# **TRY-ANGLE MEETING #2 INTERNAL REPORT**

Tuesday & Wednesday 16/17 May 2023 Lyon (FR)





Co-funded by the **Creative Europe Programme** of the European Union

# Introduction

The Try-Angle experimentation process offers representatives of 18 live music venues in Europe the time and resources to take a step back and find new perspectives on audience development. Particularly after two years of pandemic, the live music is struggling to get back to normal. Reaching audiences has become more difficult.

Live music venues selected to be part of this project are working together on audience development strategies, notably via the Try-Angle prototype model designed by Live DMA.

On 16 & 17 May 2023, the Try-Angle group met in Lyon (FR) for the second time. This meeting, following the first meeting which took place in October 2022 in Bilbao (ES), was improved in its format, as advised by participants' feedback: two half-days instead of one full day, and a better focus on participants exchange of best practices. This second Try-Angle meeting intended to focus on both the continuation of the first meeting's review of the Try-Angle prototype as well as a deeper reflection on Audience Dialogue and ways to put it into practice.

You can read the report of the first Try-Angle meeting in Bilbao here.

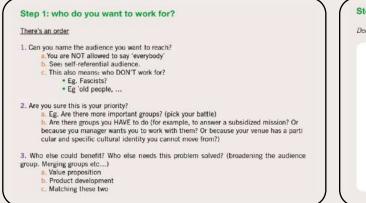
This report of the second meeting aims to convey the main points of discussion and decisions taken regarding the Try-Angle prototype tool. The changes made to the Try-Angle tool are highlighted in blue. This report also wishes to highlight the best-practice examples that were shared by participating venues during the meetings. They are highlighted in yellow.

- Phil Henrion for <u>Atelier Rock</u>, Huy (BE)
- Egija Salnikova from Cesis Concert Hall, Cesis (LV)
- Jaani Haapsalo for <u>G Live Lab Helsinki</u> and <u>G Live Lab Tampere</u> (FI)
- Mike Naert from <u>Het Depot</u>, Leuven (BE)
- Jean-Christophe Gérard and Alain Brohard for <u>L'Autre Canal</u>, Nancy (FR)
- Charlotte Olejnik for Le Gueulard Plus, Nilvange (FR)
- May Linn Vollen Heggertveit, Bente Søfting and Frode Kleveland Baardsen for Lie Bydelshus, Skien (NO)
- Gonçalo Riscado for <u>Music Box</u>, Lisbon (PT)
- Marine Idir for <u>Petit Bain</u>, Paris (FR)
- Elio Giacoma, <u>Povero Ragno</u>, Cuneo (IT)
- Steffan Lykke Møller for <u>Radar</u>, Aarhus (DK)
- Célia Carron for <u>Rocking Chair</u>, Vevey (CH)
- Tomi Legido Sanchez for <u>Sala Mardi Gras</u>, A Coruña (ES)
- Aitor Bengoetxea for Sanagustin Kulturgunea, Azpeitia (ES)
- Ben Zschorn for <u>Scheune</u>, Dresden (DE)
- Waldo Volmer for <u>Stad als Podium</u>, Harderwijk (NL)
- Kukka Hytönen for <u>Tanssisali Lutakko</u>, Jyväskylä (FI)

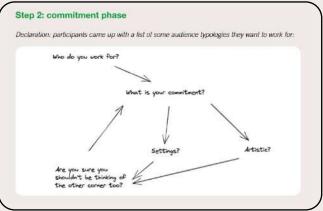
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# 1. WHERE WE ENDED UP LAST TIME: the new first steps

We started the session by reminding participants where we left our work last time, and showed them the new first steps of the Try-Angle. We asked participants to review them and tell if they still agreed with them, or not. Participants were split into small groups to do so.



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After the session in Bilbao and the months that had passed, the concept of the Try-Angle was more comprehensible for the participants. They were able to discuss the Try-Angle tool with the teams from their live music venues, which gave birth to relevant conversations where all the staff could take a step back from their daily work.

The participants overall agreed with the changes we had made to the first steps of the Try-Angle, although some words needed to be changed in order to be more comprehensible and suitable to the realities of live music venues.

#### Words to be changed in the first steps:

• Better phrasing: WHO DO YOU WANT TO WORK FOR? Pick only one specific group. Adding the notion of choice and willingness highlights that sometimes venue staff do not have a say on what audience segment they wish to work for (management or public funding body choice).

• Better phrasing: what is your commitment >> what is your promise to audiences? What experience do you want to offer to your audience? (refers to passion, convince, convert to story of venue). Indeed, commitment is a word holding to much responsibility. There are things you cannot control during an event. For example, you cannot commit to be a 100% safe place, people still may have bad experiences. But, you can promise you're going to try to be a space as safe as possible.

#### **About partnerships:**

• Partnerships can be a good way of reaching audiences you want to reach but cannot on your own. Partnerships can be inscribed in your promise. Yet, some participants remarked that partnerships could somehow blur the coherence of external communication of the venue: partners do not have necessarily the same graphic charter as the venue. This can be overturned by changing the venue's storytelling.

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#### **INSPIRATION SHARED ON PARTNERSHIPS: HET DEPOT'S HIPHOP NIGHTS**

Het Depot had the idea of organizing events for the local younger hip-hop community. This audience segment did not come to their venue. Reason is economical: prize of ticket would be too much. Also, Het Depot is not seen as being for the segment audience (too clean, etc). But, this audience have nowhere to gather except street or music studios.

20 years ago, Het Depot started an open mic night curated by local songwriters, and they wanted to do the same for hip-hop. They thus looked for two artists to host the night. They found two artists, asked them to create something very specific for hip-hop >> inspired by club context, beats, vibe of club night. They involved a local organization which work on inclusivity, and they programmed the night with the artists.

For these events, the Het Depot team is not involved in artistic programming: the artists do it. They decided to have these hip-hop nights with free entrance, to remove the financial barrier. The event consists of 6 showcase + DJ.

They did it for the first time last February. They welcomed 130 people, all young, half of them from diverse ethnic-cultural background. It was already something great, they welcomed people in Het Depot that never came there. They changed the rhythm of the night (not 15 min pause between acts but 1 hour, so it's more chill. Flexibility on closing time as well, it ends later than usual concert nights.) Last time, 10 days ago: the house was almost full.

This example shows that partnerships can be really beneficial to reach audiences that are not familiar with the venue, and that the venue is not familiar with.



Het Depot Hip Hop night, Cool Festival #3



#### **About experience:**

• Between the artistic and setting "angles", there perhaps should be an experience one. The experience can be a mixture of artistic and setting parameters

#### **INSPIRATION SHARED ON EXPERIENCE: POVERO RAGNO'S SECRET LINE-UPS**

In order to attract new audiences, Povero Ragno developed secret line-up concerts.

They announce a date, but no line-up. People come, the concerts take place, and the names of the bands are only announced at the end of the night.

This creates a very specific experience of the venue: people come to be surprised, and with no expectations for the music.

The artists programmed in the secret shows are usually emerging. Povero Ragno offered artists, as a form of compensation, to create some communication content (photos, video interviews...) that they could use after.

The venue workers' experience was thus also turned upside down as the effort on communicating around the artist came after the show, and not so much before as it usually does.

#### INSPIRATION SHARED ON EXPERIENCE: SALA MARDI GRAS' MONEY BACK GUA-RANTEE

In order to attract people in the neighbourhood not yet convinced the venue is for them in their audience, Sala Mardi Gras offers people who buy a ticket at the door to be integrally reimbursed if they don't like the concert, as long as they leave the venue before the 4th song of the band.

This allows venue neighbours or people passing-by to be reassured as to the investment they make when going out. People can also easily convince their friends to come, by saying that if they don't like the concert, they can be reimbursed and just go home. It prevents having bad experiences for the audience, and makes them come again because they know they can have this money back guarantee as a safety net.

In several years of having this policy, they had to give the money back only one time.

Of course, this kind of policy only work for smaller venues with only one room. For bigger venues, if people are not interested to see the concert, they go to the bar area. Having this kind of policy in bigger venues would make the venue lose some bar income.

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#### **INSPIRATION SHARED ON EXPERIENCE: G LIVE LAB'S PROMISE TO START ON TIME**

G Live Lab Helsinki commit to always start their concerts on time. If the artists start late, they are not paid, so this is a great incentive to start on time. This ensures the audience is reassured to get their last train home after the concert, and not miss either the train or the end of the concert. This ensures a relaxed experience for the audience. Of course, this depends on cultural differences among countries, and it might not work everywhere in Europe.

#### 2. WORKING ON SETTINGS & ARTISTIC SIDE, OR BOTH

As a preparation for the session, we had asked participants to provide the following homework:

Concerts are made of three components: an audience, an artistic proposition and a setting (= the contextual elements, such as the place, date, time, weather, length of event, pricing, etc). When you change one of the components, the others are impacted as well. This is the Try-Angle theory.

Talk with the rest of your team about this theory and choose one component that you would like to work on/change: either the artistic side or the settings side. Explain in 1 page the reason for your choice, if it was a difficult choice, if it was imposed by some constraints or not, if it was easy to choose, how your team reacted, what it made you talk about, if you could make a choice at all, etc. There are no wrong answers to this question!

Most participants were able to hand out their paper and do the exercise. This led to interesting discussions with their team. Most papers had chosen to work on the settings side and we noticed that most venues were hesitant to change the artistic side. Perhaps because they felt

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it would change the core mission of music venues, especially grassroots: bring emerging or niche artists to an audience. Perhaps, also, because sometimes artistic programmation is in the hands of a few people within the venue, who may gatekeep their function of booking artists. On the contrary, every worker of a music venue can have an influence on the setting. Yet, there is a feeling among the group that changing the setting has a smaller impact than changing the artistic proposition. We might explore this point of conflict more in detail in the next Try-Angle meeting.

In Lyon, we decided to work in small groups, based on what side people had chosen to work on with their homework. This led to four small groups: one who worked on the artistic side, two who chose to work on the settings side, and one who decided to work on both sides.

#### Artistic side:

This group was made up of two very different venues: one small capacity in rural Italy, fully commercial business model, which programme pop and rock music. The other is a subsidized venue in a Latvian city, of large capacity, and which programmes mostly classical music. Although they had two different situations and experiences, the common point was to change the musical and artistic experience: by doing secret line-up shows, the audience of the Italian venue came not knowing what they will listen to. On the other hand, the Latvian concert hall created separate events with music genres they usually do not programme: jazz and electronic.

In both cases, they noticed that working on the artistic side had to do with "educating" the audience and explain something to them. E.g. "You love classical music? I will prove that you can also like jazz or electronic music". For the Italian venue, as they were also creating content for the artists, it was also about explaining and sharing communicational experience with emerging artists.

Another common point of both venues' experience with changing the artistic side is the notion of "differentiation". Both venues tried and offered something different from what they usually do. This comes to the difference, in traditional marketing thinking, between acquisition and retention of clients. By giving more and new things, you can either attract new audiences (acquisition) or spark the curiosity of your audience (retention).

Both venues also mentioned that working on the artistic side automatically had an impact on the settings side: for example, you do not host an electronic concert the same as a classical one (acoustics, people standing or sitting, lighting, having drinks allowed inside or not...).



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### Artistic & settings side:

As the Artistic group had noticed, changing the artistic side has an impact on the settings side, and vice versa.

#### **INSPIRATION SHARED ON ARTISTIC & SETTINGS: HET DEPOT'S CLUB NIGHTS**

Het Depot recently organized new nightlife club concepts. Yet, the venue does not have a "club" vibe. They asked themselves: how to repurpose Het Depot to organise nightlife events? Their willingness for a new artistic concept (the club night) needed to be done in another kind of setting which they usually do (the rock venue).

So, they decided to host an Afrobeat DJ night, and put the DJ booth in the center of the room rather than on stage where artists usually perform. This gave a "boiler room" vibe to the event, as people were free to move and dance around the DJ and go behind the DJ booth. They transformed the stage into a dancefloor, and the audience dancing became part of the performativity of the night. They also changed the lighting inside the venue, to make it darker and create a club atmosphere.

The night was a success, but Het Depot team felt that these changes in setting, although they seem simple, are actually quite technical to do.

The conversation we had made us realise that in the Try-Angle prototype tool, we always talk about changing a corner. But rather, from the testimonies of the participants, it is rather not a change but about building on what already exists. We thus decided to have this new wording and replace the words "change" into "build on"

#### **Settings side:**

#### **INSPIRATION SHARED ON SETTINGS: LE GUEULARD PLUS SUNDAY CONCERTS**

Le Gueulard Plus, a venue in French rural area, decided to host a metal concert on a Sunday night. They had the opportunity to do so because one of the band they programmed was available on Sunday and Le Gueulard + was on a perfect routing to their next show.

They thus organized the event at 7pm on a Sunday, a bit earlier than during the week where concerts start around 8pm. This allowed the audience to come home sooner on a Sunday night. Apart from the day and time, no other change was made for the settings: so it was easy for the venue team to adapt.

The usual audience targeted for this kind of artistic propositions responded as in a week concert. And they touched a new audience: workers from the closest big city that are working on usual event times: bartenders / event managers / other cultural venues.

Le Gueulard Plus will try again this experiment with two other events, with other music genres programmed and which targets other audience segments.

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The group discussed the fact that some settings depend on country legislations and cultural habits.

They noticed that changing the setting could lead to new artistic opportunities: for example, le Gueulard Plus was able to book an artist they would not have been able to host otherwise, because the event was held on a Sunday. More artists are available on Sundays than on Saturdays or week nights.

Another point of discussion among the group was on the pricing of drinks & tickets.

Suspended tickets, member cards with financial advantages and pay-what-you-can systems were discussed. The financial sustainability of some of these options was unclear for the group, and they admitted that a Working Group or study on pricing strategies would be beneficial in order to make the best decision as to what option to put in place.

#### **INSPIRATION SHARED ON SETTINGS: ROCKING CHAIR'S SUSPENDED TICKETS**

Rocking Chair offers their audience members to give donations that go into tickets for people who cannot afford to buy one. This allows audiences with low financial income to come to the concert.

Rather than having cheaper tickets (which they also have for some social categories), they also invite people who can afford it to give more money and take part in a solidarity dynamic.

The system works, and Rocking Chair has some "suspended tickets" to offer. But, they also noticed that the demand for these kind of ticket got high, and that it was more and more difficult to reach this demand through donations only.

Also, it can be difficult for the audience to ask for a suspended ticket, because there can be the stigma of "being poor" that is attached to it.

Another point of discussion was more on practical settings that can be changed, such as mixed gender bathrooms or wheelchair ramps. Some of these settings are inscribed in law (in France, if you are a building welcoming audiences, you are obliged to have a wheelchair ramp, for example). These kind of settings depend a lot from country to country, as they do not have the same regulations. Also, some of these settings' changes can be hard to push for younger members of the staff: they may not have a say as to what they want to implement and why. The older people in the staff may rely on their habits and changing them may be an obstacle, even though they sometimes cannot justify why they do things the way they do.

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## 3. FEEDBACK STEPS 4 & 6

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The first day of meeting was ended with a first introduction from participants to the steps 4 & 6 of the Try-Angle prototype and first feedback on them.

The Steps 4 & 6 of the Try-Angle relate to the changes in artistic and settings side, both at the event (one-time only) level and at the policy level, that is more structurally inscribed in the venue's functioning.

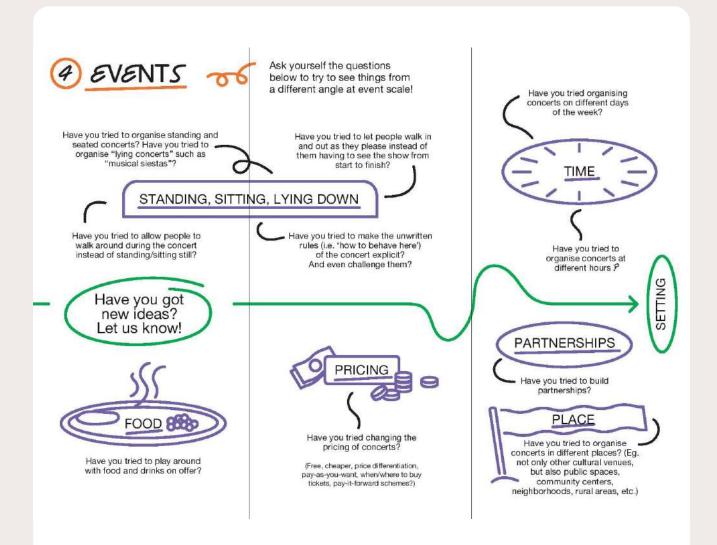
#### Step 4 (event level):

• Participants said that the step 4 was filled with relevant questions.

• The question on partnerships seemed specifically relevant, given what was said at the beginning of the meeting on the importance of partnerships to reach specific audience segments.

• Most participants had tried the questions in step 4 in practice. Some of them found out that the ones on Food and Added Events did not have such a big impact.

• Question remains: is this step coherent with the new steps 1, 2 & 3?



# Step 6 (policy level):

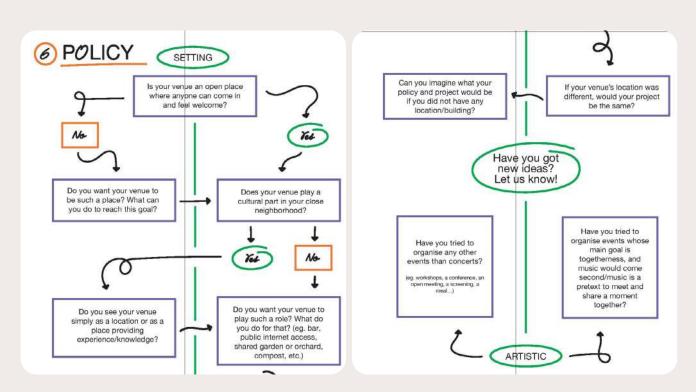
- Complicated to understand (logic behind yes/no path)
- Every question was pretty relevant
- Question "venue a place where everyone can be safe & welcome"

--> reluctant but we cannot guarantee that (change question 1 to make it less binary and such an open question

--> we're not working for EVERYONE) // contradiction with what was said earlier.

--> Change question to : is your venue an open place where your DESIRED audience can feel welcome?

Also, if answer is NO it takes you back to step 1. We need to change that. Answer needs to be YES. STOP WITH THE YES/NO QUESTIONS.



### 4. AUDIENCE DIALOGUE: THEORY

Booking great bands is only half the work in the music industry. The other half involves ensuring that people actually attend the shows. Grassroots venues focus on attracting audiences to support smaller bands. Music organisations can be customer-driven, passion-driven, or mission-driven. Mission-driven organisations should be cautious of falling into the trap of incrow-ding, where they cater only to a small group of dedicated followers.

To combat incrowding, audience development plays a vital role. It involves actively engaging new audiences, which rejuvenates the organisation's sense of purpose and spreads its mission to a wider audience. Incorporating audience feedback and maintaining an ongoing dialogue are essential to staying connected and responsive. The exclamation point theory advocates for a blend of mission and business model fuelled by audience engagement. By actively involving the audience, music organisations can avoid incrowding and create a thriving and inclusive music community.

• It can be hard to have one story telling with a lot of different events (formats, music genres, audience segments...)

--> This can be fixed by changing your story telling. Don't tell the story of what you do (through a list of events), but tell the story of who you work for. There, you can find coherence in your story-telling

• Misunderstanding: wrong to think that venue have only 1 story. Always adapt the story to the people listening. Change the story and adapt it to your audience.

• Some venues talk to their audience through media or website. Hard to target specific groups on these channels.

--> If you have multiple audiences, not best strategy to have an Instagram account. Maybe you need a couple of Insta accounts that people can follow, one for each project or music genre or event or audience segment. Maybe website or newsletters need to be divided into music genres or themes, and not just be an agenda of your events to come with links to buy tickets.

• Let's not forget that when it comes to cultural experience and identities, people are numerous. They are not only in one box of audience segment (cultural intersectionality)

• It can be helpful to not think in genres, but in motivation "is it to party ? is it to relax and meditate?". Storytelling as a strategy is still on the marketing side, and theory works but how to actually start the dialogue? Maybe some audience members want to act like customers and not be included or asked about what they want or feel.

#### **INSPIRATION SHARED ON STORY-TELLING: HET DEPOT'S "MUSICAL HAPPINESS"**

In Het Depot's mission statement and story-telling, they wrote the notion of "musical happiness". This goes for the artists and audiences alike.

This notion is in every of their communication and work processes. It starts before the concert (how to get there, know if the facilities are adapted to their needs, etc) and ends after the concert (how to get home easily and safely, etc).

This notion is a way for Het Depot to harmonize their mission and the variety of events they do, the diversity of crowds they want to reach, without going into the usual communication in silo per music genre.

• One trick is to get 2 or 3 people who went to the concert and actually talk to them. You can also put these "audience testimonies" in your general communication (e.g. your newsletter), to give a voice and a soul to the events you organise

• It is crucial to put the audience at the front and center of everything: in your mission, in your work, in your communication...

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# 5. AUDIENCE DIALOGUE IN PRACTICE

We asked the group the following question: do you talk with your audiences?

- Most venues answered positively. Even if it's just a conversation at the bar.
- Some venues developed audience surveys

• Some participants said that it was interesting to dialogue with your audience, even if you have negative feedback. That's part of the dialogue. Venue staff need to not take it too much at heart, although it can be difficult. The venue needs to have a position of "we're trying to improve this negative point you're mentioning, please help us in doing so".

#### **INSPIRATION SHARED ON AUDIENCE DIALOGUE: G LIVE LAB'S AUDIENCE SURVEY**

Every year, G Live Lab runs an audience survey. They survey their audience on their business model (e.g. the prices at the bar, etc) as well as on their mission.

They give free concert tickets as incentives to answer the survey

#### INSPIRATION SHARED ON AUDIENCE DIALOGUE: ROCKING CHAIR'S AUDIENCE SUR-VEY

Rocking Chair prepared an audience survey following the first session of the Try-Angle test-drive, in order to know better the audiences that came to the venue. The survey was also needed because their programmer of 15 years left her position. They needed to know what attracted the audience to Rocking Chair, and give inputs to the two new programmers which took her place.

Rocking Chair has seen some difficulties in attracting plenty of audiences to some of their events and concepts. They wanted to know better why. They also needed inputs on the willingness of audiences to make donations for fundraising, to help financially the venue.

#### Steps for constructing the survey:

• Why are we doing this? Team discussion, everyone involved; Google draft sheet where everyone could put their questions. Célia translated these preoccupation into questions, and asked feedback of the team?

- Incentive: contest and lottery for free concert entrance
- Survey divided in 5 parts:
  - o what is your cultural habit (economically, frequency, how keep in touch with cultural offer, what makes you choose one venue over the other)
  - o Evaluate what we do
  - o Did you know that we have this and that (suspended ticket, etc)
  - o What we should do more?
  - o Demographic infos

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• Info sent through newsletter + social media and also live interviews with audience members at the entrance, during the break and after.

Rocking Chair do not necessarily wish to make the results of the survey public, although the discussion from the Try-Angle group thought it could be interesting to share some surprising facts with the venue's audience, to start the dialogue with them.

• Some participants said that it was interesting to dialogue with your audience, even if you have negative feedback. That's part of the dialogue. Venue staff need to not take it too much at heart, although it can be difficult. The venue needs to have a position of "we're trying to improve this negative point you're mentioning, please help us in doing so".

• It's important to communicate about the venue's weaknesses as well. Be honest. Even if you are not accessible to people in wheelchairs, be open about it. It shows you care. And the people concerned will be more willing to help you improve. Or, if you organise a concert and nobody comes, why not share a picture of your empty concert hall and ask "why did you not come? Do you have suggestions on how we can improve?". Be clever in which channels you do this, hugely crowded social media like Facebook may not be the best option and where you will reach people who are actually close to the venue. You can then share anonymously what people answered, and see if other people agree with their suggestions or not.

• Including more your audience in your venue's story and mission can be tricky in terms of business model, if not done well. E.g. loyalty card vs membership card. Should you reward people who are loyal (1 free entrance after 10 concert tickets bought) or is it better to have people pay extra to have a membership card? Always have your business model in mind.

• Cost is different from value. For example, the legendary techno club Berghain builds on the "not everyone can enter" value. The financial cost of entering Berghain is less than the symbolic value of being able to enter it.

#### **INSPIRATION SHARED ON AUDIENCE DONATION: BELGIAN MUSEUM**

A museum in Belgium asked for donations to restore a specific painting. It worked way better than if they had asked for donations for the museum in general.

When making a donation, people had free access for the museum for 2 years to visit the painting they had restored with the money donated.

This made audiences part of the museum (and that specific painting)'s history.

• DO NOT BECOME BETTER SALESPEOPLE. BECOME BETTER STORYTELLERS.

• Artist can also be part of the audience, especially in smaller venues. They should also partake in audience dialogue.

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#### **INSPIRATION SHARED ON AUDIENCE DIALOGUE: SCHEUNE'S VOTING ASHTRAY**

In order to get feedback from their audience, Scheune have set up a voting ashtray in front of the venue. Audience members who smoke can throw their cigarette butts into an ashtray which asks a question (e.g. do you prefer metal shows or punk shows?) and audience members choose their preferred answer.

This anonymous and fun way of getting some audience feedback is quite simple to put in place, although it may have pose some democratic issues as only people who smoke can partake in the vote.



#### INSPIRATION SHARED ON AUDIENCE DIALOGUE: ROCKING CHAIR'S TRAINING WITH TEENAGERS

Rocking Chair organized a 4 month training with teenagers to make them discovers the jobs and tasks behind organizing concerts. The trainees could try different functions and organise their own event.

Rocking Chair also asked teenagers some feedback on how they use the venue.

#### **INSPIRATION SHARED ON AUDIENCE DIALOGUE: SCHEUNE'S NEIGHBOUR PARTY**

Once a year, Scheune invites the venue's neighbours for a food party. A relaxed way of getting to know them better, and give the venues' contact in case of npoise disturbance.



# CONCLUSION: LOOK AT NEXT SESSIONS

These two working days ended on a brainstorming with participants as to what themes should be tackled during the next session.

#### A homework for the next session was agreed upon:

Ask one of your audience members to write/record/film a visit of your venue through their eyes. Ask also one of your staff to explain what is the one thing they think the rest of the world should know about the venue.

This homework will allow participants to start Audience Dialogue and see their venue through the eyes of one of their audience member. It also allows other staff to be included in the process, and have another vision of the venue.

#### Topics for next session will include (among other topics to be defined later):

- Feedback on steps 5/6/7 of the Try-Angle
- Start working on the new visual (ask graphic designer to be there as well?)
- The dates and places of the next Try-Angle sessions were also announced:
- 16 & 17 October 2023, Helsinki (FI): hosted by G Live Lab venue
- 2 to 4 May 2024, Dresden (DE): hosted by Scheune venue

The participants, including the moderator and Live DMA's project Officer, had a unanimous positive feedback on these working sessions in Lyon. The feeling after them was clearer than the one after the session in Bilbao. This foreshadows some interesting exhanges for the future of the project.



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