

CAOS – INDISCIPLINARTE – TERNI (TR), ITALY

Key words: place | by habit | by choice | by surprise | partnership | building capacity | co-creation

Synthetic data sheet

Full name	CAOS - Centro Arti Opificio Siri
Address	Viale Luigi Campofregoso, 98, 05100, Terni, ITALY
Legal status	Temporary Consortium: Indisciplinarte Srl+3 more private bodies
Year of establishment	2007
Website	http://www.caos.museum
Social media	Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Vimeo
Area of activities	Multidisciplinary
Kind of activities	Performances, workshops, seminars, residencies, festival, exhibitions, special projects
Total amount of budget	600.000 €
Sources of funding	Public funding: 50% Education activities, productions, ticket sales, Other revenues: 50%
Number of employees	12 from Indisciplinarte and 4 from others cooperatives
Number of annual attendances	70.000

Data refer to 2005

Background information

In 2006 the first activity of Indisciplinarte was an international contemporary arts festival focused on performing arts in the town of Terni, a former industrial area in the centre of Italy, now completely dismissed and strongly marked by its industrial past. The festival has grown over years, and the initiative legitimised Indisciplinarte as a strong cultural player.

First constituted as cultural association, Indisciplinarte became a private company and formed a consortium with other companies in a so-called "temporary association of enterprises", to participate in a bid to manage the venue CAOS, a former industrial compound owned by the municipality. It was renovated and opened in 2009, in the

centre of Terni. This marked a first step towards a different way of relating with the urban environment, since having a huge physical space pushed the company to find different ways of engaging with the local community.

With over 5000m² at its disposal, CAOS is a complex centre of art production, hosting two museums, one exhibition area, one theatre, a residency centre, a library, a café-restaurant, a cinema and a special area for educational activities with about 1100 activities annual. CAOS has established strong relationships with different partners operating locally, nationally and internationally: universities, associations, schools, cultural institutions (museums, libraries, etc.), theatre companies and venues, networks.

They always imagined themselves as community-oriented and artist-led. According to their vision, in participatory approaches the role of artists and curators is crucial, since the artistic *process is not enough*: fostering participation in the artistic process is not the only aim; it can't happen without a strong artistic value. Otherwise "we would be social services, which is good, but others are better than us at this, it's not our job".

Their aim is to mediate between artists and communities; this is always at the centre of their curatorial choices. These choices also changed over time, as they learned from their mistakes and kept listening to community voices: "If it doesn't work, we made some mistakes."

"We don't like the definition of 'serving' the community, we prefer the idea of being constantly 'in a relationship' with it. We want to listen to community needs and identify 'empty spaces' and respond to them: not with services but with unexpected answers."

What do they do? Goals and achievements

After 7 years, they are now able to reach about 70.000 people, while the city of Terni has a population of 120.000. When they started, they were 'just' a performing arts festival, running one main activity, intense and successful, but also concentrated in time and space. They didn't have a single venue and they were unable not even to know how many people participated in the festival. They just had the feeling they had started something important. After two years, the event with a strong artistic vision linked to active participation, brought them onto the agenda of the municipality. This led to the city tender for a private management of the CAOS venue. CAOS at first was thought as just the new venue for two city museums (art and archaeology), but now it is a vital cultural centre offering much more than museum visits.

Participation increased over time, despite continuously decreasing public funding, thanks to the huge diversification of the cultural offer. Cinema, a theatre season, exhibitions, educational activities linked to the museums, were progressively added to the festival, leading to the full schedule that CAOS has today, where citizens can find something appealing each day.

This happened mostly through a trial and error approach, through an extensive building of relations with other cultural institutions and stakeholders, locally and regionally. This openness led them to partnering with an increasing number of players, enriching the cultural offer and the market penetration of CAOS.

CAOS has a nurtured group of volunteers of all ages, ready to get involved and support the massive workload during the festival. This includes support for artists in participatory artworks, in public spaces across the town.

How do they do it? Making it happen

Having an impact on people has always been a focus for Indisciplinarte, questioning and revising themselves in their work. Self-reflective practices as well as project evaluation are somehow part of their DNA.

In the first year, their artistic vision and audience mission dominated this reflective practice. The need to become more structured appeared later: they have been observing, interviewing, talking with people as a common and daily practice, but they didn't use these materials to collect and analyse quantitative data, partly because it was outside their competences, partly because it was also outside their idea of what was needed.

One simple practice they adopted was to give up the external service that was managing the info desk, and to decide that every and each member of the staff should periodically work at the desk, in order to gain a shared and clearer idea of community needs and requests.

As complexity grew, they realised they needed to go a step forward and they invested in capacity building – thus Chiara Organtini, the head of Communication, participated in ADESTE, a European funded project aimed to train audience developers. Also after that training experience, they are beginning using quantitative data; they started from the theatre data that are structured and plenty of useful information (many activities in CAOS are for free, and the very open structure makes difficult to monitor all users). Even digital, which provides lot of information, has been always carefully used, but mainly qualitatively – semantic analysis of media discourse to explore the value that users give to cultural experiences – and much less quantitatively. Paradoxically, they know more about the local community than about their actual audience, since this has always been their focus, and for years they have been “lost in practice”.

If their focused listening attitude (“we don't know their profile, we know their names!”) has been effective, things are changing because they feel it's not enough to tackle the challenge of sustainability. After the first phase of providing a festival and a second phase of venue management, they feel ready for the next challenge: to structure their audience knowledge in data, and to find a way “to go from audience engagement to AD”.

Interviews: Linda Di Pietro - Artistic Director; Chiara Organtini - Executive Manager

Interviewer: Alessandra Gariboldi – Fondazione Fitzcarraldo (Italy)