That's why anyone could join Bosk. The project invited visitors to share their thoughts and to participate.

Together with people, neighbourhoods, villages, associations, entrepreneurs and organisations, Bosk aimed to create a greener future by planting lots and lots of trees. When Bosk was done, 1,000 trees got a permanent location in Leeuwarden.



How ?

1

Every day for a hundred days, a different part of Leeuwarden city centre turned green. That is because over 1,000 trees were walking around the city. This walking forest gave the trees – and with them, nature – a voice: what can we learn from trees and how does the forest view the human world?

2

Bosk was more than just an impressive mobile art installation. It was an art project with an intense programme of performances and exhibitions that focused the public's attention on the urgent need to change our relationship with nature. It included a summer school for Leeuwarden neighbourhoods, a Bosk news programme for primary school pupils, a whispering garden, and art performances.

3

Bosk created a space for everyone to make time for conversations, art and ideas. After a hundred days, the walking forest left Leeuwarden city centre, and the trees made their way to their final destinations. Dispersed throughout the city and the surrounding areas, they found fresh soil where they put down roots and now keep an eye on future generations.

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Budget/Financing

€4.6 million

The total budget of the initiative was €4.6 million from the local and regional government. The creative team of Arcadia oversaw the creative process and delivery of the project.



Management

Thanks to a dedicated team of hundreds of volunteers, the Bosk forest played with the senses and created a new network of interconnected roots. Arcadia oversaw the organisation but worked closely with several staff members and advisors from the municipality and the province because Bosk touched upon event organisation, legislation, landscaping, city marketing etc.

The practical implementation of Bosk raised some challenges: how do you water an entire forest every day? How do you move 1,000 trees throughout the city centre every week? What if there's a bird nests in the tree? Where will the trees go after?



Transferability

- With a project this size and impact on the city's infrastructure it is of the utmost importance that the municipality and the producers work as one team.
- A good balance between artistic freedom and practical needs, like safety and logistics, is led by a positive partnership between the artists and the city officers.
- The trees were a big part of the budget, but the project cleverly integrated them in the wider budget of the municipality.



Impact

With Bosk and Arcadia, Leeuwarden-Friesland answered the question that every ECoC needs to answer: how to ensure that the European Capital of Culture year is not just a one-year party? How can the year be the basis for a fundamental change in your city and region?

When Bosk ended, the municipality planted all the trees in and around Leeuwarden. Though inhabitants asked, 'why can't we let the forest stay here permanently?'

People enjoyed the cleaner air and the silence that the forest provided. They enjoyed the green space. The initiative showed them that a greener city was possible. It challenged their understanding of city planning and helped convince decision-makers to invest in permanent green spaces.



(c) Thomas Vaer Fotografie



Links

- Video: <https://youtu.be/hp2AVbSRVRw>
- [Press toolkit](#) (pictures and video's)



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