

Interview of James Wallabank, conducted in Bergen (NO) on 22.11.2013

Organisation: Access Space Network (Sheffield, UK) /

www.access-space.org

Festival: the first edition of 'Do It Anyway' will be organized in April 2015

> Give yourself a title, some kind of imaginary title, something unconventional that describes best your role in the organisation?

Constructive destabilizer

> What kind of animal is your festival and why?

A bee, because bees are individually unintelligent but collectively intelligent. Also bees are allergic to corporate produced insecticides, so they have a big hostility to chemical products (like Monsanto) and also they are quite resistant to ownership, and they facilitate vital services. Bees could be quite like artists, cause the effect of their work is profound. If we don't take care of them, we will be doomed.

> What was the spark that inspired your festival?

Rather than a spark, a very slow process, where we started to realize that people only pay attention to a big party, that they are conceptually unable to pay attention to ongoing activity.

> Why are you doing this and not something else with your life?

Perhaps I haven't had a better offer. I find it important to do things that I think are meaningful.

> How would you describe your festival to your grand-parents?

We had a mini-festival in 2005 about live coding. I would describe it by saying, that there are some extremely interesting new technologies and practices, where the expertise is not located in universities or businesses, but in individuals who are enthusiasts. So the significance of this kind of things is getting people together so that they can share that kind of expertise and interest. It is in the end all about inspiration and information sharing.

> What would you have in an organiser's survival kit?

One extra day per week that nobody else has, that you can just put in between 2 days; a list of phone numbers of people who might be helpful at short notice; a working printer.

> What's one thing that you do wrong?

I don't think that people make organizations happen. You can not do everything right. You have some kind of super power but you have also a kind of super weakness. My role at Access Space is one of exploration and leadership but exploration and leadership is not the same as management. The thing is that I am not very good at managing or good at managing in person but not good at management systems. Some people have beautiful calendars, fantastic email lists, with team meetings on a regular basis but they won't be introducing new factors. I am very good at being opportunist and at face-to-face persuading people to do things. But lots of people get frustrated, because you need to have a rule. But it is not how I do things. So I need other people to do these things. I am good at starting things, but the final wrapping up after events, I am not great at. There is the idea that management comes in 3 phases, like in an invasion: 1) It is the middle of the night and you are parachuting commandos that will cause damage and disrupt. 2) The morning comes and the main army arrives when the enemy is already confused. 3) You need the police to keep order. Or in software development terms: 1) Coders to solve the difficult problems 2) Testers and the producers that will get the product to market. 3) Customer support. I am in the first phase.

> What is a successful festival according to your own standards?

It would be one where people go away and they feel happy about it, when they have more energy after than before the festival. It would be one that makes the organization more sustainable.

> How can one contribute to your festival?

We will need to raise a budget and make a call for artists. But also we should have an opportunity for people to pitch ideas that we are not calling for. Locally I would like people to volunteer to help in different ways. It would be good to get some good media coverage as well. A key thing is physical presence. I would like people to be there rather than having them just send some work.

> List a few events that you find inspiring

Sheffield hackers & makers day - small scale but a lot of people got together, made things and shared things (www.makerdaysheffield.com/).

Mal au Pixel exhibition in Paris in 2012 was great (www.malaupixel.org)

Next 5 minutes (a while ago!) in Amsterdam

(http://monoskop.org/Next_5_Minutes)