Selected Literature Review

Study on Audience Development - How to place audiences at the centre of cultural organisations

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LEGAL NOTICE

"Audience Development. How to place audiences at the centre of cultural organisations" is a study promoted and commissioned through an open call for tender by the European Commission – Directorate-General For Education, Youth, Sport and Culture.

Partners: Fondazione Fitzcarraldo, Culture Action Europe, ECCOM Progetti s.r.l., Intercult

This Literature Review has been created in the framework of the "Study on Audience Development. How to place audiences at the centre of cultural organisations", promoted and commissioned through an open call for tender by the European Commission – Directorate-General For Education, Youth, Sport and Culture.

Literature on the topic has been produced profusely, providing not only a sense of the speed at which such development is taking place but also knowledge on projects, including innovative aspects, that are implemented throughout both Europe and the rest of the world.

1. SELECTED LITERATURE REVIEW

The selected literature review has been organised in different areas. The working group has taken this decision considering the complexity of the subject: for the sake of clarity, it seemed more appropriate to review the literature according to the main topics, which are part of the current discourse about AD. Some publications have been mentioned as related to more areas, since they reflect the complexity of the subject matter. The five different areas are summarized below:
1. *Access to culture*
2. *Audience development and organizational implications*
3. *Engagement and active participation*
4. *The challenge of digital shift*
5. *The social role of culture and the problem of impact measurement.*

3.1. Access to culture

From an historical point of view, post-war cultural policies revolving around the issues of access and participation may be categorised - according to Matarasso's 2004 paper *L'état, c'est nous*: **arte, sussidi e stato nei regimi democratici -** in three broad approaches developed by policy makers and listed here in chronological order: audience development, rooted in the idea of the democratisation of culture (from the 50ies onwards); socio-economic development, based on the use of arts and cultural activities to further non-artistic goals(during the 90ies); and cultural inclusion, aimed at extending access not only to consumption, but also to the means of cultural production and distribution (in the last decade).

Generally speaking, the issue of access remained the most popular one in terms of cultural policy. According to the 2012 OMC working group publication **Policies and good practices in the public arts and in cultural institutions to promote better access to and wider participation in culture**, access to culture "*remains a highly topical issue across Europe. Available data on cultural participation shows that a significant part of the population still does not participate in mainstream cultural activities, with people in more deprived circumstances (with regards to their income and education level) participating much less than people with higher education profiles and higher incomes. Cultural participation is recognized as a human right and an important building block for personal development, creativity and well being. However, the cultural provision offered by institutions receiving public funding often benefits only a reduced segment of the population. This may require the identification of strategies to increase participation, in order to guarantee equity and efficiency in the use of resources*". But, although the visitor is referred to in the OMC report as vital for culture, audience surveys and studies show that the cultural sector is generally exclusive and self-referential.

3.2. Audience development, organisational implications and leadership

No matter how AD is materialised - in reaching new and diverse audience, in raising awareness, in fostering engagement, in building sustainable relationships, etc. - it should be embedded in the organisation and form part of the organisational culture, as a responsibility of the whole institution (and not of one department). It is important to claim that AD, before than a theory, arose as a practice and that it was born because of the cultural organisations need to pursue their missions: for this reason, AD has been mostly planned and run by single departments (usually the education or marketing ones), often without involving the whole organisation. As an activity run by single organisational areas, it started to show its limits and ineffectiveness in pursuing its audience goals, as reported in some extensive case studies based analysis, such as Fondazione Fitzcarraldo's Report **Quali politiche per un pubblico nuovo (2009)**, that clearly identifies the whole organisation involvement as a key factor for successful AD strategies and practices. This statement is reinforced and structured in the **Grants for the Arts. Audience Development and Marketing** (2011) report by the Arts Council of England, and in the later **The Road to Results. Effective Practices for Building Arts Audiences** (2014), which identifies nine steps that make the difference in successful AD, and recognise leadership as a crucial factor, particularly in the first step ("recognising when change is needed") and underlining that AD requires that *"Leaders and staff built clarity, consensus, and internal buy-in around the audience-building initiative's objectives, importance to the organization, and staff roles in implementing it".* The organisational dimension is also stressed by Jackson in **Imagining Arts Organizations For New Audiences: Values And Valuing,** (2015) whose theory of change is that an organisational approach is more effective because it "*ensures and embodies distributed leadership, ensures congruence with corporate strategy, avoids tokenism, integrates digital and live perspectives, manages clashes between new and existing audience members, avoids duplication and stop-start processes".* The importance of a "distributed leadership", is also an outcome of the EU funded project focused on competences needed to tackle AD, as the **ADESTE Research Report on New Training Needs** (2015) reminds that "*although the depth of AD knowledge, skills and competences would necessarily vary between roles, every employee should be aware at least of what the AD philosophy implies".*

Literature agrees that AD should therefore involve an understanding of multiple connections between an institution's policy, its profile, its artistic aims, its financial setup, its staff composition, its competition reality, its partners and collaboration circumstances, its programming tradition, its community anchoring and its potential development.

On that background, many cultural organisations are testing new management models and are willing to take on new responsibilities with a view to diversifying their visitor policies. Those organisations will recognise that (economic and social) sustainability can be achieved through an audience-focus and that this requires organisations to be vision-led; outcome oriented; insight guided; inter-disciplinary and interactively engaged.

Leadership is an issue clearly related to the new management models and also one of the key factors to fully understand how organisations deal/tackle AD. Notwithstanding the fact that the importance of leadership is recognised by institutions and practitioners in order to develop effective AD policies, there is a scarcity of theoretical reflections on this subject. One of the rare attempt of clearly stating the role of leadership in AD processes has been made by the Morton Smyth Limited in **Not for the Likes of you** (2004), where it is affirmed that the leader of the institution must have a clear vision - which has attracting a broad audience at its heart – plus all the features which distinguish a positive leadership behaviour: active listening; creating the right systems and structures; setting high standards; managing risk and mistakes; using a range of leadership styles; using the whole person; ensuring strong support and sticking at it.

3.3. Engagement and active participation

One of the most intriguing perspective on AD is related to engagement and active participation, that can be considered as a way of interpreting AD both in technical terms (engagement as an operational step after reaching audiences) and in political terms (active participation as the key of ownership). Yet Maitland tries a first categorisation in **A guide to audience development** (2000), classifying the different kind of strategies to reach new audience in three areas of Mediation, Involvement and Outreach. Mediation seems less considered by the later literature on AD, as well as outreach, a concept that refers more to the tactic domain than to a kind of relationship between audiences and cultural contents. Further studies focus more on involvement, meant as a broad spectrum of possible relationships, from simple workshops to co-creation, taking for granted that having a relationship means to go beyond the one-way communication of cultural contents. Particularly focused on engagement and community relations, Kelly's **Measuring the impact of museums on their local community** (2006) adopts a framework based on "*social capital concepts of trust, reciprocity and networks using a belief/behaviour dichotomy within the museum/community context*" that underlines the dimension of relationship underpinning AD approach. More recently, the 'active participation' has come an hot topic related to AD, firstly clearly stated for the museum sector in Simon's **The Participatory Museum (2010)** that categorize the participatory paradigm in four main types: "*Contributory projects, where visitors are solicited to provide limited and specified objects, actions and ideas to an institutionally controlled process. Collaborative projects, where visitors are invited to act as active partners in the creation of institutional projects that are originated and ultimately controlled by the institution. Co-creative projects, where community members work together with institutional staff members from the beginning to define the project's goals and to generate the programme or exhibit based on community interests; Hosted projects, where the institution turns over a portion of its facilities and/or resources to present programmes developed and implemented by the public*". A part form museums, active participation in the performing arts has been critically analysed from a philosophical perspective by Rancière in **the Emancipated Spectator (2008).** His statement that "*We don't need to turn spectators into actors. We do need to acknowledge that every spectator is already an actor in his own story and that every actor is in turn the spectator of the same kind of story*", has been the conceptual standpoint for most of projects focused on "active spectatorship". Engagement and participation have also been criticised in terms of effectiveness in Hamlyn Foundation's **Whose cake is it anyway? A collaborative investigation into engagement and participation**. Starting from the analysis of 12 museums in the UK, Lynch explores limits and pitfalls of participatory work if this is not embraced by the organization as core value. About meaning and limits of participation in the very "extreme" form of co-creation within the performing arts, it's worth reminding Walmsley's **Co-Creating Theatre: Authentic Engagement or Inter-Legitimation?** (2013), "*the rising trend of co-creation reflects the evolving role of the audience in the creative process. At first sight, co-creation represents a movement towards democratizing the arts through a process where creativity is demystified and opened-up to participant engagement.*" And again "*Ultimately, co-creation must be acknowledged to be messy, raw, contingent and context-dependent. At best, it provides a platform for authentic engagement; at worst it can foster elitism and inter-legitimation. These characteristics raise significant challenges for producers, artists, marketers, policymakers and even audiences, especially as experiential participation and hedonic consumption seem to be the preferred modes of engagement for many modern theatregoers.*"

3.4. The challenge of the digital shift

Data shows that cultural access is still strongly influenced by socio-demographic, gender and educational issues. The digital shift is adding complexity to this picture. This complexity is due to the fact that cultural consumption is increasing in quantity and typologies, thanks to the use of new technologies, and cannot be easily monitored by official statistics. Indeed, the very nature of cultural consumption is tending towards the participatory models, where the role of producers and consumers are not clearly defined. A fast-changing economic, social and technological environment is prompting the birth of new audience development policies at the local as well as at the global level.

Already in 2010, the Arts Council of England in the publication **Digital audiences: Engagement with arts and culture** confirmed that engaging with the arts through digital media was becoming a mainstream activity and that this engagement augments, rather than replaces, the live experience. The publication underlines the fact that people use digital media primarily as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, the live experience and that people who engage with arts and cultural content online tend to participate in the arts through live events as well - suggesting that digital media is more valuable as a means of reaching out to audiences that are already culturally engaged. The Digital R&D Funds for the Arts publication **Digital Culture: how arts and culture organisations in England Use technology** (2015) indirectly underlines the organisational implications of the digital shift in terms of expertise distributed across the organisation, and the need of competences related e.g. to the increasingly important field of data management.

As Da Milano and Righolt point out in 2015 EENC report **Mapping of practices in the EU Member States on promoting access to culture via digital means**, new digital environments and technologies, in particular, represent an opportunity for cultural organisations to reinforce their capacity to develop meaningful and interactive relationships with different audiences, but at the same time they challenge cultural actors in terms of strategic vision, new skills, organisational reshaping, and capacity to find consistent and sustainable financial models.

3.5. The social role of culture and the problem of impact measurement

In the West claims about the transforming power of arts and culture date back to ancient Greece and arrive to present days: for this reason, the literature review about this particular topic starts with Belfiore and Bennet **Rethinking the social Impact of the Arts: a critical-historical review**, published in 2006. The authors set a framework for the understanding of the so-called "transformative" power of the arts analysing the different claims that have been made through the centuries for the ways in which the arts can affect individuals and transform society. The paper offers a critical review of these claims, underlining the complexity of the matter, its changes through different historical periods and presenting both the positive and negative traditions about the role of arts and culture in Western society.

The issue had become particularly relevant in the 90ies at a European level, as the Council of Europe 1995 publication **Cultural Heritage and its educational implications: a factor for tolerance, good citizenship and social integration** demonstrates. The book - collecting the proceedings of a seminar held in Brussels in 1995 - presents different European case studies fostering the idea that heritage knowledge and education can be used as a means to solve social problems related to physically, mentally and socially disadvantaged groups.

In 1998, Sandell published his **Museums as Agents of Social Inclusion**, in which for the first time it has been stated that culture is a sector - together with the economic, the political and the social one - where social exclusion can take place and, consequently, be combated, through access, participation and representation (see Glossary).

According to Kawashima's **Beyond the Division of Attenders vs. Non-attenders: a study into audience development in policy and practice**, published in 2000, those who want to develop a new audience want to establish contact between new audience groups and an existing art product (product-led perspective): this practice is part of the cultural policy goal of democratizing culture. The author is sceptical, however, of whether this is possible if the goal is to facilitate cultural inclusion (i.e. to reach groups whose demographic characteristics are significantly different from those of the core audience). Instead, Kawashima argues that an audience development strategy that endeavours to achieve cultural inclusion must be target-led in order to come into contact with a new audience on their own terms.

In a following paper, **Audience development and social inclusion in Britain** published in 2006, Kawashima re-enforces her position, stating that the issue of representation in culture, which can provide the institutionalisation of inequality, also leads to a call for a "target-driven" approach to these areas. She argues that this would be fundamentally different from the dominant "product-led" approach that tries to leave the core product intact whilst making changes in presentation. This means that, in her opinion, to become truly inclusive is a most formidable challenge for cultural organisations as it inevitably brings them into a wholesale review of their core products.

The issue of the problematic relationship between AD and social inclusion is tackled also in Bjørnsen's **The Limitations of Audience Development** of 2014. He affirms that indicators seem to demonstrate that effective results are reached in terms of social inclusion activities not only by removing barriers – physical, geographical, economic and cultural – but also mainly by changing or "adapting" the offer. Bjørnsen affirms that "*this type of target-led audience development relies to some extent on the cultural democracy of the 1970s, in which audience groups were allowed to influence what was offered more than curators, artistic directors and other decision makers in the culture sector. This represents another type of cultural leadership, one that is less predicated on an arts sector driven by artistic goals, and more on a desire to combat social and cultural exclusion. The question, of course, is: are the arts institutions prepared for this?*".

The idea of the power of arts and culture to fight social exclusion and inequality gained strength particularly in the UK, after the disillusion about the economic value of arts and culture and as a consequence of Labour governments cuts to culture. The immediate consequence was the growing need for evaluation of the social impact and effectiveness of arts and culture transformative power.

A clear example of that is Matarasso's **Use or Ornament? Social impact of Participation in the Arts** of 1997. It was the first large-scale attempt in the UK to gather evidence of the social impacts stemming from engagement in arts. The study was important since it established a methodological framework for social-impact assessment, experimenting with different qualitative techniques and a list of comprehensive indicators, namely: personal development, social cohesion, community empowerment and self-determination, local image and identity, imagination and vision, health and well being.

As Matarasso himself writes in **Full, free and equal: On the social impact of participation in the arts** published in 2010, the report "Use or Ornament" has been attacked during the years using arguments related both to exploitation and methodology. In the paper, he states that "*we need to develop a much more complex theory and understanding of how people receive, create and interpret their engagement with art: the word "impact" is not just inadequate but misleading in this process*". A different conceptual model is needed, looking for probabilities instead of guarantees, asking

ourselves not "whether" arts and culture have an impact on people but "how" and "why", in what ways, in which circumstances and for whom.

An historical framework of the impact evaluation in the cultural sector is presented in Bollo **Measuring museum impacts** of 2013. The author - analysing publications and contributions published during the last 15 years - underlines how identifying social impact has been one way to shift the focus from the economic value of culture (a very popular concept during the 80ies) to a broad understanding of how arts and culture contribute to communities. This shift contributed to put excessive emphasis on the 'instrumental' role of cultural institutions, stimulating the tendency to value culture for its 'impact' rather than its intrinsic value. According to Bollo's analysis, the last decade has been characterised for the search of more holistic approaches, balancing intrinsic and instrumental approaches and combining the use of quantitative and qualitative techniques (hard and soft indicators).