

Exhibition: Art and Sustainable Development

How it started

The collaboration of the European School in Uccle and the school in Kayar, a fishing village north of Dakar, the capital of Senegal, started out with a concern of massive environmental degradation of the sea and the coast. The question arose, could we students digest scientific results about unsustainable fisheries, which ruin marine ecosystems and coastal people's livelihoods. How could we find our own expressions of reacting to the information.

The researchers from Europe and West Africa were already engaged in international cooperation supported by the European Research Framework Programme, but here at school, we were initially not even aware about the problem of overfishing and its dramatic effects on marine ecosystems. We certainly had no idea about the scale of the problem. So, the graphical presentation of the research results by Cornelia Nauen from the International Scientific Cooperation Programme of the Commission came as a surprise to the students and even the teacher, Ms. Bettina Ghalalle.

How we went about creating our paintings and installations

But this also raised the question for us, what to do – it's all very well to hear the words and see the graphs. But first it gave us a feeling of being powerless and dumbfounded in the face of what seemed senselessness or worse, plain greed. It was not at all easy to react in a satisfying way. Then there was also this idea that the pupils in Kayar were experiencing the effects first hand and people from their village were perhaps even forced to come as illegal migrants in search of work and better lives to Europe, because their livelihoods were suffering. But we had little concrete

knowledge about living conditions there. Luckily, some video material and internet searches produced visual impressions that helped create a more intense relationship with the topic. Gradually, the frustration gave way to plans what to do.

Ms. Ghalalle has meanwhile filmed the students' comments on their individual motivations and approaches to the problem and the artistic solution they had chosen.

Getting more attention from Kayar and the 'high ups'

When the date of the 50th school anniversary party drew closer, we got more news from Kayar and were excited that the students would send us their works for a joint exhibition.

We also learnt that the European Research Commissioner, Dr. Janez Potočnik, became interested and allowed the exhibition to take place under his auspices. We surely needed to give our best. Everybody worked frantically on their projects, even outside school hours, because some of the more ambitious works would otherwise not have been finished in time.



Opening of the courier from Kayar (foto: C.E. Nauen)

On the Thursday before the party, the parcel with colourful paintings of the students in Kayar was delivered to our class. The same day, we clubbed together, framed and prepared all 57 pieces for the exhibition.

The day of the exhibition – Le jour de l'exposition

L'exposition a été officiellement ouverte par M.

KIVINEN, Directeur de l'Ecole, Mme MINCH, Directrice de la Coopération Scientifique Internationale de la Commission Européenne, et Mme CHRISTMANN, Secrétaire Générale des Ecoles européennes, qui ont rappelé, dans leurs

saying: "a scientific explanation shows us the problem, but does not necessarily engage us. When I see these works, my sensitivity is touched and this motivates me much more strongly to act. "But it's best to recall the atmosphere of the place through the photos.



Director Kivinen opens the exhibition with a copy of 'Connection' in his hand



Hristo Kouzmanov



Overview of the exhibition

interventions, l'importance de l'interaction entre les cultures, les écoles, les scientifiques, les artistes et les pédagogues. Ils ont tous trois remercié les élèves pour leur engagement ainsi que pour la qualité de leur travail artistique. Ils ont, en outre, encouragé les professeurs et les scientifiques, à l'initiative de ce projet, à le poursuivre et à le développer. [We put this in French, so that the students in Kayar can also understand]

We attracted quite a number of visitors and many compliments. One visiting student aptly brought it to the point



Diatou Ndiaye and Djiby Checkh Bâ

What's next?

The echo of our joint exhibition was very nice. It even got showcased on the Commission website: <http://ec.europa.eu/research/inco> (there is an English and a French version) and in Dakar too. It was a great feeling to have pulled this off

together. After the exams and the summer break, we should be thinking about showing our exhibition in some other schools and Commission buildings, as suggested by the speakers in the inauguration.

Senegal and elsewhere have already confirmed their willingness to help us continue. We hope to get the internet connection to work better, so that we can have direct contact with the students in Senegal. Perhaps, one day, we might even visit each other in person.



Olalla Sabater Sanz – Don't eat babies



Pauline Pascale Meeûs



Khadidiatou Gueye and Pape Matar MBaye

We would also like to continue collaborating with Kayar. For that we are happy that the newsletter sale generates some income. We also heard that some other schools in Germany and in some other African country are getting interested in this sort of exchange. Ms. Ghallale, and the supporters in Brussels,



Alexander Haukrogh Jensen

Last but not least, we hope that our collaboration raises awareness on the need to stop the destructive fishing practices and rebuild healthy ecosystems. We'd like to have all these creatures around in the future, and be able to eat some without bad feelings.

Giulia Bottoni, s6DE, and Livia Bottoni, s5DE (Fotos: P. Bottoni)