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"Connect Rome - Conversations on Audience Development, Cultural policies and Higher Education "

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Introduction

The event "Connect Rome - Conversations on Audience Development, Cultural policies and Higher Education" was organised within the Erasmus Plus framework - Knowledge alliances project "CONNECT -CONNECTING AUDIENCES European Alliance for Education and Training in Audience Development" which aims to promote innovative cooperation between universities, institutions and enterprises in the cultural sector across Europe on the theme of audience development.

This is one of many events that are taking place in the different countries of the partners; Spain, United Kingdom, Denmark, Poland and Italy.

Local cultural professionals attended the event together with the European partners of the project CONNECT at the Library Institute of Rome, a long-standing and active cultural organisation next to the famous Villa Borghese. The event was organised by Melting Pro and the project partner CKI in collaboration with the municipality of Rome.

The event gathered together local professionals and international experts to debate key questions on audience development.

- How can cultural organisations become more relevant?
- How can they be part of building a different future?
- What skills do cultural professionals need to develop?
- How can we understand our audiences?

The event was labelled as a European Year for Cultural Heritage event since it aimed also to reflect on how audience development could make cultural heritage more relevant to audiences, more connected to their needs, more inclusive and sustainable in the long term. The rationale is that everyone has the right to access cultural heritage. Therefore better AD skills in the field of cultural heritage could allow cultural managers working in the cultural heritage sector as well as institutions to develop innovative strategies to identify barriers to cultural participation and possibly remove them in order to increase, deepen and diversify their audiences.

This report shares the outcomes of those conversations around four themes, which are central to the training delivered within the Connect project:

Capturing Data. To find out more about cultural participation, integrating qualitative and quantitative data is key, but how should this be done? The essence is to understand audience motivation and behaviour, therefore asking questions and listening are core skills.

Engagement. The exploration of new and effective ways to engage young people is one of the most important challenges for cultural organisations. Many exciting projects have been mentioned like a cinema festival completely run by young people in Copenhagen, the Takeover festival, Concerts for babies and Nati con la cultura - passaporto della cultura.

Cultural policies. Through the case stories told by the staff working at the Culture Department of the City of Warsaw, partner in the project, participants were encouraged to reflect on how to enable an integrated system in which the municipality invests in up-skilling cultural professionals to create a collaborative system within the city's arts institutions.

Skills and training needs. The necessary shift within a cultural organisation that aims at becoming audience focused goes through the development of new competences for its staff. Collaboration and sharing are also essential for organisational change.

We are hopeful that readers will find the outcomes useful for their job in becoming more audience focused.

Antonia Silvaggi and Patrizia Braga - Melting Pro

@CONNECTING_AUD

#connectalliance

#connectingaudiences

Introduction speech by Niels Righolt - CKI

Good afternoon! As expressed by the previous speakers I too am very happy to meet so many of you, so many representatives of Roman arts and cultural institutions and organisations.

You could ask, of course, why a project on audience development? And my answer would be because it's needed. In a time of increasing nationalism across Europe, where nation states close themselves around domestic agendas and seek domestic solutions to transnational and transversal challenges there is a need to show how European collaboration can provide possible solutions and innovation to shared challenges and changes.

Since the emergence of Smartphones and social media we have experienced an unprecedented change in our communication and media behaviour, not least in Europe and North America. Digitization has become a major game changer in most aspects of our lives. Self declaration and tax payments are now fixed via the smartphone or similar gadgets; the American president 'rocks the cynics' every morning when he turns up on Twitter. Russian hackers apparently influenced the US presidential elections, advanced SoMe communication 'stole' the Brexit agendas from the traditional media platforms and allowed emotional logics to dominate. No matter how you view the outcomes of these events, there is no doubt that the world of today is radically different from the world a decade ago.

This reality is of course also the case for the cultural institutions and organisations across Europe. Mostly still anchored in a modernist perception and tradition deriving from the mid-20th century in terms of how cultural institutions are organised and led, many cultural organisations face the challenge of being 'locked' up in an organisational structure that does not meet the transition that is taking place as a result of the overall changes of our societies. As a result they have become both politically and financially more vulnerable and exposed. This is where a stronger audience focus can make sense, make a difference and help organisations to create a clearer and stronger connection between artistic and institutional aims and the audience.

The CONNECT project (2017 - 2019) is the result of a long term transnational collaboration between partners from many places in Europe, - and it stands on the shoulders of previous projects and European research on Audience Development. The EU initiated research initiative Engage Audiences forms a theoretical and case based backdrop for the project. The different parameters and findings there have helped the CONNECT partners in designing a project, that can promote innovative cooperation between universities and enterprises in the cultural sector across Europe.

Previous projects like CREAM and ADESTE are the platforms on which CONNECT is based. The CREAM project (2011 - 2013) aimed at the development and testing of a mentoring kit deployed into learning outcomes to foster creativity and entrepreneurial skills; it was based on a mapping of competences needed in the cultural sector. ADESTE (2013 - 2016) was created from the need to fill a gap in the education and training paths, by promoting the development of a new professional profile for the European cultural and creative sector, with specific expertise related to audience development and engagement. The project was built on a shared philosophy (including documented definitions), a strong and highly complementary partnership, an innovative "portable" training programme, tools and materials and positive feedback from participants in a pilot programme.

In this project the consortium wants to expand further into training the future cultural leaders by connecting them with practitioners. As a Knowledge Alliance the consortium is well balanced to meet the different realities of universities and cultural institutions and enterprises. As part of the project a new 'Twin-track Programme' in audience development for students and practitioners working in arts management has been designed and will be launched by the consortium and a transnational team of researchers, teachers and trainers in 5 national hubs in Spain, UK, Italy, Denmark and Poland. Each hub will be composed by higher education institutions and private cultural organisations.

The programme is based on multidisciplinary training modules mixing formal and informal learning methodologies and digital resources. Parallel running sessions will introduce audience development theory, practice and philosophy, transfer management and strategic skills, and develop entrepreneurial skills through a mentoring scheme matching students and professionals in practice-based learning activities.

Obviously we hope you and your colleagues in Rome and Italy will find an interest in the project and the Twin-track programme and will consider participating. We aim for a variety of institutions in order to ensure a diversity of cases and learning from which we can all benefit. Around the tables here, we have arranged an opportunity for a reflective dialogue with you and I bid you a warm welcome and look forward to the next hours' intense discussions. Welcome

Niels Righolt - CKI

Table 1. Capture Data-How can I find out more about my audiences?

Why is it so important to collect data on audiences?



One of the defining features of an audience strategy is that it is based on real evidence, rather than untested assumptions. Without evidence that the audiences we hope to reach are really within our reach or without listening to their opinions or tracking their habits, our efforts to reach them are at best a shot in the dark and at worst a waste of our limited resources. This table aimed at sharing doubts, exchange ideas, and exploring opportunities on one of the most debated issues around audience development in the cultural sector , audience data.

The discussion started by discussing **quantitative** and **qualitative data**; which should we collect? Quantitative data is easier to retrieve, especially if we think back to a time when almost no data was immediately available. Qualitative research is more expensive and time consuming to undertake.

The expert at the table Anne Torreggiani (TAA, UK) and Raul Ramos (Asimetrica, Spain) , partners in CONNECT, suggested that especially if you work with an agency the important thing is to ask yourself:

- *Why do I need quantitative or qualitative data?*
- *What do I need quantitative or qualitative data for?*

- *What do I need to know to refine/improve/enhance my visitors' experiences?*

What truly makes the difference in cultural data analysis is the process of integration and interrelation and ultimately, the interpretation of data.

Generally speaking, data may be used by the organization to do one of the things: for advocacy - proving that the organization is worthy of government support, private endowment, is of public relevance or alternatively stimulating the organisation to run operations in a different/better way. In any case, "*data leads change, as the more data you have, the more narratives you will be able to develop about your organization*", as stated by Niels Righolt (CKI - Denmark).

"*Not everybody approaches data analysis easily,*" Anne said that the Audience Agency is following on from a project they have been working on an app for '[Data Haters](#)', that uses natural language processing like Apple's Siri.

Data can be used also to analyse non-attenders. Niels recalled Richard Florida's studies on the growth of the creative class in connection to urban regeneration, defining culture as a framework for innovation. Non-attender data is relevant as it may influence the funding and the public spend on cultural and urban project.

Raul cited a recent US study on common drivers for taking part in cultural activities. The highest motivator was "*to have fun*", but it is also important for attenders "*to have someone to go with*" and share the emotional experience. Raul therefore recommended that organizations fight the risk of being irrelevant by asking themselves:

- Does my community know me?
- If it does, does it know what I do?
- If people know me and know what I do, can they see what's in it for them?
- If they have finally come to me, how do I facilitate the need for socialization during the event, beyond the simple act of selling the ticket?
- How do I engage with my audience? Do I stress enough the "thank you for coming" message?

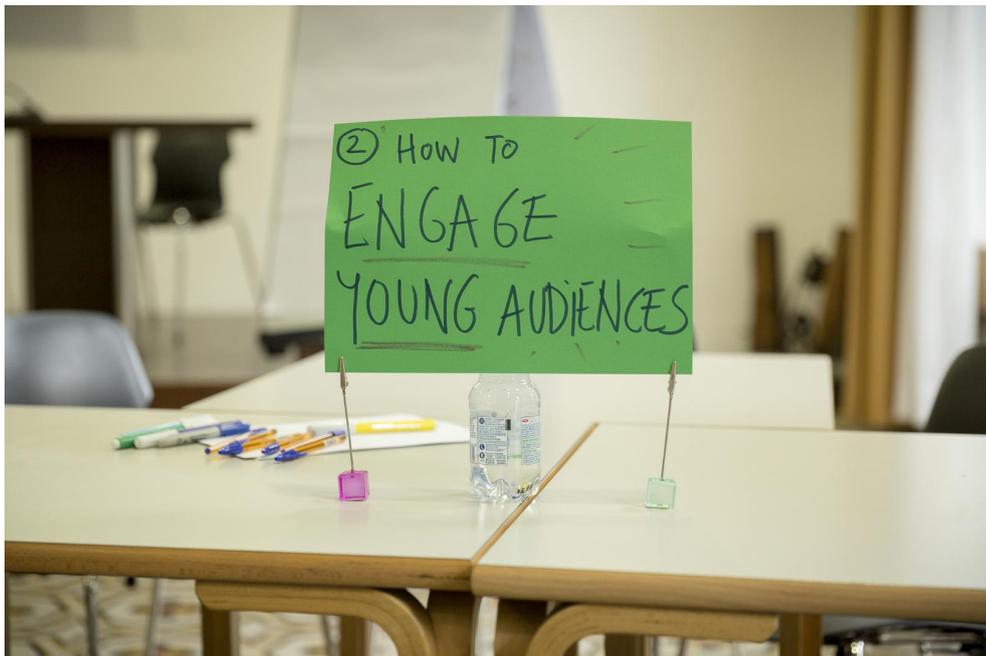
Answering these questions is all about branding and positioning, and again, here too data can help. As we found out in CONNECT, asking good questions is a really important skill.

These questions and this relevance-making process was experienced also by Filippo in [Tor Bella Monaca](#). Filippo chose a different starting point; he started by engaging with the theatre's historical audience. One person at a time, he turned them into ambassadors of the theatre's production and activities

towards the community. *Word of mouth* has then resulted in a more powerful (and less expensive!) key to unlock community relevance than any massive marketing campaign.

Table 2. Engagement – How to engage young audiences?

One of the main challenges for cultural organisations is to engage with young audiences. This leads on to issues such as How to be relevant? How to capture young people? Where to find them?



Fondazione Cinema per Roma and Roma Europa Festiva both highlighted how strong and deep the connection is between music, video and young people/publics in comparison to other types of public.

The Head of Communications at Cittadinanzattiva, argued "Before focusing on young people, we should focus on young parents and schools. It's they who should teach young people about beauty, and by beauty I mean respect. "

Some successful case stories of connection between culture and youth were presented by the CONNECT partners:

1. A cinema festival produced by students and promoted by the Centre for Arts and Culture of Copenhagen. Students were called to participate first-hand and were 'recruited' in different ways. The process started from schools that weren't necessarily oriented towards arts/cinema, but there were some problems regarding the numbers of subscribers (less than expected). Therefore, the process moved on to 'reclute' young people that were taking cinema courses at their

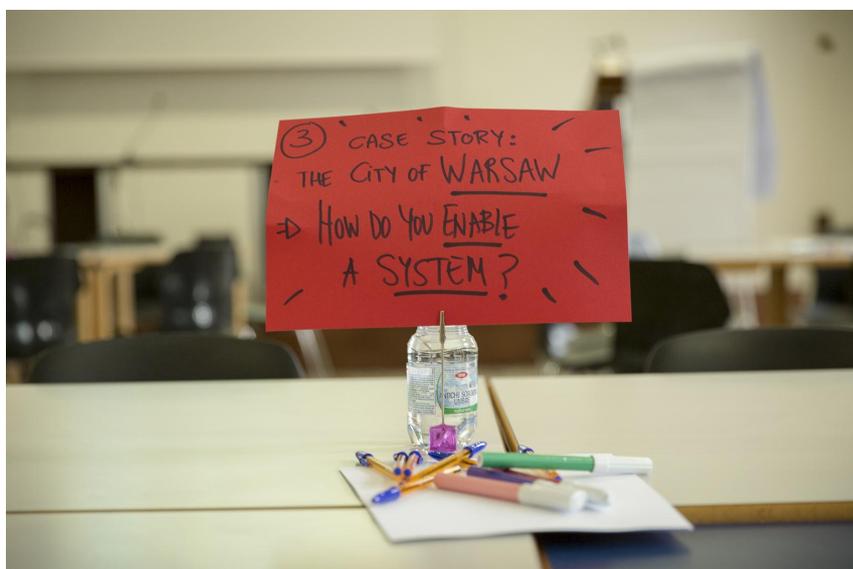
colleges and many people subscribed. The first thing that was discussed was what these young people wanted; this discussion took place before organising the festival.

2. [*Takeover*](#), project, promoted by York Theatre Royal in collaboration with Fondazione Fitzcarraldo. A similar procedure to the previous case study: this was a theatre festival produced by students that counted on a real budget.
3. *Concert for babies*, promoted by l'Unione musicale di Roma. Its objective was to attract one of the youngest audiences: newborn babies and their families. These concerts were very successful so they were re-proposed for the following year.
4. [*Nati con la cultura*](#) (culture passport), presented and promoted by Fondazione Fitzcarraldo.

Table 3. Cultural policies – Case study: the City of Warsaw - How do you enable a system?

One of the main goals of the exploitation strategy in CONNECT is to involve policy-makers and relevant stakeholders together with academics and practitioners of audience development in cultural policies.

Importantly, **it's about politics, more than policies.** Enabling change, supporting not cultural forms but cultural meanings, meant that it's about considering culture as a key factor for human and societal development, taking responsibility not only to preserve its memory, but also to make space for voiceless communities, and to empower them.¹



One of the case studies of bridging policy and practice, is the City of Warsaw, which is also one of the project partners.

The City of Warsaw is an organizer and patron of Warsaw's culture. It implements its cultural policy through the Culture Department.

The main aims for cultural policy of City of Warsaw are listed in the strategic document of the Culture Development Programme. The city is focusing on increasing and deepening the participation in culture and fostering social and cultural activity of the inhabitants of the city; support for the development of cultural works and popularization of culture and art and the development of

¹Steps towards a good audience practice: following the learnings of the ADESTE project <http://www.adesteproject.eu/steps-towards-good-audience-practice-following>

the creative sector; improvement in the condition and the availability of cultural infrastructure; improvement in the quality of public space and its better use for cultural activities; promoting the image of Warsaw as a significant city of culture in Europe; creating the contemporary identity of Warsaw with respect to tradition and multiculturalism; improving the quality and effectiveness of culture management.

The city council runs 28 municipal cultural institutions. Being a partner in CONNECT, as it was in ADESTE, it is important to acquire the tools to make institutional changes that will put the audience at the centre of cultural organisation programmes and enable those audiences to benefit from the increasing and deepening of participation in culture.

According to its strategic document, the Culture Department is responsible for supervising and supporting all the city's cultural institutions and giving them the best possible conditions to grow. It also creates Warsaw's cultural policy through social dialogue and participatory mechanisms. The strategy of the communication is to support the image of Warsaw as a city of culture and to shape the role of the Culture Department as professional partner. The objective is to present the cultural offer of the city, to report the work of the Culture Department and to inspire discussions and debates. The tactic is to be creative in areas of media relations, public relations, events, social media services. All activities are provided under the supervision of the four-person communication and promotion team.

Table 4. Skills and training needs – How to improve competences within an organization

What are the skills and competences linked to audience development? Why is important to invest in training?



The conversation was started by Beata Stawska presenting the outcome of the [ADESTE training](#) in Warsaw, which involved different types of organizations theatres, orchestras, cultural houses, galleries & museums. The main outcomes of the training were:

- People built connections because they shared the problems and the situations inside the organizations
- They built a community
- Common projects were created (eg. communication project for the kids day → same brochure, website, etc)
- The project dramatically changed the relationship among institutions; before it was formal and afterwards it became also personal and informal
- The Adeste training (a formal learning environment) led to an informal and constant learning → Attitudes were changed and

this was considered crucial: soft skills emerged as more important than hard skills. However some important hard skills were also highlighted (eg data collection; management; analysis)

- Additional impacts from the Adeste training included: some institutions changed their AD plan, others changed their mission & vision; some created an AD department...
- From a basic level of awareness of AD, they feel they have improved a great deal, in awareness, knowledge and skills.

The CONNECT project aims to build on the successes of Adeste, which was designed for practitioners working in audience development. The ambition of the 'Twin-track Training Programme' is to bring practitioners together with students to develop their practice, confidence and capacity to carry out strategic audience development. This suggested model is based on experiences from the first Adeste project, and it is connected to [Connect \(WP2\) Research](#).

This ADESTE project showed that:

- Audience Development is an increasingly important issue in the cultural sector
- Audience Development Professionals have a variety of backgrounds
- Training happens in real life settings
- There is a need to address strategic issues in training that takes in soft skills and leadership rather than an emphasis on tactical operation
- Personal skills and attitudes are fundamental
- Marketing, educational and artistic aspects can be aligned
- 'Audience Developer' = mediator + project manager + change agent + strategist + data expert

During the first phase of Connect, research into audience development practitioners in a variety of countries in Europe corroborated the need for audience development training that is strategic, holistic, networked, is derived from and compatible with real practice and also rooted in sound theory and frameworks.

Websites

<http://www.adesteproject.eu/>

<http://connectingaudiences.eu/>

[Data Haters](#)

<http://engageaudiences.eu/>

Partners' websites

Project leader

Universidad de la Iglesia de Deusto (ES)
www.deusto.es/cs/Satellite/deusto/es/universidad-deusto

Asimetrica gestion cultural (ES)
www.asimetrica.org

The Audience Agency (UK)
www.theaudienceagency.org/

Goldsmiths' College (UK)
<https://www.gold.ac.uk>

Melting Pro
www.meltingpro.org

Center for Kunst & Interkultur (DK)
<http://www.cki.dk>

Miasto Stołeczne Warszawa (PL)
<http://www.um.warszawa.pl/en>
Uniwersytet im Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu (PL)

Fondazione Fitzcarraldo (IT)
<http://www.fitzcarraldo.it>

European Network of Cultural Administration Training Centres (BE).
<https://www.encatc.org>

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