



The Middle East Expedition

The key elements

The project idea

The Middle East Expedition is a caravan of busses traveling around Syria, Jordan and Lebanon for 3 weeks in August 2010. On the busses will be 100 creative, open minded, curious and enthusiastic young people, respectively from Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Denmark. The busses will stop in smaller cities in the 3 countries, 2 days in each city. Every time the busses stop, the young people will get out and do creative and engaging activities together with young locals. All the different activities will in one way or the other focus upon the main theme of the project, *engagement*; either by having engagement as a theme of the activity, or simply by making an engaging activity.

These activities will encapsulate the core of engagement, because the young people on the busses will themselves have defined and created how they want to express this theme; whether through art, radio, music, cooking, theatre, photography, dance, videos – or any other media they desire.

In order to reach this goal, the participants will have to start working on their ideas in good advance. In July 2009 open workshops will be conducted in each of the four countries. These workshops will gather youth from different backgrounds, with different talents, different networks, different ideas and different aspects on the theme, the point being to foster new unique ideas for projects on the bus.

We believe that all young people have a special talent and something special to offer. Through creative and interactive brainstorm sessions and workshops their individual contributions will mix, and unique ideas will appear.

This first workshop is only the start of numerous national and international workshops and events. All of this is happening to make sure that the activity ideas keep developing with youth involved, until and throughout the expedition in August 2010.

The core dimensions

The key elements in the Middle East Expedition can be summed up to the following:

- **Engagement**

The core objective of the Middle East Expedition is to challenge existing norms for youth projects, which are almost exclusively initiated and organized by everyone, but the youth themselves. The Middle East Expedition is using ownership as a key component to reach the maximum of engagement from the young people involved. In reality this will be achieved by having the youth themselves developing and planning the project. This also provides for a whole new way of providing youth a space to lead by example, and an opportunity to experiment with new ideas and visions for forms of youth engagement in the region. Focusing on engagement, involvement, responsibility, reflection and action, these ideas will become more than buzzwords only when they are actively rethought by young people and expressed through various creative medias that engages the project creators themselves.

- **Experimenting with expressions through creative medias**

The young project creators themselves have to define the media of expression that makes them inspired, curious and in which they feel they can make a difference. By having the youth creating their own activities and the form of expressing engagement they desire they themselves will encapsulate exactly this core theme; engagement.

Furthermore, we believe that gathering around creative medias is the ideal facilitating element in creating a common platform for all the youth in and around the project.

- **Dialogue**

Throughout the project dialogue will be central in many aspects; within the project creators in each country, between the project creators from the four countries involved and between the project creators and the young people addressed in all the local communities where the busses will stop. The dialogue in all these aspects is the key in making the Middle East Expedition a success; through the personal relations that will appear across different backgrounds, talents and borders the project will reach a level where unique ideas will flourish on a common ground.

- **Cultural exchange**

The cultural exchange element plays a major part in the project. The cultural diversity in the expedition will ensure a wider spectrum of perspectives and ideas with regards to youth engagement, and will help position the findings of the Middle East Expedition a larger global context. Learning from each other's experiences and different cultural standpoints lies within the heart of the project. Creating a joint platform and traveling together with the project for three weeks is a unique opportunity to expose and challenge stereotypical notions of each other.

- **Youth-to-youth action**

It is important to note that the Middle East Expedition is a unique project in the Middle East that is, in fact, created by young people for young people, using ownership as the key motivator. The project is challenging the perception that experts and massive experience is needed to take action and making a difference. The Middle East Expedition aims to prove that all young people can affect their own future and contribute with something valuable to the community they live in. When there are no experts imposing the exact form of the project, only the sky is the limit for how the young people express the theme.