



GUIDE PART I - TOOLS OF AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT: A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR CULTURAL OPERATORS

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

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

Guide Part I – Tools of Audience Development: a
practical guide for cultural operators

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Guide Part I – Study on audience development - How to place audiences at the centre of cultural organisations

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Experts: a group of additional experts in the field of Audience Development – with various backgrounds and nationalities – participated in the study.

Macarena Cuenca – Institute for Leisure Studies, University of Deusto (Spain)
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CORNERS
Donostia/San Sebastian 2016
ENCATC
IETM
Matera 2019
River//Cities

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Based on findings from this study, as well as our continuous exchange during the last 10 months with professionals and stakeholders across Europe, we have designed a "Guide", formed in two parts: Tools for cultural organisations who want audiences at the heart of their activities, and Rules - recommendations for policy makers who want to effectively support the shift. (see further: THE GUIDE - PART 2).

1. RATIONALE AND INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to investigate **how organisations shift towards "audience centricity"**. We do not intend to define "good" Audience Development. But finding an appropriate balance between audience and artistic objectives means - necessarily - some kind of change. The proposed **Tools** are to be used freely keeping in mind that each organisation must first be fully aware of what role audiences have in the organisation's mission.

There are already a number of functional toolkits, developed during the last 15 years, which attempt to summarise and codify Audience Development. Some focus on how to build an AD Plan (<http://www.adesteproject.eu/guidelines-set-guidelines-effective-vocational>), while others focus on skills, implementation and results. (<http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/The-Road-to- Results-Effective-Practices-for-Building-Arts-Audiences.pdf>).

Clearly, most organisations we analysed didn't achieve their goals with a straightforward process as described in the toolkits. Real life processes are rarely linear. Change must take place even while carrying on daily activities. The Guide tries to balance well known planning tools with the learning we gained from this Study.

1.1. How to use this guide

We focus on 5 challenges to be met when putting audiences at the centre of a cultural organisation. These steps don't tell organisations what to do, nor do they list utopian best practice examples. Instead they are meant to inspire sustainable ways to become audience-centered, in a range of contexts. A **self-assessment tool** is provided to support the process (see chapter 2).

These **Tools** are meant to be used involving the entire staff. We encourage you not to do it individually: Audience Development is an organisational challenge, not an individual one. Take your time to share this with colleagues.

1.2. Five challenging steps to place audiences at the heart of your organisation

You must find your own ways. The challenges are interlinked and might be faced at different moments, but all are fundamental. In real life, you will probably find yourself bouncing back and forth. These are not gradual steps to engage audiences, rather reflections to be kept in mind over time, so that a long lasting impact can result.

Challenge 1. Who are you? Who do you want to meet?

The starting point is to be very clear about who you are, what makes your work special and for whom you want to make a difference. You can avoid many problems that might arise later if you enter into the developmental work with a clear idea about your objectives. Who would you like to invite? Who is your actual audience? Is there a missing audience?

Useful mistakes we met:

- *Doing this alone. And later discovering that your colleagues disagreed*
- *Trying to reach 'everybody', without segmenting and prioritizing*
- *Reaching to new audiences without considering those you already have*
- *Skipping this step and going directly to what you would like to do*

Others did...

Künstlerhaus started to look at its own organisation. They realised that their main audience was the artists themselves, not the wider community they wanted to meet. They started focusing on their key assets (artists as members) and on a specific segment (families), developing tailored programmes.

Challenge 2. Balancing priorities - Audiences needs and your own

How far are you willing to go to meet audience goals? Are they coherent with your values and artistic vision? You should be sure how "badly" you want to reach them, since there might be a "price" that the organisation is not willing to pay. At this stage, it is not a financial issue, but one of excellence and ethics. This is a critical bridge to cross since it challenges your artistic identity. Are you willing to adapt programming for a cultural offer more appealing to target audiences? Are you ready to give up a part of your authority, empowering people to interpret contents in their own ways? Are you ready to share ownership? The answer affects the weight that you will give to audiences and help you focus on feasible strategies and actions.

Useful mistakes we met:

- *Education and marketing staff agree, but scientific/artistic direction doesn't. Different perspectives are not taken into account*
- *Extensive work with an audience segment, setting up programs that are later contradicted by other factors, like letting blind people touch artworks but neglecting website accessibility*
- *Begin participatory processes without knowing how to manage them*

Others did ...

York Royal Theatre was engaged in an extensive and stressful process to make the "Take Over" of the theatre possible. Their shared aim was to empower young people through a "theatre-based" total experience, impossible without the full commitment of the organisation and beyond pure "taste appreciation".

Challenge 3. Focusing, Listening and Understanding

Once you have agreed upon the role of audience within your priorities, it's time to focus on whom you want to work for/with. In the long term we all want to take care of an entire spectrum of potential audiences, those by Habit, by Choice or by Surprise.

But there are two main reasons to segment and focus the efforts. First the only effective and measureable way to engage with audiences is to target them. This means recognising different needs. Second, you will most likely not have the resources to target all possible visitors at the same time. Where do you want to start? What do you know about your target groups? How could you know them better?

Useful mistakes we met:

- *"We are not for a specific segment, we want to be for everybody"*
- *Targeting audiences by Surprise, forgetting to take care of your core audiences, with a backlash effect from your loyal visitors*
- *Dispersing energy, trying to do everything at once and missing the opportunity to measure and evaluate*
- *Targeting an audience segment without knowing their needs, interests and features*

Others did ...

Mercat de les Flors, the Point, Zuidplein and others use data segmentation to identify priorities and design strategies adapted to different segments. **CAOS** staff, with small resources and without a solid quantitative analysis tool, activated intense qualitative strategies to be in constant relationship with their audiences. Part of this "listening" strategy led to the decision to rotate staff responsibilities, each member working for a while at the front desk, to become further aware of audience needs.

Challenge 4. Am I able to do that?

Facing an audience challenge might be beyond your possibilities. Are you able to do it by yourself? Does your staff have the necessary skills? Is there any competence you can grab from outside the organisation? You might need to train your staff - in marketing, communication, facilitation, reception. You might consider partnering with other stakeholders. In many of our Case Studies, capacity building processes were fundamental to trigger the change. We also identified extensive partnerships which led to new mixtures of audiences.

Useful mistakes we met:

- You have data, but you don't use them for planning or evaluation, as no one is able to interpret and turn them into shared knowledge
- You don't have data and you rely only on impressions
- You want to reach a segment that is out of your sight and you use wrong channels or misleading communication styles
- Your front-of-house staff is not trained to deal with sensitive audiences

Others did ...

Auditorio de Tenerife and others participated in capacity building programmes like ADESTE because they felt the need to train themselves. This led to shared Audience Development plans for their organisations. **Maison des Métallos** reorganised the outreach team to be more effective in reaching segments valued as primary in the social exclusion and education area. **Renlund Museum** developed a wide range of active partnerships aimed at reinforcing its Audience Development strategies: local groups/third sector, provincial actors and projects, national museums, other organisations and universities; at the same time, it also collaborates at a municipal level with the library, theatre, schools and kindergardens. **The Point** works closely with local partners, including businesses, schools, charities, artist networks, libraries, and a regional dance network. When **Bunker** operates in a specific community, they cooperate with experts, academics and researchers to get more information on the neighbourhood needs.

Challenge 5. Foreseeing the consequences

What impact will this have on your organisation over time? Can you afford it? An Audience Development plan requires change that can be stressful for your organisation. Even when all agree in principle, actions taken will lead to consequences and you must be sure that you are able to manage them. Intense flows of visitors, extended opening hours, audiences with special needs - all this will bring stress to your staff and even lead to uncomfortable situations. Initiating an open process with audiences means it doesn't end when the project ends. You need planned resources (human and financial) for managing people's participation and expectations.

Useful mistakes we met:

- Working hard to connect with a specific audience, convincing them that your place is their place, letting them down when project funding ends
- Being overwhelmed by intense flows of new visitors
- Inviting people to join in curatorial choices that finally you don't approve
- Setting up a service which is unsustainable over time
- Focusing on one segment and ignoring the impact this can have on others, for example school children playing freely and loudly in the same space where adults look for quietness.

Others did ...

*To understand how audiences felt in the library, **John Rylands Library** developed a 'journey mapping' - tracking how people moved through and used the space - that showed necessary changes. The exhibition and display spaces were re-vitalized, previously dark and unfriendly. The TakeOver experience led **York Theatre Royal** to change its mission and staff organisation. **Maison des Métallos** runs a bar which is financially not self-sustainable but they believe that it is an essential asset to make their venue welcoming for a wider community.*

2. SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

1. *Background information*

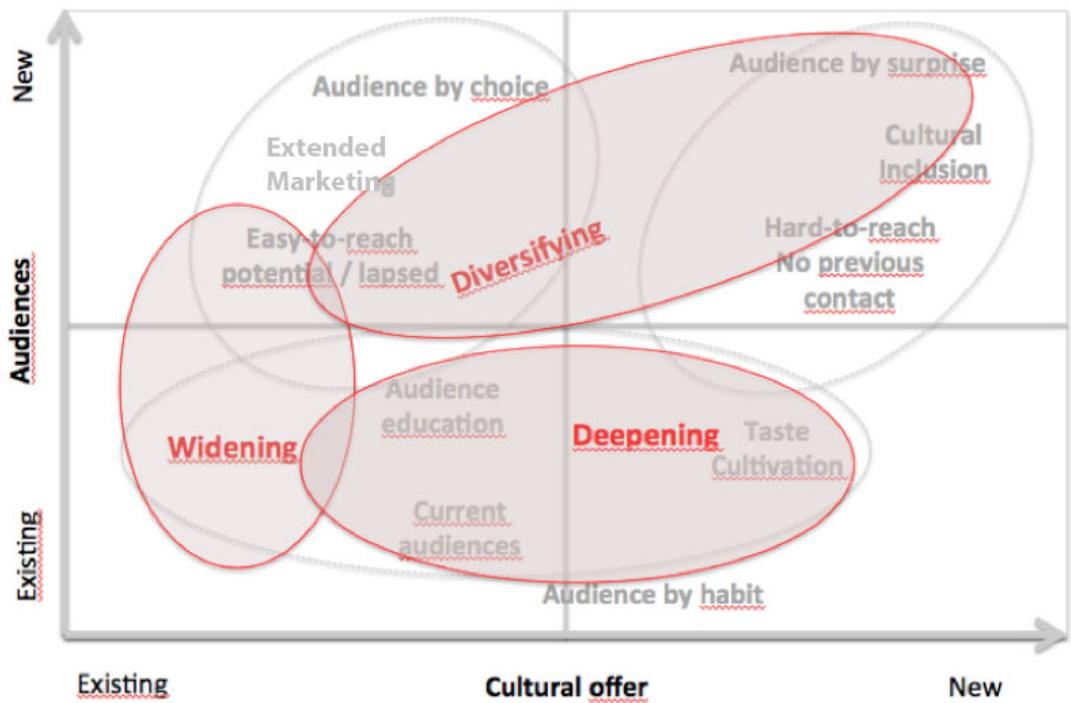
- 1.1. Please provide a summary of your institution/organisation focusing on its mission and vision:
- 1.2. Please indicate the number and the typology of performances/exhibitions/events planned in the current and next year

2. *AD within your organisation/institution - The current situation*

- 2.1. Please provide information on your organisation:
 - 2.1.1. Number of staff
 - 2.1.2. Professional figures in charge of audience development activities
Audience development activity budget
- 2.2. Please specify how you collect data and information about your audience:
- 2.3. What are your three largest audience groups? (Example: young, tourists, adults, schools, etc.) ;
- 2.4. Have you ever evaluated or assessed the effectiveness of your audience development programs? If yes, how? (Staff debriefings of engagement events/programs; Participant satisfaction surveys; Collected anecdotes about participant experiences; Focus group discussions with participants; Online survey, Expert observation or quality assessment blog; Newsletters; Other)
- 2.5. Please provide information on your AD goals (in relationship with the key-concepts of access, participation and representation and the 3 typologies of audiences - by habit, by choice and by surprise)
- 2.6. Please provide a general explanation of your organisation AD strategies (staff training, partnerships, tools, dissemination, programming, etc)
- 2.7. With reference to last performances/exhibitions/events, were your initiatives effective in audience development? What worked and what didn't? What could be done better?
- 2.8. Have you undergone organisational changes to achieve a more audience-centric approach? If yes, please shortly describe them
- 2.9. Have you developed any particular management tool to implement audience development actions (e.g. audience development plan, market analysis, ecc.)?

2.10. Map your organisation: which areas do you cover today?

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3. AD within your organisation/institution - The future

3.1. Please provide information on your future AD activities:

Objectives

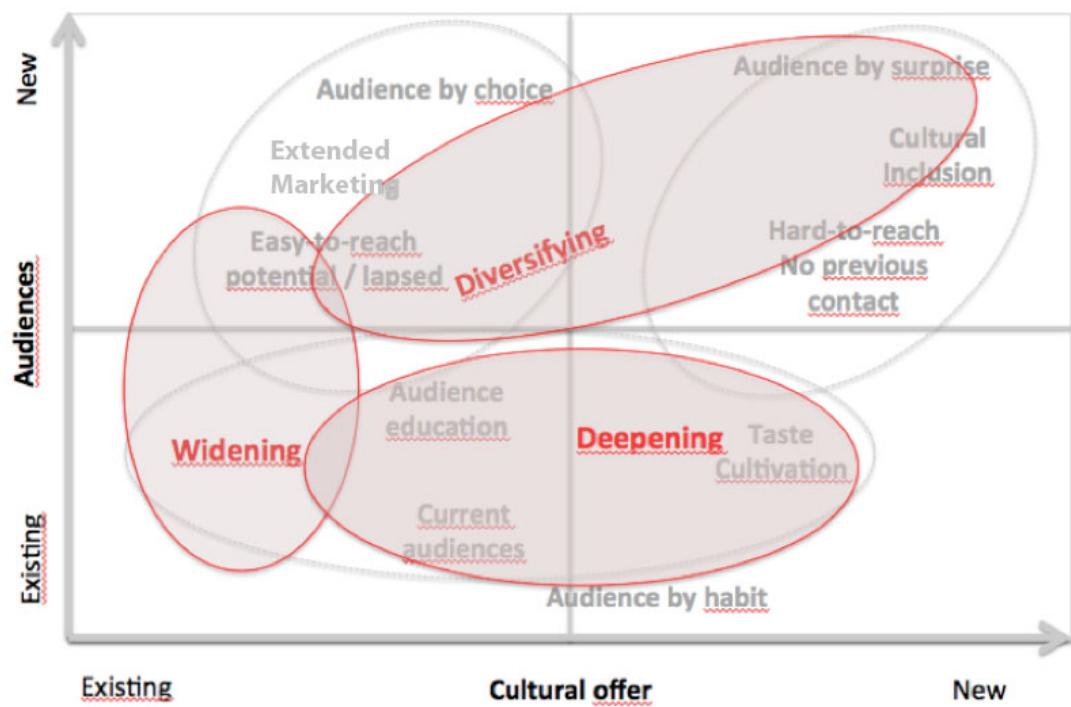
Target groups

Strategies/Tools

Desired outcomes

How will you measure them?

3.2. Re-map your own organisation (how are you going to cover all areas?)



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