

## **A small Scottish town**

I moved to a small Scottish town 21 years ago. I arrived from a big city in Europe. A place full of cinemas, restaurants, museums, academia, galleries, supper clubs, university courses, latte cafes, smoothie bars ...

The small Scottish town, was quite pretty:

Granite houses, cobble stone roads, a castle, plenty of green around it. There was also a ski centre. I ski, and this was great for me.

And what else was going on?

- The boy racers hit the local paper.
- At the school board that I joined, they said the children were becoming too fat.
- They also said the boys are under achieving. There are not enough male role models around, they said. Many of them Dads are offshore.
- There was drinking and fighting at night time, the NHS statistics for the town were ORANGE.
- There was a tattie shop, a shop with nothing but tatties.
- The supermarkets came and the small shops closed, one by one...
- Many people were in debt, they have too many credit cards.

Apart from this, I thought there was nothing going on. What is going on? Is there anything going on here? I had three small children, and I wanted them to come from an interesting place too? So what could I do?

I met two other people, they also came from big European cities. They also thought there was nothing going on.

A couple of bottles of wine. And we thought we need to make it happen. Ourselves. The consuming of culture.

And then we brought the theatre to town, the exhibitions that came from the city, and the music too. But few people came. What's going on? Why don't they miss it like us?

But then we came across an artist. The artist was talking to people. About their animals, their pets and the ones in the farms. He befriended the people and their pets, and the people and their pets befriended him. He also helped the farmer with the lambing. Day and night. He kept the still born ones. They are still around.

And another artist came. He checked what the role of a father is today? He created a tug o' war between Dads and non-Dads.

And another one came from the big city, and he checked out people's street fighting culture. He played Ennio Morricone deep in the night to the fighters - and the police.

And another artist, she befriended the boy racers, the tubers, as they are called here. And she made a drive in cinema with them and all the other people here.

An artist from far away Africa played with people at Christmas, he turned it at its head, he became Santa with his white helper. He swapped calabashes in turn for ideas, at the bank, at the supermarket, in the train full of shoppers to the city.

And then two came from China who discovered one of the town's amazing sons. A man who went out to teach the bible, but came back with over a hundred philosophy books translated.

And then we invited an artist, a local lass, who learned singing early. She dug out the songs, the tunes and the ballads. And she sung them on the farms, where the tatties once grew.

We looked, and looked, and looked, and there was more and more to discover in this little town. The songs, the houses, the soups, the dances, the paper, the shops, the paths, the trees, the children, the grannies, the commuters, the wheel chairs, the new comers and the old comers...

And so we kept on looking and listening, and we never got bored again. The artists helped us look. The butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker.

And the children grew up. And they can think back of a place that had a lot to look at, a lot to listen, to learn from. A lot to talk about. They learned to look. And so did I. Thanks to the artists, who are part of the community. They are part of my, of our family.

And this is where I still am. I learned to look. No place is boring. You just need to look.

Now our situation is different. I have colleagues, an award, some money, an office, a business plan, a safety procedure, a carbon footprint counting system.

And now there is no more offshore. Farming is now about wind instead of tatties.

So what do we do now?

In this small colourful Scottish town.

**Written by Claudia Zeiske on the occasion of Deveron Arts' 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2016**