TRY-ANGLE
MEETING #1
INTERNAL REPORT

LIVE
DMA

Introduction

On Wednesday 26 October 2022, 22 representatives of 18 live music venues from different parts of Europe gathered in BIME, Bilbao to start working together on the question of audience development:

- Phil Henrion for Atelier Rock, Huy (BE)
- Egija Salnikova from Cesis Concert Hall, Cesis (LV)
- Jaani Haapsalo for G Live Lab Helsinki and G Live Lab Tampere (FI)
- Mike Naert from Het Depot, Leuven (BE)
- Jean-Christophe Gérard and Alain Brohard for L'Autre Canal, 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 Music Box, Lisbon (PT)
- Marine Idir for Petit Bain, Paris (FR)
- Elio Giacoma, Povero Ragno, Cuneo (IT)
- Steffan Lykke Møller for Radar, Aarhus (DK)
- Célia Carron for Rocking Chair, Vevey (CH)
- Tomi Legido Sanchez for Sala Mardi Gras, A Coruña (ES)
- Aitor Bengoetxea for Sanagustin Kulturgunea, Azpeitia (ES)
- Ben Zschorn for Scheune, Dresden (DE)
- Waldo Volmer for Stad als Podium, Harderwijk (NL)
- Kukka Hytönen for Tanssisali Lutakko, Jyväskylä (FI)

They were invited by Live DMA to join an experimental project over 2 years – the test-driving of a tool for audience development and community building, the Try-Angle.

These venues gathered with the willingness to reflect on their work practices, learn from their peers, participate in a collaborative project that will benefit many other venues and, most of all, take care of the social links that are born out of live music events.

This is the report of the first meeting of the Try-Angle experimentation project. During this first meeting, we chose to focus on the Try-Angle tool per se, so that participants could gradually become familiar with it.

1. FIRST EXPECTATIONS

The meeting started with a roundtable of the participants, where they could share the expectations they had with their participation in this 2 years long project.

These expectations are very precious, as it will be the last time all participants will be "naïve" and without a lot of knowledge on the Try-Angle tool. With this exercise, participants could intuitively outline some of the most challenging areas. We then grouped the answers into the following themes:

Deliberate strategies (instead of always rushing)

Relates to all the work processes, strategies and philosophies behind running a live music venue, and to the people that make it possible.

- Raise awareness on venue's mission to audience and staff
- Open multiple perspectives
- Understanding why some concepts work and others don't.
- A way to communicate with(in) your team
- Credibility towards my team / our fund providers => breaking the expectations of profit but enlightening other benefits.
- Less random booking, more targeted approach
- Try-Angle could be used as a checkpoint to progress measurement
- Good practices related to monitoring audience development

New Audiences

Relates to audiences who never entered the venue and may not know about it.

- Get young people to the club
- Get more diverse audiences
- Tool for audience categorisation
- Make people curious

Covid-related

Relates to changing habits in audience behaviours due to COVID restrictions of social-isolation and closing of venues. It's about the audience that you had, but who does not come anymore, or not as often as pre-covid.

- Gigs vs Netflix
- Convince people to return
- Bring back audience's habits (pre-covid)
- Come back! (after covid)

New strategies

Relates to innovative work practices, things that have never been done, experimentations.

- Keys to create more integral experiences around live music!
- Give me new ways to think outside the box and expand on the whole live music experience at my venue.
- Ideas to try out that haven't been tried out in my venue before.
- Attract new audiences to our offer of emerging acts and artists
- Perspective. New language.
- Without completely changing our kind of music, how to get young people to attend?
- Examples of inspirational projects related to audience development

Others

- Make the rural places a spot to go out and enjoy / keep the audience and attract the youth
- Skeptic! Propose approaches, data on other implementation
- Growth strategies (i.e. more audience)

2. GUT FEELING EXERCISE

We then let the participants work with the first two steps of the tool.

In the Try-Angle prototype, these first steps are conceived as a way to check some prerequisites needed to use the Try-Angle and work on audience development in a targeted approach: have a mission statement and get some knowledge around your audience (audience data). These steps were imagined as a game, and are currently shown in a linear and binary (YES/NO) roadmap.
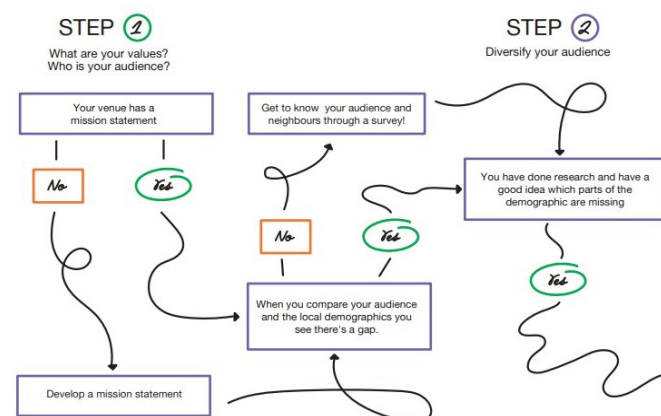
Participants gave some feedback on these steps by sharing their gut feeling reaction when reading these steps. They could share if the steps would work for their venue, or not. The main feedback is that these steps do not work as they are for now. Many participants struggled with the step one "Do you have a mission statement", because not all had such a document and many did not even know what it was. They thus felt like they could not continue after step one. Also, many criticized the binary answers (YES/NO), as nothing is black & white in life and it divides Try-Angle users into two groups: those who can and those who cannot.

Participants were asked to stand in three groups: enthusiastic about the Try-Angle, not enthusiastic and in-between.

Not enthusiastic (the smallest group)

- Some participants liked it but were turned off by the notion that this would not work in their country because of legal reasons.
- One participant had a more fundamental critique. He felt the opening steps of the tool to be too static and therefore old-fashioned. It starts from the assumption that the definition of 'audience' is clear from the get-go. Which in reality it is not. His point comes down to 'Who is it for?'. There appears to be a clear distinction between venues that want practical solutions ('tell us what to do') and venues that have a more philosophical question ('why do we do what we do?').

Enthusiastic

- I love working with it and it inspires me to test new ideas.
- A tool to question ourselves and make the process dynamic

Medium

- If you don't have a mission statement, if you don't know your audience as a small venue, you can't move on to step 2.
- Make steps 1 and 2 easier. Not exact figures (or yes/no questions). We need a new way into the tool.
- Don't ask "Do you have …" but as "What is your audience?"
- Is this tool supposed to be used for the whole of the venue, every concert night (and thus every audience typologies)? Or genre per genre, concert per concert, and so for a specific audience typology (punk heads / jazz fans / etc)?
- We talked about alignment between staff and values or identity of the organisation. And having a common language. About making explicit why we are changing. The tool needs a commitment phase. That can be told to the team itself (internally) and to the outside world (externally)
- Let's not make it too philosophical, keep the focus.

3. WHO IS THE AUDIENCE?

Because the previous information had shown a roadblock in the tool, we tried a different approach. Instead of moving on to steps 3 and 4 we first wanted to redesign the 'way in' to the tool. We did that by first asking people to list their audiences. Over lunch the theory had emerged that the tool would be easier if the audience was better defined and singular. It goes back to the question in the medium group: do you do it per audience group or for the whole venue?

Live music venues deal with various types of audiences: the people coming in on a Monday night for a music lesson may not be the same as the ones coming on Tuesday for a jazzy jam session or on Wednesday for a hardcore punk feminist show. Venues contain multitudes, and audience members as well (a fan of feminist punk could also be a doublebass player. They could be a woman and also from Asian origins and not drink alcohol. Intersectionality).

In order to help participants define their audiences, we asked them the question "Who do you want to work for?". This question would become the new first step of the Try-Angle, a way to self-define the audience typologies venues want to target in priority. This thread of thought led us to the following sub-questions:

### Step 1: who do you want to work for?

There's an order

1. Can you name the audience you want to reach?
    a. You are NOT allowed to say 'everybody'
    b. See: self-referential audience.
    c. This also means: who DON'T work for?
        • Eg. Fascists?
        • Eg `old people, …

2. Are you sure this is your priority?
    a. Eg. Are there more important groups? (pick your battle)
    b. Are there groups you HAVE to do (for example, to answer a subsidized mission? Or because you manager wants you to work with them? Or because your venue has a particular and specific cultural identity you cannot move from?)

3. Who else could benefit? Who else needs this problem solved? (broadening the audience group. Merging groups etc…)
    a. Value proposition
    b. Product development
    c. Matching these two

This new Step One in the Try-Angle, and the sub-questions that naturally arise from it, lead us to think more about the values a venue wants to bear. We then thought of a step two which would relate to the commitments a venue makes, its core purpose for existing.

Then, we invite Try-Angle users to think of how this value could match new artistic propositions and/or new settings: where the concert takes place and all the contextual and environmental parameters that relate to it.

Step 2: commitment phase

Declaration: participants came up with a list of some audience typologies they want to work for:
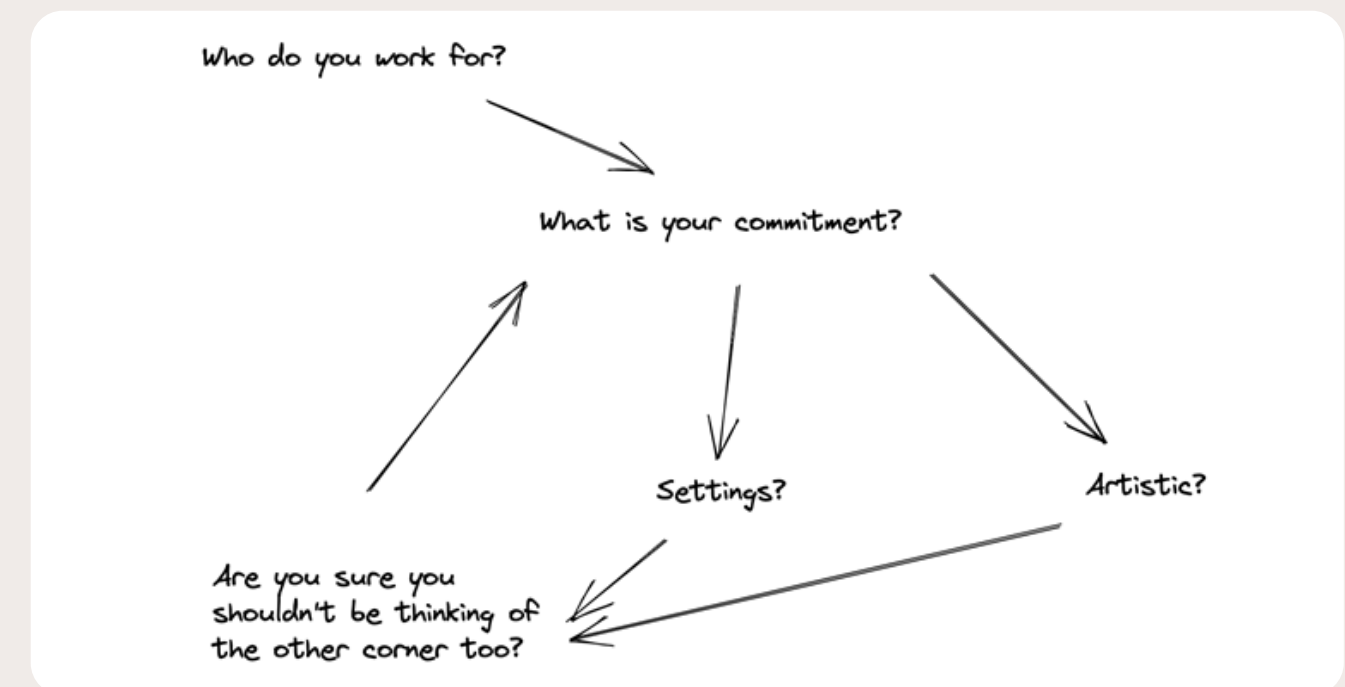
1. Traditional Audience typologies (non-exhaustive)
    • LGBTQIA+
    • Fans of a genre
    • Cool cats, hipsters
    • NOT "everyone" = self-referential audience
    • Local community, local people
    • 'nu-jazz fans'
    • Young people, people under X years old
    • …

They could then analyse further these traditional and large audience typologies with these questions:

2. Dimensions
    a. Identify with the venue or not?
        • Habitués / Regulars
        • Fans of the venue / concept? Or fans of the band? And what happens when you have multiple concepts/brands/fan groups?
        • Also : multiple audiences that use the same venue but don't want to mix or cannot mix.
    b. Financial: dimension. Customers – beneficiaries – funders
        • Eg young people who can't afford the tickets
        • Do we keep customers as a term or do we prefer 'cultural actors'
        • Passive consumer versus active partner
        • Community versus individual

This led to the identification of some problems that could arise, internally in a venue, when targeting specific audience typologies:

3. Problems

    a. What if the government or other team members are unrealistic, wants you to reach everyone or groups the rest of the team doesn't like? And what if these people don't show up?

    b. Internally conflicting business models :
- eg. A quiet restaurant AND a metal show. What is the narrative for your venue? Classical AND hiphop.
- People just coming for drinks/food not the music

    c. Local support/sympathy. Do the neighbours know what we do?
- Do your neighbours know that you are a Grassroots venue, a really important springboard for local and new talent? That you are not a "bad guy"? That you are here for them as well?
- What if you don't reach enough local people
- IDEA: this could be a MUST. Always involve your neighbours.

    d. Keeping out people you DON'T work for

    e. Bad reputation
- People thinking it is 'not for them'.

4. Separate issues

    a. Pricing. Finding the right price.

    b. Low price may indicate low quality

CONCLUSION / IN THE NEXT EPISODE

This first Try-Angle meeting came to an end, as people were quite tired but happy to be there and take part in this exchange.

Based on the evaluation feedback we received from Try-Angle participants, they were overall happy with the session, although some shared that they felt really tired at the end of the day, notably because it can be exchausting to speak English all day when not a native speaker:
"It was a long day and by doing everything in English, I was quit tired that afternoon. It's normal for first meeting to take time to get to know each other, so I hope next time we will digg more in to the try-angle tool than we did this time."

Also, one feedback asked for more targeted and clear goal to meet at the end of day:

"*More targeted and clear goal to meet at the end of the day. Maybe when deviding participants in to groups, looking more at they background - if the confrontation of views or challange of the solution needed then mix, if the clear opinion on certan matters needed - deviding by the scale, funding (private, with subsidies) etc. For in some cases the difference between the venues was efficient for group discussions, in some cases not that much.*"

These will be taken into account, of course. Next session will also have more space for participants to share some concrete actions on audience development they put in place in their venue, we will try to rely more on participants expertise and less focus on the tool per se.

Next meeting will take place in Lyon, France on 16 & 17 May 2023. Try-Angle participants will also meet online in January 2023.