A handbook for fostering a participatory approach in the performing arts

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MAKING CULTURE IN COMMON

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Foreword

Back to the roots: the inspiration of Be SpectACTive!

Luca Ricci

First chapter. A small village of 16,000 inhabitants in the Apennine Mountains, in the centre of Italy, with a performing arts festival established ten years earlier. A group of citizens – neither theatre nor dance professionals, simply enthusiasts – had agreed to work together for nine months a year and meet each other every week to watch and evaluate 400 performance videos, the aim being to select nine shows for the festival's annual programme. The village is named Sansepolcro, the festival is called Kilowatt – whose co-founder and co-director is myself, together with my wife Lucia Franchi – and the group of spectators are the Visionari. These are the premises and the starting point from which the idea of Be SpectACTive! was born.

The second chapter of the story is set in Lecce, in Puglia, in the south of Italy, in 2011, during a professional meeting organised by the Fondazione Fitzcarraldo. There, I for the first time met Giuliana Ciancio, a cultural project-manager, and proposed we together start a Europe-wide research project, looking for performing arts projects in which the audience was actively involved in selecting part of the programming for theatres and festivals.

The next chapter is situated back in Sansepolcro, in July 2012, when the Kilowatt Festival invited 12 professionals to meet and share their innovative European projects for active spectator involvement in performing arts programming. Following the meeting, Giuliana and I led the process of recruiting all the partners – some of them already participants in the very first meeting – and writing the proposal. The keyword of the first project was a neologism – 'active spectatorship' – but our first application was rejected.

So we tried again, and the second one was approved, and in December 2014 we started the first quadrennial edition of Be SpectACTive! 2014–2018. Obviously with success, because after the first four years, the EU Commission decided to support a second Be SpectACTive! edition to run from 2018 to 2022.

The most original aspect of both the Be SpectACTive! projects was the idea that audience and artists could forge a creative path together: the audience could inspire the artists, giving them feedback and insights, sharing knowledge and experience to provide creative momentum. In this way, spectators are not just the mere consumers of a product; instead they become the producers of meanings, activators of stimuli, creators of awareness. Art becomes a place where citizenship is experienced from an active and interactive perspective.

When we wrote the first project and subsequently worked on the second one, it was clear to us that the radical perspective it contained questioned the role of curators and professionals: the theatre and dance experts were no longer considered as deus ex machina, uniquely able to understand the needs and preferences of artists and spectators alike. Instead they were seen as creators of collaborative experiences, in which the arts are used as a goal in themselves, as well as a means to increase the interactions in a community of individuals and groups.

Be SpectACTive! - A matter of 'how'

Giuliana Ciancio

The way in which (that is 'how') a cultural architecture functions is among the greatest challenges for any EU cultural cooperation project. This above all entails conceiving the given project as a concrete context within which all the participants can experiment whist simultaneously spreading and widening economic, organisational and artistic responsibility. This in turn involves creating spaces for people that were not imagined to begin with – to consciously experience and profit from cultural clashes between different national perspectives, hence also leading to the sharing of skills among partners. This is an ostensibly internal procedure. However, given the cross-border (or better trans-local) nature of EU cultural cooperation, this equally implies that an EU project occupies an intermediate space between cultural local experiments, EU cultural policy development and global dynamics. The 'how' (as an internal procedure) crucially also depends on this factor.

In the effort to put this 'how' to work, in Be SpectACTive! we came to appreciate that a peer-learning network, in its production-oriented nature, requires internal qualitative procedures. These procedures are meaningful if the cultural ecosystem is truly represented and not simply homogenised into a major tendency or policy priorities. Among the various experiments, we have gradually embraced various discussion tools – such as fishbowl, world-café, and a range of others – to flank the project's participatory mechanisms. We have chosen in-progress internal qualitative evaluations to scrutinise shared artistic journeys. And we have invested in professional roles to enlarge trans-local interactions in co-programming, co-creation and co-commissioning. In the course of this journey, a 'research-time' period has emerged, which stands for valorising the time needed for experimenting at both the artistic and organisational levels. This time has

also been shared between proper 'academic research' and the real cultural realm. The resulting dialogue (via action research) has given a common name to recurrent terms or practices ('cultural participation', 'cultural democracy', 'active spectatorship', etc.) to the point that they can be successfully used in different ways in the local territories.

In our own system of 'people engagement', the matter of 'how' has become synonymous with questioning democratic procedures. Once analysed within the wider partnerships and discussed in tandem with other EU experiences and EU policy arenas, these democratic procedures have decisively changed. At the end of this journey, we have the advantage of being able to clearly see the way in which this 'how' has and still is emerging to take its place among the legacies of EU cultural cooperation. This is a democratic matter, explored in a circumscribed trans-local context but nonetheless significant for understanding national and trans-national tendencies, overall cultural and democratic needs, and the wider EU social and political fabric. This 'how' has driven us to react to the crisis caused by the pandemic so as to bring about solidarity using the instruments at our disposal – a solidarity that can be equally extended to artists and cultural professionals in the ongoing invasion of Ukraine. I myself see this 'how' (between its failures and successes) as a cultural participatory democratic procedure, nourished by the multiple interactions across the EU space, which in turn constitutes a vital contribution to the EU policy debate. Faced with the spectre of resurgent neo-nationalism and the widening crisis of our representative democracies, this 'how' also says a lot about the real need of many, many people to meaningfully reconnect the various segments of our societies.

The Journey You Are about to Go On

Giada Calvano,
Luisella Carnelli
and Elettra Zuliani

This handbook was created with a very concrete and operational purpose in mind: to provide a tool, a sort of guiding compass, for operators, mediators, cultural organisations, artistic directors and – why not? – even artists when approaching participatory cultural processes.

It does not pretend to cover the theme of cultural participation in all its myriad nuances and implications, although it does explicitly provide interpretative frameworks on the meaning of a term that in its simplicity also encompasses ethical choices and the deployment of a complex and interrelated system of value assets, and that, moreover, can find different declinations.

This publication is nourished by both the theoretical and practical lessons we have learned during the eight years of the Be SpectACTive! EU project, through a trial-and-error approach involving both mistakes and never-ending achievements alike.

The book tries to explore the reasons that make participation so vital, in part because of its intimate affinity with human nature. It aims to provoke reflection – sometimes starting from a theoretical statement, sometimes from concrete examples (which we hope will resonate with the experiences of the reader).

Crucially, instead of aiming to be a ready-to-use recipe book, it intends to provide what are operational pathfinders.

The book was born as an act of sharing, animated by the belief that everyone can find their own way, or rather that this way unravels progressively with the reading. And, like every road, it will have steep stretches, sometimes it will turn off the beaten path, sometimes it will become a highway … but it is up to the driver to decide when to press on the accelerator, when to slow down, when to stop, when to choose a shortcut.

In essence, we have imagined it to be somewhere between a book and a customisable notebook, with the reader deciding the dosage.

Why?

In the course of eight years of action research within the framework of Be SpectACTive!, in which we have investigated:

- *the different methods and intensities with which participatory processes can be articulated,*

- *the motivations behind them,*

- *the congruences and contradictions,*

- *the limits and potential,*

- *the innovative approaches and those inscribed in the furrow of continuity.*

We have realised that:

- *theoretical frameworks often need to be 'translated' into prototypical projects that require operational tools,*

- *the staff dealing with the dynamics of relations with audiences and artists are confronted with very concrete and contextual problems,*

- *although there is no pre-packaged 'recipe', it is possible to identify both key moments/milestones and similar needs, requirements and expectations amongst the different actors,*

- *people are human beings, therefore they are complex and multifaceted, and when we relate to them we must always keep in mind that they are characterised by:*

  - different demographic, educational and socio-economic backgrounds

  - different interests and passions

  - different access and involvement opportunities in cultural activities

  - different degrees of knowledge about what you do

  - different possibilities to participate (time, commitment, energy, passion, desire)

  - seeking different benefits even when doing the same things.

Who is it for?

This workbook is for you if you are:

- *A mediator or 'community manager'*
- *A cultural organisation (of any size or form)*
- *An arts practitioner*
- *An artistic director*
- *A creative producer*
- *In general, a person or institution with a mission to engage local communities in arts and culture by:*

- creating and maintaining meaningful and long-lasting relationships with your communities
- actively involving your beneficiaries
- experimenting with new prototypal activities
- working with artists willing to embrace reflective and audience-centric practices
- nurturing your audiences through active and authentic involvement
- exploring in greater depth the links between creative decision-making and audience experiences.

Book structure

This volume has been conceived in two integrated and complementary parts, to be read in sequence or separately, it doesn't matter.

The first part introduces a reflection on the meaning of participation and what we refer to when talking about participatory practice in the performing arts, also providing examples of typologies of participation ('What Are Participatory Practices in the Cultural Sector?'). It then delves into the reasons and reflections behind the decision to embark on a participatory journey ('Why Does a Cultural Organisation Adopt a Participatory Approach?') and the dilemmas and tensions between opposite conceptual extremes which may occur on this journey, including practical cases and lessons learnt ('Dilemmas and Risks of Participation'). Finally, the different actors involved in participatory processes are examined ('The Community Manager'). In the second part of the book, using practical tips and examples we try to answer the question how cultural organisations and professionals can integrate a participatory approach into their daily practice.

We have realised that:

- You can read it in a linear fashion, following its structure as it retraces the operational phases of implementation of any participatory project.

- You can decide to dive into a perspective (we imagine three main different ones), taking into account the core actors involved in participatory processes in the performing arts, namely **artists, organisations** and **communities.**

- You can look for **tips** and **tricks** or simple suggestions for a specific need.

- Lastly, if you are feeling adventurous, you can randomly open it looking for inspiration.

PART 1 -
PRELUDE

What Are Participatory Practices in the Cultural Sector?

Emmanuel Négrier,
Félix Dupin-Meynard,
Julia Sterner and
Giada Calvano

What is 'participation'?

The polysemy of the word 'participation' creates a semantic confusion: participation sometimes refers to 'cultural practices', 'spectatorship' or 'audiences', but may also hint at 'participatory art', 'community art', 'active involvement', 'creative participation', 'arts engagement', 'citizen participation', etc. Here we set out to explore some distinctions and typologies that may help to clarify the different forms of participation.

Passive/active?

In 2006, UNESCO stated that cultural participation is 'not limited to the consumption of products that belong to the so-called "elite" culture but is part of daily life and contributes strongly to the quality of life of a given community'.[1] A few years later, the 2009 UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics (FCS) reiterated that participation mainly refers to taking part in amateur or unpaid activity, as opposed to the term 'consumption', normally used when referring to 'an activity for which the consumer has given some monetary payment'.[2] In 2012, UNESCO stated that the commonly accepted meaning of 'participation' covers both 'attendance' (passive) and 'participation' (active). This perception of attendance is, however, questioned, as it suggests that being a spectator is not an 'active' posture, and does not account for the different types of exchanges between artists, artworks and spectators.[3]

[1]   Adolfo Morrone, *Guidelines for Measuring Cultural Participation* (Montreal: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2006).

[2]   UNESCO Institute for Statistics, *Measuring Cultural Participation*, 2009 UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics Handbook no. 2 (Montreal: UNESCO, 2012).

[3]   Ben Walmsley, 'Co-creating theatre: authentic engagement or inter-legitimation?' *Cultural Trends*, 22, no. 2 (2013): 108–18.

Democratisation/democracy?

Traditionally, cultural participation is understood within the paradigm of cultural democratisation: it mainly concerns the issues of massification and diversification of audiences. However, the crisis of legitimacy of cultural institutions, as well as the increase of discourses and claims denouncing the failure of democratisation and the top-down approach of cultural policies, has gradually given new dimensions to the term 'participation'. Beyond mere attendance, participation increasingly embraces the (active) involvement of audiences and/or citizens in cultural and artistic projects.

This is why nowadays definitions of participation are more related to the objectives of empowerment, cultural democracy or emancipation, aspiring to give a more place to non-professionals in cultural projects.

Participation as an exchange?

Some definitions take these different dimensions into account by considering participation as an 'exchange'. Philosopher Joëlle Zask, for instance, proposes a definition of participation as an exchange involving the concomitant existence of three conditions, ideally in equilibrium with each other:

'to take part in'
a relationship in which individuals are not restricted to the group

'to contribute to'
the result would not have been the same without the contribution

'to benefit from'
according to the participant's experience: material, ideal, relational...[4]

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[4]   Joëlle Zask, *Participer: Essai sur les formes démocratiques de la participation* (Lormont: Le bord de l'eau, 2011).

Who participates?

Overall, most definitions of participation involve exchanges with 'non-professionals'. François Matarasso, for example, defines 'participatory art' very simply as 'the creation of art by professional artists and non-professional artists'.[5]

The distinctions between professional and non-professional/amateur vary by discipline/sector, with a recent tendency that the divisions become blurred or even disappear. Most of the time, non-professional participants are defined as individuals who are not career-directed with paid contracts/arrangements in their field. But this status covers very different realities.

Participatory projects distinguish several categories of participants. Some are dedicated to the involvement of existing audiences (deepening the relationship); or, on the contrary, dedicated to non-audiences (diversification). Other projects name 'target audiences', the most common of which are 'young people', 'inhabitants', 'inhabitants of the peripheries', 'migrants', 'disabled people', 'elderly people' or 'women', depending on the objectives of the projects (social inclusion, intergenerational dialogue; involvement of young people, cultural democratisation, empowerment, etc.).

From all these elements, Félix Dupin-Meynard and Anna Villaroya define cultural participation in the framework of cultural policies as 'a mutual exchange between cultural institutions and non-professionals'.[6]

However, they point out the need to distinguish between classic 'cultural participation' (spectatorship, consumption, etc.) and forms of participation that involve a sharing of power between the two parties.[7]

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[5] François Matarasso, *A Restless Art: How Participation Won, and Why it Matters* (Lisbon and London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2019).

[6] Félix Dupin-Meynard and Anna Villarroya, 'Participation(s)? Typologies, Uses and Perceptions in the European Landscape of Cultural Policies', in Félix Dupin-Meynard and Emmanuel Négrier (eds.), *Cultural Policies in Europe: A Participatory Turn?* (Toulouse: Editions de l'Attribut, 2020), 31–54.

[7] Ibid.

What is shared?

What is the object, the practice or the pretext, and what is the subject of the exchange? Three different dimensions can be identified: cultural practices, professional artistic creation and decision-making in artistic institutions. On the one hand, cultural practices cover the classic objects of 'cultural participation', where the sharing concerns cultural products; singular shows, moments, pieces, exhibitions; and meeting with artists, as well as amateur artistic practices. On the other hand, the sharing of professional artistic creation covers co-creation with professional artists, in addition to participatory performances. Finally, the sharing

of decision-making in artistic institutions can concern the choice and implementation of projects, activities, events, programming, budgets – in short any strategic issue in which decisions are normally made only by professionals.

This participation as 'sharing of the decision-making' can have very different scopes and implications.

Different scopes of participatory sharing in cultural institutions and policies

Source: Dupin-Meynard and Villaroya, in Dupin-Meynard and Négrier (2020): 42.

A part of an activity / project?

A specific project designed for participation?

An entire activity / project?

The global project of the institution?

The global project of the institution and its activities?

The cultural policies budgets and orientations?
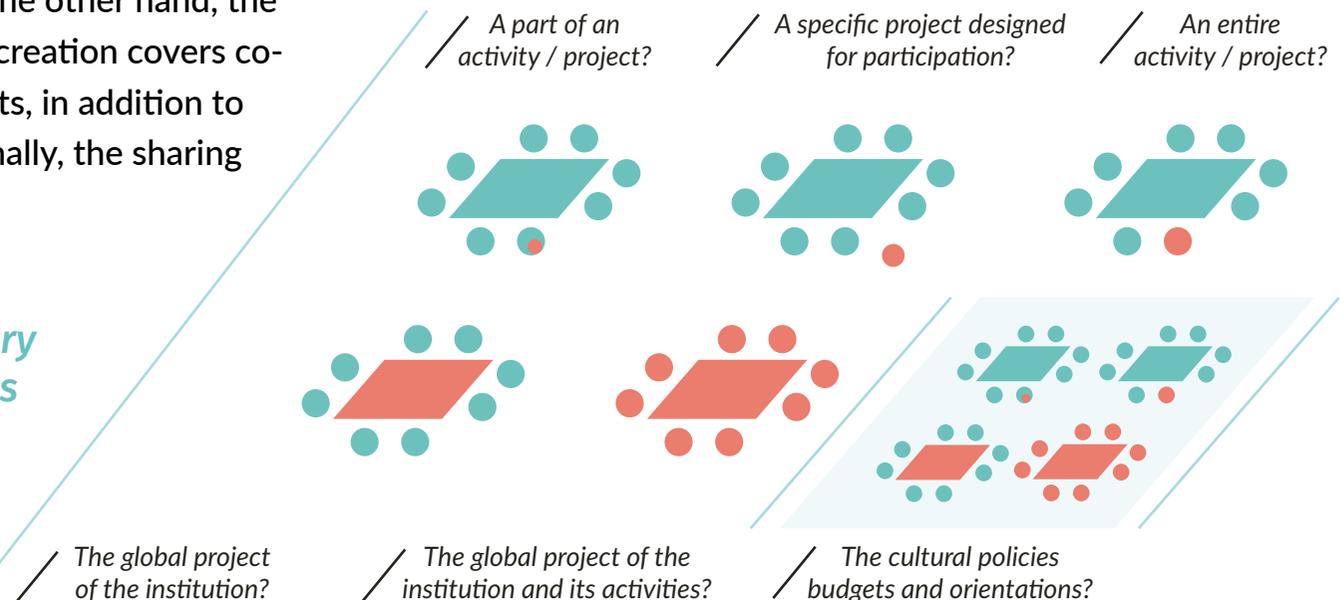
The issue of power-sharing

How do citizens or non-professionals interact with professionals in these cultural and artistic activities? What are the frameworks, methods and rules of the game for these interactions? The participatory framework determines the conditions of interaction between professionals and non-professionals, and, ultimately, a particular form of power-sharing. But what is the freedom with, the influence on and the level of control of the participants over the object of their participation?

Different ladders of citizen participation, such as that given by Sherry Arnstein[8], focus on degrees of effective power-sharing.

At the bottom of the scale is manipulation, or symbolic participation; at the top of the scale is the delegation of power and citizen control.

The ladders of citizen participation

Source: Arnstein (1969).

Effective empowerment of citizens

8. Citizen control
7. Power delegation
6. Partnership

Symbolic cooperation (tokenism)

5. Reassurance (placation)
4. Consultation
3. Information

Non-participation

2. Therapy
1. Manipulation

8   Sherry R. Arnstein, 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation', *Journal of the American Institute of Planners, 35*, no. 4 (1969): 216–24.

Different modes of participation

Brown and Novak-Leonard propose five *modes of participation*, based on the level of creative control by the participant.[9] Moving from total control to no control, they describe these modes as follows:

- *Ambient participation* involves experiencing art, consciously or unconsciously, without intentionality;
- *Observational participation* occurs when spectating arts activities or works of art created, curated or performed by other people;
- *Inventive participation* engages the mind, body and spirit in an act of artistic creation that is unique and idiosyncratic, regardless of skill level;
- *Interpretive participation* is a creative act of self-expression that brings alive and adds value to pre-existing works of art, either individually or collaboratively;
- *Curatorial participation* is the creative act of purposefully selecting, organising and collecting art to the satisfaction of one's own artistic sensibility.

Two other modes of participation could complete this list:

- *Organisational participation*, which describes volunteer commitments to arts projects in various non-artistic positions, necessary to carry out the projects;
- *Strategic participation*, which describes the overall leadership roles in cultural projects, such as general assemblies in associations.

[9]   Jennifer L. Novak-Leonard and Alan S. Brown, *Beyond Attendance: A Multi-Modal Understanding of Arts Participation* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 2008).

Modes and types of participation in Be SpectACTive!

Source: extension of the Brown and Novak-Leonard (2008)
model by Dupin-Meynard.

Observational Participation

Spectatorship, audience, consumer/prosumer

Inventive participation
Interpretive participation

Participation in the artistic creation process: documenting, performing, acting, creating, co-creating, directing, etc.

Ambient Participation

Unintentional participation (for instance, casually attending a mime performance while walking down a street)

Strategic participation

Global strategic decision-making (for instance, citizens' consultations)

Organisational participation

Volunteering, helping in non-artistic positions (ticketing, staging, etc.)

Curatorial participation

Targeted stake-holding: crowdsourcing, commissioning, programming, etc.

Typologies of participatory programmes in Be SpectACTive!

The above-mentioned modalities of participation can be usefully observed in the programmes created within the Be SpectACTive! Project. All the activities organised within the network always have an audience-centric approach at their core: indeed, the key concept is that of active spectatorship, which refers to all mechanisms through which audiences, namely spectators or citizens, take on an active role in the artistic and organisational processes.

Modes and types of participation in Be SpectACTive!

Source: elaborated by the Be SpectACTive! research team.

Co-commissioning

Co-creation

Co-programming

Co-managing
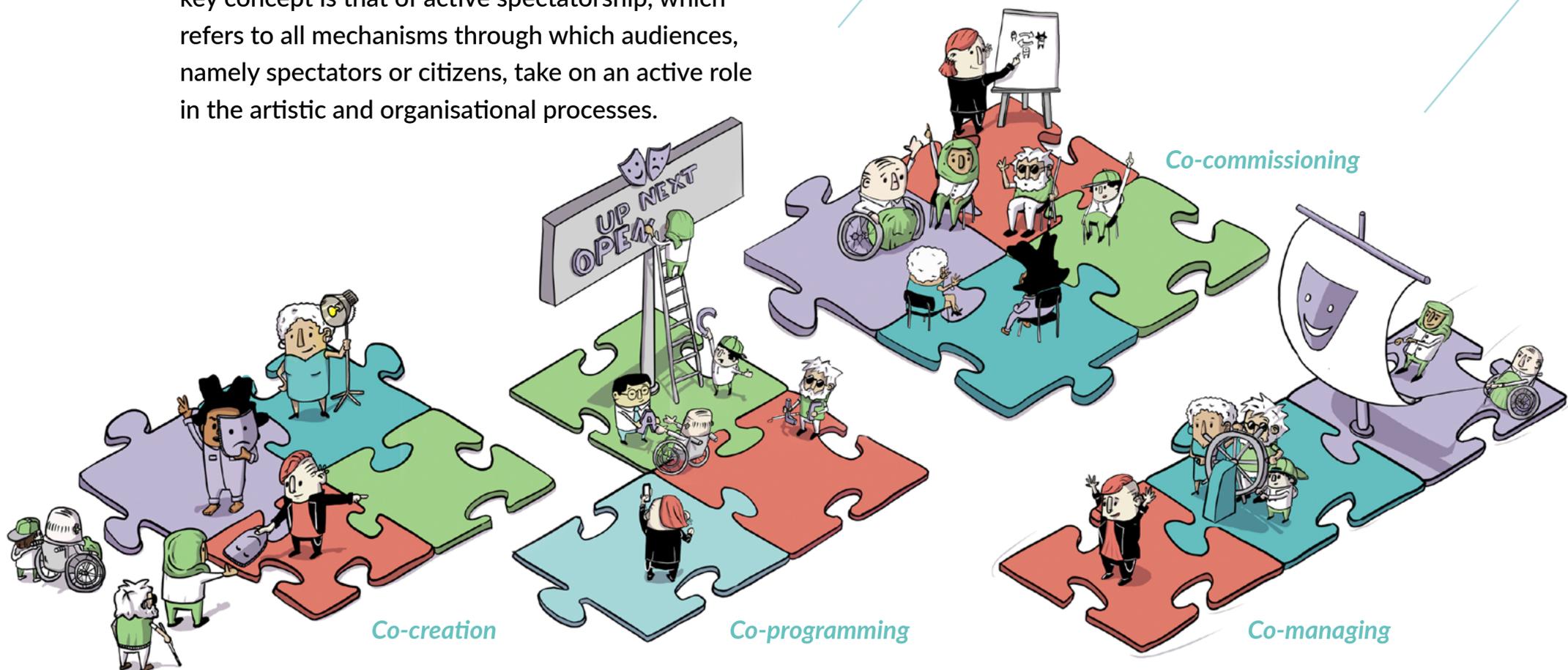
Name of Be SpectACTive! programme	Mode of participation	Description
Active spectators (co-programming)	Curatorial participation	Active spectators are local groups of audiences and/or citizens involved in the programming of each artistic partner venue or festival. The activities implemented may be organised differently according to each venue or festival, but they usually consist of regular group meetings, moderated by the artistic director or the community manager, to debate and commonly decide which shows to include in the programming.
Creative residencies (co-creation)	Inventive and/ or interpretive participation	The project involved co-producing several theatre/dance shows, involving emerging and innovative European artists or independent companies that were supported during the entire cycle of production, from the research to the touring phase. Thanks to the artistic residencies programme – three artistic residencies in three cities of the network for each artist/group, plus one in-house – the creative process was nourished by the interactions with the local communities, fostering exchange between artists, spectators and professionals. The involvement and collaboration between artists and local communities varied widely from one place to another, from simple artist documentations, who used the stories of people to build his/her own creation, to more active participation through amateur performing or acting on stage.

| *European Art Commissioners (co-commissioning)* | *Curatorial participation* | Inspired by Les Nouveaux Commanditaires programme, European Art Commissioners is a site-specific project aimed to create a strong connection between the artists, the professionals and the citizens of local communities through co-commissioning practices. Every year, two communities in two 'twin' cities of the network meet online and work together to commission an art piece, which can be a performance, show, or exhibition. Eight communities have been involved in total (four artworks in four years) in the following European cities: Prague (CZ) and Nitra (SK), Sansepolcro (IT) and Vienna (AT), Zagreb (HR) and Sibiu (RO), Kortrijk (BE) and Dublin (IE). The relationships between communities have been moderated by the community managers of each partner venue/festival. |
| *Youth festival (co-managing)* | *Organisational participation* | In some of the partner venues, the co-programming activity has been extended to a proper process of co-managing, in which the general management of a festival or a theatre season can be shadowed by active spectators. The main aim is to experiment with new forms of democratic engagement at different organisational levels. An example of this is the UPAD Festival in Novi Sad, where a group of young active spectators has been involved not only in the decisions about the performances to be included in the festival but also in all the organisational aspects (such as communication, ticket sales, moderation of after-show debates, etc.), always under the supervision and mentoring of the community manager. |

Why Does a Cultural Organisation Adopt a Participatory Approach?

Lluís Bonet

More and more cultural organisations are encouraging the active participation of their users, a strategy that goes beyond capturing audiences or encouraging the consumption of cultural goods and services. However, let's ask ourselves the reverse question: Why are there still many cultural organisations that don't opt for a similar approach? In both cases, the reasons for these attitudes need to be queried. In artistic organisations, the main mission is to enable the existence and sustainability of the artistic project – a viability that in most cases (but not all) is to ensure an audience that helps to finance and/or legitimise public or philanthropic support for the project.

Embarking on active participation projects, whether co-creation, co-management, co-programming or collective commissioning of works, means having a committed vision regarding cultural rights. It involves believing that bottom-up dynamics can be more transformative and richer than decided top-down ones. This is also to understand that quality and excellence are not at odds with working with amateurs and volunteers. Institutions embarking on these adventures must be clear in their minds that process and experimentation are more important than the final result, albeit without detracting from the refinement of a well-finished product. Instead, they are simply looking for a different kind of outcome – different, that is, from the genius of a creator. But in any case, it must be a well-matured, planned and executed process. Like in the production of good shows or works of art, excellent professionals are needed in the design and mediation of good participatory projects – specialists who stand out in their commitment and capacity for innovation. This is how powerful outcomes and medium and long-term impacts are achieved.

What factors explain why certain organisations have opted to encourage much more active forms of participation? What outcomes and impacts do we hope to achieve with these strategies? Three types of factors can explain this: **contextual, endogenous** and **exogenous**.

Contextual factors

Contextual factors are indirect but end up influencing the other two types of factors, as they are induced by deeper social and technological currents. Contemporary society is the result of progressive value changes, in which immediacy, the desire for individual enjoyment and the interaction between peers prevail over slow processes, in turn a result of collective consensus or emanating from a historical, institutional or social legitimacy.

On the other hand, the proliferation of games and interactive practices driven by digitisation makes many users, particularly younger ones, more attracted to proposals based on emotional stimuli that capture their immediate interest through involving their interaction. It should also be borne in mind that the education system has changed and today is less focused on the transmission of knowledge from the authority of the teacher or the textbook, and instead has become more focused on the development of skills, often by starting from projects in which the student interacts with classmates while the teacher guides and provides resources. Thus artistic projects whose users cannot interact with the presented proposal are perceived as less attractive. However, there is a limit to this interaction, namely the effort and time required to obtain satisfaction.

To the extent that active participation proposals incorporate too few stimuli and require greater endeavour or continuity, the likelihood of incorporating active audiences will be more difficult.

Endogenous factors

The second type of key factors is endogenous: those that emanate from the mission, values and goals of the cultural organisation. A growing number of cultural professionals believe that the intensity of the enjoyment of the artistic experience depends to a large extent on the degree of interaction the cultural proposal generates in their audiences. This professional belief, often influenced by experiences from other regions or countries, contaminates (positively) organisations and projects. Another key factor to consider is the growing interest in the creative process and its perception, rather than in the final artwork or artefact. In many cases, creator and audience experimentation, as well as uncertainty in the results, become an essential part of the artistic proposal. In this context, those proposals that incorporate the public's reaction based on interactive stimuli are thriving. Proposals that know how to combine good initial expectations, linked to the interests and previous community experiences of users, can incorporate a certain degree of uncertainty inherent in experimentation but nonetheless end up generating powerful emotional or symbolic results.

The emergence of a strategy like this cannot be divorced from how the values of a given context evolve, but every process of change begins with the vision and commitment of certain professionals, including how they end up inspiring other professionals and organisations within their environment. Sometimes, especially in the early stages of disseminating a new strategy, they can be used as a driver for organisational change (internal impact). However, this also importantly depends on the openness to innovation by the given entities and managers.

To achieve this set of intrinsic cultural impacts, a growing concern for the achievement of other social impacts has to be added: improvement in well-being and health, more cohesive and supportive individuals and communities, and so on.

These goals, closely linked but extrinsic to the cultural goals themselves, are best achieved when forms of active participation by audiences take place.

Many organisations and professionals have taken on this challenge, which explains the growth of proposals that incorporate different ways of interacting with participants.

Exogenous factors

Finally, there are exogenous factors, driven by various stakeholders, be they governments or philanthropic entities. These institutions formulate their support policies related to the achievement of more general objectives, aware of their more or less direct ability to influence the whole cultural ecosystem. Their capacity to condition the design of proposals that incorporate proactive audience participation depends on the volume of resources specifically linked to these goals, or how this argument is incorporated into the discourse and

general values that permeate the entire strategy of these larger institutions. It should be noted that for some of these stakeholders, the cultural experiences can be used instrumentally as a way to achieve other social or even economic impacts that are clearly extrinsic to the artistic or heritage logic itself.

In this sense, one of the challenges to be shouldered is the difficulty of adapting a homogeneous strategy in disparate social, cultural, political and economic geographic contexts.

Challenges and limitations of active participation strategies

From the point of view of a cultural organisation, developing participatory practices involves both a change in priorities and in the way of managing processes and measuring results. It also involves distributing human, symbolic and material resources differently. This fact has a variety of implications for the organisation, its professionals, and for those who agree to take part.

First, collaborative decision-making involves sharing criteria and, ultimately, power. Co-decisions imply a certain loss of control on the part of professionals who have the responsibility to maintain prestige vis-à-vis the media and stakeholders, to invite talented creators and to attract a general audience. These professionals create and manage symbolic values from processes of reflection that incorporate a lot of cultural and educational capital, but that also include intangible components that are hard or impossible to quantifiable. In large organisations, this may lead to some conflict between the professionals in charge of the creation and design of artistic experiences and the staff in charge of mediation or revitalisation. It is therefore necessary to effectively share the mission and objectives, to know how to raise awareness among all staff and to lead with transparency.

A second challenge of participatory projects is not to focus solely on people with significant educational and cultural capital, i.e. those most prepared to understand and be attracted to an active participation proposal. As with cultural democratisation strategies, cultural participation tends to be elitist, and despite being part of the cultural democracy paradigm, bottom-up dynamics are no guarantee of equity. To really give a voice and be open to the expressions

of the whole spectrum of the population, it is necessary to make an important mediation effort between the groups less prone to participation: immigrants, residents of poor suburbs, people with a low level of education or limited socio-economic resources.

A third limitation of participatory experiences is the difficulty in reaching many people. These are activities that require care and a close timeframe to be developed, as well as more intense mediation by trained professionals. Their impact is much deeper than that of consumption or visiting cultural venues, but numerically less large.

Finally, a fourth limitation is that the results cannot be achieved in the short term, because the cultural and social impacts of these experiences require time to mature.

However, alongside these limitations, participatory practices allow us to take on greater, more transformative challenges, to better understand the diversity of human reactions to cultural proposals, and to enrich ourselves with unconventional proposals, often better adapted to an era of great generational, technological and social changes.

Dilemmas and Risks of Participation

Lluís Bonet,
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Luisella Carnelli,
Emmanuel Négrier
and Elettra Zuliani

The definitions of participation, as we have seen in the first chapter, refer to practices that are sometimes quite distant from each other. Despite an often-announced 'participatory turn', this is therefore neither a homogeneous nor even irreversible trend, although it is part of a more general phenomenon in the political, social and environmental fields. Indeed, we talk about participation as the new instrument to achieve objectives in all areas, from local management to national policies.

In the cultural domain, the debate around participation questions what kind of benefit occurs from cultural practices. On the one hand, intrinsic effects relate to the relationship with cultural or artistic goods per se. On the other hand, extrinsic impacts refer to indirect but tangible effects of such practices: well-being and quality of life, economic development, social responsibility and integration, territorial attractiveness, individual and societal empowerment, etc.

For instance, can we be sure that participation and democracy always go hand in hand? Precisely because the answer is not obvious is what makes this question fascinating, in turn requiring an analysis of concrete situations. The following pages relate to the reality, or indeed illusion, of the participatory project and try to draw key general lessons for anyone who wants to embark on the participatory journey.

We will present five different dilemmas that we have encountered along the way in the study of participatory practices, usually taking the form of tensions between two opposing forces. To make things more concrete and relatable, we will also try to draw some general lessons based on five case studies inspired by real situations.

New democracy or new aristocracy?

Much of the debate around cultural participation is based on the utopia of democratic renewal. The fact of allowing the audience to contribute to the conceiving of an artistic programme breaks down the monopoly of expertise over what is a public good, and gives power back to the citizen. Participating in an artistic residency on a sensitive issue (i.e. gender, generation differences, ethnicity, disability, etc.) offers political visibility and recognition to a social problem. The ethics of participation include deliberation procedures which are, in themselves, the opposite of unilateral or authoritarian decision-making. But from a sociological perspective, democratic renewal cannot be automatically related to the intensity of cultural participation – this intrinsically entails a familiarity with artistic experience that is itself discriminating within Western societies. In reality, the introduction of diverse participants is always, so to say, weaker than hoped for. From experience, the involvement of participants with modest social and cultural profiles mostly applies to only a few individuals.[10] Seen from this perspective, participation would therefore be, under the guise of democratisation, a paradoxical tool for elitising cultural choices. Nonetheless, this dichotomy of intentionally democratic endeavours promoting a participatory aristocracy is not inevitable. Instead, it is a warning that the right regulatory tools have to be implemented.

Thus, for instance, the heterogeneity of a group of spectators participating in co-programming activities can be seen as an indicator of change, especially when it moves beyond the creation of a group that is well-educated and dominantly 'white', which, even if bringing an intergenerational perspective, contributes to affirming a specific cultural connotation.

[10] See, in general, Lluís Bonet and Emmanuel Négrier (eds.), *Breaking the Fourth Wall: Proactive Audiences in the Performing Arts* (Elverum: Kunnskapsverket, 2018).

Case

Two theatre festivals meet to discuss how to implement a community-commissioned project, having total freedom to decide how to manage it. They decide not to select a topic around which to build the project, but instead chose to work with a precise target group: young students from two local high schools. Both festivals agree on the publication of a call to be promoted within the high schools and proceed with the collection of the applications. They then decide to accept all the applications received and manage to form two groups of ten students each. The first three online meetings are organised: the community managers of the two organisations facilitate the discussion, as well as the selection of an artist from a shortlist pre-selected by the two festivals' directors. The two groups then agree on a common topic for the design of the artwork. The subsequent three online meetings are used by the artist to understand the expectations of the two groups and by the two groups to participate in the artist's creative process, through sharing personal stories and memories linked to where they grew up in their childhoods. Towards the end of the process, the number of students participating actively is reduced to a total of ten people. These ten people are students of the schools' theatre labs, as well as amateur actors and dancers. Despite the decreased number of participants, the artist is able to create an artwork that reflects the tastes of the students, that tells their stories and meets their expectations.

The opening event in both cities is a success and receives enthusiastic applause, also from the two municipal mayors – happy to have witnessed a process of democratic participation of young citizens in the artistic life of the two cities.

Analysis

In this case the participatory process is certainly inspired by Les Nouveaux Commanditaires[11], although it innovatively subverts some of the traditional set stages of the process. By giving the participants the freedom to select the artist and to decide upon the topic of the artwork, the two artistic directors delegate part of their powers. Nevertheless, we cannot talk of a democratic process. Why not? Participants are selected beforehand by the artistic directors according to their need to engage a specific target audience (students) in their theatre activities rather than providing a social service to the citizens. Moreover, the community managers and the process itself fail to sustain a high level of group interest, and half of the initial participants eventually dropped out.

Even though it was not planned, those who actually participated in the process from the beginning until the end represent 'the usual suspects' of cultural participation: mainly educated individuals and heavy consumers of culture.

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[11]   Started in France by the Foundation de France, the New Patrons Programme set out to connect civil society with artists in order to develop community proposals, addressing particular needs to bring about positive change. Citizens – such as groups of teenagers, parents and children together, teachers and students, associations, or neighbourhood inhabitants – can commission a work from artists with the help of a mediator. After a first phase where the proposal is developed (with the help of the mediator), the organisations seek financial, governmental and political support for developing the project. The patrons, the artist and the mediator all remain involved until the completion of the project. For more information, see: 'Les Nouveaux Commanditaires / New Patrons', https://bit.ly/3T7WsdS (accessed 1 July 2022).

Lesson

Embarking on the participatory journey should open up the specific cultural organisation's doors to wider society. And embracing the whole of society means assuming more diverse and socially relevant propositions, capable of increasing plurality.

For cultural organisations, this requires an **awareness of cultural rights, knowledge of the local context** and of its main societal challenges, and a **predisposition to be internally democratic,** by broadening the number and quality of decision-makers within their own staff.
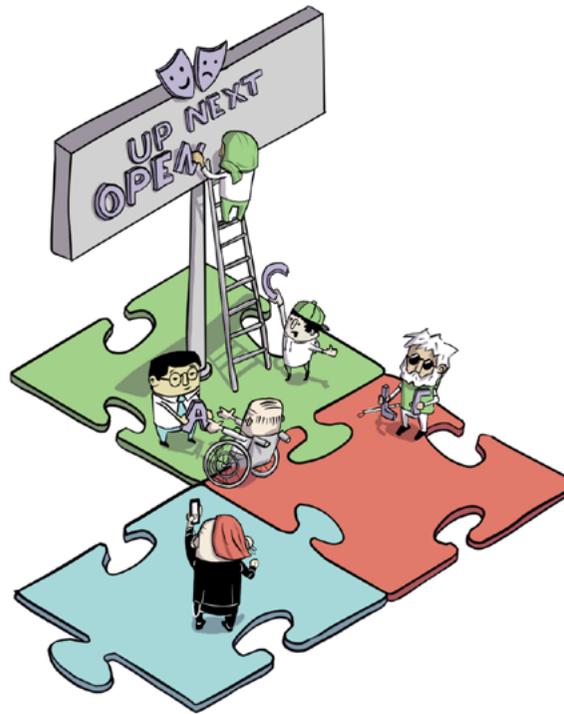
Power-sharing or capacity building?

Although we have seen that the definition of participation in arts and culture is not univocal, it nonetheless usually involves the sharing of power between a cultural organisation and a community. Participatory practices are most often defined as means for the empowerment and capacity-building of the people involved (from personal development and well-being, to social cohesion and community empowerment). Nevertheless, it is often the case that the person in a decision-making position – from the artistic director to the artist – fears losing their power. In fact, the intervention of non-professionals in decision-making (usually reserved for people with specific competences) can threaten the value of that kind of expertise. Therefore, the relationship between power-sharing and skills-transmission is not always predictable: a participatory process can be very much oriented towards the transmission of capacities to citizens without granting them power, or, conversely, entrusting them with power without allowing them to access new capacities.

Case

The Arts Centre of Quartz City has a long history of supporting innovation, experimentation and creativity in the performing arts, and it usually hosts over one hundred international residencies a year. Other than enabling the realisation of shows, artists in residence have the opportunity to profit from professional artistic capacity-building with local artists and curators. In 2018, driven by the desire to open up its activities to new audiences, the arts centre decided to test a new programme to sustain participatory productions. An artist with previous experience in participatory art is selected and hosted at the centre's venues. The artist's project is intended to solely involve amateur dancers and actors. An audition open to the local community is organised, and 25 inexperienced people are selected by the artist. Over the course of three months, the group of people are then invited to meet and work with the artist once a week. By habit, the artist is also usually very keen on engaging with the group at night in the pub. The arts centre provides the group with plenty of opportunities to learn about its activities, to meet the staff and to visit the venues. Free tickets to shows are made available, and workshops with arts professionals are organised. The debut is fully booked out in a week and the show is a success. The local newspaper titles 'Amateur actors on stage: who'd have thought?!'

In the following months, the 25 participants end up enrolling in local drama courses and subscribing to local theatre seasons, but most importantly they describe the past three months as an unforgettable and bonding experience.

Analysis

This is a good example of how a participatory project in the arts can be enriching for its participants. The fact that the artist is already experienced in participatory practices is usually a recipe for success: the artist is strongly motivated by a genuine interest in involving citizens in their artistic creation and the artist is already equipped with all the tools and techniques to create a successful process both for themself and the others. Moreover, the arts centre offers the participants a comprehensive set of immersive experiences to accompany and help them to familiarise themselves with the world of theatre and to prepare for the performance. Eventually, the participants are so satisfied with the experience that they are motivated to take part in other cultural experiences in the city. Nevertheless, this process does not really imply any delegation of power from the artist.

The participants benefit from a process of capacity-building but do not really have a say in the show or in any decision about the performance. Having said so, it is important to underline that this example, in the long run, has all the right ingredients to become a process of participatory empowerment, creating an impact on people's confidence and self-determination.

Lesson

The lesson to be drawn from this example is that **strengthening people's capabilities is not always related to entrusting power to communities, or vice versa.**[12] Moreover, significant transfers of power are rare and, most often, participants have only limited influence on the decision-making process. All this requires the organisation/artist to be aware of the implications and risks of sharing power. Organisations should bear in mind that the amount of time needed for the positive impact of participatory practices to be felt by the staff, and especially by upper management, is usually quite long.

The question of time is, as such, a crucial issue: time is required to build trust among participants (both internal and external to the organisation), to create the instruments for experimenting with art models and civil interactions, but also to internally share the successes and the failures. It is precisely by allowing adequate time that cultural civil actions are built and can become part of a broader value-based strategy, which is strongly based on having a long-term perspective and a clear value chain to which to refer to.

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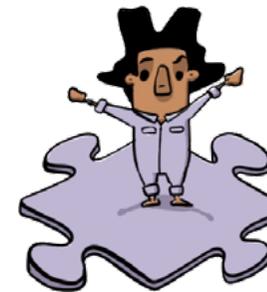
[12]　See Lluís Bonet, et al., 'Participation and citizenship committed to the live show: a compared territorial approach", in Lluís Bonet, et al. (eds.), *Be SpectACTive! Challenging Participation in Performing Arts* (Spoleto, PG: Editoria & Spettacolo, 2018), 315–36.

Emotion or demagoguery?

Our relationship with art calls on both our intellectual capacities and our sensitivity. This mixture varies according to the individuals, and to cultural experiences too. In a participatory process, a lot of things play out on an emotional level: giving more voice to people far removed from artistic decision-making and creation provides more scope for emotion in cultural choices, while emotions are generally excluded from choices when governed by professional norms. But this emotionality can also be seen as a lever if the emotion-based choices are not subject to reflective work. In this case, they run the risk of being demagogically instrumentalised, in other words of flattering prior-established tastes rather than delivering discovery or even surprise.

Case

The municipality of Catilina proudly presents its new participatory forum to select part of its cultural programme. In order to do so, the local authorities ask their statistical service to identify, by drawing lots, a representative sample of Catilina's citizens. The criterion is that only 20 out of the 100 people drawn are required to already have experience as a spectator, which matches known theatre attendance statistics. The cultural department of the municipality then selects a list of artworks from all theatrical genres (avant-garde, humour, one-person-shows, object theatre, boulevard, classic, etc.).

A few months later, the 'Grand Participatory Forum' is held. It begins with a speech by the mayor, who tells, with emphasis and emotion, about his personal ties to theatre since his early adolescence. He then outlines the list of 40 proposals (for 20 programmable shows) that have emerged from the cultural department's pre-selection process. He describes each project, showing excerpts from the works. After an hour of questions and answers, a vote is taken, with the result that 20 shows are selected by a citizens' participatory exercise

Analysis

In this example, the participatory process is certainly very structured. Its scale is ambitious. The transfer of power to the citizens seems impressive. But yet it remains a demagogic experience. Why? The participants are not at the originators of any of the initial choices that go on to condition their vote. Thus their emotion is only reactive to the choices of others. As a result, the voting process does not transfer any capacity to the participants, in the sense that they do not really enter into the programming activity. Instead, they merely arbitrate between given professional preferences. No trust is invested in them. Catilina claims to revolutionise power, but changes almost nothing in the programmer/spectator relationship, meaning that the participants are invited to take part in what is, essentially, an exercise in legitimising central power.

Lesson

Embracing participatory risk means assuming that the emotionality and interests of all the actors (participants and professionals) are recognised fairly. This assumes that **participation takes place very early on in the process,** and that **participants are given the necessary tools, space and knowledge to play an active role.** This process needs care and, again, a proper timeframe to be developed. Therefore a genuine interest in changing the conversation is required, recognising that people are essentially different but also considering them, first
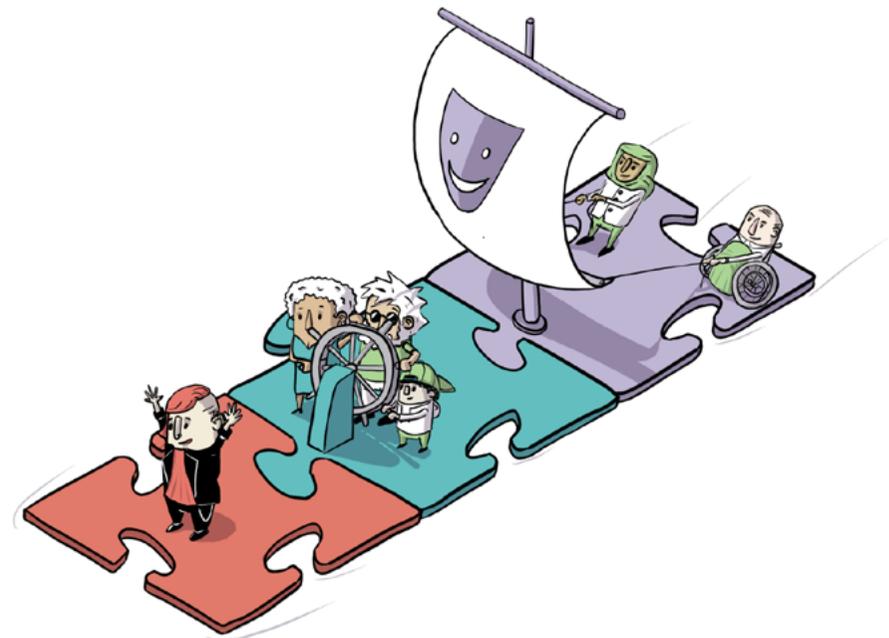
and foremost, as human individuals. This means a commitment to a human-specific approach, opening up a more radical approach where human intimacy is at stake.

Vice versa, this also means not giving space to a set community but building new spaces with these communities – a scope where humanity, with all its contradictions, is not only recognised but celebrated.

Excellence or mediocrity?

Participatory art and, in more general terms, the involvement of non-professionals in artistic decision-making and co-creation, is often criticised as a potential threat to the classic definitions of artistic quality, based on excellence in the technical and professional sense. In short, for some cultural participation should be restricted only to specific areas of artistic production, and the quality of arts can only be achieved by preserving professional excellence. Conversely, others insist on the positive impacts of participatory forms in the arts, both on the people participating but also on the content: participation nourishes artistic work, it is argued, positively challenges the artists and their creative processes, and can foster innovation.

In this way, speaking about artistic quality/ excellence can be seen as something that needs

to satisfy the logic of professionalism. Reflections on aesthetics (understood more as a distinct 'canon') imply a recognition of mainstream cultural programmes. Seen from the other perspective, the meaning of artistic quality can also be fostered in the sense of giving space to artists to experiment, to overcome the need to present a final product (a final output which responds to the logic of the market in terms of accountability and diffusion).

From this viewpoint, taking risks means giving time and placing no pressure to and on the artists for their final premiere, and, instead of focusing on the intrinsic quality of the final product, concentrating on the effect the process generates for the different beneficiaries involved.

Case

Body of Knowledge by the artist Samara Hersch is staged for an adult audience with teenagers participating from different locations, phoning in from their individual bedrooms. The teenagers are given a forum to ask questions concerning sexuality, boundaries, pleasure, intimacy, shame, grief, consent, ageing and death, and how we pay attention (or not) to our own bodies and the bodies of others.[13]

To prepare the performance, a group of teenagers are involved as the real performers and protagonists of the show, although invisible to the public. Each night, from their bedrooms, they dial in to the adult audience members at the theatre venue and start an intimate conversation on a topic previously agreed with Hersch and her team. Over the preceding weeks, Hersch has accompanied the groups in identifying and preparing themselves for the conversation with the adults by agreeing on shared rules and safety measures to ensure a smooth and enjoyable experience for all.

In the preparation phase, Hersch's previous experience of working with adolescents and her familiarity with the topic of taboos proves to be a source of constant relief and comfort for the teenagers, who, as common for their ages, face grave challenges and doubts about their identity and bodies.

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[13]   'Body of Knowledge', https://bit.ly/3EPyIHV (accessed 1 July 2022).

Analysis

Samara Hersch introduces herself on her website as an 'artist and director whose practice explores the intersection of contemporary performance and community engagement.'[14] We were lucky enough to meet her during Be SpectACTive! as one of the artists produced by the network. Hersch's production is mostly characterised by forms of active involvement, and she is one of the most striking examples of an artist who draws great inspiration from participatory practices. Self-confessedly, she is interested in the level of chaos and unpredictability that non-professionals can bring. In *Body of Knowledge* she does not know what the phone conversations between the adults and teenagers are really about and how they will develop, with the younger generation leading the conversations. The teenagers have a certain degree of freedom, while her degree of control as an artist is quite minimal – something she had to learn with difficulties over time. She would define her work as 'collaborative', in the sense that she takes responsibility for the frame, but in terms of content it is primarily driven by the young participants.

A case like this needs a community manager with the ability to offer the artist and the group as a whole a framework in which trusting relationships can be created.

Together, and in agreement with the artist, their job is to prepare the participants before the experience, setting the rules of the game, the objectives, and clarifying expectations on both sides. Importantly, a performance like this requires finding and testing safety mechanisms for the teenagers (or indeed any other 'vulnerable' group) before going live on stage.[15]

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[14] 'Samara Hersch: About', https://samarahersch.com/ (accessed 1 July 2022).

[15] During the performance, some adults in the audience reacted badly to the teenagers' questions. When it occurred, the teenagers were not only free to ask to change the interlocutor or to leave the phone conversation as they wished, but they also communicated in real time with Samara Hersch and her collaborators via a chat room. Even prior to these incidences, Hersch was careful to prepare the teenagers through various workshops and meetings. These encounters also served to equip the youngsters to talk only about experiences they felt comfortable with and were ready to share – also taking into account that they would have strangers on the phone

Lesson

This case involves an artist with a very strong sense of co-creation purpose, who sees the very motive of her production in participation itself. The lesson here is that the value of a **participatory activity always lies in the interaction between people**, and that this transcends any debate about artistic quality (which can perhaps profitably be left to artistic directors, researchers and critics). In such dynamic and unpredictable events, with the human factor as their locus, mediation and preparation are equally vital and often require the presence of an experienced mediator.

Policy constraints or artistic freedom?

At present, participation is a general expectation in cultural policies. For example, cultural access to and participation in culture, as well as audience engagement, are stipulated core priorities in European cooperation funding programmes. However, policies on participation sometimes involve hidden objectives: for example, a city council trying to burnish their political credentials, elected officials wanting to leverage their position in theatre management, or a local team wishing to strengthen its status vis-à-vis top management. Moreover, within the field the prime motivations for a cultural organisation or an artist to compete in any bid focused on participatory practices can be manifold, ranging from a genuine interest in testing and practising participatory approaches, to the desire to generate social impacts, the desire to conform to certain cultural trends, simply to gain a monetary grant, or for that matter to tick the right institutional boxes.

Participatory practices often connect to an approach that is closely linked to a belief in the importance of 'empower[ing] people … to claim and exercise their rights' and 'strengthen[ing] the capacity of actors', including cultural organisations – especially those drawing on public funds – 'who have a particular obligation or responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil particular rights, notably the rights of the poorest, most marginalized/under-served'.[16]

But in recent years the themes of 'audience development' and 'audience engagement' have become a kind of mantra, a buzzword that has led to the elaboration of the notion of 'predatory participation'. For some cultural organisations,

16   Henry A. McGhie, *Museums and Human Rights: Human Rights as a Basis for Public Service* (UK: Curating Tomorrow, 2020), 71: www.curatingtomorrow.co.uk (accessed 1 July 2022).

'active participation' projects are an opportunity to achieve a significant return on their image, justify their existence in the eyes of taxpayers and access ad hoc calls for proposals and funding. 'Fearing their own irrelevance', cultural organisations try to consolidate their 'brand' (in fact their authority) by inviting audiences to participate in façade interpretative practices, 'instead of really changing the way they operate.'[17] The same applies to the artists, who may see community-based projects merely as an economic opportunity to work and operate, or a window of visibility and accountability.

Co-creative processes are not mandatory; not all artists are interested in these approaches, or not as the only way to work.

This is a perspective that stems from a desire to centrally refocus on the human dimension. It is anchored in a genuine and intentional wish to identify and enhance the resources, creative capacities, histories, languages, cultures, voices and experiences of our communities. And it is a deliberate choice.
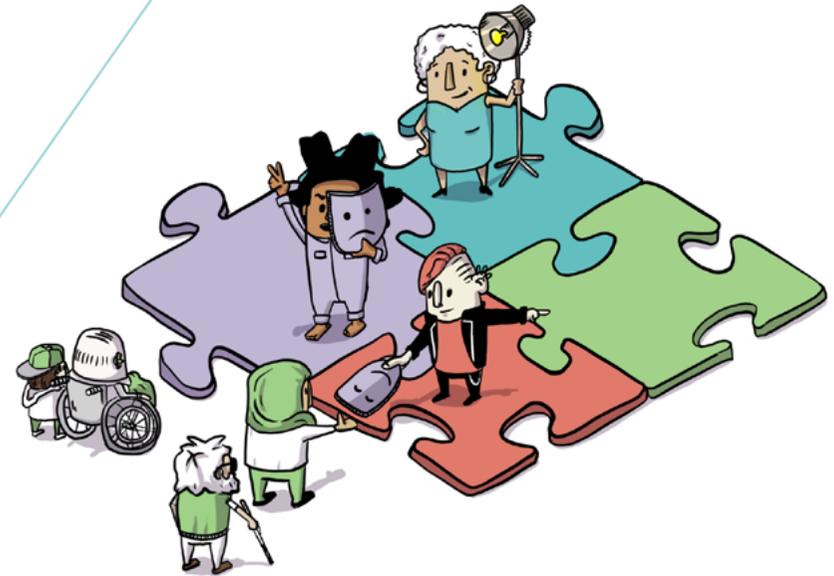
17   Isabel Singer, 'Museums as Predators' (2021), *American Perceptionalism*, https://bit.ly/3EyasJW (accessed 1 July 2022).

Case

The Festival of Beauty launches a call for the creation of a participatory performance to engage the citizens of Portobello in sharing their 'heart corners', and decides to dedicate it to young emerging artists. The call offers young artists the possibility of a paid and recognised residential course and a performance debut during the festival.

Faced with numerous requests, the festival identifies a young company that despite having no previous experience in the realisation of participatory performance presented a very articulate proposal. The project envisages the involvement of citizens through a public call inviting them to provide an image and a sentence regarding their own 'heart corners'. Citizens are then called upon to lead the artists to discover these spaces, which will feed into a shared photo gallery and become the physical stages of a walking performance.

Once on site, however, the artists autonomously select the 'heart corners' shared by the citizens and, without initiating moments of sharing, they produce a performance that includes only a few of them, selected on the basis of their scenic beauty and their resonance with the narrative that the company wants to give back to the small village.
This is developed as a closed creative process without involving the citizens.

The final output is a walking performance in which all the 'heart corners' become the stage of a narrative that does not in fact evoke the stories shared by the citizens, instead reflecting the plot developed by the artists.

Analysis

The launch of the call for the production of a participatory performance is somewhat vaguely formulated and is presented as an opportunity for research and development for young artists and companies. It is part of a cultural climate in which the presence of participatory-based performances responds to a political guideline, in this case a grant won by the festival that includes the production of a participatory performance.

The launching of the call conforms to a precise top-down request that has little resonance with the direction of the artistic curation. Instead the selection of the company is mainly based on an appreciation of the company's previous productions and fails to verify its genuine and sincere propensity for experimentation. In fact no interviews are held for the selection process, which instead merely relies on the written proposal.

The artists see the call simply as a chance to stage a new production and have a debut at a festival they value without attending to the real needs and wishes of the people, i.e. to their desire to be part of a collective narration.

The result is an instrumentalisation of the citizens' stories that focuses on the realisation of a performance which, although innovative in its dynamics, neglects to involve them in the creative process. In an extractive and selective way, the company uses citizens as a mere source of knowledge and inspiration.

Lesson

A participatory approach that starts from the conviction, desire and willingness to establish a dialogue based on principles of reciprocity and proximity does not simply arise from a response to an external call, regardless of whether it comes from political bodies or a cultural organisation. Instead it is ideally engendered and arises from a desire and will that are intentionally pursued and constantly nurtured by the artists and accompanied by the cultural organisation, which in turn has a responsibility to build the proper enabling conditions to allow the artists to get in touch and bond with the community. The case shows how **participatory approaches can be a way, but not necessarily a way for all artists**. In the artist selection process it is important to pay attention to many different aspects: personal history, artistic and aesthetic propensities, the activities carried out, the contexts in which they have acted, and the desire and skills they have shown in carrying out their activities. This does not mean relying only on artists who have experience in the field of community engagement, whereby involving non-experienced artists also requires extreme care and attention in terms of their ambitions, their true and genuine intentions, the process they build and how they develop relations with the community.

To conclude, what can be said is that participation is not necessarily a part of all artists' 'DNA': it is respectable to have artists that have no interest in this; there is no obligation to be participatory (even if they once did in the past; they are not obliged to all the time do likewise). The same is true for artistic directors: participation is not mandatory.

The Community Manager

Elettra Zuliani

Who is the community manager?

The term 'community manager'

The term 'community manager' is used in different contexts for different purposes. Usually, in social and welfare services, community managers (also called 'welfare community managers' or 'social community service managers') work for non-profit organisations, private for-profit social service companies and government agencies to coordinate and supervise social service programmes. They usually design and develop services tailored to the needs of individuals, groups and the community of a given territory, also by stimulating socialisation. The term is also widely used in digital marketing and communication to describe someone whose job is to make sure that a brand (= a product or company) has a positive image and good relationships with its customers or followers on social media.[18] Another example from the digital world is in the game industry, where the community manager is the median figure between the developer and the players. In the arts and culture realm, the person in charge of building, growing and managing communities around a cultural organisation also usually goes by the name 'community manager', but is likewise known as a 'community arts worker', 'audience developer', 'outreach manager', 'education manager', 'youth engagement manager', 'community projects manager', and so on.

[18]   'Community manager', entry, *Cambridge Dictionary*, https://bit.ly/3Vh5hEd (accessed 1 July 2022).

In this book, the term 'community manager' refers to the eight-year experience of Be SpectACTive!, where the shift towards an audience-centric and participatory approach required the adoption of an organisation-wide commitment, and therefore called for the filling of a professional role dedicated to such transformation through experimenting with formats of active spectatorship and co-creation.

The community manager plays a front-line role in achieving the audience-related strategy of the given arts organisation and is responsible for managing participatory activities to nurture the relationship between the arts organisation and the local and the artistic communities.

In the second edition of Be SpectACTive!, a person was assigned the role of community manager within each partner organisation as a way to commit to the project goals within and beyond the duration of the project.
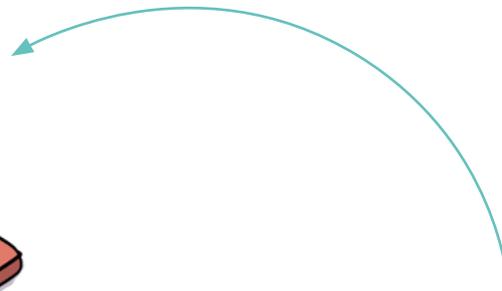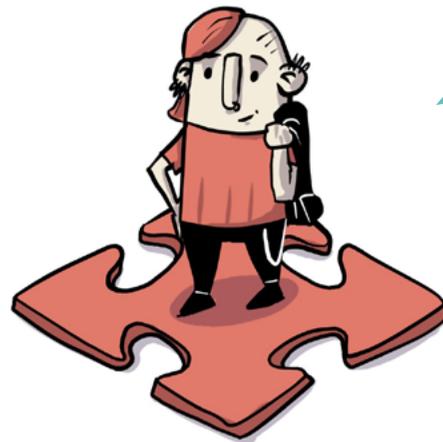
Community manager

The profile of Be SpectACTive! community managers

What follows is a short description of the main responsibilities and competences of the community manager.

The distinctive aspects that characterise the profile of a community manager and that can inform this handbook are the following:

- **Community managers have a study or professional background in arts, culture and creativity.**

  This background is not perceived as mandatory but is recommended, in that a community manager has not only the responsibility to manage and deliver projects in the arts field and has to be sensitive to artist's language, but they also have the duty to mediate the relationship with the community by meeting audience needs to comprehend and understand artistic choices and the artist's vision.

- **Community managers are skilled in project management.**

  Being at the forefront of cultural projects, community managers are competent in project management, leadership, time management and public relations, in addition to being well acquainted with communication and marketing tools and strategies in order to reach current and future audiences. They usually have access to and responsibility over a budget for experimentation.

- **Community managers know the local context.**

  Usually, implementing an organisation's audience strategies means reinforcing the relationship or establishing new partnerships with local institutions and stakeholders inside and outside the cultural sector. If the aim is to attract the non-public, then the organisation must try to connect with stakeholders beyond its own radar.

- **Community managers are relational.**

  A big part of a community manager's profile consists of relationship-building and community-development skills, relational abilities and emotional intelligence: empathy, care, ability to listen, trustworthiness, patience, reliability, dependability, persuasiveness, diplomacy, negotiation, problem solving, conflict management, and so on.

- **Community managers are good mediators.**

  Being a community manager means acting as a mediator between multiple parties, and therefore implies being communicative, tactful, patient, persuasive, persevering, trustful and generous.

- **Community managers are change-positive.**

  Community managers are responsible for bringing and promoting change within a set context by promoting participatory processes. This implies the ability to be risk-tolerant, flexible, adaptable, resilient and creative. In reality, within an artistic organisation those in charge of the artistic programming may tend to have a feeling that opening up to participatory actions restricts freedoms. In this sense, community managers are required to be open to change and to favour interaction and connections between practices, projects and people.

- **Community managers can either be already part of the existing staff or hired specifically for the job.**

  In the first case, community managers often work in the communication or production fields and are already bearers of important knowledge and relational capital. If they are hired externally, they bring additional skills to the organisation.

  Being the community manager places that person at the centre of the interrelation between the organisation, the community and the artists, therefore it is crucial to be aware that the competencies required can vary from place to place, depending on the specific nature of the organisation and the contextual situation!

Brand development

Programming

Artistic production

Marketing

Group management

Public relations

Project management
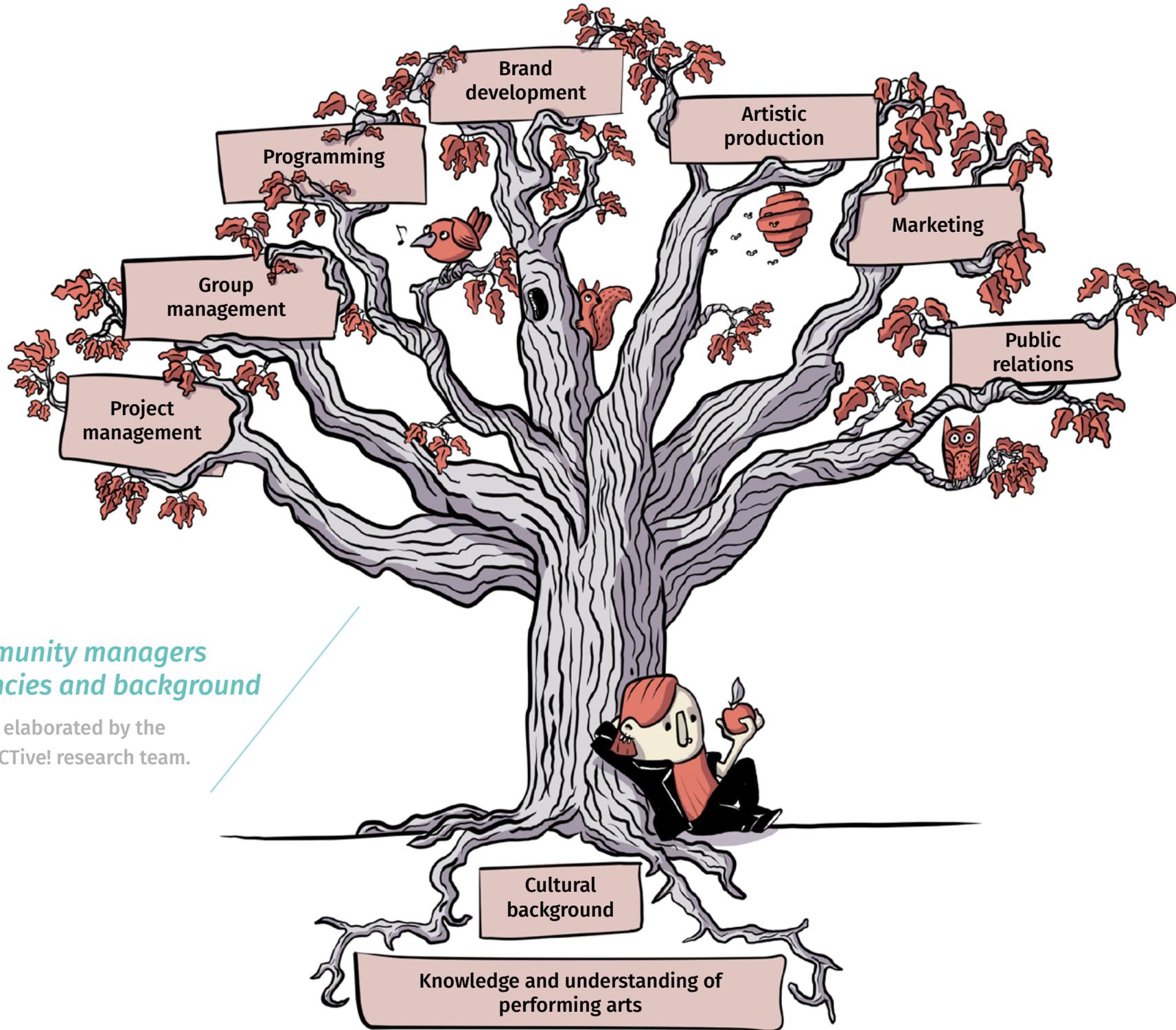
Community managers competencies and background

Source: elaborated by the
Be SpectACTive! research team.

Cultural background

Knowledge and understanding of performing arts

Various international documents stress the importance of 'life skills', 'soft', 'non-cognitive', 'social and emotional' or '21st-century skills'. Their definitions vary, but include a range of cognitive (critical thinking and responsible decision-making), personal (awareness, drive, self-management) and interpersonal (communication, negotiation, cooperation and teamwork, inclusion, empathy and advocacy) aptitudes

Community manager soft skills map

Source: elaborated by the Be SpectACTive! research team.

IDENTIFYING EMOTIONS

TEAMWORK

STRESS MANAGEMENT

LEARNING TO LEARN (from and about others)

EMPATHY

NEGOTIATION

PERSEVERANCE

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATING DIFFERENCES

DEALING WITH UNCERTAINTY AND COMPLEXITY

CRITICAL THINKING

RESILIENCE

ADAPTABILITY | FLEXIBILITY

GOAL-SETTING

TAKING CARE (of the others)

RISK-TAKING | MANAGING

PATIENCE

CREATIVITY

ACTIVE LISTENING

COOPERATION

MANAGING INFORMATION

Community managers at the centre of interconnected ecosystems

Every cultural organisation finds itself operating at the centre of an ecosystem made up of economic, socio-cultural, and political, public and private institutions and organisations. This complex ecosystem can directly influence the cultural organisation by framing constraints and conditions, but also by enabling opportunities for the development of projects and initiatives addressed to specific target audiences.[19]

In this complex ecosystem, the main ability of a community manager is developing trust and understanding among the different parties, and especially between the **organisation**, the **community** and the **artists.**

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[19]   The socio-cultural and political-institutional context is an important factor to be taken into account when developing active participation programs: 'In those societies more open to the values of cultural democracy, the development of active participation initiatives multiplies, either because society demands it, or because artistic organisations experiment with it. Conversely, in hierarchical political-institutional contexts, reluctant to the loss of symbolic power, it is much more difficult for such initiatives to appear.' Lluís Bonet, et al., 'A provisional epilogue', in Lluís Bonet, et al. (eds.), *Be SpectACTive! Challenging Participation in Performing Arts* (Spoleto, PG: Editoria & Spettacolo, 2018), 367–83, here 370.

Arts and cultural organisations

The aim of Be SpectACTive! is to create new modes of cultural participation so as to foster better, more meaningful and stronger relationships between communities and arts and cultural organisations. For such organisations, developing programmes of active participation can be a means of acquiring a more favourable community profile, responding better to community concerns, increasing ticket sales and even cultivating donors. As pointed out by Brown, Novak-Leonard and Gilbride, the linkage between forms of active participation in the arts and increased attendance is usually a positive one.[20] Active participation is perceived by the authors as essential to a healthy arts ecosystem and as a possible solution to wider challenges, such as the dwindling of cultural participation, the decline of investments in cultural education, the generational shift and changes in audience tastes and interests.
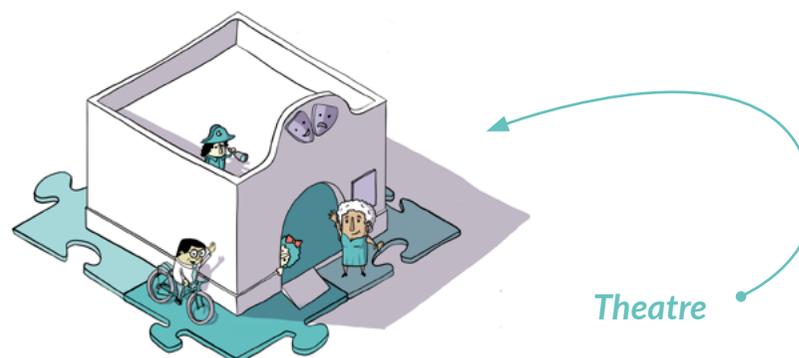
Theatre

In those societies more open to the values of cultural democracy, the development of active participation initiatives multiplies, either because society demands it, or because artistic organisations experiment with it. Conversely, in hierarchical political-institutional contexts, reluctant to the loss of material or symbolic power, it is much more difficult for such initiatives to appear.

'Audience development, therefore, is not just a marketing problem. Primarily, it is a programming issue. Attracting the next generation of audiences and visitors will require a transformation in programming, not just better marketing.'[21]

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20   Alan S. Brown, Jennifer L. Novak-Leonard and Shelly Gilbride, *Getting In On the Act: How Arts Groups are Creating Opportunities for Active Participation* (San Francisco, CA: The James Irvine Foundation, 2011).

21   Ibid., 12.

In Be SpectACTive!, the introduction of the community manager is designed to make this shift in programming a reality at all levels of the organisation. Importantly, this often involved efforts to overcome organisational compartmentalisation by favouring internal mutual exchange between the various departments, in particular between artistic direction, marketing and education.

The goal of the constant mediation work of the community manager is to create clarity around the objectives of any new initiative, at the same time promoting continuous buy-in around the project ambitions. They take responsibility for sharing learning across the organisation and ensuring changes are implemented and communicated. In this way, participatory initiatives have a chance of being integrated into the ordinary activities of the organisation.

The difficulty here lies also in the fact that the positive impact of participatory actions usually takes time to be felt by the staff, and especially by upper management.

Communities

The main responsibility of the community manager is to manage the relation between the arts and cultural organisation and one or more communities.

A community is usually defined in terms of groups of people sharing particular denominations, such as a place, interest, identity or circumstance. In this sense, a community is also something dynamic and fluid and whose characteristics depend a lot on the purpose for which the community is created:

Community

the community issues to be addressed, a particular artistic purpose and project, the mission and the audience strategy of an organisation.

Under 'community' Be SpectACTive! understands – often interchangeably – two diverse groups of people participating in the arts organisation:

- The **active spectators:** a stable group of people engaged over time by the theatre/festival for the purpose of selecting part of the artistic programming. The characteristics of this community usually reflect the organisation's aim to involve and engage particular target groups: teenagers, students, women, elderly people, etc.

- **Local groups of people** that are created around a specific purpose and project: the European Art Commissioners project, for which a community of people is built and engaged in order to commission a site-specific and public art project; every artistic co-production for which an artist engages a group of people for the purpose of co-creating a performance.

A community is also characterised by the degree of participation and interaction required for each and every project, and therefore the level of power-sharing – from being spokesperson of a local context (in terms of shared history, local culture, societal issues, etc.) to being real performers and protagonists in a performance or co-creator of an artistic programme.

The community manager is the contact person for local communities and active spectators alike. Their responsibility is to interpret upper-management audience goals and to meet those demands by involving the community in the theatre's activities. In return, a community manager nurtures the relationship established with the public on a daily basis by bridging the community's desires, ideas and expectations into the organisation's programme of activities. In practical terms, the community manager coordinates the participatory programme, sets a programme and facilitates workshops and meetings with the community, as well as capturing and sharing organisational learning.

Artists

Artist

Artists engage with active forms of public participation in the arts for many different reasons. Participation may be at the heart of an artist's production or may represent a small portion of an artist's career. Whatever the ratio, community participation in the arts can benefit the work of artists by either satisfying their civic-engagement goals or providing opportunities to increase the quality of their work and their capacity-building.

In terms of artistic empowerment, involving audiences in the process of art-making can assist artists to road-test their artistic products with audiences prior to the project's completion and presentation to a wider public. Moreover, experimentation with the audience can be a source of new knowledge or inspiration to improve an artist's practice and increase their own capabilities.

In a wider sense, and to a greater extent, active participation in the arts can make them more socially relevant by engaging artistic production with social and political issues. Public participation can be a way for an artist to explore and represent social issues by promoting greater civic mobilisation or providing
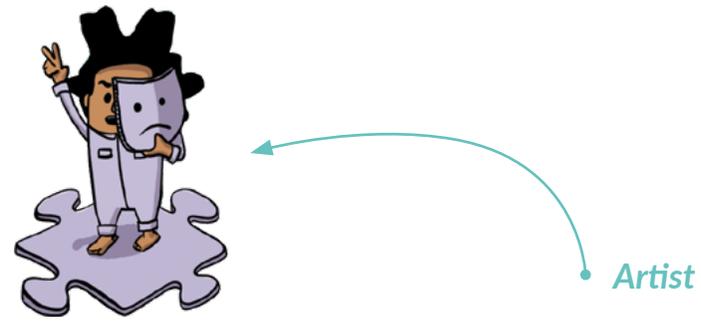
new insight into social problems and provoking reflection. In this way, art can generate reflexiveness about social issues and, in these cases, artists are motivated by the goal of social engagement.

The role played by the community manager in this scenario is that of managing the relationship between the community and the artists, mediating the artistic sensibility and motivations of the artist with those of the audience. Considering that the artists in Be SpectACTive! have a varied range of ethical, aesthetic and motivational thinking and come from different countries, the presence of a mediator has proved crucial.

Artists need to be enabled to understand the hosting organisation and the local context in order to make their work relevant and meaningful in a specific situation.

The community manager understands the needs and vision of the artists ex-ante and introduces the artists into a community, mediating the process of this relationship from the beginning until the end.

The relationship with other stakeholders: from an ego-systemic to an eco-systemic approach

We feel it is important to emphasise at this point that the involvement of different communities and groups of people often encompasses the activation of strategic partnerships with local organisations and stakeholders (local businesses, associations, NGOs, community groups, schools, educational institutions, other cultural organisations, and so on).

Working with other bodies who resonate with one's own organisation's target audiences can help lead people from one experience to the other. Moreover, engaging stakeholders has the potential to enable bigger changes and transformations and to deliver public purpose at the cultural and social levels.

Although the community manager can be the operative figure at the centre of this dynamic, we have decided to focus this book only on the triangulation between the three main actors at play (the organisations, communities and artists), whilst stressing that it is important to bear in mind the larger ecosystem in which any organisation operates.
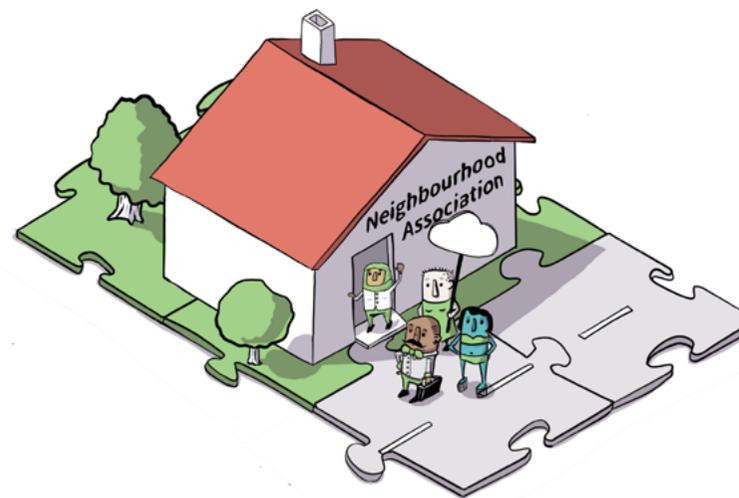
The participatory ecosystem

Source: elaborated by the
Be SpectACTive! research team.

Giada Calvano, Luisella Carnelli and Elettra Zuliani
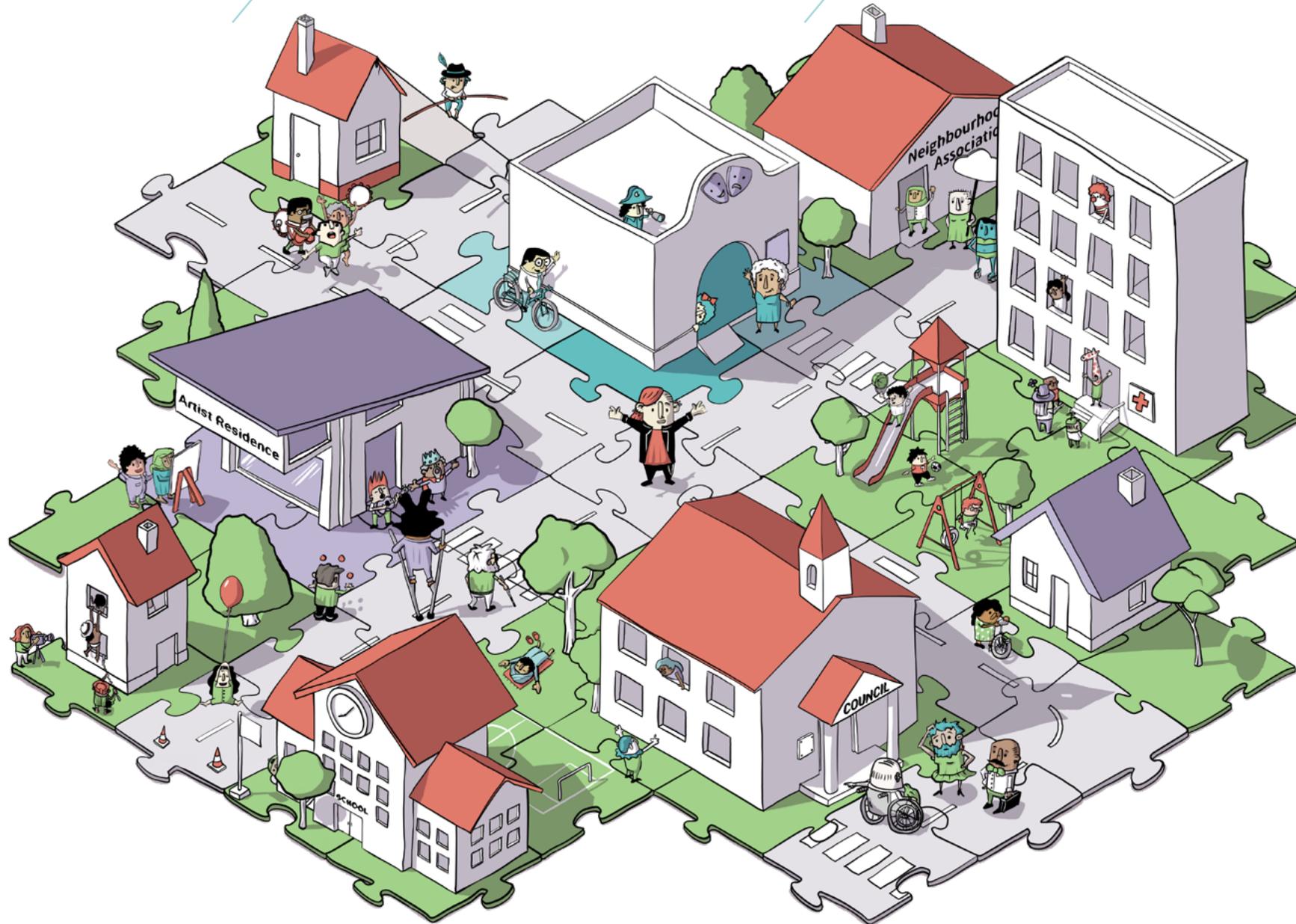
PART 2 -

WORKBOOK

Initial coordinates

This second part of this book – the 'workbook' – aims to put the conceptual aspects introduced in the first part into practice, articulating how the main protagonists of the participatory journey might integrate this approach from an operational perspective. The workbook has been conceived as a possible route, and it is entirely up to you to choose your own access point: it can be navigated in sequential order, but it can equally be explored randomly. The journey has been designed according to the points of view of the main stakeholders involved in the participatory process: the cultural organisation, the artists and the communities. For each actor, the process has been delineated bearing in mind the diachronic development along a time axis, which consists of:

Preparatory actions:

What are the steps to take in order to engage artists, organisations and audiences in a reciprocally sustaining dynamic? How are alliances within an organisation built? How are the needs of the artists understood? How can the expectations, desires and needs the communities, the organisation and the artists would like to relate to be investigated? How can boundaries be gently set?

Implementation:

How can the relationship dynamics between artists, organisations and people involved be managed? What kinds of tools are available to explore, in depth, the story around artists' ideas? What kind of approaches can be adopted to deepen the audience's sensibility? How the concept of intentionality be experimented with in relation to community experience?

The third phase, dedicated to evaluation, has been developed from a cross-sectional perspective, based on the fact this phase has been considered to involve all the different interlocutors in a holistic way. This chapter tries to answer a number of questions: What was learnt from the process? If the purpose is cause-based and touches on civic engagement, social justice or activism, how can shift, change and challenge be assessed? And how does the process influence the way of working?

Each phase of this journey has been structured according to the following elements:

- **Enabling conditions**, namely the different elements and preconditions to be taken into account when starting each phase of the participatory process.

- Some operational **guidelines** and directional pointers that may help ground the enabling conditions, with the aim of articulating activities that resonate with the values of the organisation, the expectations of the beneficiaries and the creative objectives of the artists.

Enabling conditions and guidelines include:

- **Tips** for deepening the reflection and conversation around the aspects tackled in the guidelines.

- **Tricks** to develop meaningful and valuable relational dynamics, including some exercises/games that can help you in achieving your purposes and dealing with your interlocutors.

ORGANISATIONS

Organisations: Preparatory Actions

Enabling conditions
Sharing principles and values

It may sound clichéd, but achieving a real commitment from the organisation is the first and uttermost priority before embarking on a participatory journey.

This commitment is not just about the contents of the participatory project; instead it is first of the principles and values related to the participatory approach.

Citizen participation and engagement has become a trend in the cultural sector, and many organisations decide to follow it without questioning the real reasons for doing so even though it is in fact fundamental to investigate the meanings, motivations and expectations that underlie this decision.

General questions that may help to start the conversation around these topics are:

- *Why has your organisation decided to embrace a participatory approach?*

- *What expectations do you have?*

- *Is your organisation's strategic dimension (mission, vision, values) in line with a participatory approach?*

- *Do you expect that a participatory approach requires a shift inside the organisation?*

Organisational models

During our observations within the framework of the Be SpectACTive! project, we noticed that the uptake of participatory approaches potentially relates to organisational structures and leadership models: more horizontal organisational models may result in a more pronounced inclination towards participatory approaches. However, we have also witnessed very interesting changes in organisations with a more traditional, hierarchical and top-down structure who initially resisted participation, leading to a profound modification in terms also of governance and internal management.

Top-down or bottom-up initiatives

The first step in building internal commitment within an organisation is to create a dialogue space amongst the different members potentially involved in the participatory project. Normally it is important to first secure the support of those in directive positions, which guarantees stronger participation and commitment from the overall organisation. Nevertheless, there are interesting examples where employees or mid-level managers initiate this paradigm shift from a bottom-up perspective.

Whichever the case, in the end what matters is that the whole team genuinely supports and identifies with the project and dedicates adequate **time** and **effort** to develop it.

Shared decision-making

Remember that participatory processes require a shared definition of project goals, ambitions and objectives. The more diverse the voices in the project team, as well as of the relevant stakeholders, the more probable the commitment to the cause. In the case of hierarchical organisations that tend to concentrate the decision-making process in the hands of a single person, the tendency to micro-manage and a lack of delegation may interfere in the smooth development of the activities. Listening and taking different ideas and perspectives into account may enhance creativity and, in general, create a healthier environment. It would be then advisable to avoid delegating all the responsibility to one individual. Instead, creating a strategic and shared leadership may be the key to guaranteeing the sustainability of the project in the long term.

Guidelines

Finding a common ground

Regardless of where the initiative starts from, at the beginning of this journey it could be useful to organise a number of internal meetings to find a common ground about the **meaning** of participation and the expectations associated with it. During these encounters, it is important to work on the meaning of the words themselves by establishing a **common vocabulary**. A good way is to jointly conceptually reflect on the terms used.

TRICKS: Brainstorming, common vocabulary

Brainstorming exercises are useful not only for problem-solving or boosting creativity but also for sharing different viewpoints on a topic and reaching a consensus. In this exercise, every participant lists all the words that occur to them related to the topic of participation, bearing in mind what these could mean for them personally or for the organisation, while a moderator collects them on post-its or writes them up on a board. Then the debate opens and each participant has the opportunity to further develop their semantic associations with the rest of the group. Here it is important that all views are heard, understood and respected.

Managing expectations

It is also important to understand what the different **expectations** are regarding starting a process integrating participatory approaches. In this phase, it is critical to listen to the voices of the different organisation members and leave scope not just for positive reflections but also for the potential negative repercussions or fears and uncertainties that each individual may feel.

TIPS

Ask the following questions:

- *Is the directorship of the organisation committed to the participatory project?*

- *Is the team committed to a participatory approach?*

- *What fears need to be allayed?*

(… and always keep in mind to focus on the 'why' as well as the 'what' of your work).

TRICKS: Sharing expectations and fears

What do you expect by adopting a participatory approach? What do you think the positive and negative consequences of this shift – personally and at the organisational level – may be? In this exercise, you can perhaps use a board divided into two columns: on the left, all the positive expectations; on the right, the related fears and uncertainties. Team members are often worried about changes, especially because they may entail increased time outlay or more responsibilities, and it is important to tackle these feelings from the very beginning.

Creation of the working group

Once a common basis has been established, the next step is, ideally, to set up the group of people responsible for following the progress of the participatory project.

First, it is recommended to appoint a specific person (sometimes even more than one) responsible for coordinating and accompanying all the aspects related to the participatory project. As stated in the 'Community Manager' chapter, this person should have an adequate skill set and an appropriate background to carry out the project. In this sense, it is important to verify if the organisation has all the **expertise required** for this position in-house.

This internal analysis could lead to different outcomes:

- The organisation already has a person with the requirements to carry out the project. In this case, it is important to understand their current workload and, in many cases, restructure this person's time commitments and tasks in order to integrate the demands of the new position.

- The organisation does not have a person with the required expertise. In this case, different scenarios open up:

- *The organisation decides to train one of its members to be able to take the process lead. It is possible to opt both for informal and formal training (e.g. university cultural mediation courses).*

- *The organisation decides to hire a new person with the required skills to cover the role.*

- *The organisation opts to externalise the position to a freelancer. Although this option permits certain flexibility, allowing the organisation to first evaluate if the contracted person is suitable, as a downside, professionals not closely related to the organisation or who are not well-acquainted with the internal reality of the same could have a non-in-depth understanding of the dynamics involved.*

Be SpectACTive! provides an example of the parameters described above: in some venues, community managers were hired expressly to cover this position; in other cases, in-house staff were asked to dedicate a determined amount of their time to also develop projects and tasks linked to this new position. The organisational roles already covered by the latter were quite diverse: from executive and artistic directors to producers, programmers, audience development or public relations and communication managers. This shows once again that the possible solutions are somewhat disparate and change accordingly to the needs and context of each organisation.

Ask the following questions:

- *Do conditions exist to create a working group dedicated to participatory activities and projects?*

- *Is it possible to provide ongoing training for the team?*

- *Will the project be led by a person within the organisation or an external professional?*

- *Who is involved in the participatory process in terms of being accountable, consulted or informed?*

- *What is their decision-making autonomy and freedom of initiative?*

- *What could be the internal and external communication strategy?*

- *Does the responsible person have autonomy in the management of economic and human resources?*

TRICKS: The RACI matrix

The community manager has to work in close contact with different people, both within and outside the organisation. Regarding internal management and communication flows, it is important to establish those persons who have to be kept informed, those who take the final decisions and those that should be consulted.

Once the project has been clearly defined, a RACI matrix like the one below could be useful in making these designations.[22] In any case, it is useful to have an idea of who these people may be from the beginning so as to establish first contacts and start to involve them in the process.

RACI Matrix

RACI MATRIX						
Role / Task	Role 1	Role 2	Role 3	Role 4	Role 5	Role 6
Task 1	R		C			
Task 2	R		A		C	
Task 3	R	R	I	A		I
Task 4			C		R	
Task 5	A	C		I		
Task 6		I	C	R		R

Responsible
Person assigned to do the activity

Accountable
Person who takes final decisions and has the ownership

Consulted
Person who must be consulted before a decision or action is taken

Informed
Person who must be informed when a decision or action has been taken

Source: elaborated by the authors.

22   A RACI matrix describes participation according to roles in completing tasks for a project. RACI is an acronym derived from the four most typical key characteristics: *responsible, accountable, consulted* and *informed*.

Identification and involvement of stakeholders

According to the characteristics of the participatory projects to be developed, the selection of **institutions, groups** and **individuals** to collaborate with may vary significantly. Having a map of the current and potential organisational stakeholders may be a good starting point. In case the organisation does not have already have a clear idea of who all its stakeholders are and what the relationship with them is, it is useful to carry out an exercise to identify and position your interlocutors in a stakeholder map like the one proposed below.

TIPS

Ask the following questions:

- *What types of stakeholders does your organisation already have a relationship with? Is there some individual, group or institution who is missing?*

- *Are the current stakeholders willing to collaborate in this new phase? Or is it advisable to find new organisations, groups or individuals to collaborate with?*

- *Do you need someone's mediation to create positive relational dynamics with these organisations, groups or individuals?*

TRICKS: Stakeholders map

Resource mapping is a strategy for identifying and analysing the assets you have available when developing a project. The following exercise is an adapted version of the one used during the Workshop on Cultural Mediation within the framework of the Stronger Peripheries project held in Torre Vedras in June 2021.[23] It consists of four phases:

1. BRAINSTORM: This stage aims to identify all the human resources you have available or aim to engage/activate in your project. Write each resource that comes to mind using individual post-its. You may categorise the resources into different typologies: individuals, groups/networks and organisations/institutions (also using different-coloured post-its).

2. PLACE: Now it is time to position the previously identified resources on the map. Each resource has a place of its own, in the centre or at the periphery, closer to other resources or more isolated. Draw concentric circles of levels of engagement (from the core team to those involved and those informed) and place the resources on the map.

3. MAP: This stage adds an extra layer that is specific to a map rather than an inventory: create associations, paths, crossroads and dead ends to describe the relationships with each identified resource. Draw these associations by moving the resources together, tracing lines or naming relationships. There are resources you intuitively identify but can't find a spot for them on the map? Put them aside for later and come back to them at the end, discussing challenges and asking for suggestions from other team members. 4RETHINK:

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[23] Stronger Peripheries: A Southern Coalition (2020–2024) is a large cooperation project co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union, aimed at connecting artists, cultural professionals and communities through diverse collaborative strategies and actions. For more information, see https://strongerperipheries.eu/ (accessed 1 July 2022).

4. RETHINK: Finally, you may come back to the step 'PLACE', this time to situate the existing or desired stakeholders not in the position in which they currently are but in the one you wish to have them in light of the new participatory focus you are undertaking. The same applies to the 'MAP' step: imagine how you would like these associations to be within a prospective vision.

Resources map

INFORMED

INVOLVED

CORE TEAM
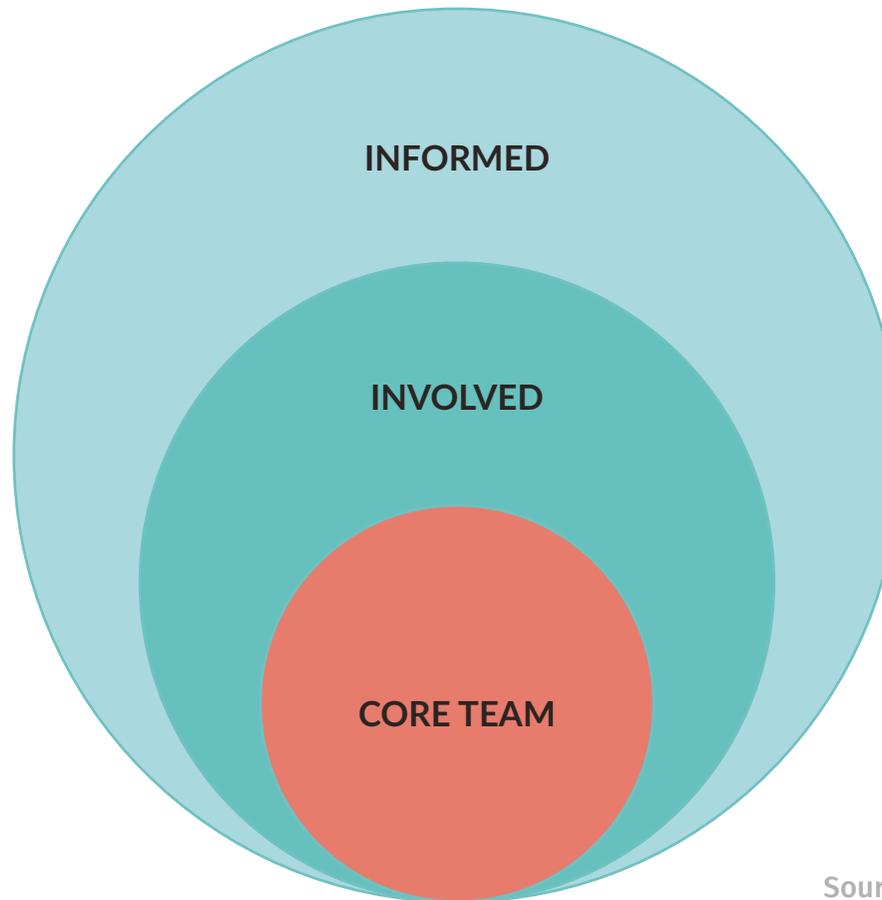
Source: elaborated by the authors.

Diagnosis

Performing organisational diagnosis is about understanding **what** the organisation does and **how** the participatory project can enter into dialogue with this.

Diagnosis allows you to understand the inputs derived from the contextual environment; to get a handle on the strategies and the goals of key stakeholders; to identify the structure, systems and management process; to create a clear picture of the organisational culture; and to understand the outputs and results based on the rest of the organisational components.

The diagnostic process can be performed by answering a number of questions outlined below.

Who are we?

Refreshing who we are as an organisation, what our raison d'être is, where we see ourselves in the future and what our core values are is a useful starting point to then integrate the changes we want to operate. When taking up a new approach, with the related required transformations, it is important to have a clear view of the **strategic dimension** and **values**.

TIPS

Ask the following questions:

- *What is our mission? Describe why your organisation exists and what it does.*

- *What is our vision? Imagine where you see your organisation in the midterm.*

- *What are our values? Outline the principles that guide your actions and how these are integrated into your organisation.*

- *What is our purpose? Identify the positive impact your organisation may have on the world.*

- *And most importantly: Is it necessary to make changes to our current structure and model in order to adopt a participatory approach?*

TRICKS: Organisational Ikigai

Ikigai is a Japanese concept that means **your reason for being**. *'Iki'* in Japanese means 'life', and *'gai'* describes value or worth. Your *ikigai* is your life purpose or your bliss, both as an individual and as an organisation. It is what brings you joy and inspires you. In this case, the following exercise is used to understand the 'organisational purpose', which differs from the mission and vision and is more related to the sense of doing what needs to be done

To create the organisational *ikigai*, you may follow these steps:[24]

- *Reflect: the organisation must think about the value it wants to deliver to its stakeholders (the purpose should be shared by all the team members, as expressed in the next point).*

- *Awareness: alignment of individual purposes with those of the organisation.*

- *Application: the purpose should be internalised in daily organisational activities and in relationships with the stakeholders.*

- *Measurement: set a monitoring system to evaluate if the organisation stays aligned with the defined purpose*

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[24] The exercise has been inspired by Ricardo Pereira, et al., 'ORGANIZATIONAL IKIGAI: towards purpose in organizations', *XI Encontro de Estudos Organizacionais da ANPAD – EnEO* 2022, online, 26–27 May 2022, 2177–371.

Ikigai

A JAPANESE CONCEPT MEANING "A REASON FOR BEING"

Satisfaction, but feeling of uselessness

Delight and fullness, but no wealth

What you **LOVE**

PASSION

MISSION

What you are **GOOD AT**

IKIGAI

What the world **NEEDS**

PROFESSION

VOCATION

Comfortable, but feeling of emptiness

Excitement and complacenty, but sense of uncertainty

What you can be **PAID FOR**
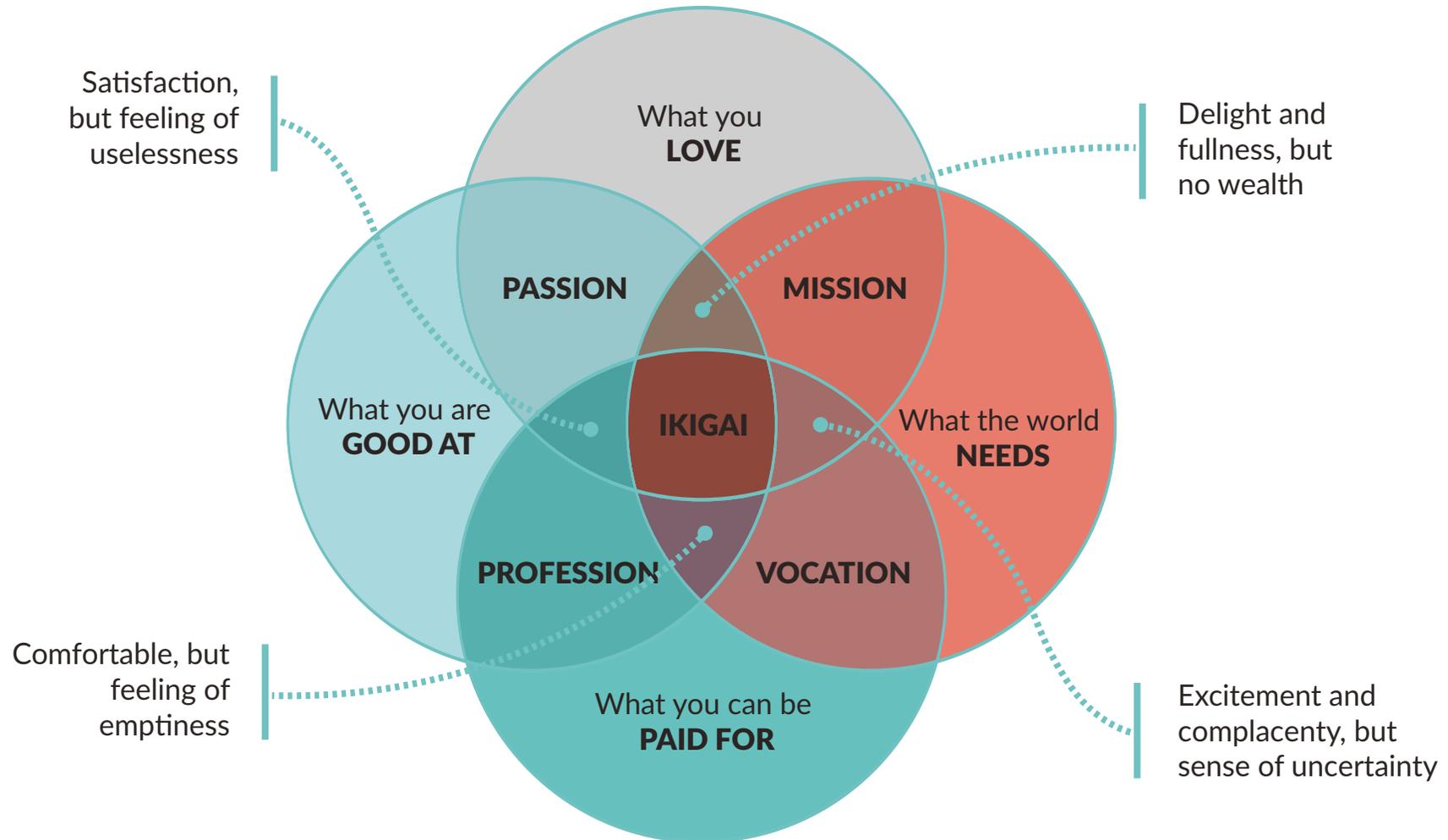
Source: Toronto Star Graphic.

You can use the Canva graphic above to start a conversation around the organisational *ikigai* and to harmonise individual and organisational purposes. Each team member should consider each question carefully and write the answers in each section, first from an individual perspective and afterwards from an organisational one:

- *Passion – what you love combines with what you are good at.*

- *Mission – what you love combines with what the world needs.*

- *Vocation – what the world needs combines with what you can be paid for.*

- *Profession – what you are good at combines with what you can be paid for.*

The answers should be then compared collectively to verify whether alignments or mismatches occur.

Where are we?

Maybe the organisation already adopts participatory practices in its daily activities and you just want to improve the implementation; or maybe participation is something quite new to the organisation. In either case, it is important to identify the **current commitment** towards this issue. Understanding the current situation is useful in identifying and prioritising the areas of action and required resources, and to give direction to the participatory project.

TRICKS: Priority setting

This visual exercise may help identify what are the participatory measures currently adopted by the organisation. List all the activities, productions, works or areas that the organisation is currently developing and associate each one with the existing participatory actions implemented (if applicable) as shown in the table below.

Activities and related current participatory actions

Activity	Current participatory actions
Performance production (creation and rehearsals)	
Programming	
Artistic residencies	
Training and workshops	
Communication	

After assessing the current situation, you may ask yourself what are the areas and actions you are interested to integrate and, importantly, understand what it means if you choose to implement these with the currently available resources; or, vice versa, whether you perhaps need to incorporate some of them from outside (e.g. you do not have enough funding, so perhaps want to consider applying for a grant earmarked for this kind of activity or do crowd-funding). It is always helpful to take into account the scope of your participatory approach: usually it suffices to start with just one area of your activity (e.g. artistic residencies) and later expand the scope to other areas, or even to the whole organisation. When prioritising the areas of action, it is important to gauge and pinpoint the organisation's highest decision-making capacities, room for improvement, appealing productions, commitment, skills and strengths

Where are we going?

It is now time to set your objectives, according to the priorities identified in the previous step.
As we have seen, the reasons for embarking on a participatory journey may vary widely from one organisation to another. However, it is advisable to tackle the task of writing the objectives in two complementary ways:

- First, you could take into consideration the organisation **vision**, i.e. where you see yourselves in a desirable future: What is your goal in terms of participatory approach in the long run? After defining this long-term arrival point, you could start going backwards in time to identify the processes that will connect that specified future to the present (a methodology known as 'backcasting').

- According to the available (human, material, relational and economic) **resources** that you have previously identified, you could identify what the first **feasible actions** you can take are to reach your organisation's goals – ones that do not require long and complex planning and that can more easily be adopted right away. Starting small is a good way to begin taking action whilst not feeling overwhelmed by the ambitions of the vision you have foreseen ahead of you. The strategy can then widen and deepen the scope of its ambitions over the years, adding small cumulative changes which will bring your organisation closer to its aspiration.

TIPS

Ask the following questions:

- *What are the first steps your organisation could take to integrate a participatory approach which does not require undue effort or high economic investment?*

- *How much time and what quantity of resources do you foresee as necessary to achieve your long-term arrival point?*

TRICKS: The bad and the good news

This exercise makes the application of the backcasting approach easier, providing an understanding of the risks and opportunities of your project. First, get the team together and pretend it is one year later. You communicate to them that the project has been a complete failure and ask them to imagine what might possibly have gone wrong. Then you tell the team that there is still time to avert the non-achievement. Pick the most likely reasons for the fiasco that the team members have just listed and use them to improve the plan. Come up with ways to prevent the failure scenario.

Organisations: Implementation

Enabling conditions

Define the scope

One of the first decisions that the organisation should make before taking action is defining the **scope of the participatory approach**. If this is the first time the organisation has adopted this kind of approach, it is advisable to initially opt for a more limited scope (e.g. a participation-designed pilot project, parallel but in line with normal daily activities) and to eventually later expand the reach. Decisions regarding the extent of the participation in an organisation are very subjective and depend on the core strategic dimension of each different institution. In this sense, there are no right or wrong solutions: some organisations have a more radical view of communitarian participation, whilst others pursue a varied number of (artistic, social, territorial) goals and prefer to run other types of projects alongside more participatory ones.

Finding place for participation in the programming

After deciding on the scope that best fits your organisation's needs and purposes, it is important to understand how a participatory approach can be integrated into the wider cultural programming of the entity. This choice has a number of consequences related to both conceptual and operational circumstances. Conceptual considerations are more linked to the **alignment of the participatory project** with the overall philosophy of the organisation, coherence vis-à-vis the general programme, the style, etc. Operational considerations have more to do with **practical questions** related to decisions about the time and space dedicated to the participatory activities, the way to communicate them internally and externally, etc.

Managing relations

The relationships between an organisation, the artists and the audiences are complex and require the mediation of a professional figure able to manage this complexity. In order to successfully deal with these relationships, it is crucial to involve the organisation's internal staff from the word go and on two parallel levels. On the one hand, the organisation should allocate the right people to the participatory project, according to their skills, competences, interests and predispositions. On the other hand, the internal team should be committed and actively involved in the management of the project. To do so, it is important to provide them with a clear idea of what the introduction of a participatory approach implies and how this may affect their current work routine. In this sense, setting up **clear internal communication procedures** is essential for the success of the initiative. As experience has shown, many of the difficulties faced by the directors and producers of the Be SpectACTive! project could have been avoided if, for instance, the staff of the different venues and festivals had been adequately informed from the beginning – not only about the development and schedule of the participatory activity but also especially about their role and responsibilities regarding it and the final goal and ambition of the organisation.

Guidelines

Define the typology of participatory programme

Concerning the typology of participatory programmes that best match the purposes of the organisation and the defined scope of the participatory approach, it is important to take into account the key dimensions that shape community arts – for instance, **capacity development** and **power-sharing**. The matrix below is potentially useful in identifying different typologies of participatory programmes according to their capacity to meet, to a greater or lower extent, the above-mentioned dimensions.[25] The horizontal axis expresses the degree of power-sharing, namely to what extent the organisation shares its power with the community and lets people have a say in the decision-making process. The vertical axis relates to the degree of development of participant skills. According to this distribution, it is clear

that a higher degree of capacity development does not necessarily correspond to a higher degree of power-sharing, nor vice versa. What can also be read into this is that that lower ratings in both values potentially correspond to more passive forms of participation, whilst high levels in both capacity development and power-sharing may well correlate with more active audience involvement.

Naturally the same participatory programme typology organised in a different context and under different ideological participatory precepts may result in a variable degree of power-sharing and/or audience skill development. Nevertheless, it can be said that some cultural participatory programmes have a higher likelihood of enhancing either one or both dimensions. For instance, volunteers

[25]   The matrix has been adapted from Lluís Bonet, et al., 'Participation and citizenship committed to the live show: a compared territorial approach', in Lluís Bonet, et al. (eds.), *Be SpectACTive! Challenging Participation in Performing Arts* (Spoleto, PG: Editoria & Spettacolo, 2018), 315–36.

taking part in the managing board of a cultural organisation have a higher chance of influencing the decision-making process and of acquiring valuable knowledge, whilst after-show debates between artists and audiences (although a valuable opportunity for both parties and representing the will to bring theatre closer to the broad public) have a more limited capacity to influence the same dimensions to any great extent.

Level of audience involvement according to skill development and power-sharing

Skill development   **Active**

Volunteers employed to welcome artists

Amateur/artist performances

Volunteers employed for production tasks

Training courses for audiences

Spectators participation by documenting the creative process

Volunteers participate in the managing board

Open rehearsals

Co-programming with the audience

After-show debate between artists and audience

Audience art-work commissioning

Community consultations

Programme presentation sessions

Passive   **Shared power**

Source: Adaptation from Bonet, et al. (2018) by Giada Calvano.

The decisions concerning which typology of participatory action to implement paves the way for the subsequent organisational steps and gives a good indicator of the organisation's willingness to leverage the above-mentioned dimensions. However, it has to be borne in mind that other dimensions exist that may be taken into account as pointers in this decision. For instance, participatory programmes can be analysed under the lens of the arts-audience experience, including considerations of the degree of risk management or authenticity.[26]

TIPS

Using the above map and try to position your current programmes along the axes according to the main goals and activities of your proposals. Later, you could start to reflect on the participatory programmes you would like to implement and where these could be placed on the graph. Try to identify which activities would best suit your participatory purposes and the requirements this shift would entail for your organisation.

[26] See Alan S. Brown and Jennifer L. Novak-Leonard, 'Measuring the intrinsic impacts of arts attendance', *Cultural Trends*, 22, no. 3–4 (December 2013): 223–33. DOI: 10.1080/09548963.2013.817654

Verify the project idea

When reflecting on the scope and type of participatory programmes that may suit the wider organisation's activities, it is important to verify the **potential** of the project idea, both from a conceptual and practical perspective. Identify the key distinctive features of your project that differentiate your proposal from alternative ones. To do so, it is useful to understand what other organisations are doing, what the profile of the communities you intend to work with is, if your project is in line with recent developments and trends, and if you need to involve other relevant stakeholders.

In terms of the artistic project, it is important to question the **significance and relevance of the artistic content** – a topic which is often controversial in the field of community arts since it is hard to find a balance between artistic quality and capacity development.

It is also fundamental to assess whether the **proposed adopted solutions** are the most suitable for the target groups and stakeholders you are collaborating with in terms of implementation.

For instance, the digital gap is a reality that needs factoring in when working with the elderly; or, likewise, language barriers, which may hinder the participation of individuals and communities from migrant backgrounds. The same considerations should be made internally, for instance: Is the team working on this project comfortable with the proposed solutions?

Also always bear in mind the **context** in which your project is set. This includes the physical and social environments, the territorial economic situation and the local area's cultural characteristics.

From a practical perspective, it is crucial to assess the **available time** that your team can dedicate to the project without affecting other activities, along with the **economic and financial resources** allocated to it. It is useful to first estimate the time needed for the main and critical activities and then start to detail the indicative costs that your actions may require. This often demands identifying priorities and finding accessible solutions using the resources you currently have available.

How can criteria and activities be prioritised in a cost-constrained environment? This is a very common question in all fields, but is particularly acute in the performing arts. Unfortunately financial resources are limited, thus all decisions necessarily involve trade-offs. A cost-effective analysis is especially important when seeking to achieve multiple objectives. For example, project funding used to contract artists to carry out a community creation laboratory at a venue might come at the expense of not having enough funds to pay for other crucial organisational activities. By comparing the respective economic costs and outcomes (social, cultural, health, reputational, etc.) of the different interventions, it is nonetheless possible to identify neglected opportunities by highlighting interventions that are relatively inexpensive yet have a high potential impact, as well as to pinpoint ways to redirect resources to achieve more. These comparative alternative costs can be productively considered in terms of time spent and economic, material and human resources (thinking also about 'voluntary' work and in-kind support).

Managing stakeholder expectations

When implementing a participatory project, cooperation with other individuals and entities is of uttermost importance. The relationships with the stakeholders in your projects may help to boost contacts and to understand the specificities of the communities you are working with, thus enhancing the reach of your actions. To create a collaborative environment and to guarantee the smooth operational running of the project, it is crucial to know and embrace different values and perspectives. Thus the choice of collaborators should always start with understanding the expectations these different individuals and external organisations have regarding your project, ascertaining that values and principles correspond, and establishing that the relationships are based on mutual respect.

Acknowledging risks

The chapter 'Dilemmas and Risks of Participation' introduced the conceptual risks related to the adoption of a participatory approach. Now, in this discussion, we refer specifically to operational risks, in other words related directly to project implementation. This step is fundamental to verify the critical points in every proposal and to implement adequate and set mitigating actions. The identification of potential risks also informs activity and **task priorities**, in that some require more attention than others due to their different characteristics and nature and the potential associated risks.

TIPS

As a rule of thumb, applying an 80/20 rule may be a good way to prioritise tasks. This rule, also known as the Pareto principle, states that for many outcomes roughly 80% of consequences come from 20% of causes. Reframed for this context, we could express it to say that 20% of the tasks are crucial to the successful outcome of 80% of the results, therefore it is fundamental to identify and prioritise both of them.

TRICKS: Risk matrix

A risk matrix visualises potential project criticalities in diagram form. In the diagram, the risks are divided according to their likelihood to occur and their negative effects and extent, allowing the worst-case scenario to be determined at a glance.

The advantages of this tool are that it allows the gravest risks to be visually identified in a simple manner and helps to assess the efficiency of any countermeasures.

Risk matrix

			Impact			
			0 **Acceptable**	**1** **Tolerable**	**2** **Unacceptable**	**3** **Intolerable**
			Little or No Effect	Effect are Felt but Not Critical	Serious Impact to Course of Action and Outcome	Could Result in Disasters
Likelihood	**Improbable**	Risk Unlikely to Occur				
	Possible	Risk Will Likely Occur				
	Probable	Risk Will Occur				

Shape your idea in space and time

It is now time to structure and give form to your idea. One of the first practical aspects to define is where and when to carry out the project, which is also strictly linked to questions around format. Decisions about the space(s) **where activities are hosted** are interconnected with the choice of whether to develop an online, hybrid or in-person programme. These decisions should always take the communities you are working with into consideration, anticipating, for instance, their familiarity with the digital environment or their ease of access and travel to the venue, or for that matter whether the spatial layout is suitable for promoting participatory engagement and fruitful exchanges. The same considerations apply to **scheduling**, which varies according to the target groups involved: workers have different time schedules and availability than say students, or some groups may have different calendars (e.g. consider religious festivities, such as Ramadan, when working with Muslims).

Ask the following questions:

- *How long will your project last (total duration)?*

  What is the most suitable frequency for your activities, according to the communities you work with (weekly, monthly, etc.)?

- *Are there some events throughout the year that you should consider when planning the timing of the activities?*

- *What are the most suitable hours to dedicate to your project for the groups involved?*

  Are the (digital or physical) spaces easily accessible for the target groups?

- *Do the structure and distribution of the spaces foster or constrain participation and exchange?*

Keep the staff on board

One of the most demanding tasks is to maintaining **high team motivation** throughout the whole process. There is no magic formula, but, based on our experience, creating a project that involves the entire organisation, that engages all the different team members on a daily basis, is a good predictor of success. Logically some members will be more involved than others, but it is nonetheless vital to keep the whole organisation constantly informed about the state of play and give everyone the opportunity to have a say in the activities carried out. Also, recognise and acknowledge the efforts of each individual and promote a collaborative environment. In the end, being participatory is a state of mind that should apply not only to your projects but also to the whole organisation.

ARTISTS

Artists: Preparatory Actions

The co-production process in Be SpectACTive!

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Enabling conditions

Selecting the right artists

As seen in previous chapters, the reasons and ways in which a participatory project comes to life are many and can be initiated by an organisation, an artist or a group of artists, a municipality or other government authority or policy, etc. Sometimes an open call to select the proper artists is needed in order to ideate an artistic project in line with the organisation's objectives. It is essential to launch a coherent and complete open call, communicating the requisite details in a timely and precise manner. This includes:

- **the aims of the project** (which may range from raising awareness of specific issues to the desire to create links of proximity with people with so-called 'special' needs or requirements, extending to building loyalty and increasing the participation of certain individuals and/or segments of the population, etc.);

- possible **targets** with whom you intend to cooperate;

- the **timing** for the structuring of the project;

- possible **integration into activities** already developed by the organisation;

- the **type of commitment** and involvement required, specifying duration and intensity of activities;

- the **budget**.

Other than outlining information about the project to be developed in the call for proposals, it is important to clearly state the criteria that the organisation will apply in selecting the successful artists, as follows:

- **Eligibility criteria**, e.g. the requirements that candidates are required to meet to be included in the selection process (demographics, place of origin or residence, mother language, artistic discipline, etc.).

- **Assessment criteria**, e.g. clear and transparent expression of requirements against which the artists' applications are assessed (artistic background, aesthetic thinking, disciplines, previous experience with participatory processes/community engagement, education, contribution to specific values or objectives, maturity in people-management skills, etc.).

After having collected the applications, it is essential not to stop at a simple reading of the project proposals but to gather additional information about the artists. You can do this with short interviews and virtual and in-person meetings that will make it possible to identify artistic and aesthetic consonances and verify the feasibility of the projects. It could also be important to draw up a short-list of artists in order to slightly adapt the proposals following a short conversation between you and the artist(s) to better clarify your aims and context.

Commitment to the values of the project

As we have explored in the chapter on the 'Community Manager', artists engage with participatory practices for many different reasons. To simplify, the range of motivations can be placed along a continuum between two poles running from artistic empowerment to social engagement. Nevertheless, as in the case of organisations it is not unusual that artists are drawn to experiment with participation for extrinsic reasons (money, recognition, work opportunities, self-promotion, etc.). In spite of this, in our experience the success of a participatory project usually depends on the level of the artist's commitment to the overall values and principles of participatory projects (empowerment, dialogue, capacity-focus development, self-determination, collective action, accessibility, equity, etc.). Values are beliefs and opinions that guide the choices a person makes. They distinguish how you identify yourself and shape the way you develop relationships, handle challenges and define goals. Values, attitudes and behaviours, together with the contextual environment and institutional systems, combine to form the enabling conditions in which to develop a trustful and 'safe space' of experimentation.

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A clear agreement

By its very nature, a participatory project comprises several levels of complexity and unpredictability that have to be accepted both by the organisation and the artist as a precondition and a possible source of risk. Therefore it is very important, from the outset, to establish an effective communication between the two parties so as to guarantee constant adaptation and responsiveness to any changes and problems that may arise. **Transparency, honesty** and **clarity** about the purpose, the limits of what can and cannot be modified, who can be involved and how, and what is expected as a result from both sides (the organisation and the artists) are essential prerequisites for smooth implementation of the project.
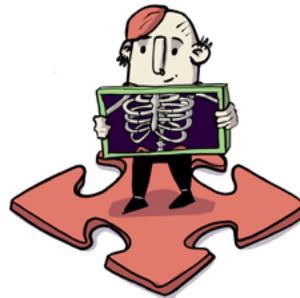
Guidelines

Creating a mutual understanding

Creating a mutual understanding and building common ground means sharing worldviews, a vocabulary and people's various experiences and motivations in pursuit of a shared goal. To do this, it is important to engage in a number of meetings with the artist in order to understand their practice, language and value philosophy and their guiding principles before the start of the project. If artists are true in their intentions, the organisation will be able to make all-the-more insightful decisions about supporting a balanced process and upholding the integrity of the artistic creation.
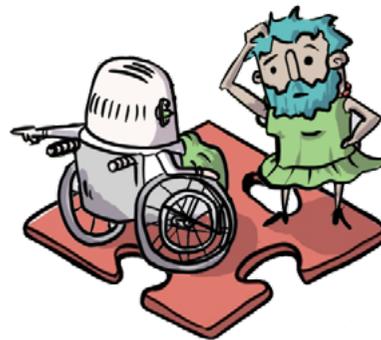
Don't be afraid of dissent and open confrontation. Nevertheless, in order to encourage a dialogue that is as open and genuine as possible, avoid a judgmental attitude, and instead use open, neutral questions to help the artists to reflect on their creative approaches and needs. Questions are neutral when they do not have an opinion couched in them. For example, if you are discussing the idea of working with youngsters, 'Why do you want to work with youngsters?' is not a neutral question, whereas 'What ideas guided your choices about working with youngsters?' is. Try and ask the following questions:

- *What is your own understanding of participatory practices in art?*

- *What opportunities and challenges do you see in participatory practices, and how do they motivate you?*

- *Do you have previous experience in participatory practices and how do you usually work with communities?*

- *To what extent do you usually consider audience experience when creating work?*

- *How often do you think about the physical dimensions of the audience's experience?*

- *Participation means that the audience evolves with the project. What kind of 'shifts' would you invite and encourage them to make?*

- *What would you most like the audience to take away with them from the project?*

The basis for effective collaboration and communication needs to be prepared in advance: pay attention to your ability to listen, and agree on a system to allow constant dialogue with the artist. Moreover, don't forget that misunderstandings are commonplace. Sometimes a couple of face-to-face meetings with artists are better than ten long emails. Be sure to devote enough time and attention to project preparation to avoid later surprises along the way!

Artists: Implementation

Enabling conditions
One size doesn't fit all

The artist and the organisation need to be aware that the specific interaction process and typology derives from the kinds of people involved, and therefore correspondingly determines the approach and methodology that an artist can use. A participatory project cannot be implemented regardless of whom it is addressed to: it needs to adapt tools, rules and general goals depending on the type of participants. For example, thinking about the distinctions between common audiences (usually those with stronger cultural capital) and non-audiences, (those with less or none), the former will have higher expectations in terms of power-sharing in co-creative practices. One solution is that artists may decide to open up their creative process to the prospective audience by allowing them share power over the initial conception of the idea or the development of the creation, thus treating them more as collaborators rather than passive recipients. Working with children, on the other hand, means that some adjustments need to be made organisation-wise (allowing for weekday school timetables and daily family schedules, the necessity for parental permissions or the involvement of a mediator, e.g. a teacher, educator, etc.). Moreover, the artist will need to use simple language and propose easy-to-understand tasks, organising the time together in a captivating and engaging way. If the project involves people with disabilities, then the artist may need to have previous experience or an education to provide the best service and care, in line with the specific needs of the group. Artists should be equipped with the necessary sensitivity to navigate the delicate balance between their own reality and that of others, and this requires a capacity to recognise the relative strengths involved, take care of others, deal with uncertainty and complexity, and being able to negotiate imaginative and creative space.

Addressing tensions and challenges

Some tensions are intrinsic to any participatory project, and it can be beneficial to address and reflect with the artists on the challenges encountered along the way. Moreover, certain projects may have more educational or artistic aims. At some point, an artist may feel that the educational or social components of the project overshadow and dilute their artistic aims or aesthetics. On the other hand, other artists may focus more on the advantages for the beneficiaries rather than on the artistic output, and participants may, in turn, be more interested in gaining particular artistic skills. Moreover, not all projects result in a concrete output, such as a performance, an exhibition, a collaborative artwork, the selection of part of a season, etc., even though this might be the set expectation of both the participants and the organisation. The participatory process may, in other words, prove to be equally rewarding as an end in itself.

Overcoming barriers

Because communities and groups of participants can vary broadly from one project to another, it is important to accompany the artist from the very beginning and throughout the whole process. At some point, certain participants may show or express an unwillingness to continue with the project. Some may feel that the task set by the artist is too much, or even incomprehensible; others may have had past negative experiences and are reluctant to offer their time and availability once again; others, at some point, may need additional support in the form of the presence of a professional mediator; and so on. Just keep in mind that your job is to collaborate with the artist in order to achieve the results you've set yourselves, meaning you need to be above all open minded and always practise active listening – both with the artists and whoever else is in the room.

Equal footing

The artist should place themself on an equal footing vis-à-vis the community. In a participatory project, the artist will guide the process and maybe pass on skills and understandings to participants, but it is important that, at any juncture, the knowledge and competences of the participants are also taken into consideration, and, if this is the case, utilised for the development of the project.
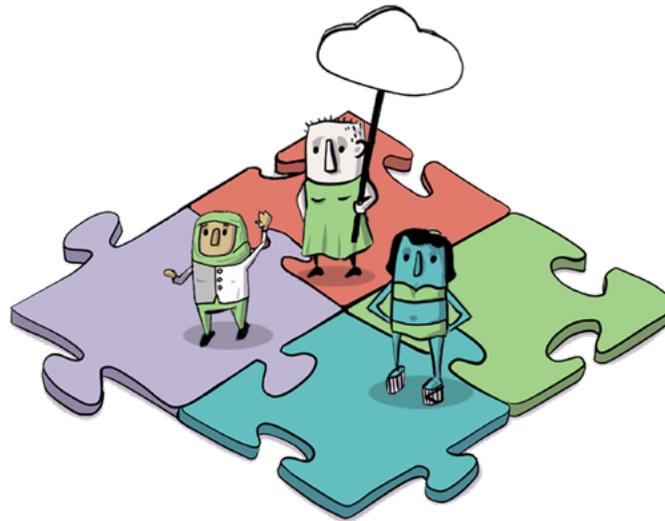
Guidelines

Getting to know each other

In relation to the people involved in the project, you need to verify if the artist has any previous experience in working with such a group and whether prior lessons have already been learnt in terms of expectations and needs, so as to modify your project accordingly. Some communities may have particular specialities, needs or indeed limitations, and it is necessary for the artist to have the time and the chance to understand them. This is also applicable to projects where the participants' voices and stories are collected by the artist and form part of the artistic project: the artist should be accompanied in understanding the history and the values of any such community. Therefore it is important to allow the necessary time for the artist and the participants to get to know each other. It could be beneficial at this point, parallel to formal meetings, to ask the artist to organise **informal get-togethers with the community**. This allows you and the artist to gather personal information in a less orchestrated atmosphere, genuinely getting to know the participants and creating a sense of trust and comfort. Informal get-togethers make forging a united group easier via a common vocabulary and shared intentions.

Sometimes, as the artists proceed, they struggle for the above-mentioned reasons. If this happens, acontinue engaging in the process of creative development and enable them to make decisions with your support.

- *Did the artist give enough information to the group on the project's objectives and results?*

- *Is the artist successful in explaining their aesthetic views and objectives?*

- *Did the artist allow the group to speak about their past experience with similar projects – what they liked, what they did not like? And is the artist trying to create a more positive experience?*

- *Is the artist trying to build trust with the group? Did you give the artists all the tools and connections necessary to do so?*

- *Is the artist capable of doing this alone, or do they need help from external experts?*

Setting common expectations

It is important to formulate and communicate what is expected from the very start. **Artists** have expectations in terms of creative outputs, artistic research or relational dynamics with local people; at the same time, organisations may have specific expectations in terms of time and deliverables; and, on the other hand, **participants** may have expectations in terms of sociality, entertainment, knowledge, competences and freedom of expression. It is your job to understand all of these aspects from the beginning, working to create an environment in which such expectations can grow freely and offering an enriching experience for all the parties involved.

TIPS

You could dedicate one of the first meetings with the artist and the community to explore each other's expectations and personal objectives. You could do so by inviting everyone to reflect on their role, on how they want to participate, what opportunities they would like to have and what their participatory limitations are. Be sure to allow assumptions to emerge: unstated assumptions are the main source of undefined expectations. You could also use this time to establish norms, habits and behaviours that everyone feels comfortable with and so create an inclusive atmosphere.

The need for additional mediators

Some artistic projects may require mediators, such as translators, social workers, healthcare staff or educators. In some cases, it may be useful to identify a person whose background and previous experience is more in tune with the artistic world, for instance a dramaturg; in other cases it may be more useful to identify people who can relate to potential audiences, such as **psychologists, pedagogical experts, social workers** or **cultural mediators**. This aspect has to be consciously appreciated from the outset of any project. Experts available to work with artists are usually not easy to find, and they usually require additional budget allocations and attention from the organisation and from the artists. During the whole process, be ready to act as mediator between the artist and the community yourself: they do not always speak the same language and the presence of a third party can often help in setting the right ambitions from the start.

TIPS

Ask the artist if from their previous experience there is somebody who could help in creating a human connection and a deeper understanding of people's wishes, expectations and thoughts. Try to come up with a plan to involve this mediator from the beginning and during the whole journey in a way that leaves enough scope for the artist to work and for the community to feel engaged through a process that is not too mechanical or cumbersome.

The art of flexibility and adaptability

Whether the artist has previous experience with participatory processes or not, co-creating with non-professionals should never be facetious. The artists ideally uses the experience to become open to new stimuli and question their work, and will probably need adequate time and space to do so. The process is not likely to be linear, and needs constant adjustment over time. Be aware of this, and try to agree on a mutually comfortable way for both you and the artist to adapt to the ongoing artistic process. Be open-minded and flexible, and try to set-up a non-judgmental environment – a **safe space** for unsafe ideas and experiences.

TIPS

- When dealing with artistic creation, sometimes haste and pressure force us to find and stick to results early on in the process, but this can be a trap: focus from the start on a process-led approach rather than an output-oriented approach.

- Be careful not to promise to the artist too much: this can undermine the trust relationship or potentially trigger negative 'sell-out' reactions with respect to the expectations initially presented.

- Artists will, per se, take risks, including whilst opening up to new practices and other peoples' opinions. Do not leave them alone in this and make sure to offer the necessary tools for their creative process. Crucially, failures are always potentially imminent. Not stigmatising but enabling error, giving the artists the space to fail and learn, provides a productive human scope that facilitates authentic and constructive exchange.

COMMUNITIES

Communities: Preparatory Actions

Enabling conditions

If you want to engage the community in the life of your organisation and in participatory programmes with your artists, you need to work for and together with people (no matter whether or not they are already part of your audience) and on your capacity to understand the people around you and effectively communicate with them. Working with communities means practising the skill of togetherness.

When you enter into a co-creative process, when you ask people to open themselves up, you should bear in mind that you are inviting people to expose themselves, sharing vulnerabilities that need to be embraced yet also handled with care.

In the process of welcoming someone, of creating together, connections are established through being open, non-judgemental and inquisitive.

If your work revolves around inclusion as a value, part of your practice may well be also about developing empathy and acknowledging differences, thus fostering a sense of belonging. This can be defined as 'the capacity to see the humanity in those that are not like us and to recognize that the same elements that exist within them also exist within us. It means that we have to see the humanity in others, even if they refuse to see the same in us.[27]

[27] Shawn A. Ginwright, *The Four Pivots: Reimagining Justice, Reimagining Ourselves* (Huichin, unceded Ohlone Land / Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2022), 15.

(Re)act based on the present

The current situation in 2022, at the time of writing – including the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the ongoing environmental crisis and the challenges posed by migration – has prompted artists and the cultural sector in general to question, rethink and re-imagine the way art institutions, art practices and artists operate – for whom and with whom.

To repeat, the first necessary reflections relate to **the role we want to assume in our social context**. To whom do we want to be relevant? To what extent are we willing to open our doors? Are we ready to move beyond our usual 'comfort zones', repositioning ourselves away from traditional, monolithic interpretations of culture?[28]

This approach involves listening and observing the realities we work in/with, the skill to respond with creativity, the possibility to share responsibilities and collaborate together, finding new inspiring and innovative opportunities in a more horizontal power setting, and supporting a process of inclusivity in more intergenerationally and interculturally cohesive societies.

[28] With this we embrace the 2001 UNESCO definition of culture as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, encompassing not only art and literature but also lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.

Being human-centric

Being able to engage people and to attract broader and more diverse audiences often requires a change of mindset and attitude before any change to the content and the way you programme can occur. This consists of thinking about people (and audiences) first and making sure that they are taken into consideration from the very beginning and on throughout the whole development of the process/project. Being a human-centric organisation means being porous from and to the outside: be sure you first and foremost take care of the people you work with, so that you and your co-workers are better equipped to engage with the outside community. Placing people at the core of your philosophy results in being aware that instead of consumers, audiences are human beings with emotions, perceptions, tastes and expectations. This means thinking of **audiences as partners and as contributors** in meaning-making; but it also means focusing on the effects that active involvement processes are able to generate for the beneficiaries, thus legitimising full ownership of the different interests and needs.

Being human-centric implies that each individual is involved as a person who enriches not only a single project or the production of an artist but the whole institution. The question is not so much how cultural organisations can serve the community, but which community talents, knowledge and interests can bring new life to artistic and cultural practices. At the heart of working with specific communities and local audiences should be a commitment to identifying and harnessing their resources, creative capacities, histories, languages, cultures, voices and experiences.[29] Care, empathy, trust, generosity, openness, reciprocity, interdependence, solidarity, inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility, the ability to fathom and tap the deepest aspirations of the community and support its rights are the key values that underpin a genuine process of involving individuals in creative activities.

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[29] In the field of community development studies, this is called an 'asset-based approach' or 'capacity-focused development', in clear contrast to the mindset underlying a needs-based approach.

Own your commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion

Usually arts and cultural organisations are good at engaging and communicating with people similar to their staff or to those who are already engaged, or people whose tastes mirror those of the artistic direction. Alternatively, sometimes we are mistakenly driven by a 'samaritan' impulse to assist the excluded, when in fact these people are victims not so much of their own shortcomings as of the barriers that prevent them from fully exercising their rights, including their right to cultural participation.

Furthermore, staff in cultural organisations are often anything but diverse and inclusive (in terms of age, ethnicity, cultural and economic capital, etc.), in other words embodying a false universality that actually corresponds to a very precise identity: **white, male, heterosexual, 'able-bodied', educated, wealthy**. However, this definition of 'universal' is long defunct and palpably not representative of today's increasingly diverse and complex society. Moreover, when organisations experiment with participatory practices and start engaging the community in co-creative processes, they usually do so only with existing audiences or animated by the above-mentioned deceptive paternalistic attitude of coming to the aid of the excluded. But if you want to deliver public purpose, to stay relevant for contemporary society and be resilient, then you need to embrace a more organic approach. Engaging new and diverse audiences means above all being aware of all this and proactively going beyond these barriers by learning how to intentionally pursue your ambitions.

Empathise

It can't be emphasised enough that the people we engage with are never an indistinct mass, but instead comprise specific people who have interests and behave in certain ways. Audiences are people, and they can differ in terms of degree of interest, background, knowledge about what you do and their potential to participate (time, commitment, energy). Effort must therefore be made to put oneself in their shoes to avoid generalisations and stereotypes. Furthermore, diversity is increasing in Europe – something that should be embraced, not denied. Knowing that diversity is not static, but something steadily changing, challenges us as individuals to **learn, re-learn** and **unlearn** on a constant basis. Respecting each other and knowing how we are similar and different will help us to develop better human relations. We are similar and different in so many ways in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, worldviews, political affiliations, educational attainment, careers, physical abilities, value bases, family histories, and so much more besides. There are many ways to be sensitive to diversity in our everyday lives. For instance, we should make an effort to refrain from stereotyping and avoid stereotypical comments. We should also be conscious of our behaviour and humour in general, knowing we can act as role models and set a good example for other people. With an open and curious mind, we can better recognise various forms of diversity and learn to be more tolerant towards all kinds of differences. True tolerance is based on the profound conviction that diversity is a blessing, not a curse. An inclusive and integrated society (or workplace) can, among other things, be built on valuing mutual recognition, clear communication and critical self-reflection.

Guidelines

There is no ready-made recipe for engaging the community in your project. Every organisation and artist has different reasons and motivations for reaching different people, and they do so using different tools and strategies. As such, you should ideally be able to build a tailor-made strategy that reflects your vision, your purpose and the resources at your disposal. But in some other cases it might be that you are called upon to work with artists who have very clear and coherent ambitions with regard to their own research trajectory and make precise and contextual demands on the people they would like to work with. In this case, it is essential to find a common ground between the artist's needs, the organisation's vision and respect for the people you are going to involve. Moreover, it is important to stress that while the following guidelines ostensibly look linear, developing your strategy may well look more like a messy doodle

Knowing your audiences and your community

Before taking any decision on how to implement your programme of activities, the first step is to make sure you know your audiences and the people you want to engage with and to whom you want to be relevant and meaningful. Understanding current and potential audiences implies knowing **who they are, what they think** of you (and, even before that, whether they know you exist at all) and **what matters to them**. Even if you think you already know the answers, this understanding is gained through formal strategies such as audience research and focus groups, and through informal but constant connections where you directly hear their words and points of view. The latter of course needs more time and energy, but ultimately it enables a real understanding and the creation of a direct relation with the people around you. On the basis of this knowledge, you will be able to think more effectively about whom you want to approach, and why, how and to what extent. It is important to also remind yourself that there is no such thing as 'one size fits all' in participatory projects, and that no project can be implemented by ignoring whom it is addressed to.

TIPS

The very first step to knowing your current and potential audiences is to describe them by collecting and reviewing present data and information. The exercise is quite simple if you already have quality information at your disposal! Brainstorm with people working with you and verify your perceptions against your audience data (derived from booking and ticket data, surveys, interviews, etc.). Who participates in your programme of activities? Try to describe them in as much detail as possible.

The second step is to describe the community around you. Use available primary sources, such as municipal demographic censuses or administrative records, to collate demographic and socio-economic statistics on your neighbourhood or city. You can also ask your colleagues and your main stakeholders for direct insights into the people living in your area.

Now you should be able to answer the following questions:

- *Who are you already engaging? How and why?*

- *Who is living in your neighbourhood/area?*

- *Who can help you learn more about the community?*

- *Who is not currently engaging with your organisation and why?*

TRICKS: Audience map

From the analysis of your internal data, you can proceed with the **segmentation**, in other words the process of dividing your audiences into groups of potential customers with similar needs and behaviours. Each segment should be homogeneous within itself and heterogeneous with respect to the other subgroups. The important thing is to get a clear picture of their main characteristics, needs, interests, values and participatory barriers. Segmenting can help you validate some of your ideas or challenge them. It will allow you to better understand the people you already address and others you want to reach out to. Use this knowledge to define the main target(s) of your participatory programme and then use the following Audience Map to experiment with segmentation.

Once you have gathered some ideas about your audiences, try to place them on a map.

First of all, draw concentric circles (like the ones in the next page) to mark the proximity in terms of loyalty/participation.

Then, take a set of post-its and try to place an audience type or segment on each one.

Then, try to answer the following questions:

- *Why is a certain type of audience in a certain position?*

- *Under what conditions can I turn an occasional audience into a loyal one?*

- *Who have I never considered among the non-audiences?*

- *Who do I risk taking for granted?*

- *What relationship do I want to develop with each of them?*

- *What are my priority audience goals?*

Audience map

Non audiences

One shot attenders

**Audience by choice
(occasionally attenders)**

**Audience by habit
(loyal)**

**Core audience
(lovers)**

Source: elaborated by the authors.

And now, ask yourself:

- *Who do I want to engage and why?*
- *For whom do I want to be relevant?*
- *How can I be relevant to those people?*
- *What kind of experience do I want to offer them?*

- *What do I need to change in order to get their attention?*
- *How do I want to engage them?*

  (Remember to share your audience goal with the rest of the team!)

TRICKS: Building your personas

Segmentation is a useful and effective tool and strategy, but it risks shrinking the parameters so that the audiences fail to reflect the variety of people you want to connect with. An effort must be made to put oneself in the audiences' shoes to avoid generalisations and stereotypes.
A specific approach we can embrace is the one of personas. Personas are distilled essences of real people. In user experience (UX) design, personas are used to build empathy with target users and focus on their world. Creating personas can help you to understand people's needs, experiences, behaviours and goals.
To build a persona, you start from direct observations and data collected in your analysis, but you can also use your imagination and fantasy. Here a list of some aspects you should try to describe:

- *DEMOGRAPHICS: Name. What's the age range? What's their family composition? What's their current job title? Where do they live? How much do they earn? What's their educational background? What's their work experience?*

- *VALUES & GOALS: What are their individual core values? What are their personal goals? What are their professional goals? What is important to them?*

- *DAILY LIFE: What does their day-to-day life look like? What activities are they involved in? How much free time do they have?*

- *PASSIONS: What do they do in their free time? What do they care about? What do they like most? What excites them? What makes them happy? What do they appreciate? What do they love?*

- *SOCIAL BONDS: Who do they socialise with? What kind of relationships do they have?*

- *DESIRES/AMBITIONS: What would they love to do? What do they feel is missing in their life? What do they fear? What do they dislike? What worries them?*

Audience persona canva

7 **Negative trends**
Negative trends from the environment

2

4 **Positive trends**
Positive trends from the environment

8 **Headaches**
Professional and work related issues

3 **Need**
What does this person really want?

5 **Opportunities**
Professional and work related positive outcomes

9 **Fears**
Personal issues

1

6 **Hopes**
Personal goals and hopes
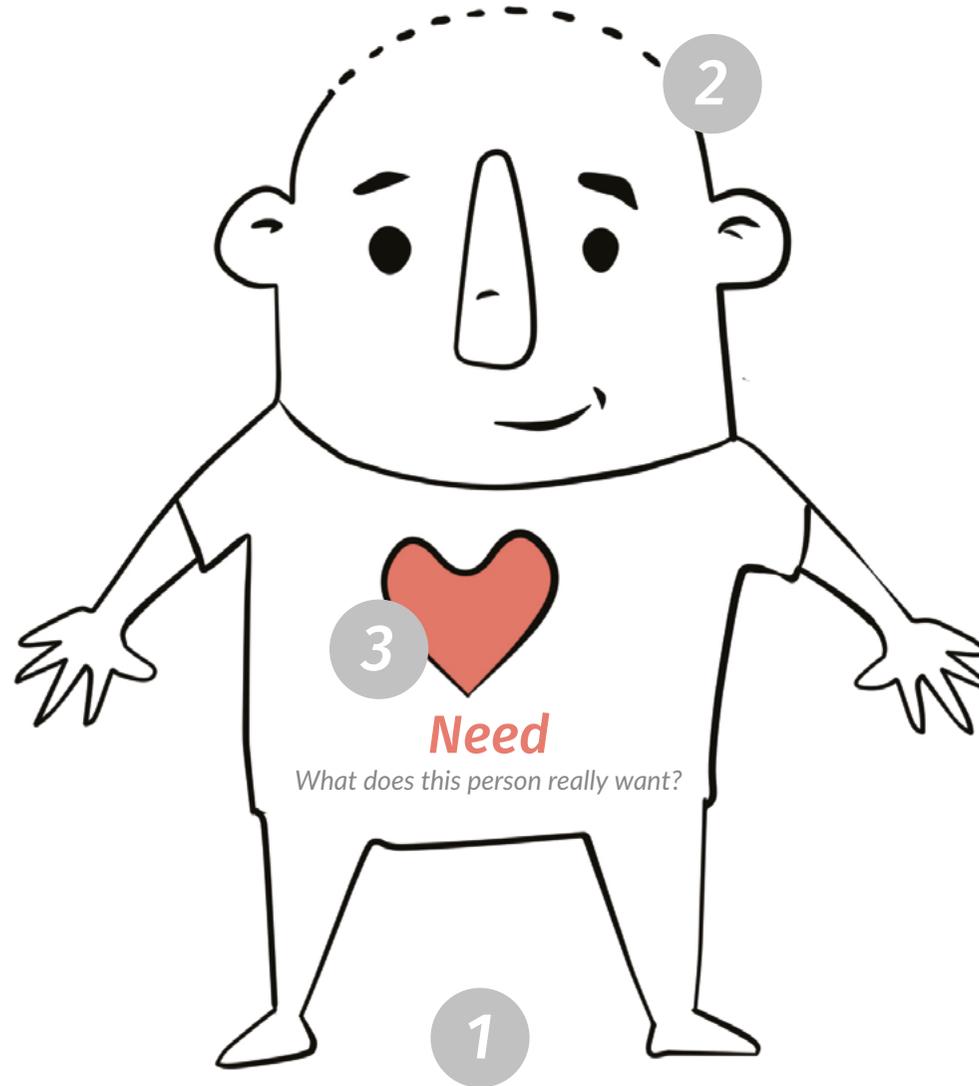
Name _____
Role/occupation _____
Age _____
Other information _____

Bring you target group alive

Once you have a clear idea on paper of whom you are currently engaging with and who you want to engage, take a step back and reflect on what we previously said about becoming people-centric. Collecting data through research has served the purpose of detailing your current and potential audience on paper, using effective tools such as segmentation and the building of personas. Now it's time to acquire an empathetic understanding of people's needs and interests by bringing your target group alive. How? Talk to them!

Let's start with the simplest case: try to see if the people you want to engage are already in your audience – whether they usually come to your venue or whether they've never visited it at all. Of course it's easier to try to connect or involve people who are closer to you in terms of interests, habits and tastes. But if you've decided to open up to new audiences, then it is worth tapping your stakeholders again for information: Is there any other theatre or museum in the city engaging your target group? Are there any institutions, associations, NGOs outside the cultural field that work with your target group? Do some research and make some calls: this can help you get in touch with the target group and obtain valuable information! To collect this information, you can organise focus groups and informal interviews that will allow you to have a real conversation about the target group's interests and tastes and about what they think of you. You might want to allocate a budget for this activity and get help from an expert. In certain other cases, you might also think about showing up in the places frequented by your target audience and try to start an informal conversation. At the end of this phase, you'll be able to test and validate your assumptions about your target audience with real people, in the real world.

Ask your audiences:

- *What do you think of our organisation? And of our programme of activities?*

- *What are your main disincentives for coming to us?*

- *What would convince you to come?*

- *How would you like an organisation like ours to be?*

- *What would you like to find in our programme of activities?*

- *What kind of experience are you looking for when entering a cultural venue?*

- *What do you care about? What do you do in your spare time? What interests you?*

TRICKS: the Diversity Wheel

You can use the Diversity Wheel to better trace differences in audience behaviours and attitudes, and respond correspondingly. What the Diversity Wheel gives is an overview of the dimensions of diversity that are present and active in any workplace or environment. It consists of four layers of diversity (personality and internal, external and organisational levels) through which stimuli, information and experience are processed by all of us. By means of the model, we can explore differences, but also similarities, from multiple perspectives, at the same time as grasping our own assumptions and behavioural patterns. Depicted as concentric circles, the Diversity Wheel can be used in many different ways to encourage thinking about values, beliefs, and dimensions of identity for people and organisations.

The Diversity Wheel

Organisational Dimensions

Functional level / classification

External Dimensions

Geographic location

Internal Dimensions

Marital status

Income

Management status

Age

Work content / field

Parental status

Race

Gender

Personal habits

Appearance

Ethnicity

Personality

Sexual orientation

Recreational habits

Union affiliation

Work experience

Physical ability

Religion and spirituality

Division / department / unit / group

Educational background

Work location

Seniority

Personality – how a person interacts with others and what their characteristics are: whether they are introverted, ambiverted or extroverted, active or passive, a fast and dynamic doer or a silent and reflective thinker, etc., and how all these aspects collectively influence the way the person is treated by others.

Internal dimensions – based on six aspects that an individual potentially cannot choose or control themselves. These aspects influence how the person is treated when they are dealing with diversity in communication and interaction with others.

External dimensions – depict the outcomes of life experiences and decisions/choices taken.

Organisational dimensions – include elements integrated into work and social interaction in an organisation. They contain a number of hierarchical as well as functional aspects of working life and how a person relates to them in the context of diversity.

You can use the Diversity Wheel both for internal mapping purposes (to enhance diversity inside your organisation) and for people you are engaging with. After spending time looking at the wheel, everyone can write down five things that describe who they are – the main five things they think of when describing themselves. Again you can use post-its, encouraging everyone to write one characteristic on each of five post-it notes. The descriptions don't have to match the categories on the wheel, but it can be helpful to think of them that way. Then everyone can pinpoint their characteristics on the Diversity Wheel and talk with one or two other people about how they identified themselves and what they noticed when they tried to put their characteristics into the various areas of the wheel.

Focus on experiences and emotions

So far, you should have gained a broader view of your potential beneficiaries, which you may also have verified together with your artists. You should have an idea of what interests or worries them, what they value, what they want, and maybe even what they think of your organisation, what they like and what they don't like, what they would love to do and the time they have at their disposal. That's a lot of information! What to do with it?

People have the power to decide whether or not to participate in an activity, and they decide to do so only if and where they see value in it, which has, in turn, to be proportionate to the effort required. The value is linked to the ability of that activity

to respond to a **desire** or sometimes a **need**. And it only materialises when people know that they can find a safe space where they can be listened to and respected for who they are and what they represent. This means you should appreciate the way your activity can make them feel, more than what they themselves can do. Feelings and emotions are crucial and help us in overcoming a potentially aseptic proposition. This means focusing on the 'why': the reasons they identified that desire, the frustrations they want to overcome, the goal they would like to achieve. This process can help not only you but also your artists in focusing on what they want to achieve and why.

TRICKS: Empathy Map

One tool that can help you put yourself in the shoes of your potential audiences is the Empathy Map, a simple, easy-to-digest visual tool that captures knowledge about a user's behaviours and attitudes. You can use it with your staff or with your artists to gain a deeper insight into the people you want to engage with.

You can put the Empathy Map template on a large piece of paper or whiteboard, then invite everyone to write down their thoughts on post-its – at least one post-it for every section.

To help bring the individual to life, you may even wish to sketch out the characteristics this person might have in the centre where the face is. At the end of the session, ask everyone what insights they have gathered. More importantly, ask them what hypotheses they now have about the person that they'd like to engage with.

Empathy Map

Think & feel
What really counts
Major preoccupations
Worries and aspirations

Pains
Fears
Frustrations
Obstacles

Hear
What friends say
What colleagues say
What influencers say

See
Environment
Friends
What the market offers

Say & do
Attitude in public
Appearance
Behaviour towards others

Gains
Wants/needs
Measures of success
Obstacles
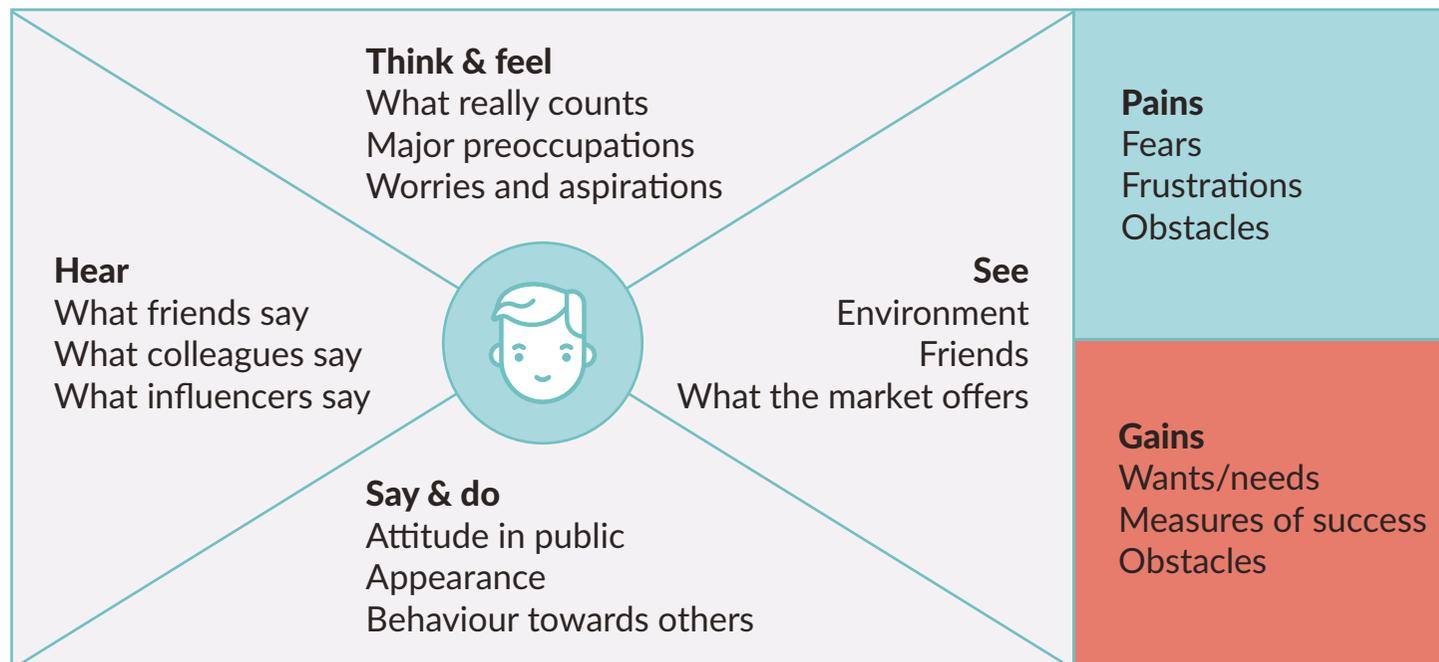
Source: Toolshero.

Communities: Implementation

Enabling conditions

Creating a context in which artistic reflections and experimentation can arise and develop requires the establishment of a common ground of shared values and ambitions. This entails providing for desires, expectations, opportunities and limits, especially from the side of communities.

A safe space

A safe space is felt when people coexist in accordance with values and practices they share, and where every voice is genuinely heard. Issues related to cultures, genders, ability and perceived class should be taken into account throughout the project. Ensure that all participants' voices are actively listened to. Take into account that some communities, especially if they come from very different cultural backgrounds, may have particular needs and limitations, such as translation or cultural-mediation requirements. Moreover, people are different and have specific experiences, backgrounds, competencies, abilities and limitations, so their way of participating may vary considerably. They should feel **comfortable** and **empowered** to participate in their own way. In this sense, building trust is essential to improving group cohesiveness, the capacity to listen to each other and group understanding.

Communicate and share expectations

In the same way that every organisation has its own agenda, each project has its own objectives. Similarly to working with artists, it is important, from the start, to set and communicate to participants what you are trying to achieve, what the project objectives are and what success might ideally look like for you and for the artists. For a participatory process to really bring about positive changes for communities, you should be able to create the basis for an open and porous process, where expectations and personal objectives of all the parties involved are listened to and valued. Make expectations emerge, embrace a **listening attitude** and adjust the process and the project to match.

Equity and collaboration

In a participatory project, at any stage – from the conception of the project idea to the evaluation of the results – hierarchy should be substituted by a sense of equity and collaboration. All the participants' ideas and competences are important to the project and can enrich it or give added meanings. Framing common expectations, agreeing on how to communicate with each other, finding the right schedule that fits all the participants and promoting the most effective dynamics of participation all help to assure an **equitable balance of power** throughout any participatory project.

Guidelines
Deliver the right message to the right people

The communication of the initiative should be adapted to the project's audience and their needs and habits. Make sure you pay enough attention to finding out the best way to reach them and deliver your message. Make use of all the data and information gathered about whom your audiences are, what matters to them and how they want to participate. First, you will need to choose the **right channels** or media. Second, you will need to understand how to shape your call to action in an engaging way. Along the way, you should be able to constantly collect data to reflect on what works and what not, and eventually adjust your strategy accordingly. In some cases you may feel the need to lean on stakeholders who can make it easier for you to get in touch with the people you would like to involve. Again, do not be afraid to ask for help and support – listen carefully and be open and flexible about changing your strategy and communication methods.

TIPS

Ask your audiences:

- *Is the project clear and appealing to our audience?*

- *What are their expectations, ambitions, desires? What are their fears?*

- *How can we transmit that information? What hooks can we use? Are we using the correct language and channels to communicate with them?*

- *What does our project offer to our target audience?*

- *How is our target audience informed online?*

- *Do they use more their laptops or mobile phones?*

- *What kind of media or channels do they use more?*

TRICKS: The case of Municipio de Pombal – ARTEMREDE (Portugal)

The following is an example of a call to action developed in 2019 by the Municipio de Pombal – ARTEMREDE (Portugal), one of the partners of Be SpectACTive! for the Visionari (Visionários).

Together with a number of visuals, the group also created also a short promotional video, distributed via social media (https://bit.ly/3SSEMDx).

The call to action was spread via different communication channels, with a specific language established and deployed for each. Using the testimonies of people who had previously participated in Visionários, the result is an articulated choral narrative in which the aims and participatory methods are made explicit. The last element to highlight is the direct invitation to cross the physical or psychological threshold into the theatre, even out of simple curiosity. This testifies to an open and welcoming attitude – everyone is embraced.

Call to action by the Municipio de Pombal, 2019

Source: Artemrede.

Clarify the benefit of taking part in your project

Make sure you specify clearly how the project will benefit the group: Will it teach participants specific skills and competences or just provide entertainment and social intercourse? Will the project represent the history and values of a territory or give its participants the chance to make their voices heard around a specific hot topic? Will it produce concrete outputs and let people keep the artefacts, or is the intention to invite friends to an exhibition with their creations? Be clear about the initial offer you are making to people, be it on a Facebook post or during the opening event.

TRICKS: The case of collection of spectators by the artist Raquel André for the 2020 Be SpectACTive!'s European Spectators Day

The following is an example of call to action developed in 2020 by the artist Raquel André who developed an artistic participatory format for the sixth annual edition of the European Spectators Day, a digital and community-based event that involves and connects local groups of active spectators participating in the activities developed in the framework of Be SpectACTive!

Collection of Spectators call to action
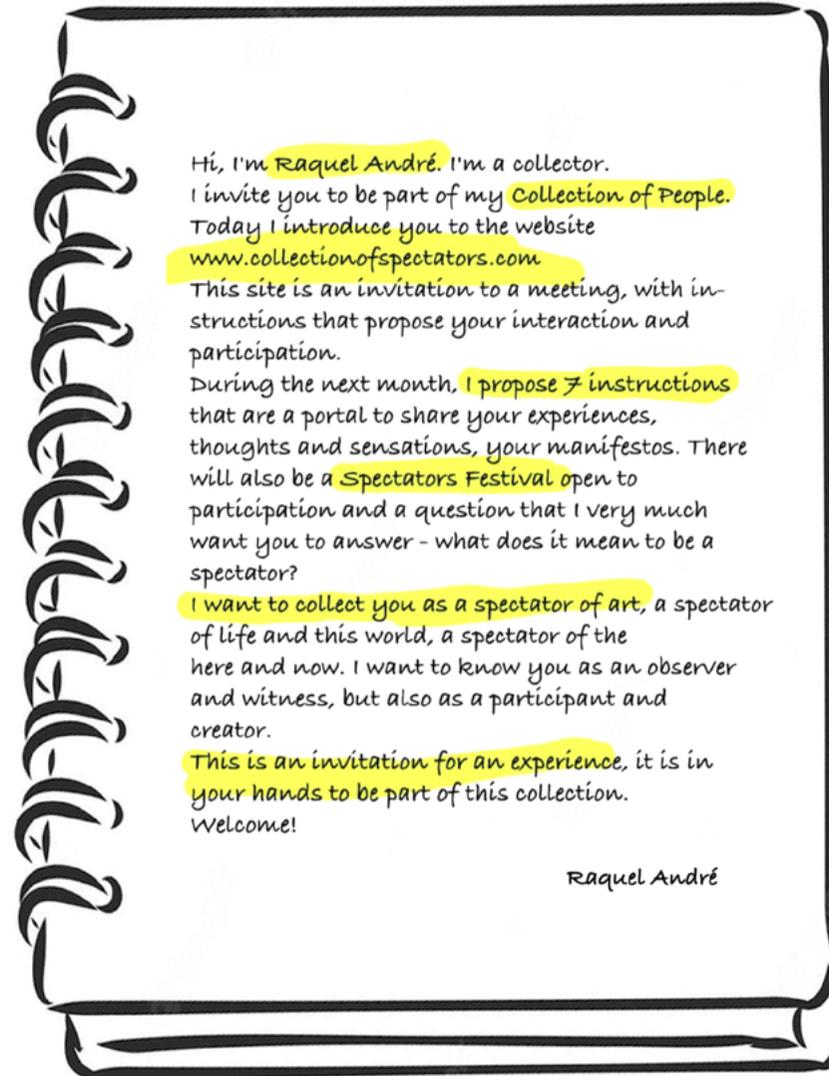
Hi, I'm Raquel André. I'm a collector.
I invite you to be part of my Collection of People.
Today I introduce you to the website
www.collectionofspectators.com
This site is an invitation to a meeting, with instructions that propose your interaction and participation.
During the next month, I propose 7 instructions that are a portal to share your experiences, thoughts and sensations, your manifestos. There will also be a Spectators Festival open to participation and a question that I very much want you to answer - what does it mean to be a spectator?
I want to collect you as a spectator of art, a spectator of life and this world, a spectator of the here and now. I want to know you as an observer and witness, but also as a participant and creator.
This is an invitation for an experience, it is in your hands to be part of this collection.
Welcome!

Raquel André

Adapt content and structure

The content should be relevant to participants and should meet their needs. Make sure to dedicate time to listening to the group interests and requests from the beginning: some may ask to meet your colleagues or visit the theatre venues; others may want to go to a show all together; some others may prefer to spend time discussing scenography, while others may want to create the scenography with their own hands! Someone else would just spend time together with other people, some would love just to act or dance… Moreover, the structure of the process should be adapted to the **participants' schedules** and **availability**. Certain projects require a brief commitment in an intense period of time, while others continue over longer stretches. Shorter projects may be more immersive and engaging, where it is easy to keep attention high, whereas longer projects allow more time to build trust between people. For longer projects, continuity should be assured over time throughout the development.

Take time to spend together

Taking time refers to enabling the time to stay together. Time needs to be allocated for **formal meetings** and may also be dedicated to **informal get-togethers**, including outside the theatre space and in places that are closer to people's lives. Devote time to address specific issues, problems, conflicts and daily operational matters. Spending time together facilitates the cultivation of a shared language and purpose – essential to arriving at a common vision and agreement about the best way forward.

TRICKS: A brainstorming city walk

Since 2020 we have all experienced the pandemic-induced constraints on sharing physical space with others, especially indoors. One idea to overcome such kinds of situations, or in order to provide a safe space for those who are still sceptical about physically joining a group, is to propose a city walk. In our own case, one of the Be SpectACTive!'s community managers launched the idea, the plan being to provide a safe context for a meeting to happen. The proposed city walk took the group through various urban settings (built-up areas, a park, suburbs, etc.) and in each one they discussed a different topic. The community manager additionally wanted to provide the group with an opportunity that is rare online, namely to also be together in silence, therefore specific moments during the walk were dedicated to stillness and self-thinking. She firstly divided the group into pairs, inviting them to discuss and share ideas, and then they re-gathered to expand the discussion amongst the whole group for about five to ten minutes. The first questions were quite broad, such as 'Which art or performance do you consider most memorable in your life?' or 'What is relevant for the arts sector in the city of Vienna?' Finally the ideas collected were put on paper and at the end of the walk they all went to see a performance rehearsal together.

For the community manager, dividing the activity into sub-activities (working in pairs, discussion in groups, alternating moments of silence and walking and standing in different parts of the city) made the discussion very effective and allowed even those who usually do not speak much to really get engaged and express themselves.

Furthermore, what might initially have been perceived as an obstacle, in other words the impossibility of being together in an enclosed space, was turned into an opportunity: the very fact of moving around in more-or-less-familiar city spaces facilitated participation and immediately gave the impression that each point of view and opinion was equal.

Keep your audience informed

It is important to use the right channels and forms of communication to keep participants engaged. Make sure to ask your group directly which channel of communication they prefer to keep in contact with you by and agree on an effective and inclusive communication system. Be it a Facebook page, a WhatsApp group or an email thread, do not skimp on communication: always keep your participants updated, but do so with the right intensity!

Moreover, maybe not everyone on your contact list will respond to your call to action this time round, but they may be available for the next project you propose. Make sure to provide constant information to them also during the implementation of the project's activities. Share pictures and videos of your group and provide good storytelling on the process implementation. Facilitate encounters even outside the frame of the project if they help group cohesion.

TRICKS: The example of Zombijana Bones, Be SpectACTive2!'s Instagram influencer

Below is a link to the work of the Montenegro Instagram influencer and artist Zombijana Bones, born as Andrijana Vešović, who travelled around Europe visiting Be SpectACTive!'s artistic venues of to tell about the project activities through Instagram posts and stories.

In this case, the narrative style and point of view are Zombjiana's subjective ones: the resulting narrative does not pretend to be didactic or

exhaustive, or indeed technically precise. However, it is fresh and direct, as well as being surprising for the protagonists themselves, who through Zombijana's gaze discovered aspects and elements that had previously been taken for granted or underestimated, but which gave humanity to the project. Moreover, this synergy allowed the project to broaden and diversify its audience.

Zombijana Bones Instagram stories: https://bit.ly/3rKIyTl
Zombijana Bones Instagram profile: https://bit.ly/3MoJuXl

Bonus Track: Facilitating Group Dynamics

An essential part of participatory practices is the ability to motivate people and enable them to make the most of their experiences with the artists and artistic organisations. It is important that the community manager is able to collaborate with groups of people and lead them as they set goals, identify resources and take steps to attain the objectives they have established together. Be it a group participating in the creation of a performance or selecting the programme of a festival, the following examples and advice can provide guiding tools for effectively working in a group and providing memorable experiences to audiences.

In the following pages, we have tried to compile a comprehensive list of examples and tricks to establish a collaborative and positive environment and to address specific challenges so as to equalise participation in groups.

As seen in the previous chapter on artists, poor group dynamics can mean that participants may become reluctant to continue the project. Many of the challenges in keeping the group engaged over time are usually related to group dynamics, but may vary greatly from group to group and according to the projects. Some people may feel left aside because they joined the group late; someone else may be reluctant to work with people perceived as 'different' from themselves; others may struggle in keeping up a high level of interest because they do not find the content relevant to them; etc.

Often, inequities occur because the focus is dominated by an individual or class of individuals, usually due to socialised behavioural problems (e.g. racism, sexism) or internal dynamics, such as experience, seniority, fear, shyness, etc. In these cases, newcomers can feel excluded by senior participants who know each other better, share past experiences, and who may forget to explain certain references to the newcomers. Somebody may decide not to participate actively or at all, or prefer to refrain from taking part in a specific activity or discussion, and so on. This can lead to a feeling of exclusion, and if it is not corrected, these people may decide to leave the group. Conversely, however, sometimes people simply need time to jump

into a discussion or to share their thoughts or feelings. What is important is to pay attention to these dynamics and to actively listen to all the needs and desires, even those that are unsaid.

From our perspective, in situations with positive group dynamics participants trust one another, they work towards a collective decision, they hold one another accountable for making things happen and demonstrate mutual understanding. They are supportive and share a sense of togetherness and proximity. In groups such as these, people tend to be more creative and satisfied, and critical thinking is stimulated. Usually, this constellation means the risk of having people drop out is lower and the level of engagement and loyalty over time is higher.

What follows is a list of never-to-be-missed elements for a community manager to foster positive group dynamics.

Get off on the right foot

An ice-breaker is an activity or game that is used to welcome and warm up the conversation amongst the participants in a meeting, class or other event. Ice-breakers are used when any event requires people to comfortably interact with each other.

A facilitator may use an ice-breaker to boost energy at the beginning of a meeting, to let people get to know one another, to get people to interact with the group, to bridge any silence or discomfort in the room, or just to have fun!

TRICKS: Cross-presentations

One popular ice-breaker is to divide the group into pairs and have one person interview the other for a few minutes, and then switch. Then the group is called back together, and each person introduces their partner to the wxhole group. Individuals learn a bit about the importance of listening when they begin introducing their partners. They also learn something about the various members of the group. The timing for this exercise is about five minutes for the interviews, and one minute for each introduction. The better people understand each other, the more effectively they can work together. You could dedicate some time at the beginning of each meeting until everyone has spoken with everyone else.

Usually an outline is given for the interview questions, such as for example:

- *What's your name?*
- *Where are you from, and what's your background?*
- *What do you do?*
- *Why are you involved here?*
- *Why are you here today?*
- *What do people say about the work that you do?*
- *What is your greatest ambition?*
- *What difference do you hope to make?*
- *What matters to you?*

TRICKS: Trading cards

This ice-breaker works well because it lets people self-define, gives them a 'personality' beyond their typical work environment, gives participants quick snapshots of multiple players (since they see multiple cards as they're being passed around), and creates memorable visuals of the experience.

How to play:

1. Provide the meeting's participants with large-format index cards and markers.

2. Ask them to take five minutes to create a personal 'trading card' – one that includes a self-portrait, a nickname for their 'player' and one thing about themselves that people in the meeting aren't likely to know.

3. Have the players pass the trading cards around the room randomly. Tell them to read each trading card that falls into their hands and hold onto one they feel they might like to ask a question about. They can keep passing until they find one.

4. Ask for volunteers to read their player's name and nickname and then to ask that person a question related to the little-known fact on their card.

5. Let the player who was chosen elaborate on the question they were asked. The player can then opt to ask the person whose card they're holding a question, or they can pass and the moderator can request another volunteer.

6. Keep going around until the players appear to be sufficiently warmed up, but try to make the exercise last no longer than 15 minutes.

Set the rules of the game

Having to deal with a group of people with their own personalities, ambitions, aims and expectations, it is important to come to an agreement from the start on how to collaborate and spend time together. You could dedicate one of the first meetings with the artist and the community to exploring each other's expectations and personal objectives. Be sure to make assumptions emerge as well: unstated assumptions are the primary source of undetermined expectations and misunderstandings. Use this time to also set norms, habits and behaviours for everyone to feel comfortable, listened to and valued. Start with the people: ask them how they want to be involved, what matters to them and what may cause them stress.

TRICKS: Code of conduct

This game has been designed to help establish the right culture in a group of people and help build mutual trust. It empowers all the participants to act upon the results of this game.

How to play:

1. Write down the words 'meaningful' and 'pleasant' in the middle of a flip-chart or whiteboard.

2. Ask everybody in the group to write down on post-its what they believe is necessary to make the meeting or workshop or activity meaningful and pleasant. Leave a couple of minutes for the participants to reflect in silence.

3. In the meantime, hang a large white sheet of paper divided in two main quadrants on the wall or place it on a table, so that participants can put their post-its on it. Quickly glance over each of the ideas and make sure everybody has the same understanding of the idea at hand. If necessary, adjust any item to avoid misunderstanding.

4. Now go back to the first item addressed and ask the participants what they believe would be a good way to make sure this idea is carried out during the meeting or workshop. Note the items attached to the given value addressed.

5. End the game by pointing out that this code of conduct that the group has just created needs to be upheld by everyone. Each participant has the responsibility to make sure everybody in the group respects this code.

The importance of good communication

Positive group dynamics depend first of all on good communication amongst the members and, more specifically, on the way information is shared between everyone. Make sure the information you give about the group purpose and objectives are clear enough and well received by everyone. You should take time to summarise the task that is to be done and seek clarification from the participants to ensure that everyone understands what is expected. In this, help the group in understanding that everyone should be willing to recognise when other people may need more information or assistance and offer help so that everyone can participate in full. Importantly, this also means leaving proper space for everyone to jump into the proposed activities in their own time: nobody should be rushed, pushed or forced. Everyone has the right to enter the proceedings as intensely or gradually as they want. Respect and understanding of different perspectives are mandatory.

Your attitudes, behaviour and actions are conduits that let equal participation flourish.

Moreover, it can happen that people may lose sight of what the original purpose was and may get sidetracked, so make sure that everyone keeps the goal or task in mind, and ensure that if it gets derailed the discussion comes back to the stated focus. Last but not least, remember that silence does not mean approval! However, vice versa, silence is also needed as a vital pause to assimilate or digest what's happening.

Ask yourself:

- *Have the participants been provided with all the necessary information?*

- *Are they able to understand the artistic language involved and the objectives of the artistic project?*

- *Are activities organised so that everyone feels at ease at any point in the process?*

- *Do the participants feel free to interact within the group?*

TRICKS: Question Balloons

Question Balloons are very effective for meetings with dense content, for instance in reviews or status meetings. The Question Balloons game empowers those in the meeting, gives the facilitator a certain control and provides both sides with feedbacks. It leverages visual and kinaesthetic information through balloons floating and popping. It uses the mechanism of elimination to score how many questions get answered, and allows those attending to see their questions answered. Play Question Balloons when you want to better manage group energy.

Accepting and responding to questions is one of the most difficult parts of running any meeting, workshop or presentation, and this needs to be planned for. Is there enough time for Q&A? Is the audience willing to ask questions? How many questions will they ask? Do I take questions at the end or throughout? How do I know if questions were answered in a useful way?

To address this challenge, the Question Balloons game allows attendees to 'float' their questions throughout a meeting or presentation whilst providing a visual status that helps manage group energy.

How to play:

1. Start by providing a marker and one or two balloons to each attendee. The balloons must have strings that allow the attendees to float and then retrieve them (from the ceiling, if necessary) when needed.

2. Ask each attendee to write their questions about the scheduled topic on a balloon and then float the balloon. Only write one question per balloon. It's okay to save balloons for later. Question Balloons can be floated at any time during the presentation or meeting.

3. During any free time (pre-meeting, breaks or lunch), the speaker or leader should walk around and read the Question Balloons, getting a feel for the questions that are going to arise.

4. Inform all attendees that they should pop their Question Balloons – loudly – whenever one of their questions has been adequately answered. This response might have come via meeting materials, images, a speaker or a casual conversation. It doesn't matter. At the end of the session, any remaining Question Balloons will be addressed.

5. When a question is answered, the corresponding balloon will pop. Some people will jump. That's okay. The leader/facilitator should acknowledge that a question has been answered and lead a round of applause. Some participants will float new Question Balloons throughout the session. That's good.

6. When the content or topic is completed, there will usually be two types of Question Balloons remaining. The first type is informational. Answer these first. The second type of question you'll see concern opinions. These should be posed to the room. Instruct the person who floated the question to pop their balloon when they receive information, from anyone, that will help them move forward.

The benefits of active listening

Trust and clarity are essential to group dynamics to enable and legitimise a collaborative approach by adopting an active listening attitude. This, in turn, promotes constant dialogue and openness in dealing with uncertainty and acceptance of possible failure and conflict. A 'safe space' can arise when contributors have learnt to co-exist and to respect divergent point of views and have experienced conflict and can grow together. Try to create moments of exchange and dialogue throughout the process; take notes and return to your group constantly to check that the right adjustments have been made and that the experience is rewarding for them.

TRICKS: Four cards game

This game has different versions, but the main goal remains in all of them is to listen to different voices and promote a creative collaborative exchange of viewpoints.

For this game, you will need four decks of 40 cards each. Each deck contains four pictures which represent an idea or a feeling associated with the following categories:

- *Emotions*

- *Childhood memories*

- *Comic characters*

- *Idyllic landscapes*

- *Artworks*

- *Human groups*

- *Extravagance*

- *Traditional cultural expressions*

- *Social inequality*

- *Social engagement*

(The categories are, of course, adaptable to the type of topics you want to work through with the group, and are therefore completely replaceable.)

How to play

Split the participants into four groups of (ideally) four people each. Each group will have a deck of 40 cards scattered on the table in front of them.

In the first part of the game each participant, individually and without talking, selects four cards, taking into account the ideas/feelings they want to be represented in the theatre/festival programme.

(Duration: five minutes)

Then, each participant puts the four selected cards on the table. Still in silence, the participants start to see the cards selected by other participants and try together, this time as a group, to select four cards out of the 16 on the table that convey the ideas/feelings/aesthetics to be represented in the theatre/festival programme.

(Duration: five minutes)

Now the participants can talk and try to explain the reasons why they personally chose the selected cards, if they would make changes and why, as a group. They can decide whether to stick with the four selected cards on the table or to swap them with other cards in the deck.

(Duration: 15 minutes)

The final part consists of a general debate. Each group explains to the other groups why they decided to pick the four cards and describe the process by which they reached an agreement.

(Duration: 20 minutes)

(Total duration: 45 minutes)

Consider participants as collaborators

Usually issues arise when a participatory project comes across as unresponsive because the participants don't feel that their contributions are being respected or valued. If you want to be perceived as actively inviting and incorporating contributions from audiences, then you need to consider the participants as collaborators. Participatory design is not a reductive process of simply 'involving' end-users, rather it entails a process of co-imagination, co-reflection, co-understanding and co-development which is supported by a mutual learning process, providing all participants with increased knowledge and understandings. In our own case, this involved informing participants about the creative process designed and artists and organisations about the people and their habits and practices.

TRICKS: World Café

World Café is a simply structured conversational process for facilitating collaborative dialogue and the sharing of knowledge and ideas. Participants discuss a question or issue in groups around small, round café tables, with the participants switching tables at regular intervals to be introduced to the previous discussion at their new table by a 'table host', providing a cross-fertilization of their discussions with the ideas generated at other tables.

The method is based on seven basic principles https://theworldcafe.com

1. Clarify the purpose of the meeting.

2. Create a hospitable space: a café ambience is suitable in order to facilitate conversation, and a name, appropriate for the purpose, is given to the meeting (e.g. 'Strategy Café', 'Discovery Café', etc.).

3. Explore questions that matter and make sure that the questions and themes for the conversation rounds are visible to everyone on cards on each table.

4. Encourage everyone's contribution

5. Connect diverse perspectives: as well as speaking and listening, individuals may be encouraged to write notes on the tablecloth so that when people change to different tables, they can see what previous members have articulated, as well as hearing the table host's view of what has been happening.

6. Listen for patterns and insights: at the end of the process, the main ideas are summarised in a plenary session and follow-up possibilities are discussed.

7. Share collective discoveries: in some café events, a particular person documents the group ideas by drawing them on a wall mural to illustrate the patterns in the overall group conversation. Starting from these records, it may be useful to create a storybook to bring the results of the café session to larger audiences following the event.

The World Café process is particularly useful for engaging large groups in an authentic dialogue process when the goal is to generate input and stimulate innovative thinking. The technique, which stimulates sociality among the participants, engages people meeting for the first time in authentic conversation, as well as deepening relationships in an existing group.

Better group cohesion

Group cohesion is the extent to which participants are attracted to the group and its goals. With group cohesion, the predominant aspect is emotional and derives from the connection that people feel to other group members and to their group as a whole.

The sense of cohesion consists of feelings of interpersonal affinity, task commitment and group pride

TRICKS: Physical Activation

Physical Activation not only enlivens any given situation, it also allows the participants to relate to each other in a more direct way. This is an activity that works very well when the group members don't yet know each other. Through the use of the body and by focusing on one's own space and that of and others, it allows the participants to jointly get in tune and empathise with each other and with the group work, at the same time reinforcing the community experience. Whilst enabling the participants to get to know each other, it provides a climate of listening and sharing in an environment predisposed to trust, respect and horizontal leadership.

How does it work?

The performative and relational activity uses the timing and movements of theatre and dance.

Through the use of sticks (one per participant), the group is invited to gather in a circle and start moving their body and exploring the space around themselves while holding the sticks.

In a second moment, the facilitator invites participants to start interacting in pairs with the use of the sticks and to pay attention to the rhythm and force used by the other person.

In the third step, the facilitator encourages everyone to interact with the rest of the group. In this way, though the use of sticks, a sort of moving human chain is created. The purpose of this last stage is to move through the space of the room while avoiding breaking the circle or dropping the sticks.

At the end of the exercise, the participants are invited to comment on the experience.

TRICKS: The low-tech social network

The object of this game is to introduce the event participants to each other by co-creating a mural-sized, visual network of their connections. The network remains up for the duration of the event, and may be added to, changed or studied throughout.

How to play:

To set up the game, all the participants need a 5×8-centimetre index card and access to markers or something similar to draw their avatar. They will also need a large wall covered in butcher paper to create the actual network.

1. Give the participants clear instructions: 'As a group, we are going to build the social network that is in the room right now. We're going to use this wall to do it. But first, we need to create the basic elements of the network: who you are. Start by taking your card and drawing your avatar (profile picture) that you'll be "uploading" to the network. Save room on the bottom of the card for your name.'

2. Create the avatars. After a short period of time (and probably some laughter and apologies for drawing ability), the participants should have sketched their avatars and written their names. At this point, you can add a variation, which is to ask the group to also write two words on the card that 'tag' who they are or what they're interested in at the event.

3. Make the connections. Next, ask the participants to stand up and bring their cards and a marker to the butcher-paper wall, then 'upload' themselves by sticking their card to the wall.

4. The next task is simple: find the people you know and draw lines to make the connections. Label the lines if you can: for instance 'friends with' or 'went to school with' or 'went mountain climbing with'. This continues for a time, and is likely to result in previously undiscovered links and new friends.

Build trust among people

Building trust in groups is a key aspect to take into consideration. Trust can be defined as the confidence that is placed in someone else, and usually means that a person tends to expose certain vulnerabilities to the other person believing that they will not take advantage of their openness. The attitude and ability to trust one another in a group is considered one of the most critical elements that help participants bond with each other and work together towards their common goals.

TRICKS: Trust Walk

The Trust Walk aims to build trust and understanding between the participants. It challenges them to give up control over a situation and put their 'fate' into the hands of others. What you need is a space and some blindfolds. It's good if you can use a space new to the participants, even better if it's an outside area – forest paths, city streets, a park, etc. Make sure the space is large enough so that people don't interfere with each other, and scout the area beforehand to eliminate or avoid possible dangers.

Have your group divide into pairs, designating an 'A' and a 'B' in each, and firstly discuss safety and respect as priorities (for example the blindfold can be taken off any time if someone becomes uncomfortable or anxious).

Then invite each 'A' to put on a blindfold and close their eyes. At this point, 'B' takes 'A's' hand and leads them slowly through the space. The pairs should constantly communicate, assuring safety and warning of what to avoid by giving instructions. After five minutes, 'A' and 'B' can then switch roles and the second walk can start.

At the end of the exercise, the participants are invited to comment on the experience.

TRICKS: Manifestos of good conduct

Ideally, you could propose that the group write and sign an agreement on how they want to work together: how to talk to one another, how to attune to each other's ideas and what the responsibilities of being in the group are. The manifesto could include some of the following shared rules, presented as examples:

'Our rules for a good communication are...'

- *to remember to take turns speaking;*

- *to remember to give positive comments to others, regularly and often;*

- *to avoid negative observations, unless presented in a constructive way;*

- *to remember that the comments I receive are not insults but are meant to help the whole group's objectives;*

- *to ask for help when something is not clear and offer help when you see someone struggling.*

'By being part of the group I agree to...'

- *represent the group and the group interests;*

- *begin and end meetings on time to respect each other's daily commitments;*

- *remain open-minded and receptive to all ideas, however contrary to my own;*

- *encourage full participation by everyone;*

- *speak up if I feel another member's behaviour is disruptive;*

- *share all information, so that everyone is working from the same body of information;*

- *share failures as a team and never blame someone specific.*

Improving inclusion and diversity in groups

With 'diversity', we mean our differences in religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic status, physical abilities and so on; and with 'inclusion' we mean the extent to which people feel valued, respected, accepted and encouraged to fully participate. The combination of diversity and inclusion in a group can increase the level of satisfaction and engagement, and can also lead to better decision-making and collaboration.

TRICKS: Values of solidarity

This game has been developed within the framework of the Reshape project, co-funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union.[30]

The game aims to promote collaborative communication and attitudes relating to the solidarity paradigm. Its purpose is to give participants a chance to express what values are important to them in their collaboration, to understand how others think, and what is important and necessary for them to work and communicate together. It also provides inspiration and an opportunity to reflect on how the group wants to deal with potential conflict, especially when participants come from different contexts.

The rules of the game can be found under the following link: https://bit.ly/3W2d9K0.

[30]   Reshape is a collaborative, bottom-up research process that proposes instruments for transition towards an alternative, fairer and unified arts ecosystem across Europe and the Southern Mediterranean. For more information, see https://reshape.network/ (accessed 1 July 2022).

Improving critical thinking

Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skilfully conceptualising, applying, analysing, synthesising and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication as a guide to belief and action.[31] In other words, it is the ability to analyse available information without allowing our biases, prejudices or misconceptions to skew our conclusions and opinions. Improving critical thinking can promote interest and engagement and inspire people to embrace and question new ideas and data, thus giving them new perspectives and teaching them to shape their opinions better.

TRICKS: Four Intelligences

This exercise is based on the Multiple Intelligences theory by Howard Gardner, which accounts for the fact that each person has different ways of learning and different intelligences they use in their daily lives. For the purpose of this exercise, the Four Intelligences game assumes that individuals have a predominant or leading intelligence that instinctively guides their learning and/ or decision making:

1. People with predominantly physical or practical intelligence (PQ) see things or make decisions from a more practical perspective (they want to immediately 'do', 'make' or 'try' things first, to see if the idea works).

2. People with predominantly intellectual intelligence (IQ) see things or make decisions through processes, data and results, and their thinking is mostly

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[31]   Statement by Michael Scriven and Richard Paul, presented at the 8th Annual International Conference on Critical Thinking and Education Reform, Summer 1987. For a general definition, see https://bit.ly/3W00QhC (accessed 1 July 2022).

evidence-based (they want proof, or evidence that an idea will work).

3. People with predominantly spiritual intelligence (SQ) see things or make decisions based on instinct and intuition (they just feel that the idea is going to be good, with no evidence to support this).

4. People with a predominantly emotional intelligence (EQ) base decisions on feelings and emotions (they know that the idea is going to be good for people, no matter what).

Using this game, you may want to encourage the participants to reflect on what kind of intelligence they predominantly possess and how this influences their decision-making process. It will help people think about their approach to other people, to their lives, to time-management issues and motivation.

What to do?

1. Separately write 'PQ', 'IQ', 'SQ' and 'EQ' on four large post-its.

2. Place one of each of the post-its on the wall at separate corners of a room.

3. Explain a little about the qualities of each individual intelligence category and the characteristics the individuals who have them display.

4. Ask the participants to stand in the corner displaying the intelligence they feel they most closely identify with. There may be some resistance to choosing this at first, so encourage them to think about how they work best.

5. Begin a conversation about how this intelligence can affect their decision-making and problem-solving. Ask them questions about how they know this, the way they like to spend their time, how this manifests itself in their daily procedures, etc.

6. Then ask them to move around the room and to stand in different corners, and reflect on how, if this were their dominant intelligence, they would work differently. How does this intelligence make them feel? Ask them questions relating to people who have a very different intelligence balance to them, or people who have predominantly the opposite intelligence to them. How might this affect group dynamics? Can they empathise with other intelligences? Can they try to be aware of leading with a different intelligence?

Enhance decision-making and problem-solving

Problem-solving processes involve thoughts, discussions, actions and decisions that run from the first consideration of a problematic situation to the final goal. In other words, problem-solving entails passing from a problem (undesirable situation) to a solution (desirable situation) by overcoming obstacles. Overcoming obstacles requires the most work, and this is the stage where decision-making occurs. Enhancing decision-making and problem-solving can improve communication, productivity and satisfaction; enhance focus, clarity of thinking and receptiveness to outside influences; and balance collective strengths and weaknesses to accomplish a mutual goal.

TRICKS: The Six Hats decision-making method

Edward de Bono developed the Six Hats method of thinking in the 1980s.[32] Using this method, you ask the participant to look at a problem, review an existing operational approach or interrogate a new idea from a very specific perspective.

The method's popularity lies in its ability to help people overcome habitual ways of thinking and to allow group members to play different roles and see a problem or decision from multiple points of view. The basic idea is that each of the six hats represents a different way of thinking, and when we figuratively

[32] Edward de Bono, *Six Thinking Hats* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1985).

switch hats, we switch the way we think. The hats and their style of thinking are as follows:

White hat = objective – focuses on seeking information such as data and facts and then processes that information in a neutral way.

Red hat = emotional – uses intuition, gut reactions and feelings to judge information and suggestions.

Black hat = negative – focuses on potential risks, points out possibilities for failure and evaluates information cautiously and defensively.

Yellow hat = positive – is optimistic about suggestions and future outcomes, gives constructive and positive feedback, points out benefits and advantages.

Green hat = creative – tries to generate new ideas and solutions, thinks 'outside the box'.

Blue hat = philosophical – uses metacommunication to organise and reflect on the thinking and communication taking place in the group, facilitates who wears what hat and when group members change hats.

Specific sequences or combinations of hats can be used to encourage strategic thinking.

Each of these hats is 'worn' by the participants, whereby the hats can be metaphorical but equally real. Each change of 'hat' indicates the next stage of the session. By the end of a successful Six Hats session, a particular decision or evaluation will have been considered from a range of viewpoints. As an example, you can start with someone wearing the white hat in order to process facts and other available information, then pass to someone with the yellow hat to identify potential positive outcomes, etc. At the end, the blue hat would summarise what was said and begin a new sequence.

Each round of thinking should be limited to a certain time frame (two to five minutes) to keep the discussion moving.

TRICKS: The Anti-Problem

The Anti-Problem game helps people get unstuck when they are at their wits' end. It is most useful when a team is already working on a problem but are running out of ideas for solutions. Asking the players to identify ways to solve a problem completely contrary to their current one makes it easier to see where a current solution might be going astray or where an obvious solution isn't being applied.

This game's purpose is to help people evaluate a problem differently and break out of existing patterns by making the anti-problem more pronounced and extreme than it really is just to get people thinking. Don't worry if the players don't generate many (or any) viable or actionable solutions. Obviously, this would be a boon to the game, but the intention is not to solve a complex problem in 30 minutes. Instead the aim is to provide a new approach that can lead to a solution when the participants have time to think after the meeting is over. Or, since this game tends to

naturally segue into a conversation about the real problem, you could use any extra time to start that conversation while the players' ideas are still triggered. Note: there may be some unexpected aha!-moments when people perhaps discover they're applying a solution that's actually also germane to the current problem. Whoops!

The Anti-Problem game is based on an activity called Reverse It.

How to play:

1. Before the meeting, find a situation that needs to be resolved or a problem that needs a solution.

2. Give players access to post-its, markers, index cards, pipe cleaners, modelling clay, etc. – any supplies you have around the office that they could use to design and describe solutions.

3. Break large groups down into smaller groups of three to four people and describe what they'll tackle together: the anti-problem, or the current problem's opposite (e.g. if the problem is about engaging

youngsters, the players could brainstorm ways to deter youngsters from participation). The more extreme the problem's opposite, the better.

(Optional activity: Bring a list of smaller problems and decrease the amount of time allotted to solve them. Make it a race to come up with as many solutions as the group can churn out – even if they're outlandish.)

4. Give the players 15 to 20 minutes to generate and display various ways to solve the anti-problem.

Encourage fast responses and a volume of ideas. There are no wrong solutions!

5. When the time is up, ask each group to share their solutions to the anti-problem. They should stand and display any visual creations they have at this time or ask the others to gather around their table to see their solutions.

6. Discuss any insights and discoveries the players have.

TRICKS: Walking Discussions

The Walking Discussion is undertaken to simplify complex problems by identifying underlying patterns of tension in the system called 'polarities', in other words opposite properties where one pole is not valued better than the other. The Walking Discussion helps you and the group in visualising these polarities and their graduality, and helps participants to discuss and express their thoughts and feelings, as well as noticing different hints. This is useful when you want to delve into a specific problem or you want to find a solution which can fit everyone.

To hold an effective Walking Discussion you need very little, only a sufficiently large space (either indoors or outdoors) to allow people to move around. Divide the physical space in half by marking a line with a tape, so as to delineate two areas representing two different polarities. Initially, let the people arrange themselves freely in the space.

At this point you are ready to launch and explore your topics of discussion. You can decide to formulate questions that gravitate around two polarities, or you can launch statements and ask people to arrange themselves in the space according to how strongly they adhere to the statement or the question. An example could be, 'Do you like the sea or the mountains? If you like the sea go to the one pole, if you like the mountains go to the opposite pole!' Where the participants position themselves in the physical space corresponds to the intensity of identification (if I like the mountain more, I go as far away as possible from the spatial demarcation line; vice versa, if I like both, I position myself close to the line).

ALERT: Whether you decide to set up your Walking Discussion by asking questions or by issuing statements, remember the physical movements involved are a pretext to speak about each of these statements in a free and open way. You, as a facilitator, need not only to launch questions or statements but also to animate the discussion to let different points of view and pros and contras to emerge.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Many different approaches to monitoring and evaluating cultural activities have been experimented and applied over the past 50 years in order to measure and communicate the role, value and impact of cultural activities in wider society. Despite this, the fact remains that the arts and cultural sector still suffers from the difficulty of quantifying and expressing their value to stakeholders and funding bodies.

Especially in the beginning, much evaluation was dominated by economic frameworks to the detriment of other dimensions and approaches but there has been a growing emphasis on holistic evaluation frameworks, accounting for multiple dimensions and measures simultaneously (across economic, social, cultural and environmental realms, to name a few of the most dominant). One of the prevailing approaches used in recent years is the theoretical framework of the *Theory of Change*, a widespread and consolidated approach in the field of social impact assessment.

At the core of this approach there is essentially a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It is focused on identifying all the conditions (outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs) that must be in place (and how these relate to one another causally) for the goals to occur. These are all mapped out in an Outcomes Framework that provides the basis for identifying what type of activity or intervention will lead to the outcomes identified as preconditions for achieving the long-term goal. Through this approach, the precise link between activities and the achievement of the long-term goals are more fully understood.

We ourselves value using such a framework as a vital contribution to not only evaluating a project but especially as a planning tool, and given its wide use and relevance within the evaluation discourse in recent years, it is worthwhile at least mentioning here. Nevertheless, we have decided to dedicate the following pages to a more managerial approach that focuses first and foremost on the monitoring of processes rather than on the evaluation of impacts. This comes from the conviction that by using monitoring processes set against their own objectives and standards, well-managed organisations and community managers can obtain a clear understanding of their performance and learn a great deal.

Moreover, the use of the term 'impact' is somewhat controversial. It is usually defined as the effects and changes generated in the long term in the community through the activities carried out by an organisation, project or intervention. This implies a necessity to adopt counterfactual methods so as to identify the portion of the impact that would have occurred without the intervention (i.e. caused by other factors) and then deduce the impact actually caused by the intervention under consideration. However, for economic but especially temporal reasons, deploying counterfactual methods often exceeds the capacity of most arts and cultural organisations because impact is generally more visible, and as such potentially measurable, over the longer term (ten years or more).
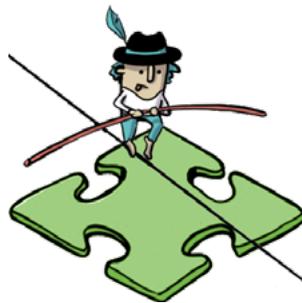
Enabling Conditions

Monitoring and evaluation are not synonyms

Monitoring can be defined as the systematic collection and analysis of information to track a project/programme's progress against initial plans. **Evaluation** is the systematic assessment of a project/programme to determine the fulfilment of objectives, its impact and sustainability, over time, allowing lessons-learned to be incorporated into the decision-making process. Evaluation mainly helps you in focusing on interpreting phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. This means these phenomena need to be understood by placing emphasis on interpretation rather than quantification, and on subjectivity rather than objectivity, calling in turn for flexibility in the process of conducting research, an orientation on process rather than outcome, and a concern with context. This allows you to overcome the age-old (and irresolvable) controversial discourse on 'artistic quality' – which is not and cannot be an object of evaluation – in order to instead focus on the **effects** produced by artistic activities in different spheres (which can be social, environmental, cultural, economic, etc.).

Methodologically, it is crucial to consider the longitudinal and temporal development of the project, sticking closely to the approach on which any before-and-after study (also called 'pre-post study') is based, namely the ideal measuring of outcomes in a group of participants before being exposed to an intervention or involved in a project, and then again afterwards.

Together, monitoring and evaluation are useful for:

- *organisational learning and knowledge-sharing to improve the ability to adapt to contextual changes and evolutions;*

- *achieving and reporting on results for the programme or project beneficiaries;*

- *the empowerment and engagement of the stakeholders involved;*

- *transparency and accountability.*

Monitoring and evaluation are cyclical, and start with the project design

Although this chapter comes last in this book, the activity of monitoring and evaluating a programme or a project starts at the very beginning of a project cycle and is run parallel to project implementation.

The basic principle is simple. You decide on what aspects you want to focus on before carrying out the work and assess your performance against your original objectives. Of course, in the real world it is much more complicated than it sounds! Adopting this approach also means setting up the internal logic of activities more effectively, checking all the hypotheses of change. Therefore, incorporating evaluation is an integral part of the management process, involving managing your operations in a transparent and shared way, and thus enriching, among other things, the set of tools already used for planning. In a certain sense, it allows one to better direct and dose one's energies and resources, and reinforces planning activity.

Monitoring and evaluation are based on an experience-built approach

Monitoring and evaluation of a project usually start with an analysis of the context of the project/programme so as to inform the project design. It finishes with an evaluation at the end of a cycle to understand what has been effective or ineffective in terms of project implementation in order to inform decision-making and make progress in achieving results. Using information and involving the right stakeholders allow an organisation to design a roadmap to achieve its mission and to set priorities and expected results, usually in the form of objectives, indicators and targets.

Monitoring and evaluation help in facing problems and changes

A monitoring and evaluation approach and the correct use of monitoring tools can help managers in foreseeing problems and changes, as well as adjusting the course of action during project implementation. Many changes and unforeseen events may happen that influence the achievement of results, so it is important to learn how to recognise and manage change

The results of monitoring and evaluation are an important communicative tool

Interpreting project results means demonstrating the correspondence between the initial strategic plan and the results achieved. Usually, reports are made in order to communicate qualitative information and key lessons to internal and external stakeholders.

The relational value of evaluation processes

Activating an evaluation process constantly stimulates listening, which is its fundamental value. Investigating the effectiveness of projects or programmes activates and strengthens relationships (creating and nurturing trust), because knowing the point of view of stakeholders and beneficiaries requires involving them directly and transparently in the evaluation.

Guidelines

Using the Logical Framework approach

The Logical Framework approach is widely used, especially in international development projects, and is based on a worldwide study carried out in the 1970s by Fry Consultants Incorporated[33]. Nowadays, many variations of this tool exist (called outcomes framework, logframe, results chain, value chain, etc.), but all of them are based on a matrix that synthesises all the key information concerning a project/programme in order to represent what the project intends to do and to clarify the relationship of cause and effect between the different items. Moreover, the framework is a reflective and learning evaluation tool with a circular feedback loop: fulfilling a Logical Framework is not a linear process, and when new parts of the matrix are drafted, previously assembled information needs to be re-reviewed.

The main elements of a Logical Framework are:

- *Inputs: the financial, human, and material resources used for the intervention.*

- *Activities: actions taken through which inputs are mobilised to produce specific outputs.*

- *Outputs: the products, capital goods and services which result from a development intervention.*

- *Outcomes: the likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs.*

- *Impact: long-term effects produced by an intervention. The impact is the portion of the total outcome that has occurred as a direct result of the intervention, as opposed to the portion that would have occurred regardless of the intervention*

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[33]   Leon G. Rosenberg, Lawrence D. Posner and Edward J. Hanley, *Project Evaluation and the Project Appraisal Reporting System,* *submitted to the Agency for International Development by Fry Consultants Incorporated*, 1970, https://bit.ly/3TGwTSc (accessed 1 July 2022).

Logical Framework grid

	Indicators	Source of verification	Assumptions
Impact			
Outcomes			
Output			
Activities			
Inputs			

Source: adaptation of Leon, et al. (1970) by the authors.

TIPS

Once you have finished, look at your Logical Framework and take a step back. Try to see if there is a logical sequence between activities and impacts. It is far better if you share this activity with your colleagues working on the project, but especially with someone who is new to it. To review your Logical Framework, you can try to respond to the following questions:

- *Is there a logical sequence connecting activities with the final impact?*
- *Given the project interventions, is it likely that the project's objectives will be achieved?*
- *Are the project objectives relevant to the needs of the beneficiaries/stakeholders?*
- *Are the assumptions relevant and likely to happen? Is the budget dedicated to monitoring and evaluation sufficient?*

TRICKS: First approach to the Logical Framework

Try to fill in the following Logical Framework. Start by identifying the main beneficiaries of your project and their main needs to which the project responds. Think also about the changes that the project should generate for them. Now, use this as the main plank of your reasoning and start filling in the table, starting with the 'impacts' and working backwards to the 'inputs'. There is no need for detail, simply make sure to point out the main elements in each category.

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Once you have finished, make a list of the main assumptions behind your Logical Framework, meaning the necessary conditions that have to exist if the relationships in the framework are to behave as expected. Remember that assumptions are largely or completely beyond the control of the implementers (e.g. favourable government policies and regulations, sufficiency of funds, availability of human resources, etc.).

Using smart indicators, baselines and targets

Usually, a Logical Framework also includes the description of a set of indicators. Indicators describe the project's objectives in operationally measurable terms (quantity, quality, time, etc); they respond to the question 'How can we know whether or not what has been planned is actually happening or happened?' In essence, indicators are what will tell you whether or not you have achieved your objectives.

Indicators can be quantitative or qualitative: quantitative indicators are numerical (age, duration, number of participants, etc.); qualitative indicators do not strictly involve enumeration and are able to explain the intangible characteristics, properties, abstract concepts and qualitative processes of a project. The five characteristics, called SMART, of a good indicator are:

1. SPECIFIC: clearly related to each level of the interventional logic (narrow and not generic).

2. MEASURABLE: giving the same results, regardless of who is evaluating.

3. ACHIEVABLE: easily accessible by evaluators, and cost-effective.

4. RELEVANT: closely linked to the relevant outcome.

5. TIME-BOUND: signifying when the indicator should be collected or measured.

But before being SMART, indicators need to be complete. Defining an indicator means including the source of verification to describe how and when the information will be collected, and also a baseline in order for the indicator to be effectively measured. A baseline is the value of the indicator prior to project implementation against which your indicator can then be assessed.

It is also useful to specify the targets, meaning the level you are aiming to achieve in the future for your indicators. Indicators are complete if they also include a short definition.

Examples of a complete set of indicators

Indicator	Indicator definition	Data collection method	Period and frequency	Baseline	Target
Number of citizens participating in the project activities	Total number of citizens who have participated in at least 60% of the project activities in a yea	Logbook updated weekly by the community manager indicating the number of participants in each activity	Data collection is weekly, but the final count is made at the end of every project year	Value in T0= 50%	5% increase in participants every year
Inclusion and diversity goals	Total number of people participating grouped according to age, ethnic group, profession and education	Survey collecting demographic data from the citizens participating	At the beginning of each project year (three times in total)	Demographic data to be collected before the start of the project	In year 3, the group of participants is representative of the local population
Participant dropout numbers over time	Number of people involved at the beginning of the project year minus the number of people involved at the end of each project year	Logbook updated weekly by the community manager	Data collection is weekly, but the final count is at the end of each project year (three times in total).	The baseline results from the collection of data at the beginning of each project year Value in T0= 25%	A decrease of 5% every year, giving a total 15% decrease in dropouts.

Source: elaborated by the authors.

TIPS

Once you have finished filling in the table, ask yourself:

- *Are the indicators valid and measurable in comparison with a baseline?*
- *If baseline data is not yet available, are there specific plans for when baseline data will be collected?*
- *Can data be easily collected and measured to evaluate progress?*
- *Is the budget dedicated to monitoring and evaluation sufficient?*

TRICKS: Define your indicators

Now that the general structure of your project has been established and reviewed through the Logical Framework, it is time to capture your informational needs in order to assess how far you are achieving your results. You do so using defining indicators.

Fill in the following table, bearing in mind the main characteristics of a SMART indicator, and this time try to be as precise as possible. Come up with one to two indicators for each item of your Logical Framework.

Logical Framework indicator grid

	Indicator	Indicator definition	Data collection method	Period and frequency	Baseline	Target
Impact						
Outcomes						
Output						
Activities						

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Collect information and analyse data

Once the project has been designed and reviewed through the Logical Framework and indicators have been identified, it is important to plan how data will be collected and analysed before the start of the project, during project implementation and at the end. Many methods exist to collect data, the most common of which are:

- *Direct observation of phenomena (the least time-consuming but the most biased one).*
- *Feedback sessions, normally used to collect information, share reactions and voice opinions on artistic works (normally ongoing).*
- *Interviews to obtain in-depth information from individuals, useful especially when used to additionally learn more about results collected via a questionnaire.*
- *Focus groups under the guidance of a moderator (very effective in reflecting different viewpoints, but usually affected by group dynamics).*

- *Surveys, with a virtually unlimited reach, that allow evaluators to carefully structure the data collection and respondents to react in convenient time.*
- *Desk research to analyse existing information, which is cheaper than primary research (e.g. the collection of first-hand data through surveys), but the data may be less relevant and already out of date.*

Once information has been collected, it is time to focus on the data analysis to transform it into usable information, assess performance against baselines and targets, recognise problems, and identify solutions for decision-making and organisational learning.[34]

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[34] It is not an objective of this book to explain how to analyse numerical and qualitative data – for which plenty of guidelines can be found online. Nevertheless we think it is important to highlight some general rules to take into account when analysing data for monitoring and evaluation.

TRICKS: Das Theatre Feedback Method

This is a method developed by the DAS ARTS Academy in Amsterdam to give constructive feedback in the arts, especially in the hybrid, cross-disciplinary artistic practices often encountered in the context of contemporary performing arts. This method is about providing and receiving feedback on each other's works, and can be used both between professionals and by audiences. The general aim is to empower the artist receiving feedback on their work and to increase the enjoyment of giving and receiving feedback by going beyond expressions of judgement.

The method is run by a 'moderator' who manages a 'presenter' (the artist presenting his or her work) and involves a one-hour group session and a half-hour feedback round. The moderator is responsible for timing, involving the participants and writing down the summaries of what is said on a board. Most of the time the presenter doesn't speak, instead their basic role is to give a short presentation of the project at the beginning of the

session. Remember that unnecessary repetitions of the same comments can be excluded by a feedbacker saying 'plus 1' if they agree with the comments made by others.

The method consists of nine different formats that can be used freely by the moderator:

- *ONE-ON-ONE: divided into pairs, the feedbackers express their first impressions (5').*

- *AFFIRMATIVE FEEDBACK: feedbackers give affirmative feedback by using one single sentence that is structured according to the following formula: 'What worked for me was...' (10').*

- *PERSPECTIVES: feedbackers use one single sentence that is structured according to the following formula: 'As a ... I need ....' Feedbackers can also chose a perspective that is fictional and imaginary (e.g. as a woman, as a politician, as an alien, as a dramaturge, etc.) (10').*

- *OPEN QUESTIONS: feedbackers pose questions which cannot be answered with a simply 'yes' or a 'no'. The presenter doesn't answer these questions (10').*

- *OPEN DISCUSSION: the presenter participates in this discussion, which can be based on whatever was said previously (10').*

- *CONCEPT REFLECTION: feedbackers write concepts down on small post-its which, for them personally, relate to the presentation. The presenter then hangs these on a board, closer to or further away from the written title of the work. This positioning demonstrates the hierarchy of importance: Which concepts, in the presenter's opinion, relate most to the piece, which don't? The moderator then picks out two concepts and asks the presenter why they are important or unimportant to them (10').*

- *GOSSIP ROUND: feedbackers freely gossip about the presentation while the presenter is there. They talk about them in the third person. They themself cannot intervene (10').*

- *TIPS & TRICKS: every feedbacker can share their specific knowledge and experience with the presenter by giving tips and tricks (10').*

- *PERSONAL LETTER: a feedbacker can express comments they didn't want to share with the rest of the group and deliver it privately to the presenter (10')*[35]

35   'DAS Theatre Feedback Method', 2013/2014, https://bit.ly/3Cozh8w (accessed 1 July 2022).

TRICKS: Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process

The Critical Response Process (CRP)© was developed by dance artist Liz Lerman, starting in the 1990s. The CRP© encourages meaningful and motivational (rather than de-motivating) feedback. It requires patience and thought from everyone involved. Importantly, it taps into some of the values at the heart of community arts practice and is designed to be constructive, pushing forward an artist's thinking. Using a series of steps guided by a facilitator, it affords both the maker and a group of responders a chance to ask questions, share reactions and voice opinions, with the goal of building a stronger work of art. The basic premise of the CRP© is to keep ownership of the art in the hands of the artists – it is not the place as play responders to newly create their art for them.

For this to work well, you need to have a sense of how to engage at each of the four core steps.

THE ROLES

- *The **artist** offers a work-in-progress for review and feels prepared to question the work in dialogue with other people.*

- *One, a few or many **responders**, committed to the artist's intent to make a high-value*

- *Work, engage in dialogue with the artist.*

  *The **facilitator** initiates each step, keeps the process on track and works to help the artists and responders use the process to frame valuable questions and responses.*

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36   'Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process', https://bit.ly/3s5tLmJ (accessed 1 July 2022) (©2020 Liz Lerman LLC, all rights reserved). Lerman has her own intergenerational company in the USA and is actively involved in creating art with community and professional dancers.

THE PROCESS

The CRP© takes place following the presentation of the artistic work, which can be short or long, large or small and at any stage in its development.

THE CORE STEPS

1. Statements of meaning:

Responders state what they found meaningful, stimulating, surprising, evocative, memorable, interesting, exciting, striking, touching, challenging, compelling, delightful, different or unique in the work they have just seen.

Tips:

- *Avoid stating opinions (although it is often difficult to avoid this).*
- *Be specific.*
- *Avoid using the words 'I like', but nonetheless keep it positive.*
- *Maxim: 'Nothing is too small to notice.'*

Examples:

- *I found the pacing of the play exciting.*
- *I found the character interactions evocative.*
- *I found the stage pictures compelling.*
- *I found the scenery design concept stimulating.*
- *I found the sound design challenging yet memorable.*
- *Ask the artists if there was anything not addressed in this step.*

2. Artist as questioner:

The artist asks questions about the work. After each question, the responders answer. Responders may express opinions if they are in direct response to the question asked and do not contain suggestions for changes (also called 'fix-its').

Tips (for the facilitator):

- *Give the artists examples of possible questions.*
- *Artist questions can be general or specific.*
- *Artists should avoid asking if something was 'liked'.*
- *Feel free to help the artists finesse their questions.*
- *Artists should ask open-ended questions about specific things.*

Examples:

- *How did you experience our transitions from one character to another?*
- *We worked particularly hard on the way we expressed the characters' objectives throughout the play. What*

did you think of the clarity of the characters' journeys?

- *We designed and selected the costume colours for very specific reasons. What was your interpretation of these choices?*

- *Could you comment on your ability to hear and understand us on stage?*

- *We had the challenge of cutting down a three-hour play to 90 minutes. Did you notice this? How effective do you think our shortening of the play was?*

- *The artist asks if there was anything not addressed in this step.*

3. Neutral questions:

Responders ask neutral questions about the work. The artist answers. Questions are neutral when they do not have an opinion couched in them. For example, if you are discussing the lighting of a scene, 'Why was it so dark?' is not a neutral question – "What ideas guided your choices about lighting?' is.

Tips:

- *Practice formulating questions, even if based on opinion, where your own views are not evident.*

- *This step is about understanding the artistic values of the artists.*

- *Artists will learn more through a discussion than through a lecture.*

- *Avoid questions that might cause defensiveness.*

- *Ask questions that encourage reflection.*

Examples:

- *If you had an extra week of rehearsals, what would you work on?*

- *What lessons do you want your audience to come away with?*

- *What did you do in the rehearsals to develop your characters?*

- *How was the discussion facilitated to unify your design elements?*

- *What guided your decisions about hairstyles?*

- *Ask if there was anything not addressed in this step.*

4. Permitted opinion time:

- *Responders state their opinions, subject to permission by the artist.*

- *The usual form is along the lines of 'I have an opinion*

about …. Would you like to hear it?' The artist is free to decline the opinions for any reason.

Tips:

- *Always ask permission about something specific, and wait for a 'yes' or 'no'.*

- *Respect the answer.*

- *Do be critical – everyone has room to grow!*

- *Soften critical feedback, cushioned with something positive.*

- *Avoid gushingly positive praise.*

- *Offer the opinion without a fix-it or telling the artist how to do it.*

- *Allow the artist to find the solution so ownership remains with them.*

Examples:

- *I have an opinion about the pacing between the two acts. Would you like to hear it?*

- *I have an opinion about the choice of special-effect lighting at the end of act one. Would you like to hear it?*

- *I have an opinion about your choice to have live instrumentals on stage. Would you like to hear it?*

- *I have an opinion about way characterization is expressed in the minor roles. Would you like to hear it?*

- *The facilitator asks if there was anything not addressed in this step.*

A note on fix-its:

Sometimes responders will want to offer fix-its (suggestions for changes) during step 4. Whether fix-its are appropriate or not depends on numerous factors, including the relationship between the artist and the responders, how advanced the work is in its development and the artist's own style and preferences. To manage these variables, facilitators can take a couple of measures at the beginning of the process:

- *Allow artists to state whether they welcome fix-its or not. If an artist says 'no', the facilitator may need to intervene in step 4, guiding responders who may still want to suggest fix-its to instead frame the opinion that underlies their suggestion. If an artist says 'yes', responders in step 4 who have fix-its should say, 'I have an opinion that includes a suggestion about….'*

- *Acknowledge that the desire to get involved in the process of shaping a work is natural and creative, but that artists may gain more if they follow their path to their own solutions. Encourage responders who immediately jump to ideas for changes to use the steps in the process to otherwise pinpoint and express the*

issue that their fix-it is intended to address. This means mentally backing up through the process before taking part in it: first formulating the opinion underlying their fix-it and then framing a neutral question addressing the focus of the opinion.

MORE STEPS

1. What's your next step?: After step 4, artists talk about the next steps they are planning based on information gained through the process.

2. Subject matter discussion: Sometimes a work will trigger a key discussion about an issue of social or aesthetic controversy. A separate, added step to discuss the issue itself allows the artist to obtain additional useful information but avoids sidetracking the process away from the art project itself during the four core steps.

3. Working the work: Sometimes a CRP© session can move directly into 'labbing' aspects of the work, meaning (practical) elaboration, with the participation of some or all of those taking part in the process.

Data analysis depends on the objective of the monitoring and evaluation process

Remember that the analysis of data related to activities and outputs is usually aimed at understanding if activities are being carried out as scheduled and budgeted and if outputs correspond to expectations. In this case, data analysis allows managers to address delays, changes or problems while reallocating resources and finding alternative solutions to problems. Importantly, also keep in mind that the analysis of outcome indicators is more complicated than analysing output indicators.

Data analysis is not only a researcher's job

Data analysis can be carried out by different people inside an organisation. If made by the people implementing the project, they will be able to identify relevant recommendations for internal improvement. If done by staff not involved in the implementation of the project, then the analysis can provide real organisational learning, peer-learning and cross-fertilisation. In this second case, any biases due to the experience, perceptions, expectations and assumptions of the professionals involved are limited.

Be aware of biases

Be aware of the major types of bias that usually occur in data collection and analysis. For example, a poor selection of the analytical sample population usually leads to inadequate demographic representation or the collection of responses from only easily available respondents (e.g. conducting surveys online falls under this risk category of under-coverage because they tend to miss out on the elderly and those with limited or no access to the Internet). Moreover, poor data measurement can often be caused by the evaluator's attitude towards or experience of how questions are posed or data is cleaned and analysed. To avoid this, make sure that the analysis is complete, best practice being when results are validated through different methods and sources that can add value, consistency and coherency to each other.

Everything depends on the core questions you are addressing

Take into account that there are many types of analysis. The basic difference is between descriptive analysis on the one hand, which aims to set out facts, conditions and states, and responds to the question 'What has happened?' Interpretative analysis, on the other hand, aims to explain causal relationships from the findings, rather than responding to the question 'Why did this happen?' The analytical focus can vary as well: trends to be analysed can be the discrepancy between targets and results, or the comparison between results for different groups divided by gender, age or ethnicity, geographic location, and so on.

Data is useless if not presented properly

At the end of a project cycle, the analysed data is usually assessed and then communicated internally to inform decision-making and/or externally to stakeholders and beneficiaries for accountability and transparency. Reporting is also a very important phase of a monitoring and evaluation approach because qualitative data cannot be used if not presented and communicated effectively. Remember to ensure that data is presented in a clear and simple manner and tailored in an appropriate format for the target audience. Remember also to include a list of specific and relevant recommendations for improvement in your presentation.

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"Making Culture in Common. A handbook for fostering a participatory approach in the performing arts"

is the fourth and last publication within the framework of Be SpectACTive!. The handbook is conceived as a practical guide to help performing arts' practitioners and organisations start or continue their path towards a more community-centred way of being and working.

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The first part of the book introduces a reflection on the meanings of participation, the motivations behind the decision to embark on a participatory journey and related dilemmas and tensions, and the different actors involved. In the second part, the authors delve into the aspects related to the implementation of a participatory process from conception to evaluation, complemented with practical tips and game dynamics.