

REPORT

LIVE STYLE EUROPE WORKING GROUP

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

06. - 08. DEC 2017
Rennes, France

Invited by Les Transmusicales festival, we organized last week with the help of la Fedelima the **second #LiveStyleEurope working group** in Rennes. Around 30 participants worked together on the topic of **audience development and audience diversity in a music venue**. Following the moderation of Live DMA consultant Dorte Hartmann, the participants tackled the question from different angles and perspectives in order to come up with concrete tools and recommendations.

We also had the chance to have the two **sociologists Quentin Amalou** from the **Avignon University** and **Michael Spanu** from **Lorraine University** participating at the working group. The scientific insight in the question of audience was adding positively to the discussion. Quentin and his team from the Avignon University are currently working on a research project about how the audience perceives and talks about festivals. Michael Spanu contributes regularly to Volume ! – the French journal of popular music studies.

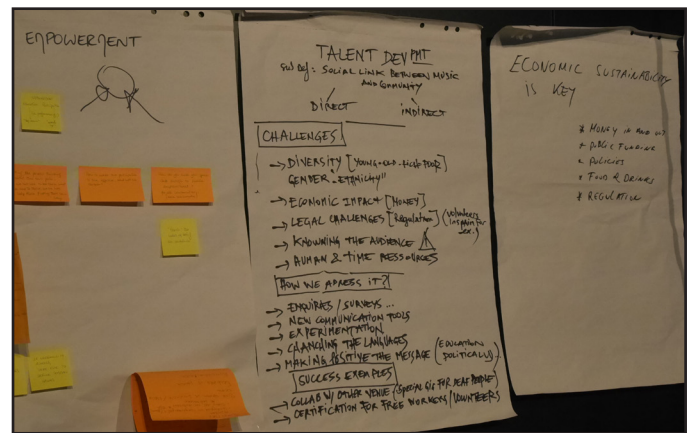


>>> The **first challenge** of this intensive workshop was to **define a common playground** by agreeing on a vocabulary. Coming from different cultures and backgrounds, it was an important step that we understand each other when talking about such important topics. Quite early in, the balance of **cultural impact versus economic sustainability** of audience development made it into the center of discussion. **The group agreed very rapidly to focus on the human and social aspect** as to a purely marketing oriented approach. Consequently, participants transformed their consideration of **"audiences"** into a more **dynamic and inclusive vision of "users", "mixed community"** and simply **"people"**.

>>> In the early afternoon of the first day, **three main topics emerged from the discussions: cultural values, networking, and empowerment.**

Those topics were the main guidelines for the working sessions on Wednesday afternoon and Thursday morning. It was extremely important to take the time and to explore the topics thoroughly. The headline empowerment guided most of the exchanges and the outcomes of those vivid discussions led eventually to solid recommendations.

It is also important to notice that the group agreed that the question of audience is not only an issue to consider at a local level, but that **measures on a larger, European scale need to be employed.**

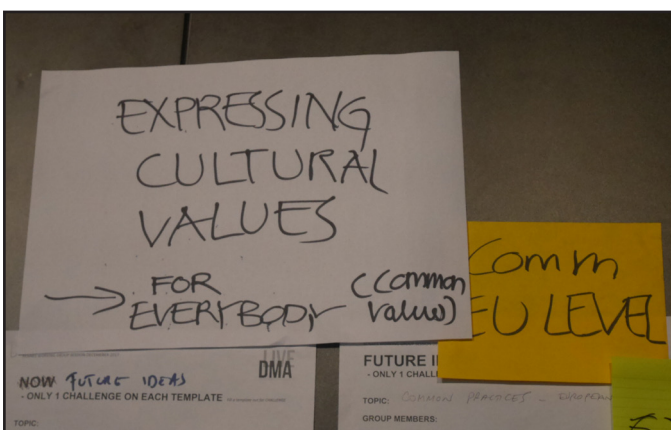


>>> On Thursday, the discussions turned gradually into practical outcomes that the participants presented at the end of the day.

How to communicate our cultural values?

>> **We need data in order to communicate about our cultural values at the EU level.** The idea would be to create a common audience survey that serves as an argument in the EU debate. More than being data on audience, it should be **data that values the social impact of venues through the ideas of audience diversity** and through testimonies of the diverse dimensions of the audience experience.

>> On top of that, the **Live DMA chart needs to be updated with a strong focus on the human and social values of the network.** Ideally, not only the national umbrella organizations, but also the venues would commit to this chart.



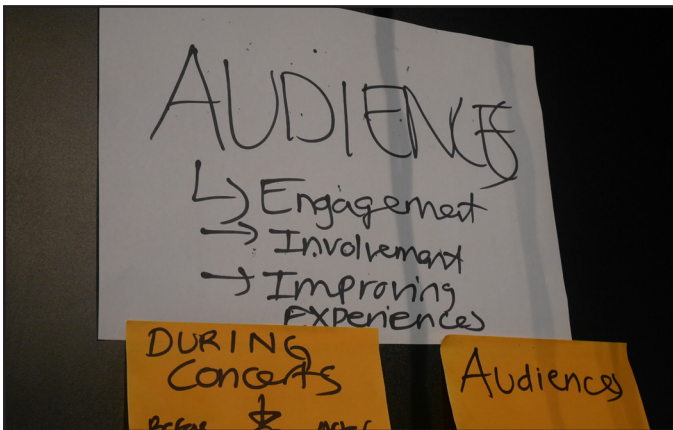
How to improve the audience experience?

The challenge is to **address differently to the audiences** and to **increase their empowerment in the venues**.

>> **Think new formats**. The aim is to **create events around a certain theme** that enables the venue to propose a music program that the audience would not usually engage in. Best practice experience in the venue 109, Montluçon, France: The museum of music organized an exhibition around the history of drums – the venue took this as an occasion to set up a specific music program, link it to the museum's project and thus improve the experience of their audience, but also of the museum's visitors.

Attention: The aim is **not to trick the audience** into something or to tell them what they should do. The respect of the audience is very important. **The main idea is to try to create new entries and better conditions to discover new bands.**

>> **Creating a sense of ownership**, how can the audience appropriate the venue? Based on the concept of the **triangle artist – venue – audience**, there are different ways to improve the exchange and experience inside a venue. The aim is to list actions and parameters for each side of the triangle. Example venue – artists: What role can a venue play for artists and how do we want the artists to act and behave in our venues? A potential action could be to ask them not to spend the entire evening backstage, meet the audience, and be part of the audience.

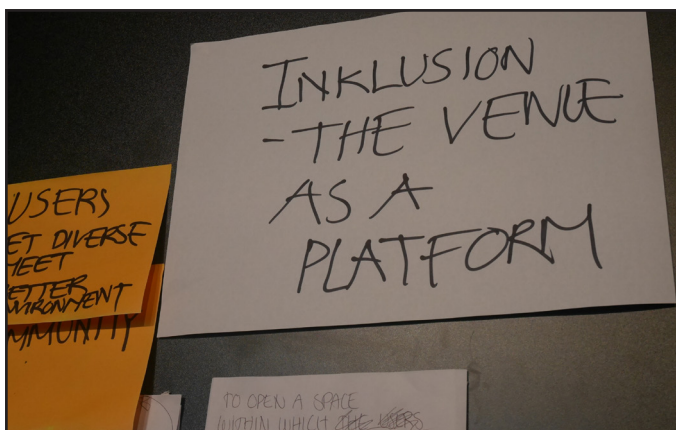


How to include more diversity into the venue?

The group had some already existing good practices to share. The question arose on how to share those practices in the best way possible in order to inspire others and to help them not to repeat eventual mistakes.

>> **Cell-phone party Plug in beats**

Challenge: how to **create a low-level access and possibility of participation for new citizens** (especially with language barriers or cultural different backgrounds). The social-cultural center and music venue Feierwerk in Munich, Germany developed Plug in beats as a **basic democratic party concept**, that is a party that is not being dominated by DJs. People exchange the music that they listen to on their phones. This event concept needs a lot of resource and anticipation: Necessity to communicate in the different languages, importance to communicate clearly the values of the venue, logistical sound set-up with professional VJs and DJs to manage sound levels and structure the event, important volunteer engagement to reach the target audience, etc. **This is a very interesting, yet complex event concept that needs a lot of anticipation.**



>> Know the society around you in order to create inclusion

As a venue, creating **a manifest as a co-construct with the audience leads to more inclusion**. The aim of such a manifest is to state who the venue is and who they are going to be for the next ten years. In the example of the venue Folken (Norway), this manifest was not created by the venue staff alone, but together with the people around them. After pinpointing their target groups (artists, student, general public, municipality, university), the venue wanted to know what those groups expect the venue to be. On this purpose, they sent out questionnaires, held peer-to-peer interviews, organized workshops between employees and volunteers, and set up strategic seminars. The draft of the final document was send out for validation to their different target groups. **The result of this two year process was a visionary document that included their surroundings in the project of the venue.**

>> The **need for a practical tool** that provides easy access to existing resource, shares inspiration and good experience, and helps to create connections among the Live DMA network became even more obvious after this working group. The creation of this tool will be a priority for Live DMA in early 2018. The commenced work of this **working group will be continued in a second session** and as an **ongoing online exchange**.

